

# An Overview of the Book of **Revelation**

Edmond W. Holroyd, III





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by Edmond W. Holroyd, III

Your Name and starting date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Cover Illustration.** A satellite image of western Turkey showing the region of Patmos and the seven churches of Revelation.

**Introduction:** This course was first written for a junior high Sunday school class in Miles City, Montana, in the Spring of 1976. It was designed as a self-study course for a ten week period. That way the good students could learn something even if some in the class were disruptive. Furthermore, classes were easily made up and all students could proceed at their own pace. Since then many adults have enjoyed this course. There have been some revisions, in 1996 and 2018, mostly towards the beginning of this study, and with illustrations improving with technology. The insights of several books and teachers have been merged in this study guide.

The continuing instructions, in bold print, ask you to read directly the words of Revelation and related passages. You are asked to fill in the blanks with answers that may seem trivial. It will be difficult to get a wrong answer unless you fail to read the Scriptures. While the original edition was dependent on a Revised Standard Version Bible, the revision of 1996 was keyed primarily to a New International Version, which is the version sometimes quoted. If you do not know where a book of the Bible is located, check the index in the front of your Bible for a page number. You will be asked many times to read a relevant portion from some other part of the Bible.

This course is mainly an overview. It introduces the apocryphal language style and its code words and numbers. Its purpose is to try to show what John was trying to communicate to his flock on the mainland of what is now western Turkey. It also tries to show what the Holy Spirit wants us to know in today's world and times. The Book of Revelation is primarily a book of hope and comfort for true Christians undergoing severe persecution. The detail of the events of the Last Days is secondary.

Many other books and pamphlets have been written over the ages, each with some special insights. Many writers have been proven wrong in their interpretations of the details. Many diverse interpretations have contributed to the formation of denominations of Christians and

cults. You are encouraged to read other writings on the Book of Revelation and regard this course as merely an introduction with a particular point of view.

Like all other works, this course probably contains errors and certainly incomplete development of various topics. My attitude is that no one person at the time of the First Coming of Jesus Christ correctly understood all of the Old Testament prophesies. Yet the Scriptures were all true. Similarly, I claim that no one person, prior to its happening, will have a correct grasp of all of the details, gleaned from Scripture, of the Second Coming. Yet again the Scriptures will all be true. Some prophesies have had multiple fulfillments over time. They had one meaning for near the time of their utterances and another meaning at a later time, like the messianic prophesy in Isaiah 7:14, naming Immanuel. Others have only one meaning intended by God but people have differing interpretations. "Even the angels long to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:12, NIV)

I am a retired scientist (B.S. in astrophysics, Ph.D. in atmospheric science, and continuing education in geology) and a retired graduate school professor in remote sensing (usually viewing the Earth from aircraft and satellite) and digital image processing. I am therefore used to the physical world and its evidences. Therefore, my illustrations are of physical things that confirm the reality of locations and history. I am also used to walking by faith and acknowledge a spiritual realm beyond the measurement capability of our instruments. Those things are more challenging to illustrate, and so the illustrations become few in the later chapters. As of this 2018 edition, I can be contacted at my home address: Dr. Edmond W. Holroyd, III; 5395 Howell Street.; Arvada, CO 80002-1523, U.S.A.; phone (303) 279-5395; eholroyd@juno.com; www.EdHolroyd.info.

## **Lesson 1. 500 Years Before**

When I teach a course in Revelation, I never start in that book. I start in Daniel and 1 Maccabees, a history book in the Apocrypha. That is because there was a language style developed for times of persecution. We need to know the special code of that language first. Otherwise the images will seem weird to us and we will miss understanding the passages. Once one learns the language style, Revelation appears as a book full of hope and consolation for true Christians, especially to those being persecuted for their faith.

The normal Old Testament history of the Bible ends with the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem under Ezra and Nehemiah. It ends in about 440 B.C. during Persian rule. There is then a big gap until John the Baptist and Jesus appear on the scene. At that time the Romans are in control but the main language is Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic. Some Bibles contain a collection of books called the "Apocrypha". These were written in Greek and were rejected by the Hebrew scholars and priests who were assembling the Old Testament. They appear in the Catholic Bibles but not most Protestant Bibles. Two of the history books in the Apocrypha are 1 and 2 Maccabees, and they are useful and good reading. They fill us in on the important history between the Old and New Testaments. The other books can be interesting reading.

**Table 1. Bible contents:**

<u>Bible version</u>	<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>Apocrypha</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
Hebrew	YES	NO	NO
Catholic	YES	YES	YES
Protestant	YES	NO	YES

**Table 2. Apocrypha contents:**

1 Ezdras (Ezra)  
2 Ezdras ...the only one in apocalyptic style  
Tobit  
Judith (killed the enemy general)  
(additions to) Esther  
Wisdom of Solomon (like Proverbs)  
Ecclesiasticus (more wisdom literature)  
Baruch (scribe who worked for Jeremiah)  
A Letter of Jeremiah  
(additions to Daniel): Song of the three (Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego)  
Daniel and Susanna  
Daniel, Bell, and the Dragon  
Prayer of Mannaseh (the bad king after his father Hezekiah)  
1, 2 Maccabees (important history)  
(some versions also have): 3, 4 Maccabees  
Odes  
Psalms of Solomon

**READ Daniel 8.**

We start with Daniel chapter 8. There we read about a vision given to Daniel. It was like a dream, but Daniel was awake. **(Now you get to write down some answers.)**

**What is the animal described in verses 3-4?**

**How many horns?**

**What is the animal described in verses 5-8?  
verse 5?**

**How many horns according to**

**How many horns according to the end of verse 8?**

**What is the name of the angel sent to tell Daniel the meaning of the vision (verse 16)?**

The events in this vision seem weird to us, about a ram and a goat and their horns. The angel Gabriel (one of the highest) was sent to Daniel to interpret the vision. He said that the animals represent kingdoms of the future, and the horns represent their kings. The vision was really about future events that would happen within the next 500 years after Daniel's time.

**The Actual History.**

These events really did happen. The map (Figure 1) shows the areas of activity of the Babylonian Empire (Daniel's time) which was about to be conquered by the Empire of the

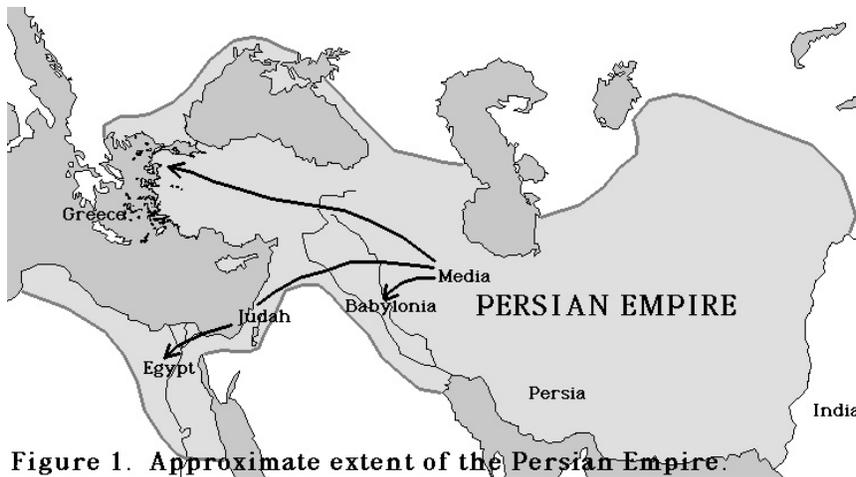


Figure 1. Approximate extent of the Persian Empire.

Persians and Medes (ram of two horns). It was during the Persian Empire times that coins were invented in what is now western Turkey. They were simple at first, having a design only on one side (Figure 2).

That empire was benevolent (good) to its conquered peoples, letting them go back to their native homelands. They even helped the Jews rebuild their temple and the city walls of Jerusalem (see Ezra and Nehemiah). After a beauty contest, Esther (an orphan Jewess) was made the new queen. In that position she saved her Jewish people from an intended holocaust.



Figure 2. Persian silver coins (siglos)

That event is celebrated today in the Jewish feast of Purim. (The Book of Esther is good and easy reading in both its normal version in the Bible and extended version in the Apocrypha.)



Figure 3. Coin (silver tetradrachm) of Alexander III (the Great) of Macedon.

The Persians were eventually conquered by Alexander the Great, king of Macedonia and Greece (goat with a large horn). The coins of Alexander (Figure 3) often have his picture on one side and name on the other. The year 333 B.C. is an approximate date for his reign (336-323).

He introduced Greek (pagan) culture to the conquered people. The Greek language became the common trade language for the region, much like English is for the world today.

Alexander's teacher had been an important man named Aristotle. Aristotle and Alexander believed that people were the most important beings around and

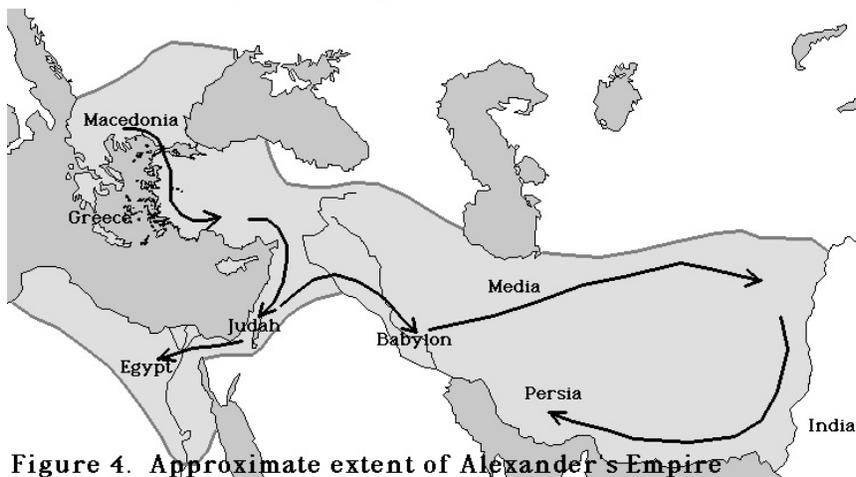
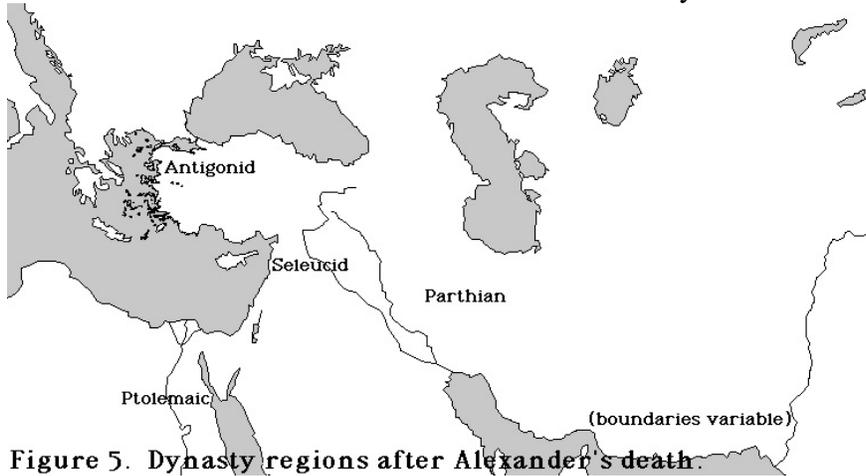


Figure 4. Approximate extent of Alexander's Empire

that men could figure out how the world operated by using their own reason. Men could then change their world to suit themselves, to rule it, and to mold their own future. (Sound familiar?) They believed this so strongly that they felt everyone should believe it also. So besides conquering all of the world that he could (Figure 4 map), Alexander set up libraries, schools, and gymnasiums where men could become great. But Alexander did not live very long. He died at about the age of 30 from some disease. Maybe the world's greatest general (he knew the personal names of every one of his soldiers down to the least of them) was killed by a mosquito. Alexander was amazed when he was shown the 200-year old Daniel 8 prophesy of his life!



The empire (map, Figure 5) was divided between his four generals (lesser horns). One ruled Greece and Macedon and started the Antigonid dynasty. A general named Ptolemy started a series of kings in Egypt, all with the same name until the Romans took over shortly before the time of Jesus Christ. Their coins

**Figure 5. Dynasty regions after Alexander's death.**

(Figure 6) typically have a picture of Ptolemy I (or Zeus, a Greek god) on them, regardless of who was reigning, and an eagle or two on the back. Another general started the Selucid dynasty, in which the name Antiochus was frequent (Figure 7). The cities of Antioch derive their names from those kings. The Parthians ruled the eastern part of Alexander's empire, based where the Kurds want to re-establish a new nation today. Their coins are unusual in having the lettering on the back side arranged in a square.



**Figure 6. a coin of Ptolemy VI**



**Figure 7. Coin (silver tetradrachm) of Antiochus I of Syria.**



**Figure 8. Parthian drachm. (Mithradates II; 123-88 B.C.)**

These generals and their successors continued to try to get people to believe in the greatness of man. They did well, because these ideas predominate in the world today. This is what is taught in public schools.



Figure 9. a coin of Antiochus IV Epiphanes

Eventually in 175 B.C. there came a king in the Selucid dynasty named Antiochus IV Epiphanes, (little horn becoming great) who thought that he was God. He even said so on some of his coins on which the Greek words mean "King Antiochus--the appearance of God", or "--God made visible". (Figure 9) He decided to show how great he

was by enlarging his share of Alexander's former empire. He defeated Ptolemy VI in Egypt and also tried to expand eastward against the Parthians. He tried to make all of his subjects give up their own religions, which he considered only superstitions, and give glory to man instead. The Greek gods were to be worshipped instead as a token of loyalty to the ideas of the king. Everyone, even the king, knew that the Greek gods did not really exist; they had become symbolic only. It would be like us worshipping Uncle Sam.

Antiochus tried to enforce this attitude on the Jews, forbidding them to worship the true God of the Bible. He boldly entered the Jerusalem temple where only the high priest could enter once per year. He sacrificed a pig on the altar, spoiling it for holy purposes. Then he set up a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the temple and told the people to worship Zeus. Some Jews, fearing for their lives, agreed to do what Antiochus commanded. Some of the faithful resisted. Eventually in about 166 B.C. one priest, Mattathias, got so angry at being forced to worship false gods that he killed the soldiers making him do it. That forced the family to go into hiding. Others joined them in a small army of freedom fighters. One of the leaders, after Mattathias died, was his son Judas Maccabeus, after whom the Apocrypha Books of Maccabees are named. In about three years they beat the major armies of Antiochus and won freedom for the Jews, for the first time since the Babylonian captivity. They purified the Temple in Jerusalem, resulting in the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah (near Christmas time).



Figure 10. a coin of Rome

The freedom of the Jews did not last long. The office of High Priest became a political one and there were disputes between the leaders. Eventually the Romans were invited to settle things, and they did so gladly. They were taking over the entire Mediterranean Sea perimeter, and this tiny territory of the Jews was just another piece in their empire. The Roman coins (Figure 10)

often have on them the name ROMA, their capital city. The Greeks had unified the culture and the commerce in the region. The Romans brought general peace and stability. It was during early Roman empire times that God dropped into our history for a visit as the person Jesus Christ, born to Mary at Bethlehem in Judea.

Time to write your answers again:

**What kingdom did the ram represent (Daniel 8:20)?**

**What kingdom did the goat represent (Daniel 8:21)?**  
**Who is the single horn (Daniel 8:21 but not named there)?**  
**Why did the four horns replace the single horn (verse 22)?**  
**Who is the wicked king (verses 23-25 but not named there)?**  
**What is the "Beautiful Land" (verse 9)?**  
**What Jewish feast (near Christmas time) today celebrates the end of the "2300 evenings and mornings" and the reconsecration of the Temple sanctuary?**

**"Hidden"**

That is how the history actually worked out. We can see that the strange vision of Daniel was talking about real history in the future. But the language style that was used is called "apocryphal" (adjective) or "apocalypse" (noun), with the root meaning "hidden". The same root is in the word "Apocrypha" referring to the books normally in the Catholic Bible but not in the Protestant Bible. This language style, with images like the strange animals and their horns, was introduced at a time when the Jews were under oppression of a foreign government, that of Babylon. It came back into use during the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes. When John wrote the Book of Revelation the Christians were under severe persecution from the Roman Emperor Domitian. The Holy Spirit directed him to use the same apocalyptic literature style.

**End Times**

Another thing that we noticed in the Daniel passage was the phrase "a time, times and half a time", (Daniel 12:7) which is interpreted as three and a half years. That is the period of time that God's people would suffer under severe persecution. It is similar to the 2300 evenings and mornings (1150 days) of Daniel 8:14. It is similar to the time that the Temple altar was spoiled under Antiochus Epiphanes. So in Jewish literature the three and a half years came to represent any period of severe persecution, even if its duration was somewhat different. The period without proper sacrifices was called "desolation" in Daniel 8:13, and again refers to what Antiochus Epiphanes did hundreds of years later. When Jesus was asked about end times, he also gave a warning about a new "abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15), referring to Daniel, talking about what happened under the Romans in 70 A.D., and also what will happen in the very Last Days, which are still in our future. There are many other parallels that can be enjoyed with further study.

**Table 3. Daniel 8 summary:**

Vision details in Daniel 8:1-14	Is symbolic of Daniel 8:15-27
2-horned ram	King(dom) of Medes and Persians
Goat	King(dom) of Greeks
large horn	"First" king (Alexander)
4 horns	Fragments of kingdom
little horn	Wicked king (Antiochus Epiphanes IV)
Prince of the host	Prince of Princes (God)
2300 evenings and mornings	"is true" (about 3 1/2 years)

For convenience, in case you do not have access to copies of the Apocrypha, here are some readings for the **next** Lesson, combined from the Revised Standard Version and the Jerusalem Bible.

### **THE FIRST BOOK OF THE MACCABEES, CHAPTER 1.**

1 Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came via the land of Kittim (Cyprus), defeated Darius, king of the Persians and the Medes, and succeeded him as king. He had previously become king of Greece. 2 He fought many battles, conquered fortresses, and put to death the local kings. 3 He advanced to the ends of the earth and plundered nation after nation. When the earth became quiet before him, his ambitious heart swelled with pride. 4 He gathered a very strong army and subdued provinces, nations, and princes, and they paid tribute to him.

5 After this Alexander became sick and knew that he was dying. 6 He summoned his greatest officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. 7 Alexander had reigned for twelve years when he died. 8 Each of his officers began to rule in his own region. 9 All put on their crowns after his death, and so did their sons after them for many years, and they brought increasing evils on the world.

10 From them came forth a sinful offshoot, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of king Antiochus. He had been a hostage in Rome. He became king in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks. (175 B.C.) 11 Then lawless men emerged from Israel and led many people astray. They said, "Come, let us make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us. 12 This proposal pleased them, 13 and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to practice the pagan observances. 14 So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, like the pagans have, 15 disguised their circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They submitted to the Gentile rule and became willing slaves to do evil.

16 Once Antiochus saw that his authority was established, he determined to make himself king of Egypt, so that he might reign over both kingdoms. 17 So he invaded Egypt with a strong force, with chariots, elephants, cavalry, and a great fleet. 18 He engaged Ptolemy king of Egypt in battle, and Ptolemy turned and retreated before him, leaving many casualties. 19 Antiochus captured the fortified cities of Egypt and plundered the country.

20 After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the year one hundred and forty-three (169 B.C.) He advanced on Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. 21 He arrogantly broke into the sanctuary and took the golden altar and the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. 22 He also took the table for the bread offering, the cups for the drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the Temple. He stripped it all off. 23 He took the silver and the gold and the precious vessels; he discovered the secret treasures and took them also. 24 Removing all of these, he went back to his own country, leaving the place a shambles and speaking with extreme arrogance.

41 Then the king declared to his whole kingdom that all were to become one people, 42 each giving up his particular customs. 43 All the Gentiles conformed to the king's command. Many Israelites gladly adopted his religion, sacrificing to idols and profaning the Sabbath. 44 The king

sent instructions by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah directing them to adopt the customs strange to the land, 45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane Sabbaths and feasts, 46 to defile the sanctuary and the priests, 47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice pigs and unclean animals, 48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything impure, unclean, and profane 49 so that they should forget the Law and change all observance of it. 50 Anyone not obeying the command of the king was to be killed.

51 Writing in such words to every part of his kingdom, the king appointed inspectors over all of the people and commanded all the towns of Judah to offer sacrifice one after another. 52 Many of the people, those who abandoned the Law, joined them, and they committed evil in the land; 53 they drove (the faithful of) Israel into hiding in all of their places of refuge.

54 On the fifteenth day of Chislev in the one hundred and forty-fifth year (167 B.C.) the king erected the abomination of desolation above the altar of burnt offering. Altars were built in the surrounding towns of Judah, 55 and incense was burned at the doors of houses and in the streets. 56 Any books of the Law that were discovered were torn to pieces and burned with fire. 57 Whenever anyone was discovered possessing a copy of the book of the covenant or practicing the Law, the king's decree condemned him to death. 58 They continued their force against offenders discovered in the towns of Israel for month after month. 59 On the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was erected over the altar of burnt offering. 60 According to the decree, women who had their children circumcised were put to death, 61 with their babies hung round their necks. The families and those who circumcised them were executed with them.

62 Yet there were many in Israel who stood firm and found the courage to refuse to eat unclean food. 63 They chose death rather than to be defiled by the food or to profane the holy covenant, and they were executed. 64 It was a dreadful wrath that came upon Israel.

The atrocities against the faithful were similar to those of this century in many parts of the world. If you like to read of such gross and gory details, here are some from 2 Maccabees. What is more important to note is the courage of a mother and her seven sons in the face of terrible persecution for their faith. Note their strong faith in everlasting life and the resurrection. It is greater than any we see in the Old Testament, apart from Job 19:25-27.

## **THE SECOND BOOK OF MACCABEES, CHAPTER 6.**

10 For example, two women were charged with having circumcised their children. They were publicly paraded around the town, with their babies hung at their breasts, then hurled down headlong from the city wall. 11 Other people who had assembled in the nearby caves to secretly observe the seventh day were betrayed to Philip and were all burned together, because their consciences kept them from defending themselves, out of respect for the holiness of the day.

## **THE SECOND BOOK OF MACCABEES, CHAPTER 7.**

1 There were also seven brothers and their mother who were arrested. The king tried to force

them to eat pig's meat, which the Law forbids, by torturing them with whips and cords. 2 One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What are you trying to find out from us? We are ready to die rather than break the laws of our ancestors."

3 The king, in a rage, ordered that pans and caldrons be heated over a fire. 4 As soon as they were red-hot he commanded that the tongue of their spokesman be cut out and that they scalp him and cut off his hands and feet, while the other brothers and his mother looked on. 5 When he was completely helpless, the king ordered them to take him to the fire, still breathing, and fried alive in a pan. As the smoke from the pan drifted about, his mother and brothers encouraged each other to die nobly, saying, 6 "The Lord God is watching over us and truly has compassion on us, as Moses declared in his song of witness against the people to their faces, when he said, 'he will certainly have compassion on his servants.'"

7 After the first brother had died in this way, they brought forward the second for their brutal amusement. They stripped the skin and hair from his head and asked him, "Will you eat rather than have your body tortured limb by limb?" 8 He replied in the language of his ancestors, "Never!" And so he too was tortured like his brother. 9 With his last breath he exclaimed, "You inhuman fiend, you may dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to everlasting life, because we have died for his laws."

10 After him, they amused themselves with the third. When they asked him, he quickly put out his tongue and stretched forth his hands, 11 saying nobly, "Heaven gave me these limbs, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again." 12 The king and his attendants were astonished at the young man's courage, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

13 When he was dead, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. 14 When he was near death, he said, "Ours is the better choice, to die at the hands of men, relying on God's promise that we will be raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!"

15 Next they brought forward the fifth and tortured him. 16 But he looked at the king and said, "You have power over men, mortal as you are, and you can do what you please. But do not think that God has deserted our people. 17 Keep this up, and you will see how his mighty power will torture you and your descendants."

18 After him they led out the sixth. When he was about to die, he said, "Do not deceive yourself in vain. We are suffering like this for our own faults, having sinned against our own God. The result has been terrible. 19 But do not think that you will go unpunished for trying to fight against God!"

20 But the mother was especially admirable and worthy of honorable memory. Though she watched the death of her seven sons within a single day, she endured it with good courage because of her hope in the Lord. 21 She encouraged each of them in the language of their ancestors. Filled with a noble spirit, she reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage and said to them, 22 'I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who shaped every part in you. 23 It is the Creator of the world, who

shaped the beginning of man and directed the origin of all things, who will in his mercy give you back both breath and life, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.'

24 Antiochus thought he was being ridiculed, suspecting an insult in the tone of her voice. As the youngest brother was still alive, Antiochus not only appealed to him with words, but promised with oaths to make him both rich and happy if he would abandon the traditions of his ancestors, and that he would make him his Friend and entrust him with public office. 25 Since the young man would not listen to him at all, the king then appealed to the mother, urging her to advise the youth to save his life. 26 After much urging on his part she agreed to try to persuade her son. 27 Bending over him, she fooled the cruel tyrant by saying in the language of her ancestors, 'My son, have pity on me. I carried you nine months in my womb and nursed you for three years, fed you and reared you up to this point in your life. 28 I implore you, my child, to look at heaven and earth and consider all that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed, and that mankind comes into being in the same way. 29 Do not fear this executioner, but prove yourself worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in the day of God's mercy I may get you back again along with your brothers.

30 While she was still speaking, the young man said, "What are you all waiting for? I will not obey the king's command, but I will obey the command of the law given to our ancestors through Moses. 31 But you, who have contrived all kinds of evil against the Hebrews, will certainly not escape the hands of God. 32 We are suffering for our own sins. 33 And if our living God is angry with us, to punish and discipline us, he will again be reconciled with his own servants. 34 But you, unholy wretch, bloodiest villain of all mankind, do not be carried away with senseless elation, boasting with false confidence when you raise your hand against his children. 35 You have not yet escaped the judgment of the almighty, all-seeing God. 36 Our brothers, after enduring their brief pain, have already drunk of ever-flowing life under God's covenant, while you, by God's judgment, will have to pay the just penalty for your arrogance. 37 I, like my brothers, give up my body and life for the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation and by trials and afflictions to make you confess that he alone is God, 38 and through me and my brothers to bring an end to the wrath of the Almighty which has rightly fallen on our whole nation."

39 The king fell into a rage and treated him worse than the others, feeling the sting of his scorn. 40 So he died in his integrity, putting his whole trust in the Lord. 41 The mother was the last to die, after her sons.

42 Let this be enough of an account of eating of sacrifices and of the extreme tortures.

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## **Lesson 2. Faithful Under Persecution**

Some important history happened between the Old and New Testaments. It was forecast in the book of Daniel, where the descriptions are generally in symbolic or apocryphal language. Now read parts of it directly in the books of the Maccabees, inserted just ahead of this lesson.

**READ 1 Maccabees 1:1-24.**

The dates in the original text are the years since 312 B.C., the official start of the Greek era. They are translated into our system in the parentheses.

**What did the lawless Jews build in Jerusalem (verse 14)?**

**What did they abandon (verse 15)?**

**What animals and equipment did Antiochus have for his army (verse 17)?**

Only the Jewish priests were allowed to enter the sanctuary of the Temple in Jerusalem and to handle the religious equipment there. **What did Antiochus do at the Temple (verses 21-24)?**

**READ 1 Maccabees 1:41-64.**

**What is everyone to give up(verse 42)?**

**How are the Jews to officially do this (verses 45-49, list many things)?**

**What is to happen to those who want to keep worshiping God (verse 50)?**

In Matthew 24:15, when Jesus talks about the future destruction of Jerusalem, he refers to a disastrous abomination or desolating sacrilege, mentioned by the prophet Daniel, that is set up in the Temple. Neither Jesus nor Daniel give any more clues to what that thing is. In 1 Maccabees 1:54 it is mentioned again. The year is 167 B.C. and it is the king and his followers who set up this horrible thing. This supreme insult to the Jews is a statue of the Greek god Zeus erected above the altar in the Temple.

**What happens to the copies of the Bible (verse 56)?**

**What happens to the owners and followers of the Bible (verse 57)?**

Circumcision was a required sign that Jews used to show that they belonged to God.

**What happened to children who were circumcised?**

**What happened to the mother and relatives (verse 60)?**

**READ 2 Maccabees 6:10-11**

Some children were hung to death on a rope dangling from the mother's neck. The mother was then forced to wear her dead child in that way until she herself was killed.

**How were such mothers killed?**

**How were refugees in caves killed when they were discovered?**

**READ (or skim) 2 Maccabees 7 (all of it)**

**What were the faithful Jews forced to eat (verse 1)?**

When they refused, they were tortured and killed in a horrible way.

**What were they looking forward to after death (verse 9)?**

**What does the cruel king have to look forward to (verses 34-35)?**

The king was eventually killed by his "friends". The faithful Jews won their freedom. They even minted their own coins (Figure 11), named "lepton" in Greek, "prutah" in Hebrew, and "mite" in the King James Bible. Jesus praised a widow who put two such small coins in the Temple treasury, which was all that she had (Luke 21:1-4).



### **Communication under times of persecution**

Suppose you were living then, hiding in the desert, so that you could remain faithful to God. You wanted to send a letter of encouragement to your friends in the city who are being hunted down and killed. You want to tell them that Antiochus is merely a tool of Satan and that God was in ultimate control and would win the last battle. You wanted to tell them to keep resisting the king, even die if necessary, and never to give up their faith in God. That is what you want to write in your letter. **But** that letter may fall into enemy hands! It would then be destroyed and give no further encouragement to anyone. Furthermore the enemy could start searching for you to kill you as well.

Suppose your letter contained the following statements: "I am Jonathan. I am hiding in a cave five miles west of Jericho. King Antiochus is a tool of Satan and will eventually be defeated by God. Resist Antiochus and keep believing in God, even unto death, for he will raise us to live again." What might happen if the king's army intercepts your letter:

**Who would the army look for?**

**Where would they look for you?**

**What would they probably do to you when they found you?**

**How many more faithful Jews would then get to see your letter?**

Suppose instead that you used this coded language where words have meanings different from their ordinary meanings: "I am the prophet Elijah writing from my cave on Mt. Sinai. God showed me a vision today. In this vision a giant pig rose out of the depths of the earth and made everyone eat his manure and filth and then wash themselves in it or else die. But the Ruler on the high throne sent a warrior on a white horse to kill the pig and all those people who were dirty. Everyone who stayed clean to the end was saved."

**Who would the army look for?**

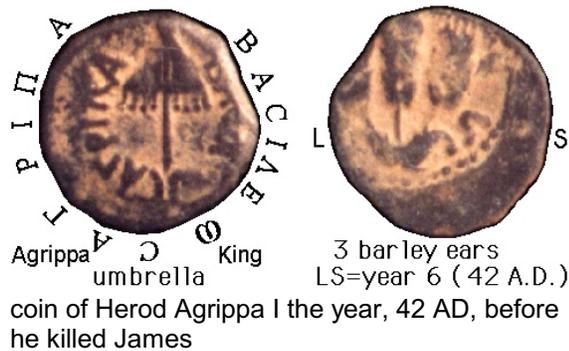
**Where would the army look for him?**

**Would they find him there?**

**Would they keep looking for him after they found out that Elijah had died five hundred years earlier?**

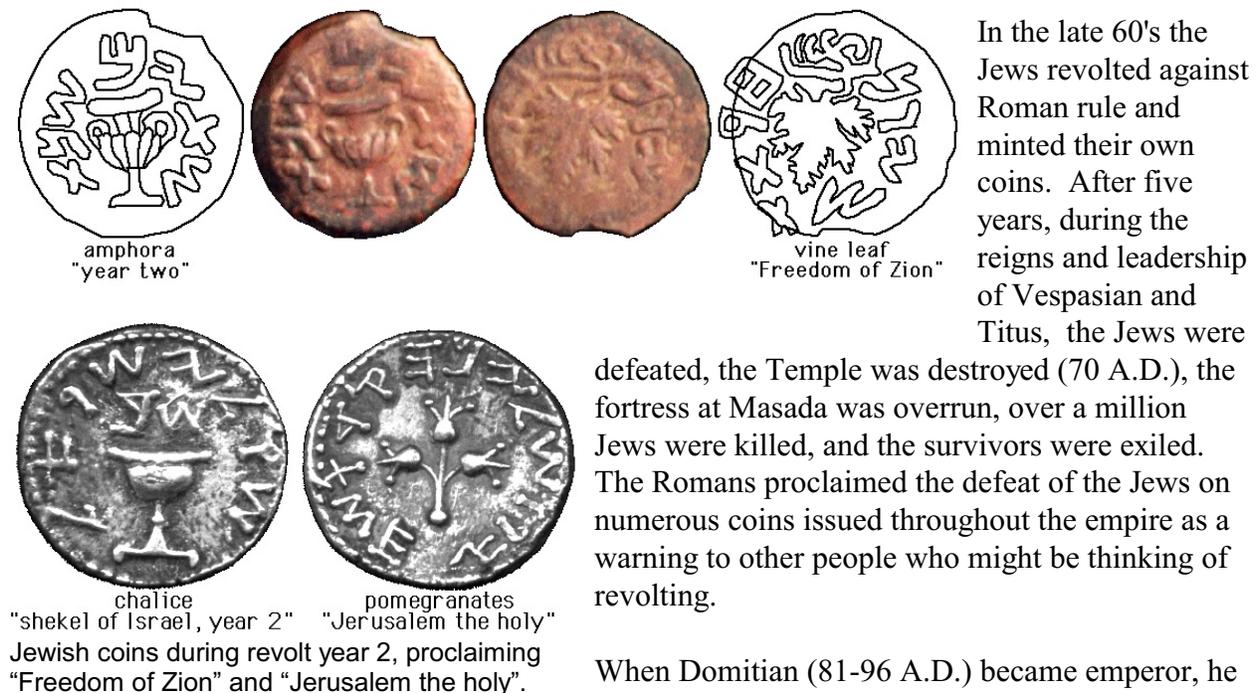
**Since you have not revealed your true name or hiding place, could the army use this letter as evidence against you?**

The army would also see that the letter was nothing more than a harmless fairy tale about a pig and a rider on a white horse who saves the people. They would probably allow the stupid letter to circulate. By writing in such a language you would save your own neck and still get your message through, even if the enemy read it. The Jewish readers would know that Antiochus was the pig, that he was sent from Hell, that his policies were the filth, that God was the ruler on the high throne, that the warrior was God's servant, that Antiochus would eventually loose the battle, and that everyone who remained faithful to God (clean) would be rewarded. Your letter would have succeeded if you wrote it this way. Such special language is called "apocalyptic", meaning "hidden". It was invented during years of persecution to give encouragement to the faithful. Apocalyptic literature was used in the books of Daniel, 2 Ezdras in the Apocrypha, and Revelation.



### Roman Persecutions

Before the New Testament was completely written, Christians were being killed for their faith. The Book of Acts records the death of Stephen (7:60) and James (12:2) under Herod Agrippa I). Later, Peter and Paul were among many killed (mid-60's) during the reign of Roman emperor Nero.



When Domitian (81-96 A.D.) became emperor, he



### Lesson 3. Codes

In the previous lessons we learned that apocalyptic writing is in a code language. The writer uses words to paint a picture of images which have special meanings. The ordinary reader, like the enemy censors, sees only a stupid letter. To the faithful who know the code, the letter is full of hope and encouragement. John is in a Roman prison on the island of Patmos. He gets his letter past the Roman guards to his flock and tells them that God is still in control, even while they are being persecuted and sometimes killed.

**Numbers** are a part of the code. The special numbers are 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, and 1000, and their combinations. To the Jew and early Christians they had special meanings.

Heaven ... **How many persons are there in our God, known as a Trinity?**

**Name them:**

In the sky the most impressive shining objects one can usually see are the sun, moon, and stars (which include the star-like planets, comets, and meteors). Notice that these are of three types. The number three is associated with heavenly things.

Earth ... **How many seasons are there in the year?**

The Greeks wrongly thought that all things on earth were made up of one or more of these substances: fire, water, air, and soil. **How many are these?**

Somehow we got the expression "the \_\_\_ corners of the earth". **How many corners?**

When we describe a direction we use one or more of the following words: north, east, south, west. **How many different directions are these?**

So we get the idea that the number four is associated with earthly things.

All ... Perfect ... When we combine heaven and earth we have everything there is. (Hell is associated with earth.) So the numbers 3 and 4 add to 7. Seven is considered to be the perfect number. As a code number it represents completion, perfection. It represents everything; there is no more. Something else is perfect:

**WRITE Matthew 5:48.**

**How many days are there in the week?**

Notice also that God made a perfect creation, including his rest, during 7 days. Also the number of visible objects that have regular movements that God placed in the sky is also 7: sun, moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. You will find that the number 7 may often be replaced by the word "all" in apocalyptic literature.

Complete ... The numbers 3 and 4 may be combined by multiplication for a spiritually complete number. **How many tribes of Israel were there originally?**

**How many apostles did Jesus choose?**

The number 12 also appears in the number of months in the year, but in apocalyptic literature it

has the other associations. The Jews used a lunar calendar in which there were 12 or 13 months in the year, so the number of months was not special.

Large ... To emphasize that something is large, the Jews multiplied its number by ten. Jesus tells Peter (Matt. 18:21-22) to forgive not just seven times, but seventy times seven. He is not telling Peter to count out 490 forgivenesses and then get even on the 491st time. He is telling Peter to always be forgiving. Squaring seven makes it a large number; by then multiplying it by ten Jesus is making it difficult to count. So where we see the number ten used symbolically we can usually substitute the words "many, large".

Infinite ... Forever ... When a number is multiplied by ten three times it is ordinarily a thousand times larger. Symbolically, however, the Jews don't mean just 1000 but rather a huge number, approaching infinity. A thousand objects are therefore "uncountable", like the stars in the sky and the sand grains on the seashore. A thousand years are therefore nearly "forever" or almost for eternity.

### **WRITE Romans 3:23.**

Incomplete ... Corrupt ... Sinful ... The number 7 represents completion and perfection. To fall short of that number is to be imperfect, corrupt, defective. God requires that we be perfect (Matt. 5:48), but we "fall short" (Romans 3:23) of that standard by a drastic amount; we sin. In archery, when an arrow falls short of the target, the term used is "sin". The number 6 is used in apocalyptic literature to represent the same imperfection. In Revelation the number 6 is combined three times in the number 666 to be a possible code word for absolute corruption and sinfulness. It is used to name a counterfeit of God, someone who tries to appear great like God but falls short.

Word equations ... "Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." says a law in mathematics. John makes use of this concept. He may initially say that  $A = B$ , where A and B are some words or phrases, usually describing someone, like Jesus. Later he says that  $B = C$ , where C is another word or phrase. The logic then says that  $A = C$ . By this way John frequently says that Jesus Christ is God himself. Watch for the many examples in Revelation.

These are the approximate code meanings for the numbers in Revelation. There may have been additional meanings unknown to us today.

### **READ Revelation 1:1-3.**

**Who is the revelation about (verse 1)?**

**To whom did the angel reveal it (verse 1)?**

**What are the three ways to receive a blessing from this book (verse 3)?**

The key verbs are read aloud, hear, and keep. Revelation is an artistic painting of words. To get the benefit of an ordinary painting, or a picture printed in a newspaper or book, one stands back and looks at it with one's eyes. To look at the flecks of paint or printer dots with a microscope is to miss the meaning of the painting or picture. The same applies here. John is advising that one

should hear the picture that he is painting with words, not analyze the words themselves. He therefore says "read aloud" and "hear". The message is then not to be ignored. One is to "keep" it. Keep means always to know it, to obey it, and to do it. (It does not mean here to hide it and make sure that no one else gets it.) A response is necessary to prove that the message was understood.

If you are working with others in this class you may therefore read aloud these reading assignments in Revelation to each other. (Quietly!) Or you may quietly read them aloud to yourself if you wish. Listen to the "music" or poetry of the words; visualize the pictures they are painting. You'll maximize your understanding and enjoyment of John's message this way.

**READ Revelation 1:4-8.** (aloud if you wish)

The seven churches will be named in verse 11. The term "Asia" refers only to the Roman province of Asia, the western part of present-day Turkey (see map). **But 7** is a code word meaning "all"! John is therefore writing to all of the churches in this region, not just to seven of them.

"Him" in verse 4 is identified by the phrase "who is and who was and who is to come". The cross-reference in some Bibles is to Exodus 3:14. To get the context, **READ Exodus 3:13-14.**

**What does God give as his name?** (The name is usually in capital letters)

Some footnotes may give variations on that name at the bottom of the page or in the margins. This is the meaning of the personal name of God: Yahweh = Jehovah means "I AM". God is! God always was. God always will be. **Therefore, who is the "him" of Rev. 1:4?**

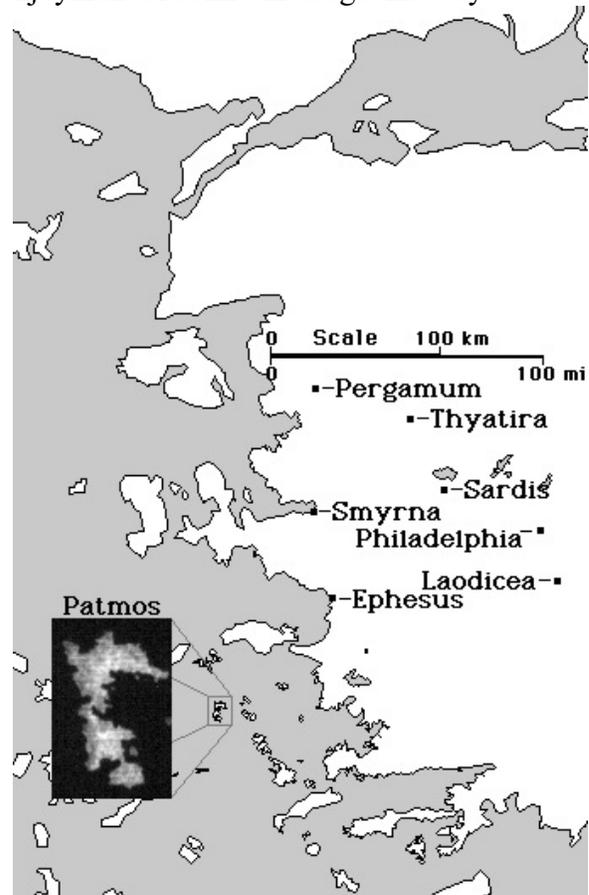
The end of this verse 4 mentions seven spirits, possibly meaning all of the spiritual beings serving God (or else the sevenfold Spirit, which is the perfect Holy Spirit). The benediction may therefore mean, "Grace and peace to you from God and all his loyal angels."

**Who else sends grace and peace (verse 5)?**

Later word equations will show that Jesus is God. "Him" is therefore also Jesus.

Jesus was faithful to the mission God gave him: to die on the cross to pay the penalty for the sin of everyone, so that all of us can go to be with God in heaven. John now quotes from many places in the Bible to describe Jesus.

In Psalm 89:27 God says to David, "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth." John is seeing the fulfillment of this promise in Jesus, the first to rise



permanently from the dead, the ultimate ruler of everyone on earth. Jesus loved us so much that he shed his own blood to pay the penalty for our sins. We are therefore free. We have our own kingdom and in it we are priests to God (verses 5 and 6).

In verse 7, "he" is Jesus. John quotes from Daniel 7:13, Matthew 24:30, Mark 14:62, and Acts 1:9,11 when he says, "he is coming with the clouds". Though it was one soldier's spear (John 19:34) that went into the side of Jesus, everyone who has sinned (all of us) was behind that spear; we have pierced him. The last half of verse 7 is from Zechariah 12:10, where God says, "they will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn..." Through this description John, though using the obscure pronouns he and him, leaves no doubt that he is talking about Jesus, who is God himself.

### **Who is speaking in verse 8?**

The title Lord refers to God's right to rule. Almighty refers to God's power. "Who is" refers to God's eternal existence. God says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega". Alpha is the name of the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega is the last letter. It is like saying, "I am everything from A to Z", "I started everything and I will end everything", "I am the beginning and the end of all that there is." Later Jesus also says, "I am the first and the last", and "I am the Alpha and the Omega". Therefore Jesus is God, as declared by one of John's word equations.

### **READ Revelation 1:9-11.**

In verse 9 John says that he is on Patmos (see satellite photo) because of his loyalty to Jesus. He is sharing in the persecutions being experienced by the people he writes to. The Lord's day is Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead. John was praying in the Spirit at the time, in an ecstatic state of joyous communication with God through the special power of the Holy Spirit. Later word equations show that it is



Patmos (from Google Earth). Inserted yellow line is 2 km long.

Jesus who speaks to John in the "loud voice like a trumpet". John is told to write this book now called Revelation. It is to be sent to the 7 (=all) churches. The seven representative churches are listed in an order that the letter would logically take in being passed from one church to the next (see map). Later John shows that he knows these churches in detail.

**READ Revelation 1:12-20.**

**What do the seven golden lampstands represent (verses 12 and 20)?**

Christians and their churches are to be the light of the world (lampstands) (Matt 5:14-16).

**What are the seven stars (verses 16 and 20)?**

**Who did the things described in verse 18?**

Hades is the Greek word for Hell. Since Jesus died and came back to life again, he has proven that he has the power over death and hell. In John 5:24-29 Jesus says he has this power. He says that those who believed in him will be resurrected to eternal life with God. Those who do not believe and who do evil will be resurrected to judgment. In Matthew 16:19 Jesus gives the "keys of heaven" to Peter and thus to the Church.

In Revelation 1:17 Jesus says to John, "I am the first and the last", meaning Alpha and Omega and thus God. Jesus is therefore saying, "Don't be afraid; I, Jesus, am also God."

Jesus appears to John in the glorified body that he has in heaven. John saw Jesus this way once before: When Peter, James, and John saw Jesus transfigured (Matthew 17:1-9) "his face shown like the sun, and his garments became white as light." In Rev. 1:14-16 Jesus' head and hair are bright white, his eyes and face are as bright as fire and the sun, his feet are glowing like red-hot molten bronze. In John 8:12, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." At the end of Revelation (21:23) John says that in heaven there is no darkness and yet no need for the sun, moon, or lights, because "the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb [Jesus] is its lamp." The brightness of Jesus will illuminate heaven. This is the best description of what Jesus will look like in heaven: a pure and intensely bright light.

The word of Jesus is the sword that comes from his mouth. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword..." (Hebrews 4:12. see also Eph. 6:17)

But Jesus is not far away in heaven! Look carefully at Revelation 1:13 and watch the symbols. This "son of man" (=Jesus) is standing in the midst of the "lampstands" (= the churches). Jesus is always present in his Church, as he promised (Matt. 18:20 and 28:20), even if we can't see him through our spiritually blind eyes.

We can now see in just chapter 1 the complexity of the picture that John is painting with his words. The words he chooses he pulls from elsewhere in the Bible, dragging with them the former meanings of those words. He then weaves those words very carefully into the fabric of his word picture. (No wonder he warns people in Rev. 22:18,19 not to change any of the words!) In this way the person who knows best the rest of the Bible will understand the richness of John's illustrations best. Those who do not yet know the rest of the Bible can keep on learning more

about Revelation as they read the Bible over and over again.

#### Lesson 4. The Seven Churches

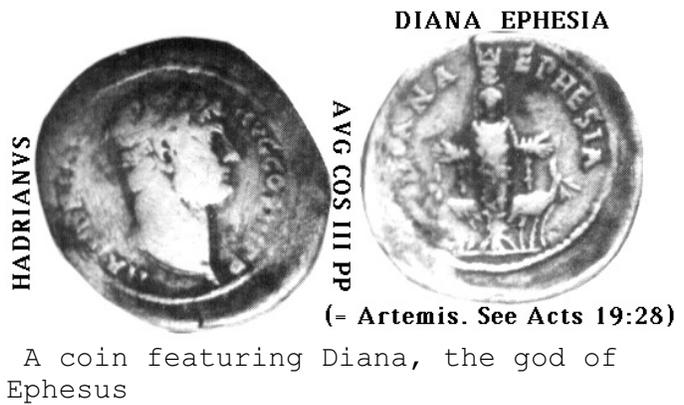
John has been told by Jesus to write letters to the seven (= all) churches. Compared to the rest of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 are written in relatively plain language. Though John wants the Roman censors to think that he has gone mad or senile, he must make sure that the Christians do not get the same idea. He is therefore careful in his words here to show that he is still in his right mind and understands what is happening in each of the congregations named. Every letter of chapters 2 and 3 opens with "I know ..." John knows these churches that he once served, but Jesus who speaks these words knows more.

In Biblical times most cities and villages (83% of those named in the Book of Acts) minted their own coins at some time period. The seven mentioned in Revelation did so as well. To help emphasize that these were real churches and real people in these cities, I have included a picture of a coin from each of the seven cities.

You have been introduced to the idea of coded language in the last lessons. See how much code-breaking you can do on your own in this lesson.

#### READ Revelation 2:1-7. Ephesus

Ephesus is the capital of the Roman province of Asia, and John had made his home there before his arrest. The people there will know that the letter is genuine and will read it carefully and pass it on. Look back at 1:12-20 which you read in the last lesson.



**Who "holds the seven stars" and "walks among the seven golden lampstands"?**

**What (or who) are the seven stars?** (remember or look at your answer before)

**What are the seven lampstands?**

**Who therefore is the "I" of verses 2-7?**

The "wicked men" who are "false apostles" are those who teach heresy, things that are not Christian, and try to draw the people away from following Christ and what Jesus taught.

**What did the church members of Ephesus do to these "false apostles" (verse 2)?**

**What are they praised for in verse 3?**

**What is wrong with them (verse 4)?**

This refers to their original love and zeal for Jesus. It is a common tendency for Christians to slowly lose their love and zeal for Jesus. That is why today's churches seem so lifeless and why they seem to have none of the power that one reads about in Acts. One of the terms we sometimes use for this is "backsliding". One of my own backsliding periods was in the late

1960's. Even though I always went to church, taught Sunday school, worked with the youth group, served on the church council, tithed, and visited Israel and mission fields around the world in 1970, my faith was fading from a peak in 1964-65. It was becoming all outward works and a hollow, empty inside. I couldn't even rejoice when an African evangelist told me about his work in saving souls in Arusha, Tanzania. Perhaps it has happened to you as well. Maybe it is in your future.

**What is the solution for "backsliding" (verse 5)?**

**What will happen to the church in Ephesus if they fail to do this? (verse 5; remember the meaning of "lampstand"!)**

Ephesus was conquered by the Goths in 262 A.D., declined, and was deserted by the tenth century. Only ruins are there today in a country that is overwhelmingly Islamic in faith. The works and teachings of the Nicolaitans have mostly faded from modern memory. It was most likely a Gnostic cult that watered down Christianity with pagan and secular ideas and practices to justify their joining in the lusts and evils of the world around them. Their philosophy may have been, "Well, everybody is doing it", therefore they might as well do it also. The practice is common today as well and severely harms our churches. More about this later in the lesson.



The theater of Ephesus in which there was a riot mentioned in Acts 19

**What are you being tempted or asked to do or believe because "everybody is doing it"?**

The "tree of life" is described in Genesis 2:9 and 3:22,24. Look them up.

**What is the value of this tree of life?**

Back in Revelation 2:7, the word "overcomes" or "conquers" is a variation of the Greek word NIKE meaning "victory". It appears to mean remaining faithful to Jesus in spite of the persecutions. **Therefore, what is the meaning of verse 7?**

**READ Revelation 2:8-11. Smyrna**

**Who is "the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (verse 8)?**

The city of Smyrna (now Izmir) is large today and prosperous. Jesus knows the poverty and wealth of the Christians at Smyrna (verse 9).



Apollo  
a coin from Smyrna



Homer

**How are they poor? \_\_\_ money, \_\_\_ faith.**

**How are they rich? \_\_\_ money, \_\_\_ faith.**

Jesus knows the verbal abuse they are suffering from those who claim to know God but don't. Remember that 10 is a code word for "many", but not huge; therefore the period is limited.

**What are the Smyrna Christians about to experience (verse 10)?**

The second death (verse 11 and at the end of Revelation) is the judgment of the wicked that occurs after everyone (good and bad) is resurrected. The Christians are not judged but go directly to heaven. The "crown of life" means a joyous eternal life that begins on earth and lasts forever in heaven.

**What are the promises to the faithful in verses 10, 11?**

"Be faithful, even to the point of death" suggests that many Christians will be killed by the persecutions. The most famous one was Polycarp, their bishop who was killed in 155 A.D. They are not to worry; they have their reward in heaven.

**READ Revelation 2:12-17. Pergamum**

**Who "has the sharp, double-edged sword" (verse 12)?**  
**What is the sword? (If you forgot, try Hebrews 4:12)**



a coin from Pergamum

"Satan has his throne" in numerous places around town where the Roman emperor (Domitian) was worshipped as a god and where there was the temple of one of the many idols. Today there is a small city there by the name Bergama.

**What are the Christians of Pergamum praised for (verse 13)?**

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, Balak, the king of Moab, hired the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. The long story, including the talking donkey, is in Numbers 22-24. But God made Balaam bless them instead. Then Balak let his people invite the Israelites to sacrifice to their idols and to eat in the religious feasts and thus worship false gods and not the true God. They also invited the Israelites to engage in sexual immorality with their women. (Numbers 25) So the bad teaching of Revelation 2:14 might be, "Let's do as everyone else is doing, just for the fun of it." This is essentially the same as the teachings of the Nicolaitans (literally, "people conquerors") in verse 15.

**What, therefore are the Christians at Pergamum criticized for (verses 14,15)?**

**What must they do instead (verse 16)?**

**What will happen if they do not?**

Tolerance and compromise with those who do not keep Christian doctrine pure or who are adulterous and otherwise sinful is not permitted by Jesus! Jesus wars against such defiled people with the Truth in the Scriptures. Perhaps our church needs a similar cleansing.

In verse 17 the hidden manna refers to the food in heaven. The white stone (like a medal or trophy or plaque) may symbolize a special entry into an exalted status. The new name may

signify the Christian's spiritual rebirth when he is born again into the kingdom of God. Verse 17 therefore promises a new life, a more important life, a life in heaven, for all who overcome (= remain faithful to Jesus).

**READ Revelation 2:18-29. Thyatira**

The small city of Thyatira still exists today. Lydia, the first believer in Philippi (Acts 16), was from there.



Artemis

eagle, "Thyatira"

**Who is glowing like a "blazing fire" (verse 18)?** a coin from Thyatira

Verse 20 has the content the same as verse 14. Therefore, it refers to the same bad practices. Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, king of the Northern Kingdom at the time of the prophet Elijah. She introduced the worship of Baal (which involved sexual immorality) and tried to kill everyone faithful to God. She is considered the most wicked woman of the Old Testament. She died by being thrown over a wall, trampled by horses, and eaten by dogs until only her skull, hands, and feet were left to be buried. (1 Kings 16 to 2 Kings 10) Her name is used here symbolically for the leader of the Nicolaitans.

Today the idols we are asked to worship include money, fame, ourselves, pleasure, sex, sports, drugs, education, job, government, a life of ease, people, and other things. We are asked to make these most important in our lives, even more important than God. Most people, including church members, go along with these ideas. Immorality here means not only having sexual relations with a person who is not your husband or wife; it is also a code word (used often by the Old Testament prophets) for worshipping anyone or anything who is not God. By going along with these teachings we become "children" of "Jezebel". We learn the "deep secrets" of Satan. **What, therefore, is the meaning of verses 20-23?**

**Who will do the punishing (verses 22,23)?**

**What are the faithful Christians to do in the meantime (verse 25)?**

"What you have" is the true faith in Christ. The iron scepter symbolizes justice. It will shatter inferior pots made of clay but cannot break metal pots, only reshape them. The morning star is the brightest "star" in the sky. Scientifically it refers to the planet Venus, but here it is a code word for power and majesty and for the person who holds them. **Who is the morning star (Rev. 22:16)?**

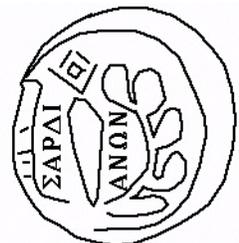
**What, therefore, do the faithful get for holding out to the end for God and for doing his works (Rev. 2:26, 28)?**



Apollo



"Sardis"



club, oak wreath

**READ Revelation 3:1-6. Sardis**

**Who has the "seven spirits" and the "seven stars"?**

a coin from Sardis

Sardis was the location of the richest king in the world (Croesus) when coins were invented. The people trusted in their wealth, walls, and armed forces, but were conquered in 540 B.C. and 218 B.C. before the Romans took over. Then an earthquake destroyed the city in 17 A.D. but Tiberius rebuilt it. Today only the small settlement of Sart is there. Perhaps the city was repeatedly lethargic and careless about their security, never preparing for destruction and death.

The church in Sardis looks like it is in bad shape! **Have you ever seen or been in a "dead" church that people still come to (verse 1)?**  
**What is such a church told to do (verse 2)?**

In the last lesson you were asked to quote Matthew 5:48 (You must be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect.) But our sinfulness makes us imperfect as soon as we are born. Only those who become part of the Body of Christ and who function in the Body are seen as perfect and alive by God. Clean, white garments are the code symbol for this perfection.

In the Jerusalem Bible translation, verse 3 begins, "and yet do you remember how eager you were when you first heard the message? Hold on to that. Repent."  
**What happens to those who do not repent?**

**Are there any true Christians in Sardis (verse 4)?**  
**What is the reward and meaning of verse 5?**

**READ Revelation 3:7-13. Philadelphia**

**Who "holds the key" that is the final verdict (verse 7, also 1:18)?**

Philadelphia was founded about 150 B.C. and still exists today, with about 10 percent Christians in this Islamic country. The "open door" is an opportunity to expand God's kingdom. This congregation is not criticized, and they will be spared from the severe persecution (verse 10). They have little power on their own.



**READ 2 Corinthians 12:9,10.**

**Whose power is allowed to operate when we have weaknesses?**

The miraculous help is easier for us to see when it is obvious that we cannot do something on our own.

**What have the Christians in Philadelphia done (Rev. 3:8)?**

**Who will be taught by Jesus (verse 9)?**

**What will they be taught (end of verse 9)?**

**What are the Christians to do (verse 11)?**

A "pillar" in God's temple in heaven will be there forever. The Christians who remain faithful will be "branded" with God's identifications and will be God's people forever. (verse 12)

**READ Revelation 3:14-22. Laodicea**

The city of Laodicea was enlarged about 250 B.C. and named after the wife, Laodice, of king Antiochus II. It is now replaced by the district city of Denizli. It was mentioned by Paul in the letter to the Colossians, a nearby city. There are no good words for the church in this chapter. Yet this church is most like today's churches in this country. We are in danger of God's judgment ourselves! Let's look at it carefully.



a coin from Laodicea

**Who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation"? (verse 5 and John 1:1-3, 14)**

Laodicea was built along a stream. Upstream were some hot springs, useful as a tourist resort. Downstream were abundant fish where the water became cold. At Laodicea the water was lukewarm, worthless for tourists and in which no fish would live. They had banking and clothing industries and a medical practice specializing in an eye ointment. Notice how John mentions these things as he writes the condemnation from Jesus. All of these become spiritual symbols.

"Lukewarm" Christians don't care. They will come to church sometimes, put something in the offering plate sometimes, maybe even work on some committee. But they wouldn't want to be caught giving Jesus more than a couple of hours or dollars per week. They may resemble backslidden Christians but have never really discovered Jesus personally. They are in spiritual poverty, blind to what Jesus offers them, and their pitiable condition is obvious through their spiritual nakedness. They are also immune to God's help. If we are eagerly for God, we please him and are useful to him. If we are really against God, then God can send a miracle like he did for Paul (= Saul) or through our running away from God we discover him. But God cannot or will not work with people who do not take sides; they are spewn from his mouth.

**What is your present spiritual temperature?** \_\_\_ Hot (= for God), \_\_\_ Lukewarm (= indifferent to God), \_\_\_ Cold (= against God)

**How is the church in Laodicea rich (verse 17)?** \_\_\_ money, \_\_\_ faith.

**How is it poor?** \_\_\_ money, \_\_\_ faith.

**How are we to become rich in the eyes of Jesus?** (verse 18, and also Matthew 6:19-21)

**How are we to get the "white clothes" symbolizing perfection?** (verse 18, also Rev. 7:14 if you can break the code, also 3:5 as discussed above)

**How are we, who are spiritually blind, to see?** (verse 18, also John 9:39 and Luke 18:41,42)

**What is the meaning of verse 19?** (See Hebrews 12:5-11 for help)

**COPY Revelation 3:20 here:**

**Who is knocking?**

The door is the "door" to our hearts and those of others who claim to be Christians.

**How do we "open the door?"** (see also John 14:22-24 for ideas)

Jesus promises to come into the lives of everyone who lets him in. He comes in to be a guest and a friend as well as to guide our lives. This is his promise, and Jesus does not lie.

**Have you opened your "door" to Jesus yet?**

**Where is the throne on which the "overcomers" will sit (verse 21)?**

We have now seen what the churches were like. They were probably complaining to God, "Why are you letting us suffer this persecution? Look at all we have done for you and for your kingdom! Look at our faith! There are probably no better congregations than we are. You, God, are being unfair to us by letting us suffer!" But God sees things differently. There are imperfections everywhere. God loves his churches. He will therefore make them more perfect. He will purify his church through the persecutions so that they can become strong. God sends a "refiner's fire" that burns away the trash and leaves a "pure gold". He does this even today. He calls us to repentance, to become something better. We can therefore thank God for the troubles we are having, because through them God is strengthening us and making us more perfect in his eyes.

## **Lesson 5. The Scene in Heaven**

In the last lesson on chapters 2 and 3 we saw the church as Jesus sees it. Jesus tells John to write down what Jesus says about his churches. Jesus praises some of the churches for their faith and endurance. But he criticizes them for falling away from their initial faith, for trying to keep doing popular and unfaithful things, and for being indifferent in their faith. The churches are far from perfect; they are sinful and made up of sinful people. They must therefore come under God's judgment and be purified. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent." (Rev. 3:19) In fact, they were already experiencing God's cleansing through the persecutions they were suffering.

**READ Revelation 4:1-11.**

**Whose voice does the speaking in verse 1?** (The clue is "like a trumpet".

Go back to 1:10 to find the same phrase. The speaker there is also the speaker of 1:18, where you will find enough clues to answer correctly.)

**What will be shown to John (verse 1)?**

"At once" John is able to see what things are like in heaven.

**Who sits on the throne in heaven (verses 2,3)?**

The meanings of the colorful descriptions (the stones named are white, red, green, and other colors) are lost to us, but they are intended to show some of the glory of God.

**How many elders are there worshipping God (verse 4)?**

This is the number of priestly classes in 1 Chronicles 24:1-19 in the Old Testament. It could also represent the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel plus the 12 heads (apostles) of the "new Israel" = the Church. What John intended to say, if different, through the number 24 is no longer

remembered. The 24 elders are clothed in white garments, showing their purity and perfection. The faithful are also promised "white clothes" (3:5). The 24 elders wear golden crowns, symbolizing their authority to rule and to live forever. The faithful will also be given the "crown of life" (2:10) and this power (2:26,27).

The lightning and thunder and fire around God show his power and majesty. They are in the descriptions of others who have been close to God (like Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai). The 7 lamps are the 7 spirits of God (4:5), meaning either all (7) angels or else the 7-fold (total, Holy) Spirit. The angels belong to Jesus (3:1) and serve God.

### **How many "living creatures" are there (verses 6-8)?**

From a previous lesson we should remember that the number four refers to earthly things while three refers to heavenly things. So these creatures are in charge of God's creation. The lion, ox, man (angel), and eagle suggest all that is noblest, strongest, wisest, and most swift in the created world. The angel, lion, ox, eagle are also now used to be the symbols of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Many churches have them as decorations with that meaning. Being "covered with eyes all around" means symbolically that they can see and understand everything. Their wings (verse 8) symbolize their spiritual (3 pairs) mobility in carrying out the commands of God.

### **How often do the four creatures praise God (verse 8)?**

"Holy, holy, holy" is the song of the angels that Isaiah (6:3) heard. It is used in our hymns and in our communion service. "Who was, and is, and is to come" (also 1:18) is the meaning of God's personal name Yahweh (= Jehovah). God lives forever!

### **Who praises God in verse 9?**

The elders receive their crowns of governmental power and authority from God and they recognize this by returning to God the crowns as they worship.

### **Who praises God in verse 10?**

### **What did God do that everyone praises in verse 11?**

## **READ Revelation 5:1-14.**

### **Who is seated on the throne and holds the scroll (verse 1)?**

The scroll is filled with writing. It may contain God's account of the way things are or possibly the way things will work out in the future, but nowhere in the Bible are the details of the words in it described. Ezekiel also saw this scroll (Ezekiel 2:9) and Isaiah knew about it (Isaiah 29:11). The churches may be assuming that the scroll contains an account of how good they have been and of their future rewards. They would like the scroll opened so that everyone can see their good record. (But they forget that their bad record would also be exposed at the same time and show their need for punishment and purification.) On behalf of the churches and their supposedly good record John weeps for the scroll to be opened (verse 4). The 7 seals means that the scroll is completely closed and locked.

### **Is there anyone in verse 3 who can open the scroll to see what it says?**

But there is one person that the elders know about. **What tribe does he come from (verse 5)?**

### **What famous king does he descend from?**

He has "overcome (triumphed)" over Satan and death and is therefore worthy to open the scroll.

He has remained perfect and faithful to God.

**What animal is used in verse 5 to describe him?**

This symbolizes his conquering power. **What animal is used in verse 6 to describe him?**

This symbolizes his sacrificial actions. The Lamb shows wounds from having been killed, but it is alive and standing. Already we have read in 1:18 of one who says, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" The Lamb has been used throughout the Bible as the sacrifice that brings forgiveness for our sins and restores our relationship with God.

**What does John say in John 1:29 about the Lamb?**

**Who is the Lamb of God?**

**Who will therefore open the scroll?**

The 7 horns are the symbol in apocalyptic literature of power to rule. Jesus (the Lamb) has all (7) power (horns). The 7 eyes indicate that Jesus sees and knows everything. Apparently this knowledge comes from all of God's angels (7 spirits or the 7-fold Holy Spirit) "sent out into all the earth". We are therefore always surrounded by God's spiritual angels and Holy Spirit that we cannot see but who can always see us and what we are doing. Nothing is therefore hidden from God.

Jesus takes the scroll from God (verse 7). He is then worshipped by everyone with singing (harps). The worship also includes "golden bowls full of incense" to give Jesus and God a pleasing aroma. **What are the bowls of incense (verse 8)?**

The word saint means anyone who follows Jesus. All of us in this class who truly follow Jesus are therefore saints. And our prayers are pleasing to God and are a way of worshipping him. God can then show off his power to everyone by answering our prayers.

**For what is Jesus praised by everyone in heaven (verses 9,10)?**

Purchase (or ransom) here means to buy men back from Satan's power so that we become God's people. The value of our price tag was the life of Jesus and the spilling of his blood.

**Which people are ransomed from God (end of verse 9)?**

**Does that include you?**

**What are Christians to be for God (verse 10)?**

This means that each one of us is to be a minister. Each is to worship God and lead others in worship. Each of us is to read the Bible for our own instruction and to tell others about God's word. Each of us is to tell others about what Jesus has done for us and help them become Christians. Each of us is to console those in need and sorrow. There are many other ministry tasks for each of us. We are each to be ministers, though only a few are called by God to be ordained like our pastors. We are not to sit back and let one man (our pastor) do it all for us. We laymen are to do all of this work for Jesus ourselves because Christ made us his priests. Our pastors are to train us to do our priestly work (Ephesians 4:11-13) and to help maintain an order in our congregation. Most people fail to recognize their responsibilities as priests. They also fail to recognize that Jesus gives them power and authority to reign here on earth and to spread the kingdom of Jesus. What a waste of talent when we are spiritually lazy!

In Greek "myriad" means ten thousand, their largest number. (Either term might be used in your translation.) Multiplying the thousands and ten thousands is symbolically more than those

products. One thousand is already the code word for a nearly uncountable number. Squaring it surely makes its meaning infinite. Then, as if that were not enough, squaring many tens of thousands greatly emphasizes the infinite number of angels that serve and worship God. It is absolutely impossible to count them all! **In verse 12, how many things is the Lamb to receive?** This is the code number for all. So Jesus deserves everything there is.

**Who joins in the worship in verse 13?**

**Is anyone or anything left out and thus fail to praise God and the Lamb?**

If no one is left out, that means that even those who hate God and who are going to hell are somehow praising God, even against their will. Their existence praises God; the justice they receive praises God; the love and care they received on earth praises God; even their rebellion against God shows that they acknowledge that God exists.

So we see in chapters 4 and 5 the way things are in heaven. What a contrast with things on earth! God is constantly praised for who he is (living forever) and what he has done (created everything). The Lamb (Jesus, Son) is also praised for what he has done. He has ransomed men with the price of his own life so that we can be with God forever and be perfect in his eyes. Jesus is therefore worthy to open the scroll on which everything is written. In the next lesson we'll see what happens when the words of the scroll are exposed.

In heaven everything is perfect and the way God wants it. His will is done there. This is in sharp contrast with the way things were in chapters 2 and 3 where the churches were imperfect. Something must now be done to make "your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

**Which chapters represent the way things are in your life now? \_\_\_2 and 3? \_\_\_4 and 5?**

## **Lesson 6. Seals and Trumpets.**

The Church at John's time is undergoing persecution. The faithful are refusing to worship the Roman emperor or anyone or anything else except God (and Jesus) himself. As a result of their faithfulness, some are being exiled like John; others are being killed. They could be wondering, "Why does God allow these things to happen to us? After all, we have been faithful to God, so why the punishment? Does God have no power over Satan?"

God sees things differently. We saw in chapters 4 and 5 how perfect things are in heaven. There everyone and everything gives perfect praise to God and to the Lamb (=Jesus). But on earth the churches have problems with false gods. The people in the churches are allowing the bad practices of idol worship, sexual immorality, and backsliding faith to creep in. They are not giving God first place in their lives and therefore their worship is imperfect. They are in need of repentance and spiritual cleansing. God sends these difficult times to purify his Church by destroying its imperfections. Perhaps we and our churches need a similar purification.

Jesus is about to open the scroll closed with seven seals. (The seals are like a glue made of wax and are not the animals that like to swim in the ocean.)

**READ Revelation 6:1-8.**

John gets his imagery of the 4 horses of different color from Zechariah 1:8-10 and 6:1-8. In Zechariah the horses patrol over the earth to the north, east, south, and west; i.e., everywhere. They also have access to God's throne in heaven. The events of Revelation 6 take place in heaven. It is from heaven that the horses and riders are sent. Their plagues come from God, not from Satan! God is in control behind these troubles. The 4 living creatures in charge of the earth welcome the horses and riders with their words, "Come!" They see the troubles as good for the earth. Notice that the order of things is what Jesus already said in Matthew 24.

**What does the rider of the white horse hold (verse 2)?**

The bow was the favorite weapon of the Parthian cavalry and of the Biblical nation of Gog (Ezekiel 38 and 39, possibly towards Russia). The Parthians (now Kurds) had an empire just east of the Roman Empire and kept the Romans from extending very far eastward from the Mediterranean shores. They (the Parthians) were given authority (a crown) to create war (conquering) and to win, presumably at the Roman's expense. In general, the first horse might represent **war**.

**What happens on earth when the red horse and rider come (verse 4)?**

This might be simplified in the word **revolutions**.



Mars  
A typical denarius

Victory in biga (chariot)

**What does the rider of the black horse hold (verse 5)?**

This is a set of scales used in the marketplace, in this case for food and money during a time of famine and scarcity. Look at the prices! A denarius (actual Greek word) is a Roman silver coin (Figure 26) about the size of a dime. Its value was an entire day's wages back in Roman times.

The food was rationed out carefully by the scales.

**Would you like to have to spend your entire day's wages for only enough food to keep your family alive for one day?**

This horse and rider can therefore be called **famine**. The world is beginning to suffer some increasingly severe famines, with the news brought to our homes by our modern communications. The rich, however, symbolized by their oil and wine, are not touched; they just keep getting richer.

**What is the name of the rider of the pale horse (verse 8)?**

This death is not by war, revolution, or famine because they are already covered. This is death by an epidemic of disease, like Bubonic plague, Black Death, AIDS, etc. Hades is the Greek word for the place of the dead, the grave, or hell. So we'll call this horse and rider **epidemic**.

God is sending war, revolution, famine, and epidemic to the earth. And a significant portion ("one fourth", verse 8) of the world will be affected. Both believers and pagans, rich and poor will suffer these disasters. And this has already been happening throughout history. God is not a weakling. He has the power to direct these horrible punishments upon sinful people. God is sending these problems to purify all people, even his own, so that they might repent and start worshipping God again.

**READ Revelation 9:20-21. Looking ahead, did the survivors repent after all of this?**

**READ Revelation 6:9-11.**

**Who had been killed (slain) and for what (verse 9)?**

**What were they asking (verse 10)?**

They are waiting for God to "get even" with those who had killed them. God purifies them (white robe) of their sins and tells them to wait. **For what must they wait (verse 11)?**

So the killing of Christians has not ended.

**READ Revelation 6:12-17.**

The four horsemen brought problems to people only and affected the surface of the earth. At the opening of the sixth seal, everything above and below the earth's surface gets violent. The description would be appropriate for sudden world-wide earthquakes and volcanic activity, where the sky is darkened by smoke and its color and features changed, and hot objects from the eruptions fall back onto the earth, and all mountains start moving around. Such has not occurred on a large scale in recent history. John is saying that because of the sins of mankind, even the physical world will experience God's anger.

**How do the people still living enjoy this scene (verses 15,16)?**

**Who do they realize is sending these problems (verse 16)?**

Notice that nobody is spared from these experiences. The powerful, rich, slaves, and free people all want to die or at least hide from God. But there is no way to hide from God!

**READ Revelation 7:1-17.**

There is a pause. The angels are ready to continue God's destructive punishments, but they are told to wait. **What is the waiting period for (end of verse 3)?**

So God is labeling those who belong to him. God knows who his faithful really are.

**Do you think you would be "branded" with God's seal as belonging to him? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no, \_\_\_I hope so, \_\_\_I hope not.**

Verses 4-8 contain code numbers again. As you may remember 12 is a spiritually complete number. 1000 is a huge, nearly infinite, number that no one can count. So  $12 \times 12 \times 1000 = 144,000$  represents all of the faithful and they cannot be counted; there are more than billions of them. This is confirmed immediately in verse 9. The tribal names are symbolic only. Where is the tribe of Dan? It was squeezed out by the mention of Manasseh, but not Ephraim, sons of Joseph. So the tribe of Joseph is split into two in this list. These numbers and names are therefore not to be taken literally but only symbolically, as a word painting.

Some religious cults believe that only 144,000 of the millions of Christians will ever get to heaven. They see the number as a limit, while John meant it as a code number for a much larger, unlimited number of people. Look back at 6:9 for people already in heaven, the martyrs. I have

read somewhere that the number of Christian martyrs during the first three centuries of the Church totaled perhaps 800,000. Christians killed by the communists in this century number many tens of millions. That far exceeds 144,000 and leaves no room in heaven for those who claim it to be an upper limit. Fortunately, God does not place a "no vacancy" sign on heaven's gates. Jesus assures us that there are many rooms there that he is preparing for us (John 14:1-4). God wants everyone to be saved, even though most people choose to go to hell instead (Matthew 7:13-14).

**From what parts of the world do the people in heaven come (verse 9)?**

They stand before Jesus (the Lamb) and are purified of their sin (white robes). They give praise to Jesus like people did on Palm Sunday. In verse 10 all the people who are saved praise Jesus, saying that their salvation comes from him. All of the angels also worship God at the same time. This is the same song of praise sung to Jesus in 5:12, except for the minor difference that "wealth" has been replaced by "thanks". So God and Jesus receive essentially the same song of praise from the angels. This helps show that Jesus and God are the same.

**What question is asked of John in verse 13?**

**What is the answer given to John in verse 14?**

These are the Christian people who have lived on earth through all the troubles that God sends to purify them. They have trusted Jesus to forgive their sins (washed their robes). Jesus has already paid for our sins by dying on the cross and shedding his own blood (blood of the Lamb). For us heaven is therefore free! We get our "white robes" and live in heaven forever simply by really trusting that Jesus has done this for us; we then thank him for it all. God's discipline was successful for this crowd of people. Those who did not come clean (of sin) are not in heaven. Also notice that the Lion, who became the Lamb, is now the shepherd in verse 17.

**How enjoyable are things in heaven (verses 15-17)?**

**READ Revelation 8:1-6.**

**What happens when the 7th seal is broken (verse 1)?**

The 7th (last) seal introduces the series of 7 angels blowing trumpets (for announcing, not for music) and we get a similar chain of events, the second of three such series of 7. Some of the disasters can remind us of the plagues of Exodus. A censer (verse 3) is a scoop for shoveling up and holding burning coals. **According to Rev. 5:8, what is the incense?**

So in chapter 8 the extra incense and the prayers of the saints are the same. More and more prayers are offered to God. Prayers are important in bringing about what God wants to carry out.

Again we have disasters on earth. **Whose altar do they come from(verse 5)?**

**So who do you suppose is angry with the people on earth?**

**READ Revelation 8:7-13.**

**What part of the earth is hurt by the first trumpet (verse 7)?**  
**What parts of the earth are hurt by the second (verses 8,9)?**  
**What happened to the drinking water after the third (verses 10,11)?**  
**What is affected by the fourth trumpet (verse 12)?**  
**Can you think of any parts of our world not affected by these four trumpets?**

So again the 7 trumpets are grouped into an initial 4 and the other 3 come later. 4 deals with earthly things. In 6:8 only a fourth of the people were affected. Now we are up to a third. Later it will be total. One third involves the code number 3, referring to heavenly things. So the amount of destruction on earth (4) is determined by God in heaven (3). "Woe" means trouble!  
**How comforting to people still living is the cry of the eagle in verse 13?**

**READ Revelation 9:1-12.**

The star that had fallen from the sky to the earth is either Satan or one of his fellow fallen angels.  
**What does he open with the key given to him (presumably by Jesus, see 1:18), in verses 1,2?**

The bottomless pit (Abyss) is probably an entry way to hell.

**What comes out of the Abyss (verses 2,3)?**

Scorpions have a poisonous sting that is worse than any bee or insect sting. Locusts normally eat every green thing in sight; in just a few hours they can eat a crop to the ground.

**What are the locusts allowed to harm?**

**Who are the people with the seal of God?** (Look back at the comments on Rev. 7:3.)

**Would these special "locusts" be able to harm you if what they mean were to come today?**

**How pleasant is the torture of the locusts (verses 5,6)?**

Hell will be worse and verse 6 will apply there as well!

The description of the locusts sounds like some barbaric army, but John's intended meaning for his readers has been lost. **Who rules over these locusts (verse 11)?**

**What does his name Apollyon mean?** (Check for any footnotes.)

So God allows the "Destroyer" to torture those who are not following Jesus. Satan tortures those people that he gets in the end, but he is not allowed to harm the Christians with these tortures. It is therefore important to establish whose side you are on. Satan's torture destroys. God's harsh discipline builds one up and makes him better.

**READ Revelation 9:13-19.**

**Who does the 6th angel release (verse 14)?**

**What are these angels to do (verse 15)?**

**How many are in the army?**

The two hundred million is made up of code numbers, suggesting nearly infinite. It is similar to that in 5:11, but there it refers to the number of angels worshipping God. No mention is made of where this army came from. The further symbolism suggests that it may not be an army of

people, though it is now possible to imagine one that large. The original meanings of the colors on the breastplates have been forgotten. The lion's heads on the horses symbolize their power and fierceness. What comes from their mouths has the same symbolic colors. Words normally come from mouths, so maybe this means killing by degree or indoctrination. They can also wound with their "tails". The size of the army is like the number of angels; the smoke, sulfur, and serpents suggest Satan and his fallen angels. So maybe this army is Satan's army, whose job is to both wound and kill unbelievers on earth. Even so, they are sent by God. God is using them.

### **READ Revelation 9:20-21.**

Not even all this trouble convinces people to repent and turn to God and be saved.

#### **What are the things that the survivors keep doing?**

The Christians have been suffering persecutions at the hands of unbelievers. God has sent these persecutions at the time they are needed to purify the people he loves. But God also sends another set of troubles to the earth (war, famine, disease, natural disasters) which come to everyone, both believers and pagans, because they do not recognize that God is in control and that God is allowing his people to suffer so that they can be made stronger. Then God sends some special torments to those who have rejected God and his ways. Yet the unbelievers do not repent. They can't! Their hearts have been hardened by their persistence in sin. It is now too late and impossible for them to turn to God in the proper way. They curse God instead.

In these and the next chapters John describes what is going to happen on earth in the future. When John writes it, he has in mind the persecutions that his friends living then are going to go through. In his coded language he describes conditions of extreme suffering. John is describing future conditions for the people living in about 90 A.D. If the code is taken at face value it sounds like the end of the world, but that obviously was not what occurred then. If the code is taken at its symbolic value, then John did describe the conditions correctly. Some things happened then or since; some are still in our future.

As you read these chapters, try to get the big picture of what is happening and of who is in control. The details are not always of high importance except as flecks of paint making up the larger picture. The words may also be describing events of the 20th or 21st century and of Jesus' second coming as well, but their primary purpose was to comfort and advise the Christians in John's time. As you read, consider: If God purified those he loved then by such harsh conditions, what will he do to us? The Christian Church today is also in need of cleansing and strengthening. Such a "refining fire" from God may already be occurring and spreading over the earth today. **Will you survive God's cleansing or will the persecutions reveal that there is nothing to your faith?**

### **Lesson 7. The Major Players.**

In the last lesson we saw two sets of seven plagues sent to the people on earth. God had been letting his flock of Christians be persecuted through the unbelieving Roman officials. The Christians were in need of spiritual cleansing which God's discipline was supposed to provide.

But they wrongly saw their troubles as coming only from Satan, not from God. They thought that God appeared powerless to stop Satan. The unbelievers also thought that the God of the Christians was powerless. Therefore God is showing his power also in the worldwide plagues by sending war, rebellion, famine, epidemic, earthquakes, and other disasters. Though both Christians and unbelievers should realize their helplessness before God and turn to him in repentance, most people do not. God must therefore send worse troubles.

**READ Revelation 10:1-7.**

The angel has the glory of God about him. By standing in the air with one foot on the sea and the other on the land (you might visualize a giant figure hundreds of feet tall) he shows his power and authority over all the world. He cries out with a loud voice.

**What echoes back in return (verse 3)?**

This may be the voice of God speaking (Psalm 29:3-9), naming things that will happen. **Is John allowed to write down what he heard (verse 4)?** \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no. So we will never know the details before we get to heaven. **Who is the angel swearing by (verse 6)?**

**What does he swear (last words of verse 6)?**

During the days of the last trumpet call "the mystery of God" will be fulfilled. This mystery was also told to the prophets. This "mystery" is the establishment of God's kingdom and the destruction of the enemies of God and of God's people. This obviously will be good news to the Christians John is writing to.

**READ Revelation 10:8-11.**

The scroll contains a listing of what will happen. It is much shorter than the scroll with the 7 seals opened by the Lamb. The news is sweet because it announces the Church's victory; it is bitter because it foretells her suffering. John is told to prophesy (tell God's word) about everyone.

**READ Revelation 11:1-3.**

**What three things is John to measure (verse 1)?**

**What is he not to bother measuring (verse 2)?**

The Temple of God refers to the Church, by which God is worshipped. John is saying that the core of the Church, made of those faithful to God will survive the persecution. The extra, optional things, frills, etc., of the church will probably be destroyed (trampled on) by the persecutions. They might lose their synagogues, homes, feasts, freedoms, leaders, right to gather in worship, and other things, but the Church as a whole will make it through the persecutions. John was told not to bother measuring the extra things because they will pass away.

A period of time is mentioned: 42 months (Rev. 11:2, 13:5), 1260 days (Rev. 11:3, 12:6), and

3.5 years (times) (Rev. 12:14, Daniel 7:25, 12:7). **Multiply 3.5 years by 12 months per year: Multiply 42 months by 30 days per month:**

Obviously these are all the same period. Daniel gives this as the length of the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes (Remember him from a beginning lesson?). By John's time, 3.5 years was used to describe any period of persecution which will eventually end, regardless of its duration. So the coded sentence, "They will trample on the holy city for 42 months," means that the unbelievers (the nations) will persecute (trample) the Church (holy city) for a limited time of persecution. The period may be more or less than a literal 3.5 years.

**READ Revelation 11:4-14.**

The "two witnesses" (olive trees, lampstands) are code symbols also. In Zechariah 4 the symbols specifically refer to Joshua and Zerubbabel, the high priest and governor, respectively, of Judea after the return from the Babylonian captivity. In Revelation 11:6 these two witnesses are described in terms of Elijah (stopping the rain) and Moses (bloody water and other plagues), the two greatest prophets of the Old Testament. Some people speculate that John meant his code to refer to Peter and Paul, who were killed (11:7) in Rome (11:8) by Nero (11:7). Peter was given authority over the Church and the world by Jesus (Matthew 16:19) to send people to heaven or hell, to forgive or not to forgive people. This sounds like the consuming fire of Rev. 11:5. The beast of Rev. 11:7 comes from hell and is thought to represent Nero.

John is careful not to name where these two witnesses were murdered. **What two names does he substitute (verse 8)?** Sodom is a city (Genesis 19) that was destroyed because of its promotion of homosexual behavior (sodomy) and other wicked activities. Egypt put God's people in slavery and suffered plagues during the Exodus because its people were enslaved to their idols. "Where also their Lord was crucified" seems to mean Jerusalem, but it could also mean the nation of the Roman Empire. Later the "great city" is called Babylon, but in terms that obviously mean Rome. It was the Roman authority that the Jews used to crucify Jesus. So John is very carefully saying that the Romans killed these two witnesses from God. If he said that without using coded language, he might be killed for treason. **How does the non-Christian world react to the death of God's two witnesses (verse 10)?**

**What happens to the two after they have been dead for awhile (verses 11,12)?**

**Then what happens to the world (verse 13)?**

The code number 7000 means that all classes of society (7) were killed in great numbers (1000). Otherwise a literal 7000 is not very much by today's standards. That's what they get for being happy over the temporary defeat of God's witnesses. However, this time they give glory to God rather than cursing. At last it is time for the seventh trumpet.

**READ Revelation 11:15-19.**

**Who takes over ruling the world (verse 15)?**

**How long will this rule last?**

**For what do the 24 elders praise God (verse 17)?**

**What is to happen to God's servants, the prophets and saints (verse 18)?**

## **What happens to everyone else?**

God's temple is now open in heaven for all to see; God is ruling boldly and making no secret of it.

### **READ Revelation 12:1-6.**

The woman is the nation Israel, the nation chosen to belong to God and share his authority.

**How many stars are on her crown (verse 1)?** This probably represents all the tribes.

The child is to be the Messiah (Jesus). The Messiah comes from the Jewish nation.

**Who is the dragon (look ahead to verse 9)?**

The "stars" swept from heaven (verse 4) may refer to the fallen angels.

**Who do you suppose tried to get Herod to kill Jesus at birth, as in Matthew 2:16?**

**Who tried to get Jesus to abandon his mission at the temptation (Matthew 4:1)?**

**Who entered Judas to get Jesus betrayed and crucified (Luke 22:3)?**

**Who tried to destroy the child of the woman (Rev. 12:4)?**

**Where did the Messiah (child) go (Rev. 12:5)?**

**Where did the woman go (verse 6)?**

**Who takes care of her?**

This probably represents the scattering of the Jews by the Romans in 70 A.D. as the Jewish nation was destroyed. God has indeed taken care of the Jews. They are still around today as an identifiable group. No other ethnic group has ever been scattered and persecuted so much for so long and has yet survived. This scattering (living in the wilderness) lasted from 70 to 1948 A.D., or 1878 years. So the 1260 days of Rev. 12:6 obviously is not literal, but rather a code number for the period of persecution.

### **READ Revelation 12:7-12.**

This is what is called a "flash-back". John tells not about the present or future, but about the distant past. **What happened in heaven (verse 7)?**

**Who lost (verses 8,9)?**

**Where were the losers expelled from (verse 8)?**

**Where did they go (verse 9)?**

In the book of Job, Satan roamed the earth looking for bad evidence with which he could convict people of being unfaithful to God. He still does. He even has power to make life easy or miserable for people to get them to reject God. Satan thus tells God of people's sinfulness. He accuses them. **How do people overcome the power and accusations of Satan (especially when his accusations are true), verse 11?**

So the blood of Jesus defeats Satan, as do our testimony and actions that show we belong to Jesus. **How much time does Satan have left on earth to accomplish what he is doing (end of verse 12)?**

His great wrath and fury is his anger. Satan will try everything possible to keep people from becoming faithful to God. Satan is encouraging you to be rebellious against God, his Bible, his commandments, and his Church. With many of you Satan has succeeded. God is allowing this to happen because he has already provided a way out for you if you want it. It becomes obvious this way who wants to go to heaven to live with God forever. If we want to resist Satan, God lends us his power. We can freely tell Satan, when he tempts us, that Jesus has already defeated him, that we belong to Jesus and will stay that way even when we die. Many of you, however, though claiming to belong to God, let Satan rule over you instead.

**READ Revelation 12:13-17.**

Now back to the woman and her child.

**Is the serpent able to defeat the woman (verses 15-17)?**

**Who does he war against next (verse 17)?**

**READ Revelation 13:1-10.**

From Judea, Rome is across the Mediterranean Sea. Rome is therefore a great power that came "out of the sea." This is what John means by this beast. Many people ruled over the Roman Empire. These are represented by the heads, horns, and diadems. Notice that the number of heads and horns is the same as the dragon (Satan) has. The blasphemous titles on the heads refers to the emperor worship that John is condemning. The power of the beast is symbolized by the animal references. **Who gives the beast (the Roman Empire) his power (verse 2)?**

The fatal wound (verse 3) is an obvious counterfeit of the wounds of Jesus. It may refer to the fact that only four of the twelve emperors up to John's time had died naturally; the others were killed by themselves or by others. Yet the empire lived on and remained powerful. The beast is then something like Jesus who is alive after he was killed. **Who do the people then worship (both of them) and why? (verse 4)**

In verses 5 and following, the beast is allowed to insult God (blaspheme), to make itself be worshipped, to be proud, and to persecute (42 months).

**Who is the Roman Empire allowed to make war upon (verse 7)?**

**Who will win?**

**Is that good news for the Christians suffering persecution?**

**Who does not worship the beast (verse 8)?**

John warns in verse 10 that whoever is meant to be captured will surely be captured, and whoever is meant to be killed by the sword will surely be killed by the sword.

**What must the saints therefore have?**

**READ Revelation 13:11-18.**

Another beast appears, coming out of the land this time, and becomes the first beast's prophet.

**Who does this beast sound like (verse 11)?**

**What does this second beast do (verse 12)?**

**How does it make people impressed (verse 13)?**

**Of whom do these people make an idol (verse 14)?**

**What happens to those who refuse to worship the idol of the beast (verse 15)?**

In chapter 7 God "brands" (seals) everyone belonging to him. Now in 13:16 the beasts also mark everyone who belongs to them. Satan rules over the beasts, so everyone siding with the beasts becomes part of the flock of Satan. **What do you suppose happens to those who refuse to have the mark of the beast as their identification (verse 17)?**

In verse 18 John carefully throws out another code number. There are several ways of looking at this number 666 (616 in some manuscripts). In the first place, the number 6 falls short of the perfect number 7, so in 666 it falls short three times. It in this way represents someone who tries to be God but doesn't make it. This could represent the practice of emperor worship, which John condemns. John, himself, was probably in exile on Patmos because he refused to worship the emperor. John says of the 666, in literal Greek, "for the number of a man it is." It stands for a man's name. If John simply said the man's name he would be killed for treason. So John codes it instead.

Number	Greek																										
	Α	Β	Γ	Δ	Ε	Σ	Ζ	Η	Θ	Ι	Κ	Λ	Μ	Ν	Ξ	Ο	Π	Ρ	Σ	Τ	Υ	Φ	Χ	Ψ	Ω	☉	
Number	Hebrew																										
	א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900

You have probably heard about Roman numerals, where letters of the alphabet are used for numbers. I=1, V=5, X=10, L=50, C=100, D=500, M=1000. In Greek and Hebrew every letter had a numerical value. Dates on Greek language coins were written in Greek letters, with the numerical value of the date being equal to the sum of the numerical values of the Greek letters (shown above). Throughout the ages many people have suggested names that might add up to 666. No one has come up with a good name, and John's original intent has been lost. In about 150 A.D., the church leader Irenaeus suggested the word whose Greek letters transform to our LATEINOS, (30 + 1 + 300 + 5 + 10 + 50 + 70 + 200 = 666) meaning a Latin or Roman person. That is not really a man's name. Emperor Nero (50 + 5 + 100 + 800 = 955) doesn't work in its short or longer forms. Emperor Domitian, who was causing all of the trouble for the Christians, adds to 485 in a short form and 755 in a longer form common on coins. The title Caesar adds to 332 in its Greek form. On some Greek language coins an A is added to its end, making 333 for its value. That word, repeated 2 times in an act of emperor worship would total 666.

On a coin from the region east of the Jordan River, Decapolis, is the inscription, ΔΟΜΙΤΙΑΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΑΡ (where the smaller letters are not on the coin). Decode the large letters and add them. What do you get for the sum?

	Greek	Number
	Α	
	Ο	
	Μ	
<b>Domitian:</b>	Ι	
	Τ	
	Ι	
	Α	
	Κ	
<b>Caesar:</b>	Α	
	Ι	
	Σ	
	<b>sum:</b>	

I was able to find one coin (number SGI-876) listed for the Decapolis area (east of Sea of Galilee) on which the name "Domitian Caesar" was abbreviated. **Add up its value in column to the left using the numbers above.** This exercise is just to show you how this "numerology" works, not to give what John intended for a meaning.

Whatever John's code really meant, most likely he was warning his flock not to worship any emperor nor any person who declares himself to be god. We are to remain faithful to God alone, even through persecution and death.

Notice that the dragon (Satan), the resurrected beast (Rome), and his helper beast (later called the false prophet) form a kind of counterfeit Trinity. They try to be like God to keep people from worshipping the true God. They are still around today though they have different forms which are not very obvious. We are still asked to make just

about anything more important in our lives than the true God.

**What or who is most important in your life?  
Does it show?**

### Lesson 8. Harvest Time

In chapter 12 we met Satan (dragon) who fights against the Jews (woman) and the Christians (offspring). But it is God who allows Satan to trouble the believers by persecution so that they will be strengthened. In chapter 13 we met the Roman government (beast) and officials (second beast = false prophet) who make everyone worship the emperor (image of the beast). Everyone who does not belong to God is made to worship the emperor. Those who refuse to worship (the true Christians) are to be severely persecuted (can't buy or sell, or are killed). The Christians are called to repentance, endurance, and faith.

Other commentators claim that these three, the dragon and two beasts, are in our future. They are probably right. Indeed, the three are with us in every age in various forms. What form they will have at the time of the Second Coming of Christ has been the source of endless speculation for centuries. This overview of Revelation tries to focus on what they meant to John and to the people to whom he was writing, including us.

The themes of this lesson will be familiar; you have heard them before. So in this lesson you will have to apply what you have already learned to get some of the answers.

**READ Revelation 14:1-5.**

Mount Zion is the temple site in Jerusalem. **Who is the Lamb mentioned in verse 1?**

**Who are the 144,000 who are with him?**

The number 144,000 is a code number (12 x 12 x 1000). **How many people does this number represent? \_\_\_ only a few, \_\_\_ a few thousand, \_\_\_ a few hundred thousand, \_\_\_ a few million, \_\_\_ an uncountable number.**

**How are they symbolically identified (verse 1)?**

**From where does the music of verse 2 come?**

**Based on verse 3, can non-Christians learn this heavenly song?**

In the Old Testament, ordinary adultery is often a code word for idol worship. Just as a person leaves his or her spouse to engage in sex with someone else, so too have people left God to concern themselves with things that are not God. This is still done today by most people. It happens whenever we let someone (including ourselves) or something be more important to us than Jesus is. Verse 4 uses the same code. "Not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure" refers to spiritual adultery. It means that these people have not worshipped the emperor nor idols since their conversion; they have remained faithful to Jesus (the Lamb). They belong to Jesus. They have been made sinless (blameless) by him and have not denied him (lied).

**Will you be one the "144,000"? \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no \_\_\_hope so \_\_\_hope not**

**How do you know?**

**Why?**

**READ Revelation 14:6-13.**

Seven angels are active in the rest of the chapter. The first three speak, the last four start the harvest on earth. The first angel flies between earth and heaven; he can see what is coming to the earth and can proclaim his message to the earth.

**For how long is his message or gospel valid?** (There is a key word in verse 6)

**Who is supposed to hear it (verse 6)?**

**What is the meaning of the angel's message (verse 7)?**

The second angel sees into the future and sees that something has happened in the future.

**What city or nation is mentioned (verse 8)?**

This is a code name for Rome and the Roman Empire. **What will have happened to this city or nation in the future (first words of message)?**

This is described in more detail in chapter 18.

The third angel gives a warning! **What is it that entitles people to receive God's punishment (verses 9,10)?**

In these code words John is saying, "Don't you dare worship the emperor!" To us he is saying, "Don't you dare let anything take God's place in your life!"

**Whose anger (wrath, fury) will the offenders receive (verse 10)?**

The word unmixed means that the punishment will be at full strength, not diluted down or weakened. **Can you survive God's full-strength anger?**

**Who will supervise the punishment (verse 10)?**

"Burning sulfur" or "Fire and brimstone" is a code for hell.

**How long will this punishment last (verse 11)?**

People cannot die in hell to end their torment; their punishment never ends. **Will there be any pauses of comfort in the punishment for people to rest?**

The saints must have endurance. They must never let their persecutions make them give in to the Romans because that would put them in hell. If they endure, they will go to heaven when they die. **Who are the saints (verse 12)?**

**Are you one of them?**

**Where does the voice of verse 13 come from?**

"Who die in the Lord" means that the people are still Christians when they die.

**Is such a death happy or sad?**

They have had hard times (labors) on earth. **Will these continue to bother them after death?**

**READ Revelation 14:14-20.**

The time has come to gather the spiritual harvest on earth. God has waited long enough and everything is ready. At the second coming, Jesus (son of man) is to come in the clouds to gather the righteous people. The pagans (probably the grapes) are to be harvested by a different angel and punished (trampled) outside of the city (heaven). The volume of blood given as flowing from the winepress is about the same as the amount of blood in all the people living in the world today. The 1600 stadia may be made up of code numbers: 4 (earth) times 10 (large), then squared. Jesus himself described the last harvest.

**READ Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43.**

**Who are the weeds?**

**What happens to them?**

**Who are the good seed or wheat?**

**What happens to them?**

**Which harvest would you want to be in?**

**READ Revelation 15:1-8.**

Seven more plagues are on their way. **From where are they sent (verse 1)?**

**Are there any more plagues to come after these have ended?**

Notice that these plagues to destroy the earth are called "great and marvelous" by those in heaven. In Revelation 4:6 we notice that the sea of glass is in heaven and surrounds God's throne. Those who conquer the beast and its companions are there. They did not worship the emperor or any idols. After the Exodus, Moses and the people (in Exodus 15) sang a song celebrating their deliverance from Egypt and slavery. Now those who have remained faithful during the persecutions are in heaven singing a song of praise to God.

The 7 angels of the plagues come from God's temple. The troubles they bring are sent from God, not from Satan. "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." says Rev. 3:19. The clean, shining linen and golden sashes symbolize the purity and holiness of the angels. The four living creatures are in charge of things on earth (4). The plagues are given to the angels by them. The full-strength wrath (smoke) of God even fills this temple so that no one can enter, as it was during the Exodus and the dedication of Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 8:10,11).

## **READ Revelation 16:1-21.**

The whole earth is to be affected by the plagues this time, not just a quarter or third. The style of the Egyptian plagues is there but the magnitude is now global.

**What is the first plague (verse 2)?**

**Who is punished by it?**

**What is the second plague (verse 3)?**

**What is the third plague (verse 4)?**

**Why is it appropriate (verse 6)?**

**What is the fourth plague (verses 8,9)?**

**Did the people love God for this?**

**Did they repent yet?**

**What is the fifth plague (verses 10,11)?**

The beast represents the Roman Empire.

**Where is the throne of the beast?**

**Did the people repent yet?**

**What is the sixth plague (verse 12)?**

The kings of the east in John's day were the Parthians who were a constant threat to the Romans. Evil spirits come forth from Satan, Rome, and the officials to gather for a final battle of good against evil. **What is the Hebrew name of the place of battle (verse 16)?**

This name means "the mountains of Megiddo".

**Which good king of Judah was killed by Pharaoh at Megiddo in 609 B.C. (2 Kings 23:29)?**

The future triumph of God at the last battle will even the score.

**What happens during the seventh plague according to Rev. 16:18?**

Verse 19 means that God is destroying Rome and other pagan nations.

**Are there any more islands or mountains left after the great earthquake (verse 20)?**

**What falls from the sky (verse 21)?**

With their weight (hundred pounds, fifty kilograms) they would fall at a couple hundred miles per hour (hundred meters per second). One-pound or kilogram hailstones today can kill cattle (and everything smaller). **Who can survive these larger hailstones?**

**Do people love God yet?**

Notice that these final plagues have the same effect on people as did the plagues of Moses. The people's hearts are only hardened still more and they refuse to surrender to God. Faith in God is impossible for them. Perhaps some of your hearts have already been hardened. When God sends problems and discipline to you that normally improve his saints and make them more fit for heaven, you only get mad at God and get worse instead. If you suspect that you are hardening against God instead of loving him, pray to Jesus to help you. His power can stop the hardening and bring you to heaven. For those of you who are already receptive to God, the difficulties he sends you should make you joyful even in your misery. The problems show that God cares enough about you to make you more like what God intends you to become.

## **Lesson 9. Fall of the Global System.**

With the end of chapter 16 the plagues on the earth have ended. People have had a chance to see who is really in charge. They have had an opportunity to repent and turn to God. But most people would not. They feared the power of Rome. They are willing to risk eternal torment if they can just avoid the present persecutions. God is now ready to call, "times up", for the earth. Like a game of musical chairs when the music stops, God is going to show who is sitting on the lap of Jesus and who is sitting on fragile and imaginary chairs, trusting "Rome", themselves, their

works, or anything else. Only those trusting in Jesus get into heaven and have a glorious forever. Everyone else gets discarded into hell forever.

### **READ Revelation 17:1-18.**

John is in a Roman prison. The Roman guards will read his book of Revelation and censor it. If John criticizes Rome, he will be killed and his book destroyed. But John must tell his people that Rome is to be destroyed in the end and that no one should put his trust in the emperor. He uses coded language to get past the guards. We now meet a "great prostitute". A prostitute sells her body for temporary pleasures, getting people to do what God condemns (adultery). The many waters of verse 1 refer to the position of Rome in the center of the Mediterranean Sea and also to the many rivers surrounding the original Babylon.

#### **How many heads and horns do these beasts have?**

**The scarlet beast (verse 3) heads \_\_\_ horns \_\_\_**

**The beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1) heads \_\_\_ horns \_\_\_**

**The red dragon (Rev. 12:3) heads \_\_\_ horns \_\_\_**

#### **Are the three similar?**

The red dragon is Satan who opposes the Christians. The beast from the sea represents the Roman Empire which persecutes the Christians. The blasphemous names on the scarlet beast and the beast from the sea probably refer to emperor worship.

#### **What is the name of this woman (verse 5)?**

#### **On what has she become drunk (verse 6)?**

Obviously, what she symbolizes has killed many Christians.

In verse 8 the scarlet beast "once was, now is not, and yet will come". This is a counterfeit of God, "who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8) People who do not belong to God will be fooled by this counterfeit god.

#### **What do the seven heads represent (verse 9)?**

Rome is built on seven hills. So this woman who has the code name Babylon is really Rome.

#### **In verse 10, what else do the seven hills represent?**

Again John is very specific about what he means. Unfortunately, modern scholars no longer understand those details. Here is one idea. Counting from Julius Caesar, the sixth emperor is Nero, who started the severe persecutions of Christians. Now Nero is a code for the present Roman emperor (Domitian) whose persecution is even worse. Verses 11 and 12 refer to more kings to come after the seven. Ten is the code word for many. In this way John gets over the literal problem of Domitian and many other emperors coming after Nero's successor.

#### **Who is the Lamb (from memory)?**

In verse 14 John is saying that the kings of the beast (Roman Empire) will fight against Jesus (and his followers). **Who will win?**

Verse 17 is a key verse to the understanding of Revelation! **Who is in control of the hearts of those who persecute the Christians?**

This shows how great his power is, that he can even control his enemies.

### **READ Revelation 18:1-24.**

This chapter speaks of things in the future with the assurance that they will happen. **What has happened to Babylon (code for Rome) in verse 2?**

In 313 A.D. emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, proclaiming religious tolerance throughout the Roman Empire. Later he declared that everyone in the Roman Empire should become a Christian.. That made it safe at last to be a Christian. About a century and a half later, Rome did fall to barbaric invaders and the Empire died. However, it really rotted from within as the people became more sinful and sought after personal pleasures. John was right, in terms of the fall of the empire of his time period. Other empires have also fallen. But the fall of the secular world system is in our future, and Chapter 18 seems to refer to it instead. However, the kingdom of Jesus has spread ever since, so that today there are Christian ministries in each and every nation on this earth. No kingdom has ever lasted so long. You are invited to become a part of it, now and forever.

**What does the second voice from heaven warn (verse 4)?**

That means us! (that is, if we are part of "my people", the saints of Jesus.) The world asks us to join in and do many things that might be fun, profitable, or in style, but which are not pleasing to God. If we do not keep apart from such things, then we get to share in the punishments mentioned in the following verses. We need to develop a strong resistance to peer pressure that leads us away from Jesus and God's commands. It is the world system that we are to come out of, not the world itself. Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world.

**Who is sorry over the destruction of "Babylon" in verse 9? in verse 11? in verse 17? Why?(verses 11 and 19)**  
**From God's perspective, is that a good reason?**  
**Did they repent of their practices?**

**How long did the destruction take (verses 10,17, or 19)?**

This is probably a code word for a very short time. Today such a destruction can be accomplished with nuclear weapons in only half an hour. Or it could be like the rapid destruction of Soviet communism and its economic system in a couple of years.

**Who is to be happy over the destruction (verse 20)?**

**Who sent the destruction?**

Notice that all normal ways of life are to cease (verses 22,23). The punishment is in part for the persecutions that the Christians have had to endure (verse 24). Throughout history, all nations which have made it a policy to specifically persecute Christians because of their faith have fallen, like "Babylon". Our nation could be added to the list at a later date if present trends continue.

**READ Revelation 19:1-8.**

**What did the great multitude ask in Revelation 6:10?**

**What do they now say has happened (Rev. 19:2)?**

**Has God done what the saints had asked?**

**What is everyone in heaven doing (summary of verses 1-7)?**

The Bride is the Church -- the group of all people who serve and worship Jesus (the Lamb) That

may include you! **What is to happen to the Lamb and the Bride (verse 7)?**

The fine linen, which makes the Bride attractive, is a code word. **What does it mean (verse 8)?**

**READ Luke 14:15-24.**

**What is the great occasion?**

**Do the invited people come?**

**What do the invited guests do?**

The excuses are similar to the legal excuses for avoiding the military draft, according to Deuteronomy 20:5-7.

**Is the occasion well attended?**

**By whom?**

Believe it or not, you have been invited by Jesus to his marriage banquet in heaven.

**Will you be there? \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no, \_\_\_hope so, \_\_\_hope not.** Remember the warning of Luke 14:24 and the declaration of Matthew 7:21-23.

**If you plan to go, why should Jesus let you or anyone else into heaven?**

**READ Revelation 19:9-16.**

The saints are invited to "the wedding supper of the Lamb". They are not just guests. They are the Bride! **What does the angel say about them (verse 9)?**

**Whom does the angel tell John to worship (verse 10)?**

Jesus has been called the Lamb for many chapters. Now he appears as a victorious general.

**What two names now describe Jesus (verse 11)?**

These

remind us that Jesus has not forgotten us. He will remain our friend forever and will be with us (Matthew 28:20) through our hardships and come back for us to take us to heaven (John 14:3).

In verse 12 his eyes are described in the same words as in Revelation 1:14. His secret name refers to the fact that he does not belong to the beast or to anyone. He is God and belongs to himself alone. The bloody robe is a warning that he is now coming with judgment, as a warrior.

**What is another name by which he is called (verse 13)?**

**Does his army have the stains of battle (verse 14)?**

Only Jesus needs to participate in battle, and his weapon is simple.

**Who does John the Baptist say is the Word of God in John 1:14? (figure it out)**

**What is the meaning of the code words "sharp sword" (verse 15) coming out of his mouth?**

(Look back at your answer for Rev. 1:16, 2:12, and Hebrews 4:12, or use your memory.)

"Word", as used by John, has many symbolic and literal meanings. Jesus will rule by his words even while he is the Word of God.

**What comes from the winepress of the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15 and 14:20)?**

**Will any of it be yours?**

**What are some more names for Jesus (verse 16)?**



At about 1000 A.D. the Byzantine Empire, derived from the eastern part of the Roman Empire and centered around present day Greece and Turkey, minted an abundance of coins on which Jesus Christ is proclaimed "King of Kings". These government coins (see Figure 28) were totally devoted to Jesus on both sides and were minted for about a century with various designs. Neither the country, ruler, nor coin value are mentioned on the coins.

**READ Revelation 19:17-21.**

A final battle is described. (Have you been paying attention to who is who?) **Who wins? Who loses? What happens to their human allies (verse 21)?**

It is mentioned that "the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse" killed the unbelievers. This means that Jesus can have people destroyed simply by telling the truth about them and exposing their sins. You have probably observed how people can "kill" the reputation of another person by carefully choosing words. Jesus will do worse to those who do not belong to him, letting them go to hell. **Whose side do you want to be on then?**

**Lesson 10. Welcome to Heaven.**

In the second half of chapter 19 a great battle is described. It was won by Jesus. The beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake of fire and everyone with them was killed. However, Satan, the dragon, is still loose. The action continues.

**READ Revelation 20:1-6.**

**Who gets captured (verse 2)? List the four names for him:  
 What is the code number for the length of time he is captured?  
 Is Satan then allowed his full power over the nations (verse 3)?**

Most denominations have doctrines describing the "1000 years", often deriving from Jewish hopes for a military reign of their Messiah and Old Testament prophecies of a glorious kingdom of peace and prosperity. Some say that Christ will return before the "1000 years", some say after. Most claim that Christianity will flourish then and that all the Jews will be converted. Yet the "1000 years" is never described in terms of such a time span anywhere else in Scripture. And in

Revelation, the use of 1000 is always as a code number. As a code number this refers not to a literal thousand years but to a very large number of years, perhaps uncountable but still limited.

Jesus defeated Satan at his resurrection nearly 2000 years ago. Jesus has reigned over those who follow him since that time. Satan has not been allowed to totally deceive the true Christians. He would like us to be unaware of his defeat. Might this mean that the "1000 years" is already in progress? Some denominations think so.

Time in Revelation is not linear. There are flash-backs describing some things that have gone before. Not everything will happen in John's near future, as in 22:6 "the things that must soon take place". So there is reason to be careful about declaring when the "1000 years" will occur (or is or has occurred) and about declaring its exact length of time.

We must also be careful about where the reign is to take place. Look carefully at these verses, particularly 4 and 6. It does not say where this is! The last time we saw the martyrs as a group like this was in Rev. 6:9-11, and they were at the throne of God in heaven. They are now resurrected, while the rest of the dead wait (verse 5). Who do they reign over? It does not say. In chapter 19 it seems that only the unbelievers were left on earth. In chapter 18 the faithful are warned to come out of "Babylon", but that world system has always been around and we are always commanded not to be a part of it. That "Come out" applies to all ages, particularly to John's time. The last time Christians are definitely on earth seems to be in chapter 14. They are declared blessed for dying in the faith (verse 13) and then are harvested by Jesus in verse 16. Then God is free to bring on total destruction on the rest of the world, just like he did to Sodom and Gomorrah when Lot and his family were forcibly taken out of there. So this reign in glory may not be on earth; we won't be there. Jesus specifically said that Christians will suffer tribulation, not glory, on earth. We have our crosses to bear. We serve as priests here on earth and are generally in the minority. We influence our world by being its salt and light. All human attempts to politically establish a purely Christian nation on earth have failed throughout history. So perhaps this resurrection of the martyrs is in heaven or the new earth of the next chapter. Perhaps this "1000 years" reign of Christ and the martyrs is already in progress in the place Jesus is preparing for us (John 14:1-4).

### **READ Revelation 20:7-15.**

The end of the "1000 years" is at the end of the world, when Jesus and Satan have a final battle. Satan will be allowed to gather those who belong to him.

**How many people belong to Satan (verse 8)?**

**What happens to them (verse 9)?**

**What happens to Satan (verse 10)?**

**Does the punishment there ever end?**

**According to Matthew 25:41, for whom is this eternal fire prepared?**

According to that verse, even though it was not prepared for human beings, many people will share in it, most according to Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14.

In Revelation 20:11-13, everyone comes back to life, regardless of how long they have been dead or where they were buried or whether they belong to Satan or to God.

**What are opened (verse 12)?**

**What is the name of one of them?**

Apparently records are kept of what we do (and fail to do) in this life, whether it is good or bad. Everyone will then find out the truth about everyone. **Will you like everything that you ever did wrong to become common knowledge?** It will happen anyway, regardless of how you feel about it. Everyone will be judged by God by "what they had done".

According to Matthew 5:48, "You must be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." One bad thing at any time in your life makes you imperfect forever! There is no such thing as being good enough to make up for not being perfect. **What will be the verdict when you are judged by what you have really done or failed to do? \_\_guilty of sin, \_\_perfect.** If you are perfect, you can go to heaven. If not, there is the other place.

There's got to be a better way, or else heaven will be quite empty of people. Look at verse 15. The lake of fire is hell, where Satan and all that are his are punished forever.

**Why are some people thrown into the lake of fire?**

So if your name is in the book of life you escape going to hell. You can get into heaven if God finds your name written in the book of life. But not everyone's name is written there. (For your information, the following passages talk about the book of life: Exodus 32:32,33; Psalms 69:28; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; and Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27.) A byproduct of having your name in the book of life is that our sins are erased from the book of our deeds. There is no record of anything that we did wrong because our sins were all forgiven because of the death of Jesus on the cross. That is how we appear perfect to God. Only our good deeds remain in the record book if we belong to Jesus. **Is your name in the Book of Life?**

**READ Revelation 21:1-8.**

**What has disappeared (verse 1)?**

**What is new?**

**Where will God be living (verse 3)?**

The name of Jesus, "Immanuel", means "God with us".

**What things are gone (verse 4)?**

**Are you going to like that?**

In verse 6 are the words, "It is done." All the arrangements have been made.

Water is one of the symbols of the Spirit, who gives life and who gives the second birth. God is ready to give his life to anyone who wants it. It is free, without price. "He who overcomes" will belong to God and have this life and all its blessings as in chapters 2 and 3. If we hold on to Jesus even to our death, then we are overcomers. But if we die when we do not belong to Jesus, then we are not overcomers. It is that simple.

Now look at the list in verse 8. Have you done any of these things? Have you ever been afraid to let non-Christians discover that you would rather be friends with Jesus than reject him? Have you ever trusted someone or something more than God? Have you ever been really angry against someone? Have you ever thought lustfully after someone who is not your spouse, eagerly desiring sex with them? Have you ever played around with astrology or other occult activities?

Have you ever let someone or something be more important to you than God? Have you ever lied? **Unless your name is in the book of life, what happens to you if you can answer yes to any one of these questions (verse 8)?**

**READ Revelation 21:9-27.**

Here we get a word painting of heaven. Notice that it is one of the angels who helped destroy the earth who gets to show off what heaven is like. The Bride = the wife of the Lamb = the new Jerusalem = the people of God = the heavenly kingdom = the Church = the communion of saints = the Body of Christ; and maybe a few other things. At the heavenly wedding feast, Jesus and his Church are joined together forever. The Church is described in these verses in terms of perfection and richness using lots of code words.

**How many gates (verse 12)?**

**How are they labeled?**

**How many foundations (verse 14)?**

**How are they labeled?**

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus talks to the Apostles about the foundation of his Church.

**What is the code number for the length of the "city" (verse 16)?**

The 12 is a spiritually perfect number and 1000 is a code for a huge number. Heaven and the Church are to be huge. The 144 of verse 17 is 12 times 12, another perfect code number squared. All the stones mentioned in verses 18-21 are gem stones.

**Why is there no temple in heaven (verse 22)?**

**Why don't the sun and moon need to shine there (verses 23-25)?**

**What does Jesus say about himself in John 8:12?**

**Who are allowed to be in heaven (Rev. 21:27)?**

**Is anyone else allowed in?**

**READ Revelation 22:1-5.**

The Holy Spirit (water of life) proceeds from the Father (God) and the Son (Lamb) in verse 1 and in the Nicene Creed. **What is located along this river (verse 2)?**

Its fruit lets the eaters of it live forever, according to Genesis 3:22. Throughout the Bible no one was ever allowed to eat of it while on earth.

**What special thing will be allowed according to verse 4?**

**READ Revelation 22:6-21.**

**Who heard and saw all the things written in the book of Revelation (verse 8)?**

**Is John to keep all this knowledge secret (verse 10)?**

In verse 11, the meaning is that God will continue to work out his plan regardless of what men do.

**Who is coming soon (verses 7, 12; and see 13 and 16)?**

These words were written down about 1900 years ago. But remember that Jesus comes for each of us at the end of our own short lifetimes, and usually without warning. That is really soon enough.

In verse 13 are parts of word equations. In Rev. 1:8, the first refers to God Almighty. In Rev.

1:17, the second refers to Jesus. The third phrase is of the same type. By these word equations John is declaring that Jesus Christ is God Almighty. "Things equal to the same things are equal to each other."

In verse 14, "wash their robes" is the code for being without sin in the eyes of God. The blood of Jesus makes us clean. That lets us get our names written in the book of life and live forever and enter heaven.

The word "Come" in verses 17 and 20 is "Marana tha" in the original language. Some Christian groups use this phrase for a name. It is an invitation for Jesus to come and to come soon and take us to heaven.

**Does John want anyone to change the words he has written (verses 18, 19)?**

To do so would disrupt his careful codes and word pictures and destroy the message.

**Can you eagerly say "Come, Lord Jesus!" and really mean it?**

**Lesson 11. The Saints and Summary**

This overview of Revelation was designed to show what John intended to communicate to his flock on the mainland at the end of the first century A.D. John was in exile on Patmos. The Christians in the churches of the area were undergoing various degrees of persecution, particularly in forced emperor worship. Most congregations had various flaws, such as losing their zeal for the Lord, tolerating sin in their midst, dealing with false doctrines, and general apathy. They were probably wondering why they were suffering.

John contrasts the church conditions with what things are like in heaven. In God's presence everything is perfect and praise is offered continuously. Thereafter the visions speak of mostly coming events, where the wicked are increasingly punished by God through various plagues and disasters. Eventually the wicked lose their ability to repent and are thereby doomed to join Satan and the other beasts in the lake of fire forever. The faithful, though impatient, are eventually rewarded with a new heaven and a new earth where there are never any things to bring sorrow and all things are healed. The faithful are forever in the presence of their God and Savior.

The literary style of Revelation is in the coded apocryphal language, where images, words, and numbers generally have special meanings. The result is a painting with words that communicate some great spiritual truths. However, to those who do not know the code, the picture is weird and incomprehensible, like a bad dream. That lets John's letter get past the Roman guards and censors and encourage the suffering Christians on the mainland.

We who are living near the year 2000 A.D. probably wonder about the final words of Jesus, "I am coming soon." We also see bad and possible worsening conditions around us. We join with the martyrs in heaven in asking "how long?" before God executes his judgment on the unbelievers. We may think of ourselves as having good-enough lives and congregations. Like the seven churches, we may not think we deserve any hardships and fail to see that God wants to

mold us into being more Christ-like (perfect). We tend to resist the discipline that God sends to help us grow spiritually. We also have a natural curiosity about the details of the end times. That makes us look at the world events and review a mental checklist of prophesied conditions to see if they fit yet. No one has ever been successful in describing those details accurately. This overview continues that tradition. You are therefore encouraged to review the insights of other writers and speakers. Some will have valuable interpretations that have not been included in this overview. Others will have interpretations that stray from the meanings intended by John and the Holy Spirit. Discernment is therefore required.

In the last chapter I hinted at a question that may have interesting implications. In each chapter of Revelation, who and where are the saints, and what are they doing and what is happening to them? Let's use this question to look back at the book of Revelation in review.

Chapter 1. The saint is John, who is in exile on Patmos and receives a vision.

Chapters 2 and 3. The saints are in seven congregations on the mainland. They are imperfect and may be suffering persecutions to various degrees. They are warned to strengthen and hold on to their faith.

Chapters 4 and 5. Except for the 24 elders in heaven, the general saints are not mentioned.

Chapter 6. There is no mention about the saints suffering or avoiding the partial disasters that affect a quarter of the earth. In verses 9-11 the martyrs (killed for the faith) are under the altar (in heaven, presumably) asking "How long?" They are purified and told to wait until the completion of the killing of the saints on earth.

Chapter 7. The saints on earth are "branded" with God's seal before the next disasters begin. John then sees the great, uncountable multitude of saints in heaven, from every nation and tribe. They have already suffered in the great tribulation and are now in a blissful condition in the presence of God.

Chapter 8. The prayers of the saints are important in heaven. There is no mention of whether the saints are spared during the disasters that affect a third of the earth.

Chapter 9. The saints are protected from being harmed by the evil forces released by the fifth angel. They are not mentioned when the sixth angel blows his trumpet.

Chapter 10. Only John is mentioned as he participates in the vision.

Chapter 11. John gets to count the saints in heaven but not those who are excluded. The two witnesses may be special saints who have great powers in word and deed, are killed, resurrected, and raised to heaven. The 24 elders in heaven announce the time for rewarding the saints.

Chapter 12. After failing to destroy the Jews (woman) and Christ (son), Satan turns to war against the saints (verse 17).

Chapter 13. The evil beasts are given power to war against and conquer the saints! (verse 7) "This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints." (verse 10) The saints cannot buy or sell. (verse 17) So the saints on earth are going to lose that war and suffer severe persecution. There will be no glorious rule of Christianity on earth.

Chapter 14. The "branded" saints are now with Jesus in heaven. The angels issue a final call to worship God or else suffer the consequences. "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." (verse 12) Then an important pronouncement: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.... they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (verse 13) In verse 16 the earth is harvested by Christ, "because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."

(verse 15) This may be the final and sudden removal of the saints from the earth, possibly described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Another angel harvests "grapes", presumably unbelievers. Chapter 15. The saints are in heaven singing.

Chapter 16. The saints are not mentioned, except that their persecutors are punished.

Chapter 17. The woman is drunk on the blood of the saints that she killed previously.

Chapter 18. The saints are called to "come out of her" (verse 4) before she is destroyed. The saints are to rejoice over the destruction of their killer.

Chapter 19. The great multitude of praising voices in heaven presumably includes saints.

Chapter 20. The martyrs are resurrected to reign first while the other dead saints wait longer.

Satan tries one final assault on the saints (now all in heaven?) but fails and is destroyed at last.

Everyone is resurrected and those who are not saints are sent to join Satan in the second death.

Chapters 21, 22. The saints are forever united with God in the "new Jerusalem", the place prepared for them by Jesus (John 14:1-4). It is glorious.

This series makes me think that the "1000 years" during which the martyrs reign with Christ is in the "New Jerusalem" as it is being prepared for the wedding feast of chapter 21. That makes it simultaneous with the 2000 years that we have had on earth (so far), waiting for those final days.

## **Review Questions.**

Here are some review questions to check up on what you have learned. Use your Bible and your previous answers. See how many you can answer. Then check on the pages in brackets: [ ].

### **Part 1.**

**The style of writing of the book of Revelation is called \_\_\_an apology, \_\_\_an aerosol, \_\_\_an apocalypse, \_\_\_a calypso, \_\_\_a eulogy. [7]**

**Such literature was usually written during times of \_\_\_prosperity, \_\_\_persecution, \_\_\_purposelessness, \_\_\_military strength, \_\_\_national triumph. [7]**

**The style of writing contains a coded language which will fool foreign rulers. \_\_\_true, \_\_\_false. [13,15]**

**Writers of most apocalypses seldom write their names to their work for fear of being discovered and punished. \_\_\_true, \_\_\_false. [13]**

**Who wrote the book of Revelation? [15,19]**

**Where was he when he wrote it? [19]**

### **Part 2. [21-26]**

**Name the 7 churches to which John wrote.**

**Choose two of them, name them, tell what was good (if anything) about the people in them, tell what was bad (if anything) about them, and tell what Jesus promises to the faithful.**

**1. name:**

**good:**

**bad:**

**promise:**

- 2. name:**  
**good:**  
**bad:**  
**promise:**

**Part 3.**

**The following are code numbers that appear in Revelation. Explain the symbolism and meaning of five of these numbers.**

- 3:** [16]  
**4:** [16]  
**7:** [16]  
**10:** [17]  
**12:** [17]  
**144:** [32]  
**666:** [17,40]  
**1000:** [17,48-49]  
**144,000:** [32]

**The following are code words and phrases that appear in Revelation. Explain the symbolism and meaning of four of them.**

- Lamb:** [29, many others]  
**serpent:** [35,39]  
**beast:** [39, others]  
**sword from the mouth:** [20,47]  
**alpha and omega:** [19]  
**who is, who was, and who is to come:** [18,28,45]  
**who was, is not, and who is to come:** [45]  
**marked with the number of the beast:** [40, end of Rev.13]

**Part 4.**

- Who sends the plagues that cause the trouble?** [30,35,41]  
**Why do the Christians suffer through some of them?** [35]  
**What is the author of Revelation trying to tell the Christians through his coded language?**  
[1,35,52]

**Why is the book often considered a message of hope for Christians?** [clue: Who is in control?]

## **The Back Cover:**

"An Overview of the Book of Revelation", by Dr. Edmond W. Holroyd, III, is a self-study guide to the last book of the Bible. It was used successfully at the early teen level for twenty years. Adults, also, have appreciated its insights and style since then.

The author seeks to acquaint the Bible student with the message that John had for his own flock on the mainland. John wrote in the coded, apocalyptic style, recognizable to faithful Jews but not to most Roman or Greek rulers. John gave a message of hope and encouragement to those experiencing severe persecution for their faith. He also warned them against spiritual unfaithfulness, such as following heretical teachers or worshipping the Roman Emperor. He tells of the glories in heaven awaiting those who are overcomers. There the faithful will be united with Jesus Christ forever.

Other authors sometimes make detailed predictions of near-future events based on the Book of Revelation. The passage of time has shown most of those interpretations to be wrong. This study guide makes no attempt to link modern events in Iran, Russia, Libya, etc., with the prophecies in Revelation. It has generally a no-nonsense, non-sensational approach that follows interpretations ("church historical") that have been around for centuries. The author doubts that there is much that is theologically new in this study. Instead, the reader will find an attractive and informative style that has helped students of a wide range of ages to gain a deeper appreciation of this Biblical book of hope.