



1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: Revelation, Part 3

Theme: Victory Won

Overview: This is the third series in this study of the book of Revelation. In the book we have found a call to arms while all the while remembering that our battle is spiritual in nature. In this study we come to the final victory of God. Reading of that victory ahead of time is like watching an Olympic competition and knowing who receives the gold medal, but still watching the competition play out. Students will learn that God's justice is inextricably linked to that victory, allegiance to God keeps one righteous before God, just acts in the fallen world become our dress code, and fidelity to Christ grants true freedom.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

INTRODUCTION

Author and Audience

The New Testament book of Revelation stands as Scripture's final word—both a culmination of God's redemptive story and a pastoral letter to believers living between Christ's ascension and his return. Written by the apostle John, exiled on the island of Patmos "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," Revelation was addressed to seven real congregations in Asia Minor. These churches faced pressures familiar to every generation of Christians: cultural compromise, spiritual fatigue, persecution, and the temptation to lose heart. John writes as a shepherd apostle, strengthening believers to endure faithfully in a world that often opposes the reign of Christ.

Date

Most conservative scholars date the book around AD 95 during the reign of Domitian, a period marked by increasing hostility toward Christians.

Setting

Yet Revelation's setting is not merely historical; it is cosmic. John is invited to see earthly events from heaven's vantage point. What appears chaotic on the ground is revealed to be ordered under the sovereign rule of the risen Lamb. The book's visions unveil the true nature of

the age between Christ's first and second comings—a time in which the church is called to patient endurance while Christ advances his kingdom.

Theme

The central theme of Revelation is the victory of Jesus Christ. The Lamb who was slain now reigns, and his triumph shapes the entire book. Evil is real, but it is not ultimate. The church suffers, but it is never abandoned. History moves not in circles but toward a consummation in which God dwells with his people and makes all things new. Revelation portrays this present age as the arena of spiritual conflict and gospel advance, culminating in Christ's visible return and the final judgment.

Why Study Revelation?

Because it grounds weary believers in hope. It reminds us that the church's story is anchored not in fear, speculation, or political turmoil but in the unshakable reign of Christ. Revelation trains us to see our world truthfully—to recognize both the deceptive allure of Babylon and the quiet, steady victory of the Lamb. It calls us to worship, to perseverance, and to confidence that God's purposes will stand. Far from being a book to avoid, Revelation is a gift to the church: a promise that no matter how dark the night, the morning of new creation is certain.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: Revelation 15:1-4; 16:1-12, 15-17

WEEK 2: Revelation 17:1-2, 6, 18; 18:1-10

WEEK 3: Revelation 19:1-14; 20:11-15

WEEK 4: Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-7, 18-20

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Declare God just.**

STUDY: Revelation, Part 3

THEME: Victory Won

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 15:1-4; 16:1-12, 15-17

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 50:8-9; Romans 8:33

THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S

BY MARK SCOTT

It is vital to have a just God. When that is not the case, what seems to be nailed down comes loose. If the God of the universe is not just, then there is no standard for behavior. Paul taught that God would need to be found true and every man a liar if that was necessary (Romans 3:4). In the book of Revelation, the justice of God gets worked out in a structure called “progressive parallelism.” That is to say, the book begins several times with the first coming of Christ and moves to the second coming of Christ. This is evident in the growing aggressiveness of the plagues that display God’s justice. They begin with the seals, then move to the trumpets, and finally to the bowls of wrath.

Singing Justice (15:1-4)

John is allowed to see another *sign* (symbol) in heaven—so this is clearly heaven’s perspective (not necessarily the perspective people see on earth). A complete number of angels comes with a complete number of plagues (*seven* as a number indicating completeness). Note the phrase “with them God’s wrath is completed.” This matches the end of the lesson text when it says, “It is done!” There is another clue that we are at the end of history when later we read, “You who are and who were.” Notice what is missing—the future tense. There is no need to say “who will come” because the Lord has already come.

What John saw precedes what he heard. He saw a splendid picture of the victory of God’s people. The sea of glass was glowing as if on fire. Think beauty and purity. God’s people had by this time gained the victory over the beast (13:1-10), his image (13:11-17), and his number (13:18). The people of God burst forth in song with words very similar to when Moses achieved victory over Pharaoh (Exodus 15). The song celebrated the great deliverance of God for his people.

There are three components to this justice tune. First is an acknowledgement of God’s ways and character. His deeds are great and marvelous, and his ways are *just and true*. Second, there is a rhetorical question with an answer. Who would not fear God and give him glory? After all, he is uniquely “other” (holy). Third, there is predictive prophecy. All the nations would come and worship God. The reason? He is righteous (just).

Watching Justice (16:1-12)

Sometimes Christians have a tough time discerning God’s judgment in a fallen world. It is hard to discern the

times with 100 percent accuracy (Luke 12:56) when believers lack specific details about those judgments. But in Revelation 15-16, Christians are given a front-row seat on the judgments of God. They can watch them unfold through observing the angels with their seven bowls of wrath. Note that the *loud voice* that gave the command to pour out the bowls came from the temple. The temple was a symbol of God’s presence, so that voice is God’s. There is a pattern to these bowls of wrath. The first three are given, and then an interlude occurs. Then the second set of three are given and a slight interlude again. Finally, the seventh bowl is poured out, which symbolizes the end.

Just as the song of Moses was mentioned in the previous section, so here Moses and the exodus from Egypt is recalled. The first bowl was poured out on the unbelievers, and they ended up with *ugly festering sores* (This may also make one think of Job 2). The second and third bowls dealt with blood in the waters (Exodus 7:14-25). Another song occurred, once again underlining the justice of God on those who mistreated his people (5b-7).

Bowl four dealt with more than global warming. Fire scorched people, but like those in Revelation 9, nothing moved the people toward repentance. Bowl five dealt with darkness (Exodus 10:21-29). Bowl six dealt with rich flowing rivers like the Euphrates drying up. The east was where the enemies of God’s people came from in ancient Israel. Therefore, it is an image of war and misery.

Justice at Last (16:15-17)

God reminded John of what he said through Christ in the gospels, namely Jesus’ coming would be sudden like that of a thief (Matthew 24:42-44). The call for believers was to remain alert and clothed in good deeds even with all Gehenna breaking loose on earth.

The gathering place for many wars in Israel was Megiddo. It was a strategic mountain near the Valley of Jezreel. But there is really no end-time battle predicted here. Jesus showed up and “It was done!” As we say, “That’s all she wrote.” Justice at last.

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THE PRAISEWORTHY JUSTICE OF GOD

BY DAVID FAUST

Recently a worship leader asked me, “Have you noticed that very few hymns or contemporary worship songs mention the justice of God?”

“You’re right,” I told my young adult friend. I couldn’t immediately think of any song lyrics about God’s justice, although the Bible says a lot about the subject.

“And that’s strange,” he continued, “because in our culture we hear a lot of concern about justice.”

I believe a sense of justice is imbedded in our intellectual DNA because it’s an attribute of God and we are created in his image. That’s why moral indignation and outrage arise in us when injustice occurs.

I told my friend, “You ought to write a song praising God for his justice.”

“Maybe I will,” he replied.

Just and True

Do we pay enough attention to the justice of God? “He is the Rock,” Moses sang, “his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deuteronomy 32:4). David sang about justice, too: “For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones” (Psalm 37:28). A messianic prophecy predicted Christ would “proclaim justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:18).

In biblical terms, justice (and its synonym, “righteousness”) have to do with right relationships and right behavior within a community—making sure things are the way they ought to be. A just judge is fair, reasonable, and consistent—true to established laws and covenants. Biblical justice condemns evil, preserves and defends what is right, values people, shows no partiality, upholds the cause of the defenseless, and seeks to fix what is wrong.

God’s justice isn’t forgotten in the book of Revelation. John saw a throng of saved souls holding harps, and they “sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the

Lamb: ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations’” (Revelation 15:2-3).

God’s justice is affirmed again in Revelation 16, a chapter that describes God’s punishment for sin. “Seven bowls of God’s wrath” pour out devastating consequences upon the earth (Revelation 16:1-21), including intense heat and oppressive darkness. There are outbreaks of demonic activity. The earth shakes, cities collapse, and huge hailstones fall from the sky. If you wonder if these harsh judgments are justified, Revelation 16 isn’t the place to look for loopholes. On earth, sinners curse the name of God and refuse to repent, but in heaven, praise for God resounds. “You are just in these judgments, O Holy One . . . for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets” (v. 5-6). “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments” (v. 7).

Putting Justice into Practice

The justice of God is a challenging concept, but it has practical implications for us.

We should study what the Bible says about God’s justice, include it in our prayers, and pursue it in our relationships. Concern for biblical justice should impact how we treat others and help us decide what causes and leaders to support. The more we respect God’s justice, the more we will appreciate the way he forgives our sins even though he has the right to punish us.

Maybe someone should write a new song about it.

Personal Challenge:

Offer God a prayer of praise, honoring him for being just, fair, righteous, and holy. Thank him for offering his Son as an atoning sacrifice for your sin, allowing him “to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26; 1 John 2:2).

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do you think the world would be like if there were no justice? How does justice make the world a better place to live?

Ask two people to read aloud **Revelation 15:1-4; 16:1-12, 15-17**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

2. John's vision in Revelation 15 brings us near the end of time on earth as "the wrath of God is completed" (15:1).
 - How is the wrath of God connected to the justice of God?
 - Why is it important that God is a God of justice (wrath) as well as a God of mercy?
3. Revelation 15:2-4 depicts God's people celebrating their ultimate, eternal victory.
 - What images in Revelation 15:2 indicate victory?
 - How does the song God's people sing in Revelation 15:3-4 portray victory?
4. God commanded seven angels to pour out seven bowls of wrath upon the earth in Revelation 16:1-12. Why do you think God called for seven bowls of wrath to be poured out and not just a single bowl of wrath?
 - What does this say about our often-stubborn human nature?
 - Read again Revelation 16:4-7. What does this say to you about God's fairness when it comes to our actions and their consequences?
5. Twice in this text (Revelation 16:9, 11), those who received God's poured-out wrath cursed God, "but they refused to repent." Under circumstances like these, what could possibly cause a person to refuse to repent when given the opportunity?
 - What does this say to you about the urgent need to "come clean" before God when struggling with sin?
6. In Revelation 16:15, the Lord declares that, while his return is certain, no one knows when it will occur. What will you do personally to make sure you're ready when Jesus returns?
7. As the seventh and final bowl of God's wrath is poured out on the earth, a loud voice from the throne declares, "It is done!" (Revelation 16:17).
 - What is done?
 - While this is a sobering thought, how does it give you assurance?
8. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Revelation 17:1-2, 6, 18; 18:1-10**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Remove yourself from sinful associations.**

STUDY: Revelation, Part 3

THEME: Victory Won

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 17:1-2, 6, 18; 18:1-10

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Numbers 16:1-33; Ezra 10:1-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE

BY MARK SCOTT

In America, people who serve in the military pledge allegiance to their country and pledge to defend the constitution of the United States. It is no small thing. Allegiances matter, and some allegiances put us at odds with other allegiances. It is hard to be a Denver Broncos fan and cheer for the other teams in the AFC West Conference (the Chiefs, Raiders, and Chargers).

God's people should be crystal clear about their allegiance. They play to an audience of one. So they must be very careful of other allegiances. For the believers in the seven churches, that meant coming out from the pagan influences of the culture. The key verse in this lesson is Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins." There is a time to stand and fight (Acts 14:3). But there is equally a time to run for the hills (Acts 14:6). Sometimes the greater part of valor is degrees of separation from the world.

Allegiance to the Lamb Means No Intimacy with the World (17:1-2, 6, 18)

The word *adultery* occurs four times in the lesson text. It is a betrayal of wedding vows. To be united with Christ means not being yoked with the world (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). The third member of the evil trinity occurs in this text. The ancient serpent used a trinity of evil (the beast out of the sea, the prophet from the earth, and the *great prostitute*—a rather consistent image in Old and New Testaments for pagan culture) to derail the saints. This adulterous woman sits on seven hills (17:9) and sits by *many waters*. Almost without question this must be a reference to Rome.

The kings of the earth were mesmerized by this adulterous woman. In fact, they were *intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries*. She ruled *over the kings of the earth*. Her power was especially seen in her martyring of God's people (i.e. *drunk with the blood of God's holy people*).

Allegiance to the World Is Dark and Demonic (18:1-3)

An angel came from heaven to announce the ultimate demise of the city that is now identified as *Babylon the Great*. The angel announced why the city was so compromised: it was inhabited by *demons*. What was going on in Rome

was not just humanism gone amuck. It was demonic from the pits of Hell. Unclean spirits, birds, and animals were part of the landscape. Their unfaithfulness was likened to *maddening wine*, and the *merchants of the earth* got rich in excessive luxuries.

While the language of the text is sexual in nature, that may well be a metaphor for any excess, particularly regarding riches. One of the warnings for the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 cautioned them against putting their hope in the futility of riches (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

Allegiance to the World Ends in Doom (18:4-10)

There is no question that it will not end well for Christians who hitch their wagon to the world. In the words of the hymn *Almost Persuaded*, doom really does come at last. In one of the most convicting sections in the book of Revelation, another voice from heaven announced Babylon's demise. Several pronouncements are made against Babylon. Her sins were piled high. Her pay in retribution should be double what it was for what she did. Her supposed glory would become *torment and grief*. All her boasting would come to naught. Plagues would overtake her, and fire would consume her.

But it is not just the voice from heaven that announced this judgment. The *kings of the earth joined in* too. The very cultures, nations, and peoples that had been enticed to join Babylon ended up cursing her and rejoicing in her downfall. The three famous "woes" are announced. The first one is in the lesson text. The other nations might *weep and mourn*, but they will also be terrified and stand far off and cry out, *Woe, woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon. In one hour your doom has come*. The second woe is in 18:16, and the third one is in 18:19. Those two definitely deal with riches more than sexual immorality.

The only way to escape Babylon's doom is by coming out of her and pledging allegiance to the Lamb of God.

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DON'T FALL FOR SPIRITUAL SCAMS

BY DAVID FAUST

Do you ever receive a call from an unfamiliar number that your cellphone identified as "Scam Likely"? Sometimes I glance at my phone and joke, "Yep, it's another call from my friend 'Scam.'" But of course, it's not really a friend.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, in a recent year Americans lost more than \$10 billion to fraud. Impostors use e-mail, phone calls, text messages, and social media to steal from consumers, enticing them with fake deals, nonexistent prizes, and phony investments or job opportunities. "Digital tools are making it easier than ever to target hard-working Americans," said Samuel Levine, Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection. Altogether, the FTC received fraud reports from 2.6 million consumers last year, and many more incidents go unreported.

Recognizing the Danger

Financial swindles aren't the only problem. Spiritual scams abound as well, and though modern technology makes them easier to spread, they are nothing new. They might look appealing at first, but they are deadly in the long run. "Go ahead and eat the forbidden fruit," the devil tempted Eve. "It looks and tastes good, and it will make you smarter." (See Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7.) How can you keep from falling for Satan's scams? What are the marks of a faith-related hoax?

Spiritual scams sound reasonable on the surface, but closer scrutiny unveils their fallacies. Satan tried to plant doubts about God's instructions, whispering seductively to Eve, "Did God really say . . .?" Spiritual scams are enticing, but deceptive. "You will not certainly die," the serpent insisted, directly contradicting God's words. Satan is a counterfeiter. He misinterprets Scripture and makes deceptive promises, appealing to our lust and pride (see 1 John 2:16). He twists the truth to make lies sound plausible.

Spiritual scams make foolish ideas appear smart, popular, and trendy. In Revelation 17 and 18, Babylon represents blasphemy against God, the spread of evil, and the persecution of God's people. In the Old Testament, Babylon enjoyed great success for

a time, but eventually it was destroyed because of its arrogance, idolatry, and lust for power and wealth. Like a prostitute, the bewitching beauty of self-serving governments, businesses, and man-made religions intoxicates the earth's inhabitants (including its rulers, "the kings") so they get in bed with her (Revelation 17:1-2, 18:3).

Steering Away

To avoid falling prey to spiritual scams, we must be honest about the danger. We live in a time when sin isn't taken seriously. By minimizing the consequences of sin, we become more vulnerable to Satan's scams. We should recognize sin for what it is:

- an arrogant, prideful attitude
- rebellion and disobedience toward our Creator
- denial of the truth
- choosing darkness instead of light
- missing the mark and transgressing God's law
- loving self above the Lord and others
- blame-shifting to avoid accountability
- embracing what God disapproves and neglecting what he desires.

Satan's scams entice his victims to make foolish and costly decisions. His scams should stir revulsion, not attraction. It takes faith, discernment, and determination to resist Babylon's seductive ways. John heard a voice from heaven exhort, "'Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues'" (Revelation 18:4).

When we're exposed to ideas that contradict God's Word, a warning sign should flash in our hearts that says, "Scam Likely."

Personal Challenge:

What spiritual scams do you recognize in our culture right now? What steps are you taking to guard your heart against them? How can you help others resist the devil's lies?

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Talk about a time when your allegiance to someone or something you value was tested. How did it occur, and what was the outcome?

Ask two people to read aloud **Revelation 17:1-2, 6, 18; 18:1-10**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

2. Lesson writer Mark Scott states, "God's people should be crystal clear about their allegiance. They play to an audience of one." In what ways does the world around you negatively impact your allegiance to Christ?
 - How do you resist that influence?
3. In reference to "the great prostitute" (17:1), it is said that "the kings of the earth committed adultery" with her and "the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."
 - Viewing the great prostitute and Babylon as metaphors for sinful regions, rulers, and people in the world, what is it about sin that is so attractive to people?
 - What does it mean to say that the Christian is in the world, but not of the world?
4. In Revelation 18:1-2, an angel with "great authority" announced the fall of "Babylon the Great." No nation, city, or ruler, no matter how great, is beyond the reach of God's wrath.
 - Does this idea help you deal with the realities of evil rulers and oppressive nations today? Why, or why not?
5. In declaring the fall of Babylon the Great, the angel indicated that "the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries" (18:3).
 - Given all the evil deeds that could have been mentioned, why do you think the angel singled out the sin of loving riches in this context?
 - What warning should Christians hear in this verse?
6. Fallen Babylon is described as "a dwelling for demons" and "a haunt for every unclean spirit" (18:2). To what degree do you think sinful regions, rulers, and citizens today are affected by demonic activity?
 - What can Christians do today to protect themselves from the enemy's attacks? (Hint: see Ephesians 6:10-17.)
7. While judgment against Babylon was certain, God's people were urged to "come out of her" so they would not "share in her sins" nor "receive any of her plagues" (18:4).
 - What does this tell you about the love and mercy God shows to his children who are striving to live for him in a hostile environment?
 - How does this encourage you to remain faithful in the midst of your own struggles?
8. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Revelation 19:1-14; 20:11-15**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Readily engage in
righteous acts because
of Jesus.**

STUDY: Revelation, Part 3

THEME: Victory Won

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 19:1-14; 20:11-15

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Romans 12:9-13; Galatians 6:9-10; Ephesians
2:10

DRESS FOR THE VICTORY FEAST

BY MARK SCOTT

The dress code of heaven for the wedding feast of the Lamb is good deeds. The church (bride) makes herself ready for that feast by *righteous acts*. John gave this interpretation of the *fine linen* (19:8).

Things were very noisy in heaven following the defeat of the *great prostitute*. Babylon had fallen (Revelation 18) so it was time to celebrate. Chapter 19 is a victorious chapter. The word *Hallelujah* (which only occurs in the New Testament in this chapter and occurs four times) means "Praise the Lord." Chapter 19 is filled with praise for God. The *great multitude in heaven* (6:9-12) and the *twenty-four elders and four living creatures* (4:1-11) all join in this praise. Feasts and wars are noisy.

The Feast (19:1-10)

The church is the bride in waiting. Technically the wedding is not consummated until the great event described in this chapter. What a feast it will be! But the food at this feast is secondary. The main thing in this feast is praise for God. The great multitude in heaven and the twenty-four elders (representing God's people in both testaments) and four living creatures (representing every category of creation) all join in praising God, Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb.

In this feast *salvation* (ultimate rescue and deliverance), *glory and power* are attributed to God. The reason given for this was that his judgments are *true and just*. God is so just that he will not tolerate evil in his universe. This was shown in his condemnation of the pagan culture of Rome (*the great prostitute*). God *avenged* the blood of the martyred saints by judging that culture (cf. 6:9-11).

This victory shout was likened to a massive waterfall and *peals of thunder*. God is praised from *all his servants* both *great and small* (i.e. important or not). The feast is loud and majestic. An angel told John to write a beatitude over the whole affair: *Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb*. No wonder this scene caused John to fall down and worship. It had to be overwhelming. But John bowed his knee to an angel. The angel immediately corrected John with this admonition: *Worship God*. The *Spirit of prophecy* always directs worship toward Jesus (cf. John 16:14).

The War (19:11-14)

With Babylon out of the way, one more war needs waged. It is the war with the ancient serpent and his beasts from

the sea and the earth. For the wedding feast to be totally enjoyed, all the enemies have to be gone. But the victory is so assured that it can be announced ahead of time (19:1-10). John saw heaven standing open again (4:1), and he saw a *white horse*. The white horse was the first of four horsemen mentioned in chapter six. But that horse went out conquering to conquer. The rider of this horse seemed different. His name is called *Faithful and True*. That label is never mentioned in chapter 6. The rider of this horse wages his war by judging justly. He is described in similar ways as the vision of Christ in chapter 1 (i.e. blazing fire and many crowns). He has a unique name (maybe a reference to the special name of God, *Yahweh*).

If there was any question about this horse and its rider before, there is no question following verse 13. This rider's robe is *dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God*. Any questions? This is Jesus. His army that follows him also rides white horses (symbolic of purity and victory) and their garments are symbolic of their good deeds.

The Books (20:11-15)

Jesus and his army gained the victory in this war. Revelation 19:15-21 announced that Satan's beast from the sea and the false prophet from the earth were both defeated along with their followers. Not only that, but Revelation 20:1-10 announced that Satan himself was brought out from his binding, a binding that took place during the first coming of Jesus (cf. Mark 3:27; Matthew 12:28-29), and was finally and totally defeated. The way that Roman armies dealt with their enemies may be the imagery behind such activity.

Following this defeat, John saw a *great white throne* and God sitting on it. Now it was time for God to judge the whole world (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). So powerful was this moment that the *earth and the heavens fled*. The sea, death, and Hades all surrendered their dead, and then they were destroyed. Humanity was judged by their names being recorded in the book of life and the book which contained their works. Saved by grace; judged by works—that is the message at the feast.

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APPLICATION

PRAISE THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

BY DAVID FAUST

What will happen 100 years from now? Those of us who were alive in the 1960s and 70s struggled to imagine what life would be like in the year 2000. How quickly the first quarter of the 21st century already has passed!

The Lord is “the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 21:6, 22:13). He knows everything from A to Z. He is the First and the Last, the beginner and the ender of human history, the starting gun and the finish line, the eternal God “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).

In the past he has kept his covenants through all generations. In the present he guides and comforts us through the Scriptures and the presence of his indwelling Spirit. He is forever faithful. The future is not a mystery to him.

Seen and Unseen

The Alpha and the Omega sees it all, including “things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16). A vast supernatural reality, unseen by human eyes, exists beyond the reach of natural science, and the book of Revelation unveils important insights about this invisible realm.

We’re engaged in spiritual warfare “against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). We see some of it; God sees the full scope of it. We struggle to grasp “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (Ephesians 3:18), but the loving heavenly Father is preparing for us “immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20).

Future Certainties

Biblical prophecy goes far beyond scientific calculation or human guesswork. Micah 5:2 precisely predicted the Messiah’s birthplace in Bethlehem. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 foretold specific details about Jesus’ crucifixion. In

Revelation 19 and 20, the Alpha and the Omega unveils unambiguous truths about what the future holds.

Celebration—“the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9). At weddings, covenant promises are exchanged. Families and friends come together to celebrate with feasting and joy. Whatever hardships we endure on this side of heaven, there is celebration ahead for God’s faithful followers.

Victory—Christ’s triumphant return (Revelation 19:11-16). The Son of God’s first venture to earth required him to embrace the limitations of humanity, the fragility of infancy, and the vulnerability of the cross. But Revelation 19 pictures him returning on a white horse, accompanied by the armies of heaven, leaving no doubt he is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Judgment—the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). How could anyone read this chapter of the Bible and take God lightly? Before the Alpha and the Omega, our lives are open books. John saw “the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened” so all could be “judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (v. 12).

Revelation 20:15 solemnly states, “Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.” Thankfully, the Bible doesn’t end with that verse. It ends by saying, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (Revelation 22:21). The Alpha and the Omega, who sees all and knows all, has the last word. And in Christ, it’s a word of grace.

Personal Challenge:

How do the Bible’s promises of Christ’s return, future judgment, and eternal blessings impact your daily life?

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DISCOVERY

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Think back to the most enthusiastic victory celebration you've ever witnessed. What made this event so special?

Ask two people to read aloud **Revelation 19:1-14; 20:11-15**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize these verses.

2. Picture yourself adding your voice to "the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting" (Revelation 19:1). What emotions do you think you might feel?
 - What does this scene convey to you about God's sovereignty and justice?
3. Count the number of times the word Hallelujah appears in Revelation 19:1-8. Given that the word Hallelujah means, "Praise the Lord," what does this imply to you about the environment and activity of heaven?
4. John records that "fine linen, bright and clean," was given to the guests attending "the wedding (and wedding supper) of the lamb," representing "the righteous acts of God's holy people" (19:7-9). Do you think the wedding guests receive their garments by virtue of their work on earth, by grace, or both? Explain.
5. The armies of heaven who follow their commander (Jesus) as he judges and wages war with justice (19:11-14), are "dressed in fine linen, white and clean." Compare this description to the attire of the wedding guests in 19:8.
 - What does this say to you about the justice of God and the way he carries it out?
6. Revelation 19:11-12 depicts the final judgment of humankind before "a great white throne," as "the dead were judged according to what they had done." How do you reconcile God's judgment according to what we have done with his mercy and grace extended to us through Christ?
7. At the final day of judgment, only those whose names were "found written in the book of life" entered heaven to spend eternity in God's presence. Compare this to Jesus' words in Luke 10:20, "rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).
 - How does it make you feel to realize that, by God's mercy and grace, your name is written in heaven?
8. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-7, 18-20**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts and the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Keep the words of this book.**

STUDY: Revelation, Part 3

THEME: Victory Won

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-7, 18-20

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Psalms 119:1-11; John 20:30-31; Revelation 1:3

WAR WOUNDS

BY MARK SCOTT

If there is anything that should cause us to give thanks it is that God has provided an eternal home for us. This home is the epitome of freedom and joy. It is kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5) and retained by our keeping his words (Revelation 22:7).

Once the smoke of God's judgment had cleared and the enemies of God had been destroyed (chapters 18-20), John found himself in a whole new world, a world that serves as the ultimate motivation for God's people suffering on earth in the here and now.

Free to Enjoy a New Home (21:1-8)

John pushed language to the breaking point to describe what he saw next. He saw a *new heaven and a new earth*. The word for "new" is a word that means "qualitatively new" (not just new in time). The world that John saw had resemblances to the first heaven and first earth, but it would be like the Garden of Eden on steroids. The fact that John no longer saw any sea means that all the evil forces are gone. There is plenty of water in heaven (22:2), but the source of evil (13:1) is gone.

Next John saw *the Holy City*, which was identified as *the new Jerusalem* coming down from heaven. Inside this new heaven was a city. Life started in a garden (Genesis 1-2) and ends in a city (albeit a city with garden-like elements). The city looked like a bride (think back to 19:9) *beautifully dressed for her husband*. This city is beautiful (v. 2), it is filled with God's presence (v. 3), and it is a place of no sorrow (v. 4). And evidently this city is not just a reboot of a fallen Eden; it is totally *new* (v. 5).

This new home is filled with Jesus and his kids (vv. 6-7) and not filled with any evil influences (eight of them are mentioned) since those are totally gone (v. 8). Note that *cowardly* heads the list. The total plan of God is done/finished (cf. John 19:30). Jesus is the beginning and the end. He's the only one who can give water to the thirsty (John 4:14; 7:37-39; Isaiah 55:1). This new heaven and earth is described and measured in 21:9-27.

Free to Experience Health and Light (22:1-5)

Everything in the original Garden of Eden was healthy and good (Genesis 1:31). Before there was

sun, moon, and stars, there was light (Genesis 1:3). Health and light will be abundant in the new heaven and earth. John saw *the river of the water of life*. It was pure and clean. It flowed from the presence of God and down the middle of the street in this city. The tree of life was on both sides of the river (meaning life was everywhere). The trees that grow alongside of the river produce crops—get this—*every month*. These leaves bring healing to the restored universe. This is quite a place. The curse of sin is forever gone. God and Christ are there ("Jesus will be what makes it heaven for me"). God's people will be there to serve God. They will wear his mark and experience *no more night*. God will be their light.

Free to Keep the Words of God (22:6-7, 18-20)

While God is the most significant being in heaven, others will be there and contribute to this marvelous city. God's people will be there praising him and serving him. Just like people who cast a vote in their own salvation, they also cast a vote on continuing to make heaven the real heaven that it is. There will be no mutiny. God's people will keep God's word—unlike what happened in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3).

God's words are *trustworthy and true* and so must be the words of God's people. John reminded his readers that they should hold on because Jesus was *coming soon*. Another beatitude is pronounced on the ones who would *keep* (guard, keep an eye on, watch) *the words of the prophecy written in this scroll*.

Before the final verses of the book, John is encouraged to "*Worship God*" once again, seal up the document, and make sure everyone washes their robe so as to have access to the tree of life. There is a two-fold ending to the book of Revelation. First, keep the word—do not add or detract from the prophecy. Second, be ready for his coming. In fact, more than that, pray for it and long for it. The final word of the Bible is, *Come*.

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APPLICATION

NO MORE

BY DAVID FAUST

Do you know anyone who is sick and tired of being sick and tired? Do you ever feel that way yourself? Do your prayers ever echo this old gospel song: "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand. I am tired, I am weak, I am worn"?

Long ago, a worship leader was feeling exhausted and exasperated. Life's injustices had worn him down. Wicked, arrogant people were prospering. The worship leader complained, "They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills" (Psalm 73:4-5). By contrast, those trying to do the right things were encountering all kinds of problems.

A fellow known for his blameless character and reverence for God suffered catastrophic financial losses. A sudden windstorm killed his sons and daughters, and his body was afflicted with a painful skin disease. What had he done to deserve such agony? He cried out sadly, "My spirit is broken, my days are cut short, the grave awaits me" (Job 17:1).

Sick of It

Can you relate to those weary individuals and their frustrated feelings? I can.

Week after week, I hear about the death of yet another friend. I have known faithful

Christians who died in sudden tragedies (fires, car accidents, plane crashes, murders, heart attacks) or succumbed to slow, agonizing bouts with cancer, dementia, and other debilitating diseases. I'm sick of seeing loved ones slip into the grip of death.

In my congregation on Sunday morning, I look into the faces of widows and widowers who trust in the resurrected Christ and appreciate the Holy Spirit's comfort, but they miss their loved ones dearly. On this side of heaven, grief remains all too real.

I have friends and family members whose once-strong feet and legs no longer hold them up, whose backs are stiff with arthritis, and who live in constant pain.

Saved from It

The last two chapters of the Bible, Revelation 21 and 22, provide much-needed relief and a lofty vision of what lies ahead. Revelation 21:4 mentions harsh realities that will be "no more" in the new heaven and new earth the Lord is preparing.

"No more death." Heaven will contain many mansions—but no mortuaries. Death will be a thing of the past.

"No more mourning or crying." There will be no more long, sad goodbyes or sudden separations from loved ones. No more regrets over words said or unsaid. And no tissues needed. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes."

"No more pain." No drugs will be required to ease our aches and afflictions. Our new resurrected bodies will be powerful and imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:42-43). Crushing depression, isolating loneliness, and debilitating pain will disappear in the glorious light of God's presence.

Sin's devastating effects have plagued this fallen world ever since the Garden of Eden, but "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). In the new heaven and earth, "No longer will there be any curse" (Revelation 22:3).

Another gospel song assures all of us who are sick and tired, "Some glad morning when this life is o'er, I'll fly away." And in that home on God's celestial shore, pain and frustration will be no more.

Personal Challenge:

What excites you most about the new heaven and earth God is preparing for his people? What puzzles you most about it? How does your future hope affect your day-to-day life?

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What do you most look forward to in heaven?

Ask two people to read aloud **Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-7, 18-20**, one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize these verses.

2. In his vision, John saw "a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1). Lesson writer Mark Scott notes, "The word for 'new' is a word that means 'qualitatively new' (not just new in time)."
 - What elements of our present world do you think will be retained in heaven?
 - What do you think will be new?
3. No tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain (21:4). Knowing all these things will be absent in heaven, how does this lead you to long for your heavenly home?
 - How does this thought give you hope and contentment now?
4. Revelation 22:1-3 depicts heaven as a place where health and life abound, and where the curse of sin is forever gone. What do you think it will be like to live forever in heaven knowing that you will never again face the temptations and consequences of sin?
5. Revelation 22:4-5 tells us that in heaven we will see the Lord's face, we will wear his name on our foreheads, and God himself will provide all the light we need. In what new ways do you think heaven . . .
 - will draw us near to God?
 - will affirm our identity as his children?
 - will surround us with the light and glory of God?
6. The angel in John's vision affirmed the true and trustworthy nature of the revelation (22:6), pronounced a blessing on all who keep (obey) the words contained in it, and pointed to the soon return of Christ to the earth (22:7).
 - Do you believe Jesus could actually return any day now?
 - How does this knowledge impact the way you live your life from day to day?
7. As John's revelation comes to a close, a warning is given to all who hear the words of the prophecy, not to add to or take away from anything that is written in it (22:18-19).
 - What does this say to you about the reliability of God's Word?
 - What does this say about our own commitment and obedience to God's Word?
8. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "I will . . ."

For Next Week: This week's lesson brings this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional **"1717: Your Word Is Truth"** studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at ChristianStandard.com.