

## **NOT YOUR DAD'S END TIMES STUDY**

### **Session 9 - Revelation 12-15**

Last week we examined the beginning of God's intense judgments upon the world manifesting in the form of seven angels sounding seven trumpets. This set of judgments along with the two witnesses' testimony and ministry upon the earth, including their death by the beast and subsequent resurrection mark the beginning of the final days before Christ's return. Notice that the last thing John recorded in Revelation was the seemingly triumphant war the beast waged against the two witnesses which ended up in the killing most of the true church. The question in mind is what could possibly be the root cause of such hatred and hostility which is going to eventually break out against the church? In **John 15:20** Jesus said, "*If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you.*" There is an age-long conflict between God and Satan which is the underlying reason for the great persecution which is about to engulf the church. Persecuted Christians from the first century to the present need to understand the ultimate reason behind their persecution and why the world seeks to destroy them.

I'm a big Star Wars fan and a few years ago the National Air & Space Museum had a Star Wars exhibit and it told how George Lucas came up with the idea for Star Wars. It turns out that every ancient culture had an epic good vs. evil story. Every single one of them followed the same outline. In the beginning things were good. Evil rears its ugly head and fights against good. A hero is born but is whisked away to a distant land where he lives an ordinary life. In time, this hero gets caught up into the epic struggle. He suffers some setbacks but in the end defeats the evil and wins the freedom for the good side. All George Lucas did was retell this same ancient narrative from a science-fiction perspective.

Here's a few of the ancient accounts of good vs. evil. In Egypt mythology, Horus, the sun god, killed the red dragon, Set, after being pursued by Set his whole life. The Babylonians told the story of the evil sea monster Tiamat being killed by their hero Marduk. The Persian version was against their god Ahura Mazda and the wicked Ahriman. In the Greek version the goddess Leto is giving birth to Apollo but when it's time for delivery, the dragon Python sought to kill her and her son. Only on a small remote island welcomed Leto and allowed her to give birth. A few days later, Apollo set out, found and killed Python.

Chapter 12 of Revelation is the Bible's version of that universal account of the epic struggle between good and evil with one important exception. This version is divinely inspired and thus isn't a myth but rather the truth in symbolic form - a form the ancient listeners would have understood. Remember, this chapter is meant to answer one question: what is the source of the pure hatred and hostility against God and His church? In chapter 11 we just saw the mass-scale murder of the church by the beast to the great joy of the world. This is the reason for that hostility.

Even more than most, this chapter is loaded with symbols. There are seven signs mentioned. Three (spiritual number) are in heaven while four (earthly number) are on earth. One is good while six warn of evil and judgments of God. Important interpretative reminder: This is not a forecast of future events. This is a symbolic representation of the struggle between good and evil in the spiritual world which has been the true motivation behind human history.

#### I. The woman, the child and the beast **[Read Revelation 12:1-6]**

A. The woman. The term "great sign" is given to let us know that this is not a reference to

a literal woman but she symbolizes something more than a person. Her clothing gives us a clue to her identity.

1. She is clothed with the sun. The dazzling appearance is the glory of the Lord (Rev. 1:6) as well as her own light-bearing nature. The moon represents her permanence (Psalm 72:5, 89:37). Her crown has 12 stars. All these things show her identity as the elect, the redeemed. She is the community of faith, all those who have been saved throughout all history, beginning with the Jews but culminating in the church. The permanence shows that God has always had a witness in the world and His glory has always been reflected through His faithful. The twelve shows the number of divine administration (under the old covenant as the 12 tribes and under the new covenant as the 12 apostles). This woman is also pregnant. The covenant community gives birth to the Messiah. She is the heavenly representative of the people of God. (The church is represented as a woman in other New Testament passages: II Cor. 11:2, Eph. 5:25-27,32.)

2. The woman is under attack. Thus we see the evil red dragon who is symbolic of Satan. We know his identity as he is called such in v.9. He is the embodiment of evil. the seven heads with seven crowns suggests that he has great authority which God allows him to exercise. The ten horns goes back to Daniel 7 and his symbolic of the completeness of his might. These are meant to show that he is the god of this age. He is so huge that with one sweep of his tail one third of the stars of heaven are knocked out of their original position. This goes along with the notion that Satan took one third of the angels with him in his rebellion against God and that he has tremendous power.

3. The child is Christ, the Messiah, the hero. It appears the child will not live long as the devil is positioned to kill him at birth. In human history, this easily fits into the Herod's fit of rage that led to the murder of all babies in Bethlehem under two years of age after Jesus' birth but also of the constant war against the Jews by hostile forces in an attempt to wipe them out before Jesus' arrival so that Jesus' ancestors would be killed and He would never be born. The symbol that this child will rule with a rod of iron is a reference to the Messiah. Note that once born, the hero is caught up to the throne of God.

B. The meaning of this section is that the Messiah is born and all of the dragon's attacks on the hero and the church are frustrated.

1. The child being caught up to God symbolizes that He successfully completed His mission.

2. The dragon, frustrated by not being able to destroy the child, now turns to attack the mother (who is the community of faith in the world). The dragon's attempts were again frustrated as the wilderness is a place away from the "normal" world but also a place of God's protection. When God led His people in the wilderness, He rained down manna upon them daily. Notice that the length of time is 1,260 days. It's a limited amount of time that God has set. Since the hero is caught up to God and His mission completed, this 1,260 day time is during the end times where we are now living. This lets us, the true church, know that we are being protected now by God. We live in the world but are not of the world (John 17:14-16).

## **II. The war in heaven [Read Revelation 12:7-12]**

A. In an all-out assault to regain his position before God, Satan mounts a massive attack with his demons against Michael and the angels of heaven. Michael is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments as the archangel who contends against the devil. Satan loses the battle and

forfeits his place in heaven. The point of vv. 7-9 is to let the church know that Satan is truly a defeated foe even though he will be bringing his evil to earth. He may not appear defeated from a human perspective but he is from God's perspective - which is always the truth.

B. When did this defeat happen? This is the answer given in the hymn of vv.10-12. It was the death of Jesus, the Messiah, on the cross. The blood of the Lamb of God gave victory to the saints.

1. The events that are happening on earth are first decided in heaven. The dragon was cast out of heaven and now all that is left is for him to be cast off earth into the abyss, and then eventually into the lake of fire. It is essential to note that while Satan appears invincible now and has great strength and authority for now, he has already been defeated. His time is very short. Notice that his power is in his mouth - his ability to lie and deceive.

2. Now the woe is given because Satan is active upon the earth. He knows his own end so he is going to throw all he has at the saints of God in an attempt to martyr them all. By killing off the saints, he thinks he will neutralize the church's witness by seeing some renounce their faith and keeping others afraid to join the ranks of the saints.

Q: How do the saints overcome Satan? (*vv.11 - the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony*)

Q: What role does the word of the saint's testimony play in their victory over Satan? (*Christians are called to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). We testify to the reality of the power of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross through our lives and words. Every time we share this evidence with others, it sets in motion the opportunity for another person to claim the victory of grace by faith.*)

3. The greatest weapon of any saint is to be prepared to die for his or her faith. Satan's ultimate weapon is killing us and our ultimate weapon is dying for our faith knowing we will share in Christ's victory upon His return. Our resurrection is certain because our hero's has already happened.

### III. The war on earth [Read Revelation 12:13-17]

A. While the dragon has been banned from heaven and no longer seeks the male child, the Messiah, he is now pursuing the woman to persecute her.

1. The woman is given eagle's wings which allow her to escape again to the wilderness. This is similar to the language of Exodus 19:4. The church will be miraculously preserved from Satan's planned destruction.

2. Not ready to give up, the dragon sends a torrent of water from his mouth to destroy the community of faith. Again the church is not saved by their own strength or power but rather by the earth, which is God's agent of rescue. Exodus 15:2 - the earth swallowed up the Egyptians - those seeking to destroy God's people.

3. The dragon is enraged at this series of frustrating ends to his schemes. He was unable to destroy the Messiah and the community of faith as a whole so now he turns his attention to the rest of her children. Now this is where Satan is directing His wrath against the Christians who make up the church in the last days.

a. Here's the paradox of faith. While the woman, who is the community of faith as a whole is immune to the devil's attacks, individual Christians are vulnerable to the devil's

schemes and his wrath.

b. Now to describe the dragon's ultimate assault upon Christians, to make his wrath complete, he is going to call forth his beast from the sea who will be his ultimate instrument of persecution against the church (Rev. 13:1).

c. It is important to realize that this symbolic account of good versus evil ends just where the Great Tribulation begins - the rise of the antichrist. This is essential to know because it lets believers know that the time until Christ's second coming is very soon. The time of Satan's beast will be fierce but short.

d. There are two reasons for the Great Tribulation:

1) To administer God's wrath upon lost mankind and the antichrist who they worshiped and

2) to test the purity of the faith of the believers alive at that time.

e. The key is that the antichrist is a political world ruler. He will embody super-big government which will be completely authoritative, similar to the Emperor worship of Rome. As this government grows in size, it will squash the rights of those who live within it as it seeks more power for its leader - the beast. Again, the meaning of the chapter is to underscore the reason for the great hostility against the church about to erupt in chapter 13 (which was briefly shown in chapter 11 with the death of the two witnesses). This is the reason for why we just can't all get along.

B. Now for the practical exam on this overview.

Q: What does it mean when you see the time of three and a half years, 42 months, or 1,260 days? *(It means a fairly short limited time set by God for a set of events to take place.)*

**[Daniel 7:25]**

**[Daniel 12:7]**

**[Revelation 12:14]**

Q: Which measure of time is used in each of these verses? *(time, times, and half a time - or three and a half - notice that there isn't a unit of actual time associated with this phrase. It is given a merely 3 and a half. But these are the only three places in the Bible where this "time, times and half a time are used".)*

Q: What does it mean that this phrase is used in these three verses? *(They are describing the same event - the reign of the antichrist and his war against the church.)*

Q: What aspect of the antichrist's reign are we shown in the two Daniel passages? *(the breaking down of the church)*

Q: What do we see about the church in the Revelation passage? *(that God provides an escape for the church in some form.)*

#### IV. The beast from the sea [Read Revelation 13:1-10]

A. We got our first glimpse of the hideous beast in 11:7.

Q: Where did the beast come from in chapter 11? (*11:7 - the abyss*)

Q: Where is the beast shown as coming from in this chapter? (*v.1 - the sea*)

His purpose in coming to earth was to be Satan's big gun against the church (the two witnesses). Here he is pictured as coming out of the sea which is symbolic of the abyss - the source of demonic powers opposed to God. In the Hebrew mind, the sea was a place where demonic powers were active and pictures of sea monsters fought against the Lord to destroy God's people (Psalm 74:13-14, 87:4, Isaiah 51:9).

#### [Revelation 21:1]

Q: What is not present in heaven? (*The sea - To sum up this thought that the sea was the place where demonic powers ruled and originated, notice that in heaven there is no sea.*)

B. The description of this beast from the sea identifies him directly with Satan.

Q: Compare the description of Satan in 12:3 with that of the antichrist in 13:1. Are there any differences between these two descriptions? (*Both have seven heads and ten horns. The only difference is that this beast has ten horns instead of the seven the dragon had in chapter 12. The reason being that 10 symbolizes completeness in Revelation. In other words, this beast has the complete power and authority of the dragon. His number was seven which was given to him by God to exercise authority at God's discretion. The key is that the antichrist will have total control over the world's governments and he gets his power directly from Satan.*)

1. His heads have blasphemous names on them. He is exalting himself over God in the eyes of the world. His goal is to mislead and destroy those who follow Jesus.

2. His body is the same as the beast described in Daniel 7. However, the beasts in Daniel's vision were separate from each other, this one is contained in one being. This beast is the complete package of evil. The leopard is a stealthy predator. The bear is mighty. The lion is fierce and cunning and able to incite fear by his roar - his mouth. In addition to this, he is supernaturally empowered to do Satan's will.

C. **Revelation 13:3** - The fatal wound that was healed. This verse is hotly debated and commented upon so we'll keep it to the basics of what we know.

2. The word "as if" is the same word used in Revelation 5:6 to describe "*the Lamb standing, as if slain,...*" From the context, one of the beast's heads is given a fatal wound yet somehow it revives and the beast is stronger than before. We don't know if this is a true death and resurrection back to life for a near death or staged death with a fake resurrection associated with it. Which ever one it is, the world will believe this person died and came back to life.

Most other places this word "wound" is used it is translated "plague" in the sense of a divinely inflicted punishment. (Rev. 9:18, 9:20, 11:6, 15:1, 16:9, 18:4, 21:9, & 22:18). It can

mean “blow” - like a blow of justice.

a. v.12 - the fatal wound impacted the whole body of the beast.

b. v.14 - the sword is the instrument of God’s wrath and justice. Everywhere else we see it used in Revelation, it is used for divine judgment by the Messiah (1:16, 2:12, 2:16, 19:15, 19:21). Remember that the death of Jesus and His resurrection was the true death blow against the dragon. He appears to still be alive but he is a defeated foe. From the earliest prophecy of the Messiah crushing Satan in Genesis 3:15-17 we see it is Jesus who does the head-crushing of Satan and only Jesus.

Q: What will the beast’s recovery do for his image? *(The beast’s recovery will greatly increase the beast’s influence and acceptance and eventual worship by mankind. It’s a pseudo-resurrection. While he has truly already been defeated, he will appear to mankind as invincible and in full command.)*

c. The wound is symbolic of his already been defeated status. Yet the world, without faith or divine knowledge, will see him as God and be ready to worship him. While this wound is symbolic of his defeat by Christ, it has to have some physical nature to it as the world will see this as a resurrection event (albeit counterfeit). It is critical to understand that believers will see this for what it truly is. They will recognize the fake resurrection and see through it as this will further identify this person as the beast - the antichrist.

f. The purpose of this fake resurrection is given in v.4 - promote idolatrous worship of the dragon and his beast. This verse sends out a chilling question, “*Who is able to make war against the beast?*” The picture is that evil is so strong that it cannot even be killed. Why not give into its demands? Why even attempt to resist its power? Why even try to live a holy or moral life? This will be the theme of many “good” people who never knew Christ personally. These people will be sucked into worshipping the beast as they will feel helpless to do otherwise. This is because humans can be manipulated by power and the show of power. However, the true believer who has been paying attention remembers that the dragon did not win the battle against the hero or the woman and now has been given a wound. Satan is really a defeated foe and that is what will be important to keep in mind despite the show he puts on in front of the world. There will be two groups of people who will end up worshipping the beast:

1) those who have a love for evil

2) those who have a fear of evil

The latter group always gives homage and worship to whoever they sense holds supreme power - yet in this case - they will do so out of sight and not by faith.

3. After this fake resurrection, he will become even more blasphemous and will go unchallenged as the leader of the world for 42 months - against symbolic use of time here - a fairly brief but limited amount of time. It is his mouth that actually wages war. It won’t be so much a real war with armies but a war of words that leads him to rail against God and Christians. He will incite others to do that actual dirty work. His blasphemies go against the temple of God.

Q: What is the temple of God according to v.6? *(Those who dwell in heaven. In other words, the beast is blaspheming against the saints who have been killed or have died.)*

a. v.7 - conquer - means to destroy the physical bodies not subvert the faith.

b. He has Messiah-like dominion until the real Messiah returns to show the world the

truth.

c. The antichrist overcomes the church - he gains some sort of victory over them that subdues them. The church is hammered down by repeated assault so that it loses its effectiveness. (This is the same thought expressed in Daniel 7:21, 25 where it meant "worn down".) The church will probably have to go underground at this point as the faith will be outlawed.

d. For believers, the main thrust is given in vv.9-10. This is the only place in Revelation outside the seven letters to the churches where the phrase, "*If anyone has an ear, let him hear*" is used. These words are directed to faithful Christians who are still alive during the Great Tribulation. While it is impossible to overstate just how dark and evil this time will be for believers, it's also impossible to understate how glorious the end of this limited time will be when Christ returns.

Q: What two Christian qualities will be required to hold tightly to one's faith during this Great Tribulation? (v.10 - *perseverance and faith. It is knowing God's Word and trusting in it over what one sees or the problems associated with living out the Word of God.*)

#### V. The beast from the earth - the false prophet [Read Revelation 13: 11-18]

A. With this beast from the land revealed, we now see the unholy trinity unveiled for the first time. This is the full revelation of evil in the world - it is Satan's most complete deception upon mankind. Satan (the dragon) sets himself up as the Heavenly Father, the beast of the sea (antichrist) takes the place of the Son, the Messiah who comes back to life, and the beast from the land (false prophet) takes the place of the Holy Spirit - always pointing people to the antichrist.

1. The false prophet is completely dedicated to the antichrist and his promotion.

2. We get the name "false prophet" from other places in Revelation (16:13, 19:20, 20:10). The fact that he comes from the land shows that his origin story is more mundane and typical than that of the antichrist.. He is of human origin rather than demonic. Just know that he is totally sold out to evil and wields the power of evil.

a. His two horns, like a lamb, shows him to be a religious leader yet he speaks with the voice of the devil. **Matthew 7:15** Jesus warned His believers to watch out for false prophets. They come in sheep's clothing (two horns) but inwardly are ferocious wolves. This false prophet will appear to be a lamb but really be a ferocious wolf.

b. v.12 - the false prophet will do the same signs as the antichrist while in his presence. This is the same wording used of the two witnesses being in God's presence in 11:4. He stands in ready to do the antichrist's bidding and one of his deceptions will be to do miraculous signs.

1) Christ's followers are not to be deceived by this fake signs but recognize them for what they truly are.

2) Those who dwell on the earth (v.14) - those without saving faith - they will believe them. Lost humanity will be so overwhelmed by these signs that they will see no alternative than to worship the beast.

c. What is the image in vv.14-15? This is not a huge statue like Nebuchadnezzar set up in Babylon for everyone to worship. The language is much deeper than that. It refers to the false prophet setting up an entire religion of idolatry based on the image (character) of the beast.

1. Giving it breath is not some trick of ventriloquism. It means to give life to something. When something has breath, it has life. Thus, this passage is talking about a whole

new religion brought into existence which will unite those who worship the antichrist.

2. The thrust of v.15 isn't that someone has to literally bow down to the image but rather they must belong to the antichrist's religion. This is like the emperor worship of ancient Rome. We worship Christ for His death and resurrection and the world will worship the beast because of his apparent death and subsequent fake resurrection.

Q: What will those who worship the beast be given? (*v. 16 - a mark on their right hand or forehead*)

3. This will be a physical, visible mark. "Mark" means engraved or carved or impressed brand. It is the counter to the seal that was placed on believers by the Holy Spirit (remember the false prophet is the false Holy Spirit). The mark will denote ownership by the antichrist and it will serve both a religious and economic function. (In Deut. 6 the Jews were told to wear boxes on their arm or foreheads that contained Scriptures so it would show they belonged to God. This is counterfeit to that.) True Christians will be easy to spot because they won't have this mark.

4. The number of the beast is 666. This is another hotly debated issue. Given the symbolism of numbers in Revelation what I think is the best way to see this is that six is the number of man and to repeat this three times means to make it superlative - in other words - this will be superman - the highest evolution of man ever. Human perfection has arrived in the antichrist. Keep in mind that six is also one less than the divine number of seven. Thus 666 looks to lost mankind as superman but in reality, in the eyes of faith, it shows the failure of Satan to achieve godhood and fail even in his purposes to destroy God's people. It cannot attain the perfection of the true Trinity of God.

(While many like to play word games or cryptograms with the letters corresponding to certain numbers and those numbers adding up to 666, this is unlikely as we don't know which language we'd be using, Greek or Hebrew? Also, the note for 616 is what the word "caesar" adds up to in that game. Given the persecution of the saints in the last part of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, believers wanted to believe that the emperor was the antichrist. Irenaeus in about 150 A.D. told the church that he was ready to excommunicate whoever replaced 666 with 616.) This mark is the symbol of the antichrist's victory over the world. Again, the physical mark is a symbol of the antichrist's ownership of a person.

5. To support this thought, go to **Revelation 15:2** when it speaks of the victory of the saints over the beast (they died in that victory but are safe with God in heaven). Their victory was over the beast, his image (religion) and the number of his name. In other words the saints won their victory over the beast, his religion and the symbol of the authority and power in the world. Their victory is over false religion and idolatry not just over a mathematical code.

6. At the end of chapter 13 we are confronted with the ultimate manifestation of evil in human history. Though the antichrist will appear to be worthy of worship, he isn't and his time of terror will be short. This information was given to encourage those saints who find themselves alive in the Great Tribulation.

In Chapter 14 we are presented with the Christian counter-weight to chapter 13. The sacrifice of God's people in chapter 13 is not meaningless. Just remember back in chapter 7 the 144,000 were sealed before all this took place. Now we will see their deliverance.

Keep in mind that we are in the middle of a long interlude between the trumpet judgments



and the bowl judgments. This is not in “time synch” with the main visions or judgments and the return of Christ. Interludes answer questions and they encourage believers. There are two questions that chapter 14 answers that believers would naturally ask after reading chapter 13.

- 1) What happens to those who refuse to take the mark of the beast?
- 2) What happens to those who do receive the mark of the beast?

VI. What happens to those who do not take the mark of the beast? [Read Revelation 14:1-5]

A. John looks and sees the 144,000 standing on Mt. Zion.

Q: Instead of the mark of the beast, what do these 144,000 have on them? (*14:1 - Instead of the mark of the beast, they have the name of the Lord written on their foreheads.*)

1. Mt. Zion is one of the hills Jerusalem was built upon. It’s associated with King David and his victories of his kingdom. The Messiah would come from David’s line and have victories over His enemies as David did. It is a symbol of the defeat of God’s enemies.

2. The resurrected Lord Jesus is standing on Mt. Zion. Remember how chapter 13 opened? The beast came out of the sea. This is the contrast to that scene.

3. There is a new song sung by angels (not the 144,000). It’s a song of redemption and vindication. Only the 144,000 can learn this song. Learn means deep learning that affects one’s core being. The struggles of overcoming the world by faith through the Great Tribulation have led them to learn this song from the angels. Since the 144,000 are pictured on earth, this may represent a preview of the millennial kingdom.

a. These people were not defiled by women. This is a reference to not participating in temple and cult worship practices which always included temple prostitutes and sexual immorality. In other words we will be able to recognize a major tenet of the antichrist’s new religion in that it will bring back sexual immorality as part of worship. It will cater to the lusts of the flesh and sinful human pleasures as opposed to living obediently to the Lord.

b. The 144,000 are first fruits to the Lord. Like the farmer set aside his best first fruits as an offering to the Lord, so the Lord has set these people aside to serve and worship Him now.

c. These people do not participate in the lie of false worship. This is again showing us the contrast between the faithful saints who were martyred and those faithless lost mankind.

d. One last element of this group is shown in **Revelation 14:12-13**.

Q: Who is speaking in this speaking in this passage? (*The Holy Spirit - This is one of two places in Revelation where the Holy Spirit speaks directly and He says that those who are victors in Christ will rest from their labors.*)

Q: Why should a Christian remain firm in his beliefs? (*v.13 - Because there is rest in the end. They will never struggle again.*)

VII. What happens to those who take the mark of the beast? [Revelation 14:6-8]

A. There are three angels who make announcements.

1. The first angel announces that there is still hope for mankind. God’s mercy is still available to lost mankind.

2. The second angel announces that Babylon, the city of Satan, has fallen. The

reign of the antichrist has ended (or will in this point in history - which is still a future event at this time).

3. The third angel proclaims the answer to the saint's question. What does happen to the followers of the antichrist? **[Read Revelation 14:9-13]**

a. Those who have the mark get a free drink - on God. It is the wrath of God in full strength - undiluted. The saints will drink from the communion cup with Christ, this cup symbolizes their lack of communion with God and their short-sightedness for worshiping the beast.

b. They will be tormented day and night by fire and brimstone. In other words, those who worship the beast will suffer that same fate as the beast - they will spend eternity in hell. The saints are resting while the sinner are being tormented now.

c. There is a continuation of the fate of those who succumb to worship the antichrist.

**[Read Revelation 14:14-20]**

1) Christ is symbolized as sitting on a cloud waiting for the Heavenly Father to go harvest the souls of those on the earth with His holy angels. (Jesus is on a cloud as He was taken up in a cloud and will return in the clouds.)

2) The harvest begins. It's just another way to repeat the same judgment that is mentioned in v.10 concerning drinking the cup of wrath. This wrath is directed against the rebellious world and not the beast or false prophet (v.19) The amount of blood is hyperbole - not symbolism. This number is given to remind Christians of the value of their salvation and the urgency to share the gospel with others. It is an extreme exaggeration to show the scope of death for those who opposed Christ. This happens outside the city. There are only two cities mentioned in Revelation and this is the New Jerusalem. This happens outside the community of faith and where God's people enjoy fellowship with Him. While this event will devastate those outside the city of faith, it will not harm the saints who are safely in the city.

VIII. The celestial interlude before the final judgments **[Read Revelation 15:1-8]**

Q: What is the great and marvelous sign John sees heaven at the beginning of this passage? (*He sees 7 angels who hold the last plagues which represent the final wrath of God*)

This word "is finished" is in what is called a prophetic aorist passive tense. Usually the aorist describes an action that was completed in the past and it's force or impact will remain in effect indefinitely. However, this event has not actually happened yet. The seven last judgments have not been poured out yet. This tense is used to say that the events which are about to take place in these judgments are so certain that they are spoken of in the past tense - as if they had already happened. They are complete and finished because God will certainly bring them to pass as He has the power and will to do so. He never fails to complete His will. The believers needed to know that the judgments of God and His wrath against Satan, the antichrist, the false prophet and the lost world would be happening. They were certain.

Q: What are those who are victorious doing? (*v.2-3 - Those who came off victorious from the beast as shown in heaven worshiping the Lord. Notice the victorious saints died but are now safely before the Lord and it is said they are victorious over the beast, his image and the number of his name.*)

1. It is song of Moses because Moses led the people of God through the Red Sea to deliver them from the Egyptians. Now Christ has led them to deliverance from the world.

2. The believers are standing on a sea of glass and fire. This shows the brilliance and majesty of God and those who were victorious over the beast are able to stand before God Himself.

3. It is not the antichrist who is ruler over the world but the Lord Jesus.

C. The door to the temple in heaven is opened up and John sees the seven angels with the bowls. (The wording for what gets translated “temple” is strange. It literally means “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony”.) What is important is that the angels are leaving the direct presence of God to pour out His final judgments upon the earth.

1. Due to their attire, we associate these angels with Christ. This is similar to the attire of Christ back in Revelation 1. These judgments stem from God’s holiness - the white linen and pure golden sashes. It is the unrighteousness of the world that leads to God’s action.

2. The smoke of v.8 refers to God’s shekinah glory - which was the visible manifestation of God’s presence. He is the source of these final judgments. They are so severe that it is important to understand that they reflect directly upon God’s power and glory. God’s presence is so strong here that no angel can enter the tabernacle until after this work is complete.

3. This is the heavenly preparation and heavenly perspective of the final judgments of God. Now that we’ve seen the heavenly side, we will see how these judgments appear from the earthly perspective in chapter 16.

D. The main message for persecuted believers in chapters 14-15 is that the saints will be rewarded for their faith in Christ. Those who take the easy road through the Great Tribulation and worship the antichrist will pay for their lack of faith in Christ eternally. Despite the antichrist seeming to be invincible, his reign over the earth will be permanently brought to an end by God personally. Both the beast and his followers will now taste the fierce wrath of God forever while those who remained faithful and persevered will be eternally rewarded in God’s presence with His rest forever.

Q: Do you have any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?