

The Revelation to John

Introduction

Authorship

Although the authorship of the Revelation has been questioned by some of the conservatives of church history such as Luther, Zwingli, and Erasmus (perhaps not so conservative), ancient tradition (beginning with Justin Martyr in the second century) uniformly assigned it to the Apostle John, also the author of the Gospel of John and the epistles known as I, II, and III John. John names himself as the author of the book four times (1:1, 4, 9, and 22:8). He also claimed to be on the Island of Patmos as he wrote the book, and Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus and other fathers of the church confirmed in their writings that John was banished to Patmos by the Emperor Domitian. The style and vocabulary of the Revelation are different from John's other writings, but this is to be expected in view of the significant difference in the nature and content of the book.

Recipients

The book is addressed “to the seven churches that are in Asia” in 1:4. The seven churches are listed and given a special message from the Lord in chapters two and three of the Revelation. They include the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. That the book is intended for a broader audience as well is anticipated by the words of 1:3 which promises a blessing to all who read and hear and heed the words of the prophecy of the book, and of 22:18-19 which warn all who hear the words of the prophecy against adding to or taking away from the revelation which the Lord gave by John to His people.

Date and Place of Writing

John tells us in his book (1:9) that he was writing from the Island of Patmos. This fact, combined with the testimony of church fathers that John was banished to Patmos in the 15th year of Domitian, and that he was released by Nerva (96 A.D.) lends strong support for the view that the Revelation was written around 95 or 96 A.D. Another argument for such a late date is the fact that the churches described in chapters two and three were not founded until the late 50's, allowing too little time for the degenerate condition which is addressed in the book by the earlier date of around 68 or 69 A.D. which some Bible students suggest.

Interpretation

The book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature, a literary style which includes many symbols. Some of the symbols of the Revelation are explained, aiding in the interpretation of the book, while others are not. As a result there are numerous interpretive questions in connection with the book, resulting in several distinct approaches to its interpretation.

(1). The Idealist or Spiritualized Interpretation. Some have seen the book as an allegory of the conflict between the church and the forces of evil in all ages. This interpretive scheme gives the book no definite message. And it overlooks the fact that the book claims to be a prophecy and that it deals specifically with the second coming of the Lord and the events which precede it.

(2). The Preterist Interpretation. This view teaches that the book deals with the events of its first century setting and, thus, has already been fulfilled. This method of interpretation requires that the book's contents be allegorized, disregarding the time periods spoken of in the book (e.g. the "thousand years" of

20:2, 4, 5, 6 and 7). It also raises serious interpretive questions, like that of identifying the time in the first century when Satan was “bound” (as described in Revelation 20:2-3).

(3) The Continuous-History Interpretation. This view explains the book as a description of the events of history from the beginning of the church (or the time of John’s imprisonment on Patmos) until the end of history. The interpreter is required to have a sufficiently thorough knowledge of church and secular history to explain the correlation between the events of the book and the events of history. As might be expected, those who hold to this view hold widely varying views of the explanation of its content.

(4). The Futurist or Eschatological Interpretation. This view explains the book as a revelation of the events of the future, from John’s vantage point in time and forward, placing most of its content in the end times. This is the view of most modern pre-millennialists.

Purpose and Theme

The purpose of the book of the Revelation was to challenge the churches to spiritual zeal and accomplishment and to inform them of the events yet to come in the unfolding of God’s plan of the ages. Assuming the futurist interpretation of the book, the Revelation provides detail concerning the events which will take place particularly during the period of the “tribulation” which Jesus spoke about in His teaching concerning the time of the end (Matthew 24:9, 21, 29 and parallels). The outline of the book is suggested by the content of 1:19 which speaks of “the things which you have seen” (the vision of the risen Christ in 1:12-16), “the things which “are” (the letters to the churches of John’s day in chapters 2 and 3), and “the things which shall take place after these things” (the remainder of the book).

The book begins, after an introduction to the person of Christ (1:12-16), with letters addressed to seven churches (2:1-3:22). It then describes the events which will take place during the period of the “tribulation” (chapters 4-19), demonstrating the sovereignty of God and His Messiah Jesus over the affairs of earth in seven seal judgments (6:1-17 and 8:1 ff.), seven trumpet judgments (8:1-21 and 11:15 ff.), and seven bowl judgments (16:1-21). This portion of the book gives the reader glimpses of the glory surrounding God’s throne (chapters 4 and 5), the rise and fall of the beast and his prophet (13:1-18; 14:9-13; 16:12-16; 17:8-18), the destruction of the “great harlot” (“Babylon” - 17:1-18:24), and the second coming of Christ (19:1-21). The final chapters of the book deal with the Millennial Kingdom of Christ (20:1-15) and the glories of “the new heaven and the new earth” (21:1-22:21). The theme of the Revelation is the final victory of Christ over all who oppose Him.

Think About It: The Lord has given us in Revelation a summary of the events from John’s day in the first century until the eternal state, with special attention to the events of the tribulation period.

The Revelation to John Introduction

Authorship

Q - Who does Revelation 1:1, 4, 9 and 22:8 tell us is the author of the Revelation? They tell us that John, a “bond-servant” of Christ, who was on the island of Patmos at the time, was the author.

Recipients

Q - Who does Revelation 1:4 identify as the original recipients of the Revelation? The “seven churches that are in Asia” are identified as the original recipients.

List the seven churches identified in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 (cf. 1:11): churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

Date and Place of Writing

Q - Where does Revelation 1:9 tell us the author was when the book of the Revelation was written? It tells us that John was on the island of Patmos when the book was written.

Interpretation

Q - What are the four approaches taken by various interpreters of the book of the Revelation (see the introduction).

1. Idealist or Spiritualized Interpretation
2. Preterist Interpretation
3. Continuous-History Interpretation
4. Futurist or Eschatological Interpretation

Think About It: The Lord has given us in Revelation a

summary of the events from John's day in the first century until the eternal state, with special attention to the events of the tribulation.

Outline of the Revelation

- I. Introduction to the Revelation 1:1-8
- II. The Revelation of the Risen Christ 1:9-20
- III. The Revelation to the Seven Churches 2:1-3:22
- IV. The Revelation of God's Throne Room 4:1-5:14
- V. The Revelation of Things Which Shall Take Place 6:1-22:5
 - A. The Seven Seal Judgments 6:1-8:2
 - B. The Seven Trumpet Judgments 8:3-11:19
 - C. The Key Figures of the Tribulation 12:1-14:20
 - D. The Seven Bowl Judgments 15:1
 - E. The Fall of Babylon the Great 17:1-18:24
 - F. The Second Coming of Christ 19:1-21
 - G. The Millennial Reign of Christ 20:1-15
 - H. The New Heaven, Earth, and Jerusalem 21:1-22:5
- VI. The Conclusion to the Revelation 22:6-21

“A Blessed Revelation”

Revelation 1:1-8

Q - What is a word you might use to describe your feelings about the future?

The book of the Revelation unveils the future in a way no other book in history has ever done it - though the Prophecy of Daniel is similar in some respects.

I. John’s Explanation of the Revelation 1:1-3

Q - What does the information that this book is a “revelation” (1:1) tell us about God’s intent in giving it to us? It tells us that the Lord wants His people to know what they can expect in the future.

Q - Who does the opening verse tell us is the actual author of the Revelation? It tells us that the actual author of the book is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q - What qualified John to be identified as the human author of the book of the Revelation (1:1-2)? As a bond-servant of Christ who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ he was qualified to receive the revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q - What promise does 1:3 attach to the book of the Revelation, and what conditions? The promise of blessing for the one who reads and heeds the things which are written in the Revelation.

Q - In what sense was the time of the contents of the Revelation “near”? The revelation of Christ in His ascended glory and the challenges to the seven churches were “current

news,” followed soon by John’s invitation to view the future from the perspective of heaven (4:1).

II. John’s Address to the Seven Churches 1:4-8

Q - To whom did John address the Revelation? John addressed the Revelation to the seven churches in Asia Minor which were identified (1:11) and challenged (chapters 2 and 3) by Christ.

Q - What might be the significance of the first of the many “sevens” in Revelation as it occurs in 1:4? Frequently identified as “the number of completion,” the seven churches of Asia Minor presented a complete picture of churches in every age.

Q - Whose grace and peace did John pass along to the recipients of his prophecy (1:4-5)? John passed on the grace and peace of “Him who is and who was and who is to come” (Jesus) and of “the seven spirits who are before His throne.”

Q - What are the several descriptive phrases used of Jesus in verse 5, and what is the significance of each.

1. “The faithful witness” - no one every witnessed more accurately about God and His truth than Jesus did.
2. “The firstborn of the dead” - Jesus is the first person to be returned to death from life without having to die again in the process.
3. “The ruler of the kings of the earth” - Jesus is the one installed by God the Father as His messianic king (Psalm 2:6), “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 17:14; 19:26).
4. “Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” - Jesus proved His love when He saved His people by the forgiveness of their sins as a result of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross.

Q - For what work does Jesus deserve “glory and

dominion" for what it accomplished on behalf of His people according to verse 6? Jesus deserves glory and dominion for having made His people a kingdom, priests to His God and Father.

Q - When should we expect the promise of verse 7 to be fulfilled (cf. Matthew 24:29-30)? We should expect the promise of verse 7 to be fulfilled at the end of the tribulation.

Q - What is significant about the Lord's self-descriptions in verse 8 (cf. 1:4, 17-18)? His self-descriptions reveal that He is the eternal and almighty Lord God.

Think About It: the book of Revelation is God's unveiling of information about past and future events - information intended to confer His blessing upon individuals and churches who hear and heed what is revealed.

“Jesus as He IS”

Revelation 1:9-20

Q - If the risen Lord Jesus revealed Himself to you today, what would you expect to see?

Revelation 1:9-20 gives us John’s description of the Lord Jesus as He really IS today!

I. John’s Vision and Instruction 1:9-11

Q - Why was John on the island of Patmos when he received the vision of these verses? He was there because of His role in communicating the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to a hostile Roman world.

Q - What conditions (v. 10) helped prepare John for the vision he was about to receive? He was “in the Spirit” on the Lord’s day - alert to what was taking place around him.

Q - What does verse 11 tell us about the nature of the Revelation? It was intended for the churches of Asia Minor - representing all churches (because it was passed down to us).

II. John’s Vision of the Lord 1:12-16

Q - What makes golden lamp stands a fitting symbol in v. 12 (cf. v. 20)? Seven - speaks of completeness; golden - speaks of quality and value; light comes from lamp stands.

Q - Why is the description “one like a son of man” a fitting description of the person being revealed in verse 13? It is a revelation of Jesus who became a “son of man” (a prophetic title from Daniel 7:13).

Q - What might be the significance of each of the following features listed in John's vision?

1. The robe reaching to His feet (13)? A symbol of splendor and priestly garb.
2. The golden sash across His breast (13)? A symbol of quality and value - high priestly attire (Exodus 28:2, 4 - "for glory and for beauty").
3. Hair white like wool? White hair speaks of wisdom and dignity (Lev. 19:32; Proverbs 15:31).
4. Eyes like a flame of fire (14)? Penetrating eyesight of the all-seeing God.
5. Feet like burnished bronze (15)? Symbols of the resplendent glory of God (Ezekiel 1:7; Daniel 10:6).
6. A voice like the sound of many waters (15)? The sound of the awesome power of the voice of God (Ezekiel 43:2).
7. The seven stars in His hand (16, cf. v. 20)? In control of heavenly bodies and beings.
8. The two-edged sword from His mouth (16)? A symbol of the Lord's powerful word and strict judgment.
9. A face like the sun (16)? A symbol of the inherent glory of the Lord in all its brilliance.

III. John's Encouragement from the Lord 1:17-20

Q - What was John's response to what he saw (v. 17)? He fell on His face before the Lord in worship.

Q - What was encouraging about the words spoken to John in 1:17-18? He was told not to fear; Jesus identified Himself - as first and last, living forever, in complete control.

Q - What three-fold division was John instructed to write about (v. 19)? He was instructed to write about things which John had seen, was seeing, and would see.

Think About It: John began his writing of the Revelation with a

clear vision of the risen Lord in His rightful and inherent glory.

“To the Church at Ephesus”

Revelation 2:1-7

Q - What would you say are some of the things the Lord would like to see in the life of every church?

Revelation 2:1-3:22 shows what Jesus was looking for in the experience of seven churches in first century Asia Minor. The churches He addressed were characteristic of churches in every part of the “church age.”

The church at Ephesus has been described as “the zealous church.” Ephesus was the capital and largest city of the province of Asia, a great seaport city. But it was also the center of the pagan and immoral worship of the goddess Diana. The Apostle Paul founded the church, spending more time in Ephesus (three years) than he is known to have spent in any other place.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Ephesian Church 2:1

Q - How did the Lord identify Himself to the Ephesian church (v. 1)? He identified Himself as the one holding seven stars, walking among the seven golden lamp stands (cf. 1:20).

II. The Lord’s Commendation of the Ephesian Church 2:2-3

Q - What are some things the church at Ephesus had going for it in the mind of the Lord (v. 2-3)? They were doing deeds, working hard (toil), persevering; did not tolerate evil men; tested those calling themselves apostles; persevering and enduring for Jesus’ names’ sake; not growing weary.

III. The Lord’s Complaint About the Ephesian Church 2:4

Q - What was the Lord's complaint against the church at Ephesus (v. 4)? They had left their first love.

IV. The Lord's Challenge to the Ephesian Church 2:5

Q - What was the Lord's corrective advice for the Ephesian church? He advised that they remember from where they had fallen, repent, and do the deeds they did at first - or He would remove their lamp stand.

V. The Lord's Second Commendation of the Ephesian Church 2:6

Q - What additional compliment did the Lord have for the Ephesian church in verse 6? They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans - as the Lord Himself did. Because *nikao* means to conquer, prevail; and *laos* means people, the Nicolaitans may have been men who usurped authority, even apostolic authority over the people in the church.

VI. The Lord's Conclusion to the Ephesian Church 2:7

Q - What is the point of the Lord's words "He who has an ear, let him hear . . ."? He wanted His people to be alert to His message and act appropriately to it.

Q - What did the Lord say a person must do to eat of the tree of life which will reappear in the eternal state? He must overcome - by truly believing in Jesus, God's Son (cf. I John 5:4-5).

Think About It: The Lord commended spiritual perseverance and perceptiveness and faithfulness in the church at Ephesus. But He expressed concern over spiritual drifting which He observed there as well.

“To the Church at Smyrna”

Revelation 2:8-11

Q - Would you say persecution is more likely to be good or bad for churches which have to go through it? Why?

The second church Jesus addressed in His evaluation of seven first century churches in western Asia Minor was the church at Smyrna.

The church at Smyrna has been called “the church in tribulation.” Like Ephesus, Smyrna was also a port city, located about thirty five miles north on the eastern coast of the Aegean Sea. It is known today as Ismir.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Church at Smyrna 2:8

Q - How did the Lord identify Himself to the church at Smyrna? He identified Himself as “the first and the last, who was dead and has come to life.”

Q - What might be the significance of the identification the Lord chose? To a persecuted church it would be encouraging to know that Christ Himself was persecuted, but victorious - eternally in control!

II. The Lord’s Commendation of the Church at Smyrna 2:9

Q - What did the church at Smyrna have to commend it to the Lord? They had stood up under persecution and poverty - demonstrating commitment in adversity.

Q - How could a church in poverty be a “rich” church? By possessing and using the spiritual treasure given by Christ (cf. Ephesians 1:18) - a treasure of eternal value (in contrast to

transient things).

Q - Who might “those who say they are Jews and are not” be? And why might they have been blaspheming the church at Smyrna? They could be Jews by ethnicity, but rejecting the true religion of the Jewish Messiah (John 8:39; Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8). Such have always resisted Christ and His followers, motivated ultimately by Satan Himself in their false religion, thus speaking blasphemously about the church.

III. The Lord’s Encouragement to the Church at Smyrna 2:10

Q - What was the church at Smyrna about to face in their testimony for the Lord? They were about to face suffering - including the imprisonment of some of their numbers, and possibly even death!

Q - What might be the significance of the “ten days” mentioned by the Lord? Perhaps a short time period - though no one seems to be certain.

Q - What might the Lord’s offer of the “crown of life” refer to? The “victory wreath” of the martyr - perhaps a specific reward for those who suffer persecution (James 1:12).

IV. The Lord’s Conclusion to the Church at Smyrna 2:11

Q - Why does the Lord repeat the challenge He gave to the church at Ephesus (v. 7) for the church at Smyrna? He wants all of His people to be alert to His message and to act upon it!

Q - Why was the Lord’s concluding promise to the church at Smyrna especially appropriate to their circumstances? Some were facing possible death for their faithfulness to Christ; but Christians die only once! The second death cannot touch them.

Think About It: The Lord commended spiritual wealth and perseverance in the church at Smyrna, encouraging them in soon-coming persecution.

Q - How do we measure up in terms of spiritual wealth and perseverance to the church at Smyrna?

“Good News and Bad”

Revelation 2:12-17

Q - If you witnessed the torturous death of a fellow-Christian because of his faithfulness to Christ, what impact do you think it might have in your life?

The church at Pergamum has been called “the church infiltrated.” Known today as Bergama, the city of Pergamum was the ancient capital of the province of Asia, built on a cone-shaped hill rising 1,000 feet above the surrounding valley. It contained the renowned altar of Zeus and the temple of aesculapius in which we are told the most prominent object was the wreathed serpent.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Church at Pergamum 2:12

Q - What does the Lord’s mention of His two-edged sword suggest about His message to the church at Pergamum? The mention of His two edged sword, probably a reference to His word, suggests that He was prepared to act in judgment against people in error at Pergamum.

II. The Lord’s Commendation of the Church at Pergamum 2:13

Q - Why might Pergamum be described as the place “where Satan’s throne is”? Because of the presence of much pagan worship, the temple and altar of Zeus, the temple of Aesculapius (with its wreathed serpent). Henry Morris, in *The Revelation Record* (p. 57), described Pergamum as the “greatest center of pagan religion in the world at that time.”

Q - What do we learn about the church at Pergamum by the fact that they did not deny the faith even in the days of the

faithful martyr (cf. 1:5) Antipas? We learn that they were committed to the truth even in the face of possible death.

Note: According to tradition, Antipas (whose name comes from *anti* - against, and *pas* - all), the first martyr in Asia, was slowly roasted to death in a bronze kettle during the reign of Domitian [NASB Study Bible, p. 1851].

III. The Lord's Complaint About the Church at Pergamum 2:14-15

Q - What might the presence at Pergamum of some who held to the teaching of Balaam mean about the church (cf. Numbers 25:1-2; 31:16; Jude 11)? Though they were against heresy, they tolerated heretics - materialists (like Balaam) who caused God's people to stumble by eating things sacrificed to idols and engaging in immorality. And there were some who held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (from *nikao* - "to overcome;" and *laos* - "people"), apparently exalting themselves above others.

IV. The Lord's Challenge to the Church at Pergamum 2:16

Q - What was the church at Pergamum being challenged to repent of? Tolerating heretics, perhaps false apostles.

Q - What were to be the practical consequences of the church's failure to repent? The Lord's judgment against those in error.

V. The Lord's Concluding Words to the Church at Pergamum 2:17

Q - What might be the significance of the "hidden manna" promised to overcomers? Perhaps divine nourishment, like that obtained from the manna the people of Israel ate in the

wilderness.

Q - What might be the significance of the “white stone,” with its secret name, promised to overcomers? Perhaps divine direction, like that obtained from the “Urim and thummim” of Leviticus 8:8 and Numbers 27:21.

Think About It: The Lord was pleased with steadfast faith in the face of persecution, but not pleased with the spiritual distractions and perhaps authoritarianism He saw in the church at Pergamum.

“To the Church at Thyatira”

Revelation 2:18-29

Q - What are some Satanic acts you have heard of anyone performing as a supposed follower of Christ?

The city of Thyatira, 20 miles southeast of Pergamum, was founded by the Syrian ruler Seleucus I (311-280 B.C.) as a military outpost. It was noted for its many trade guilds, including Lydia's business in purple cloth (Acts 16:14). It is known today as Akhisar.

I. The Lord's Greeting to the Church at Thyatira 2:18

Q - What does the Lord's mention of His “eyes like flame and His feet like burnished bronze” suggest about the nature of His message to the church at Thyatira? He probably wasn't entirely pleased with what His penetrating vision saw (cf. v. 23), and He might be coming (on foot) to do something about it (cf. v. 25)!

II. The Lord's Commendation of the Church at Thyatira 2:19

Q - For what six things did he Lord commend the church at Thyatira?

1. Their deeds
2. Their love
3. Their faith
4. Their service
5. Their perseverance
6. Their increasing/improving deeds

III. The Lord's Complaint Against the Church at Thyatira 2:20-23

Q - What does the mention of the name “Jezebel” recall from Israel’s history? She was the wicked wife of wicked, idolatrous Ahab - committed to idolatry and very unprincipled and heartless.

Q - Who might the “Jezebel” of Thyatira have been? Perhaps a well-known, influential woman in Thyatira who assumed leadership but led her followers into pagan worship and immorality.

Q - What might the Lord’s threat to “Jezebel” (vv. 22-23) mean to the church at Thyatira? Some who were following her lead were in danger of experiencing serious trouble, including physical illness and even death.

IV. The Lord’s Challenge to the Church at Thyatira 2:24-25

Q - What was the Lord’s challenge to those in Thyatira who were not followers of “Jezebel”? They needed to hold strongly to faith in Christ - rejecting pagan error and practices.

V. The Lord’s Concluding Words to the Church at Thyatira 2:26-29

Q - What might the Lord’s promise to overcomers in Thyatira mean (vv. 26-27)? Those who were faithful in their belief in Christ could expect to share in His kingdom and its authority (cf. Psalm 2; I Corinthians 6:2; Daniel 7:18-19).

Q - What might be meant by the promise of “the morning star” in v. 28? It could be that those who continue in belief will be given Christ Himself as part of their reward at His coming (cf. Revelation 22:16).

Think About It: The Lord will share His authority with faithful followers, but will exercise His authority against any who sub-

mit to Satanic counterfeits.

“To the Church at Sardis”

Revelation 3:1-6

Q - What is the most memorable experience you have ever had with a church which might be described as “dead”?

The city of Sardis (modern Sart) was the capital city of the ancient kingdom of Lydia - a city of significant wealth and fame. Among its claims to fame was its acropolis, a natural citadel on the northern spur of Mount Tmolus, rising 1,500 feet above the valley below. It was located about 30 miles south-east of Thyatira and about 30 miles inland from the Aegean seaport city of Smyrna.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Church at Sardis 3:1a

Q - What does the Lord’s mention of the “seven spirits” (cf. Isaiah 11:2) and the “seven stars” (cf. 1:16, 20) in His hand suggest about His message for Sardis? He is in complete control of even the spirit world - suggesting a “heavy” message for the church at Sardis.

II. The Lord’s Complaint to the Church at Sardis 3:1b

Q - What might have given the church at Sardis the reputation for being “alive” if it was actually “dead”? They must have been active at something of no importance to their spiritual health and well-being.

III. The Lord’s Challenge to the Church at Sardis 3:2-3

Q - What does the Lord’s “wake up” call imply about conditions at Sardis? The Lord saw them as asleep at the task for which He raised them up, and weak in pursuit of the things they were doing which were of any value.

Q - What does the Lord's comment about "completed" deeds tell us about the problem at Sardis? They had apparently started to do things they had never finished - things which were worth completing.

Q - What had the church at Sardis "received and heard" that they needed to "remember" and "keep"? They had received truth and heard commands they needed to remember and keep.

Q - What would the Lord's coming "like a thief" apparently mean to the church at Sardis? He would come unannounced and with harmful intent to judge and perhaps to "remove their lamp stand" (cf. 2:5).

IV. The Lord's Concession to the Church at Sardis 3:4

Q - What is probably the significance of the "unsoiled garments" of some in Sardis? Probably referring to some who had not been polluted by worldliness.

V. The Lord's Concluding Remarks to the Church at Sardis 3:5-6

Q - What is the significance of the "white garments" predicted for those who would overcome" at Sardis? They were being worn by those who really believed in Christ and evidenced real faith by their godly lives.

Q - Why does the Lord speak to the church at Sardis of erasing names from the book of life? The Lord sometimes judges sinning people by taking their lives with the result that their names are no longer to be found in the book of life - resulting in eternal death for those who don't know Him!

Think About It: The church at Sardis was a church the Lord could not commend because of their failure to maintain and

fulfill the faith they began with - though there were a few faithful saints who were a part of the church family

“The Church at Philadelphia”

Revelation 3:7-13

Q - What are some of the characteristics you would expect to find in the life of a church for which the Lord has no condemnation but only commendation?

The city of Philadelphia (modern Alashehir - “City of God”) was an important commercial city in Asia Minor. Located twenty five miles southeast of Sardis, it served as the entrance to the high central plateau of the province of Asia. Its ancient name (meaning “brotherly love”) commemorated the devotion of Attalus Philadelphus II (220-130 B.C.), king of Pergamum, to his brother Eumenes II.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Church at Philadelphia 3:7

Q - What is significant about the way the Lord chose to identify Himself to the church at Philadelphia? It is a very positive identification - emphasizing positive truths about Jesus to a church of people precious to Him because of their faithfulness.

II. The Lord’s Commendation of the Church at Philadelphia 3:8

Q - What might the “open door” the Lord put before the Philadelphian church signify? Probably an open door to His kingdom which they would enter victoriously because they kept His word and did not deny His name.

III. The Lord’s Commitments to the Church at Philadelphia 3:9-10

A. His Commitment to Humble their Opponents 3:9

Q - What were the failings of the “synagogue of Satan” which are mentioned in this passage? They said they were Jews but were not - probably meaning that they were Jews by ethnicity who rejected the true religion of Messiah (cf. John 8:39; Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8), blasphemed Christians (cf. Revelation 2:9), and persecuted them.

Q - What might be the significance of members of the “synagogue of Satan” bowing at the feet of the Philadelphian believers? They would be forced to acknowledge that Christians were doing what was right by loving and serving Jesus.

B. His Commitment to Keep Them from the Hour of Testing 3:10

Q - Why and how was the Philadelphia church to be kept from the “hour of testing” about to come upon the whole world? Because they kept the word of Christ’s perseverance they would be preserved through coming testing.

IV. The Lord’s Challenge to the Church at Philadelphia 3:11

Q - How were the Christians at Philadelphia to protect their “crown”? They were to retain their reward by holding fast to what they had as Christians.

V. The Lord’s Concluding Comments to the Church at Philadelphia 3:12-13

Q - What rewards did the Lord offer to “overcomers” at Philadelphia? They would be pillars in His temple - remaining in it; they would have the name of God and the city of God and the new name of Christ written on them.

Think About It: The church at Philadelphia received only commendation from the Lord because of their faithfulness to

the word and the name of the Lord.

“To the Church at Laodicea”

Revelation 3:14-22

Q - What are some of the things which most commonly keep people from choosing a close and personal relationship with the Lord?

The city of Laodicea, whose ruins are around forty miles southeast of ancient Philadelphia and one hundred miles east of Ephesus at modern Pamukkale, was the wealthiest city in Phrygia during Roman times. It was widely known for its banking establishments, medical school and textile industry. Lacking an adequate water supply, an aqueduct was built to bring water from nearby hot springs (possibly at Hierapolis) - resulting in a lukewarm supply of water for the city.

I. The Lord’s Greeting to the Church at Laodicea 3:14

Q - What is significant about the way the Lord introduced Himself to the church at Laodicea? The Lord of all creation - also identified as “The Amen,” and “the faithful and true witness,” was calling His people to the truth, of which He is an authority as its author!

II. The Lord’s Complaint to the Church at Laodicea 3:15-17

Q - What did the Lord find troubling about the deeds of the Laodicean church? Like the water in their city, they were a church which was neither cold nor hot.

Q - What words of rebuke summed up the Laodicean church’s condition in the Lord’s mind (v. 17)? He described the church as wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

III. The Lord’s Challenge to the Church at Laodicea 3:18-19

Q - What three things (v. 18) did the Lord suggest the Laodicean church needed in order to improve its performance, and what might be their significance?

1. Gold refined by fire - they needed to become wealthy in terms which really matter spiritually.
2. White garments - Revelation 19:8 identifies “fine linen bright and clean” as the righteous acts of the saints.
3. Eye salve - they needed to see clearly not only in physical but in spiritual terms.

Q - What motivation did the Lord give the Laodicean church to repent in verse 19? He said that He would discipline them, because of His love for them, unless they became zealous and repented.

IV. The Lord's Invitation to the Church at Laodicea 3:20

Q - What did the Lord want the people in the church at Laodicea to do in their relationship with Him? He wanted them to open the door of their lives to Him and invite Him in for fellowship over a meal.

V. The Lord's Concluding Words to the Church at Laodicea 3:21-22

Q - What did the Lord offer to overcomers in the church at Laodicea? He offered them the opportunity to sit with Him on His throne - as He sat on His Father's throne after overcoming.

Think About It: The Lord wants churches to be zealous and personal in their service for and relationship with Him.

“Introduction to Heaven”

Revelation 4:1-11

Q - What comes into your mind when you think about heaven?

Revelation four and five give us one of Scripture's clearest pictures of the focal point of heaven - the throne of God and the God who sits on the throne, along with a description of the scene and some of the beings surrounding the throne.

I. John Is Invited to Come Up and See Future Things 4:1-3

Q - What changes in perspective take place for the Apostle John at this point in the Revelation? He moves from earth to heaven - as believers will move at the end of the church age.
His perspective changes from that of the present to the future.

Q - What first captured John's attention upon arriving in heaven (v. 2)? The throne, and the one sitting on it, captured his attention.

Q - What first impressed John about the Lord's appearance upon his arrival in heaven (v. 3)? The colors of precious stones and a rainbow radiating out from the Lord impressed him.

II. John Describes the Scene at God's Throne 4:4-8

Q - What might be the significance of the twenty four elders of verse four? They are probably representatives of the saints down through the ages - possibly representing the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles of the church age (cf. 21:12,14).

Q - What impression do the lightning and thunder which

John witnessed (v. 5) create? They create a sense of power and awe, as lightning and thunder do today on earth.

Q - How might the “seven spirits of God” (v. 5) be related to the Holy Spirit of God? They might represent the Holy Spirit in His fulness (cf. Isaiah 11:2).

Q - What impression does the “sea of glass’ surrounding God’s throne (v. 6) create? The “sea” creates an impression of brilliance as it reflects the lights and colors on and around the throne (vv. 3-5).

Q - What seems significant about the description of the four living creatures given in verses 6-8? They are all-seeing as God is, the four apparently angelic beings representing varying characteristics of God.

III. John Describes the Worship of the Lord 4:9-11

Q - What does the action of the twenty-four elders (vv. 9-10) tell us about them? About the one they fall down before? The twenty-four elders are awed in their worship before the greatness and glory of God - recognizing their unworthiness of His rewards.

Q - What act of God is singled out in the twenty-four elders’ worship of the Lord (v. 11)? The work of the Lord as creator of all things is singled out in their worship song.

Think About It: John’s visionary arrival in heaven left him deeply impressed with the power and glory of the Lord.

“God’s Worthy Lamb”

Revelation 5:1-13

Q - What worship experience stands out in your mind as the best you have ever witnessed and experienced? What made it best?

Revelation four’s introduction to heaven’s throne room is followed by a glimpse of heaven’s worship. Having been introduced to the splendor of heaven, John next witnessed Jesus as the Lamb of God receiving praise from heaven’s residents as the most worthy One because of His saving work on behalf of all men.

I. The Search for the Worthy One 5:1-5

Q - What is significant about “the book” of verse one? It was written inside and on the back (a scroll) and sealed with seven seals - indicating “absolute inviolability” (NASB Study Bible).

Q - Why might the question of “worth” attend the opening of the book (v. 2)? The book’s “absolute inviolability” results from its revelation of God’s plan and judgment - meaning that only God can reveal its contents.

Q - Who is included in the classes of verse three who were not able to open the book? Angelic beings in heaven, human beings on earth, and demonic beings under the earth were each and all unable to open the book.

Q - Why did the Apostle John weep (v. 4) when he thought that no one was worthy to open the book? He apparently sensed the importance of the revelation it contained, and he was frustrated that it there seemed to be no one who could open it.

Q - Why did the elder of verse five describe “the Lamb” as “the Lion” (cf. Genesis 49:8-10)? Jesus is a descendant humanly of the tribe of Judah - a “Lion’s whelp” (Genesis 49:9) - the tribe from which Jacob predicted the scepter would not depart.

II. The Lamb Takes the Sealed Book 5:6-7

Q - What features of “the Lamb” make His identity unmistakable? He is a “Lamb” (“the Lamb of God” - John 1:29) who was slain (“who takes away the sin of the world - John 1:29) - all powerful (“seven horns), all seeing (“seven eyes”), representing the Spirit in His fulness (cf. Revelation 4:5; Isaiah 11:2) - and also the “Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.”

II. The Creatures of Heaven Worship 5:8-14

Q - What is significant about the harps and the golden bowls of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (v. 8)? The harps accompany and the bowls represent the worship and the prayers (represented by the incense, Exodus 30:8) of the saints (who were taught to pray “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” in Matthew 6:10).

Q - For what four reasons did the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders attribute worth to the Lamb (vv. 9-10)?

1. He was slain (as God’s Lamb).
2. He purchased for God, with His blood, men of all tribes, tongues, peoples, and nations.
3. He made them to be a kingdom of priests to our God.
4. He qualified/destined them to reign on the earth.

Q - What do the numbers of those who worship the Lamb say about Him (v. 11)? He is obviously exalted in worship by innumerable crowds of elevated beings - angels, living beings,

and elders.

Q - What seven things is the Lamb considered worthy to receive by the creatures surrounding the heavenly throne in v. 12? He is considered worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing.

Q - Who, not mentioned in verse 11, is included among the worshipers of verse 13? Every created thing in heaven, on earth, and under the earth is included in His worship.

Q - How does the expression of worship in verse 13 accentuate the worship which was stated in verse 12? It is addressed to both God the Father and God the Son, and it adds to the acknowledgment of the things the Lord is worthy of, which were stated there, the Lord's worthiness of dominion.

Think About It: The Lord's true worth will finally be acknowledged by all created beings before God's throne in heaven.

“Let Judgment Begin”

Revelation 6:1-6

Q - When have you been most impressed with the force of judgment?

Revelation chapters six through eight introduce the “tribulation” period, the worst time of judgment in all of human history, with the opening of the first set of three distinct and ominous sets of judgments revealed in the Revelation - the judgments known as the “seal” judgments.

The First Three Seal Judgments

I. The First Seal’s Conquest 6:1-2

Q - What is significant about the Lamb’s ability to break the seal? He is the only one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth who is able to do it - not to be compared as an equal to any created being (cf. 5:2-5).

Q - What does the sound of thunder by one of the four living creatures add to the scene? The living creature was obviously an awesome being in his own right, because the sound of thunder is compared in Scripture to the voice of the Lord (cf. Psalm 29).

Q - What does the call to “come” (or “come and see” - *KJV*) signify? Something of great significance from heaven’s perspective is about to happen.

Q - What might be significant about the white color of the first horse (v. 2)? It speaks of purity, putting the horse in association with the divine rider of Revelation 19:11.

Q - What is noteworthy about the rider of the first horse (v. 2)? His bow speaks of military power; His crown speaks of the authority given to him.

II. The Second Seal's War 6:3-4

Q - What did Revelation 4:6-7 tell us about the appearance of the "living creatures" present in this scene? They had four appearances (lion, calf, man, eagle); each has six wings; they were full of eyes; they proclaimed God's holiness.

Q - What is appropriate about the red color of the second horse (v. 4)? The red color of the horse matches the color of the blood which was to be shed.

Q - What is the intention of the rider of the red horse (v. 4)? It is his intention to take peace from the earth.

Q - How does the rider of the red horse fulfill his intention (v. 4)? He fulfills his intention by causing men to slay each other - and he may use his sword to slay some himself!

III. The Third Seal's Famine 6:5-6

Q - What is appropriate about the black color of the third horse? Black is an appropriate color for famine which its rider introduces.

Q - Why might the rider of the third horse carry a pair of scales in his hand (v. 5)? The scales enable the rider to measure the impact of the coming famine.

Q - What does the price of wheat and barley given in verse 6 indicate? The high price (a denarius was a day's wage) indicates that wheat and barley will be in great demand because of the shortage caused by the famine.

Q - What might be noteworthy about the instruction not to harm the oil and the wine (v. 6)? The rider is given a limit of the amount of damage he is permitted to cause to be done.

Think About It: The opening of the sealed scroll marks the beginning of an unparalleled time of the Lord's judgment on the earth.

“Worsening Judgment”

Revelation 6:7-17

Q - What is the most impressive “act of God” (as the insurance industry calls them) you have ever witnessed?

The opening of each of the six seals of Revelation six reveals the intensifying of God’s acts of judgment upon earth during the tribulation.

The Second Three Seal Judgments

I. The Fourth Seal’s Death 6:7-8

Q - What is appropriate about the color of the fourth horse (v. 7)? An ashen color is an appropriate color to depict the death which will arrive on earth with the arrival of the fourth horse.

Q - What does the rider’s authority (v. 8) anticipate for the inhabitants of the earth during the tribulation? There will be one fourth of earth’s population who die as a result of war or famine or pestilence or wild animals.

II. The Fifth Seal’s Martyrdom 6:9-11

Q - What do the deaths of people slain because of the word of God tell us about conditions during the tribulation? They tell us that belief in and commitment to God’s word will be considered capital crimes during parts of the tribulation.

Q - What do the questions of those who were slain (v. 10) tell us about the outlook of those killed because of the word of God? Martyrs will feel some impatience for God to vindicate them and punish their persecutors because commitment to

God's word should clearly not be punishable by death.

Q - What might be significant about the white robes (v. 11) given to those killed for their faith during the fifth seal? They will be considered overcomers (cf. 3:5) whose righteous deeds (cf. 19:8) have made them part of the armies of heaven (cf. 19:14).

Q - What does the answer given in verse 11 to those who have been killed tell us about conditions during the tribulation? There will apparently be many killed for their commitment to God's word throughout the tribulation - not just during a limited time introduced by the fifth seal.

III. The Sixth Seal's Physical Disturbances 6:12-17

Q - What do the effects listed in verse 12 tell us about tribulation conditions? There will be a time when the earth trembles and the sky displays visible signs of God's judgment (cf. Joel 2:31).

Q - How could the earth survive the events described in verse 13? The Greek word *aster* does not describe "stars" as we understand them, but heavenly phenomenon which could include such things as meteors and asteroids.

Q - What does verse 14 tell us about tribulation conditions? Both the heavens and the earth will experience and display visible evidences of divine judgment.

Q - What is significant about the people listed in verse 15 and about their behavior? They represent all classes of people - including the most powerful and secure - seeking refuge from the judgment of the Lord in caves and rocky mountains.

Q - What is the emotional response of those hiding in caves

and among the rocks toward the Lord (v. 16)? The emotional response is that of fear because of the wrath of God.

Q - What is the concern (v. 17) of those hiding in caves and among the rocks of the mountains? They know they are experiencing the long-promised judgment of God against unbelieving sinners.

Think About It: The opening of each one of the six seals of Revelation 6 will result in seriously worsening conditions on the earth.

“Witnesses and Worshipers”

Revelation 7:1-17

Q - What is your understanding of the teaching of the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” about Revelation’s 144,000 and “great multitude”?

The seventh chapter of the Revelation assures us that the Lord will not leave Himself without effective witnesses and saved souls on the earth during the horrors of the tribulation period.

I. The Sealing of the 144,000 7:1-8

Q - Why might the Lord commission the four angels to restrain earth’s four winds as seen in verse 1? Verses two and three suggest that they do it to keep them from exercising their power to harm the earth and the sea and the trees until the sealing of God’s servants has taken place.

Q - What is significant about the fifth angel who is introduced in verse 2? The fifth angel is of higher rank than the others because he carries the seal of the living God (with its divine authority) and commands the other angels.

Q - What can be said about the identity and responsibility (vv. 3-8) of the 144,000 who are sealed? They are all Jewish bond-servants (v. 3) of God - 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel.

Q - Why might the Lord place such emphasis on the identity of the 144,000 with Israel’s tribes? He is making it clear that the 144,000 are all Jews (not Jehovah’s Witnesses!) whom He has called into His service.

II. The Appearance of a Multitude in White 7:9-17

Q - What can be said about the make-up of the “great multitude” which is introduced in vv. 9-10? They are gentiles (primarily) from all around the world who have been saved and who are celebrating (as palm branches reveal) in heaven before God.

Q - What does the action of the angels in v. 11 reveal?
They, like saved humans, worship God.

Q - What does verse 12 suggest about the great multitude’s eternal calling? It suggests that they plan to worship the Lord forever.

Q - Why might the elder in verse 13 ask the author John about the identity of the great multitude? Probably to emphasize the truth of their identity.

Q - What does the elder’s answer to his own question (v. 14) tell us about the identity of the great multitude? It tells us that they all came out of the great tribulation after having been saved (and probably martyred).

Q - What does verse 15 add to our understanding of the eternal calling of the great multitude? It reveals that they will serve and worship the Lord in His temple forever in close fellowship with Him.

Q - From what does verse 16 tell us the great multitude has been delivered? It says they have been delivered from hunger, thirst and heat (and aging, because the sun is not to bear down on them?).

Q - Does the description of verse 17 remind you of any other portion of the book of the Revelation you are familiar

with? It is reminiscent of the scene around the throne of God in chapter 5, and of the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:4.

Think About It: The Lord will provide an effective witness for the people of earth during the tribulation even as He is receiving the praises of the great multitude who have already arrived in heaven.

“The Trumpet Judgments Begin”

Revelation 8:1-9

Q - What would you say was a reasonable way for earth's inhabitants to respond to the six seal judgments described in Revelation chapter six (cf. 6:15-17)?

While each of the first six seals uncovers another stage in God's judgment of the tribulation earth, the seventh seal introduces another entire series of judgments - the seven trumpet judgments. Each of the trumpet judgments intensify the trials of an already troubled earth.

I. The Seventh Seal Results in Silence 8:1-2

Q - What is suggested by the half-hour of silence in heaven mentioned in verse 1? Something of unusual significance is apparently about to happen - probably something negative.

Q - What might be the significance of the “seven angels” mentioned in verse 2? There are seven of them - to suggest completeness in some respect; and they have trumpets - suggesting that they are heralds of something noteworthy.

(Cf. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)

II. An Angel Releases Prayers as Trumpets are Prepared 8:3-6

Q - What was the prayer of all the saints beneath the golden altar before the throne of God in Revelation 6:10? “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

Q - What might the angel's addition of incense to those prayers (8:3-4) signify? Perhaps that those prayers are ascending with increasing intensity - and something is likely to

happen in answer to those prayers.

Q - What resulted from the angel's filling of the censer with fire from the altar and throwing it to the earth? Peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake followed the filling of the censer.

III. The First Trumpet Devastates the Land 8:7

Q - What is the closest thing in our experience to the effect of the first trumpet's judgment? Perhaps the devastation of a very large and powerful cyclone or superstorm.

Q - What would be the impact of the first trumpet judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth? Such a judgment would result in people burned by fire, injured by hail, and economically and aesthetically impacted by destroyed trees and grasses on a major scale (cf. Exodus 9:22-26).

III. The Second Trumpet Devastates the Sea 8:8-9

Q - Can you think of a time when anything even remotely comparable to the second trumpet judgment has ever taken place on the earth? If so, when? The turning of the Nile River to blood in the ten plagues of Exodus would be a small sample of such an environmental catastrophe.

Q - What would be the impact of the second trumpet judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth? Such a judgment would result in many deaths among men and sea animals, major disruption of shipping and fishing industries, and major stench and ecological disruption on earth (cf. Exodus 7:14-25).

Think About It: The six seal judgments of Revelation six will only be the beginning of God's increasingly severe tribulation judgments on the earth!

“The Trumpet Judgments Intensify”

Revelation 9:10-13

Q - How are you affected when you expect that bad news in your experience is going to be followed by worse news?

The devastating effects of the first two trumpet judgments are going to be intensified by the effects of the third and fourth trumpet judgments - with the anticipation of even worse judgments to come as a result of an “eagle’s” announcement of “woe” - as the *New American Standard Bible* translation reads in 8:13.

I. The Third Trumpet Devastates Fresh Waters 8:10-12

Q - What are possible understandings of the “star” of the third trumpet judgment? A meteoroid or asteroid or some other heavenly body created specifically by the Lord for the occasion could be understood by the Greek word for “star” (aster).

Q - Where is the division between what we might call the “natural” and the “supernatural” in the third trumpet judgment of verse 10? All could be natural until the “star” falls only on one third of earth’s rivers and springs of water

Q - What is suggested by the name given to the “star” (v. 11; cf. Proverbs 5:3-4; Jeremiah 9:15; Lamentations 3:19)? The name suggests the turning of waters bitter because “wormwood” is a bitter herb associated with bitterness in other Biblical references and again in v. 11.

Q - What is especially devastating about the judgment introduced by the third trumpet (v. 11)? Because water is a necessity for life, bitter water is problematic at best for people and animals who need it - if not deadly.

II. The Fourth Trumpet Devastates the Heavens 8:12

Q - How does the fourth trumpet judgment escalate the pace of judgment? It takes judgment beyond the earth into the universe beyond the earth with effects which would seriously effect earthly life.

Q - What is the relationship between the cause and effect of the fourth trumpet judgment? Not only is the cause obviously of God, but the effect is obviously regulated by God, because striking one third of heavenly bodies would not be expected to effect light and darkness on earth as we are told that it will.

Q - What might be some of the ecological complications of such a judgment? Temperature fluctuations, interruption of normal growth patterns, and disruption of light and dark cycles people are accustomed to would be some of the complications.

III. An Eagle Announces the Woe of the Last Trumpets 8:13

Q - Why might an “eagle” (as translated in the *New American Standard Bible*) be chosen to make the announcement of verse 13? An eagle is a majestic and powerful and somewhat frightening bird of prey - consistent with the message about to be delivered by the bird as a word of “woe.”

Q - What impression does the three-fold “woe” of the eagle’s announcement create in your thinking? It creates an ominous impression - of very bad news following upon the heels of already bad news.

Q - What will likely be the effect of the eagle’s announcement on earth’s citizens in view of what will already have taken place during the tribulation? It should create a sense of dread that anything worse could possibly happen than what has already happened! It should bring about repentance!

Think About It: The third and fourth trumpet judgments, along with the message of “woe” announced in 8:13, will continue to intensify the anxiety of the inhabitants of earth and the severity of the judgments unleashed upon the tribulation earth and its inhabitants.

“The Fifth Trumpet’s Locusts”

Revelation 9:1-12

Q - What is the most unnerving experience you have ever had with one of the many insects which populate our earth?

The fifth trumpet judgment is going to introduce one of earth’s most troubling insects **ever** as another part of the Lord’s judgment against the sinful unbelief and rebellion of mankind on the tribulation earth.

I. The Fifth Trumpet’s Plague of Stinging Locusts 9:1-11

Q - What might be the significance of the “star from heaven” which John saw fallen to the earth? It appears to represent a person - apparently a significant person, an angel “fallen from heaven”.

Q - What does possession of the key to the bottomless pit reveal about the one who has it? His possession of the key speaks of authority, and the fact that it is authority over the bottomless pit sounds like God-given authority of an ominous kind.

Q - What does the opening of the bottomless pit tell us about its contents (v. 2)? The bottomless pit must contain something burning and hot.

Q - What does the opening of the bottomless pit tell us about how its contents (v. 2) and how they will impact the earth ecologically? It tells us that the opening fills the air with smoke, blacking out the view of the sun.

Q - What is unusual about the locusts which come out of the bottomless pit (vv. 3-4)? Their scorpion-like power makes

them very unusual and dangerous; their assignment to hurt people rather than eat growing things makes them unique and sinister; and their focus on those without God's seal makes them a menace to the unbelieving world.

Q - What will be unusually problematic about the torment the locusts will bring upon mankind (v. 5)? Their scorpion-like sting will bring long-lasting pain.

Q - How will people respond to the torment of the locusts upon the earth (v. 6)? They will wish they could die because their pain is so severe.

Q - What do the unusual features of the locusts tell us about them (vv. 7-9)? They are only like locusts, because their features set them apart from normal locusts: crowns - authority; faces - personality; hair - unique appearance; teeth - fierce looking; breastplates - protected; wings - noisy.

Q - What especially unusual and sinister feature of these locusts is revealed in verse 10? Their tails have a stinger like a scorpion with a long-lasting sting.

Q - What can be said about the “king” of the locusts of the fifth trumpet judgment (v. 11)? He is either Satan himself or one with Satan-like intentions.

II. The End of the First Woe Is Announced 9:12

Q - What is the effect of the announcement of the end of the first woe? Relief that one woe is over, but dread that there are still two to come.

Think About It: The fifth trumpet judgment will be a time of intense discomfort for all of earth's citizens who are not protected by the Lord's seal.

“The Sixth Trumpet’s Devastation”

Revelation 9:13-21

Q - What does the book of Revelation reveal as God’s response to the humanistic notion that mankind is basically good and likely to get even better?

The eagle’s (*NASB* translation) announcement of “woe” (8:13) in connection with the last three trumpet judgments will definitely come into clearer focus as each of the three judgments unfold - and Revelation 9:13-21 makes it clear that the sixth trumpet judgment will certainly be an experience of “woe”!

I. The Voice from the Altar 9:13-14

Q - What does a voice which comes from the altar before God’s heavenly throne suggest (v. 13)? Because of the authority with which it speaks, it is probably the voice of the Lord Himself responding to the prayers of martyred saints under the altar for vengeance to be served (cf. 6:10).

Q - What does the presence of four “bound” angels at the river Euphrates (v14) suggest? It may describe four heavenly angels, or perhaps four evil angels (demons) - in either case, angels who are restrained by the Lord from doing the damage they are able to do.

II. The Release of the Four Angels 9:15-19

Q - How does the devastation projected by the four angels compare with previous devastations (v. 15)? It is the most massive devastation yet in terms of the loss of human lives.

Q - What might be the source and significance of an army

of two hundred million horsemen (v. 16)? It could well indicate the involvement of the armies a very large eastern nation (e.g. China or India) wreaking havoc on the earth.

Q - What is suggested by the breastplates of the horsemen (v. 17)? Breastplates of fire and hyacinth (a purple-blue color) and brimstone would only be worn by horsemen who are spirit beings, because fire and brimstone would destroy human horsemen.

Q - What is unusual about the heads of the horses (v. 17) and what does this tell us about them? The size, appearance, and mouths spewing fire, smoke and brimstone are unusual by earthly standards - emphasizing the super-human and probably satanic scene which is being described.

Q - What does verse 18 add to our understanding of the horses of this passage? The information that the fire, smoke, and brimstone which proceed out of the mouths of the horses is what kills a third of mankind makes it evident that they are supernatural creatures.

Q - What do the serpent-like tails of the horses tell us about them (v. 19)? The serpent-like tails of the horses with heads which have power to do harm again emphasize their super-natural nature.

II. The Response of Surviving Mankind 9:20-21

Q - What does the response of the survivors tell us about man's condition by this time (v. 20a)? The unrepentant response of surviving humanity reveals extremely hardened hearts toward the Lord.

Q - What do the activities of the survivors tell us about man's condition by this time (vv. 20b-21)? The persistence of

surviving humanity in their worship of man-made idols, their murders, their sorceries, their immorality, and their thefts tells us that they are unworthy of divine mercy and unlikely to turn to the Lord apart from miraculous intervention.

Think About It: The sixth trumpet judgment will bring more severe devastation to earth's population than any previous judgment - in response to more determined depravity on the part of man than at any previous time.

“A Book to Eat”

Revelation 10:1-11

Q - How do you think you would be feeling about things if you were among the citizens of earth who survived the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments described in the first half of the Revelation?

The appearance and announcement of the angel described in Revelation ten provides an ominous introduction to the even more traumatic final events of the tribulation period on earth!

John’s Experience with the Little Book 10:1-11

I. John’s Sees an Angel with a Little Book 10:1-7

Q - What sets the angel of verse one apart from other angels? He is described as “strong,” clothed with a cloud, a rainbow on his head, his face like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

Q - What impression does John’s mention of “a little book” create (v. 2)? In the hands of such an angel, it creates an impression of something potentially ominous.

Q - What do the angel’s actions in verses 2 and 3 suggest? He is clearly very large (one foot on sea, one on land) and apparently very menacing (voice like a roaring lion - causing peals of thunder).

Q - What is suggested by the instruction to seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder spoke (v. 4)? What they revealed was secret at best, but more likely threatening.

Q - What is the impact of the angel's oath in verses 5 and 6? It conveys unusual determination on heaven's part about something about to happen - apparently something significant and serious.

Q - What are we to expect as a result of the trumpet blast of the seventh angel according to verse 7? The Lord is about to bring the "mystery of God" to a conclusion - including things previously unknown (though prophetically anticipated) but now to be revealed.

II. John Takes and Eats the Little Book 10:8-11

Q - How might you feel if you were in John's place when the instructions of verse 8 are given? I would be curious to know what the book contained and somewhat intimidated by the impressive appearance and stance of the angel holding it.

Q - What might be the meaning of the information given John that eating the little book would make his stomach bitter but his mouth sweet (v. 9)? Perhaps that what the little book reveals will seem good at first but be difficult to digest as it unfolds.

Q - What does John's eating of the little book add to the drama of the account (v. 10)? It signals the "beginning of the end" of the affairs of the age and the world as we know it - a bitter ending.

Q - What is the significance of the instruction given John in verse 11? He is instructed to reveal the bitter/sweet message contained in the book he has just been given to eat.

Think About It: The seven seal judgments and first six trumpet judgments, as serious as they will be, are only a warning and a warm-up for the things which will occur in the final years of

the tribulation period on earth.

“God’s Two Witnesses”

Revelation 11:1-13

Q - When have you wished you could bear witness to your faith in the Lord with supernatural signs?

Revelation 11 reveals a tribulation era witness for the Lord which is too clear for earth’s peoples to overlook - though their response is not very sensible.

I. John Is Instructed to Measure the Temple 11:1-2

Q - What does verse 1 tell us about tribulation worship for Israel? It tells us that tribulation worship for Israel will again involve an earthly temple.

Q - What does the information of the second verse reveal about Jewish/Gentile relations during the tribulation? It reveals that there will be a strong Gentile presence in the Holy City and even the temple courts during part of the tribulation.

II. John Observes God’s Two Witnesses 11:3-13

A. John Learns of the Two Witnesses 11:3-6

Q - What seems significant regarding the two witnesses introduced in verse 3? They are identified as God’s witnesses, they are clothed in sackcloth (indicating solemnity), and they are assured 3 ½ years of ministry as prophets.

Q - What does the mention of the “two olive trees and the two lamp stands” (v. 4) add to the account (cf. Zechariah 4)? As with the Old Testament’s Zerubbabel, they speak of power for effective witness supplied by the Lord.

Q - What does verse 5 reveal about the unusual nature of the two witnesses? It reveals that they have supernatural power to devour their enemies with fire from their mouths.

Q - What does the revelation of verse 6 suggest concerning the possible identity of the two witnesses? It suggests that, like the Prophet Elijah, they can shut up the sky, and like Moses they can turn water to blood and strike the earth with plagues.

B. The Death of the Two Witnesses 11:7-10

Q - What does the “beast’s” interest in destroying the two witnesses (v. 7) tell us about him and about them? The beast is obviously opposed to God - but is permitted to kill His two supernaturally empowered witnesses to serve the Lord’s purposes for the witnesses in the end.

Q - Why might the labels “Sodom” and “Egypt” be applied to the city in which the two witnesses die (v. 8)? Like Sodom the city is characterized by immorality; like Egypt the city is known for oppression of and slavery of God’s people.

Q - What does the behavior of the peoples described in verses 9 and 10 tell us about tribulation conditions? Tribulation peoples will be adamantly opposed to God and His servants.

C. The Resurrection and Ascension of the Two Witnesses 11:11-13

Q - Why is it appropriate that God raise the two witnesses back to life (v. 11)? It is appropriate in order to vindicate them, their message, and God Himself - showing His power over Satan’s “Beast.”

Q - What will the ascension of the two witnesses (v. 12)

demonstrate? It will clearly demonstrate that they were sent by God and taken to heaven by Him - as Jesus was.

Q - What is unusual about the earth-quake described in verse 13, and about it's result? The earth-quake is unusually powerful - powerful and destructive enough to cause men to glorify God!

Think About It: Tribulation peoples will not be without a clear and powerful witness concerning spiritual truth!

“The Kingdom’s Coming”

Revelation 11:14-19

Q - When, and in what sense, would you say the Lord “reigns” over the earth?

The last section of Revelation 11 reveals the scene which will be acknowledged in heaven as the beginning of the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

I. The End of the Second Woe is Announced 11:14

Q - What is the significance of the third “woe” mentioned in verse 14? It is the last of the three “woes” predicted in 8:13, and the last of the trumpet blasts/judgments.

II. The Seventh Trumpet Brings Praise in Heaven 11:15-19

Q - What are the initial effects of the sounding of the seventh trumpet as revealed in verse 15? Loud voices in heaven announce the coming of Christ’s kingdom on earth.

Q - What does the announcement of the latter half of verse 15 mean? To the world? To the Lord? To the world it signals the end of earthly kingdom control; for the Lord it signals the beginning of the long-promised reign of Christ.

Q - What does verse 16 reveal about the twenty-four elders and about the One they worship? The twenty-four elders recognize their inferior status and their subservience to God; and it reveals that God deserves the worship of even the most elevated human beings.

Q - What impressed the twenty-four elders about the beginning of the Lord’s reign (v. 17)? They are impressed by the

fact that, as almighty and eternal God, the Lord has the power to subdue all opposition.

Q - What response of the nations do the twenty-four elders anticipate in verse 18? They anticipate a response of rage (as the time arrives to judge the dead and reward God's servants - the prophets and the saints).

Q - What response of the Lord to the response of the nations do the twenty-four elders anticipate in verse 18? They anticipate a response of judgment and destruction on the part of the Lord.

Q - What will the Lord do for His servants as He begins to reign (v. 18)? The Lord will reward His servants as He begins to reign.

Q - Who are "those who destroy the earth" and why will the Lord respond as He does (v. 18)? Those who destroy the earth are all who have opposed the Lord and His authority in any way, and the Lord will respond as He does in affirmation of His right to rule in the lives of His creatures.

Q - How does the temple of verse 19 compare with the temple referred to in verse 1? The temple of verse 19 is located in heaven and occupied by the ark of His covenant, while the temple of v. 1 is earthly.

Q - What is significant about the mention of the "ark of the covenant" in verse 19? It once again symbolizes God's presence and His promises after having been missing ever since the time of the Babylonian destruction of the temple.

Q - What does the lightening and thunder and earthquake and hailstorm add to the scene of verse 19? They add a sense of power and awe as God's heavenly temple is opened.

Think About It: The Lord will assume His rightful role as ruler of this world with a final, frightful display of His power in judgment against His foes.

“Down with the Dragon”

Revelation 12:1-9

Q - What does the mention of a dragon conjure up in your mind?

In addition to other key figures of the tribulation period we have met in earlier chapters (e.g. the Lord Himself, the twenty-four elders, angelic beings serving the Lord, demonic beings, human witnesses, etc.), some of the tribulation’s other key figures appear in chapters 12-14. Revelation 12 introduces us to a sinister “dragon” which will be intent on opposing the plan and the people of God during the tribulation period on earth.

I. The Woman, Her Child, and the Dragon 12:1-6

Q - What sets the woman of verse 1 apart from other women? She is clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars.

Q - Who might the woman be, given the fact of her pregnancy (v. 2) and the description of her son (v. 5)? The woman is apparently the nation of Israel who eventually gave birth (in the person of the Virgin Mary) to the Son whose description is obviously the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q - What features make the dragon of verse 3 (identified in verse 9) unusual, and what might they suggest? The dragon is red, has seven heads and ten horns, and has seven diadems on his heads - suggesting a being of awesome splendor and authority, identified in verse 9 as Satan (cf. Ezekiel 28:11-17; Isaiah 14:12-15).

Q - What does verse 4 contribute to our understanding of the identity of the dragon of verse 3 and the woman of verses 1

and 2? The dragon's cosmic proportions indicate universal significance; the dragon's animosity toward the child indicates his universal significance; the opposition of the dragon to the child to be born to the woman indicates that she is significant in God's plan.

Q - What elements of the description of the Son born to the woman (v. 5) help to identify the Son? The fact that He is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron identifies Him as Christ (cf. Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 2:27).

Q - What does the woman's wilderness flight (v. 6) apparently describe in tribulation history? It apparently describes Israel's supernatural protection from the dragon's fury for 3 1/2 years in a wilderness setting.

II. The Dragon's Elimination from the Heavens 12:7-9

Q - How do the details supplied in verse 7 help us to further identify the main players? The fact that Michael, Israel's angelic prince, fights the dragon - each with an army of angels, identifies the two as leaders of cosmic forces (cf. Daniel 10:13; 12:1).

Q - Are there any surprises in the information given in verse 8? Why or why not? It is not particularly surprising, in view of what other Scriptures tell us about Satan and his army of angels, to be informed that there was no longer any place found for the dragon and his angels in heaven.

Q - How does verse 9 demonstrate the appropriateness of the "dragon" imagery used in this passage? The fact that the dragon is equated with the "serpent of old," first known by his appearance in the garden of Eden - and identified as the devil and Satan, makes his appearance in the Revelation as a dragon very understandable.

Think About It: The tribulation period will include an intense contest between the nation of Israel (which “gave birth” to the Lord Jesus) and her supernatural enemy, the devil, which will make Israel’s life very difficult.

“The Dragon’s Last Hurrah”

Revelation 12:10-17

Q - How do you account for the continued existence and influence of the nation of Israel in view of its many enemies throughout human history?

The last half of Revelation 12 demonstrates the Lord’s continuing faithfulness to the promises He has made to the people of Israel down through the ages - even during the prophesied “time of Jacob’s distress” (Jeremiah 30:7) and the hostilities which will characterize the tribulation.

I. The Heavenly Announcement of God’s Kingdom 12:10-12

Q - What does verse 10 reveal as the power which will become the undoing of the “dragon”? It reveals the kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ as the power which will become the undoing of the “dragon.”

Q - What does verse 10 reveal about the malevolent nature and activity of the “dragon”? It identifies him as the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them before God day and night.

Q - What does verse 11 identify as the key to overcoming the power and the working of the dragon? It identifies the blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony of the saints - a testimony spoken even as they did not love their lives when they were faced by death.

Q - What does verse 12 indicate will be the result for earth of the dragon’s elimination from heaven? It indicates that the earth and the sea will be adversely affected when the devil, in great wrath, comes down to them - aware that he has only a short time to do what he intends to do.

II. The Dragon's Pursuit of the Woman 12:13-17

Q - What will the dragon's persecution of "the woman," as seen in verse 13, mean? The dragon's persecution of "the woman" who gave birth to the male child will mean intensified suffering for the nation of Israel, depicted by the woman.

Q - What do verse 14's "two wings of the great eagle" given to the woman signify? The two wings of the great eagle given to the woman signify God's enablement for the woman to escape into the wilderness for protection.

Q - What is significant about the stay of "the woman" in the wilderness (v. 14; cf. v. 6)? Her stay in the wilderness will result in nourishment and protection from the serpent for three and a half years.

Q - What does the serpent's action in v. 15 demonstrate? His action demonstrates his power and his desire to cause the destruction of Israel by means of a flood of water.

Q - How and why does the earth come to the rescue of the woman as it does (v. 16)? The earth opens its mouth to swallow up the flood of water intended by the dragon to destroy the nation of Israel - because of the Lord's long-standing commitment to His chosen people.

Q - What does the dragon's rage and "plan B" mean for the tribulation earth and its population (v. 17)? Unable to destroy Israel in its wilderness location, the dragon's rage will lead to intensified persecution of the rest of the woman's children - those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Think About It: The frustrated desire of Satan to eliminate the people of Israel being protected by God in the wilderness dur-

ing the tribulation, will result in increasing rage against believing Jews in other locations.

“A Beast Out of the Sea”

Revelation 13:1-10

Q - What is the worst perversion of true worship you have ever been aware of during your life time?

The thirteenth chapter of Revelation records the worst perversion of true worship which will ever occur on earth!

I. A Beast Arises Out of the Sea 13:1-6

Q - Who does John picture standing on the seashore as the 13th chapter of the Revelation begins? “The Dragon” - the devil, Satan (12:9).

Q - What unusual features of the beast John witnessed coming up out of the sea are described in 13:1? He had ten horns, seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems - explained in 17:8-13 (cf. Daniel 7:1-8).

Q - What additional unusual features are attributed to the beast in 13:2? He was like a leopard with feet like a bear and the mouth of a lion.

Q - What does the dragon’s relationship with the beast (13:2) tell us about the beast? He is a tool of the dragon (the devil) - given power and kingdom and authority by him.

Q - What might be the significance of the healing of the fatal wound of one of the beast’s heads (13:3)? He apparently will be wounded and either die or appear to be dead (seeking, perhaps, to be comparable to Christ in His resurrection).

Q - What is significant about the worship of the whole earth (13:3) for the dragon and the beast (13:4)? The whole earth,

having rejected God and His Christ, will turn to the worship of Satan and his antichrist.

Q - What does verse 5 tell us about the beast's mission and the time frame of his mission? It tells us that he will have three and a half years to speak arrogant words and blasphemies.

Q - Why would the beast want to speak blasphemies against God and those who dwell in heaven (13:6)? He is on Satan's side - opposed to God and His saints.

II. The Beast Makes War with the Saints

Q - What does 13:7 tell us about spiritual and political conditions on earth during the reign of the beast? Saints will be under siege - no matter where they are on earth.

Q - Whose ancient goal is finally realized in the worship of 13:8? What blemishes the realization of that goal? Virtually everyone will worship Satan and his antichrist, who will be "like God" in that sense - except that all who worship will be destined to eternal punishment.

Q - Why the challenge of 13:9 at this point in the Revelation? There is some serious listening/thinking to be done!

Q - What will the "perseverance and the faith of the saints" (13:10) result in for many of the saints? Their perseverance and faith will result, for many, in captivity and death.

Think About It: The final half of the tribulation will mark the world's greatest spiritual apostasy and Satan's finest hour - at the expense of any true saints unfortunate enough to be around at that time.

“Another Beast Out of the Earth”

Revelation 13:11-18

Q - What is the worst deception you recall ever witnessing?
What was it that made the deception possible?

The final verses of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation record the deceptive practices of a second “beast” - a beast who, in company with the dragon and the first beast, helps to form an end-times “unholy trinity”!

I. The Appearance of the Second Beast 13:11-12

Q - What might be significant about the features of the second beast John witnesses coming on the scene? The fact that he has two horns “like a lamb” may indicate that he seeks to look Christ-like; that he speaks as a dragon makes him Satanic (cf. Matthew 7:15).

Q - What is the relationship between the two beasts John saw (cf. 13:12)? The second beast works with the authority and in the service of the first one (cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

II. The Works of the Second Beast 13:13-15

Q - What does the second beast’s ability to perform great signs (cf. 12:13) tell us about him? About signs? It tells us that he is empowered by a supernatural source. There are times when God permits great signs to be performed by others than His servants (cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

Q - What is significant about the beast’s ability to make fire come down out of heaven (13:13)? He will be empowered to do what some of God’s choicest servants have done in the name of and by the power of God (cf. I Kings 18:24-39; II

Kings 1:9-12).

Q - What will be the impact of the second beast and his signs upon those who dwell on the earth (13:14a)? Those who dwell on the earth will be “deceived” - supposing him to be empowered by God!

Q - What will the second beast use his influence to cause those who dwell on the earth to do (13:14b)? He will use his influence to cause those who dwell on the earth to make an image of the beast.

Q - How will the second beast apparently be enabled to empower the image of the beast to do what it will do (13:15)? He will apparently be enabled to work a miracle by the evil spiritual power he is serving - unless he is using technology to make it appear that he can do miracles!

III. The Mark of the Second Beast 13:16-18

Q - What does 13:16 reveal about the breadth of the influence of the second beast? It reveals that he will have influence over all human beings of all social standings.

Q - How will the second beast force earth's peoples to accept the “mark of the beast” (13:17)? It reveals that he will have control over all commercial dealings - permitting only those who have the mark to buy and sell.

Q - What are some possible explanations of the number given in verse 18? It may be related to someone's “alpha-numeric” system - a puzzle of some kind; or it could be computer related.

Think About It: Satan and his “beast” (the “antichrist”) will be joined by a second “beast” (the “false prophet”) in deceiving

end-time peoples into following and worshiping themselves.

“End-Time Witnesses”

Revelation 14:1-12

Q - When have you felt most pressured to conform to one message or another of a spiritual nature?

The last part of the tribulation will be a time of unparalleled spiritual pressure on the earth!

I. The New Song of the 144,000 14:1-5

Q - Who is “the Lamb of 14:1? The Lamb is the Lord Jesus - the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Q - What is significant about the mark on the foreheads of the 144,000 (14:1)? It is a divine mark, in contrast to the man-made “mark of the beast.”

Q - What is apparently the source of the voice John describes in 14:2-3 as a “voice from heaven”? The source of the voice is apparently the singing of the 144,000 who had been “purchased from the earth.”

Q - What sets the 144,000 apart from other people who once lived on earth as seen in 14:3-4? The 144,000 are the only ones who know the song being sung; they are apparently all men because they “have not been defiled with women;” they were “purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb;” and they follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Q - Why would the absence of lies from the mouths of the 144,000 mark them as “blameless” (14:5)? As James wrote (James 3:2), “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

II. The Proclamations of the Three Angels 14:6-12

A. The First Angel Preaches the Gospel 14:6-7

Q - What will be especially significant about the dissemination of the flying angel's message (14:6)? The message is "an eternal gospel" for all who live on the earth.

Q - Why will the world be especially in need of the message recorded as that of the flying angel in 14:7? The world will be facing imminent judgment apart from its proper response to the gospel message.

B. The Second Angel Announces the Fall of Babylon 14:8

Q - What will the announcement of 14:8 mean to all of the nations of the world? The nations will be without a significant source of supply and the immorality which characterized Babylon.

C. The Third Angel Warns of God's Wrath 14:9-12

Q - Why will the message of the third angel (14:9-11) be a very heavy message for the tribulation world to have to deal with? It will promise God's wrath (eternal torment with fire and brimstone) upon the many who worshiped the beast and his image and who received the "mark of the beast."

Q - What is "the perseverance of the saints" referred to in 14:12? It is persistence in commitment to the Lord rather than to Satan.

Think About It: The pressure upon end-time peoples to conform to the message of the antichrist and his false prophet will be counter-balanced by the message of the 144,000 and of the three angels sent with proclamations from heaven.

“End-Time Harvests”

Revelation 14:13-20

Q - When have you found yourself wondering why the Lord doesn't bring judgment upon His enemies?

The final verses of Revelation 14 survey the judgment which the Lord is going to bring upon a world entrenched in unbelief and violently opposed to the people of God who will remain on earth at the end of the tribulation.

I. The Blessedness of Those Dying in the Lord 14:13

Q - Why might the voice from heaven make a special point of the blessedness of those dying in the Lord “from now on”?

All who die “in the Lord” are blessed - but none more than those who escape the worst tribulations as faithful believers.

Q - What does the Spirit’s mention of “rest from their labors” (14:13b) tell us about the blessedness of those who die? Those dying in the Lord have obviously been laboring for the Lord - under extreme adversity.

II. The Reaping of the Earth 14:14-20

A. The Reaping of the Son of Man 14:14-16

Q - What features in John’s description help identify “one like a son of man” in 14:14? The fact that He sits on a cloud; He wears a golden crown (as king); and that He holds a sickle - as judge; each point to the Son of Man described in Daniel 7:13 - clearly a reference to Jesus.

Q - What “temple” is the angel of verse 15 coming out of (cf. 11:19; 14:17)? He is coming out of the heavenly temple.

Q - What would the angel's departure from the temple (v. 15) reveal about the source of His message to the "one like a son of man"? It reveals that the message comes from the Lord God - not just an angel.

Q - What evidence does the angel cite that "the hour to reap has come" (14:15)? He cites the evidence that the harvest of the earth has become ripe. His choice of words for "ripe" (xeraino) speaks of that which has become dry, as of grains - referring, perhaps, to the Lord's reaping of martyrs for their entry into their heavenly reward.

Q - What does the apparent ease in the reaping process say about "He who sat on the cloud"? He is obviously far more powerful than any earthly or angelic power, as the process is completed with one swing of His sickle.

B. The Reaping of an Angel 14:17-20

Q - After the reaping of verse 16, why might there be any need for another angel and another sharp sickle (14:17)? The reaping of verse 15 describes the reaping of a harvest of grain - different from the reaping of vv. 18-19 which involves the reaping of ripe grapes destined for the wine press of God's wrath and the "bloody" scene which follows.

Q - Why might we be told that the angel of verse 18 is the one who "has power over fire" and "came out from the altar"? His power over fire speaks of his ability to withstand fiery end-time judgements, and his presence at the altar makes him God's servant and vindicator of martyred saints.

Q - What is obvious about the nature of the reaping which is recorded in 14:19? It is clearly the reaping of the judgment of God's extreme wrath against sinful humanity.

Q - What might be the significance of the massive amount of blood described in verse 20? It probably anticipates the unparalleled bloodshed at the battle of Armageddon as 200 million soldiers and their mounts die in the battle at the hand of the Lord (cf. Revelation 19:11-21).

Think About It: The tribulation will come to an end with a time of harvest carried out by Christ and His angels upon a world ripe for judgment - including some very bloody judgment upon many end-time unbelievers.

“Beginning of the Tribulation’s End”

Revelation 15:1-8

Q - What is it that makes news worthy of reporting? What is it that makes news worthy of bold print?

Revelation 15 introduces some of the most newsworthy events of the end of the tribulation age as the Lord prepares to finish His judgment upon the earth with the introduction of seven angels with bowls of wrath.

I. John Sees the Seven Angels and Bowls 15:1

Q - What does John’s description of the “sign” he saw in heaven (v. 1) suggest about what is coming? That it was “great and marvelous” suggests something big, and that it includes seven angels suggests that it involves power in its fulness. And the mention of seven plagues and the mention of finished wrath each sound very serious.

Q - In what sense will the “wrath of God” be “finished” (v. 1)? It will be the end of God’s acts of judgment against earth’s sins for the tribulation age - leading up to the battle of Armageddon.

II. Heaven’s Victors Sing the Song of Moses 15:2-4

Q - What might be significant about the “sea of glass mixed with fire” (v. 2; cf. 4:6)? The sea of glass in 4:6 was the pavement surrounding God’s throne. In 15:2 it is occupied by those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, having come safely through “fiery trials.”

Q - Who are those who come off “victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name” (v. 2)? They must

be tribulation saints who did not yield to the pressure to conform to the beast and his schemes.

Q - Why might the song of verses 3 and 4 be referred to as “the song of Moses” when its words don’t come from either of the songs Moses is best known for (Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32), or as the “song of the Lamb” when no songs are recorded as coming from the lips of Jesus? Like Moses’ songs, this song celebrates the greatness and victory of God; and although there are no previous recorded songs of Jesus, the Lamb, this IS His song.

Q - What makes the song of verses 3 and 4 especially appropriate at this point in the Revelation? It celebrates the great and powerful ways of God which are so evident in the events of the tribulation, especially the end of the tribulation.

III. The Seven Angels Receive Seven Bowls 15:5-8

Q - What is significant about the opening of “the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven” (v. 5)? It appears that John was about to witness some significant testimony from the God who inhabits the heavenly temple.

Q - What does the description of the seven angels of verse 6 add to the account? The plagues they have make them fearful, and their garments make them sound majestic and God-like (cf. 1:13).

Q - What is appropriate about one of the “four living creatures” giving the seven bowls of wrath to the seven angels (v. 7)? The four living creatures appear to be exalted angels, so it is appropriate for an exalted angel to equip lesser angels for their responsibilities.

Q - What makes smoke and the inaccessible temple an

appropriate accompaniment to the “glory of God” (v. 8)?

Smoke speaks of the fires of God’s awesome judgment, and inaccessibility speaks of God’s infinite holiness.

Think About It: All of heaven will take special note as God prepares to finish up His tribulation judgments on earth because of the awesomeness of God Himself and the awesomeness of His final acts of judgment during the tribulation.

“The Opening Bowl Judgments”

Revelation 16:1-7

Q - If you were going to bring judgment upon the people of the earth, what are some instruments of judgment you think you might make effective use of?

Revelation 16 introduces us to the final series of judgments which will come upon the earth during the tribulation period - the most severe judgments in all of earth history, the seven bowl judgments.

I. A Voice Commands the Pouring Out of Wrath 16:1

Q - Whose “loud voice” is most likely heard from the temple as introduction to the pouring out of the wrath of God on the earth? It is most likely the voice of God Himself (cf. 15:8).

II. The First Bowl Produces Sores 16:2

Q - What seems most noteworthy about the plague of sores which result from the first angel’s bowl of God’s wrath? It seems most noteworthy that the sores only affect the followers of the beast.

Q - When has anything remotely like this plague occurred before in earth’s history? When boils broke out on man and beast through all the land of Egypt - the 6th plague (Exodus 9:9-11).

Q - How do you think the beast’s marked followers should respond to their judgment? You would think they might repent, knowing that those not marked were spared.

III. The Second Bowl Produces Blood in the Sea 16:3

Q - How does this plague compare with the similar judgment of God which took place at the second trumpet judgment (8:8-9)? The judgment of the second trumpet saw only one third of the sea become blood.

Q - What is ironic about the effect of the blood-like waters of the seas in this judgment? It becomes like a dead man's blood - killing everything in the sea - whereas blood is the source of life (Leviticus 17:11).

Q - What will such a judgment produce in terms of its ecological and economic impact on the earth? It will produce a major stench and ugliness and joblessness and food shortages.

IV. The Third Bowl Produces Bloody Rivers 16:4-7

Q - How does this plague compare with the similar effect of the third trumpet judgment recorded in 8:10-11? The third trumpet judgment turned only one third of rivers and springs to blood.

Q - How does the "angel of the waters" justify such a devastating display of the wrath of God in 16:5-6? He says that the citizens of earth were guilty of shedding blood, so now they appropriately get blood "to drink."

Q - What can be said in confirmation of the statement of "the altar" in 16:7? The persistent sinful rejection of the Lord down through the millennia of human history deserves a firm response from the Lord who has been rejected.

Think About It: The first three "bowl judgments" will more radically devastate the earth than any remotely comparable judgments of previous earth history.

“Hardening Hearts”

Revelation 16:8-16

Q - What is it that might keep people from turning to the Lord for His mercy and help even in the face of the severest of judgment evidenced by the bowl judgments of Revelation 16?

Revelation 16 provides illustrations of the almost unbelievable hardness of human hearts in response to the fourth, fifth and sixth bowl judgments as the kings of earth and their armies gather at the hill known as Har-Magedon to go to war against the Lord.

I. The Fourth Bowl Produces Scorching Heat 16:8-9

Q - How does the fourth bowl judgment compare with the seal judgment which affected the sun as recorded in Revelation 6:12? The sixth seal judgment darkened the sun (sackcloth, blood). This judgment brightens the sun to scorch with fire's fierce heat.

Q - What are some of the likely ecological effects of such a judgment upon the earth? Such a judgment will result in serious discomfort, and the excessive drying of everything on the earth (people, animals, plants, water, soil, etc.).

Q - What does verse 9 imply is among God's reasons for such severe judgment upon the earth? It implies that the Lord sends such judgment in response to the refusal of sinners to repent, as evidenced by their blasphemy.

II. The Fifth Bowl Produces Darkness 16:10-11

Q - Who is going to feel the impact of the fifth bowl judgment? The beast and everyone in his kingdom will feel the

impact of darkness as a result of the fifth bowl judgment.

Q - What might be the source of the pain which will cause people of the kingdom of the beast to gnaw their tongues (verse 10)? It may be anxiety, fear and injuries experienced in total darkness which causes people to gnaw their tongues.

Q - What does the response of those who are affected by this judgment indicate (16:11)? It indicates that they are more confirmed in sin and unrepentance and anger as they continue to blaspheme the Lord.

III. The Sixth Bowl Dries Up the Euphrates 16:12-16

Q - What is the most ominous result of the drying up of the Euphrates River (verse 12)? The removal of a natural impediment to the movement of large numbers of troops may be the most ominous result of the drying up of the Euphrates.

Q - How do verses 13-14 explain the craziness of those who will assemble in opposition to the Lord to participate in the final war - the “battle of Armageddon” (cf. verse 16)? It explains that they will be deceived by demonic signs and perhaps even become demonized themselves.

Q - How might the “three unclean spirits” of verse 13 motivate kings and their armies to gather together for the war against the Lord which is about to take place at Armageddon? Demonic messages (out of their mouths) from demonized leaders, and deceptive signs provided by the unclean spirits from the beast who motivates them, will add to the mental dysfunction which normally results from demonic influence.

Q - Who is addressed in verse 15, and what does the challenge to stay awake and keep clothed mean? Believers who are attuned to the Lord are being addressed as the Lord

challenges them to stay awake (alert) and keep properly dressed so they are not caught off guard by the conflict which is ahead.

Think About It: The fourth, fifth and sixth bowl judgments will further harden the hearts of men against the Lord in preparation for their final judgment at the battle of Armageddon.

“The Final Judgment”

Revelation 16:17-21

Q - What are some of the techniques your parents used most effectively when they really wanted to get your attention as a child? What would be a good way to get the attention of the entire earth?

Revelation 16 concludes with the description of a final bowl judgment so severe that the entire earth will be unable to overlook the fact that the Lord has spoken in judgment!

I. The Pouring Out of the Seventh Bowl 16:17

Q - After the devastating effects of the first six bowl judgments, what would the pouring out of the seventh bowl upon the “air” portend? It would portend disturbances potentially affecting every living thing, since all are dependent on air.

Q - What does the message of the “loud voice” which came out of the temple (v. 17) suggest? It suggests a sense of finality and impending doom as it communicates the message and is probably the voice of the Lord.

II. The Impact of the Seventh Bowl 16:18-21

A. The Impact in the Heavens 16:18a

Q - Where will the flashes of lightening and sounds and peals of thunder apparently be seen and heard (v. 18)? They will apparently be seen and heard wherever there is air anywhere on the surface of the earth.

B. The Impact on the Earth 16:18b-21

Q - What sets the earthquake of verse 18 apart from earth's previous earthquakes? It will be more powerful than any previous earthquake in history.

Q - What does Zechariah 14:3-4 associate with the splitting of "the great city" (16:19; cf. 11:8)? Zechariah associates the splitting of the city with the Lord's arrival to fight His enemies - at Armageddon - and the splitting of the Mount of Olives into two halves with a valley between them.

Q - What will result for the world's other "great cities" (v. 19) from the earthquake of verse 18? The cities of the nations will fall. Babylon the great will be remembered before God with fierce wrath.

Q - What apparently results from God's "remembering" of Babylon the great (v. 19; cf. 18:21)? Babylon the great will be violently thrown down as it experiences the cup of the wine of the fierce wrath of the Lord.

Q - In what sense is the geological violence of verse 20 a preparation for the age to follow (cf. Isaiah 40:3-5)? The geological violence of verse 20 is in preparation for the Messiah, including the lifting up of valleys and the lowering of mountains.

Q - What can stand up under the impact of hailstones like those described in verse 21? Very little, if anything, can withstand such hailstones - and that which can stand up under such impact will almost certainly be damaged.

Q - How will mankind respond to the devastation of the final bowl judgment (verse 21)? Men will blaspheme God - knowing that judgment is coming from Him.

Think About It: The final bowl judgment will leave the entire

earth more severely devastated by its impact than any previous judgment has ever done.

“The Great Harlot”

Revelation 17:1-7

Q - What does the Bible sometimes use the sin of harlotry to communicate in a symbolic way (as in the book of Hosea)?

Revelation 17 gives us a close look at the “great harlot” identified (v. 5) as Babylon - a “harlot” which (we soon discover) has enticed the nations while torturing the saints of the Lord down through the ages.

I. An Angel Offers to Show John the Great Harlot 17:1-2

Q - What is suggested by the fact that it is one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls who invites John to see the judgment of the “great harlot” (v. 1)? We are probably being introduced to a judgment which is severe and final.

Q - What might we suspect in view of the facts that the woman in focus in verse 1 is called a “great harlot” and pictured sitting on “many waters”? We might expect that she represents spiritual apostasy found all around the world.

Q - What does verse 2 indicate about the measure and the nature of the influence the “great harlot” has had upon the earth? It indicates that her influence has reached its spiritual tentacles to the highest levels of human government.

II. The Angel Carries John Away in the Spirit to See the Great Harlot 17:3-6

A. John Sees the Woman on a Scarlet Beast 17:3

Q - What does verse 3 add to our understanding of the identity and the associations of the “harlot”? It adds the fact

that she has associations with the antichrist and the blasphemies associated with him.

B. John Describes the Woman's Appearance 17:4-5

Q - What does the attire of the woman in verse 4 and the contents of the cup in her hand reveal about her? They reveal that she will have all the trappings of royalty and wealth, but will be associated with spiritual degradation of the highest order.

Q - What does the name written upon the forehead of the woman (v. 5) add to our understanding of her identity? The woman represents a world system of false religion arising out of Babylon which is repulsive to the Lord.

Q - What is there about Babylon's past which might help us understand the significance of the "harlot" being described in this chapter? Beginning with Babel, Babylon has always been associated with false religion.

C. John Wonders About the Woman's Significance 17:6

Q - What does verse 6 add to our understanding of the seriousness of the woman's atrocities? It adds the fact that she has been guilty of the persecution and death of God's true saints.

III. The Angel Offers to Explain the Mystery of the Great Harlot 17:7

Q - What does the offer of the angel in verse 7 reveal about him and his connections? The angel has insight which has escaped the world at large regarding the mysterious nature of Babylon - insight which comes from the Lord.

Think About It: The end times of our age will witness the divine judgment of the “harlot” associated with Babylon who has been very influential among the nations and destructive of the saints.

“The Beast and Its Rider”

Revelation 17:8-18

Q - How would you characterize the relationship between government and religion down through the ages of human history?

Revelation 17 unveils an unholy and unhappy union between tribulation religions and governments which will play a major role in end-time history.

I. The Description of the Beast 17:8-13

Q - How can we explain the disappearance and reappearance of the “beast” (v.8) which once was? The beast refers to the “restored Roman empire” and its leader, antichrist - both of which were, then were not, then were again (cf. v. 9).

Q - Why will the beast be a source of wonder to people with their names not written in the book of life? They don’t have the advantage of the knowledge of Bible prophecy.

Q - What is the most likely explanation for the seven mountains (v. 9) on which the woman sits? It seems likely that they refer to the seven kingdoms of the next verse - though, in view of the apparent involvement of the Roman Catholic Church with Babylon the great (cf. 17:18), it is probably not insignificant that the city of Rome has long been known as the city on the seven hills.

Q - What might be the explanation of the seven kings (five fallen; one current; and one to come) listed in verse 10? They might refer to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the restored Roman empire (seven actual emperors, seven secular empires).

Q - How does verse 11 help explain the identity of the beast? The beast arises out of the seventh empire (restored Rome) to become a separate facet (eighth) of that empire - soon to be destroyed.

Q - Who might the ten kings be who share authority with the beast for one hour (v. 12)? They might be ten rulers within the restored Roman empire who partner with the beast for a short time [the ten toes (2:40-43) and horns (7:23-26) of Daniel's prophecy].

Q - What does verse 13 show about the agenda of the ten kings? They share agendas with the antichrist - turning over their power and authority to him.

II. The Warfare of the Beast 17:14-18

Q - How are the ten kings likely to wage war against the Lamb (v. 14)? By persecuting believers, attacking Jerusalem, and ultimately trying to oppose Christ's coming militarily.

Q - How does verse 15 explain the waters on which the woman was seen sitting back in verse 1? The waters represent peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues from around the world.

Q - How can we account for the hostility of the ten horns toward the harlot (vv. 16-17)? Secular authorities will grow weary of spiritual authorities who have always been in competition for power and authority.

Q - What does verse 17 reveal about the role God and His words play in end-time events? God and His word prevail in the end as God's enemies carry out his plans.

Q - What would have been John's understanding of "the

great city which reigns over the kings of the earth" (v. 18)?
John would almost certainly have thought of the city of Rome
which, in his day, reigned over the kings of the earth - a city
from which religious influence has spread around the world
down through the centuries.

Think About It: The tribulation will produce an unholy and uncomfortable alliance between a world "church" and a confederation of governments dominated by antichrist.

“End of the Road for Babylon”

Revelation 18:1-8

Q - What kind of reaction do you experience when you are exposed to or approached by false religion and its representatives? Any particularly memorable encounters?

Revelation 18 begins with a revelation of the Lord's response to and the prediction of His judgment upon apostate religion as represented by Babylon the great, the “great harlot” to whom we were introduced in chapter 17.

I. The Fall of Babylon the Great Is Announced 18:1-3

Q - What characteristics mark out the angel mentioned in verse one? He had great authority and was glorious in appearance so as to illuminate the earth.

Q - What makes the fate announced for Babylon the great (v. 2) an appropriate fate? Babylon's deception of the earth and persecution of the saints calls for an ignominious end like the one described.

Q - How would you explain the charges of verse three? Can you cite any examples? All nations have been affected by false religion - benefitting financially by false religion's offerings. The annual conferences held by various religious bodies, for example, bring in significant tax money to the cities and business to the merchants in the areas where they are held.

II. God's People are Called Out of Babylon 18:4-8

Q - Why should any of the true people of God need to be called out of Babylon the great (v. 4)? Many times believers belong to good organizations and ministries which stray from

the truth into error.

Q - What makes the sins of Babylon the great serious enough to be described as “piled up as high as heaven” (v. 5)?
False religion’s sins have been very numerous because false religion is found all around the world, touching billions and billions of people.

Q - What is there about the sins of Babylon the great that will cause the Lord to prescribe double payment for her deeds (v. 6)? False religion’s sins rob people of life abundant on earth and life eternal in heaven - the most serious of all sins.

Q - In what sense would you say that Babylon the great “glorified herself and lived sensuously” (v. 7)? False religion has demanded the financial support of its adherents and has built itself monuments all around the world.

Q - What is the basis for Babylon the Great’s claim that she sits as “a queen” and is “not a widow” and “will never see mourning” (v. 7)? False religion has claimed authority and significance it doesn’t deserve and has made promises it can’t fulfill.

Q - How will the judgment of Babylon the great apparently be carried out (v. 8)? As we saw in 17:16-17, her judgment will be carried out by hostile secular authorities who are headed up by the beast.

Q - How is the Lord shown strong (v. 8) in the carrying out of His judgment against Babylon the Great? His ability to use secular authorities to bring His purpose of judgment against her shows His sovereign control.

Think About It: The Lord has destined false religion for severe and thorough judgment during the tribulation age.

“Responding to Babylon’s Destruction”

Revelation 18:9-19

Q - What impact would you expect the destruction of false religion to have upon the secular authorities and commercial leaders of earth?

Revelation 18 continues beyond its description of the Lord’s response to apostate religion (vv. 1-8) by describing the response of the secular authorities and the merchants of earth (vv. 9-19) to the destruction of “Babylon the great.”

I. The Response of Kings to Babylon’s Destruction 18:9-10

A. The Weeping of Kings of the Earth 18:9

Q - Does the burning of Babylon the great sound literal or symbolic as described in verses 9 and 10? It sounds literal enough, though because Babylon itself is apparently symbolic, its burning probably portrays truth symbolically.

B. The Lament of Kings of the Earth 18:10

Q - What causes the kings of earth to distance themselves from Babylon the great according to verse 10? They fear her torment - not wanting to get too close and be judged with her.

II. The Response of Merchants to Babylon’s Destruction 18: 11-19

A. The Weeping of Merchants of the Earth 18:11-14

1. The Weeping of the Merchants 18:11

Q - What does the fate of the merchants of earth (described in

verse 11) say about their relationships with Babylon the great?
Many of earth's merchants have obviously depended on false religion for their livelihood.

2. The Cargoes of the Merchants 18:12-14

Q - What does the lengthy list of cargoes in verses 12 and 13 reveal about false religion down through the ages of human history? False religion has clearly been a big business enterprise - dealing in both legitimate and illegitimate kinds of business.

Q - What impact will the destruction of Babylon the great have on the economy of earth according to verse 14? Many "fruits" and luxuries and splendid things will no longer have a market.

B. The Laments of Merchants of the Earth 18:15-19

1. The Lament of Merchants Generally 18:15-17a

Q - What will cause the merchants of earth to distance themselves from the burning ruins of Babylon the great (vv. 15-16)? Like the kings of v. 10, they will fear her torment, not wanting to get too close and share her judgment which (17a) will come swiftly.

2. The Lament of Sea Merchants Specifically 18:17b-19

Q - Who does verse 17 tell us will be impacted by the destruction of Babylon the great? All who make their living and who benefit by sea traffic will be impacted by its destruction.

Q - What obviously impressed earth's seafarers about Babylon the great according to verse 18? Babylon the great was unparalleled among earth's enterprises.

Q - How does verse 19 explain the sadness of earth's sea-based merchants? Many of them became wealthy because of the business Babylon generated for them.

Think About It: The end of false religion will cause consternation to people in places of authority and influence all around the earth - demonstrating clearly the extent of the influence of earth's false religions!

“Effects of Babylon’s Destruction”

Revelation 18:20-24

Q - Who would you expect to be adversely affected by the destruction of false religion from the face of the earth?

Revelation 18 concludes with a brief glimpse of heaven’s rejoicing while many people of earth find their lives traumatized by the destruction of “Babylon the great.”

I. The Call to Rejoicing 18:20

Q - Why will the response of God and His people to the fall of Babylon the great differ so significantly from the sorrowing of the world at large (v. 20)? False religion has been the cause of many of the wrongs carried out against God and His people throughout human history.

II. The Cause for Rejoicing 18:21-24

A. The Illustration of Babylon’s Fall 18:21

Q - What is the significance of the action of the strong angel of verse 21? It illustrates the finality of Babylon the great’s destruction by God’s judgment.

B. The Impact of Babylon’s Fall 18:22-23

Q - How and why will the fall of Babylon the great affect the world of musicians (v. 22)? The many musicians who were employed in false religion will be suddenly unemployed.

Q - Who might be some of the craftsmen (v. 22) adversely affected by the fall of Babylon the great? Builders and keepers of buildings and grounds and vehicles and machinery and

equipment will all be adversely affected.

Q - Who might be adversely affected by the absence of the sound of a mill any longer (v. 22) in Babylon the great? Any-one employed in mills, preparing food or machinery or equipment used in Babylon will suddenly be unemployed.

Q - What might be the significance of “the light of a lamp” not shining any longer in Babylon the great (v. 23)? False religion has used not only normal lights but many lights for religious symbolism, but darkness will be the appropriate end for the promoters of spiritual darkness.

Q - In what way will brides and bridegrooms be impacted by the destruction of Babylon the great (v. 23)? Many of the marriages on earth have involved religious ceremonies and officials no longer available after Babylon’s destruction.

Q - What does verse 23 reveal was the problem for the merchants of the earth in their business dealings with Babylon the great? Merchants who benefitted from false religion were benefitting on the basis of deceptive false religious practices.

C. The Evidence of Babylon’s Guilt 18:24

Q - Whose blood will be laid to the charge of Babylon the great according to verse 24? The blood of true prophets and saints of God (and many, many others) will be laid to the charge of Babylon the great according to verse 24.

Think About It: Though heaven will rejoice at the destruction of Babylon the great, many citizens of earth will be traumatically affected by her demise.

“Heaven’s Worship Celebration”

Revelation 19:1-10

Q - What have been the occasions for the most memorable worship experiences you can recall?

Revelation 19 describes the worship which will take place in heaven when the Lord has finished putting down the spiritual forces which have opposed Him and troubled His people throughout human history.

I. The Sounds of Worship in Heaven 19:1-8

A. Worship of a Heavenly Multitude 19:1-3

Q - Who are the members of the “great multitude” whose statement is recorded in vv. 1-3? The “great multitude” who recognize God as their savior and vindicator - the “bond-servants of God” - are the great multitude of vv. 1-3.

Q - For what specific acts does the multitude praise the Lord in verse 2? They praise the Lord for His judgment of the great harlot and for His avenging of His bond-servants’ blood.

Q - How will the Lord mark in infamy the deeds and deceptions of “Babylon the great, mother of harlots” (v. 3)? He will destroy her forever - as a city reduced to ashes.

B. Worship of Elders and Living Creatures 19:4

Q - What does the worship of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures add to the scene being described? It adds the whole-hearted agreement of representatives of both saints (of Israel and the church) and of angels.

C. Message of a Voice from the Throne 19:5

Q - Why is the challenge of the voice from the throne an important challenge? It is important that all men praise and fear God rather than themselves (whether they are small or great from human perspective).

D. Worship of a Heavenly Multitude and Waters 19:6-8

Q - What does John's description of the sound of the praise of verse 6 add to the scene? It adds increasing volume from a great multitude who are praising God and acknowledging His reign.

Q - What will make the "marriage of the Lamb" such an occasion for rejoicing and worship (v. 7)? It will mark the joining of Christ and His redeemed people in the absence of enemies now destroyed.

Q - Of what will the wedding dress of the bride be made (v. 8)? It will be made of the righteous acts of the saints - not only righteous standing, but righteous deeds.

II. The Focus of Worship in Heaven 19:9-10

A. An Angel's Message to John 19:9

Q - What constitutes the blessedness of an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Those who are invited are to take part in the ceremony of the marriage as the bride of Christ!

B. An Angel's Correction of John 19:10

Q - Why is it significant that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"? The testimony of Jesus is that of the One who is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). His word of

testimony is consistent with all that God the Father and God the Spirit have revealed in creation and the written word of God - given, in many places by the prophets who were moved by the Holy Spirit to write what they wrote.

Think About It: The Lord's defeat of His spiritual foes and the announcement of the marriage supper of the Lamb will be the occasion for one of heaven's most significant worship celebrations.

“The Arrival of Heaven’s Horseman”

Revelation 19:11-21

Q - What is the most impressive performance you have ever seen on horseback, and who was the horseman?

Revelation 19 describes the arrival of a heavenly horseman who will ride to earth through the sky to bring the tribulation age to a sudden and decisive end in the face of the opposition of earth’s most powerful people and forces.

I. The Appearance of a Heavenly Horseman 19:11-16

Q - What features of John’s description help us identify the horseman in verse 11? He comes out of heaven, rides a white horse, is called faithful and true, and judges and conducts war righteously.

Q - What does John’s further description in verse 12 add to our understanding of the horseman of verse 11? His eyes are “penetrating,” He wears many diadems, and He has a name written on Him which only He understands.

Q - What does the description of the horseman’s robe portend for the future of any who oppose Him? The description of His robe as “dipped in blood” presents Him as one who has fought an enemy and bloodied His enemy - with their blood staining His robe.

Q - How does the name revealed in verse 13 end any reasonable doubt about the identity of the horseman? Jesus is the only person designated in Scripture as the “word of God” (John 1:1, 14; etc.).

Q - Who would you say make up the armies in heaven

described in verse 14? The white garments identify the armies of heaven as the saints (cf. 3:4; 19:8).

Q - What do the features of verse 15 add to our understanding of the horseman and His venture? They reveal that He has come to earth to judge His enemies with death (as an expression of God's wrath) and to rule sovereignly.

Q - How does the name written upon the horseman's thigh rank Him in comparison with other authorities on earth? It reveals that He is obviously above all other kings and authorities.

II. The Invitation of the Birds to a Feast 19:17-18

Q - What does the dinner fare offered to the birds tell us about the nature of the "great supper of God" to which they are invited? It tells us that "the great supper of God" refers to a slaughter of God's enemies which scavenging birds will clean up.

III. The Destruction of the Beast and Company 19:19-21

Q - What do the armies assembled to meet the horseman reveal about earth's opinion of Him (v. 19)? The assembled armies reveal that earth's rulers foolishly oppose the Lord and think that they can confront Him.

Q - What does verse 20 reveal about the comparative strength of the opposing forces in the contest? It reveals that Christ's enemies are no match for Jesus - not even, in fact, a challenge to Him.

Q - What does verse 21 tell us about the nature of the sword seen earlier proceeding from the mouth of the horseman? It tells us that the sword is a lethal weapon of supernatural

proportions.

Think About It: The difficulties of the tribulation period will come to a sudden conclusion with the return of heaven's "king of kings" on horseback.

“The Millennial Kingdom”

Revelation 20:1-6

Q - When has the confinement of any menacing or notorious criminal in prison given you reason to rejoice?

The opening verses of the twentieth chapter of the Revelation briefly describe the confinement of the most notorious and monstrous criminal of the ages and the thousand-year time of celebration the earth will enjoy throughout his lengthy confinement.

I. The Dragon Is Imprisoned for One Thousand Years 20:1-3

Q - What do the actions and possessions of the angel of verse 1 suggest about him? They reveal that he is sent by God, granted authority, and is about to apprehend someone.

Q - What does the angel's ability to bind the dragon for 1,000 years (verse 2) reveal? It reveals that he has been given great power and authority - even over spirits of evil.

Q - What kind of an “abyss” (verse 3) do you imagine might contain the dragon for his thousand-year confinement? It must be something far out of the ordinary, an “abyss” designed by God, if it can be shut and sealed to confine a spirit being.

Q - What will the suspension of the dragon's freedom (verse 3) mean to the earth and its citizens? It means that one of the primary causes of evil will be restrained and removed from action for 1,000 years. What will his release mean? It means that the malevolent power and influence of Satan will return once again - this time to an earth accustomed to righteousness and peace under the 1,000-year reign of Jesus, the Messiah.

II. The Tribulation Saints Reign with Christ 20:4-6

Q - Who might be the occupants of the thrones described in verse 4? Probably saints of all ages.

Q - Who appear to be honored co-regents with those first described in verse 4, and why? Tribulation saints and martyrs appear to be honored co-regents - because they too are believers who deserve to be rewarded for faithfulness in difficulty.

Q - Who would “the rest of the dead” be (verse 5) who remain in their graves for the thousand years? The unsaved dead, who will have no part in the millennial kingdom.

Q - Why does verse 5 describe the resurrection of tribulation saints as “the first resurrection” though the rapture, seven years earlier, has resulted in the resurrection of church-age saints prior to that of tribulation saints? The “first resurrection” (which comes in stages) is the resurrection to life of all of the saints.

Q - What “second death” (verse 6) has no power over the resurrected souls described in this passage? Eternal death is the second death which has no power over resurrected saints.

Q - What ministry is assigned to resurrected tribulation saints (along with other saints) by verse 6? Resurrected tribulation saints will serve with Christ for 1,000 years as priests and rulers (with other saints).

Think About It: The horrors of the tribulation will be followed by the confinement of Satan and the earthly reign of Christ with His resurrected saints for one thousand years.

“Rebellion’s Reward”

Revelation 20:7-15

Q - What is the most memorable experience you have ever had with a judge and a court of law?

The closing verses of the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation briefly describe the release of the devil from his 1,000-year confinement, his role in the final rebellion against the Lord, and the judgment and sentencing of all who have rejected the Lord down through the ages of human history at the great white throne judgment.

I. The Dragon is Released for His Final Attack 20:7-9

Q - What do verses 7 and 8 indicate that Satan will have learned as a result of his 1,000-year imprisonment in the abyss? They indicate that he will have learned nothing! He will still be a malevolent deceiver opposed to Christ.

Q - What does verse 8 reveal about the hearts of people who will have lived under the authority of the Messiah throughout the Millennial Kingdom? It reveals that hearts will remain hard and deceitful, even after 1,000 years of required righteousness (cf. Jeremiah 17:9).

Q - Where will the challenge to God’s authority take place according to verse 9? It will take place surrounding Jerusalem and the saints on the broad plain of the earth.

Q - What will be the outcome of the challenge of Satan and his followers to the authority of the Lord (v. 9)? Fire will come down out of heaven and will devour them.

II. The Defeat and Doom of the Dragon 20:10

Q - What “unholy trinity” will be the first inhabitants of the lake of fire we commonly refer to as “hell”? The dragon (the devil), the beast (antichrist), and the second beast (the false prophet) will be the first inhabitants of the lake of fire.

III. The Great White Throne Judgment 20:11-15

Q - What might cause earth and heaven to flee away from the One (John 5:22,27; I Timothy 4:1) seated upon the “great white throne” (v. 11)? The unholiness of the sin-cursed earth and its inhabitants in the face of the absolute holiness and awesome power and authority of the Lord will cause earth and heaven to flee from His presence.

Q - Who does verse 12 tell us will appear to be judged before the great white throne? It tells us that the dead - both the great and the small - will appear to be judged.

Q - What will be the basis of the judgement which will take place at the great white throne (v. 12)? The things (a record of their deeds) written in the book will be the basis for judgment.

Q - Why might the dead in the sea be distinguished from the dead in death and Hades (v. 13)? Death and Hades primarily refers to people whose bodies were buried; those in the sea were never properly buried.

Q - What makes the lake of fire the “second death” (v. 14)? The “second death” (eternal death) will follow up on the physical death which preceded it for those who experience it.

Q - What is the crucial test which assigns men to the lake of fire (v. 15)? Whether someone’s name continues to be found in the book of life, following their physical death, will be the basis on which a person is assigned to the lake of fire.

Think About It: Both Satan and sinful men will be assigned to the lake of fire when the Lord passes judgment on the basis of their deeds at the Great White Throne Judgment.

“All Things New”

Revelation 21:1-8

Q - What are some changes you would like to make, if you could, to improve conditions on our earth?

The twenty-first chapter of the Revelation introduces us to the changes the Lord Himself is going to make in the universe and on the earth after the judgments of the tribulation and the Millennium which have been recorded in the earlier chapters of the Revelation.

I. The New Jerusalem Descends to the New Earth 21:1-4

Q - What will necessitate a “new heaven and a new earth” (v. 1)? The pollution of sin and physical impurity left by mankind on the 1st (Genesis 1:1) and 2nd (Isaiah 65:17) earths, as well as a new order of things, will necessitate a new heaven and a new earth.

Q - What will the absence of the sea on the new earth (v. 1) bring about as far as conditions on the earth are concerned?
The absence of the sea will bring about a more habitable land mass - more easily traversed without the water barrier seas have presented - bringing people and nations closer to one another.

Q - What does John’s description of the New Jerusalem in verse 2 tell us about the city? The New Jerusalem, beautifully adorned, descends from God out of heaven to the new earth.

Q - What are some of the differences you anticipate the changes announced in verse 3 for the new earth will make in human experience? God will be openly recognized as a powerful and positive presence in His people’s lives.

Q - What are some differences the absence of the standard features of the present earth (v. 4) will make upon the citizens of the new earth? The absence of sadness and sad experiences will make way for great and constant joy and an uninterrupted focus on life.

II. The New Jerusalem's Inhabitants 21:5-8

Q - Why might the Lord emphasize, as He does, the faithfulness and truth of His words in verse 5? Some of the things John has recorded seem almost unbelievable from our present perspective.

Q - What is important about the name by which the Lord identifies Himself in verse 6? The name emphasizes God's eternality as our own eternal blessings come into view.

Q - What do you imagine the value of the "water of life" (v. 6) might be for those who will drink it? It will apparently somehow contribute to or even enhance life eternal - as the "living water" Jesus offered to the woman at the well was intended to enhance earthly life for all who drank it (John 4).

Q - What does verse 7 tell us will be true of those who inherit the blessings of the new earth? They will have "overcome" as a result of their faith and the saving work of Christ (cf. I John 5:4-5 and Revelation 12:10-11).

Q - What does the contrast between verses 7 and 8 indicate about those who "overcome"? It indicates that the faith of the overcomers will have made a very practical and positive difference in their lives, while the absence of faith for others will have made a very tragic difference in their eternal status.

Q - How does John describe the fate of those who do not overcome (v. 8)? He writes that they will experience the "sec-

ond death” - the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Think About It: The judgment of earth’s unbelievers will be followed by the revelation of a new heaven and earth characterized by ideal conditions and the presence of God Himself among His people.

“A City Like No Other”

Revelation 21:9-21

Q - What man-made structure you have seen has made the greatest impression in your thinking?

Revelation 21:9-21 gives us the Scriptures' most detailed description of the structures and the materials which will be found in the place the Lord has prepared for His people to inhabit for the eternal future.

I. The View of the City 21:9-11

Q - Why might the holy city, Jerusalem, be described as the “bride, the wife of the Lamb” (v. 9)? It will be the residence eternally of all who have become God’s people by faith.

Q - What is significant about John’s condition and location as he viewed the holy city (v. 10)? John was “in the spirit” on a mountain high enough to allow him to see the very large New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven.

Q - What initial impression do you get of the holy city from John’s description in verse 11? It sounds like the most beautiful Jewel ever created - resplendent with the glory of God Himself.

II. The Gates and Wall of the City 21:12-15

Q - What do the names inscribed on the twelve gates tell us about the place of Israel in the holy city (v. 12)? The names seem to indicate that Israel’s believing members of all twelve tribes will be present in the New Jerusalem.

Q - What do the names on the twelve foundation stones in

the holy city tell us about the place of the church in the holy city (v. 14)? Like believing Israel, the church will clearly figure largely in the population of the New Jerusalem.

Q - What is suggested by the material of which the measuring rod used to measure the new Jerusalem was made (v. 15)?
The material of the measuring rod suggests that everything associated with heaven will be of quality materials.

III. The Measurements of the City 21:16-17

Q - How will the measurements of the holy city (v. 16) compare with those of any city you are aware of on the present earth? The measurements of the holy city will seriously dwarf any city earth has ever known.

Q - What do the measurements of the wall of the holy city (v. 17) suggest to you about the city? The holy city will obviously be a very secure city in view of its impressive walls.

IV. The Materials of the City 21:18-21

Q - What do the materials of which the city is constructed suggest to you about the city (vv. 18-20)? The city will be unparalleled in quality and beauty and expense from the perspective of human experience.

Q - What does the description of the twelve gates and the streets add to our understanding of the city (v. 21)? The city will be highly unusual and beautiful by comparison with anything human beings have known on earth.

Think About It: The New Jerusalem will outclass and outshine in both size and quality of its materials any structure mankind has ever thought about building.

“Life in the New Jerusalem”

Revelation 21:22-22:5

Q - What comes to your mind when you think of “heavenly” conditions?

Revelation 21 and 22 give us the Scriptures’ most detailed description of the place and the conditions which will apparently be the central focus of the people of God for the eternal future.

I. The Absence of Temple and Sun in the City 21:22-23

Q - What does the description of the temple in the holy city say about conditions there (21:22)? It says that God’s presence will be very evident everywhere in the New Jerusalem.

Q - What does the way in which the holy city is illuminated reveal to us (21:23)? The Biblical truth that “God is light” is more than a spiritual phenomenon. His glory provides a penetrating light which illuminates more fully than the sun!

II. The Glory of Kings and Nations in the City 21:24-26

Q - What do verses 24-26 of chapter 21 reveal about the conditions of the eternal state? There will be nations on earth with their kings passing in and out of the Holy City.

III. The Residents of the City 21:27

Q - What do you find most encouraging about 21:27's description of the residents of the holy city? All will be saints who live out their sainthood in practical terms - avoiding sinful practices.

IV. The River in the City 22:1

Q - What does the name of the river described in 22:1 suggest about its purpose? It's name suggests that the river will somehow enhance the experience of the lives of heaven's citizens.

Q - Why might the river of verse one flow "in the middle of the street" (22:1)? Perhaps it will add park-like beauty and variety in the city and easy accessibility to all who travel there.

V. The Tree in the City 22:2

Q - What does 22:2 reveal about the purpose of the "tree of life"? The "tree of life" will provide a variety of fruits - apparently for enjoyment in the eating - and it will provide healing power to eliminate any illnesses among the nations.

VI. The Lord's Presence in the City 22:3-4

Q - What changes might we expect from the absence of the "curse" (22:3)? We should expect the absence of death and decay (entropy) and irritants (e.g. thorns and thistles) and tensions between people and between men and woman and mankind and God, and we should expect no exhaustion.

Q - What kinds of "service" do you imagine the Lord might desire of His bond-servants (22:3)? He will desire any evidence of love for Him and for others, and genuine worship toward the Lord.

Q - What is noteworthy about John's report that the bond-servants of God and of the Lamb shall see His face (22:4)? The believer's relationship with God will be more than spiritual as the saints see the Lord face to face (in Christ, no doubt).

VII. Absence of Night in the City 22:5

Q - What changes might the absence of night bring about for the residents of the Holy City (22:5)? Perhaps a night's rest will not be necessary; darkness will not interrupt any activity or present any danger.

Q - Over whom or what might the bond-servants of God and of the Lamb “reign forever and ever” (22:5)? They will probably have a role in stewarding the new creation; the Apostle Paul made reference to authority over angels (I Corinthians 6:3); and saints will apparently have a role in the lives of the “nations” referred to in Revelation 21:24.

Think About It: Eternal life in the New Jerusalem, the “Holy City,” will apparently be similar in some ways to our present life on earth and radically different in others.

“A Book Like No Other”

Revelation 22:6-21

Q - What goes into the making of a book you would describe as a “great book”?

Revelation 22 brings us to its end (as well as the Bible’s end) with the assurance that it is no ordinary book, but a book to be taken very seriously.

I. The Importance of the Book 22:6-19

Q - Why might the Lord reemphasize (cf. 21:5) the faithfulness and truth of the words of the Revelation in verse 6? He reemphasizes its words to reaffirm the indispensable truth that the God of prophecy knows and controls all things - as revealed in the amazing story of the book of the Revelation.

Q - What incentive does the Lord give for heeding the words of the book in verse 7? He provides the incentive of His return to bring all things to their predetermined end and to settle the score with mankind collectively and individually.

Q - Why might John have fallen to worship at the feet of the angel of verse 8? What John had experienced was so overwhelming that he felt he had to worship even the messenger.

Q - What does the angel’s response to John’s attempt at worship (v. 9) reveal about the angel? The angels response revealed that he fully understood his place as a servant and messenger and recognized the unparalleled greatness of God.

Q - Why might the angel have given the instruction of verse 10? The angel was aware that some earlier amazing prophecies had been sealed/concealed (cf. Daniel 8:26; 12:4), so John

needed to know whether or not his revelation was to be concealed.

Q - Why might the angel make allowance for not only righteous and holy behavior but wrong and filthy behavior in verse 11? People tend to be confirmed in their ways - for good or ill - and the fact that the people who would read the Revelation given to John were to have access to even this revelation wouldn't necessarily change things. Evil people, having read the Revelation, might continue to be evil!

Q - What reward does verse 12 indicate that the Lord will bring with Him upon His return? He will bring with Him the reward which is appropriate for each person's performance.

Q - What is significant about the revelation given in verse 13 at this point in the book? The reminder that God is fully in control of the events of time and eternity is a reminder of His timeless importance.

Q - How would a person wash his robe (v. 14; cf. 7:14) to gain the right to the tree of life and entrance into the holy city? He would wash it by a saving relationship with the Lamb whose blood was shed for his salvation.

Q - What seems significant to you about the list of those who will be excluded from the holy city (v. 15)? Every variety of evildoer will be excluded from the holy city - leaving only those whose lives conform to God's will.

Q - What is significant about the way in which Jesus describes Himself in 22:16? Jesus identifies Himself as the long-promised Messiah of David's line and the one who, like the "morning star," stands out among all others.

Q - Why might verse 17 include so many invitations to

“come”? They are included to emphasize the truth that God’s invitation is wide open to all who will come - on His terms, of course.

Q - How could the Lord add more of the plagues written in Revelation to the person who adds to the book’s message (v. 18)? The Lord has ways in which He can bring judgment into the lives of those adding to the message of Revelation which are not detailed in the book.

Q - What will be the destiny of anyone taking away from the words of the Revelation (v. 19)? Such a person will be barred from “heaven.”

II. The Conclusion to the Book 22:20-21

Q - On what note of encouragement does the Revelation end (v. 20)? It ends on the encouraging note that Jesus is coming - in such a manner that no one will be able to stop Him.

Think About It: The Revelation ends with the assurance of its own significance as well as the significance of its source.