

The Book of Revelation

THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

**An Explanation of this Book
Especially for You**

Rock Solid #12

Ger de Koning

uitgeverij
Daniël 



The original Dutch version is available at
Webshop: www.uitgeverijdaniel.nl
Orders: info@uitgeverijdaniel.nl

Translation: Ursula Moestapa
Cover design: Jan Paul Spoor / Sjon Heijenga
Layout: Piet Versteeg

© 2016 by Ger de Koning. All rights preserved.
No part of this publication may be – other than for personal use – reproduced in any form without written permission of the author.

New American Standard Bible Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation La Habra, Calif. All rights reserved. For Permission to Quote Information visit <http://www.lockman.org>.

Contents

Foreword	9
Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible	11
Old Testament	11
New Testament	12
Explanation of general format	13
The Book of Revelation	15
Introduction	15
Revelation 1	17
Purpose of the Book <i>verse 1</i>	17
Recipients, Blessing and Praise <i>verses 2-6</i>	21
John On Patmos <i>verses 7-12</i>	26
In the Middle of the Lampstands <i>verses 13-20</i>	31
Revelation 2	36
The Seven Messages <i>verse 1</i>	36
Message For Ephesus <i>verses 2-7</i>	41
Message For Smyrna <i>verses 8-11</i>	46
Message For Pergamum <i>verses 12-17</i>	51
Message For Thyatira <i>verses 18-29</i>	57
Revelation 3	63
Message For Sardis <i>verses 1-6</i>	63
Message For Philadelphia <i>verses 7-13</i>	68
Message For Laodicea <i>verses 14-22</i>	74
Revelation 4	79
The Throne <i>verses 1-7</i>	79
The Four Living Creatures <i>verses 8-11</i>	85

Revelation 5	88
The Book <i>verses 1-5</i>	88
The Lamb <i>verses 6-14</i>	92
Revelation 6	98
The First Four Seals <i>verses 1-8</i>	98
The Fifth and Sixth Seal <i>verses 9-17</i>	104
Revelation 7	110
The Sealed of Israel <i>verses 1-8</i>	110
The Great Multitude From the Nations <i>verses 9-17</i>	115
Revelation 8	120
The Seventh Seal and the First Trumpet <i>verses 1-7</i>	120
The Second, Third and Fourth Trumpet <i>verses 8-13</i>	126
Revelation 9	130
The Fifth Trumpet <i>verses 1-12</i>	130
The Sixth Trumpet <i>verses 13-21</i>	136
Revelation 10	142
The Opened Little Book <i>verses 1-11</i>	142
Revelation 11	148
The Two Witnesses <i>verses 1-8</i>	148
The Seventh Trumpet <i>verses 9-19</i>	154
Revelation 12	160
The Dragon, the Woman and the Child <i>verses 1-6</i>	160
Satan Thrown Down To the Earth <i>verses 7-17</i>	164
Revelation 13	170
The Beast Coming Up Out Of the Sea <i>verses 1-4</i>	170
Mouth and Deeds of the Beast Out Of the Sea <i>verses 5-10</i>	175
The Beast Coming Up Out Of the Earth <i>verses 11-18</i>	180

Revelation 14	186
The Song of the One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand <i>verses 1-6</i>	186
Messages from Three Angels <i>verses 7-13</i>	191
The Two Harvests of the Earth <i>verses 14-20</i>	196
Revelation 15	201
The Sea of Glass and the Seven Angels <i>verses 1-8</i>	201
Revelation 16	208
The First, Second and Third Bowl <i>verses 1-4</i>	208
Testimony, the Fourth and Fifth Bowl <i>verses 5-11</i>	211
The Sixth and Seventh Bowl <i>verses 12-21</i>	216
Revelation 17	221
The Great Harlot <i>verses 1-4</i>	221
The Mystery Explained <i>verses 5-10</i>	227
The Kings and the Beast Hate the Harlot <i>verses 11-18</i>	232
Revelation 18	236
Come Out Of Her, My People <i>verses 1-10</i>	236
The Wealth of Babylon Destroyed <i>verses 11-24</i>	243
Revelation 19	249
The Marriage of the Lamb <i>verses 1-8</i>	249
Heaven Opened <i>verses 9-15</i>	255
The Beast and the Antichrist Are Judged <i>verses 16-21</i>	260
Revelation 20	263
Satan Thrown Into the Abyss <i>verses 1-3</i>	263
Thousand Years Peace and the Last Rebellion <i>verses 4-9</i>	266
The Great White Throne – the Lake of Fire <i>verses 10-15</i>	272
Revelation 21	278
A New Heaven and a New Earth <i>verses 1-4</i>	278
All Things New <i>verses 5-10</i>	283
The Holy City, the New Jerusalem <i>verses 11-18</i>	288
God Almighty and the Lamb Are Its Temple <i>verses 19-27</i>	293

Revelation 22	299
A River of the Water of Life <i>verses 1-7</i>	299
My Reward Is With Me <i>verses 8-14</i>	304
Yes, I Am Coming Quickly <i>verses 15-21</i>	309
Other Publications	314

Foreword

Dear friend,

It's my pleasure to present to you the twelfth and final volume of the 'Rock Solid series'.

This last volume, how could it be otherwise, is about the Bible book *Revelation*. In the previous books of the Bible the truth of God has come to you in the form of letters. In these letters it is about the church of God which according to her nature and calling belongs to heaven. In *the book of Revelation* it is about the earth and how God comes to His purpose with it. In all God's acts you see the Lord Jesus as the Center. It is all about Him, about His future. Everything is seen and judged in the light of the relationship to Him.

Read this book prayerfully and your love to the Lord Jesus will increase enormously. You will get more and more attached to Him and at the same time the effect will be that you will become disconnected from the world more and more.

Here are a few practical tips that might help you:

1. Provide yourself with a good translation of the Bible. Some good translations are the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), the *New King James Version* (NKJV), the *New Translation* by J.N. Darby (JND) and the *King James Version* (KJV), preferably with the New Scofield word updates. I will be using the NASB, with permission granted by The Lockman Foundation on February 10, 2016 when referencing and quoting Scripture unless I note otherwise.
2. I tried to write this book in a way that encourages you to use the Bible. At the beginning and end of each section, I have listed the Bible verses pertaining to that section. I encourage you

to read those verses before and after reading the section. It would be a good idea to keep your Bible open to those verses so you can easily refer to them.

3. Self-discipline is very important. You have to be willing to discipline yourself to take time to understand the Bible better. I suggest that you read the Bible at a set time that's best for you.

To help you with this, I have divided this book into fifty-seven sections. I also indicated with a 'V' which verse is explained. Read one section daily. If you do, then in less than eight weeks, you will have gained a little more insight into this impressive book of the Bible.

The whole Bible is a splendid book and it's my prayer that you'll get this impression in an increasing way.

I wish you God's blessing!

Middelburg, Netherlands, English edition 2016

© Tel. (0031) 0118 638458

@ E-mail: ger.de.koning@gmail.com

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen	-	Genesis
Exo	-	Exodus
Lev	-	Leviticus
Num	-	Numbers
Deu	-	Deuteronomy
Jos	-	Joshua
Jdg	-	Judges
Rth	-	Ruth
1Sam	-	First Samuel
2Sam	-	Second Samuel
1Kgs	-	First Kings
2Kgs	-	Second Kings
1Chr	-	First Chronicles
2Chr	-	Second Chronicles
Ezra	-	Ezra
Neh	-	Nehemiah
Est	-	Esther
Job	-	Job
Psa	-	Psalms
Pro	-	Proverbs
Ecc	-	Ecclesiastes
Song	-	Song of Songs
Isa	-	Isaiah
Jer	-	Jeremiah
Lam	-	Lamentations
Eze	-	Ezekiel
Dan	-	Daniel
Hos	-	Hosea
Joel	-	Joel
Amos	-	Amos
Oba	-	Obadiah
Jona	-	Jonah

Mic - Micah
Nah - Nahum
Hab - Habakkuk
Zep - Zephaniah
Hag - Haggai
Zec - Zechariah
Mal - Malachi

New Testament

Mt - Gospel of Matthew
Mk - Gospel of Mark
Lk - Gospel of Luke
Jn - Gospel of John
Acts - Acts of the Apostles
Rom - Letter to the Romans
1Cor - First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor - Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal - Letter to the Galatians
Eph - Letter to the Ephesians
Phil - Letter to the Philippians
Col - Letter to the Colossians
1Thes - First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes - Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim - First Letter to Timothy
2Tim - Second Letter to Timothy
Tit - Letter to Titus
Phlm - Letter to Philemon
Heb - Letter to the Hebrews
Jam - Letter of James
1Pet - First Letter of Peter
2Pet - Second Letter of Peter
1Jn - First Letter of John
2Jn - Second Letter of John
3Jn - Third Letter of John
Jude - Letter of Jude
Rev - Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

ASTERISKS * are used to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern us-age. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Book of Revelation

Introduction

The book of *Revelation* was probably written about the year 90 by the evangelist and apostle John. This book is addressed to seven churches in Asia (*Rev 1:11*) in the first place, but is also intended for the whole Christian church.

Revelation takes an own, unique place among the twenty seven scriptures which the New Testament contains. After the five historical books and the twenty one letters in which also prophetic portions appear, *Revelation* is in total a prophetic book (*Rev 1:3*). This last book of the Bible reveals our *future* and is in that way a nice counterpart of the first book of the Bible that declares our *origin*.

In *Revelation* it is about the future of the Lord Jesus. And His future determines the future of the world, of Israel, of the church and of the devil and his henchmen. In this Bible book the Lord Jesus is in the center. It is about His Person, about His redemption work, His resurrection, His glorification and His return.

This book is the great terminus where all trains that have started to run in the Old Testament, reach their final destination. Somebody has found at least two hundred and seventy eight verses, which calculation I have not checked, among the four hundred and four verses that this book counts, that is to be connected in one way or another with a verse or a portion of the Old Testament. That is of course not strange when you consider that Christ is also the subject of the prophecy of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament we are being pointed ahead to Him as the One Who is coming. In the book of *Revelation* He has come and as the revealed Christ He is the Center of all events.

It is the book of contrasts. You will discover how the moral powers like light and darkness and good and evil stand against one another. In the same way God and Christ stand on the one hand and satan on the other hand against one another. Other contrasts are people who are saved and people who are not saved, and also holy and unholy angels. All these persons are actors who are performing on the world stage. You will see how the stage changes and transforms from time to eternity and vice versa. The decor of the exhibition is shaped by heaven and earth and the abyss and the lake of fire.

Everything is supported by music and songs and other expressions of feelings. The song of the victory and the 'woe' cry of the defeated cause happiness and also sadness. But the outcome is that God triumphs and that the glories of the Lord Jesus in both the millennial kingdom of peace and in eternity shine in undimmed and immortal beauty and splendor.

There are various possibilities to subdivide this book. The simplest and clearest one is supplied in the book itself and to be found in *Revelation 1:19*. It is a subdivision in three parts:

1. what you have seen (*Rev 1:1-20*),
2. what is (*Rev 2:1-3:22*) and
3. what will happen hereafter (*Rev 4:1-22:21*).

Revelation 1

Purpose of the Book | *verse 1*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated [it] by His angel to His bond-servant John, ...

V1. The first word of the book, “*revelation*”, indicates that something is about to be unveiled. There is something to be made known which formerly was hidden. It is therefore remarkable that many Christians find this book incomprehensible and mysterious. I certainly do not claim that everything is easily explained, but I do say that the events in this book are not obscure, but on the contrary are made even clear. The veil over the future is taken away. You will indeed have to make efforts to figure out in which way the future is being clarified here. Many symbols for instance are being used. But your attempts in order to understand this portion of God’s Word as well will be truly rewarded when you continually remind yourself that God found it the best way to inform you about His thoughts concerning the future.

If you only read this first verse carefully for a moment and allow that to sink in, you will see that it is full of instructions for understanding the contents of this book. It says that it is the revelation “*of Jesus Christ*”. That means that Jesus Christ is the One, Who reveals or makes known (*cf. Gal 1:12*). He acts. At the same time it is of course also true that the revelation refers to Him, which means that He is the One Who is being revealed. He is both the Center and the Executor of God’s counsels.

Then you read that “*God gave Him*” that revelation. That means that the Lord Jesus is seen here as Man, Who has taken a place of dependence. He receives everything out of the hands of God. He is so truly Man, that it is written of Him that He as Man does not know when the fulfillments of the things will be taking place (*Mk 13:32*). Here you stand before an inconceivable mystery of God and Man in one Person.

Then John writes about the purpose of the revelation and that is “*to show His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place*”. The bond-servants here are in the first place the prophets (*Rev 10:7; 11:18*), but they also represent the believers in a general sense (*Rev 7:3; 19:5; 22:3; Rom 6:19-22*). In order to be able to see the things to come and to take them in, you need to have the mind of a bond-servant. Contrariwise it will, if you know the things to come, make you a better servant. You will be serving with insight in accordance to the great plans of God, with a view to the church, Christianity, Israel and the world.

The word “*show*” actually plays an important role in the *Revelation*. Now God continually ‘shows’ things to John and John in his turn passes on what has been ‘shown’ to him. The aim of this book is to *show* that the judgment is coming. It will “*soon*” take place or ‘in a hurry’, which is rapidly, quickly.

You may say that it is not that bad, for it is nearly two thousand years ago that this has been written down and it still has not happened. But don’t be mistaken. This word remains in force, for time doesn’t count for God and for the faith (*Psa 90:4; 2Pet 3:8*). And it “*must*” happen. You may say that there is mention here of a Divine must. God is not only the *omniscient* God Who tells what is going to happen, He is also the *omnipotent* God Who makes things happen the way He wants it.

In order to reveal His plans with the world and most of all to reveal His Son, He has used angels. Angels have actually been used more often by God as mediators (*Acts 7:38; Gal 3:19*). That God uses angels indicates that there is a distance between Him

and John to whom He gives His messages. This goes even more for those to whom John in his turn has to pass on those messages.

Formerly John received messages from the Lord while he was lying on His bosom (*Jn 13:23-26*). That indicates confidentiality. However, John is not the apostle here, but the prophet. Prophets speak to God's people when decay takes place. They warn for running the risk of judgment. John is the last one in the chain of five links through which the revelation of God reaches His bond-servants:

1. the revelation comes *from* God;
2. is *of* Jesus Christ;
3. *by* His angel;
4. *to* John;
5. *to* His bond-servants.

The revelation "*was communicated*" or "*was signified*" (NKJV) to John. This expression is typical for this book. It is derived from the word 'sign'. John often receives the messages on the things to come by the means of signs or symbols, through which he gets to see what must take place. Something like that we see in *Matthew 13* where the Lord makes use of parables. He uses them to teach. He tells His disciples why He does that and says that through His explanation they will be able to understand the deeper meaning of these parables, while it will remain hidden for the mass of people (*Mat 13:10-17,34-35*).

In this book you will see that the symbols which are used especially are borrowed from nature: the celestial bodies (the sun, the moon, the stars), the natural phenomena (e.g. the wind, lightning), the world of plants (e.g. trees, grass), the world of animals (e.g. the lamb, the grasshopper), the world of men (e.g. the mother and the child, the harlot and the bride), the world of culture (musical instruments, agricultural tools). Also the many numbers

that appear in *Revelation* are often symbolic (two, three, three and a half, four, five, six, seven, eight, ten, twelve, twenty-four, forty-two, one hundred and forty four, six hundred and sixty six, one thousand, twelve hundred and sixty, sixteen hundred).

The explanation of it does not leave you to your imagination. The symbols are explained

1. by the book itself,
2. by the context of the book and
3. by the use of it in the Old Testament.

That does not mean that there is always one unambiguous explanation for each symbol. It also happens that certain matters or events are no symbols, but that they are to be taken literally.

All in all, by opening this book to read it we stand at the beginning of an exciting discovery journey. Let us do that with the humble mind of people who are aware that the omnipotent God wants to share His plans with us. Let us at the same time pray that what He reveals to us will have the effect that we put our life at His disposal.

Now read Revelation 1:1 again.

Reflection: Thank the Lord that He wants you to be involved with His future plans and ask Him to help you to live in accordance to that.

Recipients, Blessing and Praise | *verses 2-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, [even] to all that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood — 6 and He has made us [to be] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him [be] the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

V2. The revelation of which John is a witness and wherein he involves you, is no fabrication of himself. It comes to you with all the authority of the Word spoken by God. What John bore witness to about the coming events, comes from the mouth of God. As an extra emphasis it is added that what God has said is completely covered by “*the testimony of Jesus Christ*”. The Lord Jesus testifies of what God has spoken.

“*All that he saw*” is the contents of this whole book. Everything that John has seen and what he has written in this book is therefore the Word of God, while the testimony of Jesus Christ indicates the prophetic nature of it. After all it is about the revelation, the process of Him becoming visible in the world.

V3. There is a special blessing attached to the reading and the reading to others of this book and to the hearing of the contents of it: you are counted to be “*blessed*”. No one can ‘read’ it and ‘hear’ it without being blessed. What you read and hear are messages about future events that are inspired word for word.

Beside reading and hearing it is also important to “*heed the things which are written in it*”. “*To heed*” means that you treasure these things in your heart, so that they may have an influence in the practice of your life too. After all your life is being guided out of your heart (*Pro 4:23*). The call to keep returns one more time at the end of the book (*Rev 22:7*). What is written in this book is therefore stuck between these two calls.

As a matter of fact, that it is “*written*”, means that it is of lasting value. It is always possible to be read in order to see what must yet take place and it can also be read to check on what is happening around you. You therefore have a perfect manual of the future in your hands. I would like to advise you to often consult it for “*the time*” that everything will be brought to a decision “*is near*”. The Lord Jesus is about to appear and to judge.

V4. John is the one to write this book. The Lord Jesus said of him that he would remain concerning his ministry, till He comes (*Jn 21:22*). That means that John also has a ministry regarding the future. He already achieves that ministry in a sense when he speaks in his first letter about the antichrist and the return of Christ and the decay that was already showing up. But the full achievement of it we find in this Bible book *Revelation*.

He writes the book “*to the seven churches that are in Asia*”. The mention of the number “*seven*” is not insignificant. The number seven represents perfection. The seven churches represent the whole church. Still there are seven different churches. You will see it better when we will be studying the *chapters* 2 and 3. That means that the whole church has manifested itself in different ways on earth.

You must have noticed in the letters which Paul has written to various churches that local churches are different from each other. That variety is not only to be seen in the different local churches, but also in the various periods of the existence of the church on earth. You recognize that directly when you only think of how the church was at the beginning and how the church is today. In that way there are more differences in the development of the church.

All those different churches may learn a lot from one another and we also can learn a lot from it. That's why it is so wonderful that in God's Word we have this writing of John to them.

It is also lovely to see that the blessing of "grace" and "peace", which you can remember from the letters of Paul, is also wished by John here to the seven churches. "Grace" is the source of all blessing, it is the unmerited favor of God, which you receive just on the basis of Who He is. If you realize that God deals with you in grace, the result will be that you will go your way with "peace" in your heart, whatever the circumstances.

Still it differs from the letters of Paul when it is about the question from Whom you get the blessing. In those letters the blessing comes from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Here it is "from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne". That is totally fitting with this book. Here you find God as He is presented in the Old Testament: as Jahweh, the God of the covenant, the God of faithfulness to His covenant. Then what is said next is not firstly 'Who was', but "Who is". That means that He is seen as the "I AM WHOM I AM" (Exo 3:14). But He is also the One "Who was". That is the God of the past, Who has always taken care of His people and the whole earth. He is also the One "Who is to come", for He is also the God of the future.

Then in the blessing "the seven Spirits" are mentioned. This is the Holy Spirit, but as the Spirit of power through Whom God will execute the judgments from His throne. The number seven refers to the variety and the perfection with which the Lord Jesus will execute the judgments in the power of this Spirit at His return (cf. Isa 11:2). Therefore the attention is drawn to the "throne" of God, which emphasizes that it is about reigning and the exercise of power.

V5. Finally grace and peace are wished "from Jesus Christ". Just like with the seven Spirits, to Whom is added "Who are before His throne", also something is added to the name of Jesus Christ. You

can actually say that three titles of Him are mentioned which all are in relation with the earth. He was

“the faithful witness” to God in the past on earth (1Tim 6:13), from the womb to the cross (Jn 18:37). He has always been faithful. The church was also meant to be like that, but she failed and still fails to do so.

He is also

“the firstborn of the dead”. He is that in the present time, since His death and resurrection (Acts 26:23; Col 1:18). ‘Firstborn’ means that He is the highest in the order of rank in the realm of the resurrection.

Thirdly He is

“the ruler of the kings of the earth”. He is that also now, but He will be that openly in the future; that’s how He will be revealed (Psa 89:27).

When He is presented like that, the church spontaneously responds to that. That will be your response too. The heart of each who loves Him agrees to it that He *“loves us”*. He has loved and still loves us. Isn’t it great that He, Who is emphatically presented as the Judge in this book, is the One Who loves you? His love has been especially expressed in the way that He *“released us from our sins by His blood”*. That meant to Him that He had to enter into death, for only His blood could redeem you from your sins. To you it means that all future judgments will pass you by completely, for He has redeemed you once and for all. Isn’t that a reason to praise Him?

V6. But He has done more than everything He did regarding the past, which was necessary to liberate us from the judgment. He has taken our sins away in order to make us to be something. He namely *“has made us [to be] a kingdom, priests to His God and Father”*. What you have become is what He has made you to be. There is absolutely no achievement from your side. You owe everything

to Him. It is nothing more than great grace that you may partake of His government. As a redeemed person you receive, together with all believers, a royal dignity together with Christ, *“the ruler of the kings of the earth”*, so that you also are exalted above the kings of the earth (*1Pet 2:9; Exo 19:6*).

Thereby you are also made a priest before His God and Father. Everything that the Lord Jesus did He did with a view to the honor of His God and Father. You are made a person who is allowed to praise and worship in God’s presence (*Rev 4:10; 5:9; Heb 13:15; 1Pet 2:5*). You can do that now already. When the Lord Jesus will take over His royal majesty, you will be allowed to be a means of blessing for those who are enduring hardships on earth and who go to God with their suffering. You then can bring ‘prayers of saints’ before God (*Rev 5:8*).

To Him be the glory for everything that He has done for you. Everything you have become reflects His glory. While man always did all things for his own glory and in his own strength, the Lord Jesus did everything to the glory of God from Whom He drew all power as a Man. As a Man He lived from all the words that came from the mouth of God (*Mat 4:4*). What characterized Him as a Man and what He has achieved, will be seen and rejoiced in forever. There is nothing more left for you to do than to wholeheartedly agree with the *“amen”* with which this praise ends.

Now read Revelation 1:2-6 again.

Reflection: What do you learn here about the Word of God and about the Lord Jesus?

John On Patmos | verses 7-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, AND EVERY EYE WILL SEE HIM, EVEN THOSE WHO PIERCED HIM; AND ALL THE TRIBES OF THE EARTH WILL MOURN OVER HIM. SO IT IS TO BE. AMEN. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." 9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance [which are] in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like [the sound] of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send [it] to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; ...

V7. With a "behold" John draws the attention to Him Who will appear in person. This is a great event to which the whole book works towards. It is told in a way that we not only shortly, but now already have to be looking forward to it. You may call it the 'prophetic present tense'. It indicates how real and close the events are, not only for John in those days, but also for you today.

The Lord Jesus will appear "*with the clouds of heaven*" (Dan 7:13) and also "*on the clouds of heaven*" (Mat 24:30) that as it were will form His throne. So it is not about His coming to take up the church, which you may call His first coming, for that will take place "*in the clouds of heaven*", and will not be visible for everyone (1Thes 4:17; cf. Acts 1:9; Lk 21:27). That will surely be the case at His second coming. Everyone will be brought face to face with Him, without exception.

Of all those people John mentions a certain category, namely "*those who pierced Him*". This primarily refers to the Jews (Zec 12:10), but

it also refers to the Gentiles, for a Roman soldier pierced Him (*Jn 19:34*). They who committed this deed of contempt will be full of fear when they behold Him. It will cause an enormous mourning among the Jews (*Zec 12:10-14*), which will be the beginning of their conversion. This is the way it shall happen, “so it is to be. Amen”. ‘So it is to be’ or ‘yes’ is the Greek confirmation and ‘amen’ the Hebrew version of it, through which for both Gentiles and Jews it is indicated that God’s Word is determined.

V8. Then the One Who will come, makes Himself to be heard. He says Who He is: “*I am the Alpha and the Omega.*” The alpha and the omega are the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet. In these two letters all the other letters are embedded. In this name you also see that He is ‘the Word of God’. What He has started as the Alpha He will accomplish as the Omega. He Who shall come and is speaking here is the Lord Jesus. He is ‘the first and the last’ (*Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13*). That is also what Jahweh, the name of God in the Old Testament, says of Himself (*Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12*), which is again another proof that the Lord Jesus is Jahweh.

He Who is speaking is ‘Jahweh Elohim’ or “*the Lord God*”, which is the Lord Jesus. He is the One “*who is*”, the eternal Being One. He “*was*” and will always be. He is also the One “*who is to come*”. He is the Almighty Who will realize all His promises and plans. He Who was pierced, when He as the weak of God was hanging on the cross, is Jahweh Himself, “*the Almighty*” Who has all power in the universe and Who is about to accept that power. This is a comfort for His people, because He carries and supports them with His omnipotence. At the same time it is a threat for His enemies, because He will judge them and repay everyone according to his works.

V9. No one else than John addresses his readers. He doesn’t present himself as an apostle, but as a “*brother*” among the brethren (in his gospel he calls himself a “*disciple*”, *Jn 21:24*, and in his letters an “*elder*”, *2Jn:1; 3Jn:1*). He also calls himself “*fellow partaker in the tribulation*” from which we derive that he shares the same fate as his fellow believers who also had to endure suffering under the emperor of Rome. Tribulation goes together with faith. It is

the path along which you must go to enter the kingdom of God (*Acts 14:22*).

The time to reign has not come yet. You still have to persevere, right through all kinds of tribulations and tests, till the moment comes to reign. When the Lord Jesus returns, it will be the moment. While considering that you may also bear in mind that the Lord Jesus is also waiting for the establishment of the kingdom.

John speaks about “Jesus” here, which is the Name of His humiliation and a reminder of His sojourn on earth. When He was on earth He also showed that perseverance. His testimony towards Pilate, when he asks Him whether He is the King of the Jews, sounds as follows: “*But as it is, My kingdom is not from this realm*” (*Jn 18:36*). Pay attention to the words ‘but as it is’. It shows that during His presence on earth He did not establish His kingdom. That was and is still now also, to come.

John testified from God’s Word of that kingdom. The Roman ruler saw that as a threat for his own kingdom and position and did not approve of it (*see and cf. Acts 17:7*) and therefore expelled him to “*the island called Patmos*”. John did not speak what men loved to hear, otherwise he would not have been in captivity now. He was ‘illiterate’ (*Acts 4:13*), but he spoke the Word of God with power and authority. In his preaching he testified of Jesus, Who is the center of all God’s thoughts and plans.

V10. There John was sitting, isolated and lonesome on an island. He is not voluntarily there, to have a break, but as a captive. He was exiled to that place, without any prospect of release. It doesn’t look like that he could expect a visit from time to time. But it doesn’t mean that the Lord was not with him and that the Spirit could not use him. On the day of the Lord (literally: the day pertaining to the Lord, the Sunday, *cf. 1Cor 11:20*) he was caught up in a vision through the power of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Acts 10:10; 22:17*). The day of the Lord is the first day of the week, the day of His resurrection (*Jn 20:1, 19, Acts 20:7; 1Cor 16:2*). On this day John receives all information and visions that are written in this book.

But before he *sees* something, he *hears* something behind him. It is as if he is standing with his back to the churches, while he is looking at the kingdom in the expectation that it will come. But the Lord has not finished yet with His church on earth. He has to deal with it first. He calls John to look, so that he has to turn and must pay attention to what the Lord is paying attention to.

What he hears is “*a loud voice like [the sound] of a trumpet*”. It is not the voice of the good Shepherd, Who calls His sheep by name. He heard that voice when he walked with the Lord Jesus through Israel (*Jn 10:11, 14*). But now he hears the voice of an ominous Judge, of Someone Who speaks out and executes the judgment.

V11. The voice of the Judge commands John to write down in a book everything that he sees. That implies that he must sharply observe and take in. Then he has to record all of his observations in writings, so that they will be preserved for the next generations. However, the book is not only meaningful for the next generations, but also for the seven churches, mentioned by name in Asia Minor, in the western part of present Turkey.

There were still more churches in Asia Minor. But the Holy Spirit of God has elected these seven because they are, as a matter of fact, a reflection of the church in its whole through the ages. That’s why you read “*the*” seven churches. It is the seven certain churches to which this book is to be sent. That there are seven, shows that it is about something complete. It is about the complete history of the church on earth. Also the order is not random, but of certain importance. You will see that when we will take a closer look at these seven churches in the next two chapters (*Rev 2-3*). At the same time each church is also mentioned separately, which you can derive from the word “*to*” which stands before the name of each church.

V12. When John heard the voice and what it has said, he turns. He wants to see the voice that spoke with him. Of course you cannot see a voice, but the voice is of a person. That Person is the Lord Jesus. He is the Word. When John turns he first sees “*seven golden lampstands*” and then only he sees the Son of Man. Isn’t it like how

it happens today, that we first see the believers and then only, as it were through them, the Lord Jesus?

John notices that the lampstands are of gold. Gold represents the glory of God. A lampstand is meant to be spreading light. Therefore, the fact that the churches are compared with golden lampstands means that it is the intention of local churches to be spreading Divine light.

Each local church ought to display in her environment Who God is. She can only do that by taking His Word into consideration. By listening to the truth of God's Word and obeying it, the light will be spread in the darkness. Darkness rules everywhere in the world and it covers more and more places in Christianity. You will see how it happened that the light of the lampstand is getting weaker and weaker and that even a situation can arise that a lampstand is taken away.

Now read Revelation 1:7-12 again.

Reflection: What is the reason for John being on Patmos?

In the Middle of the Lampstands | verses 13-20

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...; **13** and in the middle of the lampstands [I saw] one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. **14** His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. **15** His feet [were] like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice [was] like the sound of many waters. **16** In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. **17** When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, **18** and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. **19** Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. **20** As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

V13. After having seen the golden lampstands, John sees that One is standing in the middle of them. John recognizes Him as no one else than the "Son of Man", that is the Lord Jesus (see also Dan 7:9-13). He is standing here – figuratively – in the middle of the churches, in order to judge them. That is to be derived from the features that are then being observed by John. You find those features also in *Daniel 7*, but then as visions of the Ancient of days, that is God Himself. That proves once more that the Lord Jesus is God. The wearied Man at the well at Sychar (*Jn 4:6*) and the Creator Who "does not become weary or tired" (*Isa 40:28*) is the same Person.

The first characteristic of the Son of Man is that He is "clothed in a robe reaching to the feet". He is not the Servant here Who lays down His garments to serve His disciples as a humble servant (*Jn 13:4*;

cf. Lk 12:35). It is the garment of the Judge. The Lord Jesus judges the church in relation to her responsibility which she has as a testimony on earth (cf. 1Pet 4:17).

The second characteristic is that He is “girded across His chest with a golden sash”. His “chest” speaks of love. ‘Gold’ speaks of Divine glory. The “sash” speaks of serving. From this you can derive that He also as a Judge serves in love.

V14. He carries out His service as a Judge honorably and with wisdom and in accordance with the purity of heaven. That is what the next characteristic refers to: “His head and His hair were white like white wool” (Pro 16:31; 20:29).

The following characteristic, “His eyes were like a flame of fire”, indicates that He sees through everything and tests everything that is not in accordance with His holiness. Nothing can remain hidden from this flame of fire. This is how He tests the entire Christianity of which the seven churches are an image.

V15. That “His feet [were] like burnished bronze” means that the standard of His judgment is His own walk. What He can expect of the spiritual condition of the church is that she measures up to what He has shown on earth in His walk and devotion towards God. “Bronze” is an image of a righteousness that can stand the fire of God’s judgment (see Num 16:37-39), because there is nothing that should be consumed by the fire. Everything is in accordance with God.

While He exposes Himself like that “His voice [was] like the sound of many waters” (Eze 43:2; Psa 93:4). Therein the power of His word is being revealed, with which He will speak out the verdict. The power of His voice will prevent any possible reply. Nobody will dare to dispute His verdict.

V16. He also has “in His right hand ... seven stars”. What the seven stars mean is explained in verse 20. They are the seven angels, which means the responsible ones in each of the seven churches.

The Lord Jesus has them in His right hand, which is the hand of His power. That indicates that He has the control over them.

The “*sharp two-edged sword*” that came “*out of His mouth*” (*Isa 11:4; Rev 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21*), is an image of the Word of God (*Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17*). Christ judges the churches on the ground of this Word, which they have known, but have ignored in so many ways. The Divinely revealed Word is the standard according to which everyone will be judged (*Jn 12:48*). It will have to be acknowledged by everyone.

The description of His Person is concluded with a description of “*His face*”. That is “*like the sun shining in its strength*” (*see Mat 17:2; Acts 26:13; Mal 4:2*). The sun places everything in the light, nothing remains hidden. His countenance is the same countenance, at which people have been spitting (*Mat 26:67*).

V17. When John has seen Him in His full majesty, he falls “*at His feet like a dead man*”. The sight is such a horrible sight, that he almost dies. When the Lord was on earth John knew the familiar relation with Him and was reclining on His bosom (*Jn 13:23-25*). But now he sees the Lord as he has never seen Him before.

Then the Lord “*placed His right hand*” on him. That expression doesn’t only mean that the Lord touches him and in that way comforts and encourages him. The touch of the hand has life giving power. To John it is a remembrance that this Judge is His Redeemer. To you it implies the encouragement that you have nothing to fear of Him, Who will judge Christianity, if you know Him and love Him.

That is also said by the Lord. The words “*do not be afraid*” from His mouth have been a great comfort and encouragement for the believers through all ages. He points to Himself as “*the first and the last*”. As “*the first*” He is before everything and above everything and the origin of all things; everything comes forth from Him. As “*the last*” He will have the last word. Why should you fear? He is the rock of strength for the wearied feet and for the heaviest burdens of life.

V18. He is also "*the living One*". This is the large distinction between the true God and all false gods. He has life in Himself. He is able to give it to others too (*Jn 5:21,24-26*). In order to be able to do that *He* has been into death. Therefore John did not need to become as a dead. Death could not hold Him, for in His death He took away everything through which death had power.

Death has lost its power and right and will never ever be able to have any control over Him. He is "*alive forevermore*". The victory is complete and eternal. Through His victory He also has full power over "*death and ... Hades*", which is demonstrated in the possession of "*the keys*". The Lord Jesus can dispose of death and hades as He sees fit (*Heb 2:14; Rev 20:14*).

He had not been left in the grave and His body was not allowed to see corruption (*Acts 2:27-28*). The glory of the Father has raised Him out of it (*Rom 6:4*), because the Father was glorified by Christ and His work and in that way all God's holy demands were fulfilled. Therefore, on that ground death and hades have no power anymore over everyone who believes (*Mat 16:18*).

V19. After the encouraging words of the Lord, John receives the order to write down some things. It is an order in three parts. In these three parts you have the basic division of the book at the same time. He had to write down *the things which he has seen* and *the things which are* and *the things which will take place after these things*.

1. "*The things which you have seen*", you already read in the previous verses: the Lord Jesus as a Judge in the middle of the seven lampstands.
2. "*The things which are*", refers to the *chapters* 2 and 3. There the situation is described of the seven churches in Asia which are mentioned in *verse 11*. That was the present time for John. In the broader sense it is the whole period of time of the church that began on the day of Pentecost in *Acts 2* and which will stop at the rapture of the church.

3. *"The things which will take place after these things"*, starts with chapter 4:1 and ends with the last verse of the book. This third part totally lies in the future. Those are things that are to be taking place after the things that we still experience in the present dispensation.

V20. Before the Lord Jesus addresses the seven churches He first gives an explanation of *"the seven stars"* and of *"the seven golden lampstands"*. This is necessary, for it refers to a *"mystery"*. A 'mystery' is something that is a secret and is hidden until it is revealed. The mystery is now revealed by the Lord Jesus.

The stars are *in His right hand here*, as they are in *verse 16*. He supports them with His power and shows them as it were in their open relationship with Him. Stars shine in the night. They are a symbol for the angels of the seven churches. The word 'angel' literally means 'messenger' or 'representative'. You can also use it in a broader way to represent people. The angels are not cherubs or other spiritual creatures here, but people who are representatives of the churches.

Just like stars lampstands are also intended to spread light in the darkness. The lampstands are a symbol of the whole of each local church, while stars are more a symbol of the individual, out of which the churches exist. You also see that both the individual and the whole are held responsible for spreading the light. In the two following chapters you will see the judgment of this task by the Lord Jesus.

Now read Revelation 1:13-20 again.

Reflection: What impression does the description of the Lord Jesus have on you?

Revelation 2

The Seven Messages | *verse 1*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ...

Introduction. The *chapters* 2 and 3 are extraordinarily interesting. Therefore I first would like to make some introductory remarks before we deal with the text itself. In these two chapters seven churches are being addressed with regard to their actual spiritual condition. It is however clear that the meaning goes beyond what happened then.

It is also clear that you can draw spiritual lessons from their spiritual condition for our time. But these two chapters show in the seven churches also seven sequential stages in the church history, from the beginning of the church until its rapture. They contain a prophetic outline of the history of Christianity, for the whole book is after all prophecy (*Rev 1:3*), thus including both of these chapters.

You read here the history of the church as she has behaved and developed on earth through the ages. Therefore it is all about her responsibility. On other places in the Bible you read about the church as how she has been formed and seen by God. In that case we speak about the church *in accordance to the counsel God*, wherein everything is perfect. That is not the side from which the church is presented in this book. In this book of judgment the house of God, Christianity, is the first to be judged (*see 1Pet 4:17*). This judgment takes place in accordance to the way she has fulfilled her duty to be a testimony (a 'lampstand') in the world.

After the judgment over Christianity, from *chapter 4* the judgment over Israel and over the world follow.

Briefly said you can see in the sequential missives the following periods in the church history:

1. Ephesus (means: lovely) is the time that followed right after the death of the apostles when outwardly a lot of things were in order, but the first love had been abandoned.
2. The time of Smyrna (means: bitterness) corresponds with the time of the Christian persecution by the Romans. Of all these persecutions there were ten that took place under ten Roman emperors (probably the tribulation of 'ten days' refers to that, *Rev 2:10*). That period comprises the end of the second century and the third century.
3. The time of Pergamum (means: fortress) runs from the fourth up to the seventh century. It begins with the acceptance of Christendom by emperor Constantine. Christendom became the state religion. It was advantageous to become a Christian.
4. The time of Thyatira (means: incense or sacrifice) covers the period of the seventh to the sixteenth century. In that period the (roman) church dominates in the person of the pope over the world, the contrary of Pergamum, where the church sought protection from the world. As the dominating church the roman church has been dismissed (for the time being), but as an institution it still exists and it will exist until the coming of the Lord.
5. In the time of Sardis (means: remnant) the protestantism originates from the roman church and exist next to it in the sixteenth century. Also the protestant churches will remain to exist till the coming of the Lord.
6. During the period of the protestantism which is being characterized by a confession without life, the period of Phila-

delphia (means: brotherly love) arises in the nineteenth century. God's grace causes in the dead protestantism a strictly biblically grounded revival movement that separated itself from it. As well as the roman-catholicism and the protestantism also Philadelphia will remain till the coming of the Lord.

7. The final stage of the church history is characterized by Laodicea (means: people's government) which also finds its origin in the nineteenth century. The characteristic of Laodicea is lukewarmness. There is the high confession of Philadelphia, but the Lord is outside. We find that spiritual condition in various churches and denominations that have come forth from the revivals of Philadelphia, but which are today often spiritually worse than Sardis. Also Laodicea remains till the coming of the Lord.

As a conclusion of these introductory remarks on the *chapters 2 and 3*, I would just like to draw your attention to the structure of the messages, which is almost the same in all of them.

1. The command "*write*".
2. A feature of the description of the Lord Jesus from *chapter 1* followed by "*says this*".
3. The judgment "*I know*".
4. The judgment (except for Smyrna and Philadelphia) "*but I have ... against you*".
5. The admonition (threat or exhortation) "*repent*".
6. The appeal "*he who has an ear*".
7. The promise "*to him who overcomes*".

It is also remarkable that in the last four messages the promise is first given and then the appeal follows.

V1. The first message regards the church in Ephesus. This church has played a major and typical role in the early church history:

1. Paul has worked there during his third missionary journey for over three years (*Acts 19*);
2. he has spoken out his most important farewell speech to the elders of Ephesus with a warning for the oncoming decay (*Acts 20:17-35*);
3. he wrote to them his letter with the highest Christian truths (the *letter to the Ephesians*);
4. after Paul also Timothy worked there (*1Tim 1:3*); to him Paul wrote his farewell letter concerning the decay in the last days and about the path of the believer in that time (the *second letter to Timothy*);
5. and now the Lord addresses the church in Ephesus as the first of the seven churches.

John does not receive the order to write to the *church* in Ephesus, but to the *angel of the church*. As I already remarked earlier, angel means 'messenger' or 'representative'. To think of a literal angel will cause more troubles than solutions. As a matter of fact, there is nowhere an example to be found that an angel fails in doing his duty and even less that an angel is called to repent. The angel represents people who are responsible for the condition in the church.

You could think of persons who have a special responsibility in a church, like elders. But that doesn't alter the fact that also the rest of the people have a responsibility. Each member of the church is responsible to ensure that the church is faithful to God's Word and that there is faithfulness in testifying of the truth. You can compare this with the people of Israel and the king who ruled over them. God held the king responsible for the condition of the people, but He did not decrease the guilt of the people in that way.

The Lord Jesus presents Himself here as *“the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand”*. All stars are in His hand. He *“holds”* them in His hand (*cf. Rev 1:16*) and has them ‘in’ His hand (*Rev 1:20*). That indicates power and authority, protection and support to prevent her from total decline, but also to exercise control over her. This authority He exercises in all local churches and He checks up on it whether His authority is taken into consideration in the right way. Therefore He walks *“in the middle of the seven golden lampstands”*. He, as it were, goes around to see whether the lampstands are burning clearly, whether they spread the light which He has kindled.

Now read Revelation 2:1 again.

Reflection: Learn the order of the seven messages by heart and try to relate them to the sequential periods in the church history.

Message For Ephesus | *verses 2-7*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...: 2 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them [to be] false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have [this] against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

V2. The Lord Jesus starts by saying “I know”. He can say that because He is the all-knowing God. It is a great privilege that He knows everything about you (*Heb 4:12; Amos 4:13*). It means that He totally knows you. He is involved with everything you go through, He knows what you think and feel, He knows all your plans (*Psa 139:1-4*). If knowing that makes you restless, there may be something in your life that you do not want Him to be involved with. Then say it to Him.

In the church in Ephesus there are many good things. They are mentioned by the Lord first. He always seeks the good first. When Paul writes his letters to the churches he also often mentions things first which are praise worthy before he deals with things that are not good. The Lord says that He knows the “*deeds*”, the “*toil*” and the “*perseverance*” of the church in Ephesus. He see them doing good works, that they make the best efforts to do so (you may say that ‘labor’ is hard working) and that they also persevere in it. That is a nice recognition.

But there is something missing. You see that when you take a moment to read what Paul could say of the Thessalonians. Regarding them he could speak of “*your work of faith and your labor of love and your steadfastness of hope*” (1Thes 1:3). It is striking that here in Ephesus their deeds do not come forth from the true Christian characteristics of faith, hope and love. The heart is not involved (anymore).

Nevertheless the Lord continues to mention the good things that He sees with them. They also “*cannot tolerate evil men*”. Here you see a significant characteristic of a church. The evil may reveal itself, but it must not remain. It will become clear for each sincere Christian that the holiness of the Lord is not to be united with the welcoming of evil people as if they are Christians. Evil people are people who refuse to break with sin, whether it concerns the practice or the doctrine. Such people have always been there and they still are. When unknown people come into a church they will need to be tested.

In the beginning false apostles have tried to destroy the church with lies. But the Ephesians did not accept everyone who presented themselves as apostles. As watchful as they were, they tested the spirits of those they did not know (1Jn 4:1). They applied the test of the Scripture. Also today that is the touch stone which must be used for each confession.

V3. The Lord has more reasons to praise them. The church has not only started well, she also shows “*perseverance*”. Perseverance is important if you want to grow in your faith, for there is opposition involved. You have to learn to endure that. It goes without saying that it is about opposition for the sake of the Name of the Lord Jesus. As soon as you openly come out for His Name’s sake you will notice that.

The Ephesians also “*have not grown weary*”, which means that they did not think of giving up being a Christian because they began to find it more and more burdensome to fight against the evil or to face resistance for the sake of His Name.

V4. If this is where the description had stopped, you could say that the church in Ephesus, except for one minor issue, was a perfect church. Which church today could compare itself to this? But the 'minor issue' which is missing in *verse 2*, shows that there is something essential missing and that is what the Lord is pointing at when He has to say: "*But I have [this] against you.*"

What He has against them is "*that you have left your first love*". After all positive notices, this word still has to follow. Amongst all outwardly perceivable and also valuable activities there was something inwardly missing. That is what the Lord has against them. It is 'only' one thing, but it determines the real value of all outward activities. The contrast with what is previously said, is therefore major.

Leaving the first love is the origin of all evil in the church, as the following churches will be showing. A lot of various activities may be done in the church, but if the heart is not involved, it misses its real value. A wife may act out of obligation toward a husband and a husband toward a wife and do that in such a way that everything seems to be okay. However, when it is no more than an obligation, while the love of the heart is missing, which was there first, the other will notice that. He or she will then not be satisfied anymore with everything that is done for her or his sake. The Lord always remembers the first love and also reminds His own of it (*Jer 2:2*).

The Ephesians did not *lose* the first love, but they had *left* it. That refers to an activity. The Lord Jesus cannot stand it that a distance arises between Him and His own. Love can only be satisfied by love. He longs for your love, for your 'first love'. The first love is the best or highest love. It indicates the quality of this love. It is a love that only seeks the Person of the Beloved and it submits everything else to it. Works are good, they are even necessary, but they are only valuable when they are done out of love for Him.

V5. In His grace the Lord appeals to repent. That starts with a reminder of the beginning of the deviation, how it was before that time (*cf. Lk 15:17*). In case you have deviated from the Lord you

are to return to the moment where the deviation started and you are to confess that. The Ephesians had fallen from the high position which they had learned to know and enjoy by the means of the letter that Paul wrote to them.

Their conversion would appear from doing "*the deeds*" they "*did at first*". 'First works' are the works that are motivated by the first love. Without the first love there is no mention of first works. Only when a church starts to love Christ again, she can be a real testimony, a real light bearer.

When a church does not give Christ that place, He has to come as a Judge and intervene. He will then take away the lampstand of its place, which means that a church ceases to be a bearer of the light it once had, but now has lost it. Just as the darkness of the islam surrounds the places wherein once the seven churches found themselves, just like that the churches in the Western world run the risk of losing the lampstand and the risk of the darkness. When they do not remain in the goodness of God they will also be cut off (*Rom 11:22*).

V6. The Lord always praises what is worthy of praising, also even after threatening to be taking away the lampstand. He has not forgotten what is said here, but at this moment He wants to mention this separately and in that way emphasize it. It concerns the hatred of a special kind of evil, hateful to both the Lord and the church. Not the people, but the works are hated. Nicolaitans means 'overcomers of the people (or: of the laymen)' which probably indicates that here clericalism (the exercise of power through the clergy) is to be found.

You find this doctrine when people are appointed by people to do spiritual work, for which they get payment and power is being given to them to command (*cf. Acts 20:28; 1Tim 6:5; 1Pet 5:3*), because otherwise the church should not be able to function and disorder would enter. It is a denial of the fact that the church has only one Head and that all believers are 'brethren' (*Mat 23:8*). The Lord hates this doctrine and practice, because it makes 'laymen', 'accursed ones who do not know the law' (*Jn 7:49*) of those who

were bought with a high price. They are being kept ignorant, dependent on the clergy that dictates how the Bible is to be read.

V7. The Lord speaks to the whole, but in the whole He addresses the individual. The point is that you hear personally what the Spirit says to the churches (plural). Also that what is said to the other churches, is to be taken to heart by you. Notice that it is about what *the Spirit* says, not about what the church teaches, to which the demand is attached that each member submits himself to the decisions of the church. Each member of the church is called to acknowledge what is of the Spirit.

The Lord concludes with a promise for "*him who overcomes*". In each church overcoming has got to do with overcoming the evil that is to be found in the church which is concerned. Here overcoming is keeping or returning to the first love, right against everything that has to do with leaving the first love. The promise is that the Lord Himself will feed you from out of Himself (He is the tree of life). For this blessing is indeed kept for each believer, but here it is promised as a special consolation to everyone who on earth has kept his first love or has returned to it, which is the one who has overcome.

If you want to persevere in the first love, it will be a precious promise for you that you once and for all will enjoy of Him without distraction. That will happen "*in the Paradise of God*". A paradise is a garden of delights (*Neh 2:8; Ecc 2:5; Song 4:13; see also Lk 23:43; 2Cor 12:4*). The "*Paradise of God*" is a paradise of which the delights and the splendor could in no way ever be lost because of the unfaithfulness of man. The overcomer will then find himself in the glory of the resurrection and he will perfectly enjoy what he chose for on earth. Is that your purpose too?

Now read Revelation 2:2-7 again.

Reflection: How about your first love for the Lord Jesus? Is it still there?

Message For Smyrna | verses 8-11

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’

V8. John receives the order to write a second message. He must address that “to the angel of the church in Smyrna”. In this message we find no blame (just as in the message to Philadelphia there is none). It is a message full of comfort. This comfort is important because the church in Smyrna has to face tribulation, poverty and blasphemy. Each of those tests separately means a great suffering already. Now they have to face three trials. In such a case comfort is very desirable.

The comfort comes from the Lord Jesus, Who presents Himself as “the first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life” to this tested church. So you see that the Lord presents Himself in accordance to the condition of the church. What He says of Himself here is also related to the features that you have seen of Him in the previous chapter (*Rev 1:8,17-18*). He exposes Himself as the One Who rules over time and eternity, Who has everything in control, even death. Death has no power over Him. He has conquered death, for He has risen from the dead. He is sovereign in the greatest tribulation. This is a great comfort for those who run the risk of dying.

That this message directly follows after that one to the church in Ephesus, implies an important lesson. In the message to the

church in Ephesus you have seen that the Lord has to blame them for leaving the first love. In the message to Smyrna you read about several tests. Therein you could see the love of the Lord Who, through the means of tests, wants to work that His people go back to Him with their heart. He would love to regain their first love. He again wants to be the only One for them on Whom their attention is focused.

The same will happen in your personal life. If you deviate from the Lord, if He does not mean everything anymore for you, He will not let you go. He will through certain (sometimes unpleasant) events make sure that you will ask for Him again. You actually are only happy when you live in fellowship with Him and when your whole life is for Him. He has the right to your life, but it is also a privilege to live for Him, to which also the greatest possible happiness is related.

V9. When there is “tribulation”, “poverty” and “blasphemy” in the life of a church, He knows about it. He is involved. It is not that He allows it and that He is passively watching, but it really matters to Him. In a certain way He even directs it to go like that. You can see that with Job. There satan comes to God and God draws satan’s attention to Job. Then satan challenges God, as it were, by suggesting to Him to test Job for a moment. And God permits satan to attack Job. Therefore God stands behind and beyond the tests that Job has to face. That is how Job also sees it when he says: *“The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away”* (Job 1:21). So Job does not blame satan, but takes everything from the hand of the Lord (Job 2:10).

After all his vain attempts to tempt Job to sin, satan had nothing more to say. But God had not achieved His purpose with Job yet. God used the corruptness of satan to bring Job to the point where He could bless him. Job needed to become aware of the evil in his *heart*. That awareness starts to grow in the conversations that are held from Job 3 and onward between Job and his friends.

Until Job finally, after God had spoken to him, cried out: *“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You; therefore*

I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). Then he comes to the point where God wanted him to be and He showers Job with greater blessings than he had before. Therefore God’s actions are always blessing, even though it seems hard.

The awareness that what happens to you, happens from the hand of your Father Who loves you, gives strength to bear it. The faith knows and holds on to: *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1Ko 10:13).*

Except that the Lord Jesus knows of all trials and that God has His way and loving intentions with them, the Lord Jesus Himself has experienced them all. He Who says this, speaks from experience. Also that is a great comfort to those who have to face suffering and have a lack of everything. It is a special honor to them to be that close to Him and to be like Him that much. You can be like that too when you suffer for His Name’s sake (*Lk 6:22-23; Acts 5:41; Phil 3:10-11*).

With the tribulation also comes poverty. They suffer from a shortage of foodstuff. The Lord knows it. He comforts them by pointing at their *spiritual* riches. You can win the whole world, but what profit is it if you lose or forfeit yourself (*Lk 9:25*)? However, in the midst of the greatest poverty you can have the greatest peace and joy in your soul, when you consider that you have Christ and everything that is in Him. What you have in Christ is yours till eternity. Those treasures are in heaven and are untouchable for people who can rob you from everything on earth or withhold you from provisions.

An extra painful test is the blasphemy of people who confess to be “*Jews*”, which means people who arrogate themselves to be the people of God. Just like in the church in Ephesus (*verse 2*) there are also people here who arrogate themselves to have the true knowledge and claim to be superior to others. They arrogate themselves to be the true people of God with the exclusion of others.

This arrogance occurs during the whole history of Christianity. You also deal with it today. Especially the so-called Christians make it very difficult for the true Christians to remain faithful to the Word of God. Whether it is in regard to be a church or whether in regard to forms of cohabitation, as soon as you allow God's Word to speak, you run the risk of being blasphemed by the nominal Christians. Such people refuse to obey God's Word, but are a mouth piece of satan. Do not let yourself to be intimidated by them, but remain faithful to the Bible.

V10. With the words "do not fear what you are about to suffer" the believers are – and you are – encouraged to face the future without fear, even though that future surely includes suffering. They are being prepared for the suffering in a very comforting way. Tribulation, poverty and blasphemy are awful enough, but worse things will happen. There is not only persecution, but there is also a risk to be caught. The freedom has disappeared; satan gets the power to determine what happens to the believer. It may imply death.

But the Lord has His own purpose with it. The test serves to purify the faith and cleanse the life (1Pet 1:6-7) and not to bring the believer down. Thereby in addition to that He also determines the limit of the tribulation, which means that He determines the duration of the time (cf. Dan 1:12). The tribulation will last for "ten days" and not one day longer. Just like that God also has determined the number of the days of the great tribulation in the end of time, which will last for twelve hundred and sixty days, that is three and a half year, a period that will not be exceeded (Mat 24:21-22; Rev 11:2-3).

In prophetic view there is something remarkable related to the duration of ten days. That has to do with the period of the church history that bears the character of Smyrna, meaning the second and third century of our era. In that period actually ten great persecutions took place. The prophetic application is therefore that the tribulation of ten days refers to ten separate periods in which the believers were oppressed by Roman rulers.

The Lord exhorts His tested church in Smyrna to be faithful until death. He was faithful, wasn't He? As an encouragement He also promises them in advance that they will be rewarded with "*the crown of life*" which He Himself will give to them. The enemy cannot go further than death (*Mat 10:28*). Up to that moment the believer is exhorted to remain faithful. What follows after that is the resurrection, the world of the Resurrected. That's where his attention is drawn to.

VII. Although the whole is addressed, the individual responsibility is being fully maintained. The point is whether you have an ear for it to "*hear what the Spirit says to the churches*". If you have understood the message addressed to the angel in Smyrna and want to heed it, you are an overcomer. You will not allow yourself to be knocked out, but right through all adversary you will remain faithful to Him, Who has bought you with His blood.

The reward for being faithful to the extreme is that you "*will not be hurt by the second death*". "*Will not*" is a strong expression with the power of 'in no thinkable way'. Also this promise is the share of each believer, but also here it is for the believers who are in oppression and are facing death a great encouragement. The enemy has the power (meaning: he is allowed) to kill them by the first death (*Mat 10:28*). But they may know that the second death (which is hell, *Rev 20:14*) has been conquered for them and has no power over them in any way whatever.

Now read Revelation 2:8-11 again.

Reflection: In what way do you have to deal with tribulation, poverty and blasphemy?

 Message For Pergamum | verses 12-17

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit [acts of] immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give [some] of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’

V12. A new period begins in the church history. This period is presented in the church in Pergamum. In Smyrna you have seen the period of the Christian persecutions. After that period a period of rest begins, which starts in the year 313. In that year the emperor Constantine the Great outwardly converts to Christendom and therefore Christendom becomes the religion of the state. It becomes profitable to be a Christian, for that delivers a job, money and a status.

Satan changes his strategy from here. In Smyrna he incited pagan rulers to persecution. There he exposed himself as *“a roaring lion”* (1Pet 5:8). However, his attempts to eradicate Christendom had no effect. In Pergamum he becomes a protector of Christendom and *“disguises himself as an angel of light”* (2Cor 11:14). He makes sure that the church feels at home in the world so that she goes on with focusing on a comfortable residence in the world.

But there is Someone Who sees through this deception. That is “*the One who has the sharp two-edged sword*”, which is the Word of God (*Heb 4:12*). Only through the Word of God you will become aware of the deceptions of satan. If satan does not succeed to defeat you through adversity and trials, he will try to make you become unfaithful to your call as a Christian through luxury and prosperity. He will make his best efforts to cause you to forget that you are related with Christ in heaven, Who was rejected on earth. But by reading God’s Word and the desire to live up to it, you will remain faithful to your heavenly calling.

V13. The Lord begins by saying that He knows that the church dwells “*where Satan’s throne is*”. To *find yourself* where satan’s throne is, is not to be blamed, it is inescapable. But it is indeed to be blamed when you *dwell* there. ‘To dwell’ has the meaning of feeling at home somewhere, not only reside somewhere, but it includes having all your interests there and be bound there.

But how can the church feel at home on the territory where satan’s throne is, where he in fact rules? Satan is “*the ruler of the world*” (*Jn 14:30*). He rules the world in a way that pleases him. The church has been rescued from the world (*Gal 1:4*), in order to be one with the glorified Head in heaven (*Eph 4:15-16*). It is not God’s intention that Christians get established in the world and feel themselves at home. However, because of the deception of satan the church did not hold on to the Head, but has become earthly focused (*see Phil 3:19*).

But still the Lord notices that the church in Pergamum holds on to the basic elements of being a Christian. They have held on to the Name of Christ and have not sworn by the name of Caesar. They also have not given up the faith in Him, the Son of God and the Son of Man, and His redemption work. They have not succumbed under the enmity from the world, which they certainly experienced, in spite of their relation with the world. In what has happened to Antipas they could see that the world has not really changed in its nature, regarding its tolerance for a worldly Christianity.

Being faithful to the Name of the Lord will always arouse the hatred of the world. The Lord calls Antipas *"My witness, My faithful one"*. It is a great tribute to this witness. Antipas means 'against all'. Even though the mass of people let themselves be tempted to a comfortable Christendom, he continued to fight against the flow and testified of his Lord. It is remarkable that the Greek word for witness is *martus*, which means 'martyr'. The voice of Antipas could not to be moved to silence than only through death. This was also the fate of earlier witnesses, like John the baptist (*Mk 6:16-18*), the prophets (*Mat 23:34*) and above all the Lord Jesus (*Rev 1:5*). Antipas was to Christ just like Christ was to God.

V14. After the praise, which the Lord still ascribes to this church, He tells them what He has against them. He blames them for being tolerant towards the false teachers in their midst. Their false doctrine is called *"the teaching of Balaam"*. The corruptness of this doctrine is the deceptive way of mixing the truth with lies and the children of God with the world. Balaam tempted the Israelites *"to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit [acts of] immorality"* (see *Num 25:1-2; 31:16*).

It is a major deception of satan, which is also very successful today. You see that everywhere where worldly principles get entry into the church. 'The doctrine of Balaam' gets entry when you see the church as an organization or company. If you want to make a company prosperous, then structures are to be established, duties to be delegated and consultative group meetings need to be developed. The church has a product that has to be promoted and must be made desirable to 'buy'. The important aspect of the group is brand awareness. Also political influences are of importance.

This evolvment is to be found in the whole church history since Pergamum. The followers and defenders of such an evolvment are called *"adulteresses"* by James (*Jam 4:4*). It is spiritual fornication when the church associates herself with the world. Also eating the sacrifices of idols is to be found in a spiritual sense in Christianity. When I recently visited a church, it shocked me again when I saw people kissing images of saints and respectfully

bowed themselves before these images. The adoration of Mary and the pope is inextinguishable. Countless people give in to and 'eat' sacrifices of idols. Mary and the pope are not consecrated to Christ but to the devil by the (roman) church. The reverence the people ascribe to them is being received by demons.

V15. In the footsteps of the doctrine of Balaam "*the teaching of the Nicolaitans*" is found. That doctrine also got entry in Pergamum, for which the Lord also had to blame them. What in Ephesus only consisted of works and also was hated (*verse 6*), here already had been raised to a doctrine. As it was already noted in *verse 6*, Nicolaitans means 'conquerors of the people' (or: 'conquerors of the laymen'). These conquerors of the people consider themselves to be the clergy and consider the church people to be laymen. By speaking about 'the doctrine of the Nicolaitans' the distinction between clergymen and laymen is raised to an ordinance.

You can hear this distinction already in the names that were accepted by clergymen since the third century in Christianity. In those days the Roman bishop for instance was for the first time called 'papa', from which the familiar word 'pope' has been derived. This evil has deeply established itself in Christianity, it is anchored in it.

V16. After the blames not the judgment follows, but the call "*repent*". The only way you can consider that is that it is a proof of grace. The Lord gives an opportunity for repentance before judging. The church can heed that call by breaking the connections with the world and removing the corrupted doctrines out of their midst. If that does not happen Christ will come and execute judgment over them through His Word.

Evil in the church is always to be condemned on the basis of the Word. If the church does not do that, He Himself will do that. By the way, here you see the distinction between the angel and the faithful ones on the one side ("*I am coming to you*") and the followers of the wrong doctrines on the other side ("*I will make war against them*"). So there are two groups in that church.

V17. Here the call to hear is still being applied before the conquerors are addressed. That means that the whole is addressed, while what is said, is personally to be realized by each believer.

Each believer who obeys the call, is a conqueror. The victory is gained by each one who does not let himself to be drawn by the dangers that threaten this church. Such a person is a real pilgrim who does not allow himself to come under the influence of the ruler of this world.

In order to gain victory in a situation where the church has allowed herself to feel at home in the world and allowed the ideas of the world in her midst, it is necessary that the believer lives in secret with God in the power of the Word. The "*hidden manna*" speaks of the Son of God, Who became Man to give us life and Who has humbled Himself and has entered into all of our circumstances. This bread is eaten by the angels, it gives them the strength for their service (*Psa 78:25*).

The manna was within arm's reach for God's people each morning during the whole journey in the wilderness that lasted forty years. This is how Christ has to be our daily food. When the church in her heart goes back to the world, she feeds herself with 'the garlic and onions of Egypt' (*Num 11:5*). You can compare that with the television soap series and tabloids. They seem to be spicy, seasoned, but have no nutritional value and they stink.

Conquerors are they who like Christ have lived separately from the world. To them 'the hidden manna' is promised by Christ Himself. I think that this means that He, Who in His life on earth was perfectly separated to God, will tell the conqueror about His wondrous way on earth.

The "*white stone*" speaks of approval and appreciation. In the judicial system this meant an acquittal decision. At an election people made their preference for a person known by giving a white stone. The Lord Jesus shall do that with the conqueror in Pergamum. It expresses the personal fellowship between the Lord Jesus and the conqueror.

The “*new name*” on the stone is the name of the believers by which he is written in heaven (*Isa 62:2; 65:15; Lk 10:20; Heb 12:23*). It is a name “*which no one knows but he who receives it*”. That indicates that we, although we enjoy together with others the things in heaven, we also will have a personal bond with and joy in the Lord Jesus, in which another person will not share.

Now read Revelation 2:12-17 again.

Reflection: How about your separation from the world?

Message For Thyatira | *verses 18-29*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 But I have [this] against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit [acts of] immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed [of sickness], and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; 27 AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, AS I ALSO HAVE RECEIVED [AUTHORITY] FROM MY FATHER; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

V18. Prophetically speaking this church shows the worst-case period of church history. In Pergamum the church was under the protection of the world. In Thyatira the church rules over the world. This is the period in which the roman-catholic church has conquered and exercised the world power. It is generally accepted that that period started in the year of 590 with the election of Gregory the Great as the first pope and has lasted to the reformation in the beginning of the sixteenth century. The pope has had such a great influence in that period that no king or prince could

resist him. In this ruling church you see what the Lord Jesus calls in *verse 20* “*the woman Jezebel*”.

The Lord Jesus addresses Thyatira as the Son of God. As the Son of God He is the foundation of the church (*Mat 16:16-18*). That is totally in contrast to the roman catholic-church that claims that Peter is the rock and at the same time the first pope. Every next pope is considered to be the successor of Peter.

As the Son of God the Lord Jesus is also Son over His house (*Heb 3:6*). That is in contrast to ‘the woman Jezebel’ who acts as if the church is her house. In contrast to the evil of the roman church the Son of God presents Himself as the One Who has eyes “*like a flame of fire*”. That indicates His Divine insight with the capability to judge the evil. He will judge everything that is in contrast to His holiness and will do that through the way of perfectly clear righteousness, which is indicated by “*His feet like burnished bronze*”. You have already seen His eyes and feet in *chapter 1:14-15*.

V19. Although the situation in the church in Thyatira is a low point in the church history, the Lord still sees here issues that are appreciative. Actually, His praise is more abundant than the praise that He has for other churches. The reason is that because in such dark times the faithfulness of the faithful ones shines clearer. In the dark Middle Ages there was a great power of faith and devotion with little light with those who wholeheartedly loved the Lord Jesus. The examples that we have are the Waldensians and the Albigensians who resisted the great false doctrines of the powerful church of Rome.

The Lord speaks of “*your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance*”. He mentions each aspect of their effort and devotion separately. He pays attention to every detail of the expression of their faithfulness. He can even say to them “*that your deeds of late are greater than at first*”. He observes an increase with them instead of them breaking down under the pressure.

V20. Then He has to tell them what He has against them. They allow “*the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess*”, that “*she*

teaches and ... leads astray". She represents the strange element in the church that does not belong there, like the historical Jezebel did not belong to the people of God (1Kgs 16:31), but who got the leading role. Thereby she arrogates to be 'a prophetess', which means that she claims to speak words of God. This is exactly like the papacy. The Lord Jesus blames the angel for allowing her. That is a great sin. It is bearing or tolerating what God hates.

Jezebel "*teaches*". That is what the roman church does: she arrogates to have the authority of teaching. The church system, represented in a woman (cf. Zec 5:5-11), claims to have the true doctrine and that she cannot make doctrinal mistakes. She decides the doctrine and life of her confessors. From the arrogated infallible speaking (Ex Cathedra, which is the authoritative speaking from Rome by the pope) she tries to seduce the bond-servants of the Lord and makes them commit apostate deeds. You see here that the doctrine of Balaam that *some* in Pergamum held on to (verse 14), is being taught by this woman, the church *as a whole*, and is brought as a deception. The leaven of Pergamum penetrates further in Thyatira.

V21. The Lord has had patience with her for a long time. But all that patience only exposed the persistence of her wickedness even clearer. There is not only blindness and ignorance, but also a willingness that acts against God. "*She does not repent of her sexual immorality.*" She does not want to forsake the world. Exercising authority 'feels' too good.

V22. Because she does not want to repent the judgment is spoken out to her and it will strike her inevitably. The "*bed*", as a symbol of her sexual immorality and pleasure, will be turned into a symbol of sickness and pain by God. That God 'casts her into a sickbed' means in effect that He delivers her to her corrupt ways.

The judgment of God however, doesn't only come over the roman church. It also comes over "*those who commit adultery with her*". That relates to all churches that combine with her ecumenical pursuit. Also several protestant churches want to share in the influence of the politics of the world and therefore pursue an ap-

proach to the roman church. The roman church will absorb them. The church system that will then arise is called 'Babylon the great' and will be judged by God (*Rev 17-18*). However, for those who have joined her, without being considered to belong to them, there still seems to be an opportunity to repent of her deeds.

V23. The "*children*" of Jezebel are the unbelievers who participate in the system and who are jointly responsible for it. Those are the kindred spirits, people whose spiritual mother is Jezebel. They will be killed by the Lord. Each life will be taken away by Him.

Through this judgment all other churches, that is the rest of Christianity, will know that it comes from God and that He acts with perfect knowledge. They may have felt to be attracted by her doctrine, but because of the death that the Lord caused to her, they will understand that it was corrupt. The judgment of the Lord will be exercised by Him to the extent of the responsibility that each class had that belonged to Thyatira. That applies to the angel, to Jezebel, to her children and to those who have committed adultery with Jezebel.

V24. Now the Lord addresses the remnant in Thyatira. As characteristics He mentions that they have not accepted the false doctrine of the roman church and that they were not involved with "*the deep things of satan*", which refers to the occultism of that church.

The Lord will "*place no other burdens on*" them. He does not yet say here that they have to leave that place. In Sardis He will give them that opportunity. In the end times, in which we live, the call sounds: "*Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues*" (*Rev 18:4*). It indicates that up until the coming of the Lord there will be faithful ones in the roman-catholic church.

V25. What the faithful ones have is not that much. Still, the Lord calls them to hold on to it until He comes. Thyatira, or the roman-catholicism, will therefore exist until the coming of the Lord, which is in contrast to the three previous churches that have had

their time in the prophetic history, which is over. Thyatira will not be replaced by Sardis, but Sardis will be a result of it and will develop further next to Thyatira. Sardis is the protestantism that will remain next to the roman-catholicism.

V26. Also in Thyatira the Lord has a promise for the conquerors. However, He not only speaks about conquerors, but also about keeping His deeds. His deeds are the deeds that were ordered by Him and are done in His power. Therefore there is mention of a twofold condition here. To those who meet that condition He promises that they will share in His government over the nations. Thyatira has ruled and they have not participated in it. Now they are allowed to rule with the Lord. Those who have refused to rule over the world during the absence of the Lord Jesus, will receive the power to rule from Him in the day of His glory (cf. 1Cor 4:8-9).

V27. He who overcomes will reign *“with a rod of iron”*, which is a rod that cannot be broken. His reign means to *“rule”*, that is leading, keeping and protecting, of the nations that have entered into the millennial kingdom of peace.

His kingdom will also consist of dashing the ungodly pagans to pieces. The execution of that judgment is ascribed to the Lord Jesus (Psa 2:9), but is also declared to be of application to those who have overcome in Thyatira. Each authorization of power granted by the Lord Jesus is the authorization of power that He Himself has received from His Father (cf. Mat 11:27; 28:18; Jn 3:35; 5:22,27; 13:3).

V28. As an extra reward the conqueror receives *“the morning star”* out of the hands of the Lord Jesus. The morning star is the Lord Jesus Himself (Rev 22:16). It means that as an encouragement He presents Himself to them in a special way as the One Who comes for His church (2Pet 1:19). Before He rises as *“the sun of righteousness”* (Mal 4:2), He will rise as ‘the morning star’ to lead His church into heaven, amongst which are the faithful ones of Thyatira. They will not be destroyed in the judgment over Babylon.

V29. The message to Thyatira closes with a call to the individual who has an ear to hear and indeed to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. In this case this has extra significance, for it is totally in contrast to what the roman church says: 'Hear what the church says.'

Here this call appears for the first time after the promise to the one who overcomes. In the previous churches each church was called as a whole. Now this call is addressed only to those who overcome. They hear the voice of the Spirit to the churches. The whole of Christianity *cannot* repent anymore. The Spirit is still speaking to the churches. But only of a faithful remnant, not of the whole, is expected that they will hear.

Now read Revelation 2:18-29 again.

Reflection: Which characteristics of 'that woman Jezebel' do you recognize in Christianity?

Revelation 3

Message For Sardis | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep [it], and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

V1. In church history the periods that are presented in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum and Thyatira succeed each other, whereby the succeeding church takes the place of the previous one. Ephesus disappears and Smyrna appears, etc. With Sardis that tendency does not continue. Sardis does not replace Thyatira, but comes forth out of it, while Thyatira remains to exist. You also see that until this day roman-catholicism and protestantism exist next to one another.

As it is said, Sardis comes forth from Thyatira. That happened in the church history in the sixteenth century. Then through God's grace a reformation was established, for which He especially had used Luther and later also Calvin and others. God opened the

eyes of these men to the errors of roman-catholicism. The intention of the reformation was to reform the roman catholic-church, but due to the rejection by the catholic leaders it became a completely new movement.

However, a work that was started as a work of God became more and more a work of men. There is little left from the freshness of the reformation. What had come forth from the roman-catholic church, today we call protestantism. Since 1 May 2004 its greatest representative in the Netherlands is the PKN, the protestant church in the Netherlands. The connection between church and state is reflected in this name, just like it was earlier in the *Dutch* reformed church. That phenomenon is also to be seen in other countries. In such a way there is reference to the *English* state church and the *German* evangelical church.

National churches were formed everywhere. All these churches had their own national organization. The protestantism was made dependent on the national governments. You see here the relation with the world which looks like that of Pergamum. But it is different. In Pergamum the world had control over the whole church. In Sardis the domination of the world (in the form of the state) over the church is a matter of each separate country. This is absolutely far away from God's thoughts about the church, wherein a distinction according to nationality has completely disappeared (*Col 3:11*).

By relating herself to the state and by putting herself under its protection, the church disconnected herself from the biblical model. In the protestantism biblical truths are indeed confessed, but they are being implemented in a purely worldly manner. The church claims to be alive, which name she loves to have, but the Lord Jesus says of her that she is dead. Has all hope gone now?

No, fortunately not. If you see how the Lord Jesus presents Himself to this church, then there is shining hope for everyone who finds himself in such a situation. He has "*the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars*". In this way He ensures the faithful ones in Sardis that in Him there is the real source of life and power that never will fail. The world may have entered where the Spirit of

God had to be ruling, but that does not change anything about the fullness (of which the number 'seven' speaks) of the Spirit that He has. Neither will He in any way give up His right to the churches as light bearers, represented in the 'seven stars'.

Every time when He has presented Himself, He has said to the preceding churches "*I know*" and then noticed something what He could appreciate in that church. Also to Sardis He starts by saying "*I know*". However, after that comes not an appreciative remark, but a disapproving remark. That disapproval regards the appearance of the life that the church confesses to have, while in reality there is no life, but death rules.

Life has gradually faded away from the reformation, which causes it to become like what we now recognize as protestantism. The religion has become more and more a confession led by an organization. Only relatively a few people have life from God. Most of them have shifted to the new doctrine in imitation of their spiritual leaders, without personal exercises of their conscience.

You cannot directly say that there is a wrong doctrine. The confession is orthodox. However, it is a dead form, wherein the life is missing. Also today there are a whole bunch of people who *confess* Christ, but relatively there are just a few who *live* with Christ.

V2. Death may be ruling in general, but there are still souls that the Lord can address. When they hear, there will still be hope for them. The appeal sounds as follows: "*Wake up, and strengthen the things which remain.*" The sleeping believers in Sardis urgently need a wake-up call and they have to take up their place again on the watch bases. They need to become aware again that the church and the world are not to be mixed. Due to the fatal sleeping disease of the believers the world got access in the church. That needs to be changed. Obedience to the call will work that.

When the call will be heeded, it will prevent that the few faithful ones, "*which remain*", in whom a spark of life is left, will give up. The situation is more than critical. The Lord Jesus has to say that the works of the church of Sardis do not meet the demand of God.

In the church history we find this also in protestantism that has arisen from the roman-catholicism. Many issues that are typical for the roman church have been integrated in protestantism.

The result is that regarding the church structures, there has been no return to God's Word, but the people have integrated elements out of the roman church. The people wanted to return to the 'sound doctrine', but because of the mixture with the world it remained to be only a doctrine, for the practice breathed the spirit of the world. Just as little as in the roman-catholicism there was no vivid expectation of the coming of the Lord in protestantism. The religious institutions also remained to lead the church, through which in practice no room was given to the Spirit of God to lead the church.

V3. Then the call comes "*so remember*". They are reminded of the moment when they heard and accepted the gospel and received the legacy of faith (of the Reformation) as a lasting treasure. It refers to the rediscovery of the Scripture and the way to salvation that is received by faith, without works of the law. In case of deviation we are always reminded of the unchangeable Word of God and the immoveable authority of God Himself.

This also goes for your personal life of faith. In case you have deviated therein, when the faith does not live like that, remember then the moment that you heard and accepted the gospel. That will bring you to repentance of your deviation.

When there is no alertness, when the coming of the Lord is not being considered, then that coming will be just as unexpected and undesirable as the coming of a thief (cf. *Mat 24:43-44; 1Thes 5:2,4; 2Pet 3:10*). He then will come to them as He will do to the world. Protestantism has put itself under the protection of the world. It has connected itself with the world and has sought and striven for the interests and approval of the world. Therefore Christianity will also share the fate of the world and will be judged with the world.

V4. Fortunately the Lord has discovered also a few ("*a few people*" litt. "*a few names*") in Sardis who have remained faithful. They not only believe in the right doctrine, but they also live in sin-

cere separation from the world, with their eyes fixed on the Lord. They have “*not soiled their garments*”. That means that they have personally kept themselves clean from the many defilements that are typical for protestantism (e.g. bible criticism and modernism).

The Lord appreciates this in a special way. Just like they have walked in purity before Him on earth, they will be allowed to walk with Him in “*white*” in the future. The Lord emphasizes the special appreciation of their separation in Sardis by His mention that “*they are worthy*”. This expression is therefore special, because in this book it is further only used for God (*Rev 4:11*) and the Lamb (*Rev 5:9,12*).

V5. It is the part of the conquerors to be clothed “*in white garments*”. That means that the purity they had on earth will always characterize them. An additional reward is related to their “*name*”. The Lord knows each one of the conquerors by his name. On earth their names may be removed from church registers because they do not support the course that the church goes. But they may know that there is a register that the Lord is keeping up and wherein their names are written in indelible ink. This book is the book of God’s elect (*Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27; cf. Dan 12:1; Lk 10:20; Phil 4:3*). As an extra consolation the Lord adds to it that He will draw the attention of His Father and His angels to their name because of their faithfulness to Him (*Lk 9:26; 12:8*).

V6. Also here the call to the individual believer to hear what the Spirit says to the churches cannot be addressed to the whole. You have seen that the whole is dead, but also that there is a call to be watchful and that there are those who ‘remain’. Therefore the call “*he who has an ear*” follows after the promise to conquerors. When there is somebody amongst them who has an ear, he will certainly take the message to heart and will then receive the reward for the victory.

Now read Revelation 3:1-6 again.

Reflection: How do you make sure ‘that your garments remain white’?

Message For Philadelphia | *verses 7-13*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: 8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Behold, I will cause [those] of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and [make them] know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that [hour] which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

V7. The message for Philadelphia is like Smyrna without a blame. The Lord mentions only honorable things and encourages them to continue on the same track. The name Philadelphia means ‘brotherly love’. Philadelphia is a church where there is love for one another. That love comes out of love for the Lord and His Word. At the same time the love for one another forms the right atmosphere where the love for the Lord and for His Word can be expressed.

Philadelphia has come forth from Sardis. Those who had a living faith in Christ in Sardis have moved away from the deadness. A new movement arose as a work of God’s Spirit that totally devoted itself to the Lord and His Word. In the lives of the believers there was a personal, vivid relation with Christ. He meant every-

thing to them. We see this happening in the church history in the nineteenth century.

The Lord Jesus presents Himself to this church with features which you have not seen in *chapter 1*. Here He speaks as “*He who is holy*”, because they have sanctified themselves from evil. This evil is the appearance of life in Sardis. He also speaks as “*who is true*”, because this is also fitting to them. They want to walk in sincerity and faithfulness, according to the truth that is in their inner man, that He is searching for and which He sees there (*Psa 51:6*).

He also has “*the key of David*”. He is the true David (*Isa 22:22*) and the only One Who has access to and the right to all promises that were made to David. He who has the key, has the power to open and to close (*Job 12:14b*).

V8. The Lord knows their deeds. It is not said which deeds it is about. To the world and to Christianity they will not be impressive deeds, but the Lord knows them and appreciates them. He tells them that He has given them “*an open door*”. The weak remnant receives from the Lord an open door, a passable way, which no one can block (*Col 4:3; 1Cor 16:9*). It is a door to the treasury, to the knowledge of God’s Word and its secrets and to the city of God.

Maybe you are in a situation which is comparable to Sardis. There are people around you who call themselves a Christian but they are that only by name. There is a confession, but there is no life. If you desire life, He will surely open a door for you to a situation in which He and His Word are everything. He will bring you into contact with others who also have that desire. Just ask Him for it and He will show you the way. You can find that way in His Word which He will open with His key, so that you see His beauty in it and enjoy it.

He knows that you, just like it is said of the church in Philadelphia, have “*little power*”. That means that He knows that you are dependent on Him. Philadelphia – and each believer and each

church that wants to be like that – is not noticed in the world. Their and also your strength is in the Lord and in ‘keeping His Word’. With His Word the Bible is meant, but then as the Word that He has spoken. It gives an enormous spiritual power when you read the Bible as the words of the Savior Who loves you and Whom you love. You cherish that Word because it is about Him and He has spoken it. To you it is about Him, you have Him and that is sufficient to you.

Another appreciation that the Lord speaks about is that they have “not denied” His Name. His Name means everything to them. That’s what they hold on to. That’s what you also do, isn’t it? You owe your salvation to His Name (*Acts 4:12*); in His Name you may gather with fellow believers as a church (*Mat 18:20*). You do not want another name, you reject that, for that would be a denial of His Name.

V9. The remnant was under heavy pressure of by the mass of the confessing Christianity. He who did not join the established churches, was presented as a member of a dangerous sect. They claim “*that they are Jews*”, which means that they present themselves as the true people of God. You may apply this to people who claim with their mouth to be true Christians and that they are entitled to everything that God has promised to the true Christians. Christianity is full of such people. But the Lord calls the nominal confessors “*the synagogue of Satan*”. Wherever He is not the center and His Word is not being considered, people become a prey of satan.

As an encouragement the Lord promised them that He will make sure that the false confessors will acknowledge that He has loved this weak remnant. He will once and for all justify the faithful believers toward the false Christians, the nominal confessors. He will unmask all who have unjustly adorned themselves with His Name. The false confessors will be forced to acknowledge that the believers despised by them were loved by the Lord Jesus.

V10. The Lord has more to encourage them. He honors them ‘for keeping His command to persevere’. By this the Lord means that

He had said to be coming soon. He perseveringly looks forward to the rapture of His bride. This word has found resonance in their hearts: they also look forward to Him. That implies that He still does not reign. He is still patiently waiting for His kingdom and we ought to do that too (*2Thes 3:5*).

Because they are looking forward to His coming with such a perseverance, the Lord makes the promise to them that He will make sure that they will not be harmed by the judgments that soon will strike the earth. Before this “*hour of testing*” comes, He will take up the church into heaven. The second part of ‘the hour of testing’ is the period of the great tribulation (*Mat 24:21; Jer 30:7, 11; 2Thes 2:9-10*). The area upon which this trial will come is “*the whole world*”. The people who will be struck by it, are called, “*those who dwell on the earth*”. Those are the earth’s inhabitants, the people who consider the earth to be their home and who have permanently settled themselves there as their definite residence. God and His rights and eternity lie totally outside their field of vision (*Psa 17:14*).

V11. As an extra encouragement the Lord promises to come quickly. He also exhorts them to hold fast what they have. What they have is not much. Still this call is necessary for them not to lose what they have: a warm love for the Lord and for one another. If they let go of that they will become lukewarm like Laodicea. We shall see that in the next and final message. For you it is also important to take this call to heart. Make sure that you will not lose your warm love for the Lord! For there is a “*crown*” attached to your attachment to the Lord and your affection for Him. The crown is the publicly visible appreciation of the Lord for your love for Him. He will adorn and honor you with that.

V12. Although the church in Philadelphia is not to be blamed for anything and there is also no call for repentance to be heard, there is still mention of an overcomer. Overcomers are they who not only have left Sardis and have become Philadelphia, but who also hold on to that with their whole heart. The next message shows that it is possible that the warm love for the Lord Jesus may cool off.

He who overcomes will be made by the Lord *“a pillar in the temple of My God”*. This is in great contrast to the place that they had on earth. There they were of no account and they were even portrayed to be annoying because they seemed to be blocking the growth of the church. However, in the resurrection they will appear to be pillars on which God’s house is resting (cf. Gal 2:9). A pillar is a symbol of strength. Those who have shown much spiritual power precisely in their weakness will be pillars to eternity. There will absolutely be no mention of a collapse or failure.

It is the overcomers in Philadelphia who make God’s house a spiritual house. In that house spiritual sacrifices are brought and the Father is being worshipped by His sons. That is the place where priests draw near to God and know what He is worthy of. Those who do that today will be allowed to do a special service there in the resurrection.

But the promise for the overcomer goes still further. The Lord Jesus will write on him *“the name of the city of My God”*. On earth the believer in Philadelphia had no continuing city, but he was seeking the city to come (Heb 13:14). To that he will eternally be related and that will also be visible. That city is *“the new Jerusalem”*, which is the church. At the end of this book you see that this new Jerusalem *“which comes down out of heaven from My God”* (Rev 21:2), but here this scene is already presented in prospect to the overcomer.

Finally the Lord says that He also will write *“My new name”* on the overcomer. That is the Name which He has now in glory (Rev 19:12; Phil 2:9; Heb 1:4).

Are these things not an exhortation for you too not to focus on the earthly things, but to look forward to the heavenly things? Will you not relate yourself with any religious system on earth, out of love for the Lord Jesus, but with the city which is in heaven, the church in her heavenly character? Then you will soon be rewarded by the Lord in a very personal way. You can derive that from the five times that He repeats the word ‘My’. Four times he emphasizes His very own personal relationship with God and

one time His very personal relationship with each believer who is an overcomer in Philadelphia (*cf. Jn 20:17; Heb 2:11-13*).

V13. It may be the case that in the 'Philadelphia' where you perhaps are, it is to fear that the fervent love is gradually disappearing. Then for you it is important to having an ear to hear. Therefore at the end of this message the question is very personally addressed to you: 'Do you have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches?'

Now read Revelation 3:7-13 again.

Reflection: What effort do you have to make to hold fast what you have?

Message For Laodicea | *verses 14-22*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

14 *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and [that] the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

V14. You have seen that Sardis has emanated from Thyatira and Philadelphia has emanated from Sardis. This development is continued in Laodicea, for it emanates from Philadelphia. In church history it refers to denominations and churches that have emanated from revivals of the nineteenth century. They indeed have their roots in what originally is a work of God’s Spirit, but the roots have actually withered. They boast on spiritual inheritance, but there is no relation with the Heir.

In Laodicea you see what is happening when the light, which God has given to Philadelphia, extinguishes. Or better said: when the warmth of the love for the Lord Jesus diminishes and lukewarmness arises. That lukewarmness is what the Lord Jesus is blaming the angel of the church in Laodicea for (*verses 15-16*). The church

is boasting of the spiritual riches, while there is no place for the Lord Jesus. He is excluded. The difference between Philadelphia and Laodicea has been described in a very striking way, namely: Philadelphia has nothing except the Lord, Laodicea has everything except the Lord.

The Lord does not present Himself to Laodicea with one of His judicial features from *chapter 1*. The features He shows here demonstrate the contrast between what the church has become and what He remained to be. He is the measure of what the church ought to be. In this way He puts the church in the light and He shows the deviation. He presents Himself as “*the Amen*”, because there is no new phase to be expected anymore in the church history. The next thing to happen for the church is the rapture of the believers. ‘Amen’ also means that Christ will have the last word (2Cor 1:20).

He is and will always be, while the church has fallen into a great decline, “*the faithful and true Witness*”. He testifies of God’s rights in absolute faithfulness and truthfulness. He is also, as He is the beginning of the first creation, “*the Beginning of the creation of God*”, in other words: the new creation (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). This is what is said of Him in the *letter to the Colossians*, a letter that was known by the Laodiceans (Col 1:18; 4:16). The church was supposed to be a manifestation of the new creation. The church has deviated from that, but Christ remains the Same.

V15. The deeds that the Lord is talking about here are not deeds that He can honor, but deeds of which He can only speak out His disapproval. They think that they are full of good deeds but the Lord looks right through it and sees their real condition. They were not that cold as Sardis and not that hot as Philadelphia. If they could have been one of both, then they could have represented something. You’re better dealing with a totally unbelieving person, a person who fanatically represents something than with a person who is full of himself.

V16. Lukewarm makes a person sick. It makes one’s stomach turn. The only thing that is left for the Lord to do is to vomit them ‘out of His mouth’. He is about to do that too.

V17. Before He vomits them out of His mouth He tells them what their tepidness consists of. He also suggests them to change their lukewarmness and gives the opportunity to the individual to repent. Their lukewarmness consists of being full of themselves instead of being full of Christ. The church is left on earth to testify of Christ. She does not do that anymore. Not only does she not testify of Christ anymore, but instead she starts to testify of herself. That is the sign of her to have fallen that deep. The church becomes everything and Christ disappears. The church makes herself attractive, not Christ.

I will give a small illustration of this development. Many years ago devoted believers put up a sign in a building of an English church saying: 'Only Jesus'. Those two words expressed their great love for Him. After many years the letters 'Jes' on the sign faded away, which caused that all that was left was: 'Only ...us'.

The church in Laodicea talks only about herself. The Name of the Lord Jesus has become a means of self-exaltation for them, not an object of love. They are rich and they have the truth. They do not need others, for they have no lack of anything. But they do not know that they are miserable etc. par excellence. They are totally blind for their own situation, for what they spiritually represent. They do not even realize that the Lord is not with them anymore, but that He is standing outside the door.

V18. The Lord counsels them to buy from Him. When submitting their self-importance they will receive "gold". Gold speaks of Divine glory and is in contrast with their human glory, the boasting in themselves. This gold is free from any impurity, for it has been purified through the fire of the judgment. The possession of Divine glory through the work of the Lord Jesus is the true wealth of the believer.

Therefore the confessing Christian without Christ has no "white garments", which speak of purity that can be in God's presence. The white garments are in contrast with the dirty clothes of self-righteousness. But the lukewarm nominal Christian can be clothed with Christ by repentance (*Rom 13:14*). Through the

blood of the Lamb the believer is sure to be pure and covered before God. All their deeds (*verse 15*) are no cover, like the fig leaves that Adam and Eve made, were no cover for their nakedness (*Gen 3:7, 10*). God gave them the right cover by the skin of an animal (*Gen 3:21*). That means that an animal had to be killed, which refers to the work of the Lord Jesus.

Only through that way “*eye salve*” can be gained to be able to see. It is the anointment with the Holy Spirit (*Eph 1:13; 1Jn 2:20*), through which we can get insight in the things of God.

V19. In His love the Lord Jesus is punishing and chastising them. He wants to address all who find themselves in a condition that is comparable to that of Laodicea, also through events. All His efforts are focused on making their heart beat again for Him and on restoring them in the right relationship toward Him. He wants them to be zealous in condemning themselves and that they may turn to Him.

V20. In His grace He even now tries to reach their heart and conscience. He seeks a place in their affections. He is standing at the door and He knocks. That means that the Lord is standing outside the door and they do not even realize it! They haven’t even noticed that He has left. In their imagination they think that He is with them. Of course they have the truth, don’t they?

For the church as a whole the situation has become such that she will be vomited. But the Lord addresses the individual. If there is “*anyone*” who hears His voice and opens the door, then He will come in to him to dine with him.

Are you maybe in such a situation? Then it is not hopeless. The Lord is knocking at your door now. Do you hear His voice? Then open the door for Him and let Him come into your life. His coming in means that He participates in everything you are engaged with, He wants to share in all your tests and trials. Then He will let you share in everything that He has. The result will be that you will rejoice again in all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are in Him (*Col 2:3*).

V21. You can be an overcomer. An overcomer in Laodicea is someone who in the midst of this evil company, opens up his heart to the Lord and allows Him to come in. There is a reward attached to that and that is to reign with Him. It is not the greatest of the seven rewards. It is not a typical Christian reward. This reward is shared with all believers of the Old Testament and with those who come out of the great tribulation. Still, it is great to sit together with the Lord Jesus on His throne.

He relates Himself with the overcomer in Laodicea by saying that this overcomer has overcome in the same way as He did. Indeed the Lord gives a proof of His great mercy here by comparing their victory to that of Him. He Himself indeed went to be seated on the throne of the Father after He had accomplished the whole work that the Father had ordered Him to do. Therefore He is entitled to that place. That is not grace, but He has obtained and taken in that place on the basis of Who He is and what He has done.

V22. The Lord Jesus does not get tired of appealing to hear, but that will also stop some time. He does that for the seventh and last time. Do you have an ear to hear? Then listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Now read Revelation 3:14-22 again.

Reflection: Is the Lord allowed to come in to you to dine with you and you with Him? In what way do you open up your heart to Him?

Revelation 4

The Throne | verses 1-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door [standing] open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like [the sound] of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting [was] like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and [there was] a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 4 Around the throne [were] twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones [I saw] twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. 5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne [there was something] like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature [was] like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature [was] like a flying eagle.

V1. It is important to see that with this chapter a new part of the book starts (see Rev 1:19). This new part (which is also the last and longest one of the book) starts with "after these things", which is after the events that are dealt with in the previous two chapters. Therein you have seen the development of Christianity on earth, wherein the true believers were addressed. From chapter 4 all true believers have been taken up in heaven. That has happened at the coming of the Lord Jesus for the church and all Old Testament believers (1Thes 4:15-18).

Now the way is free for God to do His work with the earth (*cf.* 2Thes 2:6). He will judge the world and cleanse it from everything that is in contrast with Him. After these judgments the Lord Jesus will come to the earth to reign a thousand years. He will fulfill all promises that have been prophesied by all prophets. No word that God has spoken will remain unfulfilled.

Christ will show the whole work to John that God will do after the rapture of the church. John sees “a door [standing] open in heaven”. From there the first voice that he “heard, like [the sound] of a trumpet” (Rev 1:10) – which is the Lord Jesus – speaks with him. The voice is saying to him to come up to heaven in order to see everything that will happen on earth. And you are allowed to look over the shoulder of John!

V2. Directly after the command to come up, John was in the Spirit. He doesn't have to do that by his own power, which would not even be possible. Therefore he receives the power of the Holy Spirit. You also cannot get insight in the future of the Lord Jesus by your own efforts. You need the Holy Spirit to show you that (Jn 16:13). You are to give Him the room for that and there should be no hindrances because of unconfessed sins or because of a walk after the flesh.

The first thing that John sees in heaven is “a throne” and One Who sits on it. You stand in the throne hall where things are governed and judgment is given. This is the place of action for the rest of the book. The word ‘throne’ appears no less than forty-two times as the throne of God and still five more times with another meaning, while it appears only fifteen times in the rest of the New Testament.

The throne “was standing”, which indicates the stability and firmness of the Divine authority, in contrast to all earthly unsteady and changeable thrones. It is also set “in heaven” and therefore beyond all earthly thrones. Also all earthly thrones will at once be made visibly subjected. That the real government finds itself in heaven should be an encouragement for each who as a believer suffers under ungodly authority.

Also there is Someone on the throne. It seems that John is not able to get a right vision of Him. From the description he gives, is shining a great brilliance. The Person Who sits on it is resplendent, full of glory and radiance. It is no one else than the glorified Son of Man Who has received the whole judgment of the Father in His hands (*Jn 5:22,27*).

V3. John uses images from nature to describe the splendor of Him Whom he perceives on the throne. He first mentions two gemstones. Gemstones reflect the light of the sun in numerous colorful beams. They are used to describe the glory of God in the new Jerusalem (*Rev 21:19*). Twelve gemstones are on the breastplate of the high priest (*Exo 28:17-20*). Of these precious stones that are on the breastplate, the 'sardius stone' is mentioned first and the 'jasper stone' last.

The "rainbow" is the symbol of the faithful covenant of God with the earth. He reminds us that the flood destroyed the earth and also the blessing afterwards (*Gen 9:8-17*). This symbol also indicates that God's judgments have a limit and that He in the midst of the wrath also remembers mercy (*Gen 8:1; Hab 3:2*). The rainbow "around the throne", which is not a half but a whole closed circle, announces that His kindness never ceases, but is everlasting.

An 'emerald' has a beautiful green color, the typical color of creation. This is the color of the rainbow as the glorified saints will always see him. While the judgment over the rebellious man and the evil is announced, the remembrance of God's grace and promises towards His creation are vividly before their eyes.

V4. The Lord Jesus does not reign alone. Beside Him there are "twenty-four thrones", and on them "twenty-four elders". The number of 'twenty-four' indicates two times twelve. In these twenty-four elders the believers from the Old Testament and the New Testament are symbolically represented. You can understand that when you remember that God's people in the Old Testament is originated from the twelve sons of Jacob and that God's people in the New Testament is built on the foundation of the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus.

The “white garments” indicate the purity and priestly character of the elders. They sit on thrones like kings, as fellow kings with the Lord Jesus. They carry “golden crowns on their heads”. These crowns are no tiaras, but garlands which are received by the overcomers. The value of it is not the material value, but the public homage. You may consider that an encouragement for yourself. When on earth you are faithful to following the rejected Lord, you will soon be allowed to reign with Him.

V5. Everything that goes out from the throne proclaims the judgments to come. It reminds us of the appearance of God on Mount Sinai (*Exo 19:16; 20:18*). The throne here is not the throne of mercy, what he is to you today (*Heb 4:16*). Also in the millennial kingdom of peace the throne is a throne from which blessing comes in the form of a stream of water (*Eze 47:1-12*). But before that happens, many judgments are to come from the throne first, so that the blessing may flow freely.

With the throne of God the Spirit of God is related. The Spirit is represented here in sevenfold in “seven lamps of fire”. The number ‘seven’ indicates perfection and ‘fire’ symbolizes judgment. The judgments of God are different to each situation, but always perfect. They are executed without a chance of mistake under the perfect working of the Spirit of God. It is a good thing to consider that the God Who you may call Father is at the same time a consuming fire regarding everything in your life which is not in accordance with Him (*Heb 12:29; cf. 1Pet 1:17*).

V6. It is remarkable how everything in this chapter is related to the throne. You have read about (Someone) *on* the throne, (the elders) *around* the throne, (lightning, etc.) which was *proceeded* from the throne and (the seven Spirits of God) that were *before* the throne. Now you see something else *before* the throne and even something else *in the midst* of the throne.

We first look at what was before the throne: something “like a sea of glass, like crystal”. That reminds us of the big laver in the temple of Solomon, that is called the ‘sea’ (*1Kgs 7:23*). That laver was filled with water with which the priest was to wash his hands and

feet before he entered the sanctuary. The water here is 'crystal'. In heaven there is no more need for washing. That the sea stands before the throne means that the purity in heaven is perfectly in harmony with the holy character of the throne.

In order to have a little understanding of what the four living creatures in the midst of the throne represent, you need to read some verses from the book of *Ezekiel* (*Eze 1:5,10,18; 10:12,14*). When you compare what John sees of it to what Ezekiel sees of it, you see that the living creatures are related to the judgments of God on earth that are characterized by four things. That they are related to judgments appears already from their position in relation to the throne. They found themselves in the midst of it, which causes them as it were, to be identified with the throne.

That there are four of them emphasizes the generality of the judgment. The number 'four' is typical for the earth. You hear it in expressions like: four wind directions, four corners of the earth, four seasons. The four living creatures are with regard to the earth not only omniscient in their judgment, but they exercise it also with a full insight in the future ("*full of eyes in front*") and in the past ("*and behind*"). This insight belongs to God's nature, which makes Him act with full knowledge of all circumstances, of all causes and of all consequences.

V7. The characteristics of His judgments are compared with four of His creatures.

1. In the first place there is "*a lion*". The lion is the king among the animals that does not turn away from any (*Pro 30:30*) and against whom nobody can resist. In the lion you see the power and majesty of God's kingdom and judgments.
2. His judgments continue steadily, like "*a calf*" that is plowing continues steadily.
3. His judgments are executed with wisdom and insight, with which He has gifted "*man*" as a creature above animals.

4. Finally you see in the “*flying eagle*” the fastness in which the judgments out of heaven will strike the earth (*cf. Deu 28:49*).

Now read Revelation 4:1-7 again.

Reflection: Mention the things that in this portion are in relation with the throne.

The Four Living Creatures | verses 8-11

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY [IS] THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME." 9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

V8. Besides the differences between the living creatures you also see what they have in common. Each of the living creatures has "six wings". The seraphim that Isaiah saw in his vision also have them (*Isa 6:2*). In *Isaiah* you read what they did with the six wings. With two of their wings they covered their face, for they could not stand to see the glory of God. With two other wings they covered their feet, which indicates that in the light of that glory they do not find themselves worthy of serving Him, while they show their readiness to serve by continually moving two other wings.

It seems that with the living creatures all six wings are moving. They have no rest as long as the earth is still in chaos and rebellion against God, as long as there is no harmony between heaven and earth and heaven is not yet reigning on the earth. The holiness of God, for such a long time already being violated, stands before them. With a view to that they will as executors of God's judgments do their work on behalf of Him.

They are perfectly equipped for this work. There is a perfect insight in all things around them ("*full of eyes around*") and inwardly they are perfectly aware of God's holiness ("*full of eyes ... within*").

Besides that it causes them to carry out their judging work, for which they as it were, are impatiently waiting to do, they worship God because of His holiness. They are full of that holiness, which you can derive from them speaking out three times the word "holy". They know Him as the God of the history ("*Who was*") and the present ("*and Who is*"). He is also "*Who is to come*" to fill the world with His holiness. He is the Almighty, He is able and He will do it.

V9. The four living creatures have characteristics which distinguish them from one another and they have characteristics in which they are the same. They also give "*glory and honor and thanks*" to God. He sits on the throne and has all power to reign. His kingdom will never come to an end, for He "*lives forever and ever*". With Him and His throne they are closely related. They cannot do otherwise than to honor Him and to carry out His will. All of their actions in the execution of the judgments have God's glory as a starting point and purpose.

You can also apply that to the church when sin has been publicly revealed in her midst (1Cor 5:13b). The judgment over sin also has to happen out of this awareness. Personal motives are not to have part in this. Only the honor of God is important. In that honor lies also the blessing of man. That honor is what the Lord Jesus has always been looking for and how great is the blessing that came out of it to men!

V10. After the worship of the living creatures comes that of the elders. The cause of their worship is certainly also God's holiness and omnipotence. They also give thanks for the crowns that they have received from Him as a reward for their faithfulness on earth. They have the deep consciousness that their faithfulness was finally a result of what His grace has worked in them. Therefore they will also cast their crowns with much gratitude before the throne and express their admiration for Him.

V11. In their tribute the elders address Him directly, while the angels speak *about* Him, not *to* Him. They start with "*worthy are You*". That involves His Person. He personally is worthy. His per-

sonal glory appears here to be because of His works. In the next chapter it is said again that He is worthy (*Rev 5:9*). There it happens because of the magnificence of His redemption work. Here you see that the Object of worship is both the triune God Who sits on the throne and the Son Who because of His work on the cross has received all power in His hands.

When the elders speak about what God is worthy of to receive, it does not mean that something is given to God which He does not have yet. Their desire is that what He has will be seen and admired by the whole creation and that this will be spoken out to Him. Everything that is, has been created by Him. All things exist, because He wanted that and because He has carried out His will and indeed has created them.

You may now already tell Him that you see His glory, honor and power in His works and that you admire Him for it. Then you will now already be doing what you see the elders doing here and what you will also soon do in heaven. Isn't it great to say this to God and the Lord Jesus?

Now read Revelation 4:8-11 again.

Reflection: What will you in due time be able to offer before the throne of the Lord Jesus?

Revelation 5

The Book | *verses 1-5*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I [began] to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders *said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."*

V1. In this new chapter your eye is focused on "a book" which is "in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne". In the previous verses you've seen that all power is in the hands of the Lord Jesus. In the scene that you now see, it is presented in the way in which the Lord Jesus takes all power in His hands. He already has had the power since His work on the cross (*Mat 28:18*), but here we have the moment that He openly accepts His power. Therefore it is a very impressive moment.

Usually people write only "inside" a book, but of this one also "the back" or the outside is written on. It is totally filled with texts without any room for someone to add something to it. Indeed nothing is to be added to it, because the book contains the property rights of Christ (*cf. Jer 31:1-6; Lev 25:23-25*). From this book it appears that He is authorized to execute judgments that are needed to purify the earth and then to fulfill the counsels of God with regard to creation.

The judgments are described in *Revelation 6-19*. In the chapters afterwards the fulfillment of all God's plans follow with a blessing for both the old and the new creation. That all this has been recorded in a book means that it is all unchangeably established and it is being carried out controllably as it is described. The book contains the history of the future. Only God is able to write history beforehand.

The book is "*sealed up with seven seals*". That means that in order to open the book, these seals are first to be broken. Therefore you see the first acts with regard to the judgments when in *chapter 6* the seals are being broken one by one.

V2. But first the question arises who is worthy to open the book and break its seals. This question comes from the mouth of "*a strong angel*" and it sounds through the universe, through heaven and over the earth. The question is who the owner is of the inheritance described in it, which is creation. Another question is who has the right of obtaining the inheritance. That question must be answered, because the inheritance has fallen into the hands of an unlawful owner, the devil, caused by the guilt of man.

A strong angel is asking the question, but he himself is not the answer to the question, however powerful he may be. It must be someone who is *worthy* to do it and who is *able* to do it, who has the power. The right on the inheritance is therefore about the personal *dignity* of the heir and about the personal *ability* to execute the content of it. He Who meets both conditions (dignity and ability), is the Son of Man (*Jn 5:27*).

V3. The voice of the angel is sounded everywhere, but there is no answer from anywhere:

1. not from "*heaven*", the dwelling place of the elect angels,
2. not from "*the earth*", the dwelling place of men and
3. not from "*under the earth*", the residence of other intelligent creatures.

The universe, in all its components (*cf. Phil 2:10*), consists of not one single creature that is able to deal with the book. No one is able to do that, no one has the suitable ability (*Psa 49:8*).

V4. When John sees that there is no reply to the question of the angel, he bursts into tears and weeps intensely. He weeps, not because he had been looking forward to the judgments, but which now will not be executed anymore, like Jonah once was very displeased in such a case (*Jona 4:1*). No, he weeps, because he cannot stand the thought that evil will reign forever without being punished.

Numerous people have tried to open the book and to make the time of blessing to happen. That is still the effort of man. But he himself was and is a part of the evil and therefore completely unfit and also not able, incapable, to deal with the evil in a way that is pleasing to God. Is there really no one who is able to do it? Yes, there is a Man Who meets all God's holy demands with regard to the evil.

V5. John may be weeping much, but not for long. An elder – a glorified believer who has insight in the ways and the counsels of God – says to him not to weep. For there is Someone Who is able to open the book and its seven seals. It is “*the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah*” about whom Jacob has prophesied (*Gen 49:9-11*). As the Lion He is the Ruler. He is also “*the Root of David*”. He belongs to the royal descendants, He is the true Son of David and has the legal right to reign. It is no one else than the Lord Jesus.

He gained His dignity and right by His victory on the cross. That is where He regained the ownership of creation. There He crushed the head of satan, who by wiles and craftiness has illegally taken possession of creation. He has paid the full ransom and repurchased the whole creation for God. He has the right to open the seals, which is the right of redeeming the earth, in order to purify it from all injustice. He has conquered on the cross and will give shape to that victory in everything He does.

Now read Revelation 5:1-5 again.

Reflection: Have you ever felt that the evil is in control and that it seems as if it will never change? When does that happen? How do you respond to that?

The Lamb | verses 6-14

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they *sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood [men] from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 10 "You have made them [to be] a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, [be] blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.*

V6. John has heard that the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed and is entitled to the creation. You can imagine that he is now expecting to see the impressive stature of the king of animals. But what does he see? A Lamb, of which originally is literally said, a little Lamb, a word that appears almost thirty times in *Revelation*. The diminutive (little) makes you feel the nullity even stronger. A lamb is completely defenseless, it doesn't reflect any power; on the contrary, there is hardly anything weaker than that.

And that image of weakness is even more amplified when you see the Lamb there *“standing as if slain”*.

Here you see in which way the Lord Jesus has overcome, namely by being slain. The Lamb stands there as an animal of which the throat has just been cut through. That means that the remembrance of Golgotha will remain to be preserved in heaven. But the Lord Jesus is not on the cross nor in the grave anymore; He is *“in midst of the throne”* (NKJV) of God, in other words, in glory. The work is finished! At the same time you read that the Lamb ‘stood’. That indicates that He is ready to come into action. The time of sitting is over (*Rev 3:21; Psa 110:1*).

The Lamb stands in the *“midst”*. He is the center *“of the throne and of the four living creatures and ... the elders”*. Everything that has got to do with government and insight, finds its center in Him. He rules and acts. He does that as Lamb, but not as a defenseless Lamb. He has *“seven horns”*. ‘Horns’ speak of strength (*1Sam 2:10; Lk 1:69*), here especially of royal strength. ‘Seven’ horns means a perfect and absolute strength.

The Lord is however not only *omnipotent*, He is also *omniscient*. He has a perfect insight into all things that happen on earth. That’s what the *“seven eyes”* indicates as a representation of *“the seven Spirits of God”*. Here the number ‘seven’ symbolizes again the perfection of the Spirit through Whom He works (*Isa 11:2*). These seven Spirits are *“sent out into all the earth”*. That symbolizes that He is *omnipresent*. He knows perfectly about all things that come to pass. Nothing escapes from His all-seeing eyes (*2Chr 16:9; Zec 3:9; 4:10*).

V7. Then the Lamb walks to the throne. It must have been an awesome moment for John and everyone who at that moment are in heaven. What is happening now in heaven is a unique event. Everyone must be breathlessly watching this scene. The Lamb comes and takes the book out of the right hand of Him Who sits on the throne. Now He has the book in His hands. Without saying a word to one another, the Lamb, once slain, is given the full

entitlement by the One Who sits on the throne, the triune God, to take back the stolen property.

The act is as calm as magnificent and sublime, full of majesty. The description is without any human addition in language or in act, which would only impair this unsurpassed moment. You should just take a moment to allow what is happening here to sink in.

V8. The time of waiting is over, the time of acting has come. The tension has been broken. After the Lamb took the book, heaven comes into action to worship the Lamb. Heaven is aware of the enormous importance of the book being taken. It means that the judgment over the world is very near and the age to come is about to start.

Both the representatives of God's kingdom (the four living creatures) and the representatives of all believers who are in heaven, express their admiration for the Lamb. He is worthy and He has all power to do whatever is needed to perfectly carry out God's plan to the end. They all have "*a harp*" for expressing their admiration. The harp is an instrument of praise and worship and is often mentioned with a view to the millennial kingdom of peace (*Psa 33:2; 43:4; 49:4; 150:3*).

Beside a harp they also all have "*golden bowls full of incense*". The meaning of the incense is written right behind it. They are "*the prayers of the saints*" (*cf. Psa 141:2*). Beside *worshippers* there are also *intercessors* on behalf of the believers who are on earth at that time. Those who are in heaven are aware of their relation to those who are in need on earth. These bowls may also contain the prayers of all saints that were prayed through all ages. In those days not many were saved, but most died as martyrs; but now those prayers will be answered. No prayer that has ever been sincerely prayed to God by a believer will remain unanswered.

V9. These worshippers and intercessors themselves are not in need and are free from sufferings. For them the time to sing has come. "*They *sang a new song.*" It is a song that the earth has not known yet, neither Moses (*cf. Rev 15:3*), nor David, though he

also speaks of a 'new song' (*Psa 33:3; 96:1*). Only those who were bought by the blood of the Lamb are able to sing it.

When the redeemed people were on earth, they sang songs of deliverance, songs that were forward-looking to the time of victory and the kingdom of glory. Those were songs of hope. But when the book is taken and opened, the songs will change into songs of victory and celebration of the peace that will come. Above all, they will sing to Him Who has worked all things.

In this new song they reply to the question that was asked in *verse 2* by the strong angel. They sing to the Lamb: "*Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals.*" He is the content of the song and not the believer or what he has received. They also sing why He is worthy of it: the incredible work of redemption and atonement which He has accomplished in the offering of Himself. He was slain. In that way His blood was shed as the purchase price. In that way He has purchased, and indeed it was "*to God*".

The purchased ones come from all parts of the world population. It is not only the church (*Mat 13:44*), but those are all believers from all ages. He is the true Redeemer of the Old Testament, the true Boaz. He not only bought the believers. He has obtained the believers as a special property (*1Cor 6:20*). But He bought the whole earth including the unbelievers (*2Pet 2:1; cf. Jn 17:2; cf. Mat 13:38, 44*).

V10. The elders do not worship God for what they themselves are, but for what He has made of the ransomed ones. Therefore they sing about "*them*". It indeed refers to themselves, but they do not intend to promote themselves as the theme of the new song. Their only intention is to draw all attention to the Lord Jesus. All light must fall on Him.

It is because of Him that they were made "*a kingdom and priests*". What an awesome transformation for men who once were in bondage of sin and worshippers of satan. They are now 'kings' of a kingdom where the Lord Jesus has all authority. They are allowed to serve Him there. As subjects of that kingdom they now

find themselves already under His blessed reign, a reign that will soon be established on earth.

They are also as priests of God in His presence to worship Him. In that way man has come at the highest level of God's purpose with him (*Mat 4:10*).

As an extra favor they are also allowed to "*reign upon the earth*" together with the Lord Jesus.

V11. John sees and hears that others mix themselves in the worship. It is the voice of an enormous number of angels. The numbers that are mentioned indicate that it is about innumerable millions of angels. They form a circle around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, in the midst of which the Lamb is standing (*verse 6*). The angels have no personal part in the redemption. Therefore they are standing at a greater distance of the Lamb. But they certainly have great admiration for Him Who has accomplished the work of redemption.

V12. The angels also worship Him as the Lamb That was slain. They see the effect of it and know that the cause of it lies in Him and His work. Everything they mention has always been used by man through the ages, in order to exalt himself. Now the time has come that all these things will be used by the true Man to exalt God. He is the Owner of it all, but it will become visible by His acts. And everything that becomes visible of Him prompts everyone who sees it to exclamations of admiration.

1. It begins with "*power*". The power that man has used to destroy his way on earth, is used by Him in judgment and thereafter in blessing.
2. All "*riches*" of the universe is His and will no more be misused, but will expose Him in His manifold luster.
3. He is the "*wisdom*" and will make that visible in all His ways and works.

4. He has the “*might*” that enables Him to carry out what He has decided to do.
5. He is worthy of all “*honor*” and that will openly be given to Him.
6. Everything that becomes visible of Him, is pure “*glory*”, splendor and majesty.
7. “*Blessing*” is ascribed to Him, Who once was so maligned.

V13. The circle of worshippers gets bigger. The whole creation, everything that has been created, rejoices in God and the Lamb. Then the curse will be taken away from creation. This form of praise will never come to an end.

V14. The executors of God’s judgment agree with the praise. The only thing the elders can do is fall down and worship.

Now read Revelation 5:6-14 again.

Reflection: Tell the Lamb about the admiration in your heart for Him.

Revelation 6

The First Four Seals | *verses 1-8*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. 3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that [men] would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. 5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard [something] like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." 7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Introduction. Before we start with *chapter 6* I will give you a brief summary of the chapters to come, that you may have a general overview of what will come to pass.

1. In *chapter 6* the first six seals are broken. Those six seals describe the first six trials that will come over the earth after the rapture of the church.

2. *Chapter 7* is a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh seal, wherein God shows that a great number of believers will be kept saved, right through the judgments until the coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth. They will enter alive into the millennial kingdom of peace.
3. In *chapter 8:1-5* the seventh seal is opened. That causes a silence of half an hour in heaven, after which seven trumpets, blown by angels, give the sign for new judgments.
4. In *chapters 8:6-9:21* six trumpet judgments are being described.
5. The portion of *chapter 10:1-11:13* forms a new parenthesis.
6. Then the seventh trumpet is blown (*Rev 11:14-18*).
7. In *chapters 12-14* some events of the forgoing period are more precisely described.
8. In *chapters 15-16* you read about the seven angels with seven bowl judgments. These are the final judgments. They are the most severe.
9. The *chapters 17-18* are specially dedicated to the judgment over the great Babylon, the false church.
10. Then the wedding of the Lamb with the true church takes place in *chapter 19*.
11. Up till *chapter 21:8* it is described in chronological order what still more is to happen until eternity begins.
12. From *chapter 21:9* you have a description of the new Jerusalem in the kingdom of peace.
13. The book ends with information on the coming of Christ and His promise that He will come soon.

V1. Here you see, with John, the Lord Jesus as the Lamb, opening the first seal. As it is said, it is one of the seals of the book in which God has recorded His counsels and judgments with regard to the earth. You may call the judgments that will come over the earth with the opening of each of the seals, the introductory judgments. They are not yet the actual, ultimate judgments with the effect of the purification of the earth and the redemption of it, but they prepare the way to it. The seal judgments announce the beginning of the end, which means that God will fulfil His will by preparing the earth for the reign of Christ.

The command “*come*” is not addressed to John and still less to Christ. It comes from one of the living creatures that are related to the execution of the judgment and is addressed to the horse as a symbol of the judgment. Here it is still about judgments in providence. That means that those are judgments which by unbelievers are ascribed to natural elements or to political or other circumstances, while in reality they are directed by God. They still do not recognize God’s hand in these plagues.

V2. Horses represent authorities here that God uses for a judgment in His providence (*cf. Zec 1:10; Rev 19:11*). The colors of the horses which are related to the first four seals, consecutively represent as follows: white for victory, fiery red for blood, black for mourning and ashen as the color of a corpse (*cf. Zec 1:8; 6:2-8*).

The white horse with its rider who goes out conquering is not a representation of the coming of Christ. Christ will come down from heaven only in *chapter 19*. Indeed an assumption has been made that a prince is represented here who works and sustains the cohesion of the Roman empire. I do want to remind you that we find here the first events on earth that will take place right after the rapture of the church.

When the church has been taken away it will for a moment seem that all human efforts have been successful in order to achieve a sustainable peace. It is a short period of apparent peace and prosperity with a sense of security. God will allow it, while man in his arrogance will see it as his own success (*1Thes 5:3*). He does

not consider about peace with God and about what He finds righteous.

The “*bow*” without an arrow may probably indicate that there is no arms race at that very moment, but that the disarmament regarding the mass destruction which could be effected at a great distance, has been realized for a great deal. It is also possible that there is such an amount of long distance weapons that the threat is enough to win people without any direct bloodshed. That this process will probably be taking place peacefully can be derived from the white color.

“*A crown was given*” to the conqueror. That indicates that he overcomes under the approval of God, because it is fitting in His plans. It does not mean that God approves of all his acts and motives, but that He allows the performance.

V3-4. When “*the second seal*” is opened by the Lamb, John hears the second living creature commanding: “*Come!*” Because in *verse 1* it is not said ‘the first living creature’, but “*one of the four living creatures*”, the order of speaking of the living creatures cannot be determined on the basis of *chapter 4:7*. The horse that appears has a fiery red color. Shortly after the rider of the white horse had established a peaceful period, the rider of the fiery red horse brutally makes an end to it.

After a period of peace during the first seal, a spirit of discontentment is now working which instigates war, possibly a civil war. Here you do not see a bow, like with the first seal, but “*a great sword*” for the fight of man to man. It is a ‘great sword’, which indicates that the slaughter is great. Here it becomes apparent that the disarmament is not complete. Men will continue to be deceitful. Peace that is worked by men will not be sustained. Only God can give sustainable peace (*Psa 147:14*). Peace is a result of the submission of man to the government of God.

V5. When the Lamb opens “*the third seal*” the command of “*the third living creature*” sounds: *Come!*” John sees “*a black horse*” and the one who sits on it. He also sees that the rider has “*a pair of*

scales in his hand". We don't need to guess what the black color represents. Black doesn't evoke pleasant thoughts, but is related to mourning and lamenting (*Lam 5:10; Jer 4:28*). The pair of scales indicates an accurate measurement of what is available. The general prosperity is over and done with.

V6. You can imagine that because of the war under the second seal, an economic chaos arises. The most necessary provisions will be enormously scarce and therefore expensive. This situation is emphatically related to a judgment that comes from God. It is not written for nothing that "*like a voice in the center of the four living creatures*" announces this scarcity.

Especially the common population will suffer under this crisis. "*A quart of wheat*" will cost "*a denarius*", which is equal to a day's pay (*Mat 20:2*). The ordinary man will not be able to afford more than one meal a day. The word 'quart' doesn't evoke the thought that there is much choice. It is scarce, just enough to stay alive. All the money that has been earned will be used for that. There is no more money to spend on anything else.

"The oil and the wine" must be spared. These products are presented as prosperity goods, which we are warned to keep ourselves from loving (*Pro 21:17*). If these things must be spared it may indicate that the rich people are still prospering. They can always maintain themselves for a longer period of time. But they will surely have to face the shortage. Maybe not in material sense, but surely in spiritual sense (*see verse 15*). I myself prefer to relate the oil and wine with medicines (*see Lk 10:34*). Then I can see in the sparing of oil and wine God's compassion, that despite the severe trials which come over the earth, will not be completely taken away.

V7-8. When the Lamb breaks "*the fourth seal*" John hears the command "*of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."* Now all four living creatures have spoken. The horse you see now is "*ashen*". The rider of this horse has a name called "*Death*" and a follower called "*Hades*". Here you can find no trace of compassion. It is all

darkness. That cannot be otherwise, for wherever God is being denied as the source of life, death enters.

The territory where this judgment takes place is “*the fourth of the earth*”. That is a smaller part than ‘the third part’, which embraces the Roman empire (*Rev 12:4*). The judgment is therefore still of a relative small size.

The famine under the previous seal will be followed by death that in several ways will claim victims. Hades follows death because that is the place where the victims of death end up. Death deals with the living and hades with the dead. Together they make victims with “*sword*” (wars), “*famine*” (hunger), “*pestilence*” (cf. *Eze 14:21*) and “*the wild beasts of the earth*” (*Jer 14:12; 15:2; Eze 5:12, 17; 14:21; 33:27*). Wild beasts probably represent unscrupulous people (*1Cor 15:32; Tit 1:12; Rev 13:1*) who terrorize their fellow men.

Now read Revelation 6:1-8 again.

Reflection: Try to summarize in one word (some words are also allowed) the characteristic of each of the first four seals.

The Fifth and Sixth Seal | *verses 9-17*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

9 *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until [the number of] their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth [made] of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

V9. When the Lamb opens "*the fifth seal*" the result is different from the opening of the previous seals. Then several horses with riders appeared and did certain things. After the establishment of a false peace, several actions followed that resulted in death and misery. With this fifth seal you see nothing happen, but you get the chance to look behind the scenes of death. You see and hear individuals who cry for revenge.

This seal is not a direct judgment, but it is actually the preparation for the judgments that will follow hereafter under the remaining

seals. Those are not the same kind of judgments like those of the previous seals. There things happened on earth that are a plague for men, which are apparently caused by their own wrong acts, although God directed them. The judgments that are still coming are judgments wherein men are forced to recognize more directly the hand of God.

Those who cry for revenge are “*underneath the altar*”. The altar is a place of offering. That appears from the description that follows. “*The souls*” are “*of those who had been slain*”. They were slain by the enemies of God. They are ‘underneath the altar’ because they have brought their lives as offerings for the sake of “*the word of God*” (cf. the blood, wherein the soul is, that was shed at the foot of the altar, *Exo 29:12; Lev 4*). God considers their death as a pleasing offering to Him.

Here you read about ‘souls’, because these believers have not been resurrected yet. Their bodies are still in the grave. At the same time that makes clear that they do not belong to the church, for the bodies of those who belong to the church, will be resurrected at the coming of the Lord Jesus. The believers that we are talking about here, died during the time when the seals were opened, when the gospel was also proclaimed, meaning the gospel of the kingdom (*Mat 24:14*). They will remain in that condition till the return of Christ (*Rev 20:4*).

They did not die a natural death or because of an illness. No, they were killed “*because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained*”. They remained faithful to the truth of God’s Word and also testified of it. They had to pay with their lives for it and they were willing to pay that price. That’s why they were “*slain*”, which is the same word that is used for the Lord Jesus as the ‘Lamb as though it had been slain’ (*Rev 5:6*). What men did to the Lord Jesus, they also do to those who are faithful to Him (*Jn 15:18-20*). These souls are the first martyrs. Many of their brothers will follow in even more horrible times (*Rev 12:17; 13:7*).

V10. The words that they cry out are words of revenge. That also makes clear that we do not find ourselves on Christian ground. It is the language of the Old Testament (cf. *Psa 79:10-13; 137:7-9*). The believers of the church do not pray for revenge on their persecutors, but for grace (*Acts 7:60*). After the rapture of the church this will be a prayer that is fitting to be prayed. Then what only counts is that God will exert His right on earth and the only way is by judgment. When the believers then will be persecuted they will not be liberated by being taken out of the persecution, but by the enemies being judged. Those enemies are the people “*who dwell on the earth*”. They do not want to have anything to do with God and do not want to be confronted with Him.

The souls under the altar cry out to God as the “*Lord, holy and true*”. They long for justice for the injustice that was done to them. Therefore they make an appeal to God, Who empathizes. After all He is holy and hates unholiness. He is also true and hates injustice. They have no doubt that He will act against the evil and will thereby show His absolute sovereignty as Ruler. They only wonder how long they should wait for that (see also *Psa 94:3; Hab 1:2*). At the same time this question indicates that they know that the persecution of the faithful will come to an end.

V11. As an answer to their call the martyrs receive “*a white robe*”. It is about a symbolic robe, for souls cannot be clothed. In the same sentence it is said of God Who is Spirit, that He is clothed (e.g. *Psa 104:2; Isa 6:1*). In that way they receive as it were a high recognition for the fact that they are righteous and overcomers. It underlines their dignity.

It is also said to them that they will have to rest a little while longer. It is about “*a little while*”, which is the time of the great tribulation. The group that is talking here is the first group of martyrs after the rapture of the church. There will be more martyrs joining them; those who will be killed during the great tribulation (*Rev 20:4b*). Those are “*their fellow servants*”, for they serve the same Lord, and “*their brethren*”, for they belong to the same family of those who did the will of God (*Mat 12:49-50*). When they are

killed the number of the martyrs will be full and then the Lord will come to meet their request for revenge.

V12. After this brief conversation the Lamb opens “*the sixth seal*”. What then happens is as it were an ‘advance’ of the answer to the prayer under the previous seal. An enormous earthquake will occur which turns the earth into a chaos. This demonstration of power makes of man a completely insignificant, void creature. Above the earth it becomes black and red. The whole creation has changed into a terrifying décor. It is possible that what is described here will literally happen. It is also possible, which seems to me to be the first meaning, that it is a symbolic illustration of matters.

Symbolically the “*great earthquake*” represents an enormous revolution which causes that man will lose everything that granted him security and support. It regards social, political and religious order, things that supply man in life. Normally the ground under the feet is the most secure thing in life. Sun, moon and stars may be considered to be symbols for rulers (*cf. Gen 1:16*). When these celestial objects lose their glow and become black and red, it means that these rulers, who were intentionally given by God to preserve order and life, are now causing darkness and death.

V13. These stars seem surely to be a symbolic presentation of rulers. If it would be literally true that the stars fall on the earth, then nothing will be left of the earth. That they “*fell to the earth*”, means that they lose their original function. What they were intended for, as an orientation for man, has disappeared. They now show their true nature. Formerly they were rather in control, due to certain Christian values. Their own righteousness comes under the control of powers which they are not able to resist. Evil power will take over the control.

V14. God, as it were, takes His hands off His creation. The thoughts of heaven (i.e. of God) are being obscured, without any possibility of being informed about it. After all, you cannot read a ‘scroll that is rolled up’. There is no more light from above, only moral darkness, which causes men to be blind for any Divine guidance.

That has the result that “*every mountain and island were moved out of their places*”. In relation to the previous verses it seems that this also has to be considered symbolically. Then the mountains represent immense, immovable powers and the islands are images of commercial powers. They also lose their usual functions and become disoriented.

V15. You may take the description in this verse literally. In the sevenfold description you will view the whole human race, from king to slave. They are all astonished and helpless by the elimination of any human government, that they want to hide themselves. Every difference in prosperity, wealth, riches and social positions disappears. None of the economic, social or political benefits gives any protection against these judgments. They will all hide themselves “*in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains*” (Isa 2:19).

V16. While they are sitting there, they will still not feel safe from “*the wrath of the Lamb*”. Due to the disasters under the previous seal they discovered that they have to do with God and the Lamb. They start to consider God and even the Lamb (Pro 10:24a). It is the proof that also the unbelieving man is inwardly aware that he has got to do with God as a Judge. He also knows of the Lamb and His wrath. That indicates that we find ourselves in what was formerly a Christian part of the world.

But how fearful they may be, they refuse to convert! They do not want to accept what they always have denied and what they are now forced to acknowledge. They do not want to bow down before the Lamb. They prefer that the mountains and rocks fall on them. They probably think that if only they die, they will be able to escape from God and the wrath of the Lamb. That also will appear to be a tragic and fatal mistake when they will be called to come before the great white throne (Rev 20:12-13).

V17. People who refuse to convert are always mistaken. These people claim that “*the great day*” of the wrath of God and of the Lamb has come. But that is not true. It is yet the beginning of

the sorrows (*Mat 24:8*). That great day will have come only when Christ appears.

Now read Revelation 6:9-17 again.

Reflection: Mention some differences between what the souls under the altar ask of God and what you as a Christian ask of God.

Revelation 7

The Sealed of Israel | *verses 1-8*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel: 5 from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand [were] sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand [were] sealed.

Introduction. Here actually a parenthesis begins before the seventh seal is opened. In this parenthesis, which consists of *chapter 7*, you hear what the believers are going through in this period of time of the sixth seal. You will also read how they are being preserved by God during this horrible time. It beautifully illustrates that God remembers mercy in the midst of wrath (*Hab 3:2*).

This chapter is as it were an answer to the question that was asked at the end of the previous chapter: 'Who is able to stand?'

The answer is: A great number of saints, both from Israel (*verses 1-8*) and from the nations (*verses 9-17*), is able to stand before God and the Lamb. Both groups of believers will go through the great tribulation. They will not die like the martyrs, but they will enter the kingdom of peace alive. The first group will be sealed before they enter the great tribulation, the second group is presented as coming out of the great tribulation.

V1. That the scene which John gets to see now, follows after what is previously written, is to be derived from the words “*after this*”. After having seen the Lamb That opens seals, John now sees “*four angels*”. When the trumpet judgments break loose in *chapter 8*, the sounding of the trumpets happens by angels (*Rev 8:2,6*). Angels are also to be seen here. Angels are used by the Lamb to do His work. That work consists of protecting the saints (*Heb 1:14*) and the judgment of the evil in accordance to the purity of heaven, the dwelling place of the angels.

The four angels are “*standing at the four corners of the earth*”. That means that the whole earth is their work territory (*cf. Isa 11:12*). The number ‘four’ that appears three times in this verse speaks of what is general, universal. While they are standing there they are “*holding back the four winds of the earth*”, so that these winds cannot cause destruction. The sealing of the elected of God happens in silence.

When the four winds will blow, animals as symbols of rulers of worlds will ascend from the sea of nations. You read about that in *Daniel 7:2-3* (*cf. Jer 49:36*). Here they are still being stopped. God determines the time of their coming, but also controls them for the benefit of His own (*Psa 105:15*). They are being ‘held’, for they try to tear themselves loose. But it is impossible to escape the grip of God Almighty.

V2. Then John sees “*another angel ascending*”. He comes from the east, from the side where the sun rises. When the sun rises, a new day lightens up. This speaks of the rising of “*the sun of righteousness*” (*Mal 4:2*), which is Christ, Who expels the darkness and causes the dawning of the day. This ‘other angel’ is not an image

of Christ. In the next verse he puts himself on the same level with the four angels when he speaks about 'we' and 'our God'.

The angel has "*the seal of the living God*". A seal is a mark of ownership. 'The seal of the living God' makes clear that he who bears it, belongs to Him and is known by Him (cf. 2Tim 2:19). Therefore the seal means also safety (cf. Eze 9:4) at the same time. It is the seal of the *living God*, which means that its bearers are untouchable by death.

When God is called 'the living God, then it is also to emphasize the contrast between Him and the dead idols (1Thes 1:9). This is how He is called also in relation with Israel in the days of Joshua and Hezekiah (Jos 3:10; 2Kgs 19:4,16), which is at the beginning (Joshua) and at the end (Hezekiah) of his history in the land. Just like He intervened in the days of Joshua and Hezekiah for the benefit of His people, He will do that also in the time of the great tribulation. In that time He will lead and preserve His people right through the general idolatrous worshipping of the anti-christ and the beast.

The angel gives a command on behalf of God to the four angels that have power over the winds. The winds want to harm but they cannot, because they are held by the angels. Only when the angels let them loose they will be able to do their damaging work. That means that it is not the winds that have the power to harm the earth and the sea, but the angels are the ones that have the power. Angels also have power over fire (Rev 14:18) and over water (Rev 16:5). However, they do not act on their own, but they are under the authority of God.

V3. Those that are sealed are "*the bond-servants of our God*". They are the elect persons from the twelve tribes of Israel (verse 4) who serve God. Their service seems to consist of the proclamation of His Name, the preaching of the living God, while everything around them has turned his back on Him. They will preach both in Israel and in the whole world and they will continue their service with which the twelve apostles have started when the Lord Jesus sent them out (Mat 10:23; 24:14). It seems that the result of

their preaching is 'the multitude' which the second part of this chapter is dealing with.

It does not say what this seal exactly is. Possibly it is the name of God and the Lamb which they get on their forehead (cf. *Rev* 14:1; 22:4; 3:12). There is a reasonable argument for this approach if you consider that the ungodly have the name of the beast on their forehead (*Rev* 13:16; 14:9,11; 20:4). They are sealed "on their foreheads". In that way it is a clearly observable mark to everyone that they have focused their thoughts on God and that God recognizes them as His own (cf. *Rev* 13:16). They openly testify of His Name in each part of the world wherever they were scattered. The angel confirms that the sealing is the reason why the winds were being stopped.

V4. The number of the ones who were sealed is made known. It is one hundred and forty-four thousand. It is also mentioned who they are. Those are "the sons of Israel". It is also said that they are each from a different tribe. From further details it appears that from each tribe the same number of sealed ones comes forth, namely twelve thousand.

The numbers have a symbolic meaning whereby it is not necessarily to be excluded that it should be considered literally. It is possible that in the time of the great tribulation one hundred and forty-four thousand servants of God will go out in Israel and in the whole world to proclaim His Name. But the symbolic meaning is important. The number twelve, which also in the multiples of one hundred and forty-four and twelve thousand stands at the forefront, is in the Bible continually the number of a perfect reign and government.

This number is especially related with Israel. At the beginning of the history of this people are the *twelve* patriarchs. This nation consists of *twelve* tribes. The breastplate of the high priest had *twelve* stones which represented the whole nation. Out of this nation *twelve* apostles were called. The twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel indicate a worldwide government, for the territory of their service is the world.

V5-8. In the Bible we find almost thirty lists of names of the sons of Jacob, whereby the rank order of the names is not always the same and sometimes a name is replaced by another one. This list that John gives, is led by Judah. Not Rueben, the firstborn, comes first, but Judah, the royal tribe. That is also understandable, for Judah is the tribe from which the King of kings, Christ, has sprouted (*Rev 5:5; Gen 49:9*).

The tribe of Dan is not mentioned. The reason for that is not said. It is possible that it is because Dan has introduced the idolatry in Israel (*Jdg 17*). That does not mean that Dan loses his place in the land, for he will have his part of inheritance in the millennial kingdom of peace (*Eze 48:2*). The important thing is that God cannot use anyone from his tribe to testify of Him as one of His sealed people when the idolatry is general. Manasseh, the son of Joseph takes the place of Dan.

Now read Revelation 7:1-8 again.

Reflection: How can you show your 'seal', meaning: how can you show that you are of the living God?

The Great Multitude From the Nations | *verses 9-17*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

9 *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and [all] tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches [were] in their hands; 10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and [around] the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, [be] to our God forever and ever. Amen." 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16 They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."*

V9. As it is already said at the beginning of the previous section, this chapter deals with two groups of believers. The group that you paid attention to in the previous portion consists of believers from Israel. The distinction between that group and the group that you now have before you is the multitude from every nation and not from Israel. It is also a group that no one can number, while the one from Israel is numbered. Another difference is that the first group gets the seal before the great tribulation begins, while the second group appears when the great tribulation is over (*see verse 14*).

The fact that the first and second group of believers is presented distinctively, is also a proof that the time of the church is over, for therein is no distinction between Jew and Greek (*Gal 3:28; Col 3:11*). Another remarkable fact is that it is not about resurrected believers, but about believers on earth who are alive. There are neither indications that they have died nor that they have glorified bodies. They also stand before the throne on earth and do not sit on the thrones.

They are clothed with “*white robes*” and have “*palm branches in their hands*”. The white robes speak of purity which they have gained through the blood of the Lamb (*see verse 14*). That’s how they have been made acceptable to God. The palm branches in the hands are the image of the triumph that they have achieved over all resistance to which they were exposed. The white clothes were *given* to them, the palm branches are what they have *earned*.

V10. They give all honor to God and the Lamb for their salvation, because They have led them through the great tribulation and protected them against all hostility. Due to that they now may enter the full “*salvation*”, which is the salvation of the millennial kingdom of peace, as living ones. They are aware that they owe everything to God and the Lamb, which they also express.

V11-12. The praise of those who were preserved during the great tribulation, finds resonance in heaven with all the angels. Angels were used by God in that time as the executors of His judgments, but they are also the protectors of those who inherit the salvation (*Heb 1:14*). They stand “*around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures*”. The elders have made their praise heard in *chapter 5:9-10* and the four living creatures in *chapter 4:8*. Here the angels are doing it, like in *chapter 5:11-12*.

Their praise begins with “*amen*” and ends with it also. They agree with the praise of the countless multitude. They also confirm their own praise by that, because He has brought everything to a good end. Their praise is sevenfold, like in *chapter 5:12*. Everything they say belongs to God and they ascribe all to Him. All these features or characteristics have become public in His acts, in the fulfill-

ment of His plans. Just allow this sevenfold expression to sink in and say to God at each aspect: 'It is ascribed to Thee!'

V13. Probably there has been amazement on John's face when he watched this scene. He does not know what he should think of it. What kind of people are they and where do they come from? One of the elders noticed it and responds to that. He formulates what John is thinking of. This may help us also to pay attention on someone's face when we tell them something about God's Word, which this person may be hearing for the first time.

V14. John does not try to hide his ignorance by attempting to formulate an answer. By speaking out the words "*my lord, you know*" he acknowledges the insight of the elder with due respect. He takes in the place of a pupil. That is the right attitude and mind to receive teaching and to understand that teaching also. In his reply the elder deals first with his last question, which is the question where did they come from. He says that it regards people "*who come out of the great tribulation*" and who came to faith in that time through the testimony of the 'brothers of the Lord' (Mat 25:31-40). He speaks about *the* great tribulation. The article "*the*" makes clear that it is not about one or another undetermined tribulation, but about the well-known tribulation (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; cf. Mat 24:21).

Then the elder answers the question about who they are. He does that by pointing at their robes and what had happened to those robes. They have clothes which arrayed the whole body. Those robes were purified and made white. The means through which it happened is "*the blood of the Lamb*". Clothes represent your conduct; it is what people see of you. By your conduct you reveal who you are. The conduct of the unbeliever is sinful. As a believer you are a new creation and your environment will see that by your conduct.

That this multitude has washed its robes in the blood of the Lamb implies an important truth. That truth implies that the blood not only purifies the believers of the church from their sins, but it also implies that the blood is the only way for purification of any sin

from any believer of any time. Everyone who is saved is saved on the ground of the shed blood of the Lamb, whether it is regarding the Old Testament believers or the New Testament believers from after the rapture of the church. That the blessings attached to it, are different, is not the issue here.

V15. Due to their purification through the blood of the Lamb they are able to appear before the throne and to serve Him. In their white robes they were made suitable to be in His presence. Therefore they are not there by their own achievements, but by grace. That grace also makes a person willing to serve God. Serving God happens in the temple of God on earth, by both Jews (*Eze 40-47; Lk 2:37*) and Gentiles (*Isa 56:6; Isa 2:2; Zec 14:16*). They will exercise this service without interruption, "day and night" (*cf. Lk 2:36-38*). What a privilege!

In His turn the Lord Jesus will serve them. He is in the first place the Ruler, then the One Whom they worship and then He is their Protector and Benefactor. He will make them enjoy His presence and protection (*Isa 4:5-6*). By spreading His tabernacle over them they will always be in the secret place of His tabernacle (*Psa 27:5*). In that tabernacle they sought their refuge in the day of trouble and now they may dwell there forever at rest. That also goes for you. Your relationship with the Lord will not be different from now in the perfection. Only the circumstances are different, He is not. Everything will be perfect and will be uninterruptedly enjoyed.

V16. After the great tribulation in which they have suffered great shortage (*Rev 13:17*), a time comes in which they will lack nothing. Through the mercy of God an end will come to all hunger, thirst and heat which they have suffered (*Isa 49:10*).

V17. This change in their situation is the result of the reign of the Lamb. All blessings begin with the throne (*verse 15*) and go back to the throne, because the Lamb is there. He is the Shepherd Who shepherds His sheep. He makes sure that they have no lack of anything. Therefore He "will guide them to springs of the water of life". That speaks of an abundance of life that is freely available.

In that way an abundant refreshment is available which makes life a great joy.

That refreshment you can now already find in the Word of God which is a fountain full of living water, for it is all about Him, Who is the living water. Up till the last page of this book He invites you to come to Him and drink (*Rev 22:17*). That invitation applies to the unconverted man, but is also to be applied to the believer. If you drink from Him, you can have an unspeakable joy in your heart, regardless if you are still in a world full of sorrow (*2Cor 6:10; 1Pet 1:8*).

Every hardship has disappeared out of the life of this multitude. These hardships will not be remembered or come to mind anymore (*Isa 65:17*). The remembrance of it will be erased by God Himself. He does that as it were with His own hand. He does not do that with a big swing. No, He pays attention to "every tear". Every tear that is shed by one on His children in His sight, will be known by Him and will be taken away by Him with His own hand (*Psa 56:8*). The time of sorrow is over, the 'time of singing' has come (*Song 2:12*).

Only then the sufferings for the believers will come to an end. This is one of the many indications that a gospel which proclaims 'Prosperity NOW', the so-called 'prosperity gospel', is a false gospel.

Now read Revelation 7:9-17 again.

Reflection: Which blessings are the share of the great multitude and which of those are also yours? Thank God for that.

Revelation 8

The Seventh Seal and the First Trumpet | verses 1-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 When the Lamb broke 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 seven trumpets were given to them. 3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. 7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

V1. With the breaking of “*the seventh seal*” the book is totally open. That means that the time of the end has come, for it was said to Daniel of this book that he had to seal it till the time of the end (*Dan 12:4,9*). That means that the time has come that many prophetically announced events will be fulfilled. With a view to that a deathly silence arises in heaven. It is the silence before the storm that is about to break loose, a silence in which everything and everybody holds his breath with a view to what is going to happen.

That there is mention of “*about half an hour*” seems to be a symbolic indication for a very short period of time. It is presumably

the period in which happens what John sees in the *verses 2-4*. In the following verses the first trumpet judgments are executed.

It is also possible that the “*silence in heaven*” of half an hour shows something of the mercy of God. God is slow to anger. He doesn’t like to judge, it is an unusual act of His (*Isa 28:21; Lam 3:33*). The judgments under the sixth seal have not led to conversion. In connection to that there is a half an hour longer wait. When there is no sign of repentance to be noticed, God has to come into action which implies that the judgments break loose under the trumpets.

V2. While there is, most likely, a deathly silence in heaven, preparations are being made in that silence for the trumpet judgments. John sees “*the seven angels stand before God*”. That seems to indicate that it is about seven specific angels (*the seven angels*) who find themselves in an exceptionally privileged position (*before God*). These seven angels with their seven trumpets form together the judgment of the seventh seal.

Each of them receives a trumpet. No one else than the Lord Jesus could have given them those trumpets. That there is mention of “*trumpets*” here, means that God speaks with a loud voice through the means of the judgments which are being poured out at the sounding of each trumpet. A trumpet which is sounded is a command for attention.

V3. Then “*another angel*” comes. That is again nobody but the Lord Jesus (*see also Rev 10:1; 18:1*), for only He is able to give strength to the prayers of the saints. He came and “*stood at the altar*”. An altar is an offering place where offerings are brought to God. At the end of this verse it is said that it is a “*golden altar*” and that it is “*before the throne*”. The offering place bears the mark of Divine glory (of which the gold speaks). The offering which is offered here to God, is not a bloody offering, but it consists of “*the prayers of all the saints*”. Regarding the prayers, you read that they are compared with incense (*Psa 141:2*). Each sincere prayer is pleasing to God and will be answered by Him.

Because it regards the prayers of 'all' the saints, it is nice to consider that at that very moment the prayers will be answered which through the ages have been sent up to heaven by all the saints. But it concerns indeed the prayers of the believers who do not belong to the church. That becomes clear from the fact that these prayers are not related to the throne of grace, but to the throne of judgment.

In the time of the great tribulation the saints cry out to 'the God of vengeance' (*Psa 94:1*) to come into action. They ask of Him to judge the ungodly, from which they will be saved. This is again a proof that the church is not on earth anymore, for we are told to pray for those who persecute us and to bless them and not to curse them (*Mat 5:44; Acts 7:60*).

Each prayer only gets its full value to God because the Lord Jesus has a golden censer with much incense in it. The intention of it is also described: "*That he might add it to the prayers of all the saints.*" Nobody but He is able to give strength to the prayers of all saints (*cf. Rev 5:8*). He is the true High Priest. Everything you offer to God is only pleasing to God through Him (*Heb 13:15; 1Pet 2:5*).

'Incense' represents the personal glories of the Lord Jesus, which became visible in His life on earth and His dying on the cross. When you then especially consider prayer, you read of Him that His whole life on earth was 'prayer' (*Psa 109:4b*). Therefore His life was a sweet incense to God.

V4. Everything that the Lord Jesus is as a Man to God ascends together with the prayers of the saints to God. It says also distinctly "*before God out the angel's hand*". In this way the involvement of the Lord Jesus with the prayer of the saints is presented greater than when the incense of the altar would be ascending up to heaven.

V5. When the censer is empty, when the prayers have reached their destination, the Angel returns to the altar with the empty censer. He fills the censer with the fire of the altar which He afterwards throws on the earth. Here you see that the Lord Jesus gives as it were the starting signal for the judgments. When the fire is

being thrown on the earth, impressive accompanying signals are to be experienced.

1. The “*peals of thunders*” make clear that God speaks through the judgments.
2. “*Sounds*” are no rumbling noises at a distance, but horrible deafening blows that make everything shake.
3. “*Flashes of lightning*” put everything in the light and are blinding.
4. “*An earthquake*” causes that the earth suddenly is ripped open under the feet and that every hold is taken away.

The fire is taken from the burnt offering altar on which it burns ceaselessly. The burnt offering altar is the place where the burnt offering is consumed by fire, for the benefit of those who are reconciled and sanctified by it. But that same fire is also used to consume those who have no part in the burnt offering. That the fire is put into the censer first, indicates that the following judgments are related with the prayers of the saints and in that way are the answers to those prayers. It is altogether symbolic language in order to clarify the exercise of these judgments.

V6. Then it is the angels’ turn to exercise their duty. They prepare themselves to sound the trumpets that were given to them. A trumpet announces the judgment, but it also serves as a warning signal, so that people will escape the declared judgments (*Eze 33:2-4*). The destruction and siege of Jericho was also preceded by the sounding of trumpets (*Jos 6:4*). That will also happen when the judgments and the taking possession of the earth will come to pass.

Like often, here also the number seven can be divided in four and three. Just like the first four seals make one whole, the first four trumpets also do. These four are related to the creation, subdivided according to the four domains: the earth, the sea, the rivers and springs of waters, and the sun, the moon and the stars (*cf. Rev*

14:6). However, it does not regard the whole world, for there is still mention of “*the third part*”.

V7. When the first angel sounds, “*hail and fire, mixed with blood ... were thrown to the earth*”. “*Hail*” is a judging power that comes from heaven (*Rev 11:19; 16:21; Exo 9:23-24; Isa 28:2; Eze 38:22*). “*Fire*” is God’s consuming judgment (*Rev 20:10; Lk 16:24*). “*Blood*”, separated from the body, speaks of death (*Rev 16:3*). The fact that hail and fire are mingled with blood therefore means that those judgments will result in death.

The fire does its work and consumes the world wherever there is still a certain order of government (“*the earth*”). Arrogant powers (“*the trees*”, *Dan 4:4-27*) will be consumed, just like prosperity (“*all the green grass*”, *Isa 15:6*). Grass represents both Israel (*Isa 40:7*) and the whole human race (*1Pet 1:24*). Because of the mention of the *green grass*, it may probably emphasize that it relates to man in his prosperity.

In this verse “*burned up*” occurs three times. It is a verb that indicates ‘completely burned up’. It is about being burned to the ground. Although I prefer a symbolic explanation of this trumpet judgment, it is not unthinkable that this judgment is to be taken literally. It seems very difficult to me to consider a literal event in connection to each trumpet judgment. I would like you to ponder on that yourself, without letting your fantasy run free. Of course that also applies to myself. Therefore you need to read even more carefully what I propose to you as a possible explanation.

“*A third part of the earth*” means that the judgments will strike a limited territory and not the whole earth. It has all the appearances that this “*third part*” regards to the nominal Christian part, the false Christianity, which very probably may refer to the restored Roman empire or the united Europe (*see Rev 12:4*). That is my opinion, because in this part of the world the light of the gospel has shone most clearly. That makes the responsibility of the people who live here even greater than that of other people. And God always begins with His judgment with those who are most responsible (*cf. 1Pet 4:17; Lev 10:3*).

Now read Revelation 8:1-7 again.

Reflection: What does the power consist of which is given to the prayers of the saints by the Angel?

The Second, Third and Fourth Trumpet | *verses 8-13*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

8 The second angel sounded, and [something] like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, 9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. 10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. 11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. 12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. 13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

V8. When the second angel sounds the trumpet, something like "a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea". After the earth also the sea will be the object of judgment. The sea represents the disordered world (*Isa 17:12; 57:20*), lands where revolution and anarchy are in control, in contrast to the earth of *verse 7*. Great powers will go down in there, while other powers will come out of them.

The great mountain, or anyway something which reminds us of that, is a symbol of a strong worldly power (*Jer 51:25; Isa 2:2; Dan 2:35; cf. Psa 46:3*). This is not the restored Roman empire, for that will not go down in the sea of nations, but will arise from it (*Rev 13:1*). Some interpreters refer to the United States. This great power is burning with fire. It is an object of God's wrath.

V9. The fall of this burning great power sows death and destruction in the midst of a third part of the nations. The third part of

the inhabitants of these nations will die. The fall of the great power also causes the destruction of *"the third of the ships"*. That may probably indicate that parts of trade and communication will be paralyzed, which for example will cause it to be impossible for relief supplies to be imported from countries that are further away.

V10. At the sounding of the third angel *"a great star fell from heaven"*. Just like with the first two trumpets, there is also mention of fire here. Only it is not that much about a consuming fire here, but about something that burns *"like a torch"*. The effect is also to be compared with the previous trumpets, for here also many men die (*verse 11*). However, there is still a difference. The cause of death is not fire, but wormwood, which is caused by this star.

The star is a symbol of a ruler that should radiate heavenly light (*Rev 1:20*). You may think of a great person with authority or a religious powerful system, probably somebody who or something that impresses people, in the expectation that he or it will supply religious leadership to the (western) world. This star will not be *thrown* like it happened in the previous verses, but will *fall down* from heaven (*see Isa 14:12*). It will burn like a torch and in that way it is an imitation of the seven Spirits of God (*Rev 4:5*). That leads to the thought that this star concerns a spiritual power. The Spirit of God spreads the truth; this star spreads lies and destruction, doctrines of demons (*1Tim 4:1*).

The star falls on *"a third of the rivers and on the springs of water"*. *"Rivers"* represent the normal life of a nation which is characterized by certain principles. *"Springs"* refer more to the influences that are based on the principles. In the symbolism of this description you may say that this star causes the destruction of spiritual springs instead of giving a wholesome heavenly light.

After the two domains on which life happens (earth and sea) are struck by the previous trumpets, now the springs of life that determine the quality of life are struck. You recognize this if you for instance look at marriage and family. Marriages and family were given by God as a spring of happiness. When this is separated from God, it becomes a spring of unhappiness. Or: the womb is

a spring of life, but separated from God life is being killed there, which now has become a large place of murder. That's what makes life bitter.

V11. Wormwood represents bitterness (*Pro 5:4*). That's what this ruler causes to those who find themselves within his reach. All people who think to find delight in him, will notice that they have drunk death. The water is not only bitter, but it also appears to be poisonous. Dying does not imply the physical death, but the moral death, which means that there is absolutely no connection with what God has given concerning the good things in creation. Therefore there is no possibility to enjoy those things anymore. Life becomes altogether bitterness and embitterment. As a believer you therefore need to watch out for becoming embittered for whatever reason (*Heb 12:15*). Embitterment strangles the life within yourself and also within others.

V12. The trumpet judgments take away the life of people step by step and sacrifice them to the powers and forces of death. The fourth angel sounds. That causes that the celestial bodies are struck which were ordained to give light on the earth (*Gen 1:14-19*). The punishment of this judgment is the removal of light. In that way another spring of life is struck, for without light life cannot grow and flourish.

Of sun and moon it is said that they 'rule' (*Gen 1:16*). Stars serve to give us orientation. These celestial bodies refer to the whole system of the government in all its parts, from the highest authority to its lowest form. These light bearers, authority figures in different layers, will be partly ("*a third*") clothed in darkness. That takes every orientation which they could have offered, away from them, both in daytime and during the night.

V13. After the fourth trumpet has sounded John sees and hears "*an eagle flying in midheaven*". An eagle is the symbol of the speed with which the judgment is exercised. It sees its prey from a far distance and dives at a high speed to catch it. The eagle flies "*in midheaven*", so that it is to be seen and heard by everyone on earth. It announces the judgment of the remaining three trumpets.

Because of fierceness of these three trumpets the eagle cries out a threefold “*woe*”. This threefold ‘woe’ is like the fifth, sixth and seventh trumpet. Therefore the last three trumpets also make a whole. The three coming trumpet judgments or woes do not strike so much the circumstances wherein people find themselves, like it has been most often the case up to now, but they now strike the people themselves and are therefore not indirect judgments anymore.

These people are indicated as “*those who dwell on the earth*”. In *Revelation* this expression always regards those who feel themselves at home on earth and for whom that’s the purpose of life. Nothing else matters for them. God has no place in their thinking and life. Therefore they will be judged with the earth, which they love that much and to which they attached their fate. Believers do not ‘dwell’ on the earth, but they are pilgrims there. Their home is heaven (*Phil 3:20*).

The judgments that follow are horrible, whereby that of the third woe, which includes the seven bowls, are the most horrible ones. The first ‘woe’ will come over the unsealed Jews, the second ‘woe’ will strike the Christless Christianity.

Now read Revelation 8:8-13 again.

Reflection: What actually is struck by judgments in this portion?

Revelation 9

The Fifth Trumpet | verses 1-12

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. 2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. 7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. 8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like [the teeth] of lions. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. 10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. 11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. 12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.

V1. The star that John sees when the fifth angel sounds is already on the earth. He does not see that star falling from heaven, but he knows that it came from heaven down to the earth. As well as in

chapter 8:10 as in this verse it is about a star from heaven on the earth. In both cases you see a power that once had been a recognized person of authority with a religious character, but now has fallen and has been degraded. It acts whether under satanic influence (*Rev 8:10*) or as satan himself (in this verse).

The star is given "*the key of the bottomless pit*". The possession of a key means the possession of power over a territory to which the key gives access (*Rev 1:18; 3:7*). Here it is about "*the bottomless pit*". The star therefore has power over the dark forces of the bottomless pit. The star therefore seems to be a symbolic presentation of satan. The dark forces of the bottomless pit have satan as king (*verse 11*). The bottomless pit is the place where at this moment the evil is still being kept in control. When satan gets the keys he will let loose these evil forces, as the next verses show. When God has achieved His purpose with this loosening He will lock up all evil forces, including satan, for a thousand years (*Rev 20:1-3*).

V2. The star opens up the bottomless pit. The bottomless pit is the lowest, most depraved source of evil, from where the worst danger comes out. Up to this moment that pit had been closed, for the worst evil could not manifest itself yet. But once the pit has been opened, the swarms of evil spirits will be released and they will flood the earth. They will wrap themselves in a "*smoke*" like "*the smoke of a great furnace*".

It is a black, heavy smoke that causes an eclipse of the sun. Besides the light the smoke takes away also the warmth. The smoke works like a suffocating blanket and takes away all the oxygen. The smoke takes away everything that supplies light and warmth (the sun) and it defiles the spiritual atmosphere of the human society (the air). A spiritual darkness falls down upon men, which causes them to lose any sight of and insight in a healthy society.

V3. That it is not about a usual smoke, even it is extremely heavy and black, appears also from what comes out of it. The smoke that arises up from the pit appears to be a means of transport of "*locusts*". The locusts represent satanic powers (*Exo 10:12-20; Joel 1:4-7*). These insects destroy everything they come across.

The atmosphere of the thick smoke of the previous verse is a paradise for powers that like locusts destroy all life and like scorpions torment people. Someone who has been stung by a scorpion will be completely restless and driven to total insanity, as long as the poison is active. This will happen to the Jews as a result of their rejection of God in their Messiah (*Deu 28:28,65; Mat 12:43-45*).

V4. The powers of darkness will be released. They will rise up by swarms from the bottomless pit in order to do all they can, namely sowing death and destruction. Still, they cannot be undisturbed in whatever they want to do. They only can and are permitted to do what God wants to use them for. Therefore a limitation is imposed on them. The limitation is to such a great extent that actually only one purpose is left for them. They are allowed to carry out their pernicious work to "*the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads*".

This indication seems to show that this very judgment of the fifth trumpet, specifically strikes the ungodly mass of the Jewish people. You have seen in *chapter 7* that out of Israel one hundred and forty-four thousand people were sealed. Now you see the purpose of it. It is a warranty against the deceptive and pernicious spirits from the bottomless pit. The apostate Jews are the object of the judgment, because they have obtained more knowledge of God than other people, but have thrown that knowledge away by their rejection of God's Messiah.

V5. Besides a limitation of the territory over which they can assert their wicked power, also a limitation is imposed on these spiritual forces for the practice of causing pain and for the duration of the practice of their power. This pain is extremely severe. It will make people desire to die. The duration is relatively short, namely five months. But you may know from experience how long a relatively short time can be when you are suffering extreme pains from moment to moment. It is remarkable that this duration is strikingly the same as the normal lifetime of the locusts, which is also five months.

By the way, you can see a proof of God's mercy in the fact that the apostates are not immediately killed. Due to this 'suspension' the individual still has the chance to repent. The fact that this chance is not taken shows how much man has hardened his heart. However severe the pain of the scorpion's sting may be, man refuses to consider going to God and begging Him for mercy (*verse 20; Rev 16:9*).

V6. The sting of the scorpion is not a literal sting, as neither are the scorpions. Also the locusts are not literal locusts. It is about symbols of creatures that will operate in an extremely sadistic way. They will have a satanic pleasure, according to their nature, in tormenting people in a way that these people will seek to die, for they think that in that way they can escape the torturing pains. But death, the last weapon of satan, withdraws itself from them, so that the tortures remain.

The torture that is caused consists of diabolical doctrines that will torture people in their heart and conscience from which they cannot escape. The control of demonic influences is a result of having opened up themselves for occultism, spiritualism, sorcery and fortune-telling. These movements find more and more followers. People who surrender themselves to it will be struck with insanity. They will try to commit suicide in order to escape, but they will not succeed.

V7. Then a description of these demonic powers follows. From this description it appears that they love war and are aggressive. Horses are a good symbol for that. In some countries locusts are called 'little horses' because of the similarity of their head to that of a horse (*cf. Job 39:23*). They are also not to be stopped, but they move on triumphantly, which you can derive from what you see on their heads – something "*appeared to be crowns like gold*". It also indicates that they claim royal dignity.

That "*their faces were like faces of men*", means that they operate with insight. This insight they gained by their familiarity with people for ages. They present their doctrines, which cause pernicious, unbearable pain, very acceptably and humanly (human

rights, rights of children, rights of privacy), but with the intention to dethrone God. Behind this 'human face' demonic powers are hidden who cover their true nature.

V8. Another characteristic of them is that they have "*hair like the hair of women*". There is no doubt that it is about long hair. The 'material' is after all not different from that of man. When you look at what is written about the long hair of the woman in *1 Corinthians 11*, you can discover in relation to this remark two aspects in the performance of these creatures.

In the first place their performance is charming, attractive, as long hair is the woman's adornment, her attractiveness. In the second place this proves that it is not about independent powers here, that operate on their own, but that they are in reality subjected to their chief, which is satan. That they are subjected to satan, is expressed by "*their teeth were like [the teeth] of lions*", which indicates that their performance has the savage, cruel and tearing power of lions.

V9. Besides their brutal cruelty they are inviolable too for any resistance. Their iron harness shows their invulnerability. It also shows their insensitiveness, their heartlessness, the total absence of mercy. A conscience is something that they do not have or when they do, it is seared. The noise of their appearance is frightening (*Joel 2:4-6*). Their goal is war without compassion. They are aggravated by satan, while they cause terror and fear to their victims.

V10. The description closes with another indication that the main thing here for them is to harm people and that they have a limited period of time for that. But the sting is in the tail, which becomes clear here. The tail represents false doctrines (*Isa 9:15*). They cause spiritual damage by spreading false doctrines, which cause an enormous torment. The sting comes from the pit. Dogmas, doctrines and principles that come from the bottomless pit are accepted by the apostate part of Israel and cause unbearable agonies in their souls and conscience.

V11. That they are under the control of a leader and therefore are neither independent nor operating by their own insight appears from *verse 11*. “The angel of the abyss” is their “king”. They are under his government. He is the controlling intelligence and the hidden organizer of these pernicious battle orders. His name is written in both Hebrew and Greek. Probably his Hebrew name refers to the relation to the antichrist with the apostate Jewish people and his Greek name to the relation with the apostate Christianity.

The names have one same meaning: Abaddon means ‘destruction’ and refers more to the result of his work. Apollyon means ‘destroyer’ and refers more to the person himself. No one else than satan can be meant here (*Jn 8:44*). He is the angel of the bottomless pit, represented in the star (*cf. Isa 14:12*) which fell down from heaven (*verse 1*). The antichrist and the beast are animated by him.

V12. An end has come to the first woe, the fifth trumpet. Actually, the disasters that were caused by the locusts from the bottomless pit would last for just five months. It is possible that there is a short break before the next ‘woe’ sounds. Thereafter a third ‘woe’ is to come. That only happens in *chapter 11* when the seventh angel sounds the trumpet (*Rev 11:15-18*).

With the cry “*behold*” more attention is focused on the two times that after this another ‘woe’ is to come. How terrible the first ‘woe’ has been, still both other woes are yet to come. The second ‘woe’ is the sixth trumpet and is again related to the Roman empire, which is connected to the second (the Greek) name of the previous verse. After the judgment over the apostate Jews under the first ‘woe’ follows the judgment under the second ‘woe’ over the apostate Christians.

Now read Revelation 9:1-12 again.

Reflection: Do you already observe destructive influences in your environment? How can you recognize them?

The Sixth Trumpet | *verses 13-21*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying 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 prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: [the riders] had breastplates [the color] of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm. 20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

V13. The sixth trumpet is sounded by the sixth angel. The result is that John hears a voice. That may be the voice of God or of the Lord Jesus. That voice comes from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. That gives the impression that this judgment is the result of the prayers of the saints who had prayed for revenge and redemption (*Rev 6:9-11; cf. Rev 8:3*). The four horns show that the judgment is full of power (horns) and that it is also general (which is represented by the number four).

V14. Here you read about something that had not happened with any of the previous angels. Actually an order is given to the angel

that had sounded the trumpet. In that way this angel himself is involved with the judgment that he announces. He is ordered to release the four angels who are bound at the Euphrates river. The Euphrates river is always the border between Israel in the broadest sense (*Gen 15:18*) and the eastern powers, especially Assyria. It was also the most eastern border of the Roman empire.

These four bound angels must not be confused with the four angels that are 'holding back' in *chapter 7:1-3*. Here we have the release of powers and there the powers are stopped. There we have the good angels who are preventing the outbreak of the evil a little bit longer, here we have the evil angels who are about to cause destruction. The fact that they must be released proves that they are evil angels.

V15. It is remarkably written that the four angels "*had been prepared*" in order to be released at an exactly mentioned moment. It confirms the providence of God. He arranges everything in advance that everything may happen at the right moment. He determines the means and the time. God has prepared these angels for a long time already. He has everything in control and makes it come to pass just as it fits in His plan and serves His goal. That also goes for all destroying powers. They are released "*to kill a third of mankind*".

V16. The release of the angels causes an enormous army to appear. It seems that the four evil angels activate these armies. All armies, consisting of horses with horsemen, together form an army of two hundred million horsemen. John hears their number, for it was impossible for him to count. The number is mentioned to give an impression of the enormous mass that has been made ready to make war.

It is possible that this number is to be taken literally. It is also possible that the demonic powers that control this army are to be included in this number. These powers come from the east. When you imagine these armies you may think of the great influence of the islam that asserts itself more and more.

V17. John mentions that he sees everything in a vision. Therefore it is not really happening, but he sees with his spiritual eye what is going to take place. He not only sees events and the scene where it will happen, but he also sees the actors. These are frightening appearances. However, there is no fear with John. That should be the same with you. Those are after all creatures which are ultimately in God's hand. He determines their act and their way.

The characteristics of these armies are those of hell; they wear the armor of hell. Fire and brimstone are the consuming elements which are used judicially (*Gen 19:24*). They are also symbols of the everlasting torment (*Rev 20:10*). Their breastplates again refer to their complete insensitiveness. The heads of lions is a picture of their superiority. What comes out of their mouth comes from their heart (*Mat 15:18-19; 12:34; Rev 16:13*), which makes clear that their heart is in connection with the hell. Their vomit consumes and suffocates everything that is alive and leads into darkness and deception, without any escape.

V18. Hellish means, "*the fire and the smoke and the brimstone*", are used in this war to kill people. These armies harvest for death. The means to kill are mentioned twice in these verses and come out of their mouth, which is also mentioned twice. "*Their mouths*" refers to their voracity, which means that people are being devoured by them. It is also possible that they approach people with an unprecedented eloquence, which causes those people to be captured and in that way become a prey to these armies. In this way they are killed, which in a spiritual sense means that any connection with God, in case there should still be a connection, is being erased.

V19. Again the devouring and deceptive nature of this army force is emphasized. The mouth indicates devour. That the tails have heads indicates guile and betrayal appears from the comparison with serpents. The horsemen appear to have no role here, for there is only mention of horses.

It is remarkable that 'mouth' is written here in the singular – while before 'mouths' was twice mentioned, the plural – and that 'tails' are in plural. That shows that on the one hand they are all

animated by one spirit and that they act out of that one particular spirit, while the tails indicate the manifold doctrines and lies of satan. That the tails have heads indicates that their wicked influence is guided by intelligence.

V20. After the horses have done their malevolent work a lot of people still remain. They will witness a mass slaughter which is achieved by this overpowering army, but there is no movement of any repentance to be found with them in the direction of the living God. They have abandoned Him and no trace of any thought arises in them in order to allow Him back into their lives.

These people have fallen prey to all kinds of idolatry, demonic powers of violence and destruction. They worship their cultural, technical and medical products, the performances they have carried out without any gratitude to God who enabled them to. The different values of the materials that are mentioned indicate that all layers of the society, the rich and the poor have subjected themselves to idolatry. Everyone makes himself an own idol to worship with the means that are available to him. That kind of idol which is being worshiped is connected to the conduct of the worshiper and shows what nature he has. You see that in the next verse.

Thereby you should consider that the people who are concerned here are the nominal Christians of Western Europe. It is the part of the world where the light of the gospel has been shining the clearest. But the gospel has become more and more a social chat of philanthropy from which God in His holiness has been expelled more and more. That's why the light has become darkness. When light becomes darkness, that darkness is the greatest possible darkness (*Mat 6:23*).

They did not repent of their idols, which means as it is written here, that they did not repent of "*the works of their hands*". Their whole life, all of their daily routines was connected with idolatry in such a way that they were totally blind to the fact that they were practicing idolatry. About the idols it is again described that they are totally unable to come into any action. God's Spirit mocks with that, as you read that also in *Isaiah 44:9-20*.

V21. It is remarked once more that they did not repent. In the previous verse you have seen a sketch of the decay of Christianity. The works of human hands have become objects of adoration. But this fact does not stand by itself. This adoration of idols goes hand in hand with an inner depravity which is exposed in the most horrendous way. A borderless selfishness towards other people becomes clear.

A totally moral degeneration reveals itself with which the world was totally unfamiliar before. At the adoration of his idols, man follows the lusts of his corrupted nature without any reservation. In the deeds of man it will become clear that both features of satan, lies and murder, will control man completely at the end.

It is not about incidents, but murder, sorcery, fornication and thefts are the order of the day. The things that are mentioned show the absolute selfishness of man and the total lack of respect for what other people have. Every relation that is forbidden by God is being embraced by these people with eagerness. Wherever the relation with God is absent the relations in society become more and more loose and respect for rights and the possessions of others disappear. Everyone decides for himself.

1. "*Murders*" indicates the lack of respect for life. You see that today in the legalization of abortion (murder at the very beginning of life) and euthanasia (murder at the end of life). In between are the countless other violent murders.
2. In the "*sorceries*" you see the improper relation with wicked spirits, in order to be able to forecast the future (*1Sam 28:7*).
3. "*Immorality*" is the trampling of marriage, which was established by God and the disregard of the rights that go together with it (*see 1Thes 4:6*).
4. "*Thefts*" are committed commonly as if there is an entitlement to another one's possession. Morality has sunken that deep that there is in no way any awareness of sincerity and honesty.

Now read Revelation 9:13-21 again.

Reflection: Which forms of idolatry do you recognize around you? Do you also see any danger for yourself to worship an idol?

Revelation 10

The Opened Little Book | *verses 1-11*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; 2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; 3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. 4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." 5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer, 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. 8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, [I heard] again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he *said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. 11 And they *said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."*

Introduction: A new parenthesis begins here between the sixth and seventh trumpet that runs from *chapter 10:1-11:13*. In this parenthesis your eye is focused on a certain part of the earth, actually to Jerusalem, because all important decisions will be made there. There the feet of the Lord Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives when He comes from heaven. In the first part of the parenthesis, which is *chapter 10*, a clear light beam breaks through between the dark clouds of the judgments, as a consolation.

V1. Again John sees “another angel”. That you also read in *chapter 7:2* and *chapter 8:3*. In *chapter 8:3* the Angel is the Lord Jesus. It is also a “strong” angel. You read that too in *chapter 5:2* and in *chapter 18:21*. There it appears to be a common angel. When you read what the characteristics are of this ‘other strong Angel’ there is much to be said that it is about the Lord here.

He comes down “out of heaven”, His dwelling place. Here He as it were, makes a first step in the direction of the earth. He is “clothed with a cloud”, the symbol of God’s glory. “The rainbow ... upon His head” indicates that God will fulfill His covenant with the earth through Him (*Gen 9:16*). “His face was like the sun” reminds us that God shows all of His glory and sovereign authority in this Person. “His feet like pillars of fire” indicate that the way He operates is the path of holy judgment over sin.

V2. The Lord Jesus has “a little book which was open” in His hand. It is a different book from the one you have seen in *chapter 5*, which was closed, sealed with seven seals which have been broken in the meantime. In that book the counsels of God are written regarding the whole creation. This book is smaller. It seems to contain God’s plan with the city of Jerusalem. That will be made clear in the next chapter.

This little book is not closed. It doesn’t need to be opened like the book in *chapter 5*. Regarding Jerusalem, there are no sealed events. What the future of Jerusalem will be, has been told to us in the Old Testament prophecies. Nevertheless the future of Jerusalem is related with the taking into possession of the whole earth

by the Lord Jesus. That is symbolically presented in standing “*on the sea*” and “*on the land*” (cf. *Jos 1:3*).

V3. When He has taken in His place on the land and on the sea He cries “*with a loud voice*”. The crying of His voice sounds like the roaring of a lion. He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah (*Rev 5:5*). His roaring is a sign that He is ready to claim His right on the earth (*Jer 25:30-31; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2*). In response to that the seven thunders let their voices to be heard. They express their agreement from heaven with His rights, which He will claim through judgment.

V4. When the voices of the seven thunders are faded away, John wants to write down what he has heard. But then he hears a voice from heaven saying that he was not to do that. That is an exception for what he had done up to now, for he wrote everything down each time he had seen or heard something. It is not said why in this case he was not allowed to do that.

V5. Then John sees how the Angel Who was standing on the sea and on the earth was raising His right hand to heaven. This is the usual gesture when someone swears an oath (*Deu 32:40; Dan 12:7; cf. Gen 14:22*).

V6. John could hear how the Lord Jesus is swearing by God as the Everlasting and Creator. He Himself is everlasting and the Creator, but He is seen here as Man. God has created the three territories (heaven, earth and sea) with everything in it and on it, but which all got into the enemy’s hands. In this description the whole material universe is included, from the furthest galaxies to the creatures of the deepest sea that had never been perceived by anyone. Everything comes from God’s hand and not by the way of development (evolution).

The Lord Jesus swears that He will restore all things to the honor of God. He has created everything by His power and by His power He will bring everything to the purpose determined by Him. The end of this evil age will not be delayed any longer; the evil age will last just a short time more. All things will be accom-

plished soon. Only one trumpet is left. It will come in the next verse. When that one sounds the waiting time will be over.

V7. The seventh trumpet announces the last judgments, which are judgments that herald the coming of the Lord without further delay. Then the mystery of God will be completed. A mystery is something that has not been manifested for a certain time and therefore could not be known in that time. The people of God learn to know that mystery when God reveals it, while it remains a mystery for the world. Only when the mystery is fulfilled, the world will learn to know it.

Here the mystery consists of the ways that God in His government goes with the world, what nobody can comprehend. In that government God sometimes allows the evil to flourish and the punishment may take a long time, while believers are persecuted and receive no reward. This hidden government of God is nearly over. Then He will reveal how and why He has operated in that way.

To God's "*servants the prophets*", who know this government, it is a 'good news', just like the word, which is translated with "*preached*" literally indicates. They have heard it from God and have passed it on. The believers have accepted their prophecy in faith and it has given them guidance and strength in their lives. To the people of the world it is still a mystery. But when Christ appears the mysteries of God will be revealed by Him. It will be visible for them and they will acknowledge it (*Rev 1:7; 2Thes 1:9-10*).

V8. John is appealed to do something. He has to take the book out of the hand of the Angel. In this way he becomes from being spectator to a person who is involved. It is an example for you not only to be engaged with the future as a subject of study, but that what you read and learn about the future also has an effect in your life.

V9. John does what he is told to. He goes to the Angel and tells to Him to give him the little book. It looks a bit strange that John is giving an order here to the Lord Jesus. But John does nothing

more than the voice from heaven had said to him. The answer of the Lord Jesus also shows that He is not a subordinate of John. It is not simply said that He gives the little book, but He orders John to take the little book.

Then He gives him the order to eat it and says also what will happen to him when he does. By taking the little book and eating it, it becomes a part of John himself, of his inner man (*Eze 2:8-3:3*). In that way he will receive strength for the work that is still to be done by him. The Lord Jesus also tells to John how the little book will taste. When he eats it, it will be both bitter and sweet, bitter in his stomach and sweet in his mouth. The tastes bitter and sweet characterize the acts of God. In the history bitter comes first and then followed by sweet.

V10. It happens just like the Lord Jesus has said. Only, here the sweet taste in the mouth is mentioned first and afterwards the bitter in his stomach. In the experience of John the sweet taste comes first and then the bitter one. When you read and study the Scripture you get the sweet taste first of all God's plans. But when you allow those portions to sink in your heart you also experience the bitterness of the way God's plans are being realized.

In other words: when you learn about God's ultimate goal with creation, you will first of all experience the sweetness (*Psa 119:103; Jer 15:16*). But the ways of government which lead to that goal are not sweet, but bitter, due to the resistance of man. Reading about all God's wonderful plans with Israel gives a sweet foretaste of the millennial kingdom of peace. But when you see what sufferings these people will have to go through, it gives a bitter taste.

The same goes for the coming of the Lord Jesus. When you consider that He is coming soon and that you will meet Him in the air it is sweet for the faith. At the same time it gives also a bitter taste when you consider what the coming of the Lord Jesus means for everyone who has refused and rejected Him. It means that they are lost forever.

V11. John may have thought that the end was now. But he has to continue passing on the future events that will touch all nations of the world. By the eating of the little book he has been made suitable for that (*cf. 1Kgs 19:8*). Each service that the Lord asks of you has to be preceded by the eating of His Word. He cannot use you before that.

Now read Revelation 10:1-11 again.

Reflection: Why is it important and necessary to 'eat' the Word? What do you experience as 'sweet' and what as 'bitter'?

Revelation 11

The Two Witnesses | verses 1-8

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. 2 Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. 3 And I will grant [authority] to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. 6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. 7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies [will lie] in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

V1. Although it is not said in so many words it seems that this chapter tells about the contents of the little book from the previous chapter. The place of activity is Jerusalem with the temple of God. The temple is called "*the temple of God*", because God takes into consideration the true worshipers who draw near to Him there. But in reality it is the temple of the antichrist, which was built in unbelief and where the antichrist will place an image of

the beast from the sea during the three and a half years of the great tribulation (*Rev 13:14-15; 2Thes 2:4*).

It is most likely that this image will be placed in the court of the temple and not in the building itself. The court is also allowed for the people to enter. Because of the image of an idol that is placed there, the court is not measured.

This temple is next to the last temple of all temples that have been built in the course of time on earth. We read in Scripture about five earthly temples:

1. the temple of Solomon (*1Kgs 7*; was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.);
2. the temple of Zerubbabel (*Ezra 3:6*; was robbed later and consecrated to Jupiter by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 and 170 B.C.);
3. the temple that was built by Herod (*Jn 2:20*; its construction was started in 17 B.C. and it was destroyed by the Romans in 70); this temple is by the way not a completely new temple, but an enlargement of the temple of Zerubbabel;
4. the temple built for the antichrist (*2Thes 2:4*) and
5. finally the temple of Christ (*Eze 40-48*).

For the sake of completeness I would like to point out that in the New Testament there is still mention of three *spiritual* temples: the body of the Lord Jesus (*Jn 2:21*), the body of the believer (*1Cor 6:19*), and the church (*1Cor 3:16*). Finally, we read in *Revelation 11:19* about the temple of God in heaven and in *Revelation 21:22* that God Himself and the Lamb is called the temple of the new Jerusalem.

Just like it was with the eating of the little book John has to participate actively in the events. He is ordered to rise and measure some matters. Therefore “*a measuring rod like a staff*” was given to

him. This 'measuring rod' is to define the border of what belongs to God; it defines His ownership (cf. *Psa 16:6; Zec 2:1-5; Rev 21:15-17*). The temple is His, the altar is His and those who worship Him in the temple are His. The measuring rod like a staff represents the *support*, which faith finds in the thought that God also in times of darkness makes clear what is His and who belong to Him.

V2. John is not allowed to measure the court. He even has to reject it. That is, because the court does not belong to God. He has no relation with it, for the nations have got access to it, because the antichrist has made a covenant with them (see *Dan 9:26-27*). With "the holy city" Jerusalem is meant.

During a period of forty-two months (that is three and a half years, the duration of the great tribulation) Jerusalem will be in the hands of these unholy allies. They will trample underfoot and profane the city in such a way that in the (court of the) temple which is built for the antichrist, a gruesome image of the Roman emperor will be placed.

V3. Despite the domination of the gentiles and the pressure of the antichrist, God will kindle a powerful testimony in Jerusalem. Many people would have fled from Judea (the region around Jerusalem) to the mountains (*Mat 24:16*), but in the city itself there will be a remnant of worshipers (*Zeph 3:12*). In the midst of it God will revive two witnesses whom He calls "My two witnesses". Two represent a sufficient testimony (*Deu 19:15; 2Cor 13:1*). Many will repent because of their witness (*Dan 12:10*).

They will pass through the city "clothed in sackcloth". The sackcloth is a sign of mourning because of the miserable situation the people find themselves in (cf. *Joel 1:13; Jer 4:8*). It also supports the gravity of the message which is an appeal for repentance. They will warn and point out to the people who want to enter the temple to worship the image of the beast that Christ is coming soon. You also see with John the baptist that his clothing was fitting to the gravity of his preaching (*Mat 3:4*) and how he finally had to pay with his life for this preaching (*Mat 14:5,10*).

The duration of their preaching is indicated in days, probably to make clear and to emphasize that their preaching is heard every day. This indication is also to make clear how valuable each day is to God that a testimony of Him is given on earth. Another thought attached to that is that these twelve hundred and sixty days are again the same period of the great tribulation. Twelve hundred and sixty days is three and a half years. Because the testimony is given under the greatest possible tribulation, the count is indicated in days. God counts the days of His tested and persecuted witnesses. Because He has given power to His two witnesses the enemies cannot do anything until God allows them to.

V4. The witnesses are compared with *“the two olive trees and the two lampstands”* (see *Zec 4*). As ‘two olive trees’ they show the full power of the Holy Spirit (oil) and as ‘the two lampstands’ they spread Divine light as a testimony in the darkness that will then be reigning. They stand *“before the Lord of the earth”* (*Psa 24:1*), which means that their testimony is related to the Lord Who sets His foot on the earth and on the sea and Who will soon claim His right to it.

V5. As long as they are to testify, they are unassailable and nobody can harm them. Every attack will be paid with the lives of the attackers. The witnesses actually have the fire of God at their disposal. That fire comes out of their mouth and it consumes every enemy that wants to harm them in order to eliminate them and silence them so that they cannot testify anymore.

This course of action makes clear that this concerns a totally different time than the time in which we now live. Instead of consuming our enemies who want to harm us when we testify of our Lord, we are to bless them. The Lord rebukes John and James when they suggest to Him to command fire to come down from heaven to consume the village of the Samaritans because He is not welcome there (*Lk 9:53-56*).

V6. The witnesses have even more power. As often as they desire they can shut heaven, they can turn water to blood and they can strike the earth with all kinds of plagues. If you know some of the

history of the Old Testament, particularly the histories in which Moses and Elijah play a role, you will recognize them in these plagues. These expressions of power you find in particular with these two greatest prophets of the Old Testament. “*The power to shut the sky*” you find with Elijah (1Kgs 17:1) and the “*power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague*” you find with Moses (Exo 7:14-10:29). Elijah testified towards God’s people who had become apostate. Moses testified against the enemy of God’s people, namely Egypt.

Elijah and Moses are more often mentioned together. In that sense you find them both with the Lord on the mountain of transfiguration, where they as it were get a foretaste of the millennial kingdom of peace (Mat 17:3). Also Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, speaks about Moses and Elijah as persons who in the last days will perform once more (Mal 4:4-6; cf. Mat 11:14; 17:11-12; Lk 1:17). It is not much in the sense of their performance in person, but it relates to a performance in which the characteristics of their services are to be seen.

V7. When the time of their testimony which was ordained by God, has come to an end, they will be killed. This also happened to the Lord Jesus, Who was delivered only when His time had come, not a single hour earlier. They will be killed by the beast. In *chapter 13* you will be more informed about the beast.

It may look strange that the beast will make war with two men, but there are more examples that an army was sent out to take one single man captive. You see that for instance with Elijah who several times was attacked by a small army (2Kgs 1), with Elisha in Dothan (2Kgs 6) and even more with the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane (Mat 26:47). The witnesses have shown their power and that makes clear to the beast that he is facing very dangerous persons.

V8. When the two witnesses are killed, their dead bodies will lie “*in the street of the great city*”. From the addition “*where also their Lord was crucified*” it becomes clear that it is about Jerusalem. But that name is not mentioned. The names that are mentioned in-

dicating the spiritual decay of the city, where the city spiritually has landed. It has become like Sodom and Egypt. Jerusalem is 'Sodom' because of its corruptness and 'Egypt' because of its oppressing God's people. This wickedness altogether has shown its pinnacle in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

The two witnesses are killed, after they have borne their witness, in the very same place where their Lord had borne His witness and was killed. They suffer His fate and partake in it.

Now read Revelation 11:1-8 again.

Reflection: What does God make His two witnesses perform for?

The Seventh Trumpet | verses 9-19

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

9 *Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations [will] look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth [will] rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. 11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. 15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become [the kingdom] of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." 16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. 18 And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time [came] for the dead to be judged, and [the time] to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." 19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.*

V9. Now the two witnesses are killed. The 'successful' performance of the beast is shown to the whole world. The dead bodies are shown to the world through the internet, television and

satellite connection by the assembled large crowds of journalists. Today you can imagine well how this news will be spread worldwide, while also images are shown of the defeated 'enemies'. As a matter of fact, the mass media play a major role in the formation of human thinking. Just like somebody said: Today you see a generation growing up that is not raised by parents, but by the media.

The dead bodies of these 'enemies' are not worthy of a funeral. He who would want them to be buried will get no permission to (*see Psa 79:1-3*). The dead bodies remain to lie down as a trophy of victory, a remembrance of the victory that the beast has achieved and a proof of his power. This altogether serves for the glory of the dictator who has 'redeemed' the world from these people. This is also a warning that this is the fate of everyone who resists the beast.

V10. When this very annoying testimony has come to an end the world population will have a celebration as in a euphoria of victory. In order to celebrate the victory they will send gifts to one another (*cf. Est 9:19,22*). They will congratulate one another on the death of these miserable prophets who have tortured them so badly. They have not opened themselves for the message of God that was proclaimed by them. The torture that was done to them did not make them to seek God, which was God's purpose with His two witnesses.

Not only will the unbelieving mass in Israel find joy in their death. Like the Jews and the Gentiles together rejected the Lord Jesus, here also the whole world partakes in the demonic joy of the apostate Jews over the death of the Lord's witnesses.

V11. Their joy will however be of short duration. After three and a half days they will see something that will fill them with great fear. The witnesses will stand on their feet! That is caused by the "*the breath of life from God*" that "*came into them*". But the spectators have no idea of it. Just like the world was a witness of their death, they also are of their resurrection. In this way they have to acknowledge that God is stronger than His enemies.

V12. When the two witnesses are standing on their feet they receive the command from heaven to come up. The testimony of their life, death and resurrection is over. They are now called to come up to heaven. Such an enormous strength comes out from that voice that they ascend to heaven in a cloud. It seems that this cloud is the symbol of God's presence. God draws them into His presence. They have glorified Him and now He glorifies them.

All their enemies "saw" them. The ascension of the Lord Jesus was not seen by unbelievers nor will the rapture of the church be seen by unbelievers. The resurrection and the ascension of the two witnesses differ from that. They are not only seen, but they are 'viewed'. The spectators are watching these events, which they dismissed as impossible, with complete amazement. They cannot believe what they are seeing. But despite the fact that they cannot deny it and that these miracles are taking place right before their eyes, it has no effect on their conscience towards God.

V13. Therefore nothing is left for them than the judgment. After the two witnesses are taken to heaven "a great earthquake" follows. Jerusalem is shaken by a mighty hand which causes that "a tenth of a city" is destroyed that cost the lives "of seven thousand people". In the Dutch Bible translation it is written "seven thousand names of people". That means that God knows the names of all those people who were killed. He knows the names of those who have bowed their knees to the beast, just like He knows the names of the seven thousand who in the time of Elijah *did not* bow their knees to Baal (1Kgs 19:18). God does not count in numbers; He does not care about statistics, but He cares about people.

"The rest", those who were not struck by the judgment, become afraid. They also gave "glory to the God of heaven". That does not mean that they repent, but that they acknowledge God's hand in this event. When the Lord Jesus in mercy was on earth and acted in mercy, God was also honored for that by the people. But then also there was no mention of a real repentance. You may intellectually be convinced that God is in action without being moved in your heart and conscience.

V14. With the passing of “*the second woe*” the parenthesis that runs from *chapter 10:1-11:13*, has now ended. We are now ready for the seventh and last trumpet of judgment that is also called “*the third woe*”. The last three trumpets are called ‘woe’, because they are worse than the first four ones. The first ‘woe’ comes from the bottomless pit (*Rev 9:1-12*), the second ‘woe’ comes from the Euphrates river (*Rev 9:13-21*) and the third ‘woe’ comes from heaven, from the Lord Jesus Himself.

V15. The sounding of the seventh trumpet actually makes it clear that the kingdom is very near indeed, but the time has not come yet that it is established. Still the reality of the kingdom is that close that heaven tells us that it has come. That is what the voices cry out from heaven. But more judgments are still to come. Those are described in the *chapters 15-16*. However these judgments are of short duration. They together form the seventh trumpet.

The kingdom that is considered as having come, is an undivided kingdom which extends over the whole world. That is only possible because the Lord and His Christ will take over all control. He will reign justly and mercifully. Once He reigns it will never come to an end, as long as sun, moon and earth endure (*Psa 72:5,7,17*). He Who “*will reign forever and ever*” is the Lord God and He reigns in the Person of His Christ, the Son of Man, Who is God Himself. Our Lord and His Christ are one and the very same Person and still two Persons. This is and remains the miracle of eternity.

V16. When this awesome news has sounded, the twenty-four elders respond. Through the Spirit they understand what is happening and what will happen. They are aware of the grandeur of the events and they even more realize the grandeur of Him Who makes all these things come to pass. Therefore they cannot remain seated on their thrones, but fell on their faces and worship God (*see also Rev 4:10; 5:9*).

V17. While they are worshiping they give thanks to God. They address Him with several names. They call Him first “*Lord*”, which is Jahweh, the God of the covenant. He does what He Himself has promised to do. They also call Him “*God Almighty*”. That is God

in His creating power, Who as the Almighty maintains and leads to His goal everything that He has created.

They say furthermore of Him that He is the One “*who are and who were*”. ‘He Who is to come’ is not added. ‘Who are’ indicates His eternal existence and ‘Who were’ indicates His relation to the past. ‘Who is to come’ is not necessary to mention anymore, because He is considered here to have come already and that He has accepted His kingdom.

He did that because He has taken His “*great power*”. He has always had that great power, but now He is intervening with power in the events of the world. And what He has taken He will absolutely never allow anyone to take it out of His hands. His great power is the guarantee for that.

V18. The elders also talk about the wrath of God. They do that in relation to the anger of the nations, which is the whole human race. The nations have always been rebelling against God over the past ages and have been opposed to Him. But it is over now with their anger, because God makes an end to it in *His* wrath. The play of words shows how meaningless the wrath of man is opposed to the wrath of the almighty God. You also see these two sides in *Psalms 2:1-6*, where the distinction between the uproar the nations are in and how God responds to it, is shown even stronger.

With the coming of the kingdom the time has come that God will judge the dead, although that judgment will only be executed *after* the millennial kingdom of peace (*Rev 20:12*). But the time has come to hand out the reward. That reward is for those who as real “*servants*” in obedience to God and as true “*prophets*” have spoken His words to those to whom they were sent. That has delivered them rejection and mockery, but now they receive their reward. This reward is given *in* the millennial kingdom of peace (*Rev 22:12*). Although it has not come that far yet, it nevertheless can be told like that, because the kingdom lies in the hands of the Lord Jesus.

Also “*the saints*”, those who have lived separately for His sake in a corrupted world, will now receive their reward. They have lived like that out of respect for His Name and each person according to the extent of his responsibility, which is expressed in “*small and great*”.

Finally God’s time has also come “*to destroy those who destroy the earth*”. The three beasts from the *chapters 12-13* (the dragon, the beast from the sea and the beast from the earth) and all their followers are meant by that. This is another category than the dead that were mentioned earlier in this verse.

In this way everything is removed that has always stood in the way and those are rewarded who lived by their faith in the Prince of peace and in His coming.

V19. With *verse 19* a new parenthesis begins, which runs to *chapter 15:4*. From *chapter 15:5* the seven bowl judgments are described. In the parenthesis the Holy Spirit shows the origin of the leading actors of *chapters 8-11*. There you see: the dragon (that is satan) and the first beast and the second beast. Other leading actors are: the woman (Israel), the Son (Christ), Michael and the great harlot Babylon. In total seven leading persons pass by.

The starting point of the parenthesis is “*the temple of God in heaven*” and “*the ark of His covenant*”. The temple is God’s dwelling place in the midst of His people. The ark of the covenant reminds us of God’s faithfulness with regard to His people. It is a sharp contrast to what is taking place in the temple on earth. That temple is profaned in a terrible way by the antichrist. God is deeply displeased by what is happening on earth. The “*flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm*” express that in a very impressive way.

Now read Revelation 11:9-19 again.

Reflection: Which similarities do you see between the two witnesses and the Lord Jesus? What could you learn from the two witnesses, regarding your own testimony?

Revelation 12

The Dragon, the Woman and the Child | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she *cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads [were] seven diadems. 4 And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male [child], who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she *had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

V1. After the temple of God and the ark of His covenant (*Rev 11:19*) “a great sign appeared in heaven”. This sign is in line with the temple and the ark. The temple and the ark are the center of God’s earthly people Israel. The great sign in heaven refers to Israel. The sign is ‘in heaven’, for it represents God’s plan with Israel according to His counsel (*Rom 11:29*) and is therefore something that is fixed in His heavenly counsel.

The woman represents in several places in this book a company of people or a system. In this way there is mention of Jezebel (*Rev 2:20*), which is the papacy, the great harlot (*Rev 17*), and also the nominal Christendom which is closely related to the papacy. In that way there is also mention of the bride (*Rev 19-22*), which is the glorified church. Here the woman represents Israel. You can

derive that from the characteristics. They are presented like God intends them to be. In the time of the birth of the Child (which the following verses are dealing with) was not the case yet, for then Israel was under the yoke of Rome.

Israel is "*clothed with the sun*". The sun is the image of the highest authority on earth (cf. *Psa 104:2a*). It has always been God's intention to make Israel head of all nations (*Deu 28:1*). That is emphasized by "*the moon under her feet*". You can derive from that, that all earthly powers in the millennial kingdom of peace acknowledge the authority of Israel. Also the "*crown of twelve stars*" she is wearing, testifies of her glory. It is very well possible that the twelve stars represent the twelve tribes as channels through which the blessing of God in the millennial kingdom will flow to all parts of the earth.

V2. After this awesome perspective on the future something curious of the woman is noticed: "*She was with child.*" Moreover, her pregnancy has come to the stage of giving birth. She cried out in labor and in pain.

This description gives a flashback of the past and looks forward to the future. On the one hand you go back in time, namely to the birth of the Lord Jesus from the people of Israel (*Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2*). On the other hand you go to the future, for the labor pains which refer to the time of the great tribulation (*Mat 24:15-21*), are still to come. Nevertheless, the labor pains announce the new life. This new life refers to the coming of the Lord Jesus, His second coming of course. That coming is seen as a new birth.

Therefore somewhere else it is said very remarkably for instance that He will come *out of* (and not: *to*) Zion (*Rom 11:26*). It is as if the people have given birth to Him only then. That is the moment that God again "*brings the firstborn into the world*" (*Heb 1:6*). He will not come again as a defenseless Babe Who is being rejected, but as the Ruler.

In order to understand this representation of matters well, it is important to see that the intervening age of the church is not tak-

en into account. Here at one time you switch from the past, where so many promises were made, to the future for the fulfillment of those promises. In the past the promises could not be fulfilled because of the unfaithfulness of Israel and the rejection of the Lord Jesus. In the future those promises will altogether be fulfilled on the ground of the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus. In this chapter you see how that will come to pass.

V3. After the sign of Israel you see that “another sign appeared in heaven”. This other sign is the “dragon” or satan. His color is ‘fiery red’, which represents the color of the blood of his many victims. It indicates the murderous activities of this enemy of God.

He has also “seven heads” with a crown on each head and “ten horns”. You can find the explanation of that later in *chapter 13:1* and *17:3,7-12*. These chapters deal with the Roman empire. In the description here the emphasis lies on the diabolic power that is hidden behind this empire. The heads represent both the extraordinary intelligence and power. The crowns indicate the royal position which the dragon arrogates to himself. The horns refer to power and strength.

V4. Like it already has been shown, the tail represent lies and false doctrines (*Rev 9:10; Isa 9:14*). These false doctrines are spread by the dragon through the antichrist, the false prophet. “A third of the stars of heaven” that are dragged by his false doctrines may refer to those who have a leading position in the Roman empire. Those are probably light bearers that will bring a nominal Christian doctrine after the rapture of the church.

After you have seen the dragon in his devouring and deceptive work you see him standing before the woman who is about to give birth. His intention is to devour the Child Whom she will give birth to, as soon as it has been born. Here you see what you read in the *gospel according to Matthew* about the attempt of Herod to kill the Lord Jesus when he heard about His birth (*Mat 2:13-16*).

V5. Here the birth of the Lord Jesus is first described and then the purpose of His birth: His kingdom over all nations. But because

He is hated and rejected, God catches His Son up, to Himself *and* to His throne. That has taken place with the ascension.

V6. You read nothing in this chapter about the time of the church. The church is not a subject of the prophecy. The Christian period is skipped. We suddenly find ourselves in *verse 6* in the time of great tribulation, which is in the second part of the seventieth week which endures seven years from *Daniel 9:24-27*. Therefore the next act of God is related to the runaway of the woman that she may not fall prey to the dragon. Here the woman represents the people of Israel, but particularly that part of Israel that is related to Him, which is the believing remnant.

God protects the woman against the persecutor by providing her with a hiding place. In that place he feeds her for twelve hundred and sixty days, which is three and a half years (one month counts thirty days). The fact that there is mention of “*days*” indicates the daily care of God for His own. They will pray the prayer “*give us this day our daily bread*” (*Mat 6:11*) in the truest sense of the word. It is very likely that Moab is the place where they experience His care and providence each day (*see Psa 60:9; 108:10; Isa 16:4*).

Now read Revelation 12:1-6 again.

Reflection: What could you learn from this section, regarding your personal faith life?

Satan Thrown Down To the Earth | verses 7-17

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has [only] a short time." 13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male [child]. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she *was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*

V7. Now we will get the explanation of why the woman has to flee to the wilderness. That's because satan is thrown out of heaven to the earth, which is the result of a war that ignites in heaven. It could be the case that satan thinks that he has a chance to seize

power in heaven, now that the beast and the antichrist have full control on earth. It may also possibly be a last act of despair to stop the coming definite judgments.

In the outbreak of the war two superpowers stand against each other, two leaders and each of them has an army that is led by them. The one party is Michael with his angels, which are the elected angels. The other party is the dragon, which is satan with his angels, which are the fallen angels. With heaven, the territory where the war is going on, is meant here the firmament of the heavenly places. It is not the place where God dwells and to which satan has access. There he is unable to develop his power in opposition, but is totally subjected to God.

V8. In this war the dragon and his angels have to face Michael and his angels. The fight is fierce, but satan has to suffer the defeat. He and his angels are removed from heaven, where they up to that moment have had access. It is actually important to see that it is not a war between the Lord Jesus and satan. That wouldn't be a war between two more or less equivalent superpowers, for the Lord Jesus is God the Almighty and satan is His creature.

V9. It is comprehensively made clear here that the great dragon is satan. The great dragon is "*that serpent of old*" from *Genesis 3*. The name 'serpent of old' is a reminder of his great power that lies in his deception. The name "*devil*" is derived from the Greek *diabolos* and it means 'accuser' or 'slanderer'. His work consists of speaking evil and accusing, whereby he distorts the truth. The name "*Satan*" means 'adversary'. He is the archenemy of God and His Christ. He is the liar and murderer of men from the beginning (*Jn 8:44*). He is relentlessly and unchangeably active in deceiving the whole world, all men and in particular to take God's children away or to drag them away from God and Christ.

After his humiliation because of his resistance against God Who removed him from the holy mountain of God (*Eze 28:14-16; Isa 14:12-15*), he still had access to God. You see that in *Job 1-2*. But it is over now. He is thrown on the earth in order to be even more humiliated. That will happen when he will be locked up in the

bottomless pit for a thousand years. After he will be released from there for a short period of time, he will get his deepest and definite humiliation when he will be thrown into hell (*Re 20:3,10*). The Lord Jesus has seen and foretold his fall (*Lk 10:18*).

V10. The great dragon and his angels are removed from heaven and thrown out on the earth. After satan is thrown out from heaven a voice in heaven speaks about “*the salvation*” that has come. That refers to the millennial kingdom of peace. It is the salvation of the whole creation from the power of satan and the coming of the wonderful time of peace and righteousness over the whole earth. Then the kingdom has come with power.

The voice in heaven that John hears, speaks about “*the kingdom of our God*”. It is the great victory of the God with Whom they have come into relation by putting their trust in Him in the sacrifice that He has given in His Son for them and their sins. That Son is His Christ to Whose authority they have submitted themselves and Who now will exercise that power over the whole creation. They know that they are related to others, “*our brethren*”, who have also by faith entrusted themselves to God and the power of His Christ.

Their brethren who at that moment are on earth have nothing to fear anymore of a satan in heaven who accuses them before God (*see Zec 3:1*). Satan, “*the accuser ... has been thrown down*”, who relentlessly “*accuses*” the believers “*before our God day and night*”. The time of accusing is over. The beginning of the fall of satan is the harbinger of the ultimate victory.

V11. The fall of satan will have devastating consequences on the earth. But for those who believe the victory will be certain by the blood of the Lamb. Their testimony which they gave by their word is also a triumph over satan. They have not bowed their knees to him, but they have defeated him by their testimony, even though it has cost them their lives. At the same time they had the assurance that they could not ever lose life because they believed in the power of the blood of the Lamb. The body can be killed, but not the soul. It seems that these are the martyrs of *chapter 6:9*.

"They did not love their lives", but they gave their lives unto death by their persistent testimony of the Lamb.

V12. Now the accuser has been removed from heaven there is room for joy. But for *"the earth and the sea"*, whereon the devil was been thrown down, the consequences are terrible, even though these consequences will not last long. With 'the earth' Israel is meant in particular, while you should consider 'the sea' as the restored Roman empire.

When satan is thrown down on the sea the great tribulation will begin, which will last for three and a half years. His anger has no limits, but fortunately his time does (*Mat 24:22,24*). The devil, *"knowing that he has [only] a short time"*, will make every effort to cause a persecution that is unprecedented in history.

V13. You have read in *verse 6* about the runaway of the woman. In the *verses 7-12* you saw why that was necessary: it has to do with the throwing out of satan on the earth. Now your attention is drawn again to the runaway of the woman and you get further particulars regarding her runaway. The anger of satan is now especially focused on the believing remnant of Israel, that is represented by *"the woman who gave birth to the male Child"*. Out of this nation Christ was born Who will fulfill God's plans with His people and the world.

Satan is called *"the dragon"*, because he seeks to devour cruelly and without any compassion. Here satan takes off his mask. First he showed a friendly face in the monstrous covenant that he caused to be made between the Roman empire and the apostate Israel (*Dan 9:27*). That is in the period of the first part of the last week – a period of seven years – Daniel writes about. The temple service for instance was still allowed to take place. But that changes when satan will be thrown down on the earth. Then he will do everything possible and will use all the means he has at his disposal to eradicate everything that has to do with God.

V14. God gives the woman *"two wings of the great eagle"* at her disposal. The wings enable her to escape from the anger of the

dragon (cf. *Exo 19:4; Deu 32:11; Isa 40:31*). Those wings also enable her to fly “to her place”. God has a place for her where she will be kept safe from the dragon and where He will take care of her during the time that the dragon is allowed to do his atrocities on earth (see *Mat 24:15-16*).

With “a time and times and half a time” again the three and a half year of the great tribulation is meant. ‘A time’ indicates a year, ‘times’ indicates two years and ‘half a time’ indicates one half year. In her hiding place “the serpent” with his deceptions has no access to her.

V15. When you consider the serpent as the deceiver, you may consider the water that comes out of his mouth like a flood as an enormous flood of deceptions. The purpose of all kinds of deceiving miracles and signs is also to get hold of the elected ones. The deception will be phenomenal and will be a part of the great tribulation. When there is an enormous threat, there is a great risk to give in to all kinds of miracles and signs that come out of the mouth of the deceiver (*2Thes 2:9-10*). If those days were not shortened, then even the elected would fall prey to it. But they will be shortened precisely for their sake (*Mat 24:22*).

V16. God will supernaturally intervene, in order to make the attempts of the serpent (here again called dragon) fail. He has His instruments on earth that will help His people in that time of the greatest need. These are probably people who stand up for the persecuted ones and take care of them. God makes sure that His people will not die. He makes a hedge around them (cf. *Job 1:10*). He does not yet act openly in the favor of His people, but He protects them in a hidden way against total destruction.

V17. When the dragon sees that his attempts to eliminate the remnant as a whole have failed, he looks for other victims to express his anger against them. There is still “a rest of her children”. It seems that these are the believers who stayed behind in Jerusalem (*Zeph 3:12*). Because the dragon was focused on the majority, he did not pay attention to the few believers in Jerusalem. God knows those as the ones who keep His commandments. They are

focused on Him. That makes them have “*the testimony of Jesus*”. They are associated with Him.

Now read Revelation 12:7-18 again.

Reflection: What are the consequences when satan is thrown out to the earth?

Revelation 13

The Beast Coming Up Out Of the Sea | verses 1-4

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns [were] ten diadems, and on his heads [were] blasphemous names. 2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like [those] of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. 3 [I saw] one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed [and followed] after the beast; 4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

Introduction. The two beasts that are described in this chapter represent the two human and at the same time monstrous instruments, which will be used by satan in the end time. The first beast will come up out of the sea, the well-known image of the nations (*Rev 17:15; Isa 17:12; cf. Dan 7:2-3*). This beast is therefore also a pagan ruler over a pagan kingdom. The second beast comes up out of the earth. The earth represents Israel. The second beast is the antichrist who will reign over the apostate Israel. In these two beasts both characteristics of satan – violence and lie – are exposed (*Jn 8:44*). The first beast is more characterized by violence, the second by lies.

V1. Because of his plan to make war against the rest of her offspring, the dragon stands on the sand of the sea. Then “a beast coming up out of the sea” is described. Before the eyes of John – and through his description before your eyes too – it rises up from the

sea. He sees a ruler rising up, right from the middle of the turbulent and unmanageable nations, out of that great mass of people. It is the same person like the person that rose up from the bottomless pit (*Rev 11:7; 17:8*). His rising up from the bottomless pit indicates his demonic origin. This is no one else than the dictator of the restored Roman empire, the United Western Europe.

That it is him we are talking about, will become clear from what you see further. 'Horns' are a picture of power. The form of that power is to be derived from the 'crowns' that he wears on his horns. That indicates that this beast has authority over royal rulers. In relation to the horns and crowns the number 'ten' is mentioned. By that you know that it is about ten kings (*Rev 17:12; Dan 7:24*). They are subjected to the government of the beast.

John also mentions that this monster has "*seven heads*". Of these heads it is said in *chapter 17:9*: "*The seven heads are seven mountains.*" The question now is what the mountains represent. It is a historical fact that in the ancient days the city of Rome was known as 'the city with the seven hills'. This makes clear that Rome is the political center of this monstrous ruler.

The seven heads, however, are not only an indication of the location where the power is seated. They also represent seven kings (*see Rev 17:10*). That is an indication of seven forms of government by which the Roman empire has been ruled consecutively. *Verse 3* expands further on that. What John also sees, is that this political power is against God and resists Him. He sees "*a blasphemous name*" on his heads. The beast adorns himself with blasphemous names, probably names that are only to be ascribed to God.

V2. The description of the beast is not yet finished. John has more to tell. In this beast he recognizes characteristics of three different animals. He mentions "*a leopard*", "*a bear*" and "*a lion*". If you put *Daniel 7:4-6* next to it for a moment, then you read that Daniel sees the same animals. Only, he sees them in reverse order. Daniel sees a lion first, then a bear and thirdly he sees a panther or leopard. That's because Daniel looks ahead, while John looks back.

These animals represent empires. Daniel lived in the time of the Babylonian empire, represented by a lion. That empire was destroyed because the Medes and the Persians conquered the empire. Due to the brutality with which they operated, that empire is represented by a bear. But also their government came to an end. Greece, under the leadership of Alexander the Great, conquered the empire of the Medes and Persians with a stunning speed. Therefore the leopard is a suitable symbol for it.

Daniel also speaks about a fourth beast. He says of it that it is a *“dreadful and terrible and extremely strong”* beast (*Dan 7:7-8*). Historically this beast represents the Roman empire that conquered the empire of the Greeks. Prophetically we see this empire back in the beast that John is seeing here. The beast is both the restored Roman empire and the head of that empire. This empire and this head possess all cruel characteristics of the fourth animal, in which John sees all cruel characteristics of the three animals mentioned.

Can you imagine? The beast rises up from the sea, which means that the dictator floats to the surface. The ten kings, the rulers of different countries that together form the Western Roman empire, are inseparably connected to him. This dictator has power over them, which he exercises from Rome as his center of power. He manifests himself blasphemously and with a cruelty that is represented metaphorically by the three tearing animals, which are described.

And who is hiding behind this, who makes sure that he becomes that mighty? The dragon, which is the devil (*Rev 12:9*). Here the devil grants direct authority to someone who indeed takes this out of his hand. Of course these things can only happen, because God allows them to. And He allows them to happen because they fit into His plan. But the point is that the dragon is the inspirer of the beast. The beast has power, he reigns and has great authority because the devil has given this to him.

Here you see a huge contrast between the beast and the Lord Jesus. Once satan offered the Lord Jesus all kingdoms to take them

out of his hand (*Mat 4:8-9*). But the Lord refused it. He did not want to run ahead of God's time to become King. He wanted to receive the kingdom and the power out of God's hand (*Dan 7:13-14; Psa 2:8*). That implied for Him humiliation and the death on the cross. It is important for you too not to seek any favor in the world. Satan loves to give that to you. In that way you can escape suffering. When satan approaches you with such seductions, you are to respond like the Lord Jesus did (*Mat 4:10*).

V3. Then John sees that one of the heads of the beast was as if it had been slain. This is to indicate that the Roman empire has perished and disappeared. From history we know that in the year 476 the Western Roman empire at that time was inflicted with a fatal blow. Rome was then conquered by the Teutons. What John saw at the moment he was watching (he saw it around the end of the first century) was still to come to pass. It was going to happen after some centuries.

But to God the future has no secrets. He informs us about things happening in the future as far as He considers them to be important for us to know. He does not do that to satisfy our curiosity, but that we may live accordingly (*2Pet 3:11-12*). Therefore God shows to John (and to you) what more is going to happen.

Then John sees that the fatal wound was healed. To John that did not lie in the nearby future, but in the far future. It's what we see to be happening in our days! To us that is the nearby future. A restoration of the Western Roman empire is taking place before our eyes. But watch carefully: this happens by the power of satan! This restoration does not happen through a new conquest with violence, but through diabolic inspiration and deliberation. John sees how this restoration stirs up admiration and adoration from the world.

V4. The people will be very aware that the dragon, which is satan, has given his power to this empire. They hate God that much, they have been alienated from Him in such a way that they worship the dragon as their god in an open, general and limitless admiration. They will also worship the beast. They provoke and

blaspheme God by crying out statements about the beast that apply to God alone (*cf. Exo 15:11; Mic 7:18*). To them the beast is not to be compared to anyone else and nobody can compete with him to defeat him. That will be the result when Europe becomes one whole.

In case you may be excited about that one Europe, then I hope, due to what God's Word is saying here, that will turn into a shivering going down your spine. You will now be very well aware that satan is the origin of it and that it ends up in worshiping satan! That with the referendum about the European constitution on 1 June 2005 many Christians in the Netherlands have voted 'against', does not necessarily reflect their opinion of Europe. The argument that mattered most to vote 'against' was that in that constitution no reference to God and the Jewish Christian roots of the European Union had been written down. In case that had happened, then the Christians probably would have plainly voted 'for'! That is staggering.

Now read Revelation 13:1-4 again.

Reflection: What is astonishing about the beast?

Mouth and Deeds of the Beast Out Of the Sea | *verses 5-10*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, [that is,] those who dwell in heaven. 7 It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, [everyone] whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone [is destined] for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

V5. Like satan has given 'his power and his throne and great power' (*verse 2b*) to the beast, he also gives him "a mouth". He, so to speak, makes the beast to be his voice. Therefore what the beast has to say is only bragging and blasphemous language. His bragging language has no limit. He brags about himself to the people and prides himself that all improvement is because of him. To God he clenches his fists and scolds and curses Him.

But a limit is imposed to the performance of the beast. He is given "forty-two months". That is the period that you have already come across earlier (*Rev 11:2*) and that you have learnt to know as the period of the great tribulation of three and a half years. In that time he will uncontrollably rage (*cf. Dan 8:24*) against God and those who dwell in heaven and to the saints on earth as well.

V6. It is not only that the beast lacks the appropriate reverence to God. Whenever the beast opens his mouth against God, he does that to rage against Him and to express his disregard towards Him. He can only insult and sneer about the Name of God. He despises God to the deepest of his being. The words he uses are not

mentioned. I think that the words you sometimes hear around you and which fill you with disgust will pale to nothing, compared to what the beast will spit out.

And not only God and the Name of God are the target of his blasphemous language. He addresses his evil mudslinging against "*His tabernacle*" too. The church is meant by this, wherein God as in a tabernacle will dwell among people on earth forever (*Rev 21:2-3*).

Finally he addresses his slander against the rest of the citizens of heaven. Thereby you could think of all believers who do not belong to the church.

And don't assume that the beast speaks out this blasphemous dialog in a backroom. His blasphemous expressions which he slings at God and the citizens of heaven will happen publicly and serve as an entertainment. The people will watch his performance and his audacious language with great pleasure on television and on the internet. Everything he says and does is to propagandize his program. The purpose of this program is nothing more than setting people against God, in order to punch God from His throne. Time will tell that his propaganda will succeed, and that his program will have a dramatic end.

V7. The beast, inspired by satan, can do nothing but to open his mouth in order to vomit his hatred against everyone who dwells in heaven. But there are still some "*saints*" on earth. He is allowed to unleash his diabolical lust on them to murder after he has aired all his bottled-up feelings of hatred by slinging them out to heaven. He is given the opportunity to wage war against those who out of faithfulness towards God did not participate as in a carnival parade with the apostate mass.

The saints are not only saints by name, but also in practice. Holy means set apart for God. That there is mention of 'making war', means that he takes this fight very seriously, as if the faithful saints are the most dangerous enemies of the nation that have great power. He uses everything that he has at his disposal, be-

cause he wants to eliminate them root and branch, to the last man. And he seems to be successful. He conquers over them. This victory grants him international authority. Countries outside the restored Roman empire, i.e. the united Europe, will open themselves for his ideas and advices.

In his blind madness he does not know that this victory regards only the body. The saints were strengthened by the words of the Lord Jesus concerning that. He told them that they did not need to fear (for the beast), for only the body can be killed (*Mat 10:28*). In *chapter 20* you see them back. They sit on thrones and reign with Christ for a thousand years. In that way you will certainly be encouraged by the words of the Lord Jesus and by what you will share in the future, in order to endure the suffering that you experience sometimes.

V8. Due to all his achievements all who dwell on the earth will worship him. The admiration for the beast will have no limits. The expression "*who dwell on the earth*", indicates that it regards people who consciously have disconnected themselves from heaven. Their lives have, like the lives of animals and the beast, no broader horizon than the earth and is totally and exclusively connected to the earth.

Of these people some more detailed qualification is mentioned. Their names are not written "*in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain*". The absence of their name in that book has dramatic consequences. The short time of them praising the beast will be followed by an everlasting weeping and gnashing of the teeth because of the pains caused by the flames of the eternal fire.

Remarkable though, is the expression "*from the foundation of the world*". You may remember the expression "*before the foundation of the world*" (*Eph 1:4*). That expression is used for those who belong to the church. They were elected even before the creation of the world. Actually the church is of heavenly and eternal origin. But there are also believers who do not belong to the church. Those are the believers from Israel and the nations in the periods before and after the residence of the church on earth. They are in rela-

tion with the earth and in that way with God's plans *from* creation (*Mat 13:35; 25:34*).

There is a great contrast between those who dwell on earth and the book of life. Those who live on earth are attached to the earth with heart and soul. The earth is their life. With them there isn't any thought of God and heaven. That makes them dead while they are alive (*Eph 2:1-2*). If they do not repent they will remain in the second death for ever (*Rev 21:8*).

The opposite is the book of life. That book is related to the Lamb That was slain, which indicates that the Lamb has been into death. The Lamb had entered into death in order to give life to all who believe in Him. The Lamb writes the name down of each who believes in Him in the book of life. The book is His, He keeps the records. The names of all worshipers of the Lamb are written in it, not one is missing. The names of all worshipers of the beast are missing, not one appears in the book.

V9. I hope that you have an ear to hear and that you allow yourself to be warned. Just now you saw together with John the beast rising up. You have heard his blasphemous language and seen his murderous occupations. The mass hysteria that will be caused by his appearance and performance among all people that will be dwelling on earth has been clearly presented to you. You have been a witness of the rise of the world government and the world religion. It is not about something that could possibly happen at a time in the far future, but about an event that is getting more and more recognizable. You wouldn't say that this is something that is 'far outside your scope', would you? Indeed, it is extremely topical for you. Do not let yourself be deceived.

V10. The description of this beast concludes with pointing at the principle of retribution (*cf. 2Thes 1:6-7*). This should serve as a consolation for the saints and stimulate them to persevere. They may know that the one who throws them in prison will end up in the prison himself; and he who kills them with the sword will be killed by the sword also (*Jer 15:2; 43:11*). God will make sure that every crime that has been done to His saints will be repaid righ-

teously. Up until that moment the saints must persevere in their faith. They can be sure that God, Who has not intervened visibly yet, will do that soon.

The faith sees the good end for itself and the retribution of the oppressors. They cannot respond violently to the brutal violence of the beast. By themselves they are defenseless and helpless. But they have a source of power that works totally differently. The source of their power is the faith in God that He will make an end to the power of the beast. In that awareness they persevere in their faithfulness to God, even if it may cost them their freedom or even more their life. Their life is not in the hand of the beast, but in the hand of the almighty and faithful God. That goes also for you when you face resistance in your witness to the Lord. When you have that trust you will not give up, but you will persevere.

Now read Revelation 13:5-10 again.

Reflection: What aspects of the beast do you recognize now already in society?

The Beast Coming Up Out Of the Earth | *verses 11-18*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. 12 He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who *had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and [he provides] that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, [either] the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.*

V11. Then before the eyes of John a second beast appears. It is not a twin brother of the first beast, but another beast. It looks different and it does different things. But you will see that these two beasts get along very well. They are hand in glove. This beast does not rise up from the sea, like the first one, but “*coming up out of the earth*”. With ‘the earth’ is meant, in contrast to the sea, a more or less ordered society. It seems to represent Israel.

That’s what I think, because it appears from the description of this beast that it is an imitator of the Lord Jesus. When John sees the horns he must think of a lamb. In *Revelation* the Lamb is all the time the Lord Jesus. And who is the great imitator of the Lord Je-

sus other than the antichrist? He it is of whom the Lord Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews that somebody would come in his own name and that they will accept him (*Jn 5:43*). That also means that the antichrist will be a Jew. Israel will never accept a stranger, a person who does not belong to the Jewish people, as their king. It could only be somebody from among their own people.

Because of his horns this false messiah makes you think of a lamb. But he speaks "*as a dragon*". His language reveals him. Therefore the sheep that belong to the Lord Jesus will certainly not follow the antichrist. The sheep do not listen to the voice of the stranger (*Jn 10:5*). They know the voice of the good Shepherd and therefore they will follow Him (*Jn 10:4*). This is also a touchstone for you. When you hear a voice that you do not recognize as the voice of the Lord Jesus, you must not to listen to it.

V12. Therefore there is a great solidarity between both beasts. But that solidarity is not one of equivalence. Actually the second beast is kept on a leash by the first beast. When the second beast exercises his power the first beast is obviously present. The second beast, the antichrist, has control by the grace of the first beast. He is not able to operate on his own, but is dependent on the first beast. The first beast, the dictator of the restored Western Roman empire, the united Europe, determines and ensures the way in which the antichrist exercises his power. This is the result of the covenant that the apostate Israel under the leadership of the antichrist, the false messiah, will make with the first beast. Isaiah calls it 'a covenant with death' (*Isa 28:15; Dan 9:27*).

The second beast also has, just like all other citizens of the earth, a limitless admiration for the first beast. That admiration is so great that he makes every effort to ensure that everything and everyone on earth will worship the first beast. The cause of worship is the healing of the deadly wound of the first beast. In the description of the first beast you have learnt that this healing refers to the restoration of the Western Roman empire, that has become visible in the united Europe. With this coercion to worship the first, the second beast reveals himself as a spiritual leader of both the apos-

tate Judaism and the apostate Christianity. It is his aim to make an end to any worship of the Father and the Son.

V13. His strategy is that of lie and deception, fraud and imitation. He performs all kinds of impressive signs. What you see is not to be denied. At least, that is what many people will believe. But mind you that images may be manipulated. Another deceptive factor is that you do not get to see the whole story. When two people have seen something and make a report of it, you may get two totally different reports in the end. The devil is the great manipulator and a master in telling half truths. Therefore do not let yourself be dragged by stories and movies of so called great signs that are ascribed to God.

It is a characteristic of the end time that spectacular things happen. The origin of that is not God, but the devil (2Thes 2:9). Here you see that the beast even “*makes fire come down out of heaven*”. Everyone sees that it comes from heaven, from God ... it seems. But it is a trick of the devil who tries to give the impression through this false prophet that a true prophet is at work here. His performance is an imitation of what Elijah did several times (1Kgs 18:38; 2Kgs 1:10,12). The word “*even*” indicates that it could possibly be his most deceptive craftiness. With him making an appeal to the Bible people would say that a person who could ‘even’ do that, must surely be the true Messiah.

V14. You see how people who do not want to have anything to do with the Bible, who only live for the earth, are a prey of his supernatural manifestations. The religious feeling of man is a perfect work place for demons. People who live without God will link themselves to something that is beneficial for them, whether in a financial sense, or whether in the sense of a spiritual boost. They admire others for their own benefit. They are not aware of them delivering themselves directly to the instruments of satan. Satan gives the antichrist the ability to perform deceptive signs. Those signs happen in the presence of the (first) beast. They happen to his glory and honor.

The religious influence that the antichrist has gained by his signs has become that great in the meanwhile, that he considers it the time to establish an image of the first beast. Therefore he gives the order to make such an image. Here is mention of the establishment of "*the abomination of desolation*" (Mat 24:15; Dan 9:27; 12:11). It is referred again to his recovery after the fatal wound. That must be enormously impressive. That is something that you observe more and more now already, the more Europe becomes one empire.

V15. The deceitful power of the antichrist is so great that it seems as if he brings the image to life. Satan enables him to give breath to the image. But breath doesn't mean life. God alone can give life. The impression that the image is alive, arises because it speaks. The voice is of course that of a demon that perfectly imitates a human voice. This speaking makes the deception complete.

The apostate Jews may think that they have to do with an image of the true God. They have always been taught that idols do not speak (*Psa 115:3,5,7; 135:17*). A speaking image therefore cannot, according to them, possibly be an idol. A mass of people will fall down on their knees to worship the beast. The worship of the beast is crucial for life or death. He who does not worship will be killed (*cf. Dan 3:5-6*).

V16. Although the people have been deceived, they have voluntarily bowed down for the beast. They have chosen for the beast. But with their choice for the beast they lose their freedom at the same time. They got caught up in a power that they cannot free themselves from. The beast empowers his control over the people and brings them to an absolute relation and subjection to himself. Nobody escapes from that. It does not make any difference whether you are a small citizen or a great minister, for he is the big chief. It also does not matter whether you are rich or poor, for you cannot buy it off. Nor does it matter whether you are a free man or a slave, for you have lost your freedom.

Everyone is forced to visibly express his loyalty to the beast. Therefore the beast makes them to apply a visible mark "*on their*

right hand or on their forehead". The 'right hand' stands for deeds. In that way the beast repossesses everything that each person does. Everything will contribute to the power and glory of the beast and his empire. The 'forehead' is the center of the thoughts. Through indoctrination everyone will serve the business of the beast with conviction.

Due to the advances in technology the application of the mark will (soon) be a simple act. We are on the threshold of the era that will be ruled by the beast! In case God's Word and His revealed thoughts therein do not guide your hand and your thinking, then sin and finally the antichrist will do it. Allow yourself to become aware of this warning!

V17. By the means of this mark the beast will rule the whole economy. Whoever does not hand himself over to the beast completely will economically be a pariah, somebody who has been abandoned by society. To this test the faithful ones will be furiously exposed. Because they refuse to receive the name or the number of the beast to be applied on their body, they will not be able *"to buy or to sell"*. They run the risk of starvation.

V18. Due to the crafty and deceptive character of the beast, his proposals for the application of the mark will be presented very credible. The people who allow themselves to receive the mark, think that in that way they act wisely. But they act foolishly. The faithful, on the contrary, receives wisdom from God to unmask the beast. In order to do that he has to use his mind, which is the insight given by God. In that way he will be able to calculate the number of the beast.

A lot of attempts have made to calculate the number, but all of them have a different outcome. That proves that we are not able to calculate it today. That is not necessary yet, because that time has not come yet. The only time will be when the church has been raptured. In that time the wise men and those who have understanding will be able to calculate the number. It is anyway clear that six is the number of man. That is mentioned here in triple (666) as the number of the beast. Man has become equal to the

beast here, the absolutely lowest point of the degeneration of man.

Now read Revelation 13:11-18 again.

Reflection: Mention the characteristics of the antichrist.

Revelation 14

The Song of the One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand | *verses 1-6*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb [was] standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard [was] like [the sound] of harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they *sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These [are] the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless. 6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ...*

V1. A new scene is shown to John and he invites you with the regularly reoccurring “*behold*”, to watch together with him. He taps, as it were, on your shoulder and points with his finger to a certain direction and says: Look at that! If you are still thinking about the horrible developments of the previous chapter, you immediately come to rest here. Both beasts with their blasphemous, murderous performance make room for “*the Lamb*” and His righteous and benevolent performance. In the Lamb you see how God exceeds beyond all rages of hatred, violence and lie and calmly does His own work in those who are His.

For the first time in the book of *Revelation* you do not see the Lamb in heaven, but on earth, “on Mount Zion”, and particularly in relation to the remnant from the two tribes. Zion is the mountain in Jerusalem that God has chosen to place His sanctuary there (*Psa* 78:68). He will also establish the throne of the kingdom of David there. That mountain represents the grace in contrast to Mount Sinai that represents the law (*Heb* 12:22; *Psa* 125:1, 27; 126:1).

Together with the Lord Jesus you see one hundred and forty-four thousand people standing. This number symbolically indicates a fullness. In *chapter 7:4-8* this number is also mentioned. There it refers to a fullness of people from all twelve tribes and are seen before the great tribulation (*Rev* 7:1-3). Here it is about a fullness of the two tribes in the land, although with this hundred and forty-four thousand there are certainly also some believers from the ten tribes, who however as a whole are still in the dispersion. This group comes from the great tribulation. They have remained faithful to the Lord. They have refused the mark of the beast on their forehead. Now on their forehead is written, as a special distinction, the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father.

V2. While the Lamb is standing on Mount Zion with the faithful remnant, John hears “*a voice from heaven*”. It is a mighty, awesome voice. At the same time it is also a lovely and melodic voice. What a contrast to the bragging and boasting of the beast. This voice and this music are intended for the faithful remnant that has gone through so much suffering. It is heavenly music, played by heavenly saints for the saints on earth. Heaven and earth are brought together in harmony.

V3. John does not hear just music, but he also hears something that looks like “*a new song*”. It is sung by people in heaven. These singers are not the elders, the believers of the Old Testament and that of the church (*Rev* 4:4). The song is not sung *by* them, but *before* them. It is also sung “*before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders*”. It is a song that is heard in agreement by the symbols of the kingdom of God (throne and living creatures). The singers of the song are believers who after the rapture of the

church were killed because of their faithfulness to the Lord and who have a part in the first resurrection (*Rev 20:4-6*).

They teach those who are on earth to sing the song. The saints in heaven and the saints on earth from Israel are clearly related to one another. The saints on earth are indicated even more clearly as “*who had been purchased from the earth*” which indicates the contrast to ‘those who dwell on the earth’. They do not stand beside the Lamb on Mount Zion on the basis of their own merits, but on the ground of the redemption work of the Lamb. The same goes for those who are in heaven. They too do not owe it to themselves that they have come there, but also because of what the Lamb has accomplished on the cross of Golgotha.

The Lamb is on earth, but the Lamb is also in heaven. From heaven, where the Lamb stands as though it had been slain (*Rev 5:6*), the new song is being taught. Could that new song possibly have another content than the Lamb? In heaven and on earth it is sung what the Lamb has accomplished. The relation between heaven and earth has been made possible by the Lamb alone and His work on the cross.

V4. There comes a more extensive description of the one hundred and forty-four thousand. Some features and characteristics of them are mentioned. The first is that these faithful ones are “*chaste*”, which is applied to both men and women. It means that they have not awarded their love to anyone else than Him alone. They have not allowed themselves to be seduced by attractive people or enticing ideas that would cause them to be unfaithful towards the Lord.

During the time of the great tribulation, a time that is full of temptations, they have kept themselves clean from literal and spiritual fornication (*cf. 2Cor 11:2*). It is the time in which the roman-catholic church will expose herself as the great harlot (*Rev 17:1-6*). It will take a huge effort to remain clean, because the world is full of uncleanness. It is already now like that of course, but at that time it will be a lot more abundant.

The second characteristic is that they “*follow the Lamb*” right through the great tribulation “*wherever He goes*”. And the secret which makes them to be virgins is: their eyes are continuously focused on the Lamb. This is a great example of how you can keep yourself to be clean. Loving the Lamb determines where they go and what they do. Where He goes and is, there they go and are. That is rewarded by the Lamb. They were with Him in the tribulation, now they are allowed to be with Him in His glory. This reward is also waiting for you if you stay with the Lamb.

The third characteristic is their advanced position. They are “*first fruits to God and to the Lamb*”. ‘First fruits’ have got to do with the harvest. First fruits are the first collection, while the great harvest is yet to be reaped. This is the case with this company. Together with many others they are bought from among men by the blood of the Lamb. Among those who were bought, these one hundred and forty-four thousand are the first fruits that are allowed to have a share in the blessings. Shortly after that a great harvest will follow, from Israel and from the nations as well (*cf. 1Cor 15:23; Jam 1:18*).

V5. The last characteristic that is mentioned is that “*no lie was found in their mouth*” (*Zeph 3:13; cf. 1Pet 2:22b*). Humanly speaking they have delivered a supernatural performance in this way. They could do that only because of their attachment to Christ alone as the truth (*Jn 14:6*). They lived in a time that was full of lies and deceit. It was not possible to survive without lying and deceiving. But they kept standing and did not allow themselves to be dragged by the gushing floods of lies that were poured out over the world by the beast and his henchmen.

The biggest lie is the denial of the Father and the Son (*1Jn 2:21-23*). But they have testified uncompromisingly of the truth concerning the Father and the Son. It is the joy of the Spirit to testify of them that “*they are blameless*”.

V6. In *verses 1-5* we watched the scene that will be after the great tribulation. Now we turn back to the time of the great tribulation. Several scenes of that time are highlighted in the rest of this

chapter. In total there are six angels related to those scenes. The last angel you have seen was the seventh and last trumpet angel (*Rev 11:15*). The first angel here is not a new trumpet angel, but “another angel”, the first of a new group of angels.

This angel is flying in the midst of heaven. In that position he is visible and audible for everyone on the earth. He has a special assignment and that is to preach the “*everlasting gospel*”. This shows how great the love and grace of God are. Also in that special serious time God makes a good news (for that is the meaning of the word ‘gospel’) to be proclaimed.

The everlasting gospel is a gospel that is not related to a certain period. It has always been valid for everyone. It reaches out to “*those who live on the earth*” for the last time, whatever group they belong to, so that they may repent before God’s judgments break loose. An angel has no part in the redemption, but he can surely pass on a good news of general scope (*cf. Lk 2:10*).

When it comes down to the gospel of grace, then an angel is to take a step backwards. You see that in the history of Philip and the Ethiopian. An angel led Philip to the Ethiopian, but it was Philip who preached the gospel of grace to the Ethiopian (*Acts 8:26,35*).

Now read Revelation 14:1-6 again.

Reflection: Which characteristics of those who follow the Lamb can be applied to you?

Messages from Three Angels | *verses 7-13*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

...; 7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." 8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality." 9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

V7. The everlasting gospel is not mumbled inarticulately, but it is preached *"with a loud voice"*. It goes beyond all noise on the earth. The content of this everlasting gospel is simply: fear God, give Him the glory and worship Him. The necessity of this gospel is just as simple, namely, that the hour of God's judgment has come. Repentance begins with the fear of God (*Lk 23:40*). God is an awesome God Who will punish every sin, disobedience and rebellion.

As soon as a person realizes that he has sinned against God, he becomes afraid, for he discovers that God is angry about that. Then the soul that is convicted of his sins will give glory to God. He will certainly acknowledge that God would be righteous if He would condemn him to hell and if He would cause disasters

and plagues to the world with His visitations. Each person who acknowledges that will not be condemned, but he will be transferred from death to life (*Jn 5:24*). Finally such a person becomes a worshiper of God Who gave him such a great grace.

God is presented here as the Creator. As the Creator He has the right to the adoration of His creatures. That worship will be claimed by the beast in that time on earth. But God will never give up His rights. He appeals to us to honor those rights, though without coercion (yet).

V8. Then “another angel, a second one”, appears. Because in *verse 9* there is mention of “a third one”, it indicates that there is a rank order in the events. What this angel announces is an emphasis on the necessity to heed the call of the first angel. The hour of God’s judgment is heralded with the judgment over Babylon. It is “Babylon the great”, because it had great thoughts about itself and also because it had great influence on the nations. But God brings an end to that (*see also Rev 17-18*).

In the words “fallen, fallen” you hear the echo of the prophecy of Isaiah (*Isa 21:9*). The cry of the angel means a warning for the judgment that will come and of which the result is made known here. God never judges without any warning. It should keep people from throwing themselves in the arms of “the mother of harlots” (*Rev 17:5*) and to be overwhelmed by her tempting religious beauty and splendor.

The overwhelming wealth and worldly charm have made Babylon a desired partner of all nations. World leaders eagerly make contact with the Vatican. They eagerly join in a social glass of the wine of her fornication. They thought they were enriching themselves by having chummed up with this harlot. It was a harlot whom you did not have to pay, but who paid herself for the fornication that she committed.

But they will have to pay a high price for their flirtations. They do not realize that by joining her with this social glass of wine they expose themselves to the wrath of God (*Rev 16:19; 17:2; Jer 51:7-*

8). Just like they wanted to participate in her luxury, they will participate in her fall. Everyone who does not withdraw himself from the great Babylon will receive of her plagues (*Rev 18:3-4*).

V9. “Then another angel, a third one” appears. He announces with a loud voice a message to those who have related themselves with the beast by worshiping him and by applying his mark on their forehead or hand. You have come across these people in *chapter 13:12,16*. Those who have not yet allowed themselves to do that, get a last chance here to repent. The warning is that they should not accept that mark. That means that they must face the great pressure of being abandoned from the society.

V10. Whoever, despite this last appeal, sticks to his choice for the beast chooses for an indescribable and endless torture. There will be no softening of God’s wrath for those who are attached to the beast. The torment will happen “*in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb*” (*cf. Lk 16:23-26*), for they have been horribly provoked by these inventors and executors of the greatest godliness. This will not cause any feeling of delight to the holy angels and the Lamb.

Whoever has lived in rebellion against heaven will, beside the physical torment “*with fire and brimstone*”, be tormented by something else. While suffering those terrible pains, the remorse that he could have been in the atmosphere of the heavenly angels and in the presence of the Lamb, will continually gnaw at him.

V11. To the unspeakably physical and mental torture another torment is added of which the gravity is not to be expressed in words. This torment is that there will never come an end to this torture. Also the absence of any moment of rest, a short respite in that torment is an indescribable increase of this horrible and unchangeable situation. Beside the deep seriousness that this verse contains, it is also a simple and adequate proof that the universal atonement is a harsh lie.

V12. The impressive previous warnings addressed to the unbelievers, are an exhortation for the saints to persevere. It will en-

sure them that it is better to be temporarily tortured *by* the beast than to be eternally tortured *with* the beast. Instead of participating with the general worship of the beast they live in obedience to “*the commandments of God*”. They also keep “*the faith in Jesus*”, that is the trust in Him Who was once on earth the Rejected. The authority of the Word of God and the love for the Son determine their lives in the midst of the circumstances controlled by satan.

There is mention of ‘Jesus’ and not of ‘the Lord Jesus’ or ‘Jesus Christ’. ‘Jesus’ is the name that recalls the life of the Lord in humiliation on earth. These saints draw strength from the example of His life on earth. He has suffered under the predecessors of both the political and the religious beast. You recognize the representative of the Roman empire in Pilate and that of the apostate Judaism in Herod (*Lk 23:12*). By looking upon Jesus they will be able to suffer the greatest trials with perseverance and not fail (*Heb 12:1-3; Mat 24:13*).

V13. God orders John to write down that the saints who have lost their lives because of the murderous beast, will lose nothing of the happiness that was promised to them. The earth found that they deserved nothing more than death. Heaven contrarily calls them happy.

They died “*in the Lord*”. They have acknowledged and served Him Who was rejected on earth, as their Lord. In that way they have given Him the place that God had already given to Him with His return to heaven after the accomplishment of the redemption work (*Acts 2:36; Phil 2:11*). Their tribute to Him for which they had to pay with their lives, is rewarded by God by giving them a place with Him. The expression “*from now on*” makes clear that it is about believers who were killed because of their testimony.

With an emphatic “*yes*” the Spirit confirms what John has to write down concerning the happiness of the dead in the Lord. The voice from heaven is the voice of the Spirit, Who is also God. At that time the Spirit does not dwell on earth anymore, for with the rapture of the church the Spirit also left the earth. Wherever the church dwells the Spirit also dwells (*Jn 14:16; 1Cor 3:16*;

2Thes 2:7b). The situation will then be like it was before the church was on earth. Then the Spirit did not dwell on earth, but He was working on earth.

After His confirmation the Spirit points to the results of their death. *"They may rest."* After they have gone through all uproar and persecution, they now experience a beneficial rest. What a contrast to the endless restlessness of those who are in the everlasting torment (*verse 11*)! It will take a little while before the saints that were killed will also be rewarded for their works.

Their works of faith were not left on the earth, but they *"follow with them"*. The works of all who have been killed after the rapture will be remembered by God. Nothing will be forgotten. They will receive the reward out of the hand of the Lord Jesus. It consists of being allowed to reign with Him in the kingdom of peace. For that reason it sounds: *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."* They are blessed indeed. Aren't they?

Now read Revelation 14:7-13 again.

Reflection: Which persons or groups of people are addressed here?

The Two Harvests of the Earth | *verses 14-20*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud [was] one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. **15** And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." **16** Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. **17** And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. **18** Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." **19** So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered [the clusters from] the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. **20** And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Introduction. In the last verses of this chapter we see two scenes that both deal with judgment. Both scenes represent the judgment in the picture of a harvest. The first scene (*verses 14-16*) shows the judgment in the metaphor of a wheat harvest. The second scene (*verses 17-20*) shows the judgment in the metaphor of a wine harvest. That two metaphors are used here therefore means that the judgment has different aspects. Both scenes are in connection with the coming of the Lord Jesus.

V14. Together with John we look at the first metaphor. He sees "a white cloud". 'White' speaks of cleanness, purity. There is also mention of a white horse (*Rev 19:11*) and a great white throne (*Rev 20:11*). The cloud makes us think of the glory in which God was in the midst of His people Israel. That cloud led the people

through the wilderness and dwelled in the tabernacle and later in the temple (*Exo 40:35; 1Kgs 8:10-11; see also Mat 17:5*).

Then John notices a person, One like “*a son of man*” (*Rev 1:13; Dan 7:13*). That is the Lord Jesus. He *sits* on the white cloud like He *sits* on the white horse and on the great white throne. Absolute purity is one of His features in exercising the judgment. He appears in Divine, royal glory, presented in the “*golden crown*” that He wears “*on His head*”. What a contrast to the crown of thorns that He once wore on His head on earth. “*In His hand*” He has “*a sharp sickle*”. The instrument for the harvest has been sharpened, ready to cut the harvest in one smooth movement.

V15. The picture of the Lord Jesus on the cloud radiates rest. He waits for the time to come into action. The judgment is given to Him because He is the Son of Man (*Jn 5:27*). Then another angel comes out from God’s holy presence to announce that the hour of the judgment has come. This is the hour which the Lord Jesus did not know of as Man, an hour that was only known by the Father (*Mk 13:32*).

The reason for the judgment is also given and is clear. An end has come to all patience. Actually “*the harvest of the earth is ripe*”. ‘Ripe’ possibly has the meaning of ‘rot’, which therefore indicates the incorrigible corrupt moral condition of the earth, so that the judgment that will be executed will be fully justified. ‘Ripe’ also indicates that God has shown an excess of patience before He makes that judgment to be executed.

V16. When it has been announced that the hour has come, the Lord Jesus comes into action. He swings His sickle over the earth and reaps the earth. Now what’s going on here? In order to get a better picture of it you should take a look at the parable of the weeds (or tares) among the wheat in the *gospel according to Matthew* (*Mat 13:24-30; 36-43*). There you see that with the wheat harvest a distinction is made between tares (a weed that looks very much like wheat) and wheat. When the harvest time has come – which is the moment that the Lord Jesus swings His sickle over the earth – the Son of Man says to His angels that they must gath-

er all things that offend and all who practice lawlessness and cast them into the furnace of fire.

In the parable you see some things that clarify the scene of the reaping of the earth. The Lord Jesus accomplishes the judgment, but He does that through the means of His angels. The wheat harvest is a picture of the separation between good and evil (*cf. Mat 3:12*), but here the emphasis lies on the judgment over the evil. In the end time the judgments are not accomplished at the same time, but they take place in the total period of the great tribulation of three and a half year. During all those different judgments the angels go out to reap away the unbelievers through the judgment. They gather the weeds (the unbelievers who are judged) in bundles. The great Director, He Who directs everything, is the Man Jesus Christ.

V17. After these actions you become a witness of another scene that deals with the execution of the judgment. You can derive that from the *"sharp sickle"* that, just like in the previous scene, also plays a major role here. As the harbinger of this judgment another angel came out *"of the temple which is in heaven"*, which means from the holy presence of God. Here it is not the Lord Jesus Who has the sharp sickle, but the angel. Just like the Son of Man he waits for a command to come into action. That command comes from another angel that comes after him.

V18. The second angel that appears in this scene does not come out from the temple, but *"from the altar"*. That makes the altar to be the starting point of this judgment. The thought of judgment is empowered because it is said of this angel that he *"has power over fire"*. Fire has to do with the exercise of judgment. You have come across the altar already. In *chapter 6:9-10* you have seen under the altar the souls of martyrs and you have heard them calling for vengeance. Their cry for vengeance is answered now. Also in *chapter 8:5* you have seen the altar in relation with the judgment.

The altar in the Old Testament is the place where the sacrifices were brought as a picture of the true sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. The fire consumed the sacrifice. In this way the Lord Jesus has

been in the fire of God's judgment for each who believes in Him. However, he who rejects His sacrifice will have to undergo the fire of God's judgment himself (*Jn 3:36*).

The angel from the altar with the power over the fire commands the angel with the sharp sickle to come into action for the harvest of "*the clusters from the vine of the earth*". God presents His people Israel in the Old Testament amongst others as a vine (*Psa 80:9,15-16; Isa 5:2-7; Jer 2:21*). In this picture He shows that He expected of His people that they would testify of Him in a way that He was going to receive fruit from it. That fruit would consist of the joy (of which the wine is a picture) that He would find in His people. He did everything that could cause the people to deliver that fruit. But His people have used the fruit for themselves. They have thought only of their own joy and not of what God expected of them. They even rejected and killed the Owner (*Mat 21:33-39*).

When the Lord Jesus came to earth, He as the true vine (*Jn 15:1*) took the place of this depraved vine. He was rejected by His people. After He was rejected a new testimony was established, Christianity. The purpose of this new testimony was also that it was to deliver fruit for God, that God would find His joy in it. All who are related with the true vine, the Lord Jesus and have life from Him, bear fruit for God.

There are also some who are related with Him, but do not bear fruit, because they have no life from Him (*Jn 15:2a,6*). Their connection with Him is an apparent connection. They confess to be God's witness on earth and confess to give Him fruit, but it is an illusion, untrue, false. They bring forth stinking fruit, just like Israel did in the past.

When the church will be raptured, only a false Christian testimony will be left on earth. This false Christian testimony will be cut off from the earth by the sharp sickle together with the apostate Jewish testimony. The Lord Jesus will judge every false confession when the false confessor has fully shown his apostasy.

V19. This judgment is different from the judgment that is represented by the picture of the wheat harvest. Actually there is no distinction here. The whole harvest is thrown into the great wine press. The seriousness of this judgment is even more underlined by the addition “*the wrath of God*”. Especially what is put in relation to Him, but in reality denies Him (2Tim 3:5), arouses His wrath. There is nothing else that God hates so much as hypocrisy. Therefore He doesn’t wait until the grapes are overripe as with the wheat harvest. If the harvest is ripe, judgment comes.

The wickedness of the apostate testimony is great (Joel 3:13). Therefore the place of the judgment, where God will have His fierce wrath to be broken loose (Isa 63:1-6), will be great (“*the great wine press*”). The great wine press is the valley of Armageddon (Rev 16:16), where the nations are gathered to fight against God and His Anointed (Psa 2:2).

V20. The wine press lies “*outside the city*”. That means that the judgment takes place outside Jerusalem. To give you an impression of how horrible that judgment is, it is said how high the blood reaches and to how far it reaches. The blood of those who are killed will splash up to the bridles of the horses. The blood of those who are killed fills the whole land. The “*distance of two hundred miles*”, which is approximately three hundred kilometers, is the length of the land Israel from Dan in the North to Beersheba in the South.

This judgment is also the fulfillment of the cry: “*His blood shall be on us and on our children*” (Mat 27:25). At the same time this judgment means the purification of the land of the blood of the Lord Jesus Who was killed by them (Num 35:33). God fulfills His Word, both where it concerns His promises and where it concerns the foretelling of judgment.

Now read Revelation 14:14-20 again.

Reflection: What are the differences between both harvests?

Revelation 15

The Sea of Glass and the Seven Angels | *verses 1-8*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, [which are] the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. 2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. 3 And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! 4 "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; FOR ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED." 5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, 6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean [and] bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.*

V1. John sees "another sign in heaven". A sign means more than an event. It is an event with a message, an event with a *signal*. He has already seen two times earlier a sign in heaven. In the first sign Israel was centered and the Child That would come forth from it, that is the Lord Jesus (*Rev 12:1-2*). The second sign showed the dragon and his furious attempts to kill the Child (*Rev 12:3-18*).

Both signs tell us about the history of Israel and what will happen to this nation in the time of the great tribulation. The sign that John sees now tells us about the events that the rest of the human race will be facing. It is not just a sign. It is “great”, which means that it is a huge sign. It is also “marvelous”, for it will exceed the comprehension of everyone who will have to do with it.

The sign consists of “seven angels who had seven plaques, [which are] the last”. You have already been a witness of the seven seal judgments and of the seven trumpet judgments. Now the seven bowl judgments follow. After these seven plagues there are no more plagues. With these seven plagues God has fulfilled His wrath and His righteous wrath has become completely silenced. But what you will see in these plagues will provoke every imagination. They are of unprecedented size and fierceness and they follow one another at a fast and irrepressible speed.

V2. But before these last judgments will break loose you first see again the “sea of glass” which you also saw in *chapter 4:6*. There the sea was like crystal. Here the sea is “mixed with fire”. A group of people is standing on the sea of glass. That means that the sea is the basis of their presence in heaven. These people are transparent like glass, they have become known in public. They are in total agreement with the holy presence of God, they have not one dark spot of sin. Therefore they do not need the water of purification anymore and therefore the sea is not fluid anymore. They have also endured the test of their faith and now they are to the praise and glory and honor of Jesus Christ (*1Pet 1:7*).

Their faith has been tested in a way that we can hardly imagine. But I hope that their faithfulness to the Lord will encourage you and me to also remain faithful to the Lord in our trials which are so much less heavy. They have stood eye to eye with the beast in his devastating death threat, but they have gained victory over the beast.

It is a multiple victory. In the first place they have defeated “the beast” himself by not bowing to him, in any which way he had threatened them. With their head up, looking to heaven (*cf. Acts*

7:55,59), they died the martyr's death. In the second place they have triumphed over "*his image*", the image of the beast, by not heeding the deceiving appeal to worship this idol. In the third place they have conquered "*the number of his name*" by not selling their soul in order to take part of social life in that way (*Rev 13:15-17*). Not this group but the beast is the great loser.

The result of their victory is that you see them standing here, raised from the dead, alive and singing. The harps that they have are "*harps of God*". The harps were given to them by God, destined to be used to glorify Him Who has given the power to remain standing. Their death may definitely be the end of their existence on earth, but definitely not the end of their existence to God.

V3. And what do they sing? They sing two songs: "*the song of Moses*" and "*the song of the Lamb*". Moses is here called "*the bond-servant of God*". The company that sings his song consists of people who like him were faithful servants of God. Only when you are obedient you can sing a liberation song. Moses sang his song with the Israelites directly after they were liberated from Egypt (*Exo 15:1-18*). It is the first song in the Bible. In that song they sing about the *power* of God Who has triumphed over the power of Pharaoh and his horsemen. It is a song that fits in the mouth of conquerors of the beast. This is the last time in the Bible that something is said about a song.

They also sing the song of the Lamb. They owe this song to the Lamb. It's because of Him that they could sing this song, because He has delivered them. In the song of the Lamb they give praise to the *Person* of the Lamb. Through the Lamb the Israelites were delivered (*Exo 12:1-13*), through the Lamb all the believers of all ages have been delivered (*Rev 5:9*).

In the songs the "*works*" and the "*ways*" of God are celebrated (*Psa 103:7*). The works are extensive and impressive (see verse 3). They are ascribed to the "*Lord God, the Almighty*". 'Lord' is His name as Master, Owner. He is the Owner of the whole creation. In this book He exercises His right to the creation. As 'God Almighty' He is working to regain possession of His creation. He does not

need any help from anyone. The judgments that are abundantly exercised in this book are an expression of His almighty works. Just as almighty He is in keeping His own.

As “*King of the nations*” (Jer 10:7) He goes along different ways for His purpose. How hard the nations may try to stop Him in His ways, that will all appear to be useless attempts. In majesty, authority and power He exceeds far beyond them. In His dealings with them He is “*righteous and true*”. His ways have a righteous foundation. The different judgments that pave the way to His goal are deserved. The believers of that time understand that. They agree with it and look forward to Him (Isa 26:8-9). He is *truthful* in using the judgments. There is no deception in it. He judges because He is displeased about evil and not because of malicious pleasure.

V4. The conquerors are impressed about God’s works and ways. Could you imagine yourself and other people not to be fearing and glorifying the Lord if you let yourself become aware of God’s omnipotence and kingship? That’s no question for the conquerors. They see Him, they see His deeds and His purpose. They also see the rebellion of the beast and his followers and the foolishness of their works and ways. They praise the Lord as the only Holy One against the prevailing ungodliness on earth. He alone is fully separated from the evil.

His “*acts*”, which are His righteous deeds (cf. Rev 19:11) that “*have been revealed*” in His judgments, coerce the nations to draw near to Him and bow down before Him (Psa 72:11). They will have to acknowledge that no one else is God, but He alone. The general worship of the beast makes room for the general worship of God Whom alone is worthy of worship.

Pay attention that the conquerors do not sing about their *own* experiences, about *their* perseverance and *their* victory over the beast. They are much more occupied with the power of God, with what He has done. They are full of His righteousness and holiness. Isn’t that an indication for you to especially think about what *God* has done in the Lord Jesus when you give Him thanks?

V5. With John you now get to see the preparations for the last plagues. *"The temple ... in heaven was opened."* You're looking into the temple, the dwelling place of God's holiness. This dwelling place is here closely related to the tabernacle that is here called *"the tabernacle of testimony"* (Exo 25:22; Num 10:11). The tabernacle was God's transportable house during the journey of Israel through the wilderness. In the interior of the tabernacle was the ark and in the ark the two tablets of stone were placed. The two tablets of stone are 'the testimony'. You're looking here at the deepest interior, the heart of heaven.

Therefore the place from where the next acts happen are in relation with the holiness of God (temple), just like it is written on the tablets of stone (tabernacle of the testimony). According to those tablets, the law, God will not only judge His people, but also the world. On those tablets the demands of His righteousness and holiness are written. God has no other standard according to which He judges than the standard which He has established in the law. For those who have the need to 'recalculate' God, can gain evidence here. It always becomes apparent that God is justified in His words and when He is judged He always has the victory (Rom 3:4).

V6. The temple has been opened in the sight of John. Then it is not the high priest or priests whom he sees coming out of it, as you may be expecting. No, he sees *"seven angels"* coming out. Those angels do not come from that sanctuary with blessing, but with judgment. They have *"the seven plagues"*, of which you have read in *verse 1* that those are the last plagues.

The appearance of the angels fills people with respect. They are *"clothed in pure bright linen"*, which shows that they represent God in His holiness. Wherever they act in judgment, their purity will sharply contrast to the filthiness of objects that they judge. By this contrast the righteousness of the judgment is underlined.

They also have the *"golden sashes"* girded around their chests. Their chests speak about their inner man, their heart, their feelings. Angels also have feelings. They are not insensitive machines

that are executing what they were ordered to do without any feeling. The feelings of these angels are guided by the glories of God of which the gold speaks. Glories of God are all the attributes of Him that have become visible. Also in the judgment glories of Him become visible, like holiness and righteousness. Everything that does not fulfill those glories, represented in those golden sashes, is judged by them. In this aspect they look like the Lord Jesus (*Rev 1:13*).

V7. Then “*one of the four living creatures*” comes forward. The living creatures are closely related to the throne of God (*Rev 4:6-7*), the place where justice is provided. One of them gives each of the angels a golden bowl. Each bowl is “*full of the wrath of God*”. The seven bowls together make clear that it is about a full wrath. The bowls are wide, shallow bowls of which the contents can easily and quickly be poured out.

When these bowls are emptied there will be nothing more left on which God must still let His wrath loose like fire. What you see here is therefore a very solemn, but also terrible moment. The seven most terrible plagues from the history of earth are about to break loose. These plagues will be sowing death and destruction. They will make an end to everything that is alive. In that way there comes an end to any form of life that had been lived without God. In God alone there is life. He “*lives forever and ever*”. Everything that does not draw life from Him will be tortured forever by the pains of death.

V8. After the bowls have been distributed “*the temple was filled with smoke*”. This time it is not the smoke of God’s glory in which He was clothed when He came to dwell with His people in the tabernacle and in the temple on earth (*Exo 40:34, 35; 1Kgs 8:10-12; cf. Isa 6:4*). This time it is about God’s glory that is exhibited in the judgment and wherein His power becomes visible. The smoke indicates that it is no longer possible to enter into the temple for intercession (*cf. Lam 3:44*). The time of intercession is over.

There is no more delay, the judgments are inevitable and concluding. Only when the judgments have been fully executed and

when everything that is in contrast to God has been removed, the temple is to be entered again.

Now read Revelation 15:1-8 again.

Reflection: What are the characteristics of the company on the sea of glass? What are the characteristics of the seven angels?

Revelation 16

The First, Second and Third Bowl | *verses 1-4*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." 2 So the first [angel] went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. 3 The second [angel] poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like [that] of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. 4 Then the third [angel] poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

V1. John hears how out of the smoke-filled temple "a loud voice" sounds. 'Loud voice' is literally 'great voice'. In this chapter the word 'great' occurs often (*verses 9,12,14,18[2x],19,21[2x]*). The unrighteousness is great and God's wrath is great. Great and extensive is the area of the unrighteousness, great and severe are therefore the means of God's wrath.

The loud voice commands "*the seven angels*" to start to take action. They were to go out, each of them to the territory on earth that was assigned to them. There they have to pour out "*the seven bowls of the wrath of God*". 'To pour out' is a sudden and complete effusion of the content on the objects of God's wrath. In a way of speaking the wrath of God here does not consist of a tap with a stick to correct a wrong act, but of a complete overpowering and overthrow of the evil.

One bowl after the other is emptied by just one move. The plagues follow one another in a great pace. Probably these judgments that spare nothing and no one, will be finished within a few days.

Therefore they will not be announced, like it was with the two previous series of plagues (seals and trumpets). They happen without any warning, because God has already warned enough (*Pro 29:1*).

V2. The first four bowls look a lot like the first four trumpets in *chapter 8*. The plagues of the first four bowls strike the same areas as the first four trumpets did. However, the difference is that the trumpet plagues struck a limited part of the earth (a third part), while the bowl plagues have no limit.

In order to emphasize the speed of action, it is not said 'and the first angel went', but "*so the first went*". You find that also in each of the next cases. The first pours out his bowl on the earth. That is not the earth in the broad sense of *verse 1*, but in the limited sense of 'the dry land', because in the following there is also mention of other areas on earth (sea, rivers).

When the angel has poured out his bowl the consequences immediately become visible. The people who are related to the beast and worship his image, get a foul and incurable sore as a mark. This couldn't be just a small sore that you may put a plaster on, but it is an enormous, striking sore that is incurable. A sore is an outburst of inner uncleanness that goes together with pain and that changes the outer beauty into repulsiveness.

To people who sacrifice everything for a perfect body, regarding both health and shape, this is a disaster of unprecedented size. They have done everything to keep their body in top condition and now by one act of God's wrath their body turns into a wreck, a pitiful example of misery and pain. Such as satan struck Job with loathsome sores (*Job 2:7*), God now strikes the followers of the beast with them (*cf. Exo 9:10; Deu 28:27,35*).

V3. Without a renewed command from heaven – the command in *verse 1* is one command for all seven angels – the second angel empties his bowl. The area that was given to him is "*the sea*". The emptying of his bowl has the direct result that the sea becomes "*blood*". However, it is not blood that flows, which is still running,

but it is blood that is clotted. The blood in a dead person is not running anymore. The sea turns into a clotted mass. Everything in it that is alive cannot possibly move anymore and dies immediately on its spot. The stench of the whole will be terrible and unbearable (cf. *Exo 7:19-21*).

The spiritual application is to be seen as a symbol to all nations where there is no order (in contrast to the earth as a symbol for an ordered whole). Everyone lives for himself, authority is not being respected. At the emptying of the second bowl this conduct will become a plague. In this way each individual will be left to his own, that it will be no more possible for him to be reached or to reach another person. As a result of a full spiritual desensitization, there is absolutely no form of communication anymore. Loneliness prevails. As dead as they already were in the spiritual sense concerning their relation with God, now death has also entered in their relation to their neighbor.

V4. In case there might still be any hope that fresh water can run to the sea from the rivers, which may cause it to live again, then this hope is erased by the third angel. The bowl that he pours out, strikes "*the rivers*" that they become blood. This also happens to the "*springs of water*" that stand in themselves. There is no water to be drawn for one's own refreshment or for one to refresh another.

The water has totally turned into blood. Every possibility to bring life where death is, is cut off. When man is isolated from God and from his neighbor, he is fully subjected to the influence of death, without any alternative.

Now read Revelation 16:1-4 again.

Reflection: What do you find compelling in the description of these bowl judgments?

Testimony, the Fourth and Fifth Bowl | *verses 5-11*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." 8 The fourth [angel] poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. 10 Then the fifth [angel] poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

V5. After the third had emptied his bowl and before the fourth empties his bowl, the voice of another angel is to be heard. He is furthermore indicated as *"the angel of the waters"*. The waters seem to be the area that was given to him by God in order to act there (cf. *Rev 7:1; 14:18*). In this way he will be in a special way in relation to the second and the third angel. The angel speaks to God and says to Him that from His judgments it appears that He is *"righteous"*. The angel agrees to its lawfulness.

He also recognizes that from God's judgments it appears that He is Who He has always been already, the One Who is and Who was. God's judgments over the world at the end of history are not different than His judgments in the beginning as seen in the deluge and over Egypt. He is not an unsteady ruler with changing standards all the time. In His judgments He is all the way consistent.

V6. Concerning the bowl judgments God acts according to the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' (*Exo 21:24*).

You may also say that man reaps what he has sown (*Gal 6:7*). The angel gives an expression of that by telling that those who have shed blood also have had to drink blood in both previous judgments. Just as they have shed blood, just like that blood came out of the bowls which caused their death.

The words “*they deserve it*” are sometimes used in a positive sense (*Rev 3:4; Lk 20:35*), but also in a negative sense. A person also receives the judgment that he ‘is due’. He who has shed “*the blood of saints and prophets*” has clearly shown that he hates everything pertaining to God (‘saints’) and that reminds him of Him (‘prophets’). In that way he has got rid of every blessing that God was still giving through His saints and prophets. In that way you make yourself due to the judgment yourself.

In a spiritual sense God provided His people with His blessing by His prophets. But these ‘rivers’ were rejected by them, which caused them to change to blood. Also now all ‘rivers’ are being rejected and therefore they are changed into rivers of blood. God’s Word and His institutions were given to be a blessing. But people got rid of them.

The result is that selflessness turns into self-assertion, the submissiveness of children to their parents changes into rebellion, the exclusive love of the husband for his wife in marriage turns into feelings of being crushed and people start to live in alternative forms like co-habitation and homosexual relationships; the submission of the woman has now been considered to be slavery to which feminism opposes; euthanasia becomes a form of respect towards older people; abortion is being committed out of respect towards life; obedience to principalities and submission of employees are being answered by rights. All virtues of God are an abomination to the modern autonomous man. God will judge him in accordance to that.

V7. After the angel of the rivers John is also hearing how the altar agrees with a “*yes*” to the truthfulness and the righteousness of God’s judgments. The altar addresses the Lord Jesus to Whom the whole judgment is given (*Jn 5:22-23*) and Who at the same

time is God Almighty. This altar refers to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the redemption of all believers. God's righteousness has never been shown more clearly than in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. He went through the judgment over the sins of all who believe in Him.

Therefore they are free from all the judgments that go over the earth like a scourge. But all who have rejected His sacrifice will be struck and perish by the scourge. The serious oracle goes out of the altar that God's judgment over the stubborn unbelievers will be as truthful and righteous as the judgment that went over the Lord Jesus for the sake of those who believe in Him.

V8. Then the wrath of God addresses "*the sun*", when "*the fourth*" angel pours his bowl on it. The result is that the sun will be burning in such a way that its beams become a fire which causes men to be burned (*cf. Mal 4:1*). There is no sun protection oil that can possibly protect anyone against this burning sun, even if the oil has the highest protection factor. This fire is a harbinger of hell.

To be applied spiritually, the sun represents great rulers. The "*men*" are the unbelievers. During the great tribulation those rulers are hostile to God. While the people were thinking that these rulers sought their best interest, these rulers will due to the fourth bowl turn into merciless rulers who turn against their subjects and persecute and consume them with satanic pleasure. They did not want the gentle yoke of Him Who said that He is meek and humble of heart. Now an iron yoke is imposed on them that oppresses them without compassion (*cf. Deu 28:48*).

V9. The heat will cause an enormous pain. They know that the plagues come from God and they will not try to find a logic explanation for it anymore, like it happens today at all natural disasters. The people however refuse to admit that God speaks clearly to them in these natural disasters that they may repent themselves. Enormous physical pains or heavy inner torments or both will drive them out to God. However, they do not come to God to confess their sins, but to blaspheme Him.

Against their better judgment they blame Him for all misfortune. Their aversion to God comes out in all their intensity in those tragic circumstances. They have been indoctrinated and brainwashed by the beast in such a way that it doesn't occur to them to give God glory. The propaganda of the beast (*Rev 13:6*) has worked its disastrous effect in its followers. They have never wanted to repent themselves and they still do not want to now. The future propaganda of the beast is casting its shadows already. Through the newspaper, radio, television and internet more and more expressions and programs appear in which the aversion to God is woven. Whoever preaches the (biblical) gospel, experiences that people become more and more harsh and unreachable.

V10. "*The fifth*" angel pours out "*his bowl on the throne of the beast*", which means on the center of his power. The result is a darkness that extends itself from this center over his whole kingdom. The darkness makes you think of the darkness in Egypt, the ninth and second-last plague (*Ex 10:21-22*). With the fully-blown darkness it is impossible to take one step, because of the missing of any form of orientation and communication.

In that darkness man is fully delivered to himself. He doesn't know where he is, doesn't see any outcome and can go nowhere for help. In this darkness people have no distraction of the pains that torture them. In great despair and at the same time with undiminished hatred they "*gnawed their tongues because of pain*". Earlier they were saying with arrogance who was able to make war with the beast (*Rev 13:4; see 19:19 also*). Here is God's response.

The beast received his throne from the dragon, which is satan (*Rev 13:2*). With the super high intelligence of the beast, his knowledge and insight, it looked like the light on the world began to shine brightly and the economy was flourishing again. All crushing Christian truths have been rejected as darkness. But now here the moment has come that all the bragging about higher light and higher knowledge is not only put into the shadow by God, but it is fully covered in darkness.

When God reveals the truth it means darkness to everyone who has disconnected Him. He makes the light that has been rejected to become darkness (*Mat 6:23*). They will not be able to know where they are or where they should go to. They will not even see any neighbor anymore. In this total isolation the soul is alone with himself and eats himself up in hatred, envy, bitterness and wormwood.

V11. "*Their pains*" and "*their sores*" are a reason for the people to blaspheme God. They blame Him for that. Instead of repenting they persevere in their sinful works. Psychologists and politicians may draw people's attention through conferences, in order to explain their reactions. Every explanation, how illogical it may be, is better than admitting that you are a sinner and that you are to repent. They refuse to give up anything of their debauched life and they rather choose to die than to bow their knees under the final plagues of God.

Now read Revelation 16:5-11 again.

Reflection: Why do the people refuse to repent, while they are being tortured by the judgments of God?

The Sixth and Seventh Bowl | *verses 12-21*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

12 *The sixth [angel] poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. 13* *And I saw [coming] out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14* *for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15* *("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.") 16* *And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. 17* *Then the seventh [angel] poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18* *And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake [was it, and] so mighty. 19* *The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. 20* *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21* *And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, *came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague *was extremely severe.*

V12. It is "*the sixth*" angel's turn to pour out his bowl. The target of the content of his bowl is "*the great river, the Euphrates*". The Euphrates river is the natural border between the east and the west. This plague caused the Euphrates river to become dried up. This in turn paves the way for the eastern powers ("*the kings from the east*") in order to attack the restored Roman empire. Hereby you could think of countries like India, Indonesia, China and Japan. This is about the situation in which the Western-European armies

have come to help Israel because Israel is threatened by the king of the north.

V13. At this moment John gets a glance at the secret actions of the trinity of the ungodliness, *“the dragon ... the beast ... the false prophet”*. *“Out of the mouth”* of each of them comes an unclean spirit. These *“unclean spirits”* look *“like frogs”*. ‘Out of the mouth’ means that propaganda is being spread. The content of the propaganda is unclean. The symbol, the frog, is very fitting, for it is an unclean animal (*Lev 11:10,41*). Only one more time frogs are mentioned in the Scripture and that is in relation with the second plague over Egypt (*Exo 8:2-14; Psa 78:45; 105:30*). They live in marshes and are most audible in the darkness of the night, which also fits with this symbol for the demonically inspired propaganda.

Uncleanness has become a trademark. Hands full of money is made with uncleanness. The many millions (!) of pornographic internet sites of which the number daily increases, prove the sensitivity of man to particularly this kind of propaganda. The advertising industry is full of it. That the unholy trinity chooses this form of propaganda makes it very clear how much man has become a creature that only lives for the satisfaction of his lusts.

V14. Just promise men to get unbridled liberties and you assuredly win them for a case against God and His Christ. With this message the *“spirits of demons”* – for the unclean spirits are demons – go out and get to work. They will perform *“signs”*, which will make their message more easily to be accepted. Their mission is to make *“the kings of the whole world”* to agree with their intention. That intention is to make war against God and His Christ. But as crafty and deceptive as demons have always been, they will surely present their plan otherwise, perhaps even as a peace-mission. After all, peace is necessary in the Middle-East, right?

V15. The dark scene is interrupted by a word of the Lord Jesus for the believers who are fleeing from the beast. This statement is intended to exhort them in that turbulent time to remain expecting the Lord and to remain vigilant. They must not allow themselves to be deceived by all events and especially not by the deceiving

speech. For those who are not prepared for His return the Lord will come as a thief, which means unexpectedly and undesired.

For the third time in this book the word “*blessed*” is sounding. It is meant as a consolation and encouragement for the living saints. While under the influence of the ‘frogs’ the people will dress and behave themselves more and more shameless, the saints will distinguish themselves by dressing and behaving themselves honorably. The spiritual application is that the people of the world are walking naked, meaning that everyone sees what the flesh is capable of. Believers have received the garments of salvation by which the flesh can be kept in the death.

V16. With the word “*and*” the thread is picked up again with *verse 14*, the gathering of the armies. Here you see that in reality God gathers the hostile armies and not the spirits of demons of *verse 14* that think that they have organized it themselves through their deception. The place where these armies are gathered is called by its Hebrew name. “*Har-Magedon*” means ‘the mountain where troops gather’. In that place the Western-European armies will be defeated by the Lord Jesus. The report of that battle, or better said, judgment, is described in *chapter 19:19-21*.

V17. Finally it is “*the seventh*” and last angel’s turn. Under the previous bowl judgments the whole society has been already destroyed in all of its parts. But there is one territory left and that is “*the air*”. The last bowl is poured out on it. The air that the people breathe will be suffocating. They will suffer respiratory disorders.

In the spiritual sense the air is the atmosphere that is ruled by satan (*Eph 2:2*). The spiritual air that people breathe will then totally be under the judgment of God. All human relations that the most ungodly person needs, in order to have a meaningful life (family, friends, working place) will then be disappeared. Nothing will be left except for a desperate loneliness in a hopeless environment, without any prospects. This too is as it were a foretaste of hell.

In this way the judgments of God have come to an end. A loud voice announces that God’s holiness (the voice comes from the

temple) and God's righteousness (the voice comes from the throne) have been fully satisfied. With the cry "*it is done!*" it is indicated that all God's intentions with His judgments have been fully accomplished. There is nothing more that still has to come under the judgment.

V18. What still remains to follow is a description of the symptoms that accompany the seventh bowl and the consequences of pouring it out. "*Flashes of lightning*" underline that the judgment comes from heaven and that it will come suddenly and will be unstoppable. The lightning go together with all kinds of noises or "*sounds*" and with "*peals of thunder*". Thunder indicate the powerful speaking of God in the judgment.

This impressive speech from heaven finds a resonance on the earth in an earthquake of such a size that puts all earlier earthquakes in the shadow (*Hag 2:7*). This last earthquake will radically make an end to everything that still offered man some guidance.

V19. The earthquake will strike all living environments wherever men may find themselves. First "*the great city*" is mentioned. It is not quite clear which city is meant by that. According to some interpreters it is about political Rome and according to others it refers to Jerusalem (*Zec 13:8-9*). There are two indications that to my opinion it especially relates to Jerusalem. The first is that earlier Jerusalem is called like that (*Rev 11:8*). The second is that it is said here that the city is divided "*into three parts*", which means that the city is not totally destroyed, but is partly spared (*Zec 1:17*).

"*The cities of the nations*" are all cities outside Israel. These are the living communities of people. In the past such cities have always been reconstructed after disasters. That will not be the case here. All rebellion of the human civilization against the government of heaven has seemed meaningless. Finally every living community completely collapses.

As final city "*Babylon the great*" is mentioned. There you have the religious Rome, the spiritual power, the system that has been delivering religion to an ungodly whole. That system is remem-

bered before God separately as a special object to which His wrath is addressed. Babylon, the roman-catholic system, has arrogated itself to be God's representative on the earth and in this way has dishonored God's Name the most.

V20. Also the places where people fled to, in order to escape all the disasters, will fall in the earthquake. There will be no more hiding place to be found. All the living ones, probably on their way to an island or a mountain to seek a safe place, will directly be exposed to the closing part of the last plague.

V21. The last consequence of the seventh bowl are fatal "*huge hailstones ... from heaven*" (cf. Job 38:22-23). The weight of the hailstones is mentioned. The weight of a hailstone is converted to about fifty kilos. The last drops from the last bowl take the form of these enormous hailstones that fall down upon the people at high speed and a devastating gravity. The only response of the hardened man who is

tortured by sores,
burned by the sun,
clothed in darkness,
deprived of every guidance by the great earthquake and
struck by an unprecedented hail

is that he blasphemes God. Here it is no more said that the people did not repent (*verses 9,11*). With cursing they clench their fist to heaven and sink down to death.

Now read Revelation 16:12-21 again.

Reflection: Which warnings do the two last bowl judgments consist for you?

Revelation 17

The Great Harlot | verses 1-4

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed [acts of] immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality." 3 And he carried me away in spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, ...

V1. In the previous chapter you were a witness of the final judgments over the earth, executed by seven angels by the means of seven bowls. In this way the wrath of God was fulfilled (*Rev 15:1*). In the description of the judgments in just one verse only of the previous chapter there was mention of the judgment over the great Babylon (*Rev 16:19*). In the *chapters 17-18* John (and we together with him) gets a detailed explanation on this judgment. That explanation he obtains from one of the seven bowl angels, one who is involved, someone who knows what he's talking about.

But it is not only an oral explanation. John also gets to see something. The angel invites John to join him to go to a place where he wants to show him how the great Babylon will come to her end.

Before they arrive there the angel informs John about what he gets to see. He will become an eye witness of the judgment over

the city that is presented as “the great harlot” (verse 18; cf. Isa 1:21). From the description that follows it appears that this is an indication of the roman-catholic church. He sees further that the harlot “sits on many waters”. What those many waters represent is written in verse 15. They represent the people of the earth and particularly the nations that belong to the restored Roman empire, which appears from verse 16.

The harlot is the church which is Christian in name and which pretends to represent Christ, but in practice has fully related itself with the world (the “many waters”). In that way John sees the roman church in the connection that she has made with the kings of the earth. Her unfaithfulness therefore appears from her love expressions to the governments of the world.

The fact that she ‘sits’ on it indicates that she has control over many governments. You see that in particular in the countries where the roman church has many followers. In her corruptness she dominates the governments. She acts as if she is defending a good cause, but in reality she is looking for power.

Like no other church the roman-catholic church has pretended to be the true church and the true bride of Christ. Also like no other church she has shown in her history the most horrible practices that are thoroughly worldly and demonic. It is a real anti-church that in this and in the following chapter is shown and judged in her true character.

Everything that is said of this false church will make clear that the title of ‘great harlot’ is totally justified. She acts as if she is the bride of Christ, but she is a harlot. And not just a harlot, no, she is the ‘great’ harlot. There is no greater contrast imaginable in a marriage relationship than this.

To think through still deeper this enormous contrast between the true church and the false church you should compare the verses 1-5 of this chapter with the verses 9-11 of chapter 21, where the true church is presented.

V2. *"The kings of the earth"*, the world leaders, have sought rapprochement to her. They have accepted her invitation. Of course they have done that out of purely selfish reasons. The roman church is rich, powerful and influential. Therefore they accepted and drank with greed from *"the wine of her immorality"*. They even got *"drunk"* by it. Due to their relationship with her they came under her influence and became misted. They do not see through her true intentions. Once those intentions become clear to them, they will turn into hatred against the harlot and they will kill her (see verse 16).

The kings of the earth represent the inhabitants of the countries they rule. In their relation with the harlot they drag all their subordinates with them, which are all *"those who dwell on the earth"*. When the pope visits a place today, it attracts masses of people. Everyone tries to catch a glimpse of him. In his position he is the radiation of the power of the church. The mass is blind for his pretense to be the substitute of Christ. To them he *is* the Christ. He is visible and influential and he is surrounded by mysticism. That's what the mass likes.

V3. It seems that the angel is showing John a vision. In that vision he sees himself to be carried away in the spirit into *"a wilderness"*. A wilderness is a territory where death rules. In a wilderness life and the possibility for life are totally missing. In that wilderness John sees *"a woman"*, the great harlot of the previous verse. The territory of death seems to be the residence of the harlot. This residence is a good reflection of her spiritual condition. She is full of death. There is no life out of God and with God there.

John also sees that this woman is sitting *"on a scarlet beast"*. Earlier in *Revelation 13:1-8* you have already come across the description of this beast. There you saw that this beast represents the restored Roman empire. In what John sees here, it seems that the roman church is sitting on the beast, meaning that it rides on it and directs it.

This scene symbolizes what is known from the church history. There have actually been periods that the pope had absolute

power over the kings of Europe. In the end time the political and the religious power of the roman church will be great again. You will see this increase of power in the increasingly explicit involvements of the pope with the events in the world. He receives world leaders and they receive him.

You also hear the pope appealing to the world leaders more and more clearly concerning all kinds of subjects that deal with the life on earth. With such appeals the roman church gives the impression of wanting to fight for a righteous and tolerant, peaceful society. She also gives the impression to be willing to realize that together with the world leaders. But she does not worry about the fact that the beast is “*full of blasphemous names*”, which means that all different forms of blasphemy are present in this beast. The only thing that she wants is to have control over the “*seven heads and ten horns*”. At *Revelation 13:1* you have seen what is meant by the seven heads and ten horns.

V4. Now follows a more detailed description of the woman. From this description this horrible creature appears to be representing the roman-catholic church.

1. You see that in her dressing (*verse 4*), which indicates her attachment to worldly luxury.
2. Furthermore she is drunk with the blood of the saints (*verse 6*), which indicates that she has persecuted the true believers with fire and with the sword.
3. In this context also the seven heads speak clearly as a representation of the seven mountains (*verse 9*) on which Rome lies and of which it is said that the woman is sitting on it.
4. Finally it is said in plain language that the woman is the great city (*verse 18*).

The luxury wherein she swims makes her relation with the world unmistakable. She is adorned with all earthly splendor and in that way she competes with the worldly leaders to become domi-

nant. Just like the scarlet color of the beast (*verse 3*), she clothes herself in those same colors. Her luxury is so great that the worldly leaders even derive their luxury from that of hers (*Rev 18:3b*). Her influence is therefore not only political and religious. Also economically she has a lot to offer and she participates therein by offering her merchandise. If only it is profitable, whether in hard currencies or in appearance and influence.

The cup that she has in her hand is “*full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality*”. ‘Abominations’ stands for idolatry. The roman-catholic church has introduced idolatry in the Christian church with great craftiness, determination and persistence. The most striking proof is the adoration of Mary and many other persons who have been canonized a saint by the roman church.

Recently (5th December 2007) I read a story which is quite interesting to tell in this context. It confirms that the cult of saints is still flourishing:

Italian catholics who hope in the help of a saint, do not need to carry a portrait of him or her anymore. They can also download the picture of the saint on their cell phones. Not every roman catholic leader is delighted with the new service, because it would be crude and excessively commercial.

‘We discovered a gap in the market and we have filled that gap’, says Barbara Labate from the company that offers the saints on the cell phones. In many taxicabs, passenger cars and trucks in Italy you find a santino (a portrait of a saint) hanging on the dashboard. Millions of Italians carry a santino in their purse or bag.

Of the cup it is also said that it is full of “*the unclean things of her immorality*”. In this way it is also indicated how much she has related herself with the elements of the world. You can observe that everywhere in pagan countries where the roman-catholic church has gained a firm foothold. There she has made the pa-

gan customs to become Christian customs instead of abolishing them. She has provided very cunningly the idolatry ceremonial service, which formerly characterized these nations, with a Christian coating.

Whatever you find in the Bible about Babylon, it is related with idolatry. The first reference of Babel in *Genesis 11:1-9* in the history of the tower building of Babel, already shows that relation. The sinful striving for unity and power came forth from the will of man to be like God. The will to be like God is idolatry in its essence. God is not written off, but He is robbed from the place He is worthy of. Man puts himself in the place of God and decides himself how he wants to serve God. Idolatry has been born.

That goes together with ascribing spiritual value to something that is visible and tangible and which serves to fulfill the spiritual feelings of man. Also here is mention of an abominable mixture of worldly elements with religion, which causes this religion to become fornication. The roman church is full of these elements. Just think of the crucifix, the altar and the communion wafer, to name some.

Now read Revelation 17:1-4 again.

Reflection: Which elements of idolatry do you know in the roman-catholic church?

The Mystery Explained | verses 5-10

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., 5 and on her forehead a name [was] written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." 6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. 7 And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. 9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, 10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

V5. The religious feelings which are propagated by the adulterous church and which are expressed, are received with diabolic gratitude by demons. The Scripture makes clear that satan is hidden behind idolatry (1Cor 10:20). Any admiration for what is visible and tangible ends up with him. Babylon is called for a reason "mystery". Although her name is to be seen by everyone "on her forehead", her true nature is still hidden for all who find themselves under her control. 'Mystery' means that insight is necessary to get to know the true nature of Babylon. That true nature is that she is "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth".

A (Bible book as) *Revelation* is necessary to see through her true nature. The rapprochement of the protestant churches with the roman-catholic church shows that it is still a mystery for many people. By the way, this rapprochement is also more and more to be found with evangelical Christians. In the light of the rapprochement of protestant and evangelical churches and groups,

also her other name, 'the mother of harlots', is significant. This name indicates that the roman-catholic church has children who follow her in her connection with the world. She is the mother of daughters who have the same characteristics like her.

It is to be recognized in all those churches that are connected to the world council of churches, including many protestant churches. You also see it in the state churches that come forth from the roman-catholic church. With them certain characteristics of spiritual fornication are visible which are also to be seen in the roman church. In that way they are morally to be labeled as 'daughters'. That she is also 'the mother of the abominations of the earth' means that she has brought forth idolatry, that she is its origin. Just take another look at the explanation of the previous verse.

The blindness of the mass for the true nature of the roman-catholic church is also caused by the lack of personal Bible study. And actually, in case the people read in the Bible, then it is often because they want to have a 'practical' benefit of it or in order to have some kind of emotion. It must have a good effect on their feelings. The Roman-catholicism connects to that perfectly with all her rituals and icons. Therefore its attractiveness is that great and these things are more and more widely accepted. They do not see the warning written with massive texts on her forehead.

V6. John sees how the woman overindulges in the killing of believers. These "*saints*" are not the saints that are canonized by the roman church, but they are the true saints in the sight of God. Such saints arouse her bloodthirstiness. Her bloodthirstiness is also aroused by "*the witnesses of Jesus*". These believers do not testify of the roman church as the only true church, but of Jesus. Jesus is the name of the Lord that refers to the time that He was on earth in humiliation, in complete poverty and insignificance. That is in huge contrast to the lavish luxury wherein the roman church swims.

The blood that the woman sheds makes her drunk. With diabolic pleasure she sucks up the blood until she is oversaturated. The sight of it makes John to be marveled with great amazement.

Such massacres and the lascivious and diabolic pleasure that go together with it would not have marveled him when they were attributed to the Roman empire. This is why we too should not be amazed when the world hates us. What marvels John is the cruel nature of the woman who claims to be the substitute and representative of Christ. Instead of being a protector of God's people she contrarily persecutes and murders those who belong to Christ. That is the cause of his wondering.

V7. In response to the amazement of John the angel says that the fact that the woman reveals herself like that, must not wonder him that much. Nor do we have to be very wondered. After all, man is capable of anything. Is it not exactly religious people who killed the Lord Jesus, the Son of God? Why was that? It is because in Him they saw a threat to their position. This is why every religious system seeks to cast out or resist everyone who even has any doubt about their right to exist. What is according to the flesh always persecutes what is according to the Spirit (*Gal 4:29*).

The angel is going to reveal the mystery. In *verse 5* the mystery only concerns the woman, but here he adds to the mystery that "of the beast" and his characteristics. This mystery stands against a mystery of a totally different character. That is the mystery of Christ and the church (*Eph 5:32*). While that mystery is associated with complete purity, holiness and unity in the good, this mystery speaks of darkness, destruction and deception.

V8. John receives a more detailed explanation of things that have been earlier described or to which was already briefly referred (*Rev 11:7; 12:4; 13:1-9*). Then the angel starts to tell him what the images represent. He starts with the beast.

He firstly mentions four periods of the beast in the history, which is the Roman empire. These periods are described in this verse as follows: "was", and then "is not" and then will "come up out of the abyss". The fourth and last period is "go to destruction".

1. The first period ("was") starts when Rome was established in 753 B.C. From that time it has seen a steady develop-

ment culminating in the obtaining of world dominion around the year 168 B.C. The Roman empire possessed world dominion indisputably for several ages until in the fourth and fifth age AD a decline starts which finally resulted in the fall of Rome in 476.

2. Then the second period begins, which is the period wherein the empire does not exist (“*is not*”). That is the time where we still find ourselves in since the fall of Rome. At this moment the Roman empire does not exist. Indeed many have tried in this period to establish this empire (amongst others: Carl the Great, Napoleon). This period has had its day.
3. The time is coming when the beast will “*come up out of the abyss*”. That will be the third period. Here the restoration is shown of the Roman empire that was considered to be lost and that this restoration has a particular source. Never before has an empire risen from the bottomless pit. It is not an empire given by God, but by satan and his demons. It is of demonic origin.

This source is new. Up until now there had been no government than that of God (*Rom 13:1-6; cf. Dan 2:37; 5:18*). The beast receives his authority not from God, but from the dragon. The bottomless pit is the territory of demons (*Rev 9:1-11*). The restoration of this empire will provoke admiration all over the world (*Rev 13:3*). You have already seen these aspects in *chapter 13*.

4. The fourth period of this empire is that of perdition (“*and go to destruction*”). That means that his government will come to an end and that happens through the judgment that will be executed by the Lord Jesus (*verse 14*). That is described in more detail in *chapter 19* and we will pay attention to it later.

V9. In order to understand these things you need “*the mind which has wisdom*”. The angel explains it further. The “*seven heads*” represent the “*seven mountains*” on which Rome lies. That makes

clear that Rome is the political center of the empire. Rome is also the center of the church, represented by “*the woman*” that sits on the seven mountains.

V10. But there is another meaning of the seven heads. The seven heads do not only represent seven mountains, but they also represent “*seven kings*”. How does that accord with the ten horns of which we know that they also represent kings (*verse 12; Dan 7:24*)? The explanation is that the seven heads are seven kings or governments that have exercised power *one after the other*. That appears from this verse. We read about “*five*” kings or forms of government that have taken place, “*the one*” that is now (the imperial form, from the time of John), and “*the other*” that is to come. Of the ten kings or rulers we however read in *verse 12* that they received authority for one hour as kings *together with* the beast, which means *at the same time*. What in *verse 12* is called a period of “*one hour*”, is here called “*a little while*”. From *chapter 13* you know that it is about the relatively short time of three and a half years.

That means that at the time of John there have already been five forms of government. It is not exactly to be determined anymore which forms are concerned here. To mention some possibilities we may for instance think of forms as kings and consuls. In any case, in the days of John the sixth form existed, which is the imperial form.

Now read Revelation 17:5-10 again.

Reflection: What is the explanation of the mystery?

The Kings and the Beast Hate the Harlot | verses 11-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*11 The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is [one] of the seven, and he goes to destruction. 12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. 14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him [are the] called and chosen and faithful." 15 And he *said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."*

V11. So in the days of John they had the sixth form of government, which is the imperial form. The seventh form is still to come, for today we still live in the period that is indicated as "and is not". There is a great chance that this seventh form is the form to which the ten kings will freely join and will all together give their power to the beast, the head of the empire. Here the empire is identified with his eighth and last form of government, which is the restored Roman empire with his demonic dictator. The beast represents both the empire and the head of it.

The seventh form is the covenant of the ten kings and the eighth is the dictator. Of this last form we read that it is "of the seven". That means that it is a form that was earlier known and it will therefore not be a new one. It is very likely that it is the imperial one. Here also it is not possible to definitely indicate the kind of

form. But when we review the data that we have, we find that the most probable form is still the imperial one. Anyway, it is a form of dictatorship.

V12. The “*ten horns*” are not on the head of the beast, but are to be distinguished from the beast. Those are the “*ten kings*” that receive power together with the beast that is seen as the last ruler over the empire. The fact that the beast comes into power at the expense of three of the kings, is mentioned in *Daniel 7:24-25*, but not here. When the beast rules the kings are also in power. That means that they rule together “*with the beast*”.

V13. But the real power lies in the hands of the beast, the dictator. The cause of it is that the ten kings join to become a state union or the united states of Western-Europe. They will freely – although probably due to their own incapability to face all problems – surrender “*their power and authority*” to the beast.

V14. The monstrous union of the united Europe leads to a peak in the rebellion of man against the Lamb. The Lamb is called “*Lord of lords and King of kings*”. These names reflect His majesty and superiority above every power and authority on earth. In a few words the outcome is mentioned of the war that the kings dared to make with the Lamb in their arrogance. The result is without any doubt. “*The Lamb*”, together with all who were already with Him in heaven and who have followed Him from heaven, “*will overcome them*”. That is described in *chapter 19:11-16*.

The Lord Jesus will not come alone, but together with those who are “*called and chosen and faithful*”. Nobody can be with the Lamb except he is ‘called’ (*1Cor 1:9; 2Tim 1:9*). And he who heeds the call of God has done that because he has been “*chosen*” (*Rom 8:29-30*) by God. Regarding their lives on earth, those who are called and chosen are to be recognized by their ‘faithfulness’, by the faith that they have had in Him and with which they have made their call and their election sure (*2Pet 1:10*).

V15. After the angel has shown John what the beast, the seven heads and the ten horns represent and what will happen to them,

he explains the end of the other person in the mystery (*verse 7*). He goes back for a moment to what John has seen of the harlot and what recalls the great influence of the woman, which is the influence that the roman-catholic church has worldwide.

V16. But her religious rule will at a certain moment no longer be tolerated by the dictator and the ten kings that reign with him. Every form of religion, even if it is in the corrupted form of the roman-catholicism, is a suppression for the dictator and his companions, which they will get rid of.

The kings and the beast will make an end to Babylon, to her fornication. She who wanted to exercise her manipulating power over the world, has been made "*desolate and naked*" by that same world. She will have no more followers and she will be robbed from her power and glory. The kings will "*eat*", which means, make their own what she has possessed of earthly luxury.

Finally they shall "*burn her up with fire*". Nothing at all will be left of her religious pretense. Her spiritually corrupted doctrines and her earthly possessions can in no way offer her protection. She is consumed by the fire of the judgment that God has executed over her by the means of those with whom she has had such intimate relationships and over whom she had exercised power in such an unjustified way. The burning with fire is the suited judgment. It is in accordance with the regulation of the law that if a daughter of a priest commits fornication, she had to be burnt with fire (*Lev 21:9*). Here we find the implementation of the seventh bowl by which an end is made to Babylon (*Rev 16:19; cf. Eze 23:25-29; 2Kgs 9:30-37*).

The world leaders "*will hate the harlot*" (the harlot, not the city that delivers so much profit). What happens here is always true. The political and economic powers despise a church that commits fornication and that seeks to have influence and favor, because they see through her hypocrisy. Besides, their hatred is only fed by purely selfish motives. With even more hatred they make war with the Lamb. They do not tolerate any power above themselves.

V17. God knows how to use everything for His purpose. He uses the hatred of the beast and the kings against every religiosity to judge the false church. He will give it to them in their heart to destroy her. In which the kings are of one mind, is given to them in their heart by God (*cf. Jdg. 9:23*), for His plan is executed by them. This will be the end of the religious power of Rome, but not yet the end of the political, economic and cultural power of Rome.

V18. Babylon is judged as harlot. But she still has another character which is that of the city. This is an indication of the political and economic interest of the roman church. Her role from a religious view is finished, but she still has to be judged as a political and economic stronghold. Papacy has come to its end. Vatican City is still to be judged. We find the description of it in the next chapter.

Now read Revelation 17:11-18 again.

Reflection: Why do the kings and the beast hate the harlot?

Revelation 18

Come Out Of Her, My People | verses 1-10

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed [acts of] immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality." 4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back [to her] double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I SIT [AS] A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, AND WILL NEVER SEE MOURNING.' 8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. 9 "And the kings of the earth, who committed [acts of] immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

V1. After the presentation of Babylon as a *woman* (harlot) and the judgment over her, Babylon is presented in this chapter as a *city*

and we also see the judgment over it. Babylon is presented as a religious system under the symbol of a woman. The aspect of 'harlot' connects her unfaithfulness and apostasy from God to that. Under the symbol of a city Babylon is presented as a political, cultural and economic power and that's what this chapter deals with.

With the words "*after these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven*" a new period starts ("*after these things*") with thereby the announcement of a new judgment by "*another angel*". The magnificence of his appearance is reinforced by the addition "*having great authority*". By the way, it seems that it is not just an angel. It is possible that this angel is a hidden form of appearance of the Lord Jesus, because of the phenomena that accompany this angel (cf. *Rev 8:3* – Priest; *Rev 10:1* – King; here – Judge). Of which other being could it be said that his glory illuminated the earth (cf. *Eze 43:2*)?

V2. This verse describes the condition of Babylon after the events of *chapter 17:16*, when Babylon as a false church is robbed from her religious power and both beasts are in charge of the 'Christian' western world. The angel speaks with a powerful voice about the fall of Babylon. Everyone should know. With a repeated "*fallen*" the angel tells to the world that the great, magnificent Babylon is no longer standing, but has fallen off her pedestal.

The word 'fallen' indicates a sudden and instant fall and that it is once and for all (cf. *Isa 21:9*). She will never rise again. How great and rich she may have been, she has fallen. Nothing could have prevented or stopped her from falling.

The perfect tense of the word 'fallen' shows the absolute assurance of the prophecy. The moment that John is watching this, there is nothing visible yet of a fall of Babylon. But to God the future is now, or like here, has even already happened, so past tense.

"*Bird*" here is called, like it happens more often, in an unfavorable sense (*Mat 13:32*; *Isa 34:11-15*; *Jer 5:27*; *Dan 4:12*). The word

for “dwelling place” that is used here, appears only in *Ephesians* 2:22 once more where it refers to the dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Here it concerns the dwelling place of the spirit of the enemy of God. Besides a dwelling place it is also “a prison”. If the demons and all kinds of uncleanness have a dwelling place there, this system must be thoroughly evil. How evil it is, is better shown in the next verse.

V3. There is, as you have seen before, not only mention of religious fornication, but there is also an economic connection with the world. Babylon is not only a false religious system, but it is also a great politic and economic power in the world. That’s what has tempted the nations to drink from the twinkling cup of wine that she offered. The wine is brought here in relation with “*passion*” and “*immorality*”. It is the cunning deception of the harlot who pretends that trading with her delivers benefit and joy, while in reality she has wicked intentions.

The nations have not seen through her treacherous purpose and have eagerly accepted the trade that she offered. In that way the leaders of the nations have related themselves with her in an unacceptable way. She did not disguise her nature of harlot, but the merchants have eagerly related themselves with her. A great power came out of her luxury. The merchants of the world have seen the big money in her and wanted to benefit from that as much as they possibly could.

Babylon (or Rome) has gained her luxury for a great part by offering for sale the redemption of the soul. Many billions have been paid to the roman-catholic church by people who believed that they could buy their beloved ones into heaven. Dave Hunt writes in his book ‘A woman Rides the Beast’ besides such shameful distortions of the gospel that has deceived many hundreds of millions of people, about a lot more of ignominies. He informs us about corrupt financial transactions, money laundering from drug trafficking, trafficking with counterfeit securities and cooperation with the mafia (documented in police reports) that for a long period of time have received their orders across the globe from the Vatican.

Also the value of the art treasures that are in the possession of Rome, are not to be estimated. The roman-catholic church is by far the richest institution of the world. And then to think that Christ and His disciples were living in poverty. Christ has told His disciples not to lay up for themselves treasures on earth (*Mat 6:19*). The roman-catholic church does not care about that, but it has laid up for itself a fullness of wealth which is unmatched and over which the pope has the highest management and the greatest access.

V4. This ungodly system which is corrupted to the very core can in no way be a dwelling place of God's people. How kindly the pope or his subordinates may speak, those are voices from the bottomless pit. To God's people there comes a voice from heaven that appeals to come out of this system. It is not possible to stay there without sharing her sins. Staying there also means sharing in the plagues that will strike her. It is the last appeal in the Scripture to come out of that what will soon be judged, because the people have not given the Christ of the Scriptures His true place. The reason for coming out of her is to be a pure bride for the Lord.

Here every believer is reminded of the necessity to separate himself from every religious system that maintains an impure relationship with the ungodly world. Literally the order to come out had come in the past to Judah, that was in exile in Babel (*Isa 48:20; 52:11; Jer 50:8; 51:6,9*). Separation from the evil has been necessary for the believers at all times and that will remain so, also after the rapture of the church, like here. For us it is about separation in a spiritual sense and specifically in three relations. We are called to separate ourselves from the world (*2Cor 6:17*), from Judaism that rejects Christ (*Heb 13:13*) and from the false Christians (*2Tim 2:19-22*).

In the time wherein the fall of Babylon will take place, the church will have already be taken up to heaven. That does not mean that there will be no believers of the false church that will still exist. God's people who are called here to come out of her, are believers whom have converted after the rapture of the church by the absolute power of God's Spirit. But staying there is absolutely

not possible. God cannot be there and He will surely judge the system. Even though a person may possibly have no part in the prevailing evil in that system, he still defiles himself by staying there. That happens by staying in such a system, because it means contributing to maintaining and in that way promoting the evil (see 2Jn :11).

V5. The plagues that will strike the Vatican are so rightly deserved that it may be considered a miracle that God has tolerated it that long. But God judges only when the measure of unrighteousness has been completed (cf. Gen 15:16). In the case of the Vatican, with all her treasures obtained by shady practices, the judgment will come when her sins “*have piled up as high as heaven*”. ‘Have piled up’ literally means ‘glued together or cemented together like bricks in a building’. God remembers her iniquities when her sins have reached that height and that gravity. That does not mean that God has forgotten them for a while, but it means that He will take action.

V6. The double measure of avenge is in accordance with her own double practice. Her works were characterized by a horrible wickedness. Her double practice includes that she pretended to be righteous and faithful, but she was unrighteous and unfaithful. She dissembled in all areas. Her cup which she offered was therefore a “*cup which she has mixed*”. She mixed the truth with lies, benefit with greed. She presented heaven but she made it to be a financial source of profit. It is exactly this mixture that makes her to be hated by God. God hates every sin, but He mostly hates the sins that were committed under the appearance of Godliness.

V7. With all her charms and appeals to the world to treat one another peacefully, she has only been seeking to glorify herself. Whatever she has preached of the truth, its purpose was not the glorification of God but the glorification of herself. When the pope writes a book about Jesus, a book that is praised by theologians, even by orthodox theologians, it is a trick of satan. It strengthens the position of the pope even more.

He may theologially write many right things about Jesus, but if he does not condemn his position and the system that he represents, he has absolutely not written the whole truth of God about Jesus. He remains to go on with his luxurious life. If he stays there, he will receive the plagues and will share in the torment and mourning that will strike the Vatican. At the moment every thought of mourning is strange to him. After all he expects to possess the world domination. In his heart he holds on to his position of government. He also holds on to his claim that the roman-catholic church is the bride of Christ. And what to say about the arrogance that he is called 'substitute of Christ and shepherd over the whole church'.

V8. *"In one day her plagues will come"*, fast and inevitable. The ten kings will deliver her a devastating blow in full force, for they are used by God for this judgment, as you have seen at the end of the previous chapter. Nothing could soften the judgment that strikes her. It will be merciless, without compassion. She has to do with the Ruler of the universe, with the almighty God under Whose avenging hand all her appearances of glory will turn into *"pestilence and mourning and famine"*. She gave the impression that she could give life, happiness and saturation in exchange for money and goods. Now she receives what she has done to numerous defenseless victims. She has fallen through the mighty Lord and God against Whom every thought of resistance is plainly ridiculous.

In His glory and excellence He throws this widow down, whereby He uses the means which He in His sovereignty chooses for that purpose as the most suitable. Through the use of this means, namely the ten kings, the plagues come over her in the most horrible way. She had never expected that the beast on which she was riding, would turn itself against her. But the political, economic and cultural power of Babylon will be judged in a way according to God's will. Therefore it is a definite judgment. She will *"be burned up with fire"*. There will be nothing left of her on earth than her ashes. It will be impossible for her to rise up again from the ashes, for her eternal fate is the eternal fire in which she will end up and which will rule over her forever.

V9. The ten kings that were ruled by Rome, but which turned against her and through whom God judged her, are not the only kings. There are also "*kings of the earth*" who have particularly profited from her. They have had intimate relationships with her and swam in the luxury that it delivered them. Due to the judgment over Babylon this disappears completely. That's what makes them very mournful. It is not a mourning because of what happened to her, but because of what they have lost by it. The kings see the judgment, but they have no compassion with her. Their selfishness is the cause of the tears over their cheeks and of their lamentation. When they "*see the smoke of her burning*", they realize that it is definitely the end.

V10. The kings do not try to help her, but they remain at a distance. Besides the selfish sorrow there is also fear, for they notice that the city is being tormented. They stay away from her. They rather stand "*at a distance*" and see what is left of Babylon. In that way they see that nothing is left of that great, mighty, economic stronghold. The fierceness, the speed and the suddenness of the judgment that has struck her, makes clear to them that a greater power is at work.

Now read Revelation 18:1-10 again.

Revelation: Why is it necessary to separate from evil?

The Wealth of Babylon Destroyed | verses 11-24

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more — **12** cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every [kind of] citron wood and every article of ivory and every article [made] from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, **13** and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and [cargoes] of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. **14** The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and [men] will no longer find them. **15** The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, **16** saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; **17** for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, **18** and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What [city] is like the great city?’ **19** And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’ **20** Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.” **21** Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. **22** And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; **23** and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride

will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."

V11. The economic world has become dependent on her in such a way that all prosperity disappears together with her. From all over the earth merchants have traded with her. "*Merchants of the earth*" may include top executives of international companies. They owe their riches also to their merchandize with the Vatican.

V12-13. The fabulous riches of the Vatican have been gained through a fabulous extent of merchandize. A summary of twenty eight kinds of merchandize follows that are roughly to be divided in seven market areas:

1. mineral resources as a basis of all securities = the market for investments;
2. fine clothing materials = the textile market;
3. precious objects of wood, metal and stone = the (luxurious) housing market;
4. spices and incenses = the market of luxurious goods;
5. drinks and food = the food market;
6. means of transport = the transport market
7. bodies and souls of men = the labor market.

In the summary "*slaves and human lives*" are mentioned the last. That is typical for the value that men had in the eyes of Rome. They were considered to be less than all previous merchandize. With the merchandize in "*human lives*" we may think of the selling of indulgences.

V14. Of Rome itself there is nothing left, but also of any other thing of hers nothing is left. Everything the soul was seeking (*“the fruit you long for”*) has departed from her. She has lost control over it, she cannot grasp it anymore, it has gone from her. She has also lost everything in which her eyes found pleasure (*“all things that were luxurious and splendid”*), she does not see it anymore. Every try, if there possibly was one actually, to bring it back, will be in vain (*“[men] will no longer find them”*). It has all been evaporated, vanished, not to be gathered anymore.

Everything she had longed for and what she has enjoyed has been taken away from her. She definitely has lost everything. This is what happens with all riches of a person who uses these riches for his own pleasure and honor. We may think of private aircrafts, luxurious yachts, large villas, expensive cars.

V15. With *“the merchants”* we may think of the directors and supervisory boards of the multinationals that had the monopoly *“of these things”*. The reaction of these people is just like that of the kings (*verse 9*). Even their sorrow (*“weeping and mourning”*) is purely selfish (*verse 10*). The judgment over Babylon causes fear. They do not dare to approach her anymore, because they realize that it is not about just a natural disaster, but about an intervention from above.

V16. The merchants cry out a double *“woe”*, because they absolutely have not expected it. It was after all *“the great city”*. They thought that nothing could go wrong with it. She survived every economic recession. Her supplies seemed inexhaustible. The city was not only great and mighty, she was also attractive. Her total appearance was glamorous. Now everything has turned into ashes. All of a sudden everything has disappeared, the riches have made themselves wings (*Pro 23:5*) and those who have profited from it are the losers.

They are amazed that everything happened that fast. There had been no time to make a plan for help first. Unlike the judgment over the harlot, which happens in stages (*Rev 17:16*), the judgment over the city happens at once. The merchants are very sorry

that the great city has been destroyed, but only because of the downfall of “*such great wealth*”.

V17. There are still other categories that were struck by the downfall of the city. Not only the merchants, but also all transportation companies of the materials of the city are watching their profit to be disappearing. The consequences of God’s judgment over the city will be noticed to the ends of the earth.

V18. Despite the fact that these merchants see the result of the judgment, they cry out their uncovered admiration for the city (cf. *Eze 27:32*). The profits that this city has brought them are not to be compared with any other city. Harbors like Rotterdam and New York are in the shadow of the Vatican as an economic power center.

V19. Out of an old habit they express their desperation by throwing dust on their heads (*Job 2:12; Lam 2:10; Eze 27:30*). The symbolic meaning of dust is death. And that is indeed the only thing that has left for them. The cause of their mourning does not go further than mourning about the missing of profit and riches. They speak about “*her wealth*”, which means that this city had the most precious things that the world may harbor. They are also amazed about the rapid and radical judgment that has struck the city.

From the mourning the great power becomes apparent of this degenerated Christian system in the present world. Kings (*verse 9*), merchants (*verse 11*) and sailors (*verse 17*) from all over the world have had relations with her.

V20. It is not said who is talking in *verse 20*. It is likely that Christ Himself is making this appeal to burst out into joy. In contrast to the mourning about the destruction of the city by those who have profited from it, is the joy of those who have suffered because of it. They see that God has done justice. The exercise of justice is God’s business and not ours (*Rom 12:19*). God’s right will appear to all of those saints who have suffered injustice on earth (*Rev 17:6*). That is what happens here.

The “*prophets*” are the New Testament prophets. Apostles and prophets are the founders of the church (*Eph 2:20*). In that way all who have been built up together as the church by their teachings in the Scripture and have behaved themselves as strangers on earth, have drawn the wrath of Rome over themselves. They have kept distance from her pursuit of riches and therefore did not contribute to it. Therefore Rome raged against them.

V21. For the third time you read about “*a strong angel*”. The first time it is in relation to the book with the seven seals (*Rev 5:2*). There it is about the judgment over the Roman empire. The second time is in relation to the little book (*Rev 10:1*). There it is about the judgment over Israel. This time it is about the definite judgment over the great Babylon (*Jer 51:58,61-64*).

Babylon is compared to “*a great millstone*”. That reminds us of a warning of the Lord addressed to someone who causes a little child to stumble in his faith. He says that it would be better for such a person if a millstone was hung around his neck, and he was drowned in the depth of the sea (*Mat 18:6*). Babylon has caused a lot of people to stumble in their faith by threatening and murdering those who tried to escape her control by faith in the Lord Jesus. Her deceiving practices are definitely over by this judgment that is being executed with violence.

V22. With the downfall of the city all elements of culture and merchandize, which have made the residence in the city that pleasant, have definitely disappeared. In that place of entertainment and noise a deathly silence has risen that will never be broken. There will never ever be a sign of life to be observed anymore, such a system of wickedness will never arise again ever. The music has been brought to silence. Once a descendant of Cain introduced music into the world, in order to make the world a pleasant place without God (*Gen 4:21*). It has become an industry, the entertainment industry, with which people have made a lot of money.

The artists or craftsmen have decorated Rome and have made it a magnificent and attractive system. The sound of a mill is that of a hand mill with which grain is ground for baking bread. But that

sound will not be and never be heard ever. Therefore there will in no way be any household activity anymore.

These consequences of the judgment over Babylon are also the consequences of the judgment that will strike the unfaithful Jerusalem (*Jer 25:10-11*).

V23. Beside the deathly silence there is also pitch black darkness. The light will never shine there anymore, for Babylon has been clothed in darkness forever. Neither will there be any mention of marriage ceremonies she held nor the joy that went together with it. She has always falsely represented marriage as the relation that she herself had with Christ. But an end is made to this appearance with the false joy that was included.

The merchants are here called "*your merchants*". She has been involved with the bank directors, with those who ruled over the financial markets and in that way guided the economy and she has exercised her deceiving influence on it. In that way she has ruled in and over the world that has the character of rejecting Christ and of living in rebellion against Him. In order to exercise her influence she even made use of occultism by consulting demons.

V24. *Verse 24* gives once again the clear ground of her judgment. In her judgment her history will be visible forever. All the crimes that she has committed will then be found in her, will be brought to the surface and be exposed. Up to that moment she has exercised through the ages her murderous practices under a Christian mask. Then the blood will be revealed that she has shed of those who have been killed by her.

Now read Revelation 18:11-24 again.

Reflection: Which lessons can you draw from the destruction of the riches of the city of Babylon?

Revelation 19

The Marriage of the Lamb | verses 1-8

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER." 3 And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER." 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" 5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." 6 Then I heard [something] like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride [lit wife] has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright [and] clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

V1. The first words, "after these things", introduce a new part, which at the same time directly connects to what is previously said. When the judgment over Babylon has been fully taken place, an enormous response comes from heaven. All who are in heaven form an awesome choir and express as out of one mouth their great joy about God and His judgment over Babylon. The first word that John hears is "hallelujah!" For the first time in the book and in the whole New Testament you hear this word sounding. So it is sparingly used.

The word means 'praise Jahweh' and is therefore an appeal to worship God. Worship always has a cause. If you learn something of Whom God is, concerning His works and His ways and you are impressed by it, when it moves your heart, it causes you to worship Him. This is what happened, for example to Abraham when God told him about His plans with him and Sarah (*Gen 17:17*). Worship is not the experience of having lofty feelings through music with ecstatic expressions.

The word appears four times in *verses 1-6* and not anywhere else. In the Old Testament the word appears more often and especially in the Bible book of *Psalms*. There it is always spoken out on the earth, while here it is said in heaven. The first time you find it in *Psalms 104:35*. *Psalms 104* speaks prophetically about the millennial kingdom. Here in *Revelation 19* the time has come that the millennial kingdom is established and a visible content is given to 'hallelujah'.

God is being honored and praised as the One to Whom "salvation" belongs. The point here is the coming of the ultimate and full salvation of everything that He Himself had planned to save (*1Pet 1:5*). In that salvation His "glory" and His "power" become visible. This is the salvation that He has worked with the power which is His own.

V2. There is absolutely no doubt that His judgments are "true" and "righteous". This goes for all judgments, but these characteristics are specifically praised with a view to the judgment over "the great harlot". The word 'harlot' stresses again her unfaithfulness which was great and deep. His truthfulness and righteousness become very clear in the judgment over her who has sinned in such a general and specifically horrible way.

She "was corrupting the earth" as a whole, all men on it, "with her immorality" and she has made especially God's "bond-servants" to be a target of her wickedness. She deserves the judgment in all areas. With the judgment because of her abuse of God's servants, God answers the supplication of the martyrs in *chapter 6:10*, who

asked Him to avenge on her their blood. The day of vengeance has come (*Isa 61:2*).

V3. For the second time God is being worshiped; this time because the judgment remains “*forever and ever*” and there will never be a repeat of the performance of the great harlot ever more. “*Her smoke*” is the smoke of the great harlot. The rising up of the smoke indicates that this judgment is a permanent remembrance (*cf. Isa 34:8-10*). A smoke that rises up to God speaks of the satisfaction that God’s love and holiness find in the judgment. You see that in the sacrifices that speak of Christ. With relation to the judgment over the ungodly, only an eternal punishment fulfills God’s holiness.

V4. The elders and the living creatures are mentioned here for the last time (the first time was in *chapter 4:4*). They fall down before God to worship Him as Judge. They have also fallen down to Him as Creator (*Rev 4:4*) and as Savior (*Rev 5:14*). The judgment over Babylon is the cause to express themselves in an “*amen, hallelujah*” (*Psa 106:48*). The ‘amen’ is a confirmation of the judgments, which is to underline them. The ‘hallelujah’ draws the attention again to God as the One Who is worthy of being worshiped.

V5. Now “*a voice came from the throne*”. All judgments have always come out from the throne. With the judgment over the great harlot a point has been reached that the throne can make an appeal to praise God. Everything that God does will be for the glory and praise of His Name. Everything that He says and does reflects His glorious features. And everything that is visible of God causes all who hear Him to praise Him. That also goes for His judgments. His judgments prove His righteousness, one of His many impressive characteristics.

The throne, the symbol of God’s government, appeals to “*all ... His bond-servants*” to praise Him. It is an appeal to all who have served Him faithfully on earth, whether they have been ‘small or great’ therein. They have served Him with the fear of God. This fear is not scare, but respect.

V6. For the third time John hears a voice. It is the voice that reminds him of three things: *“a great multitude ... many waters and ... mighty peals of thunder”*. It is not an unordered mixture of sounds, like a busy market place with screaming people and honking cars. There is harmony in the ‘great multitude’. The ‘many waters’ indicate an impressive and irresistible power. The ‘mighty peals of thunder’ are the all dominating messengers that accompany the acceptance by God of His kingship.

The great multitude here includes all heavenly citizens, apart from the church that will be mentioned in the next verse. For the last time the *“hallelujah”* sounds and this time in relation to the acceptance by God of His kingship. He has started to reign, a government which He exercises by His Son.

V7. The mighty choir of voices with a multiple sound cries out to itself to be happy and to rejoice and to give God glory. The reason is that *“the marriage of the Lamb has come”*. This happy event is on God’s schedule. Now the false bride, the great harlot, has been judged, the time has come for the wedding of His Son.

Prior to the coming of the millennial kingdom of peace, the wedding has to take place first. Then the bride can on the side of the Bridegroom follow Him publicly in order to reign with Him. That is actually God’s intention. Though it is remarkable that it is *His* wedding, for with every wedding on earth the attention is drawn to the bride. Here it is different. All attention is paid to *Him*.

The bride is here called *“His wife”*. Yet she remains to be the *bride* (Rev 21:2) forever. She is wife and bride (Rev 21:9). That she is forever bride means that she will keep the glory as bride for the heart of the Lord Jesus forever. Therefore she will never put off her wedding robe. She is arrayed in it and *“has made herself ready”* to be His wife. The next verse describes what her robe consists of.

V8. The robe consists of *“the righteous acts of the saints”*. There is nothing unrighteous on that robe. Though, you may say: the saints have also committed unrighteous deeds, not only righteous ones, haven’t they? Exactly because of that the judgment

seat of Christ is that important (*Rom 14:10; 2Cor 5:10*). As soon as the church has been caught up, your life, and the life of every believer, will be judged in all its particularities in God's light. You will appear there in a glorified body and therefore it cannot possibly have anything to do with eternal judgment. The Judge is no one else than your Savior, Who gave His life for you. How could you possibly still perish?

The appearance before the judgment seat is intended for you to be brought into agreement with God's judgment about your life. You will then be able to know as you have been known (*1Cor 13:12*). You first need to know how you have been judged by the Lord, in order to be able to judge or reign over other people. Everything you have done in the body, will be revealed, even all the motives of your heart (*1Cor 4:5*). You only will love Him even more by that (*cf. Lk 7:47*).

Maybe you will see righteous acts in the robe of which you did not think that they were righteous acts. Conversely, things may be absent of which you thought them to be an important contribution to the robe. The question for you and me is now: To what extent do I contribute to the beauty of that robe? Will there probably be acts that will be consumed by the fire (*1Cor 3:15*), which will cause that there will be nothing left for the robe?

When we speak about our righteous acts, then we speak about the side of our responsibility. Through our deeds we do or do not contribute to the robe. But there is also the other side, which is the side of God's grace that has worked in us, so that we may do good deeds. In a song it is written: 'Whatever good that we have done, it was all achieved through Your grace.' That reflects well what is written here, that the robe has been "given" to her. That proves to you that everything you have contributed to that robe is ultimately the work of God's grace.

When the bride appears on the scene, her brilliance will be great. What she wears has been given by God. What she shows are the purity and cleanness of God Himself (*cf. Eze 16:14*). "Fine linen" is a precious textile, more precious than the linen with which the

angels are clothed (*Rev 15:6*). Mind the contrast with the robe of the great harlot (*Rev 17:4; 18:16*).

Now read Revelation 19:1-8 again.

Reflection: In which way do you contribute to the wedding robe?

Heaven Opened | verses 9-15

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

9 Then he **said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he *said to me, "These are true words of God."* **10** Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he **said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* **11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it [is] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. **12** His eyes [are] a flame of fire, and on His head [are] many diadems; and He has a name written [on Him] which no one knows except Himself. **13** [He is] clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white [and] clean, were following Him on white horses. **15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

V9. For the fourth time (out of seven times) John is ordered to write down "blessed" (*Rev 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6; 22:7,14*). This 'blessed' is related to those who are invited to take part in "the marriage of the Lamb". The only element of the wedding that is mentioned here is the marriage supper.

The invitees cannot possibly be unbelievers. Neither are they the believers from after the rapture of the church, for those haven't got their resurrected bodies yet. Their resurrection will only take place after the appearance of the Lord (*Rev 20:4*). Nor can they be the bride, for a bride is not supposed to be invited.

The invitees are no one else than the Old Testament believers, the friends of the Bridegroom (*Jn 3:29; Mat 9:15*). Among the invitees are people like John the baptist, Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Deborah, Elijah, Daniel, all together men and women of God for

whom we have deep respect. Isn't it an unimaginable and inconceivable grace of God that you and I are allowed to be a part of the bride when you compare yourself to such people?!

Then John receives a confirmation that everything is true. It looks like too good to be true. He can hardly believe his eyes. It looks as if that's the reason why it is told to him once more as an explicit emphasis that it is no more than the "*true sayings of God*". There is no need for him to doubt whether he sees or hears it right.

V10. John is impressed by the scene in such a way that he falls down to worship the heavenly messenger. The angel corrects John directly and says that he must not worship him, but God. God alone is worthy of worship. That is what the Lord Jesus also said to the devil during the temptations in the wilderness (*Mat 4:10*).

John forgets for a moment that the angel also is a creature. But the angel does not forget it. Good angels do not want honor for themselves, nor do devoted disciples (*Acts 10:25-26*). Only evil angels, and also evil people, want people to honor them (*Col 2:18*). The angel puts himself on the level of John, not as an apostle, but as "*fellow servant*". And he is not only a fellow servant of John, but also of all the "*brethren*" of John. These brethren have "*the testimony of Jesus*", just like him. Therefore the brethren of John are believers from both the Old and the New Testament. The testimony of Jesus binds them together.

'The testimony of Jesus' may imply the testimony 'regarding' Jesus, which is a testimony that is all about Jesus, the testimony of which He is the contents. It may also imply the testimony 'that comes from' or 'that goes out of' Jesus, the testimony that He gave when He was on earth and which He continues to give, however, through His servants. Whether it is about Him personally or about what He has said, everyone who has this testimony, meaning has accepted it, has life from God.

In the phrase "*for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*" a significant characteristic of prophecy is given. Prophecy is not

just a foretelling of the future. To know all kinds of things about the future may be considered food for your intellect, but it really is not food for your heart. Real benefit from a study of the future which the Bible tells us, is only the case when you see that in the prophecy it is about the Lord Jesus. The prophecy bears witness of Jesus. In the prophecy it is all about Him. The name 'Jesus' indicates that He is the humiliated One. The prophecy shows that He Who was once on earth in humiliation and was rejected, will reign in glory. But it is the same Person. In the prophecy it is all about Him and Him alone and not about knowledge of events.

V11. After a long parenthesis, running from *chapter 17:1-19:10*, we go back to the historical facts here. In the parenthesis you have seen together with John the judgment over the great harlot and the great Babylon, in connection with a description of the true bride and the marriage of the Lamb. The portion that now follows connects to *chapter 16:13-16*, where the nations are gathered at Armageddon for the battle. These nations return later in *verse 19*. The battle itself is described in *verses 19-20* (see also *Rev 17:14*), while in *verses 17-18* the result of the battle is already given in advance. The rest of the verses (*verses 11-16*) are focused on Him Who as the only One fights, although there are armies that follow Him in His going to the gathered enemies.

In order to show John this interesting scene, heaven is opened. The opening of heaven mocks all materialistic and rationalistic dogmas that assume that there is nothing outside the visible. When heaven is opened and Christ appears, clothed in battle outfit, there is no more denial of a super-terrestrial reality. God enters out of His world into the world of man (*Mic 1:3*). The Lord Jesus comes in majesty to earth where He was once rejected, in order to take the place that is ascribed to Him.

In the New Testament there is mention of an opened heaven five times (*Mat 3:16; Lk 3:21; Jn 1:51; Acts 7:56; Rev 19:11*), each time in connection with Christ. When heaven is opened before the face of John, he sees "a white horse" (*cf. Rev 6:2*), the sign of victory. On the horse he sees Someone Who is characterized by the names that

He wears. Those names indicate how He will operate. The work that He does is judging and making war in righteousness.

He is called "*Faithful and True*". These names characterize Him in the execution of God's plan with the world (cf. *Rev 3:14*, where Christ is called by these names, in contrast to the unfaithful Christianity). Judgment and war are the first acts with which He will execute God's plan, but He will do that in a totally different way than man acts. He is the righteous Judge and "*in righteousness He judges and wages war*".

V12. The description makes you think of a description which you have come across at the beginning of this book (*Rev 1:14*). The Lord Jesus is described there in His judgment of the church because of her unfaithfulness. He is described here as the One Who judges the unbelievers, namely the beast and the false prophet. The "*many diadems*" that He wears on His head, go far beyond the *ten crowns* of the beast (*Rev 13:1*) and the *seven* of the dragon (*Rev 12:3*). His royal dignity is not to be compared with any other dignity. These crowns show a dignity and glory that will be visible for everyone and which will constrain admiration.

In addition He has "*a name written*" which will be readable by everyone, but of which He alone knows the profound meaning. Whatever will be seen and admired of Him, there will nevertheless be aspects of His Person that remain hidden for us, creatures. It regards to aspects that He Himself alone and the Father know (*Mat 11:27*).

V13. His robe being "*dipped in blood*", means that He will come to exercise revenge (*Rev 14:20; Isa 63:1-4*). The blood is that of His enemies, not of the martyrs and less of His own. Then you hear His name. That name is "*the Word of God*". This name you also find in another writing of John (*Jn 1:1,14*). It means that He is the full revelation of God, in both His life on earth and in His eternal existence. He alone reveals God's love as well as God's holiness and righteousness. He also judges as the Word. He does everything in accordance with God's Word, because He Himself is the Word of God.

V14. The Lord Jesus will not appear alone. There will be armies that follow Him. These armies consists of all glorified saints (*Zec 14:5; Jude :14; Col 3:4; 1Thes 3:13*). You can derive that from the description of their clothes (*see verse 8*). Also angels will accompany Him (*2Thes 1:7; Mat 25:31*), but they will not ride on horses. The airspace will be filled with an enormously dazzling army. What to John is an impressive spectacle, will be terrifying to everyone on earth.

V15. He shall strike the nations with “*a sharp sword*” which comes “*from His mouth*”. He alone has a sword, the armies do not. With this sword He will execute the judgment and He, Who is the Lamb, will pour out His wrath over His enemies (*Rev 6:17*). There is no mention of a furious battle, there is nothing mentioned about any opposition. How could that be when the Lord of hosts appears in armor and acts in power and majesty? His arm grants Him power and He does not need anyone’s help (*Isa 59:16b-18; 63:3*).

Although the armies are with Him He personally executes the sentence. After the execution of the judgment He will reign and they will also reign with Him. He does that like a shepherd that herds his flock. The judgment is general and it spares nothing and nobody, which is indicated by the treading of the “*winepress*”.

Now read Revelation 19:9-15 again.

Reflection: Mention some differences between the bride and the invitees for the wedding.

The Beast and the Antichrist Are Judged | verses 16-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great." 19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

V16. Once more a reference is made to a written name of the Lord Jesus and also to the spot where that name is written. His name is written "on His robe", which refers to His outward appearance. Clothes are what people see of one another. Clothes represent the conduct that a person shows and which others observe. With Him His name shows His deeds.

His name is also written "on His thigh". The thigh is the place of power and strength. He who is struck on the thigh, is struck in his might and will become limp (*Gen 32:25,31*). His name is the title that God also has (*1Tim 6:15*), yet another proof that the Lord Jesus is God. He is the "King" par excellence, the absolutely highest Ruler. Therefore He is also the "Lord" par excellence, the absolutely highest Overlord.

V17. Even before the war has started (the war is described only in *verse 19*), the outcome is already been announced. This result is announced by an angel that is standing in the sun. The sun forms the decoration, the background of his words. This decoration gives his words the power of the glory of Christ Himself, who soon will shine like the Sun in the kingdom of peace.

All the birds of heaven are allowed to feast on the victims of the war. They are invited for this “*great supper*” which God has prepared for them. This supper is in huge contrast to the marriage supper of the Lamb (*verse 7*). In the one supper you see a delicious supper in heaven, in the other supper you see a horrible supper on earth.

V18. The flesh that the birds is given to eat is mainly human flesh. There is furthermore only mention of “*flesh of horses*”. The emphasis of the word ‘flesh’ (repeated five times) reminds us that any human and natural power whatsoever cannot do anything against God, for “*all flesh is like grass*” (1Pet 1:24-25). During their life these people were to be distinguished by all kinds of walks of life. That distinction is not to be found in death. The birds only see corpses which means food for them. By being given as food to the birds means that these humans will have no funeral. And having no funeral means that these enemies are being sacrificed to a permanent shame (*Rev 11:9; 1Sam 17:46*).

The angel mentions the different categories, in order to clarify that this supper has been effected by the judgment of God that He has executed without discrimination. His judgment has come over all these different ranks and classes and horses of which they made use, because they all together were in the service of sin. Besides, there will be one more judgment in which there will be a distinction and where every person will be judged according to his works. That is the judgment before the great white throne (*Rev 20:12*).

V19. John sees how the beast and his followers are preparing themselves with their armies for the war against Christ and His own. Christ is the Captain, He is at the front. Their battle is main-

ly focused on Him. But also those who are with Him are the target of their hatred. They think in their arrogance that they are ready for the war against the Lamb and His followers. In their audacity they fool themselves to be unconquerable and are blind for His almighty power.

V20. Without a single action of war, two hostile captains are caught and thrown in hell, without them having died the physical death. The beast, who is the political leader of the antichristian Western-Europe, and the false prophet, who is the religious leader of the apostate Israel, have no defense at all. In their lives they were closely related to one another and they are that also in the judgment that Christ executes over them. The false prophet was the dodgy henchman of the beast who deceived people to receive the mark of the beast and to worship his image.

It all looked very successful, but here all their bragging and every impression of invincibility (*Rev 13:4*) are totally destroyed in one action of awesome power. They form an exception among all other unbelievers. They are actually thrown into hell without any form of trial, while other unbelievers will first be sentenced before the great white throne. Contradictory exceptions, in the circle of the believers, are Enoch and Elijah who as the only ones were caught up to heaven without dying.

V21. The hostile armies suffer a different fate than their two captains. The Lord Jesus kills them *“with the sword”*, which is His Word, that goes out of His mouth. By His Word He creates (*Psa 33:6*) and by His Word He breaks in pieces (*Jer 23:29*). After this judgment the event happens for which the angel appeals in *verse 17*. There is so much to eat that all birds become saturated.

Now read Revelation 19:16-21 again.

Reflection: Which people are being judged in this portion and what is their judgment?

Revelation 20

Satan Thrown Into the Abyss | *verses 1-3*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut [it] and sealed [it] over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

V1. The great henchmen of satan – the beast and the false prophet – are caught and cast into hell. Their leader, who is satan, is still freely walking around but he also gets caught. That happens by an angel that comes down from heaven. Because satan has been cast to the earth since *chapter 12:9*, it is necessary that an angel “comes down from heaven” to bind him. This angel has “the key of the abyss” to lock up the bottomless pit. In *chapter 9:1* the key was used to open abyss or the bottomless pit in order to release the demons from there. Then the beast also rises up from the bottomless pit (*Rev 11:7; 17:8*). The angel has also “a great chain in his hand”. What he will do with that chain is told in the next verse.

V2. This is an historic moment. There have been several historic moments, but this one is indeed a specially memorable event. The angel catches him who is the cause of all misery of people because he has brought sin into the world. Then he binds him with the chain that he brought with him, so that satan will not be able to move for a thousand years. Every opportunity to deceive men with his craftiness and to drag them into destruction will be taken away from him. He will no longer be the prince of the world and

the god of this age (*Jh 12:31; 2Ko 4:4*). His control over man will be over.

That he as a person with his fourfold expression – “*the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan*” – will be bound and locked up, indicates that he in all his variations of wickedness will be locked up and in no way be able to manifest himself. With the judgment over satan the judgments that introduced the kingdom of peace of Christ will be finished. Now Christ can exercise His beneficial kingdom of peace and righteousness for man and creation. The number ‘thousand’ that appears six times in *verses 2-7* and which is nowhere else mentioned in the Scripture, indicates the duration of the Messianic empire of which we else would not have known the duration. That’s why the expression ‘millennial’ kingdom or ‘millennium’ (Latin) is used.

Here the four names for the great deceiver and enemy of God are used for the second time (*Rev 12:9*). He is called “*the dragon*” because of his horribly violent and relentless performance. He is also called “*the serpent of old*”. That indicates the deadly crafty nature of this monster that winds itself around its prey, in order to suffocate it and devour it. As the “*devil*” he is the tempter, the deceiver of men. As “*Satan*” he is the adversary of God. Both these characteristics – violence and lie – are the main characteristics of sin.

V3. Satan is mighty, but not almighty. Nor is he mightier than the angel that approaches him with the authority of God, seizes him and casts him into the bottomless pit. There is no mention of a fight, like it was the case when he was cast out of heaven (*Rev 12:7*).

The angel works in a thorough way. When he has thrown satan into the bottomless pit, he shuts him up. There is no connection for satan anymore with the world above him. As an extra security the angel puts a seal on the cover. Satan will in no way be able to exercise any destructive influence on people.

“The nations” here are the citizens, for the armies of these nations were killed in Armageddon. The sheep from these nations will enter into the millennial kingdom of peace (*Mat 25:32-34*).

It will be a time of unprecedented peace and safety, although the heart of man will not be changed, like it will become apparent when satan will be released for a little while. Righteousness will then *rule* on the earth, but not *be dwelling* there yet. That will only be in the everlasting condition (*2Pet 3:13*), when sin has been taken away (*Jn 1:29*). Men can and will still sin in the kingdom of peace, but at that time it will immediately be judged (*Psa 101:8; Isa 65:11,20; Zeph 3:5*).

Those who will be born in the kingdom of peace and will not have been born again at the end of it, will come into rebellion against God. The wickedness of their heart will be exposed at the release of satan. With a view to that this release “*must*” take place. This ‘*must*’ represent a Divine necessity. This happens “*after these things*”, which is after the thousand years have come to an end and not a single day earlier. It is also “*for a short time*”, which means that he is allowed to operate as long as God determines it.

It is incomprehensible that people can think that satan is now already bound and doesn’t deceive the nations anymore. There are indeed angels now already bound with chains (*2Pet 2:4; Jude :6*), but that is a totally different category.

Now read Revelation 20:1-3 again.

Reflection: Why will satan be bound for a thousand years?

Thousand Years Peace and the Last Rebellion | *verses 4-9*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I [saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. 7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

V4. In *verses 4-6* the actual kingdom of peace is described, and reigning with the Lord is mentioned twice. That implies that Christ Himself is reigning. This is described here very briefly. From *chapter 21:9* it is described more extensively. The Old Testament is full of characteristics about this kingdom. That it is about ruling, is to be derived from the end of the verse, but also from the thrones that John sees. He also sees that “*they*”, which are the twenty-four elders, are taking their seats on those thrones. Daniel has also seen thrones, but he saw no one sitting on them (*Dan 7:9*). John sees how judgment is given to those who sit on the throne, which means that authority is given to them to reign.

The thrones that John sees are on earth, for Christ reigns on earth, where His throne also is. Earlier you have already seen thrones on which twenty-four elders are seated, but then they are standing

in heaven (*Rev 4:4*). Here they stand on earth and are seated on their thrones in order to reign with Christ for a thousand years. He has promised that to His disciples in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel (*Mat 19:28; Lk 22:30*). And Paul says to the believers of the church that they will judge the world (*1Cor 6:2*). The twenty-four elders represent the believers of the Old Testament and of the New Testament.

Then John sees yet two other groups of believers. These second and third group are believers that came to faith after the rapture of the church and died the martyr's death for the sake of their faith. The second group consists of believers that were killed *before* the great tribulation, 'the souls under the altar' (*Rev 6:9*). They were beheaded because of the testimony that they bore of the Lord Jesus and their faithfulness to the Word of God.

When they cry for revenge, they hear that they must wait until the other group, which is mentioned here, will also be killed (*Rev 6:10-11*). This third group was killed *during* the great tribulation. This group had to suffer because of the beast, but they have not bowed to him or to his image. It cost them their lives, but now they get the reward.

Both groups have been killed by their enemies who thought that by killing these witnesses they got rid of the Jesus they hated. In the same way the enemies of the Lord Jesus thought to have got rid of Him themselves when He hung dead on the cross. But as the Lord Jesus became alive, these martyrs become alive. To become alive means to rise physically. It is becoming alive from the dead. Only after this becoming alive there is mention of a reigning with Christ. This is all the more a proof that now in our days, there cannot possibly be a mention of a millennial kingdom of peace wherein Christ reigns and wherein everyone takes part who are related with Him.

"They came to life and reigned." Man now finally gets his actual destination. In *Genesis 1:26* he was already called to reign over creation and in *Genesis 2:7* he received life from God. But man lost both because of his sin. Through Christ he gets back what he has

lost and that in an even more glorious way. He actually reigns with Christ and indeed as a resurrected saint and certainly not as a subordinate. Faithfulness to God will never cause loss of any blessing, but in fact only a richer enjoyment of it, richer than we have ever been able to enjoy (*Rom 8:18; 2Cor 4:17*).

Here everyone who has ever been humiliated will be exalted in His time (*1Pet 5:6*). They have all abstained themselves from their own throne and have bowed themselves before God and are now allowed to sit on their throne, a throne that has been given to them.

V5. “*The rest of the dead*” are the unbelievers, for all believing dead have been raised. They will not rise at the beginning of the millennial kingdom of peace, but they will remain in the grave, in hades, the place of torment (*Lk 16:23*). From the moment that the Lord Jesus reigns, no believer will ever die anymore (*cf. Isa 65:22*). With the becoming alive of the believers of the previous verse “*the first resurrection*” has been fulfilled.

The first resurrection will happen in phases.

1. Firstly, Christ rises (He has already risen);
2. then all who are of Christ will arise at His coming (*1Cor 15:23*).

Also the coming of Christ will happen in phases.

1. He will come first to take up the church and all Old Testament believers in the air to be with Him (*1Thes 4:15-18*). On this occasion the believers who are dead will be resurrected and the believers who are alive will be changed.
2. Then the wedding of the Lamb will take place, as you have seen in *chapter 19:7*.
3. Then the Lord Jesus will come from heaven for the second time, this time together with the church and the other

believers, in order to defeat His enemies and to establish His kingdom. That is the moment that the martyrs of the previous verse will rise in order to participate also in the government of Christ.

Then the first resurrection will be finished.

The unbelievers will become alive only after the kingdom of peace and will be judged before the great white throne where only unbelievers will stand. The body of the unbelievers will be made alive, but the spirit will remain spiritually dead. With this body they will be in hell forever and also be dead. They will stand as dead before the great white throne.

So there are two resurrections:

1. a resurrection of the righteous, or the first resurrection, and
2. a resurrection of the unrighteous (*Lk 14:14; Acts 24:15*).

Between both resurrections lies a period of a thousand years. The two resurrections are mentioned by John in his gospel (*Jn 5:29*):

1. the resurrection of life and
2. the resurrection of judgment.

V6. It is an extraordinary privilege to participate in the first resurrection. He who takes part of that is fully unreachable for the power of the second death, which is hell. The first death is physical and temporary; the second death is physical and eternal. Death and life are actually definitions that you should read in their context in order to understand their meaning. So you may find that it is said of the physically dead that they live (*Mat 22:32*) and of the physically living is said that they are dead (*Eph 2:1*).

Everyone who has part in the first resurrection, are priests “*of God and of Christ*” and not ‘for’ God and ‘for’ Christ. They in fact pour out the priestly blessing on behalf of God and on behalf of Christ

on to creation over which they will reign with Christ. 'Reigning' literally means 'ruling as kings'. They come from heaven to be priests on earth. They are not priests who represent people before God, but priests who represent God before men. In this view they also look like the Lord Jesus as the King-Priest (*Zec 6:13; Gen 14:18*).

V7. The word "completed" doesn't only mean that the thousand years have passed and are 'over', but it also implies that they have been 'fulfilled', in the sense that a pre-determined goal has been achieved. The earth has had its sabbath's rest.

Now before the peace of the kingdom of peace will lead into the peace of eternity, it is necessary for the human race to be subjected to a final test. For this purpose what was already announced at the end of *verse 3* will happen, namely that satan has to be "released" for a little while "from his prison".

V8. The nature of satan has not changed by his stay in the bottomless pit, nor has the nature of man. Satan is unchangeably wicked. When he is released he immediately acts just as he always did. He will go out over the whole earth, to all its corners (*cf. Isa 11:12; Eze 7:2*) with the purpose to deceive the nations. The corners of the earth literally means that these people find themselves far from the center of blessing, which is Jerusalem.

From the deception by satan it also appears that the sinful flesh of man has not changed under the greatest blessing. Many have pretended to be obedient to the Lord Jesus (*Psa 18:45; 66:3; Mic 7:17*). They simulated that they acknowledged Him as their Lord, but they only did that because they were (justly) afraid for the judgment. But the flesh always remains enmity against God (*Rom 8:7*), even though it simulates to be submissive. In this way man loses the argument of always blaming satan to justify themselves (*cf. Gen 3:13*). That is absolutely out of order here. Also without the devil the heart of man will not change for the better.

The Gog and Magog which John mentions, are not to be confused with Gog in the land of Magog which Ezekiel mentions (*Eze 38-*

39). The army that Ezekiel refers to comes from a certain area, the far north, and will wage war against Israel and be defeated when the Lord Jesus will already be ruling in Jerusalem. The Gog that John mentions comes from everywhere. John uses this name because of the great demonical similarities between both attacks.

Satan has great success in the recruitment of men for the sake of his army. An enormous, uncountable army rises up.

V9. Under the influence of satan this enormous army passes across the breadth of the earth. The goal is the camp of the saints and Jerusalem, which is here called "*the beloved city*" (*Psa 78:68; 87:2*), the center of the earth. The beloved city is also the place where the saints encamp, where they have rest. They are separated from the pagans that find themselves in the corners of the earth.

This enormous army is as blind for the power of the Lord Jesus as the armies were, that went to Jerusalem before the kingdom of peace (*Rev 19:19-20*). God sends His consuming fire from heaven and there are no more enemies left. The description of this war is even briefer than the one in the previous chapter.

Now read Revelation 20:4-9 again.

Reflection: Which groups of people are allowed to reign with the Lord Jesus?

The Great White Throne – the Lake of Fire | *verses 10-15*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

10 *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

11 *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. **12** And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one [of them] according to their deeds. **14** Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. **15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

V10. The devil gets a special treatment. He is the instigator of the mass rebellion, but this is the last time that he was allowed to do his diabolic work. His eternal destiny is “*the lake of fire and brimstone*” into which he is “*thrown*”. In that way he receives the absolute, unchangeable lowest point of his fall which has been executed in four phases.

1. First he has fallen into sin by his pride (1Tim 3:6). As the liar and the father of lies (Jn 8:44) he has spread deceptions and committed his murderer's work from the beginning of creation. This is how he has been occupied for thousands of years.
2. But you have noticed that at a certain moment he is cast to the earth (Rev 12:9), where he with the greatest wrath causes death and destruction because he knows that he has got only a little while.

3. After a course of three and a half years God makes an end to his rage and has him thrown into the bottomless pit in order to be locked up there for one thousand years (*Rev 20:1-3*). From there he will be released
4. in order to make his definite fall and make him end up in hell, that has been prepared for him and his angels (*Mat 25:41*).

There he meets two vassals who were thrown down there before him (*Rev 19:20*). They will not be able to help one another, for their own torments and tortures will be sufficient for themselves, which they will endlessly suffer.

V11. The defeated rebels will be spending their lives for only a little while in hades, because immediately after them being consumed by God's fire, the judgment follows before the "*great white throne*". That they have been consumed by God's fire therefore does not mean that they have stopped to exist.

John saw a great white throne. It is a 'great' throne, because He Who sits on it is great in majesty and great in authority. It is a 'white' throne, because He Who sits on it is perfect and pure. His throne as a symbol of His kingdom and His Person are perfectly in agreement with one another. The Judge is perfectly pure in His judgment. He judges perfectly righteous. In His judgment there is not a single impure element. He is incorruptible. Every examination in His faithfulness has ended up on earth in a testimony of His perfect honesty.

No one can oppose the judgment that He sentences and executes. He will convince everyone who appears before His throne of the righteousness of His sentence and everybody will agree to that. Every mouth that is still braggingly opened to heaven will then be stopped. The pure whiteness of the throne is the reflection of the glory of God Who is light and in Whom is no darkness at all (*1Jn 1:5*).

In the Scripture there is mention of three sittings of court held by the Lord Jesus.

1. The first one takes place in heaven, right after the rapture of the believers. When the believers are in heaven, they will first appear before "*the judgment seat of Christ*" or "*the judgment seat of God*" (2Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10). Every believer will get to see there what he has done in the body during his life on earth and see whether he has done that for the Lord's sake or for his own sake. He will be rewarded for the good.
2. The second sitting of court will take place when the Lord Jesus will return to earth with the believers, in order to judge the evil and establish the kingdom of peace on earth (Mat 25:31). Before that judgment seat, the "*throne of His glory*", the nations that will be living on earth will appear. They will be judged according to the attitude that they adopted towards the messengers of the Lord Jesus during the great tribulation.
3. The third sitting of court will take place at the border between time and eternity. Only unbelievers will appear before the "*great white throne*". They will be judged by what is written of them in the books.

When the moment of this third sitting of court has come, "*earth and heaven*" will flee away. That concerns the old earth and heaven. With the sitting of court and the judgment attached to it, the entire old state of affairs has come to an end. The old heaven and the old earth flee away, in order to make room for the new heaven and the new earth. They flee away, not so much for the throne, but for the face of Him Who sits on it. The Lord Jesus, Who as the Son of Man has received all the judgment from the Father, sits on the throne (Jn 5:22,27; see also 2Tim 4:1).

V12. John sees the dead. It is the 'the rest of the dead' from *verse* 5. They do not stand on the earth, for that has passed away. But even though the earth has passed away, man will remain to ac-

count himself towards God for all his rebellious deeds and to receive the deserved wages. Through the power of the Almighty they stand before the throne.

John sees great and small dead people. That is not so much about the size of the body, but more the extent of the crimes that they have committed. There are the mass murderers, but also the petty criminals. There are the bragging politicians that have spoken great words, but also the unremarkable housefather that has diligently taken care of his family. They have one thing in common: they have never condemned themselves as sinners in the light of God and have all died in their sins. To whatever extent they have been sinners, the judgment will be justified.

The proofs that form the ground for the judgment come from the books. All of their deeds are presented to them again. The gravity of their judgment is determined according to the severity of their crimes and the extent of their responsibility (*Lk 12:47*). Nobody will have a reply. Everybody will be convinced that God is righteous in His judgments. Another convincing evidence of their judgment is the missing of their names in the book of life. This means it is absolutely right that they will be cast into hell.

V13. The dead will be called to come out of the places where they have ended up after their death. In the first place the sea is mentioned. The sea will have to return all the dead that it has swallowed like a great monster. The sea is put in the same line like "*death and Hades*" of which is also said that they "*gave up the dead which were in them*".

A person who has died is physically dead. For that state of physical death it doesn't matter whether the dead body is on the earth or in the sea. That the sea is mentioned as a residence of dead, will have to do with the untraceable state of a body that has had a seaman's grave. It can also be said of people who have been torn to pieces by for example wild animals, that their bodies are untraceable. But the point is the general thought.

The dead come from the death and the hades. You may say that the death is the *condition* in which man finds himself and hades is the *place* where man finds himself. The body that has been in the death is united with the soul, that has found himself in hades (which is the realm of the dead) and the spirit. God is able to make each dead alive and to bring him to court. Each call to come out will be answered by His mighty arm.

Although it is said that they have been made alive (*Rev 20:5*), they are still called "*the dead*". They have no life from God; there is no connection at all with the living God. When they were born they received their lives from God. However, they chose to live their own lives, without considering God Who gave it to them. That caused them to be already dead when they were still living on earth, because they lived in trespasses and sins, without any connection with the living God (*Eph 2:1; Col 2:13; Jn 5:25*). Now they have been made alive again, nothing has changed in their spiritual condition. They stand as dead before the great white throne, in order for them to be judged, "*every one [of them] according to their deeds*".

That each dead is judged according to his deeds implies that babies that die and children that die in the womb or are murdered, will not appear before the great white throne as dead. They have after all, not been able to do deeds yet according to which they should be judged. All who die in the womb or as a baby will be forever with Him in heaven, on the basis of the work of the Lord Jesus.

V14. Then you see the final result of the work of Christ and His resurrection, through which He has conquered the death. Now the last enemy is destroyed (*1Cor 15:26; Rev 21:4*). Death finds its end here; this is the end of death, as it was foretold in the Old Testament (*Isa 25:8; Hos 13:14*). After this ultimate judgment there will be no more physical death and therefore the residence of souls of the dead will no longer exist.

Death and hades are presented here as persons that are cast into hell. All evil and all who have served evil will be locked up forev-

er in hell. This is “*the second death*”. The first death was the physical death and the residence in the realm of the dead. The second death is the physical existence of man without life from God in the place where the judgment of God prevails forever.

V15. Now it appears why in *verse 12* the book of life had to be opened. Their evil deeds have been written down in the other book (*verse 12b*). That’s according to which they have been judged. Those deeds have never been removed from it, because they have refused the sacrifice of Christ. This is why their names have never been added “*in the book of life*”. The convincing evidence has been delivered. The fate which is their part is terrible and horrifying. That should stimulate us, because we know the fear of the Lord, to persuade people to accept the gospel (2Cor 5:11)!

Now read Revelation 20:10-15 again.

Reflection: Where does the great white throne stand? Who sits on it as Judge? Who are standing before the throne? What is their judgment?

Revelation 21

A New Heaven and a New Earth | verses 1-4

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer [any] sea.
2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be [any] death; there will no longer be [any] mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

V1. When all evil and all evil doers have got their everlasting unchangeable, horrible destination, the attention of John is drawn to a completely new heaven and a completely new earth. "The first heaven and the first earth" have had their time, they have fled away (Rev 20:11) and have dissolved by fire (2Pet 3:7,12). In that way room has been made for "a new heaven and a new earth".

The great difference with the first earth is that the sea which is still in the millennial kingdom of peace (Eze 47:20; Zeph 2:6; Zec 9:10; 14:8) is in eternity no more there. Also the turbulent, rebellious nations which the sea represents and the ungodly that are like the sea (Isa 57:20) are no more there. There is an atmosphere of a constant, complete rest. The true theocracy has started. God reigns or better said: directs, for here it is more about God Who dwells in rest, while there is nothing more to be restrained, there is nothing more that may possibly become rebellious. Then righteousness will be *dwelling* on earth (2Pet 3:13) and will not only

be ruling like in the millennial kingdom of peace. Everything will inwardly and outwardly be in accordance with God's Being.

The old creation was perishable (*Psa 102:26; Mat 24:35; 1Cor 7:31; 1Jn 2:17*) and therefore temporary. The new creation is completely new and of permanent, everlasting nature. The new is not a replacement by the renewing and the improving of the old, but the new heaven and the new earth have never been there earlier. The second one is not only different than the first, it is also better than the first. Just as what God has worked in the redemption is different and better than what man has lost because of sin. God has not only solved the problem of sin, but given something far more wonderful instead.

With God the second always has preference over the first. You find often in the Scripture that the second or later born is given preference over the firstborn. Just look at for example to Abel whom is given preference over Cain, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Ephraim over Manasseh, David over his older brothers (*cf. also Job 42:12; 1Cor 15:47; Heb 8:6*).

V2. After the wonderful total picture of the new heaven and the new earth, John sees a city. This city is the center of the whole new scene. Also in the new order of matters where there is no sin anymore, there is room for holiness. The city is "*the holy city*". Holy has the meaning of being separated. Separation has not always to do with separation from evil. When God for example sanctifies the seventh day, it means that He has given this day a separate place compared to the other days (*Gen 2:3*). In that way this city takes a separate place in the whole new order.

This city is "*the new Jerusalem*" which indicates the contrast with the *old Jerusalem*. It is a movable city. It comes down "*out of heaven*", for heaven is the land where it belongs. It comes "*from God*", for the beginning of the city lies in God, in His counsel. The new Jerusalem comes down without coming on earth, in order to, as it were, make a connection between heaven and earth, to connect them together.

The city looks like “*a bride adorned for her husband*”. This description makes clear that this new Jerusalem is the church. After a thousand years she still has the same radiant beauty that she has had during her wedding (*Rev 19:7*). The test of time absolutely did not have any influence on her. To all eternity she will keep that beauty.

The city is ‘holy’ and is compared with ‘a bride’. That means that God, Who is light – holiness has to do with God as light – and love, is seen in that city. Here the church is perfectly suited to be related with Him, because she perfectly meets with His Being. Therefore she also fully satisfies His desires, she belongs to Him, she is like Him (*Eph 5:31-32; 1Jn 3:3*).

Actually, this *new* Jerusalem must be distinguished from the *heavenly* Jerusalem (*Heb 12:22*). With the *heavenly* Jerusalem is meant the dwelling place of *all* heavenly saints. The heavenly Jerusalem is the heavenly capital from where the kingdom of peace will be governed. It is the center of government in which believers from the Old Testament and from the New Testament have their place and task. The *new* Jerusalem consists of only those who are the church of the living God, the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Also when there is mention of ‘the Jerusalem above’ (*Gal 4:26*), it is something different than what is called here the ‘new Jerusalem’. The Jerusalem ‘above’ is not that much of a city with government characteristics, but it indicates more a sphere wherein the believers live. That sphere is a sphere of freedom that stands opposite to the law. Therefore the Jerusalem above is put in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem, which represents the sphere of the law.

V3. After John has seen these beautiful and substantial new things, he hears a loud voice. That voice comes with a declaration from the throne, the seat of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has reached its final destination; it has achieved its purpose. The explanation says that God dwells with men. He does that in “*the tabernacle*”, which refers to the church, for that is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit (*Eph 2:22*).

There are more names used for God's dwelling place, like a temple and a house. That particularly here it is spoken of "*the tabernacle*" as a dwelling place, refers to the mobility of the dwelling place, like the tabernacle during the journey in the wilderness of the people of Israel. It is also nice to consider that the word 'tabernacle' is also seen in what you read about the dwelling of the Lord Jesus among us. When you read "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (Jn 1:14), it literally says 'the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us', meaning 'dwelt in a tent'.

The tabernacle speaks about the way in which God dwells with His people. The tabernacle in the Old Testament is *an image* of God's dwelling place. The real dwelling place of God is to be seen in the Lord Jesus and in the church.

A remarkable thing is that it says that God will dwell "*among men*". That it is a special joy for God to dwell with men, is to be derived from the fact that it is mentioned three times in this very verse. All these people together are His people. There is no more mention of separate nations. Nations came into being because of sin, but all consequences of sin have been taken away. Therefore there is no more difference between Israel and the nations. Israel will not have a privileged place anymore.

Israel had to do with counsels *from* the foundation of the world (Mat 13:35; 25:34) and had an earthly and temporary existence. All earthly and temporary things will then be no more. There will only be people, believers from all ages, without exception. The only distinction that will remain concerns the new Jerusalem, the church. She has originated from *before* the foundation of the world.

The verse ends with an expression of special intimacy between God and His people. "*God Himself*", without any intermediary, like for example Moses or Elijah or a high priest, "*will be among them*". There will not be anyone anymore through whom God relate with His people. He is the God of that very great people. And that very great people has and knows no one else than Him alone as their God.

V4. When that wonderful situation has come, every memory of sorrow, which was inseparably related to the first things, will be taken away. The best description that we can make of the glory of eternity is by mentioning what we absolutely will not find there. We cannot yet grasp the glory of what surely will be there (*cf.* 2Cor 12:4). Nevertheless we can certainly understand that what often makes our life difficult and troublesome on earth today and what makes us eagerly long for heaven, will not be there anymore. Therefore this description is in itself a great encouragement already. The very five words that tell us what will not be there anymore, now define the whole world events and the whole world history since the fall of man.

In *chapter 7:17* it was already announced that God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, like a mother wipes away the tears from the face of her child. He wipes away “*every tear*”, where after never a tear will arise again ever. Everything that now still causes tears will then be disappeared. Then every man will live in perfect harmony with God, perfectly in agreement with God and perfectly unanimous with every other man. When there is no more sin there is no more death and therefore nothing that is related to death, like pain and sorrow, of which tears are the expression. It will never come back, for “*the first things*” definitely “*have passed away*”.

Now read Revelation 21:1-4 again.

Reflection: What causes you most to be longing for the new heaven and the new earth?

All Things New | verses 5-10

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He *said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part [will be] in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." 9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ...*

V5. Now speaks "*He who sat on the throne*". To sit on the throne means that He has all power and guides all things according to His will and in that way achieves His aim. We cannot imagine how what is new will look like. You can compare that with a grain of wheat. If you look at it you cannot imagine that an ear of wheat will grow out of it. Or when you look at a caterpillar, neither can you imagine that a butterfly will come out of it. Paul uses a number of images to clarify the difference between earthly and heavenly things (1Cor 15:35-49), but our comprehension is too small to imagine all of it. However, we do know that all sad things are gone and "*all things*" will be new.

It is not new in contrast to old, but new in the sense of something that has never existed, for nothing and nobody will ever grow old in the new creation. Everything for which man has ever made efforts will then be established by God. Man is not able to make an end to death and things that are related to it, because sin dwells

in him. To man that situation remains an idle dream, but for the faith it is the great reality.

After this wonderful promise that He will make all things new, John is ordered for the third time to write down (*Rev 14:13; 19:9*). By writing it down, it becomes fixed (*Isa 30:8*). When we sometimes forget these things, we can read it again. In order to avoid any insecurity, it is added as a confirmation that these words are "*faithful and true*".

V6. Then as a mighty closure the cry sounds: "*It is done!*" At that moment all things have become new. Then the full result is seen of the work of Him Who once cried: "*It is finished!*" (*Jn 19:30*). The rest, the peace and the harmony that are grounded in that work, will ceaselessly be enjoyed forever by God and the ones with whom He dwells.

He Who has said it, is the eternal God, "*the Alpha and the Omega*". He fulfills from A ("*Alpha*" is the first letter of the Greek alphabet) to Z ("*Omega*" is the last letter of the Greek alphabet) what He has said, which means that He will fulfill His Word to the jot. He is also "*the beginning and the end*", which means that He stands at the beginning of all things and at the end of all things He will be still standing. There is nothing before Him and nothing after Him. All things are kept in relation with Him from eternity to eternity. There is an eternity, because He is the eternal One.

At this breathtaking moment, where time and everything attached to it, has disappeared, actually an invitation spontaneously goes out to everyone who has no part in it yet. When there are readers who have not got a part in it yet, then it cannot be otherwise than that a desire arises to get a part in it. It is most assuredly possible! When there is a thirst for the living God (*Psa 42:2*), He will quench the thirst, just like the thirst of the Samaritan woman was quenched by the Lord Jesus (*Jn 4:14*).

V7. Besides thirst there is also a fight needed to gain part of that glory. There is actually resistance in the form of persons or doctrines that stand in the way and want to prevent a person to gain

part of that glory. But there are powerful weapons available that secure the victory. Therefore the inheritance of these things is given to those who have overcome the world through the faith (1Jn 5:4). They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11). They are more than conquerors through Him Who has loved them (Rom 8:37).

The conquerors will be faithful to the end, until the wonderful inheritance can be taken into possession. Then the new creation will be experienced in the closest relation with God and to the joy of God. This is the only place in the writings of John where there is mention of our position as sons. It is also a personal relation. Each person will have his own relation with God and God with him. He will not disappear in the crowd of people with whom God dwells (*verse 3*).

V8. After the extensive, but at the same time very limited description of the glory which is the part of the believers, the part of the unbelievers follows. The contrast is enormous and will never be negated. It will remain forever and ever. This is the part of those who are no conquerors and who haven't thirsted for God.

The first category of people of whom is said what their part is, are "*the cowardly*". The cowardly have never dared to confess the Lord Jesus. They stand on the side of the enemies and will perish with them. Also the other categories will not inherit God's kingdom (1Cor 6:10).

There is mention of "*their part*". That excludes the destruction of the soul. It also excludes the possibility for them to obtain the blessing after a course of time. The doctrine of the universal atonement is a serious attack on the authority of God's Word and damages the gravity and perfection of the work of Christ. The substitutional suffering of Christ would not be necessary if all people will ultimately receive part of the eternal glory. But all who have no part of the work of Christ because of their refusal, will come into the second death, with the result that they will be definitely cut off of all life, on which they will never have their share.

V9. With *verse 8* a chronological portion has been completed which has ended in eternity. What comes after that cannot possibly be a follow-up, for nothing else can follow after the eternal situation. Therefore from *verse 9* we are taken back to the time that directly precedes the eternal situation, namely the kingdom of peace. A description follows of the glory of the church as the heavenly city, which is the place where from Christ' government over the earth takes place.

Verse 9 starts with nearly the same words that you also have read in *chapter 17:1*. Here it also starts, as in *chapter 17:1*, with "one of the angels who had the seven bowls", though it is added here that they were "full of the seven last plagues". The full bowls are shown, in order to make clear that the city could only come after the judgments of God have been executed over the earth. Furthermore you see that in both portions the description follows of a woman and a city. If you compare both portions to one another, you see a relationship with both a great difference between what you now already have learnt about Babylon and what you will be seeing of the new Jerusalem.

The church is presented here as "bride" and as "wife". Probably 'bride' refers to her glory towards the world and 'wife' refers to the intimate relationship towards the Lamb, the Bridegroom. 'Bride' can also possibly refer to the first love for that one particular Man Whom she loves above all things and 'wife' may refer to the fulfilled desire of the love and its continuance. Both aspects remain applicable forever.

V10. In *chapter 17:3* John was led into the desert. Here he finds himself in an exalted position. He is allowed to see the bride, the wife of the Lamb from the mountain. Now what does he see? He actually sees a city. That means that the woman who is the church, also has the characteristic of a city. The city is shown to John just like God has always seen her from eternity. In that way Moses was also allowed to see the promised land from a mountain (*Deu 34:1*) and Ezekiel saw the future earthly Jerusalem and the new temple from a high mountain (*Eze 40:2*).

John's position is far higher than that of both of them, for he is allowed to see the new heavenly Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God. Just like the city in eternity comes down from God (*verse 2*), just like that it also comes down into the kingdom of peace.

The church is the dwelling place of God, where from blessing goes to the earth, in both the kingdom of peace and in eternity. Here it is also "*the holy city*", the city that God has set apart for Himself to be His city, His dwelling place. It is the city with the name "*Jerusalem*", which means 'foundation of peace'. In and through the church the name of the city will fulfill its meaning. The city is both the dwelling place of God and the place where His throne is. Therefore the city is also the center from where He reigns and directs for the benefit of people.

The last time that a city is mentioned in relation with the earth, is Babylon. The first city that was mentioned in relation with the earth, is the city that was built by Cain (*Gen 4:17*). Cities on earth are not built to the honor of God. The city that is built by God is originally heavenly and spreads the honor of God and Christ.

Now read Revelation 21:5-10 again.

Reflection: What does it do to you when you think of the future of the unbelievers?

The Holy City, the New Jerusalem | verses 11-18

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

..., **11** having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. **12** It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names [were] written on them, which are [the names] of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. **13** [There were] three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. **14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them [were] the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **15** The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. **16** The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. **17** And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, [according to] human measurements, which are [also] angelic [measurements]. **18** The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

V11. The city has “the glory of God”. That goes beyond the robe of the bride, which was woven by herself, although the robe was given to her by God. In Christ we see the light of the glory of the knowledge of God (2Cor 4:6) and here the church has that glory. The church is just as in full harmony with God as Christ is. Just like the glory of God is visible in Christ, the glory of God is visible in her (cf. Jn 17:22). What has been revealed in the Lord Jesus will also be seen in this city.

When you consider this to be applied to people whom by nature had no part of the glory of God (Rom 3:23), isn't it an indescribable grace? It is indeed no more than grace by which you have got part of it (2Cor 4:6). Therefore you are now able to boast in the hope on the glory of God (Rom 5:11) that has become a reality in this portion.

The glory of God, as it is expressed in *chapter 4:3*, is in all kinds of ways also the part of the church. The jasper stone which is mentioned there, is also to be found here (and also in the *verses 18-19*). This stone is to be compared to the diamond that is familiar to us, which can be cut in such a way that the light is being reflected in a variety of magnificent colors. That light, which soon will be visible in a fully uninterrupted glory, should now already be radiated by the church (*cf. Phil 2:15*). That is only possible by the Spirit (*Acts 7:55; 2Cor 3:18*).

V12. The church is built in a way that it can reflect or radiate the glory of God, which glory in no way can be darkened or disturbed. This is because she has a wall and gates and foundations. A wall ensures the safety (*Zec 2:5*) and holiness and makes a division between the holy and the unholy (*Eze 42:20*). In this city all the saints have gathered whom have glorified God in their lives on earth. The wall makes sure that nothing can enter the city that does not belong there (*Psa 122:3*), which now is still possible in the church (*Gal 2:4; Jude :4*).

But it is a wall with gates. Gates are related to government. In former days court cases were held in the gates of cities (*Rth 4:1*). The great emphasis on the gates underlines the meaning of the city as a governing body. The gates allow the good to enter and keep the evil outside. A gate also means a secure and controlled access to the temple. They form a connection between the city and the earth during the kingdom of peace. The angels are the servants at the gates, they are the guards. Their duty as channels of God's blessing, like in the Old Testament, is over. That duty is for the church (*Heb 2:5*). The wall with its gates is all the more to the glory of God (*Isa 60:18*).

Names are written on the gates. That has to do with the custom that gates were named after the cities which they were leading to. The Damascus gate is for example the gate through which you are led on the way to Damascus. Therefore the gates with the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel point out that the blessings of the church will go to Israel in the first place.

V13. With the holy city Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God (*verse 3*), it is the same as with the tabernacle in the wilderness. In each wind direction there were three tribes and the tabernacles was in the center (*Num 2:17*). All blessing goes out from the center and all worship goes to this center.

1. It begins with the “*east*”, the side where the sun rises. The light of the new day of the kingdom of peace is present.
2. The “*north*” reminds us of the time that God had to judge His people through the means of the nations from the north, because of their unfaithfulness, a time that is over.
3. The “*south*” speaks of the summer warmth, the summer that has come.
4. The “*west*” is the side where the sun goes down, which shows that there also comes an end to the kingdom of peace.

There is an application to be made for the proclamation of the gospel in our time and also for the church now. We must try to reach all nations with the gospel and also all age groups and social layers of the population, meaning everyone, without distinction. A church needs to have both a high wall and well-functioning gates. Some churches have too many open gates that there is no more mention of a wall. The other way around can also be the case. In that case a church has only a high wall and not a single gate. In both cases there is no separation for the Lord.

V14. After the gates the wall is described in more details. The foundations are not the twelve sons of Israel, but “*the twelve apostles of the Lamb*”. The twelve sons of Israel have never been related to the Lamb on earth. The twelve apostles have become the founders of the church (*Eph 2:20*) after the Holy Spirit came and the church came into existence. The foundation is Christ (*1Cor 3:11*). This is the city with foundations to which Abraham looked forward to (*Heb 11:10*).

V15. Then John remarks that the angel has “a gold measuring rod” in his hand. The rod is of gold and therefore meets the glory of God. The city and its gates and walls are to be measured with a Divine measure. Earlier John was ordered to measure the earthly Jerusalem (*Rev 11:1*). Only, there was no mention of a rod of gold and John also is not to measure a certain part.

When God measures something or gives the order to measure, He tells us that it belongs to Him and that it is recognized by Him (*cf. Zec 2:1-2,12; Eze 40:3,5*). ‘To measure’ also means to determine the position and the calling of the city, with the boundaries attached to it. Of all that belongs to the city, of everyone who finds himself there, of everything that is decided – as it is said, the gate in former days was the place of jurisdiction and therefore it refers to decisions – and of the holiness of the city – indicated by the wall – is to be decided whether it is in agreement with the glory of God.

V16. The city is not only square – which is indicated by the mention of “its length is as great as its breadth” –, it is also cubical, for its height has the same measure. That reminds us of the Holy of Holies, that according to its measures was also a cube (*cf. 1Kgs 6:20; Eze 41:4*). By her length and breadth it stands in connection with the earth and by her height in connection with heaven.

The “fifteen hundred miles” which the angel measures, is to be compared with about two thousand two hundred twenty kilometers. That the city has perfect even sides says something about the full balance in everything that God establishes. He gives the right weight to every truth of His Word. We see that in the way He carries them out. He never emphasizes one truth to the expense of another truth.

That the city can be measured indicates that it is limited. That goes for everything that has to do with man. Only God is endless and man is by definition limited. At the same time the church is perfect in accordance with the eternal counsels of God and the size of it is immeasurable (*cf. Eph 3:18-19*).

V17. With the “*seventy-two yards*” or “*one hundred [and] forty-four cubits*” (NKJV) the thickness of the wall is probably meant, which therefore counts between sixty-five and seventy meters. Anyway, it is a perfect measure (one hundred and forty-four is twelve times twelve). At the same time it also implies that each man can have only a limited imagination of the ‘measures’ of the church. In this measurement “*a man*” and “*an angel*” are placed on the same level. Both of them are creatures and therefore limited in understanding all the glory of God.

V18. In *verse 11* you saw that jasper is an image of the radiance of the glory of God. The wall of the city is of this same material. The glory of God therefore has the same function as a protecting and dividing wall. The glory of God prohibits and prevents anything unclean entering the city. Therefore, if the glory of God would be revealed more amongst us, then many things would be prevented that do not fit in the light of that glory (*Acts 5:13; Gen 28:17*).

This is the fourth time that the wall of the city is being dealt with. In *verse 12* the mark of the wall is mentioned: great and high. In *verse 14* the foundations of the wall are mentioned. In *verse 17* the wall is talked about in connection with its size. Finally this verse speaks about the building material, the material the wall is made of.

The city is “*pure gold, like clear glass*”, which means that the city is of *transparent* gold. In the old creation that is not possible, but it surely is in the new one. It makes clear that the city is made of a material that is fully transparent, without any dark spot, without any blemish or anything unclean. The city is in this characteristic similar to God. How could the city of God have something that is dark or blemished? Everything is transparent and meets the glory of God.

Now read Revelation 21:11-18 again.

Reflection: Which aspects of the city are mentioned and what do they represent?

God Almighty and the Lamb Are Its Temple | *verses 19-27*

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

19 *The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21* *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. 22* *I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23* *And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp [is] the Lamb. 24* *The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25* *In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26* *and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27* *and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

V19-20. Then the foundations are further examined. The foundations are adorned with all kinds of precious stones, yes, they consist of precious stones. They all together appear to be a foundation of twelve layers. Each layer is a foundation, which makes the city to lie on twelve foundations. Those foundations are not hidden in the ground, but are visible. The city is to be seen in its whole size, because it is considered to have come down from heaven from God, without coming on the earth.

The rank order of the foundations is given as follows:

1. The “*first foundation*”, the lowest one, on which all other foundations are laid, is again “*jasper*”, the image of the glory of God. The color is that of a transparent crystal.

2. The “*second*” foundation is “*sapphire*”. The color of sapphire is beautifully blue.
3. “*Chalcedony*”, the precious stone of which the “*third*” foundation consists, appears only here in the Bible. Its color is green-blue.
4. The color of “*emerald*”, the “*fourth*” foundation, is radiant green.
5. The color of “*sardonyx*”, the “*fifth*” foundation, may be lightly flamed black, brown, red and white striped.
6. “*Sardius*”, the “*sixth*” foundation, must have a beautiful red color.
7. “*Chrysolite*”, the “*seventh*” foundation, is of golden yellow color.
8. The color of “*beryl*”, the “*eighth*” foundation, can be different. This precious stone has amongst others a red, blue, green, yellow, purple and even a colorless variant.
9. “*Topaz*”, the “*ninth*” foundation, is deep splendid yellow.
10. “*Chrysoprase*” the “*tenth*” foundation, is according to the meaning of its name, golden green.
11. The color of “*jacinth*”, the “*eleventh*” foundation, is not known (to me).
12. “*Amethyst*”, the “*twelfth*” foundation, has a violet color.

Although the exact color of each precious stone is not known, you nevertheless still have an impression of the overwhelming brilliance and splendor which the colors radiate from the foundations that are lying on each other. They merge together and each color reinforces the other colors. It must be a pleasure for the eye. It is about building materials that never perish and about colors

that never fade away. The whole reveals the power and wisdom of the Creator.

You also come across twelve precious stones in *Ezekiel 28*. Those precious stones reflect the glory of the creation. You also find twelve precious stones in *Exodus 28*. There they are related to the breastplate of the high priest and reflect the glory of his service which he does for the sake of the twelve tribes of Israel.

All of the precious stones are different. We will all together be clothed with the glory of God, but it will never be forgotten how the glory of God on earth has been expressed in a unique way in every redeemed person. They altogether form a unique display of the glory of God. Each child of God can show something of God's glory in his life. In the precious stones gold represent the *common* glory – the whole city is of gold, *verse 18*. The precious stones themselves represent the glory that each *individual believer* has and which distinguishes him from every other believer, while on the other hand he complements the other believer in that way and reinforces that believer's glory.

V21. Each of "*the twelve gates*" consists of a pearl. That reminds us of the value that the church has for the Lord Jesus. The church is a pearl of great value to Him (*Mat 13:46*). The twelve gates will eternally remind to all sides in creation that He has given Himself for her. If the church is as precious as a pearl to Him, can it then be the case for us that the fellowship of saints is unimportant or insignificant (*cf. Heb 10:25*) or would we despise her least member (*Mat 18:10*)?

Another special characteristic of the city is that there is only one street. Therefore it is impossible to get lost or to walk off the road. All believers there go one way. It is impossible to have divisions there. Just as the city is of pure gold, which is gold that is like clear glass (*verse 18*), the street is also of "*pure gold, like transparent glass*". The street refers to your walk in this city. There will be no danger for pollution, for in that city you are in accordance with the golden transparency of the street. At the same time it is an appeal to walk now already like you will be doing there too.

V22. John does not see a temple in the city. Therefore it is not about the earthly Jerusalem that the prophets are speaking about, for there will certainly be a temple there (*Eze 40-44*). A temple reminds us of sin, for the temple is a separate place in the city. That means also that there is a certain distance between God and His people. The veil in the temple emphasizes the separation between God and His people.

That distance and that separation are not found between the church and God and the Lamb. God dwells in the church and He Himself is the temple of her, just like the Lamb is (*cf. Isa 8:14*). The church is in the direct, immediate presence of God and the Lamb, without any distance or separation.

V23. The city as a whole is the temple of God. God dwells in the city and in that way the city is the temple. There is no separate temple. Therefore there is no separate light, the sun or the moon, that lightens the city from outside. If God dwell in the city, He is its light. His glory could never be illuminated by something different that would have a greater glory. The brilliance of His glory lies all over the whole city.

And wherein is the brilliance of His glory to be seen? In the Lamb. The glory of God will always reach the city through the Lamb alone (*2Cor 4:6*). We know and see the Father only through the Son (*Jn 14:6,9*). The sun and moon are means to pass on the light in the creation. In *Genesis 1* you see that there is first light on the first day and that afterwards on the fourth day the sun and the moon are called by God to show up. But the city of God is not illuminated by natural, created means. There is a direct illumination that comes from God Himself. That the Lamb is the lamp actually indicates that the Lamb is the means, but that doesn't change anything about the fact that God's light is directly present, for the Lamb in Whom this light is visible, is also God.

V24. The church passes on the light of the glory of God, which lies over it by the Lamb, to the earth. The church is like the sun for the nations. Through the light of the Lamb the church gives light in which the nations may walk. The church, which we are,

will be the channel through which the blessing is passed on out of heaven to the earth. We ourselves will enjoy in our glorified bodies the blessings that surpass far beyond the earthly blessings.

The kings of the earth will bring their earthly glory to it (*cf. Psa 72:10-11; Isa 60:3,5-7,9*). It is not clear to me how we should imagine that. We may probably think of the appearance of heavenly saints to these nations on earth. After all, the church will reign together with Christ as the wife of the Lamb. These heavenly saints represent Christ. By acknowledging them as channels of heavenly blessings, the nations will honor Christ.

V25. Where the light of God rules, there is no darkness. The day will not be followed anymore by the night. The morning without clouds (*2Sam 23:4*), the day without anything that causes shadow or darkness, has come for the heavenly church. All things are fully transparent. There will be no fear for thieves that would want to enter in, for all darkness has disappeared and is gone forever (*1Jn 2:8b*). The city will be all light and glory.

V26. It is said one more time that the glory and the honor of the nations will be brought into it. It clarifies how much the church is the center of blessings in the kingdom of peace. She is in herself not the source of it, for all blessings come from God. But she certainly is the means through which God leads His blessings to the earth.

The nations will respond to that with appropriate gifts. It will not be so much about material gifts, but surely about the recognition that they in no way have any glory and honor that serve to magnify themselves as if they owe that to themselves. The nations have actually behaved themselves like that in the time of the rejection of Christ. Then the church was not counted, but was rejected and persecuted. Now it is exactly the other way around. God makes sure that His church is honored according to the extent that she was dishonored (*cf. Rev 3:9*).

V27. Into the city can enter only that which contributes to the glory of the city. It is impossible for anything to enter into it that

could possibly damage the glory of the city. Everything that is related to sin and of which the elements are still on earth, gets no chance to penetrate into the heavenly city. Should there be anything unholy that tries to enter into it, or anyone who does wrong things, the light will directly expose it. Nothing that belongs to the darkness will manage to unremarkably enter into the city. The light is at the same time its safety.

But there are certainly some who enter into the city. That concerns believers, people *“whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”*. It is not the nations of the earth, for flesh and blood cannot enter into it. Neither are they the believers of the church, for they are the city. Which believers are we actually talking about then? Those are all the dead believers from the Old Testament and the martyrs who were killed after the rapture of the church. They do not partake in the church, but they surely have a part in all the blessings that God has promised to all who have put their trust in Him. They will enjoy those blessings in the heavenly part of the kingdom of peace.

Now read Revelation 21:19-27 again.

Reflection: What is different in the new Jerusalem compared to the old Jerusalem?

Revelation 22

A River of the Water of Life | verses 1-7

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve [kinds of] fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name [will be] on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be [any] night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. 6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. 7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

V1. The words "then he showed me" introduce a new section. Still this section forms a whole with the previous one, for it still deals with the city. John gets to see "a river of water of life". This river is an image of the Lord Jesus (cf. Rev 21:6). The river also speaks of the eternal life that God's children now already are allowed to enjoy (Jn 7:38).

The water is "clear as crystal". There is no pollution at all; the water is totally pure, without any mixture with something else. That is also not possible, for the origin of this water is "the throne of God and of the Lamb". The throne speaks of a kingdom, of authority. Wherever God and the Lamb have authority, there comes room

for the life in wonderful refreshing streams. Death and curse have no chance to disturb the enjoyment of life. Life can be enjoyed to the full.

What John sees makes us think of the scene in *Ezekiel 47:1-12*. But there is still a great difference. There it is about a literal river in the earthly Jerusalem, while here it is about the heavenly Jerusalem with a symbolic presentation of matters.

V2. Then the attention is drawn to *“the tree of life”*. It is *“in the middle of its street”*, which is the street of the city, and at the same time on either sides of the river. It is one tree, though it is on several places at the same time. That is not to be explained logically. Anyway, this tree of life is an image of the Lord Jesus.

At the very beginning of the Bible you also read about the tree of life (*Gen 2:9*). God put the tree of life in the middle of the paradise. Directly next to it He put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You don't notice anything of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil here anymore. Here we see only the tree of life. Here the Holy Spirit connects the beginning and the end of the Scripture with each other.

In *Genesis 2* there is mention of two trees. There a river is also mentioned, which parted and became four riverheads. Here however, is only one tree and one river. Here there is no mention any more of the responsibility of man. Man cannot be tempted by satan in the kingdom of peace, like in the paradise. After all, satan is bound during the time of the kingdom of peace (*Rev 20:1-3*). Therefore only the tree of life is here. Man is allowed to eat from it all the time, in order to enjoy the continuous blessing of the kingdom of peace.

It indicates a continuous dependence upon the Lord Jesus. He gives power to walk on that one street and He gives refreshment, regardless which side of the river a person lives. The church will be allowed to enjoy Him in a new way *“every month”* of the thousand years, for the fruits will be for the inhabitants of the city.

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations on earth. All conflicts and disagreements will be ended by the Lord Jesus. There will be no more war, all wounds will be healed.

V3. There “*will no longer be any curse*” in this wonderful situation, for the Lord Jesus reigns. To His government blessing is attached and no curse. Curse is a result of sin. Everything that has to do with sin will in no way get a chance to exercise its influence in the new Jerusalem. Also the removal of the curse makes you think of the beginning when the curse entered into the world (*Gen 3:17*). Here it has been taken away. In this way the end condition is the counterpart of the start condition in every view. Actually sin will still be found on earth, but not in the city.

Again the emphasis is put on the throne of God and of the Lamb as the source of blessing. Enjoying the blessing does not mean that no service is being done. The believers who form the new Jerusalem are here called “*bond-servants*”. That is not a name for oppressed people, but a title for voluntarily obedient people. They want to serve Him out of love *for* Whom they have been bought (which is God) and *by* Whom they were bought (which is the Lamb). Serving here also doesn’t mean doing slave labor, but it means to serve in the religious sense, serving as priest in a worship service. This is the greatest privilege of man.

It is also noticeable that it is written that they will serve “*Him*” (singular), while it refers to two Persons: God and the Lamb. That indicates that God and the Lamb are one God. You have come across this way of writing about God and the Lord Jesus also in the letters written by John. Sometimes you do not know whether he is talking about God or about the Lord Jesus. That does not matter, for with both Persons it is about God.

V4. Besides being surrounded by blessings and the unlimited possibility to enjoy them, there is an even greater privilege. That privilege is seeing the face of God and of the Lamb. That means that there will be free access to and relationship with God and the Lamb. It is the reward for those who are pure in heart (*Mat 5:8*). Outwardly His Name shall be “*on their foreheads*”. It is the open

proclamation that they are worshipers of God and the Lamb (*cf. Rev 13:16; 17:5*).

V5. There will be no more need of natural light sources in the city (*Rev 21:23*). God Who is light (*1Jn 1:5*), has driven out all darkness. What John already has announced in his first letter as the principle of the new life – that the believer, regarding the new life that he has received, walks in the light (*1Jn 1:7*) –, has then become reality for the heavenly order of things.

It is not possible for the darkness to return. In the new Jerusalem, which is formed by men who all have the new, eternal life in the Son Whom is the eternal life, it will be day forever. Also after the millennial kingdom of peace that situation will not change. We shall reign with Christ forever. After the kingdom of peace our government with Christ will not cease, although the form of government will actually change (*1Cor 15:24*). The kingdom of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man will last for a thousand years. As the Son of God He will reign forever, without Him ceasing to be Man.

V6. John gets the security that there is no doubt that what is said is true: “*These words are faithful and true.*” They are indeed, because He Who has spoken those words, is true (*Rev 19:11*). God’s Word is exalted above all doubts. It has always been like that of course, but nevertheless, it is emphasized here.

God gives such security concerning His Word, because He knows that you can be weak in your faith in His Word. Just hold on to what the prophets have spoken about it in a way that mistakes are not possible. The Lord, He Who has authority over all things, is “*the God of the spirits of the prophets*”. That means that He has controlled the spirits, which is the inward man of prophets, over what they had to write down.

It is about things which must “*soon take place*”. You have come across these words also at the beginning of this book (*Rev 1:1*), which causes as it were that the end of this book closes the circle. It is a remembrance of the purpose of the book, which is that you will look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus. There is noth-

ing left that still has to take place before the coming of the Lord Jesus for the church. If that already applied to John and Paul, how much more does that apply to us.

V7. The angel has told John that the events of this book will soon be fulfilled. That makes your desire for the Lord to grow more and more. How wonderful it is then to hear the Lord Himself saying that He is coming quickly. It is as if He wants to focus your eye, concerning the future things, on Himself. His desire is just to cause everything that is written in this book to take place. Therefore you do not look forward to events in the first place, but to a Person.

Up to that moment *“the words of the prophecy of this book”* are at your disposal. If you keep them, you are *“blessed”*. Keeping the Word of God has always been a source of blessing. It gives you light on your way and it shows you what your future is, because your future is related with Christ. The Lord relates special blessings to the reading of this book, which unfortunately is often considered to be an incomprehensible book and left unread by many believers.

Now read Revelation 22:1-7 again.

Reflection: Mention the blessings that are related to the river of living water.

My Reward Is With Me | verses 8-14

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

*8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he *said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God." 10 And he *said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy." 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward [is] with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.*

V8. What John has heard and seen, made a strong impression on him. When he says "I, John", it clarifies that he has personally experienced everything that he "heard and saw". It was not just absorbing all kinds of interesting facts, so that he now had an idea about the future. No, he was totally involved with his whole being.

That is very important for you too. Now you have come to the end of this book, you may wonder yourself what impact this book has had on you, just as I must wonder what impact it has had on me. Have you made progress in just factual knowledge or has it deeply moved you inwardly? Do you only find it important that you now know how history will come to pass or has it caused you to desire for the coming of the Lord?

John is so deeply impressed that he ends up in worship. But he ascribes this worship to someone who is not entitled to it. That is also a risk you run. You run the risk to admire God's instrument

instead of Him Who is represented to you through that instrument. The Holy Spirit does not want to focus your attention on an angel, or on John, or on whomever, but on the Lord Jesus.

V9. John is called to order by the angel. He had already made this mistake earlier (*Rev 19:10*). Then also he was called to order by the angel. The fact that he has made this mistake for the second time, shows that it is indeed very difficult to give honor to the Lord Jesus alone and not a creature to whom we sometimes may possibly look up to. However, how much appreciation we may have for persons who have helped us to learn to know God's truth better, there is absolutely one Person Who is worthy of our praise. Everyone has a subordinate place towards the Lord Jesus and an equal position towards one another, considering the differences which the Lord has applied.

The angel calls himself "*a fellow servant*" of John, however much he has served John with the explanation of the future events. The angel also speaks about "*the prophets*" as "*brethren*" of John. John and all the prophets of God have spoken about future events. They could only do that because God had shown them what He was planning to do. He made those plans known in His Word to all of His own, particularly in this Bible book.

The angel also calls all the ones, who keep the words of this Bible book, his fellow servants. You have also come across this word 'servant' at the beginning of this book. The book can only be understood by believers who, as a response to what God reveals in His Word, devote their lives to Him. That is the true worshiping of God.

V10. When Daniel came to the end of his book, he learnt that he had to seal the book until the time of the end (*Dan 12:4*). The reason was that in the time of Daniel the end was yet far away. He lived in another period of time of God's history of salvation. The sealing of his book meant that the prophecies which are written in it, were made inviolable and kept safe until the fulfillment. The opening of the seal was only allowed to be taken place by the person that was authorized to do that (*cf. Rev 5:5*).

However, for us the time is near (*cf. Mat 25:6*). Everything has been fulfilled since the death of Christ and we have come to the 'last hour' (*1Jn 2:18*). The end of the ages have come upon us (*1Cor 10:11*). Therefore John is told that he was *not* to seal the prophecy of this book. God has revealed everything. The time of the coming of His Son is near to make everything to be fulfilled. It is important to God that by this revelation, which is not sealed – by which we know that His Son can come any moment – you will be eagerly looking forward to Him Who is going to fulfill everything.

VII. When all events of this book have come this near, it will result in a separation among men. There are only two reactions possible.

1. There are those who reject the Word of God and do not consider what is soon to happen.
2. There are those who submit themselves to the Word of God and look forward to its fulfillment.

The more the time gets nearer, the more the real character of every man is exposed.

1. The first category of men "*does wrong*" more and more and therefore one makes himself more and more "*filthy*", dirty. You see that in the world and even more and especially in the so-called Christian world. People become more and more unjust and present themselves more and more unashamed with their dirtiness.
2. The second category of people devotes itself more and more to God. They live righteously and "*still practice righteousness*", which causes them to become more and more "*holy*" opposite to the dirtiness of the people around them. Their holiness becomes more and more visible, because of the contrast with the growing filthiness of the world. The contrast to the world will grow bigger and bigger.

In the light of the coming of the Lord everything is being decided regarding our lives on earth. In that very light it is seen what we are living for.

V12. You may think that it is not simple to live righteous and holy in such a filthy world where the filthiness jumps all over you from all sides. Therefore the words of the Lord are a great encouragement. You hear Christ saying that He is coming quickly. That is already encouraging. But then you hear also that He relates a reward to His near coming. Christ will surely appreciate every sign of righteousness in your life and He will give you an appropriate reward for that.

If you have made your choice for Him on earth, you have perhaps missed out on many appreciations from men. But the Lord will compensate that abundantly at His coming. The unbelievers have already received their reward on earth (*cf. Mat 6:2,5,16*). Therefore they will not find any reward when the Lord comes. On the contrary, they will receive a retribution for their wicked deeds.

V13. For the third and last time you hear that the Lord Jesus is "*the Alpha*", the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and the "*Omega*", the last letter of the Greek alphabet (*Rev 1:8; 21:6*). He is the Word of God, the full revelation of God. Everything that God has to say, He has said in Christ. Christ will fulfill everything to the letter, as God has said it (*cf. Jos 21:45; Mat 5:17-18*).

He Who is beyond the history of creation has entered into history. He is "*the first and the last*" of history (*Rev 1:17; 2:8; Isa 44:6; 48:12*). He stands at "*the beginning*" of everything as the First and He stands at "*the end*" of everything as the Last. He will still be there when everything that was, is over. He is both the origin and the purpose of creation (*Col 1:15-17*). He Who Himself has no beginning nor end, the eternal God, covers all things. There is nothing outside of Him that in a way can escape from Him. Everything owes its beginning to Him and everything will be fulfilled in relation with Him and be brought to fullness. You see how great He is !

V14. For the seventh and last time the word “*blessed*” is spoken. It regards those “*who wash their robes*”. It is remarkable that we read “*wash*” which indicates an ongoing process of washing. That is different from what you have read elsewhere in this book, where it says “*washed*” (Rev 7:14). In the latter case it concerns the conversion. That is a one-off happening. When you came to conversion, all of your sins were washed away by the blood of the Lamb. But in this verse it is about your responsibility.

You also come across this difference between ‘wash’ and ‘washed’ in *John 13*. There the Lord speaks about being ‘bathed’, which is being totally washed, and about having one’s ‘feet to be washed’ (Jn 13:10). The act of being totally washed is a one-off happening at the conversion. The act of letting the feet to be washed ought to happen continually, because living in the world defiles the believer.

Having one’s feet to be washed, or as it is said here, to wash their robes, is a responsibility of the believer. The robes speak of the outward behavior. You prove that you are washed by the way you walk. Your clothing, meaning your conduct, will then show no spot. As soon as it gets stained by committing sins, there will also be a confession of these sins, which makes the robe to be pure again. In this way you are not to be blamed for anything concerning your practical way of living, which makes you to have the right to the tree of life. It means that you participate in the enjoyment of it.

You are allowed to live in the city of God, in His presence. You partake of the blessings of the tree and the city on the ground of the blood of Christ. That is grace. But everyone who partakes of that grace, will surely want to live accordingly. In that way you show that you have the right to it. It is a right which, concerning you, is based on grace, but it is a grace which is granted by God on the ground of the right that He has through the blood of Christ.

Now read Revelation 22:8-14 again.

Reflection: What can possibly be the reward that the Lord Jesus will have with Him when He comes?

Yes, I Am Coming Quickly | verses 15-21

First carefully take in the Bible verses of this section; please read them thoughtfully.

15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

V15. The contrast to the previous verse is big and tragic. "Outside" the city, 'outside' the new world, are all who have no right to the tree and the entering of the city. 'Outside' is more than a geographic location alone. It is surely a geographic location, but it is especially a place of eternal torment (*Rev 21:8*). The character of the people who are outside, confirms that it is justified that they are 'outside' the city of all blessings. It indicates that they have surrendered themselves to serving satan.

1. The first thing that marks their character is indicated by the term "dogs". 'Dog' is a name for an evildoer who operates without any feeling (*Psa 22:16,20; Isa 56:10; Phil 3:2; see also Deu 23:18*). All categories have this characteristic.
2. "The sorcerers" want to exert power over others.
3. "The immoral persons" seek to fulfill their lust at the expense of others.

4. *"The murderers"* are taking other people's lives.
5. *"The idolaters"* totally deliver themselves powerlessly to demons.

The whole is framed in the lie which they love and tell. Hell will be full of such people.

V16. Here the Lord Jesus is speaking again. He draws the attention to Himself with the words *"I, Jesus"*. He is the Almighty, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the Creator of the universe and the Sustainer of all things, but He presents Himself here with the name which is typical for His humiliation.

He is also the Commander of the angels. He sends them wherever He wants to with the message He wants to be sent. Through His angel He addresses the churches. Those are the local churches where believers gather and dwell together with the awareness that they participate in the worldwide church. Such believers desire no more than to affirm in the local church what is applied to the worldwide church.

The Lord still adds some more aspects of His Person to His messages. He calls Himself *"the root and the descendant of David"*, which He is indeed for Israel, whereof He is the shoot (*Rev 5:5; Isa 11:1,10*) and therefore out of which the whole people comes forth. For Israel He is also the Offspring (which means 'Son') of David. He came forth out of this people, that in Him all promises, pertaining to the kingdom of God, may become reality, with the blessings for Israel and the nations.

The Lord is also *"the bright morning star"*, which He indeed is for His church. Israel will never know Him like that. The church will not have to wait until He appears as the Sun of righteousness. He will appear as the Sun of righteousness to Israel (*Mal 4:2*), but the morning star precedes the rising of the Sun. This means that the morning star has risen already in your heart (*2Pet 1:19*), meaning that you are eagerly looking forward to His coming for the church.

V17. Now the Lord has made His voice to be heard in such a way and has referred to Himself as the fulfillment of all promises, the Spirit and the bride cannot keep silent. The Spirit is indeed on earth, but as a temporary dwelling place. The Spirit dwells here as long as the church, the bride, is here. But He doesn't feel at home, like the bride also does not feel at home in this world. She is still separated from her Bridegroom. But when she hears His voice, her voice sounds fully harmoniously with the voice of the Spirit and she says to her Bridegroom: "Come!"

The bride is the church as a whole. The whole of the church says 'come!', even though not everyone who belongs to the bride longs for the Lord in the same passionate way. Therefore the call applies to every individual to say: "Come!" The desire of the one person may have a contagious effect on the extinguished desire of the other.

Then a third group is addressed. That group still has no part in the bride, but would want to have a part, because there is a thirst. He who thirsts is still invited to drink from the water of life and for free (*Isa 55:1*). This water refers to the refreshment that the Lord wants to give through His Spirit to everyone who is weary, due to living in sin (*Jn 4:10-15; 7:37*).

V18. The Lord Jesus warns in powerful words, "I testify", to everyone not to add anything to the content of the words of the prophecy that are written in this bible book. It is prohibited and not allowed to add anything to all the events that are described (*cf. Pro 30:6; Deu 4:2; 12:32*). To add something means the arrogation as if God would not have said everything that He had to say. This is the sin which satan tempted Eve with (*Gen 3:1-3*), which caused that the punishment of death announced to her was added to her.

Satan will still try in every way to keep the prophecy of this book closed to men, or distort it in such a way that it loses its true power. If satan manages to add his lie to the words of the prophecy of this book, words wherein his end is displayed, he can drag as many people with him to hell as he possibly could. But the

Lord Jesus warns here not to get sunken into this trap. Adding something to what is perfect, means getting the plagues that are written in this book added to you. Those plagues cannot be more severe than they are described, but they can increase in number.

V19. The order is different from the previous verse. Here it is about the completely achieved message of the book as a whole. Nothing can be taken away from it. People may take away something from the Word that they do not understand. The arrogant reason of man rejects God's Word which he considers to be unacceptable. You may think here of Bible criticism. Such an attitude marks the audacity of unbelief.

However, he who deals with God's Word in such a way, God will surely deal with him. Such a person receives no part to the tree and the city. Because of his attitude he indicates that he doesn't like to have part at all in the things that the believer enjoys. Therefore he will never get part of it. It has been presented to him, he has read about it, but he rejects it. He could have got part of it, but he refused. Therefore the part that was offered to him is taken away from him.

Therefore the issue here is absolutely not taking away something to which a *believer* has received part of. The part of a believer can in no way be taken away from him. Therefore a believer will never take away something of the words of the book of this prophecy. That you as a believer do not understand everything and have questions about it is of a totally different order than rejecting something that God has said. The latter is the point here.

V20. The Lord Jesus concludes the book with a final testimony that the book comes from Himself. Christ is the absolute faithful Witness of the things revealed in this book. Following this He says: "*Yes, I am coming quickly!*" This is the reply to the call of the Spirit and the bride in *verse 17*. With His "*yes*" He confirms that we should not have the slightest doubt about everything that is said. Then He says that He is about to come. There is no fulfillment necessary of any prophecy before He can come for His bride.

The response to the promise of the Lord that He is coming quickly, is: “*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*” This comes out of the mouth of all who love Him. Two times earlier the Lord has said that He is coming quickly (*verses 7,12*). The response to that is different than the response here. In *verse 7* the promise is followed by an exhortation to keep God’s Word. In *verse 12* the promise is followed by the promise of a reward. In this verse the promise of the Lord is followed by a spontaneous expression of a desire for Himself, for His Person. This is actually the conclusion of the book.

V21. Still, there is a blessing from John to “*all*” saints, which is needed as long as the Lord Jesus has not come yet. Until that moment of His coming all saints can count on His “*grace*”. The only thing that is left is a consenting “*amen*” – a beautiful end.

Now read Revelation 22:15-21 again.

Reflection: What does the thought of the coming of the Lord mean to you?

Other Publications

On the website www.oudesporen.nl, Main Menu, English publications Ger de Koning, more Bible commentaries and publications that have been translated into English are available and will become available. They can be downloaded for free as PDF and e-book.

The original publications have been written in Dutch. These and other Dutch publications are available under Main Menu, Publicaties Ger de Koning.

Some publications have been translated into other languages than English. You can find them under 'Other languages'.