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CURRENT SERIES

## **Eternity**

Tim Hawks, Lead Pastor

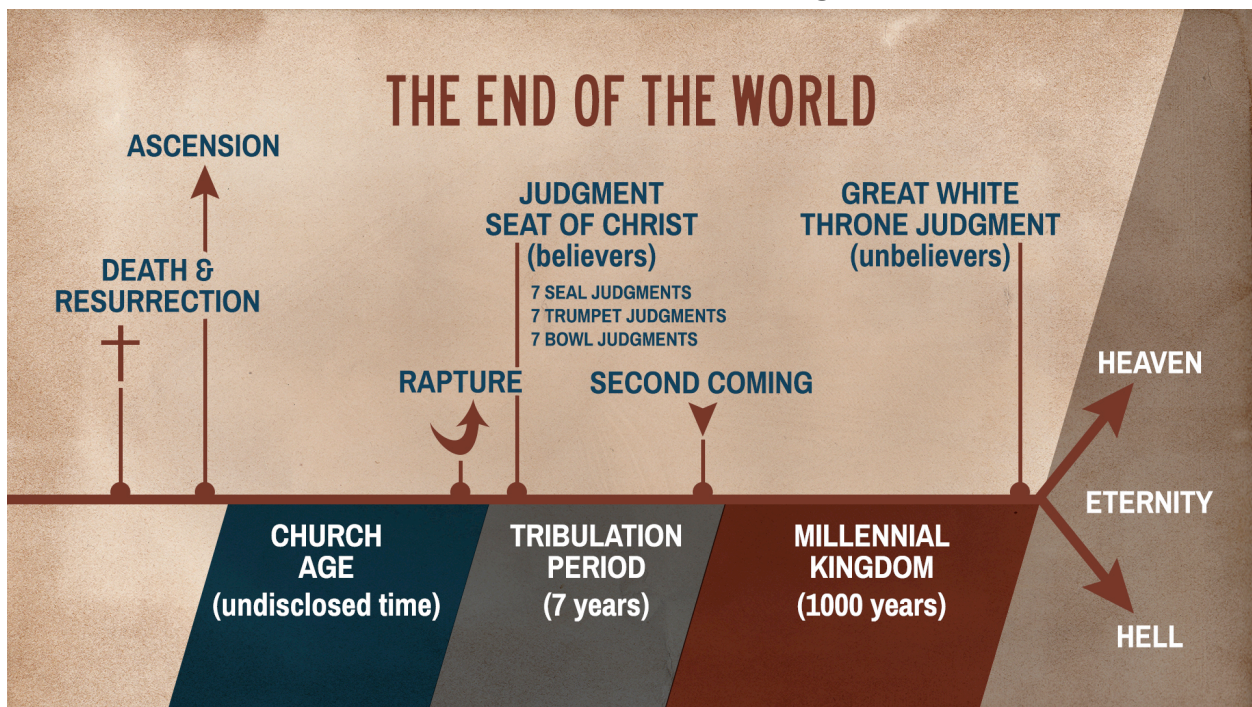
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approach, which goes exactly opposite of what Jesus our Lord told us to do. And yet God wants us to have a glimpse into what's coming in the end and so we look at this together.

So before we dive in what I want to do is kind of give you the timeline of what's going to happen, and then we'll come back and fit the book of Revelation into the timeline. So kind of looking at the timeline, we saw Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension into heaven, and that began this period that we're



living in now called The Church Age. We don't know how long The Church Age is going to be, we don't know when the return of Christ is going to come, but the next thing the Bible tells us that's going to happen is the rapture of the church. We'll talk more about that in our study of 2 Thessalonians at the end of this year. But the rapture of The Church is when all the believers on the planet are raptured up to be with Jesus in heaven before the beginning of the end of The Tribulation Period. When we're raptured to heaven we face the Judgment Seat of Christ, that's the place where believers are evaluated based on what we did with our lives after we received salvation. So from the time you trusted Jesus, which means your home in heaven is secure, until the time you stand in his presence at the end, what you did with your life will be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You can learn more about this by reading 1Corinthians chapter 3 and 2Corinthians chapter 5, and if you don't understand this, this is a very important doctrine for you to understand because what you're doing with your life right now will come under the scrutiny and be rewarded by Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Meanwhile, while we face the Judgment Seat of Christ there's a period of seven years prophesied in the book of Daniel, where God is going to be working on the earth to bring about the end of time, re-establishing his relationship with the nation of Israel, and preparing to establish the Millennial Kingdom. The majority of the book of Revelation takes place during this seven year period called The Tribulation Period.

At the end of The Tribulation Period Jesus Christ returns, that's his second coming, he binds Satan and he establishes the Millennial Kingdom. So for a thousand years Jesus Christ reigns on the earth. At the end of that time we have the final judgment of the unbelievers, and Satan is cast into Hell, and then we have the eternal state or heaven. And at that point in time everybody's fixed in where they're going to be. You're either going to be in heaven with God in the place of glory, or you're going to be separated from God in a place called the Lake of Fire or Hell for all of eternity. That's the timeline that scripture lays out.

Now with that timeline in mind, we're going to talk about the book of Revelation, and some of the book of Revelation happens during The Church Age, a little bit of it. Most of it happens during The Tribulation Period, and then it describes some of the rest of the story. So if you'll grab a Bible, open it to Revelation chapter 1, we are literally going to go chapter-by-chapter right through this book. You will see immediately who the author of the book is. The author of the book is Jesus Christ himself, and in verse one it says:

*"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place."*

So Jesus is the one who's going to give this message. He's going to do it through John.

*"He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."*

And then he gives a blessing for those who read it and practice the book. So if you've never read it, I challenge you to read it. There's a special blessing here for you, and if you put it into practice there's a double special blessing for you. He goes on to say:

*"John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia:"*

So this is actually going to be a letter delivered to the seven churches in the province of Asia for them to take heed and to remember and then to pass it down to the rest of the church. He gives a greeting from the trinity in the next couple of verses, and then he says in verse 7:

*“Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”;*

Now who are the ones who pierced him? That would be the Jewish nation, so even the Jews are going to get on board with this.

*“and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come --”*

That is Yahweh, the definition Yahweh, the Almighty. So here’s our storyline. Our storyline is this: **Jesus will return to earth again. God will confirm the eternal destiny of all individuals. The old universe will be destroyed and replaced with a new one. Christians will live with God forever.**

Jesus will return to earth – so he is going to come back, the promise is here. Jesus will return to earth again. God will confirm the eternal destiny of all individuals through this time. So everybody’s eternal destiny will be decided and fixed. In addition, the old universe will be destroyed and replaced with a new one. Now it’s going to be redone, so to speak, but the world as we know it is going to be changed. It’s going to be remade without sin, without the curse, without the problems that are catastrophic in nature, and Christians will live forever with God. Or you could say it this way, the people of God will live with God forever. Implication being that the people that reject God and Jesus Christ will be separate, will be outside of the kingdom of God and the rule and reign of God forever. So that’s kind of the big summary of eternity.

So, let’s look specifically at kind of how this unfolds. We read in verse 9:

*“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”*

In other words, John is saying, “I was placed on an island in the Mediterranean, as a way of being put in prison.” He was actually imprisoned on the isle of Patmos because he was preaching the gospel. In other words, during the intense Roman persecution all of the apostles have now been martyred. John is the last one left. He was boiled in oil, according to tradition, severely, severely

handicapped, and then sent to live out the rest of his life in prison on the isle of Patmos. That's where he was at the time of the writing. And he goes on to say:

*"On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:'"*

What we have here is John receiving revelation from Jesus Christ through an angelic being where he actually says, "I was in the Spirit –" in other words in a spiritual way God is going to take him into the future and show him scenes of heaven, conversations that God has, the things that take place with the angelic beings, and then scenes of the future earth and John's going to describe all of this. Now we call this type of literature "apocalyptic" literature, which essentially means that John is seeing and recording things in his words, from his experience, from his visions, from what he's seeing, and frequently the terminology that he uses is symbolic in nature. Lots of figures of speech and there's just some things that he can't really explain in human words, so how do you go into the throne room of God and explain what God looks like? It's going to be hard to do, so he's going to use a lot of figures of speech.

How would you describe modern warfare having never seen gunpowder, much less a modern tank or a modern stealth fighter, or a bunker-busting bomb? How would you describe that? So I believe John is seeing some of those things, maybe even something further in the future than us, and he's trying to put that into words. And so his words oftentimes are going to feel a little cryptic or a little difficult to understand.

Now I'm going to walk us through the whole thing. Okay? In just a few minutes, like we're going to walk through the whole thing. And let me just tell you that there's a whole lot here that I'm not going to be able to cover. I'm just not going to be able to cover at all. And I just want to recommend something to you. In 1997 I preached 21 messages on the book of Revelation, and I went back this week and I started listening to some of those and they're really good. (Congregation laughs) Like seriously, I'm not a big fan of myself, but I'm listening and I'm going, "Hey Hawks, good insight. That's a great explanation. Way to tie the Old Testament and New Testament together. That makes a lot of sense. Good theology." So I would encourage you, if you start reading and you go "What in the world is this beast and these horns, and what is this judgment, and how does this thing happen, and this trumpet blowing and all that kind of stuff," as best I can in 21 messages I go through the details and explain all of this. It's a fascinating study. Over the years I've had all kinds of people come to me and say, "Oh I'm going through your revelation series and it's really

good.” So I recommend that to you. You can get it online and listen to it. It’s an incredible study, if I do say so myself.

So let me keep going here, so in verse 12 it says – John says – he hears this voice and he said:

*“I turned around to see the voice that was peaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man –“*

That should give you a clue. Jesus called himself the Son of Man.

*Someone like a son of man, “dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”*

Think of the sound of Niagara Falls, a voice reverberating like that.

*“In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”*

John sees the glorified Jesus Christ. And verse 17:

*“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.”*

He passes out. Passes out. That will give you a picture of the glory that’s going to be revealed in this book and the awesome nature of what it’s like to stand in the presence of God to see him as he is in his glory. It says:



“Then he placed his right hand on me and said: **‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I**

am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”

So in chapter 2 and chapter 3 he writes to the seven churches that are going to receive this letter, and God gives a message to the seven churches and his message is essentially this. “Warning, live righteously. Maintain your love for me, give an example to the world around you. If you don’t do that I’m going to remove you as a church from the landscape.” That’s the message of warning. God is not going to tolerate a church that doesn’t actually reflect him. I wonder if that’s why the church in America is in such decline today? Because Christians in America are not seriously living out their faith, and God’s saying, “Okay I’m done with you. I’m not going to have somebody who says they are of me just hanging around making a bad example to the rest of the world. But in all of these seven warnings to the churches he also gives a promise. “If you will remain faithful, if you will follow me, if you’ll live for me in the kingdom I will reward you especially.” So that’s the first two chapters.

Then we move to the next section of the book, which is basically chapters 4 through chapter 20. And in the next section of the book we see God’s judgment on the world. This is The Tribulation, the seven-year period of The Tribulation. It starts in the throne room of God. In chapter 4 John is caught up into the very presence of God. He sees God face-to-face, and in chapter 4 he tries to describe God with all these colors and all these lights, the angelic beings, the people that are around the throne. Everybody’s there and they’re all worshipping God, and God’s got something in his hand. He’s got a scroll in his hand, and that scroll, I believe, is the title deed of the earth. Whoever owns that scroll has the responsibility to carry out and establish God’s kingdom on the earth, and nobody is qualified to step up and take the scroll. John begins in chapter 5 to weep because it looks like nobody’s going to right the wrongs on the earth, nobody’s going to fix the earth, nobody’s going to take possession of the earth, and then into the middle of the circle of God’s glory steps a lamb. It looks like he’s slain before the foundation of the earth, a sacrificial lamb, and he steps up and he takes the scroll because he’s worthy to do it. And people begin to sing, like the song that we just did, the Revelation Song. They sing that song. They begin to sing, “You are worthy because with your blood you purchased man from every tribe, tongue, nation, people group on the planet. Jesus Christ is the one who’s overcome, provided salvation, and so he is also the one that has the right to establish the kingdom. So in taking the scroll he begins to break the seals, there are seven seals, and each seal reveals the beginning of God executing his judgment on the earth.



So if you turn to chapter 6, that's where we begin the seal judgments. Now let me give you the - kind of the overview of the judgments. There's seven seals and each one of those when they are broken, they contain a judgment. The seventh seal is the seal that opens up the seven trumpets, and seven angels sound seven trumpets, which are additional judgments on the earth, so now we're up to 14. The seventh trumpet when it's blown opens up the seven bowls that are judgments also, God's wrath poured out on the earth. Each of those judgments take place, so 21 in all. And those are going to be poured out on the earth during the seven year period called The Tribulation Period. And so Jesus steps up, takes the scroll, and it says in verse 1 of chapter 6:

*"I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals."*

And what happens when he opens the first? A rider on a white horse comes out and his job is to create conquest in the earth. The second seal is opened and a red horse comes out. The rider on the red horse begins to make war among the nations. The third seal is opened and a black horse comes out, and



the rider on the black horse brings famine associated with a worldwide conflict on the earth, and by the time the fourth horseman rides out on a pale horse he has authority through the famine and the conflicts and the wars that are taking place on the planet to kill one-fourth of the population. If the population of the earth is 10 billion at this time, that means that 2.5 billion people die in the first four of these seals. We are talking about a catastrophic worldwide war. Everybody wonders when is World War III or World War Z if you're into that.

When's this going to happen? This is the beginning of The Tribulation Period. This is the stuff that's going to begin to take place during The Tribulation. The fifth seal is opened and we see all of these martyrs and the question is "Where did these guys come from?" Well these are the people who put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and during this period of time are now killed and martyred and they say, "How long God are you going to let this go on?" And God says, "No, we're going to unfold this thing." When Jesus opens the sixth seal, there's a great earthquake, and the earthquake shakes the world in such a way that people start to give attention to the fact that we are in a catastrophic, global meltdown. Things are going south here, and that's the first six.

Now immediately we see John stop, and in the middle of this John now moves to the first of one of his interludes. And John will give some judgments and then he'll stop and do an interlude and show us some other things. And in Chapter 7 we see 144,000 Jews who are converted to Christ during this time who become evangelists to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. And we see a multitude of people come to Christ during The Tribulation Period. Now I know some of you guys went to prophesy conferences that said nobody gets saved during The Tribulation Period, but that's just not true. In fact, look at verse 9 of chapter 7. It says:

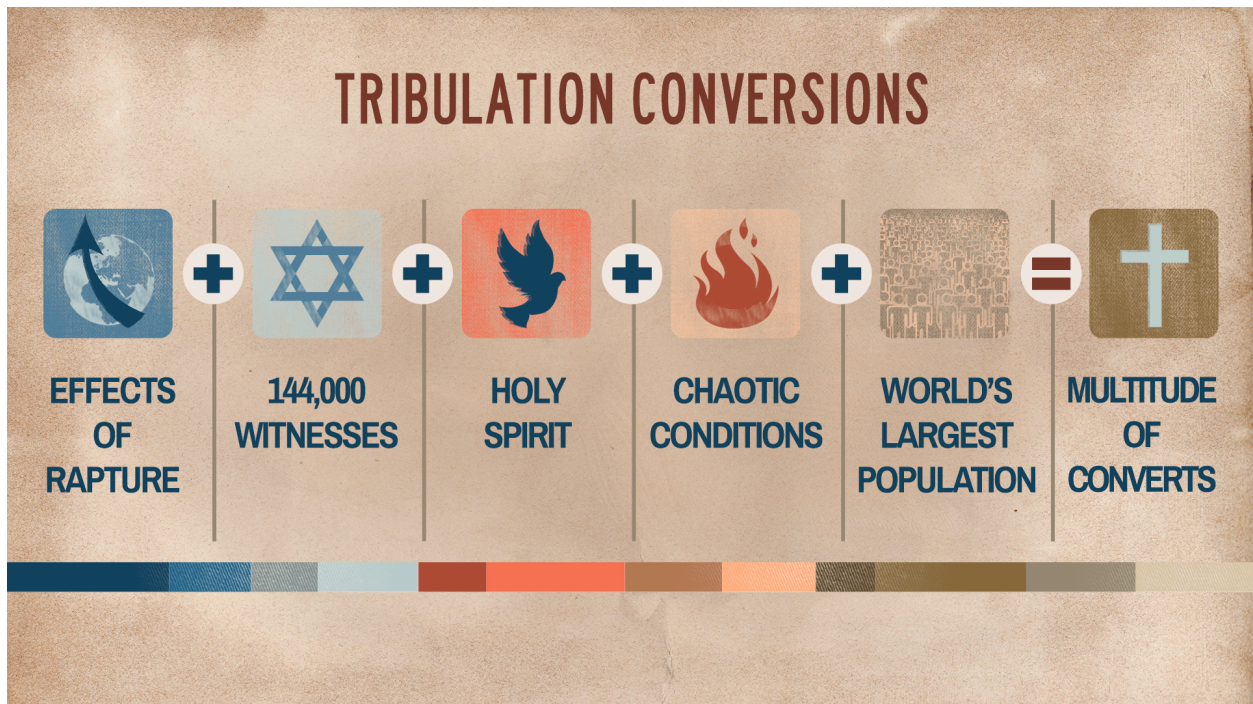
*"After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'*

Verse 13: *"Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes - who are they, and where did they come from?'" I answered, "Sir, you know.' And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"*

So out of the great tribulation we see a multitude of people standing in the presence of God that no one could even count. We're talking about a large number of people. So why would there be such a grand conversion rate during The Tribulation Period. Well let me give you some thoughts on that. The effects of The Rapture. I mean think what's going to happen when the whole church is raptured up to heaven. Your neighbors are going to be wondering, like "Who's taking care of your cat? Where did you go? When are you coming

back?” That’s going to have people scratching their heads wondering what in the world is going on.

In addition to that the 144,000 witnesses are going to preach the gospel throughout the earth, and so they’re getting the word out. In addition to that,



the prophet Joel says during the last days God’s going to pour out his Spirit in an unprecedented way. A Pentecost-type experience. He says your young men are going to see visions, your old men are going to dream dreams, and I’m going to pour out my Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is working in the world at that time. There’s also these chaotic conditions - war and conflict and trouble that are taking place, and we’ve got the world’s largest population presumably at this point in time, all that to say that the multitude of converts during The Tribulation Period is going to be very great. So here’s what I want you to get. In the midst of God’s judgment there is incredible grace. Even while God is pouring out his judgment on humanity that has rejected him, he’s also bringing the opportunity for people to repent and respond to him.

And so we move on in chapter 7 and in chapter 8 starting in verse 1 it says:

*“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”*

In other words, what’s coming in the seventh seal, which is going to be the seven trumpets is so much more devastating than what we’ve seen to this point

that everybody's just quiet. The seraphim that never stop night and day singing "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, the earth is filled with his glory." They stop. Everybody stops. I hope you get the magnitude. This is a big deal. In verse 6:

*"The seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them."*

And the first angel sounds his trumpet and one-third of the vegetation on the planet is burned up. The second angel sounds his trumpet and one-third of the waters in the sea become undrinkable. The third angel sounds his trumpet and one-third of the fresh water on the earth is destroyed beyond drinking. And then we see the fourth one sounds his trumpet and a third of the illumination from the sun is clouded from view. Not sure exactly what happens there, but we're talking about big environmental things that just shake and shape the planet. The fifth and sixth are even worse.

In the fifth there's an angel that goes to the abyss. Luke calls the abyss the place where the demons have been kept in prison for the final judgment. He opens the gate to the abyss and demonic activity sweeps the globe like a locust - an infestation of locust coming across the planet.

And then he opens the sixth one and out of the sixth one there's four angels or demonic beings that are released and they pull together an army, in verse 16, of 200 million fighting persons. Not sure if this is demonic or if this is actually a real standing army. It's possible if the planet has maintained its current population or grown a little bit, that we could actually in our day see an army of 200 million people fueled if all the nations of the world started going to war. And then it describes the killing that takes place through this, and again we're not sure exactly what it is - it's figurative language, whether he's describing modern warfare or not. He very well could be, but the net result of it is a third of the remaining people on the planet are now killed, which means that 50 percent of the population of the world dies in the first seven seals and then in the seven trumpets. Talking about massive destruction on the planet -- absolutely devastating, massive, overwhelming destruction. You would think humanity at that moment would say, "Okay God we've had enough. Whatever you want us to do, fine." That's not what they said in verse 20 (chapter 9). It says:

*"The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues --"*

So the other 50 percent.

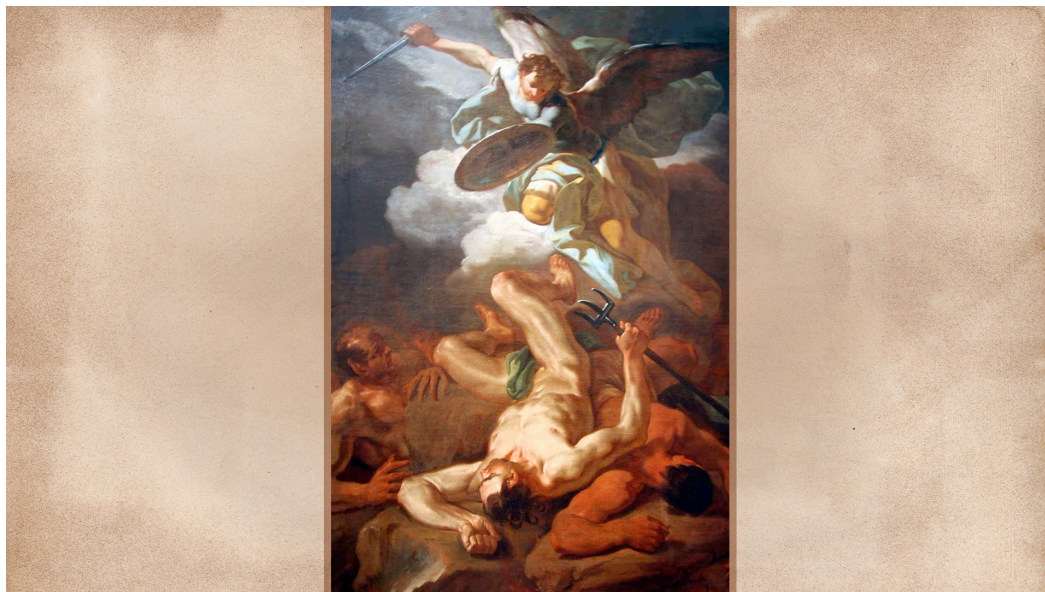
*“Still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”*

Humanity is unrepentant. Humanity is unrepentant. Chapter 10 and chapter 11 contain all kinds of good stuff – I can’t cover it today. So jumping to verse 15 – you’ve got to listen to the sermon series. In verse 15 of chapter 11:

*“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’”*

It sounds a little bit like the Messiah, right? In fact, if you study the songs in the book of Revelation you’ll find so many of our hymns and songs that have been inspired by what they’re actually singing in heaven. What we sang this morning, one of those songs they’re actually singing these songs in heaven so you’re getting a little practice in advance. The reason why this proclamation is made right here is because what’s going to take place from here on out, I believe is just the last 3-1/2 years of The Tribulation Period that sets the stage for the return of Christ. So he’s about to take total control of the earth. However, we need a few more people before we get there.

In chapter 12 we see this incredible conflict between a pregnant woman and a dragon. We find out that the pregnant woman is actually the nation of Israel who gives birth to the Messiah, Jesus, and as soon as she gives birth the dragon is trying to eat up her child. But the child is immediately taken to heaven, Jesus in the ascension, the woman is protected by God who would have ever believed that through all the persecution and all of this that the nation of Israel would still be surviving after 2,000 years, but they are. The woman is protected by God, the serpent – excuse me, the dragon is Satan and he goes crazy trying to



destroy her, and it says there’s a battle in heaven and Michael, the great archangel defeats Satan and

he casts him out of heaven. Satan lands on the earth, and when he lands on the earth he goes crazy reeking havoc on the planet. The first thing he does in chapter 13 is he raises up people to represent him. They are both called beasts in chapter 13. One of them is the anti-Christ and then his false prophet, who perform miraculous signs on the earth. Now think about this. The world is in total chaos, the planet is being decimated daily, people are dying by the droves, and all of a sudden these two people with the power of Satan come on the scene, do miraculous signs, and everybody begins to come after them converting to worshipping them as the stability, the ones who can make it happen. For the last 3-1/2 years of The Tribulation Period the nations begin to give allegiance to them and the people begin to receive an identifying mark on their forehead or their hand, the mark of the beast, which allows them to participate in worship of these two and in commerce.

In chapter 14 we have this challenge laid down. Who are you going to worship? Are you going to worship God or are you going to worship the anti-Christ. And here before the final judgment the call goes out to the ends of the earth. We see the 144,000 in the first part, and then in verse 6, very important, John says:

*“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth - to every nation, tribe, language, and people.*

So in the middle of all of this, again God is now going to get the gospel out again, one more shot for the 50 percent that are still alive. Get the gospel out to all of those people again and here’s the message that I think the 144,000 who are going all over the earth are delivering, the message that they’re preaching:

*“He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’*

The second angel pronounces doom on Babylon, the kingdom of the anti-Christ, and then watch. A third angel in verse 9:

*“The third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on the forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever. There will be no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image, or for anyone who receives the mark of its name.’”*

In other words, one angel is proclaiming the opportunity to turn back to God, to embrace the gospel. One angel is pronouncing the warning that if you go with the anti-Christ, if you receive the mark of the beast, if you put your allegiance there you're going to enter into the same fate as him at the end. And then we have the grapes of wrath. God tells the angel to take his sickle and to swing it across the earth and to harvest the earth for the deeds of the earth are fully grown, and to put it into his winepress where he tramples the winepress of the deeds of the earth. That becomes his wrath, which is poured into eight bowls that are now going to be the next eight judgments that are poured out upon the earth.

Chapter 15:

*"I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign; seven angels with the seven last plagues - last, because with them God's wrath is completed."*

So this is the closing chapters on the wrath of God. Starting in chapter 16 we see the first angel goes up, pours out his bowl on the earth and people get sick. Some kind of disease, boils break out on everybody and everybody on the planet is now infected with something. I don't know what kind of disease, virus this is, but everybody starts to get sick. The second angel pours out his bowl into the sea, and the sea becomes undrinkable; the water is polluted, the sea is destroyed. The third pours out onto the fresh water and had the same kind of results there. The fresh water is now undrinkable, so people begin to die because of that. The fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun and people begin to experience solar activity that is scorching the earth. I don't know if the ozone at this point in time is completely melted down or what's taking place, but the earth, the sun is starting to burn people on the earth. They are starting to experience scorching heat, kind of like yesterday in Texas only add about 20, 30, 40 degrees to the temperature. Okay, that starts to happen.

The fifth angel pours out his bowl and there's darkness on the planet. I don't know if we've got volcanic activity that creates so much dust in the atmosphere, but all of a sudden it gets dark and people are trying to grope around in darkness. And then the sixth angel pours out his bowl, and the river Euphrates dries up which provides an opportunity for the armies of the world to march toward Jerusalem for the Battle of Armageddon. There are spirits that go out that convince all of the powers of the world that it's time now to march on Jerusalem, and so the armies are forming and they're beginning to come. When the seventh angel, verse 17, pours out his bowl and you hear this voice saying, "It is done." There comes this earthquake so severe that it says that the cities of the earth collapse. London collapses, Stockholm collapses, Moscow collapses,

Mexico City collapses, Tokyo collapses, Hong Kong collapses, all the cities of the earth collapse. Now here's where we are -- we've got planetary devastation, the environment is totally destroyed. Civilization, as we know it, is in collapse while the armies of the earth are gathering together for one final push. In the midst of all of this, chapter 17 pronounces the death of religion. That is the false religion of the anti-Christ. Chapter 18 pronounces the death of politics, power, and commerce that have run the world under the anti-Christ up to this point in time. There's nothing really left standing of any significance except this army that's marching on Jerusalem. There they meet in the Valley of Megiddo and we have the Battle of Armageddon take place.

In chapter 19 we see the return of Jesus Christ in verse 11 it says:

*"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. 'He will rule them with an iron scepter.' He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."*

The passage goes on to describe how Jesus destroys the army, he takes the anti-Christ and the false prophet, he throws them into the Lake of Fire. He takes

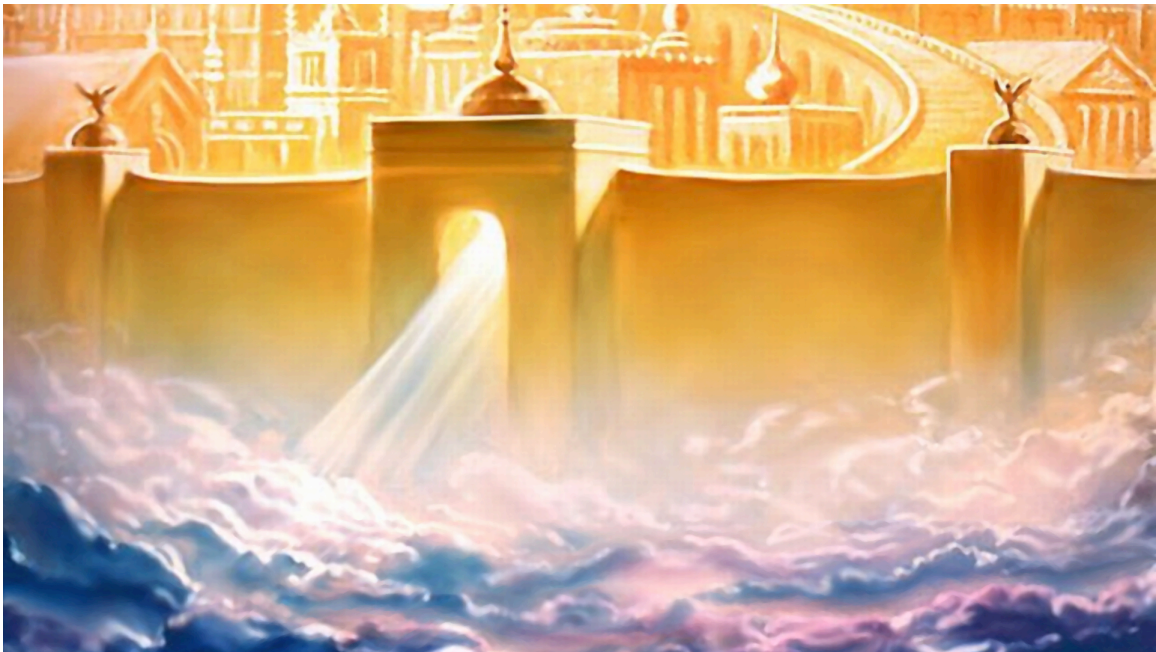


Satan, that great dragon, and he is bound and he's placed in the abyss, and for a thousand years all of the demonic, evil activity is eliminated where Jesus establishes his kingdom, the Millennial Kingdom. The earth begins to heal, it begins to be restored. People live in harmony people experience that. The

nation of Israel is restored. The promises of the Old Testament for the nation of Israel are now fulfilled during this period of 1,000 years, but at the end of 1,000 years Satan is released and guess what? He gathers an army. Even after living under the reign of Jesus Christ and seeing the prosperity of what the



world is capable of producing, people still rebel. At the end of that Satan is put down, he's cast in the Lake of Fire, and we have the final judgment on non-believers, and the non-believers are also thrown into the Lake of Fire, separated forever and ever from the presence of God. So we have Satan bound, then we have Satan released, and then we have the Kingdom established.



We see The Kingdom established in chapters 21 and 22. Chapter 21 we see the New Jerusalem descending from heaven and we see all the glory of God in it. In Chapter 22, let me just read a little bit of this - it says:

*“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”*

And so we saw in the early chapters of Genesis, the Tree of Life, and now we see it again in the city where people can eat from the tree and live forever. And the tree is all about the healing of the nations. It goes on to say:

*“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”*

With all evil removed and all rebellious people out of the way, God establishes his kingdom, sets up his eternal state we call heaven. It's a physical place. We are face-to-face with God. We get to walk and talk with Jesus, and it's a beautiful place. People's lives and hearts are changed. God's law is on our heart so we don't think of evil, we don't practice evil, we're not selfish oriented. Can you imagine a place like that, a world like that?

And then as the book wraps up, John has Jesus speaking one more time. Look at verse 12:

*"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."*

And this incredible story of the Bible, we started in Genesis where God created this perfect world and put mankind into it. We end where God recreates this perfect world and establishes his kingdom in it. In the interim we learned a lot about God between the pages of these two sections. We learned that God is glorious, we learned that God is just, we learned that God is gracious to people. We also learned a lot about ourselves in that process. We learned that we have a tendency to be selfish and sinful. We know our deeds create havoc in the world -- we hurt people, we hurt one another. We know that the deeds of God in sending Jesus Christ, he's the healer, the forgiver, the one who provides life. We also know that we have the opportunity, because of what Jesus did, to enter into his kingdom to experience paradise redeemed, to live with him forever and ever in eternity. Or we have the opportunity to hang on to our rebellion and reject him and find ourselves separated from him and from all things good.

He says in verse 14:

*"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."*

They're not in the city, they're not in the kingdom, they're outside. They're in what Jesus describes as outer darkness, separated from this so they can't come in and mess it up. They can't come in and be rebellious, and the people in it have been changed on the inside. And Jesus said:

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright Morning Star."*

And John concludes the book with Jesus saying, "Hey I'm coming. I am coming back." And John says, "Amen. Lord come quickly." I'm kind of glad John's prayer wasn't answered, you know it. Because I don't want to miss out on this, do you? I don't know when this is going to happen. I can tell you this. There's nothing right now in Biblical prophesy that would prevent it from happening today. The Rapture of the Church could happen today. This beginning of the end could happen today. The book of Revelation could unfold over the next seven years. There's nothing standing in the way of this happening right now. Now for those of you who believe and embrace the Bible, this is both terrifying and hopeful. For those of you who ignore the Bible, there's a lot at stake if this is true. That's why I would challenge you not to take a shallow look, but to take a deep look at the reliability of the Bible because if this is true it changes everything. My question for you who say you believe, does it change everything for you? My fear is that most of us live as if this will never happen and if it does we'll just kind of limp into it. I want to live it on a day-to-day basis recognizing that our friends and neighbors really need to hear the gospel. They need to see Jesus in us. We're not living in a way that we are truly walking in holiness and righteousness. The sins that are actually going to take some people out, we allow them to kind of hang around with us. We don't deal with those things seriously. And if this message is anything, it's telling us God is absolutely serious about dealing with sin and establishing righteousness. Even though he's going to do that in the future, he's also doing it in us now as we submit to him.

This is a fascinating book, passed down to us so that we can see and understand God. Do you know him today? Are you living it? I want us to bow our heads. With your head bowed, I just want to challenge you. Is there anything in your life today that is in the way that needs to be extracted, forgiven, replaced. Father if you blew the trumpet today and Jesus called your church home, would there be someone here that's not going, that are going to walk through this? May today be the day to put your faith in Jesus. Father my prayer is that you would come quickly, you'd send your Son soon, and that we would be ready. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.