



REVELATION

A CELEBRATION OF GOD'S VICTORY

PART ONE

 **GraceCity**
Church Nagoya

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How To Use

In GraceCity Church we use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text. We believe it is appropriate to replace “discussion questions” (that focus on the theoretical) with “response questions” (which require participants to personally interact with the central theme of the text).

Context →

1. Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.
2. Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation and Meaning →

3. Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. “for”, “if”, “therefore”),

repetition, dialogue, narrative, and Old Testament quotations.

4. To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author’s purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?
5. Helpful questions to ask include:
 - Who is writing and to whom?
 - What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
 - Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
 - Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application →

6. Apply God’s word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviours by asking good “heart” questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?
7. Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?
8. Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.



Introduction

Introduction

The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation from his exile on the island of Patmos. He addressed his work to seven Asian churches—Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. John worked in Ephesus for many years, and it would have been natural for him to communicate this vision to the churches under his care.

Placing It in the Bigger Story

The various blessings scattered throughout Revelation (the first in 1:3 and the last in 22:14) show the main purpose of this book is not to solve apocalyptic puzzles, but to bring blessing to God's suffering people. God's blessing is not a gift that is separable from himself. The blessing of God is God. In the new creation, he will “*dwell*” with his people (Revelation 21:3), a promise that recalls his presence among Israel in the tabernacle. The description of the new Jerusalem as a perfect golden cube (Revelation 21:15–21) links to the Most Holy Place in the temple. It suggests that in the new creation God's people

will enjoy his immediate presence, as only the high priest was permitted to do once a year. In the new world, God's people will see his face (Revelation 22:4), a privilege not even Moses was permitted. The long and painful story of exile from God's presence that began after Adam and Eve's banishment from the garden, and continued through Israel's exile from the promised land, will finally end. God's people will enjoy his intimate presence in the new creation and will never again be sent away.

As God's people await this promised future, Revelation insists nothing happens by chance—all things occur by God's sovereign plan: “*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place*” (Revelation 1:1). The book ends with the reminder that “*the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place*” (Revelation 22:6). It must take place because God has willed it. His sovereign control brings steady comfort and strength in the present. God ordains the ways of the world. God is the treasure of his people, and his throne is set amongst worshiping angels and humans (Revelation 4–5).



THE PROLOGUE

Revelation 1:1-20

Revelation 1:1-20

The Prologue

Scripture Text

Revelation 1:1-20

Big Idea

The book of Revelation is one of the most misunderstood books in the Bible. Many Christians avoid it because it seems confusing and obscure. The author's main point is a celebration of God's victory—God wins in the end. This is the consistent and hopeful message which John recorded for us. By giving us a clear and compelling vision of the future, John hopes to help us live faithfully in the present.

Overview

John presents his book as the revelation of Jesus Christ (v.1). In other words, the book comes from and is about

Jesus. God gave a message to Jesus, who then sent an angel to John, so that those who follow Jesus would be motivated to bear witness to the word of God. John refers to Jesus as '*the firstborn of the dead*' (v.5), because Jesus' resurrection guarantees the resurrection of his followers (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

John identifies with his audience as their brother and partner in both the tribulation and the kingdom. A common theme in the New Testament is that those who embrace the gospel will face tribulation (v.9). Suffering, which eventually leads to glory, is not only a pattern in Jesus' life, but also in the lives of his followers (see Matthew 5:11-12; Mark 10:29-30; Acts 14:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 2:21). John has been exiled to Patmos because of '*the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*' (v.9). In the midst of his affliction, Jesus appears to him (vv.10-20). John is not to fear (v.17), because Jesus died and yet is alive and '*the keys of Death and Hades*' are in his hands (v.18). Even if a believer is put to death, Jesus guarantees death and hell will not hold them (just as they could not hold him).

Observation and Meaning

1. What is this book about (v.1)? For whose benefit did God intend the book of Revelation (v.1)? What did God want us to learn from the book of Revelation (v.1)? What is promised to those who take the time to study revelation (v.3)?
2. To who did John write this letter (v.4)? What are the three descriptions John uses to describe Jesus (v.5)? What prophesy does John open with in this book (v.7)?
3. In what way was John a companion of his readers (v.9)? Where was John when he received his revelation of Jesus Christ (v.9)? What kind of voice did John hear in his vision (v.10)? What did the voice command John to do (v.11)?
4. When John turned around who did he see standing behind him (v.13)? What was the appearance of the one *'like a son of man'* (vv.14-16)? How did John react to seeing Jesus Christ in his glory (v.17)?

Application

- What do you learn about human nature from this passage? What do you learn about God's character from this passage?
- John identifies with his fellow believers as their brother and partner in both the tribulation and the kingdom (v.9). In what way do you identify with the sufferings of your fellow believers?
- The Son of Man affirms his eternal existence (v.17), and echos the words of Isaiah (see Isaiah 44:6). John and the churches have no need to fear (v.17). Although Jesus died, he is now alive and has conquered death forever (v.18). In what way is Jesus' victory over death and Hades a comfort to you? How does this help you to relinquish your fear in the present?



THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Revelation 2:1-3:22

Revelation 2:1-3:22

The Seven Churches

Scripture Text

Revelation 2:1-3:22

Big Idea

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Overview

The letters to the seven churches share a similar structure. They each feature:

- an address to a particular congregation
- an introduction of Jesus
- a statement regarding the condition of the church
- a verdict regarding the condition of the church
- a command from Jesus to the church
- a general exhortation to all Christians
- a promise of reward

The words of Jesus include threats of discipline and promises of reward. **Ephesus** should maintain its first love (2:4) and **Laodicea** should not be lukewarm (3:16). **Smyrna** and **Philadelphia** should stand fast against persecution from the synagogue of Satan (2:9). **Pergamum**, **Thyatira**, and **Sardis** should avoid the kinds of compromises with false teaching that result in eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality (2:14, 20).

Those who are enduring patiently (2:3), being faithful to death (2:10), are heeding what the Spirit says to the churches and obeying the call to repent (2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19). They will eat from the tree of life (2:7), will not be hurt by the second death (2:11), will receive a new name (2:17), and will have authority over the nations (2:26).

Jesus promises those who overcome that he will never blot their name out of the book of life (3:5), and will make them a pillar in the temple (3:12). These ‘over-comers’ will have clothing for their nakedness and salve for their eyes (3:18). They will sit with Jesus on his throne, having conquered as he did (3:21). These ‘over-comers’ will hold fast to Jesus’ name (2:13) and not deny him (3:8). Overcoming, for John, is not a consequence of human effort but a result of faith in the work of Jesus Christ (see 1 John 5:4-5).

Observation and Meaning

1. Although John addresses ‘the angel of the church’ (see 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14), whose words does he write down? In other words, how does Jesus describe himself?

Revelation 2:1	<i>him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands</i>
Revelation 2:8	<i>the first and the last, who died and came to life</i>
Revelation 2:12	<i>him who has the sharp two-edged sword</i>
Revelation 2:18	
Revelation 3:1a	
Revelation 3:7	
Revelation 3:14	

2. What does Jesus know about each church?

Revelation 2:2-3	<i>I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil...</i>
Revelation 2:9a	<i>I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews...</i>
Revelation 2:13	<i>I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and did not deny my faith...</i>
Revelation 2:19	
Revelation 3:1	
Revelation 3:8	
Revelation 3:15	

3. What does Jesus have against each church?

Revelation 2:4	<i>but I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.</i>
Revelation 2:9b	<i>those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan</i>
Revelation 2:14-15	<i>but I have a few things against you: you have some who... taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel...</i>
Revelation 2:20	
Revelation 3:1	
Revelation 3:9	
Revelation 3:16-17	

4. What does Jesus want each church to do?

Revelation 2:5	<i>remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first.</i>
Revelation 2:10	<i>do not fear what you are about to suffer... be faithful unto death...</i>
Revelation 2:16	<i>therefore repent...</i>
Revelation 2:24-25	
Revelation 3:2-3	
Revelation 3:11	
Revelation 3:18-19	

5. What reward does Jesus promise to the conquerers?

Revelation 2:7b	<i>to the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God</i>
Revelation 2:11b	<i>the one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.</i>
Revelation 2:17b	<i>to the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name</i>
Revelation 2:26-28	
Revelation 3:5	
Revelation 3:12	
Revelation 3:21	

Application

- What have you learnt about Jesus' nature from this passage?
- Which church do you identify with, and why?
- Jesus makes the same appeal to each church (see 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22)? What is significant about this appeal and how are you responding to it?



THE THRONE

Revelation 4:1-5:14

Revelation 4:1-5:14

The Throne

Scripture Text

Revelation 4:1-5:14

Big Idea

The book of Revelation is one of the most misunderstood books in the Bible. Many Christians avoid it because it seems confusing and obscure. The author's main point is a celebration of God's victory—God wins in the end. This is the consistent and hopeful message which John recorded for us. By giving us a clear and compelling vision of the future, John hopes to help us live faithfully in the present.

Overview

John writes to churches who are facing persecution and tribulation (2:9-10; 3:9-10). In the midst of these difficult circumstances, John is invited into the heavenly throne

room and sees the Lord God Almighty on the throne (4:2). The Lord God Almighty is being worshipped by the dignitaries of the heavenly court (4:6-10). The knowledge that God is seated on his heavenly throne, being worshipped as he rightly deserves, is given to encourage persecuted Christians who seem like a small, insignificant minority in the face of the wicked world. God in heaven rules. One day this rule will cover the earth and bring all evil and darkness to a final end. Christ's death and resurrection will secure this.

No member of the entourage is worthy to open the scroll (5:2-3). John responds by weeping (5:4), because the defeat of evil, sin, and death depends on the opening of this scroll. The elders identify the Lion of the tribe of Judah (see Genesis 49:8-12) with the Root of David (see Isaiah 11). Jesus Christ is the conquerer and is able to open the scroll. Jesus' conquest is illustrated by a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain (5:6). This is meant to depict the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross and his triumphant resurrection from the dead. In fulfillment of the Son of Man being presented before the Ancient of Days (see Daniel 7), Jesus is presented before the Father and opens the sealed scroll (5:7).

Observation and Meaning

1. After receiving messages for the seven churches, what did John see (4:1a)? What kind of voice did John hear (4:1b)? What did the voice John heard say to him (4:1c)?
2. Consider the incredible sights John saw (4:2-11):
 - How did John describe the one sitting on the throne (4:3)?
 - What was around the throne (4:3-4)?
 - What came from the throne (4:5)?
 - What did John see in front of the throne (4:5-6a)?
 - What kind of creatures were around the throne (6b-7)?
 - What attribute of God did the four living creatures repeatedly praise (4:8b)?
 - How did the twenty-four elders worship the Lord (4:10)?
 - Why did the elders say God was worthy of their worship (4:11)?
3. What was in the hand of the one sitting on the throne in heaven (5:1)? What proclamation did a mighty angel make (5:2)? What was John's reaction when the scroll could not be opened (5:3-4)? What did one of the twenty-four elders say to John (5:5)?
4. What did the Lamb that John saw look like (5:6)? What did the Lamb do (5:7)? How did the living creatures respond to the actions of the Lamb (5:8-9a)? For what was the Lamb praised and worshipped (5:9b-10)?

Application

- What do we learn about what Jesus did for us from this passage?
- What evidence do we have from this passage that God makes no distinction between races or ethnic groups (see 5:9-10), and why should we value people of all races equally and treat everyone with respect?
- How does your worship compare to that of the living creatures, the elders, and the many angels?



SEVEN SEALS

Revelation 6:1-7:17

Revelation 6:1-7:17

Seven Seals

Scripture Text

Revelation 6:1-7:17

Big Idea

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Overview

As Jesus opens the seals on the scroll, the events that unfold broadly correspond with the events predicted in the Olivet Discourse (see Mark 13). It seems the rider on

the white horse pretends to be Jesus (6:2). Jesus said, *"Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he'"* (Mark 13:6). Jesus said there would be *"wars and rumours of wars"* (Mark 13:7). This is what results from the rider on the white horse who comes to conquer (6:2), and the rider on the red horse who is permitted to take peace from the earth (6:4). The wars caused by the first two riders are followed by famines and plagues (6:5-6). John reaffirms the teaching of Jesus and prepares his readers to hold fast to the word of God. John prepares his audience to reject false gospels, and to remain faithful to the true gospel. God seals his faithful servants and marks them with a sign (7:1-8). This seal preserves the faithful during the coming trials. These faithful servants are then depicted wearing white robes, and respond with praise to God (7:9-17).

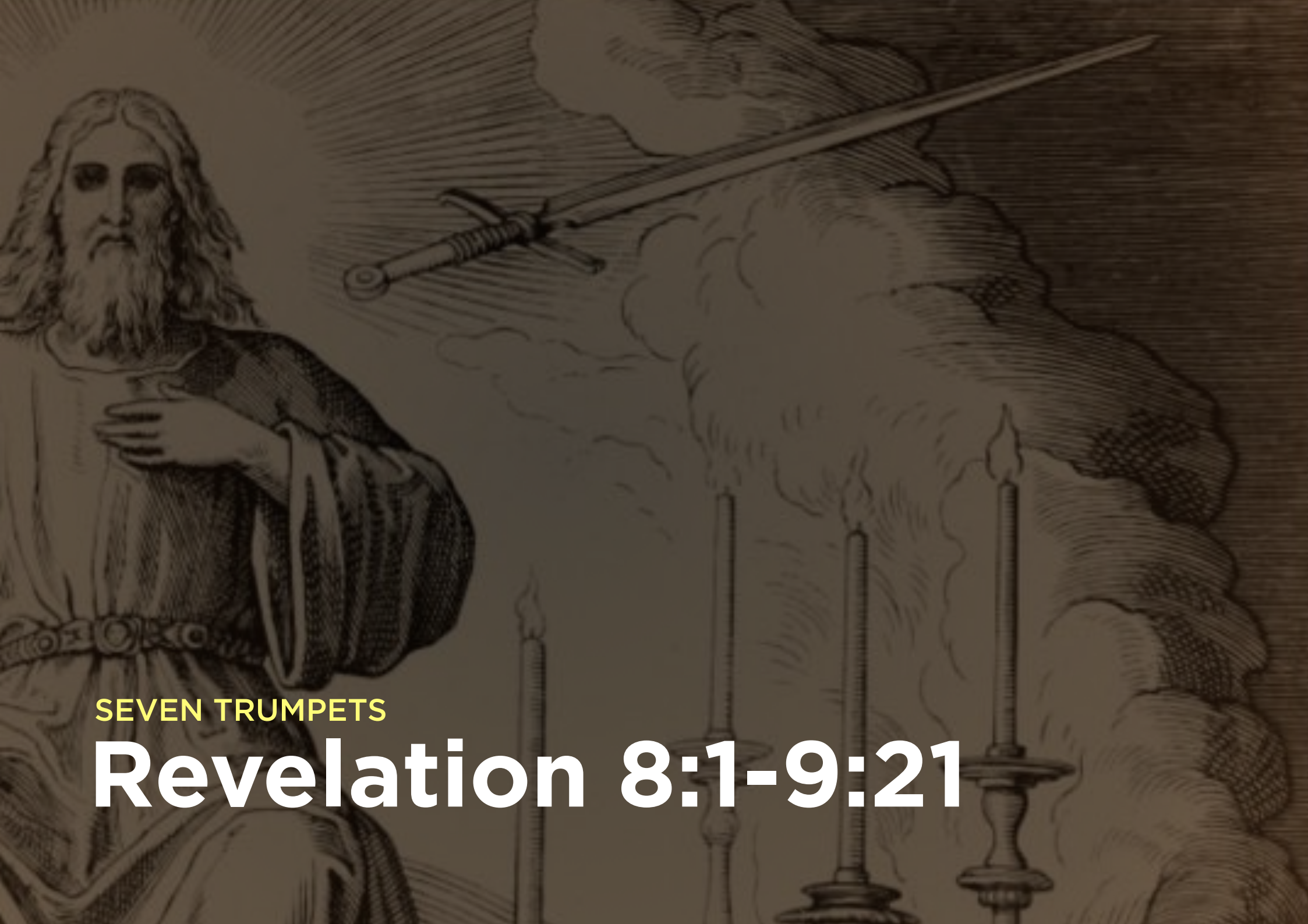
Observation and Meaning

1. Consider the opening of the seals:
 - i. What happens in the opening scene of this passage (6:1)? What was the appearance and the mission of the first horse and its rider (6:2)?

- ii. What happened after the second seal was opened (6:3)? How are the second horse and its rider described (6:4)?
 - iii. What happened at the opening of the third seal (6:5a)? How are the third horse and its rider described (6:5b)?
 - iv. What happened at the opening of the fourth seal (6:7)? How are the fourth horse and its rider described (6:8)?
 - v. What did John see after the fifth seal had been opened (6:9)? What question did the martyrs ask God (6:10)?
 - vi. What happened at the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-14)? How did the inhabitants of the earth respond to the events unleashed by the breaking of the seals (6:15-17)?
2. What did John see after the breaking of the first six seals and where were they located (7:1)? The angel with the seal of the living God told the four angels not to harm *'the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God'* (7:3). How many people were sealed in John's vision (7:4a)? Who are these sealed servants (7:4b)?
 3. What did John see, after seeing the 144,000 sealed servants of God (7:9)? What were these people wearing (7:9)? What were these people saying (7:10)?
 4. What did one of the elders ask John (7:13)? How did John respond to the elder's question (7:14a)? How did the elder explain the identity of those wearing the white robes (7:14b)? What blessings await those who come out of the great tribulation (7:16-17)?

Application

- What do we learn about human nature from this passage? What do we learn about God from this passage?
- In what way are you tempted to embrace a false gospel? What aspect of the true gospel do you find difficult to hold fast too?
- How does the assurance of God's seal upon your life as a believer, provide you with reassurance in the present?



SEVEN TRUMPETS

Revelation 8:1-9:21

Revelation 8:1-9:21

Seven Trumpets

Scripture Text

Revelation 8:1-9:21

Big Idea

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Overview

The Lord heard the people's cry for rescue (Exodus 2:23-25) and delivered his people through the plagues prior to their exodus (Exodus 3-14). Similarly, the prayers

of all the saints are presented before the Lord in this passage (8:3), and the Lord will deliver his people from their bondage through the trumpet (Revelation 8-9) and bowl (Revelation 16) judgements.

- The judgement of the **first** trumpet, hail and fire (8:7) matches the seventh plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:23-25).
- The **second** and **third** trumpets result in the sea turning to blood (8:8-9) and the rivers and springs being made bitter (8:10-11), recalling the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:19-21).
- The **fourth** trumpet results in darkness (8:12), similar to the ninth plague (Exodus 10:21-29).
- The **fifth** trumpet is followed by scorpions (9:1-11), just as the eighth plague on Egypt was of locusts (Exodus 10:12-20).
- The **sixth** trumpet results in mounted troops who kill a third of humanity (9:13-21), possibly recalling the angel of death who killed the Egyptian firstborn (Exodus 11:1-10; 12:29-32).

The fact that these trumpet judgements echo the plagues is also supported by the mighty angel, who is wrapped in a cloud and has legs like pillars of fire (10:1). Just as God led Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness with a pillar of fire and cloud (see Exodus 13:21), so now the plagues have been fulfilled in the trumpet judgements. God sends an angel of cloud and flame to give guidance to the people of God through his servant John.

We sinners, enslaved by sin and death, require a new exodus out of slavery and into the Promised Land of restored fellowship with God. This is what Jesus has accomplished—by being the sacrificial Passover Lamb. God passes over us in mercy because he did not pass over his own Son.

Observation and Meaning

1. Who is the one described as opening the seventh seal (8:1)? After the opening of the seventh seal, John sees seven angels. What was given to these angels (8:2)?

2. One by one, each trumpet is sounded (8:6). What did John see at the sounding of the fifth trumpet (9:1)? What creatures came out of the bottomless pit (9:2-3)? What were these creatures told (9:4)?
3. What events transpired when the sixth angel blew his trumpet (9:13-19)?
4. What do we know about the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues (9:20-21)?

Application

- What do we learn about human nature from this passage?
- What aspect of your current fellowship with God are you most thankful for, and why?
- What part of your eternal fellowship with God are you most looking forward to, and why?



SPEAKING AND SUFFERING

Revelation 10:1-11:19

Revelation 10:1-11:19

Speaking and Suffering

Scripture Text

Revelation 10:1-11:19

Big Idea

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Overview

The appearance of the angel not only references the Lord leading the people by the pillar of cloud and flame after the exodus, but also the salvation of Noah (the angel has a

rainbow over his head). These past acts of salvation pointed to Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus now provides the final act of deliverance. Jesus takes the scroll from the Father (Revelation 5) and opens it (Revelation 6-8). The angel then brings it down (10:2), and John eats it (10:8-11). John is reenacting a scene from the Old Testament (Ezekiel 2:9-3:4). As John eats the scroll, the people of God are given proof that he is a true prophet. The churches are confronted with false teachers (see Revelation 2:14, 20), and a false prophet is about to enter the picture (Revelation 13:11-18; 16:13). Those who have been redeemed by the work of Jesus Christ, are to trust the prophet John.

John sees the temple protected for 42 months and the two witnesses prophesying for 1,260 days (11:1-6). The two witnesses are then killed (11:7), but God vindicates them, and their resurrection is reminiscent of the valley of dry bones (see Ezekiel 37). John's description informs the churches that God is able to protect his people for the duration of the time he has called them to preach the gospel. Even if their enemies kill them, God can raise the dead! *This would have greatly encouraged the persecuted churches to continue proclaiming the gospel.*

Observation and Meaning

1. After the first six trumpets of judgement, what did John see (10:1)? What did the angel have in his possession (10:2)? When the angel called out, the seven thunders sounded. What did John try to do when the seven thunders sounded (10:4)? What did the angel swear (10:6b-7).
2. What did the voice from heaven tell John to do (10:8)? What did the angel tell John to do with the little scroll (10:9)? What happened when John ate the scroll (10:10)? What is the last thing John was told at this time (10:11)?
3. What was John told to do with the measuring rod he had been given (11:1)? Authority is then given to two individuals (11:3). What special protection will be given to the ones called the '*two olive trees and the two lamp stands*' (11:4-5)? What supernatural power will the two witnesses possess (11:6)? How will the two witnesses die (11:7)? What will take place during the three and half days after the two witnesses die (11:8-10)?

4. When the seventh angel blew his trumpet, what did the voices say about '*the kingdom of the world*' (11:15)? How did the twenty-four elders respond to this message (11:16)?

Application

- What do you think is implied by John's eating of the scroll and finding it sweet in his mouth but sour in his stomach (10:9-11)?
- How does the fact that God protects his people as they preach the gospel encourage you to share the gospel more fervently?
- What does it say to you that even angels, and elders with heavenly positions, worship God in complete humility (11:16)?

**Overcoming, for John, is not a
consequence of human effort
but a result of faith in the work
of Jesus Christ**

<https://www.gracecity.jp>

