

# The Context Bible

## Life Group Lesson 50

December 8, 2014 – December 14, 2014

### Revelation 20-22

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Have you ever wished the Bible was easier to read through like an ordinary book – cover to cover? Because the Bible is a collection of 66 books, reading it like an ordinary book is quite difficult. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that the later writers of the New Testament were often quoting or referencing passages in the Old Testament. In fact, much of the New Testament makes better sense only if one also considers the Old Testament passages that place the text into its scriptural context.

You are reading the final edition to a running commentary to what we are calling “The Context Bible.” We have arranged Scripture to overcome some of these difficulties. Using a core reading of John’s gospel, the book of Acts, and the Revelation of John, the Context Bible arranges all the rest of Scripture into a contextual framework that supports the core reading. It is broken out into daily readings so that this program allows one to read the entire Bible in a year, but in a contextual format.

These written lessons have historically corresponded to each week’s reading to explain the material. As the series winds down, however, the lessons do not fit fully with the scheduled readings for each week. Instead, the lessons are accelerated from the reading calendar. This is because no Life Groups meet the last two Sundays of the year in the home church for these lessons, so without this modification, the classes would fail to cover the end of Revelation that bring human history to a VICTORIOUS conclusion. This final lesson does include the regular reading schedule to complete the one-year Bible plan.

#### *Week Fifty Readings*

<p><b>12/8 The Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet</b> <b>Rev 11:4-19</b></p> <p>Ps 52 Ezek 38 Num 8:1-4</p>	<p><b>12/10 The Woman and Dragon Cont'd</b> <b>Rev 12</b></p> <p>Ps 74 Hos 2 Isa 14:12-23 Ps 96</p>	<p><b>12/12 The Lamb and the 144,000</b> <b>Rev 14:1-5</b></p> <p>Heb 12:18-29 Isa 33 Gen 4</p>
<p><b>12/9 The Woman and Dragon</b> <b>Rev 12</b></p> <p>Isa 26:16-21 Isa 66:7-14 Mic 4:6-13 Isa 27 Ezek 28:11- 29:21</p>	<p><b>12/11 The Beasts</b> <b>Rev 13</b></p> <p>Dan 7:1-8 Dan 7:15-28 Rom 13:1-7 Mk 12:13-17 Prv 24:19-22 Mic 7 Dan 11:36-39 Col 3:1-4</p>	<p><b>12/13 The Lamb and the 144,000 Cont'd</b> <b>Rev 14:1-5</b></p> <p>Amos 5:1-17 Prv 22:22-23 Ezek 24 (with vs 9-11) Jer 3 Mk 8:31-9:1 Hb 9:11-14</p>
		<p><b>12/14 Off</b></p>

## BACKGROUND

As we continue working through the Revelation of John, we re-emphasize the need to understand it in light of the era of its composition. The book was written to seven specific churches in Asia Minor that would have read it in light of their own experiences and, hopefully, have understood much of it. After all, the name “Revelation” speaks to a “revealing.” Having said that, in earlier lessons, we illustrated that the number seven was significant for symbolizing a totality. From this we can fairly deduce that the Revelation was not only for the seven specified churches, but was also for the church in its fullest sense, including the church throughout history.

Revelation is a kind of writing well-known in its day. Scholars today call this genre “apocalyptic” from the Greek word *apocalupsis* (ἀποκάλυψις) which actually means “revelation.” When scholars use the word, they are generally referring to writings that use symbolism and speak of the present and future, frequently stemming from a narrative of visions. There are many apocalyptic works from the centuries before and after the biblical book revelation. As these writings are well known for using symbolic numbers and language to impart their messages, Revelation is a marvelous example.

As we study the book, therefore, it is critical to our understanding that we discern as best we are able, what the symbolism means. Fortunately the Bible itself informs much of our understanding. A great deal of the symbolism comes directly from the Old Testament.

The book relies upon the Old Testament not only for many of its symbols, but also its ideas, and even structure. As far back as Eusebius (c.260-c.339 A.D.), the Greek text of Revelation was considered very stilted that was much more Hebraic in its reading style than true Greek.

There are many modern ideas on how to understand and study the book. We do not recite all of those in these lessons, but we do try to illustrate some of the differences where it matters on the issues as discussed. While there are legitimate and fair disagreements among well-schooled scholars on the approaches and layout of the revelation, there is really no disputing the overall theme. The book emphatically proclaims that God sits enthroned over all of history. He has ensured the destiny of his children through the Lamb who conquered death and redeemed his people by his shed blood.

## STRUCTURE

Recognizing that differences in views about the structure of the book, and the corresponding differences in interpretation, exist among scholars, we nonetheless must use a structure for this set of lessons. Some scholars believe that Revelation reads in a

normal time sequence like a book we might read today. In other words, it starts with material relevant to the contemporaneous church in the first century, but then as it progresses, it moves through history until at the end, it recounts the end of days with a window into eternity. This necessarily dictates different conclusions about what the text is referring to in a number of places.

In these lessons, we are using a different approach. Much like the book of Daniel, we are using an approach that explains Revelation as a series of cycles that repeat themselves. In a parallelism reminiscent of Hebrew poetry, the book proclaims material past, present and future, speaking to the time between the first and second coming of Christ.<sup>1</sup> It then proclaims material again – past, present and future. It then takes another perspective as it explains the material again, past, present and future. This happens for seven (the “complete” number) cycles throughout the whole book.<sup>2</sup>

As an illustration of this, think of a running track. On a track you have a starting line and a finish line. IF you were running a seven-lap race, you would start at the starting line, and run seven loops, each one repeating the prior loop. At the end, you would have passed the starting line seven times and the finish line seven times. This would get you your seven laps. In the same way, the seven cycles of Revelation begin and end at the same basic place, with the same time periods covered in the middle. Each cycle just brings a different emphasis on the cycle.

We have seen the first “lap” in chapters 1-3. Jesus walks among the lampstands, (symbolic for walking “among the churches”). He is present with John and displayed as one in power and victory, one who has conquered the grave (Rev. 1:13-1:18). He

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<sup>1</sup> Parallelism was an artistic construction in ancient Hebrew writing and thought as well as other Semitic cultures. We see in many poetic and prophetic writings the ideas of parallelism where the second phrase repeats the ideas of a previous phrase, giving a slightly different or fuller meaning to the concept expressed. This is also found in a fuller sense in books like Daniel where the future events were set forth multiple times in five different visions. Daniel chapter 2, 7, 8, 9, and 11 all cover the same general time period, but as different visions with differing emphases. For example, in Daniel chapter 7 we read of four beasts that represent coming kings, likely with the leopard representing the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. Then in Daniel 8 we read again of the same future, but this time in a vision of a battling ram and goat. The ram has two horns, representing the Medes and Persians, while the goat is Alexander’s Greek conquest. Then again in Daniel 11, we read of the coming successive kingdoms from another approach and in different detail.

<sup>2</sup> A classic explanation of this approach, although modified a bit in these lessons, is that of New Testament scholar William Hendriksen (1900-1982) in his book *More Than Conquerors* (Baker 1967). This book was initially published in 1939 and is still in print today. Hendriksen was the principal translator of the book of Revelation for the New International Version. Hendriksen’s ideas are used in multiple places in this lesson. Another scholar who sets out this approach is Leon Morris in his commentary, *The Revelation of St. John* (Eerdmans 1980). See also the discussion of this versus other approaches in G. K. Beale, “The Influence of Daniel Upon the Structure and Theology of John’s Apocalypse,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, (Dec. 1984) 413-423.

proceeds to speak of things that are to come (Rev. 1:19). From there, we read letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. These letters speak to those churches and to all churches. The messages contain not only concerns of what was happening in the churches, but also promises of what *was going to happen* should the churches not pay attention and make changes.

The second lap is found in Revelation chapters 4 through 7. These passages started with John's vision of the throne, showing the holiness and authority of God, the Lamb, and the Spirit. This scene includes a scroll that has seven seals, containing the future of God's people and the earth. With Revelation 6, the opening of the seven seals began. Like many of the "sevens" in Revelation, these seals are divided into a group of four and a group of three. The first four were horsemen followed by three other seals.

The third cycle or lap is found in Revelation 8-11, centered around the seven trumpets. While the first cycle focused on the churches and their holiness, the second cycle emphasized the effects of outside persecution on the saints. The third cycle was more focused on the effects of the coming history on the people outside the church. The trumpets were warnings of things to come that should drive people into the safety of God's arms and belief in his Son. Unfortunately, the same vision indicates that many will not be moved to faith but will rather deepen their disbelief, much like Pharaoh did in the midst of the plagues sent as warning to him. (Key language in the trumpet warnings echoes the plagues used in Egypt over a millennia earlier.)

The fourth cycle is found in Revelation 12-14. As with each other cycle, the vision begins with the conquering Christ and proceeded with the history that will culminate in the victory of Christ at the end of time.

The fifth is found in Revelation 15-16, which begins with the birth, death and ascension of Jesus and treks through the Gospel Age pronouncing God's judgment upon the nations through his pouring out bowls of wrath. This cycle, like the others, ends with the final judgment and Christ reigning over his enemies at the close of the age.

As we moved to the sixth cycle, found in Revelation 17-19, we again returned to the beginning of the gospel age and the defeat of the seductress and Babylon by the victory Christ won on the cross. The victory started at Cavalry, but is brought to conclusion at the end of time as Jesus rides forth to end the enemy's evil deeds and influence.

The final seventh cycle is considered in this lesson as we concentrate on Revelation 20-22. In this cycle, we see the driving reasons that caused William Hendriksen to entitle his classic work on Revelation "*More Than Conquerors*."<sup>3</sup> In these chapters we see that the believers in Christ do not simply win – it is not simply that evil is defeated. But

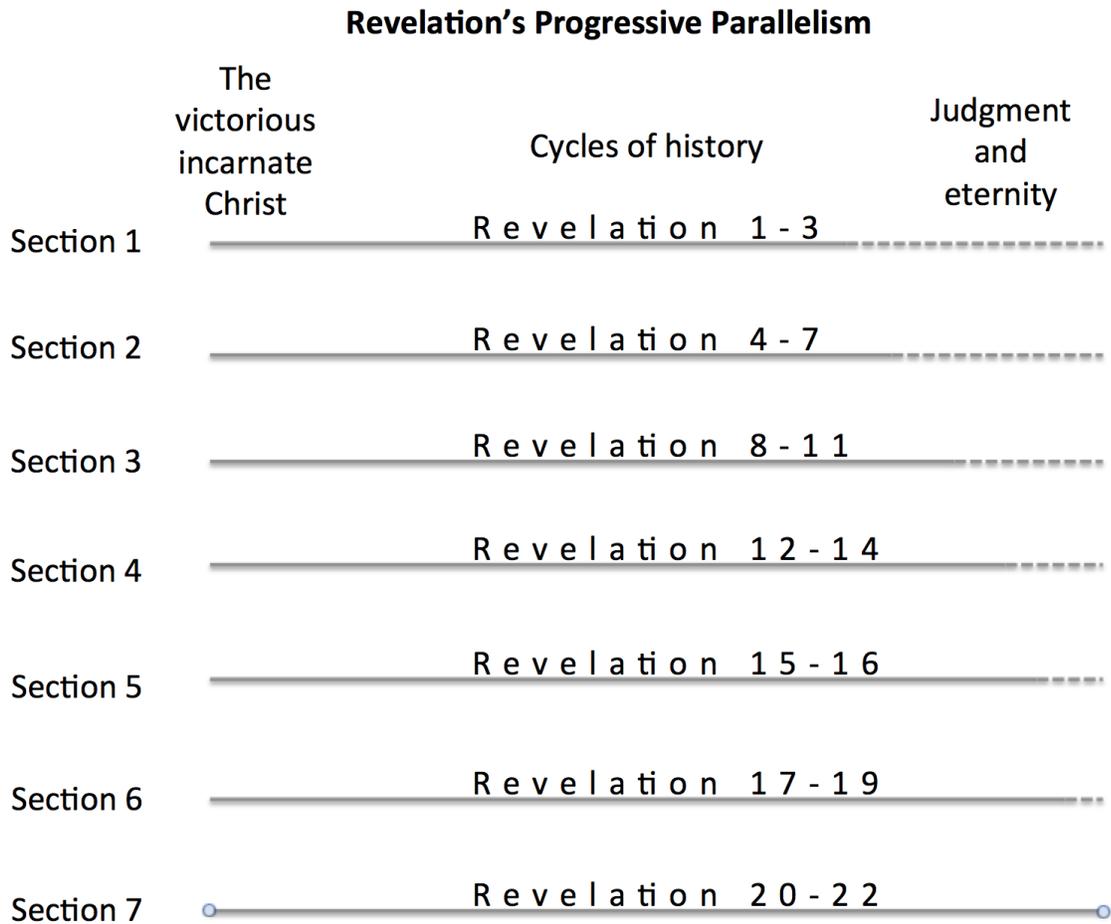
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<sup>3</sup> Hendriksen, William, *More Than Conquerors* (Baker 1967).

the believers sit in union with God in an eternity of goodness and joy. We are *more* than conquerors.

These cycles speak to the churches in John’s time, explaining the events of the world, but they also speak to the churches in our day and throughout history. Just as the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3 reach out and speak to all churches, so these cyclical visions give a measure of understanding and encouragement in their insight for the churches of every age.

We have used the following diagram/time line to illustrate this approach to Revelation’s structure and meaning:



**IMPORTANTLY:** There is much in Scripture about the end of days. Revelation is not the full answer or explanation of what is to happen in the end times. There is a wealth of things contained in Revelation on that subject, but the book was written to real churches over 1900 years ago. It had a message to those churches and we do it a disservice if we lose track of that. **HOWEVER,** we do a disservice to other Scriptures

if we fail to see that they have much to say, sometimes more to say, about the end times than passages in Revelation. For example, in Romans 11, we have a good discussion from Paul about the restoration of many Jews before the Lord returns. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the end times giving important insights. The goal in these lessons is simply to focus on Revelation and the contextual Scriptures chosen for their relevance in understanding the book.

***The Thousand Years (Revelation 20; Isaiah 2:6-4:1) The New Heaven and Earth (Revelation 21; Romans 8:18-25; Hebrews 8; 13:20-21; Philippians 3:12-4:1; Proverbs 25:18; 29:16; Zechariah 8; Isaiah 35; 60; 65; Psalm 87; 93) Victory Consummated (Revelation 22; Ezekiel 43:1-12; 47:1-12; Colossians 2:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:1-40; 23:17-18; Romans 15; Jude 1:17-25; Psalm 117)***

If our structure of Revelation is right, then we have a return to the beginning of the cyclical period as we start this final section of Revelation. That would mean that we are first looking at the advent of Jesus Christ and his life on earth followed by his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. This will mean a different interpretation of a core passage in Revelation in comparison to those who read Revelation linearly.

The question centers on the verses we key as the start of the seventh section (and seventh cycle) of Revelation:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while (Rev. 20:1-3).

The core difference is seen in the binding of Satan for 1,000 years, a time commonly referred to as the “millennium.” If someone is reading Revelation linearly, then this is an event that happens at the end of time. These people generally believe that this event follows the return of Jesus and hence this approach is termed “premillennial,” for it means that Jesus returns *before* (pre-) the millennium.

The premillennial linear approach is commonly seen in a lot of the popular material on Revelation, such as the Lahaye/Jenkins *Left Behind* series of books and movies. (That is not the only version of the linear understanding. Many read the “millennium kingdom” differently, even as they read it linearly.)

Others read Revelation linearly, and accordingly place this millennium event at the end of time, but they do not have Jesus returning until *after* this time. Accordingly they are called “postmillennial” meaning Jesus returns *after* (post-) the millennium.

If those scholars that ascribe to structuring Revelation around the ideas of repeated cycles through the same time frames are correct, then the thousand-year binding is something that happened much earlier! We would then understand these verses as constituting what happened when Jesus began the Gospel Age during and in his earthly ministry and ascension. (For those keeping track of the names associated with the various views, this approach is called “amillennial” meaning that Jesus’ second coming is not related to the 1,000 years. In keeping with the approach of these lessons, we will examine this section of Revelation as part of the cyclical approach.<sup>4</sup>

Now some will read these first three verses of Revelation 20 and wonder at first blush how anyone can claim that these verses recount the first coming of Christ. That is why we need to carefully consider these verses as John would have understood them, that is, in light of Scripture itself.

John was writing Revelation at the end of the New Testament time, and likely all other books were written, even if all were not in full circulation throughout the churches geographically. The rest of Scripture, however, gives us insight into how the church spoke of and thought of the work of Jesus while on earth. From such Scriptures we can derive some important considerations for understanding what John saw and recorded.

So as we read this, we need to read it first as people in John’s day would have. The questions we ask are:

- Can we find where Satan was “bound?”
- Can we find where Satan was “thrown” or “cast out” into the abyss?
- Is there meaning to ending Satan’s ability to “deceive the nations” for “1,000 years”?

The answers are found in our Scriptures, in experiences that John knew quite well, and in doctrines taught to the early church. Let us break out each question:

### *The Binding of Satan*

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<sup>4</sup> Here is a very graphic example of the difference in a linear and a cyclical reading of Revelation. It is like what we have already seen in Revelation 8-11 and then 12-14. The cycle of 8-11 ends with judgment day as the seventh angel blows his trumpet and “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15). Then in the very next chapter we saw the start of the cycle anew with the incarnation/birth of Christ, “She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne” (Rev. 12:5). This is what we see in the end of the cycle of Revelation 17-19 and the start of Revelation 20-22. Revelation 19 ends with the Second Coming of Christ “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.” (Rev. 19:11). Revelation 20 then starts again with the cycle as set out in the lesson above.

The Greek verb for “bound” is *deo* (δέω). It is the precise word used to describe Jesus’ actions during his earthly ministry in reference to his activity over Satan. In Matthew 12 we are told of when a “demon-oppressed man” who was both blind and mute was brought before Jesus and his apostles (John!). Jesus healed the man to the amazement of the crowd, who started rumblings about Jesus being the awaited Messiah. Certain Pharisees critical of Jesus accredited the casting out of demons to Satan.

It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons (Mt. 12:24).

Jesus then pointed out that he worked those miracles because he *bound* (*deo* - δέω) Satan.

Or how can someone enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds [*deo* - δέω] the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house (Mt. 12:29).

The same word is used in the accounts of this in Mark 3:27.

Furthermore, this is the same power that Jesus gave to his apostles:

Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind [*deo* - δέω] on earth shall be bound [*deo* - δέω] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Mt. 18:18).

Jesus’ binding and victory over Satan begins in the wilderness and is brought to completion on Calvary. This defeat is part of his parting cry, “It is finished!” (Jn. 19:30).

### *The Casting Out of Satan*

John speaks in Revelation 20:3 of Satan as being “thrown” or cast into the abyss. The Greek word he used to describe his vision is *ballo* (βάλλω). We find John using this same root word in his Gospel (written close in time to the Revelation). In John 12, Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion are imminent. In the words of Jesus, his “hour is at hand.” Jesus prayed,

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” (Jn. 12:27-28).

When those nearby heard the voice from heaven, Jesus made an interesting remark:

“This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be *cast* [*ballo* - βάλλω] out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (Jn. 12:30-32).

Jesus’ ministry on earth bound Satan. Jesus’ death on the cross cast him out. But what of question three? Has Satan lost his power to deceive all nations?

### *Deceiving Nations for 1,000 Years*

As we have dealt with numbers, we have seen them used figuratively over and over in the Revelation. We suggest that here, the 1,000 years is not a sudden departure into mathematics, but rather a significant number in the same respect we have seen with the others. 1,000 is not a “total” or everlasting number. For that, we would expect 7 or 12 in some permutation. But 1,000 is a magnifier number. It is used to show a grand length or significance to whatever it is describing. So it is here. 1,000 stands for a very long time, but not a permanent time or an eternity.

The ability of Satan to deceive the nations *was* ended with the crucifixion of Christ, and especially his resurrection, his ascension, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Before, even Jesus’s disciples were unclear about what Jesus was doing. None of them went to the tomb on Easter Sunday expecting it empty! Everyone was deceived. Everyone believed Jesus to be dead forever! Everyone was sad and despondent. Thomas didn’t even believe Jesus’ resurrection when told it by other apostles!

But look how rapidly things changed with the resurrection, ascension and coming of the Holy Spirit. The apostles believed. Other followers believed. Then on Pentecost, with a rush of the Holy Spirit, thousands from all the nations believed. During what we are terming the Gospel Age, Satan’s ability to deceive all the nations has remained curtailed. He is not without influence. His reach, even from the abyss, and that of his minions is not unnoticed. History shows great persecution of the church and attacks on the saints. But there *is* a church, one that started with a few folks in a ragtag corner of the Roman Empire and spread throughout the world – *fast!*

Paul described it as “the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead” in Colossians 2:13-15 adding,

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. *He disarmed the*

*rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

And so if we begin Revelation 20 understanding the cycle beginning again with the Gospel Age, we now open up some important vistas of teachings in the succeeding parts of John's visions.

John again sees the thrones he had seen earlier in heaven, representing the place of authority given to those under the Old Covenant (12 tribes of Israel) as well as the New (12 apostles). He also sees the souls of martyrs ("those beheaded for the testimony of Jesus"). In addition, he sees other believers who have died on earth, but live on in the presence of the Savior in a "soul" sense ("those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark"). These are believers who die before the end of days. They live on before God in what John calls "the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:5). This was not a foreign concept to the church. Hebrews 12 speaks of the "great cloud of witnesses" that surround us as we live, having recounted them as examples of faithful people under both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in Hebrews 11.

The Gospel Age is not forever, however. As the age winds down, the 1,000 year binding will end and Satan will be released. He will gather armies and descend on the church in a final fury. He will seek to bring to utter destruction and annihilation the presence of any who trust in the Lord Jesus. His attack will be deceptive and will come from the four corners of the world. They will surround the "beloved city" and things will look dire indeed!<sup>5</sup>

As we are considering Revelation a set of visions and sections repeating the same cycles of the Gospel Age, it gives added significance to this final "battle" to see that it was also described in the earlier cycles, especially Revelation 16 and 19.

Revelation 16:14, bringing the fifth cycle to the close of the Gospel Age, described it thus:

For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

Revelation 19:19, bringing the sixth cycle to the close of the Gospel Age, described it similarly:

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<sup>5</sup> The full description of the besieged is "camp of the saints -- the beloved city," an apt description for the people of God with echoes not only of the Old Testament (Isaiah 60:14 explains God's people "will be called the City of the LORD"; the people called out of Egypt were "the camp" with passages speaking of God "moving among the camp"), but of Revelation itself. In Revelation 3:12 we read that the believers who overcome are directly associated as the "City of God."

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

This battle was forecasted long before John's visions. Isaiah himself wrote of the fearsome Day of the Lord, "a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up" (Is. 2:12). This is a day when the rebellious are brought low and "the LORD alone will be exalted" (Is. 2:17).

Having already read through the events in the other cycles, and knowing the echoes found in Old Testament prophecies, we are not surprised by the outcome of what John sees. Satan's final brutal assault is not successful. His defeat is thorough and his temporary reprise is simply ushering in the second coming of Jesus.

Fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:9-10).

Satan meets his final verdict of eternal torment, but what happens to humanity? What of the believers who are caught up with the Lord in the air? (Paul explained that at the second coming of Christ, "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:17). What of the unbelievers who deny the Lord and served the beast?

John gives us that in his vision as well. Jesus sits on a great white throne. He sits in judgment. Those whose names are not written in his book of life, are judged by their own deeds, are cast into the lake of fire, and die a second death. But for those whose names *are* in the book of life, something altogether different happens. The earth and sky have "fled away" at the coming of Christ (Rev. 20:11) and a new heaven and new earth take its place! (Rev. 21:1).

The story of Genesis 1-3 is made complete. The Bible closes in a very appropriate fashion, and history does as well. In Genesis 1, God created the heavens and earth. In Genesis 2, he made humanity and placed them in Paradise, walking and communing with them. But in Genesis 3, things went awry with sin, borne from the temptations of the deceiver himself, and fallen humanity was no longer suited for Paradise, for the presence of God, or for eternity and the tree of life. Now with the end of Revelation, we read the old fallen world is finished. The deceiver lives on eternally tormented for what he did in rebellion to God. And for those who embraced God's redemption, a new

heaven and earth come, there is a bodily resurrection, and a new life in true Paradise with the tree of life in a new Holy City, “the New Jerusalem.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus makes everything new, the believers as the bride of Christ are transported into his presence where the dwelling of God is *again* with his people.<sup>7</sup> Zechariah 8:3, 7-8 made this promise:

Thus says the LORD: I have returned to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, the holy mountain... I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

The New Jerusalem is described in magnificent detail, albeit symbolic, but even without understanding the symbols, it is beautiful! Radiant like a jewel – high walls (in 1<sup>st</sup> century speak, that meant great security”!) – 12 gates (complete believing Israel<sup>8</sup>) 12 foundations (complete apostles/church) – 12,000 stadia long and wide (complete size) – pearly gates – streets of gold – lit by the glory of God and the Lamb – always day, never night – nothing detestable or deceptive there<sup>9</sup> – INCREDIBLE!

Paul may not have shared John’s visionary experience, but Paul was able to write narratives that align with John’s visions because Paul had understanding and inspiration of the Spirit along with the Old Testament passages like the following:

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<sup>6</sup> Over and over in Scripture we read of echoes and themes repeated in how God works. The new city is “New Jerusalem.” The old covenant can contrast to the “new covenant.” The old “tent” becomes the new presence of Jesus. The old passes away and gives birth to a new and fuller expression. This is shown well by the ideas in Hebrews 8 and 13:20-21.

<sup>7</sup> The Bible is clear, God will not dwell in the midst of the unholy. It would degrade God. Something that cannot be done. See, e.g., Ezek. 43:1-12.

<sup>8</sup> Understanding the “gates” of the New Jerusalem thusly, brings a special touching significance to Psalm 87:1-2,

On the holy mount stands the city he founded; the LORD loves the *gates* of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob.

<sup>9</sup> John contrasts those who go into the city with those outside:

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (Rev. 22:15).

This is not a reference to real *dogs*! The expression was for those who were living in open rebellion akin to prostitutes. See in this sense Dt. 23:17-18.

- **Isaiah 35:8-10** A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- **Isaiah 65:17-19** For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.<sup>10</sup>

Hence Paul was able to explain to the Romans how his confidence in what the future held in words directly aligned with John's visions:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience (Rom. 8:18-25).

Similarly, Paul wrote to the Philippians,

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved (Phil. 3:20-4:1).

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<sup>10</sup> There are plenty more Paul had to draw from, including the context readings in Ezekiel 47:1-12.

John then ends his book assuring his readers of the truth of what he has seen and written and its implications. It should change how we live, attentive to the times and the promised coming of our Savior! The risen Jesus is the one we worship! He is the self proclaimed, “root<sup>11</sup> and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). We do not worship angels or saints (Col. 2:18-19), but God alone!

In the process of doing this, John draws on Deuteronomy 4, a passage in which God through Moses exhorts the people to not “add to the word” or “take from it” (Dt. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). In Deuteronomy 4 also there are three specific warnings against idolatry, just as there are in Revelation 21-22.<sup>12</sup>

We can begin to draw this study to an end with some of the great praises found in Scripture. We start with the end of Jude,

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen (Jude 24-25).

We add Psalm 117,

Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

Then with John’s own closing (Rev. 22:20-21), we close this study:

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

## QUESTIONS

1. Are you taking advantage of this age where we can take the gospel forth and bring Jesus to the four corners of the earth?
2. Is there reassurance and motivation in knowing that those who are dead in Jesus come into his presence awaiting the final judgment?

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<sup>11</sup> Paul used the same phrase for Jesus in Rom. 15:12 claiming for Jesus the prophecy of Isaiah 11:10.

<sup>12</sup> A good discussion of this is found in Beale, G. K., *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield Academic Press 1998) at 95-96.

3. Are you ready for the end of days?

*End of Year Readings*

*Week 51*

<p><b>12/15 The Impending Judgment</b> Rev 14:6-20</p> <p>Rom 1:22-32 Ex 22:20 Isa 21 Jer 51</p> <p><b>12/16 The Impending Judgment</b> Rev 14:6-20</p> <p>Job 21 Joel 3:13-16 Pslm 109</p>	<p><b>12/17 Angels and Plagues</b> Rev 15</p> <p>Ex 15:1-21 Ps 111 Amos 4:13 Dt 32:4 Ps 86</p> <p><b>12/18 Angels and Plagues</b> Rev 15</p> <p>Nm 17 1Kg 8:31-66</p>	<p><b>12/19 Bowls of Wrath</b> Rev 16</p> <p>Isa 66:1-6 Isa 66:15-24 Ps 119:137-144 Ps 19 Ps 106</p> <p><b>12/20 Bowls of Wrath</b> Rev 16</p> <p>2 Pt 3 Mt 24:42-44 Ps 83 Ps 76 Ps 88 Prv 12:3</p> <p><b>12/21 Off</b></p>
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*Week 52 and more*

<p><b>12/22 The Prostitute and Beast</b> Rev 17</p> <p>Nah 3 Dan 2:46-49 Ezek 23 Ezek 21</p> <p><b>12/23 The Fall of Babylon</b> Rev 18</p> <p>Jer 50 Isa 47</p> <p><b>12/24 The Fall of Babylon Cont'd</b> Rev 18</p> <p>Ezek 26-27 Ps 114 Prv 16:4 Isa 14:1-11 Amos 4:1-12</p>	<p><b>12/25 The Marriage Supper</b> Rev 19</p> <p>Ps 135 Mt 22:1-14 Eph 5:22-33 Lk 13:22-30 Mt 26:26-29</p> <p><b>12/26 The Marriage Supper Cont'd</b> Rev 19</p> <p>Hos 1, 3 Ezek 39:1-24 Lk 14:12-24 Jer 12 (with vs 17-18)</p> <p><b>12/27 The Thousand Years</b> Rev 20</p> <p>Isa 2:6-4:1</p> <p><b>12/28 Off</b></p>	<p><b>12/29 The New Heaven and Earth</b> Rev 21</p> <p>Rom 8:18-25 Heb 8 Phil 3:12-4:1 Prv 29:16 Zech 8 Isa 35 Ps 87</p> <p><b>12/30 The New Heaven and Earth Cont'd</b> Rev 21</p> <p>Isa 65 Isa 60 Heb 13:20-21 Ps 93 Prv 25:18</p> <p><b>12/31 Victory Consummated</b> Rev 22</p> <p>Ezek 43:1-12 Ezek 47:1-12 Col 2:18-19 Dt 23:17-18 Dt 4:1-40 Rom 15 Jude 1:17-25 Ps 117</p>
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**IF YOU HAVE FOLLOWED OUR READING PLAN THOROUGHOUT THE YEAR, CONGRATULATIONS!!!! YOU HAVE JUST FINISHED READING THE ENTIRE BIBLE IN ONE YEAR! IF NOT, LOG ONTO OUR**

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IT IN 2015! HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!**