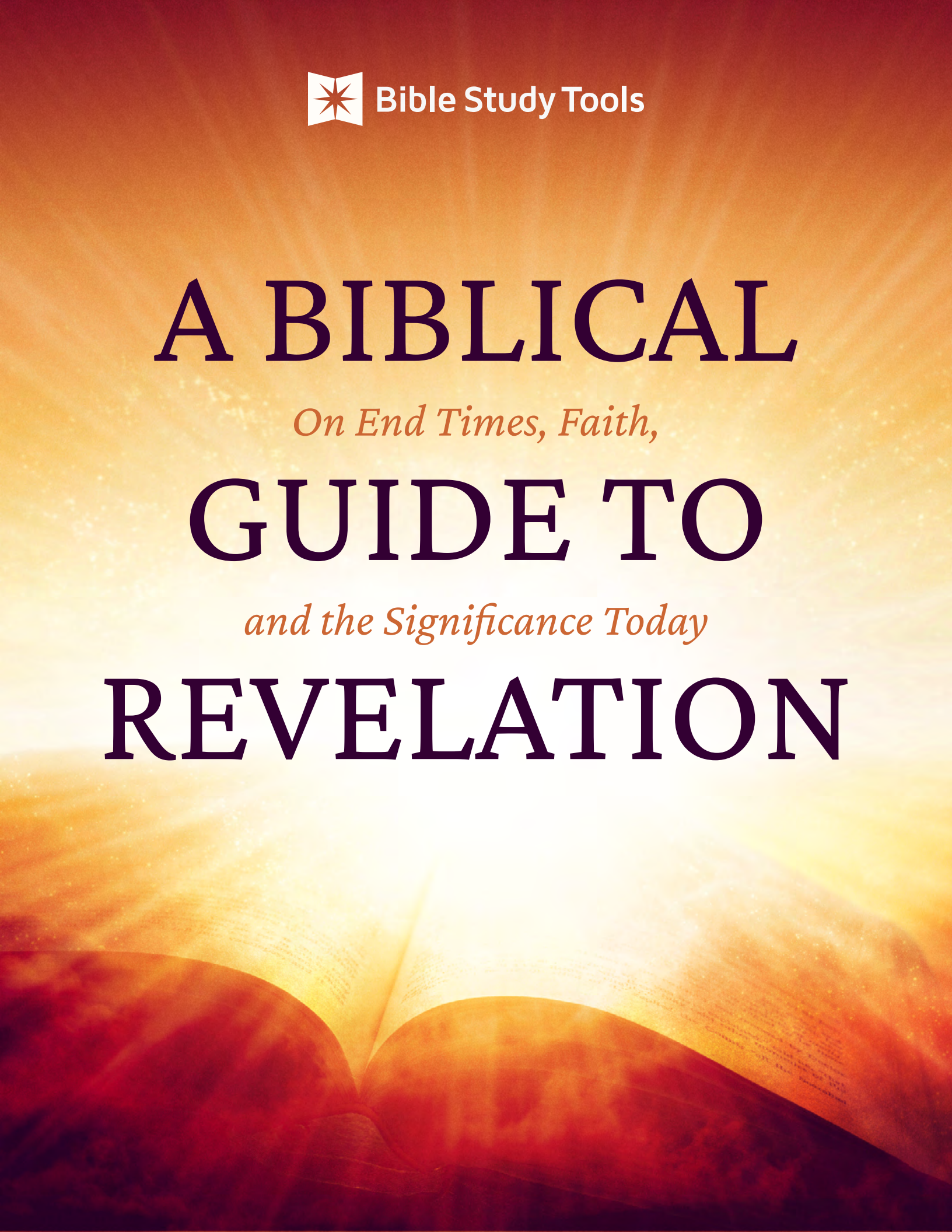
Bible Study Tools

A BIBLICAL GUIDE TO REVELATION

On End Times, Faith, and the Significance Today



Contents

Introduction: Unpacking the Book of Revelation 3

Chapter 1: Who Are the Seven Churches in Revelation? 4

Chapter 2: What Should We Know about the Rapture? 9

Chapter 3: Who Is the Beast and What Is His Mark? 12

Chapter 4: What Is the Tribulation? 14

Chapter 5: What Is the Millennial Reign? 16

Chapter 6: What Are the Different Views on the Millennium? 18

Chapter 7: What Is the Great White Throne Judgment? 20

Chapter 8: What Is the New Heaven and New Earth? 23

INTRODUCTION

Unpacking the Book of Revelation

Have you ever read the books of prophecy, in particular Revelation, and scratched your head?

Revelation can be daunting to unpack. It's full of symbolism, allegorical content, and many events that have not yet come to pass. The book seems to be shrouded in mysteries (such as what are the seven thunders) and theologians have argued for centuries over minutiae found within the book.

Although we cannot cover everything there is to know about Revelation, as it would take several thousands of books to do so, we can unpack some of the most important concepts Christians should know about the End Times.

In this guide, we'll explore some of the biggest hallmarks of the End Times and how to be prepared for them.

CHAPTER 1

Who Are the Seven Churches in Revelation?

At the beginning of Revelation, we see John addressing seven letters to seven churches. These were probably literal churches, but could also be a testament to patterns we see within our churches today as we approach the end times.

1. Ephesus: The Church that Has Abandoned Its Love for Christ and His Teachings (Revelation 2:1–7)

Summary and Explanation

Ephesus was the prominent commercial and cultural center of Asia. Christ's letter to the Ephesian church praises the congregation for its "deeds…hard work…and perseverance," and for its rejection of false apostles (Revelation 2:2–3).

Despite its hard work and doctrinal integrity, Christ faults the community for having "forsaken the love [they] had at first" (Revelation 2:4). This "forsaken love" can mean that the Ephesians had become less devoted to Christ or that the work they did was no longer motivated by love for one another. The letter to the Ephesian church does offer the community hope if they repent and rekindle their love for Christian living (Revelation 2:5–7).

Significance Today

The lesson in the letter to Ephesus teaches that truth and love must go hand-in-hand. A church that upholds doctrinal purity at the expense of showing love is just as flawed as a church that upholds congregational harmony at the expense of truthful teachings. Instead, Jesus reveals that a church fashioned in His image must teach God's Truth in love.

Notes

2. Smyrna: The Church that Remains Faithful Amidst Persecution (Revelation 2:8–11)

Notes

Summary and Explanation

Smyrna was home to a large Jewish community hostile to Christians. The Bible notes that slanderous accusations by Jews against Christians had led to Christian persecution by Roman authorities (Acts 14:2, 19; Acts 17:13).

Christ's revelation to Smyrna commends the community for its material poverty but spiritual wealth and acknowledges its wrongful persecution (Revelation 2:9). Christ does not reprimand this church but warns of impending imprisonment for some of its members, urging them to remain faithful "even to the point of death" and remember the promise of their "victor's crown" (Revelation 2:10).

Significance Today

Like the church in Smyrna, Christians are persecuted worldwide in obvious and insidious ways. This letter warns all Christians that although we may suffer greatly, the length of tribulation will be short compared to the promise of eternal life.

3. Pergamum: The Church that Compromises Its Beliefs (Revelation 2:12–17)

Summary and Explanation

The city of Pergamum was renowned for its pagan practices. The letter to the church there lauds the congregation for upholding its faith despite the city's pervasive pagan influences (Revelation 2:13). The letter then addresses the church's sin by denouncing some of its members for following false teachings that brought about religious and moral compromise (Revelation 2:14–15).

The Lord calls on the community to repent or risk the judgment that will emanate from the "sword of [His] mouth" (Revelation 2:16). Those who repent will be given the "hidden manna" that is the grain of Heaven (Psalm 78:24), and a "white stone" or clean slate with a new identity in Christ (Revelation 2:17).

Significance Today

Like the Christians in Pergamum, it's easy to normalize the non-Christian behavior of those around us and allow that behavior to dilute our values (1 Corinthians 15:33). But the Bible urges us to "not conform to the pattern of this world" but be transformed by the renewal of our mind in accordance with God's Word (Romans 12:2).

4. Thyatira: The Church that Follows False Prophets (Revelation 2:18–29)

Summary and Explanation

Thyatira was a wealthy commercial city. Jesus' letter to Thyatira praises the church for having grown in faith and service (Revelation 2:19). The church's downfall was its devotion to a false prophet that led some members to commit idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:20). Although the false prophet remained unrepentant, Jesus affirms that the congregation can still repent by turning away from the prophet's ways (Revelation 2:21–22).

The Lord reminds us in this revelation that He will repay each of us according to our deeds (Revelation 2:23). The payment for sin is death. Those who persevere in faith, however, will receive a share of Christ's messianic authority over all nations and triumph over death (Revelation 2:26–28).

Significance Today

Just as some in Thyatira's church were led astray by a false prophet, Christians today fall prey to cult leaders, occult practices, and other false teachings. To share in Christ's victory, we are to avoid these "so-called deep secrets" of Satan (Revelation 2:24) and hold firm to Christ's teachings.

5. Sardis: The Church that is Spiritually Dead (Revelation 3:1–6)

Summary and Explanation

Sardis was a city that had endured two surprise attacks despite its fortifications. Our Lord faults the church in Sardis for maintaining an outward appearance of being "alive," while actually being spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1). Alluding to the city's history of prior surprise

Notes

attacks, Jesus warns the congregation to "wake up" and repent, lest he "come like a thief" to bestow His judgment (Revelation 3:2–3).

Those in Sardis who heed Christ's warning will be "dressed in white," a symbol of purity and victory, and will be acknowledged in Heaven's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

Significance Today

Today, Christians can fall into the trap that ensnared the church in Sardis if we merely go through the motions of practicing our faith without really feeding our spirit. We can avoid becoming "the living dead" by engaging in our faith through Bible study, prayer, and fellowship.

6. Philadelphia: The Church that Patiently Endured Despite Weaknesses (Revelation 3:7–13)

Summary and Explanation

Philadelphia was home to a synagogue community hostile to Christians. Christ praises the Philadelphians for remaining faithful in the face of trials despite their limited strength (Revelation 3:8).

Jesus does not reproach this congregation but condemns its persecutors. (Revelation 3:9). Christ promises that if Philadelphia's congregants remain faithful to Him, He will protect them from the "hour of trial" and make them pillars in God's heavenly temple (Revelation 3:10–12).

Significance Today

The message to Philadelphia shows us the blessings that come when we maintain our faith despite life's tribulations. In fact, those who persevere despite weaknesses will stand strong as pillars in Heaven.

7. Laodicea: The Church with a Lukewarm Faith (Revelation 3:14–22)

Summary and Explanation

Laodicea was a prosperous industrial and commercial center. Jesus' letter to this church wastes no time denouncing the congregation for its lukewarm faith, threatening to "spit" the congregation out of His

Notes

mouth (Revelation 3:16).

Notes

Christ scolds this church for allowing its economic prosperity to cause it spiritual bankruptcy and reveals that, despite its economic wealth, only He can provide spiritual wealth (Revelation 3:17–18). Those in Laodicea's church who open the door to Christ will share in His Heavenly banquet and have the right to sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:20–21).

Significance Today

Like the church in Laodicea, it's easy to become complacent in our faith during times of abundance. Christ warns us in this revelation that he will "spit out" lukewarm disciples. Instead, Jesus urges us to keep seeking the Lord's face even after His hand has bestowed riches in our lives.

Further Reading: What Do the 7 Churches in Revelation Represent? Summaries and Explanations by Dolores Smith

CHAPTER 2

What Should We Know about the Rapture?

The experience of being caught up with Christ in the air was first termed "rapture" by Irish evangelist, John Nelson Darby, who taught on pre-millennialism. It is an English translation of the Latin *rapio*, which means to seize or snatch away.

The dictionary definition of rapture is: *that state or condition of being rapt, or being carried away by one's self by agreeable excitement; violence of a pleasing passion; extreme joy or pleasure; ecstasy.*

To look forward to the most wonderful occasion that could happen in a person's life would bring unprecedented joy. A bubbling over of anticipation.

Some criticize the use of the word rapture because that word is not in the Bible.

But the word *trinity* is not in the Bible either. Both terms are simply word pictures. Trinity shows us a description of the three-fold person of God Almighty.

> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness (Genesis 1:26a).

> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

While it is clear from Scripture that the Godhead is three persons in one, the use of trinity just helps us speak of the infinite personality of God through one word.

Notes

The word *rapture* is used to describe how believers will join the Lord in the air in the same way. It's merely a description of the event believers look forward to.

Here are some scriptures to describe why we refer to Christ's catching away of His saints as extreme joy or pleasure.

Those who have gone before us will be in the sky with Christ and we will see them at His coming.

> For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

> We know we will be taken to our new home and live with God. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (John 14:3).

Having a promise of escaping judgment is a definite reason to rejoice and be enraptured.

> Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth (Revelation 3:10).

> Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:30–31).

We have the promise of a new body that will never die, suffer pain or sadness, or age again.

> But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (Philippians

Notes

3:20–21).

Notes

The glory we will see and experience is beyond the ability for anyone on earth to describe.

> I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).

We know He will descend from the sky in the same way He left. This gives us the assurance that false christs cannot come this way.

Further Reading: Why Is the Word 'Rapture' Applied to Jesus' Return? by Barbara Latta

CHAPTER 3

Who Is the Beast and What Is His Mark?

There are actually three beasts who make up what Thomas R. Schreiner calls "The Unholy Trinity" of monsters. One is a dragon, Satan, who stands on the seashore summoning another "beast rising out of the sea." The one Satan summons behaves as a demonic ruler but takes his orders from the evil one.

The third member of this group "claims to speak for God" but is a false prophet. He "represents religious authority contrary to God's Word and ways." He returns to life after a death blow, mimicking Christ's resurrection and lending credibility to his lies. Much of the world will worship this "miraculous" beast who "enforces the power of the first [beast] through economic discrimination."

A fourth beast is mentioned. Perhaps John pictured this beast as Rome, still a powerful empire in the late first century. None of these beasts has ultimate control, however, "God ordains what the beast does" and His "judgment is his 'strange' work" referenced in Isaiah 28:21. "For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way" (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Notes

What Is the Mark of the Beast?

Satan's mark is supposedly 666, the number of man, while "777 represents perfection." Man and woman were created on the sixth day. "Man labors six days only. The sixth commandment is "Thou shalt not murder." Six words are used for man: Adam, ish, Enosh, gehver, anthropos, anar. Also, 6 x 6 = 36; 36 + 35 + 34 + 33 + 32; 5 + 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 666. 666 is the number of the antichrist. This means that the name of the antichrist in Greek adds up to 666. This is a mockery

of the Trinity." We can come close, mimic perfection, but only for a short time.

In the final scene of the original *Omen* where Gregory Peck reveals "666" marked on his own child, this mark confirms that his son is the Beast foretold in Revelation 18. We don't know for sure if this is the number or if there will be a visible mark on followers of the Beast. Commentators understand why we expect to see a "brand" or "tattoo" on these individuals.

According to Sam Storms, marking has been common throughout society as a means of "tribal identification," punishment, as a sign of "ownership," of "disgrace," and of "loyalty to a pagan deity."

Satan tries to copy everything God does, as seen in the creation of his "trinity," the resurrection of his beast, and with the "false prophet."

Why not also copy His example for marking? "And the Lord set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him" (Genesis 4:15). But Cain's mark might have been "some type of token or pledge." Theologians suggest that "the phrase set a mark upon Cain [...] more likely means a sign for him."

Further Reading: What Is the Mark of the Beast in the Bible? by Candice Lucey

Notes

CHAPTER 4

What Is the Tribulation?

A brief look through the pages of Revelation chapters six, eight, nine, and sixteen describe the living hell you can avoid if you are saved. Here are only a few of the dreadful disasters that take place during the Tribulation:

- One out of every two people will die during the Tribulation (see Rev. 6:8 and onward), some through the ravages of war, others by starvation, and amazingly many others by the 'beasts of the earth'. So, whether by death that comes instantly and thus less dreaded or a slow and painful death that is lingering and agonizing-50 percent of all people will die. And remember that the population of the world is doubling every 39.5 years. So every day the number of people who will die becomes larger and larger.

- One third of all vegetation will be burned up. All grass, every tree, everything green will be destroyed (see Rev. 8:7).

- The sun and the moon will be darkened as nature goes into revolt (see Rev. 8:12).

- The gates of hell will open and hordes of locusts, the size of horses, will come upon the earth. Those locusts will be allowed to sting men like scorpions and the pain will last for five months. The Bible says men will beg God to let them die but they will not die (see Rev. 9:3–6).

- There will be worldwide famine unlike anything the world has ever seen (see Rev. 18:8).

- There will be a world war so bloody that the blood of those

Notes

killed in battle will flow for two hundred miles up to the bridle of a horse in the valley of Jezreel. This will be the Battle of Armageddon (see Rev. 14:20).

- All told, during the Great Tribulation, as many as half of all the people on the earth will be killed. Now do you see why God refers to the Rapture as a 'blessed hope'? Because the Tribulation to come is so horrible!

But that means we are gone and will escape everything, right? Yes, exactly, we will miss every part of the Tribulation, but we will probably go through some of the worst days we have ever seen before it starts. And that is what Jesus is pointing out to us in Luke 21 where we open in God's Word today.

In Luke 21 we see the end of everyone's life as it was. Time stops. Life ends. Nothing is the same again. Christ's Coming simply reveals what people have been all the time. Paul tells us later that "each man's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Remember what we have already learned from Luke 21:36: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The dangers Jesus warned of are what His church has faced from the beginning. There have always been deceiving teachers, persecution, and disasters. But what He says is that each of these areas will increase and intensify as Christ's Coming draws near.

There will be religious deception (Luke 21:8). "Be not deceived!" is Christ's admonition to us, and we must take it to heart.

And He said: "Take heed that you not be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore do not go after them."

Further Reading: The Tribulation and End Times by John Barnett

Notes

CHAPTER 5

What Is the Millennial Reign?

The Millennial Kingdom and reign take place when Christ is in power for 1,000 years, whilst Satan waits in prison for his last stand against the people of God. Some people interpret this as an allegorical 1000 years, like the 70 weeks in Daniel not being a literal 70 weeks. But Scripture does seem to make it clear that this case is probably literal. During this time, after the rapture, the saints of God will come to life again and reign with Christ during this time. We don't have an exact job description of what we'll do, but it seems to involve some type of ruling and judgment.

We also should note that it mentions these saints didn't get the Mark of the Beast. Scripture makes it clear that those who do not receive the Mark will not have a chance to purchase anything (including food) and eventually may be killed, persecuted, or imprisoned for their refusal (Revelation 13). This can give us a good idea of when the Millennial Kingdom will take place.

When Will the Millennial Kingdom Reign Take Place?

Again, it depends on what Christian you ask. Some, known as Amillennials, believe the Millennial kingdom is taking place right now. That sometime in history marked the start of the 1000 years in which we live. Others in the Amillennial camp also believe in a figurative 1000 years, rather than a literal one.

Premillennials, on the other hand, believe that after the period of tribulation, Christ will return. Then the millennial reign will begin. Premillennials can split into various camps as to when Tribulation will occur, when Christians will get raptured, and when Christ will step onto the scene.

Notes

Postmillennials believe the millennium happens prior to when Christ returns. For a chart that details this, check out this article.

In other words, for the most part, Christians do believe in a 1000-year reign. They just tend to differ on when it will take place. Revelation seems to make it certain that it will happen after a period of Tribulation with the Beast. All Millennial camps offer scriptural support for their viewpoints, so we won't pick a side in this article (or at least, won't allude to which camp the author of this article falls into). But we should know that the Millennial reign does mark an important period in the End Times.

Further Reading: What Is the Millennial Kingdom and Reign? by Hope Bolinger

Notes

CHAPTER 6

What Are the Different Views on the Millennium?

Amillennialism is the view or system of eschatology (doctrine of the last things) that holds that there is no literal earthly millennium (thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth). Amillennialists believe that the millennium is spiritual. While all versions of amillennialism unite around their belief in no earthly millennium, they sometimes differ as to the exact nature and time of the millennium. While all believe that the millennium is spiritual and thus not earthly, some believe that the spiritual kingdom is present during the current era of the church. Some amillennialists believe that the present spiritual reign of God's kingdom consists of the influence that the church exerts through its many worldwide ministries.

Another form teaches that the millennium is composed of the reign of all dead Christians in heaven. Yet another kind believes that the millennium is equal to the eternal state that will commence at the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth (known also as the second advent). In this view, the new heavens and new earth equals the millennium.

Premillennialism is one of the three major views of Bible prophecy (the others are amillennialism and postmillennialism). Premillennialism teaches that the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth (known also as the second advent), will occur before the establishment of the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem described in Revelation 20:1–7. This reign is known as the millennium.

The English theological term *premillennialism* comes from the Latin elements *pre* (before), *mille* (thousand), and *annus* (year). Premillennialism means that Jesus Christ will return to the earth

Notes

"before the thousand years."

Notes

There are hundreds of millennium references in the Old Testament that speak of the time of Israel's end-time restoration to the land in blessing. However, it is not until John receives his revelation on the island of Patmos at the end of the New Testament era that the length of the Messiah's earthly reign is specified.

In the early church, premillennialism was called *chiliasm* (from the Greek term *chilioi* meaning "one thousand" used six times in Revelation 20:2–7). Theologian Dr. Charles Ryrie cites essential features of premillennial view of Christ's reign as follows: "Its duration will be 1,000 years; its location will be on this earth; its government will be theocratic with the personal presence of Christ reigning as King; and it will fulfill all the yet-unfulfilled promises about the earthly kingdom."

Postmillennialism is the view or system of eschatology (doctrine of the last things) teaching that the current age is the millennium, which is not necessarily a thousand years. Postmillennialists believe that the kingdom of Jesus Christ will gradually be extended though the preaching of the gospel; the eventual conversion of a majority of people (not necessarily all people); and the progressive growth of righteousness, prosperity, and development in every sphere of life as this growing majority of Christians struggle to subdue the world for Christ. Only after Christianity has dominated the world for a long time will Jesus Christ then return. After the church's glorious reign of victory (like amillennialism), there will be a general resurrection, destruction of the present creation, and entry into the eternal state.

Postmillennialism differs from premillennialism and amillennialism in that postmillennialists are optimistic that this victory will be realized without the need for a cataclysmic return of Christ to impose righteousness. Instead, they believe that it will result from the faithful application of the present process.

Further Reading: What Is Amillenialism?; What Is Premillenialism?; What Is Post-Millenialism? all by Timothy J. Demy and Thomas Ice

CHAPTER 7

What Is the Great White Throne Judgment?

In speaking of the Great White Throne Judgment people may refer to terms such as Judgment Day or the Last Judgment. This event is mentioned in Revelation 20 which we will look at in a moment, but Jesus referred to this judgment even in the Gospel of John.

> "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned." – John 5:28–29

Let's forward to the book of Revelation and see how these two scriptures point to the same event.

> "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens 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 they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire." – Revelation 20:11–15

Great White Throne Judgment Characteristics

When you are reading or studying Scripture it's always good to ask questions to help understand the passage. These can be referred to

Notes

as the W questions, who, what, where, when, why. Let's do that with this passage.

Notes

Who will be judged?

The Great White Throne Judgment is a judgment for unbelievers and not for believers. I know you are saying how do you know this? When you read a little earlier in Revelation it reveals it.

> "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.)** This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years." – Revelation 20:4–6 (bold emphasis added)

The people who are present and participating in this Great White Throne Judgment are those who were not resurrected at the beginning of what is called the millennial period. They did not take place in that first resurrection they were part of the second. In the second resurrection, all those who were dead are now brought to stand before God in judgment. For these, there is no hope of eternal life which is why John wrote "Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection."

When and where will they be judged?

This judgment will take place after the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth. These people will already have died and will be lying in wait during this period until their final judgment is pronounced on them. In a criminal trial where bail is not offered or met a person can be held in jail until their trial date occurs. This is how it will be for those who will be judged at this judgment. These people will be held

in a place called Hades until they are called to appear before God for trial. At that time, they will be resurrected for the purpose of facing their final judgment. This trial and judgment will take place before the very throne of God which is represented here by the Great White Throne.

What will they be judged for?

According to Revelation, these will be judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. They will be judged for their own actions and their own sins.

Why are they being judged?

This judgment is because they have rejected Christ as their substitute and they have chosen to pay the penalty for their sins themselves. Because God is a just, holy, and righteous God all sin requires that a penalty be paid for it. For those who receive Christ, the penalty for their sin is placed on him. For those who choose to reject Christ, they carry in themselves the penalty of their sin. As you can see the penalty is extreme and severe.

Further Reading: What Is the Great White Throne Judgment? by Clarence L. Haynes Jr.

Notes

CHAPTER 8

What Is the New Heaven and New Earth?

Jesus shared this same reality with Nicodemus in their famous nocturnal conversation when he said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. . ." (John 3:16). Though Jesus is contextually speaking of his love for all nations, not merely Israel, the word *world* (*kosmon*) infers that his love and sacrifice are not limited to mankind, but extend into all of the created order.

Genesis portrays, for us, a picture of a good world, in which the spiritual and physical realms complement and complete each other. Don't overlook the fact that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The word *heavens* doesn't simply speak of the space and atmosphere over the earth, but rather speaks of God's space.

Before sin's entrance into our world, the physical and spiritual realms existed in harmony and there was no separation. This is demonstrated by God "walking in the cool of the day" with Adam and Eve and also in how the serpent spoke to Eve with seemingly no alarm on her part at all.

It seems that this conversation between humans and non-humans was not unusual at all. But this all changed in one bite. Man, and his disobedience, had ruptured God's good world in a way that mere mortals could never repair. The Apostle Paul would capture the weight of this tragic condition in Romans when he said,

> For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for the adoption as sons. . . (Romans 8:23).

Notes

All of God's good creation, both man and the created order, is affected by sin's curse as Paul clearly points out. Therefore, why should we believe that God would purpose to restore only man, while relinquishing the physical realm for which we were made to destruction?

Peter signals to us that this is not the case when he writes of our "living hope through the resurrection" (1 Peter 1:3). My hope can be "living hope" when it is anchored to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There will come a day when God will do for all of creation what he did for Jesus on that first Easter morning.

Redeemed saints are not destined to live eternally in an ethereal realm floating around with no purpose. Rather, we are guaranteed that the Maker will transform his world into the glorious place that it was intended to be when he first planted Adam in the garden.

When the last day finally comes, we will not fly away to him, but Christ will return to us as indicated in Revelation 21 when John observes,

> "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God'" (Revelation 21:1–3).

What Does This Mean?

The new world to come is far more glorious than the one we presently know. However, there are great continuities between this one and the one we long for. It will be a world that we recognize and one in which all the things that we love will be present but no longer marred and twisted by sin.

We will work for all eternity but not for the love of or need for money

Notes

but for the joy of work. And it is likely that our present gifts, abilities, and personalities will follow us to the other side only without the marks and motives of sin.

Can you imagine the sports, the arts, the music that no human ear has ever heard, the construction, the technologies, the research, the teachings which will be possible in the new world without the power or presence of sin?

And best of all, Christ will be at the center of it all. This is a world I can get excited about and for good reason. It is the one I was intended to occupy from the very beginning. And so, it will be.

Further Reading: What Does the Bible Say about the New Heaven and the New Earth? By Rick Kirby

You Made it Through the Guide!

There is obviously so much to unpack in Revelation. We have not even begun to scratch the surface. But we hope this guide was helpful when it comes to discovering more about the Tribulation, about the Beasts, and about the events we have to look forward to coming to pass as we approach the End Days. Remember to stay vigilant and watchful, for none of us knows the hour in which the Son of Man will return.

Notes