

# Revelation Guide for the Layperson

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A help in reading and understanding the book of  
Revelation

By David Silver

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First, read the whole book of Revelation, the last book of the bible. Then read each section of the study guide before reading that section of Revelation. This is meant to help individuals, small groups or Sunday schools.

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This book is dedicated to all who are searching for the truth

## **Acknowledgments**

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I have used mostly three resources- G.K. Beale's extensive commentary on Revelation, Dr. Vern Poythress's book on Revelation, and Bauckham's book (see footnotes on pages 4-7). Of the three, Beale's book was followed as the main resource of this material, especially the Old Testament references in the Appendix.

My desire is to repeat this format for the whole bible. Since Revelation is probably the hardest book of the bible to understand, I hope the rest is downhill. May God give me the strength to accomplish as much of this monumental task as I am able. I am deeply indebted to God for his gospel and salvation in my life. His grace and love are more than I can fathom. They keep a tear in the eye of my God-given faith. To Him be the glory. Amen.

## **Outline of Revelation**

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- II. Letters to the Seven Churches 2:1-3:22**
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## I. Prologue 1: 1-20

Revelation is one of the hardest books of the bible to understand. It has more allusions from the Old Testament than any other New Testament book. It is filled with symbolism. Yet it is meant to be read and understood by every Christian. There is a blessing attached to reading or hearing it and obeying (1: 3), as well as a warning not to add to or take away from what is written (22: 18-19). This letter is written as a prophetic apocalypse<sup>1</sup> by John<sup>2</sup> to the seven churches addressed in chapters 2-3. Seven is a number of completion, and the seven churches addressed represent the timeless church universal. We see in the first two verses of chapter 1 the chain of communication of this revelation:



In 1: 4-8 we see a standard letter opening including author, recipient and greeting. The Trinity is also apparent in these verses. In 1: 9-11 we find John banished on the Island of Patmos, suffering persecution for his witness. He is told to write down the vision he is about to see and send it to the seven churches in Asia Minor. He turns to see the voice speaking to him and sees a vision of Christ in 1: 12-20.

The purpose of Revelation is to exhort Christians to endure persecution from the world because God will use their suffering to bring about judgment and salvation. Christ has

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<sup>1</sup> Defined by Bauckham as “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world.” Bauckham, Richard, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Theology series, General Editor: James Dunn, Cambridge University Press, 1993, 6.

<sup>2</sup> This is the Apostle John. He likely wrote around 95A.D. during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian.

accomplished redemption for the saints by his death and resurrection and God is sovereign over history. As believers patiently endure, God's plan will unfold according to his will.

Historically, there are four major ways of approaching the book of Revelation. The *futurist* sees most of the book as being fulfilled in events immediately prior to Christ's second return. The *preterist* sees Revelation as describing past events either prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70A.D. or the destruction of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. The *historicist* interprets Revelation as representing chronological historical events in the interadvental period. Lastly, the *idealist* views the visions in Revelation as describing the interadvental period in a symbolic way.

There are also different views of the millennium mentioned in Rev. 20: 6, which may be combined with the approaches mentioned above. The *premillennial* view holds that Christ will reign on the earth for 1,000 years after his second coming. The *postmillennial* view espouses that we are living in the millennium currently and the sharing of the gospel will be progressively successful in bringing many to faith as the time approaches for Christ's return. This will positively impact societies around the world. The *amillennial* view claims Christ and the heavenly church are currently reigning from heaven during this interadvental period until Christ returns to end history. There are strengths and weaknesses to all the approaches and millennial views. A careful reading of Revelation should help us to practically view history from God's perspective. It should also empower us to endure suffering and be strengthened in our witness as we live amid spiritual warfare. Just as John wrote to the Asia Minor churches for strengthening and exhortation, so this message is communicated to the church currently serving the Lord.

## II. Letters to the Seven Churches 2:1-3: 22

The messages to the seven churches in chapters 2-3 are nicely summarized in the following table<sup>3</sup>:

Church	Character of Christ	Strength	Problem	Duty	Promise
Ephesus	authority	doctrinal zeal	lost love	repent	tree of life
Smyrna	giving life	spiritually rich		suffer for Christ	Freedom from death
Pergamum	warrior against sin	holding fast	false teaching, immorality	repent	Spiritual significance
Thyatira	searching heart	love, service	false teaching, immorality (Jezebel)	repudiate Jezebel	rule over nations
Sardis	source of Spirit	a few faithful saints	spiritually dead	awake!	White robe (honor)
Philadelphia	opening door	keeping the word	little strength	continue	Secure dwelling
Laodicea	true witness		worthless	admit need; receive from Christ	Fellowship

This chart shows the pattern used in the messages to the churches using the columns. The second and sixth churches appear to be doing the best, while the first and last are struggling more. The middle three are fair with much room for improvement. Overall, the church is in need of strengthening.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Taken from *"The Returning King, A Guide to the Book of Revelation"* by Vern Poythress ISBN 978-0-87552-462-7 p.84 used by permission of Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, P.O. Box 817, Phillipsburg, New Jersey 08865-0817, 2000.

### III. Throne Room 4:1- 5: 14

Chapters 4-5 are the throne room scene which highlights the importance of God overseeing the events which occur. The ongoing vision for the rest of the book flows out of heaven with God in control. Nothing specific is said about his appearance except that He is jasper and carnelian. These represent God's sovereignty and majesty<sup>5</sup>. The lack of God's description speaks volumes about him since he is mysterious and indescribable. No one on earth may see him fully as He is and live. But in heaven believers will see Him face to face (see Rev. 22: 4). The elders and living creatures in this heavenly scene worshipping God show that God is holy and worthy as the Creator. Our worship services on the earth are to reflect this praise and perspective.

Then a scroll is seen in God's right hand which represents His plan of judgment and salvation. John was inconsolable until he was told that Jesus was worthy to open the seals. Nobody other than the risen Christ is worthy to open the scroll. He is the conquering Lion, but seen as a slain Lamb. Because of what Jesus Christ accomplished by his death and resurrection, he is able to open the seals of the scroll and reveal the will of God.

God, the Sovereign Lord on his throne, and Christ the Redeemer are worshiped by all in Heaven. His people are ever before Him, praising Him for who He is and all He has accomplished. We are to worship the Triune God both in this life and the one to come. In a sense this section is central to the book thematically: "The book is about the incompatibility of the monotheistic worship portrayed in chapter 4 with every other kind of idolatry- the political, social and economic idolatries from which more narrowly

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<sup>4</sup> This chiastic pattern: abcccb'a' was pointed out by Beale in his extensive commentary: Beale, G.K., *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC-Editors I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mi./Cambridge, U.K.; The Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1999, 32,226.

<sup>5</sup> Poythress, 'The Returning King' can be found at <http://www.frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-returning-king/>. This quote is from the 'Opening the Seals' section on Rev. 6: 1- 8: 1, paragraph 3, line 1. No pages are available in this version.

religious idolatry is inseparable<sup>6</sup>". The imagery in these chapters comes from Daniel 7:9-27 where 14 elements are repeated in the same basic order. The word throne appears 17 times in these chapters and Ezekiel chapters 1-2 are also in John's thinking. "Revelation renews us, not so much from particular instructions about particular future events, but from showing us God, who will bring to pass all events in his own time and his own way."<sup>7</sup>

#### **IV. Seven Seals 6:1- 8: 5**

The seven seals, trumpets and bowls are progressive judgments revealed in chapters 6-16. In 6:8 one-fourth of the world is involved in the seal judgments. In 9:15 one-third of mankind are touched by the trumpet judgments. In 16:14 the whole world is liable in the bowl judgments. There are also seven signs between the trumpets and bowls. It is likely that these cycles are restating the same ideas with increasing intensity (recapitulation) rather than different events with each cycle. Interpretation of this judgment section is dependent on the approach one takes toward the book.

The four horsemen of 6:1-8 represent conquest, war, famine, and death.<sup>8</sup> The fourth seal seems to be a summary of the first three. Together they form a foursome analogous to Zechariah 1:8; 6:1-2.<sup>9</sup> Other OT passages that are relevant to this section are Ezekiel 14: 12-23 and Lev. 26: 18-28.<sup>10</sup> God is punishing unbelievers in this chapter and allowing his people to go through persecution. Yet this flow happens by Christ opening the seals as he sovereignly administers his justice and redemption.

In the fifth seal, the people of God are pictured as martyrs who have been killed for their faith. They are told to wait until the full number of martyrs is complete. These ones likely represent the church universal which has been called to endure through the suffering of the last days. Yet God preserves his

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 'First Seal' section, paragraph 2, line 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., line above 'God and His Angelic Court', Rev. 4: 1-11.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 'Opening the Seven Seals', Rev. 6:1-8:1, the first line of the third paragraph.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 'The First Seal: White Horse of Conquest', Rev. 6: 1-2, second paragraph, line 4.

<sup>10</sup> Beale, 372-373.

people through the midst of the trials (as the interlude in chapter 7 reveals). The sixth seal demonstrates God's final judgment on the unbelieving world. As in Isa. 34:4, these cosmic elements signify judgment coming on the earth's inhabitants. "The scene depicts figuratively the inauguration of the last judgment."<sup>11</sup>

**Revelation 7** is an interlude showing that God protects his people in the midst of judgment. Rev.7:1-8 probably occurs before Rev. 6: 1-8. The four winds in 7:1 likely represent the four horsemen in chapter 6. God is preparing and sealing his people before judgments occur so they don't lose their faith<sup>12</sup>.

The 144,000 represent the entire church, which must endure all the tribulation in the interadvental period (between Christ's first and second comings). The tribes of Israel point to the true Israel, the church. Judah is listed first as the Messiah is from that tribe. Dan is not listed, perhaps because "Dan" means God judges, and his people will be spared.

Rev.7:9 confirms that all of God's people are involved and they are standing before the throne in fulfillment of Rev. 6:17. In Rev.7:10 the saints praise the Father and Son, and the angels give an Amen. Then the angelic choir repeats almost verbatim Rev. 5:12.

In Rev. 7: 14-17 we learn of many benefits bestowed upon those sanctified by the work of Christ:

1. They serve God forever before His throne.
2. They are sheltered by His presence.
3. They shall not hunger, thirst or be scorched. God will meet all their needs.
4. Jesus their shepherd (Psalm 23) will guide them to living water (eternal life).
5. Every tear will be wiped away by God.

When the seventh seal is opened in Rev. 8: 1-5, there is silence in heaven for half an hour. This is indicative of judgment. This is reinforced by the recurring phrase in 8:5 'peals of thunder, rumblings,

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 404.

flashes of lightning, and an earthquake' (see also Rev 4: 5; 11: 19; 16: 18). The seven angels in 8:2, which harken back to the seven angels of the churches (1:20), are given seven trumpets, which leads us into the next major section of the book. Another angel in 8:3-4 is at the golden altar with a golden censer offering incense with the saint's prayers. He fills the censer with fire and throws it on the earth. The saint's prayers for vindication in Rev. 6: 10 have begun to be answered.

#### **V. Seven Trumpets 8:6-11:19**

As noted previously, there is progressive judgment apparent as we move from the seals to the trumpets to the bowls. In the trumpets 1/3 of the earth is affected by most of these plagues. The first six are very similar to the Egyptian plagues at the time of the Exodus. These judgments are likely not literal, but represent God's wrath on unbelieving hardened sinners. God is glorified as he answers the prayers of his people to be vindicated. "In Joshua (during the battle of Jericho) and here in Revelation, silence precedes trumpet judgments.<sup>13</sup>"

The first trumpet is modeled after the seventh Egyptian plague of hail and fire. The spiritual significance of this is that God deprives the ungodly of earthly security because of their persecution and idolatry (see chart on page 10). The second and third trumpets combined are similar to the first Egyptian plague. Wormwood is a bitter herb mentioned in Jer.9:15 and Jer.23:15 which poisons water. God is judging those who polluted his ways by bringing suffering and famine. The great mountain in verse 8 is likely an evil kingdom which God is overthrowing. Later on in Revelation we learn that this is Babylon, which represents an ungodly kingdom opposed to God and his people. The fourth trumpet is similar to the ninth Egyptian plague of darkness. Unbelievers are deceived and kept in the dark spiritually. The sun, moon, and stars often represent leaders. The last three trumpet judgments are called woes, or prophet oracles of warning. We see this pattern in Amos 5: 18.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 468.

<b>Trumpet/Revelation reference<sup>14</sup></b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Parallel in Exodus</b>	<b>Spiritual significance</b>
1/Rev. 8:7	Hail, fire, and blood cast on the land- 1/3 burned	7 <sup>th</sup> plague-Exod. 9: 22-25	God deprives the ungodly of earthly security because of their persecution and idolatry
2/Rev.8:8-9	Burning mountain cast into the sea- 1/3 bloodied	1 <sup>st</sup> plague-Exod. 7: 20-25	As above
3/Rev. 8:10-11	Burning stars fall on rivers and springs- 1/3 embittered	1 <sup>st</sup> plague- Exod. 7:20-25	As above
4/Rev. 8: 12	Sun, moon, and stars- 1/3 darkened	9 <sup>th</sup> plague- Exod. 10: 21-23	As above
5/Rev. 9: 1-12	Demons from the Abyss	8 <sup>th</sup> plague- Exod. 10: 12-15	Demons torment hardened unbelievers
6/Rev. 9:13-21	Invasion from the east- 1/3 of mankind killed	10 <sup>th</sup> plague-Exod. 12: 29-32	Some hardened unbelievers judged by demons through deception until death. The rest are unrepentant.
7/Rev. 11:15-19	Kingdom of the world becomes kingdom of God	Exod. 19: 16-19	Narrates the very end of history.

<sup>14</sup> This chart combines themes and charts from Poythress ('Blowing the first four trumpets', 8: 7-13), ESV Study Bible (Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, Ill., 2008, 2475) and Beale (472-620).

In chapter 9 we find the fifth and sixth trumpets. The fifth trumpet is patterned after the eighth Egyptian plague of the locusts. The locusts eat what is left after the hail (Ex.10:5, 12, 15). In Revelation 9 it is apparent that locusts represent demonic forces which are marshaled against unbelievers. The demons coming out of the abyss come to torment hardened unbelievers. It is not physical torment but rather psychological and spiritual. "People are reminded of their hopeless spiritual plight."<sup>15</sup> Christians are sealed from these and will not be harmed. Much of the description of the locusts in 9:7-9 can be found in Joel 1-2. Joel also describes a locust plague which may have the dual meanings of an actual physical phenomenon and an army invading. Revelation 9 is a further intensification of the plagues described in Exodus and Joel. We also discover in 9: 11 that the leader of these locusts is Satan.

The sixth trumpet in 9: 13-21 is linked to the tenth Egyptian plague which involved death of the firstborn Egyptians and led to the Exodus. There is an invasion from the east where 1/3 of mankind is killed. The significance of this is that some hardened unbelievers are judged by demons through deception until death. The rest who survive are unrepentant. The sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl in Rev. 16:12-16 describe the same event. The three plagues mentioned in 9: 17, namely fire, smoke and sulfur occur in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They represent a coming destruction and point to the final judgment. Rev.9: 17-19 mentions 'the mouths' three times symbolizing deception. Those unbelievers who die physically will also die spiritually.

Rev. 10-11: 14 is an interlude before the seventh trumpet. In chapter 10, John sees another mighty angel who has divine characteristics- wrapped in a cloud, a rainbow over his head, face like the sun, legs like pillars of fire, and a voice roaring like a lion. This harkens back to the description of Christ in Rev. 1. He placed one foot on the sea and one on the land because he is Sovereign over the entire world. Just as Daniel (Dan.12:9) is not allowed to write down some of his revelation, so John is forbidden to write what the seven thunders sounded. This angel swears that there will be no more delay- when the

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<sup>15</sup> Beale, 491.

seventh trumpet sounds the final judgment will come. Lastly, there is a little scroll that John is told to eat (like Ezekiel in Ezek. 2-3) which seems to be very similar to the scroll in Rev. 5. John is re-commissioned to continue to prophecy about the revelation contained in the scroll. It concerns salvation and judgment; therefore it is both sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach.

In chapter 11 the interlude continues with a depicting of two witnesses. John is first told to measure the temple, the altar and those who worship there (alludes to Ezek. 40-48). He is not to measure the court outside the temple, where nations will trample the holy city. This symbolizes unbelievers throughout the world persecuting Christians for their witness. The two witnesses, who resemble Moses and Elijah, represent the entire church community. The church is to be faithful since “its whole primary function is to be a prophetic witness<sup>16</sup>”. The two olive trees and two lampstands also stand for the church as in Rev. 1 (and Zech. 4). Fire coming from the mouths of believers reminds unbelievers of the coming judgment for their persecution and unrepentance. Just as the earlier trumpets reminded the ungodly of the Egyptian plagues, so here there is a reminder of the water turned into blood and other plagues (11: 6). Then the witness of the church will be silenced for a short time before the end (11: 7-10). This is not likely a literal death for those in the church, but a Satanic (11: 7) persecution world-wide which will hinder the church’s witness for a time. In 11: 11 their witness is restored in a similar manner to Israel’s restoration in Ezekiel 37.

In 11: 15-19 the seventh trumpet is sounded. The kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ because the final judgment has come. The elders worship God in song with thanksgiving because He reigns and his wrath has come. Rev. 11: 18 sums it up nicely: ‘The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets, and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.’ God’s temple in heaven is opened and the ark of His presence is there.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 573.

## VI. Seven Symbolic Histories 12: 1- 14: 20

“There are thus seven symbolic histories in all: the history of the Dragon (12:7-12), the history of the woman (12:13-17), the history of the Beast (13:1-10), the history of the False Prophet (13:11-18), the history of the 144,000 (14:1-5), the history of the angelic proclaimers (14:6-11), and the history of the coming of the Son of Man (14:14-20).<sup>17</sup>” The beginning of this section, 12: 1-6 is also the start of the second half of the book of Revelation; it introduces a woman and a dragon. The woman represents the church (in the OT, NT and interadvental period). The Dragon represents Satan as Rev. 12: 9 tells us. The male child represents Christ. The Dragon, Beast and False Prophet (in chapters 12-13) together represent a counterfeit Trinity<sup>18</sup>. Thus spiritual warfare will especially characterize the second half of Revelation until the judgment removes all evil and the New Jerusalem is celebrated in Rev. 21:9- 22: 5.

In the history of the Dragon (12: 7-12), we find warfare taking place in heaven. Satan is cast out of heaven by the work of Christ. This helps establish the kingdom of God. The saints have conquered Satan by the blood of Christ and the word of their testimony (the truth of the gospel) - Rev. 12: 11. The devil is now full of wrath since he has been defeated and his time is short.

In the history of the woman (12: 13-17), God protects his church spiritually from Satan during the interadvental period. Satan cannot ultimately deceive the people of God now that Christ has won the decisive battle by his death, resurrection, and ascension. Nor can Satan accuse the saints in heaven since Christ has justified them. Satan will attack the church since he is unable to devour the risen Messiah. He will summon earthly forces and the beasts in chapter 13 to attempt to destroy God’s work.

In the history of the Beast (13: 1-10), Satan the dragon gives his power, throne, and authority to the beast as his representative on earth. This anti-Christ figure mimics Jesus, but is the devil incarnate. The beast may represent kingdoms which oppose God such as the Roman Empire of the first Century, or evil

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<sup>17</sup> Poythress, ‘Seven Symbolic Histories 12: 1- 14: 20’, third paragraph, line 4.

<sup>18</sup> Poythress, V.S. “Counterfeiting in the Book of Revelation as a Perspective on Non-Christian Culture” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 40, no.3 (1997): 411-418, [http://www.frame-poythress\\_articles/1997Counterfeiting](http://www.frame-poythress_articles/1997Counterfeiting) .

persons throughout history culminating potentially in one ultimately evil person. Job mentions beasts of the land and sea in Job 40-41. This beast rising out of the sea harkens back to Daniel 7, and the four different beasts described by Daniel are combined into one monstrous beast in this section of Revelation. The beast has a mortal wound but is healed, imitating the resurrected Christ. The dragon and the beast are worshiped, deceiving all the inhabitants who are not believers. Believers are strongly encouraged to persevere in their faith as God allows the beast to conquer his people in the earthly sphere. Though God is Sovereign, some of his people may be taken captive or martyred. The ultimate victory of the believer is secure, though like their Savior, they may have to suffer persecution.

In the history of the False Prophet, another beast arises out of the earth. This beast mimics the Holy Spirit in performing signs and promoting worship of the first beast. He also imitates God's mark on his people by causing all those committed to the beast to be marked on their forehead or right hand. Those refusing to worship the beast are to be slain. Chapter 13 ends by telling the reader there is a number to the beast- 666. "The numerical value in Hebrew of the Greek word 'tharion' (beast) is 666. This is an exhortation to discern spiritual danger.<sup>19</sup>" Though many have tried to implicate specific rulers such as Nero, or Hitler, it is unlikely that one person only fulfills this.

In the history of the 144,000, Christ stood on Mt. Zion with his people. They are his church universal as in Rev. 7: 4-8; they are marked with God's name, in contrast to the followers of the beast. They are singing a new song before the throne which only the redeemed can learn. Then the people of God are described as sexually pure and without lies, for they are blameless. This refers to all the different facets of life including the physical, social, political and spiritual.

In the history of the angelic proclaimers three angels have messages to proclaim. The first has the eternal gospel to proclaim throughout the earth; he warns his hearers to fear, glorify and worship God due to the judgment coming. The second angel declares, 'Fallen is Babylon, who made nations drink the

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<sup>19</sup> Beale, 24.

wine of sexual immorality'. In Rev. 14: 8 Babylon represents the world in opposition to God, such as the Roman Empire. Sexual immorality represents all opposition to God and all disobedience. The third angel warns of judgment against the worshipers of the beast, those who receive his mark.

Rev. 14: 12-13 may function as a short interlude encouraging the saints to persevere. Rev. 14: 12 is a slight variation of Rev. 13: 10b. With death as a possibility for some of those suffering persecution, God calls those who die in the Lord blessed. They will rest from their labors and their deeds follow them.

Isa.57: 1 intimates a similar concept as well as Psalm 116: 15.

In the history of the coming of the Son of Man in Rev. 14: 14-20, the judgment is portrayed by an allusion from Joel 3: 13: A harvest of ripe grapes is thrown into the winepress. Jesus is the Son of Man who swings his sickle over the earth while his angels gather the crop. The height and distance of the blood coming from the winepress are to accentuate the horribleness and extensiveness of the judgment.

### **Seven Bowls 15:1- 16:21**

Rev. 15 prepares the reader for the bowl judgments coming in chapter 16. With these last seven plagues God's wrath is finished. We are taken back to Rev.4-5 and the throne room scene as this is taking place in heaven with much praise and singing. The saints sing a song of Moses and the Lamb which echoes back to Exod. 15 and Deut. 32. Very similar verses are found also in Jer. 10:7 and Psalms 86:9-10; 98:2. Because God alone is holy, he is to be worshiped, feared and glorified. In heaven we see OT images of the tent of witness (tabernacle), the temple and the Shekinah glory-cloud filling the temple.

In chapter 16 the seven bowls are poured out. They are very similar in content to the seven trumpets, but are more detailed and progressive in extent. The first bowl in v.2 is poured out on the earth (as the first trumpet) and is directed against those who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped

its image. Harmful and painful sores harken back to the sixth Egyptian plague found in Exodus 9: 8-12. The sores may represent spiritual and psychological suffering, but are probably not literal here.<sup>20</sup>

The second bowl in v.3 is poured out on the sea (as the second trumpet) and the sea became like the blood of a corpse and everything in it died. This is patterned after the first Egyptian plague in Exodus 7: 17-21. This may signify famine conditions and economic deprivation leading to the demise of the ungodly world economic life-support system.<sup>21</sup>

The third bowl in vv. 4-7 poured out into rivers and streams (as the third trumpet) turned them into blood also. This also happened in the first Egyptian plague. God is declared just and holy for beginning to judge the ungodly that have persecuted his people. God fits the punishment to the crime. Once again God is answering the prayers of his people for vindication.

The fourth bowl in vv. 8-9 was poured out on the sun (as the fourth trumpet) which scorched people with fire. Fire in the book of Revelation usually represents a form of spiritual judgment. But as in the sixth trumpet, those judged did not repent.

The fifth bowl in vv. 10-11 was poured out on the throne of the beast and there was darkness (as the fourth and fifth trumpets). Like the fourth trumpet, this woe is based on the ninth Egyptian plague of darkness in Exod. 10: 22.<sup>22</sup> The darkness reminds unbelievers of their spiritual separation from God. Yet they still do not repent of their deeds.

The sixth and seven bowls in vv. 12-21 signify the final judgment, as did the sixth and seventh trumpets and the seventh seal. The sixth bowl is poured out on the Euphrates (as the sixth trumpet) to prepare the way for the kings from the east. The kings of the east may represent the political arm of the wicked world system that turns against the economic-religious arm to destroy it.<sup>23</sup> Then the false Trinity noted in 16: 13 sends out demonic deception to assemble God's enemies at the battle of Armageddon.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 814.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 815.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 823.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 828.

While there is no location “Mount Megiddo”, it likely represents a Satanically-inspired world system opposing God and making war against him and his saints. This has been ongoing in the interadvental period, but likely will escalate as the final judgment approaches. The saints are not to compromise with idolatry, nor are they to be deceived, and they will remain clothed (16: 15).

The seventh bowl in v.17 is poured out into the air. Flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a great earthquake along with hail are signs of the last judgment (as the seventh trumpet). The phrase “there had never been since man was on the earth” in v.18 harkens back to Dan. 12:1 which also points to the last judgment. The great city in v. 19 is Babylon, and chapters 17-18 will further elucidate its judgment. Mountains being thrown down, together with hail, as symbols of judgment are also found in Ezek.38: 19-22.

#### **VII. Babylon the Prostitute- 17: 1-19: 21**

This section portrays the judgment of Babylon and the beast. Babylon, seen here as a harlot, represents ‘the prevailing economic-religious system in alliance with the state and its related authorities and existing throughout the ages.’<sup>24</sup> She works with the beast to deceive earth-dwellers and persecute the saints. The ‘many waters’ in v.1 is interpreted in v.15 as peoples and nations. In v.2 it is clear that she has lead kings and multitudes into idolatry. She is sitting on the beast in v.3 (the beast represents the ungodly state or political system opposed to God). She is arrayed in similar garb as the high priest in v.4 (see Exod. 28: 6). This contrasts her lack of holiness with the holiness of the high priest. She is also contrasted with the pure bride of Christ, the church, noted in Rev. 12 and Rev.19, 21. “The woman of ch.12 gave birth to the church, and the woman of ch.17 attempts to exterminate the church.<sup>25</sup>” The rest of chap. 17 gives an interpretation of the beast.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 850.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 859.

The phrase 'it was, and is not' is used three times in this section of the beast. He tries to mimic the Lord, but 'is not' because he is headed for destruction. The seven heads and ten horns (as in Dan.7:4, 8, 20, 24) represent kings who at first are in alliance with the harlot, but later are used by the beast to destroy her. This is unexpected because the kingdom of evil unwittingly destroys itself by the Sovereign hand of God. In v. 17, we see that God put it in their hearts to carry out his purpose until his words are fulfilled. In chapter 18, we see the response of many to Babylon's destruction.

Chapter 18 may be outlined as follows:<sup>26</sup>

1. Vv.1-3- the fall of Babylon is predicted. In Isa.21: 9 we see national Babylon is declared fallen due to its idolatry. In Rev. 18 it is also clear she seduces kings, nations and merchants. We see in Isa. 23:8 and Ezek.26-28 references to Tyre which will correlate with Babylon in Rev. 18.
2. Vv.4-8- God's people are exhorted to separate from Babylon before her judgment. Isa. 52: 11 exhorts God's people to be pure and not to compromise with the world system opposed to God. Jer. 51, which deals with the destruction of historic Babylon, is also alluded to many times in this chapter, esp. Jer. 51: 7, 9, 37, 44, 45, 47, and 52. Rev. 18: 6 echoes Psalm 137: 8. Rev. 18: 7b harkens back to Isa. 47: 7-8.
3. Vv.9-19- those cooperating with Babylon will lament after her judgment. Kings, merchants and sailors all weep at her fate. The same three groups are mentioned in Tyre's fall in Ezek. 27: 29-36. Their lament is at least partly due to their own economic loss and perhaps fears of judgment. Most of the products listed here are found in Ezek. 27 also.
4. Vv.20-24- the faithful will rejoice over her judgment. As in Jer. 51: 48, God's people are to rejoice that the wicked have fallen. They are vindicated and God's character is shown to be just. In v. 21, a stone is thrown into the sea representing judgment, as in Jer. 51: 63, where a stone is

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 891.

tied to a book containing a prophesy of Babylon's judgment and is cast into the sea. With this the contents of the scroll mentioned earlier are fulfilled.

Chapter 19 returns to a heavenly scene with praises to God being shouted because of his salvation and judgment. In verse 2 it is clear the basis for the heavenly praise is the judgment of Babylon. Also, God's saints are avenged. In verse 3 the smoke of Babylon's destruction goes up forever and ever, reiterating chapter 18: 8, 9, and 18 (see also Isa.34: 9-10). There is a refrain of 'hallelujah' in verses 1, 3, 4, and 6. The wedding of God with his bride, the church, has come. The bride has made herself ready by her righteous deeds. The bride is contrasted with the harlot. God only is to be glorified (vv. 1, 7) and nobody else, not even an angel (see v.10 and Rev. 22: 8-9).

The second half of chapter 19 reveals Christ sitting on a white horse as conqueror. He is called 'Faithful and True' and in righteousness he judges and makes war (v.11). His eyes depicted as fire (symbolizing judgment) harkens back to the vision of him in Rev. 1. He also has a name written that no one knows but himself (v. 12). This symbolizes his transcendence as God and the mystery of His work before it is fully completed. He is also known as 'The Word of God' in v.13. Lastly, he is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in v. 16. As his army follows him on white horses, a sharp sword comes from his mouth which destroys his enemies (vv.15 and 21). He rules them with a rod of iron, another reference from Psalm 2.

Further details of the battle of Armageddon are given in vv. 17-21. Birds are called (as in Ezek. 39: 4, 17-20) to be ready to devour in a great supper after God's victory; indeed they gorge themselves. As the enemies of God gather together, the beast and false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire (hell). All those following them are killed.

## **VIII. The Judgments 20:1-15**

The 1,000 year period known as the millennium is a key phrase repeated in this section. Most of the numbers in Revelation up to this point have been symbolic. The 1,000 year period likely represents the church age, or interadvental period. During it Satan is bound and the saints reign. What does this mean exactly? It seems Satan is prevented from deceiving to some degree during this period. At the end of the period Satan is released and can deceive the nations again (see vv.7-8). He also gathers the nations against God and his people in vv. 8-9. This appears to be a recapitulation of the battle of Armageddon mentioned in Rev. 16: 14-16; 19: 19-21. During the same period the saints reign. In verse 4 John saw the souls of those beheaded for their testimony of Jesus and the word of God. They 'came to life' and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years. This is the first resurrection. Those participating in this are 'blessed and holy' (v. 6). So the first resurrection happens after physical death (the first death) where the saints are taken to heaven with Christ, vindicated, and in his presence reign (perhaps it is saints on the thrones in v.4 who've been given authority to judge). They are priests of God and Christ (v.6). When the final judgment comes, they are not punished since their names are in the book of life (vv.12, 15).

Unbelievers will experience physical death also, but will not be resurrected into God's presence until the final judgment. They will be kept in Hades until that time. Then at the end they will appear before the great white throne. They will be judged according to their works and will be thrown into the lake of fire (the second death) along with Satan, the beast and the false prophet.

## **IX. The New Jerusalem 21: 1- 22: 5**

In chapter 21, John sees a new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem, and the holy city as a bride adorned for her husband. This bride is also called the wife of the Lamb in v.9. This heavenly scene has

no temple and no sun or moon (see Isa. 60: 19) since the glory of God is ever present. The surprising thread running through this last main section is that all the metaphors used for the new cosmos seem to represent the church perfected. The perfected church is contrasted with the imperfect church noted in chapters 2-3. Also, the church is contrasted with ungodly Babylon. In Isa. 65: 17 and Isa. 66: 22, God says he will create a new heavens and a new earth. The work of Christ has set in motion the glorification of the church as it worships God. All evil and suffering are removed. God wipes away every tear (see Isa.25: 8), mourning, crying, pain and death (v.4). The sea was no more (v.1) since all evil is removed and the threat of afflictions gives way to consummate bliss as in Isa. 51: 10-11. Rev. 21: 2 pictures the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, as opposed to the ungodly trying to reach heaven at the Tower of Babel (Gen.11). The marriage metaphor may be taken from Isa. 61: 10 and 62: 3-5.

In Rev. 21: 6 God is once again called the 'Alpha and Omega' (a merism) as in Rev. 1: 8. This God gives water to the thirsty, combining allusions from Isa. 49:10 and Isa. 55: 1. In v.7, the 'one who conquers' harkens back to a refrain in the letters to the churches in chapters 2-3. These overcomers now receive their reward as promised since they have not compromised their faith in the face of persecution. The rest will be judged in the lake of fire and sulfur (v.8) as in the end of chapter 20. The rest of chapter 21 can be divided thematically as follows: appearance of the city (vv.9-14), measurements of the city (vv. 15-17), material of the city (vv.18-21), and the internal features of the city (vv. 22-27).<sup>27</sup> The last section of Ezekiel, chapters 40-48, is also central to John's thinking in this last section of Revelation. John blends Ezekiel's fulfillment of temple, city and land into the one reality of God's communion with his people.<sup>28</sup>

In vv. 10-17 we see God's protection of his people, who are from all nations throughout history. The walls are high and the measuring pictures security. God's presence is a shelter and comfort forever. The precious stones listed in this section represent permanent peace for God's people, who reflect his glory.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 1061.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The river in 22: 1-2 and the tree of life remind us of the Garden of Eden. 'The leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations' is an allusion from Ezek. 47: 12. Christ's work has brought redemption and healing for the nations. In this paradise there will be no more accursed thing, no more night, no lamp or sun. The people of God will reign forever (v.5).

#### **X. Epilogue 22: 6-21**

In v. 6 God sent his angel 'to show his servants what must soon take place' (see Rev. 1: 1). Rev. 22: 7 reiterates Rev. 1: 3: 'Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book'. So the epilogue refers back often to the prologue. John starts to worship an angel in vv. 8-9 and again is told not to do it (as in Rev. 19: 10). There are five exhortations to be holy in the epilogue and an emphasis on obedience until God's salvation blessings are obtained. John is told in v.10 not to seal up the words of this prophecy, whereas Daniel (see Dan.12: 4) is instructed to do the opposite. Daniel 12: 10 also parallels Rev. 22: 11. Jesus says three times he is coming soon (vv. 7, 12, 20); the saints say in response to 'come' four times in this closing section (three times in v.17 and once in v.20). God is Alpha and Omega in Rev. 1:8 and Rev. 21:6; clearly Jesus is Alpha and Omega in Rev. 22: 13.

In vv. 18-19 a curse is pronounced on anyone who adds to or takes away from words of the prophecy of this book. This may be a warning against false teaching which would likely contradict the message of God through John. The book ends in v. 21 with a typical letter closing.

## Appendix 1

<b>Revelation</b>	<b>OT references</b>
Chpt. 1	
v. 1	Dan.2:28-30,45-47
v.4	Zech. 4:2-7
v.6	Exod.19:6
v.7	Dan.7:13; Zech.12:10
v.12	Zech.4:2-6,10
v.15	Dan.7:9;10:6; Ezek.1:24
Chpt. 2	
v.7	Isa.6:9-10
v.10	Dan.1: 12-15
v.14	Numbers 22:5-25:3; 31:8,16
v.18	Dan.3:24-25
v.20	1Kings 16:31;21:25
vv.26-27	Psalms 2: 8-9
Chpt. 3	
v.7	Isa.22:22
v.14	Isa.65:15-16
v.17	Hos.12:8
v.18	Isa.55:1-3
v.20	Song of Sol.5:2
Chpt. 4	
v.1-8	Dan. 7:9-10; Ezekiel 1-2
v.6	Isa. 6: 3
Chpt. 5	
v.1	Ezek. 2:9-10
v.2	Dan.7:10; 12:4; Isa.29:11
v.6	Isa.53: 7
v.7	Dan. 7: 13
v.9	Dan.3: 4,7;4:1; 5:19; 6:25; 7:14
v.10	Dan. 7: 22,27
v.11	Dan. 7:10

v.12	Dan.2: 20; 1Chron.29: 11-12
Chpt. 6	
vv.1-8	Zech. 1:8-15; 6: 1-8 Ezek. 14:12-23 (esp. v.21) Lev. 26: 18-28
vv. 12-14	Isa.34: 4 Joel 2: 31
v. 15	Isa. 2: 10,18-21
v.16	Hos. 10: 8 Nah. 1: 5-6
Chpt. 7	
v. 1	Zech. 6:5; Jer. 49: 36
v. 3	Ezek. 9: 4-6
v. 14	Daniel 12: 1; 11: 35
vv. 16-17	Isa. 49: 10; 25: 8
Chpt. 8	
v.v. 1-2	Joshua 6: 8-10
vv. 3-5	Ezek. 10: 1-7
v.5	Exod. 19: 16
v. 7	Exod. 9: 22-25; Ezek. 5: 2,12
vv. 8-9	Exod. 7: 20-25
vv. 10-11	Exod. 7: 20-25
v. 12	Exod. 10: 21-23
Chpt. 9	
v.3	Exod. 10: 12-15
vv.7-9	Joel 1-2
v. 8	Joel 1: 6
v.9	Joel 2: 4-5
v.10	Jer. 8: 16-18
vv.13-21	Exod. 12: 29-32
v.14	Jer. 46: 4, 22-23
v.18	Gen. 19: 24,28
Chpt. 10	
v.1	Dan. 7: 13; 10 : 6

	Ezek. 1: 27-28
v.2	Ezek. 2: 9- 3: 11
v.3	Amos 3: 7-8; Psalm 129
v.4	Dan. 12: 9
v.5	Dan. 12: 7
v.7	Amos 3: 4-8
v.8	Ezek. 2: 9-10
vv. 9-10	Ezek. 2: 8- 3: 3
Chpt. 11	
vv.1-2	Ezek. 40: 3, 20; Zech. 2: 1
v.3	Joel 2: 28-32
v.4	Zech. 4: 2-3, 11-4
v.5	Jer. 5: 14
v.7	Dan. 7: 21
v.9	Psalm 79: 3
v.11	Ezek. 37: 5, 10
v.13	Mic. 7: 8-17
v.15	Dan. 7: 18, 22, 27; Exod. 15: 18
v. 18	Psalm 2: 1-2
Chpt. 12	
v.1	Gen. 37: 9
v.2	Isa. 7: 14
v.3	Dan. 7: 24
v.4	Dan. 8: 10
v.5	Psalm 2: 9
v.7	Dan. 10: 20-21; 12: 1
v.14	Exod. 19: 4; Deut. 1: 31-33; Deut. 32: 10-12
Chpt. 13	
vv.1-2	Job 40-41; Daniel 7: 1-7
v. 3	Gen. 3:15
v. 4	Dan. 7: 6
v.5	Dan. 7: 6, 8, 11, 20, 25
v.6	Dan. 7: 25

v. 7	Dan. 7: 14, 21
v.8	Dan. 12: 1
v.10	Jer. 15: 2
v.13	1Kings 18: 38; 2Kings 1: 10
v.18	1Kings 10: 14
Chpt. 14	
v.1	Psalm 2: 6
v.5	Isa. 53: 9; Zeph. 3: 13
vv.6-7	Dan. 4: 34
v.8	Dan. 4: 30; Isa. 21: 9; Isa. 23: 15-18; Jer.51: 7-8
vv.10-11	Jer. 25: 15; Isa. 34: 9-10
v.13	Isa. 57: 1; Psalm 116: 15
vv.14-20	Dan. 7: 13-14; Joel 3: 12-13
Chpt. 15	
v.3	Exod. 15; Deut. 32; Jer. 10: 7
v.4	Psalm 86: 9-10; 98: 2
v.6	Dan. 10: 5
v.7	Isa. 51: 17, 22
v.8	Isa. 6: 1,4; Ezek. 10: 3-4
Chapt. 16	
v.1	Jer. 10: 25; Isa. 66: 6; Psalm 79: 3-6, 12
v.2	Exod. 9: 8- 12; Deut. 28: 27, 35
vv.3-4	Exod. 7: 17-21
v.6	Isa. 49: 26; Psalm 79: 3, 10, 12
vv. 10-11	Exod. 10: 22
v.13	Exod. 8: 2-11
v.16	Ezek. 39: 2, 17; Zech. 12: 11
v.18	Dan. 12: 1; Exod. 19: 16-18
vv.20-21	Ezek. 38: 19-22
Chapt. 17	
v.1	Jer. 51: 13
v.2	Isa. 23: 17
v.3	Dan. 7: 3-8, 20, 24; Isa. 21: 1-10

v.4	Exod. 28: 6; Jer. 51: 7-8
vv.6-7	Dan. 4
v.9	Dan. 12: 10; Dan. 7: 3-7
v.12	Dan. 7: 7-8
v.14	Dan. 7: 21
v.16	Ezek. 23: 25-29
Chapt. 18	
vv.1-3	Isa. 21: 9; Isa. 23: 8; Ezek. 26-28
vv.4-8	Isa. 52: 11; Jer. 51: 7, 9, 37, 44, 45, 47, 52
v.6	Psalm 137: 8
v.7	Isa. 47: 7-8
vv.9-19	Ezek. 27: 7-36
vv.20-24	Jer. 51: 48-49, 63; Isa. 23: 8; Isa. 47: 9
Chapt. 19	
v.2	2Kings 9: 7
v.3	Isa. 34: 9-10
v.4	Psalm 106: 48
v.6	Isa. 52: 7
vv.7-8	Isa.61: 10
v.12	Isa. 62: 2-3
v.13	Isa. 63: 1-3
v.15	Psalm 2: 9; Isa. 11:4; Isa. 49: 2; Isa.63: 2-6
vv.17-21	Ezek. 39: 4, 17-20
v.20	Dan. 7: 9-11
Chapt. 20	
vv.2-3	Isa. 24: 21-22; Isa. 27: 1
vv.4-6	Isa. 61: 6; Exod. 19: 6; Ezek. 37: 6, 10
vv.8-9	Ezek. 38: 2-7, 11, 15, 16, 22; Ezek. 39: 4 Psalm 11: 6
vv.11-12	Dan. 7: 9-10; Dan. 12: 1-2
v.14	Isa. 66: 24
Chapt. 21	
v.1	Isa. 65: 16-17; Isa. 66: 22
v.2	Isa. 62: 1-5; Isa. 61: 10

v.3	Ezek. 43: 7; Ezek. 37: 27; Lev. 26: 11-12
v.4	Isa. 51: 10-11; Isa. 65: 19-20; Isa. 25: 8 Isa. 60: 20; Isa. 35: 10
v.5	Isa. 43: 19
v.6	Isa. 49: 10; Isa. 55: 1
v.7	2Sam. 7: 14
v.10	Ezek. 43: 5; Isa. 40: 1-2
vv.12-13	Ezek. 40: 5-6; Isa. 42: 15-19
v.14	Isa. 54: 11-12
v.15	Ezek. 40: 3-5
v.16	Ezek. 45: 1-5; Ezek. 48: 8-13; Zech. 2: 2
vv.18-20	Exod. 28: 17-20; Exod. 39: 8-14; Isa. 54: 11-12; Ezek. 28: 13
v.23	Isa. 60: 19; Ezek. 43: 2,5
v.24	Isa. 60: 3,5
vv.25-26	Isa. 60: 11-12
v.27	Isa. 4: 3; Isa. 35: 8; Isa. 52: 1
Chpt. 22	
vv.1-2	Gen. 2: 8-10; Ezek. 47: 12; Zech. 14: 8
v.3	Zech. 14: 11; Isa. 34: 1-2; Isa. 61: 6
v.5	Isa. 60: 19-20; Numbers 6: 25-27
v.6	Isa. 65: 16; Dan. 2: 28-29, 45
v. 10	Dan. 12: 4
v.11	Dan. 12: 10
v.12	Isa. 40: 10
v.14	Isa. 62: 10
v.16	Num. 24: 17; Isa. 60: 1-3; Isa. 11: 10
vv. 18-19	Deut. 4: 1-2; Deut. 12: 32; Deut. 29: 19-21

## **Appendix 2**

This appendix is to provide good questions and direction for the leader of the class or small group. One should remember to cover the following processes in studying each section:

1. Observation
2. Interpretation
3. Application

The core material of the study guide is meant to provide background which can supplement one's own study, a study bible or commentary. Enough time should be given intentionally to get to application. Crossing the bridge from the biblical culture to modern day culture can be challenging. I recommend praying at the start and end of the study and reading the passage out loud at the beginning. Here are some questions which can facilitate the task:

### **Chapter 1**

1. What genre is Revelation?
2. What is the purpose of the book?

### **Chapter 2-3**

1. What patterns do you see in the seven letters to the churches?
2. Fill in the chart and explain any symbolism.
3. How might these principles apply to the modern church?

### **Chapter 4**

1. What do we learn about God from this chapter?
2. How should we respond?

## **Chapter 5**

1. What do we learn about Christ in this passage?
2. How are we to respond?

## **Chapter 6**

1. What is the significance of the six seals?

## **Chapter 7**

1. Why are the 144,000 being sealed and who do they represent?
2. What is depicted in the second half of the chapter?

## **Chapter 8**

1. What is the significance of the seventh seal?
2. What is the significance of the first four trumpets?

## **Chapter 9**

1. What is the significance of the fifth and sixth trumpets?

## **Chapter 10**

1. What is the significance of John eating the scroll?

## **Chapter 11**

1. Who are represented by the two witnesses?
2. What is the significance of the seventh trumpet?

## **Chapter 12**

1. What is the plot and who are the characters of the signs in this chapter?
2. What interpretation explains the narrative?

## **Chapter 13**

1. Identify the beasts?
2. What is the significance of 666?

## **Chapter 14**

1. What is the significance of the last three symbolic histories?

## **Chapter 15**

1. How does this chapter fit into Revelation?
2. What do we learn about the character of God in this chapter?

## **Chapter 16**

1. What is the significance of the bowls?
2. What is the application?

## **Chapter 17**

1. Identify Babylon and the beast?

## **Chapter 18**

1. What is the reaction of Babylon's cohorts to her fall?
2. How are the saints to respond to her fall?

## **Chapter 19**

1. Why should God be worshiped?

## **Chapter 20**

1. What does the 1,000 year period represent?
2. What is the first resurrection?
3. What is the second death?
4. How are the first resurrection and the second death interrelated?

## **Chapter 21**

1. What theme unites the chapter?
2. What will heaven be like for the believer?

## **Chapter 22**

1. How are we exhorted to be holy in this chapter?