

## **Revelation, Part 34**

This will be the concluding session of our verse-by-verse study of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. In this session, I will attempt to summarize the previous 33 sessions in a way that helps us to pull together the details of the main events and persons mentioned in Revelation.

As we have seen, many very capable and highly respected expositors of God's Word disagree about the timing of some of the events during this period. I have attempted to explain those and help us understand the "why" that drives them, taking a position when I felt comfortable enough to disagree with someone I have great respect for. Whenever I did personally feel strongly about an interpretation, I attempted to support it with Scripture and even logic when appropriate and helpful. All that said I could be wrong, but then so are some other expositors who are much more capable and more respected than I am.

The area where I found the most disagreement was the timing of the three series of judgments during the Tribulation, the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls. And, of course, there are huge variations of opinions regarding the timing of the Rapture. I cannot understand that one because, in my opinion, the pre-trib Rapture is the easiest to support from Scripture. Most of my favorite expositors agree with me.

I intend to present a chart of the timing of the main events and most important characters presented in Revelation. It is a lot of material to cram into one visual that looks something akin to a spilled bowl of spaghetti, but I will do the best I can. Before we get into the visual we will do a quick review of Revelation in the order as presented by John. This will only hit the highlights. The details are contained in the previous 33 sessions. Every detail presented here will not appear on the concluding visual, as they would not all fit.

### **The Seven Churches**

In a very brief introduction in verse 1, John tells us this is, "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place." We soon launched right into letters to seven churches and saw how those seven churches were a picture of the history of the Church Age which, at the time of John's visions, was in its infancy.

We also saw that the seven churches not only represented church history yet future (prophecy), but they also described churches that existed in John's time and were also a picture of churches that would be found throughout the Church Age, even today. Furthermore, they are caricatures of individual Christians that can be found at any time during the Church Age.

**The Church at Ephesus** started as a light unto a darkened world and is seen as the early church in Christianity. But as they prospered and grew, they got involved in the love of self and works and lost that light and their love of Christ. They became more focused on their success than on Him. He switched off their light when they became a negative witness for Him. As individual believers, we face the same risk, enthusiastic at first we can drift away into human good works.

**The Church at Smyrna** was faithful even in the face of persecution. This church came under attack by Satan. Most expositors believe the church at Smyrna represents the church period covering from about the year 100 to about 300 when the church did suffer extreme persecution, mostly at the hands of the Roman emperors. Among the persecutions suffered included hundreds of Christians brought to the Coliseum in Rome to be fed to hungry lions while thousands cheered. Ironically, persecution tends to make the church stronger, which is what Jesus is suggesting here when He said, "But you are rich." They were rich in faith, which is mainly why they are commended and not charged with a spiritual failure.

**The Church at Pergamos** is called the church of compromise and is seen as representing the church from about AD 312-606, which is the period when the Catholic church came into being and assumed control of Christianity through alignment with governing powers and the development of a church hierarchy, which is unbiblical and did not exist before this period. The church at Pergamos fell into spiritual compromise and eventually went into spiritual apostasy when they watered down the truth by incorporating pagan practices into their worship. They became idol worshipers like the pagans. This follows the pattern of the church in history as it compromised itself by incorporating pagan practices into its worship. Eventually, both the church at Pergamos and the one in history lost their witness and their identity to become just like the pagans in its system of worship.

**The Church at Thyatira** was seen as a corrupt church, one that introduced pagan idolatrous practices into the church that perverted the truth by commingling the false teachings of Baal with that of Christianity. The result was spiritual adultery. With that came idol worship and practices associated with idolatry. Those of the church involved in this will suffer the second death, thus are not true believers. Even during the church's darkest hours, there remains a pivot of true believers. There were among this church some who remained faithful, and they are known to Christ and will be rewarded with rulership roles in the Millennium. Christ still commended this church. He said, "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first." Even though the church had many very serious problems, there remained a pivot of true believers within the church faithful to the truth despite the ecclesiastical system they were a part of. They were characterized by selfless service and faith of which God is a rewarder without glossing over the evil inherent to the system as a whole.

**The Church at Sardis** must be seen as representing the church from about 1517 to 1790, which is the church during the time of the reformation when the great mass of Christendom consisted of nominal, spiritually dead Christians only. During these years only a small believing remnant took their stand for Biblical Christianity and trusted Christ as their Savior. The letter to Sardis is one of rebuke and censor and almost devoid of any form of commendation, as seen in the previous letters. In previous letters, the Lord began with commendation and then shifted to condemnation, but there is not a word of commendation to this church as a whole. However, there remains a pivot, probably very small, which gets singled out for commendation. Those of the Reformation saw through the pageantry, ritual, and spiritual deadness of the Roman church and found Biblical truths upon which they took a stand at the risk of their very lives. They struggled to regain the footing of faith and demonstrate the truth of the Bible, casting aside the traditions of men. The remnant who "had not soiled their earthly garments" came out of the dead church, heeding the warnings to the church at Sardis. They held fast to what they had heard and repented, then strengthened what little remained.

**The Church at Philadelphia** received no rebuke from Christ. Instead, they are commended and given a promise because they had been willing to endure patiently. The word "persevere" means to be steadfast, feet firmly planted, to stand firm, and, in this case, to stand firm in the truth. Because

they stood firm they will be kept “from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.” The church at Philadelphia does not go through the Tribulation, which implies they are removed by the Rapture before it begins. The church in Philadelphia seems to represent the church that came out of the Protestant Reformation. These believers stood firm in the truth of God’s Word against those who taught the false gospel of works and persecuted the reformers. But they represent all true believers throughout all of church history who stand firm and withstand persecution and false teachings. They will be blessed for their faithfulness and recognized for it in eternity.

**The Church at Laodicea** was like the mineral waters of Laodicea which arrived in the city from the nearby mountains no longer hot enough to be therapeutic nor cool enough to be refreshing. The water was so useless as to induce the gag reflex. This church was spiritually unproductive, and this condition pretty well sums up the condition of the church today, both Catholic and Protestant. There was absolutely nothing positive said of this church. They are so lukewarm they are seen as vomit-inducing. The church and the individual Christian should never be lukewarm. Believers are called to produce fruit.

### **The Elders and the Rapture**

In verse 1 of chapter 4, John is told to “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this,” and John is “taken” to the throne room of Heaven. In verse 4 we have this reference: “Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.” The understanding is this is a reference to the Church that was raptured before the Tribulation begins and is here seen in Heaven in resurrection bodies (white robes) and rewarded for their spiritual lives (crowns). We developed extensive proof of why this event could only occur before the Tribulation began and not during or at the end.

### **The Throne in Heaven**

He is then shown a scroll with seven successive seals, and the only one qualified to open it was our Lord. The Seven Seals represent seven judgments on Earth.

The first four seals revealed the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” riders on a white horse, a red horse, a black horse, and a “pale” horse

(sickly green color). The first rider on the white horse represents the coming world ruler, Antichrist. The second rider on the red horse represents the war that will characterize this period. The third rider on the black horse represents famine, the inevitable aftermath of war. The last rider on the pale horse represents death and the billions who will die during this seven-year period of time we call the “Tribulation”.

When he opened the fifth seal, John saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. These are Tribulation martyrs mentioned in detail in chapter 7.

When he opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Everyone hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains to hide from the wrath of the Lamb.

### **144,000 Evangelists**

In chapter 7 we are introduced to 144,000 “super evangelists,” 12,000 each from the 12 tribes of Israel. They will go out into the world and give the Gospel of Jesus as Messiah. Throughout their ministry, they are anointed and protected from any attempts to kill them. In verse 9 we are shown the “great multitude” of martyrs in Heaven, the many saved by their ministry.

### **Martyrs in Heaven**

In chapter 7 John then saw a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” He was told by one of the elders, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

### **The Seventh Seal**

Then the Lamb opened the seventh seal. Incense was burned to offer the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, and the

smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

## **War**

Though mentioned but not detailed in Revelation, in the chronology of the period, it is during the Seal Judgments that a war starts. Though European, Middle Eastern, African and Asian players are mentioned in Revelation, the United States is not, nor is it even alluded to in any end-times prophecy in the OT. That testimony from silence suggests it is either totally destroyed by a nuclear war, has economically collapsed, or it has turned inward in sectional strife — or all three. The war seems to have started with an invasion of the Middle East, specifically Israel, by Gog and Magog, with the former being the leader sometimes referred to as the King of the North because this army comes out of the North (of Israel). With a mutual defense treaty in place between Israel and Antichrist, the King of the West (Antichrist) and his army responds and enters Israel. This war goes on for the rest of the Tribulation with the Kings of the East entering the festivities sometime near the middle of the Great Tribulation. Eventually, all are gathered in Israel for one final climactic battle, and Christ returns with His hosts of resurrected Church Age believers, OT saints, and Tribulation martyrs to end it all. These details are found mostly in several OT books like Daniel and Ezekiel.

## **The Seven Trumpets**

Chapter 8 goes on to describe the next series of judgments, the Seven Trumpets. It should be understood that all seven trumpet judgments are captured in the seventh seal judgment. Furthermore, the last series of judgments, the Seven Bowls, are captured within the seventh trumpet. The judgments are compounding and intensifying.

## **The First Trumpet**

The first angel blew his trumpet, and that was followed by hail and fire, mixed with blood thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

## **The Second Trumpet**

The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

## **The Third Trumpet**

The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great blazing star named “Wormwood” fell from heaven and impacted a third of the rivers, and the springs of water were made bitter and many died.

## **The Fourth Trumpet**

The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars were struck and a third of the light disappeared. This is followed by a loud voice crying out, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”

## **The Fifth Trumpet**

Chapter 9 continues the judgments, and the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and a star, probably Satan, fell from heaven to earth and was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. From the shaft rose smoke, and from the smoke came scorpions like locusts. They were told to harm only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were allowed to torment them for five months, but not to kill them. “In those days people will seek death and will not find it.” These locust-like creatures (demons) are physically described in detail and are given the power to harm people for only five months. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, he is called Apollyon. This is the first woe.

## **The Sixth Trumpet**

Then the sixth angel was told to blow his trumpet and “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” They were released to kill a third of mankind. They were 200,000,000 in number. This is some sort of demon attack army. A third of mankind was killed. Despite this “plague” we are told the rest of mankind failed to repent of their evil.

## **The Two Witnesses**

Then in chapter 11, we have a brief interlude that interrupts the chronology of the narrative with the introduction of the “Two Witnesses”. The two are generally identified as Moses and Elijah. They witness for 3.5 years in Jerusalem before they are publicly murdered and left to rot in the street. Three days later they are resurrected and called visibly to Heaven. I believe they actually begin their ministry near the beginning of the Tribulation and are killed soon after the Abomination of Desolation.

## **The Seventh Trumpet**

In Revelation 11:15 we have the blowing of the Seventh Trumpet and loud voices crying out in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.” The twenty-four elders who sat on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple with flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

## **The Woman and the Dragon**

In chapter 12 we then have another interruption in the narrative and take a look at some of the Tribulation actors. A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. This is Israel, and she is giving birth to our Savior. Then a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems shows up. This is Satan, and his tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. These are the fallen angels. The Dragon tried to kill the child (Christ/Cross) but failed and turns his attention to the woman, but she fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

## **Satan Thrown Down to Earth**

I believe this is linking back to the Fifth Trumpet and giving more details. We have war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon, and the dragon (Satan) was defeated, and he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him. Satan is angered by this failure and shifts his attacks to the Woman (Israel), but the Woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time (1,260 days). His attempt to immediately destroy Israel having failed, Satan shifted his attacks on the rest of her offspring “those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

## **The First Beast**

In chapter 13 we see this “Beast” rising out of the sea, usually thought of as the “sea of people” meaning the Gentile nations. He is described as having a throne and “great authority”. This is Antichrist. His initial revealing is at the beginning of the Tribulation, and this passage depicts him some 3.5 years later. He is described as having received a fatal head wound and survived it, and the whole world marveled at this and worshiped him. Antichrist spoke “haughty and blasphemous words” and was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. This 3.5 years refers to the last half of the Tribulation we call the “Great Tribulation”. It is during this time that he invades Israel then establishes himself as god and demands worship after the False Prophet erected a talking “image” of him in the Temple. He then proceeds to make war on the saints.

## **The Second Beast**

Then John saw another beast rising out of the earth, which is assumed to be Israel. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. This operates under the authority of the First Beast and performs great signs promoting the First Beast. This Second Beast is usually referred to as the “False Prophet” and promotes the First Beast as the promised messiah. It is this Second Beast that makes the “image” of the First Beast speak.

## **666**

The Second Beast is the one who promotes all to be marked on the right hand or the forehead so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the

mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name, and his number is 666.

## **The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath**

In chapter 16 we have the Seven Bowl judgments.

### **The First Bowl**

The first angel poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

### **The Second Bowl**

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

### **The Third Bowl**

The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. Then John heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.

### **The Fourth Bowl**

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire, and they cursed the name of God and did not repent and give him glory.

### **The Fifth Bowl**

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

### **The Sixth Bowl**

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great River Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then John saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs, demonic spirits sent to assemble the kings for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

## **The Seventh Bowl**

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came from the throne in the Temple, saying, "It is done!" And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city (Jerusalem) was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell in the fury of His wrath.

## **The Great Prostitute**

In chapter 17, once more we have a break in the chronology to look at the "Great Prostitute," Babylon. Babylon is both a political/financial system and a religious system. The financial/political system is used by Antichrist and he turns against it and destroys it about halfway through the Tribulation. The religious aspect with its roots going back to the Tower of Babel is used by Antichrist to promote the idolatrous worship of himself. Its seat of power is Jerusalem, and it is Jerusalem that is so identified with idolatry during the Tribulation. Chapter 18 records the final days and the fall of Babylon. Chapter 19:1-4 records the rejoicing in Heaven for the destruction of Babylon.

## **Marriage Supper of the Lamb and Second Advent**

The rest of chapter 19 is devoted to the celebration of the coming of the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (the Kingdom/Millennium) and describes the Second Advent as the Lord returns to Earth riding a white horse accompanied by His Bride (the Church) and the OT saints in Heaven.

## **The Kingdom/Millennium**

Chapter 20 begins with the reign of Jesus Christ during the Kingdom with Satan imprisoned in the Abyss for 1000 years. The Church Age believers, OT saints, and Tribulation martyrs reign with Christ. At the end of the Millennium, Satan is released to instigate the Gog and Magog revolution, is defeated by God, and is sent to the Lake of Fire.

## **The Last Judgment**

All of the lost are then raised and judged at the Last Judgment (Great White Throne Judgment). They are not judged for their sins but are condemned because their names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and that is because they never accepted Christ as their Savior. They

appeal their sentence based on their “good works,” but that is not sufficient. They are sentenced to the Lake of Fire.

### **New Heaven and New Earth**

The old heaven and old Earth are destroyed violently, and God creates a new heaven and new Earth. We then get a brief look at our future home in chapter 21, the New Jerusalem.

### **Jesus Is Coming**

We close Revelation with a promise from Jesus that He will return, “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

**Rev 22:20** He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!