

## *Acts 2 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Nine: Jesus' Revelation to John, Part 2 – Revelation 4-18*

#### Read Revelation 4:1 – 8:1 (The Seven Seals).

- 1) Describe the “throne scene” in chapters 4-5 (the place where the seven seals are broken and the viewpoint from which we observe the action that ensues in chapters 6-7).
  - a) The characters present: **God (seated on His throne); twenty-four elders (on surrounding thrones, dressed in white, and with gold crowns on their heads); the Spirit of God (represented by seven blazing lamps); four living creatures (“like” these: a lion, an ox, the face of a man, an eagle and each having six wings and each covered with eyes); a mighty angel (with a loud voice of proclamation); the Lamb (with seven horns and seven eyes); thousands and thousands of angels (surrounding God’s throne, the elders, and the living beasts).**
  - b) The sights and sounds of the place: **Colors like those of precious jewels about God Himself, a rainbow encircling the throne; twenty-four thrones surrounding God’s throne; lightning and thunder; seven lamps representing God’s Spirit; something before the throne like a sea of glass as clear as crystal, the sound of many angel’s voices loudly singing praise to the Lamb, and the echo of every creature singing praise to Him.**
  - c) The action taking place: **Incessant worship around the throne; the elders laying their crowns before the throne; a scroll in God’s hand awaiting opening; a mighty angel asking for One worthy to open it; John weeping because no one is worthy; an elder telling John the Lamb is worthy; the Lamb taking the scroll from God’s right hand; worship of and singing to the Lamb by the elders (who are holding the prayers of the saints) and thousands of angels. Their praise is echoed by a reverberation of song from the creatures in every part of creation. The four living creatures saying, “Amen,” as the elders fall down in worship.**
- 2) Summarize the event(s) that correspond to the opening of each of the six seals in Revelation 6.
  - a) First seal: **The white horse rides out to conquer**
  - b) Second seal: **The red horse brings war on the earth**
  - c) Third seal: **The black horse brings poverty and famine**
  - d) Fourth seal: **The pale horse brings pestilence and death**
  - e) Fifth seal: **Martyred saints cry out for justice**
  - f) Sixth seal: **Earthquake, heavenly bodies falling or changing, and terror on earth**
- 3) Chapter 7 is an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal of the scroll. Regarding the sealing of people:
  - a) According to 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30, what does it mean in to be sealed? (See also Revelation 14:3-4 with Romans 8:23 and James 1:18.) **Sealing guarantees ownership. God seals all believers with the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing the consummation of our salvation, as “firstfruits” redeemed from the earth.**
  - b) How does the marking by this seal in Revelation 7 contrast with the “mark of the beast” in Revelation 13:16-17 (see Revelation 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20)? **Those with the mark of the beast will be deluded by the signs of the false prophet, will be the objects of God’s wrath, and will be tormented forever.**
  - c) According to John 16:33 and Revelation 13:7 and 20:4, does the sealing of God’s servants guarantee them freedom from all dangers and harm? **No, they will be overcome by war on earth and even beheaded because of their testimony. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble.”**
  - d) What significance is there for you today in the fact that God seals His own people? **While the world will be a place of trouble for believers (John 16:33), ultimately we are under God’s watchful eye because He has sealed us as His very own, and nothing can take us from Him and His promised salvation. Personal sharing**

Read Revelation 8:2 – 11:19 (The Seven Trumpets).

- 4) As with the seals, list the judgments that follow the sounding of each trumpet from Revelation 8 and 9.
  - a) First Trumpet: **Hail and fire mixed with blood burn 1/3 of the earth.**
  - b) Second Trumpet: **“Blazing mountain” falling into the sea and killing 1/3 of the world’s sea life**
  - c) Third Trumpet: **“Blazing star” falling and turning bitter 1/3 of earth’s fresh water sources**
  - d) Fourth Trumpet: **1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars turning dark; 1/3 of the day and night without light**
  - e) Fifth Trumpet: **Sun and sky darkened; demonic locust/scorpion-like creatures torturing and killing for five months those who are not sealed by God**
  - f) Sixth Trumpet: **200 million mounted troops killing 1/3 of mankind by plagues of fire, smoke, and sulfur.**
- 5) Revelation 10:1-11:14 is an interlude between the Sixth Trumpet and the Seventh Trumpet. In chapter 10, John tells us that some of the mysteries he was shown were not to be recorded (10:3-4), that there would be no further delay in God’s program (10:1-2, 5-7), and that his call to prophesy further was affirmed (10:8-11). In chapter 11, we read about two witnesses who testify for 3-1/2 years, are killed by “the beast,” and are resurrected and taken to heaven in a cloud. Interpretations of this vary substantially. Regardless, a common thread woven throughout the book is illustrated through the two witnesses. Study the following passages and tell what underlying assurance John intended to give the churches of Asia (addressed in Revelation 2-3) and the church of Christ throughout time: Revelation 2:10; 6:9-11 and 8:3-4 with 7:9-10, 13-17; 7:2-3 with 14:1-5, 13-14 and 15:2-4; 11:3, 7 with 11:11-12. **Those who represent Christ faithfully, even though they may be persecuted and killed, are assured they cannot ever lose the security of their eternal hope and home.**
- 6) According to Revelation 11:15-19, the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet is accompanied by an announcement, but it is not new. Find it also in Daniel 2:44; 4:3; 6:26; 7:14, 26-27; and Zechariah 14:9.
  - a) What is this wonderful announcement? **The “kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 11 further informs us that Jesus will judge the dead, reward the prophets and saints, and destroy those who have not had their sins paid for by Jesus but have lived as “destroyers.” [The outcome of this announcement is not detailed until chapters 19-22]).**
  - b) What personal insecurities do you need to evaluate in the light of this announcement and the “clear assurance” you discovered in Question 5? (For some, this may require prayer and thoughtful consideration of behaviors that have fear or worry underlying them.) **Personal sharing**

Revelation 12-14: These chapters are an interlude between the Seven Trumpet Judgments and the Seven Bowl Judgments. They give us insight into the nature of the conflict, highlighting key characters in the drama.

- 7) The two main characters are clearly identified. Who are the “dragon” and the “Lamb” and which verses in these chapters reveal their identities? **12:9 says the “great dragon” is “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.” Christ is called “the Lamb” in many places in the New Testament (e.g. John 1:29), but is identified again as such in Revelation 12:10-11; 14:1, 4.**
- 8) Revelation 12-13 traces the conflict between Christ and the forces of evil from before the time of Christ’s birth through the Last Days. Regarding the evil portrayed in chapter 13...
  - a) Who empowers the first beast (include verse number)? **The beast is given his power and authority by the dragon (Satan, 13:2).**
  - b) What does he give each of the two beasts (include verse numbers)? **In addition to power and authority (13:2), Satan gives the beast “a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies” (13:5), power to make war against the saints and to conquer them (13:7), and authority over every tribe, people, language and nation (13:7). The second beast was given power to perform great and miraculous signs (13:13-14) and power to give breath to an image of the first beast (13:15).**

- c) What impact do the beasts have upon the world? (Include verse numbers.) **The response of the world to the beasts is “astonishment” (13:3), “worship” and admiration (13:4, 8, 12-17), even though the inhabitants of the earth are forced into receiving a mark on their hand or forehead in order to be involved in commerce of any kind.**
- 9) After reading the alarming events of chapters 12-13, what comfort does chapter 14 hold for the persecuted church? How does this comfort you in your own circumstances today? **The church can be comforted by the certain victory of the Lamb and control in Heaven (14:1-5), despite the chaos on earth (chapter 13). The warnings of 14:6-11 remind us that God is a God of patience and mercy, giving opportunity for repentance. Like God, the saints themselves are called upon to endure patiently (14:12). We are also reminded that our deeds follow us for reward (14:13) and that judgment is certain and imminent (14:14-20). God’s power and control over all things gives great comfort to any believer facing persecution.**

Read Revelation 15-16 (The Seven Bowls).

- 10) Summarize each of the seven “bowls” (the “seven last plagues”).
- First bowl: **Painful sores**
  - Second bowl: **Sea turned to blood and every living thing in it died**
  - Third bowl: **Rivers and springs (fresh water) became blood**
  - Fourth bowl: **Sun scorched people with fire**
  - Fifth bowl: **Darkness**
  - Sixth bowl: **Drying up of Euphrates, and evil spirits (Kings from the East) gather world forces for war at Armageddon**
  - Seventh bowl: **Lightning, thunder, and a great earthquake are accompanied by the words from heaven, “It is done.”**
- 11) Reread Revelation 9:20-21 and 16:9, 11 with Romans 1:18, 21, 24a, 26a, 28; 2:5-6; and 2 Peter 3:9. What do these verses teach about God and about sinful man? **These passages in Revelation describe the unwillingness of those under God’s judgment to repent, despite all the judgments they are enduring. Although God is full of wrath over sin, He is patient, giving many, many opportunities for repentance. When individuals choose to persist in sin, He hands them over to what they desire. Apart from God’s grace, sinful man continues to harden himself against God and His ways, even when it is unreasonable to do so.**
- 12) In what specific ways has God been merciful and patient with you? **Personal sharing**

Read Revelation 17-18. These chapters more fully describe the last two “bowls,” explaining exactly what is overthrown at God’s command, “It is done!” (16:17).

- 13) Conservative scholars generally agree that the “woman” of Revelation 17 is not the same woman described in chapter 12. They also agree that the chapter 17 “woman” represents something more than a solitary human figure. However, a wide variety of ideas about her identity exist. Make a list of summarizing statements or phrases from Revelation 17 that give information about the “woman’s” character and behavior (with regard to verses 9-14, consider general ideas without trying to explain the passage). **She is called a prostitute, and will be punished (verse 1). She has captivated the rulers and people of the earth (verse 2). She “sits on” the blasphemous beast (verse 3). She is wealthy and uses her wealth to ensnare others (verse 4). She wears the title (given, it seems, by heaven), “Mystery; Babylon the Great; Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth” (verse 5). She persecutes and kills the saints (verse 6). She is closely affiliated with the beast and all he represents and therefore in opposition to the Lamb and His followers (verses 9-14). People groups worldwide relate to her (verse 15). The beast and his cohorts will ultimately destroy the woman (verses 16-17). She is called “the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (verse 18).**

- 14) Some scholars view “Babylon the Great” in Revelation 18 and the woman in Revelation 17 as one and the same. Others believe they represent different aspects of evil in human culture. As in Question 13, make a list of summarizing statements or phrases from Revelation 18 that give information about “Babylon the Great.” “Babylon” will fall (v 2, 8) violently (v 21), suddenly (vv 10, 17), and permanently (vv 14, 21-23); all nations commit adultery with her (v 3, 9); merchants have been made wealthy by her (v 3, 9, 19); she is full of sin and God’s people are to “come out from her” (v 4-5); she has much “glory and luxury” and is overly confident in them (vv 7, 14-17); when she falls those who have benefitted from her (kings, merchants, sea captains) will mourn (v 9-19); her merchants were the world’s great men (v 23) and she deceived the nations (v 23); she has mistreated God’s people (v 20), and she is guilty of killing prophets, saints, and “all who have been killed on the earth” (v 24).
- 15) Kings, nations, and people of the earth are said to commit adultery with both “the woman on the beast” in Revelation 17 (17:2) and “Babylon the Great” in Revelation 18 (18:3, 9).
- a) With what kinds of things do people in your culture figuratively “commit adultery”? Among many other things, individual sharing may include outright idol worship, material indulgences, absorption of one’s time and energy by various types of entertainment, placing one’s confidence in wealth, religious systems, or anything other than God, seeking fame or reputation, etc.
  - b) With regard to this adultery, in Revelation 18:4 God’s people are told to “come out of her...so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues...” From what activity, pursuit, relationship, or false sense of security must you personally “come out?” Personal sharing