

# **THE APOCALYPSE**

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# LESSON ONE

## Introduction to the Apocalypse

### Introduction

- 1) The Second Coming was earlier relegated to the status of a fringe movement.
  - a) In early church, considered flat-out heresy.
  - b) In 1920s, the doctrine of Christ's imminent return was not considered to be foundational to the faith.
  - c) Advance from fringe to status quo promoted by *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey.
  - d) Each new war of global disturbance has given birth to a new wave of books and tapes.
  - e) Greatly damaged Christian credibility in eyes of the world.
- 2) Christians do not have to wait for some distant, future event in order to experience the fullness of His presence.
- 3) The prevailing message of the church is a message of impending global--even universal--disaster.

### Heresy

- 1) The dictionary defines heresy as “any belief that is against a belief of a church or most people.”
- 2) By that definition, Jesus was a heretic.
- 3) So was writer of Revelation.
- 4) History reveals that the majority is often wrong.

### Symbols

- 1) In the First Five Books of the Bible, God used physical objects: rainbow, the blood of a lamb, a pillar of fire--as spiritual symbols.
- 2) Nearly everything in the Bible can be spiritualized.
  - a) You can attach a spiritual meaning to nearly every physical/material object or event in the Scripture.
  - b) You cannot always reverse the process. Being born again as a spiritual reality difficult to interpret in the natural.
- 3) Much of confusion over the Revelation stems from the widespread practice of interpreting its visual images as literal, physical, and historical realities to support theories about God's timetables and specific plans.
- 4) We can, and must, leave the future in God's hands and get on with being the people of God in our present generation.

- 5) The book ends on a triumphant, inspiring note: God has removed the veil from the full reality of Jesus Christ, enabling believers to overcome the world, to live in perfect fellowship with Him, and to reign and rule in the kingdom of God.
- 6) The Revelation is not a prediction of a disastrous end but a proclamation of a glorious beginning.

## **Countdown to 2000**

### **Indicators:**

- 1) Richard Kienenger is racing to assemble a fleet of blimps to rescue hundreds from the major earthquakes he believes will rumble across the globe on May 5, 2000. So far, he says, 250 have reserved seats on the blimps, which will take off from sites in Texas, Illinois, and an island in the South Seas.
- 2) Publishers are beginning to cash in on the burgeoning fears of an apocalypse. They're bringing out a spate of new books on Nostradamus, a prophet of the 16th century, who predicted an apocalyptic ending for the world around 2000.
- 3) Video stores in New York and California report waiting lists of up to three months to rent a film on the prophet (Nostradamus) narrated by Orson Welles.

### **Legitimate Concerns**

- 1) Middle East wars and political upheavals come and go but keep the world on edge.
- 2) The 1991 war with Iraq once again brought forth a fevered pitch of cries from various church leaders, teachers, and writers about the imminency of fulfillment of biblical prophecies regarding "Armageddon," "Apocalypse," and "the end of the world."
- 3) Worldwide terrorism is a ticking bomb that now inflicts fear on millions of travelers and has the potential to create major problems for the world's transportation, food and drug supplies, and water systems.
- 4) Illegal drug trafficking threatens to destroy whole nations, including the United States.
- 5) The overwhelming debt burden in Third World countries, and even in America, poses the threat of worldwide economic collapse and widespread depression.
- 6) The AIDS problem appears totally out of control.
- 7) Scientists generally agree that our environment is reaching a pollution saturation point.
- 8) Medical advances continue to raise moral issues like genocide, genetic manipulation, and mind control.
- 9) The moral fabric of society, the values of family and the relevancy of the church continue to deteriorate at an accelerating pace.

## **Why People Don't Turn to the Church Any Longer**

- 1) They don't find one church speaking with a unified voice.

- 2) Even within denominations (and often within the same local church) they find more controversy than agreement over what the Bible says about the future and how to prepare for it in the present.
- 3) They may have a hard time finding out what a church really believes about prophecy.
- 4) They may turn to the media.
- 5) Since bad news sells and good news doesn't, they find only the more dire predictions and dramatic timetables in the media versions; thus, they rarely hear the more responsible prophetic voices.

### **People Cope (or Fail to Cope) in a Variety of Ways**

- 1) Most people simply ignore biblical prophecy.
- 2) Most churches neglect biblical prophecy.
  - a) Many Bible scholars push prophecy either so far into the past or so far into the future that it has little relevance to the here and now.
  - b) Some consider Revelation as being too divisive.
- 3) Some people get carried away with dramatic predictions. Causes people to react in several destructive ways:
  - a) Some are immobilized by anxiety and depression.
  - b) Some lapse into escapist lifestyles.
  - c) Some retreat into cynicism.
  - d) Perhaps most people are simply indifferent to biblical prophecy.
- 4) Some use scare tactics to get people converted.

### **The Prophetic Message is for Here and Now**

- 1) The whole book echoes the theme that it is for all who live and die for Christ from the time of the writing forward.
- 2) Proclaims the ongoing involvement of Jesus Christ in the struggles of both the spirit realm and the physical/material realm, for all ages.
- 3) Today, the pertinent reality of the Revelation remains hidden except to those who receive it through spiritual eyes and ears.

### **What the Book Says about its Prophetic Message**

The book of Revelation has always been God's present-day message to His church, and it explains itself.

- 1) The Apocalypse.
  - a) Most people have an image of total devastation; a nuclear holocaust.
  - b) The Greek word is *apokalypsis*, which simply means an unveiling or an uncovering.

- c) It is “the Revelation (unveiling) of Jesus Christ.
  - d) The book's basic purpose is to reveal Jesus Christ, not to satisfy our intellectual curiosity about distant, future events.
  - e) The Apocalypse was given to people in the first century (and all people since) to enable them (and us) to live out the will of God and to experience the fullness of Christ and His kingdom in their (and our) daily lives.
- 2) At Hand.
- a) “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.”
  - b) This is in contrast to God's message to Daniel to shut up and seal the message, because in Daniel's time, the time was not yet.
  - c) Most likely the first-century Christians in the seven churches of Asia who received this prophecy interpreted it as available, pertinent, and fulfillable for them--not a message about something that would happen more than nineteen centuries later.
  - d) The term “at hand” is used both at beginning and conclusion of Revelation.
  - e) Christians throughout the centuries have always drawn strength, faith, and courage from the Revelation as a message that was within reach for their times, as with all other New Testament writings.
  - f) To limit the symbolic imagery to speculation about single historical events that have either already occurred, or future events that might someday occur, is to rob this vital book of its pertinent reality and practical guidance for our daily lives in this present age.
  - g) Keepable, heedable, and obeyable.
    - i) “Blessed is he that readeth...and keep those things which are written therein.”
    - ii) “Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”
    - iii) In order to keep, heed, and obey all of this book, it must all be keepable, heedable, and obeyable.
  - h) The Revelation is not a futuristic foretelling of events that will occur, although the prophecy indeed contains dynamic future fulfillments. It is a forthtelling of the gospel of the kingdom of God.
    - i) It is the good news of who Christ is, what He is doing throughout history, and what He expects of His disciples of every generation.
    - ii) Everything in the Revelation is graspable and fulfillable as a present-day reality.
    - iii) To focus most of our attention on speculating about past or future events is to draw people's minds away from what God wants to fulfill in their lives here and now.
- 3) Our view of the future determines our philosophy of life. Our expectations shape the way we live and the way we define and carry out our mission today.
- a) It matters to the church, because nothing divides Christians and discredits the Christian message so effectively as does all this distortion of the Revelation.
  - b) As a result, the media, special interest groups, and opinion polls have taken over the role of deciding moral issues like abortion, gay rights, prolonging life, and the boundaries of medical research and practice.
  - c) It matters to the individual, because people who get caught up in speculation about the End Times usually struggle with needless anxieties, doubts, and confusion.
    - i) Usually lead anemic lives, because they are waiting for God to do something more.

- ii) The good news is that He has already done everything that needs to be done.
- 4) We don't have to wait for the end of the world before Christ comes to us in power and glory.
  - a) He is coming in all His fullness, right now.
  - b) We can be overcomers in the daily experiences of our lives.
  - c) We can live victoriously and abundantly, no matter what is happening in our lives today or what may happen tomorrow or twenty years from now.

## LESSON TWO

### Conspiracy against the Apocalypse

There is a conspiracy to seal up the glorious truths about Christ and the kingdom of God which are unveiled in the Revelation.

- 1) A diabolical plot to continuously distort and discredit the revelation of Jesus Christ and the present reality of His kingdom.
- 2) The ongoing goal of the conspirators is to strip the Apocalypse of all its present, pertinent reality and life-giving power.
- 3) One of the most productive strategies is to try to focus people's attention on dramatic predictions about the future.
- 4) Jesus by His death, resurrection, and ascension, has established His permanent lordship over the kingdom of God and has triumphed over the kingdom of this world and its ruler Satan.
- 5) The enemies of Christ's kingdom cannot win the war against the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ has already delivered the decisive blow and holds in His hands the keys of death and hell.
- 6) Everything Christians need to enter and live in the fullness of the kingdom of God has been provided by Jesus Christ and is clearly revealed in the Word of God.
  - a) Only recourse of enemy is to keep human beings ignorant, confused, and distracted from what the Bible says.
  - b) To do this, they constantly plot ways to distort and discredit the Word of God.
  - c) Enemy knows human beings are quite curious and anxious about the future and have seized on prophecy as one of the most fertile fields for sowing their seeds of confusion and deception.
- 7) Why does God choose to use images?
  - a) The human mind cannot grasp spiritual reality in the same way as scientific or historical knowledge.
  - b) Spiritual reality can only be grasped by faith, through spiritual ears--same as parables.
  - c) We need to interpret the stories and images of the Revelation just as we interpret the parables and symbols Jesus used in the Gospel narratives--figuratively, as metaphors and similes that express both spiritual and physical realities.
  - d) The parables and symbols of the Apocalypse become complicated and frightening only when we take the book's language literally, purely physically, or connect it with future events and people.

### Who Are the Conspirators?

- 1) Willful conspirators.
  - a) Satan's human agents who conspire knowingly and willingly to twist the truth and deceive the unsuspecting.
  - b) Usually cloak their real motives and objectives in secrecy to gain the support they need to



achieve their goals.

- i) The frenzy created over the so-called End Times prophecies.
  - ii) Their hidden agenda is to draw attention away from what God is doing today and what He wants Christians to be doing in the here and now.
  - iii) To achieve this, try to get people so caught up in what might happen in the future that they miss what is actually happening.
    - (1) Some insist on interpreting the Apocalypse as ancient history, important now only in principle.
    - (2) Others push its fulfillment out into the future and use its imagery to predict coming events.
    - (3) Others claim that apocalyptic language and imagery are literal descriptions and use them as false evidence to convince people with a scientific mindset that nothing in the Bible can be taken seriously.
    - (4) Still others seize on frightening images to create terror in people who don't know any better.
  - iv) Do whatever it takes to focus attention away from the spiritual and practical realization that the kingdom of God is in our lives here and now.
  - c) A handful of willful conspirators can mobilize millions of innocent people, who then become tacit conspirators.
- 2) Tacit Conspirators.
- a) Literally translated *silent*.
  - b) A tacit conspirator unintentionally acts in a way that furthers the goals of the willful conspirators.
    - i) May be sincere people who are doing what they believe is right.
    - ii) Many operate under the name of religion.
  - c) Unless we enter and live constantly in the kingdom of God, we fall victim to the conspiracy and become blind guides or kingdom killers who lead others astray.
  - d) Simply won't take *now* for an answer.

### **Deception: The Great Cloaking Device**

- 1) Truth is the greatest obstacle conspirators face in their efforts to thwart the continuous emergence of God's kingdom. If c cannot disprove it, will do anything to discredit it, distract people from it, and make it irrelevant to the present world.
- 2) Tactics to deceive.
  - a) Counterfeit.
  - b) Trickery.
  - c) Distortion of truth.
  - d) Half-truths.
  - e) Fear.
- 3) Deception does not work against Christians who know the Bible and yield to the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Why the Church Is Such Fertile Ground for the Conspiracy.
  - a) The End Times conspiracy appeals to a strong, anti-supernatural bias which is widespread

in the church today.

- i) Will never understand the visible world until we recognize the invisible realm of the spirit.
  - ii) De-spiritualizing the spiritual message Jesus delivered and modeled makes the message intellectually acceptable.
  - iii) The new age movement is growing because it offers such an authentic-looking alternative for the spiritual/physical reality the Bible proclaims--a reality for which many people hunger but know little about.
- b) The End Times frenzy appeals to a widespread aversion to evangelism.
- i) Most Christians would secretly rather see the world destroyed than pay the price of witnessing openly to the reality of Christ and His kingdom in our present world.
  - ii) Let's just let God destroy it and prove to those sinners that we're right.
- c) The End Times frenzy appeals to an escapist psychological desire.
- i) Many Christians would rather be jerked out of difficulties and pains of their lives than pay the price for intimate, moment-by-moment fellowship and co-laboring with Jesus.
  - ii) Long for a knight on a white horse to come and take them away from it all.
  - iii) So busy looking for a particular type of coming, future Messiah that they completely overlook the Messiah who has already come and who continues to come.
- d) The End Times doctrine is fiercely defended by denominational protectionism.
- i) Resist change.
  - ii) Truth threatens book sales.
  - iii) Privately-owned publishers hesitate to publish a work which may offend certain religious leaders.
  - iv) Denominational protectionism exerts pressure on ministers to comply with their denomination's stance on the Revelation.
- e) The End Times doctrine is reinforced by decades of religious conditioning.
- i) Little questioning in the church because most Christians have been conditioned all their lives to believe them.
  - ii) Most people tend to settle into churches with doctrines and practices that are comfortable for them.
- f) Shoving the kingdom of God into the future relieves us of having to take greater responsibility now.
- i) Complexities of life cause us to hesitate tackling the challenge of finding out what it means to be a citizen of God's kingdom now.
  - ii) God does not have to do anything else to fulfill all the prophecies of the Bible, though he could if he chooses.

## **How to Avoid being Taken in by the Conspiracy**

- 1) A literalistic, futuristic theology fits neither the teaching, pattern, nor terminology of Jesus' earthly ministry or of any other Scripture.
- 2) Biblical prophecy does not give us enough information to enable us to predict when God might wrap up human history. If we get caught up in trying to figure it all out intellectually,

we may be as wrong about God's future plans as the Jews of Jesus' day were about the coming of the Messiah.

- 3) Three basic instructions which can help us avoid being taken in by the conspiracy.
  - a) We are to read it (both publicly and privately), to hear (understand) what it says, and to keep or obey its commands.
  - b) We are to live out our daily lives as *rulers and priests* in Christ's kingdom.
  - c) We are to overcome--to *be faithful to God* and *to overcome the evil one*. We are not to look for a quick and easy way out of this troubled world but to get on with being Christ's kingdom, temple, bride, and servants in the world--no matter what happens.

### **How to tap in the kingdom of God here and now.**

- 1) Read, hear, obey.
  - a) "Blessed is he that readeth...the words of this prophecy..."
  - b) Constantly re-examine the Scriptures to make sure that no message you believe adds to or takes away from the content and spirit of the Apocalypse.
  - c) Consider these points:
    - i) All Scripture is prophetic.
      - (1) The Revelation is the Word of God for the here and now--not merely a set of clues about what will happen.
      - (2) Don't get carried away with the future that you overlook the Revelation's spiritual and practical message about the here and now.
      - (3) Everything contained in Revelation is consistent with and supported by all other Scriptures.
    - ii) Rely only on what the Bible says, not on human interpretations of what it says.
    - iii) Examine the fruits of any interpretation.
      - (1) The conviction that the kingdom of God dwells within and among us now will produce the fruits of His kingdom.
      - (2) To remove tribulation from the present produces the negative fruit of spiritual blindness; it is to ignore Jesus' warnings about the coming persecution and His prediction, "In the world ye shall have tribulation."
      - (3) We are to rule and reign over the world, not get caught up in its ways.
- 2) Do the works of Jesus.
  - a) All who do the work of Jesus will be given authority and will rule with Christ over the nations.
  - b) Christ has already made us His kingdom and His priests.
    - i) Not pie in the sky by and by.
    - ii) We don't have to wait for any prophecy to be fulfilled before we can enter Christ's kingdom to reign and be priests with Him.
  - c) What are the works of Jesus?
    - i) Includes conquering the spiritual forces that are constantly struggling to gain control of our personal lives and of the world around us.

- ii) Means winning against evil in the spirit realm and expressing that victory by the way we live our daily lives.
  - d) A Closer Look at the Works of Jesus
    - i) We must enter the kingdom and live there continually.
      - (1) Must first belong to His kingdom.
      - (2) If not born again, can't see the kingdom
    - ii) The kingdom is spiritual, but we express it in physical actions.
      - (1) We are to be Christ's kingdom--to be spiritually in Him and have Him in us.
    - iii) It is more intellectually appealing to speak of a literal, physical Battle of Armageddon over in Israel someday than to accept the reality that citizens of the kingdom are constantly fighting a spirit-realm/physical-realm Armageddon--right now.
  - e) Doing the works of Jesus means doing what Jesus did in the same power in which He did them--being energized by the supernatural power of God.
    - i) God is actively involved in our world--now!
      - (1) Doing the works of Jesus means demonstrating the good news of the kingdom by the power of the Spirit.
      - (2) "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them."
- 3) We Can Overcome.
- a) Overcoming requires us to recognize the presence and activities of real spirit-realm powers
    - i) The underlying theme of the Revelation is that much of the visible evil in the world results directly from invisible spiritual forces and activities.
    - ii) We can overcome evil only when we recognize that these forces exist and when we can discern their influence, both in our world and in our personal lives.
  - b) Overcoming requires supernatural empowerment.
    - i) Recognizing not enough; must have supernatural power to overcome them.
    - ii) To rule and reign with Christ, we have to seize the kingdom by force; to do that, we simply must operate within the supernatural power of God.
  - c) Overcoming gets very nitty-gritty.
    - i) Overcoming begins in the spirit realm, but is executed primarily in the nitty-gritty of our daily lives in this world.
    - ii) "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one."
    - iii) We are in the world on a definite mission: "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world."
    - iv) Mission: "That the world may believe that you have sent me."
    - v) Overcoming means more than simply escaping the enemy of God. We are to engage God's enemy and win.
    - vi) "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."

## LESSON THREE

### “The Language and Symbols of the Apocalypse”

#### Four Keys to Unlock the Mysteries of the Apocalypse

- 1) The revelation uses figurative language and symbols to reveal spiritual/physical realities.
- 2) The revelation is timeless.
- 3) Let the Bible interpret itself.
- 4) Judge any interpretation by the fruit it produces.

#### Key #1: The Revelation Uses Figurative Language and Symbols

- 1) Imagery is the means by which the infinite God communicates with finite humans about truth and reality in the spiritual and physical realms.
  - a) Trouble not in way God has chosen to convey message but with the way we humans try to grasp it.
  - b) God speaks in figurative language and symbols to reveal spirit-realm/physical-realm realities.
- 2) Our physical/material mindset.
  - a) Jesus constantly spoke about the kingdom of God in very simple terms, using parables and metaphors such as water, seeds, coins, and fish.
  - b) People who heard Him kept trying to interpret His parables and symbols literally instead of spiritually.
- 3) Why bother about spirit-realm realities?
  - a) God is spirit.
    - i) Can't think of God only in physical terms.
    - ii) “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and truth.”
      - (1) Truth is unveiled reality.
      - (2) The apocalypse unveils the spirit-realm reality of Christ here and now.
    - iii) God invites us to look beyond Jesus' earthly appearance to see Him in all His present, glorious reality. That is at hand, right now.
  - b) Humans are spirit beings.
    - i) We can experience our spirits only through the new birth--through an awakening of our spirits to the realities of the spirit dimension.
    - ii) The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life.
    - iii) Humanity has continually attempted to discredit and de-spiritualize the spirit-realm/physical-realm message Jesus gave to John through visual parables in the Revelation.
    - iv) Because we are so attuned to the material world (our flesh), we long for a physical

- rapture, for a physical return of Jesus, for a visible New Jerusalem, for a physical wedding supper with Christ--someday, somewhere.
- v) The real message of the Revelation is that we don't have to wait. Spiritually, we can dwell and dine with Jesus in His Holy City right here, right now.
  - c) The kingdom of God is a spirit-realm kingdom.
    - i) "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'there it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."
    - ii) God has chosen human beings as the earthly seat of His kingdom.
    - iii) The fact that the spirit realm is invisible doesn't mean that it doesn't exist; the spirit dimension is just as real as the physical world we experience through our five senses.
    - iv) We will never be able to fully understand the physical world and to effectively rule and reign with Christ in it until we understand the world of the spirit.
    - v) The spirit-realm forces influence the behavior of both individuals and nations.
    - vi) We must recognize that we can overcome and live victoriously in the material world only when we are energized by the Spirit of God within and among us.
  - d) Spirit-realm reality is where the blessings are promised.
    - i) The temple rulers and teachers tried to keep others from entering the spirit realm by reducing everything to a mere physical/material plane.
    - ii) The teachings of Jesus, especially the Revelation, repeatedly promise God's blessings to those who enter the kingdom of God's spirit realm and reign and rule with Christ.
      - (1) Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near (at hand).
      - (2) Blessed is he who stays awake (spiritually) and keeps his clothes with him.
      - (3) Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.
  - 4) Spirit-realm reality can only be received spiritually.
    - a) Since the Bible is a supernatural book, we can only receive its realities supernaturally, as they are made alive to us by the Holy Spirit.
    - b) We do this as we come in poverty of spirit.
      - i) If you read the Revelation with the eyes of the flesh, we can see only a physical Second Coming, a material global destruction, a geographical New Jerusalem, and a set of timetables.
      - ii) If we approach it in poverty of spirit and allow the Holy Spirit to lift the veil by the Word of God, we can see and enter the spiritual dimension of God's kingdom.
    - c) "Unless one is born again he cannot even see the kingdom of God."
    - d) The Spirit of God reveals the kingdom of God.
      - i) Don't expect to comprehend with only your intellect.
      - ii) Spirit-realm reality must be received spiritually, too.
    - e) We cannot figure out the mystery of spirit-realm reality by reducing it to a physical/material plane.

## **Key #2: The Revelation Is Timeless**

### **There are two common approaches to fixing the dates and times of the Apocalypse.**

- 1) Literary and form critics in most mainstream churches say that all the events in the Revelation are in the past.
- 2) The dispensationalists in most evangelical churches say that the events of the Revelation occur in stages.

### **Careful study shows that the Revelation depicts time as ongoing, not in stages.**

- 1) “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later.”
- 2) Through the Revelation God is equipping believers of all generations with an understanding of how the world of the spirit operates.
- 3) It is knowledge of how the kingdom of God operates and how we can enter and live in it in this present world.
- 4) The Revelation depicts Jesus as the present-tense fulfillment of all prophecy.
  - a) It is Jesus who stands among the lampstands and speaks with absolute authority to the seven churches of Asia.
  - b) It is Jesus alone who is worthy to break the seals of the seven scrolls.
  - c) It is Jesus who rides the white horse and defeats the enemies of God.
  - d) It is Jesus who shares the wedding supper with the overcomers.
- 5) Profound truth in the Revelation is that Jesus freely receives worship, attesting to His deity.
  - a) King of kings; Lord of lords.
  - b) Every knee bows before Him.
  - c) He is the conquering “Lion of the tribe of Judah.”
  - d) He is in the midst of the majestic throne.
  - e) He is the source from which the river of life flows.
- 6) Yet Jesus has not lost any of His attributes as Savior. At least 30 times referred to as Lamb.
- 7) Only one mystery in Revelation--Jesus Christ, and He is fully unveiled.
  - a) Unveiled so we can see Him in all His spirit-realm reality.
  - b) The Jesus of the Apocalypse is the same Jesus, but He is different from the Jesus of the Gospels because He is glorified.
  - c) He is the spirit and life to those who receive Him.

### **Ongoing Disclosure through the Testimony of Jesus**

- 1) Jesus' presence impacts the physical/material world right now and always will.
- 2) The comings of Jesus do not represent a single event.
  - a) John is instructed to “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.”
  - b) Jesus says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

- c) These parallel our expression from A to Z, meaning everything, or all that happens from the beginning to the ending (including everything in between).
  - d) He always has been, He is, and He always will be involved with humanity.
- 3) The invitation, “Come!” and “take the free gift of the water of life” follows immediately after Jesus' announcement of what happens at His comings.

## **We Are Active Participants in the Ongoing Testimony of Jesus**

### **Christians throughout the ages have paid with their lives.**

- 1) The white-robed saints are slain for the testimony of Jesus.
- 2) The two witnesses are killed by the beast and their bodies left lying in the streets because of the testimony of Jesus.
- 3) The dragon is enraged at the woman and goes off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

The testimony of Jesus is Christ's ongoing disclosure of Himself to and through all individuals who demonstrate His character and power. Christ reveals Himself to the world through His direct actions and through His saints as we do the works of Jesus.

If we could just get our eyes and hearts off of what God may someday do, and grasp fully what He is doing and wants us to do today, we could live in the full reality of His kingdom right now.

### **Key #3: Let the Bible Interpret Itself**

- 1) The Bible interprets itself through Direct Statements.
  - a) “...what must soon (not centuries from now) take place.”
  - b) “...the time is at hand (not nineteen hundred years away).”
  - c) “Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come...the (present) ruler of the kings of the earth.”
  - d) “Look, He is coming (not just will come someday) with the clouds,...”
- 2) Many of the strange symbols of the Revelation are interpreted by direct statements made in context.
  - a) “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”
  - b) “Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”
  - c) “The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to earth, and his angels with him.”
- 3) The Bible follows consistent patterns.
  - a) Jesus compared His comings to the comings of Elijah. Just as Elijah comes, Jesus comes.



- “And he (John the Baptist) will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.”
- b) “To be sure, Elijah comes (ongoing)...Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him....In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.
  - c) “And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.” (The spirit of Elijah, not the man Elijah).
- 4) Scriptures confirm each other.
- a) No scripture stands alone or contradicts any other scripture.
    - i) Any interpretation of scripture must be confirmed by other scriptures.
    - ii) One way Jesus' ongoing testimony is manifested in all generations is by the saints who do “the works of Jesus.”
      - (1) Christians of the New Testament period did the works of Jesus.
      - (2) Nothing in scripture declares that the works of Jesus were only for the so-called Apostolic Age.
      - (3) The New Testament constantly affirms that people of every generation are expected to do the works of Jesus.
    - iii) We don't need a dictionary or tomorrow's newspaper to interpret Bible prophecy.

#### **Key #4: Judge Any Interpretation by the Fruit It Produces**

- 1) Good Fruit: Worshiping God.
  - a) In Revelation, we see Jesus in all His present glory and majesty.
  - b) Seeing Him as He is creates a sense of awe and reverence that produces authentic and spontaneous worship.
  - c) One glimpse of the unveiled Jesus with a face beaming like the sun, eyes like blazing fire, and feet glowing like white hot brass, and it quickly becomes obvious that this is no mere human friend, but one to be worshiped.
  - d) Once we have truly encountered Christ as He is today, no one will ever again have to tell us that we ought to worship God.
- 2) Good Fruit: Godly Character
  - a) We develop godly character, not so much by our efforts but by our exposure to Christ.
  - b) As we enter into and live daily in a marriage relationship with Him, we begin to share His values, His traits, His ways.
  - c) We take on His character. “We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”
  - d) The Revelation makes it clear that His appearances are glorious present-tense realities that have a profound impact on those who receive them. They produce the character of godly character.
- 3) Good Fruit: Expansion of God's Kingdom.
  - a) As we worship God and develop His character, we begin to do the works of Jesus.
  - b) We actually become a part of the ongoing testimony of Jesus.
  - c) The combination of proclaiming the gospel of Christ, living the life of Christ, and demonstrating the power of Christ leads to the expansion of Christ's kingdom.

- d) When we grasp the present reality of the Revelation message today, we produce the good fruit of expanding His kingdom.
- 4) Worshiping God, developing godly character and expanding His kingdom are the kinds of fruits God sought to produce by giving us the Revelation, not the fruits of anxiety and dissension over the future.

### **Conclusion**

- 1) Our difficulty in unraveling the mystery of the Apocalypse is not in the book's strange symbols and language. Rather, our problem is that most of us have been conditioned to think of the Revelation as a book about the future--not as the unveiling of Jesus Christ as a present, ongoing reality.
- 2) We must receive God's message as revealed knowledge made alive to us by the spirit of prophecy, which is the ongoing testimony of Jesus.

## LESSON FOUR

### “Conquering the Beasts of Revelation”

#### Themes Promoted Today

- 1) The ruthless “four horsemen of the Apocalypse.”
- 2) Devastating earthquakes, famines, and plagues that leave men gnawing their tongues in agony.
- 3) The sun, moon, stars, and waters turning into blood.
- 4) Giant locust with stingers in their tails.
- 5) A great red dragon chasing an expectant mother.
- 6) Multiheaded beasts, one inflicting his dreaded mark on unsuspecting humans.
- 7) The “great white throne judgment.”
- 8) The cataclysmic “Battle of Armageddon.”
- 9) The seductive, but deadly, Harlot.
- 10) The fiery-tailed dragon being cast down to earth.
- 11) The beguiling and enslaving Antichrist deceiving all the nations.
- 12) Merchants and kings lamenting the fall of evil Babylon after being rebuilt in the Mideast.

These are all visual parables about the spirit-realm activities behind the material world and the false religious system.

#### Needed: A Major Paradigm Shift

- 1) The Revelation was written to and is fulfilled entirely inside individual believers and the church.
  - a) To grasp that concept requires a major paradigm shift.
  - b) We have been so programmed that any other way of thinking seems wrong, perhaps demonic.
- 2) People who are looking only for a one-time, future coming of Jesus and the establishment of a political kingdom on earth are making the same mistake that the first-century theologians made.
  - a) The visual parables of the Revelation provide believers with a spirit-dimension perspective of our present struggles.
  - b) They empower us with valuable, revealed knowledge, and equip us with insights into how we can overcome evil in both the spirit realm and the material world.
- 3) God wants us to know about and understand the invisible spirit realm and how it interacts with the visible material realm.
- 4) If you long for the full manifestation of Christ, eventually you have to end up in the book of Revelation.

- a) It is the ultimate wisdom of God to reveal Himself.
- b) Virtually all spiritual truths come to fruition in the book of Revelation.

## **Eating the Book**

- 1) John was commanded to eat the book (to internalize God's message).
  - a) Where the action was going on--internally.
  - b) The vision was an up-to-the-minute report of spirit-realm activity taking place within the writer.
  - c) This vision is timeless, not chronological and predictive.
  - d) Since John was commanded to not seal up the book, this indicates that it was for all people, everywhere, of all times.
- 2) The unfolding spirit-realm drama of the Revelation symbolizes Christ's ongoing judgment of the evil forces that seek control in our lives.
- 3) The awesome creatures and descriptions provide a parabolic glimpse into the same gripping human struggle against sin.
- 4) The action is inside us.
  - a) The Lamb stands up inside us.
  - b) The seven seals are opened inside us.
  - c) The seven trumpets sound inside us.
  - d) The seven vials are poured out inside those who reject one or more of the messages to the seven churches.
  - e) All work together inside every believer concurrently, not sequentially, to effect an ongoing, dynamic fulfillment--not a global timetable or merely a serialized unfolding of the future.
- 5) Of course, the Revelation has a collective fulfillment among the body of believers. The kingdom of God is both within and among believers.
- 6) Judgments are pronounced first within the individual then through the individual to the church.

## **Sweet and Sour**

- 1) When we receive the unveiling of Christ's spirit-realm/physical-realm reality, it tastes sweet, precious, and glorious.
  - a) The conflict arises when the light of God's truth starts revealing the evil spirit-realm forces at work within us.
  - b) His sword begins to war against everything in us that is not consistent with His character.
  - c) Our inner man becomes a battleground in which with Christ we fight against the evil, spirit-realm forces.
  - d) God, by His Word, judges the spirit-realm evil that lurks in our hearts.
  - e) If we press through to victory, we go on to rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom.
    - i) We wear the white robes of righteousness.

- ii) God's seal of ownership is stamped upon our foreheads.
  - iii) We sit with Him on His throne.
- 2) Building strong inner character is one of the major secrets of the kingdom of God.
    - a) Building and maintaining strong inner character reaps the full benefits of God's kingdom.
    - b) Without strong inner character, even the strongest and most powerful human beings cannot stand against evil spirit-realm forces.
    - c) When we reign and rule over spirit-realm forces within us, we go forth to reign and rule among the churches and in the material world.

## **The Revelation Shows You How the Spirit Realm Operates**

- 1) Most interpretations revolve around interpreting the symbols to meet our expectations--what we believe will occur in the future.
- 2) Symbols of Revelation interpreted by looking backward, not forward.
  - a) Deeply rooted in other 65 books of the Bible, not in dictionaries and newspapers.
  - b) Dominant symbolic role of the number seven.
    - i) Seven visions.
    - ii) Seven worship scenes.
    - iii) Seven spirits who worship before God.
    - iv) Seven candlesticks.
    - v) Seven seals.
    - vi) Seven trumpets.
    - vii) Seven bowls, or vials.
    - viii) Seven angels.
    - ix) Seven-headed beast.
    - x) Represents completeness or perfection; completion of God's plan or judgments.
  - c) Book of Revelation is concerned with perfection, maturity, completion, or reaching the goal God intends for each believer's life.
- 3) Pushing all prophecy out into the future as literal and physical could, and does, cause many Christians to remain dead in Christ.

## **Recurring Spirit-Realm Themes of the Revelation**

- 1) Christ is worthy to be worshiped and is given full authority in God's kingdom.
  - a) Whole book is revelation God gave to Jesus and to His true church.
  - b) It is Christ who receives the worship of John, the angels, the four living creatures, the white-robed saints, the twenty-four elders, and eventually the whole world.
  - c) He is declared worthy to receive worship, honor, power, and glory.
  - d) He is given the keys of David, the keys of hell and death, the keys to the bottomless pit, the keys to the book of life.
  - e) He stands in the center of the throne of God.

- f) He sits on the conqueror's white horse.
  - g) His seal of authority is placed on the forehead of the numberless saints.
  - h) He is given the power to judge.
  - i) He is called Lord of lords and King of kings.
  - j) He is the Bridegroom who receives His bride at the wedding supper.
  - k) He is the light of the new heaven and earth.
- 2) Christ continuously comes to his saints, and through them to the Church.
- a) Letters, seals, trumpets, and bowls all represent internal, spirit-realm comings of Jesus to individuals and to the church.
  - b) Jesus comes in the spirit-dimension to individual Christians to judge their obedience to His Word, and to invite them into intimate fellowship with Him.
  - c) He knocks on the door.
  - d) Once we receive Him in all His spirit-realm reality, we become His messengers to the church.
    - i) We become the messengers, the trumpets, sounding out God's Word to His church.
    - ii) The works of Jesus that we do as a result of His coming to us become the vehicles He uses to bring judgment to His church.
  - e) As the Lamb breaks the seven seals within us, we are measured against and cleansed by the sword of His Word.
    - i) The fleshly nature within us is slain.
    - ii) God's seal of ownership is placed upon our foreheads, and we are given white robes of righteousness.
- 3) The false church continuously rejects the spirit-realm truths and realities of Christ and persecutes the saints who proclaim His message.
- a) Saints of every generation who come into His spirit-realm reality and proclaim its truths are persecuted by the false church of their day.
  - b) This false church is depicted as “the great prostitute (or harlot).
    - i) She lures the kings and inhabitants of the earth to commit spiritual adultery with her.
    - ii) She grows rich by deceiving the masses into idolizing her and bringing their treasures to her.
    - iii) Her power is enhanced by the beastly world system.
  - c) This seductive woman is the oppressive church system which calls attention to herself rather than to the Christ she claims to represent.
    - i) Denies the supernatural.
    - ii) Lures people into worshiping the idols of her doctrines, buildings, structures, institutions.
  - d) The false church is also called Babylon, a parabolic symbol for confusion.
    - i) Roots in story of Tower of Babel.
    - ii) Later became the prophetic name of a nation whose rulers defiantly enslaved God's people, enshrined idols in the temple of God, and used the temple vessels for sensuous feasts in celebration of false gods.
    - iii) Binds up God's people by reducing the works of Jesus to humanistic doctrines and organizational structures.

- iv) It usurps the throne of God in the hearts of men by receiving their worship.
- 4) The world system constantly seeks to defeat and reign over the saints of God.
  - a) By focusing on a literal, physical beast who inscribes an actual number on helpless victims at some future date, people are distracted from the present, unseen demonic forces at work in the spirit realm, causing events to occur in the visible physical/material realm.
  - b) While Christians are busy looking for some future event, Satan is wreaking havoc in the daily lives of millions of people.
  - c) These scriptural creatures were at hand in the first century, are at hand right now, and will be at hand in the future.
  - d) All these beastly creatures represent the evil world system that fights against the kingdom of God and its ruler, Jesus Christ.
    - i) The seven heads symbolize completeness, which means that this oppressive world system pervades every area of human activity.
    - ii) It exercises control through governments, commerce, science, education, the arts, entertainment.
    - iii) The world system constantly wars against Christ and His kingdom.
  - e) The beast system also operates through the false church. The collusion between the idolatrous religious system and the beastly world system is the same conspiracy that crucified Jesus.
  - f) God wants us to be aware that the beasts are within us in the form of our godless, fleshly nature, and that they constantly seek to infiltrate and seize control of all human institutions.
- 5) The antichrist spirit constantly deceives most people into rebelling against Christ.
  - a) Conspirators cover up the ongoing presence of the spirit of antichrist by portraying an Antichrist as an actual human being who will show up someday and deceive the nations into worshiping him.
  - b) The deception of the nations by the antichrist is not some future event--it is going on right now.
  - c) The term *anti* not only means against, but also an alternative to or substitute for.
    - i) Shows up in the big bang theory.
    - ii) Appears in biological evolution.
    - iii) Appears in the new age movement.
  - d) This antichrist constantly arises within us on an individual level. Seeks to deceive us into self-sufficiency.
  - e) In the church the antichrist spirit seizes every opportunity to substitute activities and programs for the supernatural reality of Christ, to channel worship to the church itself and away from Christ, and to discredit the Scriptures and works of Jesus in any way possible.
- 6) Christ constantly triumphs in and through His overcoming saints.
  - a) The beast, the great prostitute, Babylon, and the false prophet all symbolize the idolatrous world and religious system that conspires against Christ and His faithful saints.
  - b) The great dragon and his archangel empower and direct the constant spirit-realm onslaught against the kingdom of God, as reflected in such symbols as the plague of locusts and the demon spirits that look like frogs.

- c) The dark side of Revelation is represented by evil spirit-realm beings deceiving, controlling, and energizing human beings and their institutions in order to persecute and kill the blood-washed saints who dare to exhibit the testimony of Jesus.
- d) The bright side is that Christ has already won the decisive battle over all evil forces, and we can win with Him in our day-to-day lives.
- e) Conspirators would love to lump Christ's triumphs over evil into a single Second Coming and shove it out into the future.
  - i) They can deceive millions of Christians into waiting and longing and looking for something that is already happening.
  - ii) Christ's victories are ongoing, present realities.
- f) How the prophetic message of the letters, seals, the trumpets, and the vials of wrath is ongoing, not predictive.
  - i) Christ continuously comes to us through His Word, encouraging, rebuking, and warning us. He knocks at our heart's door and offers to come into us.
  - ii) If we open the door by praising and worshiping Him, He (the Lamb) stands up inside us.
  - iii) He breaks the seals of the scroll within us, exposes the spirit-realm creatures of the Apocalypse, clothes us in His righteousness, and places His protective seal upon us.
  - iv) His trumpets (messages) sound within us and through us to the church, proclaiming His triumph over all evil spirit-realm forces and judgment of those who resist His message.
  - v) If we receive His messages in our innermost beings (symbolically eating the scroll), He enables us to overcome the evil within us and to ride out with Him to conquer the beastly religious and worldly systems.
  - vi) The seven plagues (bowls of wrath) show what happens to those who continuously reject the message of the letters, the seals, and the trumpets. God hands them over to Satan and to their own evil natures and devices.
- g) Individual believers overcome the awesome creatures of the Apocalypse when Christ reveals, and when we recognize and resist, attempts to lure us into looking for spiritual deity in earthly systems, or in other humans.
- h) The conflict goes on continuously within us and the church.
- i) The increasing intensity of the judgments reveals that the conflict of the two kingdoms occurs at deeper and deeper levels within us and, through us, in the church.
- j) As we receive His judgments of our own beastly nature, and of the beastly religious and world system which surrounds us, Christ enables us to overcome them through the blood of the Lamb and by our testimony of doing the works of Jesus.
- k) If we receive God's judgments and go on to live in the fullness of Christ's kingdom, we need not fear the beastly creatures of the Revelation.
- l) The Revelation shows that God wants to move by a fresh wave of His Spirit to bring encouragement, power, and victory to His saints..
- m) Satan and his co-conspirators always fight the battle of Armageddon to try to keep it from happening.



## LESSON FIVE

### The Comings of the Lord

- 1) Though Jesus will have a future, glorious coming like no other, in this lesson we'll be dealing more with the presence of Jesus actively working and coming in our midst in the here and now. Let us stop limiting his comings to merely a past event or a future hope. Jesus' comings were at hand for first century believers; they have been at hand for believers ever since; they are at hand for believers today; and they will continue to be at hand in the future. Between now and final coming will be many comings.
- 2) The comings of Jesus represent a crucial and glorious spirit-realm/physical-realm reality for every generation.
- 3) Looking for a single Second Coming, somewhere up in the sky, off in the future distracts us from tapping into the spiritual dynamite of the kingdom of God, from worshiping God in all His unveiled reality, and from doing the works of Jesus in the full power of His spirit, today.
- 4) To live in the reality of the comings of the Lord, must break our physical/material mindset, which demands only a physical/material Second Coming, and receive His comings as both spirit-realm and physical-real reality, here and now.
- 5) The Second Coming does not fit the teaching of Jesus
  - a) Why do we readily accept such terms as *born again* or the *bread of life*, or *living water* as symbols, yet refuse to accept *come again* or *wedding banquet* or *comes in glory* as symbols illustrating spirit-realm/physical-realm realities?
  - b) Symbols are used to convey spirit-realm/physical-realm realities because we humans have no frame of reference to enable us to understand the realities of the spirit realm.

### The Classic Second Coming Scriptures

- 1) John 14:18-21.
  - a) (John 14:18 NIV) I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:19 NIV) Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. (John 14:20 NIV) On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. (John 14:21 NIV) Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."
  - b) This promise is addressed to individuals. Jesus fulfilled this in just a few days.
- 2) Acts 1:3-11.
  - a) (Acts 1:3 NIV) After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:4 NIV) On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (Acts 1:5 NIV) For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts

1:6 NIV) So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:7 NIV) He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. (Acts 1:8 NIV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:9 NIV) After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (Acts 1:10 NIV) They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. (Acts 1:11 NIV) "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

- b) Jesus comes and goes in and out of the spirit realm, manifesting Himself in the physical realm.
  - i) Jesus comes in clouds.
  - ii) He comes in spirit-realm clouds.
- 3) Matthew 24(Mat 24:2 NIV) "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."
  - a) (Mat 24:3 NIV) As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"
  - b) (Mat 24:33 NIV) Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.
  - c) (Mat 24:34 NIV) I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.
  - d) Fulfilled 70 AD

### **A Few of the Comings of Jesus in the Old Testament**

- 1) Exodus 3:2-14.
  - a) Appeared to Moses in burning bush.
  - b) Identified himself as God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
  - c) He is alpha and omega; who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.
- 2) Exodus 17:1-7.
  - a) Jesus was the rock which Moses struck and from which the life-giving water flowed.
  - b) 1 Cor. 10:4. The rock was Christ.
- 3) Daniel 3:24-27. Jesus appeared in the fiery furnace.

### **New Testament Patterns of Jesus' Comings**

- 1) (1 Cor 15:5 NIV) and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. (1 Cor 15:6 NIV) After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:7 NIV) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, (1 Cor 15:8 NIV) and last of all he appeared to me also, as

to one abnormally born.

- 2) Acts 7:55. (Acts 7:55 NIV) But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
- 3) Acts 9:4-5. (Acts 9:4 NIV) He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:5 NIV) "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
- 4) Acts 22:17-18. (Acts 22:17 NIV) "When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.'
- 5) Acts 23:11. (Acts 23:11 NIV) The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."
- 6) Rev. 1:17. (Rev 1:17 NIV) When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

## **Why Does It Matter?**

- 1) The conspirators use a single Second Coming to hold people in bondage to an earthly Jesus.
  - a) The message of Revelation is that of the unveiled Christ.
  - b) We can know and fully experience Him now, in the present.
- 2) Much of the church in general doesn't know what is going on in the spirit realm.
- 3) The world of the spirit has authority over the world of the flesh.

## **The Comings of Jesus**

- 1) A present reality.
  - a) All Bible prophecy is and can be fulfilled in each individual.
  - b) Jesus said the kingdom of God is both in you and among you.
  - c) Apocalypse means an unveiling or an uncovering; also, the manifestation, the coming, the appearing of Jesus Christ.
  - d) The book of Revelation was designed to let Christ appear to you as He appeared to John. Yet, most people see only beasts, plagues, earthquakes, locust, and torment.
- 2) Are continuous.
  - a) "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them."
  - b) When? "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is a hand."
- 3) Comes in a variety of ways.
  - a) In the Revelation, He shows up in many different ways: as an awesome, human-like being with a sword coming out of His mouth, as a lamb with scars on it; as a conquering warrior on a white horse; as an all-pervasive light.
  - b) He chooses how and when to manifest Himself to us.

## **Four Ways to Discover the reality of Jesus' comings:**

- 1) If you're not already doing it, begin to study your own Bible diligently.
- 2) Recognize that the purpose of Jesus' countless comings is not to get you out of this world, but to empower you, with a prophetic foundation, to operate in spirit-realm authority.
- 3) Recognize that, in biblical prophecy, we are talking about spiritual/physical realities, just as we are with terms like *the bread of life*, *living water* or *salt and light*. We're talking about getting beyond Jesus' earthly ministry into the unbridled reality of His Spirit.
- 4) Open your spirit and heart to His comings in your own life. Jesus is standing at the door and is knocking.

## LESSON SIX

### The Rapture: A Present Reality

- 1) The idea of a one-time, physical, corporate rapture is one of the touchiest doctrines to question.
- 2) Millions of people are questioning all the Rapture mania, and masses are simply confused.
- 3) God had something in mind far more pertinent and glorious than snatching His church out of the world before He wreaked havoc upon the earth.
- 4) Jesus in the gospels demonstrated that He was far more than a political messiah.
  - a) His empathy with the masses.
  - b) His aloofness from governmental structures.
  - c) His willingness to die indicated that He wanted to accomplish something far superior to a global political revolution.
- 5) Scripture emphasizes a triumphant God who enables His people to triumph as well.
  - a) God's people do not run away or get rescued.
  - b) God's emphasis is to purify His people and create godly character within them while leading them to the Promised Land.
  - c) Jesus conquered death by dying.
  - d) He conquered sin by facing temptation head on and refusing to give in--by taking sin's awful guilt upon His own shoulders.
  - e) The spirit of the Scriptures is to face up to sin, death, and evil in this world--and conquering them.
  - f) There is presently a realm, an intimacy to which God invites His saints.
- 6) History of present-day Rapture teaching.
  - a) Began in 1830 with a vision by Margaret McDonald.
  - b) J. N. Darby, leader of the Plymouth Brethren began to hold prophetic conferences and espoused this vision.
  - c) The vision was: only a select group of believers would be removed from the earth before the days of the Antichrist; but she also saw other believers enduring the tribulation.
  - d) Popularized by the *Scofield Reference Bible* and Clarence Larkin's *Dispensational Truth*.
- 7) Anything that gets your mind and heart off what God wants to do in your life, and through you in the lives of others--the furthering of His Kingdom--is a deception.
- 8) Ten fallacies in the bodily-removal, Rapture doctrine.
  - a) The word *rapture* does not appear in Scripture.
  - b) Jesus spoke of sending His angels to "gather his elect." But He said, "This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened."
  - c) In Paul's often-quoted "caught up in the air" statement, the Greek word for the *air* the saints are caught up into means the unconscious breathing air--not the atmosphere.
  - d) The great escape idea is contingent upon the limiting assumption of a single Second Coming of Jesus, but His comings are countless; He comes to us, not jerk out of the world to Him.

- e) Following the famous Rapture passage (1 Thes. 4:13-18), Paul speaks about times and dates; plural because they are countless, ongoing fulfillments.
  - f) In 1 Thes. 5:1-2, the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, but there are many days of the Lord. (Luke 17:22,26).
  - g) A bodily Rapture doctrine depends upon a physical/material interpretation of the main Rapture passages.
  - h) A physical, corporate, one-time removal of the church focuses attention on *when*, rather than *what* and *how*.
  - i) The physical, corporate Rapture idea depends upon a chronological interpretation of the Scriptures.
  - j) Since there is no direct teaching to support it, the physical Rapture doctrine grows out of deductive reasoning or inference.
- 9) Two strong reasons people grasp at any hope of avoiding a trip through a dirt grave to reach heaven.
- a) The high emotionalism associated with the rapture grows out of a very human desire--a compelling drive to survive.
  - b) The physical and corporate aspects of the Rapture idea appeal to us because we have grown up with a Western world view.
    - i) This view tends to be materialistic and scientific.
    - ii) What we can see and test is real; what we can't is not real.
    - iii) In the Middle East, looking at reality spiritually, poetically, or symbolically.
    - iv) Life itself is spirit.
- 10) We will never be able to grasp the glorious truth of being “caught up” until we throw out the notion that saving our flesh is what matters most to us and to God.
- 11) The so-called Rapture scriptures speak of present-day, spirit-realm/physical-realm reality.
- a) Should be an ongoing, spiritual/physical reality.
  - b) History has taught what it means to be visited by God; to be gathered, or raptured, into His presence.
  - c) For overcomers, it means life after death continues the resurrected life of ruling and reigning with Christ, which we can enter into here and now.
  - d) The resurrection is a person, not just a single historic event.

### **Key concepts of 1 Thes. 4:13-18.**

- 1) *Caught up...in the air.*
  - a) Two Greek words which the New Testament translates as *air*.
    - i) *ouranos*. Atmospheric air.
    - ii) *aer*. The internal breath. Comes from a verb which means to breathe. unconsciously.
  - b) Eph. 2:2 symbolizes the spirit realm, “*the kingdom of the air.*”
  - c) Revelation uses the same word to describe the air into which the seventh vial is poured out.
  - d) All of this is in the spirit realm--inside us and among us, where the kingdom of God

- exists.
- e) This air is in us and also around us.
  - f) We are caught up into the spirit realm not physically removed from the earth.
  - g) Being “caught up...in the air” is an inner spiritual/physical reality, not a physical removal.
- 2) *With them in the clouds...*
- a) In prophecy, clouds symbolize humans, spirit-realm beings, and those who have died in the Lord--not atmospheric clouds.
    - i) Heb. 12:1. Surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.
    - ii) Jude 12. “Godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ.” These are “clouds without rain.”
  - b) When we are caught up in the spirit realm, we become a part of that great cloud of witnesses.
- 3) *To meet the Lord...*
- a) Our feet never leave the ground to meet the Lord.
  - b) We have an encounter with Christ and are transformed into the fullness of His reality.
- 4) *Asleep in Him.* The asleep are the physically dead who have died in Christ.
- 5) *The dead in Christ.*
- a) This could be those described as being asleep.
  - b) Could be another group.
    - i) Joh. 5:25. “A time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.”
    - ii) Prov. 21:16. “A man who strays from wisdom comes to rest with the dead.”
    - iii) These passages refer to those who are physically alive but spiritually dead.
    - iv) They are not reigning and ruling as part of the first resurrection.
- 6) *We which are alive.* These are the people who have experienced the first resurrection; those who have come alive in Christ and are also physically alive.
- 7) *Encourage one another.* The Spirit changes, equips, and empowers us for ministry and for spiritual warfare.
- a) It does not make us disappear.
  - b) We receive levels of authority and blessings to the degree that we are caught up.

### **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**

- 1) This passage has been pushed into the future because we haven't been able to explain a present fulfillment.
  - a) Death came through Adam, and the resurrection of the dead came through Christ.
  - b) Speaks of people being asleep and alive.
  - c) Verse 23 speaks about all will be made alive, “but each in his own time: Christ the first-fruits; then when he comes, those who belong to him.”
  - d) Each in his own time clearly means that being made alive is not a one-shot, corporate deal, but an ongoing continual reality for individuals.
- 2) *We will all be changed.*
  - a) Speaking about a coming reality in everyone's life.

- b) Not removed, but changed; transformed into the likeness of Christ.
  - c) When the revelation of the unveiled Christ hits us (each in his own order), it is like a spiritual lightning bolt.
- 3) *At the last trumpet.*
- a) It's the seventh trumpet in Revelation 10 and 11.
  - b) In prophetic symbolism, an angel sounding a trumpet represents a voice, or message, from God.
  - c) The message is: "The kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.
  - d) The trumpet in reality has already sounded, but not everyone has received it.
  - e) It continues to sound for individuals as they personally receive the revelation of Jesus Christ.
  - f) The same trumpet, "And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.
  - g) When we receive the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are changed instantaneously into kings and priests to rule and reign in the kingdom of God.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:1-4**

- 1) Those who hold to a literal, physical interpretation of this Scripture either overlook entirely or dismiss Jesus' statements in Mat. 16:27-28: "For the Son of Man is going to come in his glory with his angels...I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."
- 2) *Man of lawlessness.* \
  - a) The man of lawlessness is the flesh; it is self-righteousness; it is the sinful nature of human beings.
  - b) God's temple is in us. We are God's temple.

## **How You Can Live in Raptured Reality--Now**

- 1) The Revelation message challenges us to overcome--to be transformed into spiritually liberated, energized, and controlled kings and priests--so we can rule and reign with Jesus in His kingdom--now!
- 2) The essence of being caught up in the air to meet the Lord and being changed in the twinkling of an eye is this: one must be in Christ.
  - a) You will walk as Jesus did.
  - b) You will do the works that He did.
- 3) John 14.
  - a) In my Father's house are many mansions.
  - b) I go to prepare a place for you.
  - c) Where I am, there you will be also.
  - d) He's inside us, in the place of the spirit--that place of the internal, breathing air.



- e) Christ in you, the hope of glory.
- f) When we are caught up in the spirit in Christ, and He shows us Himself as He is today, we are transformed into His likeness and are equipped to live victoriously and to minister in His power--to do the works of Jesus.
- g) In that dwelling place, we can live in such fellowship with Him that we don't have to consciously think about what we are doing or not doing. His presence becomes as natural to us as the air we breathe.

# LESSON SEVEN

## Armageddon

- 1) Traditional teaching.
  - a) Final war which will someday pit God and all His heavenly forces against Satan and all his evil forces.
  - b) The war to end all wars.
- 2) Facts.
  - a) The term *Battle of Armageddon* never appears in the Bible.
    - i) The battle on the great day of God Almighty.
    - ii) Armageddon is the location of the battle.
  - b) Scripture never mentions a specific place bearing the name Armageddon.
  - c) The Hebrew term *Har Meggidon*, which we translate as *Armageddon*, has no apparent meaning in ancient Hebrew.
  - d) *Har*, in ancient Hebrew, means *mountain*.
  - e) Based on various other scriptures, battle could be:
    - i) *Har Mo'edh*, the mountain of assembly.
    - ii) Megiddo.
    - iii) *Ar himdah*, God's city of Desire (Jerusalem).
    - iv) *Har migdo*, his fruitful mountain (Mount Zion).
- 3) Don't look for a one-time Battle of Armageddon to be fought in the Middle East at some future date with horses, tanks, soldiers, missiles, and airplanes. The battle goes on in the church at this very moment.
  - a) The battle on the great day of God Almighty was "at hand," and it has been at hand ever since.
  - b) Armageddon symbolizes the location of the ongoing conflict between God's overcomers and those within the church who oppose the unveiling of the supernatural Christ.
  - c) Evil spirit-realm forces that constantly seek to thwart God's purposes are waging an ongoing war inside the church.
    - i) This spiritual warfare also constitutes one of the primary themes of the entire book of Revelation.
    - ii) We as believing Christians are called upon to be the warriors in this great conflict.
- 4) By depicting this battle as God's war, not ours, and by shoving it out into the future, conspirators hope to dupe Christians into believing that the battle on the great day of God Almighty has no direct meaning for their daily lives.
  - a) Sleeping warriors pose no danger to the enemies of God.
  - b) Most Christians either ignore Bible prophecy about spirit-realm conflict, or they think of conquering evil as something God will do someday.
  - c) "Let Jesus come back and clean up this mess."

**The time is now, the location is here, the battle is ours.**

- 5) The battle describes the ongoing spiritual/physical conflict between overcomers and non-overcomers within the church.
- 6) The revelation promises blessings to believers who read, hear, and keep or obey its message.
  - a) The saints are blessed if they wash their robes in His righteousness, keep their white garments with them at all times, and keep themselves spotless.
  - b) Not addressed to organized church in general. It is addressed to individuals within the church, in very specific ways.
- 7) The battle line is drawn; in the boundary between the material realm and the spirit realm.
  - a) Drawn between those who are lukewarm for God and those who are red hot.
  - b) Between those walking in the flesh and those walking in the spirit.

### **The Anatomy of a Battle: Revelation 16:12-16**

- 8) Bowls represent the judgment of God in all its awesome fury.
- 9) River Euphrates.
  - a) Recognized as the eastern boundary of the Garden of Eden and of the Promised Land.
  - b) Represents boundary between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world.
  - c) Represents the supernatural power source that sustains and energizes the false church, Babylon.
  - d) Stands in sharp contrast to the crystal clear “river of the water of life...flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” through the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.
- 10) Waters dried up. The statement implies that God has to dry up Babylon's polluted power source before a successful onslaught against His enemies can take place.
- 11) To prepare the way. The dried-up riverbed represents the boundary line between the material and the supernatural, where the battle rages.
- 12) For the kings of the East.
  - a) These are the overcoming saints who have been purified by the letters, seals, and trumpets, given white robes of righteousness, and stamped with the seal of God.
  - b) Blasphemous words release the evil spirits.
  - c) The human action which most effectively releases demonic power is the spoken word.
- 13) Go out to the kings of the whole world.
  - a) Boundary dwellers, operating in evil spirit-realm power, become Satan's messengers.
  - b) The kings symbolize masses of people, not just rulers.
  - c) Engage the enemy and seize the kingdom of God by force.
  - d) From the east--from God. God always comes from the east; from the direction of the rising sun.
- 14) Three evil spirits that looked like frogs; demonic, spirit-realm forces stationed by Satan in the boundary line to ward off all attacks against his domain, the beast system and the harlot church.
- 15) Came out of mouth of dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

- a) Blasphemous words release the evil spirits.
  - b) The human action which most effectively releases demonic power is the spoken word.
- 16) Go out to the kings of the whole world.
- a) Boundary dwellers, operating in evil spirit-realm power, become Satan's messengers.
  - b) The kings symbolize masses of people, not just rulers.

## **Personal Dimensions of Armageddon**

- 1) The battle for the kingdom wages within individuals.
- 2) Christ Himself comes and fights against false doctrines, unrighteousness, and evil spirit-realm forces within individuals in His church.
  - a) Only those who repent and overcome will cross over the boundary line and enter into the kingdom of God.
  - b) These will be protected from and become a part of God's ongoing judgment of the church and the world.

## **The Rider on the White Horse (Rev. 19:11-16)**

- 1) Names of rider.
  - a) Faithful and true.
  - b) The word of God.
- 2) Characteristics.
  - a) Judges and makes war.
  - b) His eyes are like blazing fire.
  - c) He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood.
  - d) The armies of heaven were following him.
  - e) Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.
- 3) These are physical symbols of ongoing, spirit-realm/physical-realm realities.
- 4) On his head are many crowns.
  - a) In prophetic Scripture, a crown symbolizes authority; and we are given crowns.
  - b) The white horse symbolizes the perfect and irresistible power of God.
  - c) In the wedding supper of the Lamb, the bride of Christ has lifted her veil and has been united with Him.
  - d) Christ and His true church have become one.
  - e) What was represented by one crown is now represented by many crowns.
- 5) The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.
  - a) Armies are of heaven; not from heaven.
  - b) The blood-washed saints belong to the armies of heaven.
  - c) The rider on the white horse is Jesus Christ and His Body.
    - i) God sends us into the world to conquer and rule.
    - ii) Wherever we are, there He is.

- iii) The rider is Christ in us.
- d) This is Jesus in all His spirit-realm reality.

### **Armageddon, Now**

- 1) Armageddon has always been going on, and it is going on right now.
  - a) It is within you.
  - b) It is within the church.
  - c) It is wherever the beastly world system seeks to place its mark of ownership on you.
- 2) We must bind up the evil spirit-realm forces that seek to control our lives and come into the full realities and truths of Jesus Christ.
- 3) Once we have overcome the evil within ourselves, we must engage and overcome Christ's enemies within the church and throughout the world.
- 4) That means:
  - a) We are to hear His knock and open the door to our hearts so the unveiled Christ can come into us and eat with us.
  - b) We are to enter into His supernatural reality through praise, worship, and righteous acts.
  - c) We are to allow the Lamb to break all the seals and open every aspect of our lives to the judgment of God, conquering all the unrighteousness within us so that we can overcome.
  - d) We are to hear and respond to His messages (trumpets) calling us into the battle which rages within the church and in the world.
  - e) We are to act as messengers of His kingdom, sounding the trumpets and pouring out bowls of His wrath (by proclaiming His Word and doing the works of Jesus) upon those boundary-dwelling believers who refuse to hear, repent, and come into the kingdom.
- 5) We are to fight and win "the battle of the great day of Almighty God" within us, in the church, and in the world.
- 6)** We can do it only as we ride the white horse with Him and live daily in the supernatural power of the unveiled Christ. That becomes possible only when we eat "the wedding supper of the Lamb."

## LESSON EIGHT

### “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb”

- 1) This gets to the heart of the unveiled Christ in all His spirit-realm reality.
- 2) Tradition:
  - a) Many say this feast lasts for seven years, while the great tribulation is wreaking havoc on the earth.
  - b) Then these stuffed saints come back and watch while God destroys the world in the Battle of Armageddon.
  - c) After this, Satan is bound in chains and thrown into hell while the saints reign with Christ for precisely one thousand years.
  - d) Eventually, Satan will be thrown back into the bottomless pit and the saints will rule and reign with Christ forever--somewhere.
  - e) Two points traditionists agree upon:
    - i) A literal, physical wedding supper is going to happen someday, somewhere.
    - ii) Its main significance for now is to warn us to be ready.
  - f) Making this feast a once-only event and pushing it out into the future is a doctrine of man, not a revelation of God.
- 3) What does the Bible say?
  - a) The wedding supper is a Revelation symbol describing the kingdom of God as an ongoing spirit-realm/physical-realm reality--not a one-time, future event.
  - b) This physical symbol is the same type of metaphor Jesus used in describing Himself as the bread of life, which could take away our hunger for anything else, and as the water which could forever quench our spiritual thirst.
  - c) It was at hand for the first century and has been at hand ever since.
  - d) Can't interpret Wedding Supper literally when surrounded by symbolic language.

### Jesus' Teachings Conflict with the One-Time, Future Event Theory

- 1) The parable of the wedding feast.
  - a) But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. “Friend,” he asked, “how did you get in here without wedding clothes?” The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, “Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” For many are invited, but few are chosen.”
  - b) How did this guy get into the feast?
    - i) Was he raptured by mistake?
    - ii) Was he then thrown back to earth?
  - c) The wedding feast symbolizes the ongoing reality of God's kingdom on the earth. It is not

- a one-shot, physical happening up in the sky.
- 2) Final Passover.
  - a) "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."
  - b) This is not a prediction of a one-time, future event in the sky.

## **When, Where, and What Is the Wedding Supper of the Lamb?**

- 1) Proverbs 9:1-6. Wisdom has built her house. She has hewed out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city, "Let all who are simple come in here!" She says to those who lack judgment, "Come, eat my food, drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways, and you will live; walk in the way of understanding.
  - a) This passage describes the kingdom of God; eating and drinking.
  - b) Wisdom has built her house.
    - i) The house of the Lord.
    - ii) A house of prayer for all nations.
    - iii) A house built upon a rock.
    - iv) The Father's house of many rooms.
  - c) Peter speaks of Jesus being the living stone, and he says we are living stones, being built into a spiritual house.
  - d) The seven pillars of the house speaks of the seven churches, seven messages, seven seals, and seven bowls of wrath. Seven is the prophetic number for completion.
- 2) The wisdom of God comes when we recognize the absolute sovereignty of God, and HE begins to reveal to us His spirit-realm reality.
- 3) Wisdom and knowledge are the revelation to believers of the mystery of Christ.
- 4) The feast table is set in the house of God, which is made up of the lively stones of Jesus Christ and His saints.
  - a) We are invited to partake of this feast.
  - b) The feast takes place spiritually within us; it is in us and among us. It is within the kingdom of heaven.
- 5) The wedding feast is not a meal that God will someday serve in outer space.
  - a) It is an ongoing spirit-realm/physical-realm reality that continuously takes place within the church and in the individual.
  - b) Jesus invites anyone who hears his voice and opens the door.
- 6) The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.
  - a) Parable deeply rooted in the ancient wedding traditions of the Israelites.
    - i) Typically lasted for days and featured giant smorgasbords on which people gorged themselves around the clock.
    - ii) People sang, danced, and played games.
  - b) Jesus likened the kingdom of God in the spirit realm to the Israelite wedding celebration.
- 7) These gala wedding feasts stood in sharp contrast to the somber ceremonial fasts, concocted from the Mosaic Law.

- a) Public fasts were characterized by stark silence, ceremonial cleansings, public offerings, sober reflection, and religious rites.
  - b) The fasts of the Pharisees represented all that was superficial and empty in their religiosity, while the wedding feasts represented all that was alive, fresh, and new about the kingdom of God.
  - c) Jesus' zest for feasting was so pronounced that He was accused of being "a glutton and a drunkard."
  - d) How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom is taken from them; then they will fast.
    - i) The bridegroom's presence makes the difference between fasting and feasting.
    - ii) The bridegroom's presence also makes the difference in dead religious ritual and life-giving reality.
  - e) The new order of the kingdom of God is the abiding presence of the Bridegroom.
  - f) The spirit-realm presence of the Bridegroom in our life determines whether we are fasting or feasting spiritually.
- 8) Jesus often used the symbols of physical food and drink to describe the spirit-realm/physical-realm reality of God's kingdom.
- a) Miraculously provided food for His followers.
  - b) Turned water into wine.
- 9) Kingdom of God does not come through eating and drinking in the physical sense.
- 10) He intends these physical symbols to refer to the spiritual kingdom of God.

## **The Problem is the Veil**

- 1) The thrilling moment in ancient Jewish wedding ceremony was when the bride removed her veil so she could see and be seen by the bridegroom, face to face.
- 2) Once she removed the veil, she was never to put it back over her face.
  - a) Never again would it interfere with her union with the bridegroom or with her partaking of all his sumptuous feasts.
  - b) This act symbolized that the two of them had become one flesh.
- 3) John chose the term "the wedding supper of the Lamb" to describe the full, spirit-realm union of Christ and His bride because this ceremony was so significant.
  - a) When we remove the veil, we receive the full revelation of Jesus Christ.
  - b) We can then begin to eat the wedding supper of the Lamb.
  - c) First, we have to remove the veil.
  - d) What is this veil?
    - i) Our mental image of Jesus.
    - ii) As long as we insist on seeing Jesus in just His earthly ministry, we cannot receive and experience Him in all His present, glorious reality; we cannot see Him face to face and eat the wedding supper with Him.
    - iii) He is more than Jesus of Nazareth.
    - iv) He is the risen, unveiled Jesus of the Apocalypse.



- e) Why must we remove the veil?
  - i) It affects the way we think of Jesus, the way we study Him, and the way we worship Him.
  - ii) Can't limit ourselves just to His earthly image.
- 4) The most recent description of Jesus. (Rev. 1:12-16).
  - a) A sword is coming out of his mouth.
  - b) He has fiery eyes.
  - c) His feet are as of bronze.
  - d) He has the voice that sounds like many waters.
- 5) If you are just focusing on the earthly ministry of Jesus, the veil will prevent you from eating the wedding supper with Him in the spirit realm, right now.
- 6) You can't see him face to face, because you're still looking for a face that doesn't exist anymore.
- 7) The word *Apocalypse* means to lift a veil, or to remove a shroud or curtain, in order to resolve a mystery.
- 8) In the symbolism of the wedding supper of the Lamb, that Apocalypse of Jesus Christ reaches its peak.
- 9) If you miss the full reality of this glorious truth, you'll miss the deepest intimacy that Christ longs to share with you right here, right now.
- 10) The veil separated the two parts of the Tabernacle of Moses: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.
  - a) This veil was a curtain that reached from the ceiling to floor, sealing off the Holy of Holies.
  - b) This veil was torn when Jesus became the eternal High Priest and that through Him every human being now has free access to God.
- 11) God has torn away the veil that enshrouded Him in mystery.
  - a) Once we remove the veil, we are free to eat the wedding supper of the Lamb with Him.
  - b) To be married to Him.
  - c) To bear offspring as a result of our marital union with Him.
  - d) We have to give up our fleshly ideas of Jesus and lay aside our fleshly worship in order to see Him face to face in the spirit realm.

## **What's on the Menu for the Wedding Supper of the Lamb?**

- 1) We eat Christ!
  - a) I am the bread of life.
  - b) I am the living bread that came down from Heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.
- 2) How can we eat of Him if we are still thinking of Him as an earthly man?
- 3) The hidden manna is beyond the veil; beyond flesh; beyond the image of the spiritual reality of Christ.
  - a) The term *hidden manna* indicates a permanent blessedness, a richness in our spiritual

lives while we dwell in the Holy of Holies in Him, under the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. We eat this hidden manna at the wedding supper of the Lamb. It is available only for those who come through the veil and see Him face to face, who eat of Him and live in a marriage relationship with the glorified Christ. This requires spiritual revelation.

- b) "To him that overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna."
- 4) We become what we eat.
  - a) My food is to do the will of him who sent me.
  - b) When we eat of the hidden manna behind the veil, we have the power to do the works of Jesus.
- 5) The hidden manna is the fullness of the Word of God.
  - a) As we continue to eat of Him, we come more into His likeness.
  - b) We eat of his life, his truth, his attributes, his perfection.
  - c) We partake of him because He comes.
  - d) Jesus gives us this hidden manna when He comes to dine with us inside our spirits.

## **All Is Now Ready**

- 1) Jesus gave us two parables.
  - a) The parable of the wedding banquet.
  - b) The parable of the ten virgins.
- 2) Three key issues in these parables.
  - a) We have to prepare ourselves to receive the Bridegroom.
  - b) We have to open ourselves to spirit-realm reality.
    - i) We are not to look at anyone through the eyes of the flesh, including Jesus.
    - ii) We know him through the Spirit.
    - iii) You have to go through the veil of Jesus' flesh to go into the Most Holy Place, where the wedding supper takes place.
    - iv) God can only work with us and share full intimacy with us to the degree that we are willing to behold the glorified Christ.
    - v) The bride must remove her veil in order to eat at the banquet.
  - c) We must stay spiritually alert for the comings of Jesus.
    - i) The kingdom of God has come.
      - (1) there's no reason to wait for some future event.
      - (2) the waiting is finished; it was finished at Pentecost.
    - ii) Christ can come to us in countless ways.
      - (1) through some person.
      - (2) through circumstances.
      - (3) through the words of Scripture.
      - (4) through direct revelation,
      - (5) through an appearance.
      - (6) God can come anyway He chooses.
    - iii) Our job is to not figure out how or when He will come to us, but to keep the eyes and

ears of our spirits attuned for His comings at all times.

## **Summary**

- 1) Don't have to wait for some future, pie-in-the-sky event to occur.
  - a) We can be married to Jesus right now.
  - b) We can eat His wedding supper on a day-to-day basis.
- 2) He comes to us; inside us.
- 3) First we become betrothed by accepting Jesus as our Savior.
  - a) As we prepare to become equally yoked, to be joined in marriage to Him, we can lift our veil so we can see Him face to face and eat of Him.
  - b) Then we can have an intimate relationship with Jesus.
  - c) We can rule and reign with Him as His bride.
  - d) From this union, we're impregnated with the incorruptible seed of God; we reproduce spiritually.
  - e) When we're married, we're the bride.
- 4) Take the veil off; start eating, start making love to Him, and start bearing children by Him.
- 5) Within the veil is the place of communion with God, total authority, full life, infinite power; perfect everything. It's all contained in Him.

## LESSON NINE

### “The Tribulation and the Seventieth Week of Daniel”

- 1) The Scriptures say nothing about a seven-year period called the Great Tribulation.
  - a) According to man's tradition, there will be a one-time, future-only seven-year tribulation period.
  - b) It will occur, according to conspirators, immediately after Christians have been raptured out of the earth and are off in space eating the wedding supper of the Lamb.
  - c) During this seven-year period, God's judgments on the earth will be so terrible that men will literally gnaw their tongues in anguish and cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them.
  - d) Then the saints will come back to the earth, watch God wipe out all His enemies in the battle of Armageddon, and then will reign with Christ for exactly one thousand years.
- 2) To make this work, a number of prophetic passages are either ignored or twisted out of proportion.
- 3) Must recognize that these prophecies are figurative and timeless, not literal, physical, and chronological.

### What Scriptures Actually Teach about the Great Tribulation

- 1) The word “tribulation” appears in Bible one time; Rev. 7:14.
- 2) Translated in other scriptures as affliction, persecution, trouble, or suffering.
- 3) Daniel and the revelation.
  - a) The idea of 7-year tribulation comes primarily from combining Daniel's seventy-week prophecy with numbers used in the Revelation.
  - b) “Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.”
  - c) “From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven,' but in the middle of that 'seven,' he will put an end to sacrifice and offerings. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

### The Big Gap Theory

- 1) History records precisely sixty-nine weeks of years between the time of Daniel and the coming of Christ.
- 2) Then you have to jump over nearly two thousand years to make the Great tribulation a future event for our, or a future, generation.
- 3) The time-liners say there is a gap, a postponement, an interruption of time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of years.

## **How Do the Scriptures Interpret These Scriptures?**

- 1) There are three things to remember as we seek to grasp the meaning of Daniel's seventy weeks.
  - a) Does it reflect the spirit of prophecy, which is the testimony of Jesus? In other words, what kinds of fruit does it produce?
  - b) Is it consistent with the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God? Does it fit the principles and patterns of Jesus' kingdom teachings?
  - c) Is it consistent with all other Scriptures--whether from the Old or New Testament? Does it stand in harmony with the themes and types of the entire Bible?
- 2) The time-line theory of a seven-year tribulation period and a precise future Millennium do not measure up to those criteria.
  - a) Instead of producing good fruit, like doing the works of Jesus, they produce the bad fruit of anxiety, escapism, and confusion.
  - b) They stand in open conflict with the principles and patterns of Jesus' kingdom teachings.
  - c) The time-line theories don't fit the harmony criteria, because one has to twist and distort many other Scriptures to make them work out.
- 3) The time-line theory comes apart at the crucifixion of Jesus.
  - a) At the crucifixion of Jesus, the essential nature of every element of worship and every prophetic symbol changed from physical to spiritual/physical reality.
  - b) The spiritual wisdom, understanding, and knowledge comes to us through the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy.
  - c) Jesus went through the veil; into the Holiest of all; the realm of the spirit.
  - d) Jesus opened the spiritual way, by Him we gain entrance into the spirit realm which is superior to the physical.
  - e) The earthly tabernacle and ceremonies are only physical representations of the new order.
    - i) Then, the description shifts to spiritual/physical realities.
    - ii) This is God's pattern for Daniel's seventy weeks and for all prophecy.
    - iii) All symbols change from physical fulfillment to spiritual fulfillment.
  - f) Jesus brought a shift from the physical to the spiritual.
    - i) To the Samaritan woman: "The time shall come and now is...they that worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth."
    - ii) "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it in three days."
  - g) In the new order, the temple is Jesus--and it is the saints in blood-washed robes.
    - i) We are being built into a spiritual house.

- ii) God has taken the physical things and events of the Old and New Testaments and turned them into spiritual/physical realities.
- iii) We now represent God's temple; which is why we're now called the New Jerusalem.
- h) Time-liners interpret those symbols physically and chronologically; thereby robbing them of their deepest realities.

### **The Seventieth Week of Daniel Symbolizes the Timeless Kingdom of God.**

- 1) It is at hand.
- 2) It is an ongoing spiritual kingdom.
- 3) The sixty-nine weeks ran from Cyrus' decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the rebuilding was complete.
- 4) The seventieth week started immediately after the sixty-ninth week ended.
  - a) Jesus ministered publicly for three-and-a-half years and was then cut off. Jesus' ministry fulfills the first half of the seventieth week.
  - b) The old covenant ended at Jesus' death.
  - c) He put an end to sacrifices and ceremonial offerings by becoming our eternal High Priest.
  - d) The people destroyed the city and the sanctuary (by crucifying Jesus) to make way for the New Jerusalem and the new temple.
  - e) The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus completed the first three-and-a-half days, or years, of the seventieth week.
  - f) We're now in a new day; an eternal day.
    - i) The physical fulfillment has become spiritual/physical fulfillment.
    - ii) Time no longer applies; time is ongoing.
    - iii) We're living in the age of the Spirit, in the middle of the seventieth week, right now.
    - iv) We are the completion, the sealing up, of the vision.
    - v) The remaining three-and-a-half years are in a spiritual time frame.
      - (1) it is a period of continuous unfolding throughout all the ages.
      - (2) it can never be confined to a literal three-and-a-half-year period.

### **What Does the Second Half of the Seventieth Week Represent?**

- 1) Revelation 11 describes the second half of the seventieth week.
- 2) Those three-and-a-half years is a symbol for the Bride of Christ in operation.
- 3) The two witnesses are those who stand up in the church system and prophesy and are slain in the street of Babylon--not necessarily physically, but in a spiritual sense.
- 4) We are God's temple.
- 5) As His bride we become equally yoked with Jesus.
- 6) The bride's three-and-a-half-year symbol is connected with Jesus' three-and-a-half years to complete, to seal up the vision of Daniel's seventieth week.
- 7) The fire that comes out of the mouths of the two witnesses is prophesying by the Word of God in the power of the Spirit that burns and consumes those who fight against it. It burns

and consumes that which opposes it.

- 8) The rain is not physical rain, but streams of living water; a symbol of the power of the Spirit.
- 9) The word of their testimony; the unveiling of Jesus in all his glory.
- 10) The two witnesses spew fire, lock up the rains, and turn water into blood.
  - a) They are slain, and their bodies lie in the streets while their enemies mock them.
  - b) The beast system in the apostate church rears its ugly head and goes into a rage against any saint who threatens its stranglehold; just as it did when Jesus challenged the religious leaders of His day.
  - c) The religious leaders demanded Jesus' crucifixion; religion still crucifies Jesus today through his two witnesses, through those who hold the testimony of Jesus.
  - d) Often succeeds in destroying witness by character assassination, innuendoes, and suspicious thoughts planted in people's minds.
- 11) The world can, and always does, bring tribulation on the bride for doing the works of Jesus.
- 12) In the world you will have tribulation. Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
- 13) Getting killed for Jesus can get you resurrected.

## LESSON TEN

### “The Millennium”

- 1) The binding of Satan and the reign of the saints for one thousand years are also physical symbols of a spirit-realm/physical-realm reality.
  - a) Satan is bound for the duration of the Kingdom.
  - b) As long as the kingdom abounds, Satan is bound.
- 2) Why one thousand years?
  - a) A symbol that represents a very long time.
  - b) The expression occurs several times elsewhere in the Bible, and it is allegorical in every other instance.
  - c) It was an idiom in Bible times comparable to our expression, “Never in a million years!” We don’t mean literally a million years; John did not mean precisely one thousand years.
- 3) The psalmist spoke of God owning the cattle “on a thousand hills.”
  - a) Does not mean that someone else owns the cattle on all but those one thousand hills.
  - b) The one thousand years in Rev. 20 refers to a vast, unspecified period of time.
- 4) To translate a thousand years literally contradicts many other Scriptures that refer to the reign of Christ.
  - a) Daniel characterizes Christ's reign as “an everlasting kingdom.”
  - b) John tells us that the bride of Christ will “reign for ever and ever.”
  - c) In Deuteronomy, God keeps His “covenant of love to a thousand generations.”
    - i) Does not mean He breaks the covenant after the one thousandth generation?
    - ii) God always keeps His covenants.
- 5) When thousand years is up (when Kingdom not abounding), Satan is loosed.
  - a) When we reign, Satan is bound.
  - b) When we cease to reign, Satan is loosed.
- 6) When does Millennium begin?
  - a) Somewhere out in future?
  - b) Or did it begin with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ?
- 7) The thousand years is a temporal symbol of the ongoing, timeless, eternal kingdom of God.
  - a) Blood-washed saints have been living in its reality for nearly two thousand years and will continue to reign and rule in it for eternity.
  - b) It is something that God has created and, like God, it stands outside of time.
  - c) People are looking for a political Messiah to come back and rule the world from a temple over in Jerusalem.
  - d) What a comedown it would be for Jesus to leave His present, glorified, and omnipresent position to confine Himself for one thousand years inside a temple built by hands.
  - e) His kingdom is not visible; is not of this world.
- 8) That Jesus is indeed ruling His kingdom now is consistent with every prophetic Scripture and represents the highest spirit of Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God.
- 9) The kingdom was at hand when Rev. 20 was written, it has been at hand ever since, it is at hand now, and it will continue to be at hand.



## **The Binding of Satan**

- 1) The symbolism of Satan being bound and thrown into the abyss is a parabolic description of Jesus' promise to His disciples, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
- 2) When we live in this timeless kingdom of God, we have authority to bind up Satan and all his evil spirit-realm forces in our spheres of influence.
- 3) When we either step out of this kingdom or refuse to exercise the authority we have been given, Satan is loosed to wreak his havoc.
- 4) The only limitation to the total control of Satan in the world is the willingness (or unwillingness) of Christ's blood-washed saints to accept and exercise the authority we have been given.
  - a) When we don't execute the authority of the kingdom, Satan keeps jumping out of the pit and stirring up people (nations) to rebel against God.
  - b) As blood-washed saints keep proclaiming the Word of God and doing the works of Jesus, Satan keeps being bound and thrown back into the pit.
  - c) When we relinquish authority, we empower Satan.
- 5) God desires that His kingdom to come, His will to be done on the earth, and His saints to continue to defeat Satan through Christ's limitless power. That has been and is the most relevant, pertinent application of this prophecy.
- 6) Ruling accomplished through:
  - a) Yielding to the Lordship of Jesus.
  - b) Holding the testimony of Jesus.
  - c) Doing the supernatural works of Jesus.
  - d) Binding up Satan.
- 7) If Satan is not bound, we're not ruling
- 8) Millennial Reign: The reign of Christ through His Bride.
  - a) Will rule and reign until every enemy destroyed.
  - b) Last enemy is death.

## **Who Are the Two Witnesses?**

- 1) The union of Christ and His body.
- 2) Jesus cannot be yoked with just anybody.
  - a) Being equally yoked with Jesus ties into the marriage supper and the bride.
  - b) Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers.
- 3) Revelation 18:4. "Come out of her, my people."
  - a) Come out of Babylon.
  - b) You can't rule and reign in Christ's kingdom, do the works of Jesus, and prophesy in the power of God's Spirit as long as you are unequally yoked with religious Babylon.
  - c) Babylon represents dead religion; harlot religious systems; bondage; confusion; mammon.

## **The Inner Kingdom**

- 1) The most pertinent and relevant application of all biblical prophecy can be fulfilled in each individual.
- 2) Daniel's second three-and-a-half years, the Tribulation, and the Millennial reign are ongoing, individual realities.
  - a) Individual saints are the martyrs who are slain; some spiritually, some physically, some mentally.
  - b) Slain by the people in the false church who don't want anything to do with spirit-realm/physical-realm truths and realities or with God's supernatural ways.
- 3) Jesus said the kingdom is both within you and among you.
- 4) His kingdom comes within and among us.
- 5) The most holy is the temple.
  - a) The first temple was material.
  - b) The second temple was physical (the human body of Jesus).
  - c) The third temple of God is a spiritual temple.
- 6) "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city (us) to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."
  - a) This all takes place in each individual person.
  - b) That's where the fulfillment of prophecy is--in us.
- 7) Jesus confirms the covenant.
  - a) Jesus' death put an end to sacrifice.
  - b) God's ultimate plan was finished with the death, burial, and resurrection of JESUS.
  - c) That's why he said, "It is finished."
  - d) It was a plan to end sin, to end sacrifice, to make a way to God, for God to continually manifest Himself to His people, to complete the fulfillment of the first half of the seventieth week.
- 8) The second half of that week is our response to the work that Jesus did, as we execute the kingdom of God through our lives.
  - a) We do that by worshiping Him.
  - b) By doing the works of Jesus.
  - c) By seeking His righteousness.
- 9) As we do those things, the prophecy of the seventy weeks is fulfilled inside us.

## **Summary**

- 1) Will there be tribulation in the world?
  - a) Proclaiming God's Word through His bride will continuously bring judgment on all who refuse to repent and obey His Word.

- b) Satan will continue to do everything he can to keep us from doing the works of Jesus.
  - c) Those things cause the Great tribulation.
  - d) Nowhere does the Bible teach that it will last only seven years.
- 2) Will we reign and rule with Christ for a thousand years?
- a) Not just for a thousand years, but forever and ever.
  - b) “His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation.
  - c) Christ wants us to reign and rule with Him in that kingdom
- 3) When does it all start?
- a) It started long before Daniel's prophecy.
  - b) God's plan for it was laid before the foundation of the earth.
  - c) But it starts in us:
    - i) The moment we come out of Babylon.
    - ii) When we take God's seal upon us.
    - iii) When we eat the wedding supper of the Lamb.
    - iv) When we yield ourselves to the spirit of prophecy.
    - v) When we begin to manifest the supernatural works of Jesus.
- 4) The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
- a) Seeking his righteousness (scepter of righteousness is a scepter of His kingdom)
  - b) Doing the works of Jesus brings us peace.
  - c) Worshiping Jesus brings us joy.

## **LESSON ELEVEN**

### **“The New Heavens and the New Earth”**

The teaching concerning the end of the world is an effort by conspirators to cover up the spirit-realm/physical-realm truths and realities that have been revealed in the Apocalypse.

- 1) Drawn attention away from the most pertinent and relevant application of prophetic Scripture--God's ongoing, timeless judgment and restoration of individuals and Christ's true church.
- 2) Calls for a literal, physical, universal, and chronological interpretation of all so-called End Times biblical prophecies.
- 3) The teaching is that at the great white throne judgment, God will destroy this present material world and its atmosphere, then create a whole new material heaven and a new earth.

### **What the Bible Actually Says about God's Judgment and a New Creation**

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them...and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

“I'm making everything new”

“It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”

- 1) These spirit-realm/physical-realm truths and realities are at hand.
  - a) They symbolize God's ongoing judgment and restoration in individual believers.
  - b) They describe a continuous process of personal cleansing and the creation of new spirits and rejuvenated minds and bodies in overcoming believers.
  - c) The language describing this process is figurative, spiritual, individual, and on-going--not literal, physical, global, and chronological.
- 2) This does not deny God's right to conduct a final, ultimate judgment and destruction of the world.
  - a) God is sovereign and omnipotent.
  - b) He can do as He please.
- 3) However viewing this passage as a description of the kingdom of God at work within individuals and among God's people is the most pertinent and relevant application
- 4) The great white throne judgment and new creation prophecy are applied individually because the Revelation repeatedly addressed individuals within the churches.
- 5) God delivers the messages to the church and to the world through individuals who hold to the testimony of Jesus (do His works) and proclaim the Word of God.
- 6) This application does not make judgment any less awesome nor restoration any less glorious.
  - a) It makes judgment a far more pressing concern and restoration an exciting, present reality.
  - b) Spiritual reality is just as real as physical reality.
  - c) While the judgment and restoration themes are mostly spiritual in character, they have strong implications for the physical/material realm.

## **The Symbols of the Great White Throne Judgment**

- 1) The throne.
  - a) A throne symbolizes a seat of authority.
  - b) The Revelation no longer shows Christ as a suffering servant; rather, as the triumphant, sovereign Lord of the universe.
  - c) Fitting and proper that He should sit on a throne of authority and exercise judgment.
  - d) The throne in the final chapters of the Revelation is on the earth and is characterized by judgment and accountability.
- 2) The White Throne.
  - a) White is the primary biblical symbol of purity and righteousness.
  - b) Jesus' clothes became "as white as the light."
  - c) In the opening of the Revelation, Jesus' head and hair were "white like wool, as white as snow."
  - d) Jesus promises the overcomer a "white stone" with a new name written on it.
  - e) The faithful saints will "walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy."
  - f) Overcomers will be given "white raiment."
  - g) John saw the overcoming saints dressed in white robes, clothed with white linen, and riding on white horses.
- 3) Who is being judged?

- a) The “white” context suggests that the righteous are being judged.
  - b) Unbelievers are judged only on the basis of whether or not they have been washed in the blood of Christ.
  - c) Jesus chooses not to sit on this throne alone. “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”
    - i) When we were born again, we were given the right to sit on the throne with Him.
    - ii) The judge in the great white throne judgment is clearly Jesus, and He is judging the subjects of His kingdom.
- 4) Where does the white throne judgment occur?
- a) The throne is inside us.
  - b) Inside us and among the churches the King sits on His throne, judging and reigning over His kingdom.
  - c) The whole Revelation, including this judgment, is to be internalized.
  - d) That’s why John was instructed to eat the scroll.
  - e) Christ’s throne is established inside us through righteousness.
  - f) Although we have the authority to sit with Christ on the throne inside us, the choice is up to us.
    - i) We can either sit on the throne to reign and rule with Christ, or we can stand before that throne and be judged by Him.
    - ii) If we are sitting on the throne inside us, we are alive in Christ; if not, we are dead in Christ.
  - g) The great white throne judgment applies to believers who have the throne of Christ within them but are not sitting on it to reign and rule with Christ. They are the ones receiving the judgment.
- 5) What happens at this judgment?
- a) The whole purpose of the judgment is to clear away the old heaven and earth to make way for a new heaven and earth--to establish within individual believers the full authority and power of the kingdom of God.
  - b) This is the ongoing process by which Christ is “making everything new.
  - c) By it, He transforms us into a new creation in which the unveiled Jesus can reign fully.
  - d) If our old earth and sky flee from the Lord’s presence, and if we allow no room for them in our lives, God’s judging and refining process destroys all our sinfulness and reliance on the flesh.
  - e) If our old earth and old sky refuse to flee from God’s presence, we continue to live under judgment and are considered dead to God.
  - f) The messages (seals, trumpets, and vials) bring the judgment to the individual.
  - g) This does not mean we won’t face a final judgment.
    - i) “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.
    - ii) The great white throne judgment provides us an opportunity to face up to that while we can still do something about it.
    - iii) If we be judged now, we will not be judged later.
- 6) What are the new heavens and new earth?

- a) These material-realm symbols of heaven and earth are also parabolic, not literal.
  - b) They are individual and internal, not cosmic and global.
  - c) He who overcomes will inherit all this (new heaven and earth; New Jerusalem).
  - d) The first heaven represents the born again believer's old natural spirit, which was dead to and at enmity with God.
  - e) The new heaven represents the new spirit God gives a person at salvation.
  - f) Our old earth consists of our unregenerated physical bodies, minds, and emotions; our flesh.
  - g) Our new earth is an ongoing process by which God, with our consent and cooperation, breaks the power of our bodies, minds, and emotions.
    - i) Our lives are no longer dominated by them, but controlled by the power of God through our renewed spirits.
  - h) Isaiah: "I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered."
  - i) "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth!
    - i) Physical heavens don't hear, and the earth doesn't listen.
    - ii) He's talking to people.
  - j) Positionally, we are made new at conversion, but it is still being worked out in us through the ongoing great white throne judgment of our flesh and the creation of a new earth within us.
- 7) The day of the Lord is ongoing.
- a) Jesus comes to individuals, each in their own turn, and His comings always bring judgment on those who are not reigning and ruling with Him.
  - b) II Peter.
- 8) Death is a process of physical change for believers who cannot, or will not, change themselves into new earth.
- a) Many won't let the flesh, the old earth, pass away while they're still walking on this physical planet.
  - b) They've got to go through death to get rid of their old earth.
  - c) You can become a new earth by faith.
  - d) The judgment and destruction of the old heaven and earth, to make way for the new, is a timeless process that occurs continuously as Jesus comes to us, not a cataclysmic end to the physical/material world.

### **The Criterion against which Believers Are Judged**

- 1) In the great white throne judgment, the dead are judged by what they have done.
- 2) The books which are to be opened.
  - a) We are the first book.
  - b) The book of life is Jesus.
    - i) The book of life contains all the names of believers who are spiritually alive in Christ.
    - ii) Life is a relationship with God.
    - iii) Only sin and unbelief will get our name blotted out of that book, because sin and

unbelief make us dead to Christ.

- c) The dead in Christ are those believers who are not reigning and ruling with Christ, and they are judged by the fruits they bring forth in relation to the messages that have been given.
- d) The criterion used in the great white throne judgment is the gospel of the kingdom which is written on their hearts.
- e) We are being judged by our response to the kingdom of God.

## **What's It Like to Live in the New Heaven and New Earth?**

- 1) The goal of the great white throne judgment is to wipe away the old to make way for the new, to destroy reliance on the flesh so that we can be full alive in both the spirit and physical realms.
- 2) Once our old nature and our flesh have either fled from the presence of God or been burned up by the judgment, we can inherit the kingdom of God--a new heaven and new earth.
- 3) John saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.
  - a) You don't have to die or be raptured to go up to the New Jerusalem.
  - b) It comes to you.
- 4) "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.'
  - a) Overcomers are called to be God's tabernacle, His dwelling place, lively stones in His temple.
  - b) The kingdom of God is now within and among the overcomers.
- 5) When Christ comes into us, our spirit is renewed, but we still have an old mind and body.
  - a) They become new when we are in Christ.
  - b) The key is "being in Christ."
  - c) Christ being in you brings your flesh before the throne of judgment; but you being in Christ means complete restoration.
  - d) "Making all things new" means not only newness of spirit, but newness of mind and body.
  - e) The physical aspect of the first resurrection is making all things new.
- 6) Jesus said he was the "alpha and the omega."
  - a) Jesus finished his work on the cross universally.
  - b) Done within individuals when we come "into Christ."
  - c) It is the difference between the announcement of a universal, timeless fact and individuals coming into the reality of that fact.

## **How Christians Experience God's Judgment and become New Heavens and New Earth**

- 1) We can reign and rule with Jesus only as our old earth and our sky flee from His presence.



- a) Many Christians are not seated on the throne with Him.
  - b) They are standing in front of it.
  - c) They are not reigning and ruling with Jesus.
  - d) They are under judgment from this throne.
- 2) Three suggestions which can help you receive the glorious spirit-realm/physical-realm realities of the destruction and restoration vision.
- a) Quit putting this out into the future.
    - i) It is time for a renewed sense of judgment and fear of the Lord in the body of Christ.
    - ii) Many are being judged right now.
    - iii) Christians who are leading troubled, defeated lives are standing in front of the great white throne of judgment.
    - iv) The throne either purifies or destroys you.
    - v) When it purifies, it makes new heaven and new earth.
    - vi) It time to abandon our preoccupation with the end of the world; the end of the world is God's business.
      - (1) Our business is hearing, heeding, and acting upon what is at hand.
      - (2) Our task is to overcome here and now; to inherit all that God has provided for us.
      - (3) It is God's goal to destroy all the sin and self-reliance of our flesh so that He can share intimate, personal relationships with purified, reigning, and ruling saints.
  - b) Let God make all things new in you.
    - i) What's wrong with this world is not the physical earth or its atmosphere.
    - ii) It's not the material planet that needs to be wiped out and replaced with a new one.
    - iii) The problem with this earth is the people who live on it.
    - iv) They need to be made new.
    - v) Our biggest problem is our own flesh. That's where the victory needs to be won.
    - vi) This flesh comes under the judgment of the great white throne.
    - vii) If we are standing before the great white throne ourselves, our own flesh is not under the control of our spirit; we are under judgment.
    - viii) Since the body is controlled by the mind, this transformation process starts with changing our mental focus from the flesh realm to the spirit realm.
  - c) Come alive!
    - i) God wants us to come alive as new heavens and earth.
      - (1) The new earth symbolizes your flesh that is redeemed, crucified, and transfigured with Christ. You walk in newness of life.
      - (2) The new heaven contains God's new throne inside you.
        - (a) It's a spiritual dimension, and it includes your spirit.
        - (b) It's a throne which can direct all your actions.
        - (c) It can create total liberty, love, and forgiveness.
        - (d) Heaven is a spirit realm, and it's inside us.

## What Does All This Mean?

- 1) The key is “he who overcomes.”
- 2) If we want to be new heavens and new earth and reign and rule with Hi, we have to overcome.
- 3) When someone rejects the message, there’s judgment.
- 4) People reject this truth because *having* is more difficult than *hoping*.
  - a) Christ in you is the hope of glory.
  - b) You in Christ is the glory.
- 5) If you are not reigning and ruling, God sees you as dead in Christ.

## **LESSON TWELVE**

### **“The New Jerusalem”**

The City of God is the grand finale of the Revelation. It is also the natural extension of the obvious fact that there is a New Jerusalem in the new heaven and earth.

#### **What the Conspirators say:**

- 1) They want us to believe that God's most exciting promises are all out in the future somewhere.
- 2) They tell us that these are all literal, physical, and material objects. They want us to believe that God's highest ideal for man is a physical, material paradise--a space city

#### **Why Such Deceptions?**

- 1) Human beings don't feel nearly the sense of urgency about future hopes and fantasies that they feel about the pressing concerns of their day-to-day lives.
- 2) Satan knows that once we grasp and tap into the full reality of what God has promised, he can never again use the weaknesses of our flesh to intimidate us and keep us from reaching our full potential in Christ in the here and now.
- 3) He knows that once people enter the present reality of the Holy City, he loses all control over them; and that they pose a major threat to his strongholds in the world.

#### **The Scriptures Proclaim that the New Jerusalem is a Present Spirit-Realm/Physical-Realm Reality**

- 1) In the gospels, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as a present, ongoing, spirit-realm reality that impacts powerfully on the physical and material realm.
- 2) In Rev. 21 and 22, He presents His bride as a Holy City, the New Jerusalem, which is made up of overcomers; people who are being refined through great tribulation, people who are standing firm against the beast system and holding to His testimony by doing His works, and people who continuously clothe themselves in the robes of righteousness.
- 3) The Jews of Jesus' day were so busy looking for a political messiah to come and liberate physical Israel that they crucified the real Messiah when He appeared.
- 4) Likewise, the religious Babylon of our day is so busy looking for an earthly Jesus to come back and set up a material kingdom on this earth that they are crucifying the unveiled, spirit-realm Jesus who lives in and among us now.

#### **What Is the New Jerusalem?**

- 1) A literal, physical city with golden streets and jeweled walls are man's ideas, not God's.
- 2) In the Revelation, the language is parabolic and figurative, not literal and physical.
  - a) It uses physical symbols we understand to convey spiritual/physical truths and realities that we don't understand.
  - b) John the revelator saw the Holy City as the bride of Christ.
- 3) Who is this bride?
  - a) She is the bride who has made herself ready for the wedding supper of the Lamb and is dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean, who lifts her veil in order to eat the marriage supper and become one with the Bridegroom.
  - b) She is built on twelve foundations (the teachings of the apostles), she has intimate relations with the Lamb, and nothing impure is ever to enter into her.
  - c) The Lord God and the Lamb are a part of the city.
    - i) They are its temple, its light source, its throne, and its river of living water.
    - ii) It is the City of God, and it is also a city of people.
    - iii) This kind of perfect union comes only from lifting the veil to behold the unveiled Christ and dining at His wedding supper in our spirits.
- 4) The Perfect City for Perfected People.
  - a) The Holy City describes a state of perfection, or completion, in Christ.
    - i) It symbolizes spiritual/physical truths and realities and describes what is ideal, perfect, or complete in each overcomer's life.
    - ii) It is here, and it is now.
  - b) God gave each of us a single purpose in life, and that's to reach our maximum potential--to be everything God created us to be in Him.
  - c) That's what the Holy City represents.
- 5) This Holy City exists now, and it has never been empty. Its residents include heavenly hosts, spirits of righteous men made perfect, and blood-washed saints who are living in it today.
  - a) This city is what Abraham was looking for; a city not made by hands but built on faith in God.
  - b) It is what Hebrews called a new covenant.

## **What Is It Like to Live in the Holy City?**

- 1) John's parabolic description of the Holy City is not describing a physical city of the future but a spiritual city of the present.
  - a) John used elegant, material-realm symbols to describe beautiful, spirit-realm/physical-realm truths and realities just as Jesus used grains of wheat, lost coins, and a pearl of great value to describe the realities of the kingdom.
  - b) We need to stop putting all this out into the future and awaken to the glorious, present realities these symbols contain.
- 2) What Is the Shape of the City?
  - a) There is a parallel between the cube of the Tabernacle and the cube of the Holy City.
  - b) A cube describes completion, perfection, and fullness.

- i) Overcomers can be perfected, filled, and completed in the kingdom of God.
  - ii) The shape of the city symbolizes the perfection and completion of overcomers in Christ and the fullness of God that dwells within them.
- 3) What is its size?
- a) Fourteen hundred miles cube.
  - b) It's a spiritual city, and it's big enough for all the overcomers who have ever lived, are alive now, and ever will live.
  - c) The symbolism of the numbers:
    - i) Three represents the fullness of God (the Trinity).
    - ii) Four describes the totality of a work in the world.
    - iii) Twelve stands for sonship in Christ.
    - iv) Put them together, and you arrive at a symbol for God working out His total purpose in a human being ( $3 \times 4 = 12$ ) and in the world.
    - v) Numbers in Revelation do not deal with arithmetic; they deal with spiritual truths and realities.
    - vi) A cube has 12 edges: 12 edges x 12,000 stadia (1400 mi.) For each side = 144,000, the number of saints sealed.
    - vii) The 144,000 is a symbol of the multitudes of overcomers and of the new Israel, a spiritual Israel.
- 4) What are its gates?
- a) You don't go up to this city; it comes down to you.
  - b) You can only enter through its gates.
    - i) Gates are mentioned throughout the Bible and have much spiritual meaning.
    - ii) There are twelve gates to the New Jerusalem, and each gate was named after one of the tribes of Israel.
    - iii) The gates are spiritual entrances and exits; we go in and out of the city through them.
    - iv) The name Judah means praise, so praise is one of the gates.
    - v) Not everyone enters the city through the same gate, and we don't enter through the same gate each time.
  - c) Obstacles block the gates.
    - i) Self-centeredness blocks the gates through pride, fear, ignorance, and sin.
    - ii) Religious people often stand by the gates and keep people from entering.
      - (1) "Woe to you teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites, you shut the kingdom of Heaven in men's faces."
      - (2) You shut the gates by either denying that they exist or attacking those who try to enter.
      - (3) "You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to enter.
      - (4) "Wisdom takes her stand "beside the gates leading into the city."
- 5) What are the gates of pearl?
- a) The mouth, with its pearly calcium teeth, opens up the gates to the kingdom.
  - b) We enter it ourselves through our mouths.
  - c) "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.
  - d) We inherit the right to enter the kingdom, and we stay in it by overcoming the evil one.

- e) We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony.
- f) We reproduce the kingdom in other people by speaking the message of the kingdom.
- g) “The house of God is the gate of Heaven.”
  - i) We are the house of God.
  - ii) Thus, our mouths are the gates through which people come into the city.
  - iii) Our very own mouths; our teeth through which the message passes--are symbolized by the pearly gates.
- h) “Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.”
  - i) We are the pearl of great value, and Jesus is the merchant.
  - ii) He bought us with His blood.
  - iii) Now, we are all of one pearl (gate)--Jesus.
  - iv) We all enter the city through Him.
- 6) What are the foundations of the city?
  - a) The city sits on top of twelve foundations--the teachings of the twelve apostles.
  - b) This symbolizes the full Word of God.
- 7) What are the walls of the city?
  - a) The walls are the people--the lively stones--of the city.
  - b) The walls are made up of twelve kinds of precious stones--us.
  - c) Walls provide protection.
    - i) We build these walls in our minds by learning and renewing the Word of God in our memories and by drawing on the supernatural power of God.
    - ii) “Like a city whose walls are broken down, is a man who lacks self-control.”
- 8) What is the street?
  - a) *Street* is singular, not plural.
  - b) This street is the highway to holiness; the unrestricted opportunity and ability to communicate with God--that runs through each of us.
  - c) We have direct access to the King of the city.
  - d) The street of gold signifies the divine nature of holiness.
    - i) Nothing unclean can travel on this street.
    - ii) It is transparent because it is spiritual reality, and you can only walk on it by entering the spirit dimension.
- 9) What is the river of life?
  - a) The river is the Spirit of God.
  - b) It is eternal life.
  - c) This river runs inside us.
    - i) “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”
    - ii) This river flows on forever, and its fountain never dries up.
- 10) What is the tree of life?
  - a) Jesus Christ.
  - b) He is in the midst of the city, and when we eat of the tree of life (just as when we eat of the Lamb), we eat of Christ in the spirit realm.

- 11) What will we be doing in the Holy City?
- a) Ruling and reigning over our own lives and in the sphere of the world we are occupying for the King.
    - i) We are to rule and reign over everything in the spirit realm and the material realm-- the whole creation.
    - ii) It's time for Christians to quit resting and retreating and start reigning and ruling.
  - b) The Great Commission has been magnified by the unveiling of Jesus Christ in His Alpha and Omega form.
    - i) End Times doctrines leads too many to take a short-term view of their tasks in this present world.
    - ii) Why bother with trying to make disciples of all nations when they're all going to be burned up some day anyway?
    - iii) How can you view the world with a long-term perspective or invest in future generations when you think you are part of the terminal generation.
  - c) Jesus is the King, but He has place us in charge of His kingdom and has given us specific instructions on how we are to reign and rule over it.
  - d) Jesus has given us His all-inclusive authority to carry on the work of His kingdom.
    - i) He has given us the keys to His kingdom so that we can bind and lose anything or any force that hinders our reigning and ruling over.
    - ii) He has made everything in heaven and earth available to us.
- 12) How to carry out the Great Commission.
- a) We have to press our way into and become the Holy City.
    - i) John entered through the spirit.
    - ii) We do not have to be taken away literally into outer space to enter this city.
  - b) We have to measure up to God's standards.
    - i) "The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.
    - ii) First, we have to see ourselves as in Christ, then we have to see if we measure up.
    - iii) The angels were measuring overcomers; the Gentiles were outside and could not be measured.
    - iv) To measure is to ascertain size or stature by a fixed standard.
    - v) We must measure up in our fullness in Christ, our spiritual maturity, our faith, our obedience to God's Word, and the degree to which we have the Holy Spirit within us.
  - c) We are to do the works of Jesus.
    - i) Doing the works of Jesus means exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, meekness, and so forth.
    - ii) The works of Jesus also include all the natural and miraculous works He did in His earthly ministry.
    - iii) The Bible is a supernatural book.
  - d) We are to do the greater works.
    - i) We are first to do all the things He did, then to do all the things He didn't do but that we are instructed in Scripture to do.
    - ii) For example, He didn't make disciples of all nations, but we are to.

- iii) He didn't take back all the territory Satan has seized, but He instructs us to do it.
- iv) He didn't reign and rule over governments, peoples, and nations, but He says we are to do it.
- v) We are to take all-inclusive dominion over all the spiritual and material world.
- vi) Ruling and reigning starts with us as individuals.
  - (1) We have to be able to reign and rule over our own lives before we can reign and rule in the world.
  - (2) That means having our flesh and our minds under the control of the spirit, reaching our full potential in Christ, and being the best we can be.
  - (3) Next, we're to reign and rule in our families.
- vii) The beginning point of the greater works is doing the works of Jesus in the spirit of love.
- viii) The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.
  - (1) The sickness or deception of the nations that needs to be healed is the delusion that the nations can come together and solve all the world's problems--without God.
  - (2) Sometimes involves pouring in the balm of oil; other times, radical surgery.
- e) We are to defeat the enemies of God and to expand His kingdom.
  - i) The battle for control of this world starts in the spirit realm, where evil powers run rampant.
  - ii) Our struggle is not with flesh and blood.
  - iii) How can we expect to conquer and rule the world for Christ when we don't even acknowledge or know how to deal with the powers and beings that control it now?

## Conclusion

- 1) The idea of the Holy City is a present reality; it is inside us and among us.
- 2) It is the message that we are to rule and reign.
- 3) All this is the final outworking of God's new covenant with man.
- 4) We are to enter into and become the New Jerusalem now, and we are to bring the nations into it.
- 5) Shouldn't wait for Jesus to come and straighten everything out. He is already back and He wants us to reign and rule in this present world.
- 6) The prophecy of the Holy City is calling God's people out of mediocrity into fullness, completion, and perfection.
- 7) It is hard to believe that Jesus came all the way from heaven, suffered as He did, and finally hung on a cross and died--all for the sake of creating the mediocre, anemic brand of Christianity that calls itself the church today. The New Jerusalem is a parable of the dynamic and glorious kingdom Jesus died to establish.
- 8) The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ has unveiled Him in His Alpha and Omega form.
  - a) He stands atop the holy mountain and says, "Come unto me!"
  - b) His comings are at hand.