

*Notes
on
Biblical
Prophecy
and
the
Book
of
Revelation*

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Ten Conclusions from Studying Every Prophecy of the Bible

First, God made an unconditional promise of what is called the Promised Land to Abraham's descendants, often referred to as the Abrahamic Covenant. The relevant verses present the promise as unconditional, literal, and eternal. The physical boundaries promised include a total land mass Israel has never yet occupied. The promise is yet to be literally fulfilled. The relevant passages make clear that individuals may miss out on it, but the promise remains. It is also clear that disobedience by Israel would have severe ramifications, but not a final rejection by the Lord.

Genesis 12:3; Genesis 13:14-15; Genesis 15:18-19; Genesis 17:1-21; Exodus 23:31; Leviticus 26:44-45; Deuteronomy 4:25-31; Deuteronomy 30:3-5; Psalm 89:30-34; Luke 1:67-75; Romans 11:25-26; Galatians 3:17-18

Second, God made a conditional promise to Israel as it received what has been called the Mosaic Law. Israel would experience blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience. Israel's disobedience eventually led to such tragedies as a divided kingdom, the North's captivity to Assyria and the South's captivity to Babylon. The Mosaic Law curbed sin and revealed the need of a coming Savior. In that sense the Old Covenant of the Mosaic Law would eventually give way to the New Covenant through the Messiah's active obedience and actual atonement for sin. But Israel's disobedience and failure to achieve her full blessing did not set aside the unconditional promise to Abraham.

Deuteronomy 28-38; Matthew 5:17-18; Galatians 3:15-25

Third, God made an unconditional promise of a throne within the Promised Land to David's descendants. This is often referred to as the Davidic covenant. It is an unconditional, literal, and eternal promise. It is also carefully articulated. It is made clear that Solomon and his sons may forfeit their part in it through disobedience, but the promise stands for a son of David. Psalms 89:29-36 makes this clear.

2 Samuel 7:11-16; 2 Samuel 23:5; 1 Kings 2:1-4; 1 Kings 9:4-9; 1 Chronicles 17:3-5; Psalm 132:11-18; Jeremiah 36:30; Luke 1:26-33; Luke 1:67-75

Fourth, Israel's Messiah would die as an atoning sacrifice for sinners yet rise from the dead (what we now refer to as the First Coming of Jesus Christ). The Old Testament shows the Jews expected two things from their Messiah. They expected both a Suffering Servant and a Conquering King. Only in retrospect can we see that Jesus fulfilled the Suffering Servant passages in His First Coming and will fulfill the Conquering King passages in His Second Coming. Jesus Himself reinforced the idea of two comings in Matthew 16:24-27.

Genesis 3:15; Genesis 49:9-12; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Deuteronomy 21:22-23; 1 Samuel 2:35; Psalm 22; Psalm 110; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:1-2; Isaiah 11:1,10; Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 53; Isaiah 61:1-4; Jeremiah 16:19-21; Daniel 9:24-27; Micah 5:2-4; Zechariah 9:9-10; Zechariah 13:7-9; Malachi 3:1

Fifth, the phrase 'Day of the Lord' in the Old Testament, when applied to the End Times, seems to encompass what we call the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Battle of Armageddon, and what we call the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium. The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament includes expectations of a coming time of Tribulation, including the reign of the Antichrist, physical disturbances, regathering of Israel, and defeat of Babylon. This Tribulation is also called the 70th week of Daniel because of the prophecy in Daniel 9:24-27, identifying the Tribulation as lasting seven years, if indeed each week is taken to be seven years. The 'Day of the Lord' in the Old Testament includes expectations of what we have come to call the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon. The 'Day of the Lord' in the Old Testament includes expectation of the binding of Satan during what we have come to call the millennium and the Day of Judgment after the millennium.

Tribulation passages: Daniel 9:24-27; Isaiah 10:20-21; Isaiah 11:10,12; Isaiah 13:1,6,9; Daniel 2 and 7; Daniel 8 and 11; Daniel 12:4-12; Joel 2:30-32; Amos 5:18; Amos 7:7-9; Amos 9:8-10; Zephaniah 1:2-3; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Matthew 24; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Revelation 6-19
Second Coming/ Battle of Armageddon passages: Psalm 2; Psalm 110:5-6; Isaiah 11:4; Isaiah 34:1-3; Isaiah 64:1-2; Jeremiah 25:30-38; Jeremiah 50-51; Joel 3; Zephaniah 3:8-13; Zechariah 12:8-14; Zechariah 14:1-21; Malachi 4:1-6; Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thess. 1:3-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Jude 14-15; Revelation 19.

Millennium/ Day of Judgment passages: Isaiah 24:21-23; Exodus 32:32-34; Psalm 1:5; Psalm 37:12-13; Psalm 96:13; Psalm 98:8-9; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Isaiah 34:4; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Peter 3:1-7; Revelation 20

Sixth, Israel's Messiah will reign on the throne promised to David in the land promised to Abraham. The expectation of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other Old Testament prophets was clearly of a literal reign in the actual Promised Land. This is described as a time when Israel will no longer be harmed. It is presented as a time unlike Israel has ever experienced, but not quite the New Heavens and New Earth referred to in other prophecies. The most likely time these prophecies could be fulfilled is the millennial reign of Jesus Christ described in Revelation chapter 20. The sheer number of these prophecies is almost overwhelming. So rooted was this actual reign of Christ in Jewish thinking that Jesus' disciples are still asking about it after He rises from the dead and is about to ascend to the Father. In Acts 1:6 Jesus' disciples ask Him, "Lord, at this time are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel."

This would have been the perfect time for Jesus to correct them and say, “You’ve got it all wrong, fellows, all those Old Testament promises were forfeited by Israel by their disobedience and are now to be spiritually applied to the church.” But that was exactly what Jesus did not do. The Book of Acts records Jesus’ response in Acts 1:7-8. Instead of Jesus rebuking them for interpreting the Old Testament promises literally Jesus reinforces both that the Kingdom will be restored to Israel one day and tells them what to do in the meantime- take the gospel to the ends of the earth. **Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Acts 1:6-8; Revelation 20; Jeremiah 30:1-9; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-15; Psalms 10:16; Psalms 37:9; Isaiah 2:1-11; Isaiah 11:1-12:6; Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 62:1-4. 12; Jeremiah 3:11-18; Jeremiah 16:14-15; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Jeremiah 30:1-11; Jeremiah 31:31-40; Jeremiah 33:14-18; Ezekiel 36:22-37; Hosea 1:8-2:1; Hosea 3:1-5; Hosea 14:1-7; Joel 2:25-27; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 2:12-13; Haggai 2:1-9; Haggai 2:20-23; Zechariah 14:1-21; Matthew 19:27-29; I Corinthians 6:1-3**

Seventh, the apostles explain to us the mystery of the church and the rapture of the church between the time Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Suffering Servant (First Coming) and the time He will come as the Conquering King (Second Coming). This fits with the concept of an interval of time before the final seven years mentioned in Daniel chapter 9:24-27. This fits with the concept of progressive revelation found as one reads the scriptures. Jesus only used the word for church twice, in Matthew chapters 16 and 18. Jesus only clearly spoke of the rapture once, in John 14:1-3. The bulk of the details about the church and the rapture of the church were left to His apostles to teach about. In a sense believers experience the Kingdom of God now in relationship with Jesus. But in another very real sense the Kingdom is yet to come when Jesus rules on earth, fulfilling scores of prophecies.

Daniel 9:24-27, Joel 2:28-32; Acts 1:6-8; Romans chapters 9-11; Matthew 13:10-15; Matthew 13:31-32; Ephesians 1:9-10; Ephesians 2:6-7; Revelation chapters 2-3

Eighth, the apostles, in anticipation of an imminent rapture of believers, introduce a sense of giddy anticipation that is very different in tone than the ‘Day of the Lord’ verses in the Old Testament. Characteristic of this is their use of the phrase found in the apostles’ letters, “the Day of Christ.”

Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 1:7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:10; Philippians 3:10-14; Philippians 3:18-21; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Titus 2:11-15; Hebrews 9:27-28; Hebrews 10:25-29; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 4:7; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:2-3

Ninth, the apostles seem to promise that believers will be raptured before, and not experience, the Tribulation, the day of God’s wrath. This fits with the three purposes for the Tribulation that seem clearly presented within The Book of Revelation: the judgment of the satanic world system known as Babylon; the regathering of Israel for the Messianic Age when Jesus rules on earth; and several last chances for earth dwellers to repent before Christ’s Second Coming. Whereas there is no scripture spelling out a purpose of the tribulation related to the church, there is this explicit promise in The Book of Revelation: “I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come over the whole world to test those who live on the earth (Rev. 3:10).”

1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 3:10

Tenth, the final expectation of the redeemed is dwelling with God forever on the New Earth in new bodies. The final woe of the lost is presented as eternity in the Lake of Fire. In 2 Peter the apostle Peter seems to refer to this time as “the Day of God” coming after “the Day of the Lord” (2 Peter 3:10-13). It is also recognized here that there are many verses that refer to “rewards” for believers and “degrees of punishment” for unbelievers. For those whose names are written in the Book of life this appears to happen at the “judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10). For the unbeliever, this appears to happen at the Great White Throne Judgment spoken of in Revelation 20:11-12.

Job 19:25-27; Psalm 23:6; Isaiah 60:18-22; Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:22-24; Matthew 11:20-24; Matthew 13:36-43; Romans 2:5-8; Romans 2:14-16; Romans 8:18-25; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Corinthians 15; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10; Hebrews 4:13; Hebrews 12:22-29; James 1:12; 2 Peter 3:8-13; Revelation 21-22.

This study confirmed that the author’s approach to The Book of Revelation would be as a Premillennialist that believes the church will be raptured before the Tribulation of Revelation chapters 6-19. But a note of distinction must be made here. It is clear to the author of this project that most people who read the Bible literally will gravitate toward the Premillennial view. As it relates to the timing of the rapture of the church, this is an area where people who read the Bible literally and hold the Premillennial view have a difference of opinion. For the reasons presented above, the author of this project believes the Rapture is distinct from the second coming and happens before the Tribulation begins. The great thing about preaching through Revelation is how much the book can be applied to everyday life in spite of the debate Premillennialists have over the timing of the rapture.”

As a preacher works through Revelation with his people, he will be wise to follow three “rules”:

Basic explanation! Little speculation! Lots of application!

Revelation 1:1-8 The Return of the King!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The certain return of the glorified Christ should motivate the beloved Christians of Asia to quickly seek the blessing that comes by reading, understanding, and applying the word of the triune God given to John by God's angel!

Theological Proposition: The imminence of Christ's return should lead Christians to study and apply The Book of Revelation to their lives.

Homiletical Proposition: Jesus is coming back and we better get ready!

Worship Theme: Behold He comes!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That Jesus Christ has not forgotten us!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Jesus Christ could come at any time!

I want audience to do more readily: Seek the blessing that comes from reading, understanding and applying Rev.

Verse 1 lets us know that The Book of Revelation is first and foremost an indispensable source for rounding out the Biblical portrait of Jesus!

Only in 1:1 does Revelation use the Greek word apokalypsis. But verse 3 tells us Revelation is also a prophecy book, and in the last chapter, Rev. 22, we are reminded four times that prophetic words have just been spoken. With prophecies, we do look for literal fulfillment of what has been prophesied. I believe Revelation is much more of a prophetic book than it is an apocalyptic book. But from verse four we also learn it is a letter to churches.

"The greetings distinguish this book from all other Jewish apocalyptic works. John writes to actual, historical churches." -Africa Bible Commentary (Zondervan: 2006), page 1546

In verse 3 we get a unique promise: you'll be blessed if you do three things with The Book of Revelation: read it, hear it, keep it! This is the first of seven blessings contained in the book:

1:3 14:13 16:15 19:9 20:6 22:7 22:14

Verse three also tells us the time is near! The Greek word used is kairos, which is time as "significant events." The Greek word chronos is not used here, which is more focused on "chronological time." In other words, these events are "imminent;" they are certain to come, and should influence how we live life in the present.

In verses 4 & 5 we get a greeting from the Triune God!

Verse 5 gives us three titles for Jesus: Faithful witness; Firstborn from the dead; Ruler of the kings of earth.

Verse 6 reminds us of three things Jesus has done for believers: loves us; freed us; "kinged" us!

Verse 7 is the theme of the book: The return of the King!

There is not a single specific quotation from the O.T. in the Revelation, but over 260 of the 404 verses contain allusions to over 550 O.T. references. It is fair to say that The Book of Revelation not only completes the New Testament, but also completes the Old Testament! In the 260 chapters of the New Testament, there are 300 references to His Second Coming- one for every 30 verses! 3 times in these 8 verses it says God is coming!

Revelation 1:9-20 Title: The Radiance of the King!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The radiance, power, and presence of the glorified Christ should encourage the struggling Christians in Asia and their pastors as they face the same kinds of trials John faces.

Theological Proposition: The all knowing, all powerful Christ is with believers as they face difficult trials.

Homiletical Proposition: Jesus is with us right now as we face trials!

Worship Theme: The greatness yet nearness of Jesus!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That the all powerful Christ walks among us!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That their image of Jesus should be more than Christmas and Easter.

I want audience to do more readily: Seek to realize Christ's presence in every trial.

Today we'll see that the truly beautiful one has come, and as we behold His radiance, His power, and His presence among us, we can persevere in whatever we are facing because the Radiant One is with us! There are 16 different names for God in verses 1-20!

I love how John identifies himself in verse 9! No mere human alive when this was written deserved more respect than this man, the last living apostle. But he identifies himself as John, our brother! He also spoke of being our partners! Paul wrote to the Philippians thanking them for being partners in God's grace and partners with him in sharing the gospel. John states here that we are partners in trouble!

Verse 10 lets us know that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day there on Patmos. Four times the phrase "in the Spirit" occurs in Revelation, and there are some who use it to outline the book. 1:10 4:2 17:3 21:10

V. 12-16 The Radiance and Power of the King!

Jesus is seen here to be the All-knowing, All-powerful, Everywhere-present Prophet, Priest, and King!

V. 17-20 The Presence of the King!

According to Rick Warren, there are 365 occurrences of "don't be afraid" in the Bible, one for each day of the year!

"Keys stand for authority, possession, and privilege. The one who has the keys is the one who is in control. What do keys do? They open things. They lock and unlock things. They liberate and imprison. What are these keys to? Death and Hades – the two great enemies of man... When a person dies, death gets the body but Hades gets the spirit and the soul."
-Adrian Rogers *Unveiling the End Times in Our Times* (Broadman: 2004), page 45

V. 20 The Radiant Lord reveals two secrets about His presence

Secret # 1: Jesus walks among the church's people!

Secret #2: Jesus holds in His hand the church's pastors!

V. 19 God's Outline of Revelation

The things seen (Past):	The risen Christ!	Chapter 1!
The things which are (Present):	The church age!	Chapters 2-3!
The things which will take place after this (Future):	Tribulation/ 2 nd Coming!	Chapters 4-22!

Revelation 2:1-7 The First Love of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Ephesus, encouraging the church by referring to Christ's power and presence, commending the church for faithful endurance despite pressures from without and false teaching from within, exhorting the church to repent of losing their first love, and promising the church that overcomers will eat from the tree of life!

Theological Proposition: Christ is with believers as they face persecution from without and false teaching from within, but believers must not forget to put their relationship with Jesus before the things they do for Jesus!

Homiletical Proposition: To love Jesus must remain the heartbeat of our mission, the spring from which our service overflows!

Worship Theme: Abiding in Jesus so we'll bear much fruit!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That Jesus loves to encourage us, telling us what we're doing right first!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Jesus does know my exact situation!

I want audience to do more readily: Increase the amount of time they spend in prayer and Bible study.

Things we know about Ephesus:

- It's name means "desired one," and it was home to 300,000 people
- The Temple of Diana was there, one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world
- Many people were employed making idols of Diana, also called Artemis
- 3 great highways came in and out of Ephesus to the North, South, and East
- It was the capital of the western part of Asia Minor
- So intertwined was the Temple with the economy it became a great bank
- One commentator has aptly called it "the Vanity Fair of the Ancient World"

The formula of these seven letters:

A word about Jesus Christ – something to fill in the portrait of Jesus!

A word of commendation – something they were doing right!

A word of condemnation – something that they needed to change!

A word of warning – what will happen if they don't change!

A word of promise – what victors will receive after Jesus comes!

V. 2-3, 6 Jesus commends the Ephesian church for 4 things!

First, Jesus commends them for the deeds they had done for Him! Second, Jesus commends them for staying away from evil influences. Third, Jesus commends them for recognizing and shunning false teachers. Fourth, Jesus commends them for enduring despite all they had faced

V. 4 Jesus rebukes the church for losing her first love

People don't ask busy Christians what their secret is! They ask people who love Jesus and glow because of time spent with Jesus what their secret is!

V. 5a The 3 R's of getting your first love back! Remember Repent Repeat

V. 5b What happens when a church loses it's first love?

God removes them, and raises up others to let His light shine!

V. 7 The victor will get to eat from the tree of life in Paradise!

As we go through these letters it's amazing how many things we will see we lost in Genesis 1-3 are promised to us in Rev. 1-3 and realized in Rev. 20-22!

Revelation 2:8-11 The Faithfulness of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Smyrna, encouraging the church by referring to Christ's resurrection from the dead, commending the "poor" church for being spiritually rich, exhorting the church to be faithful unto death despite Satan's coming persecution, and promising the church that overcomers will not be harmed by the second death.

Theological Proposition: Christ has risen from the dead and so believers can face whatever Satan throws at them knowing God will reward them!

Homiletical Proposition: Faithfulness to Jesus often means enduring suffering- but Christ's reward is out of this world!

Worship Theme: Christ has overcome death and so will believers!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That they are rich "in Christ!"

I want audience to believe more strongly: With Christ's example and help they can be faithful when suffering.

I want audience to do more readily: To be faithful witnesses even in the midst of suffering.

Things we know about Smyrna (35 miles North of Ephesus):

- It was another important seaport city, also on the direct trade route from India and Persia to Rome!
- It is still a thriving city today, Modern Izmir in Turkey, with 200,000 people, and many Christians
- It was a wealthy city known for learning, especially in the sciences and medicine
- The city was perhaps proudest of having become a center of emperor worship
- In A.D. 23, it won the bidding war over 11 other cities and became the home of the first temple built to honor the Emperor Tiberius, who was the Emperor of Rome when Jesus was crucified
- Under Domitian, emperor worship became compulsory for every Roman citizen on threat of death
- Once a year citizens had to burn incense on the altar and say, "Caesar is Lord"

V. 8 Jesus puts death in perspective

Three times in these four verses death is referred to! The reality of death overshadowed the church in Smyrna.

Jesus is the first and the last! He was around before there was physical death; He'll be around after physical death! He experienced physical death personally, but lives again!

V. 9 Jesus puts difficult circumstances in perspective!

In our day we are accustomed to Jews being very tolerant of Christians and others. The problem in our day has become others being intolerant of Jews. But in that day many Jews persecuted Jews who believed in Jesus, such as Saul had done before he became Paul the believer! The Book of Acts traces much of this persecution.

V. 10 Jesus speaks direct words about what lies ahead for faithful disciples

For the Christian, death is not the worst thing that can happen to them; being unfaithful to Jesus is the worst thing that can happen to them! What's this deal about the tribulation for ten days?! Bottom line: we're not sure!

V. 11 The true believer in Jesus will never die twice!

The second death does not mean non-Christians will cease to exist, as some mistaken people believe. It means they will be transferred from Hades to the Lake of Fire, experiencing endless torment apart from Christ.

If you're only born once, you'll have to die twice. But if you're born twice, you'll only have to die once!

Revelation 2:12-17 The Testimony of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Pergamum, encouraging the church by referring to Christ's spoken power, commending the church for keeping the faith in a difficult city even during the days of Antipas' martyrdom, warning those who compromise the church's witness by idolatry and sexual sin that Christ will come and fight against them if they don't repent, and promising the church that overcomers will receive hidden manna and a white stone with their special name on it!

Theological Proposition: Christ commends faithful witnesses but will fight against those who corrupt the church.

Homiletical Proposition: Christ cares passionately about what kind of witness we are!

Worship Theme: Purity in the church!

I want audience to feel more deeply: Jesus is watching and impressed when we are faithful in difficult situations.

I want audience to believe more strongly: Jesus fights against those who don't repent of idolatry and sexual sin.

I want audience to do more readily: Put away their idols!

Things we know about Pergamum:

- If we left Smyrna driving north in a car, it would take about an hour to get to Pergamum
- It was the administrative center of Rome in Asia Minor, meaning its governor could put people to death
- It had the only provincial temple to Augustus Caesar (who reigned when Jesus was born)
- A university was there, as well as a library with 200,000 volumes (only Alexandria had more)
- Pergamum was the place where animal skins were first used to write on, called at first pergamena
- Pergamum had the largest altar in the world, the Temple of Zeus, one of the 7 wonders of the world
- There were many other temples too, most notably one to Aesculapius, the god of healing or medicine

V. 12 Jesus Christ is the Ultimate Judge of our behavior

To the church in Pergamum, where they were pressured by those who judged with the sword, Jesus introduces Himself as the One with the sharp, two edged sword!

V. 13 Most of the church in Pergamum had a great testimony for Jesus

It's probably best to view "Satan's throne" as being a composite of all its pagan influences, the same influences Christians of all time have had to deal with living in godless cultures where false ideas flourish and enslave. We don't know anything more about Antipas than his name, which means "against all!"

V. 14-15 Some in the church need to repent of a bad testimony for Jesus

The teaching of Balaam encouraged God's people to compromise their faith by participating in the sinful practices of those they lived among. What are the hated practices of the Nicolaitans? We are not sure.

The end of verse fourteen tells us the two ways these false ideas were mainly lived out: idolatry and immorality. The way churches dissolve is not from without but within, through cancerous doctrine and carnal living. We need to care more about what the One with the two edged sword thinks than what false teachers think!

V. 16 Jesus fights against professing Christians who are unrepentant

Your understanding of Jesus has to include verse 16: Jesus will fight against professing Christians who don't turn from their idolatry and immorality. Thankfully, according to verse 16, it's not too late to repent!

V. 17 Three things overcomers receive Overcomers receive...

The hidden manna! A white stone! A new name from Jesus!

Revelation 2:18-29 The Direction of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Thyatira, encouraging the church by referring to Christ's penetrating sight and power, commending the church for actually increasing its enduring love and faithful service, but rebuking the church for not dealing with the false prophetess who has many engaged in idolatry and sexual immorality, warning them that all who fall into such sins will be killed with the plague; finally, those who hold on to the true faith until the end are promised they will have authority in Christ's coming kingdom.

Theological Proposition: Christ examines professing disciples and will hold them accountable for whether they are growing in love and service or regressing back to idolatry and sexual immorality.

Homiletical Proposition: Christ is committed to us growing up in Him not sliding back into sin!

Worship Theme: Live up to what you have already attained!

I want audience to feel more deeply: Christ is watching and impressed when we keep growing!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Christians must turn from idolatry and sexual sin.

I want audience to do more readily: Seek to speak the truth in love to those who are in danger of falling away.

Things we know about Thyatira:

- It was 40 miles southeast of Pergamum
- It had been established by Alexander the Great 300 years before Christ
- Thyatira did commerce in wool, leather, linen, dyed stuff, pottery, bronze works, and unfortunately, slaves
- Each of those industries had a trade guild or union that you just about had to belong to
- Each guild had associated itself with a particular god that was supposed to be worshipped
- Every so often each guild would share a common meal at a feast
- There was a lot of drunkenness at these feasts, and they also often included sexual activity

V. 18 Jesus is the all powerful God who sees all!

This is the only place in Revelation Jesus is called the Son of God. Emperor worshippers would call Caesar the "Son of God." But Jesus is the real Son of God, God the Son! See 1:13-15.

V. 19 Jesus commends the church at Thyatira for love and progress!

Even though He has a stiff rebuke for them in a moment, He first commends them heartily! Of the seven letters in Revelation this is the only church specifically commended for its love!

V. 20-21 What can mess up a church known for love and progress?

We read here that false teaching that leads to immorality and idolatry can mess up an otherwise wonderful church!

Jezebel is a reference from the Old Testament to Queen Jezebel of Israel, who not only led her husband King Ahab to worship Baal but through Ahab had promulgated her teachings of idolatry and immorality throughout Israel. It appears that somehow Jezebel had actually been confronted about this, but had refused to repent.

V. 22-23a Jesus will deal with false teachers and their followers

Jesus is very strong in His words here! He speaks of sickness, death, and great tribulation for false teachers and their followers. This is the first mention of the time that is coming in Revelation 6-19, the seven years of Great Tribulation. See Mark 13:19.

V. 23b-25 Jesus will reward true believers for their progress when He comes

In verse 24 he commends the rest, the faithful ones, for not holding Jezebel's teaching. What's this about the "deep things" of Satan in verse 24? We aren't really sure!

V. 26-28 Overcomers will rule the nations with Jesus

The reference to Christ reigning is from Psalm 2, the very important Messianic Psalm that is quoted here, and in 11:18; 12:5; 19:15. I believe the time we will have this authority over the nations will be during that 1,000 year reign spoken of in Revelation chapter 20! Note the reversal of fortunes for the redeemed: Now we are oppressed, persecuted, and suffering, but the reversal of our present experiences is coming! That's what I call progress!

Revelation 3:1-6 The Overriding Concern of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Sardis, encouraging the church by reminding them that Christ gives the church the Spirit and its pastors, commending the few in the church who have not compromised their faith, rebuking the church for looking good on the outside but being dead on the inside, exhorting the church to repent and build again on the basics of the faith like the few that are faithful, and promising those who do white clothes, a place in the book of life, and acknowledgment before God the Father.

Theological Proposition: Christ honors those who have a substantive walk with God, not those who have merely impressed men.

Homiletical Proposition: The main person we need to focus on impressing is God!

Worship Theme: Seeking to please God.

I want audience to feel more deeply: How great it will feel to have Christ acknowledge us before God the Father!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Christ will never erase the name of a truly redeemed person from the Book of Life.

I want audience to do more readily: Evaluate whether their reputation matches their walk with Christ!

Things we know about Sardis:

- It was 30 miles South of Thyatira
- At one time it had been the capitol of the Kingdom of Lydia with Croesus as it's king ("Rich as Croesus")
- Aesop (620-560 B.C.) was one of the most famous citizens of the city named Sardis
- It was a very wealthy city located on a trade route that ran east and west
- The city was built on a steep hill 1500 feet above the valley floor and inaccessible on 3 sides
- In 549 B.C., Cyrus, King of the Persians found a way to capture it
- The Persians lost Sardis to Antiochus and Greece in 218 B.C.

Sardis had a huge necropolis (city of the dead). This cemetery was said to have a "thousand hills" because it had hundreds of burial mounds visible on the skyline some seven miles away!

V. 1a Jesus is the One who gives the energizing Holy Spirit

The Sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit is in Isaiah 11:2-5

V. 1b The danger of deception in our lives

I wonder how many of us have a good reputation before others but not God?

V. 2 What does NOT impress God

Right deeds done from wrong motives do not impress God! See Isaiah 64:6

V. 3 What DOES impress God

Right internal motivation impresses God, and then overflows into right deeds.

V. 5 Two great promises to the overcomer: White clothes! A guaranteed place in the Book of Life!

Revelation 3:7-13 Title: The Open Doors before the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Philadelphia, encouraging the church by referring to Christ as the One who is Holy and True, and has the keys of Death and Hades, commending the church for keeping Christ's word and not denying Christ's name, despite limited resources, exhorting the church to hold on to what they have and make the most of the opportunities before them, promising the church that their enemies will

one day bow before them, and that they will not go through the coming tribulation, and that they have a glorious future in the new Jerusalem.

Theological Proposition: Christ holds the future in His hands, so believers should walk through open doors before the coming tribulation.

Homiletical Proposition: Making the most of open doors before the coming tribulation.

Worship Theme: Taking the gospel to our neighbors and the nations.

I want audience to feel more deeply: A sense of urgency in sharing Christ.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That God does open doors before them.

I want audience to do more readily: Share the gospel with someone this week.

Things we know about Philadelphia:

- The city is 25-30 miles Southeast of Sardis, and was considered the gateway to Upper Asia
- It was named after the Pergamenian King Attalus III, named Philadelphos because he loved his brother
- A lot of grape growing happened there, and they worshipped Dionysus, the god of wine
- Because it was liable to earthquakes, many of its citizens lived outside the city
- It had a big earthquake in AD 17, and had tremors that continued for years
- Tiberius had used Roman money to rebuild it; In gratitude it was renamed Neocaesarea (New Caesar)
- As the gateway to Upper Asia, the city was responsible for spreading Greek Culture

V. 7 The Holy & True God who opens and closes doors

A Holy person reflects Heaven's values even when they are on earth! See Isaiah 22:15-24 Verse 22 is Rev. 3:7.

V. 8 The Open Doors before the Redeemed!

The apostle Paul spoke often of open doors. See I Cor. 16:8-9; See also Col. 4:2-3; 2 Cor. 2:12

V. 9 Open Doors do NOT mean there won't be opposition

In every generation there are those who bitterly oppose the gospel, and lash out against believers. Here we are told they will one day acknowledge that Jesus is real and loves His disciples.

V. 10-11 The Great Open Door Coming for the Redeemed!

What is the hour of testing? I believe it is the Tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6-19. That phrase, "earth-dwellers, occurs throughout the tribulation and refers to those who will not repent and turn to Christ. Earth-dwellers appears here and in 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14

V. 12 Overcomers get two more things in the New Jerusalem: Security Recognition

Revelation 3:14-22 Title: The Preferred Temperature of the Redeemed!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Holy Spirit speaks to the church at Laodicea, encouraging the church by referring to Christ as the power behind creation and the true witness, rebuking the church for thinking it was rich when in reality it was poor and lukewarm in commitment, exhorting the church to repent and open their hearts to Christ, realizing He only disciplines those He really loves, and promising those who do that they will get to sit with Him on the throne.

Theological Proposition: Christ doesn't give up on those He loves who are self-deceived about their spiritual status, giving them opportunity to experience Him at a deeper level.

Homiletical Proposition: Having an "average" faith isn't good enough for Jesus!

Worship Theme: The wonder of time spent with Jesus!

I want audience to feel more deeply: Christ inviting them to spend time with Him!

I want audience to believe more strongly: A stagnant faith is not why Jesus died for them!

I want audience to do more readily: Spend time in personal worship!

Things we know about Laodicea:

- It was 45 miles south of Philadelphia on the road to Colossae
- It was founded by Antiochus the II in the middle of the 3rd century BC to honor his wife Laodice
- In the temple of Asklepios in Laodicea there was famous medical school

- It was known for producing a “Phrygian powder” famous for its cure of eye defects
- One more thing about Laodicea- 7 miles north of it lay Hierapolis, famous for its “hot springs”
- A six mile long aqueduct brought the water into Laodicea
- Just 10 miles away, Colossae was known for its cold springs.

V. 14 Jesus is our Faithful and True Creator!

Here we are told that Jesus is the Originator of God’s creation!

V. 15-17 The sin that make Jesus want to throw up: Lukewarmness

A believer who is “hot” is on fire for Jesus! A person who is cold is dead spiritually. The lukewarm are church goers but not Christ lovers. See 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Verse 17 shows us the big problem with the lukewarm: self-deception.

V. 18-19 The antidote for Lukewarmness

Acknowledge your sinfulness and utter lack of righteousness before God. Repent of having a faith that makes true dependence on Christ optional. Note the good news in verse 19. Jesus still loves the lukewarm!

V. 20 Jesus Christ’s Great invitation!

Robert Murray McCheyne called this the most touching passage in the Bible!

Here are the two enduring images I want to leave with you from chapters 1-3:

1. The strong Christ of chapter 1, the Ancient of Days in all His splendor!
2. That same awesome God coming to your “door” to meet with you!

Revelation 4 The Creator is praised in Heaven!

Exegetical Central Proposition: After the time of the letters to the churches, John was transported into the throne room of Heaven in the Spirit and saw the occupants of Heaven praise God continuously for His creation of all things.

Theological Proposition: God is on His throne in Heaven and is continuously praised for His creation of all things.

Homiletical Proposition: We are to join the occupants in Heaven in praising God for being the Creator of all.

Worship Theme: Praising God our Creator!

I want audience to feel more deeply: The splendor of creation.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That creation, not evolution is truth.

I want audience to do more readily: Spend 15 minutes 3 times this week enjoying God’s outdoor creation.

Revelation chapter four begins the third section of Revelation. See Revelation 1:19.

V. 1 Introduction to the rest of Revelation, after the church age!

Chapters four and five are a look into Heaven, and then when we return to earth in chapter six we enter a very different time on earth, the seven years of tribulation. From here until all but the very end of Revelation there is no more mention of churches during the tribulation, or stars as pastors. As we begin to learn about Heaven, chapter four takes us to a specific place: the Throne Room of Heaven! Interestingly, this fits well with Paul’s description when he went to Heaven briefly. See 2 Cor. 12:1-4.

V. 2-12 What did John experience in the throne room of Heaven?

First and foremost, John saw God on His special throne (verses 2-3).

The word throne occurs 45 times in Revelation, after only 15 other times in the N.T! When you think of the rainbow, remember that that God keeps His promises!

Second, John saw lots of people in Heaven (verse 4). Picture this: 24 thrones around the Big Throne!

Who are these elders? There are at least 13 different views! I take them to represent the people of God of OT and NT times. Elders are always representatives of others, whether Israel, or the Church! Israel had 12 tribes, the church had 12 apostles! Revelation 21 lets us know there will be 12 gates with the sons of Israel’s names and 12 foundations with the apostle’s names. Over and over again we are told the saints in Heaven will be dressed in white and will receive crowns based on their deeds for Jesus down here! There are two kinds of crowns: the crown of a sovereign (Diadem) and the crown of victor (Stephanos). Here it is the crown of a victor!

Third, John was reminded of the greatness of God (verse 5).

From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings, and thunder. Four times in Revelation we hear of these things in Heaven: 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18. John also saw 7 fiery torches, the seven spirits of God!

Fourth, John sees four angels of praise around the throne (verses 6-8).

There have been all kinds of attempts at explaining these very alive creatures. We can't overlook that they correspond to aspects of angels called seraphim and cherubim the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel saw around God's throne! See Isaiah 6:1-7; Ezekiel 1:1-10. Being in the presence of God, who is life, seems to energize these angels of praise! It says they never stop singing praise to God! Day and night they sing, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!" The word holy means "set apart!" They are saying, "God in three persons, there is No one else like you! You are what Heaven is all about!" When we are called to be holy as He is holy, we are called to let the way things will be in Heaven be what we strive for here!

Fifth, John experiences part of Heaven's unending praise service (verses 8-11).

Verse eight is the first of five hymns by the heavenly choir in chapters 4-5 alone! And then there are nine more in Revelation for a total of fourteen! You will do other things also in Heaven and later on the New Earth. But there will be many times when you are back in the throne room praising! I picture Heaven as untold millions coming in from the things they have been doing for God as untold millions go out to do meaningful things for God. But wherever in Heaven people are, their heart will be right there at the throne!

Sixth, John understood what Heaven was praising God for (verses 9-12).

Heaven constantly praises God for being the Creator of all, the source of all blessings!

Revelation 5 The Redeemer is praised in Heaven!

Exegetical Central Proposition: Jesus is able to open the title deed to the earth because He redeemed the nations through His substitutionary death, making Him the rightful recipient of every creature's praise!

Theological Proposition: Jesus is the only one able to open the title deed of the earth and is continuously praised in Heaven for His redemption.

Homiletical Proposition: Only Jesus makes true redemption possible, therefore only Jesus is worthy of our praise!

Worship Theme: Praising Jesus our Redeemer!

I want audience to feel more deeply: How worthy Jesus is of our praise because of His substitutionary death!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Jesus is the only way to salvation.

I want audience to do more readily: Spend 15 minutes 3 times this week thanking Jesus for His redemption!

In chapter four we saw Heaven praising God for being the Creator of all! In Chapter five we will see Heaven praising Jesus for being the Redeemer, the only One who can really fix the mess earth is in!

V. 1 The scroll that must be opened to initiate the redemption of earth

In Roman days official papers from Caesar had a series of seals on them. The most important papers had one seal for Caesar, a second seal for the Senate, a third seal for the general of an army, and a fourth seal for the governor of the province. But this scroll had seven seals! The number of perfection –this must be the most important message ever!

We don't need to do a lot of guessing about what this scroll is about. Revelation tells us. Chapter six features the opening of the first six seals, and chapter eight indicates everything that follows is part of the seventh seal. The scroll is about the events that will unfold beginning with the tribulation. The scroll gives the recipient the authority to initiate the redemption of earth. Adrian Rogers called the scroll itself the title deed of the earth!

V. 2-4 John doesn't see anyone able to open the scroll

John weeps because if that scroll can't be opened and acted on, things on earth will never change. And as a man in his mid 90's who has had one too many 'Patmos experiences,' John can't bear the thought of earth remaining as it is. And he longs for the day God's will is going to be done on earth instead of Satan's!

V. 5-7 Jesus: The One who will open and act on the scroll!

All the way back in Genesis 49:9-11 Jacob had prophesied of this coming Lion! When you think of Jesus, you are to think of a powerful lion! He is not only the descendant of David; He was around before David, the root of David. He

was the source of David before He was an earthly descendant of David! The Lion who is the Lamb is another way of speaking of the One who is 100% God and 100% man, uniquely qualified to open the scroll!

Now this description is different than an ordinary lamb: Lambs don't stand, but this One does! Slain is dead, but this Lamb is very much alive (Christ is Risen Indeed). Seven horns speak of this Lamb's power (omnipotence). Seven eyes speak of this Lamb's knowledge (omniscience). Seven spirits speak of the Holy Spirit (omnipresence).

V. 8-14 Christ's receipt of the scroll initiates three hymns of praise!!!

Now we're going to see here that praise is contagious! In verse eight we are told 28 sing! In verse eleven we see millions of angels join in! In verse 13 we hear that every creature joins in! What are they singing about? They are praising Jesus for the redemption He provided with His blood! There is a reason verse nine comes after verse eight here: the prayers of the saints have brought a harvest of souls into Heaven from every place on earth! How many prayers do you have in Heaven's bowls for unreached people in the world?

Revelation 6 God's Wrath Comes to Earth

Exegetical Central Proposition: When the seals are opened by Jesus, the wrath of God begins to unfold; first comes the rise of Antichrist, followed by war, famine, massive death, the martyr's cry, and a great earthquake.

Theological Proposition: The Day of the Lord's wrath begins when the seals are opened.

Homiletical Proposition: Sin's built-in consequences include God's wrath.

Worship Theme: Reverent Awe of God!

I want audience to feel more deeply: The fear of God.

I want audience to believe more strongly: God will judge sin.

I want audience to do more readily: Leave vengeance to God.

Revelation 6 brings us to the time of the tribulation, which the book of Daniel indicates will be seven years in length. The time of singing we saw in Heaven in chapters four and five behind us, now we see ever intensifying difficulties on earth. I take the seals, trumpets, and bowls to be sequential, with the other chapters being parentheses that give fuller details about events within the tribulation.

As we look at Revelation chapter 6, the chapter is divided into three sections: Verses 1-8 are the first four seals and are famously known as the 4 horseman of the apocalypse. Verses 9-11 is the fifth seal, as the martyrs in Heaven pray to God about what is happening on earth. Verses 12-17 are about the sixth seal, a natural disaster.

Ever since Jesus Christ has come into the world, an "antichrist" world has been clamoring for a "no God" approach. During the tribulation, God will give the world what it says it wants: life without God. What the world doesn't understand now is how much it benefits from two things it will not have during the tribulation: the difference the church makes in the world as salt and light, and how active the Holy Spirit is in restraining evil in the world. I believe the Holy Spirit will still be active in salvation during the Tribulation, but not active restraining evil.

V. 1-2 The first seal/ white horse: The rise of the Antichrist

The wrath of God begins by God letting the world have the leader it has clamored for, the leader who promises peace. But what the world doesn't realize is that in getting their anti-God leader they lose God's protection.

V. 3-4 The second seal/ red horse: War

At some point whatever peace the Antichrist has promised will crumble into people slaughtering one another.

V. 5-6 The third seal/ black horse: Famine

A denarius was a day's wages. A measure of wheat is approximately what a laboring man would eat in one meal. If he got the cheaper barley instead, he could eat three meals. Either way, no money would be left for other things. You needed oil to make bread, wine for cooking and purifying water- suddenly those things will be luxuries. This will be a time of famine when life will be reduced to the barest necessities.

V. 7-8 The fourth seal/ pale green horse: Death

Theological Proposition: The Day of the Lord's wrath continues when the trumpets are blown.

Homiletical Proposition: The Day of the Lord.

Worship Theme: The Fulfillment of God's Word!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That God will avenge wickedness on earth.

I want audience to believe more strongly: What God says is going to happen will happen!

I want audience to do more readily: Learn to pray in a more focused way over areas of injustice.

8:1 The Calm Before the Storm

This is the calm before the storm, the sobering realization of how intense the next judgments are...

8:2-6 The Prayers of the Saints Precede the Trumpet Judgments

These prayers should be seen as both prayers that Satan will get what's coming to him and that God will do what it takes to make sinners think about their need...God's wrath in the time of Tribulation must be understood in terms of His strategy to save the world! Even as you see these coming judgments remember God is still trying to get people to turn to Him and live! See Ezekiel 18:32. See 2 Peter 3:9.

8:7-13 The First Four Trumpets: The Physical Elements begin to fail

What's happening in these first four trumpets? God is taking away the things the sinful world system has relied on, gifts from Him that they have taken for granted. In chapters four and five we saw what Heaven is like and we said "WOW!" Now in these fifth and sixth trumpets we see what Hell will be like and we cry out "WOE!"

9:1-19 Fifth and Sixth Trumpets: Hell on earth

As John struggles to relay what he saw this chapter has more occurrences of the words 'as' and 'like' than any in the Bible. What's really going on in that fifth seal? God shows people bound for Hell what Hell will really be like if they don't repent. Why doesn't he let them die by the sting? Because He's not willing that any should perish but all have every opportunity to turn to Him and live. Now the sixth trumpet also has torment that is like Hell on earth.

9:20-21 Many people still did not repent!

Revelation 10 Title: He's got the whole world at His feet!

Exegetical Central Proposition: A mighty angel with Christ-like qualities appears on the earth and sea with a little scroll in his hand, announcing the end of the 70th week of Daniel at the blowing of the seventh trumpet, good news to those who receive it, but bittersweet because of what those who will not repent are going to face.

Theological Proposition: The tribulation has been the 70th week of Daniel, when it ends the world faces Christ's second coming as judge.

Homiletical Proposition: The impending return of Christ.

Worship Theme: The King is Coming!

I want audience to feel more deeply: How great Christ is!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That God always has the last word!

I want audience to do more readily: Expand their image of Christ to see His greatness!

V. 1-4 The Mighty Angel Roars Like a Lion!

This angel is either Jesus Christ Himself or a mighty angel representing Him! The trumpets of chapters eight and nine were even more intense than the seals, and the bowl judgments of chapters 15 and 16 will be uber-intense! We get this amazing interlude in chapters ten to fourteen that fill in things we need to know about the Tribulation. The language in chapter ten transports us back to the great image of Jesus we got in chapter one.

V. 5-7 The Mighty Angel Announces God's Plan is almost Complete

In verse six we learn "there will no longer be an interval of time." And then in verse seven we read that when the seventh trumpet is blown, and the seven bowls are poured out, God's hidden plan will be complete, the plan announced to His servants the prophets. See Daniel 9:20-27. Seventy weeks here means 490 years, with each week referring to 7 years. Daniel 9:24 says at the end of the 490 years everlasting righteousness will be brought in, with no more sin and rebellion (The millennium described in Revelation chapter 20). Daniel 9:25 says after the decree is made to rebuild Jerusalem 69 weeks, or 483 of the 490 years, will go by and then Messiah will be cut off.

But what does that leave us missing? The seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, the last seven years before the millennium, also called the tribulation. Daniel 9:27 tells us the coming Antichrist will make a covenant with many for that week, but in the middle of the week, or 3 and a half years in, he'll desecrate the Jewish Temple. But then his destruction is decreed! So what is the interval of time spoken of in Revelation chapter ten? The interval of time was the time between the first 483 years of Daniel's prophecy and the end of the 490th year when the Desolator is destroyed. Think of these things in terms of a stopwatch counting up to 490 years. When Artaxerxes made his decree to rebuild Jerusalem, the stopwatch started counting and got to 483 years when Christ was crucified.

"After Israel rejected Christ and crucified the Messiah, God hit the 'pause' button of that imaginary stopwatch. 483 years had elapsed, only 7 remained... This 'pause' in God's program with Israel is the time we are living in now: the Church Age. During this time God has *temporarily* turned aside from Israel to allow Gentiles to become heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant. But God is not through with Israel yet." –Jeffress, *As Time Runs Out* (Broadman: 1999), 73. See Romans 11:25

V. 8-11 John Digests the Little Scroll

The little scroll seems to contain the sum of Revelation's message so far – comfort to those who believe, terror to those who won't repent. The message John received is for everybody, and John was to be a messenger to everybody! The gospel we preach is for every people group, and we are messengers to every people group.

Revelation 11:1-14 Title: God's Keeping Power!

Exegetical Central Proposition: During 1,260 difficult days in Jerusalem God raises up His two witnesses, who faithfully witness with God's protection until the Beast is allowed to kill them, but they rise again after 3 ½ days.

Theological Proposition: Courageously witness knowing that God controls our fate, not enemies of the gospel.

Homiletical Proposition: God takes care of his witnesses!

Worship Theme: God's Protection!

I want audience to feel more deeply: God takes care of them despite earthly circumstances.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That they are immortal until God says its their time!

I want audience to do more readily: Develop courage in the face of death!

V. 1-2 God Measures Israel's Worship

John is given a reed commonly used in those days to measure things out, and he is told to measure three things related to the Temple. I think the point is that God is getting a comprehensive measure of what's happening in BOTH the externals of their worship and the internals of their worship!

In Daniel 9 we read that the coming Antichrist will desecrate the temple at the midpoint of the tribulation. Perhaps the relative calm during the first seal will allow the Antichrist to help Israel build its temple back. Or perhaps it will be built back before the tribulation begins. In Ezekiel 40 Ezekiel has a vision of a man with a measuring rod in his hand who goes on to measure out a temple for him bigger than any temple yet built, and the context makes clear this is the Temple that will be in place when Messiah reigns from Jerusalem. That will happen in the millennium. Now we are told in Revelation 15:5 that there is actually a Heavenly sanctuary, so there are those who suggest John is measuring that Temple. But since verse two clearly excludes him from measuring the court of the Gentiles, it is clearly speaking about the Temple area on earth in Jerusalem. John is told not to measure that area because of how the heathen nations will trample the holy city for 42 months. This probably is referring to the last half of the seven year tribulation, when those left on earth will terribly persecute the Jewish people. Jeremiah 30:7 calls the tribulation the time of Jacob's trouble. For those who say verses one and two are about the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, understand that they believe this happened because God was now done with Israel as a separate entity, and the church now replaces Israel forevermore. In my view, the exact opposite of what "replacement" theology says is happening here: in these verses God is letting Israel know He is not done with them forevermore, but is bringing to pass all of the things the prophets prophesied about Israel's reclamation in the last days!

V. 3-14 God Raises Up Two Witnesses!

The greater point here is that even during dark days, God always gives a witness! There has never been a time on earth, nor will there ever be until the Great White Throne judgment, when God will be without a witness.

Why does God go to all this trouble? Because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent!

Most who take the text literally believe one of two options: One option is that they are Elijah and Enoch, because both of them did not die in the Old Testament, but went directly to Heaven! Others say they are Elijah and Moses, for a couple of reasons. First, the miracles they do in verses five and six are miracles that Elijah and Moses did while on earth. Second, it was Elijah and Moses who spoke with Jesus when he was transfigured!

It says they prophesy 1,260 days, or three and a half years. Is that the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation, or the second 3 ½ years? If it is the first three and a half years, that would be cool because perhaps that helps explain why 144,000 Jewish guys would want to follow Christ and be his witnesses to the end of the earth! They had seen Moses and Elijah! If it's the second three and a half years, that would also be cool, because even as Antichrist is persecuting Jews, he won't be able to do anything to stop these guys from telling it like it is!

This is the first of 36 references to this beast in Revelation; we are going to learn a lot more about him! But don't miss the key thing said: the Beast will not be able to harm the two witnesses until they finish their testimony! When the two witnesses are here they'll be speaking truth and they won't be apologizing. When things like the trumpets are happening, they'll keep preaching from Jerusalem that people better repent because God's wrath is falling. An angry world will want to shut them up but be unable to do it.

Revelation 11:15-19 Wrath, Rewards, and Regrets

Exegetical Central Proposition: When the seventh trumpet is blown, Heaven announces that the time the Lord will set right the world has come, a time of wrath for unbelievers, but a time of reward for believers!

Theological Proposition: God will reign on earth, a source of comfort to believers, and judgment for unbelievers.

Homiletical Proposition: What we have done on this earth will matter when Christ comes.

Worship Theme: God rewards those who seek Him!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That their acts of service will be rewarded!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That no wicked person ever gets away with anything.

I want audience to do more readily: Store up treasure in Heaven!

There is a clear truth taught in every part of the Bible that is often neglected today: each of us will stand before God one day and give an account to Him of our thoughts, motives, words and deeds. See 2 Corinthians 5:10

V. 15-17 Anticipation Brings Praise!

As we get closer to Christ's Second Coming, Heaven is bursting with anticipation about Christ's coming reign, and the righting of all wrongs! When it says, "has become" in verse 15, or "has come" in verse 18, it is referring not to the instance of this announcement but in the soon to be accomplished 2nd coming and all that will happen after it!

V. 18 Wrath and Rewards

This verse anticipates the dead being judged, which is bad news for those who destroy the earth, but good news for those whom God will reward! Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment.

When you read the Bible, it appears there are two times of judgment coming, one for those who have repented and believed, and one for those who haven't repented. For those who haven't repented, there will be the Great White Throne Judgment we'll talk about in Rev. 20. But there is also a judgment just for believers, sometimes referred to as the judgment at the Bema Seat, because that is the Greek word used in 2 Cor. 5:10 when it says believers will appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

"Consider, to provoke you to good works, that you shall have from God, when you come to glory, a reward for everything you do for him on earth." -John Bunyan, Quoted in R. Alcorn, *The Law of Rewards* (Tyndale: 2003), 70
See also I Corinthians 3:11-15; Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:23

Now you can do two things with that truth: You can keep living for earthly priorities and have regrets on that day! Or you can re-order your life around kingdom priorities!

But there is another facet of this we need to know. See Romans 14:10-12 and I Corinthians 4:5. These passages make it look like there will be more than just a personal part of our Bema seat judgment. What is between wrath that believers don't experience, and rewards, which are based on what we do for Jesus? Regrets.

Think about the conflicts you have had with other Christians. Could it be after individuals stand before Christ, He will call people together to talk through conflicts and have them settle things before eternity? If you don't try to restore that relationship now, it will be a regret at the Bema seat. If you do try to restore that relationship now, it will be a reward at the Beam seat!

Revelation 12:1-18 We Shall Overcome!

Exegetical Central Proposition: When Satan and the demons are thrown out of heaven, they persecute Israel and all who have the testimony about Jesus for the last three and a half years of the tribulation, but as Heaven rejoices the saints continue to conquer him by the blood of the Lamb and their courageous testimony.

Theological Proposition: Saints conquer Satan by the blood of the Lamb and an overcomer's testimony.

Homiletical Proposition: Despite intense spiritual warfare, we can rejoice that Satan will be defeated!

Worship Theme: Victory in spiritual warfare.

I want audience to feel more deeply: the power of the blood and their testimony.

I want audience to believe more strongly: that Satan is going down!

I want audience to do more readily: Be able to share their testimony verbally!

If you had to pick one chapter in the Bible to summarize the entire Bible, it may be today's passage! It refers to events in Heaven and on earth, God and Satan, angels and demons, Israel and believers, spiritual warfare and persecution, Satan's being thrown out of Heaven, and victory for believers in the blood of the Lamb! It's also interesting that Revelation chapter twelve occurs at the exact midpoint of The Book of Revelation. There are 194 verses before chapter twelve and 193 verses after chapter twelve.

V. 1-2 The Woman represents Israel.

This is the first of seven times the word sign is used. 12:1 12:3 13:13-14 15:1 16:14 19:19

A sign is a symbol. Instead of it being a literal woman, it's a symbol of something. This particular woman reminds us of Eve, and because she gives birth in verse five to Jesus, she reminds us of Mary. But in the context she represents Israel. The description of the woman in verse 1 immediately makes us think of the dream Joseph had in Genesis 37:9-10, referring to Israel and it's twelve tribes. We're then told in verse 6 that she will flee into the wilderness for 1,260 days, or three and a half years. This corresponds to numerous prophecies in the Old Testament about the time of Israel's Great Tribulation. When we say "the Tribulation" we are referring to the entire last seven years before Christ's coming. When we say "the Great Tribulation," we are talking about the more intense last three and a half years of the Tribulation. It won't be Eve or Mary experiencing those hard 3.5 years, it will be Israel.

V. 5 The Child is Jesus!

Genesis 3:15 said the child of the woman would crush Satan's head. Isaiah 7:14 said He would be born of a virgin. Isaiah 9:6-7 said the Child would be called Mighty God, and would rule the nations from David's throne. Micah told us He would be born in Bethlehem, although He had always existed! His glorious return has been the theme of The Book of Revelation! Verse five tells us where He went after His first coming – "caught up" to God!

V. 3-4 The Red Dragon is Satan.

Again the word "sign" is used! Don't look for Satan to appear visibly in red with a pitchfork, or as a dragon: this is a symbol for us of how awful he really is. It says here he has seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. From early days commentators realized that the heads and horns refer to earth's kings and kingdoms.

Revelation 17:9 says the seven heads represent the Seven Hills of Rome. Rev. 17:10 tells us they also represent seven past kings. Revelation 17:12 tells us these are ten kings of the end time. Daniel saw one head with ten horns (Daniel 7:7, 20, 24). Verse three is telling us that Satan is the leader of a revived Roman Empire at the end of time.

Verse four tells us of two events in Satan's past; his rebellion with a third of Heaven's angels and his attempt to destroy Jesus at birth. In other places the Bible describes for us Satan's fall from Heaven and the fact that there were angels who joined his rebellion. But here we learn that it was one third of the angels who joined Satan's rebellion and became demons.

Revelation chapter twelve tells us several things about Satan:

First, we read of three things Satan hates: Israel, Jesus, and those who have the testimony about Jesus. Verse 13 and verse 17 tells us how Satan persecutes Israel and those who believe. Second, Satan's true character is made known: Look at verse 9. Interestingly, this is the center verse of The Book of Revelation. Five titles for Satan are here: Dragon, Serpent, Devil, Satan, and Deceiver. Add in verse 10 that tells us he is the Accuser of our Brethren. Third, we learn that Satan himself is deceived! Fourth, we learn that Satan is going down, down, down! The history of Satan is his continual spiral down from the highest heaven to the lowest hell, the Lake of Fire.

V. 11 How we conquer Satan:

By the blood of the Lamb AND by the word of our testimony! When Jesus died on the cross for sinners, he purchased victory for all who will believe in Him and receive Him as their Lord and Savior. The testimony of your life and lips does not save you, it points to the One who did save you and is completing the work He began. Remember that John was in Patmos with other persecuted believers when he received The Revelation. They had friends who had died for their faith. This must have meant so much to them as they faced their trials. And it has continued to bless Christians as they have faced trouble, or persecution, for these 2,000 years. See John 16:33. Dying for the faith is probably the worst thing that could happen as a believer. But the Bible makes clear that if that happens to you, God will be with you, and there is a reward waiting for you in Heaven that only martyrs get!

Revelation 13 The Unholy Trinity

Exegetical Central Proposition: Satan gives authority to the Antichrist and the false prophet for 42 months, who deceive the nations through great signs and compel them to blaspheme God and worship Satan and receive the mark of the Antichrist or not be able to participate in commerce.

Theological Proposition: During the last half of the tribulation the Antichrist and false prophet will compel the nations to worship Satan.

Homiletical Proposition: Understanding Satan's obsession with being like God.

Worship Theme: Satan has been and will be defeated!

I want audience to feel more deeply: how much Satan hates God

I want audience to believe more strongly: that Satan is the great counterfeiter.

I want audience to do more readily: spot Satan's counterfeit initiatives in their own lives.

V. 1-4 The Background of the Beast

Instead of thinking of this Beast as a monster, we need to think in terms of the human ruler to come elsewhere called the Antichrist. The term Antichrist comes from John letters. Daniel called him the Prince that shall come. Jesus called him the Abomination of Desolation. Paul called him the man of sin. We were told of this ruler in Rev. 11:7, which called him the Beast that comes from the Abyss and kills the two witnesses when they finish their testimony. We believe this is the rider on the white horse we met at the beginning of the first seal. From Daniel 9:27 we learn that he makes a covenant of peace at the beginning of the 7 year tribulation, but violates it at the 3 ½ year mid-point.

The Beast John saw in verses 1-4 clearly brings to mind the images of future kingdoms presented in the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter two Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue to speak of 6 future kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, a ten toed future kingdom, and Christ's future Kingdom on earth. In Daniel chapter seven Daniel had a vision of 4 beasts that talk about the same empires, with the last one having ten horns that one future little horn will dominate. The animals are the same as right here in Revelation chapter 13.

Revelation 13 combines these beasts and points out they have ongoing influence. In other words, Babylon's (Modern day Iraq) influence is still a big deal. Persia (Modern day Iran) is in the news constantly now. Who can deny Greek and Roman influence on us? If the beast of the sea is symbolic for a man, so is the sea. Usually in the Bible references to the Sea are to the Mediterranean Sea. The Roman Empire wrapped around it! See Dan. 7:20-27.

We know that this ten kingdom prophecy of Daniel's remains in the future because not only has the ten leader form of the Roman Empire never existed in history, but neither has such a kingdom been suddenly crushed as prophecy indicates it will be.

-David Jeremiah, *What in the World is Going On?*, (Nelson: 2008), page 57

What must we conclude? The Antichrist will probably come out of a renewed Roman Empire, perhaps from the current European Union states. Verse two tells us his real power will come from Satan. We know that people can be possessed with demons. Perhaps this man will be possessed by Satan himself. In any event, he will be Satan's pawn. Verse three says that one of his heads appeared to be fatally wounded, but was healed. Some think this means people will be astonished to see the Roman Empire itself come back to life, like when Israel became a nation again after 2,000 years. Others, and I put myself here, think it refers to this man the Antichrist himself coming back to life after a fatal wound. We don't know for sure! But we do know that those left on the earth at this point in the tribulation will be so impressed by this apparent resurrection that they will worship the beast, saying, "Who is like the Beast?" He's the man! And through his influence they will worship Satan, again here called the dragon.

V. 5-8 The Behavior of the Beast

In these verses we see four things the Antichrist will do: First, he'll boast about how great he and the dragon are. Second, he'll blaspheme God. Third, he'll make war against the saints. Fourth, he'll rule the world! It says here he'll do it openly for 42 months. That's 3 ½ years! Daniel 7 & Rev. 12 said for time, times, half a time. That's 3 ½ years!

"We do not need another committee. We have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man and be he god or devil, we will recognize him." -Paul-Henri Spaak, first president of the UN General Assembly, first president of the European Parliament, one time secretary general of NATO. -Jeremiah, page 65

V. 11-17 The Accomplish of the Beast

Verse 11 tells us of another beast, this one coming up out of the earth. Later this beast will be called the False Prophet- Rev. 16:13, 19:20, 20:10. If the Antichrist will primarily be a political ruler, the false prophet will clearly be a religious spokesman, possibly leader of the world religious community. There are a lot of different people that call themselves Christians in the world, but you really can boil them down to two kinds. True Christians of whatever denomination embrace Jesus' insistence that to go to Heaven a person must be 'born again' and take as their authority the Bible as the Word of God, seeking to obey its commands. False Christians reject the idea of having to be born again and take as their authority their own collective judgment, often stating the Bible is merely a collection of writings by flawed men who could not understand our day. If you have ever read the writings of those false Christians who are really embarrassed by what the Bible teaches, you may as well be reading words written by Atheists. They wind up stating the same beliefs. Verse 11 tells us this False Prophet will look like a lamb, but speak like a dragon. In other words...No matter how religious he dresses, when the False Prophet opens his mouth, Satan's lies will come out!

During the Tribulation Church and state will be thoroughly intertwined. And as church history reveals, when church and state intertwine, it's bad, especially bad for the church! In the time of the tribulation, together the Antichrist and the False Prophet will use whatever tools they can to stomp out belief in God. We're told this False Prophet will be able to wow people with signs and wonders. That's always enough for some people! Perhaps these wonders will neutralize the impact of the two witnesses from chapter eleven. The false prophet will encourage people on earth to set up an image of the Beast to aid their worship. Verse 15 could not have been understood by John in his day! But in ours we understand that television, internet, cell phones and other technologies will be used to compel the entire world to worship the beast. Verses 16-17 show that during that time if you don't worship the beast, you won't even be able to buy anything or make a living. It's simple really. You have to worship the beast to get the mark! This could be some type of microchip that would be scanned at the checkout. Without it, you can't buy anything. If you don't worship the beast, you won't get the mark; you'll be unable to buy anything. Microchips have already been implanted in some Alzheimer's patients in case they wander.

V. 18 The Number of the Beast

The number of the beast is 666! This is perhaps the item most speculated about in Revelation. Let me just plead with you as a pastor not to make the mistake so many have made down through the centuries, trying to identify who the Antichrist is and what the number means. Throughout the last 2,000 years people have tried to equate this with cruel tyrants, powerful popes, and popular politicians. It really is a fool's errand, and gives the church a black eye.

One writer has remarked that this famous number has been made to yield almost all the historical names of the past eighteen centuries. A sound interpretation is to see the number as an emphatic form of six, which symbolically is the number of fallen man. -Irving Jensen, *Revelation: A Self Study Guide* (Moody: 1971), page 113

V. 8-10 Beauty and the Beast

What we have just talked about is a horrible time on earth. But Even in the midst of this time when the Unholy Trinity will desecrate the earth, God will encourage His beautiful people. There will be many Jews and others who turn to Christ Jesus during this time. They will face awful circumstances, but they will be beautiful in God's eyes!

In verse eight it mentions the Book of Life, spoken of 7 times in Revelation! In verse nine there is a special appeal to anyone still around who would repent and turn to God and get in on the Book of Life! And then matter of factly in verse 10, it refers to the fact that the destiny of many of those who won't worship the beast is to be killed. But then, as if to reinforce that death is no big deal for the believer, is the call to faith and endurance. Scripture challenges us to be brave in faith and have courageous endurance no matter what we face. It will not catch God by surprise if you die for your faith! All of John's apostle friends had! See Matthew 10:32-34

Revelation 14 Heaven celebrates what the Hell bound mock

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Heavenly Mount Zion readies itself for the Second Coming of Christ, celebrating the completed work and character of the 144,000, and then dispatching a progression of angels to announce to the inhabitants of earth their last chance to turn to God before the Lord and His angels execute wrath upon those who worship the beast.

Theological Proposition: When God's wrath comes all that will matter is who you have worshipped and served.

Homiletical Proposition: Godly character is celebrated in Heaven.

Worship Theme: The view from Heaven.

I want audience to feel more deeply: Heaven will celebrate godly character, so those of us going there also should.

I want audience to believe more strongly: God settles all accounts.

I want audience to do more readily: Write a note to someone this week celebrating their godly character.

V. 1 The 144,000 - Mission Accomplished!

This is undoubtedly the same people we saw in chapter seven: 144,000 Jewish men who come to Christ early in the Tribulation and are sovereignly sealed and equipped to be a witness to every people group on earth. Today's passage is letting us know they had accomplished their mission! Mt. Zion usually means the Temple area of Jerusalem on earth. But in Hebrews 12:22 it refers to the Heavenly Jerusalem. That certainly is where the next set of voices is going to come from. But scholars are divided about whether the 144,000 are with Christ in Heaven or in Jerusalem. We are not sure! What is not in doubt is that here they have finished their exceptionally successful time of witnessing, and they are ready to reign with Christ!

V. 2-5 The 144,000 - Maturity Affirmed!

Now why does it say they sang a new song? Because God had done this work in their time! New songs are always welcome because of the work God is doing in our generation! I believe the voices leading this new song will be the ones converted under the witness of the 144,000. When it says no one could learn the song but the 144,000, the Greek word there means, "experimentally understand." Only this group of 144,000 witnesses had been through the unique challenges of the tribulation, and this song will mean so much to them! Mocked by the Hell-Bound on earth, they are celebrated in Heaven! What traits of the 144,000 are celebrated in Heaven? Their purity; Their passion for Jesus; Their sense of "mission."

Verse four says they were the Firstfruits for God? Firstfruits of what? Of those who came to Christ during the Tribulation! These 144,000 gave their time and resources to take the gospel to the nations, and chapter seven gives us reason to believe they will win millions to Jesus! Mocked on earth, leading others to Jesus is prized in Heaven!

V. 6-12 Three Missionary Angels announce imminent judgment!

First, the "Good News" Angel speaks hope to the world! V. 6-7

Second, the "Bad News" Angel speaks reality to the world! V. 8

Third, the "Decision Time" Angel calls for a final answer! V. 9-12

V. 13 Heaven Celebrates the death of God's people

This blessing must have meant so much to John, who had seen his brother James and his fellow apostles killed for the faith! They were resting, and their converts would follow them to glory!

V. 14-20 **Three More Angels will Implement Judgment**

Now this passage anticipates the Second Coming of Christ and the Battle of Armageddon we will read more about in chapter 16 and chapter 19. Immediately after this chapter we will get to the most severe judgments yet, the bowl judgments. I think the bowl judgments happen in rapid succession toward the very end of the great tribulation.

First, a “Guardian” Angel Appeals (from the Earth’s Temple?)	V. 14-16
Second, a “Judgment” Angel Appears from the Heavenly Temple	V. 17
Third, a “Fire” Angel Appeals (from Earth’s Temple?)	V. 18-20

Look at verses 19-20. I’ll leave it to others to explain how the bloody battle in the Valley of Megiddo could cause blood to drain into the Jordan Valley and all the way to the Dead Sea. Verses 19-20 tell us that there will be a reckoning for those who try to destroy God’s people, particularly Israel. As we will learn in chapter 16 and 19, a worldwide army led by the Antichrist will descend on the Valley of Megiddo to try and destroy God’s beloved people once and for all. One day the blood of those who would do Israel harm will flow in the Promised Land.

Revelation 15 & 16 **God’s Wrath Is Completed on Earth**

Exegetical Central Proposition: When the angels pour out the bowl judgments the wrath of God moves toward completion with great intensity, which causes praise in heaven but blasphemy on earth as the wicked still refuse to repent.

Theological Proposition: The Day of the Lord’s wrath moves toward completion when the bowls are poured out.

Homiletical Proposition: The Day of the Lord.

Worship Theme: The Fulfillment of God’s Word!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That God will avenge wickedness on earth.

I want audience to believe more strongly: What God says is going to happen will happen!

I want audience to do more readily: Learn to pray in a more focused way over areas of injustice.

Today’s passage reinforces something taught many times in the Bible: Earth as we’ve known it, degraded by sin, will cease to exist. But earth as it should have been, enlivened by God’s presence, will be restored forever! The Bible, including The Book of Revelation, is optimistic compared to other doomsday scenarios, letting us know that after God judges the world as we know it, the BEST days of earth are yet to come!

During the seal judgments “God’s Wrath begins on Earth.” During the trumpet judgments “God’s Wrath Intensifies on Earth.” Today we learn that during the bowls, “God’s Wrath is Completed on Earth.”

15:1-8 **Heaven Rejoices in Anticipation of the Bowls being Poured Out**

This great and awesome sign goes with the two signs John had seen in chapter twelve. There he saw the great sign of God’s protection and dealings with Israel. He also saw the sign of the havoc Satan would cause during the last three and a half years of the tribulation. This great and awesome sign will mean the end of the evil plans Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet have for God’s people! Verse 1 tells us the sign is 7 angels with 7 plagues that will complete the time of God’s wrath, the tribulation. During the days of the tribulation, many people will turn to Christ and then be killed for their faith. But far from being worse off, they’ll be very much alive in Heaven with God! Verse three tells us they are up there singing the song of Moses AND the song of the Lamb. What does that mean? It means that many Jews will be among the saints in Heaven. The prophets in several places speak of many Jews coming to know God in the last days. The apostle Paul speaks emphatically about that in Romans 9-11.

Interestingly, Heaven doesn’t seem to struggle with God’s righteous judgment the way we do down here with our sinfully divided hearts! They sing out, “Great and awesome are your works, Lord God! Righteous and True are your ways!” Look at verse four. In Heaven they can’t imagine people being so hard hearted that these coming events won’t cause them to fear God and glorify His name! Heaven understands we are to celebrate God’s holiness! God went to extreme measures to show His love for the world by dying on the cross for sinners, so that those who repent and trust Him may be saved! God’s holiness will not allow sinners to go on defiling earth. Heaven is out of the question for those who won’t repent. That only leaves Hell for them, a place that should only have to be for the Devil and his demons. And so as Heaven rejoices at the Rightness of God in judging the earth because of it’s failure to give Him glory, the angels prepare to pour out the bowls.

Chapter 16 The Bowl Judgments are Poured Out

The first bowl is painful sores, the kind of boils that were poured out on the Egyptians during the 6th plague in Exodus. This is only for those who had worshipped the beast. Any followers of Christ alive on earth at that time will not undergo this judgment. The second bowl is like the second trumpet judgment, except this time ALL life in the sea dies instead of just a third of it. At this point the earth as we've known it will be in very bad shape indeed. The third bowl will mean that the world's water supply will become undrinkable. No one can live very long without water. This resembles the first plague on Egypt. Under the fourth trumpet the sun gave less light. But under this fourth bowl it will give more heat. This will lead to not only intense discomfort for people, but to lots of fires. And if it leads the polar ice to melt, major seaboard cities will experience flooding. Verse nine is sobering – despite these things happening those dwelling on the earth don't repent, and they don't give God glory. How incredibly sad! The fifth bowl is even more intense. In those days the world will be plunged into darkness, yet still they will not repent.

The sixth bowl takes a little longer. The Euphrates is a key river in the Bible. When God told Abraham and later Moses the boundaries of the Promised Land, He had the Euphrates as the Eastern border, with Babylon being on the other side of it. When the Euphrates is dry, it will allow kings and armies from the east to travel right over it on their way to attack Israel. My guess is that those left on earth will resent God's protection of a significant number of Jews in the wilderness, something we read about in Revelation chapter twelve. Much speculation has been made about the frogs coming out of the unholy trinity's mouths, but verse fourteen lets us know they are powerful demons who will convince rulers of the world to join this effort to rid the world of God's people. These forces will gather at Armageddon. In chapter 19 we'll see what happens at that battle. Armageddon is the same Greek word for the Hebrew word Megiddo. Look at verse 15. Injected into this sobering reality is "I am coming like a thief." Several other times that phrase occurs in the New Testament. God is so good, He stops and warns all who will read this that there can be another way for them if they'll repent and turn to Jesus! But if not, judgment awaits.

And that brings us to the last bowl, where a severe earthquake happens that causes the cities of the nations to fall. It says islands will disappear and mountains will be flattened. Perhaps all that will be left after this is the original area that included the Garden of Eden. Maybe you have seen on maps how it looks like the continents once were all one giant land mass. Some Christian geologists agree in part with the theory of plate tectonics, and at Noah's flood they believe the world was separated into the present continents. Maybe during this flood of bowl judgment the continents will be brought back together in preparation for Christ's millennial rule. Verse 19 makes clear this seventh bowl is the end of Babylon. The city perhaps; but this also clearly refers to the godless world system. The next two chapters will go into greater detail about this fall of Babylon forever.

That's a lot to think about. But there is one key thing yet to see. Look at verse 17. When the seventh bowl is poured out, a loud voice from the throne says, "It is done!" What's done? When it says here "It is done," now it means the Tribulation is complete and the reign of Christ on earth will shortly begin.

Revelation 17 Title: The end of Christ-less religion!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The judgment of the false prophet, the false religion that persecuted the saints, is accomplished as God allows the people under the Antichrist's authority to destroy it

Theological Proposition: False religion will one day be destroyed by the one world government it supported.

Homiletical Proposition: Christ-less religion will be destroyed!

Worship Theme: Christ is the real thing!

I want audience to feel more deeply: Devotion to Christ Himself, not religion apart from Christ.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Christ is the only way of salvation.

I want audience to do more readily: Be able to identify the three main characteristics of Christ-less religion.

The Rise of the False Religion and its False Prophet.

Verse one tells us the purpose of this chapter. John is told, "Come, and I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute who sits on many waters." Look at verse 15. It tells us that the waters are essentially the nations of the earth! During the tribulation this false religion will have influence and notoriety throughout the earth.

Adrian Rogers said, "Women in Bible prophecy are always considered a symbol of religion, whether good or bad."

The church of the Lord Jesus is called “the bride of Christ.” In chapter twelve Israel was described as “a woman clothed with the sun...and a crown of 12 stars on her head.” When Jesus comes back we will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb! But in this chapter we see another symbol of religion, but this one is not pure. This one is a prostitute or a harlot. The Greek word is *pornes*, from which we derive the word pornography. If the people of God purify the planet as salt and light, the religion of Babylon pollutes the planet with its sewage. Verse two tells us that the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her. Whenever that phrase is used like that it is speaking of idolatry, taking things that aren’t God and worshipping them as if they were God. Idolatry also happens when we take things that God will bless if we do them the way He instructs us to, and use them in ways God can not bless but must judge.

Now back in chapter thirteen we read of two beasts that get their power from Satan. One was clearly the Antichrist, and the other was clearly the one chapter sixteen calls the False Prophet. Chapter thirteen made clear the False Prophet will help the Antichrist achieve worldwide acceptance. Since the scarlet beast we will talk about in a moment is clearly the Antichrist, this notorious prostitute can only be the False Religion led by the False Prophet. Verse four lets us know this false religion is characterized by beauty and riches. Verse five lets us in on a mystery: this false religion has its roots in “Babylon the Great.” The Bible really is a tale of two cities. Jerusalem is the city of God; Babylon is the city of fallen man. And that is true going all the way back to the tower of Babel, which became Babylon. Jerusalem says, “The Lord is God!” Babylon says, “we will be gods.”

Look at verse nine. Here it tells us the prostitute is seated on seven mountains. There really is no doubt that is Rome, called the city of seven hills, the center of the world in John’s day. Verse six says John was astounded when he saw this woman who was drunk with all the saints she had killed. Why was he astounded? Because she looked religious on the outside, but was responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of people. I believe that after the rapture of born again Christians, those left who really aren’t born again and don’t obey the Bible will do anything it takes to have unity with other religions. The movement is already underway in our own day.

The Ride of the False Religion and its False Prophet.

Verse three tells us the prostitute will be riding the scarlet beast, the one with seven heads and ten horns. This is referring to both the Antichrist and the nations he will arise from. The Bible tells us in places like Daniel 7 that there will be a ten kingdom version of the Roman Empire at the end of days. The Antichrist will arise from one of those ten horns. Now verses 10-11 tell us the seven heads are seven kings, five have fallen, one, is, the other has not come, but is from the seven and is himself the eighth. When John was writing the one who is was probably a reference to the current ruler of the Roman Empire, with the Antichrist coming from his type and being the eighth! There will be a united world under the Antichrist, and false religion will help make it happen.

The Ruin of the False Religion.

Verse 16 tells what is really a sad story. Having used false religion to gain power, the Antichrist and the ten horns he leads will first hate false religion, and then devour it. This usually is what happens when the church tries to partner with politicians. Eventually politicians that have used the church to get to power turn away from the church after they have. Putting together the Bible’s data I believe false religion will help the Antichrist gain worldwide power, perhaps even rebuilding Israel’s temple in a show of tolerance, but at the mid-point of the tribulation the Antichrist will turn on all religion and insist on being worshipped. Interestingly, the False Prophet appears to make it to the end of the tribulation. We see his demise later. It appears he himself will lead the world’s false religions as a double agent for the antichrist. Unfortunately, many good people are in liberal churches today that are led by people that don’t really believe the Bible and are really wolves in clerical clothing.

Three Responses we should have because of false religion: First, Treasure Christ! Abide in Him!
Second, do what it says in the Bible! Jesus said “if you love me, you’ll obey my commands!”
Third, never bully people, but rely on the power of the Holy Spirit!

Revelation 18:1 to 19:10 Where’s the Party?

Exegetical Central Proposition: When a mighty angel announces the destruction of Antichrist’s political and economic system, there are drastically different reactions, mourning by the wicked on earth but celebration and preparations for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in heaven.

Theological Proposition: Antichrist's political and economic system will be destroyed, with drastically different reactions on earth and in Heaven.

Homiletical Proposition: The Christ-less political and economic system will be destroyed!

Worship Theme: Store up treasure in Heaven!

I want audience to feel more deeply: That Heaven is their real home.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That the things of this world really are temporary.

I want audience to do more readily: Write down five things in their lives Heaven views differently than earth.

Today's passage shows us that when Babylon falls and Jesus prepares to return to Earth, those on Earth and those in Heaven have two completely different responses to what's happening...

Five Observations From This Passage:

First, Demons Concentrate around the Disobedient

18:1-3

Verse two tells us that Babylon the Great has become a dwelling for demons, a haunt for unclean things. Babylon may be a rebuilt city at this point, but it also clearly represents the satanic world system, described in Ephesians chapter two as a world ruled by Satan and consumed by a spirit of disobedience. In other words, Babylon represents a world obsessed with sin, misusing God's good gifts in sinful ways. I believe the further a person gets away from what God intended for their life, the more demonic activity concentrates around them. As these verses go on, this disobedience is seen in two key words in verse three: immorality and excessive. Satan always convinces people they need more than what God wills for them to have. And so rejecting the God appointed boundaries of our lives, in disobedience we go beyond the boundaries God has set for us, and disobedience allows demonic activity to concentrate around us.

Second, God Calls His People Out From the Disobedient

18:4-8

Verse four says if your God's people you better come out of Babylon, because Babylon is going to be judged. The Greek word for church, ecclesia, comes from two Greek words, ek and kaleo. Kaleo means to call and Ek means out of. Believers are the ones who are called out of Babylon. Even here, late in the tribulation, God is calling people to confess their sins and repent, to turn from the ways of disobedience to following Jesus! From these verses we learn that Unconfessed Sin IS held against people. A person can't be forgiven of sin they haven't repented of! Look at verse 5: Her sins are piled up to Heaven; God remembers her crimes. She will reap as much torment & grief as her disobedience has sown. In fact, verse 6 says because of exploitation her judgment is doubled! In Contrast: God chooses not to hold confessed sin against us when we repent! See I John 1:9.

Third, the Party of the disobedient will end

18:9-19, 21-24

Verses 12-13 mention over 30 different expensive status symbol commodities the world celebrated, gold, jewels, expensive clothes, perfumes. Now the Bible extols workmen who have honest jobs that meet people's basic needs. That's not what it's talking about here. This all must be understood in terms of the words "excessive." Look at verse 13 – all the trafficking in human bodies and souls will also end! What a great promise that is! The exploitation of people will stop! Look at verse 14 – It all ends – the party will be over! When Babylon is destroyed the kings, the merchants, the sailors all mourn because the party is over. Look at verse 23 – your merchants were the nobility of the earth. Earth under Satan has had its own golden rule: he who has the gold, rules! In Contrast: Revelation has taught us as believers we can't take it with us, but we can send it ahead! See Matthew 6:19-21. When the party is over, those who have made themselves citizens of Babylon will mourn because all their treasure will be lost also. But those who have stored up treasure in Heaven will not lose anything they have committed there.

Fourth, the Resources of the Disobedient Can't Stop the Prayers of the Saints

18:20

Despite all the resources Babylon had, despite years of mocking, persecuting and sometimes killing God's people, the prayers God's people have prayed for justice have never been forgotten! God has not forgotten the prayers of saints for justice throughout the ages, whether New Testament apostles or Old Testament prophets! We have already seen in Revelation that there are bowls filled in Heaven with the prayers of the saints! He heard The Psalmist who cried out...How long, O God, will the wicked Prosper? He heard The Tribulation Martyrs who cried out... How long, O God, until you avenge our blood...? He heard your prayer too, dear friend, when you cried out to him about the injustices you have experienced! We are to leave vengeance to God, but we are to pray for justice! Yes, pray for people to be saved! Love your enemies! Share the gospel! But also pray intensely that things that should not be happening on earth will stop happening! Pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!

Fifth, the Real Party is in Heaven!**19:1-10**

I include this in with the fall of commercial and political Babylon to drive home one of the main lessons of Revelation: Heaven's perspective is very different than earth's! That thought is supposed to get in your head, your heart, until it overflows in the way you make your decisions! In contrast to the unrepentant on earth, Heaven will be rejoicing when Babylon goes down! Because now the Real Party can begin! In verse two Heaven shouts Hallelujah because Babylon has finally got what's coming to her! In verses three and four they shout hallelujah because her destruction is final, no one will be exploited on earth any longer: no more sin! In verse six they shout Hallelujah because now the Lord Jesus can reign on earth! Everlasting righteousness can be brought in! Now the party Jesus announced when He gave us the Lord's Supper, the one we have waited so long for, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, will happen! Babylon's party is over! Christ's is just beginning! Verse 7b tells us the bride of Christ prepared herself for that day. Verse 8 says she was permitted to wear dazzling white because she had acted righteously while she waited for her true love to come! That's what we are to be about as we wait for Christ's return- Faith in Christ! Certain Hope of His Return! Loving acts for others!

Revelation 19:11-21 Title: The Second Coming of Jesus Christ!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Second Coming of Jesus Christ with His saints results in the capture and throwing into the Lake of Fire of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and the physical death by Christ's word of all those who had followed the Antichrist into this fool's battle

Theological Proposition: At Christ's Second Coming he will defeat the forces of Antichrist handily.

Homiletical Proposition: You want to meet Christ as the Lamb, not the Lion!

Worship Theme: Jesus wins!

I want audience to feel more deeply: The power of He who is Faithful and True.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Christ rules the past, present, and future!

I want audience to do more readily: Fear God.

V. 17-21 The damning power of deception imbibed

In John 8:44 Jesus called Satan the father of liars. Satan is all about deception. Lies are very powerful, because lies keep people from acknowledging the truth that will free them. Verses 19-20 say that the Beast and the False Prophet, themselves deceived by Satan, will have deceived those who lived on the earth. Turn back to Revelation 16:13-16. Late in the tribulation the unholy trinity will deceive those on earth who haven't turned to God and convince them to go to Israel and try to finally wipe out the children of Israel. They are even be so deceived that they know Jesus is coming back but think they can kill Him when he comes. What a contrast between the meals in verses 7 and 17! Verse seven shows the saints ready to celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb. Verse seventeen shows the birds of the air about to feast on the rotting corpses of those who had believed Satan's lies and tried to take on God. See Zechariah 14

V. 11-16 The Power of the Word of God!

Here you have an army waiting for Christ to return, thinking they can stop Him! Satan's lies have messed this planet up, but when Jesus returns, the power of His truth will set the world free! Romans 8 describes creation groaning for this moment to come!! Look at verse 11- The day will come when Heaven opens, and out will come Jesus riding on a white horse! Jesus is called Faithful and True! That's the Jesus I know! It says in righteousness He judges and makes war. Having rejected Him as Lamb, the unrepentant will meet Him as the Roaring Lion. What a shame- that anyone would fail to receive Him as Savior and Friend, and have to meet him as Judge and Enemy- He went to extreme lengths so it wouldn't have to happen! But make no mistake about it- it has to happen! Jesus is going to reclaim the world, and He is not going to let sinners mess it up any longer. Once conceived, a person's soul is eternal. Life will go on somewhere after death. If you reject His offer to receive His forgiveness and live eternally with Him on the new earth, the only option left is the Lake of Fire, where the Antichrist and False Prophet and Satan himself will be.

Verse twelve tells us His eyes will be like a fiery flame- He knows all about us. And then we see He has a name written that no one knows but Himself! Folks, there is always more to learn about Jesus! Maybe we'll get to know that name one day! What's amazing is that Rev. 2:17 says He has a name for each of us that's going to be just between Him and us! Verse 13 tells us His name is the Word of God! John is the only writer that calls Jesus the Word of God. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word! Verse 16 tells us He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! If you refuse to meet Him as the Lamb of God who took away your

sin, you will meet Him as the Lion who defeats Satan and sinners! Now in verse 14 were told the armies of Heaven follow after Him on white horses wearing white linen. Is that us, Danny? You better believe it is! But don't get the idea that we'll be fighting! Believers never are part of Jihad for Jesus! More likely we'll be holding camcorders while King Jesus does all the work!!

Verses 15 and 21 tells us it is the sharp sword from His mouth, elsewhere called the word of God, that will defeat the enemies of God! See Hebrews 4:12-13. His Word is so powerful He spoke the universe into creation in Genesis 1. God said, "Let there be...and it was so!" He raised Lazarus from the dead by telling Him, "Get up, Lazarus!" Here we see He will consign His enemies to death by telling them to drop dead! When God speaks, what He says happens! That's the power of the Word of God!

Revelation 20:1-6 When the Saints Come Marching In!

Exegetical Central Proposition: During the coming millennium, Satan will be under house arrest in the abyss, and unable to deceive and harm the world while saints will rule with Jesus for 1,000 years.

Theological Proposition: The millennial rule of Jesus Christ will be a time when saints rule the earth without the deception and harm of Satan.

Homiletical Proposition: One day the earth will be more like the Lord created it to be!

Worship Theme: Real Peace!

I want audience to feel more deeply: The wonder of the millennium.

I want audience to believe more strongly: That the millennium is a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth.

I want audience to do more readily: Be peacemakers now.

The Word Millennium comes from two Latin words: "Milli" means a thousand and "annum" means year. Millennium means a thousand years. The phrase 1,000 years, as in a time directly after the Second Coming of Christ, occurs only here in the Bible. For some that is enough to say there can't possibly be a thousand year reign of Christ on earth after His Second Coming. There are two answers to that charge: First, The Old Testament prophets did not place it as a thousand years, but in numerous passages they speak of a time that is vastly different than the current age but not quite the New Earth yet. That time can only be what John refers to in Revelation 20. Secondly, John speaks of the thousand years six times in seven verses here, emphatically stating that this time will last for a thousand years after Christ's second coming!

The Three Main Millennial Views:

1. The Amillennial view- There is NO 1,000 year reign of Christ in earth.

An Amillennialist does not believe in a literal millennium. To the Amillennialist all of the Old Testament prophets' predictions of a golden age, along with Revelation 20, are to be understood as spiritualized language to represent the expanding kingdom of God, which is happening now spiritually.

2. The Postmillennial view- The 2nd Coming is AFTER the millennium.

In this view the millennium is not necessarily a literal thousand years. To the Postmillennialist the church will be so successful in changing the world in its global efforts that the last part of the church age will be the millennial golden age, after which Christ will return to earth.

In both these views promises made to Israel of a literal reign of the Messiah from David's throne in Israel were forfeited when Israel disobeyed God. Those promises are then spiritually applied to the church.

3. The Premillennial view- The millennium is AFTER the 2nd Coming.

In this view the millennium is a literal thousand years. This view follows the order presented in Revelation chapters 19-20, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, then the millennium. This view sees the millennium as a key part of God fulfilling the unconditional Old Testament promises to Israel of a literal reign of the Messiah from David's throne in Israel. This view alone interprets Revelation 20 literally! See Acts 1:6-8. This would have been the perfect time for Jesus to tell his disciples, "You've got it all wrong, Israel has lost those promises forever." In Acts 1:6-8 Jesus affirms two things: there is a time coming in the future set to restore the Kingdom to Israel (in fulfillment of Old Testament promises), and that in the mean time His disciples are to be witnesses (the church age).

The Two Great Truths for Earth During the Millennium:

First, Satan won't be around (verses 1-3). Second, Jesus will be on earth during the millennium (verses 4-6).

Verse four tells us that John saw people sitting on thrones and given authority to judge. That's cool, because John had once before heard Jesus say this:

Jesus said to them, "I assure you: In the Messianic Age, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses, brothers or sisters, father or mother, children, or fields because of My name will receive 100 times more and will inherit eternal life." -Matthew 19:28-29 See also 1 Corinthians 6:2-3

Revelation 20:7-15 The Lake of Fire

Exegetical Central Proposition: The Final judgment of Satan and all those who rejected Christ results in all of them being thrown into the Lake of Fire along with Death and Hades after the last battle.

Theological Proposition: All those who reject Christ will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire with Satan.

Homiletical Proposition: How to get your name in the Book of Life!

Worship Theme: Rescue from sin's penalty: Hell

I want audience to feel more deeply: The reality of Hell

I want audience to believe more strongly: The reality of Hell

I want audience to do more readily: Make sure they are in the Book of Life

Today's passage is about the sobering reality that for those whose names are not written in the Book of Life because they have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, there awaits eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

V. 7-10 The Final Judgment of the Devil – The Lake of Fire

The army of these that rebel against Christ is cryptically called Gog and Magog. Back in Ezekiel 38-39 Gog and Magog refers to a battle that takes place during the end times. But a close look at the context indicates that battle will probably happen sometime before the tribulation begins. If that's the case, Gog and Magog here would be like referring to Napoleon's Waterloo or Custard's Little Big Horn. In other words, their efforts are doomed to fail big time! Look at verse nine. It shows us the end of this army of rebellion. Fire came down from Heaven and consumed them! After His Second Coming Christ will never allow harm to come to Jerusalem again!

And then there is the wonderful verse ten, showing us Satan's final judgment! The Devil is thrown into the Lake of Fire, just as his two human agents of the tribulation, the beast and the false prophet had been a thousand years earlier. Verse ten clearly tells us the Lake of Fire is a place where people and demons, including the Devil, will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Interestingly, these verses don't show Satan as the ruler of the Lake of Fire, but just one of the ones confined there.

V. 11-15 The Final Judgment of those who did not receive Christ – The Lake of Fire

Throughout the Bible God has told us about this final judgment referred to in verse eleven as happening at the Great White Throne. See Exodus 32:31-34. In verse 11 John sees this Great White Throne, and then he sees earth and heaven flee from God's presence. Perhaps the Great White Throne is beyond space. When that moment happens, it looks like all those who have died without receiving Christ will have their spirits released from Hades and they will be before the Judge at this Great White Throne. It is possible all the saints living with Christ on earth will also be there to the side, but this judgment is not for them. After this time is over, old earth won't exist as we have known it. The next chapter tells us there will then be a new heaven and a new earth that saints will live on.

Verse twelve is key to understanding what happens at the great white throne. It tells us there were many books opened before the throne. And then it tells us there was another book opened: the book of life. The end of verse twelve lets us know the dead were judged according to their works. That's what the books contained: the works people did on earth. Verse fifteen lets us know that no matter how great anyone's works were in that book, they were not good enough to go to Heaven based on their works.

Now look at verse thirteen. It tells us these unbelievers will be judged according to their works. The Bible teaches there will be degrees of punishment in the Lake of Fire. No one will be glad they are there, but those who had greater revelation from God and failed to obey it will suffer more. In Matthew 11:20-24 Jesus said Sodom and Gomorrah's judgment will be less than Capernaum because in rejecting Him they were rejecting more information than Sodom had when it rejected God. Oh how bad is it going to be for Americans who have been taught so much but have spurned Christ and acted so wickedly? Verse fourteen makes clear that this will be the end of death as we have known it and also the need for Hades, the temporary domain of the unsaved dead, will no longer be necessary. From now on, it's just the Lake of Fire for those who didn't receive Jesus.

Look at verse fifteen again. Anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the Lake of Fire. We already saw in verse ten this includes a torment for demons and people that goes on forever and ever. There are many who teach that the unsaved dead will simply be annihilated and cease to exist. This is based on taking the word "perish" from John 3:16 to mean annihilation, and from teaching that when Jesus referred to Gehenna he meant the place outside Jerusalem where the fire kept burning, but the trash thrown into it merely ceased to exist, while the fire kept burning. But verses like verse ten clearly show the Lake of Fire involves a forever torment for those who reject Christ. This is in keeping with the nature of a soul. A soul, once created, goes on forever. Apart from Jesus' work everyone would have had to go to the Lake of Fire because of sin and their inability to produce the perfect righteousness required for Heaven. Because of Jesus' work, people can go to Heaven instead if they receive Him and let His righteousness count for them before the Great White Throne. Those are the only options.

Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 Heaven on Earth!

Exegetical Central Proposition: The final home of the triune God and all those who received Christ is shown in gripping detail, not only the indescribable beauty of the New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem, but the comforting absence of all things that were results of the curse of sin.

Theological Proposition: All those who receive Christ will spend eternity on a New Earth with the triune God.

Homiletical Proposition: The comforting reality of our final home!

Worship Theme: Heaven

I want audience to feel more deeply: How great it will be to be with Jesus and loved ones in Heaven!

I want audience to believe more strongly: That Heaven will be exciting!

I want audience to do more readily: Begin regularly meditating on what it will be like in our real home with Jesus!

Today we learn about the biggest building project of all time, a project that Jesus Himself has personally been working on for 2,000 years! In just the right timing, that New Jerusalem He has been building will be relocated to a New Earth, and it will be our eternal home! God will bring together all the unconditional promises He has made, He Himself will declare, "IT IS DONE!"

When Everything Will Be Made New!

There are three key phrases in this passage: "New," "Passed Away," & "No Longer." Verse four tells us the previous things have passed away! During the time of the tribulation we saw God give earth an extreme makeover before the millennial reign of Christ! But now there is a completely new earth! Verse one says that from this time forward, if there is time at all, there will be a new heaven and a new earth! Verse two says the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God! And then in verse five is the biggie! LOOK! I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW! One day we'll have new bodies on a new earth!

Now you may wonder about this whole idea of the first heaven passing away, and a new heaven emerging. Don't forget the Bible speaks of three 'heavens.' The first is the sky; the second is space; the third is where God's throne is beyond space. You may remember that Paul spoke in 2 Corinthians 12:2 about being caught up to the third Heaven. This is undoubtedly the same place John was transported to in his own vision in Revelation four and five. This is undoubtedly where the Great White Throne is now, along with the New Jerusalem which will be on the New Earth. When it says the first heaven and earth passed away, it means the present earth, sky, and space. In the place of the first earth, sky and space will be a new earth, sky, and space, and the New Jerusalem will come down out of the third heaven and be the center of the New Universe! I believe the place Jesus speaks of preparing for us in John 14 is the New Jerusalem, which one day will be for us "Heaven on Earth!"

The Indescribable Beauty of the New Jerusalem!

John had the privilege of getting a sneak peek of what the New Jerusalem will be like. In verse 11 he describes the city as arrayed with God's glory! The radiance was like what he saw in chapter four when he saw the glory of God, like brilliant jasper stone, bright as crystal! And the city John saw was huge! Verse 16 says the city was a cube, equal in length, width, and height! 12,000 stadia would be about 1,400 miles. Around the New Jerusalem will be a wall about 216 feet high, according to the 144 cubits mentioned in verse 17. In God's perfect way the city will bring together the Old Testament saints of Israel with the saints that have come since the time of the New Testament.

Wondrous Activity in the New Jerusalem!

Here we see the New Earth presented as a city, brimming with physical activity? Can't you see yourself there in a glorified body, taking walks, enjoying the outdoors, playing sports, laughing and painting, playing instruments and singing, engaged in creative and meaningful work, learning how radio waves and quantum physics and other things really work, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit being worshipped in all you do? Look at 21:3. God will live with us there! Can you imagine how being with Him will inspire us to new heights in our eternal service of Him?

The Comforting Absence of Things that won't be in the New Jerusalem!

Look at 21:4 - Death, Grief, Crying and Pain will exist no longer! Hallelujah! We won't need ambulances, hospitals, funeral homes or graveyards! You'll never again have to experience the intense, gut wrenching sense of loss because your loved one isn't here any longer! No more grief! Some of you have intense pain in your physical body, and sometimes you wish you could just go on and be with Jesus rather than face the pain another moment! No more pain! The previous things have all passed away! Hallelujah!

Look at 22:2 - On the new Earth we'll have constant access to the Tree of Life, and if it is ever needed, partaking of the leaves there will heal whatever needs healing! Look at 22:3 - There will no longer be any curse! Christian, aren't you tired of your struggle with sin? You love Jesus and you want everything in your life to be His! And yet you find yourself thinking wicked thoughts, speaking unkind words, doing stupid and sinful things. You wear out I John 1:9! Overall you have made progress, but you aren't what you want to be yet! Thank God that when we get to the New Earth there will be no more curse! Our new bodies won't even have that part of the brain that puts that dilemma before us, Satan won't be around to mess it up! No more curse, Just God and His people together forever!

The traits of those who will go to the Lake of Fire

Look at 21:7-8 - here we see three traits of those who will experience the Lake of Fire rather than the river of life. First, they had cowardice instead of courage. Second, they had unbelief, not belief! Finally, they continued in their sin, refusing to repent.

Revelation 22:6-21 Title: The Choice that must be made

Exegetical Central Proposition: The imminent return of the Lord of the Ages leads to a compelling invitation to "come to Jesus" and experience eternal life with Christ and His saints in the New Jerusalem, along with the sobering warning that those who reject the message will remain forever outside the city.

Theological Proposition: Today is the day of salvation.

Homiletical Proposition: You must personally respond to the offer of salvation,

Worship Theme: The gospel!

I want audience to feel more deeply: The urgency of not delaying a decision for Christ.

I want audience to believe more strongly: The goodness of God in giving us so many chances!

I want audience to do more readily: Make their peace with God if they have not, and begin regularly meditating on what it will be like in our real home with Jesus!

What do we find in this the last passage of both Revelation and the Bible? A final appeal to walk through the door of salvation that has swung open widely for mankind, a final appeal to make the choice that must be made!

Our passage today is the postscript to The Book of Revelation, coming after the great vision John received on Patmos. Our passage today is like the grand finale of a fireworks show, citing 8 names of Jesus Christ in 16 verses!

The Last Three Things The Bible Impresses On Us:

First and Foremost, it's all about Jesus! Secondly, we are partners with all believers who have gone before and come after us! Lastly, one more time the appeal goes out to sinners to come to Jesus before it's too late!