

The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key



©2013 Stan Key. Reproduction of all or any substantial part of these materials is prohibited except for personal, individual use. No part of these materials may be distributed or copied for any other purpose without written permission.

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright ©2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

For information about these or other additional study materials, contact:

The Francis Asbury Society

PO Box 7

Wilmore, KY 40390

859-858-4222

800-530-5673

fas@francisasburysociety.com

www.francisasburysociety.com

To follow Stan on his blog, visit: <http://pastorkeynotes.wordpress.com>.

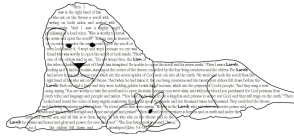
Downloadable PDFs of both student and answer guides for this study are available at www.francisasburysociety.com/stan-key.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2. THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE KEYS (1:1-20).....	7
CHAPTER 3. SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1-3:22).....	13
CHAPTER 4. A GLIMPSE THROUGH THE DOOR (4:1-5:14).....	21
CHAPTER 5. WHO CAN STAND? (6:1-8:1).....	25
CHAPTER 6. SAFE AND SECURE (7:1-17).....	29
CHAPTER 7. HOLY SMOKE (8-9).....	33
CHAPTER 8. CAN I GET A WITNESS? (10-11).....	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	43



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I. A Brave, New World.

The last book of the Bible is unlike any other book in the New Testament. Though parts of the Old Testament (Daniel, Ezekiel) have some occasional similarities, there is little in the Bible that prepares us for what we encounter in the book of Revelation. Reading this book demands a _____! Consider:

- Dragons, beasts, ten-headed monsters.
- Visions of heaven (warfare, throne room, etc.).
- Angel armies.
- Mysterious numbers (e.g., 666).
- Seals are opened, trumpets blown, bowls poured out, horsemen released, etc.
- Final judgment.
- Plagues and destruction of cosmic proportions.
- Two cities: a new Jerusalem on earth and an old Babylon destroyed.
- Two women: one a prostitute, the other a holy mother.
- A holy Trinity and an unholy “trinity” (Satan, Antichrist, False Prophet).
- Mortal combat between a dragon and a lamb (Who do you think will win?).
- The repetition of the number seven (churches, seals, trumpets, plagues, etc.).

Revelation introduces us to a world “in which children are instinctively at home and in which adults, by becoming as little children, recapture an elemental involvement in the basic conflicts and struggles that permeate moral existence....” (Eugene Peterson, p. x).

The result of such unfamiliar territory, has caused many Christians to:

- A. _____ the book.
- B. _____ the book.
- C. _____ the book.

II. Finding the right approach.

- A. Recognize the importance of literary form (genre).

From about 200 BC to about 100 AD a new genre of Jewish literature appeared. Called ‘apocalyptic literature’ (from the Greek term *apokalupsis*, meaning ‘unveiling’ or ‘revelation’), these writings sought to inspire hope to God’s people in the midst of great adversity. This literature made great use of remarkable symbolism and visions and had several recognizable themes:

- 1) The _____ of good and evil.
- 2) If we understand the _____, we can survive and thrive today.
- 3) God is in control of _____.

Revelation (and Daniel) clearly falls into this type of literature. However, it is important to recognize how Revelation goes beyond the Jewish genre and has additional characteristics that make it unique:

- 4) The author of Revelation calls his book a _____ (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19).
- 5) Jewish apocalyptic literature was nearly always pseudonymous but Revelation clearly identifies its author as 'John' (1:4,9; 22:8).
- 6) Jewish apocalyptic literature was generally pessimistic about the present age, but Revelation maintains a _____ of hope in the midst of trial (John 16:33).
- 7) While most apocalyptic literature sought to focus on the future, the book of Revelation has a strong _____ for today (calls to repentance, etc.).
- 8) John's book includes seven _____, something never encountered in other apocalyptic literature.

B. Historically, there have been four basic interpretive approaches to this book:

- 1) *The contemporary-historical approach.* The basic idea here is that John is writing about events occurring in the _____ (the Beast is Nero; the Great Prostitute is Rome, etc.). Thus, most of the prophecies of the book would have been fulfilled with either the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD) or the fall of Rome (476 AD). The primary weakness of this view is that the overwhelming victory portrayed in the later chapters of Revelation was never achieved in history.
- 2) *The historicist approach.* This view believes that Revelation is a _____ of events from the writer's day to our own... and beyond. Examining the prophecies, one can find indications of the history of Western Europe, the Reformation, the French Revolution, the re-establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, etc. The weakness of this approach is seen in the fact that few interpreters can agree on which symbols in the book point to which events in history.
- 3) *The futurist approach.* Most popular understanding of Revelation is here (Dispensationalism, *Left Behind*, etc.). The basic idea is that everything after Revelation 4:1 belongs in a period still _____, focusing on events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ. Often, this position claims that the seven churches represent seven successive ages of church history building to the rapture of the church in 4:1 (?). The weakness of this view is that it means the book would have had little significance for those to whom it was addressed in the first century.
- 4) *The idealist approach.* This school of interpretation claims that the book does not refer to any specific historical events or time periods at all. Rather it is _____ and _____, a type of theological poem, that expresses the ageless conflict between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness.

Robert H. Mounce sums up the matter succinctly when he says: "It is readily apparent that each approach has some important contribution to a full

understanding of Revelation and that no single approach is sufficient in itself.” (p. 43).

There is no textual indication that John meant for his book to be used as a kind of _____ or Ouija Board to predict future events. It takes much creative speculation to transform the book of Revelation into vast, sweeping charts and time-lines of human history that outlines the chronology of world events for us today. John was writing as a pastor to help the believers in the churches of Asia both survive and thrive as they lived in the evil empire of first century Rome. His words certainly point to the future and the final victory of the Lamb. But what he has to say is profitable for all believers everywhere whether they live under Nero, Attila the Hun, Ivan the Terrible, Vlad the Impaler, Napoleon, Pol Pot, Stalin, Hitler, Idi Amin, etc. Conclusion: The book of Revelation is not a call to _____ but rather an invitation to _____!

III. Overview of Revelation

- A. The simplest structure for the book is outlined in 1:19. Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

The things you have seen	The things that are	The things that are to take place after this
1	2	3 4 22

- B. A more complete outline of the book might look like this:

- 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).

- C. What can we learn from the structure?

1. There is a building double crescendo that climaxes in:
 - a. _____ (ch. 17–20). Therefore, “repent.”
 - b. _____ (ch. 21–22). Therefore, “be steadfast.”
2. There is a recurrence of _____ between: God and Satan, the Lamb and the dragon, good and evil, Babylon and Jerusalem, the prostitute and the bride, salvation and judgment.
3. The number 7 is obviously very important to God.

IV. Why study Revelation?

- A. It is an _____ word.

Don't believe the lie that pretends Revelation is written in _____ so that only those with special training or spiritual gifting can decipher it! When it was read aloud to the seven churches in the first century, we can believe that they understood its meaning. So can we. Therefore, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (22:10).

B. It is a _____ word.

The book is addressed to the seven churches in the province of Asia (1:4). In all probability John was their pastor (or bishop, or part of the pastoral team providing oversight for their care). So when John writes of the Beast, the trumpets, the plagues, etc. he is not writing as a speculative theologian interested in eschatology. He is writing as a shepherd concerned _____! The book is a pastoral letter written to help Christians living in the Evil Empire. It should be read as a Survivor's Guide to life in Babylon: how to live victoriously in a world of temptation, persecution, false doctrine, apostasy, demonic hordes, and constant pressure simply to say, "Caesar is Lord."

C. It is a _____ word.

Those who read this book out loud and those who listen to it and obey its teaching are promised a blessing. In fact, there are seven (!) beatitudes promised in this book:

- 1) Blessed is the one who _____ the words of this prophesy, and blessed are those who hear it, and who keep what is written in it... (1:3).
- 2) Blessed are _____ who die in the Lord from now on... that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them! (14:13).
- 3) Blessed is the one who _____, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed! (16:15).
- 4) Blessed are those who are invited to the _____ of the Lamb. (19:9).
- 5) Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will _____ for a thousand years (20:6).
- 6) Blessed is the one who _____ of the prophecy of this book (22:7).
- 7) Blessed are those who _____, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city... (22:14).

So perhaps we should admit to having an ulterior motive in studying this book. We want to share in the blessing!

D. It is God's _____ word.

With this book, God's revelation is _____. He has nothing more to say. Because it is final. Anyone who adds to or takes from this word is cursed (22:18-19).

*What more can he say, than to you he has said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled? (John Rippon, 1787).*

Recognize, however, that for John, the "word" (Greek, logos) is not simply a spoken sound or a written document. God's final Word in its ultimate expression is Jesus! (see John 1:1,14).

The revelation _____ Jesus Christ.... He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word (logos) of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ... (1:1-2).

This final book is a “revelation *of* Jesus Christ.” The preposition is important! The book is not only mediated *by* (or *from*) Jesus; it is an unveiling _____ Christ himself in all his glory and power! The purpose of God’s final word is not just that we know about the future, but that we _____!

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!.... And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (5:12-14).

The word “amen” comes from a Hebrew word meaning firm, dependable, trustworthy, certain, and true. Anyone who says “amen” to a prayer or doxology, shows that he is in agreement with what has been said and makes it his own. “So be it”... “May it be true”... Thus, it is fitting that the last word of the book is an invitation for all of us to make our own personal affirmation of the Lamb in all that he _____, in all that he _____, and in all that he _____ in the future. And all God’s people said, “_____” (22:21).

TABLE TALK

1. Describe your own experience with the book of Revelation.
2. How does it change your approach to Revelation to see it as a book written by a pastor concerned about his sheep?
3. The book is not just a revelation *from* Jesus. It is the revelation *of* Jesus. Explain the difference.
4. The book promises a blessing to those who read, listen, and obey. What blessing do you hope to receive in the study of this book?

All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!

By Edward Perronet

All hail the pow'r of Jesus' Name!

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,

Ye ransomed from the fall,

Hail Him Who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,

On this terrestrial ball,

To Him all majesty ascribe,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng

We at His feet may fall!

We'll join the everlasting song,

And crown Him Lord of all!



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 2. THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE KEYS (1:1–20).

I. Outline of Chapter 1.

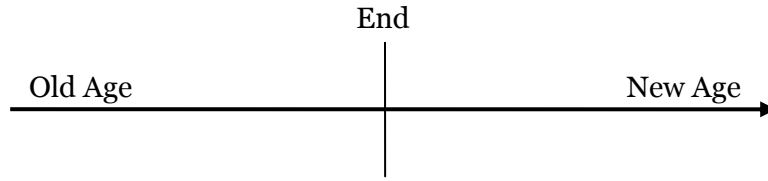
Prologue (vv. 1–3).	Pastoral Greetings to the Seven Churches (vv. 4–8).	John’s Vision Begins (vv. 9–20).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What this book is about (vv. 1–2). • Promised blessing (v. 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grace & peace (vv. 4–5a). • 7 things to know about Jesus (vv. 5:b–7). • “I am...” (v. 8). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The setting (vv. 9–11). • What he sees (vv. 12–16). • What he hears (vv. 17–20).

A. Prologue. (Rev. 1:1–3)

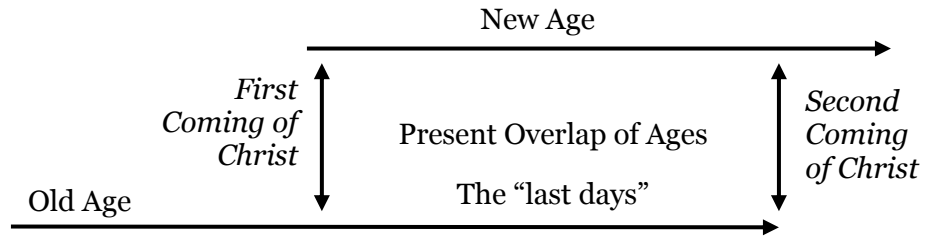
1. It’s all in the prepositions (vv. 1–2). This revelation (*apocalypse*) is:
 - _____ God.
 - Mediated _____ an angel.
 - Given _____ John (and John is to share it with the churches... and to us).
 - It is _____ the events that must soon take place.
 - And it is _____ Jesus. The revelation is not just about future events. Preeminently, it is an unveiling of Jesus: his identity and his work (past, present and future).
2. A blessing (beatitude) is promised to (v. 3):
 - The one who _____ this book out loud.
 - The one who _____ what is read.
 - The one who _____ what it tells us to do.
3. “The time is _____” (v. 3). “I am coming _____” (22:7, 12, 20).

These statements were written some 1900 years ago! In what sense is the glorious victory of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom “near”? In what sense is Jesus coming “soon”? Even in the New Testament, the question “When?” was passionately asked (Mark 13:4; Acts 1:6–7; I Thessalonians 5:1–11; II Peter 3:8–10; Revelation 6:10).

Christ’s coming changed the way God’s people think about “_____.” Before Christ, time was basically conceived in two stages:



But the coming of Christ changed this perspective so that time is now conceived something like this:



Christians live in the land of _____. The life of faith is the call to live victoriously in the interval between the old age and the age to come, the promise and the fulfillment, the _____ and the _____. Some use D-Day and the Battle of Berlin to describe this reality.

B. Pastoral Greetings to the Seven Churches. (Rev. 1:4–8)

1. The book of Revelation is addressed to “the seven churches that are in Asia” (v. 4). These churches are named in verse 11. The book is in reality a _____ written to Christians undergoing great difficulty.

But why seven churches? Why not one? Jesus apparently wants us to see the beauty of _____ in _____ and diversity in unity. Each local church contains part of the truth, a portion of the light. It is when they all work together (7 is the number for wholeness, completion) that the full-orbed beauty of the Gospel is best seen.

2. John tells us seven truths about Jesus Christ, the one “who is and who was and who is to come” (vv. 4–7):
 - a. Who he is (in this present moment):
 - He is the faithful _____ (v. 5).
 - He is the _____ from the dead (v. 5).
 - He is the _____ on earth (v. 5).
 - He _____ (v. 5).
 - b. What he has done (in the past):
 - He has _____ from our sins by his blood (v. 5).
 - He has made us a _____ of priests (v. 6). (The church is to be to the world what the Levitical priests were to Israel: mediators and intercessors).

c. What he will do (in the future):

- He is _____ (v. 7).

3. As if to confirm and emphasize the truth of what has just been said, Almighty God (the Father) speaks: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come” (v. 8). He is the A and the Z and all that is in between. He is not constrained by the limits of time. He is the _____.

C. John’s Vision Begins (vv. 9–20).

1. The setting for the revelation. (Rev. 1:9–11)

In the Greek, the preposition *en* is repeated seven times in verses 9–10.

- I, John, your brother and partner *EN* the _____....
- EN* (understood) the _____...
- EN* (understood) the _____....
- EN* _____....
- I was *EN* the island of _____ on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus...
- I was *EN* _____...
- EN* the _____... (Note: it appears that the Christians were already making a distinction between the Sabbath, the Jewish day of worship, and Sunday, the Christian day of worship).

2. What John saw: the vision. (Rev. 1:12–16)

a. The seven golden lampstands (vv. 12–13).

The lampstands represent the seven churches (v. 20). Thus, the church is not the light, but it is meant to _____ the light. Yet these churches were _____: Ephesus had left her first love, Pergamum was dabbling in the teachings of the Nicolaitans, Thyatira was tolerating that woman Jezebel, Sardis had a good reputation but was really dead, Laodicea was lukewarm, etc. But, if John is going to see Jesus, it will be “in the midst” of these churches!

b. One like a Son of Man (v. 13).

In the Gospels, Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man” more than any other title. The title comes from the book of Daniel.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like _____, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given _____ and _____ and a _____, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13–14).

The one John saw was “clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest” (v. 13). The word for “robe” describes what Aaron wore as the Great High Priest. Thus, the Son of Man is not only a

_____. He is also a _____: and he exercises these functions now!

John then describes the characteristics of this Son of Man. There are seven elements of his description.

- His *hair* (v. 14). As white as snow. He is _____.
- His *eyes* (v. 14). Like a flame of fire. His gaze both penetrates and purifies. Christ doesn't just look *at* us, he look _____ us!
- His *feet* (v. 15). Like burnished bronze. His kingdom will _____. In Daniel's vision, the statue had feet that were "partly of iron and partly of clay" (Daniel 2:33). Such a statue is sure to fall. Not King Jesus!
- His *voice* (v. 15). Like the roar of many waters. Many did not hear the Word spoken at Bethlehem (John 1:1–18). But the day is coming soon when _____ what the son of man has to say.
- His *right hand* (v. 16). He holds seven stars. Jesus is not controlled by the stars (astrology). He _____ the stars and the entire the universe by his mighty power!
- His *mouth* (v. 16). From his mouth comes a sharp, two-edged sword. This is the Son of Man's ultimate weapon...and ours (Eph. 6:17)! His Word _____, _____ and _____ our deepest thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12).
- His *face* (v. 16). Like the sun shining in full strength. Perhaps John was remembering the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus' face "shone like the sun" (Matthew 17:2). The culmination of our Christian journey will be when we see him _____ (22:4).

3. What John heard: the word. **Read verses 17–20.**

- a. "_____..." (vv. 17–18). Though John's vision is unlike anything anyone has ever seen before, there is no reason to fear because he is already _____ (vv. 9–10) and Jesus has already overcome sin, death, hell and Satan. Jacques Ellul says that the entire book of Revelation "can be summed up in this word: *fear not*" (p. 105).
- b. "I have _____ of Death and Hades..." (v. 18). What he shuts, no one can open. What he opens, no one can shut. Nothing happens without the permission of King Jesus!
- c. "Therefore _____..." (vv. 19–20). Others need to know the vision John has seen and hear the words that he has heard.

II. The Excellency of Christ.

A. Behold, the Man.

This book is "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1) and here in the first chapter we see both who Jesus is and what Jesus does (past, present, and future). The revelation of Jesus seems to fall into two categories:

Mercy & Grace	Justice & Law
He loves us (v. 5). He died for us, forgave us (v. 5). He says “Fear not!” (v. 17).	He is ruler of kings of earth (1:5). Those who pierced him will wail (1:7). His presence is overwhelming (vv. 13–16).

This double-reality of Jesus Christ comes through most poignantly in Revelation 5:5–6.

And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the _____ of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.” And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a _____ standing, as though it had been slain.... (5:5–6).

B. The lion-like Lamb... the lamb-like Lion.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) preached a famous sermon, entitled “The Excellency of Christ,” based on the text Revelation 5:5–6. Edwards spoke of the fact that the final revelation of Jesus Christ shows him to be both a Lamb and a Lion.... not one _____ the other but _____... at the same time! The purpose of his sermon was to show forth the “admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ.” His sermon (35 pages) shows the contrasting excellencies that meet in the person and in the work of Jesus.

As a lamb, Jesus is...	As a lion, Jesus is...
Infinite in condescension	Infinite in exaltation
Infinite in grace	Infinite in justice
Infinite in humility	Infinite in glory
Infinite in meekness	Infinite in majesty
Infinite in submission	Infinite in dominion
Full of trust and reliance on God	Self-sufficient
Takes our sin on himself	Judges and condemns sin
Delivered over to his enemies	Victorious over his enemies

At his first coming, Jesus came humbly, riding on a _____. But when he comes again, he will come on a _____, prepared for war (Revelation 19:11–16). And yet Jesus is one Divine Person... not two. Behold, the excellency of Jesus Christ!

Perhaps the most amazing thing is this: as we follow Jesus the Lion/Lamb and allow his Spirit to transform our hearts and lives, we begin to reflect his glory and discover that his image is _____.! When we are in Christ, we too become lamb-like and lion-like _____.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. (II Corinthians 3:18).

C. Living in the land of in-between.

Men and women today live in the time period between _____ of Christ. He came as a Lamb and many did not recognize who he really was. He will

come again as a Lion but this time everyone will know his true identity! But why, you may wonder, this interval? Why wouldn't Christ come to us initially in all his power and glory so that no one would mistake who he was? C. S. Lewis speaks eloquently to this question in his book *Mere Christianity*.

Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is he not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to _____ of joining His side freely. I do not suppose you and I would have thought much of a Frenchman who waited till the Allies were marching into Germany and then announced he was on our side. God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else – something it never entered your head to conceive – comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? For this time it will be God without disguise; something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be _____ then to choose your side....That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen.... Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it. (pp. 64–65).

TABLE TALK

1. Discuss something you learned from this study that you had never really grasped before.
2. Describe what it means for you personally to live in the land of in-between, in that time period between Christ's first and second comings, between the promise and the fulfillment, the already and the not yet.
3. John saw Christ "in the midst" of the (dysfunctional) churches. Do you believe it is possible to find Christ outside of church? Explain your answer.
4. What conclusion should we draw from the fact that most (all?) of the seven churches addressed in this book no longer exist?
5. What difference does it make in our daily lives to realize that Jesus Christ is eternal and lives in the "eternal now," not subject to the laws of past, present and future?
6. When you think of Jesus, what image comes to mind, the Lamb or the Lion? Does the thought of him make you feel warm and fuzzy or does it inspire fear? Why is it so important to be fully Biblical in the way we envision Jesus Christ?



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 3. SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1–3:22).

I. Introduction to the Seven Churches.

A. A look at the map and a lesson from history.

1. The map shows us that these churches in Asia Minor (today, Turkey) form a kind of circuit. John apparently intended that his book (and each letter to each church) would be read as a kind of _____ by each church.
2. History tells us that none of these churches (?) exist today. Does this mean that their lampstand was _____? (2:5).



B. The real Senior Pastor.

In these letters, Christ is _____ his church(s): observing, warning, encouraging, etc. Each letter has the same basic structure:

1. *Greeting and introduction:* The letter is addressed to the angel¹ of the church and Jesus Christ is identified (titles and names) as the author.
2. *Body:* The works of the church are recognized and either praised or criticized.
3. *Conclusion:* The letter closes with a plea to hear what has been said and a promise to those who _____.

C. A seven-fold message for each church.

Though each letter is worthy of individual study in and of itself, the real message contained in these letters is found in viewing them _____. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (plural)” (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22).

D. Seven stages of history?

Many popular interpretations of chapters 2–3 are a form of _____ that claims the 7 churches represent 7 eras of history. The conclusion is usually that we live in the Laodicean age. I see no biblical basis for such an approach.

II. The Seven Churches.

A. Ephesus (2:1–7). The _____ church.

Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 18:1–41; 20:17–38 and the book of Ephesians. • Heresy and pseudo-apostles (Nicolaitans). • Persecution.
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The one who holds the 7 stars in his right hand. • The one who walks among the 7 lampstands.

¹ Robert H. Mounce believes that the “angel” is not some sort of guardian angel for each church or some ruling official of the congregation but rather “its prevailing spirit” (p. 66).

Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know your toil and endurance (<i>hupmeno</i>). • I know you cannot bear those who are evil. • I know how you have tested those who claim to be apostles. • I know how you endure patiently and bear up. • I know how you hate the works of the Nicolaitans. <p>This church was:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ in ministry. 2. _____ in adversity. 3. _____ in theology.
Rebukes	You have abandoned the love you had at first.
Commands	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. _____ from where you have fallen. 2. _____. 3. _____ the works you did at first.
Promises	The one who conquers will be granted to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God.
Threats	If you don't repent, Jesus will remove your lampstand.
Major Theme	Love—Is our relationship with Christ characterized by love?
Message for Us	Am I doing the _____ things for the _____ reasons?

B. Smyrna (2:8–11). The _____ church.

Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persecution (synagogue of Satan). • Poverty. • Demonic activity.
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first and the last. • The one who died and came to life.
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know your tribulation. • I know your poverty... but you are _____! (cf. 3:17). • I know the slander you are experiencing. <p>Some of the slanderous things said against Christians in the 1st century included (see Matthew 5:11–12):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are _____ (eat flesh and drink blood). • You are _____ (love feasts). • You are _____ (refuse to say “Caesar is Lord”). • You are _____ (children leave parents, a wife leaves a husband, etc.). • You are _____! (don't worship Zeus, Diana, etc.). • You are _____ (talk of the end of the world... Nero blames Christians for the fire in Rome).
Rebukes	None. Suffering and persecution tend to _____ the church!

Commands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Be faithful unto death.
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you are faithful, you will be given the crown of life. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the 2nd death.
Threats	None
Major Theme	Persecution—the world around us hates what we represent.
Message for Us	Suffering for Christ is a _____. God knows! And he will reward our faithfulness. Better to be poor and not know you are rich (2:9) than to be rich and not know you are poor (3:17).

C. Pergamum (2:12–17). The _____ church.

Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You dwell where Satan’s throne is. Antipas had been martyred for his faith.
Titles of Christ	Him who has the sharp two-edged sword.
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You hold fast my name (we can hold on to Christ only because he first _____). See 2:1). You did not deny the faith even in the midst of great adversity.
Rebukes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of you hold the teachings of Balaam. Some of you hold the teachings of the Nicolaitans. <p>These false teachings condone things that Christ will not tolerate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> _____. Worshiping Christ plus idols.... _____.
Commands	Repent!
Promises	The one who conquers will be given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hidden manna. a white stone with a new name written on it.
Threats	If you don’t repent I will come and make war against you with the sword of my mouth.
Major Theme	Heresy—a _____ is often more dangerous than a lie.
Message for Us	The sharp, two-edged sword in Jesus’ (see Rev. 1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15,21; Heb. 4:12–13; Eph. 6:17) mouth will either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expose our hearts and save us (like a _____). Or condemn us (like an _____).

D. Thyatira (2:18–29). The _____ church.

Historical Context	A “prophetess” (Jezebel) has a huge influence in the city and is “seducing” followers of Christ to practice sexual immorality and eat food sacrificed to idols (syncretism).
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Son of God. • The one who has eyes like a flame of fire. • The one who has feet like burnished bronze. • The one who searches mind and heart.
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I know your _____. • I know your faith. • I know your service. • I know your patient endurance. • I know you are doing more good works now than formerly.
Rebukes	You tolerate that “prophetess” Jezebel, who teaches “the deep things of Satan”. God’s concern is not so much with Jezebel and her followers. He will take care of them personally (vv. 21–23). His concern is with the church that tolerates this stuff!
Commands	Hold fast what you have until I come.
Promises	The one who conquers and keeps the faith until the end: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will be given authority over the nations. • will be given the morning star.
Threats	God will throw all the disciples of Jezebel into great tribulation and eventually kill them... unless they repent.
Major Theme	Tolerance that remains silent when God’s people practice sexual immorality and syncretism is _____. God seems to be almost more angry over the church’s tolerance of sin than the sin itself!
Message for Us	Churches tend to resemble either Ephesus (2:2–4) where there was _____ without love... or Thyatira (2:19–20) where there was _____ without truth. Oh where can we find a church that is strong in both?

E. Sardis (3:1–6). The _____ church.

Historical Context	There is no indication that this church was experiencing any persecution from the outside or heresy on the inside. Everything looked good.
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The one who has the 7 spirits of God (the 7-fold Spirit). • The one who has the 7 stars.
Commendations	There are a few persons in your church who have not soiled their garments... they are worthy to walk with me in white. Even though the church is spiritually dead there are a few members who are spiritually alive (the _____).
Rebukes	You have the reputation of being alive, but you are _____!

Commands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wake up! • Strengthen what _____ and is about to die. • Remember what you received and heard and keep it. • Repent.
Promises	<p>The one who conquers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will be clothed in white garments. • his name will never be blotted out of the Book of Life. • Jesus will confess his name before his Father.
Threats	If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief... and you will be unprepared.
Major Theme	You can't judge a book by its cover and you can't judge a church by its activities, programs, or doctrinal statement.
Message for Us	<p>At least six times the New Testament specifically warns us about the danger of self-deception: "Do not be deceived." These verses help us to form six questions of self-examination to help us determine if we are dead when we think we are alive:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do I consider myself to be _____? (I Cor. 3:18-20). 2. Is there _____ in my life? (I Cor. 6:9-11). 3. Are my _____ drawing me toward God or away from God? (I Cor. 15:33). 4. Do I imagine that I am immune from the _____ of sinful choices? (Gal. 6:7-8). 5. Am I living in any _____ to the known will of God? (James 1:22). 6. Do I control my _____? (James 1:26).

F. Philadelphia (3:7-13). The _____ church.

Historical Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God has given this church a golden opportunity for ministry and cultural impact ("I have set before you an _____"). • The synagogue of Satan (false Jews).
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The holy one. • The true one. • The one who has the key of David (can shut and open doors).
Commendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have kept my word and not denied my name... though you have little power. • You have patiently endured hardships and trials.
Rebukes	None
Commands	Hold fast what you have so that none may seize your crown.

Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nonbelieving world will soon come and bow before you and will understand that I have loved you! • I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the world. • I am coming soon. • The one who conquers will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ become a pillar in the temple of God. ○ have the name of God written on him. ○ have the name of the New Jerusalem written on him. ○ have Jesus' new name written on him.
Threats	None
Major Theme	Jesus has the power to open doors and close them.
Message for Us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When Jesus opens a door... _____ in faith. • When Jesus closes a door... accept it in _____.

G. Laodicea (2:14–22). The _____ church.

Historical Context	The church has become routine, normal, habitual. The _____ has become a machine, the _____ has become an organization.
Titles of Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Amen. • The faithful and true witness. • The beginning of God's creation.
Commendations	None
Rebukes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other. • You are lukewarm... _____. • You _____ your true condition. You think you are rich and have no needs but in reality you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked. Blindness to our true condition is the cause of lukewarmness.
Commands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy gold from me... so you can be rich. • Buy white garments from me... so you can be clothed. • Buy eye salve from me... so you can see. • Be zealous! • Repent!
Promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I reprove and discipline the ones I love. • I'm _____ at the door... if you open it, I will come in. • The one who conquers will sit with me on my throne.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be spit out of Jesus' mouth. • Reproof and discipline.

Major Theme	Jesus is looking for followers full of zeal and fiery passion. Lukewarmness makes him nauseous.
Message for Us	<p>Beware _____ Christians! Those who want a faith that is not too hot, not too cold, but tepid and lukewarm.</p> <p><i>The greatest danger to Christianity is, I contend, not heresies, heterodoxies, nor atheists, nor profane secularism.—no, but the kind of orthodoxy which is cordial drivel, mediocrity served up sweet... In the world of mediocrity in which we live it is assumed that only crackpots, fanatics, and the like should be deplored as offensive, as inspired by Satan, and that the middle way is the right way.... What nonsense! Christ is of another mind: mediocrity is the worst offense, the most dangerous kind of _____, farthest removed from the possibility of being cured.... This kind of religion is nothing but a deception. (Soren Kierkegaard. Provocations. p. 16).</i></p>

III. Do we have ears to hear what Christ is saying to the churches?

- A. Jesus Christ is to be found “_____” and “among” the churches (1:13; 2:1), even though many of them are sinful, heretical and dysfunctional.
- B. Christ is not limited to one church. Each individual church can only _____ reveal who he is in his fullness. It takes all the churches to manifest his glory.
- C. The Gospel puts us in a community. “Me and Jesus” is not a Biblical way to think! Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father...” The fact of the matter is that we normally go to heaven or to hell _____. But though each member is part of a bigger family of faith, we each still have personal and individual responsibility. One can be _____ in a good church. One can be _____ in a bad church.
- D. The church is a lampstand. Her role is to carry the light of Christ to the nations. This means she is _____ what lurks and slithers in darkness. The church is to be the conscience of the world (Babylon). She is to be counter-cultural.
- E. The _____ of the world (Revelation 4–22) is determined in church... not in Washington, Wall Street, Hollywood, Harvard, the Pentagon, etc.
- F. The New Testament in general and these letters in particular assume that there is only _____ in each city.
- G. The challenge of doing church in an evil empire is really defined by a small number of obstacles and hindrances that are present in every age in every place:
 1. _____ (heresy, false prophets, etc.).
 2. _____ (John 15:18–16:4).
 3. _____ (especially to sexual immorality and idolatry/syncretism).

- H. Church life today seems very different than church life in John's day. Notice the things so prevalent in our typical contemporary church experience that are _____ in these letters to the 7 churches:
1. Organizational realities (buildings, committees, finances, constitutions, etc.).
 2. Leadership (pastors, elders, deacons, boards, etc.).
 3. Programs (Sunday School, youth group, worship teams, ministries, pot-luck dinners, small groups, etc.).
- I. When the church falls short of what she ought to be and what she ought to do, the solution is always simple: _____!
1. Remember.
 2. Repent.
 3. Do the works you did at first.

TABLE TALK

1. Which of the seven churches is most like your church?
2. In the first century, the major heresies troubling the church related to the Nicolaitans, Balaam and Jezebel. What heresies are troubling the church today?
3. What is God asking you to do?



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 4. A GLIMPSE THROUGH THE DOOR (4:1–5:14).

I. Behold, a door standing open...

A. Looking for the door.

When Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, the way back home was blocked by an angel with a flaming sword (Gen. 3:24). Ever since, we have been groping and searching in hopes of finding “the door” that will lead us back to life as it was meant to be.

1. The _____ was a noble attempt to reach “the gate of heaven”¹ (Gen. 11:1–11). The dramatic failure was an eternal object lesson that man, in his own strength and piety, can never find the way to heaven.
2. The revelation of _____ was God’s solution to a problem that man could not fix. There was indeed a “door” between this world and the next but only God could build it and show man how to find it (Gen. 28:12).
3. The Gospel announces that _____ himself is that ladder (John 1:51). He is _____ that enables a person to come and go into the very presence of God (John 10:7–10).

Conclusion: There is only _____ to connect with the other world: through Jesus Christ. The door may be narrow (Luke 13:22–30) but it leads to glorious life, vast and abundant. Finding the door is what life is all about!

B. When the door was cracked open.

At key moments in Biblical history, the heavens were _____ revealing and confirming God’s heavenly purposes for our earthly realities: Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 1:1), Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:16), the first martyrdom (Acts 7:56), the Gentiles are welcomed into God’s family (Acts 10:11), and when Christ returns in glory (Rev. 19:11).

C. Revelation has much to say about doors and keys (1:18; 3:7–8, 20; 4:1).

John sees _____ in heaven. It is only because of the door that John is able to understand the purposes of God for the church and for the world.

II. What John saw and heard (4:1–5:14).

A. The door (4:1). A voice like a trumpet issues an invitation:

- *Come up here... But _____ is heaven? Is it “up”?*
- *I will show you what must take place after this...*

B. The throne (4:2–11).

1. The One on the throne (4:2–3, 5–6).
 - a. Heaven is not seen as a temple but rather a _____ of “the Lord God Almighty” (4:8), who lives forever (4:9–10).

¹ Babel in Hebrew means “gate of god.”

- b. Rather than attempting to describe the One he saw, John speaks of the bright light reflected from precious stones (jasper, carnelian and emerald) (3).
- c. The _____ reminds us of God's covenant with Noah. Though disaster is coming on the earth, God has not forgotten his promise (3).
2. The ones around the throne (4:4-7).
- a. 24 elders on 24 thrones (4).
- The number 24 probably signifies 12 tribes and 12 apostles (see 21:12-14).
 - _____ garments connote redemption in the blood of the Lamb (7:14).
 - _____ on their heads (I Cor. 9:25; II Tim. 4:7-8; Jam. 1:12; I Pet. 5:4).
- b. 4 living creatures (6-7).
- Full of eyes in front and behind (6)... all around and within (8).
 - A lion, an ox, the face of a man, an eagle in flight (7).
 - Each has six wings (8).
3. What they are doing around the throne (4:8-11).
- a. _____ constantly² (8,11).
- Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come! (4:8).*
- NOTE: This hymn praises God for _____ and mentions 3 attributes:
- His _____.
 - His _____.
 - His _____.
- Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created (4:11).*
- NOTE: This hymn praises God for _____, namely in _____.
- b. Giving _____ and _____ and _____ (9)
- c. Falling down in worship (10).
- d. Casting their crowns continually before the throne (10). A crown represents power and _____ as well as wealth, victory and _____

² God's people have always been a singing people. Even in Babylon! There are five hymns in this passage.

honor. To cast one's crown before the throne is to be fully and unreservedly surrendered to God.

NOTE: So far, John's vision of heaven could have been written by any Jew. It is only in the next chapter that his vision becomes "Christian." In chapter 4 God is worshiped as sovereign king for his role in _____ but in chapter 5 God is worshiped as the Lamb for his work of _____.

C. The scroll (5:1–5).

1. The description of the scroll (1).

The scroll apparently contains the full and detailed account of what God is about to do. It is the record of the destiny of the world. It is _____ written in _____. Unless the scroll is opened God's purposes for the future will be thwarted. John weeps because human existence is now meaningless. Perhaps Shakespeare was right:

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
that struts and frets his hour upon the stage
and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot,
full of sound and fury signifying nothing. —Macbeth*

2. But who can open the seals? (2–5).

It takes more than power and authority to open the seals. It takes someone who is _____. John is told that the Lion of Judah is worthy to open the scroll. When he looks, John sees a _____.

D. The Lamb (5:6–14).

1. Who he is and what he does (6–7).

The Lion is the Lamb! The Lamb has 7 horns³ and 7 eyes and bears the wounds of _____. Note it well: the one who is going to preside over the Last Judgment is "the Lamb, the crucified, the stripped, the annihilated, the weakest of all men, the one who has neither beauty, nor honor, nor power" (Ellul, p. 117).

2. The response of heaven and earth (8–14).

The 4 creatures and the 24 elders fall down before the Lamb in worship each having a harp and bowls of incense (prayers). They sing a **new** song⁴ (8–9).

*Worthy are you 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. (5:9–10).*

NOTE: No longer are the angelic beings praising Almighty God for his work in creation. Now they are praising _____ for his work in redemption.

³ In the Old Testament, the horn stands for both power and honor.

⁴ The song is "new" not only in terms of time. It is new also in terms of quality.

Myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of angels⁵ begin to sing (11):

*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and might and honor and glory and blessing! (5:12).*

Every creature in _____ and on _____ and in
_____ began to sing:

*To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
Be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever! (5:13).
And the four living creatures said, “ _____ ” (5:14).*

III. Worship 101.

When we look through the door to see what is going on in that other world, we see worship! The worship of heaven is the prototype and _____ for every worship service on earth. In recent “worship wars” the focus generally is on things like screens vs hymn books, guitars vs organs, choirs vs worship teams, etc. But if the following three elements are absent, worship is not authentically worship, regardless what _____ it claims to be.

- A. Seeing God _____. “If your concept of God is wrong, then the more religious you become the more dangerous you become to yourself and to others.” (William Temple). This passage tells us that the One we worship is holy, majestic, eternal, the Creator, triune, and that worship is centered on the Lamb.
- B. Praising God _____. In the heavenly worship service there is weeping, bowing, and lots of singing. No one slept during that worship service! Worship is a verb (Robert Webber). Most people think that in worship the congregation is the audience, the people on the platform are the performers, and God is the prompter. No! God is _____. The people on the platform are the prompters and the people in the pews are the performers (Kierkegaard).
- C. Offering ourselves _____. The worshipers in heaven cast their crowns continuously before the throne. To worship is to surrender everything to the Lamb. “I urge you brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual _____” (Rom. 12:1). And all God’s people said, “ _____ ”

TABLE TALK

1. Describe what a typical worship service is like in your church. How is it similar to the worship of heaven? How is it different?
2. Christianity has been called a “singing religion.” Why? Is this still true? Is there a song in your heart?
3. Revelation 4–5 speaks of worshiping God for his work in creation and worshiping the Lamb for his work in redemption. Are both realities supposed to be present in every worship service?
4. Did you notice the Trinity in our Scripture today? God is one and yet three. How does this impact worship?
5. Have you been involved in the “worship wars” of recent years? What did you learn? Has this study confirmed your ideas about worship or changed them?

⁵ A myriad is 10,000. Therefore, 10,000 times 10,000 then multiplied by 1,000 times 1,000, comes to 100 trillion.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 5. WHO CAN STAND? (6:1–8:1).

I. Introduction.

- A. In our last lesson we were introduced to the scroll that was in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne (5:1). Only the Lamb was worthy to open the seals.
- The scroll symbolizes the destiny of the world, _____ written in advance.
 - The writing on front and back of the scroll means everything was written that could be written. Everything we _____ is included.
 - The seals were probably seven globs of wax “gluing” the scroll together with the signet ring of the king imprinted in the wax. The contents were _____ unless someone worthy could be found to open the seals.
- B. This unfolding of human history can be seen as either, 1) a picture of specific future events, or 2) a statement about human history in general. (Perhaps we don’t have to choose. Maybe _____ statements are true).

II. Six Seals are Opened (6:1–17).

- A. The first four seals comprise the famous “_____ of the Apocalypse.” The 7th seal will be opened in chapter 8, making possible the seven trumpets (chapters 8–11).
1. The first seal (6:1–2). The white horse.
 - Description: The rider has a bow and a crown. He has come _____.
 - Significance: But who is this horse and rider? There are two basic options:
 - a. He may represent _____ (cf. 19:11). This would mean that Christ precedes his judgments in the earth. His Gospel will have a victorious progress in the world. It must be preached to _____, and then the end will come (Matt. 24:14). In this sense, he is very different from the other three horsemen.
 - b. He may represent an _____ influence coming on the earth (perhaps, even _____). In this sense he is similar to the other three horsemen.
 2. The second seal (6:3–4). The bright red horse.
 - Description: The rider has a great sword and he takes peace from the earth so that people _____.
 - Significance: History will be characterized by _____.

3. The third seal (6:5–6). The black horse.
 - Description: The rider holds a pair of scales to measure the price of food (a day’s wage buys a quart of wheat; enough for one person to subsist on). Yet oil and wine (luxury items) are plentiful.
 - Significance: History will be characterized by _____ and famine.

4. The fourth seal (6:7–8). The pale horse.
 - Description: The rider’s name is Death and Hades is following him. They are given permission to kill 25% of the earth’s population by sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts.
 - Significance: History will be characterized by _____ and suffering.

NOTE: “Instead of discussing the probable significance of each of the four colored horses, those first listeners would undoubtedly have recoiled in terror as war, bloodshed, famine, and death galloped furiously across the stage of their imagination. Visions at best are to be _____ rather than analyzed.” (Mounce, p. 145f).

5. The fifth seal (6:9–11).
 - Description: John sees martyrs under the altar in heaven, crying out “_____, O Lord?” They were given white robes and told to wait a little longer until the full number of martyrs was complete.
 - Significance: _____ is part of the story. There is nothing in this passage to cause us to believe we will be “raptured” away so as not to experience tribulation and persecution (cf. Rev. 7:14). The prayer of the suffering church is not for personal vengeance and retaliation. But rather for _____ to be done in the earth and God’s reputation to be enhanced.

6. The sixth seal (6:12–17).
 - Description: John sees great cosmic signs (earthquake, stars fall, sky vanishes like a scroll, etc.). People scramble to find a place to hide from the wrath of the Lamb. They fear God’s _____ more than death itself! *Who can stand?*
 - Significance: As the divine judgment unfolds, it get progressively worse. Things fall apart! Envisioning an _____ requires sanctified imagination.

B. Lessons revealed in the unsealing of the scroll:

1. Human history is composed of wars, injustice, famine, disease, earthquakes, and death. Don’t be surprised by this. _____ (John 15:20; 16:33; Acts 14:22; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; I Pet. 4:1, 12).

2. God is _____. Nothing happens, not even the worst disasters and persecutions, without the _____ of God himself.
3. God is working out his purposes even when it feels like _____ is breaking loose.
4. God's people can have peace and security even in the midst of total chaos. The Lamb wins! As the scroll is _____, God's people are _____ (7:1-3) so that they can finally _____ (7:9). The four horsemen don't have the last word! Another Horse and Rider are on the way (19:11).

III. The Wrath of the Lamb (6:16).

The picture of an angry lamb is startling! And yet this image (as well as this entire passage about the seven seals unleashing God's judgment on the earth) reminds us of several important truths about the wrath of God.

- A. *Defining anger.* We tend to think of anger as a bad thing, something to be avoided, a synonym of hatred, vindictiveness, spite, rage, loss of temper, and the like. But God gets angry and he is without sin. Saints too get angry yet need not sin (see Rev. 6:10). Holy anger, righteous indignation is a "_____"¹ The thing that makes anger good or bad is:
 1. Its _____ (What/who am I angry at?).
 2. Its _____ (How do I manifest my anger?).
- B. *The fact of God's anger.* Those who try to depict God as a grandfatherly senile benevolence in heaven are sadly mistaken. Those who think that divine wrath is only found in the _____ and not in the New, simply don't know their Bibles.
- C. *The terror of God's anger.* God's wrath causes kings and generals to flee in panic to caves seeking to escape (Rev. 6:15-17). But there will be nowhere _____ (cf. Gen. 3:8).
- D. *The manner (method) of God's anger.* God's wrath is seen in war, famine, disease, etc. as well as in a future day when we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Many of his "judgments" are simply permitting the _____ of sin to come to full fruition.

¹⁸ For the wrath of God _____ revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness _____ the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.... So they are without excuse....

²⁴ Therefore God _____ in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.... ²⁶ For this reason God _____ to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸ And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God _____ to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.... ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice

¹ Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be*, 165.

such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Rom. 1:18–32).

- E. *The motive of God's anger.* It is the crucified Lamb of God who is unleashing these judgments. His motive is _____.
- F. *The time of God's anger.* Though the ultimate expression of divine wrath lies in the future at the final judgment (Rev. 19:15), much of God's wrath is experienced _____, in this life (Rom. 1:18ff.; Eph. 5:6; I Thess. 2:16).
- G. *The protection from God's anger.* There is only one place to find safety when judgment on sin falls on the earth: in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The thought of God's wrath may be _____, but it is true (John 1:29; Rom. 5:9; I Thess. 1:10). *...that on that cross as Jesus died the wrath of God was satisfied... (In Christ Alone, lyrics by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty).*²
- H. *The reason for God's anger.* The Gospels are quite clear about those things that made Jesus angry. The wrath of the Lamb (Jesus) is focused on specific attitudes and behaviors. So, what made Jesus angry?
1. Mark 3:5. _____ and a willful rejection of the truth.
 2. Mark 10:14. Those who _____ from coming to Christ.
 3. John 2:13–17. Treating as _____ that which is holy.
- I. *The imitation of God's anger.* The cleansing blood of Jesus and the sanctifying Spirit of Pentecost mean that in Christ we are now able to express anger even as Jesus did. In fact, God _____ us to be angry at the same things and in the same way that Jesus was (is!). Righteous indignation is part of the _____ that is desperately needed in our day. *Be angry and do not sin... (Eph. 4:25–27).* But remember, you are not the judge! *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, _____, says the Lord"... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:14, 17–21).*

TABLE TALK

1. Do you think of the unfolding scroll of your life as a happy story or as a tale of tragedy and suffering? Explain.
2. Describe your own thoughts and feelings about the wrath of God. How has the Bible study today challenged those beliefs and those feelings?
3. What makes God angry? How does he express it? What makes you angry? How do you express it? Now, what have you learned?
4. Where are angry Christians needed in the world today?
5. Do you think of martyrdom as part of the normal Christian life? Why or why not?

² The Presbyterian Church (USA) wanted to include this song in their hymnal but were offended by these words and suggested that they be changed to read "... the love of God was magnified." The authors refused and so the song was dropped from their hymnal.



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 6. SAFE AND SECURE (7:1–17)

I. Between the 6th and 7th Seal... a Pregnant Pause.

A. The six seals.

In chapter 6 the first six seals of the scroll in God's right hand were opened. As the destiny of the world unfolded one seal at a time, there was a growing crescendo of wrath, judgment and catastrophe on the earth:

1. The first four seals released the four horsemen of the apocalypse:
 - The white horse (6:1–2). The imperialistic _____.
 - The red horse (6:3–4). _____ politics.
 - The black horse (6:5–6). Economic _____.
 - The pale horse (6:7–8). _____ and suffering.
2. The 5th seal (6:9–11). _____ of Christians.
3. The 6th seal (6:12–17). _____ calamities and the wrath of the Lamb.

B. Before the 7th seal is opened (8:1), there is an interlude, a pregnant pause.

Remember that this book is written by a pastor concerned for his flock. The question that is begging to be answered is therefore this: what is going to happen to _____ during this coming period of wrath and judgment upon the earth?!

II. Preparing for Tribulation (7:1–17).

Pastor John wants his congregation to _____ two realities as they anticipate the horror about to be unleashed on the world: 1) The need to be _____ (7:1–8), and 2) the _____ of a glorious future (7:9–17).

A. The sealing of the saints (7:1–8).

1. Four angels, four corners, and four winds (v. 1). The 4 destructive winds may be another way of describing the 4 horsemen. The angels are “holding back” the disastrous events about to be unleashed until something of great importance occurs.
2. Another angel explains the reason for the delay (vv. 2–3): “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”
 - God is apparently concerned about the _____ of the planet (earth, sea and trees). The Bible has much to say about creation care.
 - As the scroll is _____ the servants of God are _____.
 - The choice of wording cannot be accidental.
 - See part III for more discussion of this important matter.

3. The number of the sealed (vv. 4–8). The number 144,000 is a “suspiciously tidy sort of number that is much more likely to be a symbol than a statistic” (Wilcock, p. 80). The number is attained when 12, the number of tribes, is both squared and multiplied by a thousand, a twofold way of emphasizing _____ (Mounce, p. 158). Further underscoring the symbolic nature of the 144,000 number is:
 - The list of the 12 tribes (vv. 5–8) is somewhat irregular. Joseph and his son Manasseh are included but his son Ephraim is not. Dan is omitted entirely. Thus it seems the list is meant to indicate “_____ will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). But be careful: defining “Israel” may be harder than you think!
 - In the rest of the passage the 144,000 seem to morph into the “great multitude that _____” (7:9).

Conclusion: People have debated the number of those who will be saved for centuries (see Luke 13:23). Though the question is important it is apparently something that God does not intend for us to know... or fret about! Rather, he wants us to simply rest in the fact that “_____ those who are his” (II Tim. 2:19).

C. Salvation belongs to our God! (7:9–17).

It is difficult to determine whether this scene in heaven is in the future or whether it is going on right now. Perhaps the answer is both! God is eternal and not subject to time (an eternal _____), so John’s description of heaven is something we are to simply embrace and experience. Earlier when John had looked into heaven, the focus of his attention was _____ and the Lamb (ch. 4–5). In this vision the throne and the Lamb are still center stage, but his focus is on _____ around the throne.

1. Their *number*. The multitude was vast, innumerable (v. 9).
2. Their *origin*. Those around the throne came from every _____ on earth. These were not just Jews (the 12 tribes) but men and women from every nation, tribe, people, language (v. 9).
3. Their *dress*. John is struck by the _____ the redeemed are wearing.
 - In heaven we will not revert back to an Eden-like paradise where we need no clothing (Gen. 2:25). Even forgiven sin still has consequences. Though the death of the Lamb of God makes us pure, it does not make us _____.
 - The whiteness of the robes is due to the fact that they have been washed (they were dirty once) in _____ (v. 14)! It takes sanctified imagination to understand how red blood can make garments white. But the imagery points to Christ’s atoning work on the cross (_____ by faith).
4. Their *journey*. When asked from where this multitude has come, John is told: “These are the ones coming (present tense) out of the (definite article) great tribulation” (v. 14). The Lamb suffered and those who follow him will likewise

experience times of trial and tribulation. NOTE: God's people are saved _____ tribulation, not _____ it!

5. Their *activity*.

- Perhaps most startling of all, these people were _____ (v. 9. See 6:17) in the very presence of Almighty and thrice-holy God!
- They are _____ God day and night (v. 15). The Greek word *latreuo* refers to works of various kinds that are done out of devotion to God.
- But primarily they are _____ God... loudly, enthusiastically, with palm branches and songs of praise (vv. 9–12) Two songs are mentioned:

*Salvation belongs to our God
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb! (10).¹*

*Amen!² Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor and power and might
be to our God forever and ever! Amen! (12).*

6. Their *blessed state*. Heaven is described as a place of _____ (v. 15) from the judgments and punishments ravaging the earth as the seals are being opened. The Lamb will _____ his sheep (v. 17). Note the reversal of roles! But especially, heaven is described as a place where certain realities are absent: no hunger, no thirst, no scorching heat, no tears... no unmet desire, no danger.

D. Does being heavenly minded mean that we are of no earthly good?

Many pretend that Christians believe in _____ and thus have no concerns about life here below. But John believes just the opposite. It is the hope of heaven that enables his congregation to be of service here, now, in this world.

1. Only when we know the destination does our _____ make sense!
2. Only when we know the destination do we have a real reason to take care of the _____! Christians care about Babylon and seek her well-being (Jer. 29:7). (Illustration: the road to nowhere).
3. Hope for tomorrow makes it possible to live in _____ today.
4. We are saved _____... and hope that is seen is not hope! (Rom. 8:18–25).

III. The Sealing of the Saints.

To be able to “stand” when tribulation comes, we must first be sealed (7:1–4).

A. The *nature* of the sealing.

¹This is a song that only the redeemed can sing! Because angels have not experienced redemption, they are not singing this hymn. But they will join wholeheartedly in the next song of worship (vv. 11–12).

²Jesus often began his words with “Amen, Amen, I say unto you...” The word means to affirm that which is certain and reliable, that which can be trusted. Thus it can begin a prayer as well as end it.

In the ancient world a seal was a mark or a visible sign that was placed on an object (letter, will, bill of sale, etc.) or a person (a servant or slave) to denote _____ . When it involved a person, the seal was often put on the _____ (Rev. 7:3; cf. 14:1) which meant it was sometimes more evident to others than to yourself! Satan loves to _____ God's work. He too has a form of marking and sealing those who belong to him! (See Rev. 13:16–18). NOTE: Our eternal destiny will be determined by whose seal marks us; to whom do we belong?

B. The *background* for understanding the sealing.

- Exodus 28:36–38. The gold plate on Aaron's forehead: "_____."
- Ezekiel 9:1–6. Killer angels mark with a "taw" the foreheads of those who _____. These only will be spared. Begin at the sanctuary!

C. The *purpose* of the sealing. This sealing is intended to do two things:

1. Designate those who belong to him and make them _____.
2. _____ them from judgment and wrath... but not from tribulations. They will be saved _____ trials, not from them. Charles Spurgeon said it well:

It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honor, death is his gain. (quoted in Wilcox, p. 83).

D. *How* can I be sealed?

1. Come to _____ and let his blood forgive your sins and purify your heart (white robes). The verb tense of Rev. 7:14 (aorist) means that this is a _____ action.
2. Be _____ with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit _____ God's seal on our lives; the mark of his ownership, the _____ of his protection and provision.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee (down payment) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13–14).

TABLE TALK

1. This study claims that Christians are saved through tribulation not from it. Describe your reaction to this statement. Does this fit your experience? your theology?
2. How do you envision heaven? Does your vision of heaven make you want to go?
3. Have you known any Christians who were so heavenly minded they were no earthly good? What about you? Do your thoughts of heaven make you less concerned for the physical needs of those around you or more concerned? Explain.
4. How do you understand the "sealing" of the Holy Spirit? Has this lesson changed your thinking or confirmed it?
5. Do you have assurance of your standing before God?



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

CHAPTER 7. HOLY SMOKE (8–9)

I. The 7th seal makes it possible for the 7 trumpets to sound (8:1–5).

A. The 7 Seals (chapters 6–7).

We have seen that as the Lamb opened the six seals (6:1–17), the destiny of the world unfolded, one horrific revelation at a time: war, famine, disease, death, persecution, etc. We saw that these events may represent human history _____ or they may hint at things to come (cosmic calamities in the 6th seal, for example). But once the 7th seal is opened (8:1), we are clearly dealing with realities still in the _____, both for John 2,000 years ago and for us today. You may think life on planet earth has been difficult under the reality portrayed by the 7 seals but wait till you see what happens when the 7 trumpets start blow!

B. Read 8:1–5. At least three elements of this passage deserve comment:

1. “About half an hour” of _____ (8:1).

Revelation is a _____ book (loud voices, huge choirs, thunder, earthquakes, horses in full gallop, etc.). But for 30 dramatic minutes there was silence! You may say, “That’s not very long.” But when you are dealing with a great congregation of people, even two or three minutes of silence can feel like an eternity! George Frederick Handel understood the dramatic power of silence in music and used it very effectively in the *Hallelujah Chorus*. During the half hour of silence two things were happening (see #2 and #3).

2. Seven angels¹ are given _____ (8:2).

At first a curved ram’s horn (*shophar*) and then long, straight metal “trumpets”, these instruments were not yet developed to the point of making “music” as we think of trumpets today. Rather they were used primarily to get people’s attention:

- To _____ the people (break camp, an announcement, etc.) (Numbers 10:1–10).
- To warn of _____ (invasion, enemy attack, etc.) (Amos 3:6).
- To prepare for _____. To arms! (Joshua 6:4–21; Judges 7:16–20; Job 39:24–25).
- To announce the _____ of some great person; the king, perhaps (Matt. 24:31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:15–16).
- To _____ in worship, feasting, offerings, coronations, dedications, etc. (Lev. 25:9; Num. 10:10; II Kings 9:13; II Chron. 5:12; 29:27–28; Ezra 3:10).

The seven trumpets of Revelation seem to signal all of the above!

¹ When you think of “angels” don’t think of cute, cuddly, chubby cherubs with stubby wings that are often portrayed in pop culture. No! Think mighty warriors, armed and dangerous.

3. Another angel with a _____ (8:3–5).

The angel took incense and mixed it with “the prayers of all the saints.” First, he allowed the smoke to rise to the throne, then he took the coals from the censer and cast the fire down on the earth. The silence was suddenly broken by “peals of thunder, rumblings (literally, voices), flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.” (8:5). During the silence, God was listening to the prayers of his people on earth, suffering as the first six seals were opened. The smoke of prayer _____ and the fire of judgment _____!

- C. The 7th trumpet (11:15–19).

Six trumpets are blown in rapid succession in chapters 8 and 9. Then there is an interlude, another pregnant pause (10:1–11:14). When the 7th trumpet is blown all _____ breaks loose! The culmination of human history is gloriously proclaimed.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (11:15).²

When we pray the words Jesus taught us (...*thy* _____ *come*...), we are pleading with God to let the 7th angel blow his trumpet. But remember: before the 7th trumpet can sound, the first six must be played.

II. Six Trumpets (8:6–9:21).

- A. The 1st trumpet (8:7). These judgments fall on the _____. Hail and fire mixed with blood. A third of the earth is burned up.
- B. The 2nd trumpet (8:8–9). These judgments fall on the _____. Something like a mountain of fire is thrown into the ocean. A third of the sea becomes blood, a third of the sea creatures die, and a third of the ships are destroyed.
- C. The 3rd trumpet (8:10–11). These judgments fall on the _____. A blazing star named Wormwood falls to earth. A third of the waters become bitter (toxic) and many people die.
- D. The 4th trumpet (8:12). These judgments fall on the _____. A third of the sun, moon and stars are struck and a third of all light is lost.

A brief interlude occurs when an eagle flies through the heavens screeching “Woe, woe, woe!”. The next three trumpets will bring three horrible woes.

- E. The 5th trumpet/the first woe (9:1–12).

John saw a “star fallen from heaven to earth.” This was probably a vision of Satan (Lucifer) and his expulsion from heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18). Having the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit, he releases swarms of _____. These creatures will torment everyone who does not have God’s seal on their forehead. In the Bible, locusts are often used for divine judgment (Exodus 10:1–20; Joel 1:4; 2:5) but this locust invasion is undoubtedly the worst!

What these locusts look like (vv. 7–11):

- Like horses prepared for battle.

² George Frederick Handel knew his Bible well and included this verse in the climactic portion of the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

- Crowns of gold on their _____ heads.
- Hair like a woman's, _____ like a lion, breastplates of iron.
- When they fly it sounds like a _____ of horses and chariots.
- _____ that sting.

What these locusts do (vv 4–6, 10):

- _____ those who are marked with God's seal and spare the grass and trees (but grass and trees are precisely what locusts normally eat).
- Inflict _____ on people (but don't kill them) with the sting in their tails... like a scorpion.
- This will last 5 months (about the life-span of a locust).
- People prefer death to the pain and torment of the sting.

But the real explanation for the diabolical terror caused by these locusts is that their king is the angel of the bottomless pit: _____ (Greek) or Abaddon (Hebrew)... the Destroyer.

F. The 6th trumpet / the second woe (9:13–21).

A demonic army is released from the east numbering _____ mounted troops!³ The riders wore breastplates “the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur” (v. 17). But the most terrifying aspect of this army was the _____:

- Heads like a lions' heads
- Out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. This created three plagues that killed _____ of the earth's population.
- Their tails were like _____... they bite!

And yet the survivors still refused to _____ of their evil deeds (murders, sorceries⁴, sexual immorality) and they continued “worshiping demons and idols” (vv. 20–21). Thus we see that God's purpose in sending the 6 judgments on the earth was not punitive but _____.

⁹ *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting _____ to perish, but _____ to come to repentance. (II Peter 3:9 NIV). (see Ezekiel 18:23).*

God will do whatever it takes to bring us to repentance. If he can't succeed in this endeavor by _____ (Acts 2:38) or by showing us _____ (Romans 2:4), then sometimes the only method left is to allow suffering and pain to come in like a flood.

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His _____ to rouse a deaf world.... No doubt pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul. (C. S. Lewis. The Problem of Pain. pp. 74, 76).

³ “Twice ten thousand times ten thousand” (v. 16). Do the math.

⁴ In Greek, *pharmakon* denotes the use of drugs or enchantments and on occasion referred to poisoning. These things were often associated with the occult (thus, sorceries).

III. Holy Smoke.

The 7 trumpets are blown because the people of God pray. It is only as the prayers of God's people go up that the fire of God's judgment comes down (8:1-5). Chapters 8-9 are not really about the end of the world but rather about the _____! Prayer is and always has been the saints' _____. Pastor John knew that his congregation was living in an evil empire (Babylon). He wanted to encourage them to pray.

- A. Never underestimate the _____. Rising smoke makes no sound. But don't be fooled. It has the capacity to create thunder in the earth! In the late 1970s a delegation from the World Council of Churches went to Russia to report on the state of the church under an atheistic regime. The delegates were not impressed. Their report coldly stated: "It's just a bunch of _____." Revelation helps us to understand that wicked thugs and tyrants everywhere should tremble when old ladies pray!
- B. No prayer is _____. The censer had to be filled before the fire was cast down (8:3-5). Like a suspended water bucket at a water park, it tips over only when it is full. So God's judgments are released in the earth only when the "prayer bucket" is full of the petitions and intercessions of his saints. No prayer is ever lost. They are all stored in his "bucket." David prayed: *You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in _____.* *Are they not in your book?* (Psalm 56:8).
- C. Prayer is _____ to God. Prayer is mixed with incense. It is a pleasing fragrance, an aroma that brings pleasure to God. Paul tells us to "find out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10). Now we know.
- D. Prayer is more _____ than you imagine. It may often seem that prayer is just a quiet, contemplative spiritual discipline that affects no one but the one praying. But more is happening that you can ever imagine!

*Little boy kneels at the foot of the bed,
Droops on the little hands little gold head.
Hush, hush, whisper who dares?
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers.⁵*

- E. Prayer encourages God to do whatever it takes to bring people to _____. Be sobered by what your prayers may unleash! God will do whatever it takes to bring this world to repentance. Before all heaven breaks loose, he may permit all hell to break loose! So go ahead, pray... but be prepared for what your prayers may produce.

*Prayer does not fit us for the greater works; prayer is the greater work.
(Oswald Chambers. My Utmost for His Highest)*

*God instituted prayer in order to lend to his creatures the dignity of causality.
(Blaise Pascal. Pensees).*

⁵ *Vespers.* A. A. Milne.

TABLE TALK

1. What has God said to you during this lesson?
2. How do you respond when you read of God's wrath and judgment falling on sinners?
3. What did it take to bring you to a place of repentance?
4. Has this lesson changed the way you think about prayer? How?
5. Will your prayer life be different?

The Key to Joy

By Stan Key

Broken heart and shattered world,
The center cannot hold;
My faith is feeble, hope is spent,
My love has grown so cold.
It seems, O Lord, that all is lost,
I don't know what to do;
In dark despair, my only cry:
"All I *have* is You."

And then—a slender ray of hope
Illuminates my tomb;
A tiny spark, the faintest prayer,
Is kindled in the gloom.
I grope for words to help express
What I now see is true:
Into the void I whisper them:
"All I *need* is You."

The world around me hasn't changed,
The status quo's in place.
But in my heart there's been a shift
For I have seen His face.
And though the old is present yet
I know there's something new;
For now I've found the key to joy;
"All I *want* is You!"

is not in the thunders but in the little scroll. The angel raised his right hand and gave a solemn oath:

- There will be no more _____. Once the last trumpet sounds, the final events of human history will be set in motion. Time's up!
- When the 7th trumpet sounds, the _____ will be revealed. The term refers to the coming reality that the kingdoms of this world will all become the kingdom of Christ. And he will reign forever and ever (11:15)!

2. Read 10:8–11. The little scroll and its impact on John.

The mighty angel tells John to “take” the scroll. John hesitates and asks that the angel would “give” it. No! You must _____ it and _____ it! Jeremiah and Ezekiel also ate the book of God (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 3:1–3). Though it was _____ in his mouth, it was _____ in his stomach. With the little scroll now inside of him, John was commanded to proclaim the Word.

D. The two witnesses preach the Word and are martyred (11:1–14).

1. Read 11:1–3. Measure the temple of God.

John is commanded to measure the temple, the altar, and _____... but not the court of the Gentiles. The nations will “trample the holy city” for 42 months (or 1260 days, or 3 ½ years).

2. Read 11:4–14. The two witnesses.

Few passages anywhere in the Bible are more _____ to interpret than this! But before we try to interpret the meaning, let's make a few observations:

- a. The two witnesses are clothed in _____ and called “olive trees” and “lampstands” (11:3–4).
- b. They have supernatural powers (fire from mouth, no rain, water into blood, plagues, etc.) (11:5–6) but their real ministry is to witness... to proclaim _____.
- c. The Beast³ kills them (11:7).
- d. The city called “_____,” “_____,” and the place where their Lord was crucified (11:8).
- e. People will _____ their death, exchanging presents, etc. (11:9–10).
- f. The dead witnesses are raised from the dead after 3 ½ days and taken bodily into heaven (11:11–12).
- g. A great earthquake strikes the city and 7,000 die (11:13).

Though many commentators want to make the two witnesses into historical persons (Moses and Elijah, for example), claim the city is a geographical city (Jerusalem), and go to great lengths to determine when these events will occur and which temple it is that is to be measured... my attempt to discern the

³ Note the definite article. This is not “a beast” but “the Beast.” We have already seen in Revelation that Antichrist is at work in the world (6:1–2; 9:1–2, 11; etc.).

meaning of the text is much more humble. It seems to me that the wiser path is to see chapters 10–11 as a _____ expression of how Christians are to witness to the truth while living in the evil empire in times of tribulation.

A number of scholars believe _____ contained in the scroll that John eats in chapter 10 is in fact the story he tells of the two witnesses in chapter 11. In other words, when a follower of Christ eats “the Book”, he/she will become _____ and his testimony will be similar to that of the two martyrs depicted here.

3. Numerous indications in the text itself, encourage a symbolic interpretation.
 - a. The _____ in Jerusalem was no longer standing when John wrote the book of Revelation. When John then measured “the temple” and the “worshipers” (11:1), he was probably speaking of the church, the people of God (I Cor. 3:16; etc.).
 - b. The _____ (1260 days, 3 ½ years) (11:2–3; 12:6; 13:5) is surely symbolic. To what does it refer?⁴ It is very difficult to know and probably should be left without a specific definition until God gives further clarification.
 - c. The two witnesses are called “_____” (11:4), symbols of the churches (1:20). Note that only two of the seven churches were blameless (chs. 2–3). Christ had nothing negative to say about Smyrna or Philadelphia. Perhaps the two witnesses stand for that part of the church which has never compromised the truth, as the other five churches did, and is wholly faithful, even _____.
 - d. Though the city is identified as the place where the “Lord was crucified,” it is also called “Sodom” and “Egypt” (11:8). It appears John has a bigger “city” in mind than the literal Jerusalem, that he is speaking of the “_____” in opposition to the “_____” (see chtrs 21–22).⁵

CONCLUSION: In his two visions (eating the scroll in chapter 10 and the two witnesses of chapter 11), Pastor John is answering two questions that persecuted Christians and the suffering church always ask:

Question 1: *How long, O Lord?* (chapter 10).

Answer: Once the 6th trumpet blows, there will be _____.

Question 2: *What is the role of the church in tumultuous times?* (chapter 11).

Answer: _____. Though the mission is difficult and dangerous, ultimate victory is certain.

III. Being Effective Witnesses in the Evil City

A. _____ this Book.

1. You are what you eat!
2. You must _____ the Book, not wait for someone to give it to you.
3. One of the surest marks of spiritual maturity is the ability to _____.

⁴ Scholars note that Antiochus Epiphanes tyrannized Jerusalem for 42 months and that there were 42 encampments of Israel in the wilderness (Num. 33:5ff.).

⁵ In fact, a very good title for the book of Revelation could be “A Tale of Two Cities.”

4. You must bite off, chew, savor, swallow and _____ God's Word.
5. Eat _____ the Book... the parts you do understand and the parts you don't.
6. Today, we find many eating _____ in the church!
7. God's Word is sweet like honey but it sometimes has a _____ after effect because the Word reminds us of the coming judgment and our call to lay down our lives.
8. When you've assimilated the Word into your very being, then....

B. _____ the Word.

Only when we have digested the Book are we ready to speak the truth and be witnesses. While not every believer is called to be a preacher, we are all called to be witnesses. It takes great _____ to name the Name! This involves two things:

1. Measuring _____ (the people of God) (11:1-3). *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? (I Peter 4:17).*
2. Evangelizing _____ (the Gentiles) (11:4-13). *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).*

C. _____ your life.

But those who proclaim the Word and witness to Jesus inflame the anger of _____ and invite the hatred of _____. The Greek word for witness is *martus*. In the early church, to be a witness and to be a martyr were two ways of saying the same thing.

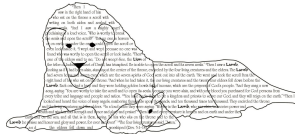
IV. Marching Orders for the Church (Acts 1:6-8).

This passage gives us six truths about being a witness in an evil age:

- A. _____ will be my witnesses (this is not a gifting for some but a privilege for all).
- B. You will _____ my witnesses (not, "you shall do witnessing").
- C. You will be _____ witnesses (of me).
- D. You will be my _____ (martyrs).
- E. Witness begins _____ (Jerusalem).
- F. To obey these marching orders requires _____.

TABLE TALK

1. Why does the world hate Christians so passionately?
2. You are what you eat. How does this explain our culture? Our church? Our family?
3. Describe your Bible study routine. Do you "eat" the word?
4. What is the difference between "doing witnessing" and "being a witness"?
5. Does the American church regard martyrdom as something strange and foreign to the Gospel or something integral to it?
6. What is the relationship between witnessing and the infilling of the Holy Spirit?



The Last Word

A Bible Study on Revelation by Stan Key

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barclay, William. *The Revelation of John Volume 2*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960.
- Coleman, Robert. *Songs of Heaven*. Old Tappan, NJ: Flemming H. Revell Company, 1975.
- Eldredge, John. *The Journey of Desire: Searching for the Life We've Only Dreamed of*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000.
- Ellul, Jacques. *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*. New York: Seabury Press, 1977.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *The Lamb and the Lion: the Gospel in Revelation*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984.
- Janney, Rebecca Price. *Who Goes There? A Cultural History of Heaven and Hell*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009.
- Kreeft, Peter. *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Heaven... But Never Dreamed of Asking*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990.
- Morris, Canon Leon. *The Revelation of St. John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969.
- Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation: The New International Commentary of the New Testament*. Revised. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997
- Mulholland, Jr., M. Robert. *Revelation: Holy Living in an Unholy World*. Grand Rapids: Francis Abury Press, 1990.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John & the Praying Imagination*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Stott, John. *What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1-3*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003.
- Wilcox, Michael. *The Message of Revelation: I Saw Heaven Opened*. Downers Grove, IL: IntersVarsity Press, 1975.
- Wright, N. T. *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

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!