

LESSON TEXT: Daniel 7:1-28 & Revelation 1:1-20

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The “fourth beast” of Daniel 7 is the Roman empire. The “4th beast” of Daniel is synonymous with the “fourth metal” of the great image in Daniel 2. Rome was the last *universal* empire of paganism God allowed to rule civilization. The only *universal* empire to be allowed after Rome is the **kingdom of God--the church of Christ** (people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation).

Daniel 7 is a prologue (condensed preamble) to the whole book of Revelation. Revelation (singular, **not** “Revelations”) is the detailed amplification of the 4th beast of Daniel 7. In other words, Revelation fulfills (fills up full) Daniel 7. Note these parallels (Dan. 7:9-10 with Rev. 1:12-16 and 4:1--5:14; Dan. 7:12 with Rev. 13:4; Dan. 7:13-13 with Rev. 4 & 5; Dan. 7:19-25 with Rev. 13:1-10 and 17:1-18; Dan. 7:26-27 with Rev. 18-19).

We will be studying the book of Revelation with the presupposition that it was initially focusing on the **historical** struggle of the church of Christ in the first five centuries of the Christian era against the Roman empire which was beastly (civil persecution), lascivious (the “harlot” and carnal temptation), blasphemous (the “false prophet” and pagan religion). Some would say an **historical** interpretation makes it irrelevant for the church today. **NOT TRUE!** Revelation is epistolary (i.e., a letter written to the 7 churches of Asia Minor ca. A.D. 100). It differs from other NT epistles only in *style* (Revelation is *apocalyptic*, i.e., highly symbolic in language, while the other NT epistles are not). If Revelation is irrelevant for today, then all the epistles of the N.T. would have no relevancy for today’s church. They were written to specific churches of the first century! Revelation is as germane to the church today as it was 20 centuries ago---only the circumstances have changed, **not** the purpose and principles taught in the epistle to the 7 churches of Asia Minor.

All civil governments and human civilizations are, to one extent or another, “beastly, lascivious, and blasphemous.” Some more than others. To one degree or another they all oppose Christ’s church, tempt Christ’s church to carnality and blaspheme the sovereignty of God in human affairs. Paul T. Butler

QUESTIONS:

1. Why does the Bible symbolize pagan world empires as beasts? Dan. 7:3-7; Isa. 27:1; 51:9; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2; Rev. 13)
2. What is the overall picture and the outcome of the struggle between the 4th beast and the saints in Dan. 7?
3. What is the time element focused on in Revelation ch. 1? (Rev. 1:1,3,4,9,11,19), i.e., when was Revelation to come to pass?
4. What does the mentioning of Christ’s redemptive work, Rev. 1:4-7, have to do with preparing Revelation’s readers for the onslaught of the beast?
5. John was a participant in the tribulations of his readers Rev. 1:9, does it help you accept the word of God to know others share your trials?
6. Why is a lamp an appropriate symbol of the church? (Matt. 5:14; Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15).
7. Why did Jesus reveal himself to John as “one like a son of man” Rev. 1:13? What was that picture to do for the 7 churches of Asia Minor? For you?
8. What do each of the characteristics symbolized in Christ’s appearance portray Rev. 1:13-16? Why so bizarre a picture? (see Dan. 7; Isa. 6; Ezek 1; Zech 1-6).
9. What is the significance of Christ revealing himself as standing in the midst of the lampstands Rev. 1:13? Should we think of him that way today? (Matt. 18:20; 28:20; Jn. 14:1-31; Acts 4:23-31, etc.).

The Revelation is “...from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth” 1:5. This affirms his unconditional supremacy over the world. It does not always seem that it is so. Kings have defied and continue to defy Christ, with blatant, brazen boldness. Even today monsters of hell walk the earth as rulers of men. But their doom is certain. The kingdom which Satan once offered, and Christ refused, Christ will yet have, in his own way, not Satan’s way. The redeemed of all ages, souls in Paradise and saints now living, are longing for that glad day. As surely as the morning, it will come. Christ is on the throne, even when things look darkest. Let us never forget this.

Halley’s Bible Handbook, 1965, p. 68

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 2:1-29 & 3:1-22

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Until about A.D. 500 most of the Christian population was concentrated in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) and Greece. That is where the devil focused his attack. That is why Christ gave this Revelation through John to the 7 churches of Asia Minor. As Daniel 7:1-28 and 9:24-27 predict, the devil would have the fourth beast (Roman empire) to use as his tool for one last *universal* effort to devour and destroy forever the bride of Christ, the church. Both Daniel and Revelation predicted, however, that **Rome** and the **devil** would be defeated. The church was actually to be *nourished* by the *great tribulation* (Rev. 12:13-14).

The devil's use of Rome to destroy the church was to take a 3-pronged attack (a) political purge; (b) false religion; (c) carnal seduction. All 3 would proceed under the authority and by the actions of a universally sovereign dictatorship--the Roman empire. These three simultaneous forces are symbolized in the Revelation as the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot. These years A.D. 100-500 would be the great tribulation of Christ's church! Would she survive? Would she get through the great tribulation? How? What should she do to prepare for the great tribulation?

Repent! These churches were told that to prepare for the coming attack of Rome and the devil they were to **repent**. Five of them are clearly commanded to repent, and the other two appear to need repentance for negativism. No amount of hard work, toil, liveliness, outward success or financial well-being will compensate for lovelessness, carnality, hypocrisy, and whining self-pity. The devil's power to concentrate such a great tribulation in one universally sovereign empire is no longer viable. God has "bound" him. But God has not yet destroyed him. The church of the 21st century faces the same 3-pronged attack, within limited areas and limited powers. Her urgent need today is still the same--**Repent!**

Each letter consisted of the whole book, with a brief special message to each church. We presume that seven copies of the book were made, and one sent to each city. Each church could thus have the Lord's estimate, not only of itself, but also of the other churches. Even today churches may appraise themselves by these letters.

---*Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965, p. 693

QUESTIONS:

1. How differently did Christ see the 7 churches than they saw themselves? 2:1--3:22. How did he remedy their poor perception? Is there a danger for the church today in self-perception? What is the remedy?
2. What was wrong with the Ephesian church? 2:1-7. What was right? Did its right excuse its wrong? What about our congregation?
3. What was Smyrna's view of itself? 2:8-11. What was Christ's view? Is material affluence dangerous to a church?
4. What was Satan's throne? 2:12-17. Was Pergamum's location to blame for her immorality? May a church live for Christ surrounded by ungodliness?
5. How could the church at Thyatira be growing and tolerating Jezebel at the same time? 2:18-29. What are the deep things of Satan?
6. How could Sardis have the reputation of being alive and be dead? 3:1-6. What is alive as men see it? What is dead as Christ sees it?
7. Why did the church at Philadelphia consider itself weak? 3:8-13. Why did Christ say it was powerful?
8. Would Christ really have preferred Laodicea to be cold rather than lukewarm? 3:14-22. What is the real cure for lukewarmness? Where is the real threat to the survival of Christ's church?

Repentance may be thought to be old-fashioned, but it is not outdated so long as there is sin.

---J. C. Macaulay

Repent is the translation of a Greek verb *metanoeo*, meaning *to have another mind, to change the mind*, and is used in the N.T. to indicate a change of mind in respect to sin, God, and self. This change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor. 7:8-11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. The son in Matthew 21:28-29 illustrates true repentance. Repentance is not an act separate from faith, but saving faith includes and implies that change of mind which is called repentance.

---*Quote, Unquote*, Lloyd Cory, 1969, Victor Books, p. 273

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 4:1---5:14

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Chapters 4 & 5 connect the ancient (A.D. 100-500) church to the events in the world but show that all the events of the world are ruled over by the sovereign purposes of God. The church would not escape war, famine, pestilence, persecution, temptation and physical death. **Through these things, however, the church will be sanctified, nourished, and purified.** Hard and bitter would be the struggle, but the church was assured of victory. She would pass through the great tribulation and find her rest with God. But during the attack of Satan-controlled-Rome it was imperative that the church see all her circumstances through the **throne-perspective!**

Throne-perspective has always been God's way of dealing with crises in his redemptive program (see Isa. ch. 6; Ezek. chs. 1-2; Dan. Ch. 7; Zech. chs. 1-8). So John, at the most crucial time of the Bride of Christ, was given a **throne-perspective** to reveal to the church. The Roman emperor had boasted that he was god! He seemed to have invincibility (Rev. 13:4). He boasted power to slay or keep alive; to starve to death or feed; to make anyone a pauper and slave or rich beyond measure. But Jesus opened the door to heaven and let the church see that the Roman emperor not only did not rule creation, but he would be used by the Sovereign God and Christ to fulfill redemption's purposes for the world! **Everything and everyone** on earth, under the earth, in the sea and in the heavens is subservient to the **throne of God**. Some would never admit subservience to Christ; they would resist with all the power at their disposal; ultimately, however, all would bow to it!

The purpose of chapters 4 & 5 was to prepare for the opening of the scroll in chapters 6 & 7. But the **throne-vision** was also fundamental to all that followed in the Revelation. Everything in the book was to be seen through the **throne-perspective--GOD IS IN CONTROL!** All that transpires in the events of mankind serves to bring victory to the saints. At every point and step in life, through time into eternity, the saints must understand and act upon this **throne-perspective**. THAT'S RELEVANT IN EVERY CENTURY THE CHURCH EXISTS ON THIS EARTH!

QUESTIONS:

1. Would your faith be stronger if you had a **throne-vision** all your own? Did God expect Christians in John's day to be strong on the basis of John's vision? 4:1
2. From the symbolism of 4:1-6 what do you think God looks like?
3. What are the crowns being cast before the throne? 4:9-10. When should crowns be cast before God's throne?
4. What is symbolized by the service to the throne of the four living creatures? 4:6-11
5. Can theistic evolution be harmonized with Revelation 4:11?
6. Who is the lamb? 5:1-6 why is he alone worthy to open the scroll?
7. What does the scroll symbolize? 5:1-10. (See Ezek. 2:8---3:27; Zech. 5:1-4; Dan. 12:4,9; Rev. 4:1).
8. What makes Jesus worthy enough that you have surrendered all determination of history and your own destiny to his direction? 5:9-12---or have you? Can you trust him to tell you what life means and how to live it?
9. Why was the song being sung a new song? 5:9-10. May everyone sing this song?
10. Where and when are the saints reigning? 5:10. Do you think of yourself as reigning with Christ right now?

As a man exhibits himself in physical forms and actions, so there is One Other Spirit, a great, wide mighty, infinite eternal Spirit back there in the depths of space, and in the present, and in the future, and in the abysses of space, who at His will wrestles into existence great globes, and in their position. He builds them, and places on them these mysterious forms of earth which are signals hung out over these abysses to tell coming spirits who He is, what He is, what He does, how high is His throne, and how vast is His power from eternity to eternity, from infinity to infinity through all ages of all time: He is holding forth to men and angels those external tokens of His almighty power, of His infinite skill, and of His everlasting love.

--Randolph S. Foster (1820-1903)

"He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision."
--Psalms 2:4

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 6:1--7:17

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Lamb (Christ) reveals in chs. 6 & 7 what is soon to come to pass upon the churches of Asia Minor. The history of Christianity in its confrontation with Rome is a great (tribulation) spiritual struggle stretching over four centuries (A.D. 100-500). The scroll (Christ's omniscient knowledge of history) revealed that the churches of Asia Minor were to understand their commitment to Christ did not protect them from the tribulations of history brought on by the sinfulness of men in rebellion against God (see Rom. 1:18-32). Christians were not to be surprised at the fiery trials to come upon them as though it were something strange (1 Pet. 4:12). That is the way history is because men allowed themselves to be deceived by Satan into renunciation of God's sovereignty and grace. When that happens, all of mankind suffers. Rome was the epitome and incorporation of all that rebellion in one crushingly-powerful and decadently-sensual empire.

Rome's insatiable desire to conquer (white horse) produced war (red horse), which in turn produced famine (black horse) and pestilence and death (pale green horse). Christians were to suffer and die during this great tribulation and cry out for vindication. God was going to bring such destruction upon Rome it could only be described ***as if it were*** the end of the world (in apocalyptic language, just like in Matt. 24). Even the enemies of God will acknowledge Rome's fall as the wrath of heaven (see Rev. 18:9-19). During the great tribulation of Rome's decadence and destruction God's saints are safe. God has numbered all who belong to him; he will not lose one; they are his **new** Israel (symbolized by the number of the 12 tribes). No man could number the saved--but God could! All who were washed in the blood of the Lamb, although they were martyred, were saved forevermore. They **were coming**, when John wrote Revelation (Greek present tense verb in 7:14), out of the great tribulation--John was **not** predicting a group **yet** to come after A.D. 2000!

QUESTIONS:

1. When you read your morning newspaper, do you think of the history of the world under the sovereign purpose of God? Does the scroll symbolism to John in A.D. 98 (5:1-14) still apply in the 21st century?
2. Was it possible for God to turn man's insatiable lust to conquer into good for the church? 6:1-17. How? (see Rev. 12:13-17; 13:10; 14:12) Did God operate that way in the O.T.? (See Jer. 29:4-14; Dan. 7:1-27).
3. Did God want Christians to be realistic about the world's opposition to the church? 6:1-8. Why? What about the Christian's attitude toward the world's ability to save itself?
4. Wasn't it out of character for Christians to be crying to God for vengeance? 6:9-11. How healthy is your vindication/justice quotient? (see Rev. 18:20).
5. Are there parallels in the OT for the apocalyptic symbolism of the 6th seal? 6:12-17. (see Isa. 13:10; 14:21ff; 24:23; 34:1-4; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Amos 4:9; Joel 2:10; Micah 3:6; Heb. 3:11; Matt. 24:29-31; Lk. 21:25-28).
6. Why did Christ use the symbolism of sealing to speak of the church's deliverance from Roman tribulation? 7:1-8. Does Christ still seal believers?
7. Were the 144,000 Jews? Were Gentiles Christians ever symbolically said to be Israelites? (see Rom. 9-10-11; Gal. 3:7,29; 6:15-16).
8. Who were the innumerable throngs of 7:9-17?
9. Does it make you want to go to heaven when you read about what the innumerable throngs experienced when they went? 7:13-17 **Right now?**

"I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat...that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary."
--John Milton (1644), in, *Areopagitica*

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 8:1---9:21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Rome was determined to conquer the civilized world, control and prostitute the creation of Almighty God. But God could not have allowed such a powerful and pervasive challenge to his sovereignty over creation to go unanswered! He warned and judged that rebellious civilization through **woe**; at the same time, those who believed were to accept those **woes** as clear signs of God's chastening and vindication for his church.

A **fundamental** teaching of the O.T. is that God **repeatedly** uses secondary forces and instrumentalities in this world as warning-judgments. Through these secondary forces he called Israel and the heathen to repentance. God's secondary forces were (a) natural calamities; (b) national corruption; and (c) neighboring conquerors to work the forces (i.e., signs) of **woe** upon the nation of Israel and her world. Some of the classic examples of this in the O.T. are: Joel 1:1--2:27; Amos 4:6-13; Isa. 10:1-19; Jer. 27:1-15. Jesus plainly teaches the same philosophy (i.e., viewpoint) of history in Luke 13:1-9 and Matt. 24:1-35; Lk. 21:1-33; Mk. 13:1-31. The apostles amplified this viewpoint in their epistles: Rom. 1:18-32; Heb. 10:32-39, etc.

The Revelation given to John concerning the Roman empire of A.D. 100-450 is the capstone to this basic doctrine of the Bible. Revelation chs. 8 & 9 are especially devoted to this teaching that God uses secondary forces to judge an impenitent world and chasten and cleanse his church. We outline chs. 8 & 9:

THE LAMB WARNING THE WORLD THROUGH WOE

A Pause in Time for the World's Contrition, 8:1-5

Portents of Judgment in Nature's Calamities, 8:6-13

Portents of Judgment in Nation's Corruption, 9:1-12

Portents in Neighboring Barbarian's Conquests, 9:13-19

Perversion (Rome's Impenitence) Does not Cease, 9:20-21

QUESTIONS:

1. Why the silence in heaven for half-an-hour :1-5? Is God withholding some judgment today to create expectancy in the saints?
2. What does a trumpet symbolize in the Bible? (Isa. 27:13; Ezek. 33:3-4; Joel 2:1,15; Zeph. 1:16; Zech 9:14; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52-53). What does incense symbolize (Lk. 1:9); coals of fire (Ezek. 10:2; Isa. 6:6).
3. Why do the trumpets hurt only 1/3 of the earth? 8:7,9,10,11-12-15-18. Is 1/3 of the earth more sinful than the other 2/3rds? (Lk. 13:2,4).
4. How would hurting 1/3 of earth's vegetation be a signal to Rome of God's wrath? 8:7 (see Gen. 3:17-19; Joel 1:1-20; Amos 4:6-9).
5. What is the great burning mountain cast into the sea? 8:8 (Matt. 17:51-54; 28:2; Acts 16:26).
6. What is wormwood 8:11? Does this characterize the ancient Roman empire?
7. How would God use the earth's solar system to warn Rome? 8:12. Is there a warning in our solar system for the world today?
8. Is this a real locust plague 9:1-11? What kind of plague could it **symbolize**?
9. How large is the army turned loose on Rome 9:13-19? Why is it symbolized by being from the Euphrates?
10. Why is it plain that these six-trumpet-judgments are not for the end of the world? 9:20-21
11. Could you convince a non-Christian friend that trumpets like these are *continuing* to be sounded in our world and they are God's warnings of a final judgment to come? Have you tried? Remember, Revelation is to be **read, heard, and kept!**

"The moral government of God is a movement in a line onward towards some grand consummation, in which the principles, indeed, are ever the same, but the developments are always new."
--Mark Hopkins (A.D. 1802-1887) American philosopher and educator

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 10:1---11:19

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Thunder was a rare phenomenon in Palestine. If it did occur it was considered a sign of God's displeasure (1 Sam. 12:17). It symbolized God's judgment and chastening (1 Sam. 2:10) and God's power (Job 37:2-5; 40:9; Psa. 18:13; 29:2-9; Isa. 30:30).

God initially warned his enemies (the beast, false prophet & harlot) by opening the seals and sounding the trumpets. But they refused to repent (Rev. 9:20-21). The **thunder** of God reverberated in John's ears (Rev. 10:3-4). It symbolized that God's judgment upon the Roman empire was on the horizon! But, before that storm descended, God "paused for a brief message." He handed John a brief note (Rev. ch. 11) describing in bitter-sweet terms (bitter to the pagans; sweet to the Christians) the outcome of pagan Rome's attempt to eradicate the church of Christ and the word of God (the two witnesses). Rome said, "We will bury you!" But it was Rome that was buried and the kingdom of the world became the kingdom of our Lord!

Godless atheism and pagan idolatry through the generations following the Roman empire has held many premature celebrations! How often, since A.D. 500, have believers been told, "We are going to eradicate the church and burn all Bibles"? But Christ's church still exists all over the world (even Communist and Islamic dictatorships); God's word is still printed and read, eagerly, by millions even in the very jaws of modern beasts, false prophets and harlots.

If the universally powerful Roman empire could not bury the church and the Word, neither the devil nor any other power on earth shall do so. Christ built his church, and the gates of Hades (death and hell) shall never prevail against it. Are you a member of the **everlasting kingdom** of persons called the church of Christ? The Spirit (the Word) and the Bride (the Church) say, Come!

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you see a recurring methodology of God (i.e., judgment/redemption) being practiced upon the Roman word of Revelation? Can you recall it in the great historical eras of the Bible?
2. What was the mighty angel's warning to Rome's refusal to repent? 10:7
3. What was the mystery of God announced to the O.T. prophets? 10:7. See Daniel chs. 7 & 9. It has to do with Rome--the 4th beast.
4. Why was the scroll both bitter and sweet? 10:9-11. Is all of God's word that way? Are you willing to taste the bitter with the sweet?
5. Why is chapter 11 **not** referring to the relation of the gospel to Judaism? 11:1-3
6. What did measuring the temple of God symbolize? (see Ezek. 9:1-11; and Ezek. chs. 40-42).
7. Who were the two witnesses? 11:3-5. Has God always had these two witnesses?
8. What did the three phases of the confrontation between the witnesses and their enemies (Rome) symbolize? 11:4-13
9. 9. When did the kingdom (singular) of the world become the kingdom of our Lord? 11:15-18
10. 10. What was symbolized by the vision of the temple in heaven and the **ark of the covenant** within? 11:19. How much have you invested in your belief that God will faithfully fulfill his covenant? Would you have believed that if you had gone through the great tribulation of the Roman empire?

11.

Whosoever studies Divine providence, whether it be in relation to the events that concern us, our families, the cities and nations to which we belong; whosoever studies the rise and fall of nations and empires, whoever looks at the clashing of armies, will perceive that these are only parts of one grand movement. God is marching on to the accomplishment of an appointed end; namely, the subjugation of the world to Himself.

--J. M. Reid, in *God, What People Have Said about Him*, by Lothar Kahn, 1980

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 12:1-17

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Chapter 12 is pivotal! In Revelation, chs. 1-11 we learn that the Lamb is on the Throne and is Sovereign in all historical circumstances. In ch. 12 we have the revelation that the Lamb is Sovereign in every **spiritual** or unseen circumstance.

The 2nd main division of Revelation (chs. 12-20) explains in dramatic *symbolism* that the earthly, observed, struggle of the church against its enemies is inseparably united to the unseen confrontation of God and the rebels of heaven for sovereignty over creation. The apostle Paul said this very thing a number of times: e.g., “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood..” (Eph. 6:10-12); “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal..” (2 Cor. 10:3-5) (see also Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 2:11; Col. 1:13, *et.al.*).

History’s direct link to heaven’s battle for the supremacy and sovereignty of man’s eternal soul is taught in Daniel 10:1-21; Zech. 3:1-10; 2 Kings 6:15-19. Revelation ch. 12 summarizes this teaching. Graphically, it depicts the struggle between God and the devil. From chapter 13-19 the picture moves to the struggle between the devil’s earthly agents (beast, false prophet, harlot), and God’s earthly agent (the Bride of Christ, the church). The essential concept presented is: the heavenly, spiritual involvement of history.

Revelation chs. 12-20 is a window opened to heaven for the **mental-spiritual** eye. It is as real as the vision of horses and chariots of fire in 2 Kings 6:15-19. Those who are with us (the saints) are more than those who are with them (the beasts). Revelation 12-20 was a message for the 7 churches of Asia Minor. **Their** struggle was tied to heaven’s plans; **they** were wrestling with cosmic powers using Rome as an agent; **those** Christians needed to know the Lamb would win. But so do we. And that is why, in principle, it is a message for the church from A.D. 100 to the end of time.

Any human being, institution or government, today, vowing to overthrow or eradicate the Bride of Christ (the church) on earth is an “evil government” and a tool of the devil! President Reagan was right about “evil governments”!

That is what the Bible teaches! --PTB

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think of the life’s struggles and history as a **warfare** involving the issue of the control of creation? (Rev. 12:1ff; Eph. 6:10ff; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). Does there seem to you a cosmic struggle for supremacy of right vs. wrong?
2. Who was the woman clothed with the sun? 12:1-2. How does the church’s glory become a *sign* (portent) to the world?
3. Why was the devil symbolized as a dragon? 12:3. How do you visualize the devil? When had the devil swept some of the stars (angels) from heaven?
4. Who was the male child? 12:5. Why did he have a rod of iron?
5. What was the wilderness 12:6? How was the woman nourished there 12:14? How had God prepared the wilderness for this?
6. Where would God have permitted the devil to wage war? 12:7-12. In Heaven where is eternal peace (Rev. 7:13-17) 21:1-4? What, then, is the “**heavenly place**” where the devil fought God?
7. When was the devil thrown down to the world? 12:12-13
8. How did the devil know his time was short? 12:12
9. What was the river from the mouth of the devil? 12:15-17. How did the earth swallow up this river?
10. Who were the rest of the woman’s offspring? 12:17

“He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

--Jesus Christ in Gospel of John, 8:44
(Our underlining)

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 13:1---14:20

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The devil knows what the Bible says (see Matt. 4:5-6 where he quotes it). The devil knew what Daniel, chs. 2 & 7 say! He knew, therefore, when the church was instituted and he couldn't destroy it through Jews and Judaizers, he had only one really powerful tool left. He knew his time was short (Rev. 12:12). He knew only the massive, and seemingly *invincible* Roman empire was left by which he might hope to eliminate God's redemptive kingdom on earth. If the imperial power and the seductiveness of paganism could not eradicate the church and the word of God, then it was apparent the devil's power was bound by a God who was sovereign over everything. The church would survive; the gospel would go forth.

John's vision in chapters 13-14 connects the Roman empire's hostility against the church to the cosmic spiritual war of the devil against God. Rome is implicated as a tool of the devil in the blasphemous rebellion against God's sovereignty in Christ. Rome's attempt to kill the church is not merely human goodness in error--it is complicity with all that is evil!

The clear teaching of the Bible is that no human form of government is adequate to produce the reconciliation of man with his Creator. Human government at its worst or best, stands, by its very nature, opposed to man's allegiance to the absolute sovereignty of God. The message of the Bible is that **all** human government is doomed while the government of God through the Messianic kingdom (the church) will be established forever.

It is not unusual for men or governments to be called beasts in the Bible (see Isa. 27:1; 51:9; Nahum 2:11-12; Dan. 7:1ff; Isa. 1:3; 56:9-12; Matt. 7:6; Lk. 13:32; Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:43; Matt. 7:15; Phil. 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:12). When men and societies worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator they begin to act like beasts and should be called beasts (see Rom. 1:18-32). There is a place God has reserved for all human beasts (Rev. 14:9-11); and a place he has reserved for the saints (14:12-13).

Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking some one to devour. --1 Peter 5:8

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you compared Rev. 13 to Dan. 7 and seen the very evident relationship?
2. Is all human government vulnerable to being used as a tool of the devil? 13:1-4. Can you think of governments today which might earn the name beast?
3. What authority did the devil give to the beast? 13:2. How much authority does the devil have? Is he the god of this world? How?
4. Who was the second beast? 13:11. Can you think of religious powers or organizations today which might earn the name beast?
5. How did the beast **deceive** the world of Rome? 13:14-16 does the devil work *actual* miracles? (see 2 Thess. 2:1-13). Note emphasis on **deceive in 13:14**.
6. What was the mark of the beast? 13:16. What was the meaning of the number 666?
7. What was the new song? 14:1-5. Have you learned it?
8. Was the wrath of God a part of the eternal gospel? 14:6-11
9. Would a merciful God **torment** people in fire, forever? 14:9-11
10. What works do saints take with them to heaven when they die on earth? 14:13
11. What reaping was going on in 14:17-20? Was it the end of the world? Would the Bible use such gory language to describe merely the fall of a human empire? (see Isa. 34:5-7; Ezek. 38:19-23; 39:17-24; Matt. 24:1-34; Lk. 21:1-36; Isa. 13:1--14:27; Nahum chs. 1,2,& 3).

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. C. S. Lewis in the Preface to *The Screwtape Letters* --*Letters from a senior to a junior devil*, 2nd edition 1960

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 15:1---16:21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The Lamb's judgment upon Rome (symbolized by Babylon) built up to the *crescendo* of the seven **last** (Gr. *eschatas*, from which we get the English, eschatology) **plagues**. This had been in progress since the seven **seals** (ch. 6) and the seven **trumpets** (chs. 8 & 9). In chs. 15-16 John depicted in graphic symbolism that the final judgment on Rome was about to be poured out upon her in bowls of God's wrath. Chapter 15 pictures the temple in heaven (God's residence) opened and God's agents (angels) sent to **finish** Rome's judgment.

The 7 seals **revealed**; the trumpets **announced** and **warned**; the 7 bowls **executed** what had been revealed and warned. Please notice how similar and parallel the bowls are to the seals and trumpets! And, once again, we note that the bowls were not picturing final judgment at the end of the world, just as the seals and trumpets were not, because there are still people left alive on the earth, refusing to repent **after** the bowls were poured out (16:6,9,10,11,12,21).

In these two chapters we will study: (a) the Song of Moses and the Lamb; (b) frog-like spirits; (c) Armageddon; (d) and the great city, Babylon. Please read these O.T. chapters to prepare--Joel chs. 2 & 3; Ezek. chs. 38 & 39; Isa. ch. 34; Zech. ch. 14.

Armageddon is mentioned only once in the whole Bible--Rev. 16:16. It is not the end of the world! It is a symbolic reference to the end of the Roman empire. Let a petty emperor of the earth in a little decade, or even in a century or two, assert his deity. He was nothing compared with the Christ of the Ages! An emperor's enforced worship was a cheap sacrilege when viewed against the worship of God. And when God had allowed such an emperor to strut as much as he could tolerate, God brought that rebel to his Armageddon! God has brought all such empires to their own Armageddon's from Assyria (Isa. 10,13,14,36,37), Babylon, Persia & Rome (Dan. 1-9 & Esther), Syria (Dan. 10-12), France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Iraq, etc., etc., etc.

He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding
Daniel 2:21

QUESTIONS:

1. Do the Biblical words last or time of the end (Rev. 15:1) have to mean the absolute, final, end of all time? (cf. Dan. 8:17; 10:14; 11:35; 12:7)--**see also 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 1:2**.
2. What do you think about musical instruments being played in worship of God? In heaven? Rev. 15:2. Could God be worshiped without them?
3. What was the Song of Moses and the Lamb 15:3? Why is it sung by Christians? Is it all one song or two different ones?
4. Chapter 15-16 is a picture of God's wrath in judgment--you have often thanked God for deliverance--how about thanking him for judgments? 15:3-4 (see Rev. 18:20)
5. Why do you think so much emphasis is placed on these later chapters (15-19) on the **justice** of God's judgments? Did you realize justice was that **emphatic** in the N.T.? 15:3
6. Have you checked to see how the bowls (16:1-21) parallel the seals and trumpets? So what forces are used by God to bring wicked empires to an end?
7. What was **Armageddon**? 16:16-21. What do you think of modern eschatology which makes it a literal war in the 20-21st century between Russia and Israel?
8. Why is the 7th bowl poured into the air? 16:17-21. Why does the great voice say, "It is finished"?

Hal Lindsey predicted that **Armageddon** would be the final great war which would involve the destruction of one-third of the world's population through a nuclear holocaust and that this event would occur during the lifetime of those on the earth in the 1980s.

--*The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon*, p. 98, 181

Hal Lindsey predicted that the great tribulation and the rapture would occur 40 years (a generation) after modern Israel was returned to the Holy Land in 1948.

--*The Late, Great, Planet Earth*

If you believe in predicting the last days or the great tribulation or the rapture you need to read: *Approaching the New Millennium, An Amillennial Look at A.D. 2000*, by Paul T. Butler, 1998 College Press; and *Last Days Madness*, by Gary DeMar, 1991, Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Pub. Inc., Brentwood, TN

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 17:1--18:24

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

John devoted 3 chapters (Rev. 17-18-19) to portray the doom of the **city of Rome**. That was because such great **importance** was attached to the **city** of Rome in that ancient civilization as the **center** all forces opposing God and profaning all that ancient civilization. Rome's seduction of mankind into paganism and her declared intention to obliterate the church of Christ made it appropriate for her to be symbolized as **Babylon** (see Isa. 13-14; Jer. 50:51; Dan. 1-5).

It is an established fact of history that a nation or civilization will be as godly or ungodly as its leadership (Micah 1:5). The 17th chapter of Revelation focused on identifying Rome as the harlot that was seducing that whole ancient civilization. A number of symbols were given in detail for the benefit of those early Christians. **They were expected to understand** the mystery of the woman (Rev. 17:7) nearly 2000 years ago thus we should be able to understand it!

Chapter 18 portrays, in symbolic terms, the devastating prostration of the city of Rome. And the glory of Rome did disappear (about A.D. 500) from the earth in exactly the manner John predicted it!

There is a vivid contrast (ch. 18) between heaven's attitude and the world's attitude when the judgments of God fall on wicked worldliness! Heaven and the saints **rejoice** (18:20); the worldly-minded **mourn** (18:10,15,19). Heaven knows that the life of the godly is one of tribulation and injustice. Christians cannot always expect to have injustices vindicated in this life. They must trust God to punish wickedness in the ultimate sense and they may rejoice at every clear judgment of ungodliness in history.

Be in Bible School and learn what God does to nations and individuals who oppose his Word and his People (the church)!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why was Rome portrayed as an harlot? 17:1-6. Could any modern capital city become a harlot? How?
2. What made the harlot drunk? 17:2,4,6. Do you see how rebellion intoxicates?
3. How do we know John was not referring to a resurrection of ancient Babylon? 17:7-18. Or could John's Babylon have been Jerusalem?
4. Why did John **identify** the beast as the one who was, is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit? 17:8. Who was this?
5. Why did the ten horns hate the harlot? 17:12-17. Who were they? Is this a recurring principle of history?
6. How did God put this hate into their hearts to fulfill his purpose? 17:17
7. Why did John speak of Rome as a dwelling place of demons 18:1-2
8. Could those Christians have remained residents of the city of Rome and still obeyed God's command? 18:4. What about residents of Baghdad, Beijing, Washington, D.C.? Have you come out of your Rome?
9. History saw Rome destroyed 18:9-19. How many nations has history seen destroyed?
10. Could you rejoice today (18:224) if certain nations which are persecuting God's saints were destroyed? What about great religious organizations who are persecuting God's saints?
11. Why does the proclamation of the Gospel and its belief by a majority of the people of a nation affect that nation's behavior? Can you name some examples of nations, both pro and con?

"Justice is the great interest of man on earth. Justice is the ligament which holds civilized beings and civilized nations together."

--Daniel Webster (1782-1852)

"The Catacombs of Rome: vast subterranean galleries, commonly 8 to 10 feet wide, 4 to 6 feet high, extending for hundreds of miles beneath the city of Rome. Used by Christians as places for refuge, worship and burial in the Imperial persecutions. Christian graves are variously estimated between 2,000,000 and 7,000,000. More than 4000 inscriptions have been found belonging to the period between emperors Tiberius and Constantine (A.D. 1--A.D. 337)." --*Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965, p. 763

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 19:1---20:6

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The drama of Christ's *real* sovereignty versus the *pretended* sovereignty of the devil and his allies (beast-false prophet-harlot) Rome, came to its terrible climax in Rev. chs. 19-20. From the moment of the birth of the Man Child (Messiah) (ch. 12) it was apparent that the old dragon (Satan) was raging to destroy the Man-Child but he could not do so--God brought the Child back to life! The devil made war in the heavenly place (the church) but he was thrown out with the Judaizers. Then, in great wrath, the devil pursued the woman (the church) into the wilderness (the pagan world of Rome).

But God pronounces complete judgment upon the beast-false prophet-harlot empire. Her doom was sealed. Her death was inevitable. Rome would even be an instrument to bring about her **own** downfall! Bowls of God's wrath would be poured out and Rome; the harlot-city, Babylon (Rome), was obliterated like a great millstone would be when thrown into the sea, never to rise again. Rome had spilled the blood of saints and apostles and prophets--she would die!

The Lamb became the Warrior-King (Messiah) and rode forth to defeat his enemies and rescue his Bride (the church). So, in chapter 19:1--20:6 we see this drama played out 2000 years later. The Bridegroom rescued his Bride; the marriage ceremony was performed when the church was instituted on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2; Eph. 5)--and the marriage-supper invitation **still** goes out even today. Soon the marriage will be **consummated** (dramatized in Rev. ch. 20:7--22:5). But what is soon in God's perspective?

Before the consummation of **all** things (Matt. 24:36--25:46; Lk. 21:32-36; Mk. 13:32-37; 1 Thess. 4:13--5:11; 2 Pet. 3:10, etc.), the beast-false prophet-harlot were thrown into the lake of fire and with this destruction of Rome the devil's power to deceive was **bound** for a long time (symbolized by "1000 years"). During this binding time, the saints (and the church) reign with Christ.

This is what we will study: the marriage supper of the Lamb; the binding of Satan; the 1000 years; the first and second resurrections. BE THERE!

If because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:17, 18

QUESTIONS:

1. When did the marriage (not the supper) of the Lamb take place? 19:1-8 (see Eph. 5:1-21-32). Do you think of your relationship to Christ as intimate and binding as a marriage?
2. When did the marriage **supper** of the Lamb take place? 19:9. What do you know about ancient Middle-East marriage customs?
3. Who was the rider on the white horse? 19:11-16. What kind of warfare did he fight? Does he have an army today? What is its weapon? Is it powerful enough?
4. Should Revelation 20:1-6 be tied inseparably to the end of ch. 19?
5. When was the devil bound 20:2,7. How? By whom? (see Matt. 12:25-29; Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Heb. 2:14-15; Lk. 10:18; 1 Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:13-15; Job chs. 1 & 2; Zech 3:1-5).
6. What were the thousand years? 20:2,4. Does 1000 have to be literal time? (See Psa. 50:10; Deut. 1:10-11; Job 9:3; 33:23; Psa. 90:4; Eccl. 6:6; 7:28; 2 Pet. 3:8).
7. Who were the rest of the dead? 20:5. Why didn't they come to life? What was the first resurrection? 20:5. Is there another resurrection? (see John 5:19-29). What? Who will participate in it?
8. What was the second death? 20:6 who escapes the second death?
9. Has all this apocalyptic imagery done anything for your faith and Christian growth? Should it have? How did John begin this book? (Rev. 1:3) and end it (Rev. 22:6-7).

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

--2 Pet. 3:8

For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

--Psa. 90:4

LESSON TEXT: Revelation 20:7---22:21

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

After almost 50 years of teaching and preaching the Bible (I began in 1952 in Oxnard, CA, teaching adult Sunday School) with 37 years in Bible college teaching the O.T. Prophets, the Gospels, Hebrews, other epistles, and Revelation, it is my opinion, for what it's worth, that what we have between Revelation 20:6 and 20:7 is a literary vehicle known as **shortened perspective**.

Classic examples of this characteristic of Biblical, apocalyptic, prophecy are found in Joel 2:27 and Joel 2:28; Micah 5:1 and Micah 5:2; Matthew 24:35 and 24:36. **Shortened perspective** is where the writer or speaker is describing things *contemporary* with himself (or nearly contemporary) in one verse and then, *in the very next verse*, skips over centuries of time to something in the *far distant future*. Joel skipped from his day to the Day of Pentecost; Micah skipped from his day to the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem; Jesus skipped from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world--ALL FROM ONE VERSE TO THE NEXT.

Revelation 20:6 is talking about the Christian dispensation at the fall of the Roman empire and for the 1000 years following (1000 was figurative for the period of time from Rome's fall to the 2nd Coming of Christ). Revelation 20:7 is talking about the Second Coming of Christ and the end of all time. And from 20:7 to 22:5 John gives us a view (figuratively) of the final judgment and heaven and hell; 22:6-21 is *epilogue*.

In Rev. 20:6 to 20:7 John is not doing something unusual to prophetic writings in the Bible. There are many, many such examples in the O.T. Prophets not listed above. You will want to be in Bible School for this last lesson on Revelation. It will help you see through the myriads of mixed-up misinterpretations.

Jesus 2nd coming is often symbolized as "a thief coming in the night" (Matt. 24:43-44; 1 Thess. 5:2,4; 2 Pet. 3:10). Does a thief give signs to prepare you before he breaks into your house?
Will Jesus give signs before he returns? NO!

In fact, Jesus is going to return when he is not expected to do so!
See Matt. 24:36,42,44,50; 25:13; Mk. 13:32,33,35--PTB

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do some people think the whole book of Revelation is about the 2nd coming of Christ?
2. Is the 2nd coming of Christ mentioned specifically in Revelation? Where?
3. When are the 1000 years ended? 20:7. How long will Satan be loosed? How loose will Satan be? What will Satan's place be in hell?
4. What happens to those whose names are not written in the book of life? 20:15 how does one have his name written there? Do you know any who aren't?
5. Should the kingdom of God on earth now be attempting to function, as nearly as circumstances permit, like the picture in heaven? (see Matt. 6:10). Is it? What needs to be done?
6. Why must the kingdom of God find its consummation in glorified circumstances? Does the hope of these heavenly circumstances help you? How?
7. Why the unpleasant description of those whose lot is the 2nd death in the midst of the glories of heaven? Do you believe you are becoming now what you shall be then? Are you ready in attitudes and desires for heaven?
8. Would you like Christ to come back for the consummation **today**? Would you be more ready if it were one year from today? Why?
9. What is adding to and taking away from the words of this book? Do you know anyone who might be doing this?

"It is strange how, when we imagine heaven, we think of it as somehow shadowy. We color it with the tints of moonlight, sleep, and the faces the dead. But there are no shades there; there is the substance of joy, and the vitality of action. When we are there, and look back on earthly life, we shall not see it as a vigorous battlefield from which we have gracefully retired; we shall view it as an insubstantial dream, from which we have happily awakened."

--Austin Farrer