

THE BOOK OF

REVELATION

AN INTRODUCTORY SYLLABUS & STUDY GUIDE

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A Simple Outline of the Book

I. THE FOUR PARTS

1. John's Commissioning (1)
2. The Seven Letters (2-3)
3. The Throne Room (4-5)
4. Jesus' End-Time War Strategy (6-22)

II. THE FIVE SECTIONS

Section One

Rev. 6 Judgment Event: THE SEAL JUDGMENTS

Rev. 7 Interjection: PROTECTION OF ELECT JEWISH REMNANT & THE CHURCH

Section Two

Rev. 8–9 Judgment Event: TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

Rev. 10–11 Interjection: DIRECTION GIVEN BY END-TIME PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Section Three

Rev. 11:15-19 Judgment Event: SECOND COMING PROCESSION

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Section Five

Rev. 19–20 Judgment Event: ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM & VICTORY (Rev. 19:11–21:8)

Rev. 21–22 Interjection: RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS (Rev. 21:9–22:5)

III. THE SEVEN SYMBOLS

1. Dragon: Satan
2. Woman with a Male Child: Elect Remnant of Ethnic Jews and Jesus
3. Beast: Antichrist
4. Another Beast: False Prophet
5. Harlot Babylon: A Global End-Time Demonized Religious and Financial network
6. Seven Head: Seven Empires that Persecuted Ethnic Israel
7. Ten Horns: A 10 nation confederacy of nations in the Middle East (Ez. 38-39)

Session 1: Forging a Culture Where the Book of Revelation is Treasured

I. SETTING A CORPORATE VISION TO FORGE A CORPORATE CULTURE: AWAKENING TO THE BEAUTY OF JESUS & THE REALITY OF HIS RETURN

- A. Over the next year we're going to search out the book of Revelation in an intentional, deliberate and focused way. Our goal though is not simply to understand it intellectually. That is important and we want that. But that is secondary. **We want to forge a culture.** To forge means: *to "establish with effort: to establish and strive to develop something with great effort."*¹ We're being invited by the Lord into something much greater than we could ever have imagined; we're called to lay our lives down to establish a "watering-hole" where the masses will soon flock when the season shifts; people need answers in crisis. But this will take time, energy, risk, courage, sacrifice and an alien grace to sustain us.
- B. There are many places on the earth where individuals can be taught how to understand the book; accurately and erroneously. But there are few places on the earth where individuals can be immersed into a culture where they can submit to the process of inward formation that is mandatory for the emergence of the forerunner ministry. We want to fight for the establishment of that environment so that forerunners can be forged. That is what is unique about our context. We're called not to simply learn books of the Bible but to raise up forerunners who will prepare the earth for the return of Jesus.
- C. In this unique hour of history God is awakening the church to **the beauty of Jesus** (*His person and work*) and **the reality of His return** (*the reality of the implications of the end of this age and the beginning of the next under Jesus' leadership*). Without doubt these are two of God's greatest priorities in our generation (Rev. 1:1). It's what will catalyze the greatest redefining of the expression of Christianity in all of church history.
- D. Over the next decade we're going to set ourselves in a very intentional way to pave the way **for tens of thousands of young adults in the southern hemisphere**

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to encounter the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return. It's going to be difficult and it's going to be costly. But it will be worth it. Think of the multitudes that labored to dig the Panama Canal linking the Gulf of Mexico with the Pacific. Many spent the prime years of their lives in muddy yellow fever infested trenches laboring to enable the next generation to access that which was nearly impossible to access in their own generation. We're laboring for our peers and children to access that which is now seemingly impossible for our generation: **Authentic passion for Jesus and for His return.**

- E. In this session we're going to look at the opening verses of this profound gift from God called "the book of Revelation." In these first verses we're told, (1) the nature of the book, (2) the central message of the book, (3) the contents of the book and (4) a clear statement about what God's people are to do with it. These four concepts will serve as a springboard into all that we're moving towards and will be our "pillars" that we must put in place to build a culture around.

II. THREE FOUNDATION PRESUPPOSITIONS

What is culture built upon? – Values. Every culture is predicated on specific values. Those values govern and dictate the culture. There are three key values, or presuppositions, that compel us in this direction. In other words, the conviction of these three realities drive us to labor on behalf of this nation in light of what's coming. And, in order to approach the book we need a foundation to set our exegesis upon. So in this session I want to present three foundational premises that we need to acknowledge and agree upon for this ministry to flourish as God intends.

- A. We're Living in a Transitional Generation that will Culminate with the Return of the Lord
1. Jesus unequivocally commands us to know the hour of His return. The false idea that Jesus discourages us from knowing the timing of His return needs to be thoroughly addressed and forcefully (yet humbly) refuted.

When you see all these things, KNOW that it is near--at the doors! Assuredly...this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place... (Mt. 24:33-34)
 2. When Jesus said that "no one knows the day or the hour" in Matthew 24:36 He said it to encourage us to know the hour of His return not to discourage it. The Lord said that statement in context to the disciples

question about the signs of the timing of His coming. After giving the global trends that will be unique to the final generation (24:4-14) He explained how there would be a catalytic event in the Middle East that would trigger the final 3 ½ years of history known as “the great tribulation” (24:15-22). After that Jesus told over half a dozen parables about how and why we are required to know the hour of His return and be prepared for it (24:32-25:46).

3. Jesus gave only two conditions that must be met before His return. We are the first generation that has seen them met. The return of Jesus is contingent upon (1) the establishment of a Jewish nation-state that culminates in an age-ending siege of Jerusalem and (2) the proliferation of the Gospel to all nations.
4. No generation since the generation of the apostles can say with absolute certainty that the return of Jesus is possible. In view of the intensifying geo-political context surrounding Israel, it’s clear that we are approaching the beginning of the end. In fact, we are required to conclude that and declare that.
5. We need to be convinced of the fact that we are supposed to know the hour of His return. Why else would Jesus use the word “know” so much in Matthew 24 if we aren’t supposed to know? And why build a case for knowing by the declaration of all the timing indicators (Matthew 24:4-42) if we’re not supposed to pay attention to them and draw conclusions from them?

“When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you KNOW that summer is near.” (v. 32)

“When you see all these things, KNOW that it is near--at the doors”! (v. 33)

“Of that day and hour no one KNOWS...” (v. 36)

“...they were eating and drinking and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark and did not KNOW until the flood came and took them all away...” (v. 38-39)

“Watch therefore, for you do not KNOW what hour your Lord is coming...” (v. 42)

“But KNOW this, that if the master of the house had KNOWN what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into...” (v. 43)

6. The Book of Revelation is a gift from God to the generation that witnesses this age-ending transition. The Book of Revelation is not about things that happened in the Roman Empire in 70 AD. Nor is it all useless symbolism. Nor is it a vague and arbitrary account of the struggle between good and evil. The book contains information that is necessary to sustain the people of God through the coming storm. Not only are we supposed to know the hour of His return, we’re supposed to be a responsive Bride who submits to her Husband and obeys Him.

B. God is Raising Up the Forerunner Ministry

1. In view of the urgency of the hour that we are living in, God is raising up the forerunner ministry in His mercy to prepare the nations of the earth for the return of the Lord.

...for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” (Luke 1:15-17)

2. Forerunners are those who are anointed to prepare the way of Jesus’ return. Those who have been marked with the same grace and anointing that John the Baptist was marked with are alive right now on the earth and are being commissioned with the same call that John heard:

And I was told, “You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.” (Revelation 10:11)

3. In our midst God is going to cultivate, nourish and mature the prophetic anointing. In fact, in the mind of God, the main reason – among many – that the House of Prayer reality is emerging on the earth is for the cultivating of the forerunner ministry.

So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (John 1:22-23)

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...The glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together (at Jesus' Second Coming)... (Isa. 40:3-5)

Prepare the way for the people; build up the highway! Take out the stones, lift up a banner for the peoples! Say..., "Surely your salvation is coming..." (Isa. 62:10-11)

C. God is Raising Up a Global Prayer Movement

1. In view of the coming glory and horror associated with the closing of this age God is committed to setting adequate leadership in place. And the way in which God is going to prepare these leaders is in the place of day and night prayer. One of the most prominent trends that we will witness in the church over the next few decades will be the transformation of the methodology of church. Before the Lord returns, the church globally will be identified from heaven and earth as being a "house of prayer."

It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" ... (Mt. 21:13)

Now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night...? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. (Lk. 18:7-8; NAS)

2. Lifestyles of prayer and fasting are mandatory for those who are called to the forerunner ministry. The priority for those who are called to this ministry is radical inward transformation that comes as a result of gazing upon the beauty of Lord in a focused and sustained way.

One thing I have desired of the LORD...that I may dwell in the house of the LORD...to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. (Ps. 27:4)

3. The optimum environment for forerunners to grow is in the place of prayer. Thus, the plan of God for this city and for this global family that we are a part of is to establish day and night prayer for the formation of prophetic messengers.
4. We *must* labor to forge a culture here unto the establishing of a context and an environment where these forerunners can grow.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:80)

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2)

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. (Galatians 1:15-2:1)

- D. These three foundational truths are necessary to connect with in order to rightly understand, respond to and position ourselves under the realities contained in the book of Revelation.

- E. To say it simply: We are living at the end of the age. And because of this, God is committed to establishing the forerunner ministry in this generation. And the forerunner ministry requires lifestyles of prayer and fasting.

III. THE PROLOGUE (1:1-3): FOUR FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS ABOUT THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The first statements of the book in this Prologue are meant to grip us and direct us. These verses tell us how we're supposed to view and handle the rest of the Book. Most erroneous teaching on the book of Revelation is addressed in these 3 verses.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”
(Revelation 1:1-3)

- A. The Nature of the Book

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants...”
(1:1a)

1. Before it is anything to us, anything that pop-culture Christianity tells us it is, it is first and foremost the Revelation that God gave Jesus for His saints to receive. The object being revealed in the book is Jesus, the source of revelation in the book is God the Father and the recipient of this revelation is the Wife of the Lamb; the saints.
2. This book is:
 - a. **A Revelation of the Son of God** – The conjunction of “ἀποκάλυψις” and “Ἰησοῦς” suggests that we read the verse so as to mean “the revelation about Jesus” or “the revelation of Jesus.” Some argue that it should be understood as “the revelation from Jesus.” They argue that “Jesus is not the subject of the book but the author.”² While we affirm that Jesus is the author of the book, we are correct to also

² Geisen, pg. 56; 1997

affirm that Jesus is the subject of the book also. The book of revelation is most principally about how Jesus is going to close this age and inaugurate the next. The book of Revelation contains the clearest picture of Jesus' person, plan and power in orchestrating history bringing to a glorious consummation. At the outset we read that the Father has commissioned Jesus to reveal His beauty, His worth and His excellence to "His servants." That is the central pillar of the book.

- b. **A Revelation that was Given by God** – Those who argue that the book is irrelevant need to address the Lord with their opinion. God says that He gave it to us making Him responsible for its contents and message. I find it hard to agree with pop-Christianity that believes that God would waste His time and ours with a useless vision that serves no purpose except for the equipping of 7 churches in Asia Minor for an exaggerated crisis some 25 years after it allegedly happened.³ To say that the book is meaningless for a final generation is not to disrespect the book but God Himself. The title of the book is "the revelation...given by God." The fact that God gave this to us must necessarily imply purpose and relevance. The One in whom is all wisdom and knowledge is not interested in proliferating useless apocalyptic hyperbole that has no real fulfillment.
 - i. There is a 4-stage process by which the book was given. God gave it to Jesus; Jesus gave it to the angels; the angels gave to John; John gave it to us.
- c. **A Revelation that was Given to Us** – The object of revelation is Jesus. The source is God. And the recipient is us. God gave this to us. Explaining it away or ignoring it does not honor Him. How many of us know that it does not bring us honor when the gift we give to someone for their birthday or Christmas is ignored, rejected or mistreated? The book of Revelation is a gift from God to those He loves.

³ Many today argue that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD during the Roman siege of Jerusalem. The problem with this theory is that the book was written around 90-95 AD; some 25 years after the fact. That's not prophecy, that's history. Moreover, the vision of the past tense crisis was wildly exaggerated and ridiculously communicated if it was meant to explain some sort of conflict with Rome.

3. Many people in the western world have been seduced by false teaching and are adamant about the idea that the book of Revelation is entirely irrelevant in any practical way. Meaning, it's alright if we believe it to be symbolic, historical or fulfilled. But we cannot say that it's future, literal or real. This mentality must be addressed and corrected.

B. The Central Message of the Book

***“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants...”
(1:1a)***

1. It is the will of the Father to make known two things to us: (1) ***His Son*** Jesus Christ and (2) ***the things*** that must shortly take place. This is the person of Jesus and His plans to destroy wickedness and establish His kingdom on earth.
2. ***The central message of the book of Revelation is the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return.*** The vision was given to us to awaken these things in our hearts.
3. There is a unique relationship between the beauty of Jesus and understanding eschatology. Our goal is not to understand events so much as it is to know the Man who is planning these events and orchestrating them. It's not one or the other. It's both.
4. Many people want to “just love Jesus” and let everything sort themselves out. But they will be unprepared when the storm comes.
5. And other people want to understand all the events that will occur in the end-times but are uninterested in studying the person and work of Jesus. And they too will be unprepared when the storm comes.

C. The Contents of the Book

“...who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” (1:2)

1. The term **“bore witness”** in the book always means “fearless public proclamation in the face of tremendous opposition.” (Osborne; pg. 56)
2. **The Word of God.** This phrase is found 7 times in the book (1:2, 9; 6:9; 17:17; 19:9; 13; 20:4). The apostle John was bearing witness to the word of God in two primary ways; he was bearing witness to (1) the person of Christ as the incarnate word of God (John 1:1-3) and (2) he was bearing witness to the written word of God. “The word of God is thought of in the Bible not merely as a means of communicating truth, but as an active, dynamic entity.”⁴ It’s no coincidence that John opened his gospel with the grand statement of Jesus being “the Word.” In chapter 19 when he sees Jesus splitting the skies and leading a military procession into Jerusalem, the blood-stained Man on the horse is identified as “the Word of God.” On the road to Emmaus, Jesus understood that the way the human heart burns hottest is to open up the Scriptures and make the Person of the Messiah known. In the pursuit of end-time apostleship we are first loyal to the WORD OF GOD.
3. **The Testimony of Jesus Christ.** This phrase is found 6 times in the book (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [twice], 20:4). The testimony of Jesus is defined in 19:10 as being “the spirit of prophecy.” The vocation of the Holy Spirit in this age is to testify to the saints concerning the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return. The Spirit of Christ was in John as it was in all the prophets of old who longed for consummation. The forerunner ministry is driven by this; this “testimony of Jesus.”

...the prophets have inquired and searched carefully...searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To THEM it was revealed, not to themselves, but to us... (1 Peter 1:10-12)
4. **All the things that he saw.** This phrase refers specifically to the end-time events that will be unique to the final generation that is alive on the earth at the return of the Lord. God saw it necessary to reveal these “things” to His people. And we must treat the book accordingly. That is, we should approach it knowing that it’s absolutely necessary to (1) hear, (2) understand and (3) declare these things. The uniqueness of the events

⁴ Ladd, pg. 23

that will be released in the final generation will be so unimaginable and so unprecedented that if we do not take the book seriously now, learning how to prepare ourselves, we run the risk of being caught off guard when it occurs and being offended at the Lord because we lack understanding.

²¹ There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world...nor ever shall be. 22 Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. (Mt. 24:21-22)

D. What God Wants Us to do with the Book

Within the book are 7 beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). This is the first. This one, along with one other, focuses on how we are to handle the book. Here in this verse we're told how the heart becomes prepared to digest (1) the word of God, (2) the testimony of Jesus and (3) the things which John saw (from verse 2). In other words, verse three tells us how to pursue authentic understanding of that which is contained in verse two.

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

1. The three-fold promise of blessing presupposes the fact that we can understand the book of Revelation. Our goal in this community is to read, listen and keep the book of Revelation in such a way that the youngest, weakest and most immature can enter into an understanding and appreciation of the book. The following sessions will be spent attacking the idea that only scholars and full time Bible students can understand the book. Anyone and everyone can understand this book. All that is required is hunger and humility.

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will/good pleasure. (Matthew 11:25-26)

2. ***Blessed is He Who Reads This Prophecy*** – This is the New Testament counterpart of that which was told to Moses and Joshua about the Law. Bind it to your eyelids and let it consume you. If you do it by the

prescribed method you'll live with a burning heart. It's the call to have a Mary Bethany posture about the end of the age.

- a. We need to establish a culture where the book of Revelation is read aloud corporately for community reflection, digestion and agreement.
- b. It's not enough that we study at home or alone in the prayer room. We need to pursue it together.
- c. The communities that do not read this book aloud together in corporate settings forfeit so much. When the book goes unread and unmentioned we starve ourselves of the richest of "food." Jesus called the revelation of His return "food in due season." Remember, this book is about Jesus and His plan to take over the earth. Not reading it is not helpful.

"Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food in due season?" (Matthew 24:45)

3. ***Blessed is He Who Hears This Prophecy*** – This is the reception of divine insight by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Hearing takes place when the spiritual senses of the person are awakened to the truths contained in the book and suddenly the content shifts from the realm of principles to be pondered to the place of living understanding that demands a response.
 - a. In the 7 letters Jesus will address every church by telling them that whoever has an ear **MUST** hear what the Spirit is saying. We must be given to seeing and hearing (Acts 4:20)
 - b. ***"Then He said to them, Take heed WHAT you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. 25 For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him."*** (Mk. 4:24-25)

c. ***“Therefore take heed HOW you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.” (Luke 8:18)***

4. ***Blessed is He Who Keeps This Prophecy*** – To “keep” means to “guard” in the Greek. This charge is for individuals and corporate bodies to guard the contents of this book within their hearts; meaning, treat it like you’d treat money or expensive jewelry. Treat is according to its value. It’s precious and it’s a gift. God’s gift to us is not simply meant to be understood; it is to be kept. To love Jesus is to keep the book of Revelation.

“Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” (Jn. 14:23-24)

- a. We “keep the book” is by taking it seriously
- b. We “keep the book” by treasuring the Jesus we read in it
- c. We “keep the book” by declaring it faithfully; even unto death
- d. We “keep the book” by being persistent in our study of it over the years
- e. We “keep the book” by not succumbing to the temptation to explain the reality of the return of Jesus away; Peter says that people do this not because of bad teaching but because of the lust in their hearts.
- f. We “keep the book” by forging a culture that cherishes it for the next generation

Session 2: A Simple Overview of the Book

I. THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. The central message of the book of Revelation is the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:1-3)

- B. This message of the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return is the articulation of the person, power and purposes in Jesus’ heart that are manifest during the Great Tribulation as He closes this age and inaugurates the next.
- C. The vision that John saw displayed the ***nature*** of this transition period. The book of Revelation explains ***what the transition will be like***. It is the most detailed description in the Bible of the hour that leads up to the second coming. With over 300 allusions to the Old Testament, it is like a Bible study from all the books of the Bible on the final generation compiled into one book.
- D. The majority of the book is dedicated to the final 3 ½ years of this age before the return of Jesus (chapters 6-19) known as “the Great Tribulation.” The scriptures for the last 3½ years of this age include 6 different expressions: ***42 months*** (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), ***1260 days*** (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), ***time, times and half a time*** (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), and ***Middle of the Week*** (Dan. 9:27), the ***Great Tribulation*** (Rev. 7:14), ***Jacob’s Trouble*** (Jer. 30:7). The 3½ year time period is designated in three different ways numerically so as to render it impossible to spiritualize or make symbolic.
- E. As we touched on last week, Jesus commands us and requires us to ***know the hour of His return***. Often people cite Matthew 24:36 to discourage the saints knowing the hour of His return. But Jesus made the statement that “no one knows” to provoke confidence that we can and must know. 7 times the Lord

used the word “know” in that chapter. 2 times it’s an explicit command to know the hour of Jesus’ return.

- F. The timing indicators are screaming that we are approaching this 42 month period of unprecedented intensity. In view of that, I want to charge you as an individual and us as a corporate family to ask the Lord for grace to begin to develop a life vision that takes into consideration the fact that you may have to lead your family, your ministry and your region through these events. We need to have 10, 20 and 30 year visions that are built upon the conviction that we will see the skies torn open and that the pursuit of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ is the greatest investment of our time, energy and money in this age. Many in the church are so disillusioned and ignorant of who Jesus is and what He’s about to do that if clear voices do not emerge the casualties will be unfathomable.

“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” And he told them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. As soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. “But watch yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a trap. For it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the whole earth. But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:28-36)

- G. These chapters (6-19) tell us the broad trends and some of the important details that will be present on the earth in that hour.

1. It will be the greatest crisis the world has ever known

And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)

So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number. And this is how I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur came out of their mouths. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur coming out of their mouths. (Revelation 9:15-18)

²¹ *There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world...nor ever shall be. 22 Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved. (Mt. 24:21-22)*

"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (Daniel 12:1)

"Thus says the LORD: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:5-7)

Behold, the LORD will empty the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist ["distort" NKJV] its surface and scatter its inhabitants. (Isaiah 24:1)

2. It will be the greatest awakening unto salvation in history as the Gospel is preached with power and the Great Commission is completed

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-14)

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. (Rev. 14:6)

3. It will be the most violent and devastating hour that the Jews have ever known ⁵

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:1-2)

In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off [will be killed] and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'" (Zechariah 13:8-9)

⁵ Many wrongly presume that the state of Israel will be protected in the end-times and that all who attack them will be destroyed. This is not true. While the remnant will be protected and preserved (Rev. 7:1-10; 12:1-17), the current nation state will collapse. Many will choose to flee to the nations of the earth (Amos 9:10-16) and many will choose to stay and fight. Those who stay will undergo the most horrific hour of bloodshed in history eclipsing even the holocaust of the Nazi time. Zechariah tells us that "1/2 of Jerusalem will go into captivity" (14:1-3) and "2/3's" of all the Jews "in the land" will die. Jeremiah called this "the time of Jacob's Trouble." (Jer. 30:7) Daniel said that during this time "the power of [Israel] will be completely shattered." (Dan. 12:7) This is why Jesus said that this hour would be worse than any other time in history (Matthew 24:21-22).

And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time [3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation], and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. (Daniel 12:7)

"Thus says the LORD: We have heard a cry of panic, of terror, and no peace. Ask now, and see, can a man bear a child? Why then do I see every man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned pale? Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it. (Jeremiah 30:5-7)

And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach." [because of how many men died fighting] In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. (Isaiah 4:1-4)

4. It will consummate this age

"...but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be finished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." (Rev. 10:7)

5. It will be a violent take-over of every earthly kingdom, institution and sphere of influence

"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces

and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (Revelation 11:15-18)

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:11-16)

II. A SIMPLE APPROACH TO THE BOOK

- A. The book of Revelation is meant to be understood. And the only thing necessary to understand it is hunger and humility.

At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will/good pleasure. (Matthew 11:25-26)

- B. In this session I want to lay out an "action plan" of how to approach the book. It's my conviction that if we can understand three things almost every reason we have to be intimidated by the book is removed. The three things are: (1) the **Outline**, (2) the **Storyline** and (3) the **Symbolism**.
- C. The book of Revelation is broken up into **four parts**. The fourth part contains **five sections**. And within that fourth part there are **seven symbols**. If we can discern these four parts, understand the five sections and see the interpretation of the seven symbols, there is little reason to be intimidated by the book.

- D. The reason people stay away from the book is because it appears to have a nebulous structure that contains too much unexplained symbolism. Both of these assumptions are wrong.
- E. **The structure of the book** is actually quite easy to understand. John saw a vision. That vision told a story. That story contains a coherent and logical storyline – like a storyboard for a film. The storyline is comprised of chronological events that unfold one after the other AND angelic interjections that are meant to help us understand certain truths related to the chronological events.
- F. **The symbolism of the book** is even easier to understand than the storyline. There are only seven symbols in the book. And all of the symbols are interpreted either by the verse before or after it OR by Scripture somewhere else in the Bible. There are no grounds on which to interpret the symbols as anything other than what the angel told John it was. Most people refuse to study the book because they assume that the symbolism is too difficult to understand. It is not. It is explained in the book. And there are logical, sensible and literal realities behind all of them. And we do not need to interpret them ourselves. In fact, the context of the symbols prohibit from doing so.
- G. I will be presented the book by explaining the four parts first. And then we will spend most of our time looking at the five sections. I liken these five sections to acts of a play. It was as if John was watching a story unfold in front of him on a screen. That story contained five acts. Each act consists of a series of unfolding events and an angelic interjection that speaks into those events.
- H. In this next session we'll deal with interpretation issues regarding the accurate approach to controversial issues like the Rapture, the Millennium and the Timing of the Book's Fulfillment. But first, before we address any of that we need to look at the book itself to get our bearings.

III. THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK: THE FOUR PARTS

1. John's Commissioning (1)
2. The Seven Letters (2-3)
3. The Throne Room (4-5)
4. Jesus' End-Time War Strategy (6-22)

IV. THE STORYLINE OF THE BOOK: THE FIVE SECTIONS

Section One

Rev. 6 Judgment Event: THE SEAL JUDGMENTS

Rev. 7 Interjection: PROTECTION OF ELECT JEWISH REMNANT & THE CHURCH

Section Two

Rev. 8–9 Judgment Event: TRUMPET JUDGMENTS

Rev. 10–11 Interjection: DIRECTION GIVEN BY END-TIME PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Section Three

Rev. 11:15-19 Judgment Event: SECOND COMING PROCESSION

Rev. 12–14 Interjection: SATANIC RAGE IN THE END-TIMES

Section Four

Rev. 15–16 Judgment Event: BOWL JUDGMENTS

Rev. 17–18 Interjection: SEDUCTIVE DANGER OF HARLOT BABYLON

Section Five

Rev. 19–20 Judgment Event: ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM & VICTORY (Rev. 19:11–21:8)

Rev. 21–22 Interjection: RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS (Rev. 21:9–22:5)

V. THE SYMBOLISM IN THE BOOK: THE SEVEN MAIN SYMBOLS

8. ***Dragon***: Satan
9. ***Woman with a Male Child***: Elect Remnant of Ethnic Jews and Jesus
10. ***Beast***: Antichrist
11. ***Another Beast***: False Prophet
12. ***Harlot Babylon***: A Global End-Time Demonized Religious and Financial network
13. ***Seven Heads***: Seven Empires that Persecuted Ethnic Israel
14. ***Ten Horns***: A 10 nation confederacy of nations in the Middle East (Ez. 38-39)

Session 3: The Timing and Nature of the Rapture

I. MANDATORY RESPECT FOR THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”
(Revelation 1:1-3)

A. Most honest and sincere believers would approach the first few verses of the book the same way at a very basic level. They would all affirm the idea that we are to “read,” “hear” and “keep” the message of the book; though at varying degrees and at differing levels of course. Most believers are not opposed to the book being in their Bible (though they may not want to read it!)

B. However, the way in which people think that the book is to be read, heard and kept differs from individual to individual and from denomination to denomination; and radically! So the question of “how to approach the book” is extremely relevant. In view of the seemingly endless sea of opinions clouding the main message of this book, we need a compass to navigate through them. Rightly viewing the message of the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return is contingent upon resisting the temptation to embrace false teachings; false teachings that are so prolific in our day. And that is an integral part of growing into maturity. We can’t call this “semantics” and choose to stay away from the book. We need to see our pursuit of truth concerning the beauty of Jesus and the reality of His return as growing in grace unto maturity in Christ.

“...so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ...” (Ephesians 4:14-15)

C. Before addressing the varying opinions that surround the issue of interpretation I want to point out from these first verses that **respect for the book of Revelation**

is mandatory. That is, we must acknowledge the importance of the book. Even before we understand *why it's important*, the prologue (1:1-3) gives us ample reason to take it seriously and to approach it with humility willing to submit to whatever the Lord would have us submit to in the text. For those who want to ignore it, the Lord says **“Read it;”** for those who want to block it out, the Lord says **“Hear it;”** and for those who want to do away with it, the Lord says **“Keep it.”**

⁷ I (Jesus) am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book ...⁹ I (angel) am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book...¹⁰ He said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book...¹⁶ I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things..." ¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"...¹⁸ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life...²⁰ Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Rev. 22:6-20)

- D. So in this session we're going to address how we're to “read,” “hear” and “keep” the book.

II. THE THREE MAIN “DISASTER VIEWS” CRIPPLING THE CHURCH

- A. Among the varying opinions circulating concerning the nature, message and contents of the book of Revelation there are three views that are the most **prominent** and the most **disastrous**.
- B. We're going to consider these three views in a broad and introductory way. But before we do, I want to make sure that we are clear on this: *Many sincere, humble and Christ adoring believers hold these views. And the fact that they hold these views does not mean that they are reprobate, conniving or licentious.* They are just misled; for whatever reason. Some are in willful disobedience. But many have just been misled by false teaching and are willing to hear truth. There is a big difference between being “misled” and “giving heed to doctrines of demons.” Many who have been misled will be brought into truth because they love truth. We as community must foster this love for truth at all costs. And we must use wisdom, humility and discernment when speaking concerning these

realities knowing that not all men are willfully distorting the truth and that not all men love truth.

¹ The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...² having their conscience seared... (1 Tim. 4:1-2)

⁷ The mystery of lawlessness is already at work...⁹ The coming of the lawless one (Antichrist) is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception...because they did not receive the love of the truth... (2 Thess. 2:7-10)

- C. We need to be humble in our speech when approaching false interpretation giving honor and respect to those who hold them. AND we need to be bold in speaking the truth in opposition to them. And we need to remember that some are willfully distorting truth and others are seeking it but have been temporarily misled. This will temper our speech concerning the end-times.
- D. Some will change their minds and some will persist. But we pray for change and hope for the best. And we labor in the place of prayer and study to become clear and to become steadfast. Our goal is not to win an argument – it's to sway hearts in the hour of need when disagreement with God's purposes can result in terrifying consequences.
- E. I call the following views “disaster views” not to be mean or disrespectful but to communicate the fact that an adherence to these views sets individuals and congregations up for disaster in the days of transition. You can be sincere, genuine, born again and studious and still find yourself at odds with God in the midst of judgment.
- F. It didn't matter how much you loved God and studied His word; if you didn't obey Noah's specific instructions to the people you drowned to death with lungs full of mud. It didn't matter how humble and sincere you were in the days of Assyrian invasion if you didn't listen to Hosea, Amos and Isaiah. If you didn't listen you would have been slain by the swords of Sennacherib's army. It didn't matter how many Temple services you went to or how much you loved God in the days of John the Baptist if you didn't listen to him. If John and Jesus' words were not heeded in a focused, deliberate and intentional way, you would've

been killed by Syrian legions hired by Titus and the Roman Empire to “level” Jerusalem.

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down (“level you” NASB) to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)

- G. Instead of defining the views in their clinical theological terms I want to present them as they are most commonly presented on a “street level.” That is, most people don’t discuss eschatology or the book of Revelation in context to what scholars and commentators say; they discuss the issues the best way they can.
- H. Most of the people that we know hold one of these views. And they don’t define them in strict theological terminology. They define it by saying things like “We aren’t going to be here when the Great Tribulation comes” (***Pre-Tribulation Rapturism***) or “The book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD” (***Preterism***) or “You aren’t supposed to take the book literally! It’s symbolic!” (***Ammillennialism***). Instead of attempting to address these views within the confines of theological banter I’m going to address them at a street level by showing **the glorious alternative** to the values that under-gird the broad confessions that so many of our friends and family hold (like “Get ready! We could be raptured any minute!”).
- I. The most common error that pervades the Western church is the assumption that we cannot know the hour of Jesus’ return and mustn’t (citing Matthew 24:36 out of context). I’ve not counted this in the three. We have already dealt with this issue and will continue to deal with it so we won’t focus on it in this session. The prophets and apostles – and the Lord Jesus Himself – were very clear: We are required to know the hour of His coming.
- J. The three views that we’ll be addressing are:
 - 1. The *Escapist View/Secret Rapture View* of the **Pre-Tribulation Rapture**
 - 2. The *Historical Fulfillment View* of **Preterism**

3. The *Symbolic View of Amillennialism*

III. **THE ESCAPIST VIEW/SECRET RAPTURE VIEW (PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURISM)**

- A. The first view, and probably the most common one, is the idea of a secret rapture. Proponents of this view argue that Jesus will rapture the church prior to the Great Tribulation. They agree that we will be gone before the final 3 ½ years but disagree over whether we're raptured at the 7 year mark or at the 3 ½ year mark.
- B. There are three things to keep in mind when considering this view:
1. **There are four verses in the whole Bible that explicitly speak about the rapture and none of them remotely allude to a secret rapture.** All four say that it occurs at the 7th trumpet; or the "last trumpet." If there is a secret rapture, the Biblical foundation for it cannot be found in any of the rapture verses but must be found outside of them and then projected onto them.
 2. **The idea of a secret rapture was not held or taught until the late 1800's** when a Scottish woman named Margret MacDonald had a vision about the end-times. She told her dream to leaders in the church and was told that it was unbiblical. Her view ended up ringing in the ears of two men who would leave a significant mark on Biblical theology. Their names were John Darby and C.I. Scofield. These men – being from England – were told that this new view was unbiblical and to be rejected. These men moved to the States where they published the "Scofield Study Bible" which remains one of the top selling Bibles in modern times.
 3. **The idea of the secret rapture is only held by those who were influenced by the Western world;** or, by those who were influenced by Scofield's Bible. The view is considered orthodox only in the Western world. And where it is accepted outside of the West is the direct result of Western influence. For example, China sent letters to the States asking the American church to quit sending them Pre-Tribulation teachers to them as it did not aid them in persecution. I was in Indonesia in 2005 right after the Boxing Day Tsunamis. Before preaching one morning I was told that could make no mention of a Pre-Tribulation rapture in my sermon as I was American and "American's believe in a secret rapture."

- C. As I said, **there are only four verses in the entire Bible that speak explicitly about the rapture.** Before bringing anything to the table we need to consider these four verses. (I am including a fifth verse pertaining to the 7th Trumpet for clarity sake) Note the language and the timing indicators in the following verses:

1. *“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall **all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Last Trumpet.** For the Trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised...” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*
2. *“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with **the Trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*
3. *“Immediately **after the Tribulation of those days...**He will send His angels with a **Great Sound of a Trumpet,** and they will gather together His elect...” (Matthew 24:29-31)*
4. *“Concerning **the coming of our Lord and our gathering together [Rapture] to meet Him....**Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed...** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)*
5. *“...in the days of the sounding of **the Seventh Angel/Trumpet,** when He is about to sound, **the mystery of God would be finished,** as He declared it to His servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:7)*

- D. No rapture debate comes without the preacher employing his/her favorite proof texts. But that’s exactly the problem. The problem with this issue is that people use too many proof texts that they shouldn’t be using and distort the ones they should use. If we look at the verses at face value and identify their plain meaning we would be confident to say:

1. We are raptured At the **LAST Trumpet** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
2. We are raptured With **THE Trumpet of God** (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

3. We (the elect) are raptured **AFTER the Tribulation** at a **Great Trumpet** sound (Matthew 24:29-31)
4. We are raptured **AFTER the Falling Away** and **After the Revealing of the Antichrist** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)
5. When the **SEVENTH and LAST Trumpet** sounds the Mystery of God is complete (Revelation 10:7)

- E. The idea of a secret rapture is nonsensical for a multiplicity of peripheral reasons. But if we just look at the *only* passages in Scripture that speak about the event, we have an unequivocal statement that the rapture happens at the Last Trumpet which is also the Seventh Trumpet and that it occurs after the Tribulation and after the emergence of Antichrist and the Great Falling Away.
- F. The consequences of holding this view is being **unprepared** when the end-time events begin to break out, **offended** because the events are breaking out and **confused** because it's too difficult to figure out why God would allow us to be on the earth as the events are breaking out.
- G. The primary objection to the idea of the church's presence on the earth during the Great Tribulation is that "we can't be because God did not appoint us to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9)!"

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ..." (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

1. This is true! We aren't destined to wrath! That's the glorious message of the Gospel of the cross of Christ. Jesus quenched the torrent of wrath that burned against us. But the problem is, this verse has nothing to do with the Rapture.
2. The Great Tribulation is not divine wrath dispensed on the church. The Great Tribulation is divine wrath dispensed on the Antichrist *by the church*. We loose the tearing of the seals by prayer (Rev. 5:8-6:2), we release the trumpets by prayer (Rev. 8:1-5) and we release the bowls of wrath by prayer (Rev. 15).

3. The church is on the earth for the Great Tribulation and is an active participant in the great end-time drama.
- H. The other main objection to the idea of the church's presence on the earth during the Great Tribulation is the idea that "the church is not described as being on the earth in the book of Revelation after chapter 4 when the rapture is." This idea is completely untrue. ***The following are 14 examples of the church's presence and involvement on the earth during the Great Tribulation.***
- A. The great harvest of souls from all nations occurs during the tribulation. The Church will not be absent at the time of our greatest increase and effectiveness in evangelism.
- Behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne...¹⁴ These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Rev. 7:9, 14)***
- This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. (Matt. 24:14)***
- B. The saints will overcome Satan and the Antichrist with great victory during the tribulation.
- They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)***
- I saw...those who have the victory over the beast (Antichrist), over his image and over his mark...standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. (Rev. 15:2)***
- C. Some saints will be martyred during the tribulation. The Church must be on earth at that time.
- For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets... (Rev. 16:6)***
- I saw the woman (Harlot Babylon), drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. (Rev. 17:6)***

In her (Harlot Babylon) was found the blood of prophets and saints... (Rev. 18:24)

He has avenged on her (Harlot Babylon) the blood of His servants shed by her. (Rev. 19:2)

Rejoice...you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her! (Rev. 18:20)

How long...until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? 11...they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed. (Rev. 6:10–11)

I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast (Antichrist)... (Rev. 20:4)

- D. Satan and the Antichrist will war against the saints during the tribulation.

The dragon (Satan) was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 12:17)

It was granted to him (Antichrist) to make war with the saints...10 Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. (Rev. 13:7, 10)

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13...Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. (Rev. 14:12–13)

- E. The 144,000 Jewish servants of God are followers of Jesus.

Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads...4 One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed... (Rev. 7:3–4)

One hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads...3 were redeemed from the earth. 4 These...follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. (Rev. 14:1–4)

They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Rev. 9:4)

- F. The saints' prayers during the tribulation will release the trumpet judgments.

Another angel...was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints...4 The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. (Rev. 8:3–5)

- G. Jesus comes back to earth in answer to the prayer of saints crying out for His return.

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" (Rev. 22:17)

- H. Prophetic ministry will increase greatly during the tribulation (Rev. 11:3–6, 10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6–9; Joel 2:28–32; Acts 2:17–21; Eph. 4:13; Dan. 11:33–35; 12:10). The seven thunders prophecies were sealed in John's generation with the intention of being released during the tribulation to the end-time prophets.

When the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." (Rev. 10:4)

- I. The two witnesses or prophets will be born-again believers.

I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophecy 1,260 days... (Rev. 11:3)

These two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. (Rev. 11:10)

- J. Calculating the number of the Antichrist will only be relevant to those living in the tribulation.

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. (Rev. 13:18)

- K. Believers who watch until the time of the bowl judgments (Rev. 16) will be blessed instead of suffering loss at the time of Jesus' Second Coming.

Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Rev. 16:15)

- L. Only those on earth during the events prophesied by John are in a position to keep the prophecy.

Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev. 22:7)

- M. An angel commands God's people to leave Babylon just prior to her final judgment in Rev. 18.

I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. (Rev. 18:4)

- N. Jesus' bride is prepared in the context of the final judgment of Babylon during the tribulation (Rev. 19:1-10). An angel revealed to Daniel that the saints would be purified during the pressures of the tribulation (Dan. 11:33-35; 12:10)

For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:7)

Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly...but the wise shall understand. (Dan. 12:10)

IV. THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT VIEW (PRETERISM)

- A. One of the most damaging views within the Body of Christ is the idea that the events in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem under the leadership of Titus. This view is growing immensely and is gaining considerable influence.

- B. The view is technically called “Preterism;” they are called “Preterists.” A “Preterit verb” is a word that communicates that which is past tense. The book of Revelation is a *past tense prophecy* in their view; hence the term “Preterist.”
- C. There are three primary reasons that people feel compelled to embrace this view:
1. They think it strange for God to send a prophecy to 7 historical churches in Asia Minor about events that would occur at the end of the age.
 2. They believe that anticipating an age-ending crisis averts our attention and energy from our mandate in the here and now. Many leaders of the “emergent church”⁶ are now advocating this position in view of issues the church’s apparent disengagement with things like the environment and government. They feel that a futuristic interpretation of the book encourages a pessimistic mentality that fosters disengagement and negativity.
 3. They find it too costly to embrace the idea of a coming hour of global crisis that culminates in the literal splitting of the skies and a violent battle procession from heaven’s courts through the Middle East and into Jerusalem. The stigma attached to the book of Revelation makes it easy for them to “believe” that it has already been fulfilled. It’s too embarrassing to hold to a literal return and a literal Millennial reign.
- D. One of the intellectual hurdles that people can’t get over is the question of “If this vision was intended for the final generation in church history, why was it given to the first generation in church history?” The assumption is “If it was a revelation that was meant for the final generation it has no relevance to the first generation or any generation in between.
1. George Ladd explains the invalidity of this assumption by saying: “This is an argument **[of relevance]** which cannot be pressed too far, or else it will *empty many of the Old Testament prophecies of any relevance*. The prophets spoke not only of contemporary events; they constantly related contemporary historical events to the last great event at the end of

⁶ Men like Brian McLaren have openly criticized the idea of a future literal second coming in hopes that the church would engage with issues like global warming.

history: the Day of the Lord when God will visit His people to redeem them and to establish His Kingdom. This brings us to a characteristic of Old Testament prophecy which is also characteristic of the Revelation and which solves this problem of distance and relevance. As we have just pointed out, the prophets had two foci in their prophetic perspective: the events of the present and immediate future, and the ultimate eschatological event. *These two are held in dynamic tension often without chronological distinction, for **the main purpose of prophecy** is not to give a program or chart of the future, but to let the light of the eschatological fall on the present (2 Peter 1.19)."*⁷

- E. **The greatest flaw of this view** is the fact that none of the events contained in the book of Revelation were even remotely fulfilled in the first century.
- F. **The next greatest flaw with this view** is the fact that it changes the book's genre from being prophecy to being history (and poorly recorded history). The book was written in the 90's during the reign of "Domitian." This is decades after the rise of Nero in the 60's and the fall of Jerusalem in the 70's. Not only would that make it historical and not prophetic but it would also mean that the book demands far less respect; because the discrepancy between what happened in history and what John saw is incalculable.
1. The scope and impact of the judgment events
 2. The dramatic nature of the rise and fall of "the beast"
 3. The global sifting of the people of God
 4. The second coming of Jesus
- G. To affirm that the events contained in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the first century is also to affirm these four statements:
1. ***God is Inaccurate in His Predictions of the Future*** in that Christ did not return, the oppressive empire was not overthrown, the Kingdom of God was not established "on the earth," and none of the events described in the Seals, Trumpets or Bowls can accurately, sensibly, logically or

⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*

indisputably be linked to **any** historical or current event. In a sentence, if this is the Lord's prophecy concerning the first century, *He missed it*.

2. ***God is Ineffective in Strengthening His people*** in that church history unanimously tells us that the Book was written between 81 and 96 B.C. This means that God gave the "prophecy" some 20-30 years after the so called rage of "Nero the Beast from the Sea (A.D. 64)" held sway over "every tribe and tongue" during his tyrannical reign. This then puts God two or three decades late in telling His people about what was about to happen. The argument that it was written primarily and even solely for these 7 historical churches as a warning to strengthen and encourage the church going through the persecution led by Nero is a faulty one in that it was written decades after the events occurred serving no purpose for those under the rule of Nero the alleged "Beast" of chapter 13.
 - a. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul in the second century wrote, "It (The Revelation) was seen not very long ago, almost in our generation, at the close of ***the reign of Domitian (81-96 A.D.)***."
 - b. Victorinus wrote in the third century, "When John said these things he was on the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by ***Caesar Domitian.***"
 - c. "Another ***serious difficulty*** to the earlier dating (60's A.D.) is the earthquake that destroyed Laodicea, one of the seven cities addressed in Revelation, in A.D. 60 or 61. Evidence indicates that the earthquake had long-term effects on the area. Laodicea was deeply involved in reconstruction for the rest of Nero's reign and shortly thereafter. The possibility of the existence of a city, much less a relatively degenerate church in that city, during the 60s is highly questionable. Gentry's (*a scholar who is of the few to challenge the historical dating of the book*) attempted rebuttal of this argument (pp. 319-22) is again far-fetched."⁸
 - d. The theory associated with an early dating of the book assumes and concludes that there was foreseen "*...an imminent world-wide persecution of the church by Rome (Rev. 13-1-18)*. The church

⁸ Robert L. Thomas, *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*

was about to face practical annihilation (*Rev 12-13*); to steel God's people in the face of their trials, John wrote to assure them that though they must expect to suffer, the coming of the Lord was at hand *to overthrow Rome* and to deliver his church. ***The problem with this theory is that there is no evidence that during the last decade of the first century there occurred any open and systematic persecution of the church.....***It is true that widespread persecution was promoted by Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, but earlier persecutions were local in character or relatively mild in execution. Nero did indeed instigate a vigorous if brief persecution on Christians, but only in Rome and on a single occasion. ***The alleged persecution by no means was empire-wide but was directed against a few families in Rome.***" (George Eldon Ladd)

- e. Clearly the message of the Book was meant to strengthen the believers in the 1st century. The issue though is over the nature of that encouragement. The reality of the ultimate and final world crisis was to encourage them in their regional, local and historical one.
- f. It's interesting that no one challenged the dating of the Book until recently. This does not mean that church leaders have been extremely gullible for 2,000 years but that it has been historically documented as being written in the 90's.

- 3. ***God is Extremely ambiguous, vague and unconcerned with specificity in His communication.*** That is, definitive terms, phrases and realities were shown to John that spoke of world-wide events that would have impact on the entire earth in an ultimate way. To say that the events took place already is to say that God cares not about communicating truths in any sort of sensible, logical, or understandable manner. Instead He has chosen to speak of isolated historical events of an un-ultimate kind by using completely different language that in no way resembles those historical events. In other words there is nothing in the chronological sections or the parenthetical sections that can be obviously linked to anything in history (without completely manipulating and distorting the text to fit fringe and obscure events like the sinking of the Titanic and the existence of certain diseases) making God a horrible communicator.

4. **God is guilty of excessive exaggeration.** Some people would call this “lying.” Why? - Because He employs radical language to speak of events that do not match up in any way shape or form on a historical plane. For instance (*Just one example*):

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13.5-8)

- a. There is a clear period of 42 months – *it is either historic or prophetic.*
- b. In order for it to be historic we must then say with confidence that the Roman Emperor Nero waged war on “every tribe, tongue and nation” as well as received the “worship of all who dwelt on the face of the earth” for 42 months. No one can honestly say this without willingly ignoring the text and history altogether.
- c. In Revelation 19 the Beast is destroyed *at the Coming of Jesus* forcing us to conclude its sure future fulfillment. Nero died alone and pathetic; not at the splitting of the skies at the return of Jesus.

V. THE SYMBOLIC/NEBULOUS VIEW (AMMILLENNIALISM)

- A. This view can be summed by saying that those who hold it end up saying that the book of Revelation is fulfilled by anything from the Titanic sinking to 9-11 to the Anthrax scare to “global warming.” Most that advocate Reformed Theology fall into this pit of exegetical disaster. I advocate Reformed Theology just as these men do. The error though in many Reformed circles is to project a bunk hermeneutic onto literally *hundreds* of chapters to keep consistent with the fathers of their tradition. Men like Augustine have done incalculable damage to

the studying of eschatology. I love Augustine! His soteriology is brilliant! But o how he distorted eschatology for so many.

B. This camp is adamant that a straight forward approach to the book is lunacy and that there are no literal realities behind the apocalyptic imagery.

1. The greatest weakness of this theology is **flaming inconsistency**. They employ a literal hermeneutic to every other area of theology (soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.) while attempting to use another one for eschatology.

2. They will often say things like “You don’t read an Atlas or a history book like you would read Shakespeare – they’re different genres.” While that is true, the analogy runs aground in that the imagery and poetry of the apocalyptic books and passages are all interpreted by Scripture as being literal events that precede the Day of the Lord at the end of the age.

3. So while we don’t approach a book however we want, and while we need to take genre into consideration, it’s clear from the prophet, apostles and Jesus that the imagery and symbolism isn’t meant to be ethereal and ambiguous to us but is designed to help our hearts connect with the literal realities that will break out at the end of the age.

4. Let’s remember that there are only 7 symbols in the book that need to be interpreted. And let’s remember that the 7 are interpreted by the angel in the text itself.

15. **Dragon:** Satan

16. **Woman with a Male Child:** Elect Remnant of Ethnic Jews and Jesus

17. **Beast:** Antichrist

18. **Another Beast:** False Prophet

19. **Harlot Babylon:** A Global End-Time Demonized Religious and Financial network

20. **Seven Heads:** Seven Empires that Persecuted Ethnic Israel

21. **Ten Horns:** A 10 nation confederacy of nations in the Middle East (Ez. 38-39)

B. This is a haphazard approach to the book where any past or current event can be what is meant in the book. I use the word “Nebulous” because the method of

interpretation is vague, hazy, undefined and unarticulated. **Because the book is “symbolic” and “allegorical” the interpretation of those symbols are open to any and all to decide what they think it mean.** That’s why virtually no Amillennialists agree with each other.

- C. The result of this view is widespread disagreement. One commentator says that the fact that there is no sea in the age to come means that there is “no denominations in eternity” whereas another says that “it is symbolic of national boundary lines” whereas another says “it is symbolic of the Gospel going forth to all nations at the end” whereas another says “it means in the age to come there will be no ocean.” Nearly every verse in Revelation is defined differently by those who say that no literal reality is behind the symbolism.
- D. The book of Revelation mustn’t be defined as being “literal” or “symbolic.” That’s very unhelpful. Here’s why: If God speaks to His people through a symbol, they can and must be sure that that symbol points to a literal, cold, hard reality. There is no symbol in Scripture that does not point us to a literal reality.
- E. Therefore, we shouldn’t call the book “literal” or “symbolic.” We should say “we approach the book at face value.” That is, every symbol points to a reality. And every reality can be spoken of by a clear symbol.
 - 1. Example: In Revelation chapter 4 we read that God the Father sits on a Throne that is surrounded by an “emerald rainbow.” We read that He looks like “a sardius and a jasper stone.” Now, we aren’t meant to teach people that God is a sardius and a jasper stone. Those stones came into John’s mind to help describe what he literally saw. The literal reality that is behind that radiant diamond looking “jasper stone” is the transcendence of God in all His holiness as He sits surrounded by light. The literal reality that is behind that fiery red “sardius stone” is the burning heart of God. The stone looks like fire. And the Scriptures compare God to a “jealous husband” who has “fire in His eyes” and who is a “consuming fire.”
 - 2. Every symbol in the book of Revelation is **either interpreted in the same context,** OR is **interpreted by Scripture elsewhere** OR **common sense.**
- F. The amillennialist camp is guilty of some of the most horrendous distortion of the Scriptures in church history. We do not honor the book of Revelation by rendering the symbols “unknowable” and so nebulous that the common believer cannot conclude what they mean.

Session 4: Was the Book of Revelation Fulfilled in History?

In this session I want to argue that the events contained in the book of Revelation are meant to be understood as being future and literal in nature. And I want to show that any attempt to explain the contents of the book away as being historically fulfilled or intended to be understood symbolically is (1) altogether *nonsensical*, (2) extremely *dangerous* and (3) radically *inconsistent* with the hermeneutic⁹ Scripture gives for eschatological passages and the hermeneutic that we use for all other areas of theology.

I. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A. The Four Parts

1. John's Commissioning (1)
2. The 7 Letters to the 7 Churches (2-3)
3. The Throne Room (4-5)
4. The Transition Period Between this Age and the Next (6-22)

B. The Five "Acts" within the Fourth Part

1. 7 Seals (Then Explained by an Angelic Interjection)
2. 7 Trumpets (Then Explained by an Angelic Interjection)
3. 7th Trumpet: Rapture and Beginning of Second Coming Procession (Then Explained by an Angelic Interjection)
4. 7 Bowls of Wrath (Then Explained by an Angelic Interjection)
5. Jesus' March Into Jerusalem (Then Explained by an Angelic Interjection)

II. THE THREE MAIN "DISASTER VIEWS" CRIPPLING THE CHURCH

A. The three views that we need to address are:

5. *The Escapist View/Secret Rapture View* of the **Pre-Tribulation Rapture**

⁹ The term "Hermeneutics" comes from the Greek word that means "to interpret." In theology, hermeneutics is the method of interpreting a given passage correctly and faithfully.

6. The *Historical Fulfillment View* of **Preterism**

7. The *Symbolic/Nebulous View* of **Amillennialism/Post-Millennialism**

B. In the last session we dealt with the issue of the danger of the pre-tribulation rapture. We saw that the rapture is synonymous with the second coming and occurs at the 7th or last Trumpet (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; Matt. 24:31; 2 Thess. 2:1-3).

“...and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

1. The day of vengeance, judgment and punishment is also the day He comes for the saints to relieve them of affliction and to be glorified in them as they marvel at Him.

2. The “blessed hope” of the church in affliction is not a secret rapture that can happen at any moment. According to Paul, our relief comes *only* when Jesus is revealed in flaming fire (not hidden in a secret rapture) to inflict judgment (not take people to heaven).

C. The foundational mandate of the forerunner ministry is to “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). And an integral part of make ready a people prepared for the Lord is stating clearly the nature and quality of His leadership in history.

III. THE HISTORICAL FULFILLMENT VIEW (PRETERISM)

A. One of the most damaging, dangerous and destructive views that is emerging within the Body of Christ in our generation ¹⁰ is the idea that the events in the

¹⁰ The view has gained credence and momentum in the last 10 years in an unprecedented way.

book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem under the leadership of Titus. This view is growing immensely and is gaining considerable influence. This is the orthodox view for many seminaries and Bible schools in America.

- B. The view is technically called “Preterism;” those who hold it are called “Preterists.” A “Preterit verb” is a word that communicates that which is past tense. The book of Revelation is a *past tense prophecy* in their view; hence the term “Preterist.”
- C. There are **four primary reasons** that people feel compelled to embrace this view of historical fulfillment. They see our view as being:
1. **Too Irrelevant** – They think it strange for God to send a prophecy to 7 historical churches in Asia Minor about events that would occur at the end of the age. Why not address it to the end-time church? If it’s for them why was it addressed to the first generation church?
 2. **Too Loose** – The language of “nearness,” “imminence” and “soon-ness” alluding to the fact that the generation that Jesus was speaking to was the generation that would see the fulfillment of the prophecies forces them to take the texts at a ‘face-value’ level. They say that Jesus promised the end of the age was ‘soon’ and that therefore 70 AD must have been it.
 3. **Too Misleading** – They believe that anticipating an age-ending crisis averts our attention and energy from our mandate in the here and now. Many leaders of the “emergent church” ¹¹ are now advocating this position in view of issues the church’s apparent disengagement with things like the environment and government. They feel that a futuristic interpretation of the book encourages a pessimistic mentality that fosters disengagement and negativity.
 4. **Too Embarrassing** – They find it too costly to embrace the idea of a coming hour of global crisis that culminates in the literal splitting of the skies and a violent battle procession from heaven’s courts through the

¹¹ Men like Brian McLaren have openly criticized the idea of a future literal second coming in hopes that the church would engage with issues like global warming.

Middle East and into Jerusalem. The stigma attached to the book of Revelation makes it easy for them to “believe” that it has already been fulfilled. It’s too embarrassing to hold to a literal return and a literal Millennial reign.

- D. ***No one reads the book of Revelation and concludes that it must have been fulfilled in history; you need to be indoctrinated to believe that.*** And so, very rarely will you find an ignorant and unlearned person affirming preterism. It is almost always advocated by someone who has been taught the system.
- E. The issue of relevance (point 1) is important to understand. One of the intellectual hurdles that people can’t get over is the question of “If this vision was intended for the final generation in church history, why was it given to the first generation in church history?” The assumption is “If it was a revelation that was meant for the final generation it has no relevance to the first generation or any generation in between.” The problem with this view is that the book of Revelation isn’t the only book that moves from history to prophecy seamlessly.
1. George Ladd explains the invalidity of this assumption by saying: “This...argument [***of relevance***] which cannot be pressed too far, or else it will *empty many of the Old Testament prophecies of any relevance*. The prophets spoke not only of contemporary events; they constantly related contemporary historical events to the last great event at the end of history: the Day of the Lord when God will visit His people to redeem them and to establish His Kingdom. This brings us to a characteristic of Old Testament prophecy which is also characteristic of the Revelation and which solves this problem of distance and relevance. As we have just pointed out, the prophets had two foci in their prophetic perspective: the events of the present and immediate future, and the ultimate eschatological event. *These two are held in dynamic tension often without chronological distinction, for **the main purpose of prophecy** is not to give a program or chart of the future, but to let the light of the eschatological fall on the present (2 Peter 1.19).*”¹²
 2. The prime example of the use of prophecy in history is the book of Isaiah.

¹² George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*

- a. Historical crisis of chapter 1 blends into the eschatological crisis of chapter 2
- b. Assyria in chapter 10 becomes Antichrist by chapter 11 by virtue of the fact that Isaiah shifted from prophesying about Assyrian invasion to the second coming of Jesus.

F. ***The greatest flaw of this view is the fact that none of the events contained in the book of Revelation were even remotely fulfilled in the first century.***

1. **The scope and impact of the judgment events** – “the whole earth worshipped the beast,” “1/3 of the earth was killed,” “every eye will see Him,” etc. The scope and impact cannot be ignored or explained away. John saw the impact and heard the numbers of casualties on many occasions. It’s too serious and too dramatic to explain away as historical when nothing fits.
2. **The dramatic nature of the rise and fall of “the beast”** – The beast emerges from the bottomless pit and receives the worship of the whole earth. Nero was another Roman whose name wasn’t even widely known until modern times. The beast implements religious and economic sanctions on the whole earth and then kills the saints and the Jews for not obeying. Nero’s persecution was brief and, according to most scholars, was limited to one family in Rome. It wasn’t worldwide persecution, it wasn’t even empire wide. In fact, it wasn’t even city-wide. The beast is killed by Jesus’ literal physical appearing. Nero stabbed himself in the throat because he was afraid of being caught by men on horses. He quoted a line from Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ and then died saying “The world is losing its greatest artist.” Nero was a pathetic historical leader. The beast is an unprecedented eschatological tyrant.
3. **The global sifting of the people of God** – The book of Revelation clearly depicts the context of the hour of fulfillment as being the bloodiest hour in the church’s history. This 42 month period will be a global blood-bath. Nothing in history remotely resembles the carnage that we see in the 5th Seal of chapter 6, the innumerable multitude of chapter 7, the Satanic persecution of chapter 12, the Beast’s oppression in chapter 13, the patience of the saints in ch. 14 and the Babylonian aggression in chapters

17 and 18. Jesus said that if the hour were not cut short by His return no flesh would survive (Mt. 24:21-22).

8. The second coming of Jesus – The book concludes with the physical and literal return of Jesus. Anyone can figure out that this has not occurred yet. Even if one could make a case for the book of Revelation being symbolic (which they can't), they would have to explain away the dozens of passages that speak of a bodily return and a physical reign on the earth.

G. ***The next greatest flaw with this view is the fact that it changes the book's genre from being prophecy to being history (and poorly recorded history).*** The book was written in the 90's during the reign of "Domitian." This is decades after the rise of Nero in the 60's and the fall of Jerusalem in the 70's. Not only would that make it historical and not prophetic but it would also mean that the book demands far less respect; because the discrepancy between what happened in history and what John saw is incalculable.

H. ***What about the apparent immediacy of the prophecies to the first generation?*** If we impose immediacy on Revelation we must also impose it on the other dozens of passages that use language of nearness. The point wasn't **immediacy** but **surety**. (See Haggai 2:6 and the author's use of it in Hebrews 12:26 [and not the rough 580 year gap]) The immediacy factor comes into play only in the generation meets the conditions for the events to occur. Until then the people of God are to hold to the surety of the events – not the immediacy. Think: with no Jews on any Jewish soil there exists no possibility of immediacy. That was Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. Conditions must be met.

(Isaiah 10: 25) "For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and my anger in their destruction."

(Isaiah 13: 6) "Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty."

(Isaiah 56: 1) "Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed."

(Jeremiah 51: 33) “For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like threshing-floor, and it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.”

(Ezekiel 30: 3) “For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.”

(Ezekiel 36: 8) “But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come.”

(Joel 1: 15) “Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.”

(Joel 2: 1) “Blow ye a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, it is nigh at hand.”

(Zephaniah 1: 14) “The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty men shall cry there bitterly.”

(Haggai 2: 6) “For thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

IV. PRETERISM’S ATTACK ON THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE QUALITY OF HIS LEADERSHIP

To affirm that the events contained in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the first century is also to affirm these four statements:

- A. ***God is Inaccurate in His Predictions of the Future*** in that Christ did not return, the oppressive empire was not overthrown, the Kingdom of God was not established “on the earth,” and none of the events described in the Seals, Trumpets or Bowls can accurately, sensibly, logically or indisputably be linked to ***any*** historical or current event. In a sentence, if this is the Lord’s prophecy concerning the first century, *He missed it.*

- B. ***God is Ineffective in Strengthening His people*** in that church history unanimously tells us that the Book was written between 81 and 96 B.C. This means that God gave the “prophecy” some 20-30 years after the so called rage of “Nero the Beast from the Sea (A.D. 64)” held sway over “every tribe and tongue” during his tyrannical reign. This then puts God two or three decades late in telling His people about what was about to happen. The argument that it was written primarily and even solely for these 7 historical churches as a warning to strengthen and encourage the church going through the persecution led by Nero is a faulty one in that it was written decades after the events occurred serving no purpose for those under the rule of Nero the alleged “Beast” of chapter 13.
1. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul in the second century wrote, “It (The Revelation) was seen not very long ago, almost in our generation, at the close of ***the reign of Domitian*** (81-96 A.D.).”
 2. Victorinus wrote in the third century, “When John said these things he was on the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by ***Caesar Domitian.***”
 3. “Another ***serious difficulty*** to the earlier dating (60’s A.D.) is the earthquake that destroyed Laodicea, one of the seven cities addressed in Revelation, in A.D. 60 or 61. Evidence indicates that the earthquake had long-term effects on the area. Laodicea was deeply involved in reconstruction for the rest of Nero's reign and shortly thereafter. The possibility of the existence of a city, much less a relatively degenerate church in that city, during the 60s is highly questionable. Gentry's (*a scholar who is of the few to challenge the historical dating of the book*) attempted rebuttal of this argument (pp. 319-22) is again far-fetched.”¹³
 4. The theory associated with an early dating of the book assumes and concludes that there was foreseen “...*an imminent world-wide persecution of the church by Rome (Rev. 13-1-18)*. The church was about to face practical annihilation (*Rev 12-13*); to steel God’s people in the face of their trials, John wrote to assure them that though they must expect to suffer, the coming of the Lord was at hand *to overthrow Rome* and to deliver his church. ***The problem with this theory is that there is no***

¹³ Robert L. Thomas, *Commentary on the Book of Revelation*

evidence that during the last decade of the first century there occurred any open and systematic persecution of the church.....It is true that widespread persecution was promoted by Decius, Valerian, and Diocletian, but earlier persecutions were local in character or relatively mild in execution. Nero did indeed instigate a vigorous if brief persecution on Christians, but only in Rome and on a single occasion. ***The alleged persecution by no means was empire-wide but was directed against a few families in Rome.***" (George Eldon Ladd)

5. Clearly the message of the Book was meant to strengthen the believers in the 1st century. The issue though is over the nature of that encouragement. The reality of the ultimate and final world crisis was to encourage them in their regional, local and historical one.
6. It's interesting that no one challenged the dating of the Book until recent times. This does not mean that church leaders have been extremely gullible for 2,000 years but that it has been historically documented as being written in the 90's.

C. ***God is Extremely ambiguous, vague and unconcerned with specificity in His communication.*** That is, definitive terms, phrases and realities were shown to John that spoke of world-wide events that would have impact on the entire earth in an ultimate way. To say that the events took place already is to say that God cares not about communicating truths in any sort of sensible, logical, or understandable manner. Instead He has chosen to speak of isolated historical events of an un-ultimate kind by using completely different language that in no way resembles those historical events. In other words there is nothing in the chronological sections or the parenthetical sections that can be obviously linked to anything in history (without completely manipulating and distorting the text to fit fringe and obscure events like the sinking of the Titanic and the existence of certain diseases) making God a horrible communicator.

D. ***God is guilty of excessive exaggeration.*** Some people would call this "lying." Why? - Because He employs radical language to speak of events that do not match up in any way shape or form on a historical plane. For instance (*Just one example*):

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. 6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 13.5-8)

1. There is a clear period of 42 months – *it is either historic or prophetic*.
2. In order for it to be historic we must then say with confidence that the Roman Emperor Nero waged war on “every tribe, tongue and nation” as well as received the “worship of all who dwelt on the face of the earth” for 42 months. No one can honestly say this without willingly ignoring the text and history altogether.
3. In Revelation 19 the Beast is destroyed *at the Coming of Jesus* forcing us to conclude its sure future fulfillment. Nero died alone and pathetic; not at the splitting of the skies at the return of Jesus.

V. THE SYMBOLIC/NEBULOUS VIEW (AMMILLENNIALISM/POST-MILLENNIALISM)

- A. This view can be summed by saying that those who hold it end up saying that the book of Revelation is fulfilled by anything from the Titanic sinking to 9-11 to the Anthrax scare to “global warming.” Most that advocate Reformed Theology fall into this pit of exegetical disaster. I advocate Reformed Theology just as these men do. The error though in many Reformed circles is to project a bunk hermeneutic onto literally *hundreds* of chapters to keep consistent with the fathers of their tradition. Men like Augustine have done incalculable damage to the studying of eschatology. I love Augustine! His soteriology is brilliant! But o how he distorted eschatology for so many.
- B. This camp is adamant that a straight forward approach to the book is lunacy and that there are no literal realities behind the apocalyptic imagery.

1. The greatest weakness of this theology is **flaming inconsistency**. They employ a literal hermeneutic to every other area of theology (soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.) while attempting to use another one for eschatology.
2. They will often say things like “You don’t read an Atlas or a history book like you would read Shakespeare – they’re different genres.” While that is true, the analogy runs aground in that the imagery and poetry of the apocalyptic books and passages are all interpreted by Scripture as being literal events that precede the Day of the Lord at the end of the age.
3. So while we don’t approach a book however we want, and while we need to take genre into consideration, it’s clear from the prophet, apostles and Jesus that the imagery and symbolism isn’t meant to be ethereal and ambiguous to us but is designed to help our hearts connect with the literal realities that will break out at the end of the age.
4. Let’s remember that there are only 7 symbols in the book that need to be interpreted. And let’s remember that the 7 are interpreted by the angel in the text itself.

22. **Dragon:** Satan

23. **Woman with a Male Child:** Elect Remnant of Ethnic Jews and Jesus

24. **Beast:** Antichrist

25. **Another Beast:** False Prophet

26. **Harlot Babylon:** A Global End-Time Demonized Religious and Financial network

27. **Seven Heads:** Seven Empires that Persecuted Ethnic Israel

28. **Ten Horns:** A 10 nation confederacy of nations in the Middle East (Ez. 38-39)

- B. This is a haphazard approach to the book where any past or current event can be what is meant in the book. I use the word “Nebulous” because the method of interpretation is vague, hazy, undefined and unarticulated. **Because the book is “symbolic” and “allegorical” the interpretation of those symbols are open to any and all to decide what they think it mean.** That’s why virtually no Amillennialists agree with each other.
- C. The result of this view is widespread disagreement. One commentator says that the fact that there is no sea in the age to come means that there is “no denominations in eternity” whereas another says that “it is symbolic of national

boundary lines” whereas another says “it is symbolic of the Gospel going forth to all nations at the end” whereas another says “it means in the age to come there will be no ocean.” Nearly every verse in Revelation is defined differently by those who say that no literal reality is behind the symbolism.

- D. The book of Revelation mustn't be defined as being “literal” or “symbolic.” That's very unhelpful. Here's why: If God speaks to His people through a symbol, they can and must be sure that that symbol points to a literal, cold, hard reality. There is no symbol in Scripture that does not point us to a literal reality.
- E. Therefore, we shouldn't call the book “literal” or “symbolic.” We should say “we approach the book at face value.” That is, every symbol points to a reality. And every reality can be spoken of by a clear symbol.
 - 1. Example: In Revelation chapter 4 we read that God the Father sits on a Throne that is surrounded by an “emerald rainbow.” We read that He looks like “a sardius and a jasper stone.” Now, we aren't meant to teach people that God is a sardius and a jasper stone. Those stones came into John's mind to help describe what he literally saw. The literal reality that is behind that radiant diamond looking “jasper stone” is the transcendence of God in all His holiness as He sits surrounded by light. The literal reality that is behind that fiery red “sardius stone” is the burning heart of God. The stone looks like fire. And the Scriptures compare God to a “jealous husband” who has “fire in His eyes” and who is a “consuming fire.”
 - 2. Every symbol in the book of Revelation is **either interpreted in the same context, OR is interpreted by Scripture elsewhere OR common sense.**
- F. The amillennialist camp is guilty of some of the most horrendous distortion of the Scriptures in church history. We do not honor the book of Revelation by rendering the symbols “unknowable” and so nebulous that the common believer cannot conclude what they mean.

Session 5: John's Commissioning and His Encounter with the Beauty of Jesus (Chapter 1)

I. THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

A. The Four Parts

- 1. John's Commissioning**
- 2. The 7 Letters**
- 3. The Throne Room Vision and Transfer of Power**
- 4. The Transition Period Between this Age and the Next**

B. In this session we're going to look at the first part of the book.

II. GETTING THE BOOK OF REVELATION OUT OF THE GUTTER

A. The book of Revelation has been so trivialized and marginalized in modern times. As we approach it we need to do so knowing that the central message is the beauty of Jesus and the reality of his return. Knowing this will help us remove the book from the "gutter" as it were as the Holy Spirit emphasizes its message in a unique way at the end of the age: It's an integral part of the apostolic Gospel and its central message is the beauty of Jesus. How can it be marginalized and sidelined?

B. The book is absolutely essential and absolutely necessary in the equipping of the end-time church. It is not an optional subject. It is mandatory. And we as messengers of its contents must be aware that the book is intimately connected to what the Scriptures call "the Gospel." The dichotomy between "Gospel" and "Consummation" must be eradicated in the coming years. The book of Revelation is the story of the consummation of the mystery of the Gospel. Therefore we need to understand that the book of Revelation is vital to the preaching of the gospel at the end of the age. If you are into preaching the Gospel you're into the book of Revelation.

- C. The heart of this end-time document is the apostolic gospel. This book reveals how all that which the gospel entails is brought into fullness – the completion of the mystery of God (Revelation 10:7). Jesus in Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel of the kingdom (the mystery of God) will be preached to the nation and then the end will come.

“The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven ⁶and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, ⁷ but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.”
(Revelation 10:5-7)

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

- D. And Revelation chapter 1 is an integral part of the vision that John received – it is his commissioning. And his commissioning consisted of a vision of the glory of the risen Christ.

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

III. AN OUTLINE AND OVERVIEW OF REVELATION CHAPTER 1

- A. As has been said, the Revelation of Jesus Christ is crucial and essential for the equipping of prophetic messengers; it is not optional. Revelation Chapter 1 is critical to understanding the rest of the book and is easily overlooked. It's important to contemplate and meditate on because it explains the nature of John's commissioning and what he was being called to proclaim. Every commissioning reveals so much about the message and the historic and prophetic context of that message. The first chapter of Revelation reveals so much about the nature of its message and its historic and prophetic context.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. (Isaiah 6:1)

The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month. Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jeremiah 1:1-5)

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles ... Galatians 1:15-16

B. The Outline of the Chapter:

1. **The Prologue – 1:1-3**
2. **Greeting and Blessing – 1:4-6**
3. **An Oracle Concerning the Coming of the Lord – 1:7-8**
4. **John's Vision of Jesus on Patmos – 1:9-20**

C. **The Prologue – 1:1-3**

1. The Nature of the Book – 1:1
2. The Central Message of the Book – 1:1
3. The Contents of the Book – 1:2
4. What We're Supposed to Do with the Book – 1:3

D. **Greeting and Blessing – 1:4-6**

1. Grace and Peace – 1:4
2. From the Father, Son and Spirit – 1:5
3. Doxology to Him who loved us, freed us and exalted us – 1:5-6

- E. **An Oracle Concerning the Coming of the Lord – 1:7-8**
 - 1. He is coming on the cloud and every eye will see Him and all will mourn even those who pierced Him (ethnic Jews) – 1:7
 - 2. The Alpha and Omega who *is*, who *was* and who *is to come*, the Almighty – 1:8

- F. **John’s Encounter with Jesus on Patmos – 1:9-20**
 - 1. Where and when John had the vision – 1:9-10
 - 2. The command John received – 1:11
 - 3. The vision of the Glory of Christ the Son of Man – 1:12-16
 - 4. John’s weakness and Jesus’ glory – 1:17-18
 - 5. The command to write to the 7 churches – 1:19
 - 6. Jesus explains the symbolism and gives a hermeneutic for the rest of the book – 1:20

IV. THE GLORY OF CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. The vision that John saw contained a number of unique descriptions of Jesus’ person and work (leadership) that is essential for us to understand. Of the dozens of facets of Jesus’ glory that is revealed in the book, I want to emphasize four as they are clearly the most prominent. The five are:
 - 1. Jesus the Lamb of God
 - 2. Jesus the King
 - 3. Jesus the Judge
 - 4. Jesus the Bridegroom
 - 5. Jesus the Military Leader (Root of David)

- B. The revelation of the person of Jesus is the highest and most precious revelation one could ever receive. BUT, this is not the ONLY reason God gave us this book as a gift. **The general blessing one can receive from the book is the revelation of the beauty of Jesus. This is incredible! But it isn't the fullness of the blessing. God gave us this information so that we would understand what HE would be doing, what MEN would be doing and what SATAN would be doing in the final generation of natural history.**
- C. That information is contained in chapters 6-19. And that information is most readily received and properly digested by hearts that have beheld the glory of Jesus.

V. JESUS THE LAMB OF GOD

- A. ***John called Jesus "the Lamb" 29 times*** (5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3). Clearly Jesus the Lamb is the central figure of the book.
 - 1. We need to contend for the centrality of the Jesus the lamb in our studying, understanding, preaching and praying of the book of Revelation.
 - 2. We need to see the continuity from the Gospel of John to John's vision on Patmos. It's the same Man. Whenever John sees Jesus do something in the book he identifies Him as "the Lamb."
 - 3. The term "lamb" is used almost completely in context to worship. That means that the revelation of Jesus as a lamb is the predominant fuel for worship in the book of Revelation. And that beckons us to come behold Him as a Lamb. I want to come haze upon Him as Lamb so that my heart would awaken in love and adoration to the degree that we see it displayed in the throne room.
- B. The idea of Jesus being a Lamb communicates the reality of Jesus' sacrificial death on Golgotha when He was "slain" for the "sin of the world."
 - 1. The primary use of the imagery of a lamb in the OT is sacrificial. We see it in the Passover in Exodus 11-12, the ceremony of Exodus 29 and Numbers 28-29 and the description of the ministry of the suffering Servant in Isaiah 53:7.

These passages are applied to Christ in the NT in passages like John 1:29, 35; Acts 8:32; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19.

2. The Lamb is described in chapter 5 as being “slain.” This removes any ambiguity as to what we’re to understand “lamb” to mean. The word “slain” literally means “*slaughtered*.” John combines the sacrificial language of the sacrificial lamb and the prophetic language of the suffering servant.
- C. Three foundational statements concerning the nature of the death of Christ:
1. 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “became sin”
 2. Galatians 3:13 – “became a curse”
 3. Romans 8:3 – “condemned sin in the flesh (of Jesus)”
- D. Jesus can claim the right to take the scroll and to break its seals precisely because He was slain as a sacrificial lamb. **This is the theological foundation of the end-time judgment events.** If we fail to understand the relationship between the first and second coming we miss the heart of the book of Revelation. John was laboring to make sure we didn’t see his vision on Patmos as something that was inconsistent or incongruent with his vision of Jesus during those 3 ½ years of His earthly ministry.

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense,

which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain... (Revelation 5:1-9)

- E. There is a stunning parallel between Jesus statement in John 19 and the final declaration from heaven after the bowls are poured out in Revelation 16:

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30)

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" (Revelation 16:17)

1. Understanding the intensity of the wrath of God poured out upon Jesus at the cross guards our hearts from offense when we seek to understand the intensity of the wrath of God poured out upon the earth at the end of the age.
2. We trust His heart and His leadership in the end-times because of what He has done for us historically.
3. The cross is the foundation of the end-time message.

- F. The 28 verses (29 times) that reveal Jesus as "Lamb:"

(Revelation 5:6) And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

(Revelation 5:8) And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

(Revelation 5:12) saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

(Revelation 5:13) And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

(Revelation 6:1) Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!"

(Revelation 6:16) calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

(Revelation 7:9) After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

(Revelation 7:10) and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

(Revelation 7:14) I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

(Revelation 7:17) For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

(Revelation 8:1) When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

(Revelation 12:11) And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

(Revelation 13:8) and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain.

(Revelation 13:11) Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

(Revelation 14:1) Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

(Revelation 14:4) It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb,

(Revelation 14:10) he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

(Revelation 15:3) And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"

(Revelation 17:14) They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

(Revelation 19:7) Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

(Revelation 19:9) And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

(Revelation 21:9) Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

(Revelation 21:14) And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

(Revelation 21:22) And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

(Revelation 21:23) And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

(Revelation 21:27) But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(Revelation 22:1) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb

(Revelation 22:3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

VI. JESUS THE KING

- A. Jesus is revealed as a King in a very profound way in the book of Revelation.

...and from Jesus Christ...the ruler of kings on earth.... (Revelation 1:5)

- B. Jesus will replace all the unrighteous governments on earth with righteousness leaders and laws.

¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded...voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord...and He shall reign forever!" (Rev. 11:15)

- C. Jesus' kingship is literal and physical. Many reduce it to a spiritual reign that is never physically actualized. That is Biblically unwarranted. Jesus' return will be an inauguration and a governmental implementation.

- D. The New Testament contains a clear affirmation of Jesus' end-time inauguration in which He will establish His government and hold sway over the whole earth as King. This affirmation is rooted in the Old Testament anticipation of a Messiah who would be a King. There are 5 major timeframes within Israel's history in which God communicated the fact that theocracy was His ultimate desire. ***This***

anticipation of the Messianic government is the primary Biblical motif. The narrative centers on this hope of a coming King.

1. Genesis - Joshua

¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel." (Gen 3:15)

Abraham sacrifices Isaac – God will Provide the Lamb. (Gen 22)

Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh (Messiah) comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people. (Gen. 49:9-10)

"His king shall be higher than Agag, And his kingdom shall be exalted. 8 "God brings him out of Egypt; He has strength like a wild ox; He shall consume the nations, his enemies; He shall break their bones And pierce them with his arrows. 9 'He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?' "Blessed is he who blesses you, And cursed is he who curses you." . . . "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult. (Num. 24:7-9, 17)

¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house , we will serve the LORD." (Josh 24:15)

2. Judges

The Book of Judges is one of the premier displays of the ultimacy of theocracy. By nature of contrast the book propels us into the deep conviction that Israel is useless, loveless & helpless without a King. As God gives temporary helps to 'emergencies' throughout the book, He

makes is unbelievably clear that they'll always fall short 'until Shiloh comes.' (Gen 49:10)

⁶ In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6)

¹ In those days there was no king in Israel. (Judges 18:1)

¹ And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel... (Judges 19:1)

²⁵ In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25)

3. Samuel – Kings/Chronicles

This was a period that was ironically marked by a longing for a King but a complete loss of trust that any King could help the situation as all failed. There was a sense of Anti-monarchy when Samuel began the season. It turned into a pro-monarchy that, by the end of Kings/Chronicles, turned into a deep conviction that no mere man could do what (1) needed to be done, what (2) was promised to be done. *In other words the King would have to be God Himself* on the earth governing a redeemed people whose sins had been paid for. In the middle of this period one of the greatest promises came to David through Naman.

¹² "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Sam 7:12-16)

4. Psalms

Alec Motyer, about the anticipation of the King in the Psalms writes, “...the expected King would meet world opposition (2:1-3; 110:1) but as victor (45:3-5; 89:22-23) and by the activity of the Lord (2:6, 8; 21:1-13;110:1-2) He would establish world rule (2:8-12;45:17;72:8-11; 89:25; 110:5-6), based in Zion (2:6) and marked by a primary concern for morality (45:4, 6-7; 72:2-3; 101:1-8). He would rule forever (21:4; 45:6; 72:5), in peace (72:7), prosperity (72:16) and undeviating reverence to the Lord (72:5). Pre-eminent among men (45:2, 7), He would be the friend of the poor and the enemy of the oppressor (72:2-4, 12-14). Under His rule the righteous would flourish (72:7). He would possess an everlasting name (72:17) and be the object of unending thanks (72:15). He is the recipient of the Lord’s everlasting blessing (45:2), the heir of David’s covenant (89:28-37; 132:11-12) and of Melchizedek’s priesthood (110:4). He belongs to the Lord (89:18), and is devoted to Him (21:1, 7; 63:1-8, 11). He is His Son (2:7; 89:27), seated at His right hand (110:1) and is Himself Divine (45:6).”

5. The Prophets (Isaiah to Malachi)

The prophets are littered with promises of Jesus’ literal Kingship. Of them all, Isaiah ¹⁴ and Zechariah are clearly the most powerful. They contain dozens of detailed prophecies concerning Jesus’ Millennial Reign on the earth after His second coming.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and

¹⁴ “The Promise of the immediate birth of Immanuel [7:14]) is transferred to Isaiah’s own son..... (8:1-3), and Immanuel, moved to a later date (9:1), becomes the bearer of the great fourfold name of 9:6, whose second component, “Warrior God,” gives the child the same title as Yahweh Himself (10:21). He is a Davidic King (9:7; 11:1), perfect in character (11:2-3) and rule (11:4-5), in a perfect (11:6-9), united world (11:10-16). He reigns in righteousness over a righteous society (32:1-6), and is the ‘Beautiful King’ bringing security & the forgiveness of sins (33:17-24.” – Motyer, ***‘Story of the OT’***

the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'" And the crown shall be in the temple of the LORD as a reminder to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. (Zechariah 6:12-14)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10)

And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. ...Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain

on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. (Zechariah 14:9-19)

VII. JESUS THE JUDGE

A. Jesus is a righteous and wise Judge, who works redemptively to confront hatred of God and truth in order to establish righteousness and love across the whole earth (Rev. 16:5-7; 19:1-5). And He is a judge who decrees eternal punishment (14:9-11). His judge-ship and His judgments are nuanced in the book.

1. Temporal Judgments in the book of Revelation

³ Great and marvelous are Your (Jesus) works...just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4...For Your judgments have been manifested. (Rev. 15:3-4)

2. The Final Judgment in the book of Revelation

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

3. Eternal Judgment in the book of Revelation

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath,

poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."
(Revelation 14:9-11)

- B. A casual reading of the book of Revelation will leave you with the impression that ultimate judgment is inevitable. The storyline of the book centers around the manifestation of divine judgments released on the earth.

Rev 6:10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Rev 14:7 And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

³ Great and marvelous are Your (Jesus) works...just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4...For Your judgments have been manifested. (Rev. 15:3-4)

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,

Rev 18:10 They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come."

Rev 18:20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Rev 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

VIII. JESUS THE BRIDEGROOM

- A. The culmination of the end-time drama is a wedding. This reveals so much about the heart of Jesus and the nature of His leadership.

⁷ The marriage of the Lamb has come...His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)

- B. Jesus is repeatedly likened to a Bridegroom who is filled with tenderness and jealous love for His people; His covenant people (Is. 54:4-5; 62:1-5; Jer. 2:2-4; Hos. 1-3; Mt 22; 25; John 3:29; 2 Cor. 11:1-3; Rev. 19:7; 22:17).

- C. Jesus will come only in context to a prepared Bride who lives in unity with Him and the Spirit. This is not being born again. There is a difference between being born again and walking in unity with the Holy Spirit as a mature Bride.

"The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come!'" (Revelation 22:17)

- D. The most profound disclosure of the nature of the love of God is in Bridal language.

1. Tender Love
2. Jealous Love
3. Covenant Love
4. Immutable Love

IX. JESUS THE HUMAN MILITARY LEADER

- A. Jesus is seen as returning as a human (though fully God) military leader who "makes war." He will physically march on literal land and will be covered in real blood of real people who resist Him.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies

of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Revelation 19:11-15)

B. The term "root of David" is a key phrase in Biblical prophecy. The term is used in the book of Revelation (ch. 5 and 22) and is a quotation from Isaiah 11:1 where the Messiah is presented as being the "shoot" that comes up "from the stump of Jesse." This speaks of Jesus' humanity. Jesse was David's father from whom Jesus' lineage is drawn. There are two observations to be made about this "root of David:"

1. *The Root of David is a Military Leader* – We read in Isaiah 11:4b and 11:10 that this "root" is a mighty military leader who leads the greatest military campaign in human history closing this age. We read that this Man will "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth; and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked." This striking and slaying is in context to a global military campaign and an international exodus of surviving Jews returning to Israel after Jacob's Trouble. This theme of Jesus being a blood stained military leader at the second coming is a very prominent one in the Scriptures (Rev. 19:11-16; Is. 63:1-6; Hab. 3; Ps. 68; etc.).

2. *The Root of David receives the same worship that God does* – Though the title communicates the absolute humanity of the Man we can't help noticing that He receives the same worship that the Father does and neither He nor anyone around Him says anything about that being wrong (see chapter 5). That is, He *is* God. The "root of David" receives the permission of Yahweh to receive worship from those who worship Him. This is one of the most incredible things concerning the nature and identity of the Messiah.

C. The Scripture presents the second coming as a war processional. Jesus marches against literal armies, wages literal war in the Middle East and concludes the narrow Day of the Lord is Jerusalem as He executes judgment on all who stand against Him.

¹ ***Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah (capital of Edom), this One who is...traveling (marching) in the greatness of His***

strength?...2 Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? 3 I have trodden the winepress...I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, I have stained all My robes. (Is. 63:1-3)

² The indignation of the LORD is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter...5 "For My sword...shall come down on Edom...for judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood...for the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom...8 For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (Isa. 34:1-8)

3 God came from Teman (in southern Edom), the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. 5 Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet...7 the land of Midian trembled (Arabian desert reaching into the Sinai Peninsula)...12 You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. 13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people... (Hab. 3:3-13)

¹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming...2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity... 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations...4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two... making a very large valley...5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley...Yes, you shall flee...Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You. (Zech. 14:1-5)

⁵ The Lord (Father) is at Your right hand; He (Jesus') shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. (Ps. 110:5-6)

Lift up your heads, O you gates (of Jerusalem)! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle (Armageddon campaign). (Ps. 24:7-8)

Session 6: The 7 Letters - A Call to Biblical Radicalism

I. THE FOUR SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

- A. John's Commissioning
- B. The 7 Letters to the 7 Churches
- C. The Throne Room Experience
- D. The Transition From this Age to the Next

II. THE CALL TO BIBLICAL RADICALISM WITHIN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

In this session we're going to look at the second part of the four. We will look at the call to Biblical radicalism contained within the book of Revelation from the lips of Jesus Himself in the 7 letters to the 7 churches. These letters are Jesus' pastoral, prophetic and apostolic exhortations to actual communities. These pastoral, prophetic and apostolic messages are essential to heed as we approach the return of the Lord. These letters ground the message of the return of Jesus firmly in reality and in our day to day context.

I have no energy to study these letters just to gain an understanding of the information contained in them; we need to study them to obey them. Jesus' words in these letters are like a scalpel to all of our religious games, youthful zeal and shallow sentiment. If we heed these letters and we live obedient to what Jesus said in them, everything will change.

- A. The Scriptures portray a church at the end of natural history that burns with radiance, intensity, purity and maturity. They speak of a redeemed company who "burn and shine" (John 5:35). We need clear Biblical teaching on this issue of wholeheartedness. I want to use the word "radical" because it encapsulates the spirit of what I believe God is inviting the church into in this hour of history before the second coming. The term "radical" articulates the sort of *unbalanced disposition that authentic believers through history and Scripture have embodied.*
- B. Many of us feel restricted, handicapped and unwilling to burn our bridges and sink our ships unto abandonment to Jesus and His purposes. One of the reasons why is because we've been seduced by the pop-Christian value of "balance." Balance is unbiblical. Balance is uninspiring. Balance is empty and without

power. None of our heroes were balanced. No prominent figure in Scripture was balanced. Balanced people don't change history. No one wears T-shirts with balanced people on it.

1. When people use the term "balanced" they mean 'not disruptive.' The Gospel is disruptive. It will violate all of our comfort zones and demand of us "more." Balanced and harmony is a myth. The Sermon on the Mount is not balanced. It's disastrously radical. Joel 2 is not balanced. It's extreme. Romans 12-14 are not balanced.
- C. In an hour of widespread apostasy, false religion, the executing of prophets and wicked government God didn't send a balanced man to Ahab and Jezebel or to Herod. He sent Elijah and John the Baptist.
- D. God has promised to release the spirit of Elijah on the earth before the second coming; of which John the Baptist operated under. John the Baptist was a picture; a mere foreshadowing of what would emerge on the earth in the final generation.

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. (Isaiah 40:1-11)¹⁵

¹⁵ This passage is entirely eschatological. It speaks of the conclusion of Israel's final humbling and the physical appearing of her Messiah. This "voice" was fulfilled in John the Baptist's ministry but in a very limited way. John

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." (Malachi 4:5-6)

This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. (Matthew 11:10-14)

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (John 1:19-23)

1. Any leader in the body of Christ on the earth right now that is not promoting the spirit of Elijah and the grace that rested upon John the Baptist is selling his people short. And any believer that doesn't have the life of Elijah or John the Baptist in their understanding as the 'ceiling' of grace that is available to them has been duped.
2. The requirement upon the people of God in our generation is radical wholeheartedness.

...The day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11b)

was national; this passage speaks of something global. And the result is a literal exodus from captivity into the promised land with Jesus at the head.

3. While Joel lays out what wholeheartedness looks like, we need it to be expounded. The 7 letters in Revelation 2-3 do just that.
- E. These men were not radical for the sake of being radical. They were not driven and motivated by a sense of youthful zeal and sentimental passion. They heard the voice of the Lord telling them what God loves the most and what God hates the most. They were motivated by grace and they were driven by both fear and love.
 - F. The 7 letters were given to John so that we would know what Jesus cares about the most and what He hates the most. The letters are primarily and principally about how the corporate people of God are to carry their hearts in transition; and they are meant to be the cultural blueprint for the church.
 - G. The divine information contained in the letters save us from shallow and sentimental zeal and rhetoric that pervades so much of pop-culture Christianity. And they rescue us from being ignorant of what God is after in our churches. Jesus' piercing words protect us from superficiality and urge us to test ourselves. They remind us that nothing is hidden from His eyes and nothing goes unnoticed.
 - H. The 7 letters explain how abandonment must be focused. Wholeheartedness is never random, generic or broad. It's focused, narrow and unbalanced. **The central message of the 7 churches is focused abandonment.**
 1. For Ephesus it was returning to their "first love"
 2. For Smyrna it was not "fearing" and being "faithful unto death"
 3. For Pergamum it was "repenting" of the false teaching they had embraced
 4. For Thyatira it was repenting of "tolerating" sexual immorality & idolatry
 5. For Sardis it was "waking up" and "strengthening what remained"
 6. For Philadelphia it was being confident before God's favor towards them and to hold fast to what they have
 7. For Laodicea it was being "zealous" and "repenting" of lukewarm-ness

II. INTRODUCING THE 7 LETTERS

- A. These 7 letters show us the kind of Church that Jesus is laboring, interceding and longing to establish. They reveal the pastoral heart of Jesus. These letters tell us what Jesus thinks about the church. Commenting on Jesus walking among the lampstands/churches (2:1), Sam Storms writes:

“He is present in and among his people. He guards and protects and preserves the church. He is never, ever absent! No service is conducted at which he fails to show up. No meal is served for which he does not sit down. No sermon is preached that he does not evaluate. No sin is committed of which he is unaware. No individual enters an auditorium of whom he fails to take notice. No tear is shed that escapes his eye. No pain is felt that his heart does not share. No decision is made that he does not judge. No song is sung that he does not hear.

How dare we build our programs and prepare our messages and hire our staffs and discipline our members as if he were distant or unaware of every thought, impulse, word, or decision! How dare we cast a vision or write a doctrinal statement or organize a worship service as if the Lord whose church it is were indifferent to it all!

Do you care “What Christ thinks of the Church”? Or are you more attuned to the latest trend in worship, the most innovative strategy for growth, the most “relevant” way in which to engage the surrounding culture? Yes, Jesus cares deeply about worship. Of course he wants the church to grow. And he longs to see the culture redeemed for his own glory. All the more reason to pray that God might quicken us to read and heed the “words” of Christ to the church in Ephesus, then, and to the church now, whatever its name, denomination, or size. It obviously matters to him. Ought it not to us as well?”¹⁶

- B. The letters define for us spiritual maturity. Similarly, they explain what sort of maturity is necessary for the Church to live, love and lead in the midst of the Great Tribulation.
- C. These letters define the truths and focus necessary to equip the Church to walk in love for Jesus. Our love is expressed as we:

1. **Obey His commands**

¹⁶ To the One Who Conquers: 50 Daily Meditations of the 7 Letters of Revelation 2-3

2. **Heed His warnings**
 3. **Believe His promises** (especially the 22 eternal rewards promised to overcomers)
- D. The end of this age will bring great challenges but these challenges will bring even greater rewards. Thus the 2-fold central message of the 7 letters is:
1. **A Call to Maturity** – Jesus explains how he defines maturity in this throughout the letters
 2. **A Call to Overcome** – Jesus explains what to overcome and how to overcome it (1 John 5:4-5; Revelation 12:11)

III. HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THE 7 LETTERS

Teachers and commentators throughout history have been confused about how to apply and appropriate these letters. Because they were addressed to literal historic churches in Asia Minor many cannot believe that the rest of the book is designed for anyone but them. This is the “preterist” view. However, on the other hand, those who see the book as being primarily about the future fail to address the full scope and intention of these 7 letters. Thus, it’s necessary that we view them rightly taking into consideration all that God designed them for. We are to understand them:

- A. **Individually:** the letters were written to provoke response from individuals. Those individuals are the believers in the first century through to the end of this age. The issues are directly relevant to those in the first generation and to those in every generation until the end of the age.
- B. **Corporately:** the most powerful application is when local churches walk in these truths together embracing and obeying all that Jesus commanded. We need to bear in mind that these were letters written with a corporate body in mind. The fullness of the letters is experienced in the local church context.
- C. **Historically:** the letters were first written to seven historical churches in John’s generation to address the actual conditions of seven real churches. It was written to them and their situations. This does not mean though that God meant them to be only understood historically (as Preterists argue).

- D. **Generically/Universally:** the letters were intended for all churches in the first century until the second coming just as the Gospels and Epistles for specific people and churches as well as all churches past, present, and future. Any believer can pick up one of the letters and obey Jesus in them and receive a blessing.

- E. **Eschatologically:** the letters are designed to prepare the End-Time Church for the events seen in Rev. 6-19. This is when there will be the most believers in history living in the most difficult time in history. In view of the sheer population and magnitude of crisis, the letters are relevant to the final generation. The greatest number of people in history will go through the greatest crisis in history; and these letters explain how to live in such a way that we “overcome” all that occurs.

IV. THE COMMON ELEMENTS IN THE LETTERS

A. Literary Features of the Letters

1. A COMMAND TO WRITE TO AN ANGEL OF THE CHURCH

2. A SELF-DESCRIPTION BY JESUS DERIVED FROM THE VISION OF CH. 1, INTRODUCED BY THE FORMULA, “THESE THINGS”

3. COMMENDATION OF THE CHURCH’S GOOD WORKS

4. AN ACCUSATION OF SOME SIN

5. AN EXHORTATION TO REPENT WITH EITHER A WARNING OF JUDGMENT OR WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

6. AN EXHORTATION TO DISCERN THE TRUTH OF THE PRECEDING MESSAGE (“HE WHO HAS AN EAR . . .”)

7. A PROMISE TO THE OVERCOMERS

B. Common Elements of the Letters

1. **Historical context:** It is important to gain information about the situation that each church was challenged with politically, economically and spiritually. Jesus strategically selected these seven knowing they would give prophetic insight into preparing the End-Time Church.

2. **Revelation of Jesus:** Each message begins by Jesus calling attention to a specific aspect of His majesty as seen in Rev. 1 that was most needed in the situation of each Church. Eighteen different aspects of Jesus' majesty are highlighted in Rev. 2-3.
3. **Affirmation for faithfulness:** Jesus gave affirmation before correction (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira). Two churches received no affirmation (Sardis and Laodicea).
4. **Rebuke for compromise:** Jesus told them what they must not do. Jesus' correction is not rejection. He had things against 3 churches: Ephesus (2:4), Pergamos (2:14) and Thyatira (2:20). Two churches did not receive a correction (Smyrna and Philadelphia). The compromises He gave the sternest rebukes for were passivity, immorality and idolatry (covetousness and/or sorcery; Col 3:5; Eph 5:5; 1 Cor. 10:20-22).
5. **Exhortation to respond:** Jesus told them what they must do. Jesus gave actions that He required often with an element of warning. The warnings that Jesus gave most were against **passivity** (distraction with their increased blessing) and **fear** (persecution/rejection).
6. **Promise for overcomers:** Jesus gave incentives for diligent faithfulness. Most of these promises are for the Millennial Kingdom. Insight into rewards is essential to equip us to stand in pressure. Jesus promised us 22 eternal rewards in Rev. 2-3 (2:7, 10, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

V. EIGHTEEN DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS

¹ *To...Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars...who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands..." 8 To...Smyrna write, "These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life..." 12 To...Pergamos write, "These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword" ...18 To... Thyatira write, "These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" ...3:1 To...Sardis write, "These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" ... 7 To...Philadelphia write, "These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David"...14 To...the Laodiceans write, "These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God"... (Rev. 2:1-3:14)*

A. The faces of Jesus:

1. He who *holds* the seven stars
2. He who walks in the midst of the seven lampstands
3. The First
4. The Last
5. He who was dead
6. He who came to life
7. He who has the sharp two-edged sword
8. The Son of God
9. He who has eyes like a flame of fire
10. He who has feet like fine brass
11. He who has the seven Spirits of God
12. He who *has* the seven stars
13. He who is holy
14. He who is true
15. He who has the “Key of David”
16. The Amen
17. The Faithful and True Witness
18. The Beginning of the Creation of God

VI. EMBRACING THE CALL TO OVERCOME

- A. These 7 letters have this prominent theme of calling believers to overcome. This call must be trumpeted in our generation loudly and boldly. For there are many in the covenantal community that are not of the covenantal community. John called these people:

“They went out from us but they were not of us; for if they were of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.” (1 John 2:19)

B. At the end of the age, there will be many who “fall away” (2 Thess. 2:3) because of the pressure. John defines those who depart as those who were with us but not of us; that is, they were not born of God. The End-Time crisis will put pressure on those who are not of us causing them to take an antagonistic role against Jesus and His saints.

C. Having said that: an overcomer in this context of the 7 churches is one who matures in the specific areas of faithfulness that Jesus emphasized in their life. This is not being born again but is made possible by being born again. In other words, Jesus is speaking to regenerate believers in these communities about how to obey Him and how to receive rewards for their faithfulness.

1. The apostle John is very clear that the necessary prerequisite for overcoming is being born of God.

“Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5)

2. And He is also very clear that all who are truly born of God will overcome.

“Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.” (1 John 5:4)

3. And He also made it clear that overcoming the world included all the forces that we experience in this age that war against our souls. In other words all the things that the 7 churches were called to overcome fall under John’s definition of “the world.”

“For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and pride in possessions – is not from the Father but is from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

- D. Jesus was calling believers to embrace faithfulness to Himself in view of the fact that the sole grounds of their faithfulness was their justification and regeneration. The fact that we are justified and regenerated does not guarantee our victory in an automatic, mechanical, clinical sense. Yes, all who are born of God overcome and will be brought to glorification. That is not what's in view here. What's in view here is the call to overcome specific temptations that assail the people of God to the end that we might be *rewarded* in the age to come – not *saved* in the age to come.
- E. To the church of Ephesus overcoming meant to return to their first love for Jesus until the end of their life. To the church in Smyrna it meant being faithful in persecution even to death. To the church in Pergamos and Thyatira overcoming meant to resist immorality and idolatry for the remainder of their life. To the church in Sardis it was be watchful or to develop a prayer life and to hold fast the things that God entrusted to them from their earlier years. To the church in Philadelphia overcoming meant to persevere in mature obedience for the remaining years of their life. To the church of the Laodiceans overcoming meant to resist remaining lukewarm.
- F. Our greatest faithfulness is flawed yet it is consistent in desire to press in and break through. Two examples of those who were counted faithful in their weakness are David and Abraham. Paul wrote that David fulfilled all of God's will (Acts 13:22) and Abraham's faith did not waver (Rom. 4:20). Our faithfulness is overshadowed by Jesus' faithfulness to us. It's what makes our faithfulness acceptable to God and precious to Him. For:

“By a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:14)

VII. PROMISES TO OVERCOMERS: ETERNAL REWARDS

- A. Jesus gave His most in-depth teaching on rewards (mentioning 22 rewards). He knew what we would need to be motivated and stabilized during the release of the glory and crisis in His End-Time plan. He reveals our rewards that we receive at the time of His Coming (Rev. 11:15-18).
- B. These equip us to persevere by being anchored in eternity with confidence that our choices will be rewarded in eternity. When suffering is seen in God's light, it loses its power to intimidate.

- C. Jesus was speaking to believers who had already received the free gift of salvation. He was calling believers to live in a way to receive heavenly rewards. Salvation through justification by grace alone through faith alone is a free gift given to us. It is based on Jesus' worthiness (Eph. 2:8-9). Heavenly rewards are given to us according to our works, or our response of gratitude to Jesus for giving us so great a salvation.
- D. There will be a vast difference in the measure of glory of each one's reward. Most of these 22 rewards will be received by all believers in at least an introductory way. The issue in Rev. 2-3 pertains to what measure of the reward a believer receives. Since only overcomers receive the fullest measure of these rewards, it is important that we rightly interpret what Jesus intends when calling us to be overcomers in Rev. 2-3. These rewards refer to varying measures of the basic blessing of eternal life that all receive (1 Cor. 15:41).
- E. These rewards are not secondary or irrelevant but rather they are a very important part of our destiny. Therefore, all believers should be very familiar with these rewards.
- F. Our obedience is deeply connected to our rewards. Some falsely teach that these rewards are given to all believers in fullness regardless of how they live. This view takes these rewards out of their context which requires repentance from certain things and to be faithful to the end. In Rev. 2-3, Jesus was not exhorting them to be born again. He was offering born again believers rewards as incentives to greater diligence in the face of temptation and pressure.

VIII. JESUS PROMISED 22 ETERNAL REWARDS

To eat from the tree of life in the midst of Paradise (2:7); to receive the crown of life (2:10); to not be hurt by the second death (2:11); to eat hidden manna (2:17); to receive a white stone (2:17); to receive a new name written on the stone (2:17); to have power over the nations (2:26); to receive the morning star (2:28); to receive white garments (Rev 3:5); to receive a name that is not blotted from the Book of Life (3:5); for Jesus to confess one's name before the Father and angels. (3:5); for one's persecutors to worship before their feet (3:9); for one's persecutors to know that Jesus loves them (3:9); to be made a pillar in God's temple (3:12); to have God's name, the New Jerusalem and Jesus' new name written on them (3:12); to receive gold to make one rich (3:18); to receive white garments (3:18); to have anointed eyes to see more (3:18); to eat with Jesus (3:20) and sit on His Throne. (3:21).

Session 7: The Beauty of God and the Bowls Full of Incense

An overview of the third part of the Book of Revelation – chapters 4-5

I. WHY WE MUST STUDY REVELATION 4-5

- A. There are 3 primary reasons why these two chapters (which constitute the 3rd part of the book of Revelation) are so powerful and so important for us to understand:
1. ***They are the theological foundation that the eschatological realities are to rest upon.*** The foundation of our understanding of the end-times must be these two chapters. They were for John and they must be for us. In chapter 4 John had a vision of the Father on His throne. And chapter 5 John had a vision of Christ being declared worthy and diversely excellent. It's in these chapters that God reveals why He can be trusted to close this age and inaugurate the next. It's in these chapters that we see the heart behind the judgments that are released on the earth during the final years of natural history. And it's in these chapters that we get the clearest glimpse in Scripture of the beauty of our Trinitarian God.
 2. ***They give us a rich and beautiful explanation of what the death of Christ was about in the eternal purposes of God.*** So full and stunning is this explanation that it's difficult to find a comparable passage in Scripture that matches its sublimity and majesty. In chapter 5 we read the chief end of God's purposes in the death of Christ. It wasn't just about saving sinners. It was about Jesus claiming the whole earth and governing it as a man; and delegating that governance to those whom He shed His blood for.
 3. ***They give us the theology of prayer and worship that, like a key, unlocks an important door to understand the rest of the book.*** This foundational relationship between prayer and the release of end-time judgment is absolutely essential to understand. This idea forms a large part of the storyline that runs throughout the book.

II. THEOLOGY MUST UNDERGIRD OUR ESCHATOLOGY – “WHY WE MUST THINK RIGHTLY OF GOD”

- A. Revelation 4 and 5 gives us the greatest revelation of God’s transcendence and beauty in Scripture. Here we get a glimpse into the glory of God as seen by (1) what surrounds Him, (2) what those closest to Him think about Him and (3) how He relates to us. And this *must* be the seedbed that revelation concerning the end of the age is cultivated and matured in.
- B. After the glory of God the Father is revealed (Rev. 4), we see His plan for Jesus emerging from the storyline (Rev. 5). To say it simply, the central message of chapter four is the glory of God the Father enthroned and the central message of chapter five is the glory of God the Son in judgment; both *on the cross* and *at the end of the age*.
- C. These two chapters are so necessary for our hearts to connect with. Most people in our generation who have energy about eschatology haven’t committed to the study of the Person of God. And if we study end-time events alone we will wind up in confusion and in opposition to the Spirit.
- D. We must become familiar with the events that will occur at the end of the age. But more importantly we need to be familiar with the One who is orchestrating and releasing them. And that’s what these two chapters are about. Revelation 4-5 is the theological foundation that our eschatology must rest upon. It is the bedrock to the study of the end-times.
- E. A billion years from now there will be no mystery about the end-time events. They will have happened and we will understand it all. But we will not have seen all of God’s worth, majesty and beauty. We will be no closer then to the end of His splendor than we are now. Eschatology must be seen in this light lest we distort the subject.

III. THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER ENTHRONED

- A. Rev. 4:2-7 outlines 4 categories of God’s beauty and worth with each having 3 specific themes (total 12).
 - 1. The beauty of God’s Person (Rev. 4:3)
 - 2. The beauty of God’s Beloved (Rev. 4:4)

3. The beauty of God's Power (Rev. 4:5a)

4. The beauty of God's Presence (fire) (Rev. 4:5b-7; 15:2)

² I was in the Spirit; and behold, a Throne set in heaven, and One sat on the Throne. 3 He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the Throne, in appearance like an emerald. 4 Around the Throne were twenty-four thrones...I saw twenty-four elders sitting...in white robes; and they had crowns of gold...5 From the Throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the Throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the Throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal...around the Throne, were four living creatures... (Rev. 4:2-6)

- B. Rev. 4:8-10, the governmental leaders in heaven and the ones closest to God adore Him declaring their affection and reverence. Their foundational hymn forever magnifies God's holiness.

8 The four living creatures...do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the Throne...10 the twenty-four elders fall down...and worship Him...and cast their crowns before the Throne, saying: 11 "You (Father) are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things..." (Rev. 4:8-11)

- C. To be holy means "to be totally separated from." God is separated from everything sinful, thus He is pure. God is also separated from everything created (or common), thus He is transcendent or infinitely superior to all that exists. God's holiness points to His transcendent beauty.
- D. While it surely includes moral purity, it is more than moral purity. While God possesses that eternally and infinitely, moral purity is not what those in the throne room are awestruck by – it's His transcendence.
- E. There are 14 hymns in Revelation. The book is a prophetic liturgy for the end time church. We will join with these hymns and proclamations in prayer in unison with the Holy Spirit and the global family of saints.

IV. THE CENTRAL MESSAGE: THE TRANSITION OF POWER AS JESUS IS EXALTED (REV. 5)

- A. Revelation chapter 5 introduces the reality that this season of Tribulation (ch. 6-19) is designed to prepare the earth for Jesus to take it over. In chapter 5 this process begins. The process that is beginning is the taking over of every earthly government.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth." (Revelation 11:15-18)

¹⁶ *He has on His robe...a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19:16)*

⁸ *I (the Father) will give You (Jesus) the nations for Your inheritance (Millennium)... (Ps. 2:8)*

⁸ *He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death...⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth... (Phil. 2:8-10)*

- B. As song erupted in chapter four about the glory of God the Father, songs now erupt in chapter five about the worth of God the Son. They praise Him primarily for His unique person and work; that is, the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. They love Him for who He is and what He has done. These songs will, as we will see, be the catalytic agent of releasing the Great Tribulation. As soon as these songs emerge, of the worth of the Son to claim His right to execute judgments on the earth and to rule and reign on it, the great drama begins.

V. JESUS TAKES THE SCROLL FROM THE FATHER'S HAND (REV. 5)

- A. As Jesus is commissioned, - by the songs of the redeemed and the delight of the Father - He takes the scroll from the Father's hand (v. 7).

- B. This scroll represents the **title deed** of the earth and the **action plan** (Rev. 6-19) necessary to prepare the church and the earth for the transition period between this age and the next.

¹ I saw in the right hand of Him (the Father) who sat on the Throne a scroll...sealed with seven seals. 2 I saw a strong angel proclaiming..., "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"...5 One of the elders said, "...The Lion of the tribe of Judah...has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." 6 In the midst of the Throne...stood a Lamb as though...slain. 7 He took the scroll out of the right hand of Him...on the Throne. (Rev. 5:1-7)

- C. The Father gives the title deed of the earth to Jesus as a human King. He is the only Man with the ability to govern the whole world and lead all its governments (v. 2). He is the only one found worthy (deserving and capable) to take the scroll from the Father. In taking the scroll (v. 7) Jesus accepts the responsibility to cleanse and rule the whole earth.
- D. To “open the seals” means to release the judgments in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 6-19) to cleanse the planet from evil and to restructure all the governments of the earth (Rev. 20:4-6).
- E. Jesus has the fierceness and fearlessness of a lion and the tenderness and humility of a lamb. Jonathan Edwards calls the reality “the diverse excellencies of Christ.” That is, He possesses such radically opposing attributes within Him that we find it possible to believe.

VI. THE WORTH OF CHRIST IN ALL HIS DIVERSE EXCELLENCIES

- A. ***Four Key Themes within the Chapter*** – I see four realities highlighted in this chapter that deserve to be considered before we jump into the text itself:

1. **The Absolute Sovereignty of God** – This chapter clearly portrays God the Father and God the Son as being sovereign and supreme over all of creation. Whatever they say goes. Whatever they want to happen happens. Nothing is outside of their control and nothing challenges their leadership. God is altogether sovereign over everything. The God who spoke in Genesis 1 to make everything come into existence is now seen with a scroll in His hand – there are profound implications bound up in that thought. All it takes for Him to exert His sovereignty and His incomparable power is the tearing of a seal. To approach this text without being willing to embrace the astounding sovereignty and power of Jesus is to completely miss the heart of the text; and to miss the heart of the book altogether. Jesus is *completely* in control of all that occurs in heaven and on the earth during history and at the end of the age. Nothing surprises Him and nothing escapes His wisdom or His power. When everything around us is pressuring us to affirm ideas that get God “off the hook” we must fight to see Him “on the throne.” That is where our confidence and our joy are cultivated. *Sovereignty is most clearly seen in the Father’s Throne and the Son’s Scroll* (Note the phrase “it was granted” or “given” in the book). Doctrines that deny God’s sovereignty will be destroyed when Jesus takes that scroll.

2. **The Intimate Relationship between Jesus’ Work at the Cross and His Plan at the End of the Age** – Jesus’ death at Golgotha and Jesus’ plan to take over the earth at the end of the age are not in contradiction or tension with each other. That is, there is no difficulty in reconciling the Messiah of the first coming with the Messiah of the Second coming. When they sing that He is “worthy to take the scroll” because “He was slain and purchased us to God by His blood,” they mean to say – “Your death secured salvation for sinners and the consummation of history. Your blood guarantees you an inheritance of people and of real estate!” We must view Jesus’ first coming in view of His second and His second in view of His first. This was His eternal purpose before the foundation of the world and we must view the entire panorama of history as the execution and administration of that purpose.¹⁷

¹⁷ See Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:19-20; Acts 3:14-21, esp. v. 21

3. **The Role of Prayer and Worship in Releasing the End-Time Transition –**
The book of Revelation is filled with prayers and songs. It is the prophetic liturgy of the end-time church. It's important that we understand the prayers and songs as more than that which *they pray and sing* but as that which *we pray and sing*. That's why they were given. In 5:8 the prayers of the saints cause the opening of the scroll. In 8:1-5 the prayers of the saints cause the sounding of the trumpets. In 15:18 the prayers of the saints cause the pouring out of the bowls of wrath. The prayers of the saints do in fact release the end-time transition from this age to the next. In chapter 8 we read that there is silence in heaven for half an hour between the seals and the trumpets. That silence is heaven honoring the prayers of the saints as they ascend to heaven. Those cries actually release the angels to sound their trumpets. Chapter 5 is the first place we see the unique relationship between prayer and worship and the releasing of the end-time events. This reality under girds the chapter.

4. **The Diverse Excellencies of Christ's Persons –** This chapter is most centrally and principally about the diverse excellencies of the person of Christ. In the 1700's Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled "The Excellencies of Christ." In it he argued three things concerning Jesus' excellency: (a) The conjunction [combination] of the excellencies in Christ is, in our manner of conceiving, very *diverse* one from another. (b) The conjunction [combination] of such really diverse excellencies in anyone else would be seen by us to be *utterly incompatible in the same person*. (c) His diverse excellencies are exercised *towards men* who we find to be *impossible to be exercised towards*. Edwards means to say "His wonderful attributes and emotions that make up His person are so incredibly diverse. And because they are so diverse our imagination is stretched to even believe they could be found abiding in one person. And those diverse perfections are so grand and so marvelous that we find it impossible to believe that sinners like us could ever experience or celebrate them; that is, why should we know His kindness, gentleness and mercy and not *only* His justice, righteousness and wrath? What sort of objects are we to have these excellencies exercised towards us?!" Edwards point was to say that it's a miracle of cosmic proportions that we don't only know His excellent wrath. Here are some examples of what he meant by "diverse":

- a. There do meet in Jesus Christ infinite highness and infinite condescension.
 - b. There meet in Jesus Christ, infinite justice and infinite grace.
 - c. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite glory and lowest humility.
 - d. In the person of Christ do meet together infinite majesty and transcendent meekness.
 - e. There meet in the person of Christ the deepest reverence towards God and equality with God.
 - f. There are conjoined in the person of Christ infinite worthiness of good, and the greatest patience under sufferings of evil.
 - g. In the person of Christ are conjoined an exceeding spirit of obedience, with supreme dominion over heaven and earth.
 - h. In the person of Christ are conjoined absolute sovereignty and perfect resignation.
 - i. In Christ do meet together self-sufficiency, and an entire trust and reliance on God.
- B. To be worthy is to be deserving and capable to open the seals of the scroll and rule the earth. The 4 living creatures (angelic) and the 24 elders (human) agree with the song of adoration that Jesus is worthy and they agree with the Father's decree to give Jesus leadership of the earth. This song, this hymn, is a prayer – a prayer of agreement that looses the Great Tribulation.

⁸ ***When He (Jesus) had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb...9 They sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals (release God's judgments); for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe...and nation, 10 and have made us kings and priests to God; and we shall reign on the earth."* (Rev. 5:8-10)**

C. **Jesus is worthy:** three applications

1. **Jesus is worth it** – The world, the flesh and the devil tell us that it isn't worth it to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Giving in and giving up is at times extremely appealing to us in our weakness and frailty. Paul's response to the excellency of Jesus was to give all to Him with extravagant love.

⁸ ***I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish... (Phil. 3:8)***

2. **Jesus is capable** – He possesses the inner resources necessary to lead the great transitional period at the end of the age that eventuates in the closing of this age and the inauguration of the next. He is capable of judging, ruling, governing and reigning.

3. **Jesus deserves it** – The Father will give the leadership of the earth to Jesus because of what He has done.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind-- so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. (Isaiah 52:13-15)

D. **Jesus being slain:** Jesus stood in our place and bore the wrath and condemnation that was ours. He secured our salvation and He secured His government role in the age to come by His substitutionary death on the cross.

1. Jesus was God incarnate
2. Jesus was sinlessly perfect
3. Jesus was our Substitute
4. Jesus was our Mediator

- E. The Father gives Jesus an unprecedented measure of favor over 7 spheres of leadership.

¹¹ *The voice of many angels...12 saying..., "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing." (Rev. 5:11-12)*

1. **Power** (political) – Jesus will receive governmental leadership over all nations.
2. **Riches** (financial) – all the money on earth will be under Jesus' leadership.
3. **Wisdom** (intellectual) – Jesus will replace every evil government on earth with new leaders and laws along with restoring every sphere of life (political, economic, family educational, agricultural, media, technology, environment, social institutions, etc).
4. **Strength** (emotional) – Jesus will have strength in His inner man (Eph. 3:16) so as to continue steadfastly as He restores the nations and contends against all resistance.
5. **Glory** (spiritual) – all will boast in Jesus with loving delight and joyful trust. Paul gloried in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:3, NIV, NAS). Children glory in their father (Prov. 17:6), young men glory in their strength (Prov. 20:29) and we glory in God's name (Ps. 105:3; 43:4).
6. **Honor** (relational) – Jesus will be greatly respected and listened to in all nations. Dictionary: to publicly esteem by showing unusual respect to one with superior standing and to listen to their words with reverence.
7. **Blessing** (social) – all will fully cooperate with His leadership resulting in the mightiest work force in history. The nations will bless all of His plans and policies. In other words, they will agree and cooperate with them by putting their resources behind them.

VII. WE WILL REIGN WITH HIM ON THE EARTH FOR 1,000 YEARS

You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe...and nation, 10 and have made us kings and priests to God; and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:8-10)

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4)

¹⁷ *Your eyes will see the King in His beauty... (Isa. 33:17)*

² *In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious. (Isa. 4:2)*

VIII. AT THE END OF THOSE 1,000 YEARS JESUS WILL GIVE THE RESTORED EARTH TO HIS FATHER

A. Father's promise to Jesus: to make Him preeminent in all things

¹⁸ *He is the head of the Body...that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col. 1:18)*

B. During those 1,000 years Jesus will be restoring the earth to give back to His Father:

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (Acts 3:19-21)

C. Jesus earned the right to rule the earth yet gives it to the Father. Jesus delights in humility.

²⁴ *Then comes the end (Millennial Kingdom), when He (Jesus) delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He (Jesus) puts an end to all rule (hostile, evil authorities during the Millennium)...**28 Now when all things are made subject to Him (Jesus), then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him (the Father)... that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15:24-28)***

IX. "BOWLS FULL OF INCENSE" - PRAYER AND WORSHIP RELEASE THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ON THE EARTH DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The subject of prayer is massive in the book of Revelation. We could do an exegesis of the role of prayer in almost every chapter. Interestingly, all three sets of chronological judgments are released immediately after a prayer, song or proclamation. The seals are

torn after the worthy song (ch. 5:8-6:2). The trumpets sound after the half hour of silence and the offering of the prayers of the saints (ch. 8:1-6). And the bowls of wrath are poured out after the saints on the sea of glass sing to Jesus of His perfection, worth, beauty and majesty (ch. 15:1-16:2). And Jesus returns when “the Spirit and” the praying “Bride say ‘Come!’” (ch. 22:17)

- A. In Revelation 5:8 we read that John saw “bowls full of incense.” This is a prophecy concerning the prayer movement at the end of the age. We are approaching an hour of sustained global prayer that will fill the throne room with incense. It is the hour when the people of God step into their identity as “a house of prayer” as Jesus prophesied in Matthew 21:13:

He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers." (Matthew 21:13)

⁷ Now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night...? ⁸ I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. (Lk. 18:7-8; NAS)

⁶ I have set watchmen on your walls...they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent, ⁷ and give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. (Isa. 62:6-7)

- B. These full bowls of incense will cause the outpouring of the judgments of God that comprise the Great Tribulation. Every judgment in the book of Revelation is released on the earth *after* someone prays or sings that God should release that judgment:

1. The 7 Seals

“...And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals...Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals...” (Revelation 5:9, 6:1)

2. The 7 Trumpets

"¹ When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. ³ Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the Throne. ⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. ⁶ So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." (Rev. 8:1-6)

3. The 7 Bowls

"And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire--and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds [end-time judgments], O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. (Revelation 15:2-8)

- C. The revelation of the Father (ch. 4) and the revelation of the Son (ch. 5) and His Millennial calling to rule the nations undergird the sort of prayer that will fill the throne room and move Jesus to take the scroll and to tear its seals.

Session 8: The Seven Seals And Seven Trumpets

An overview of the first 3 chronological sections of the book of Revelation and their angelic interpretations

I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. The book of Revelation is comprised of 4 parts:
1. John's Commissioning (1)
 2. The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches (2-3)
 3. John's Vision of the Throne Room and the Transition of Power from the Father to the Son (4-5)
 4. The Transition Period Between This Age and the Next (6-22)
- B. In this section we're going to begin a survey of the fourth part. This fourth part is comprised of **5 chronological "scenes."** Each chronological scene contains the description of a future literal event. And each event is further explained by an angelic interpretation. Thus the fourth part of the book of Revelation is comprised of **5 chronological scenes** and **5 angelic interpretations.**
- C. The 5 Chronological scenes and their angelic interpretations are in this order:
1. **The Tearing of the Seven Seals** (chapter 6)
 1. *The Protection of the Elect* (chapter 7)
 2. **The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets** (chapter 8-9)
 2. *The Promise of Prophetic Leadership and Direction* (chapter 10-11)
 3. **The 7th Trumpet & Commencement of the Second Coming** (11:15-19)
 3. *The Rage of Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet* (12-14)
 4. **The Seven Bowls of Wrath** (15-16)

4. *The Harlot's Religious and Economic Empire (17-19:5)*
5. **Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem (19:6-21)**
5. *The Restoration of All Things (20-22)*

(*which includes Jesus' 1,000 yr. reign and Satan's final defeat at its end)

- D. In this session we're going to deal with the first 3 chronological scenes and their angelic interpretations:
1. The Seven Seals
 2. The Seven Trumpets
 3. The Seventh Trumpet and the Commencement of the Second Coming

II. THE NATURE OF THE SEALS TRUMPETS AND BOWLS

- A. The 3 judgment series are ***literal*** events that must not be explained away symbolically or historically. Our method of interpretation is the ***plain, literal, common sense*** approach. All the events and numbers in the Book of Revelation are to be understood in their plain meaning unless they are specifically indicated as symbolic as in Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9.
- B. The 3 judgment series are ***future***. They have not yet occurred in history.
1. The ***Preterists view*** wrongly sees much of Revelation as having been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of Rome (in the first three centuries after Jesus' death).
 2. The ***Historicists view*** wrongly interprets Revelation as a progressive unfolding of Church history in seeing many of these prophecies as being already fulfilled in history.
 3. The ***Idealists view*** does not see a unique end-time application of the Book of Revelation, but wrongly interprets it merely as a symbolic picture of the spiritual conflict between good and evil that has occurred throughout history.

- C. The 3 judgment series are ***numbered*** according to the chronological order in which they occur. For example, the first seal is followed by the second seal, which in turns leads to the third and so on. Because God’s judgments occur according to a numbered sequence, the Church will become greatly unified. Momentum will build as the Church sees them released according to their order.
1. It’s important that we honor the way John say the vision unfold and the way the Lord gave it. Many want to do away with the strict chronology that John received the vision in. They attempt to overlap the 3 judgment series or separate them from each other to fit their timeline. We must read it as it was written.
 2. The fact that they are numbered puts down any notion of recapitulation, overlap or randomness. These judgment events were intentionally communicated as being sequential and chronological from the 1st Seal to the 7th Bowl.
- D. The 3 judgment series are ***redemptive***. They will create a global crisis that results in many crying out for salvation, while hindering the Antichrist’s persecution of the saints and destroying all the evil governments on earth.
1. Revelation is not a doomsday prophecy about the world coming to an end. It is about Jesus beautiful leadership in transitioning this present evil age into another age under His rule and authority.
 2. The Great Tribulation is the “birth pains” that precede the “birth” of the coming age.
- E. The 3 judgment series are ***progressive*** in that they increase in intensity as each series is released. The 7 seal judgments are surpassed in severity by the 7 trumpet judgments which are surpassed by the 7 bowl judgments. For example, 1/4 of the human race dies in the fourth seal (Rev. 6:8), yet at a later time this increases to 1/3 dying in the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:15).

1. The ***seals alert us*** of something important to come. They are preparatory in being analogous to the wrapping on a gift that conceals the contents inside the package. The wrapping anticipates that which is mysterious. The nature of a seal is to keep private something that is anticipated. The contents inside of a scroll are always much more important than the seals that secure its privacy. The 7 seals around the scroll must be broken to open the scroll to release the mysterious contents inside (Jesus' war strategy).
2. The ***trumpets warn us*** of something more severe to follow. They speak of impending disaster that requires extreme, desperate, emergency actions. The trumpets, like the seals are designed as a mercy tactic. That is, they are meant to shock, shake and warn people of the wrath to come. Note that God does not inflict anyone directly until the 5th trumpet. Prior to that He just sets the context (the 7 seals) and touches natural elements (1st four trumpets). How incredible is that!
3. The ***bowls pour out in fullness*** without any delay or hindrance. They are comprehensive. They are not redemptive. The bowls are poured out to annihilate and to cleanse. Think of them as God's final airstrike that takes 30 days.

III. THE SEVEN SEALS & ANGELIC EXPLANATION

- A. Rev. 6 – ***Chronological Storyline***: the ***SEAL JUDGMENTS*** against the kingdom of darkness.
 1. 6:1-17 – The Lamb tears the seven seals
 - a. **1st Seal**: The Beast Begins His Military Campaign
 - b. **2nd Seal**: Global Military Conflict Begins
 - c. **3rd Seal**: Economic Crisis and Food Shortage
 - d. **4th Seal**: Widespread Death from the Impact of the Other Seals
 - e. **5th Seal**: Prayer Movement Strengthened by Mass Martyrdom
 - f. **6th Seal**: Cosmic Disturbances Vindicating the Prayer Movement

- g. **7th Seal:** Signals the Seven Angels with the Seven Trumpets
- B. Rev. 7 – **Angelic Explanation:** we receive **PROTECTION** from judgments and falling away.
- 1. In this parenthetical section we find answers to these two questions: “What is happening to the saints as the seals are being torn?” & “What is happening to the Jews as the seals are being torn?”
 - 2. 7:1-8 – 144,000 ethnic Jews are sealed as first fruits. They are saved and regenerated at the beginning of the Tribulation as first fruits of the national regeneration (Is. 66:8) that occurs at the end of the Tribulation (Zech. 12:10; 13:8-9).
 - 3. 7:9-17 – And an innumerable “multitude” comes up “out of” the Tribulation as martyrs as the Tribulation begins. God’s way of preserving His saints is by giving grace to love their lives not unto death (12:11). Our protection from the judgments includes martyrdom.
 - 4. The protection of the 144,000 Jews and the multitudes of saints is the “sealing” that occurs before the trumpets sound.

IV. THE SEVEN SEALS & ANGELIC EXPLANATION

- A. Rev. 8-9 – **Chronological Storyline:** the **TRUMPET JUDGMENTS** against the Antichrist’s empire.
- 1. 8:1-5 – We see that the agent that releases the trumpet judgments is the prayers of the saints.
 - 2. 8:6-9:21 – The first six trumpets sound:
 - a. **1st Trumpet:** burning 1/3 of the earth's vegetation (food supply)
 - b. **2nd Trumpet:** destroying 1/3 of the sea (food supply)
 - c. **3rd Trumpet:** poisoning 1/3 of the earth's fresh water (water supply)
 - d. **4th Trumpet:** darkening 1/3 of the earth’s light (energy supply)

- e. **5th Trumpet:** releasing demonic locusts that torment for 5 months
 - f. **6th Trumpet:** releasing demonic horsemen that kill 1/3 of the earth
- B. Rev. 10-11 – **Angelic Explanation:** we receive **DIRECTION** by great increase of prophetic ministry.
- 1. 10:1-11 – John is told to “eat to scroll” and to “prophesy” concerning the end of the age. John is a model of the preparation of end time prophets. This section is also a promise from God that He will raise up and commission prophets to give clarity in the hour when the nations require it. When the trumpets are sounding and when the 3 woes (5th, 6th, and 7th trumpet) are impacting the earth, God is committed to speaking clearly to the nations.
 - 2. 11:1-14 – John sees the ministry of two prophets that God promises to raise up. They minister in Jerusalem for 1260 days and do amazing exploits; including shutting up the heavens, calling down fire and raising from the dead. These two prophets will be instrumental in those final years.

V. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SECOND COMING

- A. Rev. 11:15-19 – **Chronological Storyline:** the **COMMENCEMENT OF THE SECOND COMING PROCESSION** (which includes the Rapture).
- 1. 11:15-19 – The seventh trumpet sounds and the replacing of every world government begins.
 - 2. The 7th and Last Trumpet Jesus raptures the elect and gives them resurrected bodies (1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7; 1 Thess. 4:16).
 - 3. In His Procession, Jesus travels:
 - a. Across the sky to rapture the saints (Matt. 24:29-31; Rev. 1:7)
 - b. Through the land of Edom (modern day Jordan; Is. 34:1-10; 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3-18; Deut. 32:2-5)

- c. Into Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives (Rev. 19:11-16; Ps. 24; Zech. 14:1-8).
- B. Rev. 12-14 – **Angelic Explanation:** the **CONFRONTATION** against the saints by the Antichrist’s system and persecutions requires that all his governments be taken over.
1. 12:1-6 – John sees a vision of the age long conflict between Israel and the kingdom of darkness. He sees that God’s plan for Israel at the end of the age is sure. Here we see the level of attack that is waged on ethnic Jews in the final generation. And we see how God is committed to preserving a remnant.
 2. 12:7-17 – John sees that Satan is thrown out of heaven and denied access causing him to attack the Jews and regenerate believers with rage and hatred. Here we see the level of attack that Satan will wage on us. And we see how we overcome him and emerge victorious.
 3. 13:1-10 – John sees a vision of the coming Antichrist and the level of attack that he wages on the planet. He even makes war with Jesus and His saints. Here we are told how to overcome him and what his ministry will look like.
 4. 13:11-18 – John sees another figure called the “false prophet” who will rally nations behind Antichrist. We are also told of the “mark of the beast.” This passage will be so precious in the days ahead because of how much it will prepare us for what is to come.
 5. 14:1-20 – In this chapter we see the divine strategy of preserving the remnant of Jews, the born again saints and bringing in the great harvest. We also hear how Jesus plans on dealing with the enemies that we saw in chapters 12-13.

VI. THE CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE BIG PICTURE

- A. Now that we see what these events are theologically and exegetically, how do we understand them chronologically and sequentially?
1. The First Seal marks **Day One of the Great Tribulation**

APPENDIX TO SESSION 8: The Nature and Timing of the Rapture and How it Relates to the Second Coming

A biblical perspective on the nature and timing of the rapture and second coming

I. WHY IS EVERYONE CONFUSED ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE?

- A. The issue of the rapture has become a part of western pop-culture since leading voices of evangelicalism of the past few decades began to speak publicly about the matter. Books like “Left Behind” put the doctrine to the forefront of Western conscience in places like grocery stores, chains like Wal-Mart and coffee shops. These books and others have been sold in millions all across countries across the western world; especially in places like the US and the UK.
- B. In this session, I want to state clearly that the idea of a secret rapture prior to great end time drama is *completely unbiblical*. And on top of that I want to show that it is *not difficult to understand*. While I respect those who hold this view, I cannot tolerate it as being remotely Biblical. And neither should you.
- C. The problem with this debate (the *timing* of the rapture that is) is that most immature believers without much confidence in their ability to understand the Bible feel incapable of making a decision about what the Bible says about it. And the guys who do feel capable use so many ridiculous proof texts and out of context Bible verses so cleverly that it seems like they know what they’re talking about. And it’s sufficient to persuade themselves and their hearers into believing that they know what they’re in truth. In all seriousness, respect and humility: They don’t know what they’re talking about and it is *not* true.
- D. We’re going to look at five verses that show with absolute clarity and obviousness when the rapture occurs. But before we turn to the verses, let me answer the question of “When does the rapture occur?” in simple terms:

Regenerate believers are transformed and raptured at the 7th Trumpet. The 7th Trumpet is part of a series of judgment events that constitute “the great tribulation.” The 7th Trumpet follows the 7 Seals and previous 6 Trumpets chronologically and precedes the 7 Bowls of Wrath.

II. SUREVEYING THE FIVE VERSES SIDE-BY-SIDE

- A. There are only four verses in the entire Bible that speak explicitly about the rapture. Before bringing anything to the table we need to consider these four verses. I am including a fifth verse pertaining to the 7th Trumpet for clarity sake. Note the language and the timing indicators in the following verses:

*“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall **all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Last Trumpet.** For the Trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised...” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)*

*“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with **the Trumpet of God.** And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

*“Immediately **after the Tribulation of those days...**He will send His angels with a **Great Sound of a Trumpet,** and they will gather together His elect...” (Matthew 24:29-31)*

*“Concerning the **coming of our Lord and our gathering together** [Rapture] to meet Him....Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin** [Antichrist] is revealed... (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)*

*“...in the days of the sounding of **the Seventh Angel/Trumpet,** when He is about to sound, **the mystery of God would be finished,** as He declared it to His servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:7)*

- B. No rapture debate comes without the preacher employing his/her favorite proof texts. But that’s exactly the problem. The problem with this issue is that people use too many proof texts that they shouldn’t be using and distort the ones they should use. If we look at the verses at face value and identify their plain meaning we would be confident to say:

6. We are raptured At the **LAST Trumpet** (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)
 7. We are raptured With **THE Trumpet of God** (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
 8. We (the elect) are raptured **AFTER the Tribulation** at a **Great Trumpet** sound (Matthew 24:29-31)
 9. We are raptured **AFTER the Falling Away** and **After the Revealing of the Antichrist** (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)
 10. When the **SEVENTH and LAST Trumpet** sounds the Mystery of God is complete (Revelation 10:7)
- C. The idea of a secret rapture is nonsensical for a multiplicity of reasons. But if we just look at the *only* passages in Scripture that speak about the event, we have an unequivocal statement that the rapture happens at the Last Trumpet which is also the Seventh Trumpet and that it occurs after the Tribulation and after the emergence of Antichrist and the.

III. THE INCREDIBLE SIMPLICITY OF THE MATTER

- A. God has made it so easy for us to understand. You don't need to do a survey of the Bible to find all the types and shadows of a rapture before the Tribulation. You don't need to read dozens of commentaries and compare what people say about it. It is so clear! We are raised and transformed at the Last Trumpet and at the Seventh Trumpet which is after the Tribulation which includes the falling away and the revealing of Antichrist.
- B. If anyone wishes to impose a secret rapture on any of these texts, shame on them. The texts cannot be distorted or manipulated to say such a thing. Those who affirm the idea that the rapture takes place before the Tribulation must necessarily butcher these texts to oblivion to make them fit. If we were to put these verses before the eyes of a brand new convert in the Himalayas to ask them when they believe the rapture takes place they would simply repeat what the texts say: "At the Seventh Trumpet After the Tribulation."
- C. ***So what is this Seventh Trumpet?*** When is it to be sounded? The book of Revelation contains the clearest and fullest statement of the coming hour of Tribulation.

1. The Tribulation begins in chapter 6 and ends in chapter 19. Those chapters are comprised of **three series of judgment events**. These events are 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets and 7 Bowls.
 2. These events are interrupted in the book so that the angel can interject important information that God wants us to know in context to those judgments. In other words, Revelation 6-19 is made up of one straightforward storyline of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls being released on the earth chronologically and angelic interjections parenthetically.¹⁸
 3. Following the first six Seals the Seventh is torn. The Seventh Seal releases the 7 Trumpets. The Seventh Trumpet releases the 7 Bowls of Wrath. All of these judgment events are literal events that occur chronologically. That's why they are numbered.
- D. We need to consider the 7th trumpet in context to the clear structure given by the Lord; that is, in relation to the 21 other judgment events.
- E. The rapture occurs at the sounding of the 7th Trumpet which is synonymous with the 1st Bowl of Wrath. We are raptured as Jesus returns to the earth at the Seventh Trumpet. This Seventh Trumpet concludes the 42 months of the Great Tribulation. The Bowls of wrath are poured out over a period of 30 days (of which we'll talk about later). Scriptures for the last 3½ years of this age use 6 different expressions: **42 months** (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), **1260 days** (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), **time, times and half a time** (Rev. 12:14; Dan. 7:25; 12:7), and **Middle of the Week** (Dan. 9:27), the **Great Tribulation** (Rev. 7:14), **Jacob's Trouble** (Jer. 30:7). NOTE: The 3½ year time period is designated in three different ways so as to render it impossible to spiritualize, thus making it symbolic of something other than 3½ years.
- F. The reason we do not and cannot include the Seven Bowls of Wrath into that 3 ½ years is because Scripture is clear that the Seventh Trumpet concludes it. Note these two verses in the book of Revelation:

*"...in the days of the sounding of **the Seventh Angel/Trumpet**, when He is about to sound, **the mystery of God** would be **finished**, as He declared it to His servants the prophets." (Revelation 10:7)*

¹⁸ Writers use parenthesis in paragraphs to interject important information into the chronological storyline. The purpose of a parenthesis is to help clarify that which may be confusing or ambiguous in the plot.

*“Then **the Seventh Angel sounded**; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The Kingdoms of this world **have become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ**, and He shall reign forever and ever!”.... “You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they shall be judged and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints....and destroy those who destroy the earth.” (Revelation 11:15-18)*

- G. The mystery of God spoken of in 10:7 is “the Gospel.” Paul uses the term “mystery” to explain the Gospel in his epistles.¹⁹ (See the footnote for the 7 facets) All of these nuances of the Gospel will be completed and consummated at the Seventh Trumpet. That is clear from the text. That is a very clear indication that the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet is one of the most significant events in history. It brings the Tribulation to a close and consummates the mystery of the Gospel.
- H. In chapter 11 we read that the transfer of power takes place at the Seventh Trumpet. When it is sounded, the Kingdoms of this world are all taken over and replaced by Jesus’ earthly Kingdom. This text tells us 6 things about what happens when the Trumpet is sounded that makes it clear for us that this is the end of the Tribulation.
1. The Kingdoms of this World are All Replaced
 2. Jesus begins to Reign on the Earth
 3. The Wrath of God comes in Full (in the form of the 7 Bowls)
 4. The Day of Judgment for the Dead comes
 5. The Day of Reward for the Saints Comes
 6. Jesus destroys Those who Destroy the Earth (in the form of the 7 Bowls)
- I. How clear is that? It’s safe to conclude that the 7th Trumpet concludes this age. These 6 events are not easily dismissed.

¹⁹ He uses it to describe 7 facets of the Gospel. **(1)** The incarnation of Jesus (1 Tim. 3:16), **(2)** the Marriage of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-32), **(3)** the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), **(4)** the salvation of Israel at the end of the age (Romans 11:25-26), **(5)** the Indwelling Spirit (Colossians 1:27), **(6)** the bringing together of Heaven and Earth in the age to come (Ephesians 1:9-10) and **(7)** One New Man (Ephesians 2-3)

IV. JESUS RAPTURES HIS CHURCH AND LEADS A 30 DAY PROCESSION FROM HEAVEN INTO JERUSALEM

- A. At this point many might ask why there are still events taking place on the earth after the rapture. This doesn't compute for many. To be specific, the Bowls of wrath aren't poured out *after the rapture* but *during* it. Jesus' second coming consists of (1) a procession **in the air** to gather the saints,²⁰ (2) a procession **on the land** towards Jerusalem²¹ and (3) a procession **into Jerusalem** to destroy Antichrist and dispense the final Bowl of Wrath.²²
- B. Jesus raptures the Church to initiate His Second Coming Procession which consists of those **3 stages** including many events occurring over a **30 day period**. Now the question is: What's the deal with the extra 30 days?
- C. The 30 day can be seen clearly by comparing the 1,260 days (3½ years) in Revelation 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 with the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11. The 30 days is the length of time it takes for Jesus to rapture the saints and lead a procession into Jerusalem to kill Antichrist. The result of this procession is the destruction of Antichrist, the deliverance of the surviving Jews in the land of Israel and the shedding of so much blood that it reaches up to the bridles of horses for 200 miles.²³ This procession into Jerusalem *takes time* and it occurs during and after the rapture. It takes 30 days.
- D. An angel told Daniel about a thirty-day period that would extend beyond the commonly understood 1,260 days of Tribulation (3½ years) in which most of God's end-time plan occurs (Dan. 12:11).

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the Abomination of Desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days.” (Dan. 12:11)

²⁰ Matthew 24:30-31; Revelation 1:7

²¹ Isaiah 63; Habakkuk 3; Revelation 19:11-16

²² The “tribulation of those days,” does not include the great slaughter of the Antichrist's armies which leaves blood flowing for 200 miles (Rev. 19:19-21; 14:20) along with the great plague that will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem causing their flesh, eyes and tongues to dissolve. This plague also strikes their horses, mules, camels, donkeys and all the cattle in their camps (Zech. 14:12-15). Jesus will destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8).

²³ ¹⁷ Another angel came...having a sharp sickle. 18 Another angel came out from the altar...cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 The winepress was trampled...and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for 1,600 furlongs (200 miles)." (Rev. 14:17-20)

- E. It is surprising that God allows the Antichrist's worldwide worship system to continue to function in Jerusalem for 30 days after Jesus raptures the Church at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15). But that's what the text reads. We struggle with this if we have carelessly swallowed what pop-culture Christianity tells us.
- F. The Antichrist's future worship system is referred to as the Abomination of Desolation ²⁴ because it is an abomination to God that results in the desolation of the nations by His Great Tribulation judgments. This set up and remains for 1290 days which is precisely 30 days more than the 1260 days of the Tribulation.
- G. Though difficult at first to understand, it is simple and straightforward. Daniel's 30 days makes complete sense when we view those 4 passages about the rapture and the Seventh Trumpet with the account of the 7 Bowls of Wrath in Revelation 15-16.
- H. When we see the prominence of the 1260 days the 1290 days makes sense. Scripture makes it clear that during the three-and-a-half-year period three significant end-time activities unfold pertaining to God's people. This very important 1260-day period begins on the day the Abomination of Desolation is set up. Each of these three primary activities will begin on the very day that the Abomination of Desolation starts and they will continue for 1260 days. The three activities that span the duration of 1260 days are:
 1. God will make **provision** for the remnant of Israel for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6, 14).
 2. The two witnesses will **prophecy** for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3).
 3. The Antichrist will **persecute** the saints for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 13:5).
- I. These three activities will abruptly end on exactly the 1,260th day after the Abomination of Desolation begins. See how this coincides with the rapture of the church at the 7th Trumpet? The very day that the provision, prophecy and persecution ceases is the day the rapture of the Church occurs (Rev. 11:15).

²⁴ The centerpiece of the Abomination of Desolation worship system is an image or statue of the Antichrist that will be seen standing in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. It will stand there for exactly 1,290 days. On the day this starts, we will know that the Great Tribulation has begun and the three primary activities soon to be listed begin:

"When you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." (Mt. 24:15-16)

V. THE 30 DAY PROCESSION MUST OCCUR AFTER THE RAPTURE

- A. Jesus' coming is in context to a military conflict around the city of Jerusalem. He will come to win the Battle of Jerusalem which ends the Armageddon Campaign (which lasts for 3½ years). Jesus will march through Bozrah in Edom (Jordan) killing His enemies on His way to Jerusalem (Isa. 34:1-10; 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3-18; Ps. 110:5-6; Deut. 33:2; Num. 24:17-19; Rev. 19:11-16). This procession must come after the rapture because it is logically, exegetically and reasonably impossible to place it after it.
- B. Consider the following passages concerning the 30 day procession into Jerusalem:

¹ *Who is this who comes from **Edom** [Jordan], with dyed garments from **Bozrah** [capital of Edom], this One who is...**traveling** [marching] in the greatness of His strength?...² Why is **Your apparel red**, and Your garments like one **who treads in the winepress**? ³ I have **trodden** the winepress...I have **trodden** them in My anger, **and trampled them** in My fury; **their blood is sprinkled upon My garments**, I have **stained** all My robes. (Isa. 63:1-3)*

² *The indignation of the LORD is against **all nations**, and His fury against all their armies; He has **utterly destroyed them**, He has given them over to the slaughter...⁵ "For My sword...shall come down on **Edom**...for judgment. ⁶ The sword of the LORD is filled with blood...for the LORD has a sacrifice in **Bozrah**, **and a great slaughter** in the land of Edom...⁸ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (Isa. 34:1-8)*

³ *God came from **Teman** [in southern Edom], the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. ⁵ **Before Him went pestilence**, and **fever followed at His feet**...⁷ the **land of Midian trembled** [Arabian desert reaching into the Sinai Peninsula]...¹² **You marched through the land** in indignation; You **trampled the nations** in anger. ¹³ You went forth for the salvation of Your people... (Hab. 3:3-13)*

¹¹ *Behold, a white horse. He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and **makes war**...¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the **armies in heaven**, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, **followed Him on white horses**. ¹⁵ Now out*

*of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should **strike the nations**...He Himself **treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God**...19 I saw the beast, the **kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered** together [on the earth in Jerusalem] **to make war against Him**...20 The Beast was captured, and with him the False Prophet...these two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And **the rest were killed** with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him... (Rev. 19:11-21)*

VI. CONCLUSION

- A. The two greatest reasons why we conclude that the rapture takes place after the Tribulation and at the 7th Trumpet are:
1. The four texts that speak about the rapture all place it after the Tribulation and at the Last Trumpet.
 2. The evidence for the 30 day procession from heaven to Jerusalem only makes sense contextually when we affirm the timing of the rapture according to those three texts.
- B. Now the question many will be asking is, "Where will Jesus and the saints be during these thirty days?" This becomes clear when we remember the context of the big picture. Remember that the rapture will occur at the seventh trumpet, exactly 1,260 days after the Abomination of Desolation is set up. This is the very day that the Antichrist's persecution of the saints stops (Rev. 13:5), when God's supernatural provision for Israel in the wilderness stops (Rev. 12:6, 14) and when the prophesying by the Two Witnesses stops (Rev. 11:3). They all end exactly on the 1,260th day because that is when the saints are raptured.

- C. As we have seen from a handful of passages several things will be happening with the saints when this glorious event known as the rapture occurs (as seen in Mt. 24:31; 1 Thes. 4:17 and Rev. 11:15-18). They will be gathered together in the sky to receive their resurrected bodies, they will be evaluated and rewarded by Jesus and they will be organized and mobilized for the battle of Jerusalem which results in the hostile takeover of the governments of all the nations on earth. This is when Jesus marches up from Edom (Jordan; Isa. 63:1-6) to Israel, as the greater Moses, releasing the bowl judgments on the Antichrist as the end-time Pharaoh. He marches into Jerusalem to liberate Israel and kill the Antichrist and his armies, thus ending the Abomination of Desolation (Rev. 19:11-21) and the wicked reign of the man of sin. The saints will be deeply involved in this. These dramatic events will take 30 days from the rapture of the Church to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to be received as King of kings.
- D. Again, we respect men and women who claim that the rapture occurs before the Tribulation. But this claim is not only unbiblical but dangerous. Imagine living through the hour of Tribulation under the impression that you will escape any moment. Considering the fact that the Tribulation is that which is loosed by the church upon the powers of darkness, we do a great disservice to the people of God when we tell them they will miss this awesome hour.
- E. We will be on the earth releasing the Tribulation and will meet the Lord in the air at the 1260th day. And we will witness with our own eyes the violent demise of the Antichrist on the 1290th day.
- F. I encourage you to meditate on those five verses mentioned at the beginning and ask the Lord if there is anyway the doctrine of a secret rapture could be hidden within them. Keep the simplicity of it in mind and wrestle with it until it becomes clear. Remember: There are only five verses! Anyone can study five short verses!

Session 9: The 7 Bowls of Wrath and Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem (ch. 15-22)

An overview of the last two chronological sections of the book of Revelation and their angelic interpretations

I. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- E. The book of Revelation is comprised of 4 parts:
1. John's Commissioning (1)
 2. The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches (2-3)
 3. John's Vision of the Throne Room and the Transition of Power from the Father to the Son (4-5)
 4. The Transition Period Between This Age and the Next (6-22)
- F. In this section we're going to begin a survey of the fourth part. This fourth part is comprised of **5 chronological "scenes."** Each chronological scene contains the description of a future literal event. And each event is further explained by an angelic interpretation. Thus the fourth part of the book of Revelation is comprised of **5 chronological scenes** and **5 angelic interpretations.**
- G. The 5 Chronological scenes and their angelic interpretations are in this order:
1. **The Tearing of the Seven Seals** (chapter 6)
 1. *The Protection of the Elect* (chapter 7)
 2. **The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets** (chapter 8-9)
 2. *The Promise of Prophetic Leadership and Direction* (chapter 10-11)
 3. **The 7th Trumpet & Commencement of the Second Coming** (11:15-19)
 3. *The Rage of Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet* (12-14)

- 4. **The Seven Bowls of Wrath** (15-16)
- 4. *The Harlot's Religious and Economic Empire* (17-19:15)

- 5. **Jesus' Entrance into Jerusalem** (19:16-20:15)
- 5. *The Restoration of All Things* (21-22)

(*which includes Jesus' 1,000 yr. reign and Satan's final defeat at its end)

H. In this session we're going to deal with the last 2 chronological scenes and their angelic explanations:

- 1. The Seven Bowls of Wrath (ch. 15-16)
- 1. The Harlot's Religious and Economic Empire (ch. 17-19:5)

- 2. Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem (ch. 19-20)
- 2. The Restoration of all Things (ch. 21-22)

II. THE NATURE OF THE SEALS TRUMPETS AND BOWLS

- A. The 3 judgment series are **literal** events that must not be explained away symbolically or historically.
- B. The 3 judgment series are **future**. They have not yet occurred in history.
- C. The 3 judgment series are **numbered** according to the chronological order in which they occur. For example, the first seal is followed by the second seal, which in turns leads to the third and so on. Because God's judgments occur according to a numbered sequence, the Church will become greatly unified. Momentum will build as the Church sees them released according to their order.
- D. The 3 judgment series are **redemptive**. They will create a global crisis that results in many crying out for salvation, while hindering the Antichrist's persecution of the saints and destroying all the evil governments on earth.

- E. The 3 judgment series are **progressive** in that they increase in intensity as each series is released. The 7 seal judgments are surpassed in severity by the 7 trumpet judgments which are surpassed by the 7 bowl judgments. For example, 1/4 of the human race dies in the fourth seal (Rev. 6:8), yet at a later time this increases to 1/3 dying in the sixth trumpet (Rev. 9:15).

III. AN OVERVIEW OF THE LAST TWO SCENES OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. The fourth chronological section in Revelation reveals the 7 judgment events that Jesus will release on the Antichrist's empire as He marches through Edom (modern day Jordan) to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

¹ Who is this who comes from Edom (modern Jordan), with dyed garments from Bozrah (ancient capital of Edom), this One (Jesus) who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?-- "I (Jesus) who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." ² Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ³ "I have trodden the winepress...in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. ⁴ For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come...⁶ I have trodden down the peoples in My anger, made them drunk in My fury, and brought down their strength to the earth." (Isa. 63:1-6)

- B. This journey **begins** with the 7th trumpet and **concludes** with the 7th bowl as Jesus marches into Jerusalem to destroy Antichrist and the False Prophet and to incarcerate Satan for 1,000 years.

- C. On this journey, Jesus will dash the nations or destroy the infrastructures of the Antichrist empire that have been permeated by evil (Ps. 2:8-9; Isa. 11:4, 15; 19:22; Rev. 2:26-27; 19:15).

¹¹ Behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him...He judges and makes war...¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses...¹⁵ He should strike the nations. He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of...the wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ He has on His robe...a name written: KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS. (Rev. 19:11-16)

- D. This journey will take 30 days.

¹¹ ***From the time...the Abomination of Desolation is set up there shall be 1,290 days. (Dan. 12:11)***

IV. THE 4TH CHRONOLOGICAL SCENE: THE 7 BOWLS OF WRATH (REV. 15-16)

After the 7th Trumpet sounds (11:15-19), and after the saints gather on the sea of glass to worship Jesus (15:1-8), 7 angels with 7 bowls of wrath take their stand and pour out their bowls on the earth (16:1-21).

A. First Bowl (Sores): Painful sores on those who worship the Antichrist (Rev. 16:2)

² ***The first went and poured out his bowl...and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast... (Rev. 16:2)***

1. These sores will be foul with a terrible odor as foul meat is rotten or putrid. They will be loathsome in being so painful that men will loath them.

2. Only during the seals and trumpets does John mention believers having a divine seal of protection (Rev. 7:3; 9:4). The saints were raptured at the 7th Trumpet.

3. The sixth plague of Egypt was sores or boils (Ex. 9:8-11). Moses warned that rebellion toward God would bring God's judgment of severe boils (Deut. 28:35).

B. Second Bowl (Food Supply): Destroying the sea with blood killing all sea life (Rev. 16:3). This may be globally but I doubt it. It's my opinion that this is focused on the Mediterranean Sea from Dan. 7. The sea will become like the blood of a dead man with unimaginable stench. There will be complete destruction of marine life not just 1/3 destruction as in the second trumpet.

³ ***Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. (Rev. 16:3)***

C. Third Bowl (Water Supply): Poisoning the earth's fresh water with blood (Rev. 16:4-7). The third trumpet (Rev. 8:10) is similar to the third bowl in defiling the drinking water. The first plague of Egypt struck the Nile with a similar impact as this (Ex. 7:19-21).

⁴ ***Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are***

righteous, O Lord...because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." 7 I heard another from the altar (heavenly intercession) saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." (Rev. 16:4-7)

- D. Fourth Bowl (Torment): Scorching heat and fire from the sun (Rev. 16:8-9) is a supernatural act, not merely a natural one. Men blaspheme God (v. 11, 21). This bowl will intensify the heat of the sun. The fourth trumpet affected the sun in the opposite way by making it less intense.

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. (Rev. 16:8-9)

- E. Fifth Bowl (Destruction): Darkness on the Antichrist's global empire (Rev. 16:10-11)

¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the Beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. 11 They blasphemed the God...because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. (Rev. 16:10-11)

- F. Sixth Bowl (Global Guilt): Demons lure the nations to gather to fight Jesus (Rev. 16:12-16)

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared. 13 I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast (Antichrist), and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth...to gather them to the Battle of that great day of God Almighty...16 They gathered them together to...Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-16)

- G. Seventh Bowl (Annihilation): Shaking by earthquakes and 100 lbs. hail stones (Rev. 16:17-21)

¹⁷ Poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice... from the Throne, saying, "It is done!" 18...there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now the great city (Jerusalem) was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent (100 pounds). Men blasphemed God... (Rev. 16:17-21)

1. This bowl poured out into the air is probably the cause of the plague Zechariah prophesied that will cause the flesh, eyes and tongues of people and livestock to dissolve (Zech. 14:12, 15).
- H. The next event following the 7 bowls is Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21).

¹¹ Behold, a white horse. He (Jesus) who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war....¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...¹⁴ The armies in heaven...followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron...¹⁶ He has on His robe...a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS...¹⁹ I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet...These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ The rest were killed with the sword... (Rev. 19:11-21)

V. THE ANGELIC EXPLANATION: HARLOT BABYLON (REV. 17-19:5)

Seeing and comprehending the severity and comprehensive nature of the bowls of wrath provoke anyone to ask the question, "Why is this necessary?!" This section answers the question by explaining the maturity of sin that will cover the earth at the end of the age.

- A. This is clearly the most difficult section of the book to understand. Combined with Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 this is the longest prophecy in Scripture. The Lord wants us to understand this facet of the end-time drama.
 1. It is the most difficult because it contains so much symbolism. The good news is, the angel interpreted the symbolism for us giving us a basis of interpretation and solid ground to understand it. But, nevertheless, the symbolism is confusing at first – even with the angelic interpretation.

2. In this session we'll only briefly look at the main themes of the subject of the Harlot Babylon without looking at the details.
 3. Chapters 12 and 17 are the only chapters in the book that deal with events that take place before the Great Tribulation begins with the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation and the tearing of the first seal. Chapter 12 explains the cosmic conflict between Satan and the Seed of Abraham. And chapter 17 deals with the emergence of Antichrist and the Harlot system in the days that precede the Great Tribulation.
- B. The **three main themes** of Revelation 17-19:5 are:
1. The Emergence of the Antichrist
 2. The 10 Nation Coalition that Comprises Antichrist's Power Base
 3. The Emergence of Judgment of Babylon
- C. There are **3 key messages** within the text that help explain what the Harlot Babylon is:
1. It is a **global empire** that will hold sway over the whole earth through unprecedented **financial power** (17:2, 4, 15, 18; 18:3, 7, 9, 11-19, 23); it is a literal **city**, and global **empire** and a international **network**.
 2. It will **emerge** in concentrated unity with Antichrist (17:3, 7)
 3. It will **fall** in two stages: (1) at the beginning of the Great Tribulation as Antichrist turns against it and attacks it and (2) at the End of the Tribulation as the 7 bowls of wrath are dispensed.
- D. Though this Harlot will be a global network and a global empire, it will have a "capital city." Many have argued in favor of it being many different cities from Rome to Jerusalem to New York City. But the mass of Old Testament prophecies about the destruction of Babylon (which have never been fulfilled) press us to acknowledge the literal nature of this prophecy in that the city of ancient Babylon will be the governmental headquarters of this empire. In the same way that Jerusalem emerged miraculously in the wake of WWII, so too will Babylon emerge out of a Middle Eastern conflict (that may be precipitating now with the current war) to assume global influence and great financial power in a very short amount of time.

VI. THE 5TH CHRONOLOGICAL SCENE: JESUS' ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM (REV. 19:6-21)

This section is one of the most straightforward and easy to understand portions of Scripture in the book. It is comprised of seven successive “I saw”s. That is, seven times in a row John said, “I saw.” All unbiblical systems of eschatology emerge from a distortion of these seven scenes. John saw them unfolding one after another with each being contingent upon the other.

A. The 7 Scenes are:

1. Jesus presents Himself and enters Jerusalem (19:11-16)
2. Jesus defeats Antichrist (19:17-21)
3. Satan is cast into prison for 1,000 years (20:1-3)
4. Saints are given governmental leadership over the earth (20:4-6)
5. Satan is released after the 1,000 years (20:7-10)
6. The Great White Throne Judgment of All (20:11-15)
7. The Father Dwells on Earth with Men (21:1-8)

VII. THE ANGELIC EXPLANATION: THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS (REV. 21-22)

A. After the release of Satan at the end of the Millennium we see that there is one final judgment.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev 20:11-15)

B. After the Great White Throne Judgment, eternity begins. This is clear. But what confused many commentators and preachers about what follows the Great White Throne Judgment is the elusive blend of chronological and parenthetical explanation. That is, the Lord shows Him the Great White Throne (which ends

“time” and begins endless eternity) and THEN shows him what appears to be the Millennium again.

- C. We know that Revelation 21-22 are not chronological in that John begins to describe the MILLENNIAL New Jerusalem AND the ETERNAL New Jerusalem. There are at least 5 reasons why we must see a distinction between the Millennial Jerusalem and the Eternal Jerusalem.
1. First, the Kings of the earth come into the New Jerusalem during the Millennium to bring their glory (Rev. 21:24). Why are there kings with ethnic distinction making trips to Jerusalem if there is no Millennium?
 2. Second, the leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2). Healing is progressive not immediate.
 3. Third, the angels guard sinners from entry (Rev. 21:12, 22:14-15; Gen. 3:22-24). Why are sinners on the earth if there is no Millennial city?
 4. Fourth, the New Jerusalem lights up the saved nations on the Millennial earth not unsaved ones (Rev. 21:24; 20:7-9). Why are there unsaved peoples if there is no Millennium?
 5. Fifth, the size of the Millennial Jerusalem is approximately 10 square miles (4,500 rods x 4,500 rods) (Ezek. 48:30-35; 45:6; 48:15-19) whereas, the New Jerusalem is 1500 miles. Why is there such a dramatic distinction between the two descriptions of the city if there is only one city?

Session 10: The Second Coming Procession

I. THE CLIMAX OF THE END-TIME DRAMA: THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

- A. The second coming is often thought of as an immediate event that occurs suddenly and concludes suddenly. This isn't true. It will be dramatic. It will take a considerable amount of time (30 days). And Jesus will not suspend human processes. He will return as a Jewish Man to establish a government in Jerusalem; and He will be covered in blood (Isa. 34:5-10; 63:1-6; Hab. 3:3-18; Zech. 9:14; Ps. 110:5-6; Deut. 33:2; Num. 24:17-19; Rev. 19:11-16).
- B. The second coming will have three "stations" or "stages." Jesus will (1) appear in the sky before (2) marching through the land in the Middle East before (3) marching into Jerusalem to destroy His enemies. In this session we're going to look at these three stages.
- C. Structurally, chronologically and exegetically the second coming **begins at the sounding of the seventh trumpet** (Rev. 11:15-19; 10:7; Mt. 24:29-31; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Thess. 2:1-3) and **concludes with the seventh bowl of wrath** (Rev. 16:17-21). The second coming and the dispensing of the 7 bowls of wrath occur simultaneously over a period of 30 days.

II. JESUS APPEARS IN THE SKY

- A. The first stage of the second coming process is when Jesus appears in the sky (or "in the clouds") and commissions the angels to gather the elect in the rapture. It's critical that we understand the second coming and the rapture as the same event. There are only four passages in the Bible that speak explicitly about the rapture and all four say very clearly that it occurs at the last trumpet; which is the 7th trumpet; which is after the 1260 days of the Great Tribulation.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the Last Trumpet. For the Trumpet will sound, and the dead in Christ will be raised..." (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the Trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

“Immediately after the Tribulation of those days...He will send His angels with a Great Sound of a Trumpet, and they will gather together His elect...” (Matthew 24:29-31)

“Concerning the coming of our Lord and our gathering together [Rapture] to meet Him....Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [Antichrist] is revealed...” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

- B. The rapture of the Church initiates His Second Coming Procession as well as the taking over of every earthly government and institution as well as many other events that occur over a **30-day period** (compare the 1,260 days (3½ year) in Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; Dan. 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 with the 1,290 days of Dan. 12:11). We must understand the significance of the last and 7th trumpet.

“...in the days of the sounding of the Seventh Angel/Trumpet, when He is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared it to His servants the prophets.” (Revelation 10:7)

¹⁵ ***The seventh angel sounded...loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord...18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time...that You should reward...the saints...and destroy those who destroy the earth. (Rev. 11:15-18)***

- C. Jesus’ appearance in the sky will be sudden, dramatic and global in impact; hardly a secret event:

⁷ ***Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him...and all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him... (Rev. 1:7)***

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mat 24:29-31)

III. JESUS MARCHES ON LAND

- A. Isaiah saw Jesus marching through the nation of Jordan stained in the blood of His enemies

1 Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah (capital of Edom), this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?-- “I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.” 2 Why is Your apparel red, and Your

garments like one who treads in the winepress? 3...I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. 4 For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come." (Isa. 63:1-4)

² The indignation of the LORD is against all nations, and His fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter...⁵ "For My sword...shall come down on Edom...for judgment. 6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood...for the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom...⁸ For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion. (Isa. 34:1-8)

- B. Habakkuk saw Jesus marching through the Middle East in judgment and deliverance

³ God came from Teman (in southern Edom), the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. ⁵ Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet...⁷ the land of Midian trembled (Arabian desert reaching into the Sinai Peninsula)...¹² You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. ¹³ You went forth for the salvation of Your people... (Hab. 3:3-13)

²⁵

- C. David saw Jesus filling the earth with dead bodies:

⁵ The Lord (Father) is at Your right hand; He (Jesus') shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. ⁶ He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. (Ps. 110:5-6)

- D. John saw Jesus covered in blood, tattoos and zeal to destroy His enemies:

¹¹ Behold, a white horse. He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...¹⁹ I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him...²⁰ The Beast

²⁵ **Mount Paran** is in the Sinai Peninsula, 30 miles south of Israel, and 130 miles north of Sinai. **Mount Seir** is the range from the S. of the Dead Sea to Elath, N. of the gulf of Akabah, on the E. of the Arabah. The distance from Mt. Sinai to Israel is 165 miles. It is an 11-day journey traveling 15 miles a day with flocks (Deut 1:2). **Teman** is a town in the southern part of Edom. **Midian** is the land east of the Dead Sea, that stretched to the south through the Arabian desert, reaching to parts of the Sinai Peninsula. It lay between Edom and Paran and it is in Arabia today.

was captured, and with him the False Prophet...these two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him... (Rev. 19:11-21)

- E. John saw that at the 6th bowl being dispensed, masses of men bent on war would march towards Jerusalem. If the 7th Trumpet marked the replacing of world governments and the rapture, what are these people doing still alive and bent on “making war with the Lamb”? Jesus’ procession on land is the only way to make sense of these passages.

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared. 13 I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast (Antichrist), and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth...to gather them to the Battle of that great day of God Almighty...16 They gathered them together to...Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-16)

- F. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the Abomination would remain standing in Jerusalem for 1290 days which is 30 days longer than the duration of the 1260 Tribulation:

And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the Abomination of Desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days. (Dan. 12:11)

IV. JESUS MARCHES INTO JERUSALEM

- A. The conclusion of this age is Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem. He will gather all nations against Israel and will defend them as He marches into the city as the greater David. Upon arrival He will deliver the remnant of ethnic Jews who survived Jacob’s Trouble (1/3 of the population; see Zech. 13:8-9).

¹ Behold, the day of the LORD is coming...2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken...half of the city shall go into captivity... 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations...4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two... making a very large valley...5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley...Yes, you shall flee...Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You. (Zech. 14:1-5)

- B. David saw the day that One who possessed the fullness of the earth as His own inheritance would enter Jerusalem as King; a King mighty in battle:

Lift up your heads, O you gates (of Jerusalem)! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and

mighty, the LORD mighty in battle (Armageddon campaign). (Ps. 24:7-8)

C. John described this procession into Jerusalem as he saw it:

¹¹ Behold, a white horse. He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war...¹³ He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations...He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...¹⁹ I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him...²⁰ The Beast was captured, and with him the False Prophet...these two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him... (Rev. 19:11-21)

D. This is the day that Jesus prophesied of in Matthew 23:39:

I say to you (governmental leaders in Jerusalem), you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" (Mt. 23:39)