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Day 336 - December 1

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 8:10-11**

We continue in our study of the various judgments within the time period of the tribulation as we turn our attention to the third trumpet judgment. The text describes a large star from the sky (a term that undoubtedly refers to the surrounding outer space) that crashes to earth with truly catastrophic results.

The text tells us that this star is called “wormwood” which refers to a bitter tasting shrub that symbolizes sorrow. Bitterness is often associated with sorrow, particularly sorrow that is associated with judgment for sin (see Proverbs 5:3-4). In this case, the reference to bitterness and judgment is clear as the aforementioned star crashes to earth immediately harming the water supply. The effect of this star’s arrival is felt as a third of the water is compromised which leads to further death and suffering.

There has been speculation as to what exactly causes death and the truth is that we do not know. Obviously, the event will lead to some sort of contamination, most likely as a direct result of the star’s impact and/or decomposition. Regardless, the point is that dire times will get even worse as the world is now struggling not just to find food but to find water as well.

### **Putting This Together**

The impact of God’s judgment on the world is both severe and all-encompassing. Literally every aspect of creation as we know it will endure changes and difficulties in these last days. They will be truly horrendous times that are unprecedented in human history.

This leads to one devotional point for the day. I would implore you not to confuse God’s patience with His approval. It is easy to look at our personal lives and even the world that surrounds us and wonder if God really is just and willing to punish sin.

Please allow texts like Revelation 8 to serve as a reminder that God’s mercy and longsuffering will not last forever. It might seem as if the world has spit in the face of God with no consequence but the truth is that God is preparing to levy the just penalty for man’s collective sin. Furthermore, we must be vigilant in our personal lives as we endeavor to follow the Lord without falling victim to acceptance of sin in our lives.

Day 337 - December 2

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 8:12**

As if things weren't bad enough, God now turns His attention to the cosmos! Over the years, one mainstay in human history is the rising and the setting of the sun. We have grown so accustomed to daylight and moonlight that we do not even bother to question whether or not light will continue. This truth was perhaps best encapsulated by the great theologian Annie (kidding) who famously belted out these famous words "the sun will come out, tomorrow!" While you may, or may not, have enjoyed the play, the truth is that Annie has never been wrong... yet.

Our text for today speaks of a coming day in which the sun won't come out, at least not in totality. The Bible says that the sun and moon and stars were struck and the effect will be that a third of the day and night will be pitch black dark.

The term "struck" implies an object or Person who either destroys the heavenly lights or sufficiently hinders them. Obviously, we realize that this Person is God as God alone is the only One capable of performing such a terrible miracle. While many scientists have amused themselves with various speculations of when and how the sun might flame out, the Bible provides the clear answer to the question.

The text reminds us of God's Sovereignty over all things. There is no foe nor object that can withstand His commands. Instead, when God deems something to take place, He is able to bring His plan to pass. Our God is a loving and merciful Father to His children but He is also a Great and Terrifying deity to His enemies.

### **Putting This Together**

It is interesting to note the biblical significance of the language that is employed in our text for today. The term, and reality of, "darkness" is always symbolic of evil and judgment. Those who are in sin live "in darkness" and darkness is often alluded to in passages referring to those who endure God's wrath in judgment (see Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7).

This period of time will be an unimaginable time of darkness, both figuratively and literally. The darkness of man's heart will meet its fitting consequence which is total darkness as man stands condemned underneath God's judgment.

Day 338 - December 3

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 9:1-11**

Today's passage involves some interpretive challenges but the overall truths expressed are crystal clear. First, let's address a few of the questions regarding the main characters in this passage beginning in verse 1 as we read of a "star that had fallen from the sky to earth". The subsequent verses make it quite clear that this "star" was not some sort of inanimate object, instead it performs duties that require life and intellect as it opens the door of the Abyss. Many people believe this to be a reference to Satan, and with good reason! The Bible elsewhere describes Satan in terms of falling from the heavenlies (see Luke 10:18) and it would make sense that he is active in this scene of judgment.

Regardless, it is imperative that we remember our deal with one another when we started this study of eschatology. Recall that we endeavor to make sure we understand the main truth, which is explicit, more so than we want to be distracted by things that are not sufficiently clear. The main truth of the text is not that Satan fell from the sky, the main truth is that God is pouring out judgment AND, in our passage for today, He is doing so while harnessing evil!

The second oddity of the text are those beings described as "locusts". Obviously, they are far more consequential than the insect that flies around our planet currently. Instead, the name "locust" is given to them in order to express the swarm and devastation that these supernatural beings will constitute on earth. These "locusts" were not allowed to kill a person but they are given the ability to inflict severe pain on those who are still alive on the earth. These beings were equipped with everything they needed to harm those on earth and their very appearance is described with terrifying clarity.

### **Putting This Together**

There are two overarching truths that we must take from this text, first is that God's judgment will be felt. I believe we have covered that reality in sufficient detail over the past few days but the second truth is that God is Sovereign, even over evil. You will notice that these evil beings were unleashed by one who "was given" the keys to the abyss and they were limited by God as they are not allowed to kill anyone, only torture them.

This passage is similar to that of the book of Job. In Job, Satan must request and receive permission from God in order to carry out evil in the life of God's servant. He is not able to go beyond that which God allows even as the devil is an avowed enemy of God.

In both instances, we are reminded that nothing, absolutely nothing, takes place in the world without God's allowance. Nothing and no one can overwhelm Him and no event will take place without His admission. This does not mean that God is responsible for evil but it does mean that He can control and utilize evil for His purposes.

Day 339 - December 4

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 9:13-17**

Today's text marks another escalation as we read that the prohibition of murder, which was levied towards the locusts of the previous passage, has now been rescinded in the presence of the four angels of destruction. Once again, there are disagreements about the identity of these angels but the overarching truth is clear. It is always prudent to identify the main point before you get sucked into the weeds of speculation. We are not saying it is wrong to attempt to track down the identity of these beings (many capable scholars and Bible students have done so over the years) but this should only be undertaken after the main truth of the passage is comprehended.

In this case, the main truth is... more judgment! It is instructive to note the reference to the voice coming from the golden altar in verse 13. This is almost certainly an allusion to the prayers of the martyrs as recorded in Revelation 6:9-10 as these men and women of God cry out for justice for their wrongful deaths. Evidently, God has now waited as long as He intends before pouring out His judgment in vengeance for the termination of His precious children.

Another point of interest is found as we see how the description of the horses and riders which are unleashed by God parallel the description of the locusts found in the previous trumpet judgment. This is almost assuredly meant to call our attention to the continuity between the wrath of these two entities. Out of their collective mouths come "sulfur" and "fire" and "smoke" which most scholars take as a parallel to the description of the aftermath of God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.

### **Putting This Together**

The result of this unleashing of the four angels is more death. At this point, a third of the population is killed yet again which leads to ever dwindling numbers of men and women on the earth. As each seal and trumpet and bowl passes more are killed and everyone suffers. The simple truth I'd like you to take from our time together today is this, no one will escape this judgment and, likewise, no person will escape the judgment of God save the blood of Jesus. Whether you or I live to see these days or not is not the ultimate question. Instead, the real line of demarcation will be drawn based on your relationship with Christ.

Believe it or not, this time of intense judgment known as the tribulation pales in comparison to the eternal judgment that is being experienced by every person who has not exercised saving faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Those who are in Christ are shielded from the wrath of God but those who reject His blood have this kind of terror to anticipate for all eternity. I pray you allow these descriptive words of the book of Revelation to either propel you to Christ or compel you to praise Him for the grace He has afforded you in absorbing the wrath of God on your behalf.

Day 340 - December 5

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 11:15-18**

The final trumpet judgment is a welcome breath of fresh air in some respects. In this particular moment, the judgment is really a declaration of the Messiah's rule and reign. It is the moment that the exalted saints proclaim what should have already become quite clear, that the earth is ruled by the Messiah forever.

This trumpet is a proclamation of praise and worship to Christ but it also reminds us that the judgment the inhabitants of the earth have experienced is warranted. Its easy to fall victim to the false idea that the earth is full of innocent people who do not deserve to experience God's wrath. There are many who think they are not deserving of God's punishment and indignation, but verse 18 reminds us that the "nations were angry".

What were they upset about? They were angry about the rightful authority of the One True God. You see, every country and every empire inevitably rages against the rule of the One True God. In their collective sin, they want to be their own god (see Romans 1) and this causes them to rage against the One who is in their way.

We see this explicitly in Psalm 2 as we read that the "Kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against His anointed." The entire world, in all of its systems and societies finds its common enemy in the Lord God.

This is why the very proclamation of His coming to physically conquer and rule is both glorious for believers and judgment for everyone else. Despite lost man's best efforts, the Lord Jesus Christ has prevailed. The rulers have taken their best shot at the Messiah but they have missed and Jesus is on His way to finish the job of taking over the planet they used to think they controlled.

### **Putting This Together**

It is easy to make this passage all about "them" but the stark reality is that each of us, in our natural state, despised God in like manner. We were all rebels whose hearts desired our own autonomy until God in His grace tamed and transformed our hearts. He did so by showing us the validity of the message of Christ's rule all the while allowing us to see His beauty and majesty causing us to love Him who we once hated. The simple truth is this, if you think the message of the seventh trumpet is wonderful it is only because God in His mercy has taken your cold, dark and sinful heart and replaced it with one that is sensitive to His glorious grace.

Day 341 - December 6

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 16:2**

Today's text mentions a topic that I'm sure you're interested in... the mark of the beast. We are not going to fixate on the specifics of the mark today but we will address the subject in more detail in a few more days. Today's text picks up the final series of judgments known as the bowl judgments. These are incredibly severe and they constitute the very last of their kind before the Lord Christ's physical return.

Many Bible students have seen a parallel between these judgments and the plagues that God poured out on Egypt in the book of Exodus. Whether there is intended symmetry or not is unknown but the similarities do remind us of the reality that our God is Sovereign and unchanging.

In this case, the first bowl results in sores on a specific group of people. You will note that John says this bowl judgment impacts only a select number of folks who are still alive at the moment of its coming. These sores infest those who had "the mark of the beast and worshiped its image." While we will not delve into the specifics of the mark it is imperative to note what that mark communicates. Those who are identified by this mark are the declared enemies of the Lord Christ. They have undertaken the visible sign of ownership of Satan and the Antichrist and his false prophet.

Over the next several days we will talk in a bit more detail about the Antichrist but the fate of his worshippers is suffering and destruction. The suffering is uniform in this text but the reality is that all of those who choose to worship false gods will suffer. While they may not have the symptoms of a plague and physical pain may not be chronic in their lives, their allegiance to the great deceiver will inevitably end with shared punishment and destruction.

### **Putting This Together**

The physical suffering is just the foretaste of that which is coming after and it serves as a reminder that our choices and allegiances have consequences (or blessings). Those who choose to chase after the deceitful promises of the evil one will suffer but those who stand firm on the promises and trustworthiness of God will flourish.

I'll admit this next paragraph is conjecture but I do wonder what the others will be thinking on this day. You see, I do believe that regardless of the timing of the rapture that there will be people who are saved during the tribulation. I have no doubt that part of the reason why John specifies who has sores is because there will be a subset, as small as it may be, of people who refuse the mark even as they trust in Christ alone for salvation.

These men and women will suffer at the hands of the Antichrist and Satan. They will, obviously, not fit in and true persecution will befall them. Nevertheless, I wonder what they will be thinking on this day. Can you imagine the joy and hope that is manifest in the knowledge that those that have followed the evil one are suffering even as you are preserved? Can you imagine the hope of knowing that the grace that God has bestowed by shielding you from the presence of sores is just the tip of the iceberg of the blessings that await even as those who deny Christ begin to experience punishment that never ends?

Christian, I know we are nowhere near this kind of persecution or suffering. Nevertheless, I want to remind you that following the Lord is worth it! We might suffer momentarily but that difficulty pales in comparison to the joys that await. Conversely, whatever security and prosperity the devil may offer you will be bankrupt in light of the price you pay for denying Christ. Hang in there in faith that all of these momentary afflictions will yield an eternal weight of glory!



Day 342 - December 7

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 16:3**

We've now entered into what are referred to as the "bowl judgments". These judgments are some of the most severe in all of Scripture and they truly constitute some of the very final events prior to the return of our Lord and Savior. Even the casual reader will note the increase in severity of these judgments. Scholars have noted that they resemble labor pains as they become more and more painful and seem to occur increasingly rapidly as the time of Jesus' reappearing draws ever closer.

Today's devotion is really aimed at helping us see the uniformity of the Scripture as we reflect on an interesting connection between Revelation 16 and Exodus 7. As you remember, Exodus 7 records God's judgment of Pharaoh in the plagues that befell Egypt. In Exodus 7:21, God causes the Nile River to turn to blood causing the fish in the river to pass away and the water to stink. The catalyst of God's judgment was a wicked king who refused to honor Him as the One True God. In similar fashion, the cause of God's judgment against the world is carnal and depraved mankind who absolutely denies their need to submit to and worship God.

### **Putting This Together**

The connection is clear even as Revelation 16 is a greater or escalated instance of the same kind of judgment. Unfortunately, men and women are all born with hearts like Pharaoh's. In our carnal state, we despise God and His claim to authority, and, without His gracious converting power, we will all reject Him bringing about His rightful judgment and wrath.

The purpose of all of these judgments is both to inflict consequences upon the people but also to testify of the awesome nature and power of our God. The simple truth is that, like Pharaoh, we are no match for God's power and sovereignty. Each and every seal, trumpet and bowl judgment is yet another reminder that He alone is in control of all things. This should lead all men to humbly bow at His feet and beg for mercy but there is no such mass reaction in the text. Instead, the presence and power of sin in each life is so entrenched that even seeing the sea turned to blood won't move them off of their rebellion.

If you are a believer today, you have every reason to rejoice as you believe because God overcame that stronghold of sin in your life. He alone is the reason you worship Him. He is the cause of your adoration for Him as He alone can intervene and overcome that which would otherwise make you His enemy instead of His child.

Day 343 - December 8

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 16:4-7**

Do you ever look at the corruption and injustice in the world in disgust? Perhaps you would echo the words of the Psalmist when he wrote “for I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Its easy to understand the mentality behind this verse of Scripture. Our world is full of people who are living in direct opposition to God’s Word and yet they seem to get along just fine. If you’re like me, you’re tempted to raise your voice to the heavens and ask “where are you God?” How could God allow His children to be killed and oppressed and persecuted all the while having complete ability to overcome their enemies?

There is an answer to the above question, but its one that we, frankly, don’t really like to hear. The reply of our Great God is that these men and women will not prosper for long. They may enjoy some worldly fame or resource for a little while but Revelation 16 (and a multitude of other passages) teach us that these gains will be short-lived and they will pale in comparison to the consequences which are sure to follow.

In this text, the Lord continues His bowl judgments by now infiltrating the fresh water resources that the world has left. Remember, this is not the first time that the rivers and springs of water have been compromised. In Revelation 8 we read that one of the trumpet judgments resulted in the pollution of a third of the fresh water but now God has returned to this precious resource to finish the job.

What is of particular interest in this passage is not so much the effect (which is the utter ruination of all water supplies) but the cause or impetus behind God’s action. Verse 6 records the angel’s words as he says of God “for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” Here is what the angel is saying, they are receiving the penalty for their actions and it is absolutely just!

### **Putting This Together**

While this world might seem unjust, it is merely in the middle of its trial. The court proceedings might seem to drag on but this does not mean that the judge won’t ultimately pound His gavel and pronounce unimaginable judgment on those who deny Him and harm His family. Passages like Revelation 16 teach us that God is intimately aware of all of the depravity that takes place in His universe, and one day there will be hell to pay... literally.

Day 344 - December 9

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 16:8-9**

Whereas yesterday's text constitutes an intensifying of a previous judgment, today's passage records a total reversal of preceding events. In Revelation 8:12, the Bible records a trumpet judgment whereby a third of the sun is darkened. The effect of this judgment is both disconcerting and terrifying but, evidently, the sun won't stay weakened for long! Instead, the fourth bowl judgment takes place as the sun's heat is intensified which results in the people on the earth being scorched.

What is of particular interest here is the foreshadowing that this text provides. We know, based on subsequent chapters in Revelation, that the fate of those who continue in their rebellion will be eternal agony in the lake of fire. The destination for all of those who refuse to bend the knee to God voluntarily is eternal torment by scorching. Today's passage is the foretaste of such a destination.

Of particular note is that effect this scorching has on the men and women who are left. Instead of repenting of their sin and turning to the Lord, they acknowledge Him as the source of their pain and yet still refuse to turn to Him! This is one of the strongest evidences in all of the Bible of the total depravity of mankind. Despite all of the evidence of God's power and authority, men and women simply refuse to obey Him in their pride and anger.

### **Putting This Together**

This proves, yet again, that salvation is not about providing enough evidence. Instead, it can be attributed to a radical and supernatural alteration of the sinful heart. If left to our own devices, we simply will not submit to God and embrace Him as our necessary and authoritative God and Savior. Instead, all men will see His authority and despise it by virtue of their desire to be their own sovereign in life.

The difference between you and I (as believers) and those people who experience scorching and curse God is not our intellect nor our natural superiority. No, the difference is God's grace alone. In His wonderful love and mercy, He chose to alter your heart such that what you would naturally despise (namely His power and authority) you now love and that which you would have never chosen (humble submission to His Gospel which is a confession of our ineptitude to save ourselves) you now readily embrace with joy. May this text lead you to worship as you reflect on the truth that save the grace of God so go you and I!

Day 345 - December 10

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

**Revelation 16:10-11**

In our passage today, God plunges the “throne of the beast and its kingdom” into darkness. The result was immense suffering and even more cursing of God.

Of particular note here is the cause of suffering. You’ll remember that the first bowl judgment resulted in sores on all the people. Now, in the fifth judgment we see the reference back to sores indicating that these painful spots were not immediately temporary. The implication of the text is that some of these judgments are more permanent than one might otherwise think.

Moving on, the Bible says that the result of the darkness is that people “gnawed on their tongues in anguish”. The reason for their anguish is both their physical pain but also, more than likely, depression that comes as a product of being engrossed in total darkness. There is no daylight to lift the spirits, there is no joy at all. Instead, there is anguish, anger and depression as the life that was promised by the “beast” (the Antichrist) is totally evaporating.

Putting This Together

There is another interesting connection between this judgment and that of the plagues recorded in Exodus. The ninth plague in Egypt (the one immediately before the slaughtering of the firstborn) was also one of total darkness. In both cases, the point was to illuminate the stark difference between the human ruler Pharaoh or the Antichrist and the One True God of the universe.

Whereas both of these temporal rulers claimed supernatural power and abilities, God alone possesses the capability of darkening the sun. In so doing, He exposes these fraudulent deities and unveils the drastic mistake of the people in ascribing their worship to mere men instead of to Him.

The lesson of the text is that we should be very careful whom we worship and hope in. Many men have claimed to be God and have offered promises that God alone can deliver but salvation is found in no one else. In fact, our relationship to the Lord will determine whether or not we experience darkness and pain forever or glorious light and joy for all eternity.

Day 346 - December 11

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:1**

The fifth bowl judgment mentioned the “beast”, specifically it refers to the beast and “its kingdom”. For this reason, we have an appropriate time to dive into some specifics of the Antichrist and his identity and work. Over the years, there have been numerous speculations and proclamations of the identity of the Antichrist but none of those predictions have proven accurate. Our goal for the next few days will not be to make more grandiose prophecies but to study the biblical teaching on the Antichrist and his role in eschatology.

Today’s text teaches us a truth regarding the coming of the Antichrist as the Bible teaches us that he will come up out of the sea. The original language communicates that this emerging from the sea will come at the behest of Satan who is referred to as the “dragon”. The point is that the Antichrist is the ultimate representative and messenger of Satan. This man won’t speak merely on his own authority or in light of intrinsic power, instead he will be the mouthpiece of the evil one.

There has been a good bit of debate about the significance of the sea. Does this text communicate that the Antichrist will emerge from the Pacific? Undoubtedly the answer is no, instead Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 both communicate that the beast comes out of the “abyss”. The abyss is a term that always symbolizes hades or the realm of the condemned and so it is best to understand John’s language here as symbolic of the Antichrist’s origin in the realm of evil.

The text also provides a window into his human origin. Whereas spiritually he is aligned from and descending from the realm of the demonic, from an earthly perspective he will rise out of a conglomeration of the world’s military power. The horns symbolize power and strength to attack and the number 10 is a symbolic number representing the world’s military might (see Daniel 7:7 & 24).

The diadems signify his royal authority and the blasphemous names on his heads are symbolic of the fraudulent claim he will make of deity. Like many dictators before him, the Antichrist will claim to be divine and encourage and demand worship from the world.

### **Putting This Together**

This means that we can expect the Antichrist to arise out of the nations. He will be known and recognized as a mighty warrior and esteemed commander even as he slowly demands worship and obedience to his edicts.

Day 347 - December 12

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:2**

Today's passage records for us some of the details of the empire that the Antichrist will establish and rule. It is important to note that the symbolism employed by John in this passage is understood in light of Daniel 7:3-7. The three animals are meant to denote characteristics of various empires that have gone before the Antichrist, each of them represents some of the most impressive and enduring qualities that contributed to each dynasty's success. The overarching point of this verse is that the Antichrist will establish a truly dominant empire in a short amount of time.

The lion is symbolic of the unrivaled power of the Babylonian empire. The bear represents the stability and strength of the Persian Empire and the leopard symbolizes the swift and meteoric rise of the Greek Empire. Put together, the Antichrist's dynasty will be extremely powerful and strong, and it will rise in a very short amount of time.

It is important to point out that all of John's readers and all men and women who are aware of history throughout the ages would agree that these various empires were indeed unusually strong and impactful. John is not describing some small operation that has a modicum of characteristics like the Persians, Greeks, etc. He is talking about some of the most impactful dynasties and rulers in the course of human history.

This empire is not one that will build slowly, instead it will rise quickly as countries acquiesce to the Antichrist's demands and fall in line with his plan of attack. Those who get in the way will be slaughtered but most will simply recognize the strength and might of his forces and choose to side with him in his efforts to rule the world.

### **Putting This Together**

Essentially, John is telling us that this empire will be a composite of all of the most desirable traits of previous world orders. The Antichrist will not lead a small militia of radical militants nor will he be on the fringes of societal awareness. He will constitute THE figure in that moment in time and no one will be unaware of his identity or ascent. This is important because it should help us discern the ridiculous claims many have made about the rise of this man. When he comes, the world will know.

Day 348 - December 13

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:3**

How is it that this man can garner so much power in such a small amount of time? The answer is found, at least partially, in verse 3 of Revelation 13 as we read of the counterfeit miraculous signs that accompany this man's rise to prominence.

In order to understand how this Antichrist becomes so influential, it is important to understand the societal context in which this prophecy will take place. Remember, throughout the tribulation, death will become even more prominent than it is now. Great disasters and judgments will befall the world and the need to escape such judgment will be obvious even to the most hardened sinner. For this reason, the "miracle" performed by the Antichrist will be intoxicating and extremely persuasive as he mimics Christ's resurrection claiming to overcome the grave himself.

John describes this man as having a "fatal wound" as if he had been slain that was now healed. The absurdity of this statement is obvious, one cannot, by definition, have a "fatal" wound that heals. In fact, the term fatal means a wound that brings death. The obvious point of John's passage is that the world will be led to believe that this man was mortally wounded, and even died, only to overcome such injuries and rise again.

This obviously is a satanic counterfeit of the resurrection performed by Christ and it will work to draw many people to the Antichrist as the Jesus they reject seems to have a rival. 2 Thessalonians 2 speaks of the Antichrist saying this man will be empowered by Satan to display wonders that serve the lie.

### **Putting This Together**

The Antichrist will be given rule and reign because of his fictitious claims of deity and assertions that he can bring peace. People will line up to serve and follow such a man, but all of his supposed signs and wonders will not be empowered by God but precipitated and catalyzed by Satan. While the world will be led astray, believers must remember that it is Christ alone who overcomes the grave and, therefore, only He can bring us peace before God who requires death as a payment for sin. The world often attempts to offer counterfeits to the joy and peace of the Lord but Christ alone is the conquering King and those who choose to follow the Antichrist will discover this reality but only after it is too late!

Day 349 - December 14

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:4**

One popular misconception about the Antichrist is that he will only be a worldly ruler. Over the centuries, many in the church have pointed to various kings and/or military leaders as the possible Antichrist but the picture of the “beast” in the Scripture is more multifaceted than mere earthly acclaim. Our text for today describes the world’s reaction to the perceived resurrection of the Antichrist. As this man is “fatally wounded” and subsequently appears to overcome death, he will receive worship from the world.

Some have attempted to state that this is not explicit but implicit worship. The point they try to make is that the Antichrist will not be worshipped in services or organized times but that he will be treasured above all things and therefore the prize of all lost men which constitutes worship. However, the biblical text is quite clear on the subject, the Antichrist will receive the explicit worship of the people as they sing of his supposed power and great deeds.

What is of particular interest here is the reality that John gets to as he helps us understand that the worship of the Antichrist is just worship of Satan as the Antichrist serves as the evil one’s veneer. It is the devil’s authority (as limited by God’s Sovereignty as it may be) that ultimately wins the acclaim of the people. The beast is yet another ploy by the devil to take worship away from God and gain it himself. He is the puppet master as it were who is pulling the strings thereby gaining the praise of the audience even as the crowd is fixated on the dummy.

### **Putting This Together**

This passage is both a severe reminder and a heartbreaking picture of the depravity of man. Remember, man has repeatedly and forcefully denied the power that God has displayed in the various judgments that are already performed. God has shown greater power than the Antichrist but because man naturally despises God, they reject true worship and fervently search for and worship something other than Him.

This text shows that people are not looking for the True God of the universe, they are looking for a substitute who does not contradict them in their sin and who promises the benefits of God without the necessary repentance and obedience to His precepts. In this sense, the people are not victims of the beast as much as they are exposed by his fraudulent claims of authority and requests for worship.



Day 350 - December 15

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:5-6**

Not only will the beast receive worship as if he was God, he will also elevate himself and demean the God of the universe by his arrogant and blasphemous words. This man will certainly paint himself to be a religious expert. He will not be content dabbling in the world of politics and foreign relations, instead he will exalt himself as a deity and seek to tear down the majesty and magnificence of God to all who will hear him.

Exactly how the Antichrist will blaspheme is not clear. It is possible that the Antichrist will make edicts and declarations requiring worship and/or regulations that mandate the persecution and humiliation of those who refuse to bow to him. Whatever the case may be, we can rest in knowing that this man will be incredibly arrogant. He will seek to exalt self at every turn, and he will work to eliminate anyone or anything that would take away from his perceived glory.

While this text is informative, it is also encouraging for two reasons. First, we must note that the term of his tyranny is limited. Even in a text such as this one, the Sovereignty of God shines through! The Bible says that his reign will be limited to “42 months”. The 42 months is exactly half of a 7-year tribulation and almost all scholars agree that this is the second half of the tribulation which leads to the Lord’s return.

Second, we must observe the reason for his limited run which is implied in the phrase “was given to him.” The obvious question is who gave him this authority? The answer is God, in His Sovereignty, allows the Antichrist to reign for a limited time. Even in this moment, as the Antichrist screams and rails against God, blaspheming His name, the Lord is Sovereign over him. The devil, and all those who do his bidding, never have the ability to make decisions without the input and guiding of God. While they may decry His authority and work to overcome His plan, they will never be successful. Instead, God utilizes their efforts to bring about His plan and He does so all the while condemning their rebellion as evil, which it is!

### **Putting This Together**

Our God is so great that He even controls the actions and tyranny of His most ardent opponents. It is this Sovereignty, combined with His goodness and trustworthiness, that gives us as believers true, lasting hope. Even though the world might seem as if it is spiraling out of control, we must rest in the truth that God reigns and that He is accomplishing His purposes in the midst of chaos.

Day 351 - December 16

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:7**

We see another hint of God's Sovereignty as we read that the plan and carrying out of persecution was "given him". The phrase denotes God's ability to bring to mind and even provide rightful conditions for this evil plan. Please do not misunderstand, God is not the author of evil, instead He merely allows evil to take place as wicked thoughts come to mind and are allowed to be carried out.

The plan that was given the beast is one of bloodshed and persecution for believers. There are two realities that deserve our attention in this text. The first truth is that persecution and even martyrdom are explicitly referenced in Scripture. I realize this is basic for some of you, but it bears repeating, God offers no guarantee of temporal safety to His children. It is entirely possible that standing for the Lord will require your earthly life! Now, the good news of the Gospel, and the very truths that make such a stand worthwhile, teach us that those who follow the Lord, even through death, will inherit eternal life with Him. Nevertheless, the false gospel that teaches that our victory comes as we dwell on this fallen planet is dangerously wrong.

Second, you will note that John explicitly mentions there being believers present on the earth. There are two schools of thought on this text. The first says that this suggests that the rapture does not take place before the tribulation. Remember, the immediately preceding verses state that the beast is given reign for 42 months which equates to half of the tribulation. It is entirely possible that this passage suggests that believers remain.

The second school of thought is that these are men and women who are converted during the tribulation but after the rapture. This way of thinking puts the chronological events in this order: rapture, rise of the Antichrist, false worship which coincides with others' conversion to the One True God which leads to conflict. The thought is that while many reject the power of God, others will turn to Him as they see His power manifest in the various judgments that unfold.

### **Putting This Together**

Either way we go, it is important to note that widespread martyrdom is coming! The Antichrist will be allowed to persecute the church, but why? One answer is simply this: the glory of God. You see, God gains glory as His people stand firm in the face of difficulty. As believers stand before the forces of evil and remain steadfast in their faith even as they are threatened with death, God is glorified. He is glorified as people confess that He is more precious than their life.

Day 352 - December 17

Eschatology: The Antichrist

### **Revelation 13:8**

We finish this portion of our study by examining the scope of the Antichrist's power. Our text for today informs us that everyone who dwells on the entire world will worship the Antichrist. Now, to be clear, it is imperative that we understand this passage in context. John is not saying that there will be no believers at this time, instead he is saying that those who refuse Christ and are known by their earthly dwelling will uniformly turn to worship this man.

This truth is important for many reasons but one reality that this text should help us with is discernment. As we have stated before, many people have claimed to locate the Antichrist but in so doing they ignore the clear biblical teaching on the subject. The Antichrist will not be a regionally influential political leader or a moderately popular charismatic religious figure. When this man rises to prominence, the whole world will know who he is to the degree that every single one of those who are not believers will worship him!

This should lead us as Bible believing Christians to be very careful in our proclamations. Over the years, the church has claimed the Pope or various political figures are the Antichrist but none of these men have even come close to the miraculous spectacles and militaristic might that the Antichrist will exercise.

The second note we must make is the natural occurrence of worship. All of us will worship something. In fact, one of the great theologian John Calvin's most prominent quotes is this, "the human heart is an idol factory". His point is clear, each of us WILL worship something or someone, the only question is who or what will gain our adoration?

### **Putting This Together**

The Antichrist will have a grip on the world unlike any man that has been seen before. He will be the global figure for a brief time period and will receive adoration and acclaim that is due to our God alone. Nevertheless, his rule and reign will come to an abrupt end, just as the Sovereign God has deemed.

I want to end this portion of our study with an admonition. While it is good and necessary to study this passage of Scripture, don't allow your time of contemplation to draw you away from the main truth which is this: God is Sovereign, and God is victorious. Even as John describes the setting and the conditions of the Antichrist's rule, he emphasizes again and again that the beast will only be as prosperous and as popular for as long as God deems it appropriate. Our Savior remains victorious and He will triumph over all evil including the Antichrist and the devil who empowers his tyranny.

Day 353 - December 18

Eschatology: The False Prophet

### **Revelation 13:11**

Satan is called the “father of lies” and for good reason! He is constantly misleading and misconstruing information in order to gain a foothold in people’s hearts and minds. One of the primary ways he lies is by counterfeit. He often attempts to mimic that which is good and holy by replacing the righteous with things that appear to be just as good.

In the case of studying the Antichrist, we see another counterfeit regime as we turn our attention to the false prophet. The prophet is not the Antichrist, instead he is a “right hand man” so to speak. He, along with the devil and the beast, unite to form what scholars have deemed the “unholy Trinity”. This is another example of Satan taking that which is good (our Triune God) and attempting to mimic God in a manner that is destructive and dishonest.

The false prophet is a man, just like the Antichrist, who is empowered by Satan. Some have attempted to claim that the false prophet is actually an institution or form of government which assists the Antichrist’s efforts, but the Greek simply does not allow for such an interpretation. Instead, the word “another” very clearly means one of the same kind as the Antichrist which tells us this prophet will be a mortal as well.

The prophet is described in two, seemingly contradictory ways. First, he has horns “like a lamb”. The lamb clearly denotes a seemingly gentle and harmless animal. He will be unassuming and appear harmless when he arrives on the scene. However, he will speak “as a dragon”. The dragon is synonymous with Satan. This prophet will speak the words of Satan even from the innocent veneer of a lamb.

### **Putting This Together**

We must understand that this is yet another strategy of the devil. After all, Satan masquerades as an angel of light all the while being a lion who seeks those he can devour. The lesson is that we need to discern based on more than just appearances. It is not ONLY the apparent mannerisms and disposition of a messenger that matters, in fact it is the content of what he or she says that is far more destructive than the manner in which they communicate.

The prophet will arrive on the scene and gain the world’s trust because he will appear to be a kind, gentle and compassionate soul. Nevertheless, his message will destroy those who embrace it, and his purpose will always be inclined to the will of the devil.

Day 354 - December 19

Eschatology: The False Prophet

### **Revelation 13:12-14**

Today's text shares with us the plan and mission of the prophet. Unlike the Antichrist, the prophet does not exist to garner worship for himself, instead his purpose is to win as many worshippers for the Antichrist as possible.

The prophet earns the attention of the world by performing miraculous signs. It is no stretch of the imagination to contemplate how this would garner attention. A man performing miracles and claiming to serve one who has overcome the grave would be a marvelous draw even in the most prosperous times of human history. When we contemplate the setting, the appeal of a death-defying leader who is accompanied by a worker of the miraculous becomes very obvious.

His plan of attack will be two-fold: first he will continually perform signs as a representative of the beast. We see this clearly in the text as John says he "makes fire come down". The term "makes" is in the present tense which implies a regular pattern of this miraculous sign. He will, evidently, continuously wow the earth with his apparent might and then he will leverage his influence in a specific way.

After wowing the planet, he will exhort them to worship the beast, even making idols of this man to bow down to in praise and adoration. Evidently, the prophet will leverage both his powers and the supposed resurrection of the beast to win the hearts and minds of the people who worship him. This shows us that the prophet's role in all of this is ancillary. He is not attempting to garner his own following, instead he is attempting to build the renown of the Antichrist, whom he will serve.

### **Putting This Together**

All of this could be very scary to consider, but even in this text there is a strong hint of God's Sovereignty. While the Bible describes the miraculous signs of the false prophet, notice what it says about his power. Verse 14 states "and by the signs that it (the false prophet) is allowed to work." Do you notice that last portion of the sentence? Allowed? The obvious question is allowed by whom?

The answer is quite clearly God! While God will utilize this man's deceit as a further judgment of the world, He will never lose control of the false prophet, or the beast, or the devil! Instead, all of them will work to further His plan even as they passionately rail against Him! Our God is indeed able to intend that which the depraved intend for evil for His good and righteous purposes.

Day 355 - December 20

## Eschatology: The False Prophet and the Mark of the Beast

### **Revelation 13:15-18**

Finally, the text describes the program or evil plan of the false prophet. In our text for today, we read of yet another miraculous feat as the false prophet is allowed (remember our conclusion yesterday?) to animate an otherwise inanimate idol that represents the beast. This miracle will stir up the populous even more, leading to his heinous program of marking all that would follow the Antichrist.

The program will culminate in the marking of each and every person on the planet. Those who refuse the mark will be persecuted and killed (in fact this could coincide nicely with 13:7 as it might be the catalyst for the Antichrist's killing believers). The term "mark" is a word that was used to denote images or names of the emperor on Roman coins. Similar to American currency, the Romans utilized money that was stamped with the image of their ruler. In the same way, men and women who submit to the beast will be stamped with his image (a mark of ownership) in some way.

Over the years, there has been much speculation regarding what this mark will look like and how it coincides with the numbers mention (666). The simple truth is that the Bible does not speak in any detail on the subject. We don't know what the mark will look like or how it will manifest itself, but we do know two things: first, those who are believers will very clearly discern its presence. This mark is not going to be "hidden" from us such that we would unknowingly take it! Instead, it will be very clear that this is a mark of the Antichrist's claim of ownership. Second, it is obvious that this mark will be required for life as no one will be able to buy or sell without the mark! This means that currency and commerce will be so governed by the Antichrist that all of the world must get on board with his claim of superiority or be left behind.

### Putting This Together

The false prophet will be leveraged by Satan to embolden all men to come forward and receive this mark based on the fictitious claims of the beast to offer them security and victory over the trouble that befalls them. His role will be supplemental, as the mouthpiece and main catalyst of Satan's evil plan and much pain will befall those who refuse him.

Nevertheless, God has marked each and every believer for salvation. His mark is really a seal, it's a seal of hope provided by the Holy Spirit. That Spirit lives inside of each of His people for the purpose of their sanctification but also their discernment. Believers need not worry that they will ultimately be duped by this evil regime, instead we trust that the Spirit of God will lead His children away from the mark and out of the throngs that foolishly fall at the feet of the Antichrist at the false prophets behest. When we read of the mark, we need not worry, instead we must rejoice at the knowledge that our great God will take care of all of our needs and lead us through the most tumultuous of seasons.

Day 356 - December 21

Eschatology: Cosmic Eschatology, The Tribulation

### **Revelation 16:12-16**

We return to the subject of the tribulation for just a few more days as we round the corner and head for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today's text details the sixth bowl judgment. As you remember, the bowl judgments are a series of the worst of God's fury unleashed on the planet up until this point.

At first glance, the sixth bowl judgment doesn't seem all that severe. The water of the Euphrates is dried up which makes way for the armies of the world to navigate their way to a place called Armageddon. There are a few notes of interpretation that we must delve into before we can draw many conclusions. The first note is that, evidently, the false prophet we learned about in our previous few devotions will dispatch minions who will do his bidding in stirring up the world to conflict against Christ. We are not sure of the exact content of their message, but we do know that their role is to flame the hatred of God such that nations will pool their resources in taking on the Lord.

Second, we read that they will meet at place called "Armageddon". The name Armageddon is a transliteration (meaning an exact rendering, letter by letter) of the Hebrew name which refers to the "mount of Megiddo". This was a critical geographical location as it constituted a key place to overlook the route of commerce between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Evidently, the geography allows for massive armies to assemble in the surrounding area, particularly the Plain of Esdraelon, and thus this is a perfect location for a truly unprecedented hoard of people to congregate and wage war on God.

### **Putting This Together**

Now, in light of the picture, we must deal with the judgment. As we said, this bowl judgment doesn't necessarily seem as severe as some of the previous events. After all, people aren't immediately scorched or plunged into darkness and the water has already been compromised so who cares if it dries up? How is this judgment as severe as the others?

We only arrive at the answer to this question when we think about the realities that this judgment allows. The simple truth is that God's wrath is often manifested in His permitting our base and rebellious premonitions to come to fruition. In this case, the judgment is simply this, God makes it possible for the nations to congregate together in their uprising against Him. He is clearing the way for their utter destruction and demise.

You know, sometimes God's greatest acts of mercy are those in which He does not allow us the desires of our still sinful heart. Conversely, His most severe acts of judgment are often when He just lets men and women go in their rebellion against Him.

**Revelation 16:17-21**

Today's judgment truly spells the beginning of the very end of the age as we read of the things that happen immediately before Christ's return. As usual, our format does not allow us to go into graphic detail of all the components of the various occurrences that take place during the seventh bowl judgment. Nevertheless, we will hit the high points as we seek to understand the comings and goings of this moment in the future.

The seventh bowl has three components to it beginning with a radical shaking of the topography. Verse 20 teaches us that islands and mountains "flee". Most scholars take this to be a poetic phrase that is meant to denote the effect of the radical shaking of the earth as a product of earthquake(s) mentioned in v. 18. Regardless of the immediate cause, the ultimate reason behind this shaking is God's displeasure. His earth, which He created to be totally good, has now been overrun by rebels and His "makeover" is a result of His fury.

Second, there will be an unprecedented onslaught of hail. The Bible describes the hail stones as weighing 100 pounds! This is yet another example of God's Sovereign power to bring to pass truly catastrophic and unimaginable pain and suffering on this sinful world.

Finally, the seventh bowl brings with it the declaration of the culmination of God's wrath. The phrase "it is done" denotes the materialization of the final "birth pang" (see Matthew 24) prior to the Lord's reappearing.

**Putting This Together**

Our text for today unveils details regarding the final moments prior to the Lord's return. The passage reminds us of one, undying truth: God will bring all His righteous indignation to bear on those who refuse to acknowledge Him. Folks, God is not going to make an exception for you! If you choose to reject His Son, you will pay for your rebellion. Those who are still alive in this moment will see the miraculous manifestation of His indignation but even those who pass away prior to His judgment and return will experience His wrath in hell.

The Gospel teaches us that Christ absorbed God's wrath on our behalf and, interestingly enough, this passage has a direct parallel to Christ's finished work as it is recorded in verse 19. In that portion of our text, the Bible makes mention of Babylon's drinking "the wine of the fury of His wrath". The image is one that should remind us of a similar phrase utilized by Christ in the garden when He pleaded with God to "let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26:39) just prior to His crucifixion.

The cup refers to the wrath of God that Christ absorbed in the place of His believers. He drank deeply of God's indignation, suffering the due punishment for our sin so that we would not have to experience the fury that was to come. However, this passage reminds us that those who do not accept His sacrificial atonement in our place will be made to drink of the cup themselves. The question is not whether God will exact due justice for our sins, the question is whether you and I will pay ourselves or whether we will trust in the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ on our behalf.



Day 358 - December 23

Eschatology: The Second Coming

### **Revelation 19:11**

We now turn our attention to the beginning of the climax of the book of Revelation. Remember, Revelation is not ultimately about the identity of the Antichrist or the exact details of every judgment, instead its real and ultimate goal is to remind us that Christ is our victorious Savior. Today's passage unveils this truth about Christ as we begin our journey of spending several days looking at the details of His reappearing.

We begin in verse 11 as we read of two realities that undergird our understanding of Christ's Second Coming. The first detail is that His reappearing will be physical in nature. John begins describing this future event by stating "I saw heaven opened, and behold..." The point of this portion of the Scripture is that Jesus' return will be something to behold! There will be no doubt that Christ has returned as He makes His grand physical re-entry into the world! His return will be bodily, and it will be glorious. No one will be distracted or shielded from His glory upon His arrival.

Second, we note the victorious nature of His Second Coming. The Bible describes Christ as returning on a white horse. The symbolism of this horse cannot be overlooked as it hearkens back to the traditional actions of victorious Roman generals. The white horse symbolized victory, and, in this case, it is victory over Satan and all of those who would continue to deny Christ of His rightful place of authority and worship in each person's life.

### **Putting This Together**

These two truths provide a glorious peak into the majesty and greatness of our Savior. First, this text reminds us that Christ is the centerpiece of all creation. His return will be the event of all history and it will coincide with the grand entrance that befits the Messiah. Whereas many Jews (and others) missed Christ's first appearing due to their preconceived notions of His arriving, there will be no mistaking His glory this time around.

Second, the text reminds us of His Sovereignty. He is coming to battle on a white horse! Remember, the white horse symbolizes victory and yet He is declaring victory before the battle begins. How can He do such a thing? Is He arrogant? The answer is a resounding "no"! He declares victory because He cannot be overcome! There is absolutely no scenario whereby our great God can be defeated and so He rides into battle victorious as if the result has already been decided because... it already has!

Day 359 - December 24

Eschatology: The Second Coming

### **Revelation 19:11**

Today's devotion dives further into our text from yesterday as we examine the two names that are given to Christ in this passage. The Bible says that He is known first as "Faithful". The term is easy enough to understand but its application to Christ is quite enlightening. Jesus is "faithful" in the sense that He is absolutely dependable to make good on all that He promises. Remember, believers have lived for centuries looking forward to this day and living in light of Christ's promise of triumph without experiencing the totality of His victory over the world. People have been martyred and persecuted for their belief in Christ and yet, the Faithful One has promised us that He will return to avenge our unjust treatment and to establish His Kingdom that we live for in the present.

Second, Christ is known as "True". He is Truthful in the sense that this return was promised by Him and now has come to fruition. That which Jesus promises will come to fruition. If Christ has made a pronouncement, we can take it to the bank that He will indeed deliver on His Word. There has never been anyone as truthful and trustworthy as Christ. You will note that Jesus is not merely "truthful" instead He is true. He is the very benchmark by which we evaluate truthfulness. He is the epitome and originator of truth and, therefore, He is worthy of our trust at all times and in all situations or seasons of life.

Finally, we must note these realities in light of their context. The Bible does not paint Christ as "Faithful and True" only in light of His promises to believers, instead He is Faithful and True in His warnings and judgments against unbelievers as well. When He returns, He will "judge" and "make war" against those who have rejected Him just as He predicted.

### **Putting This Together**

This text serves as both a wonderful piece of hope for believers and a stark warning for the lost. When Christ comes again, He will do so as a righteous judge. Those who have lived their lives on their own accord will be called to suffer the consequence for their transgression and there will be no bribery or corruption in Christ's proverbial courtroom. His faithfulness and truthfulness will be the most terrifying and disheartening reality on the universe to those who choose to reject Him.

Conversely, His trustworthiness and faithfulness is the best news on the planet to those who love and obey Him. We can know, even now, that He will set things right and that His Word that we are His children, by faith, will stand the test of time. Those who have trusted in Christ and accepted Him as their Savior can know, based on His trustworthiness and faithfulness, that nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This means that the day of His return will be a glorious one for His redeemed!

Day 360 - December 25

Eschatology: The Second Coming

### **Revelation 19:12**

It is fitting that we talk about Jesus Second Coming on the day in which we commemorate and celebrate His First Coming. Christmas is an occasion of joy and worship for the believer. It is a day that we remember the coming of our Lord in a meek and lowly manger in a town of relative obscurity to ordinary parents on an otherwise typical day. The Second Coming, in marked contrast, will be a moment in which the Lord returns in wonderful majesty with the appropriate splendor and recognition on an absolutely unique and atypical day!

Whereas Jesus first appeared as an infant in obscurity, He will return as the conquering King in splendor. This is the point of our devotion today as we reflect on John's words as He describes Christ as wearing a crown with "many diadems". The term refers to a ruler's crown but what is of special interest to the reader is that Jesus will have many, not just one, diadems.

Most scholars agree that this is a reference to Jesus' triumph over all nations. He will rightfully wear the crown of all of the Kingdoms of this earth, leaving no land or territory unscathed or independent of His rule and reign. On this day, Jesus will ascend to His throne as THE ruler of the planet and no one will ever knock Him off of His perch.

### **Putting This Together**

The first coming of Christ left many onlookers confused. They simply lacked the category for a lowly Messiah. How could this little boy who was born in such meager circumstances really be the conquering Savior of the world? The question was born out of a right, but misunderstood, interpretation of the identity and ultimate triumph of the Messiah. The truth is that this baby would conquer death and then, much later, return to overcome all of the rulers of the world who opposed His rightful reign as the only true King.

However, the days of the misunderstandings and slights of Christ are almost over. There is coming a moment, in the not so distant future, whereby Jesus will come again in the splendor many expected upon His first arrival. On that day, the Herod's of the world will be overthrown, and His people will be liberated from the unjust and immoral rulers of the world once and for all. So, while we celebrate the Savior's birth today, may we also look forward to His majestic return whereby all the problems we face in this world will be conquered by Him alone!

Day 361 - December 26

Eschatology: The Second Coming

### **Revelation 19:12**

Today's passage reminds us of the piercing omniscience of Christ. The term omniscience (one I hope you remember!) refers to the reality that Christ knows literally everything. In this text, the Bible expresses this truth by describing Christ's eyes as "like a flame of fire". The idea in mind here is that Christ's eyes, like fire, melt away all of the veneers and structures erected to hide our true sinfulness in such a way that reality is exposed and evident to Him.

The Bible regularly utilizes the metaphor of fire in terms of judgment and purification. Fire both destroys that which is of no repute and it purifies and brings to light those things which are truly valuable. On the day of Christ's return, Jesus will see through all of the smokescreens and futile attempts to hide depravity in such a way that He sees the very heart and substance of each person. This will lead to His right and justified judgments as we will see in just a few moments.

The metaphor of fire is also utilized to express the process whereby things are tested and either discarded or preserved. Upon Jesus' return, the sheep will be separated from the goats as the fiery gaze of Christ sees the true identity of each person. Those who are in Christ and, therefore, preserved in righteousness will be spared and those who are not in Christ, both the blatant rebels and the religious hypocrites, will be identified and destroyed.

### **Putting This Together**

Looking at Jesus will be akin to looking at One who is staring straight into your soul. There will be no avoiding evaluation and nowhere to run that is way from His glorious and terrifying gaze. This ability to see to the very heart of every man is a major reason for His qualification as judge. You see, unlike normal human beings, Jesus will have all the facts about everything.

Whereas you or I could be fooled or make a judgment in ignorance, Christ will have the ability to know literally everything about everyone. This makes Him a supremely qualified judge who has no need of hearing a case argued and litigated by others. Instead, Jesus will make judgments based on His impeccable knowledge and insight which, when combined with His other attributes leads to right decisions that even those who have rejected Him will be forced to agree with on the day of their judgment.

Day 362 - December 27

## Eschatology: The Millennial Reign

### Revelation 20:1-6

Time does not allow us to walk through all of the details of the Second Coming and Christ's triumph. It must suffice to say that He returns and succeeds in conquering all nations. The result of His victory will be the judgment of His enemies (see Revelation 20:11-15) and the "millennial reign" for His children.

The Millennial Reign is a topic that is hotly debated by various sects of believers. There are at least a few opinions on the topic, but it seems best to interpret this passage as a literal 1000-year period. The general rule of biblical interpretation is that we should understand a text in its literal teaching unless there is some compelling reason not to do so. In this case, it makes perfect sense to state that Jesus will return and set up shop on this planet for 1000 years. This reign will be marked by the absence of Satan and the ruling of both Christ and His followers.

First, the Bible makes reference to the fact that Satan will be thrown into "the pit". The phrase denotes a place of holding where Satan will be retained but this is not the final destruction of the evil one. Instead, the next portion of Revelation 20 teaches us that he will be unleashed one more time for a final rebellion before he is eternally judged. Still, this millennial reign will be undoubtedly more peaceful because of Christ's rule and Satan's absence!

Second, the Millennial Reign will be characterized both by Christ's triumph and the subsequent victory of His people. Those who are in Christ will enjoy His victory with Him, even ruling over the world underneath His ultimate authority. Those who pass away in Christ will be resurrected, raptured to meet Him, subsequently return with Him and then rule alongside of Him for 1000 years on this planet! What a day to look forward to!

### Putting This Together

There is much to speculate about regarding this time period. Some wonder how Jesus could overcome the world and subdue His enemies only to be confronted with one final battle with the nations (see v. 7-8). There have been a few theories as to where this army of dissenters comes from with the most convincing hypothesis being that believers have children of which some are not saved and rise up to reject Christ. While this might seem far-fetched, we must remember that Satan was once an angel and, therefore, privy to behold all of God's majesty and splendor only to reject Him.

The larger point is not the detail however, instead the overarching truth is that we have this season to look forward to in our future! I cannot wait to see Christ return and rule with Him (and you, I hope!) for all eternity!

Day 363 - December 28

Eschatology: The New Heaven and New Earth

### **Revelation 21:1-2**

The final battle with Satan will take place after the Millennial Reign and then God will replace this worn universe and planet with a new and glorious heaven and earth! The description we read in Revelation 21 is meant to help us conceptualize this New Heaven and Earth which will be our final and eternal dwelling place with Christ forevermore.

There are several truths we could consider in this passage but let me highlight a few over the next few days. For our purposes today, notice that this new creation will be prepared by God and, therefore, totally unblemished. One of my favorite things to observe in the Scripture is the full-circle, over-arching narrative of the Bible.

The Scripture begins with a marvelous account of the beauty and “goodness” of God’s first creation. This creation was perfectly good and suited for us, but it also had, built within it, the possibility of being marred. While it was “good” the evil one was allowed to creep in, and sin soon followed which marred the entirety of the universe.

This “New Heaven and Earth” will be perfectly created yet again but this time without the possibility of falling. It will be a physical place, not an immaterial existence, which was prepared for us by God as a “bride adorned for her husband”. It will be perfectly suited to express God’s glory and majesty and, therefore, will be a place that is fully satisfying and pleasing to each and every person who lives in His presence.

### **Putting This Together**

The reality of the physical New Heaven and Earth should breed a sense of desire and longing in our hearts. Contrary to many cartoons and misconceptions, heaven will not be an immaterial place where our souls float in the clouds while we play on a harp! Instead, it will be a physical location that was especially prepared by God for our joy even as we bring Him glory for His wisdom and power in saving us and creating such marvelous accommodations. We will enjoy all things about this place and nothing evil or difficult will exist to harm our experience within this new dwelling place.

Day 364 - December 29

Eschatology: The New Heaven and New Earth

### **Revelation 21:3-4**

Our goal in this study of the New Heaven and New Earth is twofold, first we want to seek to understand the characteristics of our future home and second, we want to see the congruity of the biblical narrative. Our text today records components of both as we read yet again of the future we have to look forward to as believers.

First, it is encouraging to note that the New Heaven and New Earth will not be characterized by sin, evil, pain or suffering. The brokenness that is so pervasive in our current world will not follow us into the next. Instead, there will be no more crying or pain or brokenness in our relationship with our great God.

It is hard for us to fathom such tranquility and security but that is only because we are products of a world that is desperately broken. In our future home, pain will be eradicated and only joy and happiness will abound!

Second, we must see the beautiful completeness of the Scriptures yet again as we contrast Genesis 3 (the fall of man and creation) with Revelation 21. Whereas God cast Adam and Eve out of the garden due to their sin, He will gather us back into an even greater "garden" (the New Earth) where we will be in His presence forevermore.

Whereas the earth was plunged into pain and darkness and brokenness by virtue of man's sin, the New Heaven and Earth will be restored to the wonderful and perfect paradise that Eden once was designed to be.

### **Putting This Together**

This wonderful utopia is made possible by the very presence of God alone. God is not a secondary or tertiary aspect of the New Heaven and Earth instead God is the very pinnacle and reason for the joy that will abound. When we reach heaven, we will forever be with our Maker in right relationship with Him. He alone is the source of true joy and He will never again be gone from our sight when we join Him in eternity!

Day 365 - December 30

My Prayer for You

### **Psalm 1**

As we wind down, I want to thank you for taking the journey with me. It has been a dream of mine to write in this format and it is a wonderful blessing to know that you have read along as we journey through biblical teaching. Our last two devotions will be my prayers and exhortations for you!

Today's Psalm is one of my absolute favorites and it constitutes a wonderful goal for all of us to aspire to as we study the Word of God. It would be a fair question to ask, why spend all this time studying the Bible? The answer is multifaceted but certainly high on the list would be the truth that God's Word has a way of altering our thoughts and anchoring our souls such that blessing results and the difficult seasons of life do not overwhelm us!

Psalm 1 teaches us that a man is blessed who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked but instead meditates on God's truth as his source of counsel and instruction. The contrast is clear, but it is profoundly important. The simple truth is that everyone is instructed by something or someone. The choice we have in life is not whether or not we will be autonomous, the choice is who or what will influence and shape our thoughts and actions.

In this text, the clear effect of walking in the precepts of the Lord is flourishing even in difficult moments. The primary way that we can ensure our endurance in the difficult times and seasons is through internalizing the Scriptures which leads us to a mature and hope-filled view of our God. He alone can help us navigate life and He alone is the reason for joy.

### **Putting This Together**

Brother and sister, I pray that you will continue to study. I pray that you have grown to love God's Word even more. I pray that you are storing up the truth of the Word in your heart so that you are prepared for the difficult moments. I pray that you are not sitting under the foolishness of mere men, but you are actively seeking the Lord through His Word.

In short, I pray that you will prosper (not necessarily materially) as you grow in your knowledge and understanding of God's identity and His plan for your life!



Day 366 - December 31

My Exhortation to You

**Philippians 4:8**

Our final devotion is my final plea to you. In this life, we are bombarded with all kinds of information and outlets vying for our attention. Most of them are full of hate-filled, corrupt, unprofitable and frankly, depraved, information and ideas. It is easy to be swept into the endless news cycle or brought underneath the sway of charismatic news hosts.

The effect of dwelling on these things is catastrophic but the command of the Bible is to put away that kind of information in favor of those things which are good, pure and lasting. This is Paul's admonition to the Philippian believers and it most certainly applies today. Paul's desire is for the disciples to spend more of their time thinking on the loveliness, trustworthiness, vastness and Sovereignty of God (amongst other topics) than on the depravity and corruption of the world.

The key to hope-filled living is not dwelling in the world's mire, it is raising our eyes to the God who will overcome the swamp! My prayer is that this year has helped fix your eyes on that God. I pray that you know Him better and that you are better equipped to trust Him by virtue of His revelation of His attributes.

Now, the exhortation is that you would spend ample amounts of time and energy thinking on these things. Frankly, it would do us all good to turn off the news, disconnect from social media, set down our cell phones and commune with God Almighty. Brothers and sisters, think about and talk to this great God often! Love Him and serve Him and meditate on Him and His Word and you will find your disposition raised and your hope overflowing! Oh how I exhort you not to let this be the end of your journey of studying and contemplating the things of God. May this year-long devotion serve as a springboard for your continued growth and joy!

The truth of the matter is that we have merely scratched the surface of the truth and hope God has for us in His Word. One man described the study of theology as like trying to drink the water of the ocean through a straw. As hard and as long as we try, there will always be more to think about and more to learn. I pray that this year has whet your spiritual appetites and I exhort you to allow the good and holy truths to be the fixation of your life and heart!