

THE
BOOK
OF
REVELATION

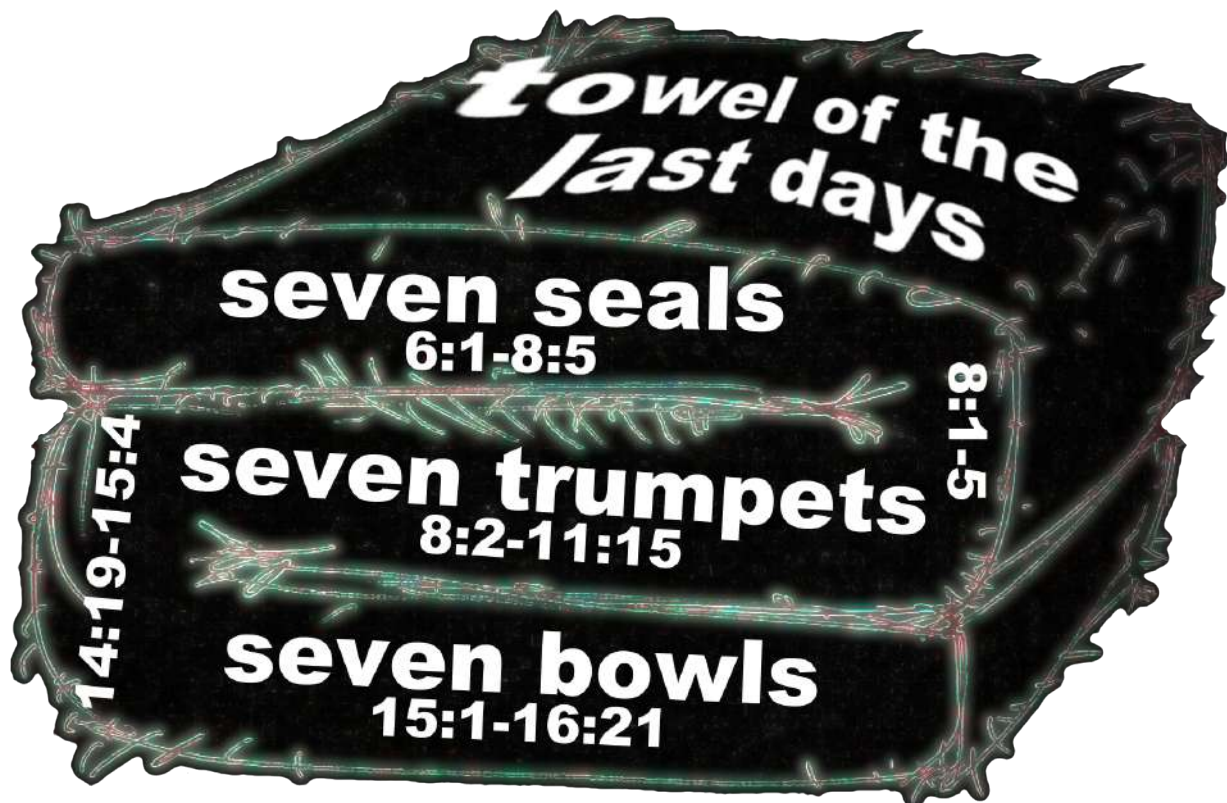
2017 STUDY NOTES

PART 2

Getting Started

Pray.

The seven Trumpets of Revelation 8-11 are the middle set of three groups of seven - the seven Seals (6:1-8:5), the seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19) and the seven Bowls (15:1-16:21). Each of these 'sevens' are describing the last days - that is, the days of Jesus' comings - his coming to earth in the incarnation, his coming to the Father in the ascension, and his coming back to earth to judge. The three 'sevens' are presented something like a folded towel with transitional 'hinges' (8:1-5 & 14:19-15:4) which fuse wrapping up the previous 'seven' with introducing the next 'seven' (see figure below).



Setting the Scene

The "Seven Trumpets" starts and ends in the same place - the temple in Heaven, where angels pour out "the prayers of the saints" before God. All is well here ... in contrast to the troubled earth. As in our previous studies, it's not hard to stand back and get the "big picture" of what's happening - and as usual, it's a message of great re-assurance to faithful Christians. But in this study, let's take the plunge and try to figure out some of the details.

Read Revelation 8:1-9:21 below

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

6 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— 11 the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and 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.

13 As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

9:1 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They

were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. 6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. 8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. 10 They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. 11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

12 The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

13 The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. 14 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 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. 16 The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. 18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. 19 The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.

20 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

In John's vision, some are kept safe. Who are they, and why are they protected?

According to 9:20-21, what sort of things is the world being judged for when things like this happen?

What is the result? How does this compare with your experience of the world's reaction when calamity comes?

Between the 6th and 7th trumpets is an interlude with many links to the Old Testament, especially the visions of the prophet Ezekiel. Read the Ezekiel "time capsule" below and then Revelation 10:1-11:2.

EZEKIEL 2-3 & 40-43

*Time
Capsule*

THEN I LOOKED, AND I SAW A HAND STRETCHED OUT TO ME. IN IT WAS A SCROLL, WHICH HE UNROLLED BEFORE ME. ON BOTH SIDES OF IT WERE WRITTEN WORDS OF LAMENT AND MOURNING AND WOE.

AND HE SAID TO ME, "SON OF MAN, EAT WHAT IS BEFORE YOU, EAT THIS SCROLL; THEN GO AND SPEAK TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL." SO I OPENED MY MOUTH, AND HE GAVE ME THE SCROLL TO EAT.

THEN HE SAID TO ME, "SON OF MAN, EAT THIS SCROLL I AM GIVING YOU AND FILL YOUR STOMACH WITH IT." SO I ATE IT, AND IT TASTED AS SWEET AS HONEY IN MY MOUTH.

HE THEN SAID TO ME: "SON OF MAN, GO NOW TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND SPEAK MY WORDS TO THEM." 2:9-3:9

IN THE TWENTY-FIFTH YEAR OF OUR EXILE, AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, ON THE TENTH OF THE MONTH, IN THE FOURTEENTH YEAR AFTER THE FALL OF THE CITY—ON THAT VERY DAY THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS UPON ME AND HE TOOK ME THERE. IN VISIONS OF GOD HE TOOK ME TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL AND SET ME ON A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN, ON WHOSE SOUTH SIDE WERE SOME BUILDINGS THAT LOOKED LIKE A CITY. HE TOOK ME THERE, AND I SAW A MAN WHOSE APPEARANCE WAS LIKE BRONZE; HE WAS STANDING IN THE GATEWAY WITH A LINEN CORD AND A MEASURING ROD IN HIS HAND.... 40:1-3

THEN THE MAN BROUGHT ME TO THE GATE FACING EAST, AND I SAW THE GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL COMING FROM THE EAST. ... THE GLORY OF THE LORD ENTERED THE TEMPLE THROUGH THE GATE FACING EAST. THEN THE SPIRIT LIFTED ME UP AND BROUGHT ME INTO THE INNER COURT, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED THE TEMPLE.

WHILE THE MAN WAS STANDING BESIDE ME, I HEARD SOMEONE SPEAKING TO ME FROM INSIDE THE TEMPLE. HE SAID: "SON OF MAN, THIS IS THE PLACE OF MY THRONE AND THE PLACE FOR THE SOLES OF MY FEET. THIS IS WHERE I WILL LIVE AMONG THE ISRAELITES FOREVER." 43:1-11

Read Revelation 10:1-11:14 below

Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 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."

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." 10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. 2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. 3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

7 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe,

language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

13 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 the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

In the light of Ezekiel's vision, how might we understand the nature of what John was to prophesy about the many peoples, nations, languages and kings in 10:11?

In John's mind, Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple and holy city is fulfilled in Jesus and those who believe in him (see Rev 3:12 and 21:2). How then might we understand the 'measuring' of the temple and its outer court in 11:1-2?

11:3 on speak about two powerful "witnesses" who will prophesy in sackcloth for "1260 days" - sack-cloth is the symbol of repentance. These powerful prophets are said to have similar powers to Moses, when he called on the Pharaoh of Egypt to set God's people free (see the book of Exodus.)

Which "Egypt" is John talking about? See verse 8.

Who are the "two witnesses," according to the olive tree and lampstand symbolism? (See Rev 1:12-13, 20)

What is their task? How is it described in verse 7? How is it described in verse 3? How are the two terms linked in 19:10?

Compare this with the experience of the two "faithful churches", Smyrna and Philadelphia in ch 2 and 3.

Though these "faithful churches" who testify to Jesus are mocked, killed, and left dead on the streets of Jerusalem, what does the future hold for them? (11:11-12)

Does this remind you of anyone else?

The gospel message calls on all the world to repent. Jerusalem is like Sodom, the ancient city famous for its depravity. The Roman Empire is just as bad. And all the inhabitants of the earth gloat when "the beast" attacks and destroys Christ's faithful witnesses. But when the seventh trumpet sounds, everything will be put right!

Read Revelation 11:15-19 below

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,

and he will reign for ever and ever."

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 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.*

*18 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 reverence your name,
both small and great—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”*

19 Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

The "Kingdom of God" was previously defined as "the land of Israel." What are the boundaries now? (v15)

What do the 24 elders finally celebrate in verses 16-18?

Do you think it is appropriate to honour God for exercising his judgement? Why, or why not?

Wrapping up...

Faithful Christians who testify about Jesus and call for repentance are under attack! Appallingly, when the power of the Roman "beast" attacks Christians and kills them, it seems everyone celebrates. But God's righteous Judgement is coming. His people will join him in heaven, where the new temple is opened to welcome them... while those who reject Gods rule and wreak havoc in the world will finally meet justice.

Are you looking forward to it? why or why not?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.

Getting Started

Pray.

This study brings us to some of the most famous yet difficult aspects of the book of Revelation. We meet strange dragons and beasts, strange numbers like "666" and all sorts of other mysteries. Don't panic! Remember again that John is writing to Christians in the Roman empire, under attack for refusing to bow down to the emperor. In chapter 12, John is given a history lesson, and the outcome is a reminder of the way God has protected his people and won a great victory over Satan.

Read Revelation 12 below

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. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. 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. 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. 6 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.

7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 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.

10 *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:*

*“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.*

11 *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.*

12 *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.”*

13 When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. 15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 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.

Who does the child represent? How do you know?

Where is the "child" in the end?

Who do you think the woman represents? (see Genesis 37:9-11)

Who does the Dragon represent? (Look at verse 9)

Look at the following three titles given to "the dragon" in verse 9.

* Ancient serpent (remind you of anything in Genesis?)

* Satan (which means "adversary" in a courtroom)

* Devil (Which means Slanderer, False Accuser)

What picture emerges of how the dragon does his work?

How, in plain language, is Satan defeated?

The big picture...

The cosmic battle between the angels and the dragon is simply a vivid word picture. What is the reality? Simply that Satan is defeated by "the blood of the lamb" - the death of Christ on the cross - and the "word of our testimony." As we proclaim Christ's death for sin, and God's forgiveness, there is no longer anything the "Accuser" can accuse us of. There is simply no condemnation for those "in Christ Jesus," (Rom 8:1) who has been taken up to the side of the Father to rule over all the nations. The last thing a Christian should do in the face of persecution, then, is to stop testifying about Jesus... no matter how much the Devil tries to make us stop! But the Devil is cunning in his attempts. He knows how attractive and commanding Jesus is, and so seeks to redirect peoples gaze from him to nasty clones. Enter the Beasts.

Read Revelation 13 and 14 below

And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.

And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. 3 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. 4 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?"

5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. 6 He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 7 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. 8 All 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.

9 He who has an ear, let him hear.

*10 If anyone is to go into captivity,
into captivity he will go.*

*If anyone is to be killed with the sword,
with the sword he will be killed.*

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

11 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. 12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. 14 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. 15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 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, 17 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.

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.

Who are the Beasts?

Compare the description of the beast in 13:1 with the description of Satan, the Dragon, in 12:3. What does this similarity show us?

John says the beast looked like a "leopard ... a bear ... and a lion" (v2). The prophet Daniel had similar visions and was told the following:

How does Daniel's insight help us understand the meaning of the "combined" animal in Revelation 13:2?



Revelation 17:3-9 below explains the identity of the first beast.

“3...I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ... 9 The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.”



In simple terms, what does the beast stand for?

Revelation 19:20 below speaks of the destruction of the two beasts.

“But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”

What does the title of the SECOND beast indicate?

It has been suggested that the "second beast" represents the false religion of Roman Emperor worship... the second beast represents the "religion" that forces people to bow down to Caesar as if he was God. Roman religion was impressive, and powerful... but ultimately, is doing the work of the Devil.

These two beasts have popped their heads up time and time again through history. Why? Can you think of any more recent examples of the beasts at work?

As impressive and imposing as the Beasts might be though, they're doomed for destruction.

Read Revelation 14 below

Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

6 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He 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."

8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, 10 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. 11 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." 12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain

The words "This calls for ..." are used three times in the passage. What exactly is called for? What does this mean to us?

Think about and Apply...

What opposition should Christians today expect from Satan? What is our defence? Think about and share examples from your own life.

Does the fact that God is in control mean things won't ever go wrong for us in this world? (See 13:7, 9-10)

What attitude should we have when we face suffering and persecution?

What do we need to be wary of as 21st Century Christians?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.

Getting Started

Pray.

Chapters 15 and 16 are designed as a set of "seven bowls" of God's anger, waiting to be poured out on his enemies. They follow a similar pattern to the seven seals and the seven trumpets in earlier chapters. Like them, the pattern takes us right to the "end point" of history. (In other words, it's a third look at the same scenario of the last days)

To kick it off...

Name some of the superstitions and legends about the way Satan can be overpowered.

What attitude do you think most "superstitious" people have towards Satan?

Read Revelation 15 below

I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. 2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God 3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:

*"Great and marvellous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.*

*Just and true are your ways,
King of the ages.*

*4 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."*

5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 6 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven

plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

In verse 2, we meet "those who had been victorious over the beast and over the number of his name." The Beast is Satan's representative on earth. How do God's people defeat him?

Compare your answer with 12:11, then 2:10 and 3:10.

"They sang the song of Moses" (v3) Look back at the song of Moses in Exodus 14 & 15 (printed below)

14:27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. 28 The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen—the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 30 That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 31 And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

15:1 Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

“I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted.

The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea.

2 The LORD is my strength and my song;

he has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise him,

my father’s God, and I will exalt him. ...

6 “Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power.

Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy. ...

13 “In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed.

In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

14 The nations will hear and tremble; ...

18 The LORD will reign for ever and ever.”

When did Moses and the people of Israel sing it? How does the situation the Israelites had come from compare with the experience of first century Christians? How does it compare with our experience today?

Why do you think the "temple" in verse 5 is now described as "the tabernacle of testimony." (Think about John's emphasis on "testimony" right through Revelation.)

Read Revelation 16 below

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.

4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 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;*

*6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets,
and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."*

7 And I heard the altar respond:

*"Yes, Lord God Almighty,
true and just are your judgments."*

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. 9 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.

10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

There are many links with the Exodus story here. (If you're not clear about the details of Israel's great escape from slavery in Egypt, find someone in your group who can summarise it briefly.)

Compare:-

- | | |
|---------------|----------|
| a) Rev 16:2 | Ex 9 |
| b) Rev 16:2-3 | Ex 7 |
| c) Rev 16:10 | Ex 10:21 |
| d) Rev 16:12 | Ex 14 |
| e) Rev 16:13 | Ex 8 |

f) Rev 16:21

Ex 9

What do all these links suggest to you? What "promise" is there in the passage for Christians "in exile" in a hostile world, like the seven churches John is writing to?

Are you ever fearful about future persecution for your faith? How should you change your mindset in the light of this passage?

How do people respond to God's punishments? How does this attitude compare with that of Pharaoh? (See Ex 9:27-35 for a good example.)

Think about it...

What is true repentance? See if you can write a definition.

The prospect of Armageddon worries many Christians, and is the subject of many books. The name comes from the Hebrew words "Har" (Mountain) "of Megiddo." Historically, it was a famous battle ground - Judges 5:19 records details.

Compare the results in Judges 5:19 below with the results here in Revelation 16:17-18 above.

*"Kings came, they fought;
the kings of Canaan fought
at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo,
but they carried off no silver, no plunder."
Judges 5:19*

What happens this time when the kings and powers of this earth come to do battle with God?

What do WE have to fear from Armageddon? Why?

What image is being presented in the final verses of chapter 16?

What message does this have for us as we live in a godless world today? What should we be doing?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.