

The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key



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B. The Child. Who is this baby boy?

He is destined “to rule all the nations with a rod of iron” (v. 5). Such a reference points clearly to **the Messiah** (see Psalm 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). Interestingly, nothing is said about Jesus’ life, ministry, or death on a cross! Rather, we read only of Messiah’s **birth** and then his **ascension**² to heaven (v. 5). Obviously, John has another purpose in mind than to tell the story of the baby. His focus is rather the dragon and the woman.

This child is the one Isaiah had prophesied: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the **government** shall be upon his shoulder...” (Isaiah 9:6–7). When Jesus came the first time, most didn’t realize who he was. And though Revelation 12 mentions him only briefly, don’t worry: he’ll **be back soon!** And when he comes again, no one anywhere will have any doubts about his true identity (see 19:11–16).

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him (1:7).

C. The Dragon. Who is this monster and why is he so intent on killing a baby?

1. What he is like? What is his name? Who is he?
 - a. He is great (enormous) and **red** (v. 3).
 - b. He has **7 heads** with 7 crowns (v. 3). Thus, he’s hard to kill.
 - c. He has **10 horns** (v. 3). The horn is the symbol of strength.
 - d. He has a huge and destructive tail (v. 4).
 - e. He is **furiosus** (vv. 12, 17). He has been kicked out of heaven, he failed to kill the baby³ or the mother, and he knows his time is short. He is really upset!

Perhaps his names and descriptive titles give us the clearest clue to his true identity:

- That ancient **serpent** (v. 9).
- The **devil** (v. 9). The word *diabolos* means “to accuse”, “to slander.”
- **Satan** (v. 9). The word means “adversary.”
- The **deceiver** of the whole world (v. 9).
- The **accuser** of our brothers, who accuses them day and night before our God (v. 10).

When King Herod tried to kill baby Jesus (Matthew 2:16–18), there was more going on than a jealous and insecure tyrant practicing ethnic cleansing!

2. What is his story?

Inserted in the story of the dragon’s war on the woman and her child, is a kind of **prequel** (vv. 7–12). When the dragon (Lucifer) rebelled against God, Michael and his angels fought against the demonic army (perhaps a third of the

² Verse 5 says literally that he was “caught up” to God (snatched up). It is the same term used in I Thessalonians 4:17 to describe the “rapture” of the saints.

³ When Jesus died on the cross, for three days the dragon thought he had won. But then Jesus was literally “snatched” out of his clutches!

heavenly host, see v. 4) and **cast them out** of heaven. (See Ezek. 28:12–17; Isa. 14:12–15; Luke 10:18).

3. What does he do?

The dragon has one primary goal: destroy the child (v. 4). When he fails, he goes into a rage and **declares war** on the woman and her offspring (the people of God, the church). This passage exposes for all to see the **strategy** of the dragon ⁴ in his war against the saints (12:17; 13:7):

- a. **Deception** (see v. 9). Ever since the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden, Satan’s primary tactic has been to tell lies, **half-truths**, and fabrications. “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree?’” “You will not die!” (Gen. 3:1, 4).
- b. **Condemnation**. (See v. 10. See Job 1:6–11; Zech. 3:1). Like an expert **prosecuting** attorney, Satan constantly gathers evidence to show what sinful, miserable failures we really are. Unless we can find a better attorney, we don’t have a chance (I John 2:1–2; Romans 8:33–35).
- c. **Intimidation**. Satan is filled with fury because he knows his time is short (See vv. 12, 17). So he seeks to do as much damage as possible in the short time allotted to him. Thus, his ferocity and cruelty are only a **camouflage** for the reality that he is already doomed!

D. The Woman. Who is this woman?

The woman represents far more than Mary. She is a symbol of the people of God, the new Israel, the **church**. Just as Jesus was born out of Israel⁵, so now the woman has other offspring who are the people of God. This godly woman is in sharp contrast to “the great **prostitute**” we are going to meet later (ch. 17, etc.). She will finally be seen as the **bride** of Christ, prepared for her wedding day (Rev. 19–22). Because the dragon was unable to destroy the child (Jesus), he now unleashes all his fury against the church!

III. What the Story of Cosmic Christmas Means for You and for Me.

A. This world is a **battleground** not an amusement park.

If you belong to Jesus Christ, beware! The dragon has declared war against you (12:17; 13:7). Those who think life is a party, will find it difficult to understand why all hell is breaking loose around them.⁶ But though Satan unleashes a **flood** of evil against you (see vv. 15–16), he will not be able to destroy you (see Isaiah 43:1–2).

B. Your life has **cosmic** significance.

Your life matters! In fact, the future of the universe is to some degree being determined by how you choose to live your life: serving the Lamb or the Beast. The destiny of the world is hanging in the balance and you can make a difference in which way it goes.

⁴ In warfare, if you know your enemy’s strategy, it becomes very easy to defeat him.

⁵ Notice that the woman wore a crown of 12 stars (v. 1), symbolizing undoubtedly the 12 tribes of Israel.

⁶ Remember the expression “life’s a beach”? That’s correct: Omaha Beach at Normandy!

C. How to be an **overcomer**. Verse 11 gives us three essential keys to victory:

They triumphed [conquered] over him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (v. 11, NIV).

1. The **blood** of the Lamb. We don't stand a chance against the accusations of Satan and the condemnation we deserve, without the blood! "There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).
2. The word of their **testimony**. To live the victorious life, we must go public with our witness. We must name the Name before others. We must confess with our mouth that "**Jesus is Lord**" (Romans 10:9-10).
3. They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from **death**. The Greek word for witness is *martus*. By definition, to be a witness is to be ready to lay down your life for what you believe. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it well; "When Christ calls a man, he bids him **come and die**."

*Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still;
his kingdom is forever.⁷*

TABLE TALK

1. How does this passage help you to better understand Christmas?
2. What has this lesson taught you about Satan (the dragon)? What has it taught you about the Church?
3. Which of Satan's tactics (deception, condemnation, intimidation) has been most successful against the American church? Against you as an individual believer?
4. Why is it so difficult to be a witness for Jesus in the public arena? What can you do to be more effective in naming the Name?
5. Describe a situation in your life right now in which it feels like evil is rolling over you like a flood. Ask your group to pray for you to be an overcomer.

⁷ Luther, ???.



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CHAPTER 10. CURSED TRINITY (CH. 13)

I. Accounting for Evil.

A. Examples of evil.

1. *People of the Lie*, by Scott Peck.
2. The Holocaust.
3. The Rwandan genocide (*Hotel Rwanda*).
4. Miss Harvest Queen and Miss Homecoming (*Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*. Cornelius Plantinga. pp. 157f.).
5. But most importantly, look no further than **my own heart**.

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every** intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil **continually**.* (Gen. 6:5).

B. But such evil needs an explanation.

We believe that man is made in the image of a good God. So where does such evil come from? What is its origin? The Scripture simply says: Now **the serpent** was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made (Gen. 3:1). Tonight our Scripture (Rev. 13) will introduce us to a much fuller description of the way this “ancient serpent” (Rev. 12:9) will ultimately present himself to the world in the hope that he can finally succeed in his rebellion against the Lamb.

C. Masquerade.

Satan can do nothing original. Evil is always a **parasite** on the good. For evil to succeed, it must appear as something “good” (Matt. 7:15; II Cor. 11:13–15). This means that Satan is always trying to imitate God. To do its worst, evil must look its best. Vice must masquerade as virtue. Nowhere is this more diabolically true than in Satan’s attempt to duplicate the Holy Trinity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are twisted so that in Satan’s scheme they become **Satan, Anti-Christ** and **False Prophet**.

II. Cursed Trinity.

A. The Dragon. In the previous session we met this evil creature (Rev. 12).

1. His qualities and appearance.
 - a. He is enormous and red, having 7 heads and 10 horns, and a huge, destructive tail (vv. 3–4).
 - b. He is furious because he lost his rebellion in heaven and has been kicked out (vv. 7–9). He knows his time is short (vv. 12,17). Like a spoiled child that cannot get his way, he is having a **temper tantrum**.
 - c. He has one overwhelming goal: kill the baby boy (Jesus) born by the woman. When he fails, he **makes war** on the woman and on the rest of her offspring (the church) (vv. 3–6, 13–17).

2. His names and descriptive titles:
 - a. The **ancient serpent** (v. 9).
 - b. The devil (*diabolos* means “to accuse”, “to slander”) (v. 9,12).
 - c. **Satan** (adversary) (v. 9).
 - d. The **deceiver** of the whole world (v. 9).
The accuser of our brothers (v. 10).
 3. Before Adam and Eve were created, this dragon had led the failed rebellion in heaven (vv. 7–9,12). Expelled from God’s dwelling, Satan (the devil) has now come to earth to seek revenge. This is the ultimate **source of evil**. But notice:
 - a. He is not another “God”. This is not **dualism** in the Bible such as one finds in Zoroastrianism and other ancient religions.
 - b. And yet his evil presence is somehow **permitted** by God and his influence allowed to infiltrate the earth.
 - c. He is a **big loser**. In the past and especially in the future, the dragon is marked as a defeated foe. No one should ever be in doubt as to his ultimate end.
- B. The Beast out of the sea (Revelation 13:1–10).
1. To understand this passage one must first study Daniel 7 (Appendix A).
 2. What the beast out of the sea is like:
 - a. 10 horns and 10 diadems (v. 1).
 - b. 7 heads with blasphemous names written on them (v. 1).
 - c. He is like a leopard (v. 2).
 - d. He has feet like a bear (v. 2).
 - e. He has a mouth like a lion (v. 2). He will be a great orator.
 - f. The Dragon (Satan) gave this beast his power, his throne and his authority (v. 2). When this beast comes he will create a **one world government**. “In Big Government we trust” will be the motto.
 - g. He is haughty and utters blasphemies against God and his temple (v. 5–6).
 - h. He rules over the entire world for **42 months** (1260 days, 3½ years) (vv. 5, 7–8).
 - i. The only ones on earth who did not worship the beast were those whose names were written in the book of life of the lamb (v. 8). He made war on these saints and **conquered** them (v. 7).
 3. The most notable feature of this beast: one of its 7 heads had a **mortal wound** but it was miraculously healed. This caused the whole world to marvel and worship the beast as well as the dragon (vv. 3–4).
 4. Therefore: listen up (v. 9)! Things are going to get **much worse** (v. 10). For the saints, this is a call for **endurance** and for faith (v. 11).

5. This beast is the same figure spoken of elsewhere in Scripture as the **Anti-Christ**. Evil became flesh and lived among us. He will be a sort of **incarnation** of Satan (the dragon). He will be worshipped by the whole world.

- *Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is **the last hour**....Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son (I John 2:18, 22).*
- *Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the **man of lawlessness** is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.... For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved (II Thess. 2:3-4, 7-10).*

C. The Beast out of the earth (Revelation 13:11-18).

1. What the beast out of the earth is like:
 - a. It has two horns like a **lamb** (v. 11).
 - b. It speaks like a dragon (v. 11).
 - c. It has all the authority of the first beast (v. 12).
 - d. It makes the inhabitants of the earth **worship** the first beast “whose moral wound was healed” (Antichrist) (v. 12).
 - e. It performs **signs and wonders** (fire from heaven, etc.) and thus “deceives those who dwell on earth” (vv. 13-14).
 - f. It makes an image of the first beast (Antichrist) and then breathes life into the image so that it speaks. Those who will not worship the image of the first beast must be slain (vv. 14-15). With this beast the union of **church and state** is total. The state is deified and religion become politics.
 - g. It causes everyone to be marked on the right hand and forehead with “the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.” This mark is necessary for all **economic purchases**. (vv. 16-17).
 - h. Pay attention and calculate the number of the beast: “it is the number of a man, and his number is **666**.” (v. 18). (See Appendix B).
 - i. As the beast out of the sea (Antichrist) exerted his power through politics and **intimidation**, this beast exerts his power through **deception** and false religion.
2. With the beast out of the earth we see the completion of the cursed trinity.
 - The dragon of chapter 12 is Satan, the devil.
 - The beast out of the sea (13:1-10) is Antichrist.
 - The beast out of the earth (13:11-18) is the **False Prophet**.

3. Notice the satanic attempts to counterfeit the Holy Trinity:
 - Antichrist has a pseudo **resurrection** (13:3,12,14).
 - The False Prophet does signs and wonders (13:13–15).
 - The False Prophet is **lamb-like** (13:11).
 - Both Satan (dragon) and Antichrist (the first beast) are worshipped (13:4,8,12–15).
 - Antichrist does his work during 3½ years, approximately the same amount of time that Jesus did his ministry (13:5).
 - The False Prophet **exalts** Antichrist and causes people to worship him similar to the way the Holy Spirit exalts Jesus (13:12). He is a sort of Minister of Propaganda for the beast.
 - Just as the saints were **sealed** by a mark on their foreheads (7:3–4; 14:1; 22:4), so the False Prophet marks all those who belong to Satan with a mark (666) on their foreheads or their right hands (13:16–18).

III. What lessons can we learn?

- A. Be **balanced**. Satan and his minions are real and powerful. But they are a defeated foe. Therefore, we must alert and vigilant yet not overly concerned nor anxious.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors....¹
- B. Don't be **fooled**. Satan, Antichrist and False Prophet are imposters, pretenders, and counterfeits. They can only try to imitate what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. More importantly, they are already defeated foes and they know it. They may look threatening but don't be fooled. Satan is a big loser! "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision" (Psalm 2:4). These beasts are ridiculous imposters! It would be comical were it not so serious.
- C. Be **steadfast** and persevere (v. 10). Pastor John is not writing to give a philosophical explanation of the origin of evil. He is writing to the members of the churches to call them to patient endurance in spite of the tribulation and suffering they are experiencing.
- D. Be **prepared** for battle. When we know our enemy's strategy then we can be victorious in our combat against him. His tactics are primarily **intimidation** and **deception**. The beast from the sea would frighten us into disobedience; the beast from the earth would deceive us into illusions and false beliefs. But such tactics simply cannot work against those who know he is only bluffing. Yes, the beast may gain a type of "victory" over the saints (v. 7) but this is only temporary.

¹ Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 3.

TABLE TALK

1. What theological truth have you learned in this lesson?
2. What practical truth have you learned? How will your daily walk be different because of what we have discussed here?
3. What has been your attitude to Satan in the past? Has this lesson changed the way you think about him and his work in the world?
4. Pastor John repeatedly calls the members of the body of Christ to be “overcomers.” And yet, it is clear he expects some of them to be killed and “conquered” (13:7). How can both of these realities be true?

Appendix A: Daniel 7

Daniel 7 is indispensable background material for understanding Revelation 13. In his vision, Daniel saw four beasts coming out of the sea: the first was like a lion, the second was like a bear, the third was like a leopard, but the fourth beast was different (v. 7,23,24) from the other three. It had 10 horns. Then a little horn grew that replaced three of the horns. These four beasts represent four kings and their empires. The fourth king will be different as will his kingdom (vv. 23–24). It will devour the whole earth and this king will speak blasphemies against God and make war on the saints and prevail over them (vv. 21, 25). But as horrific as this evil will be in the earth, suddenly the Ancient of Days will appear and take his seat on his throne and this fourth beast will be killed (vv. 9–12,22). Then the Son of Man will return in glory and establish his kingdom (vv. 13–14). The beast’s kingdom will then be given to the saints (vv. 26–27). John has apparently blended the characteristics of the four beasts in Daniel 7 into one composite monstrous creature in Revelation 13. John wants us to understand that the beast from the sea (Antichrist) (13:1–10) is none other than the “little horn” of the fourth beast in Daniel’s vision. He will rule over a global kingdom that will be in some sense “different” from all the kingdoms of the earth that preceded it.

Appendix B :#666

The number 666 has caused voluminous and passionate discussion for 20 centuries! How is this number to be understood? To what or to whom does it refer? In both Hebrew and Greek, the letters of the alphabet can also be used as numbers so that each letter has a numerical value. This means that names can be turned into a number. Many attempts have been made to determine which names in history can be translated into the number 666. With a little ingenuity, this can conceivably be done with Caesar, Nero, Caligula, Mohammed, Martin Luther, Cromwell, Napoleon, Hitler, etc. The possibilities are endless. It is interesting to note that 777 can be considered a perfect number. The name Jesus in Greek is the number 888, one step above perfection. And the number 666 thus represents someone who is a triple loser, a trinity of imperfection.

A Mighty Fortress

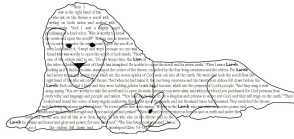
By Martin Luther

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.



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CHAPTER 11. THE GRAPES OF WRATH (CH. 14–16)

I. Judgment and Wrath.

A. Preaching the Terrors.

Pastor John had no intention of shielding his listeners from the terrors of God's coming **wrath!** Others in history have done the same. For example, on July 8, 1741 in a church in Enfield, Connecticut, Jonathan Edwards preached his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." The effects were powerful (weeping, fainting, convulsing, etc.). Such preaching was an integral part of the First Great Awakening. Using Deuteronomy 32:35 as his text ¹, Edwards graphically portrayed the coming wrath upon sinners:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider... is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire.... O sinner! Consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God... You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder....

We can debate the pastoral sensitivities of Rev. Edwards and discuss the wisdom of using "hellfire and damnation" sermons to scare people into the Kingdom. But one thing we can never debate is that Scripture plainly and clearly teaches that a day of unimaginable wrath and **torment** is coming on all those who refuse to worship the Lamb.

B. Two questions.

In chapters 12–13 we were introduced to the Dragon, Beast (Antichrist) and False Prophet. We learned how the False Prophet caused everyone on earth to be marked with the "mark of the beast". Only those who followed the Lamb refused the mark. Such a situation would have caused John's readers to ask two questions: 1) What happens to those who **refuse** the mark? 2) What happens to those who **receive** the mark?

Chapters 14–16 answer both questions.

II. Overview of Revelation 14–16.

A. The Song of the Redeemed (14:1–5).

On the heavenly Mount Zion, the redeemed (all 144,000 of them) are singing with **one voice** a "new song." Their united voices are as loud as Niagara Falls and as loud as a roar of thunder. But only the redeemed know this song. Not even the angels can join in this chorus.

¹ "In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

B. The Three Angel Messengers (14:6–13).

1. The first angel (14:6–7). Judgment is **about to begin** (“the hour has come”). The earth has one final opportunity to respond to the Gospel so that judgment is averted. Repent and believe the Gospel, before it is too late! To speak of an “eternal gospel” is to speak of a message that is **permanently** valid and **universally** applicable. Jesus foresaw a final movement of global evangelization before the end.

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then **the end** will come. (Matt. 24:14).*

2. The second angel (14:8). Judgment has already **begun**. We will learn more details about the fall of Babylon in chapters 17–18. Here we see simply the reality of her doom and the two reasons for her destruction:

- Her **immoral** behavior and impurity.
- Her evil **influence** on the nations.

3. The third angel (14:9–13). The final judgment is **now**.

Those who worship the beast (antichrist) and receive his mark will:

- Drink the wine of God’s wrath ² poured full strength into **the cup** of his anger.
- Be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the Lamb and the angels.
- Have no **rest**... forever. But note the contrast with the saints in heaven who “rest from their labors” (14:13).

Conclusion (14:12–13): “Here is a call for the **endurance** of the saints...” The followers of the Lamb should endure³ because “blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their deeds follow them.” The troubles of the saints are only **temporary**. But the troubles of the unbelievers will be **eternal**.

C. The Fields are Ripe for Harvest (14:14–20).

Often in Scripture, the final judgment is depicted as a **harvest**. Jesus spoke of this coming harvest in a poignant manner in his Parable of the Weeds (see Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43).

*Let both [the good grain and the weeds] **grow together** until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn (Matt 13:30).*

² Notice how Babylon makes people drink the wine of her impure passion (*thumos*) (14:8) and God makes these same people drink the wine of his pure passion (*thumos*) (14:10). One cup leads inexorably to the other! But remember, it was this latter cup of God’s wrath that Jesus chose freely to drink himself (Luke 22:42)...all of it!

³ Greek, *hupomone* (literally: abide under). Other translations are “patience,” “steadfastness,” “perseverance.”

In Revelation 14:14–20, the harvest is described in two ways:

1. The **Son of Man**, seated on a cloud, puts in his sickle “and the earth was reaped” (vv. 14–16. See Matt. 24:30–31; Rev. 19:11ff.). Though the text does not say so, this may refer to the wheat harvest, when Jesus gathers in **the saints** for safe-keeping.
2. Another angel puts in his sickle “and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great **winepress** of the wrath of God (vv. 17–20). This image of the winepress inspired Julia Ward Howe to write:

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword—
His truth is marching on (The Battle Hymn of the Republic).*

D. The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath (chapters 15–16).

1. God’s final judgment is manifested in the **7 bowls** poured out on the earth. These need to be seen in conjunction with the **7 seals** (6:1–17; 8:1–5) and the **7 trumpets** (8:6–9:21; 11:15–19) which also describe the coming wrath and judgment.
2. The prelude to final judgment is in chapter 15. Seven angels are given “7 golden bowls full of the wrath of God” (15:7). One by one they pour out the contents of these bowls on the earth. With these 7 plagues “the wrath of God is **finished**” (15:1).
3. The seven bowls of wrath:
 - a. The 1st bowl is poured out on the earth which results in painful **(canker) sores** on all those who bore the mark of the beast (16:2).
 - b. The 2nd bowl is poured out on **the sea** and it became like the blood of a corpse so that everything in the sea died (16:3).
 - c. The 3rd bowl is poured out on rivers and springs and all the water became **blood** (16:4–7). The angel explained: the worshippers of the beast have shed the blood of saints and so they shall drink blood, “it is what they deserve.” The punishment fits the crime.
 - d. The 4th bowl is poured out on the sun so that it **scorched** people with fire (16:8–9). This is “global warming” with a vengeance! Yet, people still did not repent!
 - e. The 5th bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast and its kingdom was plunged into **darkness** (16:10–11). Yet, people still did not repent!
 - f. The 6th bowl is poured out on the Euphrates River so that it dried up making possible an **invasion** of an enemy army from the east (16:12–16). Three unclean spirits (like frogs) work to assemble an army from many nations to withstand the invasion. They gather for battle at a place called Armageddon, probably referring to the hill of Megiddo and the nearby Valley of Jezreel (14 miles wide and 20 miles long). You could say that this valley forms the **junction point** of three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe).

- g. The 7th bowl is poured out into the air (16:17–21). There was lightning, thunder and an **earthquake** greater than any in history. Hailstones weighing 100 pounds fell from the sky. Islands disappeared and mountains sank. And the city of Babylon was destroyed as well as the cities of the nations.

The end of the matter: *Note then the **kindness/goodness** and the **severity/sternness** of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off* (Romans 11:22).

III. Do You Want to Join the Choir? (Revelation 14:1–5).

John goes to some lengths to describe the characteristics of the members of the heavenly choir which is composed of those who have been redeemed from the earth (the 144,000 are only the “first fruits”, many more will join). Pastor John wants us to understand the **entrance requirements** for heaven:

- A. They have been **redeemed** (purchased, bought). The price of their redemption was the blood of the Lamb (I Pet. 1:18–19). They have been **sealed** by God and belong to him (7:1–4; 14:1; 22:4). They refuse the mark of the beast because they do not belong to him. They belong to God! They don't even belong to themselves (I Cor. 6:19–20).
- B. They are chaste and pure. It is doubtful that John intends the word “virgin” to be understood literally. He is not prohibiting marital sexual relations but rather the unholy love of **the world** and the things in the world (I John 2:15–17; James 4:4). John is speaking symbolically of the redeemed as the **bride** of Christ preparing for her wedding day (II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 21:9). They may be **in** the world but they are not **of** it.
- C. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. When Jesus said “**Follow me**,” he meant it (Mark 1:17). Being a Christian is a walk, a relationship, and not just a static condition (ticket to heaven, “getting saved”, legal standing, etc.). *For all who are **led by the Spirit** of God are sons of God* (Rom. 8:14).
- D. No lie is found in their mouth. They are “blameless” because they hate **lies** and **falsehood** in whatever form they may appear. Satan is a liar from the beginning and the father of lies; there is no truth in him (John 8:44). But those who follow the Truth (John 14:6), are lovers of truth... and truth sets them free (John 8:32).
- E. They love to **sing** and **worship** the Lamb! Their song is always “new” not because it has been recently written but because it is always fresh and alive ⁴. And when they sing, though there are millions of them, they sing with one voice (Unison? Or perhaps harmony?). Though the words of the song are not mentioned here, we get a glimpse of what the redeemed are singing in heaven in Revelation 5:9–10:

*Worthy are you [the Lamb] to take the scroll and to open its seals,
For you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
From every tribe and language and people and nation,
And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
And they shall reign on the earth.*

⁴ There are two words in Greek rendered “new” in English. *NEOS* refers to time, something recent. This word is not used in Revelation at all. *KAINOS* refers to quality, something that is fresh and vitally alive. This is the word John uses over and over in Revelation to describe a new name (2:17; 3:12), a new Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2), a new heaven and earth (21:1), and a new song (5:9; 14:3).

TABLE TALK

1. When was the last time you heard a sermon about God's wrath? What was it like? Should preachers seek to "scare people" into the kingdom? Why or why not?
2. Describe your personal reaction to Biblical passages that depict God as angry, pouring out his wrath on sinners. Does your concept of God fit with such passages? Why or why not?
3. Pastor John wants us to be assured of our place in the choir of the redeemed? He wants us to be strong and not to despair as the forces of evil are unleashed in the last days. Are you confident of your salvation? Are you able to stand in the evil day?
4. When was the last time you heard a sermon on the sin of worldliness (warning against the dangers of loving the world and the things in the world)? Can anyone who loves the world be saved?
5. In the Parable of the Weeds, Jesus told us that it was his will that the weeds and the wheat should grow together until the harvest. Describe your reaction to this parable.

Evil, Evil, Evil

By Stan Key

Author's Note: I have no reason to believe there will be music in hell. No one will feel like singing in a land where love is banished and hope is non-existent. However, I have a fertile (morbid?) imagination. Sometimes it takes me places where others fear to tread. Let me paint a picture of what a worship service in hell might look like as the damned join in chorus with demons singing praise to Satan in all his true ugliness.

Evil, evil, evil! Majesty infernal,
Late at night we sing your might and lift our voice to thee.
Dragon, Beast, False Prophet, blasphemous and vulgar,
Perfect in darkness, cursèd trinity.

Evil, evil, evil! All the damned will fear thee,
Giving thee begrudgingly their life and liberty.
Bowing down in terror, at your voice they tremble
Chained by their passions, for their hope is gone.

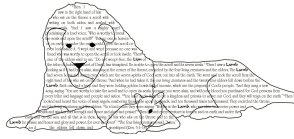
Evil, evil, evil! Mystery enfolds thee
In your triune ugliness we see your awful plan.
Dragon, Beast, False Prophet, one you stand together,
United in purpose: war against the Lamb.

Evil, evil, evil! Though we are in torment
Yet we'll praise you all our days and serve you, Anti-Christ.
We will do your bidding, though it's our undoing,
We've made our choice and now we pay the price.

Evil, evil, evil! Is there none to rescue
We who've lost our sanity and dignity and worth?
When on earth we wandered, other options pondered.
Why, why were we deaf to hear the Gospel call?

Evil, evil, evil! Counterfeit in beauty,
Once we had another choice; we really should have known.
Here we pine in anguish, in these flames we languish,
We're only reaping what our lives have sown.

Evil, evil, evil! You we choose to worship
Though you hate us, though we know the things you say untrue.
Yet we'll serve our master, though we loathe his presence,
Here in this darkness, getting what's our due.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 12. UP IN SMOKE (CH. 17:1–19:5)

I. The Meaning of the City.

In the Bible, the “city” means more than a sociological or geographical reality. Its meaning is profoundly theological. The Hebrew term refers to a guarded or fortified place, probably referring originally to a watching spiritual being, a guardian angel. Thus, the city is more than a collection of houses with ramparts. It is a **spiritual power** that has a profound impact on a person’s life. And in the Bible, its influence is always negative¹ except when it comes to the City of God.

A brief examination of the history of cities in the Bible makes readily apparent the evil spiritual influence of cities:

- A. The first city in history was **Enoch**. It was built by the first **murderer** (Gen. 4:16–17). Trying to cope with his guilt, Cain at first wandered aimlessly in the land of Nod. Rather than looking to God, he built a city and named it after his son. He hoped this city of man would provide a place of security, stability, meaning, and meaningful relationships.
- B. The next city we meet in Scripture is **Babel** (Gen. 11:1–9). Historically, it became the ultimate symbol of worldly evil and rebellion against God. Founded by Nimrod (Gen. 10:8–11), Babel and the tower built there became proverbial for:
- Militarism and imperialistic **power**.
 - **Pride**. Come, let us make a name for ourselves... (Gen. 11:4).
 - Man-made **religion**. The tower (ziggurat) was intended to be a stairway to heaven. The citizens believed that man could reach God!
 - Disregard for God’s **commands**. Come, let’s build a city and a tower lest we be scattered over the earth (Gen. 11:4; compare Gen. 1:28).

Babel was later called **Babylon**. No other city became more associated with man’s revolt against God than this!

Babylon is not a city. She is the city.... No one can rival her, not even Rome.... All the cities of the world are brought together in her, she is the synthesis of them all... She is the head of, and the standard for the other cities... Venice, Paris, New York – they are all the same city, only one Babel always reappearing...²

- C. The next city we meet in Scripture is **Sodom (and Gomorrah)** (Gen. 18:16–19:29). This city was proverbial for its sin! The Genesis account highlights her sexual perversions (homosexuality, sodomy) but Ezekiel mentions other sins:

*Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had **pride**, excess of **food**, and prosperous **ease**, but did not aid the **poor** and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them.... (Ezek. 16:49–50).*

¹ *The Meaning of the City* by Jacques Ellul (Eerdmans, 1970, p. 9).

² Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*, 20f.

Sodom became so wicked that God had to destroy it! It was **beyond redemption**.

- D. Once in Canaan, God’s people built **Jerusalem**. Though it always had special significance, it was a strange mixture of good (Ps. 87:1–3; Isa. 48:2) and evil (Isa. 1:21; Micah 3:10). Sometimes Scripture even compares Jerusalem to Sodom (Isa. 1:10; Rev. 11:8). When Jerusalem falls under judgment, God’s people are sent to exile in Babylon.

Conclusion: Every **city of man** will fail. Though God’s people live in these cities and though they seek the well-being of these cities (Jer. 29:7), they cannot be saved. Only the **City of God** will prevail (Rev. 21–22). The book of Revelation is *A Tale of Two Cities*: Babylon the Great Prostitute and the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ, holy and pure.

By faith, he [Abraham] went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents.... For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.... But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:9–10, 16).

II. Examine the Text (Revelation 17:1–19:5).

| The Appearance of the Woman | | The Identity of the Woman | | The Judgment of the Woman | | The Hallelujah Chorus | |
|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------|------|
| 17:1 | 17:6 | 17:7 | 17:18 | 18:1 | 18:24 | 19:1 | 19:5 |

A. The Appearance of the Woman (17:1–6).

1. She is the **Great Prostitute** (*porne*). Her name is on her forehead: “Babylon the Great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations” (17:1,5).
2. She is involved in sexual immorality (*porneia*) with millions (17:2,4; 18:3,9).
3. She is seated on many waters (nations and peoples) (17:1,15).
4. She is sitting on a **scarlet beast** (17:3)(Antichrist). Who is controlling whom?
5. She is dressed in gaudy apparel and lives in **luxury** (17:4; 18:3,7,11–13, 16).
6. She enjoys **killing** Christians (17:6; 18:24).
7. She is involved in human **trafficking** (18:13).
8. She is arrogant, self-confident and deceived about her security (18:7–8).
9. She deceives the nations by her **sorcery** (*pharmakia*) (18:23).
10. She is **drunk** with the blood of martyrs (17:6) and she makes the nations drunk as they drink from the cup of abominations and impurities in her hand (17:2,4; 18:3).

SUMMARY: The woman is seductive, immoral, deceptive, powerful, rich, intoxicated and influential. She hates Christians. What a contrast to the pure and holy **Bride of the Lamb** (Rev. 21–22).

- B. The Identity of the Woman (and the beast) (17:7–18).
1. The beast (Antichrist) was, and is not, and is to come (17:8). He suffered a mortal wound but recovered (13:3).
 2. The 7 heads of the beast are 7 mountains on which the woman is seated (17:9). This is undoubtedly **Rome**, the city of 7 hills. But this does not mean that Rome *alone* is what the woman represents.³
 3. The 7 heads are 7 kings: five have passed on, one is, and the other is yet to come⁴. An 8th king belongs to the 7 and he too goes to destruction (17:10–11).
 4. The 10 horns are 10 kings yet to come who will reign only briefly (one hour). In an outward show of unity they will give all their authority to the beast and together they will make war on the Lamb. But the Lamb **wins!** (17:12–14).
 5. The 10 horns and the beast will **hate** the woman and will destroy her. In doing so they will unknowingly carry out God’s purposes (17:16–17).
 6. Finally we are told the identity of the woman: she is “the **great city** that has dominion over the kings of the earth” (Babylon) (17:18).
- C. The Judgment of the Woman (18:1–24).
1. The fall of Babylon (18:1–3). In John’s mind the future destruction of Babylon is so certain he writes about it as if it has **already happened**.
 2. Only those who separate from Babylon can be saved (18:4–8). Those who remain will inevitably share in her destruction. Therefore, “**come out of her.**”
 3. Lamentation over the fall of Babylon (18:9–20). A three-fold dirge of sorrow is sung by kings (18:9–10), merchants (18:11–17a), and sailors (18:17b–20). But don’t be fooled. Though they all weep over Babylon’s destruction, their grief is not for the city but for **themselves** and all they have personally lost in her fall.
 4. Up in smoke (18:21–24). As the smoke of her burning rises to heaven, Babylon is cast into the sea like a millstone. Music, commerce, industry, the arts, and **weddings** will never be heard in her again. Babylon, the city of man, is gone forever.
- D. The Hallelujah Chorus (aka, Ding-Dong the Witch Is Dead) (19:1–5).

As Babylon sinks under God’s wrath and justice, a song of praise rises in heaven:

*Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God for his judgments are **true and just**; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality and has avenged on her the blood of his servants (vv. 1–2).*

III. How in the World Can I Be Holy?

Though rarely mentioned in the contemporary church, the Bible has much to say about the sin of **worldliness**. Our Scripture is perhaps the classic text. Babylon is the ultimate picture of worldliness. Our Scripture gives four commands to those who follow the Lamb:

³ “In the first century, Rome was a striking embodiment of what John means by Babylon. In Rome as nowhere else men could see the city of man bent on its own blasphemous way, opposing with all its might the things of God.” (Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, p. 209).

⁴ Many have tried to determine which Roman emperors John may have been referring to. But the emphasis here is on the future, not the present. It seems wise to await future events to determine who these kings really are.

- A. Babylon is seductive... so be **careful**. Using all the powers of seduction possible (dress, jewelry, perfume, cosmetics, money, words, etc.), Babylon has perfected the art of temptation. But underneath the glitz, glamour and industrial strength mascara, she is in reality only a hooker, a slut, a street walker. Don't be fooled by her charms!
- B. Babylon is cruel and evil... so be **brave**. Beneath the outward "beauty" is a murderous and evil monster. All of her power comes from the Satan. Therefore she hates those who follow the Lamb, those who are citizens of the City of God.
- C. Babylon is doomed... so **come out**. Our Scripture explains that Babylon's doom will be **sudden, total, and irreversible**. Therefore, "come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins and share in her plagues" (18:4). Flee the wrath to come!

*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?... What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.... Therefore **go out** from their midst, and **be separate** from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you... (II Cor. 6:14-18).*

- D. Babylon is going to be replaced... shout **hallelujah!** The singing in heaven is not taking delight at someone's punishment. It is rather the joyful response of the saints when **justice** is finally established, God's Name is vindicated, the **meek** inherit the earth, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and **he shall reign** forever and ever. This prepares the way for the City of God to come to earth, a city coming down out of heaven not built by human hands, a city not dressed as a harlot, but as a bride, reading for her wedding day (Rev. 21-22).

Therefore, the end of the matter:

- *If the world **hates** you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (John 15:18-19).*
- *Do not be **conformed** to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind... (Rom. 12:2).*
- ***Set your minds** on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:2-3).*
- *Do not **love** the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the **flesh** and the desires of the **eyes** and **pride** in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever (I John 2:15-17).*
- *You **adulterous** people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an **enemy** of God (James 4:4).*

TABLE TALK

1. Describe your personal experience with cities. This lesson has urged you to think theologically about cities. What have you learned?
2. Our Scripture describes Babylon as a place of sex, money, drugs, luxurious ease, and hatred of Christians. American culture seems obsessed with the same things. What lessons should we draw?
3. Why is the American church so silent when it comes to the sin of worldliness?
4. The Bible forbids us to love the world and worldly things but doesn't give many specifics of what that looks like. A previous generation associated "worldliness" with things like lipstick, movies, jewelry, etc. Today, what activities and possession indicate that someone loves this world?
5. Our Scripture described worldliness in terms of being drunk. What are the similarities between drunkenness and worldliness?
6. Scripture calls us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. How has this lesson helped you to better obey this mandate.

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
God, whose word cannot be broken,
formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply thy sons and daughters,
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
ever will their thirst assuage?
Grace which like the Lord, the giver,
never fails from age to age.

Round each habitation hovering,
see the cloud and fire appear
for a glory and a covering,
showing that the Lord is near!
Thus deriving from our banner
light by night and shade by day,
safe we feed upon the manna
which God gives us when we pray.

Blest inhabitants of Zion,
washed in our Redeemer's blood;
Jesus, whom our souls rely on,
makes us monarchs, priests to God.
Us, by his great love, he raises,
rulers over self to reign,
and as priests his solemn praises
we for thankful offering bring.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 13. THE RETURN OF THE KING (CH. 19:1–21)

I. I'll Be Back!

A. We love stories in which the hero promises to return and finish the work he has begun.

1. Early in 1942, American forces in the Philippines were defeated by the Japanese and forced to abandon the islands. Evading the enemy in a harrowing escape, General Douglas MacArthur landed in Australia and made a famous promise to the Philippine people: “**I shall return.**”¹
2. In the movie *The Terminator*, the character played by Arnold Schwarzenegger promises those who are hindering his plans that he will return to finish the job he had begun. With his heavy German accent he simply said: “**I'll be back.**”²
3. The 3rd volume of *The Lord of the Rings* is entitled **The Return of the King**. It recounts the climactic moment when Prince Aragorn returns and takes the throne that is rightfully his. One wonders if J. R. R. Tolkien may have been thinking of Revelation 19 when he chose his title for this final volume.

B. Jesus' promise.

When Jesus finished the work he had come to do, he promised his followers that he would come again and bring to completion all that he had begun.

*In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again** and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (John 14:2–3).*

Indeed, the last recorded words of Jesus written in the Bible are a promise he repeated three times: “**I am coming soon**” (Rev. 22:7,12,20).

C. A helpful analogy.

Donald G. Bloesch uses an analogy from World War II to help us better understand the two comings of our Lord. He compares the first coming to **D-Day** (the landing of allied troops in Normandy which was the decisive battle that assured Germany's ultimate defeat). However, many bloody battles would be fought before Germany finally surrendered (**VE-Day**). Bloesch makes the point that though Satan has already been decisively defeated by the first coming of Christ, he continues to fight. “Calvary signifies that the warfare is virtually, but not actually, over.”³

II. Revelation 19.

A story is only as good as its **ending**. God wants us to peek at the last chapter of the book so we know how it is all going to end. “And they lived happily ever after” is a fitting ending to the greatest story ever told. Once Babylon the Great has been destroyed

¹ Leaders in Washington urged him to amend his promise and say “We shall return,” but MacArthur ignored their request.

² The American Film Institute chose this line as the 37th most memorable quote in the history of film.

³ Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, Vol. 2, 205.

(chapters 17–18), things move quickly and in a very positive direction. Chapters 19–22 describe the final events of human history... and they are all good!

- The *Hallelujah Chorus* is sung and wedding invitations are sent out (19:1–10).
- The King of kings returns (the Bride Groom) (19:11–16).
- The Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet are defeated (19:17–21).
- Christ and his followers reign for 1,000 years (20:1–6).
- Satan is released, defeated and tossed into the Lake of Fire (20:7–10).
- The final judgment before the Great White Throne (20:11–15).
- A new heaven and a new earth... here comes **the Bride!** (ch. 21–22).

A. The *Hallelujah Chorus* is sung and wedding invitations are sent (19:1–10).

The word “hallelujah” occurs only here in the New Testament (Rev. 19:1,3,4,6). It transliterates a Hebrew expression meaning “praise God.” George Frederick Handel was thinking of this passage (Rev. 19:6,19; 11:15) when he wrote his *Hallelujah Chorus*.

1. Notice *how* the chorus is sung.

In stark contrast to the dirge-like lament sung over the fall of Babylon (ch. 18), a huge choir is singing with a single voice (v. 1). The song is **loud** (v. 1) like a mighty waterfall, like thunder (v. 6). And once is not enough! They keep **repeating** *Hallelujah... Hallelujah... Hallelujah...etc.*

2. Notice *why* the chorus is sung. Three reasons are given. Because:

- a. **Babylon** has been judged and works her evil no more (v. 2).
- b. The Lord God Omnipotent reigns (v. 6).
- c. It is time for the **Marriage of the Lamb** and the Bride is finally ready (v. 7–8).

3. Notice *what* the words of the chorus are.

a. The **attributes** of God:

- Salvation, glory, and power (v. 1).
- His judgments are **true** and **just** (v. 2).

b. The **mighty deeds** of God:

- He has judged the Great Prostitute, Babylon (v. 2).
- He has avenged the martyrs (v. 2).
- He reigns (v. 6).
- He has enabled the Bride to make herself ready (vv. 7–8).

c. Therefore “praise him,” “rejoice,” “Exult,” and “give him glory” (vv. 5,7).

4. Notice *who* is doing the singing. Though the singers are not specifically named, “the great multitude” (vv. 1,6) is probably composed of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The heavenly beings join in (v. 4).

- B. The King of kings returns (the Bride Groom) (19:11–16).
1. Who is this rider on the white horse? He is called by four names:
 - a. **Faithful** and True (v. 11).
 - b. The **Word** of God (v. 13).
 - c. King of kings and Lord of lords (v. 16).
 - d. A secret name that no one knows except himself (v. 12).
 2. What is he like?
 - a. He is riding on a **white horse** (v. 11).
 - b. His eyes are like fire (v. 12).
 - c. He has **many crowns** on his head (v. 12).⁴
 - d. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood (v. 13). Whose blood?
 - e. A huge army is with him in white robes on white horses (v. 14).
 - f. A sharp sword comes from his mouth (v. 15): the only **weapon** mentioned.

What a contrast between the 1st and 2nd comings of Jesus Christ!

| JESUS' FIRST COMING | JESUS' SECOND COMING |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A tiny baby | A mighty warrior |
| Riding on a donkey | Riding on a white horse |
| In meekness and humility | In glory and power |
| He came to save | He comes to judge |
| He is seen by a few | He is seen by everyone! |
| To shed his own blood | To shed the blood of his enemies |
| The Lamb of God | The Lion of Judah |

3. The Beast (Antichrist) and the False Prophet are defeated (19:17–21).
 The battle described in this passage is apparently **Armageddon** (see Rev. 16:13–16). This is actually not the last battle but the next-to-the-last battle (see Rev. 20:7–10). The prelude to battle is an invitation to “all the birds” to come to “the great supper of God” (v. 17–18). What a contrast this is to “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (v. 9).

King Jesus and his army are opposed by Beast (Antichrist), the False Prophet and the kings of the earth with their armies. The **greatest battle** in human history is described in two short verses, without mention of weapons or strategy or tactical operations.

And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet.... These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was

⁴ The dragon wore 7 crowns (12:3) and the Beast (Antichrist) wore 10 crowns (13:1). King Jesus has “many.”

sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh (vv. 20–21).

III. Remembering our Future.

A. Six things to remember about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

1. It will be **physical, bodily**. Some pretend that the return of Christ is only a spiritual way to talk about the new birth. The second coming thus becomes a metaphor of hope, not something to be taken literally. But the New Testament speaks differently. Just as Jesus ascended bodily into heaven, so he will return (Acts 1:9–11).
2. It will be **universally visible**. Though it is difficult to imagine how it will happen, the Bible is clear that when Jesus returns “every eye will see him” (Rev. 1:7). All the nations of the earth will see him coming on the clouds (Matt. 24:30). No one will miss the reality of what is happening.

*Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, ‘Look, he is in the wilderness,’ do not go out. If they say, ‘Look, he is in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as **the lightning** comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man (Matt 24:23–27).*

3. It will be **glorious**. In sharp contrast to his first coming, when Jesus comes again he will come “in clouds with great power and glory” (Mark 13:26).
4. It will be **sudden and unexpected**. Though Jesus wants us to “save the date”, the Scriptures are clear that no one knows the day or the hour of Christ’s return... “not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (and He’s not talking!) (Mark 13:32). Thus, Christ’s return will be “like a thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2).

For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left (Matt. 24:37–41).

5. It will be **final**. Though the final judgment will occur after Christ’s return and his millennial reign (Rev. 20:11–15), there is little reason to believe that people will have opportunities to repent and receive forgiveness and experience salvation after Christ returns on his white horse. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins Jesus explains how some people will be ready and others will not.

*And while [the foolish virgins] were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and **the door was shut**. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour (Matt. 25:10–13).*

6. It will be **soon** (Rev. 22:7,12,20). Though this has been true for 2,000 years it is the attitude of expectation that God wants us to nurture in our hearts.

The doctrine of the Second Coming has failed, so far as we are concerned, if it does not make us realize that at every moment of every year in our lives this question is equally relevant: "What if tonight was the world's last night?"⁵

B. Five imperatives from Matthew 24 concerning our response to the Second Coming.

1. Be **wise and discerning**. Let no one lead you astray because many false prophets and false christs will come performing signs and wonders (Matt. 24:4-5, 24-25).
2. Stand **firm**. Things will get worse. Persecution will intensify. He who endures to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:6-13).
3. **Preach** the Gospel. Christ will return only when the Gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth (Matt. 24:14).
4. Read the **signs of the times**. Though we are forbidden to try to determine the date of our Lord's return, we are urged to read the signs. Matthew 24 mentions several things we are to watch for:
 - Great tribulation (wars, persecutions, apostasy, distress unequalled in history, etc.) (vv. 6-13, 21).
 - Universal expansion of the Gospel; worldwide revival (v. 14).
 - False prophets and false messiahs that deceive millions (v. 24).
 - Global and cosmic catastrophes (famines, earthquakes, sun darkened, stars fall, etc.) (v. 7,29).
 - The "abomination of desolation" standing the holy place (v. 15).

So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates (v. 33).

5. Be ready!

*Therefore, **stay awake**, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you **do not expect** (Matt. 24:42-44).*

⁵ Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays*.

TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn about the Second Coming that you did not know?
2. Does the thought of Christ's return bring comfort or fear?
3. Why does God keep the date of Christ's return a secret?
4. What are the "signs of the times" indicating to you about the days in which we live?
5. What are some specific things believers today can do to better enable them to "stay awake" and be ready?

Crown Him With Many Crowns

By M. Bridges

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns all music but it's own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.

Crown Him the virgin's Son, the God incarnate born,
Whose arm those crimson trophies won which now His brow adorn;
Fruit of the mystic rose, as of that rose the stem;
The root whence mercy ever flows, the Babe of Bethlehem.

Crown Him the Lord of love, behold His hands and side,
Those wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of peace, Whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease, and all be prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end, and round His pierc'd feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown Him the Lord of years, the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou has died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 14. THE FINAL EXAM (CH. 20:1–15)

I. Three Views of the Millennium.

- A. Few passages of Scripture are more hotly contested than Revelation 20:1–10. Passions run hot concerning the **order of events** described in this passage. Often the debate has turned bitter. The word “millennium” comes from the Latin *mille* (thousand) and *annus* (year). This is the only passage in the Bible that speaks specifically on this subject.
- B. Some key questions to answer to establish your own position on this question include:
- Are the 1,000 years to be understood **literally** or figuratively?
 - Is John talking about the **future** or the present?
 - Who will be reigning with Christ and what will this look like?
 - What is God’s purpose in this millennial reign?
 - Does Revelation intend to map out a chronology of the end times or is the order of these events in the text unimportant?
- C. Three basic views have been espoused:
1. **Pre-millennialism.** The prefix “pre” means that Christ will come back *before* the millennium. This view teaches that the present church age will end in a terrible time of great **tribulation** and suffering. Then Christ will return and establish a literal kingdom that will last 1,000 years where believers will reign with him on the earth. Christ will be physically present on earth during this time and Satan will be bound in the pit and thus have no influence. It will be a time of peace and many will turn to the Lord. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be loosed and join forces with those who have been only nominal in their faith but inwardly have been seething in rebellion against Christ. This position takes Revelation 19:11–22:6 as a basic chronology of how the end-time events will unfold. The more persecution increases in the world the more this position grows in popularity.¹
 2. **Post-millennialism.** This view believes that Christ will return *after* the millennium. This position believes that the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church will gradually increase so that more and more people will become Christians and society will be increasingly “christianized” until gradually the “millennial age” will emerge. Finally Christ will return at the end of this happy period. This is a very **optimistic** position that believes in the power of the Gospel to change the world. Many missionaries of the 18th and 19th centuries were of this persuasion. Think of the hymn *We’ve a Story to Tell to the Nations*.

¹ Those holding this position are divided into those who are pre-trib and those who are post-trib. The former (most dispensationalists) believe that Christ will return not only before the millennium but before the Great Tribulation. Thus believers will be raptured first and not experience the times of trial coming on the earth for a 7-year period. At the end of the tribulation, Christ will return with his saints to reign on the earth for 1,000 years.

- D. **A-millennialism.** This view sees the millennium in non-historical, non-literal terms. Revelation 20:1–10 thus describes the **present church age**. Those saints who have died are already now reigning with Christ in heaven. The millennium then is a heavenly reign. It is called a-millennial because it maintains there is no future 1,000 year reign yet to come. One thousand years is not a literal number but speaks of an unspecified, lengthy period of time. Thus, all future events spoken of in the Bible will occur more or less at once (return of Christ, one resurrection of everyone, final judgment, new heaven and new earth).
- E. This writer takes a basically pre-millennial position. However, he holds this belief humbly and without passionate intensity because:
- The **emphasis** of Scripture is not here (end time chronology).
 - The biblical data can be legitimately interpreted in different ways.
 - Frankly, he is not smart enough to figure it all out!

II. Four Final Realities (Revelation 20).

Before the new heaven and new earth can appear (chapters 21–22), four climactic events will occur.

A. Satan is bound (vv. 1–3).

After dealing with the beast and the false prophet (19:19–21), God now turns his attention to their leader—Satan.

1. The names by which he is called: the dragon, the **ancient serpent**, the devil, Satan (cf. Rev. 12:9).
2. An angel seizes Satan, binds him with a great chain and throws him into the abyss (the bottomless pit). Then the angel shuts the pit and seals it (locks it with a key) for 1,000 years. What a **fall** Satan has had! From heaven to earth (Rev. 12:9)... and now from earth into the bottomless pit.
3. But WHY? The purpose of Satan’s confinement is not to punish him but “so that he might not **deceive** the nations any longer” (v. 3). Thus, the millennium will be a time of unprecedented global evangelization. Satan’s influence and deceptive ways will be absent for 1,000 years. Thus if men rebel against God during this period, it will be obvious that the cause of their sin is the **stubborn and willful** human heart, not the devil.
4. Jesus said: No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds (same word as in Rev. 20:2) the strong man. Then he may plunder his house. (Mark 3:27). A post-millennial or a-millennial position sees this verse as referencing the binding of Satan as something that happened when Jesus came the **first time**. Though Satan’s influence is certainly not absent, the coming of Jesus has definitely put limits to what he can do in the world. A pre-millennial position teaches that after Christ establishes his reign on the earth, Satan’s influence will be rendered completely inactive for 1,000 years.

B. The millennial reign of Christ (vv. 4–6).

1. WHO will reign with Christ? Those seated on thrones and reigning with Christ appear to be a great host of **martyrs** (*those who have been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus*, v. 4). Elsewhere in Scripture we have indications that the

saints will one day reign over the earth and participate in the final judgment (Matt. 19:28; I Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21).

2. WHERE are these thrones? The text is not specific but it appears to be on the earth.
 3. When the thousand years are ended, “the rest of the dead” will come to life. This is “the first resurrection.” These people are delivered from “the second death” (the lake of fire, v. 14) and will serve as priests and reign with Christ 1,000 years. (vv. 5–6).
 4. Pre-millennialists see these realities as literal events happening on the earth. Those who interpret the passage spiritually, may see the “first resurrection” as a way of referring to the **new birth**.
- C. Satan is released and defeated (vv. 7–10).
1. After 1,000 years, Satan is released “for a little while” (v. 3). Again he will **deceive** the nations, gathering Gog and Magog (symbolizing all the nations) and make war against the people of God and “the beloved city”. But before the battle is even fought, fire comes from heaven and consumes them all. Satan is then thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever.
 2. But WHY would God permit his archenemy to come back and again deceive the nations? Perhaps to expose the utter perversity of sin the **rebellious** nature of the human heart.
- D. The Last Judgment (vv. 11–15).
1. As the dead are standing before the great white throne, the books are opened in which are recorded the deeds we have done. Nothing is **omitted**, all is recorded. By their fruit you shall you know them. Also the book of life is opened.
 2. There is some question about who is seated on the throne: is it God the **Father** or God the **Son**? Verses can be gathered to support either claim. However, the unity of God makes it unnecessary to quibble over exactness in matters such as this.
 3. The dead are judged based on what they have done. “The dead” seems to refer to those who did not participate in the first resurrection (v. 6). Some mistakenly imagine that this passage implies “salvation by works.” No! It only underscores what is asserted over and over in the Bible: that our works **reveal** unmistakably what we believe and thus what our true relationship is with God. Salvation is by **faith alone**, but faith inevitably will be manifested by the works it produces.
 4. Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. Here we see the **death of death!**
 5. Everyone whose name is not recorded in the book of life is also thrown into the lake of fire, which is described as the **second death**.
 6. Elsewhere the New Testament speaks of final judgment:
 - *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now*

here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live (John 5:24–25).

- *...For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10).*
- *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (II Cor. 5:10).*

III. How Should We Then Live?

A. What happens when we die?

The Bible categorically rejects some answers to this question that people have proposed down through the centuries: annihilation, reincarnation, universalism, purgatory, etc. The Bible is clear: *It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment (Heb. 9:27)*. This judgment will determine one of only two possible destinies for every human being: **heaven** or **hell**.

B. Anticipating the final judgment, should help us to live better today!

*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live **holy** and godly lives as you **look forward** to the day of God and **speed** its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells (II Peter 3:10–13, NIV).*

Awareness of the final judgment helps me to:

1. Live in the hope that **justice** will finally be established in the earth.
2. Find grace to **forgive** those who have hurt me. God will take care of my enemies so I don't have to.
3. Find the power and ability to live in **holiness** and godliness today.
4. Be more compelled to **evangelize** my neighbors.

C. To prepare for our final examination:

1. Make sure you have a good **Lawyer**. I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate (lawyer) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (I John 2:1).
2. **Repent** of your sins. If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment (I Cor. 11:31).
3. Trust in the Lamb and his **finished work** on the cross. Trust in *his* good deeds not yours! *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).*

*...God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have **confidence** for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is **no fear** in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For*

fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love (I John 4:16–18).

TABLE TALK

1. Describe your own experience with trying to understand the chronology of end time events. What did you learn from this lesson about understanding the sequence of events?
2. Describe your feelings related to a literal, historical, physical millennial kingdom here on this earth.
3. When was the last time you heard a sermon on the Last Judgment? Why do you feel it is mentioned so rarely today?
4. Do you have confidence as you think about standing before the throne of Christ?
5. In the light of our Bible study, talk about the statement: *If you are born once then you will die twice but if you are born twice you will die only once.*

A Pastor's Prayer

By Stan Key

Lord, I long to see the day
When Your Spirit has full sway
In our stony hearts.
Let the Spirit and the blood
Fill us like a holy flood
Cleansing all the parts.

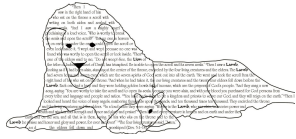
Lord, I long to see the hour
When this church will rise in power
From her careless sleep.
Break our pride, expose our sin
Raise the dead to life again,
Teach us, Lord, to weep.

Why do we not see your hand
Move in power across our land?
Have we quenched your Spirit?
Tell me if I am the cause
Where I've failed to keep your laws
Give me grace to hear it.

Help the preacher preach the Word
Until everyone has heard
Of transforming grace.
Help the elders teach and pray
Putting pettiness away
Till we see your face.

Purify our heart's desire
Cleanse us with your holy fire
Help us trust you wholly.
Burn away the carnal dross
Show us how to bear the cross
As we love you solely.

Laying down our life is gain
When we share with You your pain
For this generation.
We have holy work to do
Being witnesses for You,
This is our vocation.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 15. THE CITY OF GOD (CH. 21:1–22:6)

I. Thoughts of Heaven

- A. “Set your minds on **things above** not on things on earth” (Col. 3:2) is a command. Yet when many today think of heaven, their minds are filled with notions that simply have no Biblical support. Describe contemporary notions of heaven:
1. Where is it?
 2. What is it like? Is it familiar or unfamiliar?
 3. Who is there?
 4. What are people doing?
 5. Is it solid and real or immaterial and disembodied? ¹
 6. How long will it last? Or is time irrelevant?
 7. Will people grow and change, learn and discover? Or is it static and unchanging?
 8. Is it boring or fascinating?
- B. Wrong notions about heaven can be found among many Christians.
1. *Nearly every Christian I have spoken with has some idea that eternity is an unending **church service**.... the never-ending sing-along in the sky, one great hymn after another, forever and ever, amen. And our heart sinks.... And then we sigh and feel guilty that we are not more “spiritual.”²*
 2. Peter Kreeft tells the story about the English vicar who was asked what he expected after death. He replied: “Well, if it comes to that, I suppose I shall enter into eternal bliss, but I really wish you wouldn’t bring up such **depressing** subjects.”³
- C. Some wrong notions about life after death in the non-Christian world (that occasionally creep into the church).
1. **Annihilation**. When you die the lights go out and you cease to exist.
 2. **Reincarnation**. Some think that people return as other creatures (a person, an animal, etc.) and others think they return in a more impersonal form (the wind, the trees, the rain, etc.). (*The Fall of Freddie the Leaf* by Leo Buscaglia).
 3. **Universalism**. Everyone (except maybe Hitler and Stalin) will go to a “better place.” After all, a loving God would never send anyone to hell! Right?
 4. **Purgatory**. In popular understanding this is a land of in-between which is neither quite heaven nor quite hell. Devout Catholics believe it is part of heaven

¹ Pagan Greek philosophers preached “the immortality of the soul” while Christian evangelists announced “the resurrection of the body.” Most today are more Platonic than Christian in their notions of heaven.

² Eldredge, *The Journey of Desire: Searching for the Life We’ve Only Dreamed of, ???*.

³ Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven, ???*.

(a sort of ante-chamber where one gets ready). But neither position has support in the Bible.

D. Thinking rightly about heaven.

To propagate wrong notions about heaven is **pastoral malpractice** of the worst kind! Such false teachings may make hurting people feel better but such sentiments are like drinking alcohol in a snowstorm. “While it makes a freezing person feel warm... it is false warmth. People have been known to freeze to death feeling warm.”⁴ But where can we get accurate information about heaven? I know of only two reliable sources:

1. If only someone could go “over there” and then return to tell us about it. Well, I haven’t been there but I have a Friend who has!
2. The Bible. Revelation 21:1–22:6 is a great place to start.

II. The City of God (Revelation 21:1–22:6).

A. Survey the passage.

| Jerusalem’s Arrival | | Entrance Requirements | | Jerusalem’s Description | |
|---------------------|------|-----------------------|------|--|------|
| 21:1 | 21:5 | 21:6 | 21:8 | 21:9 | 22:6 |
| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her radiant beauty (21:9–11) • Her walls, gates and foundations (21:12–14) • Her shape and size (21:15–17) • Her construction materials (21:18–21) • Life in the city (21:22–27) • The River of Life (22:1–6) | |

B. Study the passage.

1. Jerusalem’s arrival (21:1–5).
 - a. The City of God **comes down** out of heaven from God (vv. 2, 10). We don’t “go to heaven” but rather heaven comes to us! No humans built this city! This is a city “whose designer and builder is God” (Heb. 11:10). What a contrast this is to the city of man: Babylon (Gen. 11:1–9; Rev. 17–18).
 - b. Greek has two terms translated by the English word “new”. One term (NEOS) refers to what is recent or young; new in respect to time. This word is not used at all in Revelation. The other term (KAINOS) refers to new in respect to **quality**, not a new edition of the same thing but rather something having a different nature entirely. This is the word used to describe the place prepared for the redeemed. Heaven is not the end of the story but rather a **fresh beginning!**
 - A new heaven and earth (21:1).
 - A new Jerusalem (21:2; see 3:12).
 - Everything is new! (21:5). “I am making all things new” is in the present tense, meaning God will continually make everything fresh and new.
 - A new name (2:17; 3:12).
 - A new song (5:9).

⁴ Rebecca Price Janney, *Who Goes There?*, 13.

And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.⁵

- c. Note the things that are *not* in heaven:
 - No more **sea**⁶ (21:1).
 - No more **death** (21:4). Imagine a world without funerals!
 - No more mourning or **crying** (21:4). God himself will wipe away every tear!
 - No more **pain** (21:4).
 - No **temple** (21:22).
 - No **sun** or moon (21:23)
 - Nothing **unclean** (21:27).
 - No more **curse** (22:3). This began in Genesis 3 with the arrival of sin.
 - No more **night** (22:5).
 - d. Note especially that Jerusalem arrives as a **bride** (v. 2, 9). What a contrast to Babylon, the great prostitute! History began with a wedding (Gen. 1–2). Jesus performed his first miracle at a wedding (John 2:1–11). Human history will culminate with a wedding. Here comes the bride!
2. Entrance requirements (21:6–8).
 - a. Those permitted into the city: those who are **thirsty** (v. 6), the ones who **conquer** (v. 7), and the ones whose names are written in the Lamb's **book of life** (21:27).
 - b. Those excluded from the city (v. 8): the **cowardly**⁷, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers (PHARMAKOS), idolaters, and all **liars**.
 3. Jerusalem's description (21:9–22:6).
 - a. Her radiant beauty (21:9–11). All brides are beautiful but this one is eye-popping, heart-pounding, mind-staggering drop-dead gorgeous! This city has the **glory of God**. Contrast Revelation 17:1 with 21:9.
 - b. Her walls, gates and foundations (21:12–14).
 - The wall was impressive for two reasons: 1) it was about 200 feet thick (or high), and 2) it was **transparent**, "clear as glass"! (v. 18). The wall was not for protection but probably to designate the

⁵ Lewis, *The Last Battle*, 210f.

⁶ But why? Perhaps because the beast (antichrist) came out of the sea (13:1) and thus the sea is considered as the source of evil and all things unstable and without foundation.

⁷ Mentioned first! To run in fear before the enemies of God is to deny Christ (like Peter did).

boundaries of heaven... marking those who are in and those who are not.

- 12 gates named after the **12 tribes** of Israel. Each gate was made of a single pearl (v. 21).
 - 12 foundations named after the **12 apostles**. Each foundation is made from a precious stone: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, etc. (vv. 19–20).⁸
- c. Her shape and size (21:15–17). Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the City of God is that it is shaped like a **cube** (1,400 miles long, wide and tall, about 3,225,000 cubic miles!). Only the Holy of Holies had this shape (I Kings 6:20).
- d. Her construction materials (21:18–21). The city is made of jasper and gold, the foundations of precious stones, and the gates of pearl.
- e. Life in the city (21:22–27). The gates of the city are never shut so that the **nations** can enter and will walk in the light. .
- f. The river of life (22:1–6). This city is also a **garden**. Two characteristics of this new Eden are mentioned:
- The **river of life**. The old Jerusalem had no river but not so this new city (Psalm 46:4; Zech. 14:8; Ezekiel 47). Issuing from the throne it flows through the city, giving life.
 - The **tree of life**. We first met this tree in Genesis 3:22 when humans were prohibited from eating its fruit. No longer! The fruit now is for everyone and the leaves bring **healing** to the nations.

The redeemed will see the **face of God!** (Ex. 33:20, 23).

*I stood a mendicant of God before His royal throne
And begged Him for one priceless gift, which I could call my own.
I took the gift from out His hand, but as I would depart
I cried, "But Lord this is a thorn and it has pierced by heart.
This is strange, a hurtful gift, which Thou hast given me."
He said, "My child, I give good gifts and gave My best to thee."
I took it home and though at first the cruel thorn hurt sore,
As long years passed I learned at last to love it more and more.
I learned He never gives a thorn without this added grace,
He takes the thorn to pin aside the veil which hides His face."⁹*

"These words are trustworthy and true!" (Rev. 22:6).

III. Will You Be Happy in Heaven?

It may sound like a strange question but pause and consider. Jesus went away to prepare a place for us (John 14:1–3). But **are we prepared** for what He has prepared for us?

- A. Nothing **unclean** will be there (21:8, 27). Everything is holy and pure. All jokes are clean, all movies are rated G, etc. Only the pure in heart will see God (Matt. 5:8).

⁸ These stones are basically the same stones used in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28:17–20).

⁹ Nicholson, "The Thorn."

- B. A place of **light** and utter **transparency** (21:18, 21–25; 22:5). Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, people have been trying to hide from God. In heaven, there will be no place to hide. There will be no secrets because all the walls are made of glass. Learning to **love the light** is one of the best ways to prepare for heaven (John 3:19–21).
- C. Unceasing **worship**. Though there will be lots of corporate singing and praise, heaven’s worship will be much more than “sitting in church forever and ever.” We will “serve” God and “reign” with him. This means we will finally be able to fully accomplish what we were designed **to be** and **to do**. Everything will be done before the face of God (22:3–5).
- D. People from all **nations** and ethnicities will live there (21:24–26; 22:2). Heaven is a place of reconciling love. All relational ruptures will be healed. Heaven will be a miserable place for those who have prejudice and hatred of any kind.
- E. Where doing **the will of God** is everyone’s highest joy (Matt. 6:10; 7:21; 12:50).
For those who are unprepared, even if they got to heaven it would seem **like hell** to them!

TABLE TALK

1. Describe some experiences you have had with people who had false notions of life after death. What could be done to correct their thinking?
2. What did this lesson teach you about heaven that you didn’t know before?
3. Our grandparents sang about heaven constantly. Why don’t we sing about heaven any more when we gather for worship?
4. How does thinking about the future change the way you live today?
5. Describe someone you know (no names, please) who loves the light. Describe someone else who loves the darkness.
6. Imagine what it will be like to be face to face with God! But do we have to wait until heaven for this to be true?

Joy to the World

by Isaac Watts

Joy to the World , the Lord is come!

Let earth receive her King;

Let every heart prepare Him room,

And Heaven and nature sing,

And Heaven and nature sing,

And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!

Let men their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,

Nor thorns infest the ground;

He comes to make His blessings flow

Far as the curse is found,

Far as the curse is found,

Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,

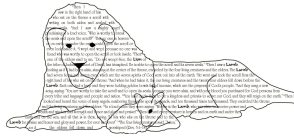
And makes the nations prove

The glories of His righteousness,

And wonders of His love,

And wonders of His love,

And wonders, wonders, of His love



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 16. THE LAST WORD (CH. 22:6–21)

I. Summary of the Book of Revelation

A. A quick overview of Revelation

- I. Introduction (1:1–20).
- II. Letters to the seven churches (2:1–3:22).
- III. Heavenly vision of the Lamb (4:1–5:14).
- IV. The seven seals (6:1–7:17).
- V. The seven trumpets (8:1–11:19).
- VI. War between the forces of good and evil (12:1–14:20).
- VII. The seven last plagues (15:1–16:21).
- VIII. The fall of Babylon (17:1–19:21).
- IX. The millennial reign and final judgment (20:1–15).
- X. A new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem (21:1–22:5).
- XI. Epilogue (22:6–21).

1. Recurrence of **contrast**: good-evil, God-Satan, Christ-antichrist, Lamb-dragon, Jerusalem-Babylon, the Bride-the great prostitute, salvation-damnation.
2. The building double-crescendo that climaxes in a terrifying **judgment** for the citizens of Babylon and a glorious **salvation** for the citizens of Jerusalem.
3. Revelation is not a crystal ball to enable us to discern the future. It is rather a clarion final call to **make a decision**: Which city will define my existence? Which Lord will I serve?

B. For those who open the door and let Jesus come in as Lord and King (3:20), Revelation encourages us to:

1. **Look up**. Our King has not forgotten us. He knows our trials and persecutions. He is watching every tear that falls. He is coming back... soon. We are saved in hope.
2. **Look in**. Because no one knows the day of His return, we must live in constant readiness. Prepare to meet your God! What if it were today?
3. **Watch out**. There are many enemies that threaten to destroy us and rob us of our salvation. The world, the flesh and the devil are all around us. Therefore, be careful and walk in obedience. Be faithful even unto death.
4. **Look around**. There are many opportunities to serve our Lord and be his witnesses (martyrs). Others need to have the opportunity to flee from the coming wrath and find salvation in the City of God.

II. Famous Last Words

When someone is about to leave, especially when one is nearing death, their final words usually reveal that about which they feel most deeply.

- Bing Crosby (1977): *That was a great game of golf, fellers.*
- Humphrey Bogart (1957): *I should have switched from Scotch to Martinis.*
- Oscar Wilde (1900): *Either this wallpaper goes, or I do.*
- Dominique Bouhours (French grammarian, 1702): *I am about to—or I am going to—die; either expression is used.*
- Nathan Hale (1776): *I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country.*
- Lord Nelson (1805): *Thank God, I have done my duty.*
- Thomas Jefferson (July 4, 1826): *Is it the fourth?*
- Socrates (399 BC): *Crito, I owe a rooster to Asclepius. Will you remember to pay the debt?*
- John Wesley (1791): *The best of all: God is with us.*
- Jesus (33): *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit* (Luke 23:46).

Revelation 22:6–21 gives us a record of God’s final words to us! It would be misleading to think that these words are more important than other words God has spoken but these are apparently the words He wants us to **constantly remember**.

III. The next-to-the-last word

When this chapter is finished, there is nothing more to say. All has been said. More definitive than when a judge pounds his gavel, these words complete what God wants us to understand. This is God’s final word.

- A. A word of **affirmation**... to authenticate all that has been said. “These words are trustworthy and true.” (v. 6).
- B. A word of **promise**... to give us hope. “I am coming soon!” (vv. 7, 12, 20).
 1. For the believer, the promise of Christ’s return tomorrow makes it possible to live in victory **today**! Regardless of how bad things are now, we can survive and even thrive because of the certainty of his return and his coming glorious kingdom.

On July 4, 1952, Florence Chadwick tried to swim from Catalina Island to the coast of California. She wanted to be the first woman to complete the 21-mile swim. But the fog was so thick she could barely even see the boats traveling with her. Finally, after almost 16 hours in the water, she gave up. Getting into one of the boats she discovered she was only half a mile from shore! In a news conference the next day she said, “All I could see was the fog... I think if I could have **seen the shore**, I would have made it.”

2. But how can the return of Jesus Christ be “soon” when we have been waiting for almost 2,000 years for this blessed event? Even in the first century, followers of Christ were struggling with this perplexing difficulty.

...knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his

*promise as some count slowness, but is **patient** [MAKROTHUMEO¹] toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach **repentance** (II Peter 3:3-4, 8-9).*

- C. A two-fold word of **blessing**... to motivate us to obedience.

There are 7 blessings (beatitudes) in the book of Revelation², two of which are given in this passage:

1. *Blessed is the one who **keeps the words** of the prophecy of this book. (22:7).* This book is not just given so that we will have more information about the last the days. It is given to us so that we will **do what it says**: believe the Gospel, hope in Christ's return, love our neighbor, bear witness to Jesus, obey our Lord and follow his commands, resist temptation, stand fast in tribulation, be faithful unto death, keep our doctrine pure, etc.
2. *Blessed are those who **wash their robes**, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city... (22:14).* The verb "wash" is in the present tense, referring to a **continual**, on-going washing. Once is not enough! However Revelation 7:14 indicates that our robes must be "washed" and "made white" in the blood of the Lamb. Here, both verbs are in the aorist tense, signifying an action that is **once and for all**. One is reminded of Jesus' word to Peter: "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:10).

- D. A word of **command**... to help us keep the main thing the main thing. "Worship God" (vv. 8-9).

This is the second time John has worshiped the **messenger** rather the One who sent the message (see 19:9-10). If the mail man delivers you a love letter, don't fall in love with the mail man! Worship God! This is not a suggestion but a command and summarizes the message of the entire book. If the study of Revelation does not culminate in worship, if **eschatology** does not result in **doxology**, then we have misunderstood the message and missed the whole point.

- E. A four-fold word of **warning**... to put the fear of God in us (vv. 10-11).

1. *"Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy" (v. 10-11).*

Warning: the day is coming soon when change will be impossible, when the day of grace will be ended, when destinies are fixed forever. There will be no chance for last minute repentance. Today is the day of salvation. Tomorrow will be **too late**.

2. *"I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done" (v. 12).*
3. *"Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (v. 15).*

¹ THUMOS—passion, anger, wrath. MAKRO—long time, great distance. MAKROTHUMIA means longsuffering, great patience, forbearance.

² Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7 and 22:14.

4. *“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone **adds to** them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone **takes away** from the words of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (vv. 18–19).*

Warning: Don't tamper with or distort God's Book (see Gal. 1:6–7). Don't add to it (Mormons, Muslims, the gnostic gospels, etc.). Don't take from it (Thomas Jefferson, higher criticism, etc.). God has given us all we need to know for life and godliness.

*What more can he say, than to you he has said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?³*

F. A two-fold word of **invitation**... to reassure us of God's infinite grace.

1. The Spirit and the Bride, say, **“Come.”** And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires **take** the water of life without price (v. 17).

The invitation is given by the Holy Spirit and the Church (Bride) to the unbelieving world around us. “Come to the waters... all who are thirsty... come.” American evangelicals did not invent “the altar call.” Every true Gospel service ends in an invitation.⁴

2. “Come, Lord Jesus!” (v. 20).

In verse 17, the invitation was that the world would come to Christ. But here in verse 20, the invitation is that Christ would come to the world. This is one of the earliest prayers of the church. We have its original expression in I Corinthians 16:22. **Maranatha!** (a transliteration of an Aramaic phrase: “Our Lord, come!”).

It almost seems that God is giving the last word to us! Having finished what he had to say, God points to us and says, “OK, I'm done. The last word belongs to you! If you don't know what to say, I'll give you a hint: **“Come, Lord Jesus!”** But I can only prompt you. You are going to have to say it for yourself!”

IV. The Last Word (Revelation 22:21)

But wait. There is one final word.⁵ All the previous words have been penultimate (next to last). This word is the ultimate and final word for all people, in all times, everywhere. When this word is said there is truly nothing else to say. Unless you want to repeat the word again and again: **Amen.**

Amen is transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and English (as well as perhaps every other language). It comes from a root word that means firm, dependable, secure and certain. Jesus used the word often, beginning many statements with “Truly, truly (Amen, Amen), I say to you...” This was Jesus' way of guaranteeing that his words were reliable and true.

³ Rippon,[John] ???

⁴ “It is the testimony of the church empowered by the Holy Spirit that constitutes the great evangelizing force of this age.” (Robert H. Mounce, p. 409).

⁵ Yes, John does add the words, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all” which are rich in meaning. But we will save a discussion of these words for another time.

When God says “amen”, it means “it shall be so.” It is through Jesus that all the promises and purposes of God are established. This is why Jesus is the Great Amen of God (Rev. 3:14).

*... in him it is always **Yes**. For all the promises of God find their **Yes** in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory (II Cor. 1:19–20).*

When worshippers say “amen”, it means: yes, let it be so, I agree, I identify with all that has been said. Once you have said Amen, there is nothing else to say. The best you can do is repeat it. It means, **let the Lord have his way!** Imagine, if the whole world shouted Amen!

TABLE TALK

1. What did you learn in this lesson?
2. This book is not just a revelation *from* Jesus. It is the revelation *of* Jesus. Explain and discuss this.
3. Describe an experience you have had when you realized someone was tampering with God’s Word; either adding to it or taking from it.
4. Does the book of Revelation fill you with hope? Or dread? Does the prayer “Come, Lord Jesus” come naturally for you?
5. Has this study changed the way you think about worship? How?

S. M. Lockridge preached an unforgettable sermon on the word “Amen!” The climax of the sermon came when he described King Jesus:

My King is a sovereign King. No means of measure can define His limitless love. No far seeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of His shoreless supply. No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessings. He’s enduringly strong. He’s entirely sincere. He’s eternally steadfast. He’s immortally graceful. He’s imperially powerful. He’s impartially merciful. Do you know Him?

He’s the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He’s God’s Son. He’s the sinner’s Savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. He stands in the solitude of Himself. He’s august and He’s unique. He’s unparalleled. He’s unprecedented. He is the loftiest idea in literature. He’s the highest personality in philosophy. He is the supreme problem in higher criticism. He’s the fundamental doctrine of true theology. He is the cardinal necessity for spiritual religion.

He’s the miracle of the age. He is the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him. He’s the only one qualified to be an all sufficient Savior. I wonder if you know Him today?

He supplies strength for the weak. He’s available for the tempted and the tried. He sympathizes and He saves. He strengthens and sustains. He guards and He guides.

He heals the sick. He cleansed the lepers. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the feeble. He blesses the young. He serves the unfortunate. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent....and He beautifies the meek.

I wonder if you know Him?

He’s the key to knowledge. He’s the wellspring of wisdom. He’s the doorway of deliverance. He’s the pathway of peace. He’s the roadway of righteousness. He’s the highway of holiness. He’s the gateway of glory. Do you know Him?

Well, His office is manifold. His promise is sure....and His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. And His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. I wish I could describe Him to you....

He’s incomprehensible. He’s invincible. He’s irresistible. Well, you can’t get Him out of your mind. You can’t get Him off of your hand. You can’t out live Him, and you can’t live without Him. The Pharisees couldn’t stand Him, but they found out they couldn’t stop Him. Pilate couldn’t find any fault in Him. The witnesses couldn’t get their testimonies to agree. Herod couldn’t kill Him. Death couldn’t handle Him, and the grave couldn’t hold Him. Yea!!!, that’s my King, that’s my King.

Yes, and Thine is the Kingdom....and the Power....and the Glory....Forever....and ever, and ever, and ever—How long is that? And ever, and ever. And when you get through with all of the forevers, then. AMEN!

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Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending

By Charles Wesley

Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favored sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.

Every eye shall now behold Him
Robed in dreadful majesty;
Those who set at naught and sold Him,
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing, deeply wailing,
Shall the true Messiah see.

Now redemption, long expected,
See in solemn pomp appear;
All His saints, by man rejected,
Now shall meet Him in the air:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
See the day of God appear!

Answer Thine own bride and Spirit,
Hasten, Lord, the general doom!
The new Heav'n and earth t'inherit,
Take Thy pining exiles home:
All creation, all creation, all creation,
Travails! groans! and bids Thee come!

The dear tokens of His passion
Still His dazzling body bears;
Cause of endless exultation
To His ransomed worshippers;
With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture
Gaze we on those glorious scars!

Yea, Amen! let all adore Thee,
High on Thine eternal throne;
Savior, take the power and glory,
Claim the kingdom for Thine own;
O come quickly! O come quickly! O come quickly!
Everlasting God, come down!