

**Adult**

# **Sabbath School Lessons**

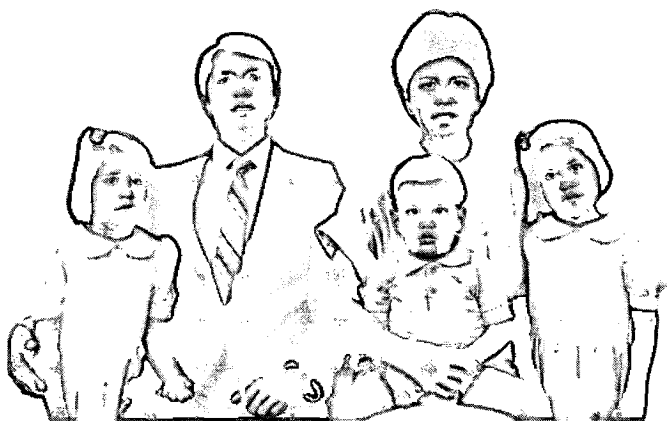
PART 2

**Present Triumph, Future Glory**



**JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER 1989**

# Why Are We Missionaries?



I have training as a pilot and a minister. My wife, who is a dentist, shares my goals and interest in mission service. When the call came from the General Conference to go to Brazil from our home in Mexico we didn't hesitate.

## What Are We Doing?

Primarily I am a pilot, but also a minister to isolated people groups. Our amphibian plane reaches jungle areas that would require a three-week boat trip. Already we've helped raise several new groups of believers who now worship the true God. My wife cares for our three children, and gives me a lot of loving support. Our financial, physical and human resources are not many, but we do our best and try to be useful in God's work.

## Would We Come Again? Yes, Without Any Doubt!

**Missionaries Still Needed:** The General Conference Secretariat currently has calls for over one hundred inter-division workers, primarily in health care, teaching, and administrative professions. Applicants must have specific academic qualifications, successful experience, and good recommendations. For details, write to Secretariat Information Service, 6840 Eastern Avenue, N.W., Washington D.C. 20012

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# Meet the Author of This Quarter's Sabbath School Lessons

Until his retirement in 1987, Elder Carl Coffman chaired the Department of Religion at Andrews University, where he joined the staff in 1975. He began his career as a pastor in Northern California Conference. Later he accepted a position as teacher in the Department of Religion at Pacific Union College before moving to Andrews University.

Elder Coffman has directed youth camps, held many academy weeks of prayer, and conducted workshops throughout North America in soul-winning dynamics, the Holy Spirit, righteousness by faith, the mission of the church, and the three angels' messages. Because of his inspirational and informative teaching students have been brought closer to Christ, and many theology students have received the much-needed training for the ministry. Elder Coffman's instruction regarding pastoral-evangelistic work has launched many a young person into a program of successful soul winning.

Elder Coffman received his B.A. at Pacific Union College and his M.A. and Master of Divinity degrees from Andrews University. He has written numerous articles for Adventist publications, published three books, and currently is working on three more. He teaches part time in the Department of Religion at Pacific Union College. The Coffmans have two adult daughters.



## Introduction to Revelation 12-22

This quarter we study the second half of "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave . . . by his angel unto his servant John," and which contains many "things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). We begin a new line of prophecy in chapter 12 that continues to the end of the book.

We see in these chapters the church of God continually in conflict with evil during the climactic days of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Our Lord also pictures the thrilling triumph of the church. In symbolic language He describes the return of the King of kings to rescue His people, the millennium, and the re-creation of the earth. He promises to live with His people (Rev. 21:1-3) in an even closer relationship than He enjoyed with earth's first parents in the garden of Eden.

The Lord does not want us to treat these messages lightly. Through Ellen White, He has said: "The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy *the first place* in the minds of God's people. *Nothing else* is to be allowed to engross our attention."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 302. (Italics supplied.) We are instructed: "When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers will have an entirely different religious experience. They will be given such glimpses of the open gates of heaven that heart and mind will be impressed with the character that all must develop in order to realize the blessedness which is to be the reward of the pure in heart."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114.

We surely need the "great revival" that will come when we understand the book of Revelation. (See *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113.) What a challenge to each of us to dig this quarter as never before into chapters 12-22. Truly, the content merits seven study periods each week. If you have lost the daily study habit, what a critical time to renew it. In a very special sense "the time is at hand," for these "things . . . must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:3, 1). The messages of these chapters allow for no lukewarmness—time is too late for that. There are enough signs of Jesus' return exploding around us to emphasize the timeliness of these lessons.

It is helpful to remind ourselves of the sections in the first part of Revelation, the historical section (chapters 1-14), that parallel the sections of the end-time or eschatological part (chapters 15-20). Comparing the emphases of these corresponding sections our understanding of the book is enhanced.

1:1-11	Prologue-Epilogue	22:6-21
1:12—3:22	Church Militant and Triumphant	21:5—22:5
4:1—8:1	Ongoing Activity of God— Judgment Finale	19:1—21:4
8:2—11:18	Trumpet Warnings— Plagues on the Wicked	15:1—16:21
11:19—14:20	Evil Powers Oppose God— Judged by God	7:1—18:24

See Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Naples, Fla.: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1979), p. 52.

# God's Church—Pursued and Protected

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 12:1-16



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2).

**JESUS KNOWS OUR STRUGGLE.** Using the symbol of a pure woman, in contrast with the impure woman of chapter 17, Christ portrays the struggles and stamina of the Christian church, particularly through the centuries since His incarnation. Although the devil opposes us with great wrath, we are to remember that Christ has defeated him. In Revelation 12 we are given the formula for victory over the evil one.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 12:1-16

12:1	12:2, 4, 5, 10, 11	12:3, 4, 6, 7-16
The Woman of Light	The Child of the Woman	The Dragon and the Woman

**CHRIST TRIUMPHS DESPITE SATAN'S EFFORTS.** The history of God's people, from the time when our first parents fell into sin until the end of probationary time, is a scene of continual harassment by Satan and his forces. The dragon, the serpent, the devil, Satan, has aimed at the same goal throughout history: to oppose God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, His church, His leaders, and His faithful people. History records blood spilled, dungeons, prisons, beheadings, the stake, opposition from without and from within. How tragic that the history of the church was not always a fulfillment of Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one" (John 17:21).

**God's power is greater than Satan's opposition.** God's power manifested through His people has moved the world in the past, is moving it in many places today, and will move it mightily in the near future. Such is predicted in the Word. God's Word will never fail!

In this lesson the key point is that God has always triumphed despite Satan's energetic but awful plottings. We will gather much courage from this fact, and a renewed faith that His final triumph is indeed imminent.

**SUN** I. THE WOMAN OF LIGHT (Rev. 12:1).

1. Describe the woman by whom Christ represents His church on this earth? Rev. 12:1, 2.
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Compare the “woman” symbol in Revelation 12:1 with the “woman” symbol in Revelation 17:1-6. They are as opposite as human language can portray them. Then read Jeremiah 6:2 and 2 Corinthians 11:2 and summarize the Old and New Testament descriptions of the type of woman that represents God’s people. (Compare Isa. 54:5, 6; Hosea 2:19, 20.)

**The true church in every age.** “Since she is presented as about to give birth to Christ (see vs. 2, 4, 5) and later as being persecuted, following the ascension of Christ (vs. 5, 13-17), she represents the church of both the OT and the NT.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 807.

Because the prophecy of Revelation 12 was given in the first century of Christian church history, the primary emphasis is on the New Testament period of the church.

2. What is symbolized by the sun that clothes the woman described in Revelation 12:1? Ps. 84:11; Matt. 13:43; John 8:12; Rom. 13:12-14.
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The righteousness of Christ is bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit when we accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. (See Eph. 3:16, 17; John 14:17, 20; Eze. 36:27.)

**Christ’s light is for all.** “God is light; and in the words, ‘I am the light of the world,’ Christ declared His oneness with God, and His relation to the whole human family. It was He who at the beginning had caused ‘the light to shine out of darkness.’ 2 Cor. 4:6.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 464.

- MON**
3. What is represented by the moon upon which the woman of Revelation 12:1 is standing? Compare Eph. 2:19-22.

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Just as the moon reflects the glory of the sun, so the Scriptures, written by “holy men of God . . . as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21), reflect the glory of Christ. (See John 5:39; Luke 24:27, 44.) To say that the church is founded on the Word of God (the Bible) is just another way of saying that it is founded on Jesus Christ. The church stands upon the entire Word of God, both Old and New Testaments. It is not convincing to argue that, because the woman is about to give birth to Christ, the moon represents only the Old Testament. As Revelation 12 indicates, the woman represents the church throughout the Christian era. This church

brings forth Christ to the world as He is presented in the Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments.

4. What is symbolized by the crown of 12 stars worn by the virtuous woman of Revelation 12:1? Rev. 3:11; compare Heb. 11:12; Rev. 21:12, 14.

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The crown represents the spiritual victory and eternal life given to believers in the here and now. (See John 3:36; 5:24; 1 John 5:4, 11-13.) Stars in Scripture quite often symbolize God's faithful people as a whole. (See Dan. 8:10; 12:3.) The number 12 usually has reference to either the 12 tribes of Israel, or the 12 apostles who are representative of the Christian church. However, the number does not have exclusive reference to the 12 patriarchs and 12 apostles. It is often used to include all of God's people who are symbolized by the patriarchs and apostles. (Compare Matt. 19:28 with 1 Cor. 6:2; see also James 1:1.)

The 12 stars of Revelation 12:1 are a symbol of the totality of God's faithful people who are following the divine principles given to Israel and the Christian Church, and who are allowing the light of truth to shine through them. "As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stood as *representatives* of Israel, so the twelve apostles stand as *representatives* of the gospel church."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 19 (emphasis supplied).

5. Why is it important that we walk in the light? 1 John 1:5-7; Matt. 5:14-16.

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**Christ is our light.** "No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ. . . . Humanity has in itself no light. Apart from Christ [born of the woman in Revelation 12:2] we are like an unkindled taper, like the moon when her face is turned away from the sun; we have not a single ray of brightness to shed into the darkness of the world. But when we turn toward the Sun of Righteousness, when we come in touch with Christ, the whole soul is aglow with the brightness of the divine presence."—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 39, 40.

Revelation 12:1 pictures the entire church "aglow" with God's presence. It is that kind of church that will move the world, and stir the devil to wrath.

**The significant issue.** Am I reflecting Christ's righteousness to others? Are my spiritual feet firmly planted on His Word? Am I wearing the crown of spiritual life and victory now?

## **II. THE CHILD OF THE WOMAN (Rev. 12:2, 4, 5, 10, 11).**

The woman's Child (Rev. 12:2) is the source of her light. As will be-



come apparent, Revelation 12 makes a number of very significant points about the Lord of the church.

**6. To what experiences of the virtuous woman does John refer? Rev. 12:2-4; compare John 16:20-22; Matt. 2:16-18.**

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Revelation 12:2 refers to the church travailing to bring forth the gospel message to the world. (See Gal. 4:19.) In every era Christian believers in various places have faced spiritual and political opposition in their efforts to bring forth Christ to those who do not know Him.

**The woman's son was God incarnate.** The Son of God was willing to "empty" Himself (Phil. 2:7), to lay aside for a time the use of His divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and glory. He became a human like us, born of a woman. This is condescension beyond our comprehension.

**7. To what event, or events, does Revelation 12:10 refer? Compare Heb. 2:14; John 12:31-33.**

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Revelation 12:10 does not refer exclusively to the original expulsion of Satan from heaven. The Revelator is enthusiastically extolling the eternal benefits of Calvary. The Lamb has won salvation by His death. (Compare Rev. 5:9, 10.) The victory of the cross has resulted in "the accuser of our brethren" being "cast down." Now eternal life can be bestowed upon all repentant people whether they lived before or after the cross. (See I Cor. 15:17-23; Heb. 9:15). Calvary is not only central to our salvation but also is the guarantee that the universe will be forever cleansed of the results of Satan's rebellion.

**8. To what does the last part of Revelation 12:5 refer?**

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The three reasons for identifying the child as Christ are:

- Christ was the One whom the devil attempted to destroy (Rev. 12:4; Matthew 2; John 18, 19).
- Christ will "rule all nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 19:15; 2:27; Psalms 2:9; 89:23).
- Christ "was caught up unto God, and to his throne" (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50, 51; Acts 1:6-11).

**What does Calvary mean to you?** Christ suffered "the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. He ascended to minister the merits of His grace to all who would accept Him. Have you accepted Him as Lord of your life? Do you know Him as your best Friend?

WED III. THE DRAGON AND THE WOMAN (Rev. 12:3, 4, 6, 7-16).

9. Who is the red dragon of Revelation 12:3?

In a primary sense the dragon is Satan. (Compare verse 9.) In a secondary sense the dragon represents those earthly powers used by Satan to oppose Christ, His truth, and His people. Satan worked through the Roman Empire to murder Christ and to attack the gospel and the early church (verse 4). Satan also used the medieval Papacy to drive the church into the wilderness, where she was pursued for 1260 years (A.D. 538-1798). (See verses 6, 13-16.) As we near the end of time, Satan will use an apostate religious-political union in an effort to destroy the remnant Christian church. (See verse 17; compare chapter 17.) Because the dragon of Revelation 12 has this fourfold application (Satan, the Roman Empire, the Papacy, and antitypical "Babylon"), it parallels the little horn powers mentioned in Daniel chapters 7 and 8.

10. What powers are represented by the 7 heads and 10 horns of the dragon?

"It seems reasonable to conclude that the seven heads of the dragon represent political powers that have championed the cause of the dragon, and through which the dragon has exercised his persecuting power. . . . The beast of ch. 13 and that of ch. 17 also had ten horns each. Some hold the ten horns of the dragon to be identical with those of these two beasts, and the latter to be identical with the ten horns of the fourth beast of Dan. 7."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 808.

The same seven heads and ten horns are mentioned in three chapters of Revelation; chapters 12, 13, and 17. We know that five of the dragon's heads refer to kingdoms or nations that by John's time had fallen. (See Rev. 17:10.) The Old Testament brings to view five powers that before John's day successively attacked and subjugated the chosen people of God and attempted to destroy their religious belief. Some see those five nations as being Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The sixth head is thought to be the dragon, the political power that existed in John's day, the Roman Empire. The seventh head, thus, would be the most significant world power that followed the Roman Empire, the medieval Papacy. As both Daniel and Revelation emphasize, the Roman Empire was divided into numerous political fragments, and the Papacy took its place as the major influence in the West.

Whereas the heads are represented as successive world powers, the horns are spoken of as existing concurrently. (See Rev. 17:12-14; compare Dan. 7:7, 20, 24.) Because of the obvious relationship between Revelation 12, 13, 17 and Daniel 2 and 7 we can conclude that the ten horns represent the parts into which the Roman Empire was finally divided. These parts became sovereign states, which at the end of time play a major role in supporting antitypical Babylon, "until the words of God shall be fulfilled" (Rev. 17:17).

11. What part of the great controversy is dealt with in Revelation 12:7-13? See also Isa. 14:13, 14; Eze. 28:12-19; John 12:31.

**Satan's rebellion unexplained.** Many have tried in vain to explain how a perfect and holy angel, "next to Christ," and "most honored of God" (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 35), could have turned against a perfect, holy, and loving God. Ellen White tells us clearly that "his disaffection was proved to be without cause" (p. 39), which marks it as beyond explanation. We do know that he was jealous of the position of Christ (p. 36), and that he introduced doubts about God's law (p. 37) which was a revelation of the very character of God (*The Great Controversy*, p. 467). He was "cast out" of heaven with all of the angels who agreed with him (2 Peter 2:4).

"At the time of the casting down of vs. 9, 10, 13 'the accuser of our brethren' had already been actively accusing 'them before our God day and night.' Obviously, the fall here referred to came after a period during which Satan had been accusing 'the brethren,' and it would therefore appear that this cannot be the original casting out of Satan prior to the creation of our earth."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 810.

We need to understand clearly the two occasions on which Satan was cast down: (a) before creation of the world; (b) when Christ conquered him at the cross. We live in the day of Satan's "great wrath" (Rev. 12:12), for he knows well his destiny and that he has left but "a short time." But his ultimate destruction is inevitable.

**The cross spelled Satan's doom.** "Christ bowed His head and died, but He held fast His faith and His submission to God. . . . "Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ's brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 761.

12. To what period of Christian church history does Revelation 12:14-16 refer? Compare Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5.

In verse 14, the woman is nourished "for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." In verse 6, she is in the wilderness for 1260 days. This same time period appears in Daniel and Revelation five more times. In Revelation 11:3, it also appears as 1260 days. In Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 it appears as three and one-half times. In Revelation 11:2 and 13:5 it appears as forty-two months. Using the year-day principle in

symbolic Bible prophecy, Adventists date this period as from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. Throughout this period of 1260 years the Papacy was ecclesiastically supreme in some European countries. During the Middle Ages, western Europe gave homage to the Bishop of Rome. Those Christians who chose to follow God's Word were persecuted for their faith. Church and state combined to destroy them. God's hand was over His true church, preserving it from extinction.

"Persecution opened upon the faithful with greater fury than ever before, and the world became a vast battlefield. For hundreds of years the church of Christ found refuge in seclusion and obscurity."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 54, 55.

**WOULD I BE FAITHFUL IF ATTACKED FOR MY FAITH?** List two occasions in your life on which you were attacked for your faith. Write down the Scriptures that were especially helpful in meeting the challenges.

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What can you do now to prepare for present or future challenges to your faith? List two approaches on the lines below.

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Review how Jesus acted when under attack. See 1 Peter 2:20-25; John 19:1-11. Read "Persecution in the First Centuries," in *The Great Controversy*, chapter 2, pp. 39-48.

**SUMMARY:** The devil has continually attacked Christ and His church. As Christ has triumphed in the past, so He will triumph in the future. There will be an army of the faithful ones whom He will take to His heavenly home.

# The Remnant of Her Seed

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 12:17; 19:10.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BELONG TO CHRIST.** God has identified the last-day phase of His true church on earth and has placed great responsibilities on her shoulders. Christ claims as His those who allow His Spirit to direct their lives. These are the ones who have the will, and receive the power, to obey His law, and who joyfully receive the special messages He has given through the prophets.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 12:17; 19:10

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
The final remnant	The remnant commandment keepers	The remnant have the "testimony of Jesus"

**VITAL QUESTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS.** In our first lesson, we identified the "woman" in Revelation 12 as God's true followers, His church throughout history, particularly from the time when Christ lived here with humanity. The first sixteen verses end with the date A.D. 1798, the closing date of the 1260 years that the church spent in the "wilderness." In every era to that point, God had true followers who suffered much for Him. At times it appeared that they would be eliminated from the earth, but the devil was not permitted to stamp them out.

In the last verse of the chapter we are introduced to the "remnant" of the woman's seed, who are bitterly opposed by the evil one. The vital question is, Who are they? What does it mean that they "keep the commandments of God?" Does God expect His people to keep all of His commandments all the time? Or is His standard somewhat less strict than that? What means does God provide to enable His people to reach the standard stipulated in this verse?

**What is the "testimony of Jesus Christ?"** Is it what His people say about Him, or what He says about Himself? There are many people in the world today who claim to be witnesses for Christ. Which of the many Christian groups should we identify as His remnant? If the "testimony of

Jesus" is what He says about Himself, to whom is He saying it, and what is He saying? Can we identify a Christian church that has received and is receiving special messages from Jesus? These are the pressing questions that are addressed in this lesson.

SUN

### I. THE FINAL REMNANT (Rev. 12:17).

Verses 1-16 of Revelation 12 repeatedly emphasize that the devil has angrily attacked Christ and His church throughout history. The context of verse 17 indicates that Satan's anger is displayed against the church after 1798. The church of the "time of the end" (Dan. 12:7, 9) is the special mark of demonic attack.

#### 1. What does Daniel say about last-day attacks by Satan upon God's people? Dan. 11:44; 12:1.

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The little horns of Daniel 7 and 8 and the desolator of Daniel 9:26 and 27, in their end-time applications, are designated the "king of the north" (Daniel 11:40-45). Satan uses this earthly power "to exterminate and utterly destroy many" (Dan. 11:44, RSV) before the end of the pre-Advent judgment. At the close of probation, when the righteous have been legally vindicated (Dan. 7:22), and the little horn power, or "king of the north," has been condemned (Dan. 7:26), Christ arises to execute the decisions of the court. Then Satan's wrath finally boils over, for then "shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time" (Dan. 12:1, RSV). But the dragon's anger, which threatens to exterminate God's people, is circumscribed by divine intervention.

#### 2. How does John reiterate Daniel's wonderful assurance that God's people will be sheltered from the dragon's wrath? Rev. 3:10; compare 7:14, 15.

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#### 3. In past ages who were the "remnant" spoken of by Bible writers? 1 Kings 19:18 (compare Rom. 11:4, 5); Isa. 10:22.

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In the Old Testament a "remnant" is often referred to. Members of Jacob's family who were preserved under Joseph's care in Egypt were called a "posterity," literally a "remnant" (Gen. 45:7). Elijah protested to God, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:14). God reassured him that a faithful remnant still remained (verse 18).

When kings and generals of Assyria and Babylon invaded Palestine they left, or allowed to escape, remnants of Israel and Judah. (See 2 Chron. 30:6; Isa. 10:20-22; 37:31; 2 Kings 19:4, 30, 31; Jer. 23:3; 50:28.)

The New Testament speaks of a “remnant” of Jewish people who, as individuals, had accepted Christ as the Messiah. They were Christian Jews in the first century. The majority of Jews did not accept Christ, but a “remnant” responded to God’s provision of grace.

God always preserves a faithful remnant. In every era of history when the majority have turned away from God, He has had a faithful “remnant.” The remnant may be a minority, but it is not necessarily a small group. Sometimes in history it has been quite a large group. The remnant has consistently been given the special mission of carrying on God’s work in the earth, preserving His truth and handing it on to those around them.



4. What does the term *remnant* mean in Revelation 12:17? Reread verses 14-16 in contemplating the answer to this question.

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At least two points need to be understood here. First, we must explain the term in light of the context. Second, there is no evidence for suggesting that we can expect a number of “remnants” to arise in fulfillment of Revelation 12:17. There have been many “remnants” in history, but here is pictured a final remnant at the close of time. The Greek word translated “remnant” means “remaining ones.” The corresponding verb means “to leave,” “to leave behind.” The “remnant” of Revelation 12:17 refers to those of Christ’s true followers (His church) who would remain after the close of the 1260 years in 1798. According to Daniel 12:7, 9 this date marked the beginning of the “time of the end.”

5. Why do we Seventh-day Adventists believe our church to be the “remnant” church?

“From the very first, Seventh-day Adventists have boldly proclaimed the three messages of ch. 14:6-12 as God’s last appeal to sinners to accept Christ, and have humbly believed their movement to be the one here designated as the ‘remnant.’” No other religious body is proclaiming this composite message, and none other meets the specifications laid down in ch. 12:17. Hence none other has a valid, scriptural basis for claiming to be ‘the remnant’ of v. 17.

“However, Adventists repudiate emphatically and unequivocally any thought that they alone are children of God and have a claim upon heaven. They believe that all who worship God in full sincerity, that is, in terms of all the revealed will of God that they understand, are presently potential members of that final ‘remnant’ company mentioned in ch. 12:17.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 815.

**Do you belong to God’s “remnant?”** The remnant people are survivors. How about you? Do you find it difficult to resist the pull of the world? Check below some of the things that you can do to identify more closely with the survivors (remnant) in these dangerous times:

- \_\_\_ Avoid worldly friends whose spiritual influence is negative.
- \_\_\_ Identify more closely with people who help me spiritually.

- \_\_\_ Help in the outreach activities of my local church.
- \_\_\_ Spend more time alone with God in prayer and Bible study.



## II. THE REMNANT COMMANDMENT KEEPERS (Rev. 12:17).

6. In the book of Revelation, which is called “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1), what first piece of evidence does the Lord give that certain people are His last-day remnant? Rev. 12:17, second part.

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The remnant are here identified as commandment keepers long after the time claimed by so many that the law had been abolished. Many Christians date the doing away with the commandments from the time of Christ’s crucifixion. The New Testament teaches that the Ten Commandments, as exemplified in the life of Christ, are the standard of righteousness for Christians. (See Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; James 2:10-12; 1 John 2:4.)

7. What does Jesus say a person must have in order to keep His commandments? John 14:15; 1 John 4:7, 8.

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8. What is the secret of power to do God’s will? John 15:5, 7; compare 1 John 5:2-5.

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Jesus emphasized, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” To illustrate this mathematically this means that, without His help, we can do “0.00.” We can never add our “1” at the end, to indicate that we can do “something” without Him. Most of us tend to feel that *we* can do a little obeying in our own strength. Quite the contrary, we are *totally* dependent on Him. Only when Christ’s love reigns in our hearts can we keep His commandments.

**Christ is the Source of spiritual life and power.** “You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 69.

**Our wills are involved.** “You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.



9. To what extent does Christ wish His people to keep His law? Rom. 8:3, 4.

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Christ died “in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4, NIV). The word translated “righteousness” in the KJV of this verse means “regulation, requirement, commandment.” Sometimes it means “righteous deed.” The verb “might be fulfilled” (KJV) comes from the Greek word that means “complete, finish, bring to an end.” The same verb in Revelation 3:2 is translated “perfect” (KJV, RSV). The force of Romans 8:4 is that Christ’s sacrifice for us and the work of His Spirit within us make it possible for the righteous requirements of His law to be perfectly fulfilled in our lives.



**In harmony with every precept as Jesus was.** “He tells us to be perfect as he is, in the same manner. We are to be centers of light and blessing to our little circle, even as He is to the universe. We have nothing of ourselves, but the light of His love shines upon us, and we are to reflect its brightness. ‘In His borrowed goodness good,’ we may be perfect in our sphere, even as God is perfect in His.

“Jesus said, Be perfect *as your Father* is perfect. If you are the children of God you are partakers of His nature, and you cannot but be like Him. Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God’s children, begotten by His Spirit, you live by the life of God. In Christ dwells ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Colossians 2:9); and the life of Jesus is made manifest ‘in our mortal flesh’ (2 Corinthians 4:11). That life in you will produce the same character and manifest the same works as it did in Him. Thus you will be in harmony with every precept of His law; for ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul.’ Psalm 19:7, margin. Through love ‘the righteousness of the law’ will be ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:4.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 77, 78.

10. What is the significance of the Sabbath commandment for God’s remnant people? Rev. 14:6, 7, 12; compare Ex. 20:8-11.

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The “remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God” (Rev. 12:17), do not attempt to exclude the Sabbath commandment from the list of Christ’s requirements. The phrase in the first angel’s message, “and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Rev. 14:7), is an allusion to Exodus 20:11, which is part of the fourth commandment. The first angel’s message invites us to worship the Creator by remembering His holy seventh-day Sabbath.

**Holiness includes Sabbathkeeping.** “The Sabbath given to the world as the sign of God as the Creator is also the sign of Him as the Sanctifier. [See Ex. 31:13.] The power that created all things is the power that re-

creates the soul in His own likeness. To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.

**Are you keeping God’s commandments?** Obedience to God’s commandments is never presented in the Bible as a means of salvation. But it is often presented as the result and evidence of God’s saving grace in the heart. Do you enjoy present salvation in Christ? If so, living by His commandments is your joy and privilege.



### III. THE REMNANT HAVE THE “TESTIMONY OF JESUS” (Rev. 12:17).

11. **What other point of identification does God give for His remnant? What do you understand this identifying point to mean?**  
Rev. 12:17; 19:10.

The Greek of the last phrase in Revelation 12:17 translates literally, “having the testimony (or witness) of Jesus.” Note the following possible meanings:

a. **The phrase could mean that the remnant give witness to Jesus.** Some translations reflect this meaning. The New Testament often speaks of Christ’s people witnessing for Him. (See John 1:6-8; Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 2:1.)

b. **The phrase could mean that the remnant have the truth as it is in Jesus.** They retain this witness in their hearts. Other translations reflect this idea, which is also apparent in the New Testament. (See Rom. 2:15; 8:16; 1 John 5:10; 1 Cor. 1:6.)

c. **The prophetic gift.** There is a very real sense in the New Testament in which the testimony of Jesus refers to special divine revelation given by Jesus personally and through the prophets. (See John 3:11, 31, 32; John 15:27; Acts 10:43.) John bore record of the “testimony of Jesus Christ” which was given to him in vision on Patmos (Rev. 1:2, 9, 10).

**The spirit of prophecy.** Revelation 19:10 specifically identifies the “testimony of Jesus” as “the spirit of prophecy.” What is meant by “the spirit of prophecy?” It could refer to an understanding of the prophecies by those who study them. In this verse it has reference to a special gift possessed by the angel, by John, and other prophets. This conclusion is supported by Revelation 22:8, 9, a parallel passage. Just as the angel was given the necessary revelation to pass on Christ’s testimony to the world, so was John.

**Special revelation in the remnant church.** The “testimony of Jesus” in the book of Revelation refers to more than testimony about Christ believed and witnessed to by Christians. The “testimony of Jesus” refers to the work of inspired prophets who, like John, have received visions, dreams, and verbal communications from God to be given to the people of earth. Revelation 12:17 teaches that the prophetic gift is to be manifested in the remnant church.

12. What did other Bible writers indicate regarding the prophetic gift in the last-day church? Joel 2:28-32; Eph. 4:11-14.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes the following in regard to the work of Ellen G. White (1827-1915): "One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White."—"Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook*, 1987, p. 7. The belief is based on the fact that Ellen White's work measures up to the Bible tests of a true prophet. This evidence includes the consistency of her writings with Scripture, the fruitage of her work, her successful predictions, her exaltation of Christ, as well as the timeliness, practical nature, and certainty of her messages. Her physical state while in vision is also supporting evidence. (See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols., Review and Herald, 1981-1986.)

**WHERE DO I STAND? Agree/Disagree Exercise:**

- God's remnant people should be a saving community.  
Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_
- I should pray for more compassion for those outside the remnant fold.  
Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_
- By no means is it possible to obey the law of God.  
Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_
- The majority of God's faithful ones are in other churches.  
Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_
- The "testimony of Jesus" is the prophetic gift.  
Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_

**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** What tests of a true prophet are given in these passages: Isa. 8:20; Rev. 22:18, 19; Matt. 7:15-20; Deut. 18:21, 22; Jer. 28:9; 1 John 4:1-3. Read the portion of the chapter entitled "It Is Finished," *The Desire of Ages*, pages 758-764. Also read "The Test of Discipleship," *Steps to Christ*, pp. 57-65.

**SUMMARY:** In light of the truths taught in Revelation 12:17, God has a last-day remnant church. The members of this church keep God's commandments by faith in Jesus, and accept the voice of the Holy Spirit in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy.

# Escape From Religious Tyranny

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 13:1-10.



**MEMORY VERSE:** "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:11, 12).

**CHRIST IS YOUR PROTECTOR.** Revelation 13 depicts Satanic forces that are pressing for allegiance from every living being. Each person's decision will determine his or her eternal destiny. Christ assures His people of divine watchcare and approval. The faithfulness of Christ's followers in resisting Satan's tyranny will be acknowledged and rewarded by Heaven.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 13:1-10

13:1-3	13:4-7	13:8-10
A new beast described	The beast's appeal for the world's worship	Not all yield to the beast's demands

**WHO WILL HAVE OUR ALLEGIANCE?** Revelation 13 and 14 confront two great issues: (1) Chapter 13 depicts the devil working through earthly powers to demand our "worship." Chapter 14 presents God's invitation for us to "worship" Him alone. (2) The related issue in both chapters 13 and 14 is to whom will mankind pledge total loyalty, even in the face of death? Humanity will finally be divided over this simple question.

**The heart of Revelation.** Chapters 13 and 14 are the very heart of the book of Revelation. As we devote seven lessons to the study of these two great chapters, keep in mind the two major issues: Whom will we worship, and to whom will we pledge our total loyalty?

**A warning for all.** Our lesson this week unmasks the error and blasphemy that have been thrust upon humanity for most of the Christian centuries. The purpose of our study is not to condemn or defame any person or any religious organization. The aim is to warn all of the importance of discovering truth and yielding to the Lord. We must be assured that our names are in His "book of life." Our faith must become strong so that we can escape blasphemy against God and the rule of tyranny that will soon fill the earth.

**SUN** I. A NEW BEAST DESCRIBED (Rev. 13:1-3).

Chapter 13 begins with the words, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw . . ." This would mean that John was the one standing and looking. The Greek text favors the reading, "And he stood . . ." The suggestion is that the dragon who had just been pictured warring against the remnant, stood on the seashore, awaiting the rise of this new wild beast, which he would invest with his own power and authority (verse 2).

1. What is represented by the sea out of which this new beast arises? Compare Rev. 17:15; Isa. 17:12, 13.

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The beast of verse 1 arises where there are multitudes of peoples. The lamblike beast, which we will consider next week, arises where population is more sparse.

2. List seven additional symbols in John's description of this beast. Rev. 13:1, 2.

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**Parallels in Revelation.** Compare the description of other wild beasts brought to view in symbolic Bible prophecy. (See Rev. 12:3; 17:3; Dan. 7:4-7.) Heads, horns, and crowns are familiar in these passages.

**The seven heads.** We discovered in our study of chapter 12 that the dragon represents primarily Satan, and secondarily the Roman Empire, which was used by Satan to persecute Christ. (See Rev. 12:4, 9.) Some interpreters regard the seven heads as seven major powers that have opposed God's truth and people: Egypt (Ex. 5-14), Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-8), Babylon (Dan. 7:4), Medo-Persia (Dan. 7:5), Greece (Dan. 7:6), pagan Rome (Dan. 7:7), and papal Rome (Dan. 7:8, 21, 24, 25). These seven powers are thought to be symbolized by the seven heads of the beasts John describes. The suggestion is that the seven heads of the dragon (chapter 12) are the same seven heads of the leopardlike beast (chapter 13) and the scarlet beast of chapter 17.

Because this leopardlike beast has characteristics similar to the first three beasts of Daniel 7 (the lion, the bear, and the leopard), the power represented would possess characteristics "prominent in the kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, and Greece."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 817.

**The ten horns.** The Roman Empire of John's day was later divided. A comparison with Daniel 7:7, 8, 24 suggests that the 10 horns of the three

beasts of Revelation (12, 13, 17) represent the national divisions into which the Roman Empire was divided.



**3. In the light of Daniel 7:24, 25 and Revelation 12 what conclusions are possible in identifying the leopardlike beast of chapter 13?**

**The successor to the Roman Empire.** "In chapter 13 . . . is described another beast, 'like unto a leopard,' to which the dragon gave 'his power, and his seat, and great authority.' This symbol, as most Protestants have believed, represents the papacy, which succeeded to the power and seat and authority once held by the ancient Roman empire. . . . [Rev. 13:5-7 quoted] This prophecy, which is nearly identical with the description of the little horn of Daniel 7, unquestionably points to the papacy."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 439.

"In the sixth century the papacy had become firmly established. Its seat of power was fixed in the imperial city, and the bishop of Rome was declared to be the head over the entire church. Paganism had given place to the papacy. The dragon had given to the beast 'his power, and his seat, and great authority.' "—*The Great Controversy*, p. 54.

**4. What is meant by the statement that this new beast has "upon his heads the name of blasphemy"? What is blasphemy? Rev. 13:1; John 10:33; Luke 5:21.**

John predicted that it would be the nature of this power to blaspheme holy things; God, His name, His tabernacle, and beings in heaven (Rev. 13:5, 6). The Greek word *blasphemia* means "slander, defamation, abusive speech." Jesus' opponents accused Him of blasphemy because He claimed to be God (John 10:33). Because He was God, Jesus was not blaspheming. (See John 10:30; 5:18; 8:58; Col. 2:9.) Anyone else claiming divine powers and prerogatives would be blaspheming. The Pharisees also accused Jesus of blasphemy because He forgave sins (Luke 5:21). Again they were wrong. As God, Jesus could forgive sins. However, the Pharisees defined blasphemy correctly. Any individual, apart from God, who claims the power and the right to forgive sins is a blasphemer.

**Papal claims.** The historical claims of the popes and Roman Catholic councils are still regarded as official. Pope Leo XIII wrote on June 20, 1894: "We [the pope] hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."—"The Reunion of Christendom," trans. in *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York: Benziger, 1903), p. 304; quoted in *SDA Bible Students' Source Book*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 9, p. 684.

The Vatican Council (1869-1870) decreed the following: "If anyone thus speaks, that the Roman Pontiff has only the office of inspection or direction, but not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church

spread over the whole world; or, that he possesses only the more important parts, but not the whole plenitude of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate, or over the churches altogether and individually, and over the pastors and the faithful altogether and individually; let him be anathema [cursed].”—Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari from the thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (St. Louis: Herder, 1957), p. 455, sec. 1831.

The same Vatican Council decreed: “And so We . . . teach and explain that the dogma has been divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff from himself, but not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable.”—Denzinger, p. 457, sec. 1839.

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) decreed: “Our Lord Jesus Christ, when about to ascend from earth to heaven, left behind Him priests as His own vicars . . . as rulers and judges, to whom all the mortal sins into which the faithful of Christ may have fallen should be brought, so that they in virtue of the power of the keys may pronounce the sentence of remission or retention of sins. . . . It also teaches that even priests who are bound by mortal sin exercise as ministers of Christ the office of forgiving sins by virtue of the Holy Spirit conferred in ordination, and that they are of erroneous opinion who contend that this power does not exist in bad priests.”—Denzinger, pp. 275, 277, secs. 899, 902.

- TUE** 5. What is the meaning of the wounding of one of the beast's heads? At the conclusion of what period was the beast to receive the deadly wound? Rev. 13:3, 5.

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The word *wounded* comes from a New Testament Greek word meaning “to slay,” or “to slaughter.” We might thus say that the head was “smitten unto death.”

**The rise and decline of the papacy.** The 42 months of Revelation 13:5 is the same period as the “time, two times, and half a time” of Daniel 7:25 (RSV). Revelation 13:2, 3, 5 identify the 42 months with 1260 days (or years). Revelation 12:6 and 14 identify the 1260 days with a “time, and times, and half a time.” Therefore 42 months are equal to the 3 1/2 times. This is the period of 1260 years of papal supremacy (A.D. 538-1798).

In connection with this period some believe that in A.D. 538 the papacy suddenly rose to power, and in 1798, it took a sudden fall. It is more historically correct to see the papacy as achieving a dominant position by 538. By that date it had uprooted the barbarian nations known as the Heruli, Vandals, and Ostrogoths. “Not until the rule of the Goths was broken could the papacy be free to develop fully its power. In 538, for the first

time since the end of the Western imperial line, the city of Rome was freed from the domination of an Arian kingdom. In that year the Ostrogothic kingdom received its deathblow (although the Ostrogoths survived some years longer as a people).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 827. After 538, the papacy continued to gain power and popularity for centuries.

With the coming of the sixteenth-century Reformation the power of the papacy was weakened greatly in many European countries. Some countries rejected the Reformation, retaining papal ecclesiastical dominance and political influence into the eighteenth century. France was one of those countries. One of the causes of the French Revolution (1789) was the mounting opposition to the power of the papal church. In 1798, Berthier dealt it a deadly blow by taking the Pope prisoner. The papacy continued after 1798, but with diminished power. In 1870, the Papal States were absorbed into the united kingdom of Italy. The temporal power of the papacy came to an end.

6. The last part of Revelation 13:3 predicted the healing of the deadly wound. How has this taken place since 1870?

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**The complete healing of the deadly wound is still future.** “There was a gradual revival in papal life in the years following the revolution in France. The papacy suffered a new setback when in 1870 the Papal States were taken from it. A significant event occurred in 1929 when the Lateran Treaty restored temporal power to the pope, who was given the rule of Vatican City, a section of the city of Rome about 108.7 acres in extent. However, the prophet envisioned a much greater restoration. He saw the wound completely healed, as the Greek implies. Following the healing he saw ‘all that dwell upon the earth,’ except a faithful few, worshiping the beast (v. 8; cf. *The Great Controversy*, p. 579). This is still future. Though the papacy receives homage from certain groups, vast populations show it no deference. But that is to change.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 817, 818.

The change is becoming increasingly apparent. The United States has established diplomatic relations with the Vatican. With the present pope’s policies, the modern papacy has become the most popular moral voice in the world. Non-Christians, as well as Protestants, admire and give credence to the pope’s declarations.

**WEB** II. THE BEAST APPEALS FOR THE WORLD’S WORSHIP (Rev. 13:4-7).

7. After the initial picture of the greatness of the leopardlike beast in verses 1-3, what twofold response does the amazed world make? Rev. 13:4.

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How the beast can be overcome. Here is predicted a world-wide reverence for, and worship of, both the beast and the power behind it. Christ’s



followers who refuse this false worship will be under attack. Jesus' words are very comforting. (See John 16:33.) The secret of victory over the beast power is given in Revelation 12:11: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

8. Who and what in particular are blasphemed by this leopardlike beast power? What effect on worship does this blasphemy have? Rev. 13:5, 6; compare Dan. 7:25; 2 Thess. 2:4.

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Although verses 5 and 6 indicate that the blasphemous work of the beast will continue for 42 months (or 1260 years), verses 3 and 4 establish that, after the healing of the deadly wound, the blaspheming will be revived.


#### The objects of Satan's attack.

● **God's name.** The leopardlike beast power has itself assumed divine titles. (Compare 2 Thess. 2:4.) Historically it was responsible for rejection of the seventh-day Sabbath, which especially draws attention to God's name and authority. (Compare Dan. 7:25.) From the second century Rome has been the center of Sunday worship. As Creator, supreme Ruler, and Sanctifier, God has the right to our worship as we honor His sacred day.

● **God's heavenly tabernacle.** Since Christ's ascension, great attention has been given to the ministry that God and Christ perform in the heavenly sanctuary. (See Hebrews 7-10.) Critically important is the "priesthood of all believers." (See Rev. 1:6.) It is the privilege of every human being to go directly to God and, by faith in Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice, to receive forgiveness and full acceptance into the family of God.

The leopardlike beast power of Revelation 13 has set up his own "temple" on this earth, and through its services has attempted to draw the attention of people away from the most vital things that God is doing in heaven. "The heavenly ministry of the sacrifice of Christ is discounted, and the sacrifice of the mass on earth is substituted."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 818.

● **God's heavenly inhabitants.** This doubtless refers to blasphemy against members of the Trinity or the angels who minister to human beings. In a sense it is blasphemy to say that certain beings are in heaven who are *not* there. Saint worship is blasphemy because only God is to be worshiped. (See Rev. 19:10.)

-  9. Will this Roman power always be successful in warring against God's saints? What events are said to put an end to it? Rev. 13:7, 10; Dan. 7:21, 22, 25, 26; 2 Thess. 2:8.

### III. NOT ALL YIELD TO THE BEAST'S DEMANDS (Rev. 13:8-10).

10. Who will be deceived, and who will not? Who will refuse to worship, at any cost, this apostate power? Rev. 13:8; compare 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

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11. What are the conditions under which a person's name is placed in the heavenly book of life? Under what conditions is it kept there? Heb. 12:23; Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5.

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**Our relationship with Christ determines the issue.** "The names of all those who have once given themselves to God are written in the book of life, and their characters are now passing in review before Him. Angels of God are weighing moral worth. They are watching the development of character in those now living, to see if their names can be retained in the book of life. A probation is granted us in which to wash our robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Who is doing this work? Who is separating from himself sin and selfishness?"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 960.

#### WHO WILL HAVE MY ALLEGIANCE?

- In what ways am I seeking to avoid the satanic deceptions that we have been warned about?
- What assurance do I have that the Lord is able to keep me close to Him, so that my name can be retained in the book of life? (See Phil. 1:6.)

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** As a review, compare Revelation 13:1-10 with Daniel 7, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4-9. Read the chapter, "God's Law Immutable," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 433-450.

**SUMMARY:** The power represented by the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13 will be the great enemy of God's people until Jesus comes. But those whose names are retained in the book of life will experience final victory and witness Christ's long-promised return to gather them "home."

# A Lamb's Appearance, a Dragon's Voice

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 13:11-18



**MEMORY TEXT:** "He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure" (Isaiah 33:16).

**THE FINAL TEST.** The second half of Revelation 13 predicts the deception and persecution that will confront God's last-day people. For such to be the work of a leopardlike beast would be expected. Wild animals attack. But for a lamblike beast to do the same is unexpected and surprising. Those who place their trust fully in Christ will be preserved from deception and enabled to endure the attack.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 13:11-18

13:11, 12	13:13, 14	13:14-18
A beast with two lamblike horns	Miracle-worker and deceiver	Great accomplishments for the leopardlike beast

**OUR SINISTER FOE REBUKED.** The devil is assured of final destruction by virtue of Christ's successful sacrifice at Calvary. Revelation 12 reveals that, since the cross, the evil one has been operating with "great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Rev. 12:12). We know today that his time has almost run out. It is not strange that he would operate in these last days through people, through political and religious organizations, through any available means, to deceive and destroy God's people. Satan hates Christ and all who have accepted His sacrifice for their sins. They have been "plucked out of the fire" and Satan's temptations and accusations are rebuked (Zech. 3:2).

**Satan's crowning work of deception** is portrayed in the passage we are studying this week. These verses reveal a sinister foe working much more openly than ever before. His work through the kings of Babylon (Isa. 14:12-14) and Tyre (Eze. 28:11-17) seems mild compared to the worldwide work of spiritual ruin that he accomplishes through the lamblike beast.

As we study this revelation, we are wise to claim the promise of John 16:13, that the Holy Spirit will guide us "into all truth," and show us "things to come." The Lord's wonderful promise is yours for the asking.

SUN

## I. A BEAST WITH TWO LAMBLIKE HORNS (Rev. 13:11, 12).

1. Where does John say that this new beast comes from? What does this mean to you? Rev. 13:11.

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This second beast of Revelation 13 “rose out of the earth” (RSV). The four beasts of Daniel 7 and the first beast of Revelation 13 rose “out of the sea” (verse 1). In symbolic Bible prophecy the “sea” stands for a populous region. (See Rev. 17:15.) Since the sea represents the peoples and nations of the world, the earth must symbolize a region relatively free from human population.

2. How is this second beast further described in verse 11?

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What conclusions can we draw from this description? Our conclusions must include recognition of a few major points:

- **The place and time in which the beast rises.** “But the beast with lamblike horns was seen ‘coming up out of the earth.’ Instead of overthrowing other powers to establish itself, the nation thus represented must arise in territory previously unoccupied, and grow up gradually and peacefully. It could not, then, arise among the crowded and struggling nationalities of the Old World—that turbulent sea of ‘peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.’ It must be sought in the Western Continent.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 440.

Revelation 13:12 establishes that this second beast functioned after 1798, when the first beast received its deadly wound. What great nation began its national existence in the late eighteenth century as a defender of religious and political liberty? Because the healing of the deadly wound occurs when papal religion is restored and the church-state union is established again (verse 12), we can assume that this second beast will perform its major prophetic role then.

- **The two lamblike horns.** Often in Scripture horns are a symbol of strength. (See Deut. 33:17; 1 Sam. 2:1.) In Daniel and Revelation horns sometimes refer to nations that emerged from other nations. (See Daniel 7; 8; Rev. 12:3; 17:3.) In Revelation 13:11 they are evidently intended to depict the two means through which the strength of the lamblike beast is manifested. (Compare the horns of the Lamb in Revelation 5:6.) We conclude that these two horns are not separate nations that grew out of the beast, but prominent characteristics of the beast itself that render it a distinctive kind of nation. Because the horns are lamblike, we can assume that they represent the strength that comes from religious and civil liberty. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 441.)

- **The voice of a dragon.** What a strange contrast between how it looks and how it speaks! “In appearance it is gentle and apparently harmless, but

in action it is persecuting and cruel, as vs. 12-18 reveal.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 820. It speaks like the dragon that Revelation 12:9 identifies as Satan.

● **The United States of America.** “What nation of the New World was rising into power in 1798, giving promise of strength and greatness, and attracting the attention of the world? The application of the symbol admits of no question. One nation, and only one, meets the specifications of this prophecy; it points unmistakably to the United States of America.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 440.



**3. What kind of power and pressure will this lamblike beast exert? From whom does it get its power? Who is its victim? Rev. 13:12.**

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“It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence . . .” (Rev. 13:12, RSV). The last four words of the verse establish the identity of the “first beast.” It is the one whose deadly wound was healed. The lamblike beast power pressures people all over the earth to worship that beast (Rev. 13:1-10) whose power has now been restored. Because the leopardlike beast represents papal Rome, the lamblike beast must become deeply involved in religious activities. It enforces supreme respect for papal Rome and demands that all earth’s inhabitants worship according to papal dictates.

“Prophecy here points to the enactment of some religious measure the observance of which would be regarded as an act of worship, in that the worshiper, by observing it, acknowledges the authority of the first beast in matters of religion.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 821.

**4. How could the United States, whose Constitution guarantees religious liberty to all of its inhabitants, ever do the work of the second beast of Revelation 13?**

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Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 13:1-10 refer to the Papacy. The prophecy states that the papal power would “think to change the times and the law” (Dan. 7:25, RSV).

The lamblike beast (Rev. 13:11-17) enforces the observance of these changed laws. God’s law will be set aside, and a civil decree by the lamblike beast power will enforce religious practices that are man-made. The Ten Commandments will no longer be honored, for the lamblike beast power will decree that the world should accept the substitute religion of Rome. (Compare 2 Thess. 2:3-12.)

**Legally enforced intolerance.** “The ‘speaking’ of the nation is the action of its legislative and judicial authorities. By such action it will give the lie to those liberal and peaceful principles which it has put forth as the foundation of its policy. The prediction that it will speak ‘as a dragon’ and exercise ‘all the power of the first beast’ plainly foretells a development of

the spirit of intolerance and persecution that was manifested by the nations represented by the dragon and the leopardlike beast.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 442.

The devil pressures for *total* worship, *total* homage, *total* loyalty. A loving, offended God, in Revelation 14:7, calls loudly for an untainted, genuine, total worship of Himself.

**Will you follow the lamblike beast, or the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)?**



## II. MIRACLE-WORKER AND DECEIVER (Rev. 13:13, 14).

**5. What specific deceptions does Satan use in the last days to enhance his chances of success in leading, if possible, the entire world into his camp? Rev. 13:13, 14 (first part).**

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We must remember first, that these attempted forms of deception are tied to John’s discussion of the formation of an “image” to the beast (verse 14, last part). The second beast does not enforce papal-type worship until the “mortal” or “deadly” wound is healed (verse 12). The healing of the wound will result in the restoration of that church-state union that was the source of papal influence in the period 538-1798. We cannot expect the signs or miracles spoken of here to occur until the church-state power has been thus restored.

Nevertheless, we are seeing events currently that are leading to that point. The New Age Movement, Eastern mysticism, and spiritualism are contributing to the preparation of the world for deceptions of which Revelation 13 is speaking.

**6. Who will and who will not be deceived by Satan’s last, and masterful, deceptions? 2 Thess. 2:9, 10.**

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**Miracles are not proof of Christian genuineness.** “No mere impostures are here brought to view. Men are deceived by the miracles which Satan’s agents have power to do, not which they pretend to do.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 395.

“Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan *also* works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612 (italics supplied).

**7. How would you differentiate between knowing the truth, and loving the truth? Matt. 25:1-10.**

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**Total commitment to God's will.** A simple knowledge of the truth does not necessarily protect mankind from deception. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10, the protected ones "love" the truth.

"The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart. One may be familiar with the commands and promises of the Bible; but unless the Spirit of God sets the truth home, the character will not be transformed. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, men will not be able to distinguish truth from error, and they will fall under the masterful deceptions of Satan."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 408, 411 (emphasis supplied).

**Do you love the truth?** What a challenge Revelation 13 gives us to come nearer to Christ and allow Him to impart to us a deep abiding love for Him and His truth.



### III. GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR THE LEOPARDLIKE BEAST (Rev. 13:14-18).

#### 8. What appeal does the lamblike beast make to all who dwell on the earth? Rev. 13:14 (last half).

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**What is the image to the beast?** "An image to the first beast would be an organization functioning on much the same principles as that beast's organization. Among the principles by which the first beast operated was the use of the secular arm to support religious institutions. In imitation the second beast will repudiate its principles of freedom. The church will prevail upon the state to enforce its dogmas. State and church will unite, and the result will be the loss of religious liberty and the persecution of dissenting minorities."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 821, 822.

#### 9. Apart from the "beast," what other religious bodies are involved in setting up the "image?" Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.

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The book of Revelation consistently distinguishes between the worship of the beast and the worship of the *image* of the beast. (See Rev. 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.) The implication is that not only the papacy will be involved in establishing the "image" but also other professedly Christian bodies that, like the papacy, are in league with the government. Revelation 19:20 refers to the lamblike beast of chapter 13 as the "false prophet." A false prophet is one who professes to speak for God but who has accepted the direction of an alien power. The "false prophet" is the religious power in the "image" that is allied with the political power. Because this "false prophet" is distinguished in Revelation from the first beast of chapter 13 (the papacy), and because it is a false Christian system, we can conclude that it represents apostate Protestantism.

**United churches will influence the state.** “The enforcement of Sundaykeeping on the part of Protestant churches is an enforcement of the worship of the papacy—of the beast. . . . But in the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast; hence the enforcement of Sundaykeeping in the United States would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 448, 449.

“When the churches of our land, uniting upon such points of faith as are held by them in common, shall influence the State to enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions, then will Protestant America have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy. Then the true church will be assailed by persecution, as were God’s ancient people.”—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p. 278.

10. What will finally result when the image of the beast is formed? Rev. 13:15?

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It would be helpful to mark these promises in your Bible and memorize them: Ps. 46:1; 91:1-7; Dan. 3:16-18.



11. What does the lamblike beast power cause all to receive? Rev. 13:16.

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12. What restriction of freedom is then imposed upon those who refuse the “mark?” Rev. 13:17.

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These verses will be studied very carefully in lesson 8 where the third angel’s message of Revelation 14:9-11 will be discussed.

13. What is the meaning of the beast’s number? Rev. 13:18.

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Since the early seventeenth century the usual interpretation has been that 666 stands for the numerical value of the letters in one of the pope’s titles: *Vicarius Filii Dei*.

V.....	5	F.....	0	D.....	500
I.....	1	I.....	1	E.....	0
C.....	100	L.....	50	I.....	1
A.....	0	L.....	1		
R.....	0	L.....	1	Total =	666
I.....	1				
U.....	5				
S.....	0				



“Latin is the official language of the Catholic Church. The pope, in Catholic theology, stands for the whole church. One of the pope’s titles is said to be *Vicarius Filii Dei*, ‘Vicar of the Son of God.’ In response to a reader’s question, the Catholic journal *Our Sunday Visitor* for April 18, 1915, replied, ‘The letters inscribed in the Pope’s mitre [his priestly crown] are these, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, which is the Latin for Vicar of the Son of God. Catholics hold that the Church, which is a visible society, must have a visible head.’”—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 413, 414.

Because the beast is the medieval papacy, revived in the last days, it is not unreasonable to assume that the number would be deduced from one of the titles given to the pope in the Middle Ages. One of these titles was, indeed, *Vicarius Filii Dei*, and the forged *Donation of Constantine* was one medieval document that used it. (See Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* [London: Oxford University Press, 1943, 1963], p. 138.)

“The number 666 is a ‘human’ number (RSV). The underlying Greek can be translated fairly as ‘the number of a man’ or as ‘the number of *man* [mankind].’ . . . Does 666 then, with its triple sixes, point to man focused inward on himself, on his own ways of doing things . . . ?

“In contrast, the crowning day of Creation is the seventh day, when God delights in His work (Exodus 31:17) and invites man to enter into His joy (Isaiah 58:13, 14)—when God rests (Genesis 2:2) and man enters into His rest (Hebrews 4:10).”—Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, p. 415.

**HAVE YOU ENTERED INTO GOD’S SPIRITUAL REST? Can you answer “Yes” to each of these questions?**

- Do I love God’s truth sufficiently to be loyal to it when the majority are forsaking it?
- Am I living for God totally, with no known reservations?
- Am I aware of what is coming on the earth?

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Jesus’ predictions and counsel in Matthew 10:16-42. Read “Aims of the Papacy,” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 563-581. Also read, “The Impending Conflict,” *The Great Controversy*, pp. 582-592.

**SUMMARY:** Revelation chapter 13 provides a serious warning against deception and heresy in the last days. It clearly tells us what will come to pass, so that when it does, our faith will be stronger, and we will be able to endure faithfully.

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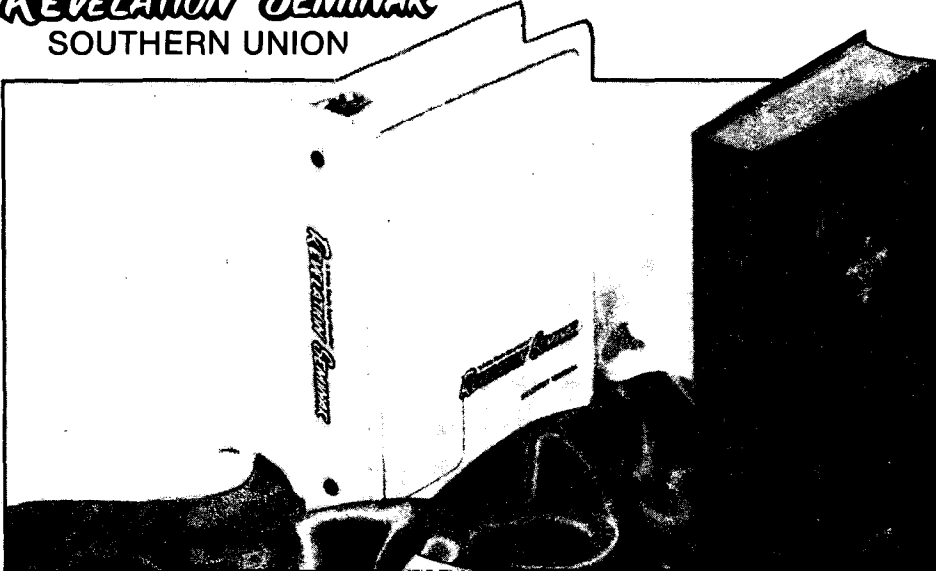
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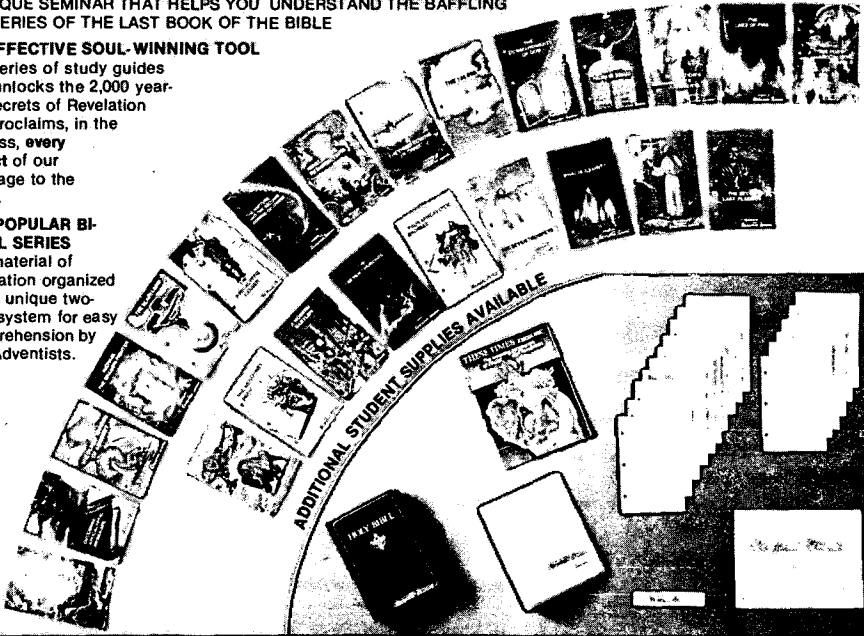
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# Without Fault Before the Throne

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 14:1-5.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

**OUR SPIRITUAL GOAL.** The focus of Revelation 14:1-5 is on victors, not victims. After their earthly conflict the 144,000 stand before God free from persecution, temptation, and sin. Their purity of character has resulted from their wholehearted response to the three angel's messages.

OVERVIEW: Revelation 14:1-5	
14:1-3	14:4, 5
The 144,000 identified as victorious	The 144,000—their purity and Godlikeness

**INCOMPARABLE JOY AWAITS THE FAITHFUL.** In this present life there is no delight comparable to that of loving the Lord Jesus Christ and trusting Him fully. Speaking of Jesus, Peter said, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8).

Yet the Scriptures present the future joys awaiting the faithful Christian as beyond reasonable comparison with any known before Jesus comes. The passage of Scripture we are studying this week pictures as closely as possible in human language just what lies beyond.

**Fellowship that produces character.** T. H. Jemison once wrote, "If love and trust in the Saviour and anticipation of the kingdom to come produce joy unspeakable—inexpressible, indescribable—the realization of being one of that incomparably favored host who shall sing a song no others can sing and who will 'follow the Lamb,' will occasion such rejoicing that even immortal lips will be incapable of framing words adequate to depict it. . . ."

"The members of the group standing on Mount Sion have reached the climax of a fellowship with the Saviour that was begun during the days of their earthly life. It is that fellowship which today leads to joy

unspeakable and which tomorrow permits us to sing the song of praise which no others can know that is of particular interest to us now. What kind of persons will this fellowship make of human beings 'conceived in sin and born in iniquity'? Through what type of experience will they pass? Why is special honor granted them in the kingdom of glory?"—T. H. Jemison, "The Companions of the Lamb," *Our Firm Foundation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 405, 406.

SUN

## I. THE 144,000 IDENTIFIED AS VICTORIOUS (Rev. 14:1-3).

1. What is the first thing that John sees in vision after the scene of apostasy described in Revelation 13? Rev. 14:1.

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Mount Sion is heaven. "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). With the saved of all ages, the 144,000 will be in heaven, "before the throne of God . . . in his temple" (Rev. 7:15), immediately after the second coming of Jesus. In the book of Revelation the temple is always in heaven. (See Rev. 11:19; 15:5.)

2. Whom does John see with the Lamb on Mount Sion? Rev. 14:1; compare 15:2.

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**Trial and victory.** Compare the description of the 144,000 here with that in Revelation 6:14—7:4. The text there pictures a terrible period just before and during the time of their deliverance. (See Rev. 6:14-17.) John is permitted to see "who shall be able to stand" (Rev. 6:17). Revelation 7:1-8 reveals that, of those living when Jesus comes, the ones who will be able to stand will be the 144,000. This number is symbolic because it is contained in a prophecy that is distinctively symbolic. The "four angels," "four winds," "the east," and "the seal" are prophetic symbols (Rev. 7:1-3). The twelve tribes represent the last generation of faithful believers, who have entered spiritually into the experience of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. (Compare Gal. 3:27-29.) The literal tribes no longer exist, and it is inconceivable that only 144,000 Jews will be "able to stand" (Rev. 6:17) at the second coming of Jesus.

Chapters 14 and 15 picture the throng represented by the 144,000 enjoying final triumph in heaven after their end-time conflict with the beast and his image.

The real issue is the kind of people they are. "It is not His [God's] will that they [the church] shall get into controversy over questions which will not help them spiritually, such as, Who is to compose the hundred and forty-four thousand. This those who are the elect of God will in a short time know without question."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 978.



3. What clue do we find in Revelation 14:1 as to what kind of people the 144,000 are, what character God expects them to possess, and which they must possess if they are to stand on Mount Zion? Compare Rev. 2:17; 3:12; 22:4; Isa. 62:2.

**Meaning of a name.** “The Hebrews, like other ancient Near Eastern peoples, attached great significance to personal names. Their names had a literal meaning sometimes symbolic of the character and personality of the one it designated.”—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 752.

**God’s name symbolizes His character.** “ ‘The name of the Lord’ is ‘merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, . . . forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ Exodus 34:5-7. Of the church of Christ it is written, ‘This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.’ Jeremiah 33:16. This name is put upon every follower of Christ. It is the heritage of the child of God. The family are called after the Father. . . . You cannot hallow His name, you cannot represent Him to the world, unless in life and character you represent the very life and character of God. This you can do only through the acceptance of the grace and righteousness of Christ.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 106, 107.

Comparing the description in Revelation 14:1 (“having his Father’s name written in their foreheads”) with the words in Revelation 7:3 (“sealed . . . in their foreheads”), we reach the conclusion that the 144,000 have permitted God to work out in their lives His lovely character. “His followers are to bear, as their credentials to the world, the ineffaceable characteristics of His immortal principles.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 37.

**The Name of the Father and the Mind of Christ.** “The family is named after the Father. Those who enter the heavenly mansions will have the name of the Father and the name of the city of God written in their foreheads. They will bear the divine superscription, and be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruptions that are in the world through lust.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 19, 1892.

“The sinner unites his weakness to Christ’s strength, his emptiness to Christ’s fullness, his frailty to Christ’s enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

4. In your own words describe the music John heard in heaven. Rev. 14:2.

One version reads, “And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like

that of harpists playing their harps" (NIV). John hears heavenly music when the redeemed and the angels meet to begin eternity together.

**5. What kind of song do the 144,000 sing, and to whom? Why could not some others in heaven learn it? Rev. 14:3.**

**The Song of Experience.** The 144,000 sing out of their experience, which others have not had. "It is the song of their experience—an experience such as no other company have ever had."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 649. They rejoiced at the deliverance when they saw the cloud in the east. Their last hours of horrible persecution, when death confronted them and the world was ranged against them have given place to indescribable exultation.

**Suffering for Christ.** Jesus sets the 144,000 apart from all others of the redeemed host. They have received the seal of God, after their characters have been perfected under the most difficult circumstances. Satan was employing his demonic arts to deceive every living human being. Interesting parallels between their lives and the life of Jesus when He was here on earth have been pointed out by T. H. Jemison, in *Our Firm Foundation* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953), vol. 2, pp. 412-416.

**a. He had no intercessor.** Of Christ in Gethsemane, Ellen White says: "Now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.

Of the 144,000 after the close of probation she says: "In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614. While there is a time coming when the righteous must live without an intercessor in the heavenly sanctuary, how thankful we can be that there will never come a time when the righteous must live without Christ dwelling within!

**b. He was without sin.** Of Christ, it is said: "One stain upon His human life, one failure of His humanity to endure the terrible test, and the Lamb of God would have been an imperfect offering, and the redemption of man a failure."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 734. The same is true of those who would enter heaven: "One defect, cultivated instead of being overcome, makes the man imperfect, and closes against him the gate of the Holy City."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 144.

**c. Satan fiercely opposed Christ.** "Satan saw that he must either conquer or be conquered. . . . All the energies of apostasy were rallied against the Son of God. Christ was made the mark of every weapon of hell."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 116. So will it be with God's final remnant. "Satan summoned all his forces, and at every step contested the work of Christ.

"So it will be in the great final conflict of the controversy between righteousness and sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 257.

**d. At the cross, people maligned Jesus.** "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him" (Matt. 27:43). In the last days of the agony of God's faithful: "The wicked exult, and the jeering cry is heard, 'Where now is your faith? Why does not God deliver you out of our hands if you are indeed His people?'"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 630.

e. **Testing brought forth pure character.** “All the efforts of Satan to oppress and overcome Him only brought out in a purer light His spotless character.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 759. Satan’s attacks against God’s last people accomplish the same results: “Let opposition arise, . . . let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 602.

f. **He finished the work God gave Him to do.** Through the long series of tests and trials Christ’s work for mankind was completed (John 17:4). So, when the time comes for the deliverance of God’s saints, they will, through tests and trials, have accomplished the work that God entrusted them to do.

**Are you enjoying spiritual victories now as a foretaste of the greater victories to be experienced before Jesus comes?**

**WED** II. THE 144,000—THEIR PURITY AND GODLIKENESS (Rev. 14:4, 5).

As the vision continues, John presents an even clearer picture of the purity of this honored group of the redeemed.

**6. How would you interpret the first sentence of Revelation 14:4?**

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“Not defiled,” means not “stained,” or “soiled.”

“With women.” “A woman is often used in Scripture to represent a church, a pure woman the true church and an immoral woman the apostate church (see on ch. 12:1). In ch. 17:1-5 . . . the Church of Rome and various apostate churches who follow in her footsteps are symbolized by an impure woman and her daughters. It is to these churches that the prophet here doubtless refers.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 826.

*The 144,000 are “virgins.”* “Because the whole passage is metaphorical, literal virginity, whether of men or of women, is not the point under consideration. If it were, this passage would contradict other scriptures that commend marriage and the marriage relation (1 Cor. 7:1-5). The saints are here called virgins because they have either kept themselves aloof from Babylon or no longer have dealings with her. . . . They have refused any connection with Babylon and her daughters at the time when these have become the agents of Satan in his final effort to eradicate the saints.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 826.

**7. What connection do you see between Revelation 14:4 and the parable of the ten virgins? Matt. 25:1-13.**

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“They are called virgins because they possess a pure faith.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 406. Pure faith includes not only a knowledge of truth



but also giving the Holy Spirit (symbolized by the oil) permission to turn the truth into a personal, Christlike, living experience in the things of God. Only five of the ten virgins had this living experience. The other five did not have the Holy Spirit. All the 144,000 are virgins. All have the truth and the Holy Spirit reigning in their hearts.

8. In the last part of Revelation 14:4, what are the redeemed 144,000 called?

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“These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as ‘the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.’ . . . ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation;’ they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob’s trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God’s judgments. But they have been delivered, for they have ‘washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 649.

The idea of the 144,000 being “first fruits” is full of deep significance. The ancient Israelites offered the first fruits of their crops to the Lord. (See Deut. 26:1-11; Lev. 23:10, 17.) The offering acknowledged God’s love in giving the harvest.

9. What did Paul mean when he called Christ the “firstfruits of them that slept?” 1 Cor. 15:20, 23.

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Moses was raised before Christ’s resurrection only *because* Christ would be resurrected. (See 1 Cor. 15:17, 18; Heb. 9:15.) In this sense, Christ is truly the first fruits of all who would ever be resurrected as “saints,” whether they lived before or after the cross. The resurrections of Moses, the widow’s son at Nain, Jairus’ daughter, and Lazarus were all dependent upon the resurrection of Christ.

10. Identify another group of those recognized as first fruits from the grave who since have never tasted death? Matt. 27:52, 53; Eph. 4:8.

- 
11. How are the 144,000 further described? Rev. 14:5 (first part).

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“The gospel of Jesus Christ changes sinful, erring man into one who has no pretense, no make-believe, no deceit, no sin.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827. We are reminded of the words of Zephaniah: “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a

deceitful tongue be found in their mouth" (Zeph. 3:13). The 144,000 are living examples of the ninth commandment (Ex. 20:16). Ellen White adds, "[The seal of God] will never be placed upon the forehead of men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 216.

**12. How does John finally describe this translated group? Rev. 14:5 (last part).**

The Greek word here is "faultless," "blameless," "without blemish." The very same word is used in 1 Peter 1:19 to describe Jesus—"without blemish and without spot." How could the characters of these "firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" be better portrayed than by describing them in some of the identical terms ascribed to our Lord Himself? They have received His righteousness and have reflected His glory of character.

**A spotless character.** God's goals for the redeemed are high, and His enabling grace is adequate to meet them. We must resist the trend to reduce the requirements of God to some lower level that people feel they can attain. God has never promised the kingdom to those who meet less than His stated requirements. Paul's assurance may be ours: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). By the tremendous power of His indwelling grace we can be among those who enter heaven with "a character that is without spot or wrinkle or any such thing."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 144. This will be the experience of all the redeemed. Those who die believing have present perfection in Christ at the point of death. (See Col. 2:10.) The faithful who live till Jesus comes will experience uninterrupted victory because of the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Spirit in their hearts.

**HOW DEEP IS MY COMMITMENT TO CHRIST?**

- Am I impressed that we live in the end-time? If so, how am I dealing with those things that keep me from daily readiness to meet my Lord and Saviour?
- Do I feel that to be one of the 144,000 is just too much for me? (See Jude 24, 25.) How can I gain the spiritual power to be one of the 144,000?

**(FRD) FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read carefully 1 Corinthians chapter 15, noting especially verses 12-23. Also read, "To Meet the Bridegroom," *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 405-421. Important lessons are contained in the parable of the ten virgins.

**SUMMARY:** The verses of this week's lesson bring us the very "air" of the kingdom, and light from the throne of Him who is Light itself. They set before us exciting, very high levels of spiritual attainment. Should this bring discouragement, frustration, the temptation to give up? Or should it draw us to Him who willingly pours out all the power of heaven so that we can be live victoriously?

# The Good News for the World

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 14:6, 7.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

**GOD'S LAST APPEAL.** The new scene that begins with Revelation 14:6, takes us back to a time before the vision described in verses 1-5. Verses 6-12 have special application to the period immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. The three-part message contained in these verses prepares the 144,000 for God's final seal. This message brings about a final separation between those who accept and those who reject God's call. The message of the first angel is the everlasting gospel in its end-time application. It is an earnest appeal for worship of the true God and reverence for His holy name, at a time when most of the world is ignoring His claims.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 14:6, 7

14:6	14:7
The everlasting gospel to the world	A threefold call to honor the Creator

**MESSAGES FOR TODAY.** Since the beginning of their history, Seventh-day Adventists have proclaimed the three angels' messages.

Chapter 14 begins with the encouraging scene of the 144,000 in heaven immediately following the second coming of Christ (verses 1-5). This scene is followed by a presentation of the messages to which the 144,000 responded immediately prior to the Second Advent (verses 6-13). The third section of the chapter describes in symbolic terms the harvest of the righteous and the wicked at the coming of Jesus (verses 14-20).

There can be no question as to the period in which the messages of the three angels apply in a special way. Chapter 14 is preceded by the prediction of a worldwide apostasy (chapter 13) and is followed by the description of seven last plagues (chapters 15 and 16). These plagues immediately precede Christ's coming.

It is critically important to know the time when the messages of Revela-

tion 14:6-12 are to be proclaimed, the identity of those who will proclaim them, and of those who need to hear them. It is also critically important to gain a clear understanding of the contents of those messages.

These messages are for our time. They focus on today's people, today's problems, today's deceptions and needs. They result in separation from the world—a final separation of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30), of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), of the righteous and the unrighteous.

As we study the message of the first angel this week, notice how it deals with issues of central concern to mankind. God is appealing for men's hearts, at the time of final judgment. Note also the call for reverence, and loyal worship at a time when the majority of the world's people have turned to worship another power (Rev. 13:8).

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## I. THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL TO THE WORLD (Rev. 14:6).

1. In this new scene, what is the first thing John sees? What is meant by "another" angel? Rev. 14:6.

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To this point in the book of Revelation many angels have been mentioned. Here John sees another angel, the first of three mentioned in verses 6-12. This "angel," or "messenger," here represents "God's saints engaged in the task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827. Note that the Greek word for "angel" sometimes means a human messenger (Matt. 11:10; Luke 9:52). Undoubtedly heaven's angels are closely involved in the same work, but the proclamation of the gospel has been committed to Christian believers.

The "first angel's message" is "the everlasting gospel" (verse 6). It is an announcement of the pre-Advent judgment, and a worldwide call to worship the true God. This message of salvation, warning, and worship is to be given to all mankind in these last days.

**Initial fulfillment.** "The prophecy of the first angel's message, brought to view in Revelation 14, found its fulfillment in the advent movement of 1840-44. In both Europe and America, men of faith and prayer were deeply moved as their attention was called to the prophecies, and, tracing down the Inspired Record, they saw convincing evidence that the end of all things was at hand."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 356.

**Continuing proclamation.** "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as watchmen and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. *They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention.*"—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 19 (emphasis supplied).

**Note three significant points.** (1) The angel represents God's people proclaiming the God-given truths of Revelation 14:6, 7 to the world in the

last days. (2) After the time of the end began in 1798, William Miller and his colleagues proclaimed this message between 1840 and 1844. (3) God has entrusted the proclamation of these same truths to Seventh-day Adventists, as a last warning to a perishing world before the second coming of Christ.

2. How is the gospel proclaimed by the first angel described? Rev. 14:6.
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3. What is the "everlasting gospel?" Examine the following passages and briefly write what each one includes in the good news.

Luke 4:18 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 15:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus 3:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 2:2, 16 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 13:38, 39 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 15:16 \_\_\_\_\_

4. When did God first decide that salvation would be through the death of His Son? When was the plan made known to mankind? 1 Peter 1:18-20; Gen. 3:15.
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**God foresaw and planned.** "The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of 'the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal.' Rom. 16:25, RV. It was an *unfolding of the principles* that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22 (emphasis supplied).

5. How widespread is to be the mission of those who teach this first angel's message? Rev. 14:6.
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**You have a part in giving the first angel's message.** God has always used His people to spread the gospel. Humble believers are invited to give the first angel's message to those with whom they come in contact. Are you involved in this thrilling work?

Every member an agent for Christ. "Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.



6. Review briefly these New Testament "mission" texts and write down the specific situation in which they were given.

Matt. 24:14 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 28:18-20 \_\_\_\_\_

Acts 1:8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_

The early Christians were zealous. The apostles carried out their mission in a marvelous way in the first century. Ellen White says that their witness "shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593.

"Filled with love for their Redeemer, they sought as their highest aim to win souls to Him."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 421.

**Are we fulfilling our commission?** After the great disappointment of 1844, God re-commissioned His early Advent people, "Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings" (Rev. 10:11). What about our first love today? What about our zeal to reach millions who so desperately need salvation? What about our next-door neighbor? Are we fulfilling the commission of the first angel to spread the gospel—next door, and everywhere?

## II. A THREEFOLD CALL TO HONOR THE CREATOR (Rev. 14:7).

7. What stirring admonition begins the first angel's message? Rev. 14:7.

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What does it mean to "fear" God? The Greek word is *phobeo*. "*Phobeo* is used here not in the sense of being afraid of God, but in the sense of coming to Him with reverence and awe. It conveys the thought of absolute loyalty to God, of full surrender to His will."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 827. The Bible recognizes two kinds of fear of God. (See Ex. 20:20.) The timing for this particular invitation is critical.

This admonition invites loyalty and full surrender to Christ in the last days. "Be ye also ready" (Matt. 24:44), ready every day for the Lord's second coming.

8. Following the instruction of Revelation 14:7, how can we “give glory to him?” How did Jesus give glory to His Father? John 17:4, 22, 23.
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9. How does the second part of Revelation 14:7 make the time setting of the first angel’s words even more specific?
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The verb here is “has come,” or “came.” The tense of the Greek verb indicates in this context that the judgment has commenced.

**A message for the last days.** “The message of salvation has been preached in all ages; but this message is a part of the gospel which could be proclaimed only in the last days, for only then would it be true that the hour of judgment *had come*. . . . No such message has ever been given in past ages. Paul . . . did not preach it; he pointed his brethren into the then far-distant future for the coming of the Lord. The Reformers did not proclaim it. Martin Luther placed the judgment about three hundred years in the future from his day.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 356.

**Two major facts about this judgment:**

- The announcement of the beginning of the judgment is part of the gospel message. We are told that the angel is proclaiming “the everlasting gospel” (verse 6).
- This judgment occurs before the second coming of Jesus, because the gospel is preached in all the world before He comes. (See Matt. 24:14.) There are two other messages for the world that follow the announcement of the judgment. Hence, the judgment of Revelation 14:7 is pre-Advent.

10. At the conclusion of what specific time period did the judgment begin? How was it explained back in the sixth century B.C., when God first revealed it to Daniel? Dan. 8:13, 14, 27. (See also Dan. 9:24-27.)
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11. How does Daniel describe the pre-Advent judgment? Dan. 7:9-13.
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12. At what period of earth’s history would the 2300-day (or year) prophecy come to an end? Dan. 8:17, 19.
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13. What was Daniel told about the time of the end during which the 2300-day prophecy would culminate? Dan. 12:4, 7.

**Future Truth Becomes Present Truth.** The “time of the end,” as it is included in Daniel’s prophecies, began at the close of the 1260 year period (Dan. 7:25; compare Rev. 12:6, 14; 13:5), or in A.D. 1798. After that, “knowledge” would increase in relation to these vital parts of Daniel’s book. With the coming of the nineteenth century, it would then become “present truth” for men to teach the fulfillment of the 2300-year prophecy and the arrival of the judgment hour. These prophecies came to focus in William Miller’s day. Martin Luther’s prediction was accurate.

“We might think that Miller preached more judgment than gospel. But we should remember two things. First, almost all the Millerites came from grace-teaching churches, and the records reveal that they had a close relationship with Christ; they were looking for *Him* to come. Second—and in connection with Daniel 8:14 and Revelation 14:7—if Christ was to come in the latter part of 1844, theirs *was* a time of judgment. It was essential to stress judgment, and stress it with vigor. A person who believed his probation was to close in a few months should have been deeply concerned about judgment—for himself and for others.”—Carl Coffman, *In the Last Days, Three Angels* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: published by the author, 1985), p. 19.

**The Judgment Continues Today.** We know that Miller was mistaken in the nature of the event to take place on October 22, 1844. He believed that the earth was to be cleansed in 1844 by the second coming of Christ. He did not realize that Jesus was about to begin His second-apartment ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Miller did not understand that the investigative judgment would be completed before Jesus’ return to earth.

Today we still have the judgment-hour message, part of the everlasting gospel, to be proclaimed with an even louder voice. Bible prophecy in relation to events in the world and the church reveal that the judgment soon will close; and when it does, all mankind will be marked as eternally saved or eternally lost. Our question is Shouldn’t we be proclaiming the first angel’s message today, as a church and as individuals, with all the fervency of our first love?

**14. What is the final appeal of the first angel? Rev. 14:7 (last part); compare Ex. 20:11.**

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The call to observe God’s Sabbath is part of the loud call of the first angel. We are invited to worship the Creator on the day that is a memorial of His creative work. This too is part of the everlasting gospel.

Of those who have “professed” to worship Christ, and to be His loyal followers, whose profession is genuine? The worship and loyalty of many is only superficial. As taught by the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13), the genuine and the true must be made clear.

**Both Christ and Satan seek our full worship and loyalty.**

“That the law which was spoken by God’s own voice is faulty, that



some specification has been set aside, is the claim which Satan now puts forward. It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world. He needs not to assail the whole law; if he can lead men to disregard one precept, his purpose is gained. . . . By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 763.

### IS MY SERVICE WHERE MY HEART IS?

- I plan to participate in the proclamation of the gospel by sharing the message with: (Circle the appropriate ones.) 1. my spouse. 2. my children. 3. my relatives. 4. my neighbors. 5. my work associates and colleagues.
- Check below those aspects of the gospel that have special relevance for you:
  - It gives me the assurance of salvation.
  - It takes away my fear of death.
  - It frees me from the guilt of sin.
  - It provides me with Jesus' presence in my life.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** What does worship on the Sabbath day have to do with holiness? Study Ex. 31:13; Eze. 20:12; compare Rom. 2:13. Three reading selections relate especially to this week's lesson. (1) The chapter, "The First Angel's Message," in *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 356-363; (2) "A Great Religious Awakening," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 355-374; and (3) "The Home Missionary Work," in *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 421-428.

**SUMMARY:** The first angel's message includes redemption, faithful obedience, right standing in the judgment, loyalty in worship, and zealous witnessing. It is the message that opens the door for each believer to be one of 144,000.

# Escape From Global Apostasy

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Revelation 14:8**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end" (Psalm 119:33).

**GOD'S WARNINGS DEMONSTRATE HIS LOVE.** When someone rejects the message of the gospel the Lord's pleadings do not immediately cease. Warnings are sent to awaken the individual to his or her great need and Christ's ability to supply it. The second angel's message is a worldwide warning to those who have not responded to the first angel's message. The greatest enemy of last-day mankind is mystical or antitypical "Babylon." Because He loves us infinitely our Lord unmasks the wickedness of this false religious system and appeals to us to have nothing to do with it.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 14:8

Ancient Babylon used as a symbol	The first giving of the message	Babylon's final fall
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**LITERAL AND SYMBOLIC BABYLON.** To grasp the full import of the second angel's message requires a three-column parallelism. Column one discusses literal Babylon, as it existed in Old Testament times, with its aims and claims. Column two contains the message of the second angel as understood and proclaimed by William Miller in 1844. Column three contains a picture of the final fulfillment of the second angel's message just before the Lord returns. In this lesson we will develop this parallelism, so that the import of the message will stand out clearly as it relates specifically to us and our day.

The Scriptures contain many final warnings and appeals. Immediately prior to the Flood, God warned a wicked and perverse generation (Gen. 6:3). The people of ancient Israel were given 490 years of warning and appeal (Dan. 9:24-27). The period ended in A.D. 34. They, too, rejected the rule of the Spirit.

The second angel's message (Revelation 14) emphasizes *final* warning and appeal. How does the message relate to the final events of earth's history? When can it be said that "Babylon is fallen"? What does it mean to come out of Babylon?

## I. ANCIENT BABYLON USED AS A SYMBOL

1. As you read the first part of Revelation 14:8, what is your understanding of the term *Babylon* in the context of the book of Revelation, and in connection with the time to which it must apply?

Revelation was written near the end of the first century A.D. The applications of its many prophecies stretch into the future from John's day. There was no literal city of Babylon in John's time, nor would there be one in the future. Thus, we must see John's use of the term *Babylon* as symbolic. In the context in which he uses the term it applies to the end of time. (See Revelation 17; 18.)

2. Who founded ancient Babylon? Why did God destroy it? Gen. 10:9, 10; 11:1-9.

The earliest Bible reference to Babylon goes back to Nimrod (see Gen. 10:10, and 11:1-9) and to the tower of Babel. "In Babylonian the name *Bab-ilu* (Babel, or Babylon) meant 'gate of the gods.' . . . From the very beginning the city was emblematic of disbelief in the true God and defiance of His will, . . . and its tower a monument to apostasy, a citadel of rebellion against Him."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 828, 829.

Genesis 11:9 indicates that the name *Babel* means "confusion." To the Hebrews the name evidently derived from the Hebrew verb *balal*, which means "to confuse." It is possible that originally the name *Babel* derived from the Babylonian verb *babalu*, meaning "to scatter," or "to disappear." (See *SDA Bible Dictionary*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8, pp. 108, 109.)

3. Why did God destroy the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the sixth century B.C.? Isa. 13:19, 20; 14:4-6, 12-14; Jer. 25:12.

**A Proud City Humbled.** Babylon kept the Jewish people as captives for seventy years, from 605 to 536 B.C. Shortly before the end of that period, in 539 B.C., the Persians captured Babylon. Following the taking of the city and the establishment of his empire, Cyrus issued a decree for the return of the Jews to their own land (Ezra 1). This is why in Scripture Cyrus and his armies (kings from the East) are used as a symbol of Christ and His angels, the antitypical kings from the "east." As Cyrus freed the people of God from ancient Babylon, so at the Second Advent Christ and the angels will finally deliver the faithful of earth from the persecutions of antitypical Babylon. (Compare Isa. 41:2; 44:28; with Rev. 16:12; 17:14; 19:11-16.)

Even though the Persians left the city of Babylon intact, after several rebellions against Persian rule, under Darius I and Xerxes, about 480 B.C. the

Persians destroyed its palaces, temples, and wall. In modern times, "the city has served as a quarry of bricks."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 111.

**4. How did the apostle Peter use the term "Babylon?" 1 Peter 5:13.**

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"Babylon is also mentioned in the NT. Peter sent greetings from the church in 'Babylon' (1 Peter 5:13), by which, commentators generally agree, he meant Rome, not the unimportant village that was all that remained of literal Babylon. . . . In the Revelation, Babylon stands as a symbol of opposition against Christ and His followers (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:18)."—*SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 113.



**II. THE FIRST GIVING OF THE MESSAGE**

**5. What power is the mystical, antitypical Babylon of the last days? Rev. 17:1-6; 13:1, 11, 14-17.**

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In the book of Revelation "Babylon" is the religious union (the papacy, apostate protestantism, and spiritism; Rev. 16:13, 14) that establishes the image to the beast, enforces the mark of the beast, and persecutes the faithful people of God (Rev. 13:15-17; 17:6). This religious union that is in opposition to Christ and His truth is supported by secular government. In Revelation 17 the great scarlet beast may be viewed as the secular power controlled by Satan, and the woman sitting on the beast as the religious union, "Babylon."

**6. What is meant by the statement that Babylon is "fallen?" Rev. 14:8; compare Isa. 21:9.**

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"Babylon is a comprehensive term that John employs to describe all religious bodies and movements that have fallen away from the truth. This fact requires us to view this 'fall' as progressive and cumulative."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 830.

**7. How did William Miller apply this second angel's message in his preaching in 1844?**

Remember that Miller had been proclaiming the message of the first angel, particularly the arrival of the judgment hour, since 1840. Two points regarding the churches of 1844 are very significant:

**a. Spiritual Apathy.** "At a meeting of the presbytery of Philadelphia, Mr. Barnes, author of a commentary widely used and pastor of one of the leading churches in that city, 'stated that he had been in the ministry for twenty years, and never, till the last communion, had he administered the

ordinance without receiving more or less into the church. But now there are *no awakenings, no conversions*, not much apparent growth in grace in professors, and none come to his study to converse about the salvation of their souls. With the increase of business, and the brightening prospects of commerce and manufacture, there is an increase in worldly-mindedness. *Thus it is with all the denominations.*—*Congregational Journal*, May 23, 1844.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 376, 377 (italics E. G. White).

**b. First Angel’s Message Rejected.** Most professing Christians rejected the warning of the first angel as given by Miller. Witnessing their moral fall, he turned to the second angel’s message in 1844.

William Miller recognized that, in rejecting the first angel’s message, the churches were rejecting light from heaven. Believing that the end of all things was at hand, he combined the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) with the call to leave Babylon. Thus the tarrying time and the Midnight Cry became part of his message.

The churches mocked, but many who responded to the message experienced deep spirituality. Those who responded in heart to the voices of the first and second angel’s messages made ready to meet their Lord.

### III. BABYLON’S FINAL FALL

8. What does the fall of “Babylon” mean in connection with our own immediate future? Review Rev. 14:4 (first part); 17:1-6.

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**A Falling Away.** Ellen White describes the reaction of the multitudes who near the end of time hear the preaching of the second angel’s message. “In amazement they hear the testimony that Babylon is the church, fallen because of her errors and sins, because of her rejection of the truth sent to her from heaven.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 606, 607.

Satan is working to deceive all nations, all professed Christians, and all churches. “‘Babylon the great,’ in the book of Revelation designates, in a special sense, the united apostate religions at the close of time.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 851, 852.

When religious bodies “fall away” from God’s truth, when they substitute the doctrines of men for the doctrines of the Word of God, when they resist the corrections of the Holy Spirit, and join hands to promulgate their errors, using civil authority to enforce their views, they are in the process of becoming Babylon.

**Has Babylon Fallen?** The message of the second angel has been with us for nearly a century and a half. We are told that “the message of the second angel did not reach its complete fulfillment in 1844.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 389. When will it reach its complete fulfillment? When can we say that Babylon is fully fallen? Has it happened yet? The last part of Revelation 14:8 will help us answer these questions.

9. What does the word *made* mean to you in connection with the drinking of the wine? Rev. 14:8.

When someone *makes* us do something, they use force, coercion, compulsion. We rise up with a feeling of rebellion. Yet most of the world will accept the mark of the beast when force is applied (Rev. 13:16, 17). The mystery in connection with Babylon's *compelling* all nations to comply is the fact that all nations seem *pleased* to drink her wine! This leads us to two conclusions: First, that the devil is very successful in putting his plans into operation; and second, the nations' drinking of Babylon's wine is the result of deception. They do not seem to know that the wine is the wine of final wrath. It is not good wine. But they drink it anyway.

- 10.** Because people are deceived into accepting "Babylon's" wine, why are they held responsible for their misplaced loyalty? 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

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"As truth is spurned, error is received and cherished."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 366.

- 11.** What does John mean by the words, "the wine of the wrath of her fornication?" Rev. 14:8 (last part).

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"Fornication. A figure of the illicit connection between the church and the world or between the church and the state. The church should be married to her Lord, but when she seeks the support of the state, she leaves her lawful spouse. By her new connection she commits spiritual fornication."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 831.

The term would include any illicit relationship that Babylon might have with the world, with false doctrines, with idolatry, with civil power. It seems clear that she finally will be involved in all of these.

**Loyalty to God rejected.** Babylon "has disregarded the only commandment which points out the true God, and has torn down the Sabbath, God's memorial of creation. . . . In the Word of God this is called her fornication."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979.

- 12.** Can you think of some Old Testament parallels to the modern acceptance of "Babylon's" errors? 2 Chron. 21:5, 11; Eze. 16:26.

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The Old Testament repeatedly speaks of Israel's apostasy from God, her bridegroom or husband. She sought other gods, practiced idolatry, and formed forbidden relations with other nations. All of this God called "fornication." The same term applies to acceptance of "Babylon's" errors by modern nations.

- 13.** What is the "wrath" of Babylon's fornication? Rev. 14:8.

Wrath is not Babylon's object in offering the nations its wine. Herein is one of her major deceptions—to make people think that she is offering them peace and blessing. It reminds us of the warning of Jeremiah when Israel offended God by dealing falsely, and saying, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11).

The wrath is God's displeasure. The drinking of Babylon's cup will bring upon mankind, not peace, but the wrath of God. The wrath of Babylon's fornication will be God's wrath upon all who received Babylon's substitute religion. (See Rev. 14:10.)



**14. What would you say is in the wine cup that Babylon offers to the world? Rev. 14:8; 17:4.**

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"This cup of intoxication which she presents to the world represents the false doctrines that she has accepted as the result of her unlawful connection with the great ones of the earth. Friendship with the world corrupts her faith, and in her turn she exerts a corrupting influence upon the world by teaching doctrines which are opposed to the plainest statements of Holy Writ."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 388.

**15. When does the fall of Babylon reach its complete fulfillment? Rev. 13:12-14.**

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"Not yet, however, can it be said that 'Babylon is fallen, . . . because she made *all nations* drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' She has not yet made all nations do this. . . .

"The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord, Satan will work 'with *all power* and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness;' and they that 'received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,' will be left to receive 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie' (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11). Not until this condition shall be reached, and the union of the church with the world shall be fully accomplished throughout Christendom, will the fall of Babylon be complete. The change is a progressive one, and the perfect fulfillment of Revelation 14:8 is yet future."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 389, 390 (italics hers).

**16. What is the final message from God to the inhabitants of our world? Rev. 18:1-5.**

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"Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accom-

plish its work. When those that 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 1:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: 'Come out of her, my people' (Revelation 18:4)." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 390.

**HOW CAN WE WARN OTHERS TO LEAVE "BABYLON"?** Check the suggestions below, marking those which you think are best with a plus (+) and those of which you disapprove with a zero (0).

- \_\_\_ Show by example that God's way is superior.
- \_\_\_ Criticize the ministers of "false churches."
- \_\_\_ In loving ways demonstrate the caring ministry of Jesus.
- \_\_\_ Humbly share my faith when there is an interest in it.
- \_\_\_ Denounce the errors of the Papacy.
- \_\_\_ Tell my Sunday-keeping friends that they are preparing for the mark of the beast.

**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** The Jewish leaders knew the Old Testament prophecies. Why did they not know that Jesus was the Messiah? (See Matt. 2:1-6.) "To those who are seeking for light, and who accept it with gladness, the bright rays from the throne of God will shine." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 47.

Read the chapter, "A Warning Rejected," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 375-390. The two chapters, "The Second Angel's Message," and "The Midnight Cry" in *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 364-374, provide much insight into the Millerite experience in connection with the 1844 movement.

**SUMMARY:** Mystical Babylon figures very prominently in our study of last day events. Early Adventists in the 1844 movement saw the workings of those elements that are characteristic of end-time "Babylon." Today we see far more than they, as worldwide doctrinal apostasy slowly but surely rears its frightful head on all sides. Today all nations are drinking from Babylon's cup. The point of total intoxication will signal Babylon's total fall.



# Everyone Will Worship Someone

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 14:9-12.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:4, 5).

**CHOOSE WHOM YOU WILL SERVE.** We find in the message of the third angel two totally different groups of "worshippers." One group consists of those who worship the beast, receive his mark, and are destroyed. The other group consists of those who worship God with patient endurance, have faith in Christ, by His grace keep His commandments, and receive the label of "saints" and the gift of eternal life. Our passage this week is undoubtedly the most sobering in all the Bible. The question is: To which group of worshippers do you plan to belong?

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 14:9-12

14:9	14:10, 11	14:12
Description of the disloyal	The result of disloyalty	Description of the loyal

**ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE PROPHETIC PICTURE.** Early adventists continued to proclaim the first two angels' messages after the disappointment of October 22, 1844, with some changes in interpretation. An understanding of the significance of the heavenly sanctuary and the pre-advent judgment changed their explanation of the judgment hour referred to in the first angel's message. Slowly they came to grasp the sobering content of the third angel's message. That understanding could come only as the truth of the seventh-day Sabbath dawned upon their minds. They identified the Sabbath command as the center of the decalogue enshrined in the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. Thus the Sabbath truth and the judgment message were recognized to be interrelated.

There were only about fifty Sabbathkeeping Adventists by 1850. As their convictions regarding the Sabbath deepened, these pioneers began to understand the meaning of the mark of the beast (Rev. 14:9-11).

Seventh-day Adventists organized in 1863. Since then they have come to be known as those who proclaim the "third angel's message." When

they speak of the "third angel's message" they usually mean all three messages. Because of its special relevance to people today, the third message is given great emphasis.

Revelation chapters 12-14 contain the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, which, when put together, provide us the clearest painting that God could give of earth's final events. The picture contains the destinies of both the wicked and the righteous, and might appropriately be captioned, "Everyone Will Worship Someone."

This week we will put in place another piece of the puzzle, and note how God's last-day drama is portrayed.

SUN

## I. DESCRIPTION OF THE DISLOYAL (Rev. 14:9).

Like the first and second angels' messages, the third is set in the book of Revelation in the context of final events before Jesus comes. The final "harvest" immediately follows.

As we open our Bibles this week, we need to spend a moment looking back to the last Scripture verse of last quarter's lessons.

### 1. What is the significance of the events described in Revelation 11:19? When do these events occur in history? Rev. 11:15-19.

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**The beginning of the pre-Advent judgment.** "As foretold in the Scriptures, the ministration of Christ in the most holy place began at the termination of the prophetic days in 1844. *To this time* apply the words of the Revelator, 'The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament.' Rev. 11:19. The ark of God's testament is in the second apartment of the sanctuary. As Christ entered there, to minister in the sinner's behalf, the inner temple was opened, and the ark of God was brought to view."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 379 (italics supplied).

**The third angel's message.** "As the ministration of Jesus closed in the holy place, and He passed into the holiest [1844], and stood before the ark containing the law of God, He sent another mighty angel with a third message to the world. . . . This message was designed to put the children of God upon their guard, by showing them the hour of temptation and anguish that was before them. Said the angel, 'They will be brought into close combat with the beast and his image. Their only hope of eternal life is to remain steadfast.' "—*Early Writings*, p. 254.

**The third angel's message and the Sabbath.** The beginning and ending of the third angel's message lie within the time span covered by Revelation 11:15-19. The scene develops following the disappointment of October 22, 1844, and climaxes at the close of probation when the wicked and righteous are forever separated (Rev. 22:11).

As God opened the Most Holy Place in heaven in 1844, the ark was brought to view. It contains the law including the fourth-commandment Sabbath. This prophetic picture was fulfilled in the emphasis placed on the law and the Sabbath following 1844. The issue of the true versus the false

sabbath is central to an understanding of this section of Revelation. (See Rev. 11:19; 12:17; 13:14-17; 14:9-11; 14:12.) All of these passages refer to the same period of time. History fulfills prophecy, revealing the recovery of the Sabbath truth after 1844. A further fulfillment will involve the exaltation of Sunday, in the establishment of the image to the beast and the mark of the beast. The climax will be the worldwide demand that Sunday sacredness be honored. This will require earth's inhabitants to make a decision that will have life-and-death significance.

**MON** 2. Against what three instruments of evil does the third angel warn? Rev. 14:9.

**What power does the beast represent?** (Review Lesson 3.) This is the beast described in Revelation 13:1-10. "By this first beast is represented the Roman Church, an ecclesiastical body clothed with civil power, having authority to punish all dissenters."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 381. The second beast of Revelation 13:11-18 commands mankind to worship the first, leopardlike beast.

Seven points of identification enable us to identify the first beast of Revelation 13 as the papacy:

- a. It is a blasphemous power (13:1, 5, 6).
- b. Its rise was dependent upon another power (13:2).
- c. It had a set time in history during which God allowed it to function as the supreme power ecclesiastically (13:5).
- d. Supported by civil power, it established a system of worship that is opposed to Bible Christianity (13:4, 7, 8).
- e. It is a persecuting power (13:7).
- f. It has worldwide influence and effectiveness (13:7).
- g. Its number is 666 (13:18).

**What is the image to the beast?** The fulfillment of Revelation 14:9 can take place only when the image to the first beast has been formed, and when the mark of the beast is enforced. These are issues for the near future. When the fulfillment of these steps occurs, and multitudes worship the beast and its image, and receive its mark, then probation's close will be at the door.

In Revelation 13 the second power makes an image to the first power. "The formation of this image is the work of that beast whose peaceful rise and mild professions render it so striking a symbol of the United States. Here is to be found an image of the Papacy. When the churches of our land, uniting upon such points of faith as are held by them in common, shall influence the State to enforce their decrees and sustain their institutions, *then* will Protestant America have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy. Then the true church will be assailed by persecution, as were God's ancient people."—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 381, 382 (italics supplied).

**TUE** **What is the mark of the beast?** This is the mark of the first beast of chapter 13, enforced by the second beast. "What then is the change of the Sabbath, but the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Roman Church—the

mark of the beast'?"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 448. The pioneers of the 1840s slowly came to these correct conclusions.

**The mark of papal authority.** The Roman Catholic Church "has made non-observance of Sunday a mortal sin. In the early Middle Ages priests 'discovered' letters from heaven to frighten people into observing Sunday rather than the Sabbath. In 1054 Pope Leo IX excommunicated the entire Eastern Orthodox Church partly because the Orthodox celebrated the Sabbath. Of all the major branches of Christendom the Catholic Church became the one most opposed to the seventh-day Sabbath.

"The pope can modify divine law,' said Petrus de Ancharano.

"The Sabbath, the most glorious day in the law, has been changed into the Lord's day . . . by the authority of the church,' declared the archbishop of Reggio at the crucial Council of Trent.

"We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday,' says *The Convert's Catechism*.

"God didn't change His law even to excuse Jesus from Gethsemane and crucifixion. . . . But a body of Christian leaders felt free to change it, and to harrass, persecute, and excommunicate millions of Christians who chose to obey it. The charge is serious indeed."—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1985), pp. 379, 380.

**When is this mark to be received?** "It is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive 'the mark of the beast.' "—*The Great Controversy*, p. 449.

The enforcement of the mark of the beast by law has not yet occurred. In the future some will observe Sunday because, despite the adequate evidence to the contrary, they are convinced that this is what they should do. Many interpreters of the prophecy have concluded that these are the ones who will receive the symbolic mark in their foreheads. Others accept Sunday observance only because of the civil penalties that they would have to suffer if they did not. It is thought that these are the ones who will have the mark in their right hands.

## II. THE RESULT OF DISLOYALTY (Rev. 14:10, 11).

### 3. What do you understand by the drinking of "the wine of the wrath of God?" Rev. 14:10.

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The New International Version reads, "the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath." Awful punishment will be given for worshiping the beast and his image, and receiving of his mark.

WED

4. How will God's wrath be manifested immediately after the close of probation? Rev. 15:1, 7.

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5. Upon whom is the first plague poured out? Rev. 16:2.

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The Bible depicts our loving God (1 John 4:8) standing at the door of the human heart pleading for entry (Rev. 3:20). There will come a time when those who have refused all of His invitations and have rejected His truth will be the subjects of "his strange act" (Isa. 28:21). With the greatest love and sadness, He will rid the universe of sin, and of those who have identified themselves with the evil one who introduced it.

6. What kind of torment will the lost suffer? Rev. 14:10, 11.

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Those who reject God and receive the mark of the beast will be tormented. They will suffer the plagues. When Jesus returns at the close of the plagues, those of the wicked who are still living will suffer death. They will then remain dead for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:5, 6). After this they will be raised for a short time. With the devil and his angels, they will be cast into the lake of fire. This is the "second death." (See Rev. 20:9, 10, 14.)

**The devil's two deceptions.** "Satan led them on to believe that the sinner would live in eternal misery. . . . Another extreme which Satan has led the people to adopt is entirely to overlook the justice of God and the threatenings of His Word, and to represent Him as being all mercy, so that not one will perish, but that all, both saint and sinner, will at last be saved in His kingdom."—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 389.

**What about the fire and brimstone?** This is how God described the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:24. Jude says that these two cities suffered "the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The wicked in these cities were burned up, but they were not tormented beyond death. Our God is always a consuming fire to wickedness and sin. It is true that the wicked never have rest in their wickedness. They will have no rest "day nor night" as they suffer the plagues and as they suffer the lake of fire at the close of the 1,000 years. (See *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 107, 763, 764.)

7. What is meant by "for ever and ever"? Rev. 14:11.

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The Greek phrase translated "forever and ever" (*eis aionas aionon*) could be translated literally, "unto ages of ages." It means as long as the nature of the subject allows. God lives forever and ever (endlessly) be-

cause He is immortal (1 Tim. 6:16). The eternal life of the righteous is forever and ever (endless) because they are given immortality at the second coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

The word *aion* ("age") used in Revelation 14:11 is often used in Scripture for periods of limited duration. For example, Matthew 13:39 speaks of "the end of the world [*aion*]." (Compare Eph. 1:21; 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 Cor. 2:7.) Because the wicked are mortal, they are entirely consumed in the fires of the last great day. The *aion*, or age, of the righteous and wicked will be different because their natures will be different. As lost mortal beings the wicked will be burned up and reduced to ashes (Mal. 4:1-3; compare Psalms 37:10, 20; 68:1, 2).



### III. DESCRIPTION OF THE LOYAL (Rev. 14:12).

#### 8. What three identifying points describe the saints? Rev. 14:12?

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The people who are taken to be with Jesus at the Second Coming include those symbolized by the number 144,000, and those who are raised in the first resurrection. (See John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:16; Rev. 20:6, first part.) Those who endure patiently the trials of this life, keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus will be "saints" for eternity.

The New International Version translates Revelation 14:12: "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." Our study of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 emphasizes that, in view of all that is coming in the future, our only security is patient trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and strict obedience to His will, as we live daily by faith in Him.

#### 9. What is the relationship between justification by faith and the three angels' messages? Compare Titus 3:5-7 with Rev. 14:6.

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"**The Third Angel's Message in Verity.**—Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.' "—*Evangelism*, p. 190.

This statement does not apply only to the warning of Revelation 14:9-11. It applies to all three angels' messages. The statement comes from an article in the *Review and Herald*, dated April 1, 1890, entitled, "Repentance the Gift of God." God has given the three angels' messages to prepare a people to meet their Lord in the clouds of heaven. A knowledge of these messages alone will not save anyone. Salvation is ours as we enter into the "everlasting gospel" experience described in Revelation 14:6. This is the personal relationship with Christ to which the three messages lead. As Jesus becomes our personal Friend and Saviour we are given His enabling grace to love and obey the truth. This is the road to the eternal kingdom.

**The same in purpose.** "The message of justification by faith and the third angel's message are the same in purpose, in scope, and in results. . . . Justification by faith is God's way of saving sinners; His way of convicting sinners of their guilt, their condemnation, and their utterly undone and lost condition. It is also God's way of canceling their guilt, delivering them from the condemnation of His divine law, and giving them a new and right standing before Him and His holy law. Justification by faith is God's way of changing weak, sinful, defeated men and women into strong, righteous, victorious Christians."—A. G. Daniells, *Christ Our Righteousness* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1941), pp. 64, 65.

**WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED?** What new insights and appeals have you found in this lesson, and in the two previous lessons? List these briefly in the space that follows:

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**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Romans 3:19-31 in connection with the messages of Revelation 14:9-12. Read the chapter "The Third Angel's Message," in *Early Writings*, pp. 254-258. Also read "The Third Angel's Message," "A Firm Platform," and "Satan's Delusions," in *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 379-392.

**SUMMARY:** There will be two classes of people on the earth at the end of time: (1) those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark; and (2) those who, by faith in Jesus, endure patiently and keep His commandments.

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# Thrust in Thy Sickle, and Reap

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Revelation 14:13-20.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

**OF WHICH HARVEST WILL YOU BE A PART?** The Son of man is on center stage in our lesson this week. During His ministry on earth He told the parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:36-43). In that parable He taught that the "harvest" would take place at the end of the world. In Revelation 14:13-20, harvest time has come, wheat and tares are separated, eternal salvation is given to believers and eternal rejection for nonbelievers. The central question in this lesson is: Will you be involved in the harvest of the saved or of the lost? Christ's earnest desire is to save everyone (2 Peter 3:9). Are you willing to be saved?

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 14:13-20

14:13-16	14:17-20
"Reaping" of the righteous	"Reaping" of the wicked

**ARE WE PREPARING TO MEET OUR LORD?** Earth's history rushes on toward its great climax. Immersed in their earthly activities, many are unaware that the final reckoning for all is in the immediate future.

Sadly, even in the Christian church, there is much unawareness of the events about to take place in our world. The church has the Scriptures in which every major event of the future is unveiled. In addition, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been abundantly blessed with a modern fulfillment of the gift of prophecy, a precious gift of the Spirit (Eph. 4:11-13). The thousands of additional pages of guidance and counsel leave no excuse for ignorance of God's program of events. The Conflict of the Ages Series, undoubtedly the finest body of spiritual literature outside the Bible, paints a picture of the future that unmasks Satan's deceptions and clearly reveals God's plan of saving His people.

We need to ask ourselves: Are we awake, listening, and preparing? Are we free from the spiritual blindness of which Laodicea has been warned?

Are we busy searching our Bibles? Are we daily getting ready to meet our Lord? Are we ready now?

In our lesson this week we are given a preview of the end-time harvest. Let us keep these important questions in mind.

SUN

## I. THE REAPING OF THE RIGHTEOUS (Rev. 14:13-16).

1. After God describes His "saints," what strong commendation does He make of those who die in Christ? Rev. 14:12, 13.

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Revelation 14:13 is one of the seven "beatitudes" in the book of Revelation. (See Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.) Revelation 14:13 refers to the saints described in verse 12, and points also to the harvest in the verses that follow.

Those who die in Christ before His second coming experience a temporary rest. Even in death, their good lives and deeds continue to testify to their faith. As they sleep peacefully in the grave, their past lives witness to many still living that they should decide now for Christ and eternity.

**The righteous shall be an everlasting remembrance.** "When a man dies, his influence does not die with him; but it lives on, reproducing itself. The influence of the man who is good and pure and holy lives on after his death, like the glow of the descending sun, casting its glories athwart the heavens, lighting up the mountain peaks long after the sun has sunk behind the hill. . . .

"But what a contrast to this is the life of those who are earthly, sensual, devilish! The sensual pleasure was indulged. In the light of the judgment, the man appears as he is, stripped of the livery of heaven. He stands before others as he is in the sight of a holy God. Let every one of us think seriously whether the works following us will be the mellow light of heaven or the shadows of darkness, and whether the legacies we bequeath are those of blessings or curses."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 429.

**"From henceforth."** These words identify the general time period during which these saints die. It is the same span of time covered by the three angels' messages, or from 1844 onwards. They rest until the time of trouble is past.

2. What classes of people will be raised in the special resurrection just prior to the general resurrection of the righteous? Rev. 1:7; Matt. 26:64; Dan. 12:2.

---

"Graves are opened, and 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth. . . awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.' Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. 'They also which

pierced him' (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 637.

MON

3. What symbolic vision of Christ's coming was John given? What significance do you see in the manner in which Christ's coming is described? Rev. 14:14; compare 1:7; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9-11.

---

Faithful believers will *look up* to see Jesus coming with clouds. Acts 1:11 gives the significance of the expression more clearly. The clouds at His ascension consisted of a "cloudy chariot of angels" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 831). Two of those angels lingered briefly to tell the upward-gazing disciples that Jesus would come back "in like manner."

**Jesus' coming described.** "Soon there appears in the east a small black cloud, about half the size of a man's hand. It is the cloud which surrounds the Saviour. . . . The people of God know this to be the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence they gaze upon it as it draws nearer the earth, becoming lighter and more glorious, until it is a great white cloud. . . . Jesus rides forth as a mighty conqueror. . . . He comes . . . to judge the living and the dead. . . . With anthems of celestial melody the holy angels, a vast, unnumbered throng, attend Him on His way."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 640, 641.

4. How is the One who comes upon the great white cloud described? Rev. 14:14.

---

● "The Son of man." Even though He now has a glorified body, Christ still is recognized as a member of the human race.

● "Having on his head a golden crown." This is a crown of victory. What a contrast to the crown of thorns He wore on the day He died for us. That crown represented the cruelty of those who reject Him. The crown that He wears at the Advent represents the spiritual victory so dearly won for humanity on Calvary's cross. (See Rev. 5:5, 9, 10.)

● "In his hand a sharp sickle." This is the time when the Judge (John 5:22, 23) executes judgment. First He saves those faithful to Him, who loved the truth (2 Thess. 2:10), and whose love motivated and enabled them to keep His commandments (John 14:15). They are so transformed by grace that they are said to be "like Him" (1 John 3:2). The passage next portrays Christ's judgment on those who refuse to demonstrate their loyalty by worshipping Him alone.

5. Another angel comes with a message for Christ. Where does he come from? Rev. 14:15.



6. What terrible and glorious moment of time has come in earth's history? Verse 15, last part.
- 

From here to the end of the chapter, two distinctive events are described. First, the gathering of the righteous, who are likened to ripened grain. Verse 15 portrays the harvest of the earth as fully ripe. The second event (verses 17-20) refers to the gathering of the wicked, who are symbolized by clusters of ripe grapes.

7. What causes the spiritual maturing of the righteous prior to the coming of Christ? Joel 2:23, 28, 29; Hosea 6:3; compare 2 Cor. 3:18.
- 

In Bible lands an early rain fell in seed-sowing time, so that the seed might germinate. The latter rain fell near the close of the growing season, to ripen the grain and prepare it for the sickle.

**The work of the Holy Spirit.** "The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. . . .

"The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

8. The Scriptures speak of a harvest of people symbolized by a harvest of crops. Study these passages, and note the figurative language in each.

- Jer. 8:19, 20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Joel 3:12, 13 \_\_\_\_\_
- John 4:28-30, 35 \_\_\_\_\_
- Matt. 13:30, 39 \_\_\_\_\_

These and other passages point to a *final* harvest of people, with reward for the good and punishment for the evil. Revelation 19 focuses on the same theme.

**Are you praying for the latter rain?** Jesus instructed His first disciples to wait and pray for the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4, 5). The answer came as the Spirit descended upon the believers on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). When the Spirit is poured

upon Christ's waiting, praying people today, the whole earth will be "lightened with his glory" (Rev. 18:1). Never has the church needed this blessing more than now. God is waiting to bestow the Holy Spirit upon us.

**WED** II. THE REAPING OF THE WICKED (Rev. 14:17-20).

9. As the scene changed to the wicked, what special power was given to an angel? What is the meaning? Rev. 14:18.

---

Some are troubled by the thought of a God of wrath and punishment. We recall the Flood (Gen. 6:5-7, 17), the 185,000 Assyrians slain in one night by an angel (2 Kings 19:35), the story of Uzzah touching the ark (1 Chron. 13:10), the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira for lying (Acts 5:1-11). And 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 speaks of retribution upon the wicked in connection with the final harvest of the earth.

**God's wrath explained.** How are we to relate to these examples of wrath, and destruction on the God's part? We know several key facts about our God:

a. He "is love" (1 John 4:8). We say He *has* love. The fact is that He *is* love. He acts always and only out of love. God is "fairness" itself. (See Neh. 9:33; Isa. 45:21.) The great controversy was started by a once-perfect angel who accused a fair God of being unfair.

b. God has given every human being opportunity to be on the right side of the harvest. (See John 3:16.) He cannot give eternal life to those who have rejected the Source of life. The redeemed sing, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. 15:3).

c. There are factors leading to destruction for which God is not responsible:

- God does not arbitrarily cause anyone to be lost. Each person, using his free will, chooses for himself whether he will serve and love God or disobey and be lost eternally. This is Ellen White's meaning when she says, "God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 84.
- God is not responsible for the consequences of a sinful lifestyle. We reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7). "The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result."—*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 235.
- God is not responsible for the destruction caused by Satan and his followers. When people turn away from God, He withdraws His protection and they become victims of the evil one. King Saul is an example.

d. After the close of probation, "God's strange act" (Isa. 28:21) involves judicial punishment of Satan and the wicked. The seven last plagues are by God's direct action ("in them is filled up the wrath of God"—Rev. 15:1; compare 16:5-7). Likewise the destruction of the living wicked at the Second Advent and the final punishment of Satan and all his followers at the end of the millennium is by God's direct action. We must not liken His wrath to human anger. God's wrath is His just and holy reaction to sin.

**God metes out destruction upon Satan and his followers.** "Satan rushes into the midst of his followers and tries to stir up the multitude to action. But fire from God out of heaven is rained upon them, and the great men, and mighty men, the noble, the poor and miserable, are all consumed together. I saw that some were quickly destroyed, while others suffered longer. They were punished according to the deeds done in the body. Some were many days consuming, and just as long as there was a portion of them unconsumed, all the sense of suffering remained. Said the angel, 'The worm of life shall not die; their fire shall not be quenched as long as there is the least particle for it to prey upon.'"—*Early Writings*, p. 294. (See also p. 291; *The Great Controversy*, pp. 661, 672, 673.)

**10. Why are the wicked likened to "the clusters of the vine of the earth?" Rev. 14:18 (last part).**

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"The figure of the two harvests is borrowed from the ancient Palestinian agricultural year, which consists of two main harvests, the grain harvest [in the spring], and the vintage [in the autumn]. . . . Here the vintage represents the wicked gathered for destruction."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 834.



**11. Where are the clusters of ripe grapes said to be cast? Rev. 14:19.**

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Our next lesson will establish that this winepress of God's wrath begins before the Second Coming, when the seven last plagues are poured out.

**12. Where are the grapes in God's winepress trodden? Rev. 14:20 (first part).**

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The allusion here is to the destruction of God's enemies pictured by Old Testament prophets. It was to take place outside the city of Jerusalem. (See Joel 3:12, 13.)

**13. As the picture of destruction comes to an end, note the symbolism John uses. Rev. 14:20 (last part).**

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“The main thought is that the enemies of the church of God are to be completely and finally overthrown. Therefore the church can look forward to full and complete deliverance from all her enemies, and to joyful triumph in the kingdom of God.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 835.

**SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 12-14.** The time period covered is largely the years from 1798 to Christ’s second coming. The events from 1844 to the close of probation are vitally important. John pictures Christ’s church persecuted before 1798, and “the remnant” pursued since then. He describes the papal apostasy of the Middle Ages as the predecessor to the deceptive, miracle-working, last-day religious union (Papacy, apostate Protestantism, spiritism). The spiritual characteristics of end-time believers and the messages designed to prepare them for heaven are clearly spelled out. Finally we are reminded of God’s purpose of redeeming those who believe and destroying those who do not.

**WHERE DO I FIT INTO THE FINAL SCENE?** In the light of Revelation 12-14 write a list of the qualifications you must have to be among those taken to heaven when Jesus comes.

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How can you gain these qualifications? \_\_\_\_\_

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** In connection with Revelation 14:14-20 study chapter 6:14-17 and 19:11-21. Read the chapters entitled “First the Blade, Then the Ear,” and “Tares” in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 62-75.

**SUMMARY:** Harvesttime for our world is the second coming of Jesus, when He will take His faithful ones to heaven and destroy those who have refused His love.

# The Seven Last Plagues

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 15:1—16:21.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:9, 10).

**GOD'S PUNISHMENT OR PROTECTION?** Never has there been such a marked separation between the righteous and the wicked, as will be seen after the close of probation when the seven last plagues are poured out. Great will be the suffering of the wicked, and great the privation of the righteous. The righteous will praise God for His mercy, and the wicked will blaspheme because of His judgments. God promises: "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments" (Rev. 16:15).

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 15:1—16:21

15:1—16:1	16:2-21
Seven angels with seven last plagues	The plagues poured out

**JUDGMENTS AFTER PROBATION'S CLOSE.** The events of Revelation 15 and 16 occur just before the harvest, which we studied last week. These chapters paint a picture of tribulation, which takes place between the close of probation (Rev. 22:11) and the second coming of our Lord. The "close of probation" is the term used to refer to the point at which Christ ceases to intercede in the heavenly sanctuary. The seven last plagues are poured out on the earth between the close of probation and the second coming of Christ.

**Fearful judgments.** These seven plagues are the most fearful judgments ever poured out on the human race. They fall upon those who have declared *final* loyalty to the religious powers that defy God in the last days. Those who have turned their backs on God's Bible truths and His many calls to repent and follow Him will begin to suffer divine retribution after probation closes. God has done all He can for them, and His judgments will then be poured out.

**The faithful sustained.** As we study this week, note carefully the references that are made to God's care for the righteous. The Lord has graciously revealed not only that His faithful people will be sustained both



spiritually and physically through these most difficult times, but also that their trials will help them eliminate all earthly dependencies.



## I. SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (Rev. 15:1—16:1).

Chapter 15 informs us concerning the overall nature of the plagues, who brings them, and from where. We are given the reassurance that not everyone will suffer them.

1. What basic facts are given us concerning the plagues? Why are these plagues said to be “great and marvellous?” Rev. 15:1.

Judgments, punishments, and “plagues” have occurred before in the history of the human race. These plagues are the *last*; there will be no more. However, the lost of all ages still must face their final punishment at the close of the 1,000 years. (See Revelation 20.)

The plagues have far-reaching effects. They fall on sinners the world around, and conclude with the glorious coming of Christ, which to the wicked is as a consuming fire. (See 2 Thess. 2:8; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12.)

2. How do you harmonize the beautiful fact that God is love, with this picture in Revelation 15 and 16 of His terrible wrath?

Note the following facts regarding God’s wrath:

a. **Christ suffered God’s wrath.** “The sword of justice was unsheathed, and the wrath of God *against iniquity* rested upon man’s substitute, Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1103 (italics supplied).

b. **Our choice is important.** “The wrath of God will not fall upon one soul that seeks refuge in Him. God Himself has declared, ‘When I see the blood, I will pass over you.’”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 157.

c. **Rejecting Christ is the greatest sin.** “The death of Christ brings to the rejecter of His mercy the wrath and judgments of God, unmixed with mercy. This is the wrath of the Lamb. But the death of Christ is hope and eternal life to all who receive Him and believe in Him.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1107.

d. **Sinners need not suffer.** Justice demands that the breaking of God’s law must meet its due punishment, as it did in our Substitute, the innocent Christ. But God’s marvelous mercy offers undeserving men and women forgiveness. By accepting Christ’s suffering, they may be free from the ultimate consequences of their sin (Rom. 8:1).

3. What beautiful example of the thoughtfulness of God are we given? Before further unveiling the specifics of the plagues, what note of hope does He first give? Rev. 15:2-4.
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**Final victory for the faithful.** "While John was shown the last great struggles of the church with earthly powers, he was also permitted to behold the final victory and deliverance of the faithful. . . . Looking beyond the smoke and din of the battle, he beheld a company upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having, instead of the mark of the beast, the 'Father's name written in their foreheads.' "—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 752.



4. What is the significance of the two parts of the song of the victorious ones? Rev. 15:3.
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**The song of Moses** is a reference to the song of deliverance that Israel sang after they had crossed the Red Sea and were safe from Egyptian oppression. (See Ex. 15:1-21.) Standing on the sea of glass, the redeemed will sing of deliverance from the tyranny of "Babylon."

**The song of the Lamb** is the song of praise the redeemed sing to Christ for His deliverance from sin. They exalt both the Son and the Father.

5. What attributes of God do the redeemed extol? Rev. 15:4.
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6. What is the significance of the place from which come the angels who have the plagues? Rev. 15:5, 6.
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7. Who gave these vials or bowls, full of the wrath of God, to the seven angels? Rev. 15:7.
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8. What conclusive proof does John give that probation's hour will be over at this crucial point in history? Rev. 15:8; compare 7:3; 8:5; 22:11.
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**The end of mediation.** "Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that the wrath of God could not come until Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place, laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance. Then Jesus will step out

from between the Father and man, and God will keep silence no longer, but pour out His wrath on those who have rejected His truth. . . .

“I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues.”—*Early Writings*, p. 36.

“When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.



**II. THE PLAGUES POURED OUT (Rev. 16:2-21).**

Analyze the following parallels between the seven trumpets, and the seven last plagues.

<p><b>The Seven Trumpets</b> Rev. 8:7—11:19</p>	<p><b>The Seven Last Plagues</b> Rev. 15:1—16:21</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hail, fire, and blood on earth (8:7)</li> <li>2. Great mountain burning with fire cast into sea (8:8)</li> <li>3. Burning star falls on one third of rivers (8:10, 11)</li> <li>4. One third of sun, moon, and stars smitten (8:12)</li> <li>5. Smoke from pit, locusts with scorpion’s tails (9:1-11)</li> <li>6. Four angels loosed who were bound in Euphrates (9:14-21)</li> <li>7. Temple opened, judgment, then Christ’s coming (11:15-19)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On earth, sores on all with the mark (16:2)</li> <li>2. Sea becomes blood (16:3)</li> <li>3. Rivers become blood (16:4)</li> <li>4. Sun scorches men (16:8, 9)</li> <li>5. Darkness on seat of beast (16:10)</li> <li>6. Euphrates dried up; three unclean spirits lead to Armageddon (16:12-16)</li> <li>7. “It is done”; then thunders, lightnings, earthquake, and hail (16:17-21)</li> </ol>

Take a pen or red pencil and tie together with lines all the similarities that exist between these two lists.

**9. Where was the first plague poured out, what was its nature, and upon whom did it fall? Rev. 16:2.**

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Are we to understand these plagues as literal or symbolic? The plagues on Egypt were literal. (See Ex. 7:20—12:31.) People suffered from boils, and were “plagued” with frogs, lice, flies, locusts, and all the rest. However, the prophecy of the trumpets employs many symbols. The plagues of Revelation 16 may be regarded as literal events with symbolic significance.

“The language of Revelation is usually symbolic, often impressionistic. The language describing the plagues may well be nonliteral. But it loses little of its force if taken as it reads. ‘Foul and evil sores,’ ‘blood of a dead man,’ ‘men gnawed their tongues in anguish,’ ‘great hailstones, heavy as a hundredweight’ are serious enough taken literally. The ‘darkness’ ‘on the throne of the beast’ and the ‘foul spirits like frogs’ that come out of the mouths of ‘dragon,’ ‘beast,’ and ‘false prophet’ require some interpretation, but they are scarcely mysterious at this stage in our study of Revelation.”—C. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 2, p. 430 (italics his).



Are the righteous free from suffering during the plagues? “The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. . . . While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 629. (See Isa. 33:15, 16; 41:17.)

Will the plagues cover the entire earth? “These plagues are not universal, or the inhabitants of the earth would be wholly cut off.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 628. It seems clear that some of the plagues will be here, some there. But all the world will suffer from some of them. “The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

10. What effect will the second plague have on international relations? Rev. 16:3.

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11. Upon what is the third plague poured? What do you think the result will be? Rev. 16:4.

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Pure water is essential for the continuance of life. It is assuring to recall the promise of the prophet Isaiah, to the righteous, “His waters shall be sure” (Isa. 33:16).

Note why God gives the wicked blood to drink (Rev. 16:6).

12. Against what is the fourth plague directed, and what are the results? Rev. 16:8, 9.

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“The prophets thus describe the condition of the earth at this fearful time: ‘The land mourneth; . . . because the harvest of the field is perished. . . . All the trees of the field are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men.’ . . . ‘How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 628. (See Amos 8:11.)

13. The fifth plague is poured out where, and with what results? Rev. 16:10, 11.

“Seat” here means “throne.” “ ‘The beast’ here represents primarily the papacy in its revived state, not so much in its religious aspect as in its assumed role of a world power dominant over other world powers.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 841, 842.



14. The interpretation of the sixth plague has been the subject of much discussion. Upon what is this plague poured out? Rev. 16:12-16.

Throughout their history, Adventists have suggested one of two differing interpretations of these verses. Note the following review.

Rev. 16:12-16	Literal Approach	Symbolic Approach
“The great river Euphrates”	Ottoman empire	People over whom mystical Babylon holds sway
“Water thereof was dried up”	Gradual dissolution of Ottoman empire	Withdrawal of support from Babylon
“Kings of the east”	Nations of the Orient	Christ, and those accompanying Him
“Three unclean spirits” from “dragon,” “beast,” “false prophet”	Paganism or spiritism, papacy, and apostate Protestantism	Same as second column
“Go forth” to gather kings of earth “to the battle”	Summon nations, both political and military, to battle	Same as second column
“He gathered them” “into a place called . . . Armageddon”	Literal valley of Megiddo in northern Palestine	Last battle of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, fought on this earth.

The *SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, pages 842-846, presents a detailed discussion of these views and verses.

## 15. Who are the blessed ones? Rev. 16:15.

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Because Christ comes like a thief He is unexpected by the world. But the happy ones during the final judgments are those who have made preparation and are ready and waiting. They are clothed with Christ's righteousness. They are "steadfast in faith and character and wholly loyal to God."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 845. (See 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Rev. 3:5.)

## 16. Answer these questions about the seventh plague. Rev. 16:17-21.

The time? \_\_\_\_\_

What happens? \_\_\_\_\_

What is "the great city?" \_\_\_\_\_

Divine judgment has come. Unbelievable opposition to God, earthly tumults, horrible disasters and wars, are interrupted by the arrival of Christ from heaven.

**WILL MY FAITH HOLD UNDER PRESSURE?** Complete the following open-ended sentences:

- Satan tries to keep me insensitive to spiritual issues by:

\_\_\_\_\_

- My plan to keep spiritually alive and alert during these dangerous days is:

\_\_\_\_\_

- I commit myself to warning others of the events about to occur in our world by:

\_\_\_\_\_

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Psalm 91 and Isaiah 4:2-6. Read the chapter, "The Time of Trouble," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 613-634. [There is a fine review of the positions Adventists have taken on Armageddon, in *Ministry*, November and December issues, 1967, by D. E. Mansell.]

**SUMMARY:** The seven last plagues are poured out by God upon the wicked after the close of probation, before the second coming of Jesus. Those whose refuge is the Lord will be preserved to see Jesus come.

# Come Out of Her, My People

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 17:1—18:24.

**SAB (PM)** **MEMORY TEXT:** "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

**GOD'S LAST CALL.** Apostasy reaches its climax in the time period studied in this week's lesson. Satan marshals every evil force, both political and religious, against God and His people. God's final call (Rev. 18:4), which takes place before probation closes, gathers His people into a unified body. When the fall of Babylon is complete Christ makes ready to come.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 17:1—18:24

17:1-6	17:8-18	18:1-24
The woman and the beast	Explanation of the vision	Deliverance and lament

**THE JUDGMENT OF THE WHORE.** This week we take a closer look at the political and religious conditions that will exist at the time when Satan works through the united efforts of kings and religions in an attempt to bring about the annihilation of God's people. The entire world will be arrayed against them.

Revelation 17 divides into two sections. First, there is the symbolic vision that John saw, in verses 3-6. Second, verses 8-18 record the explanation. The vision itself is mostly about the judgment of the impure woman who is seen sitting on a beast. The explanation includes ten verses about the beast, and only one verse about the woman.

Even though detailed interpretation of the chapter has its difficulties, the overall picture is clear. The vision is of critical importance to our understanding of the confederacy of evil that will exist at the end of time. The final deliverance of God's people results from their faithfulness despite the forces ranged against them.

### I. THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST (Rev. 17:1-6).

1. What is unique about the way in which this new vision is revealed to John? Rev. 17:1.

“The identification of this angel as one of the seven plague-bearing angels of chs. 15 and 16 implies that the information about to be imparted to John is related to the seven last plagues. This relationship is confirmed by the fact that the announced topic of this chapter—‘the judgment of the great whore’—takes place under the seventh plague.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 849.

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**2. Who is the subject of “judgment” in this chapter? Rev. 17:1.**

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The judgment against the harlot is mentioned in Revelation 17:1, 16. The judgment against the beast is the subject of verses 8 and 11. Judgment upon the seven heads and ten horns of the beast is referred to in verses 10, 12, and 14. Thus God’s judgment against apostasy is a major theme in the chapter. Sentence is passed against any course of action that is opposed to God’s will.

**3. Describe the differences between the woman of Revelation 12:1 and the woman pictured in Revelation 17:1, 5. What kind of institution is represented by each woman?**

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The woman of Revelation 17 represents “prostituted” beliefs, organized and open opposition to God’s truths, and to God’s people. Revelation 12:1 depicts the true Christian church as a virtuous woman. Revelation 17 symbolizes the ugliness and disloyalty of end-time “Babylon” by the vision of a harlot.

**4. How widespread is the evil influence of the harlot woman? Rev. 17:1 (last part), 2, 3, 15.**

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In Revelation 17:1 the woman is pictured as seated on “many waters.” Verse 15 explains that the waters represent the masses of humanity in the nations of earth. Verse 2 states that kings place their authority and resources at her disposal. Verse 3 shows the woman seated on a beast—Satan and his earthly representatives. The picture of her worldwide power and the source from which it is derived leaves us marveling as it did the apostle John (verse 6).

**5. With what have the kings of earth and its inhabitants been made drunk? Rev. 17:2.**

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Compare Revelation 14:8 and 18:3. “Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 61. Man’s power of reason and



judgment in spiritual things is benumbed; he walks into the harlot's errors, no longer able to discern between right and wrong. He is bewitched by both the woman and the devil.

- MON** 6. Where does John see the woman, and what is the significance of the beast's color? Rev. 17:3.

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**Wilderness.** The true church was pictured as in the wilderness for 1260 years (Rev. 12:6, 14). During the period from A.D. 538 to 1798 the church of God was in the wilderness. Through the forces of apostasy, the devil sought to destroy God's people.

The whole earth will become a literal wilderness as the result of the seven last plagues. The "wilderness" of Revelation 17:3 represents very difficult times and conditions for God's people.

**A scarlet-colored beast.** "The chief difference between the beast of ch. 13 and that of ch. 17 is that in the former, which is identified with the papacy, no distinction is made between the religious and political aspects of papal power, whereas in the latter the two are distinct—the beast representing political powers and the woman, religious power."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 851.

The color of the beast is a representation of sin. (See Isa. 1:18; Rev. 12:3.)

7. What is implied by the symbolism of the woman's golden cup? Rev. 17:4.

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The cup is beautiful, but full of false doctrine and deception. The suggestion is that it represents the overpowering attractiveness of the falsehoods that the woman presents to the world. Her seductiveness and moral impurity are represented by the purple and scarlet clothes she is wearing. She has assumed the colors of royalty, but in actuality she is a prostitute. What a contrast to the picture of the bride of the Lamb described in Revelation 19:7, 8!

8. If the woman of Revelation 12:1 has a name, it must be, "the faithful church of the Lamb of God." How does this contrast with the name of the harlot woman in Revelation 17:5?

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"'Babylon the great' in the book of Revelation designates, in a special sense, the united apostate religions at the close of time. . . . Babylon is referred to as 'great' in view of the fact that this chapter deals most particularly with Satan's great final effort to secure the allegiance of the human race through religion."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 851, 852.

“The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 588.

“The daughters of this ‘mother’ thus represent the various religious bodies that constitute apostate Protestantism.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 852.

9. Who are the special objects of the wrath of this great religious apostasy? Verse 6.

**The cries and songs of the martyrs.** Read Revelation 6:9-11, and 20:4. The cries of the souls under the altar have never died out. But the reward of martyrs for God is beyond our imagination. They will sit on thrones with Christ.

TUE

## II. EXPLANATION OF THE VISION (Rev. 17:8-18).

10. What are we told regarding the history of this mysterious beast? Rev. 17:3, 8, 11.

Consider several views that Seventh-day Adventist expositors have presented:

“The beast that was”	“and is not”	“and yet is [to be]”
Pagan Rome	Interval between end of pagan persecution and beginning of papal persecution	Papal Rome
Period of beast and its seven heads	Interval between the wounding of seventh head and revival of the beast as its eighth head	Revival of the beast when it becomes the eighth
Satan through the ages	The millennium of Revelation 20	Postmillennium, brief work of Satan, then his destruction

11. Compare the work of the leopardlike beast (Rev. 13:2, 3, 8) with the work of the beast and the harlot. Rev. 17:8 (second part).

“In certain respects this beast resembles the great red dragon of ch. 12:3, and in others the leopardlike beast of ch. 13:1, 2 . . . . The context makes the latter relationship appear to be closer.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 851.

**Who have their names retained in the book of life?** We must commit ourselves to a deep, personal relationship with Christ to have our names in the book of life. (See Heb. 12:23.) By His grace we must be overcomers of temptation, sin, and deception, to have our names retained in that wonderful book of God. (See Rev. 3:5.) A knowledge of Bible truth is vital (2 Tim. 3:15-17). A love of the truth must be developed and maintained (2 Thess. 2:10). Our “first love” experience cannot be allowed to fade (Rev. 2:4, 5). We must have adequate “oil” always at hand, to keep our “lamps” burning brightly (Matt. 25:1-13). Then no deception can enter, and we can rest assuredly on the promises of our Lord for eternal salvation.

**WED** 12. What are we told about the heads of the beast? Rev. 17:9, 10.

“These apparently represent seven major political powers through which Satan has sought to destroy the people and work of God on earth.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 854.

**What major views have been advanced as to their identity?**

a. Some see the heads as representing opposition to God and His people throughout history, without any identification of specific political powers.

b. Others identify seven specific nations that are mentioned in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The first four are the nations of Daniel 2 and 7: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The fifth head is said to represent the same power as represented by the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8, and the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13 (the papacy). The sixth head is thought to be revolutionary France (Rev. 11:7). The seventh head is identified as the second beast of Revelation 13, the United States of America.

c. Another view considers the heads from the perspective of John’s day (A.D. 96). The five fallen nations are identified as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The “one is” refers to Pagan Rome. The nation to come is the Papacy.

d. Another view identifies the heads with the beasts of prophecy. Five are fallen (passed off the stage of action): lion, bear, leopard, non-descript, dragon. The dragon (Rev. 12), who is primarily Satan, still functions, of course, but not in his capacity as a direct antagonist against the *person* of Jesus Christ. The “one is” refers to the leopardlike beast of Revelation 13 (the papacy). The one who “is not yet come” is the lamblike beast of Revelation 13:11-17.

13. With the above in mind, how do we interpret the statement that the beast itself is the “eighth,” “is of the seven,” and “goeth into perdition”? Rev. 17:11.

**“Even he is the eighth.** Literally, ‘also himself is an eighth.’ This is the beast in its revived state, in the ‘yet is’ period following its ascent out of the ‘bottomless pit’ . . . . Some consider the eighth power to be the papacy alone; others suggest that it represents Satan. Those who take the latter view point out that at the time here indicated Satan attempts to impersonate Christ . . . .

**“Of the seven.** Literally, ‘out of the seven.’ The beast itself—‘the eighth’—was, it would seem, the same beast to which the seven heads had been attached. . . . Absence in the Greek of the definite article before the word ‘eighth’ suggests that the beast itself was the real authority back of the seven heads, and that it is therefore more than merely another head, the eighth in a series. It is their summation and climax—the beast itself.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 856.

#### 14. How should we interpret the ten horns? Rev. 17:12-14, 16, 17?

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**Ten Kingdoms United Against God.** Uriah Smith saw the horns as the same ten kingdoms of Daniel 7:24, the divisions of the Roman Empire which became the modern nations of the West. (See Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation* [Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1944], p. 712.)

The indications are that they represent modern nations that give their political support to the religious demands of “Babylon” (verse 13). Verse 16 indicates that ultimately the nations represented by the ten horns turn against the harlot because they recognize that she has deceived them. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 654-656.)



### III. DELIVERANCE AND LAMENT (Rev. 18:1-24).

The timing of Revelation 18 is very important. In verse 1, John says, “And after these things.” After the description of what he saw in chapter 17 he continues with more information from the Lord. Revelation 18:1-4 must focus on the period just prior to the close of probation, for people are invited to respond to the call of God.

Verse 1 speaks of “another angel.” This angel unites his voice with the three angels of Revelation 14:6-12. The relationship between this passage and Revelation 14:8 is immediately apparent.

#### 15. What hints do you see here that this message is connected with the time of the loud cry and the latter rain? Rev. 18:1.

---

**Pentecost repeated.** “The angel who unites in the proclamation of the third angel’s message is to lighten the whole earth with his glory. A work of worldwide extent and unwonted power is here foretold. . . . The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given

at its close, for the ripening of the harvest.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 611.

“The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it swells to a loud cry.”—*Early Writings*, p. 277. (Compare *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 118.)

**16. How complete is Babylon’s final fall? Rev. 18:2, 3.**

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**17. Specifically, to whom is God’s final call made? Rev. 18:4.**

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Compare God’s call for Israel to come out of literal Babylon. (Isa. 48:20; Jer. 51:45.) “As God’s people formerly came out of literal Babylon in order that they might return to Jerusalem, so His people today are called out of mystical Babylon in order that they may be accounted worthy to enter the New Jerusalem.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 861.

“God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out.”—*The Great Controversy*, 604. (Compare p. 606.)

“As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power [the third angel’s message], the Lord will work through humble instruments . . . . Thousands upon thousands will listen who have never heard words like these.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 606.

“God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

**18. As God thus makes His final call and completes His work, what great lament does the world make over fallen Babylon? How does God look at her and what does He do to her? Rev. 18:5-19.**

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**19. Why are holy apostles and prophets invited to rejoice over Babylon’s final and complete fall? Rev. 18:20-24; compare Jer. 51:48, 49.**

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**FALSE VALUES** are intoxicating people everywhere. Circle the three false philosophies or doctrines that you consider to be the most damaging. Can you list others?

1. True freedom is doing what comes naturally.
2. All laws are relative—nothing is absolute.
3. Humans are each a little part of God. We are God.
4. The Bible is largely myth and folklore.
5. There is no theological unity in the Scriptures.
6. If my good deeds outweigh my bad deeds, I’ll be saved.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** As a review, compare the dragon of Revelation 12 with the first beast of chapter 13, and the scarlet beast of chapter 17. Read "The Final Warning," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 603-612. Also read the short chapters, "The Sins of Babylon," "The Loud Cry," and "The Third Message Closed," in *Early Writings*, pp. 273-282.

**SUMMARY:** Revelation 17 and 18 both give us, not only a clear picture of what must happen in terms of world events and movements but also enough insight into fulfilling Prophecy and apostasy to know that God's patience will not wait much longer. The world is almost ready. God is ready. Are we ready?



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# The Two Suppers

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Revelation 19:1-21.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God" (Revelation 19:9).

**YOU ARE INVITED TO DINE.** The two suppers of Revelation 19 represent the final destinies of earth's two classes of people. Every human being has the choice in this life of dining with Christ or being eternally rejected.

OVERVIEW: Revelation 19:1-21	
19:1-10	19:11-21
Rejoicing and the supper of the Lamb	Christ's return and the supper of the birds

**THE KING ESTABLISHES HIS KINGDOM.** In Revelation 19 the books of Daniel and Revelation, with their many lines of prophecy, reach their climax. The hopes of God's people, which have been feeble at times, now are rewarded. For instance, Daniel's promise, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed" (Dan. 2:44), finally is fulfilled. The kingdom is "given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (Dan. 7:27). When Christ comes to establish this kingdom "every eye shall see him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Rev. 1:7).

Revelation 19 records singing and wailing. Angels and saints, even a voice from the throne, rejoice as the pre-Advent judgment comes to a close and the decisions of the heavenly court are carried out. All last-day apostasy and apostatizers are destroyed. God is vindicated as He executes His final decisions, based on the choices people have made in regard to loyalty and worship. God has done everything possible to save every person who has ever lived. He sent His Son, the Lamb of God, who now returns as **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**





# I. REJOICING IN HEAVEN AND THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB (Rev. 19:1-10).

Chapter 19 begins with the words "And after these things." After witnessing the vision of the two previous chapters, John heard singing and rejoicing in heaven following the judgment of the harlot and those who had joined her deceptions and accepted her false doctrines. This first part of the chapter is the climax of what John had just seen. He too must have broken out in song on that lonely island of Patmos, as he heard heaven's glorious anthem of praise.

1. Study the following verses of Revelation 19, and make a list of those whom John hears singing and rejoicing in heaven.

Verse 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 4 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 5 \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 6 \_\_\_\_\_

2. What special term is used in the expression of praise? Rev. 19: 1, 3, 4, 6.

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The English term here *Alleluia*, originates from the Hebrew, *halelu-Yah*, a combination of two words; one meaning, "to praise," the other being a shortened form of "Yahweh." This is the only place where this word appears in the New Testament. "The entire universe unites in acclaiming the right of God to universal sovereignty."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 871. "Satan's work of ruin is forever ended."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 673.

3. How is God described in this anthem of praise and tribute? Rev. 19:1, 2.

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At the Second Coming, God's true and righteous judgments will be seen clearly by all the universe. They will be seen even more clearly following the examination of the records of the wicked during the millennium, and after Satan makes his personal testimony of God's fairness outside the New Jerusalem at the close of the millennium. (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 670.) Anthems of praise to God will be sung throughout all eternity. All will be fully satisfied that God is everything that His Word declares Him to be.



4. What work that had been requested for centuries has now come to an end? Rev. 19:2.

**The pre-Advent judgment.** The metaphorical cry of the martyrs was, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not *judge* and *avenge* our blood?" (Rev. 6:10). Their judgment then took place in heaven. While they were still in their graves, "white robes were given unto every one of them" (verse 11). White robes can be given to dead people only in the sense that they are declared righteous by virtue of their relationship with Christ at the time of their death. The giving of the robes to the dead martyrs many years after their deaths represents the pre-Advent judgment of the dead.

The second half of the martyrs' prayer was not answered until God had avenged their deaths. By judging and punishing "Babylon" (Revelation 17; 18), the Lord avenged the deaths of the martyrs. For this reason the rejoicing recorded in Revelation 19:2 specifically mentions the complete fulfillment of the martyrs' prayer: "For he hath *judged* the great whore . . . and hath *avenged* the blood of his servants at her hand."

Revelation 19 is written from the perspective of the conclusion of the pre-Advent judgment. Looking back, saints and angels praise the Lord for the decisions of the heavenly court and for executing those decisions by punishing spiritual Babylon.

**5. What other reason is given for the great rejoicing in heaven? Rev. 19:7-9?**

**The marriage of the Lamb is the pre-advent judgment.** These verses (Rev. 19:7, 8) enable us to determine the time and the nature of "the marriage of the Lamb." A literal translation reads: ". . . the marriage of the Lamb *came*, and His bride *made* herself *ready* [or "His bride prepared herself"]. It was *given* to her so that she might be clothed with pure, shining linen, for the linen is the righteous deeds of the saints."

The making ready occupied a period of time, the same period occupied by the marriage of the Lamb. The tense of the Greek verb translated "made ready" may refer to the process of making ready as a whole, or to the end result of that process. The gift of the fine linen came as the result of the process of making ready. Character purity at the end of a process of making ready is the intention of the passage. The "righteous deeds" of the saints are the result of their reception of the gift of Christ's righteousness. (See 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 8:28, 29.)

The "marriage of the Lamb" during which the "bride" made ready was the pre-Advent judgment of the martyrs (Rev. 6:10) and of Babylon, which culminated in the destruction of Babylon and the final avenging of God's servants (Rev. 19:2).

**Righteous acts reveal character.** "The righteous acts . . . of the saints are regarded by our author as the manifestation of the inner life and as practically identical with character—the character a man takes with him when he leaves this life."—R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920, 1970), p. 128.

" . . . [*dikaioma*] is used of members of the community in Rev. 19:8 . . . 'the righteous deeds of the saints.'"—Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological*

*Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), p. 222.

“The white linen represents the good deeds of God’s dedicated people. That is to say, it is character which forms the robe which arrays the Bride of Christ.”—William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), vol. 2, p. 224.

“While the wedding garment is a divine gift, this is no arbitrary or formal matter but a dynamic one. The saints who are summoned to the Lamb’s feast are those who have exercised steadfast endurance, who have kept the commandments of God, and have persevered in their faith in Jesus (Rev. 14:12).—G. E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), p. 249.

**TUE** 6. Who is the heavenly Bridegroom? Rev. 19:7; Matt. 25:6.

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7. Who is Christ’s bride? Rev. 21:2, 9, 10; Eph. 5:23, 25; 2 Cor. 11:2?

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The bride is pictured as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, because it is the home of the redeemed saints. The idea of a “city,” or a “church,” can be meaningful only as we consider the people who comprise it. The “wife” of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7) is the “saints” who receive the fine linen (verse 8).

In Scripture the bride/wife symbol is used in more than one sense. Usually the symbol depicts God’s church. In Revelation 21 the city is represented as the bride to make possible the imagery of a marriage with God’s people as the guests. However, the glory of the city is the righteousness of the saints who are represented elsewhere as the wife of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7, 8; compare Isa. 52:1).

**The pre-Advent marriage.** “The proclamation, ‘Behold, the Bridegroom cometh,’ in the summer of 1844, led thousands to expect the immediate advent of the Lord. At the appointed time the Bridegroom came, not to the earth, as the people expected, but to the Ancient of Days in heaven, to the marriage, the reception of His kingdom. ‘They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.’ They were not to be present in person at the marriage; for it takes place in heaven, while they are upon the earth. The followers of Christ are to ‘wait for their Lord, when He will *return from the wedding*.’ Luke 12:36. But they are to understand His work, and to follow Him by faith as He goes in before God. It is in this sense that they are said to go in to the marriage.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 427.

**The dual meaning of “marriage.”** The Greek word for “marriage” (*gamos*) used in Matthew 25:10 may mean “marriage ceremony,” or “marriage banquet.” In 1844 those represented by the five wise virgins entered by faith with Christ to the marriage ceremony, the pre-Advent

judgment. The same parable applies to the second coming of Jesus, when those who are ready (the five wise virgins) will be taken to the Bridegroom's home for the marriage supper of the Lamb.



8. Christ has made clear that there is a very special requirement for all who would attend His final wedding ceremony. What do you understand the wedding garment to be? Matt. 22:10-13.

---

First, Christ supplies to all a wedding garment; and second, *it must be worn* by every guest. (Review Isa. 61:10; Zech. 3:3, 4; Rev. 3:5, 18.)

**The honor of your presence.** "By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 307. (See also p. 310.)

This parable introduces us to the fact that not only is there need for true Christian character but also there is an investigation of each guest *before* the wedding. Acceptance or rejection is on the basis of the quality of character possessed by each. *Then* comes "the rejoicing of that day when He shall bring home His bride to the Father's house, and the redeemed with the Redeemer shall sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 151.

9. Who will be present at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Rev. 19:9.

---

Since there will be a resurrection of the just (John 5:29) at Jesus' coming, and the living righteous will be caught up with them to meet the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16, 17), the marriage supper guests will come from all ages since the time of Adam and Eve.

10. How did this marvelous news affect John? How did the angel react? What did the angel's statement mean? Rev. 19:10?

---

The term *fellowservant* suggests that human beings have the privilege of being co-workers, companions, on earth with holy angels. (See Zech. 3:7; compare Heb. 1:14.)

**The spirit of prophecy.** The angel stated, "I am . . . of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 19:10). The parallel passage, Revelation 22:9, records the angel as saying, "I am . . . of thy brethren the prophets." John was a prophet. Throughout history, his "brethren the prophets" were those who had received special revelations from God to be given to the world. Christ has spoken through His chosen agents in both Old and

New Testament times. They gave to mankind Christ's "testimony," which, by various direct means, Heaven had communicated to them. (See 1 Peter 1:10, 11; 2 Peter 1:21.) The term *spirit of prophecy* refers to special divine revelation, regardless of when it is manifested in earth's history. (See 1 Cor. 12:10.) The Lord has seen fit to give this gift to His "remnant" as an additional voice to call present-day people to the supper that is waiting in heaven.

The reason why John was to worship God rather than the angel is that the angel in testifying to Jesus was only a spokesman for God, not God Himself.

**Are you following the Spirit of Prophecy counsels given through Bible prophets and through the Lord's chosen messenger in the last days?**



## II. CHRIST'S RETURN AND THE SUPPER OF THE BIRDS (Rev. 19:11-21).

11. Read John's dramatic symbolic picture of the second coming of Christ. Rev. 19:11-16. List two Bible references that describe the same event:

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John sees heaven opened. Jesus comes, and the battle of Armageddon takes place. This is the "great day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:14; compare verse 19; 14:17-20).

**Elements Awaken to Battle.** "Providence has a part to act in the battle of Armageddon. When the earth is lighted with the glory of the angel of Revelation eighteen, the religious elements, good and evil, will awake from slumber, and the armies of the living God will take the field."—Ellen White manuscript 175, 1890.

"The battle of Armageddon is soon to be fought. He on whose vesture is written the name, King of kings and Lord of lords is soon to lead forth the armies of heaven on white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white. . . . [Revelation 19:11-21 quoted]."—Ellen White manuscript 172, 1899.

12. Make a list of the descriptive titles and attributes of Christ given in Revelation 19:11-16.
- 

Our coming King deserves every name and tribute in this passage. Sinful men, even church leaders, have blasphemed Him. Revelation 1:7 says that some of them will be raised to see His coming.

13. In what symbolic terms does John describe the destruction of the wicked at the second coming of Jesus? Rev. 19:17-21.

14. What classes of people are destroyed at Jesus' coming? Who is not destroyed? Rev. 19:20, 21; 20:2.

Review such Scriptures as 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; 2 Peter 3:10, along with Revelation 19:20. James White suggested that there will be "two lakes of fire" (*Review and Herald*, Jan. 21, 1862), one at the Second Coming, the other at the close of the millennium. At the Second Coming the earthly forces of evil are consumed. At the close of the millennium, Satan and his demons are also included (Rev. 20:10).

"At the coming of Christ the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of His glory. Christ takes His people to the City of God, and the earth is emptied of its inhabitants."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 657.

#### MEDITATE AND APPLY:

- Am I letting the sounds of this world drown out the sound of the soon coming of Christ? If so, how can I change that by the way I live this week? What aspects of my lifestyle must go? What must I put in their place?
- What positive steps can I take to find relief from my temptation to blame God for the problems in my life? Because Jesus quoted Scripture to answer arguments against the character of God, what Bible statements can I memorize to remind myself of God's infinite concern for me? (Some suggestions, Isa. 54:9, 10; Jer. 31:3.)
- Where do I fit in God's plan of enlightening people regarding His willingness to save?

(FR)

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** In connection with Revelation 19:7, 8, study the "white robes" passages in the book of Revelation: 3:2-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9; 12:1; 15:6; 22:14. Read the chapter, "In the Holy of Holies," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 423-432, and note the clear harmonizing of several scriptures in connection with the marriage supper of the Lamb. Also read, "The Third Message Closed," in *Early Writings*, pp. 279-282.

**SUMMARY:** Revelation 19 presents two possible destinies open to earth's inhabitants. If the destiny of the lost seems severe, we must remember that they choose it. Opposition to God cannot go unchecked forever. Noah's flood tells us that. In love God saves; in love He destroys. Because "God is love," all still have an open invitation to His marriage supper.

# Just and True Are Thy Ways

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 20:1-15.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).

**WHY IS THE MILLENNIUM IMPORTANT?** A careful study of the one thousand years of Revelation 20 is essential for several reasons: (1) It enhances our understanding of the final vindication of God's character at the end of the great controversy; (2) indicates the reward of the righteous, and their work after the second coming of Jesus; and (3) correct understanding of the millennium keeps us from unscriptural teachings, such as the doctrine of a premillennial rapture, and the theory of a "second chance" during the millennium.

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 20:1-15

20:1-3, 6	20:4-6	20:7-15
The millennium begins	During the millennium	The millennium closes

**FOUR VIEWS OF THE MILLENNIUM.** Since the time of Christ four major views of the millennium have been taught.

**Historic premillennialism**, accepted by many since the time of the early Christian church, is the view that Christ's coming will occur before the millennium. Seventh-day Adventists are historic premillennialists, with the exception that they believe that the righteous will spend the millennium in heaven. The vast majority of historic premillennialists have believed that the righteous will spend the millennium on this earth.

**Dispensationalist premillennialism** agrees that the coming of Christ is prior to the millennium, but teaches that the Christian saints are "raptured" secretly seven years before the glorious coming of Christ. In the seven years that follow, the great tribulation occurs, during which 144,000 converted Jews preach the gospel. During the millennium, Christ will reign over the earth from Jerusalem, and the Old Testament prophecies regarding the complete restoration of Israel as a nation will be fulfilled literally.

The present-day revival of Israel as a nation is seen as a prelude to the supremacy of the Jews as the chosen nation during the millennium. This view, often called pretribulationism, or Darbyism, is widely accepted today. It was originated by J. N. Darby and the Plymouth Brethren in England in the period 1825-1827.

**Amillennialism** is the view popularized by Augustine (A.D. 354-430), the famous Bishop of Hippo Regius in North Africa. In general this view states that there is no millennium immediately before or after the second coming of Christ. The millennium is seen as symbolic of the period of Christian church history, during which Christ reigns with the saints whose spirits went to heaven at death and with the leaders of the church on earth. Satan is thought to be bound since the cross. The first resurrection is spiritual, the resurrection of the soul at the new birth. The second resurrection is the general resurrection of all the righteous and wicked at the second coming.

**Postmillennialism** teaches that conditions on earth spiritually, morally, and ethically will improve so dramatically that eventually the world will enjoy a "millennium" of peace and prosperity before the second coming of Jesus. The millennium will not be a literal thousand years, but an indefinite period of unprecedented international good will and unity. It will come to an end at the second advent of Christ when the general resurrection of both righteous and wicked will take place. This view has been discredited by the tumultuous events of the twentieth century.

We need to restudy the subject in Revelation 20, so that we are doubly sure of where we stand.

SUN

## I. THE MILLENNIUM BEGINS (Rev. 20:1-3, 6).

<b>The Millennium (1,000 years between the two resurrections)</b>				
<b>Present</b>	<b>First Resurrection</b>	<b>Millennium</b>	<b>Second Resurrection</b>	<b>Eternity</b>
Christian Age	Christ comes for saints	<b>Saints reign with Christ in Heaven</b>	Christ comes with saints	Eternity
Last Days	Righteous dead raised	<b>Earth desolate; Satan bound</b>	Holy City descends	New earth state
Closing Message of Rev. 14:6-14	Righteous living caught up		Wicked dead raised	Saints forever possess the kingdom
	Saints taken to heaven		Satan loosed	
	Wicked slain		Wicked destroyed	
	Satan Bound			



- 1. What happens to the living wicked at the second coming of Jesus? Rev. 19:20, 21; compare 2 Thess. 1:7, 8; 2:8.**
- 

There is no record in Scripture of a general resurrection of the wicked at the second coming of Jesus. There will be a very limited special resurrection of some wicked and some righteous a little before the second coming of Jesus. (See Dan. 12:2; Rev. 1:7; Mark 14:62; *The Great Controversy*, p. 637; *Early Writings*, p. 285.) Because the living wicked will be destroyed at His coming, we must conclude that throughout the millennium there will be no wicked inhabitants on this earth. (See also Rev. 6:14-17.)

- 2. Who are raised from the dead at the second coming of Jesus? 1 Thess. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54.**
- 

“The dead in Christ” (1 Thess. 4:16) include the righteous who have died from the time of Abel to the end of time. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . They that are Christ’s [are raised] at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:22, 23). That “all” includes the Old Testament saints, as well as the New Testament ones.

- 3. Where are the resurrected righteous and the living righteous taken at the second coming of Jesus? John 14:1-3; Rev. 7:9-17.**
- 

Jesus identified the home of the saved after His return as “my Father’s house” to which He was going “to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). He said that He was coming back to take us to the place to which He was about to ascend.

John saw the redeemed immediately after their redemption was complete standing “before the throne of God,” and serving “him day and night in his temple” (Rev. 7:15). The throne of God within His temple is in heaven. (See Rev. 4:1, 2; 11:19; 15:5). Not until the end of the millennium is God’s throne established on earth. That fact will be established later in this lesson.

**MON**

- 4. Because the wicked are dead, and the righteous are in heaven, how many human beings are on this earth during the millennium? What is the state of the earth at that time? Rev. 16:18, 20; 2 Peter 3:10; Jer. 4:23-27.**
- 

The great, final, unprecedented earthquake undoubtedly will leave the world in a state of chaos and destruction. Jeremiah was predicting the coming of the Babylonians to destroy apostate Israel and their land. But his vi-

sion obviously applies to the end of time, when the events of his day were to be repeated on a cosmic scale.

Throughout the writings of the Old Testament prophets there are many passages that speak of destruction because of sin on the day of the Lord, followed by a period of desolation, followed by a time of restoration. Although there is no passage in the Bible apart from Revelation 20 that speaks of a period of 1,000 years during which the earth will lie desolate, there are many passages that describe the desolation of the earth. Notice a few such passages:

Day of the Lord	Desolation of Earth	Restoration
Isa. 64:1-3 Isa. 66:14-16 Eze. 33:21, 27 Zeph. 1:2-18	Isa. 64:10-12 Isa. 66:24 Eze. 33:28, 29 Zeph. 2:4-7, 9, 11, 13-15; 3:6, 8	Isa. 65:9, 10, 17-25 Isa. 66:22, 23 Eze. 34:11-16, 22-24 Zeph. 2:9; 3:9-20

The above passages have a historical application that was a type of the situation that will exist at the end of time. Not every feature of the primary setting applies to the secondary situation. But the similarities are considerable. Local, historical days of the Lord pointed to the end-time day of the Lord.

**5. What will happen to Satan at the second coming of Jesus? Rev. 20:1-3.**

---

Note that it is the angel of God who has the key. Thus there is no way that Satan can avoid being cast into the bottomless pit and being confined there.

**TUE 6. What do you understand to be the meaning of the “bottomless pit,” or abyss, in which Satan will be confined? Rev. 20:1, 3.**

---

**Desolate Prison.** As we have seen, the earth will be completely desolate, with no human inhabitants. When the Hebrew word referring to the earth as “the deep” used in Genesis 1:2, was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), the word, *abussos* (“abyss,” “deep,” “depth”), was used. The same word was used in Revelation 20:1. The earth will be reduced to its former state of desolation.

In the book of Revelation, the devil is identified as the king of the “abyss” or “bottomless pit” (Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8). The devil and his demons dwell in the “abyss.” It is the place from which Satanic deceptions emerge. Because this earth is the domain of the devil’s operations, we conclude that the earth is the “abyss” to which he will be confined during

the millennium. The devil and his demons will be “bound” in the sense that they have no one to tempt for 1,000 years.

**The fruitage of his work.** “The earth looked like a desolate wilderness. Cities and villages, shaken down by the earthquake, lay in heaps. . . . Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Here he will be confined, to wander up and down over the broken surface of the earth and see the effects of his rebellion against God’s law.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 415.

**7. What Old Testament parallel pictures the millennial binding of Satan? Lev. 16:7-10, 20-22.**

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Remission for sin and the removal from the sanctuary of the records of sin was accomplished in the daily and yearly sanctuary services by virtue of the shedding of blood. Responsibility for sin was placed on the head of the scapegoat, representing Satan. He was banished to the wilderness.

**For Crimes Against God and Humanity.** “Now the event takes place foreshadowed in the last solemn service of the Day of Atonement. When the ministration in the holy of holies had been completed, and the sins of Israel had been removed from the sanctuary by virtue of the blood of the sin offering, then the scapegoat was presented alive before the Lord; and in the presence of the congregation the high priest confessed over him ‘all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.’ In like manner, when the work of atonement in the heavenly sanctuary has been completed, then in the presence of God and heavenly angels and the host of the redeemed the sins of God’s people will be placed upon Satan; *he will be declared guilty* of all the evil which he has caused them to commit. And as the scapegoat was sent away into a land not inhabited, so Satan will be banished to the desolate earth, an uninhabited and dreary wilderness.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 658, (italics supplied).

WED

**II. DURING THE MILLENNIUM (Rev. 20:4-6).**

**8. What exciting scene of heaven during the millennium was John shown? Who is involved, what are they doing, and why? Rev. 20:4.**

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**The second phase of judgment.** From 1844 to the close of probation, the judgment in heaven involves an investigation of the records of people who have professed Christ at any time in history. All who are found to be genuine in their profession are taken to heaven at the Second Coming. During the millennium the second phase of judgment will investigate the records of those who rejected Christ. This is the judgment of the wicked dead. Verse 4 tells us that those who become judges are with Christ for one thousand years.

**Who are the people who judge?** Two specific groups are mentioned in Revelation 20:4. First, there are martyrs of all ages. Second, there are those who accepted the third angel's message, and who refused the last-day image to the beast and the mark of the beast (Revelation 13). Both groups have valiantly demonstrated their total loyalty to God, in face of terrible trials and at times of threatened death. Revelation 20:6 indicates that the redeemed of all ages "shall reign" with Christ during the millennium.

**Whom do they judge?** Paul says that the saints "shall judge the world" and "angels." (See 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; compare Jude 6.) The work of the saved during the millennium is to judge the wicked of all ages, including the wicked angels.

"In union with Christ they judge the wicked, comparing their acts with the statute book, the Bible, and deciding every case according to the deeds done in the body. Then the portion which the wicked must suffer is meted out, according to their works; and it is recorded against their names in the book of death. Satan also and evil angels are judged by Christ and his people."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 661.

**What is the deeper purpose of this second phase of judgment?** At the beginning of the great controversy, Satan accused God of being unfair. Throughout the years of the great controversy on earth, many times mankind has voiced the devil's accusations. This second phase of judgment is of vital importance to the saints. As each case is examined, it will become crystal clear, that God has given each one every opportunity to be saved. It will be seen that they have rejected His invitations, and that He is entirely just in leaving them out of the eternal kingdom. In the eternal ages beyond, no one will have any doubt about the mercy and justice of God. No one will ever wish to rebel against Him; the records of the great controversy will have proved ultimately that He is a God of infinite love.

**9. How do you understand the timing of the first and second resurrections? Rev. 20:5, 6; compare John 5:28, 29.**

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The first part of Revelation 20:5 should be regarded as in parenthesis. The last part of verse 5, and all of verse 6, belong with verse 4. The resurrection of life, which Jesus predicted in John 5:29, is the resurrection of the "blessed and holy" at the beginning of the thousand years. The resurrection of damnation is the resurrection of the "rest of the dead" at the close of the thousand years.

### III. THE MILLENNIUM CLOSES (Rev. 20:7-15).

**10. What event enables Satan to be "loosed" from the bottomless pit at the close of the one thousand years? Rev. 20:3, 5, 7.**

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For a thousand years Satan will have no one to tempt, or deceive. With

the resurrection of the wicked (verse 5), which is the second resurrection of both Revelation 20 and John 5, Satan is "back in business." His "little season" will surely be limited: "Those who have done evil will rise to be condemned" (John 5:29, NIV).

**The second resurrection.** "Then, in terrible, fearful majesty, Jesus called forth the wicked dead; and they came up with the same feeble, sickly bodies that went into the grave. What a spectacle! what a scene! At the first resurrection all came forth in immortal bloom; but at the second the marks of the curse are visible on all. The kings and noblemen of the earth, the mean and low, the learned and unlearned, come forth together. All behold the Son of man."—*Early Writings*, p. 292.

**11. What does Satan do with his wicked forces? Rev. 20:8, 9 (first part).**

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What Satan does at the close of the millennium when he seeks to take the holy city and wrest it from God is no different from what he has done previously. His history is one of warring against and accusing God, attacking Christ, and deceiving people into worshipping himself and the evil powers through whom he has worked.

**12. What final judgment scene takes place just before the destruction of the wicked? Rev. 20:11-13; compare Zech. 14:9.**

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**The Reward of the Just.** "Jesus and all the angelic host and all the saints, with the glittering crowns upon their heads, ascend to the top of the wall of the city. Jesus speaks with majesty, saying, 'Behold, ye sinners, the reward of the just! And behold, My redeemed, the reward of the wicked!'"—*Early Writings*, pp. 293, 294.

**The King is Crowned:** "In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 666.

**13. What amazing event will then take place? Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:9-11.**

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**Every Knee Shall Bow:** "As if entranced, the wicked have looked upon the coronation of the Son of God. . . . Falling prostrate, they worship the Prince of life. . . . And now Satan bows down and confesses the justice of his sentence."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 668-670.

**14. Why is there no resurrection from the "second death?" Rev. 20:9, 10, 14, 15.**

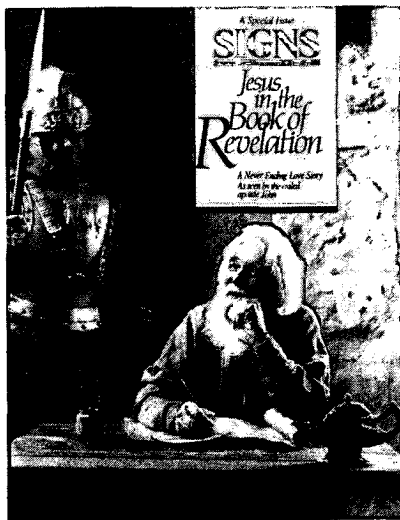
The assurance given to Christians in all ages is that Satan's defeat is inevitable. Calvary spelled his doom. By casting in our lot with Christ we are assured of deliverance and eternal life. (See Rev. 12:10; Heb. 2:14; John 12:31.)

**HOW DO THESE FUTURE SCENES INFLUENCE MY LIFE TODAY?** As I consider Christ's sacrifice and the events of the future, my life is influenced in the following ways:



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Schedule time this week to read the last three chapters of *The Great Controversy*: "God's People Delivered," ages 635-652; "Desolation of the Earth," pages 653-661; and "The Controversy Ended," pages 662-678.

**SUMMARY:** Revelation 20 describes the judgment of the wicked during the millennium by the righteous, who are in heaven. Satan and his demons are bound to the desolate earth. At the end of the millennium sin and sinners are eliminated from the universe.



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# God Himself Shall Be With Them

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Revelation 21:1—22:21.



**MEMORY TEXT:** “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:3).

**YOUR FUTURE LIFE OF JOY.** The book of Revelation, and the Bible, conclude in the way that we would expect—with sin gone from the universe and the earth restored to its edenic beauty. The difficulties of this life, however severe, are minor compared with the total joy and fulfillment of the afterlife. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

## OVERVIEW: Revelation 21:1—22:21

21:1-4	21:5-8	21:9—22:5
A new heaven and a new earth	Jesus completes His work of salvation	The New Jerusalem described
<b>EPILOGUE: Jesus is Coming (Rev. 22:7-21)</b>		

**EYE HAS NOT SEEN.** An elderly Christian had been confined to a wheel chair for forty-three years. His Seventh-day Adventist Christianity had a powerful influence on those around him, and especially on his grandson. The old man never complained, he loved to read his Bible, study his Sabbath School lesson daily, and sing. His favorite song was “Revive Us Again.” His favorite chapter was Isaiah 35, a great chapter on the new earth. His favorite verses were 6 and 10: “Then shall the lame man leap as an hart,” “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” This man’s hope and trust in Christ were constantly renewed by daily study of his Sabbath School lesson.

Writing of the end of the world, Isaiah exclaimed: “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that

waiteth for him" (Isa. 64:4). Has the world blurred the vision of the new earth for some of us? Have we been blinded to a degree by the things of this life—our work, our friendships, our cares, our busyness, our television, and other things? Have the studies of this quarter revealed to you the climactic events of the near future, and the blessed things so soon to come? If so, you will study this lesson with great anticipation. It will bring you renewed hope.

"A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 674, 675. Pause a moment to pray that the Holy Spirit will open your eyes to see all that God has for you this week.



## I. JOHN SEES A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH (Rev. 21:1-4).

1. As John's closing vision of the book opens, what are we to understand by the words *new* and *first*? Rev. 21:1.

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"The fire that consumes the wicked purifies the earth. Every trace of the curse is swept away."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 674. We understand that the Word that spoke all things into existence in the past (John 1:3), speaks again to make all things new. There is a purification and re-creation.

In Revelation 21:2, the Holy City is also called "new." Old Jerusalem and its Temple fell into such a state that Jesus called the Temple, a "den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13). Both fell to the Romans in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:43, 44). The New Jerusalem has now been prepared, the pure bride of the holy Christ. Revelation 21:2, 10, pictures the Holy City coming down to this earth.

2. Where will God be when the Holy City descends? For how long will He be there? Rev. 21:3.

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Adam and Eve walked with their Creator in the garden. Abraham met with the Lord under the oak tree (Gen. 18:1, 2). Moses was in God's presence on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20). Multitudes walked with Jesus during the thirty-three years He was on earth. But in the new earth the redeemed host communicate with the Creator face to face. The terms "with men" or "with them" are repeated three times (Rev. 21:3). God's throne will be on His new earth (Rev. 22:3, 4).

**We Shall See God.** "The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. 'Now we see through a glass, darkly.' We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and



behold the glory of His countenance.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 676, 677.

3. What are the things that God says His redeemed will no longer experience in the new earth? Rev. 21:4.
- 

God will take the sorrow, and pain, and sadness away for His saved people. With perfect bodies and minds, possessing immortality, and living in a world in which no source of hurt or destruction exists, the redeemed will have fulfillment unlimited.

4. What are some of the sins that bar people from entering the Holy City and having a part in the new earth? Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15.
- 

Only God's way will do. Rationalization leads to the downfall of many people. In terms of inheriting the new earth, God is specific as to who will and who will not enter. How many of the Ten Commandment principles do you find in the above verses? Study 1 John 2:1-6 in this respect. Basic to the hope of being in the new earth is the simple statement of John 3:16, "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Eternal life is the reward of those who are saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8), and who, by His indwelling power, walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). We should take God seriously in that we can inherit His kingdom only in His way. Anything less is deception and will bring eternal disappointment.

MON

## II. JESUS COMPLETES HIS WORK OF SALVATION (Rev. 21:5-8).

5. People often say that the promises of Revelation 21 and 22 are "too good to be true." How does God set the record straight? Rev. 21:5; 22:6.
- 

Christ's assurance is plain. He makes it clear that His words are true, that we can count on what He is promising. His word has never failed, and it never will. All of us undoubtedly have thought of the "impossibility" of everything that now is, coming to an end. Millions do not believe that God started things here, and they do not believe that there will be an "utter end" (Nahum 1:8). Eve doubted God's unfailing words. We must not.

6. How does the Lord express His close relationship with the redeemed? Rev. 21:6, 7.
-

In the teaching of justification by faith is the idea of adoption, of becoming sons and daughters of God. In the Lord's prayer, Jesus instructed us to call *His* Father, *our* Father. (See Matt. 6:9.)

**7. What can you learn from the following passages about God's adopting men and women, youth, boys, and girls, into His family?**

John 1:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 4:5 \_\_\_\_\_

As the result of sin, we are separated from God, parentless by nature. But as the result of receiving Christ as our personal Saviour, we are justified, treated as righteous because Christ's righteousness is given to us by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9, 10). We are adopted as sons and daughters by God. In Revelation 21:7 we are assured that if we meet His conditions we will be His sons and daughters forever. The condition is that we retain our genuine faith in Him, until He comes to give us immortality. (See Matt. 24:13; John 15:9; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:1.)

**III. THE NEW JERUSALEM DESCRIBED (Rev. 21:9—22:5).**

One of the seven angels who had the seven last plagues now comes to John to show him God's glorious Holy City (Rev. 21:9). That angel is in an ideal position to see the end of sin and the beginning of God's eternity.

**8. John was placed (in vision) on a high vantage point, so that he could see the Holy City well. Review John's inspired description of the city. Rev. 21:10-21. What impresses you most?**

**Brightness Beyond Imagination.** "Eye hath *not* seen" (1 Cor. 2:9). After Ellen White saw heaven and the city in vision, and the angel bore her "down to this dark world," she remarked, "Sometimes I think I can stay here no longer; all things of earth look so dreary. I feel very lonely here, for I have seen a better land."—*Early Writings*, p. 20. If only this last lesson of the quarter could give us such a vision, so that the things of earth would not be so attractive to us! Why do we tend to cling to earthly things, when God is waiting to give us what He showed to His servant?

**Review what Revelation 21:10-21 tells us:**

- o The city is brilliant, lighted by the glory of God.
- o The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are on the twelve gates in the massive wall. Ancient cities were protected by high walls. Thus John would understand the description.
- o There were three gates on each side of Ezekiel's Temple, on which were the names of the tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 48:31-34). The twelve tribes were listed in Revelation 7:4-8. The three gates on each side of the Holy City also contain the names of the tribes (Rev. 21:13). These facts suggest that both literal and spiritual Israel are reckoned as "tribes" in the Bible.

- The heavenly angels are the gatekeepers.
- The names of the twelve apostles on the twelve foundations represent the fact that the New Testament church was built on the foundation of Christ and His apostles. (See Eph. 2:20.)
- God's people of all ages are among the inhabitants of the new earth.
- What about the size of the city? Revelation 21:15-17 does not say whether the approximate 1,378.4 miles (see *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 892) are the measure of one side, or the total miles around the four sides. The important fact is that there is room enough there for everyone.
- The magnificence of the city is represented by gold and precious stones (verses 18-21).

**9. What will not be included in the Holy City? Rev. 21:22?**

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“When sin has been removed, the church will again be able to dwell in His presence, and no structure [as the Old Testament sanctuary and Temple] will be required to symbolize the dwelling of God.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 893. “The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

**10. What is meant by the “nations” and the “kings” spoken of by John? How does Isaiah clarify the type of people who will walk there? Rev. 21:24-26; Isa. 35:8-10.**

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The “redeemed” will be from all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. (See Isa. 60:3, 5; Rev. 1:6; 7:9.) All others will have been destroyed in the lake of fire. The figure of “kings” is drawn from the Old Testament. (See Isa. 60:11.)

**11. What added information about the New Jerusalem is given? Rev. 22:1, 2, 5.**

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**Eden restored.** All that Adam and Eve lost when they sinned (Genesis 3) is to be restored in the new earth. Note these parallels:

- Adam and Eve lost the privilege of face-to-face communion with God. In the new earth, “they shall see his face” (Rev. 22:4).
- Adam and Eve lost their purity, their robe of innocence. The redeemed receive Christ's robe of righteousness, His fine linen (Rev. 19:8).
- Adam and Eve lost their Eden home. God's saints are restored to their new Eden. “Adam had themes for contemplation in the works of God in Eden, which was heaven in miniature.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1082.
- Adam and Eve could no longer eat of the tree of life. All the saved forever eat of the tree of life (Rev. 22:2).

● Adam and Eve lost their perfect family happiness. In the new earth the original purposes of God will be carried out.

● Adam and Eve lost their dominion over other created things. In the new earth, the lions, lambs, leopards, and calves are tame, "and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:6).

● Stress, fear, confusion, tension—all that came with sin—are gone. In their place is the peace that passes understanding. (See Phil. 4:7; Isa. 26:3, 4.)

**How can we cherish the things of this earth when our eternal heritage is so rich?**

WED

#### IV. EPILOGUE: JESUS IS COMING (Rev. 22:7-21).

The message of the entire book of Revelation revolves around a concern for daily readiness to meet the Lord at the end of time. In Revelation 1:1, 3, the idea of immediacy is introduced. There John was shown things that "must shortly come to pass," which were urgent, "for the time is at hand." Let us note several final points of emphasis.

**12. What is the chief point of emphasis regarding the second coming of Jesus? Rev. 22:7, 10, 12, 20?**

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**13. Innocently, what did John do when he had heard from the angel these marvelous truths concerning the new earth? What are the last two words of kindly admonition that the angel gave him? Rev. 22:8, 9.**

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Review the warnings concerning false worship in Revelation 13:8 and the appeal of the first angel in Revelation 14:7. The final contest focuses on the simple but crucial question, Whom will we worship?

**14. Why do we need all of the light that the book of Revelation gives? Rev. 22:10.**

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Parts of the book of Daniel were "sealed" until the time of the end (Dan. 12:4). However, the book of Revelation is an unsealed book, an open book, to be proclaimed to the ends of the earth. After 1798 the sealed sections of Daniel were unsealed and have been proclaimed along with the book of Revelation. These two books reveal that the time for Christ's return is "at hand."

**An Open Book.** "The book of Revelation must be opened to the people. Many have been taught that it is a sealed book; but it is sealed only to those who reject light and truth. The truth it contains must be pro-

claimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are so soon to transpire. The third angel's message must be presented as the only hope for the salvation of a perishing world."—*Evangelism*, pp. 195, 196.

- 15. How did the angel describe to John the finality of the close of man's probation? What does the word *still* mean? Rev. 22:11.**

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The sense of the verse is that those doing unrighteousness will continue to do unrighteousness, and those who do right will continue forever to do right. After the close of probation no one will ever change his or her course of action. "The One who has stood as our intercessor . . . is soon to cease His work in the heavenly sanctuary."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 989. "There is not a second probation for anyone."—Ellen G. White Comments *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 989.



- 16. When Jesus comes, what does He bring with Him? And what is the basis upon which eternal life is given? Rev. 22:12, 14.**

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Some have wondered about the differing translations of verse 14: "Blessed are they that do his commandments" (KJV). "Blessed are those who wash their robes" (NIV). Which is right? The Greek manuscripts are quite evenly divided on the two readings, and it would be easy for a scribe to make a mistake in copying words that differ very little from each other. Both ideas are taught in Scripture.

The "remnant" people are characterized by commandment keeping (Rev. 12:17). God's "saints" are those who keep the commandments. (See Rev. 14:12.) Jesus Himself left no doubts about the significance of the commandments. (See John 14:15; 15:10). The commandments reveal the character of God, and the saved will have His character reproduced in their lives. (See *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.)

The redeemed are pictured in "white robes" (Rev. 7:9), and as having "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (verse 14). God gives His final and just rewards to those who have accepted Him, have been forgiven, and who have been motivated and empowered by His indwelling love and enabling grace. They keep His ten commandments, the transcript of His character.

- 17. What is the final call of the Spirit and the bride? Rev. 22:17.**

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Compare Christ's daily call (Rev. 3:20), His call to the thirsty (John 4:14, 15), and His call to the hungry (John 6:32-35). Here in Revelation 22, Scripture's last call is made. It is Christ's call to humanity.

18. Christ has promised many times to return. What benediction does He give to those who accept His call and live in readiness? Rev. 22:20, 21.
- 

What a challenging conclusion to the Bible! An invitation to eternity is extended to "whosoever will" accept His forgiveness and power. "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, NIV).

#### HEART-SEARCHING QUESTIONS:

- Has my personal experience with the Lord deepened as the result of my restudy of the book of Revelation?
- Is the appeal to be a permanent resident of the new earth genuinely impressive to me?
- Am I ready to join God's people around the world in making a new commitment to Christ and to the work of making Him known to others?
- Am I willing to live today and every day in a state of preparedness to meet the Lord?

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Take your favorite translation or paraphrase and read all twenty-two chapters of Revelation. Grasp afresh each line of prophecy as it points toward the time of our Lord's coming.

Also, read Ellen White's first vision, given in December, 1844, in *Early Writings*, pp. 13-20.

**SUMMARY:** Revelation 21 and 22 reach backwards in time urging us to renew our vows to the Lord while there is yet time. These chapters clearly reveal who will be saved and who will not. They are a plea that we awaken out of our spiritual sleep. They picture eternity for everyone who is enlightened by the Spirit.

# Lessons For Fourth Quarter, 1989

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the fourth quarter of 1989 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Visions of Victory."

## FIRST LESSON:

**"LOOK UP AND LIVE"**

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 1:1, 7, 18; 2:1; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1.

**MEMORY TEXT:** Psalm 121:1, 2.

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** The Hebrew name Zechariah means "God remembers." Often in the hustle and bustle of life we forget that God remembers us; we need to stop, turn, lift up our eyes, and see Him.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Zechariah—God Remembers (Zech. 1:1, 7).
- II. Zechariah Lifted up His Eyes and Saw (Zech. 1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1).
- III. Understand, Apply, and Live (Zech. 4:4-6; 6:4, 5).

## SECOND LESSON:

**"RETURN TO ME"**

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 1:1-6, 12-17.

**MEMORY TEXT:** Isaiah 44:22.

**CENTRAL THOUGHT:** In His love God wants to reestablish His covenant relationship with His people. He wants them to return to Him with all their hearts so that He may live within them and dwell among them.

## OUTLINE:

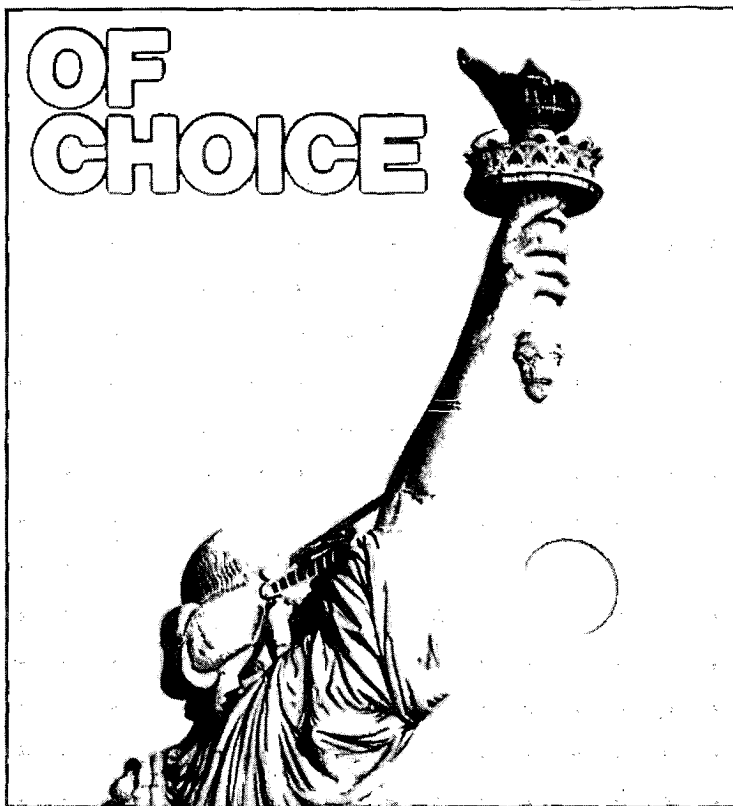
- I. God's Return to His People (Zech. 1:1-3, 13-15).
- II. Israel's Return to God (Zech. 1:3-6, 17).

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DAN DAY

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God's Day or Man's?

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How to Begin Each Day With God

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Hands Across the Gulf

and Promises of Information Series

FORD GOLDSTEIN

Gift of Tongues

Ecstatic Utterances or Intelligible Language?

JOHN J. ROBERTSON

The Silent Shout

The Biggest Fact or Fantasy?

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# **You need to have something in order to share it,**

whether it be our daily bread or the bread of life.

In order to give the "Living Bread" we need to have a constant association with its author.

The more we have, the more we can share.

Our daily lesson study will keep our supply fresh and ready for use.

# TRANS-EUROPEAN DIVISION

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
British	60,719,369	194	16,611
Finland	4,927,913	66	6,249
Hungarian	10,650,028	114	3,598
Netherlands	14,200,000	50	3,986
Pakistan	76,000,000	45	5,927
Polish	37,300,000	123	4,605
Swedish	8,358,139	46	3,312
West Nordic	9,532,119	126	8,804
Yugoslavian	22,018,000	274	10,206
Greek Mission	9,848,000	9	279
Iceland Conference	244,009	7	544
Israel Field	4,129,000	4	49
<b>Division Totals</b>	<b>257,926,577</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>64,170</b>

Statistics as of Dec. 1987

## PROJECTS

1. Evangelistic center, Karachi, Pakistan
2. Evangelistic center Reykjavik, Iceland

