BEHOLD, I AM COMING SOON

(Overview of Revelation)

Revelation 1:1-22:21

Key Verse: 22:7

“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of this prophecy in this book.”

Thank God for richly blessing our study of Revelation for the last one year. Also, thank God that we have time to overview this book of Revelation. We have learned so many things in this study. I want to overview this book into three parts Jesus Christ and his church (chap. 1-5), the tribulation (chap. 6-18), and Christ’s return, his kingdom and the New Jerusalem (chap 19-22). Let’s try to have the whole picture and flow of Revelation.

**First, Jesus Christ and his church (1-5).** Revelation beings with these words in verse 1, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.” First of all, this book is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is from him. He is the author of it, commissioning John to write it. It is written in 22:16, “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.” And the revelation of Jesus Christ indicates that this revelation is regarding him Christ Jesus, as the gospel is regarding God’s Son Jesus Christ (Ro. 1:3). Certainly, it is originated from God. The recipients of this epistle are seven churches in the province of Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (1:4, 11)

The first message of Revelation is, “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him” (1:7). Then in chapter 1 John saw the vision of the risen glorified Jesus and described him, “among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” (1:13-16). At this vision of the glorified Jesus John fell at his feet as though dead. Christ Jesus placed his hand on John and said, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades” (1:17-18).

Then in chapters 2 and 3 we see Christ’s relation to the seven churches which represent all the churches of Christ Jesus. He knew each church and gave her his life-giving words, commendation and reprimand. Ephesus was a hardworking and persevering church with sound doctrine, but was lacking the love relationship with Christ. He said to them, “You have forsaken your first love”, in the hope of restoring their loving relationship with Christ. Smyrna was a suffering church. Christ said to them, “I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich.” Christ Jesus was very pleased with this church and encouraged them with these words, “Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” Pergamum survived even in the city where Satan had his throne. They remained truth to the name of Jesus, though Caesar worship was dominant, and did not renounce their faith in him. In the church there was a faithful servant of God, Antipas, who was put to death in the city because of his faith in Christ Jesus. However, they began to compromise the truth of the sound doctrine with human teaching, Jesus urged them to repent saying, “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” Thyatira was recognized in their love and faith and their service and perseverance. But it was likely that many of them lost holiness in their living influenced by the world of money and flesh. Jesus let them know that he is one who searches hearts and minds. He encouraged the rest with these words, “Only hold on to what you have until I come.”

Sardis had a reputation but spiritually was dead. There was nothing to be commended in the church. Christ gave them “wake-up” call, saying, “If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief...” Yet, Jesus recognized a few people in that church who had not soiled their clothes, keeping their personal relationship with the Lord. Philadelphia was an exemplary church. They were not powerful or strong in human standard. Yet, despite their human weakness and little strength they kept Jesus’ word. They did not deny his name among the powerful and influential people of the world. Jesus promised them, saying, “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.” Laodicea was an apostate church with lukewarm attitude, neither hot nor cold. They were materially rich even with the delusion of spiritual richness. Jesus rebuked them strongly, “You are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” He was put outside of the church, still waiting for anyone to open his heart for him to enter. With a great hope, he promised, “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.”

In this world the churches matter to Christ. So the risen glorified Jesus minister to them, holding to his servants in his right hand and walking among the churches. In chapters 1-3, the word “church” or “churches” is written 18 times.

In chapter 4, John was taken to heaven in the Spirit and described the heavenly things, what was happening in heaven. He saw a throne with someone sitting on it. The one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, meaning sitting in his shining glory and in his holiness and righteousness being ready to finally judge the world of sin. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. This beautiful encircling with emerald-like rainbow implies that God’s promise of mercy to save repentant sinners covered God’s holy and righteous anger. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. This is somewhat surprising to us that twenty-four elders are there in heaven seated on the thrones. They represent the church dressed in white and having crowns of gold on their heads as overcomers according to Jesus’ promise (3:5; 3:21). In heaven the four living creatures, mostly likely cherubim, and twenty-four elders worship God day and night praising God.

The living creatures said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”, giving glory, honour and thanks to him.” Then the twenty-four elders responded, saying, “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for your created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

In chapter 5 a Lamb was there looking as if it had been slain in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb was the one who had triumphed as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, so had the right to execute God’s judgment upon the earth and claim the deed title for the earth, which he had already obtained through his death on the cross. That was the meaning of taking the scroll which was in the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne and opening its seals. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. In heaven the Lamb was praised and worshiped.

The twenty-four elders sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men (us in KJV) for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them (us) to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they (we) will reign on the earth.” Then many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands said, “Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!” Then the whole creation joined, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glry and power, for ever and ever!” At this the four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.

In this part we clearly see the beautiful relationship between Christ Jesus the Lamb and the church victorious and glorified because of the sacrifice of the Lamb. They are there in heaven before the tribulation began. This scene of heaven really inspires and encourages us to be overcomers of faith while living in this world.

Jesus once said in Luke 18:8, “When the Son of Man come, will he find faith on the earth?” In Matthew 25:1-13, Jesus said of the parable of the ten virgins, after telling of his disciples about the signs of the end of the age. In the parable ten virgins were waiting for the bridegroom. As the bridegroom was a long time in coming, only five wise virgins who prepared enough oil for their lamps could welcome the bridegroom and go in with him, whereas five foolish virgins with no readiness went to buy oil and so could see the bridegroom as the door was shut. Here oil can stand for faith. Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 concerning the coming of the Lord that believers would be caught to up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. It will be good that we may be aware of this and be prepared in faith for this wonderful blessing, having the vision of the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones in heaven.

**Second, the tribulation (6-18).** In this part we see seven seal, seven trumpet and seven bowl judgments and the effects of these judgments. The open of the seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments and the sound of the seventh trumpet, the seven bowl judgments. In chapter 6 the Lamb opened six seals. At the opening of the first seal there was a white horse and its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown and he rode out as a conquer bent on conquest. This was the indication of the conquest of the world by false peace. At this point it seems that the conqueror is a worldwide system for peace with the Antichrist behind the system. At the opening of the second seal another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword. This was the sign of war. At the opening of the third seal, there was a black horse. Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. There was what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!” This shows a worldwide famine. At the opening of the fourth seal there was a pale horse. Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. At this point we are reminded of Jesus’ words in Matthew 24:7-8, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains” (cf. Mk. 13:8).

At the opening of the fifth seal the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” They were appealing to the God of vengeance. Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed. At the opening of the sixth seal there was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. At this judgment by the opening of the sixth seal the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

At this point we can think of the period of tribulation. As we studied, it is the duration of seven years. This is according to Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy “sevens”, that is, the seventy of seven years. Daniel 7:25 says, “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.’” Seven ‘seven’ refers to 49 years from the decree of Artaxerxes’ decree to rebuild Jerusalem (c. 445 B.C.; Neh. 2:1-8) to probably closing Nehemiah’s career in rebuilding of the ‘street and well,’ as well as the end of the ministry of Malachi and the close of OT. Sixty-two ‘sevens’ refers to 434 years more year for total 483 years to the First Advent of Messiah, his triumphal entry to Jerusalem to die on the cross. (A.D. 30; Mt. 21:1-9). And then verse 7:26 says, “After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing.” Being cut off is a common reference to death. The remaining one “sevens”, seven years, refers to the tribulation at the time of the end. Jesus also talked about the time of distress/tribulation unequalled in human history (Mt. 24:21; Mk. 13:19), and so the time should be definite and specific, not an indefinite time.

The second half of the tribulation is called the great tribulation and during this time the persecution for believers become intense, since the Antichrist makes his appearance unambiguous, setting up an abomination that causes desolation at the middle of the seven years (Da. 9:27). Jesus said in Matthew 24:15, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—”We see that the souls slain because of their faith in Jesus crying out indicates that the time got into the second half. And Jesus also said in Matthew 24:29, “Immediately after the distress of those days, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken,” right before his coming (cf. Mk. 13: 24-25; Lk. 21:25). We also see this in the sixth seal opening. Later on, the seven trumpet judgments will be poured out rapidly, and the seven bowl judgments more rapidly like gun fire.

Chapter 7 is an interlude between the opening of the sixth seal and the seventh seal. In that chapter there are 144,000 servants of God from the twelve tribes of Israel. After that John saw a great multitude that no one cold count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. This great multitude are those who came out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. The Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. This is an amazing effect of tribulation.

In chapter 8, at the opening of the seventh seal, the seven angels who stand before God were given seven trumpets. the four trumpet judgments were carried out in chapter 8 and two more in chapter 9. At the first trumpet sound, a third of the trees were burned up. Surely the ecology was greatly damaged. At the sound of the second trumpet, a third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died. At the sound of the third trumpet a third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the bitter waters. At the fourth trumpet sound a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. In these four trumpet judgments the word “a third” is written 13 times in six verses. This judgment is not a random occurrence, but an accurate occurrence of the complete plan of the sovereign God.

In chapter 9 at the sound of the sixth trumpet demonic horde of locust came out of the Abyss and tormented people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. The torment of the locust was so torturing that the people would long to die, but death would elude them. When the sixth angel sounded his trumpet, the angel was told, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. Then John wrote, “The number of the mounted troops was 200 million. I heard the number.” 200 million demons were released to infest the earth, killing a third of the mankind by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur. At this point half of the people of the world died. That was a terrible woe.

However, the more surprising is that the survivors, although they were surely survived by God’s mercy, did not repent of their idol worship and their wrong doings, their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts (9:20-21). It well shows the sinful nature of human beings that rejects God irrationally and foolishly.

Chapter 10 is an interlude before the seventh trumpet sound after the sixth trumpet. In this chapter a mighty angel planting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land swore by the Creator and said, “There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (10:6-7). John was told to take a little scroll which lay open from the mighty angel and eat it. It tasted as sweet as honey in his mouth, but when he had eaten it, his stomach turned sour. Then he was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings” (10:11). When we think of John, telling of the prophecy seems to be a sweet thing at first seeing a great multitude coming out of a great multitude. However, as he got into the prophecy more and more, it seemed to be too much, people being tormented by demonic horde of locusts and half of mankind being killed by fire, smoke and sulfur. Probably John hesitated to prophesying wondering, “How much more terrible things should happen?” At this God encouraged John though the mighty Angel saying, “No more delay. The mystery of God will be accomplished as he said.” God wanted him to learn God’s broken heart as John was told, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.”

In chapter 11 a temple was measured, and the Gentiles would trample the holy city for 42 months. During this time God sent two powerful witnesses. The inhabitants of the earth would be tormented by their testimony and so rejoice when they were killed but stuck in terror when they came back to life and went up to heaven.” At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to God of heaven. This could be the implication of the Israelites returning to God vividly, as Apostle Paul said in Romans 11:25-26, “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved…”

Then at the very moment of the sound of the seventh trumpet, there were loud voices in heaven, which said, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (11:15). The tense is a prefect present one for the future events of Christ’s kingdom being established in this world, for the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowl judgments. At this, twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who revered your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth” (11:17-18).

Then chapters 12-14 are interlude before the seven bowl judgments are poured out. Chapters 12 and 13 are looking back for what had been done until that point from Satan’s aspect, even going back to the time of Satan’s fall. 12:1 says, “A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.” This is the picture of the future Israel glorified which was initially shown in the dream of Joseph in Genesis. And 12:3 says, “Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.” The enormous red dragon is specified in verse 9 as “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan.” When Satan fell, a third of angels fell along with him and they were flung to the earth. Satan appeared in the Garden of Eden and tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God and man’s fall took place. At that very moment God revealed his plan to send a Saviour through the offspring of a woman, who would defeat Satan. Later on it was revealed more that the Saviour, the Messiah, would come through God’s chosen nation Israel, which God would establish through one man Abraham. Since then Satan made a great effort to thwart this plan of God by destroying the nation Israel. However, God preserved this nation at each crisis in the history of Israel. In Revelation 12, the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. Certainly God’s absolute protection was there. 12:5 says, “She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And the child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” This one verse covers the Messiah, Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, and ascension. And then 12:6 says, “The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.” This refers to the event in the second half of the tribulation time, three and half years.

And it is written that there was war in heaven, between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angel. Satan and his angels were defeated and lost their places in heaven. 12:9 says, “The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” What a description it is “who leads the whole world astray”! In other translations, “who deceives the whole world” or “the deceiver of the whole world.” We see more and more that this is true. Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11, “and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.” We should really watch out for the worldwide delusion and deception. Anyway, here Satan and his angels hurled to the earth.

At this moment John heard a voice in heaven says, “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 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. Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (12:10-12).

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman but God protected her absolutely and took care of in the desert for a time, times and half a time. Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

And John says continually in 13:1, “And I saw a beast coming out of the sea…” It is not uncommon to see people and nations as a turbulent, chaotic, agitated ocean. But it can be a better understanding that here the sea is representative of the abyss, the pit. 11:7 says, “…The beast that comes up from the Abyss…” to kill the two witnesses. We can equate the sea with the abyss. Abyss is the haunt of demons, the home of fallen angels, the place of incarceration. Apostle Paul said in Romans 10:7, “Who will descend into the deep/Abyss?” It is the quotation from Deuteronomy 30:13, “Who will cross the sea?” We see that Abyss and sea are used interchangeably. In the Old Testament the sea was often associated with satanic activity and great monsters (Job 26, Isaiah 27, Ezekiel 36).

The dragon had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. This beast is the Antichrist, described in the book of Daniel as one speaking against the Most High (7:25), a man of intrigue (8:23), king who does as he pleases (11:36), and in 2 Thessalonians as the man of lawlessness, the man doomed to destruction/the son of perdition (2:3) and as one who opposes God, proclaiming himself to be God (2:4). He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

Then John wrote in verse 11, “I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had town horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.” When we refer to 19:20 and 20:10, the beast and the false prophet are mentioned together. So this another beast is the false prophet, the final false prophet, since they have been many false prophets. The antichrist is primarily a political and military leader. The false prophet is a religious leader. And here we have political power/military power joined with religious/spiritual power, political power/military power dominating the external world; spiritual power dominating the internal world.

This beast is coming out of the earth. The point is that the beast is coming from below, from beneath. It indicates that the false prophet will be controlled and indwelt and empowered by some formidable, demonic spirit. And yet, the earth is not as mysterious, foreboding, unknown as the sea. The earth is not the dark and black place that the sea is. The Antichrist is mysterious and dark and black and frightening and foreboding. But this false prophet is a subtler, gentler, more domesticated individual. He’s not so overpowering and frightening. He’s not a terrorizing power like Antichrist, but rather he is winsome, and he is persuasive. He is the epitome of the wolf in sheep’s clothing as Jesus said in Matthew 7:15, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.”

Verse 1 continues, “He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.” That’s a strange voice for a lamb. He is Satan’s mouthpiece. That’s why he speaks like a dragon. When he opens his mouth, Satan’s words come out. This is his subtlety.

The false prophet leads the world into the final form of world religion which is the worship of the Antichrist at the very end. Verses 14 and 15 say, “Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that he could speak and cause all who refuses to worship the image to be killed.” Here is a fake resurrection. Those whose minds are unclear and crooked are deceived by it. And the worship of the image of the beast is forceful with no truth at all. The word “image” is written 3 times. We are living in an image generation. The image of a certain thing has a great effect on people. People want to see with their visible eyes, instead of hearing the words of the truth. The image of fake resurrection works powerfully.

And verses 16 and 17 say, “He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.” The author commented in verse 18, “This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.” We are living in a computerized digital world, and understand this better. We need God’s wisdom to have the insight how we should live in this digital age of our time.

Chapter 14 as an interlude looks forward to the future event. In verse 1there was a vision of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and 144,000 with him. 144,000 were fully devoted servants, following the Lamb wherever he goes. And an angel flying in midair preached the eternal gospel so that the whole people of the earth may see and hear the gospel. The angel said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.” Then a second angel followed and said, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.” Babylon the Great represent the kingdom of the world of one government under Satanic power. This was a warning of the destruction of Babylon the Great. Then a third angel followed and said, “If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.”

Then the earth was harvested, leading to the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine being gathered and thrown into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia (300 km). This is related to the coming Armageddon battle.

Then in chapter 15 John saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. The words “last plagues”, which are written again in 21:9, indicate that three series of judgements, seal, trumpet, and bowl, are done in sequence. And John saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victories over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. Holding harps, they sang the son of Moses and the song of the Lamb, signifying that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are one, the same God: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

In Chapter 16 seven bowl judgments are carried out. The first bowl was poured out on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The second bowl was poured out on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in sea died. The third, bowl was poured out on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

Amid the bowl judgments John wrote in verses 5-7, “Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: “‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’” It is important to know that the victorious saints recognized God’s ways are just and true in their song and now the angel in charge of the waters and the altar recognized God’s judgments are true and just.

The fourth bowl was poured out on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. The fifth bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. The sixth bowl was poured out on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up. The kings of the whole world gathered to the place called Armageddon incited by demons for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. The seventh bowl was poured out into the air. And out of the temple came a loud from the throne, saying, “It is done!” There was a sever earthquake, which has never occurred in human history; so tremendous was the quake. It caused a severe damage and at the same time a kind of restoration of the nature for Christ’s reigning on the earth. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plagues of hail, because the plague was so terrible. Cursing God is written three times at the seven bowl judgments, which signifies the end of judgment with the end of saving work.

Chapters 17 and 18 are an interlude before Christ’s returning for the battle at Armageddon. It is a detained description concerning the destruction of Babylon, religious side in chapter 17 and political or economic side in chapter 18. In chapter 17 a great prostitute was shown dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. This tile was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” It showed all the regions stemmed from her. She was riding a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. Supported by the beast she would influence the whole world with her adulteries as she was sitting on many waters, representing “peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.” In the end she would be brought to a complete ruin by the beast and its kings. The implication is that one world religion ends with the worship of the beast, the Antichrist.

In chapter 18 an angel with a might voice shouted, “Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons…For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.” Then there was another voice from heaven: “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins; so that you will not receive any of her plagues…”

Then at the destruction of Babylon the kings of the earth will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!” The merchants of the earth will stand far off and cry out: “Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!” Then the sea business men and distributors will stand far off and cry out: “Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!”

Six woes were addressed to the great city Babylon. Babylon the Great is in the end brought to ruin with the bankruptcy of commercial and material power. This is the tragic destiny of Babylonian Empire of the world under Satan’s power. Then verse 20 says, “Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged he for the way she treated you.” What a contrast between rejoicing of heaven and saints and woes of Babylon! We have enough reason to come out of Babylon and live by faith as saints of the Lord.

**Third, Christ’s kingdom and the New Jerusalem (19-22).** 19:1-10 is also an interlude before Christ’s returning. This is a heavenly vision after the destruction of Babylon. We hear heavenly Hallelujahs. John wrote in verses 1-3, “After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.’ And again they shouted: ‘Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” And in verse 4, “The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: ‘Amen, Hallelujah!’” Here is the last worship of the twenty-four elders with Hallelujah specified in Revelation. Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”

Now the sound of Hallelujah becomes bigger. John wrote in verses 6-8, “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: ‘Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.’ (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)”

In hallelujah of the reign of our Lord God Almighty the wedding of the Lamb has come: What a beautiful vision! The wedding is between the Lamb and his bride the church. God had this plan before the creation of the world. Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 1:4, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:19-20, “but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” What are two marvelous choices before the creation of the world for the wedding of the Lamb! We truly praise God for his amazing eternal plan!

John wrote in verse 9, “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: “Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!”’ And he added, ‘These are the true words of God.” As we studied, the invitees include the Old Testament saints. Later on we see that all the saints of all ages belong to the bride group.

In 19:11-21 Christ returns to the earth as KING OF KINDS AND LORD OF LORDS and defeat the Antichrist and his joined force. The beast was captured and with the prophet, and the two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

In 20:1-6 Satan is bound and thrown into the Abyss and incarcerated for a thousand years. Victorious saints reign with Christ on earth for a thousand years. 20:6 says, “Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priest of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” This is also in accordance with 5:10, “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” This is also the fulfillment of the Lord’s prayer, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Christ’s millennial kingdom, his reigning with love and righteousness, has been the dream of all the Old Testament saints and the groaning of all the redeemed and even that of the whole creation. This is the paradise restored on the earth.

After the thousand years Satan is released for a short time and destroyed completely along with those who in their sinful nature reject Christ even in his perfect ruling. Finally, Satan is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

There was a great white throne judgment. All the dead who had no part in the first resurrection came to life, great and small, were judged according to what each one had done as recorded in the books. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Chapters 21 and 22 are truly the indescribable beautiful ending of Revelation and the whole Bible. This finally section of the Bible begins with this description, 21:1-2, “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.” Here we see that the wedding of the Lamb was consummated, in the wife and husband relationship. The most beautiful imagery in human relationship describing the relationship between Christ and the church, that is, God and his people. The description continues, “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. 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.” John writes continually, “He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.”

Then the holy city Jerusalem is described: “It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.” The city was measured. It was cubic 12,000 stadia (2,200 km) long, wide and high. The city was further described: “The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone…The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a sing pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.” This is the description of the exterior of the holy City Jerusalem. The point is that this city is real and radiates God’s shing glory everywhere.

Now this is the interior design. There was no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. Those who are in the city have entered the eternal rest. Then in chapter 22 John wrote, “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” The city was full of life.

Then now the life in the eternal kingdom God is depicted very pointedly: “No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” Again it is stressed, “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.” Lastly, “And will reign for ever and ever.” What an amazing life it is in the eternal kingdom of God!

In the epilogue the Lord Jesus said in verse 7, “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book” And in verse 12, “Behold, I am coming soon! My rewards is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” And in verses 20, “Yes, I am coming soon.” This is the last word of Jesus in Revelation and in the Bible.

In light of his coming soon, Jesus wants his people to receive the blessedness of keeping the words of the prophecy in this book. For this blessedness we are to obey the words such as, “Be faithful to the point of death” (2:10), “Stay awake” (16:15) and “Come out of her, my people” (18:4). Also, keeping the words of the prophecy includes having the wonderful visions of the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones in heaven, the kingdom of the world having become the kingdom of Christ, the wedding of the Lamb and the new Jerusalem in our hearts.

We cannot forget the words in the epilogue, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” In the eager expectation of Christ’s coming may we live as the bride of the Lamb in the Spirit and participate in God’s invitation for eternally perishing souls to the wonderful life.

“Behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”