

REVELATION
UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3
THE FINAL CURTAIN

Revelation 14–22

SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES



INSIGHT FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Pastor Chuck Swindoll



INSIGHT FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

REVELATION: Unveiling the End, Act 3

The Final Curtain

Welcome to Our Biblical Kitchen!

Studying God's Word for Spiritual Nourishment

People hunger for spiritual truth, but they often have trouble finding it. Pastor Chuck Swindoll counts it his profound privilege to offer spiritual nutrition found only in God's Word—nutrition every soul needs and craves. Solid Bible-teaching stirs people to follow Jesus, praise God, trust in God's plan, and rest in His care. A constant supply of such spiritual nourishment is vital for walking with Christ.

But wouldn't you like to cook up your own biblical meals?

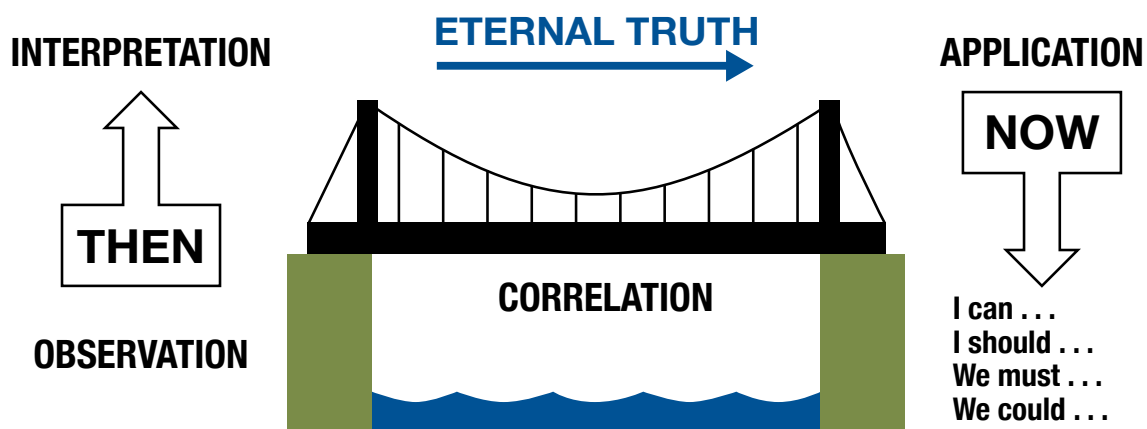
It's easier than you think! Don't be intimidated. You can become your own spiritual chef, and Insight for Living Ministries wants to help you in this journey. The first thing you need is the right method. In his book, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck helpfully explains his simple and reliable Bible-study process, which he learned in seminary and cultivated through his decades of ministry.

In the book, he explains four steps to always use to study a passage from God's Word:

- 1) **Observation:** Thoroughly reading the passage to discover what it says
- 2) **Interpretation:** Deeply understanding the passage to determine what it means
- 3) **Correlation:** Carefully comparing multiple passages to know how they relate
- 4) **Application:** Personally applying the passage to live by its truth

It's important to follow these steps without skipping or rushing. Would a chef leave out an ingredient in his recipe, skip a step in the cooking process, or cut the required bake-time short? No. The meal wouldn't taste as good. Likewise, it's important to perform all four steps to really grasp a biblical passage and incorporate it into your life. Here's a diagram to illustrate the process, and on the next page is a chart to summarize how you can apply each of the four steps.

Searching the Scriptures Steps



REVELATION: Unveiling the End, Act 3
The Final Curtain

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES
Bible-Study Review Chart

O B S E R V A T I O N

Read the passage thoroughly.	<p>Observe the passage by examining:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The who, what, where, when, why, and how components 2) What you can see, touch, taste, hear, and smell 3) The logical connections, flow of thoughts, and range of subjects 4) What's repeated, emphasized, related, alike, and unlike 5) What's written before and after
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I N T E R P R E T A T I O N

Understand the passage deeply.	<p>Interpret the passage by studying:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The cultural, biblical, and historical context 2) The literary genre and use of language 3) The author's intent for writing 4) The author's beliefs, assumed and stated, about God and life
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C O R R E L A T I O N

Compare the passage carefully.	<p>Correlate the passage by comparing it with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Scriptures that correspond in historical events 2) Scriptures that correspond in theological principles 3) Scriptures that correspond in application points
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A P P L I C A T I O N

Internalize the passage personally.	<p>Apply the passage by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Reflecting on your daily habits, attitudes, and relationships 2) Inviting the Lord to reveal what you should stop and start 3) Asking specific questions about how you should respond 4) Pursuing new paths that lead to wholeness and spiritual health 5) Aligning your beliefs, desires, thoughts, and actions with God's truth and way
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*I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches.
I will study your commandments and reflect on your ways.
I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word.
(Psalm 119:14–16 NLT)*

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What Are *Searching the Scriptures* Bible Studies?

Insight for Living Ministries creates *Searching the Scriptures* studies using the Bible-study methods from Chuck's book. These studies accompany each of Chuck's sermons, focusing on the same Bible passages Chuck focused on, and are like recipes for using your biblical cooking skills. They help you navigate your way through God's Word so that you can better understand God's truth and deepen your relationship with Jesus.

Each study follows this path:

- 1) **Introduction**—learn the topic and relevance of the study
- 2) **Prepare Your Heart**—open yourself to God to receive His Word
- 3) **Turn to the Scriptures**—step into the context of the passage
- 4) **Observation**—look at what the passage says
- 5) **Interpretation**—determine what the passage means
- 6) **Correlation**—compare the passage to other passages
- 7) **Application**—respond to the truth you learned
- 8) **Final prayer**—pray to conclude your time in His Word

How Can You Use *Searching the Scriptures* Studies?

Insight for Living Ministries creates these studies to be used in a variety of ways. They are available as downloadable PDFs at insight.org/studies and through our mobile app. You can type your notes directly into the digital file, or you can print them. Here are the ways folks like to use these resources:

- 1) **Overview.** In 15 minutes, you can read through a *Searching the Scriptures* study to glean Chuck's key points from his sermon and the biblical passage.
- 2) **Deep Study.** You can spend 2–3 hours, all at once or across a few days, digging into the biblical verses and consulting our recommended resources.
- 3) **Small Groups.** These studies ask questions focused on the biblical text as well as on life application. They're perfect for guiding and fostering a small-group discussion.
- 4) **Sermon Preparation.** Pastors and teachers can use these studies for generating ideas during their sermon preparation.
- 5) **Bible-Study Training.** Those who are preparing for ministry can learn how to study the Bible and use these studies for practice or for help delivering a devotional.

Download the Digital File of this Study Guide





INSIGHT FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

REVELATION: Unveiling the End, Act 3

The Final Curtain

Fifteen Studies on Revelation 14–22

Pastor Chuck Swindoll's final segment of a three-part series on Revelation wraps up his deep dive into the last book of the Bible.

Revelation—Unveiling the End, Act 3: The Final Curtain reveals Jesus in His full splendor as the King of kings, the first and the last, and the only door to heaven.

Renew your mind with the truth of God's Word and cling to the joyful, hope-filled ending for those who put their faith in Christ!

1. A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

2. God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

3. The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8

4. The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

5. Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

6. The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

7. From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

8. Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

9. Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10

10. The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15

11. Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

12. Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

13. Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

14. Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

15. Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21



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REVELATION
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INSIGHT FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY ONE

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

The angel sounds his message and reveals that God takes full responsibility. I love that this grand book has a great ending. I'm so old-fashioned . . . I love it when stories end well.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THROUGHOUT history, many cultures have celebrated seasons of plenty and peace, progress and prosperity through *parades*. As you stand by and experience the celebration, you can't help but feel the joy bursting from the beat of the drums, the music of the band, the flow of the dancers, and the cheers of the crowd.

In the ancient world, when one nation defeated another, the conquering army would march back to its capital in a procession led by their returning king. The whole city awaited eagerly for their arrival. When the masses glimpsed the army parade, they would run out of the city gates to greet the warriors and celebrate.

Nestled within the center of the book of Revelation is the picture of a heavenly parade made up of angelic beings singing songs of hope and raising shouts of praise to God in celebration of His victory over Satan, sin, and death.

You might be surprised, however, to see this heavenly march is *not* led by the image of a mighty warrior-king. No, the one at the front of the crowd is a slaughtered Lamb, and following Him are those who suffered and died for Him. Yet this is no funeral procession. Rather, it is an everlasting, joy-filled parade that proclaims the good news of the Lamb to the whole world.

Let's join the celebration!



A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13



PREPARE YOUR HEART

When John described his vision of the heavenly throne room, he noted that the angelic beings worshiped God “day after day and night after night” (*Revelation 4:8*). Take a moment now to participate in the eternal song of praise to your good and loving Father.

Father, I praise You for what You have done and for what You will one day do. Yet I recognize that You are working right now to do something amazing in and through me. Help me yield to the Holy Spirit to transform me as I open Your Word today. In Jesus’ triumphant name I pray. Amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Lamb’s main foe in the war depicted in Revelation is the dragon—Satan—along with its two closest companions: the beast and the false prophet (see *Revelation 13*). As with any war, each side bore a sort of insignia that allowed everyone to know who stood on which side. According to *Revelation 13:16–17*, how did the world know who fought for the dragon?

Those who bore this mark did so only because they worshiped the beast and swore allegiance to the dragon. In *14:1–13*, John welcomed the slaughtered Lamb’s army in its full heavenly glory. And though John included no battle record, this army proceeded in joy because the Lamb had already claimed the victory.



Observation: The Procession of the Lamb

As you read of the procession of this slaughtered Lamb in *Revelation 14:1–13*, imagine yourself in the heavenly crowd participating in the celebration of the Lamb’s victory. Hear the songs of praise. Feel the joy. And savor the moment.¹

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

A Portrait of Triumphant Saints—Revelation 14:1–5

According to *Revelation 14:1*, where was the Lamb standing and who followed His victory parade? What uniform did this army wear that distinguished it from the beast’s soldiers?

Like any great parade, this heavenly celebration was accompanied by music—a symphony of “many harpists” (*Revelation 14:2*) and a “great choir” (*14:3*) as loud as “the roar of mighty ocean waves” (*14:2*). According to *14:3*, who participated in this chorus? According to *14:4–5*, why were they considered worthy to sing this song of victory?

A Series of Heavenly Announcements—Revelation 14:6–13

The slaughtered Lamb led the march through heaven, and behind Him walked the four living beasts, the twenty-four elders, and the 144,000 saints. Next in line were three angels, who each added his unique voice to the celestial chorus.

In *Revelation 14:6*, John saw an angel carrying what he describes as the “eternal gospel” (NASB)—the message of the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection that is available for *all* people. What message did the *first* angel proclaim regarding this eternal gospel in *14:7*?

What message of judgment did the *second* angel proclaim against Mount Zion’s rival city in *14:8*?

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

What message of doom did the *third* angel proclaim in *Revelation 14:9–11*? What consequence would befall those who worshiped the beast, accepted his wicked mark, and marched in the dragon's army?

Finally, the music concluded with a voice from heaven. What message of blessing did this voice proclaim in *14:13*?

When you walk away from a parade, your heart sometimes carries with it new emotions—a weightiness of the significance of the celebration. Now let's explore the immediate significance of this parade for all who follow Christ.



Interpretation: Following the Lamb

In interpretation, we use our observations to determine the meaning of the text and to discern timeless theological truths. To aid you in the process, use your Bible-study tools, like Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.² Keep these resources handy as you answer the following questions.

In the Lamb's heavenly procession, the 144,000 sealed believers followed Him wherever He went (*Revelation 14:4*). Based on the context of this passage, *how* did these believers follow and imitate the Lamb? What does it look like to follow Jesus—not only as the risen King but also as the slaughtered Lamb—today? For help answering this question, see *Revelation 14:12–13*.

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

The series of heavenly announcements commenced with a proclamation of the “eternal gospel” for all people (*Revelation 14:6*). The term *gospel* refers to “good news.” The declarations that followed the first, however, sounded more like bad omens than glad tidings. In what sense were the messages of the second and third angel truly good news—not just for believers but for all of creation?

If you and I are corrupt like our times are corrupt, we will have no message for those who are lost. If our mouths are filled with lies and if we are known as individuals who lack integrity, no one will listen to what we have to say about the Lord Jesus. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Zion versus Babylon

Revelation 14:1–13 depicts two rival armies: the Lamb of Mount Zion (*Revelation 14:1*) and the dragon of Babylon (*14:8*). Each of these locales plays essential significance in the Old Testament, and the contrast between these two regions would have jumped out to John’s readers. Let’s correlate these themes to understand John’s message.

Read *Psalms 48:1–8*. What does this passage reveal about Mount Zion? What city was built there? What is God’s relationship with this mountain? What happens to enemy armies that seek to assault Mount Zion?

What does Babylon represent? Remember, Babylon was the wicked empire that desecrated Jerusalem, dragged the people of God into exile, demanded they adopt pagan practices, and defied the one true God with their idolatrous worship. If you have time, read through *Daniel 1–6* to see these atrocities in action.

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

How would John's readers have thought about this image of Babylon? How should Christians reading Revelation today understand the symbolism of a fallen Babylon?

How does seeing this contrast between Mount Zion and Babylon help you better understand the message of *Revelation 14:1–13* and the Lamb's victory parade?

Babylon represents the political, economic, and religious system of the day. That system is wicked to the core—totally evil. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: The Leader of the Parade

In John's vision, he saw the slaughtered Lamb *first*. Jesus led this procession down from Mount Zion to claim victory over Satan, sin, and death through His own death and resurrection. The image of this parade reveals an essential timeless truth that we can apply to our lives today:

GOD TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY

Though it may feel like Satan, that sinister dragon, has his claws wrapped around this world, we know that Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb, will claim final victory and set right everything Satan has corrupted. We know this because God is *good* and because He is *sovereign*.

How does this truth offer comfort to your soul as you find yourself caught in the crossfire of the war of the Lamb and the dragon? What does it look like practically for you to step out in faith in light of this truth?

A Surprising Preview of Coming Attractions

Revelation 14:1–13

Although God takes full responsibility, we must still decide and act, risk and respond. Our actions matter! What role does your own personal accountability play in the grander picture of God's sovereign rule? In what areas of your life is He leading you to take responsibility for your thoughts, words, and actions?

The Lamb has won the victory! Let this truth cause joy to erupt in your heart. But don't keep the excitement to yourself. Share this truth with disheartened believers and with discouraged nonbelievers. Invite them to join the parade and march together into an eternal celebration of what God has done for us.



A FINAL PRAYER

As you conclude your time in God's Word, say this prayer from Pastor Chuck:

Thank You, our Father, for taking full responsibility over our lives and our times. Thank You for the reassurance that You are never confused, never frustrated, never at a loss to know what to do next, never surprised, never learning, never in need, always faithful, always sovereign, always good, always just. You are over it all and in it all and through it all. In Jesus' victorious name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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Insight for Living Ministries

Study 1 • Page 7

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY TWO

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

The hour fast approaches when Jesus Christ will return from heaven with power and in great glory. All the misconceptions about who Jesus was and is will instantly be dispelled, and the whole world will be forced to face the full biblical truth about the person of Christ, the Savior who not only died for our sins but is also coming again to judge the living and the dead. We cannot merely emphasize the first coming of Christ as prophet and sacrifice; we must also embrace His coming as judge and king.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE a sickle. That long, sharp, crescent-moon-shaped blade attached to a wooden handle. What ideas come to mind as you envision this object?

For those living in agrarian societies, the sickle is nothing more than a farming device—just as ordinary as any rake or hoe. In a pinch, this tool can double as a weapon. For some, the sickle is more of a political or even religious symbol. Perhaps most infamous is the image of the Grim Reaper: that fictional personification of death whose face is shrouded in a robe and whose hand is ready to bear down on helpless souls with that massive blade. A gruesome thought!

In the book of Revelation, John used the powerful symbol of a sickle to describe how Jesus will harvest souls from the earth. It, too, is a sobering thought. Yet this image depicts God's mercy and His desire to call all to come to Him in repentance. Evil will not always rule and ruin His handiwork.



God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you turn to the Scriptures today, say a prayer to your Father in heaven. Ask Him to illuminate His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit so you can respond to Him and grow in Christlikeness. Write your prayer in the space below.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The dramatic plot of Revelation centers around the war between the Lamb and the dragon. In [Revelation 14:1–13](#), John demonstrated that the Lamb has claimed victory over the dragon . . . even though the battle still rages on. In [14:14–20](#), John looked ahead to that day of God's swift judgment when He says, "Enough is enough!"



Observation: Two Harvests

John's vision in [Revelation 14:14–20](#) is actually composed of *two* visions. Take your time as you read and observe these visions.¹ They are remarkably similar, so be sure to pay attention to both the similarities *and* the differences. Comparing and contrasting these visions will allow you to come to a stronger understanding of their meaning in the interpretation phase of our study.

The Grain Harvest—Revelation 14:14–16

Whom did John see at the beginning of his vision in [Revelation 14:14](#)? How did he describe this figure? Remember, "Son of Man" is a common moniker for Jesus in Revelation. For a refresher on the meaning of this title, see [Daniel 7:13–14](#).

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

As John peered up into the celestial clouds in *Revelation 14:15*, he saw an angelic figure proceeding from the temple. What did this angel say to the Son of Man?

According to *14:16*, what did the Son of Man do in response to the angel's call?

Though John never used the term “grain” in these verses, his original Greek-speaking readers would have envisioned Jesus reaping a wheat field because the Greek term we translate as “harvest” refers specifically to a harvest of grain.

The Grape Harvest—Revelation 14:17–20

John then saw two additional angels in *Revelation 14:17–18a*. How did John describe each of these angels? From where did each angel come?

First Angel: _____

Second Angel: _____

What did the *second* angel say to the *first* angel in *14:18b*?

According to *14:19*, what did the *first* angel do in response to the *second* angel's call? What were the results of this action in *14:20*?

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

John painted a picture that may feel foreign to us, though it likely would have looked very familiar to his original audience. To make wine, farmers would harvest grape clusters and collect them in a large vat called a winepress. Then, they would clean their feet, step into the vat, and *trample* the grapes to burst the fruit and release the juice. These large containers included channels that would filter out the flesh and allow the sweet juice to gather in a separate container.

So what do these harvest images mean? Let's explore the answer!



Interpretation: Planting and Harvesting

John's vision contained two main images we must interpret. What does the grain harvest represent? What does the grape harvest represent? Point to specific details from in the passage (especially the differences between the two visions) in your answer. Start by examining your observations. Then, if necessary, look at your Bible-study resources, like *Insights on Revelation* by Pastor Chuck Swindoll, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.com.²

Because the biblical authors lived in an agrarian society, they used familiar farming imagery as often as possible, especially the image of sowing and reaping. Three such passages are [Matthew 9:35–38](#); [13:24–29](#); and [Galatians 6:7–9](#). Read these passages on planting and harvesting and summarize how they help you better understand the visions in [Revelation 14:14–20](#).

God's justice will hold all of us accountable. If there's one truth that Scripture reveals repeatedly, it's our accountability to our Maker. He didn't simply fling us on this earth and carelessly walk away without concern for where we would go with our lives. We will give account, and His justice will hold us accountable.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20



Correlation: An Ancient Harvest

As John recorded the vision he saw in *Revelation 14:14–20*, his mind likely drifted back to an ancient prophecy from a time when Israel maintained rule over its own land:

*“Let the nations be called to arms.
Let them march to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
There I, the LORD, will sit
to pronounce judgment on them all.
Swing the sickle,
for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread the grapes,
for the winepress is full.
The storage vats are overflowing
with the wickedness of these people.” (Joel 3:12–13)*

According to *Joel 3:1–3*, what was the context for this prophecy? Why did God choose to execute such judgment against Israel’s Gentile enemies?

God’s justice is impartial. He may punish the wicked, but He also rewards the righteous. According to *3:17–21*, what would be the results of God’s act of justice against the wicked nations? What blessing would the faithful people of Israel receive?

How does Joel’s parallel prophecy help you better understand the meaning of John’s vision of two harvests? How do these visions work together to offer hope to the people of God?

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20

That's the way it is with God. Continually, faithfully, patiently cleaning up our messes. He forgives us—never overlooking but always showing grace until He comes, swings the sickle, and reaps the earth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Reaping Freedom

From this vision of two harvests, Pastor Chuck Swindoll crafted two timeless principles for application.

First, *God's justice holds all of us accountable*. We will reap what we sow, harvest what we plant. A life of unending rebellion will reap unending separation from God. Planting the seeds of faith in Christ will yield God's faithful gift of eternal life.

How does God's justice and your accountability before Him help you safeguard against drifting away from Him or toying with sin? In what practical ways can you respond to this truth this week?

Second, *God's grace allows all of us freedom*. Humans are not robots. We have freedom. And that freedom is a gift from God. The nonbeliever is free either to accept or to reject the truth of the good news of Jesus Christ. The believer has been freed from the power of sin and freed into the godward, grace-empowered life.

In what ways do you sense the Holy Spirit urging you to embrace the freedom available to you because of God's grace?

The angels are sharpening the sickles, preparing for the time when the harvest is ready. Yet this is no grim image. When Jesus returns and swings the blade, He will do so as an act of justice against Satan, sin, and death—which is also an act of mercy toward His people. Take joy in what Christ has done for you and let yourself feel the urgency to share with others His wonderful invitation.

God's Terrible, Swift Sword

Revelation 14:14–20



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for this sobering reminder that You are to be taken seriously and that when You say, “Enough is enough,” You really mean it. Thank you for sending Christ to rescue us and deliver us from the wrath to come. Your mercy and grace are so precious. You are so patient when You do not have to be. Give me the boldness to proclaim the good news and give me strength as I follow Jesus. It’s in His name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY THREE

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8

How grateful I am that God has promised He will deliver me from His wrath and into the kingdom of His Son's love in order to give me a face-to-face relationship that I don't deserve.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OUR God is a *good* God. When introducing Himself to the Israelites—His chosen, covenant people—He described Himself like this:

*“Yahweh! The LORD!
The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.
I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.” (Exodus 34:6–7a)*

Compassion. Mercy. Unfailing Love. Faithfulness. Forgiveness. These beautiful ideas capture the goodness of our God. Yet God didn't stop here with His self-description . . .

“But I do not excuse the guilty” (34:7).

Yes, God is merciful and offers forgiveness to those who place their trust in Jesus Christ because Jesus bore the full force of God's anger toward sin when He died on the cross. At the same time, those who don't follow Jesus remain guilty in the eyes of God. God will not excuse those who do not receive the gift of His Son.

Those who do not have the Son live under the “wrath of God.” And in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will see His hatred for sin on full display as seven angels prepare to pour out His wrath upon the earth. Such a display, though severe, will move us to show gratitude for God's mercy as well as concern for those who have yet to enter the faith.



The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s wrath against sinners might upset, confuse, or frighten you. It’s helpful to remember that “God is love” (*1 John 4:16*). His natural response to humanity’s sin is based on His love. Write a prayer confessing your sin, thanking God for His love, and asking Him for guidance in this study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As the music of Revelation rises from the pages of our Bibles, the melody of God’s judgment against sin hits our ears loudly. In fact, for a large portion of John’s vision, he witnessed God executing His judgment in three distinct movements: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

All the while, we hear a countermelody—a song of hope for the faithful followers of Jesus. Yet the tunes of God’s wrath and mercy are not discordant. Rather, they harmonize to sing of God’s holiness and glory.

Revelation 15:1–8 offers a prelude to the bowl judgments—the *final* demonstration of God’s wrath against sin and the *final* act of judgment before Christ’s victorious return.



Observation: Seven Bowls of Judgment

In the vision recorded in *Revelation 15:1–8*, John saw seven angels, each holding a bowl of wrath—“the seven last plagues, which would bring God’s wrath to *completion*” (*Revelation 15:1*, emphasis added). Each angel would pour out his bowl of wrath upon the earth to consume sin and evil like cleansing fire.

As you read of the events that preceded this final release, pay careful attention to the details John included. Remember, sound interpretation and practical application always grow out of the seed of thorough observation.¹

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8

A Glorious Scene of Triumph and Joy—Revelation 15:2–4

In the first portion of John’s vision, he saw something like “a glass sea mixed with fire.” (*Revelation 15:2*). Whom did John see standing on this sea?

Those standing on the sea held “harps that God had given them” (*15:3*) and proceeded in a song of praise. In your own words, summarize the message of this “song of Moses” and “song of the Lamb” in *Revelation 15:3b–4*.

A Dreadful Scene of Wrath and Doom—Revelation 15:5–8

After this picture of victory for the followers of the slaughtered Lamb, John saw an image of the defeat of sin and its slaves. This scene took place in the heavenly temple—a vibrant image of God’s holy presence. Whom did John see proceeding from this temple in *Revelation 15:6*? What did they receive from the four beasts in *15:7*?

What did John see filling the temple in *15:8*? What caused this?

Our world is too shallow, too noisy, too fast-moving for anyone to pause and ponder our mysterious, awesome God. He is our high and holy and almighty and only awesome God whom we worship and in obedience we fear. I think John was never more devoted than the moment when he saw the evidence of God’s presence in that smoke. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8



Interpretation: The Wrath of God

John's vision of the bowls of wrath commences with a picture of victorious saints who resisted the satanic beast (*Revelation 15:2*). By making this observation, John recalled the opening movement of the book when Jesus sent letters to seven churches throughout Asia Minor. In each letter, Jesus made specific promises to those who claim victory through their faithfulness.

Read *Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26–27; 3:5, 12, 21* and summarize what rewards belong to believers in Christ who overcome Satan's temptations and deception. How is this connection instructive for followers of Jesus today?

Read the following verses and summarize what they teach about the wrath of God: *John 3:36; Romans 1:18–21; 2:5–8*. If you read these verses in a more word-for-word translation (like the New American Standard Bible), you'll be able to see more clearly the use of the term *wrath*. Then, provide your own definition of *wrath*. If you need help, feel free to look up the term in a Bible dictionary (like *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*).

How does Jesus' death appease God's wrath? For the apostle Paul's insights on this question, see *Romans 3:21–26*. For additional help, take a look at Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.²

One of the many, many benefits that come with knowing the Lord Jesus as personal Savior is that we have been delivered from judgment. Is that good news or what? Our judgment is behind us. Christ was judged in our place when He was nailed to the cross. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8



Correlation: The Song of Moses

John observed in [Revelation 15:3](#) that the victorious followers of the slaughtered Lamb sang “the song of Moses.” Though these singers did not rehearse the exact words Moses had previously sung, their songs shared similar sentiments.

After God delivered the Israelite slaves from Egypt, split the waters of the Red Sea, and flooded the pursuing Egyptian army, Moses stopped to worship God. Read the words Moses sang in [Exodus 15:1–8](#) as he watched the horses, chariots, and soldiers of their former oppressors wash away. List the reasons Moses gave for praising God.

Now go back and read the song of the Lamb in [Revelation 15:3b–4](#). What parallels do you notice between this song and the song of Moses in [Exodus 15:1–8](#)? Pay special attention to the themes of victory and wrath we examined in the interpretation phase.

God may demonstrate His wrath against sin, but He has offered a way to avoid this judgment. And more than that, He has promised *victory* to His children who trust in Jesus Christ. For that reason, we praise Him.



Application: Words of Gratitude and Concern

God’s anger toward human sin and its damages functions as a key element in the complex workings of His holy character. If God didn’t demonstrate wrath against sin, then He would not be just. If He were not just, then he could not set right everything wrong with the world.

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8

In light of these truths, Pastor Chuck offers a word of gratitude and a word of concern:

- How grateful we are for Christ's sacrifice and the victory He offers.
- How concerned we are for those who don't know Him and will endure His wrath.

When Jesus died on the cross, He took the full force of God's anger against sin. He was the perfect *atonement* that satisfied God's wrath, restoring peace between God and humanity. Those who place their faith in Him will not endure God's stern judgment and fiery condemnation. Take a moment to reflect on this wondrous reality.

How can you express your gratitude to God for His loving sacrifice? Write down some practical ways you can remind yourself of God's grace and thank Him for His mercy in the coming days.

In the space below, recall one person in your life who has yet to come to faith. Reflect on what you can do for this person to point him or her to Christ. Record your thoughts below. Just as God has transformed you, He can transform this person through your prayers, words, and actions.

God is good, and because He is good, He will not always allow sin to desecrate His beloved creation. *That* is why He expresses wrath toward sin. Thankfully, Christ paved the way for us to receive and enter into God's love and participate in His victory. Victory over sin. Victory over Satan. And even victory over death itself.

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8



A FINAL PRAYER

Close your time in God’s Word today by praying the words of the song of the Lamb from *Revelation 15:3b–4*:

*“Great and marvelous are your works,
O Lord God, the Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations.
Who will not fear you, Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your righteous deeds have been revealed.”*

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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Insight for Living Ministries

Study 3 • Page 7

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY FOUR

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

You never know when it's your last opportunity. That's not meant to manipulate you. It's a fact. For somebody, this next minute will be his or her last. Postponing repentance is regrettable. The Lord graciously gives you the opportunity to turn to Him, and in full compassion, He's waiting for you to reach back. I invite you to do that today.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

HAVE you ever left your home on a long trip and forgotten to arrange for someone to care for your plants?

When you get home, you stare at the wilted flowers littering the ground, the shriveled-up leaves, and the sad stalks drooping downward. You immediately prune the dying parts, place the plant in the sun, and give it some water. The next day you give it more water, but nothing changes. In fact, it looks worse. You realize that no amount of water will save this dead-to-the-core plant . . .

It's too late.

Some people fear that their souls are like this underwatered plant. As if sin has dried up all goodness to the point that they're past saving. As if it's too late even for God to save them.

This feeling, though, misses the reality of the unlimited mercy of our God. Because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ—God's own son—no sin is too great for His forgiveness. No one who comes seeking this forgiveness will ever hear God reply, "You're too late."

Yet a time will come when Jesus returns to earth to deal with evil for good. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will examine that day. Indeed, that will be a dreadful day for those who reject God. But until that day arrives, we still have hope in this rock-solid truth. No matter how lost a person may feel or seem, new life through Christ is available.



The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Is it too late for me? Have you ever had this thought—the thought that God’s mercy has run out on you? The message of this study is simple: As long as you have breath, *it’s not too late!* God is totally merciful, totally loving, totally patient, totally forgiving. Before you turn to today’s passage, write your own prayer expressing your gratitude for His mercy.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

God’s judgment against Satan, sin, and death plays a central role in the drama of Revelation. This judgment occurs in three acts of seven judgments. John presented these cycles as nested within one another. The seventh seal judgment launched the seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet judgment announced the arrival of the seven bowl judgments.

Review the nature of these judgments in the chart below.¹ Like God’s judgment against the ancient Egyptians who held His people captive, God gradually increased the intensity of these judgments to demonstrate His absolute power over creation.

	Seals (6:1–8:5)	Trumpets (8:6–9:21)	Bowls (16:1–21)
First	Conquest	Hail and fire	Malignant sores
Second	Warfare	Meteor shower	Poisoned seas
Third	Famine and poverty	Water pollution	Poisoned fresh water
Fourth	Death	Darkness	Humanity scorched
Fifth	Persecution	Demonic locusts	Widespread darkness
Sixth	Earthquake	Demonic hordes	Vast military invasion
Seventh	Trumpet judgments	Bowl judgments	Earthquake and hail

Let’s now turn to [Revelation 16](#) to experience the conclusion of this cycle of judgment.

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16



Observation: The Bowl Judgments

At the beginning of [Revelation 16](#), John noted that he heard a mighty voice that told the angels, “Go your ways and pour out on the earth the seven bowls containing God’s wrath” ([Revelation 16:1](#)). As you read this chapter, *observe* not only what happened as each angel poured out his bowl but also how the people experiencing the judgment responded.²

Natural Disaster—Revelation 16:2–9

According to [Revelation 16:2](#), what happened when the *first* angel poured out his bowl? Who did this judgment affect specifically?

According to [16:3](#), what happened when the *second* angel poured out his bowl?

According to [16:4](#), what happened when the *third* angel poured out his bowl?

In [16:5–7](#), we experience a brief interlude that offers an explanation for the nature of the second and third bowl judgments. Based on these verses, why did God judge the earth in this manner?

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

According to [Revelation 16:8–9](#), what happened when the *fourth* angel poured out his bowl? How did the people respond—or *not* respond—to this judgment?

Wicked Rulers—Revelation 16:10–16

The first four bowl judgments brought horror upon the earth unlike anything humankind had ever known. Yet people *still* refused to turn to God. So God proceeded with His judgment.

According to [Revelation 16:10–11](#), what happened when the *fifth* angel poured out his bowl? Note how the people's response paralleled that of the *fourth* bowl judgment.

According to [16:12](#), what happened when the *sixth* angel poured out his bowl?

This sixth bowl judgment anticipates a key moment in human history: the battle between God and His enemies at Armageddon. We read of this climactic clash in greater detail later in Revelation, but John offered some foreshadowing here. According to [16:13–16](#), how did the sixth bowl judgment prepare the way for what would later take place at Armageddon?

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

A Somber Conclusion—Revelation 16:17–21

According to *Revelation 16:17*, what declaration did John *hear* when the *seventh* angel poured out his bowl? What did he then *see* in *16:18, 20–21*?

John included an interesting note in *16:19*—that Babylon and other great Gentile cities “fell into heaps of rubble.” Why did God cause this to happen?

The seventh bowl marks the completion of the cycles of judgment. Despite such a magnificent display of God’s power, the people refused to repent and even “cursed God.” God had given them plenty of chances, but they chose to suffer rather than to receive the mercy of Jesus Christ. For them, it was too late.



Interpretation: Cycles of Judgment

Why does the book of Revelation present God’s judgment taking place in increasingly intense cycles? What does this method reveal about God’s character? For help answering these questions, consult your Bible-study resources like Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

What does Revelation reveal about humanity's response to God's judgment and more broadly about the human condition? Compare the people's reactions as they experienced God's justice at the culmination of the seal ([Revelation 6:16–17](#)), trumpet ([11:13](#)), and bowl judgments ([16:21](#)).

This is our God—the true and righteous sovereign Lord who has for centuries patiently awaited the response of humanity to His offer of salvation. Graciously offering it, patiently with great long-suffering. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Culmination of Judgment

The sixth bowl describes a battle that would take place at a place called “Armageddon.” This name refers to a mountain or hill in the region of Megiddo—a region near the Jezreel Valley that was very familiar to the people of Israel. Find Megiddo using a Bible atlas or the maps at insight.org/general/bible-maps (see “[Topography of Palestine](#)”).

In the Old Testament, Megiddo was a significant site for the nation of Israel for both good and bad reasons. For a positive example, the judge Deborah and the military commander Barak defeated a faction of Canaanites at Megiddo amid Israel's conquest of the promised land (see [Judges 4:1–16; 5:12–19](#)). For a negative example, the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco killed Josiah—one of Judah's greatest, most righteous kings—at Megiddo (see [2 Kings 23:29–30](#)).

Why is it significant that the culmination of God's judgment would take place at such a storied site known for conflict between God's people and God's enemies? (For a look ahead at how the battle of Armageddon ends, check out [Revelation 19:11–21](#).)

God takes no delight in the judgment of the unrepentant. He doesn't want any to perish. He wants everyone to come to repentance. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: The Harsh Reality of Judgment

Passages that depict God's judgment challenge us. They remind us that our righteous God will not allow the dark spot of sin to pollute His pure and holy presence. Though we must contend with the reality of our own sin, we must never forget that God has offered us hope through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Final Seven Super Bowls

Revelation 16

Consider the following points for application:

1. *Escaping the reality of judgment is impossible.* Jesus will return as the righteous judge.
2. *Postponing repentance is regrettable.* Those who refuse Him will face His justice.

If you do not yet know Jesus, it's not too late for you to turn to God in repentance and experience the hope of everlasting life. But don't delay making this decision! A time will come when it *will* be too late. And you never know when that moment will happen.

If you are a follower of Jesus, remember that Christ has claimed the victory. You are no longer a slave to sin. In fact, you are *dead* to sin and *alive* in Christ Jesus. God wants you to live this new life for your good and for His eternal glory.

How do you sense God leading you to respond to these challenging truths today?

If you feel like it's too late, remember that God's mercy will not run dry on you as long as you live. He wants to shower it down on you. All you need to do is come to Jesus—the living water—and experience the new life He wants you to live.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the reminder that Your grace is greater than my sin and that it's not too late to experience Your grace. I confess that I have broken Your law, and I receive Your forgiveness today. Help me lead a life closely connected to You, the source of life. In Jesus' patient name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 232.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY FIVE

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

What do we mean when we refer to Armageddon? The Bible tells us it is the event when nations from around the world will gather to face God's judgment.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHAT images come to your mind when you hear the word *Armageddon*? According to Merriam-Webster's, this term depicts "a final and conclusive battle between the forces of good and evil."¹

Hollywood movie producers and authors of speculative novels have painted this battle between good and evil with pictures of blood-red skies, cataclysmic earthquakes and tsunamis, cities consumed by flames, and piles of dead bodies.

Yet Armageddon is not a thing of fiction.

In fact, these modern-day storytellers have adapted their narratives from Scripture—God's reliable account of history from eternity past to eternity future. Though some of these familiar images of Armageddon are exaggerated speculation, many of them find their origin in God's Word, specifically this book of Revelation.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will turn to the final chapter of God's great story to examine the truth about the battle of Armageddon. We won't find answers to all our questions, but we will clearly see the clash between Jesus and Satan and God's decisive defeat of evil.



Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Do you ever feel like it's almost *impossible* to make sense of the teachings of Scripture? If so, you're not alone! Thankfully, God has offered us His Holy Spirit, who illuminates God's Word and aids us as we pursue sound understanding and practical application. Say this prayer to ask God to guide you as you open His Word today:

Father, I want to know You. Thank You for giving me the opportunity to do so through the Scriptures. As I explore the challenging topic of Armageddon, reveal Your true character. As a result, equip me to emulate You. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The term *Armageddon* occurs only once in the entire Bible: [Revelation 16:16](#). John described it as the place where Satan's demonic army encountered Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb. According to [16:1](#), what divine event set the stage for this dramatic battle?

The sixth angel poured out his bowl of judgment on the location called *Har Megiddo*—the “mountain” or “hill” of Megiddo—a region in the Jezreel Valley, about sixty miles north of Jerusalem. Find this locale on your Bible atlas or the maps available for free at [insight.org/general/bible-maps](#) (see “[Topography of Palestine](#)”). To visualize *Megiddo*, check out [bibleplaces.org](#).

With the scene set, let's now turn to the Scriptures to see how the battle unfolds.



Observation: Experiencing Armageddon

The final cycle of judgments in Revelation—the bowl judgments—culminate in [Revelation 16:12–16](#) in a series of events that anticipate Armageddon—the *final* judgment of God's enemies. As you *observe* these events, pay careful attention to the details John included.²

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

Setting the Stage—Revelation 16:12–16

John noted in [Revelation 16:12](#) that the sixth angel poured his bowl of God’s wrath on the Euphrates River. What did this action do to the river? What happened as a result?

Next, John saw an odd vision of three frog-like evil spirits. According to [16:13](#), where did these spirits originate? What did they do in [16:14](#)?

[Revelation 16:15](#) records an interesting note from Jesus’ perspective that interrupted the flow of John’s vision. This comment may seem misplaced, but it is for that exact reason we must pay careful attention to its message. Summarize Jesus’ statement in your own words.

Jesus warned John that His return would be imminent. His long-anticipated return to earth would be *entirely* unexpected like a thief in the night. Though humanity may be surprised, Satan would be ready, and he and his minions would gather the rulers of the earth to clash with the King of heaven at Armageddon in earth’s final battle ([Revelation 16:16](#)).

Yet John foreshadowed how this battle would end in [17:14](#): “Together they will go to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings.”

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

Drawing Back the Curtain—Revelation 19:11–16

Though we might expect John to cover the battle of Armageddon in detail, his vision is relatively brief. His account begins with a majestic picture of the risen Christ descending from heaven. Read John's description of Jesus in [Revelation 19:11–13](#) and record what stands out to you most.

Who joined the risen Christ on His descent from heaven to earth in [19:14](#)?

The entirety of the battle of Armageddon took place in [19:15](#). Summarize what happened in the battle.

Please understand that these horrendous scenes should not give you a bit of fear nor cause you any dread. . . . If you trust the Lord Jesus now, you will later be delivered from the wrath of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Understanding Armageddon

The Euphrates River is one of the most important landmarks in the story of Scripture. When God set creation into motion, He sent the Euphrates flowing through Eden to nourish the plants and trees ([Genesis 2:8–14](#)). And in Revelation, John watched this once-mighty river dry up to allow the armies of the east to march toward Jerusalem for an assault ([Revelation 16:12–16](#)).

During the most prosperous season of the kingdom of Israel, God gave King Solomon reign over the entirety of the promised land—from the Jordan River in the west to the Euphrates River in the east ([1 Kings 4:21](#)).

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

Find these two rivers using your Bible atlas (or the map, “*World of the Patriarchs*,” available at insight.org/general/bible-maps). Then identify the following cities: Nineveh, Babylon, and Susa. These cities were the capitals of Israel’s key national enemies in the Old Testament: Assyria, Babylon, and Persia (respectively).

On what side of the Euphrates River do these cities lie? Why is this significant? How does this help us understand the meaning of *Revelation 16:12* and, more broadly, the battle of Armageddon?

Why is it significant that Jesus’ pure, white cloak was soaked in dark red blood *before* the great battle (*19:13*)? Whose blood did He wear? What does this blood signify?

As John witnessed this decisive, final battle, he observed, “From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations” (*19:15*). Why did Jesus’ sword extend from His *mouth* rather than from His hand? In other words, what does this sword represent? For some help answering this question, consult a commentary, like Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.³

The best thing you could do to prepare for the coming of Christ is to tell people about Christ. It becomes for them an escape, a rescue from the horrors of what remains yet future. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Foreshadowing Armageddon

Though the depiction of the battle of Armageddon may startle modern-day readers, faithful Israelites would have highly anticipated the coming clash because the Old Testament prophets foresaw a day when God would dramatically intervene in the affairs of the world to judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous.

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

Read the prophecies from the passages listed in the chart below. Then, record how each prophecy foreshadows the events depicted in Revelation's battle of Armageddon.

Passage	Description
<i>Psalm 2:1–3, 10–12</i>	
<i>Isaiah 13:9–13</i>	
<i>Isaiah 24:21–23</i>	
<i>Daniel 11:40–45</i>	
<i>Joel 3:1–3, 12–13</i>	
<i>Zechariah 14:1–5</i>	

What value does knowledge of a *future* battle have in the present? Let's answer this question in the application phase of our study.



Application: Anticipating Armageddon

Though Armageddon plays a key role in the future of God's creation, we have many lessons to learn right now from its account in Revelation. Consider the four following points:

- *The absence of certain details is surprising.* Though we want to know exactly how the battle of Armageddon will happen, John told us *everything* we need to know.
- *The presence of demonic activity is frightening.* Satan and his minions lead the rebellion against God, and their influence touches the whole world.
- *The resurgence of interest in spiritual matters is encouraging.* Many today recognize that this world moves in a dangerous direction. They are looking for true light.
- *The influence of Christ is compelling.* Let's point this lost world to Christ, whose promise to overcome Satan, sin, and death offers hope in a hopeless world.

Shock and Awe Revisited

Revelation 16:12–16

Which of these four points means the most to you? What practical steps can you take to respond to this truth this week?

How has this study shaped the way you understand that final, future clash between the forces of good and evil? How does this understanding fill you with the hope of the good news of Jesus Christ?

Jesus and Satan are engaged in an intense war, and this conflict will conclude with one final battle. Many fear Armageddon. It sometimes seems like Satan is so strong that he just might win that battle. But we don't need to fret. Jesus already won the war when He died on the cross and rose again.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the reminder that You have the final say. Though this world feels hopelessly lost, I find peace knowing that Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb, will return in all His glory to defeat Your enemies for good. The sting of sin and death is strong, but help me remember that it is temporary. In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2014), "Armageddon."
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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Study 5 • Page 7

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY SIX

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

Ours is a world that follows many gods. It embraces a philosophy of religion based on human effort for human achievement and human glory. It's a human-made, human-glorifying system of thinking. Indeed, one of the greatest enemies of the Christian life is a religious life.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IN his 2005 commencement address to the graduates of Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, renowned American novelist David Foster Wallace made a profound observation:

In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is *what* to worship.¹

Though Wallace never claimed to be a follower of Jesus Christ, his statement is true. Every person does indeed worship something. We will worship either the living God, creator of heaven and earth . . . or something else.

God created humanity to worship Him and to enjoy His presence. Yet, Adam and Eve, the original worshipers, wanted to be like God, so they chose to worship themselves instead of Him. Today, their offspring follow in their example, worshipping a whole host of false gods like wealth, beauty, power, and intellect.

And as Wallace later observed, worshipping these things simply “will eat you alive.”

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will consider the source of these false objects of worship—the religion of this fallen world—in the image of an ancient city called Babylon. Though Babylon’s influence today is strong, its wall will crumble before the one *true* God, Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy of worship.



The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Sometimes prayer feels like just another “religious” task—another box to check in a long spiritual to-do list. This kind of attitude misses the purpose of prayer. God wants us to talk to Him because He wants us to be in *relationship* with Him. He wants to hear from you. He wants to get to know your deepest worries and fears, joys and triumphs.

Take some time to calm your mind and to quiet your heart. Then spend a few moments talking with your loving heavenly Father. And remember, you’re spending time with someone who truly loves you.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Revelation 16 records the final cycle of judgment. In this cycle, John saw seven angels each pour out a bowl of God’s wrath upon the earth. The seventh bowl—the *final* judgment—culminated in the defeat of Babylon.

In *Revelation 16:19*, John described this decisive defeat: “The great city of Babylon split into three sections, and the cities of many nations fell into heaps of rubble. So God remembered all of Babylon’s sins, and he made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath.”

The next major section of Revelation zooms in on the fall of Babylon, the wicked city that has stood against God and His good purposes from the very beginning.



Observation: Babylon’s Evil

Read all of *Revelation 17* slowly, carefully, and deliberately to clearly observe its many facets. Try not to get too sidetracked determining the meaning of these details.² We will consider their meaning in the next phase of the study.

Describing the World’s Religion—Revelation 17:1–6

John’s vision began with an angel showing him a picture of judgment against “the great prostitute”—and not against the prostitute only, but also against all those who grew “drunk by the wine of her immorality” (*Revelation 17:1–2*).

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

In what ways did John describe this great prostitute in *Revelation 17:3–4*? According to *17:5*, what was this prostitute’s name?

John noticed in *17:6* that the prostitute was intoxicated—not on wine, but on something else. What made this wicked woman so drunk?

Understanding the World’s Religion—Revelation 17:7–13, 15, 18

As John watched this vision, he stared “in complete amazement” wondering what this vision might mean (*Revelation 17:6*). Thankfully, his angelic guide recognized the perplexed look on John’s face, so he said, “I will tell you the mystery of this woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns on which she sits” (*17:7*). The angel then offered an interpretation to John.

What did the angel say each of the following images represented?

The Beast’s Heads (*17:9–10*): _____

The Beast (*17:8, 11*): _____

The Beast’s Horns (*17:12–13*): _____

The Waters (*17:15*): _____

The Prostitute (*17:18*): _____

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

Defeating the World’s Religion—Revelation 17:14, 16–17

Many of the images in John’s vision represented kings—rulers Satan used to carry out his wicked plans against God and His children. What would these rulers band together to pursue in [Revelation 17:14](#)? What would be the result of their effort? Why would this happen?

At the beginning of John’s vision, the prostitute rode on the back of the scarlet beast—showing unity and cooperation. According to [17:16–17](#), how did this relationship change by the end of the vision? What did this change reveal about God’s sovereignty?

The angel helped John make sense of the key elements of his vision, but there are more layers of interpretive truth to peel back. Let’s see what timeless lessons this passage can teach us.



Interpretation: Babylon’s Effect

Interpreting the meaning of *every* image in this passage may feel impossible. Thankfully, the angel offered guidance to help John make sense of the *most important* images.

For example, he identified the prostitute who is drunk on the blood of Christian martyrs as Babylon ([Revelation 17:5](#)). The Babylonian Empire, however, had fallen *centuries* before John wrote. Babylon fell to Persia, which later fell to Greece, which then fell to Rome. And Rome ruled the Mediterranean world in John’s day.

What would John’s original readers have understood the image of Babylon to represent? How are readers of Revelation today to understand the meaning of Babylon and its far-reaching influence? For some guidance as you interpret these images, consult a commentary, like Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Insights on Revelation* or [Constable’s Notes](#) at netbible.org.³

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

The prostitute called Babylon rode on a seven-headed beast with ten horns. John wrote that the seven heads represent seven kings (*Revelation 17:9*). The beast itself represents an eighth king (*17:11*). And the ten horns represent ten additional kings (*17:12*). What does this clarification reveal about how Babylon wages war against the Lamb and His people?

In John's vision, Babylon was closely associated with the Satan-empowered beast introduced in *13:1–10*. One of this beast's essential goals was to draw worship away from the Lamb (*13:4, 8; 17:8, 13*). What are some of the characteristics of false religion? How do these traits contrast with the markers of a true, faith-based relationship with Jesus Christ?

Religion has to do with works. Christianity is based on faith. Religion is what I do for God. Christianity is what God has already done for me. Religion is an effort. Christianity is a gift. See the difference? —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Babylon's Origin

From the very beginning to the very end of Scripture, Babylon has represented the earthly capital of evil. In Revelation, we see that hideous sin in full bloom, and in Genesis, we watch Satan plant that wicked seed in *Genesis 11:1–9*.

According to *11:3–4*, what did the people who settled in Babylonia set out to do? Why did they want to do this?

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

How did God react to this news in [Revelation 11:5–7](#)? Why did He react this way? In other words, what was problematic about what the settlers of Babylonia wanted to accomplish?

What did God ultimately do in [11:8–9](#) to judge the wicked intentions of these people? How did the great prostitute in Revelation attempt to defy God and undo His work at Babel? See [Revelation 17:15](#).

Babel, Babylon, Babylonia. It isn't so much a place as it is a system of thinking—one that is apart from and against God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Babylon's Demise

The great prostitute Babylon and her league of wicked rulers want to march against the Lamb to slay His faithful followers. But Revelation reminds us of good news—that “the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings” ([Revelation 17:14](#)). This passage reveals three timeless truths:

1. Though religious activity often feels full and alive, it actually is empty and dead.
2. Though Satan always appears impressive and effective, he truly is evil and deceptive.
3. Though God sometimes seems absent and uninvolved, He always is present and engaged.

In what ways do you sense the influence of Babylon reaching your cultural context? What does it look like for you practically, as a follower of the Lamb, to resist this influence?

The Final Exit of Worldwide Religion

Revelation 17:1–18

How might you be tempted to live a life of religious activity rather than faithful devotion to God? What does it look like for you to carry out Christian practices (like prayer, Bible study, church attendance, and giving) without making them feel like a religious chore?

The kingdom of Babylon is wicked and imposing, and its influence has saturated the whole earth. Yet John’s vision assures us that the kingdom of heaven will one day take its place. Satan, sin, and death will be banished from this world, and we will sing a song of praise to God as we shout . . .

Babylon is fallen! (Revelation 18:2)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, it is tempting to follow the ways of Babylon. To try to glorify myself over You. To try to earn Your love. To try to get myself out of my messes without Your help. Thank You for the reminder that I cannot earn anything by my own effort. You have already given me everything I need through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. David Foster Wallace, “This Is Water” (commencement address, Kenyon College, Gambier, OH, May 21, 2005), <http://bulletin-archive.kenyon.edu/x4280.html>.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014)

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY SEVEN

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

Our God reigns. Remember that. Remember that when a little bit of the hope of your life has faded . . . when the deal didn't turn out as you thought it would, or the answer didn't come back as you had anticipated, or the romance didn't blossom as you had hoped. Our God is in supreme control.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ON June 12, 1987, United States President Ronald Reagan stood at the Brandenburg Gate of the Berlin Wall in Germany's capital delivering a speech largely directed at Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. At the climax of his speech, President Reagan spoke some of the most memorable words of the 20th century . . .

“Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

For more than twenty-five years, the Berlin Wall had separated Germany right down the middle—east under Soviet control and west under US, British, and French control—and the barrier represented more broadly the Iron Curtain that divided Europe during the decades of the Cold War. The conflict had ravaged the continent, and President Reagan represented many world leaders who called for the hostility to end.

Then, on November 9, 1989, the wall did indeed come down as a result of peaceful protesting, and those once divided could now dwell among one another as citizens of a united Germany. This decisive historical moment helped bring the Cold War to its end weeks later. Though President Reagan had delivered his iconic speech a little more than two years earlier, his words served as a call to action that looked ahead to a brighter future for Germany and all of Europe.

The book of Revelation contains a similarly iconic line that signals hope for the people of God—one that looks to the future when Jesus finally defeats Satan, sin, and death . . .

Babylon is fallen!



From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Though Revelation assures us of Babylon's future defeat, this evil city's power fills our world today. We've all felt the sting of its wickedness, and in those painful moments, it can be easy to forget that Jesus has already conquered sin and death. If you're feeling that hopelessness today, bring your concerns to God and ask Him to reassure you of His ultimate victory over Babylon.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Revelation 17:1–19:10 contains one extended, vivid depiction of Jesus' defeat of evil. This section begins with a vision of a opulent queen who was “drunk with the blood of God's holy people” (*Revelation 17:6*). And in *17:5*, John offered an interpretation of this woman's identity: “Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World.”

In his vision, John looked back to Israel's past—to its exile in a pagan land where the people worshiped idols and where the kings considered themselves divine. “Babylon” in Revelation, therefore, represents any worldly system of evil that stands opposed to God. For John's original readers, Babylon was Rome. In the last days, the church will suffer under the strong grip of a new Babylon. Even today, we feel the pain caused by Babylon's pervasive presence.

Yet Babylon—in all its manifestations—will fall, and in *Revelation 18:1–19:10*, we see how.



Observation: “Babylon Is Fallen!”

Take a few moments to read about the declaration of Babylon's defeat recorded in *Revelation 18:1–19:10*. This section of Scripture is lengthy, but it is rich in truth. So read it slowly and carefully with an eye for detail in order to come to a clear understanding of what John wanted to say to us. This is the goal of *observation*.¹

Farewell to Babylon—Revelation 18

The first major section of this passage begins with an angel giving a great proclamation with a mighty voice: “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen” (*Revelation 18:2*)! This announcement rises from the page like a song of worship because Babylon's demise represents the defeat of God's enemies.

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

According to *Revelation 18:3–9*, what specific kinds of evil did Babylon represent? See also *18:24*.

What phrase is repeated in *18:10, 16–17, and 19–20*? Based on the context of these verses, how is this “terrible” thing actually good news?

According to *18:21–23*, how did John’s vision depict the ultimate defeat of Babylon?

Praise to Jehovah—Revelation 19:1–10

The key word in *Revelation 19:1–10* is *Hallelujah* (*Revelation 19:1, 3, 4, 6* NASB)! This term comes from two Hebrew terms: *hallel* meaning “to praise” and *jah*, referring to Yahweh, the name God gave Himself before His chosen people Israel. In other words, this section of Revelation is filled with shouts saying, “Praise the LORD!”

Read the following verses and, in the space provided, write down the reasons the heavenly chorus offered for praising God.

Revelation 19:1–2

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

Revelation 19:3–5

Revelation 19:6–9

In this case, judgment has been fully carried out against evil. The reign of Satan will soon come to an end. False religions and false systems of philosophy are winding up their last hurrah and, as we'll see, the Lord Jesus is to return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Hallelujah!

Revelation 18:1–19:10 is a passage of *praise*. Consequently, it reveals several reasons why we can worship God today. As you reflect on the following reasons, feel free to consult your Bible-study tools to help you deepen your understanding of heaven's worship of God. Check out Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.²

We praise God because He has conquered evil. This passage begins with John's vision of a fallen Babylon (*18:2*). What kinds of worldly evils does Babylon represent? In your answer, point to specific details from *Revelation 18*. By contrast, how does Babylon's example demonstrate how a follower of Jesus should *not* act?

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

We praise God because He reigns. Though Revelation often depicts future events, John presented the fall of Babylon as having already happened. Notice, the angel didn't say, "Babylon will fall." Instead, he said, "Babylon is fallen" (*Revelation 18:2*, emphasis added). What does this choice of wording reveal about God's power and sovereignty, especially considering how today's world is so like Babylon?

We praise God because of our marriage with the Lamb. What is the significance of this marriage metaphor in *19:7–9*? What does this metaphor reveal about the relationship between Christ and His church? As you answer these questions, consider the analogy of the various parts of the marriage process in your answer: engagement, wedding, and reception.

We have come to a bridge. As we step onto the bridge to go toward the beginning of the kingdom that the Lord will establish, the angels and the people of heaven shout together in a single voice, "Praise be to the Lord! He has conquered evil!"
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Prophecy Fulfilled

In *Isaiah 47*, the prophet spoke about the coming fall of Babylon. Though the nation fell to the Persian Empire, the words of this prophecy resonate with the message of *Revelation 18:1–19:10*.

Summarize the message God gave Babylon in *Isaiah 47:1–5*. What fate awaited this mighty—yet wicked—nation? See also *47:11–15*.

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

According to *Isaiah 47:6*, how did God use Babylon, despite its wickedness, for His redemptive purpose? What does this phenomenon reveal about how God might use Babylon-like institutions today?

Even though God used Babylon, He couldn't allow its wickedness to continue to pollute His good creation. According to *47:7–10*, what specific wicked deed led to Babylon's downfall?

Babylon was a city of great evil—proud, greedy, promiscuous, and violent to the core. So God extended great judgment against it. And He will do the same to *any* human institution that defies Him and His majesty.



Application: Lessons of Babylon's Fall

Revelation 18:1–19:10 has shown us that Babylon's future demise is so sure that we can live as if it has already fallen in the present. It's easy for us to forget this, but we must never forget that God has already claimed the victory over Satan, sin, and death. Specifically, we should remember that . . .

- *Our God reigns . . . so stop worrying.*
- *Only the Lamb is worthy . . . so worship Him alone.*
- *Supper is being served . . . so get cleaned up.*

As you look at the world around you, you can see the presence of Babylon almost everywhere—in your family, in the media, in schools, and maybe even in our churches. Babylon may be strong . . . but God is stronger. What does it look like for you to lean on His kingly strength as you navigate life as an exile in Babylon? How can you transform your worry into worship?

From Earthly Horrors to Celestial Hallelujahs

Selections from Revelation 18; 19:1–10

The time to celebrate Christ's union with His church is soon coming, and *you* are personally invited to the party! In what ways can you clean yourself up to prepare for the celebration? What does it look like to celebrate this union in the present?

Babylon is fallen! This is no battle cry. In fact, the war has already been won. When Jesus died, He defeated sin. When He came back to life, He defeated death. As He reigns from heaven, He is crushing Satan's head with His mighty heel. And when He returns, the once stalwart walls of Satan's wicked city *will* crumble, and the people of God will sing an eternal song of praise to the One who claimed the victory.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for defeating Babylon . . . for conquering Satan, sin, and death . . . for giving me new life and everlasting hope. All I can do is raise a loud, "Hallelujah!" In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY EIGHT

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

Have you bowed before Jesus as King? Have you acknowledged that He is your Savior? If not, take care of that now, will you?

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE a family of four. Mom and Dad decide to take off for the weekend for some quality time together, and they leave their teenaged son and daughter home.

On Friday evening, Sister senses a tickle in her tummy, and by Saturday morning, she feels all the symptoms of the flu: nausea, headache, fatigue, chills. Brother, meanwhile, stands on the side of the highway waiting for a tow truck. He was texting while he was driving, and he drove right into the median. The family car was totaled.

How will each of these children respond when Mom and Dad get home?

Sister will rejoice to feel her parents' warm embrace, to enjoy a homemade cup of soup, to have them retrieve some medicine. Brother, however, dreads the moment when his parents see the wrecked car in the driveway, when he admits that he wasn't driving responsibly, when he hears their stern response.

There's nothing Sister can do to accelerate her parents' return, and there's nothing Brother can do to delay it. Mom and Dad *will* return, and when they do, the children will receive what they need—Sister her care and Brother his rebuke.

Just like these parents, Jesus has left earth for a time, but He *will* return. Heaven will open, and Jesus will lead the royal procession back down to earth to judge all humanity. We can do nothing to stop His return, but we can prepare for His arrival. This *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study explores how.



Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21



PREPARE YOUR HEART

One of the distinguishing elements of Christianity is the hope we have in Jesus Christ. The hope of the gospel says that no matter how bad things get in your life or in this world, Jesus will return to set things right. He will replace sin with righteousness, death with life, and sorrow with joy. Take a moment to express your gratitude to God for offering you this hope through His Son.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The reason we have hope that Jesus will return to restore God's good creation is because *He promised it*. And as Scripture reveals time and again, *God keeps His promises*.

Listen to what Jesus said to His disciples before He endured the cross:

“And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (Matthew 24:30)

We don't know when Jesus will return, so Jesus calls us to be ready by remaining faithful. One way we can prepare for His return is by knowing what will happen when He returns. Let's now turn to John's recorded vision of Jesus' second advent in [Revelation 19:11–21](#).



Observation: The Return of the King

[Revelation 19:11–21](#) acts like a telescope that peers far into the future. Its scope is limited, so it won't show us everything we want to see. What it does reveal, however, is true and valuable. As you read John's vision, read slowly and carefully to observe as many details as possible.¹

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

The King's Arrival—Revelation 19:11–16

What (or *whom*) did John see when heaven opened in *Revelation 19:11*? How did John describe the appearance of this figure in *19:12–13*?

Who accompanied this figure in *19:14*?

What names and titles did John say described this figure? Fill in the spaces below based on their corresponding verses.

19:11: _____

19:12: _____

19:13: _____

19:16: _____

The Battle's Description—Revelation 19:17–21

When John looked at Jesus, the returning King on His white horse, he observed, “From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress” (*Revelation 19:15*). Then, John saw the clash between this heavenly King and these wicked nations.

Who approached the one sitting on the horse in *Revelation 19:19*? What did they intend to do?

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

What happened to the beast and the false prophet in [Revelation 19:20](#)?

What happened to the kings of the world in [19:21](#)?

Sit quietly and let the wonder in. This frightening scene will occur in a time yet future, though it reveals a part of the Lord God that is rarely even mentioned—His wrath. Being just, God must hold accountable those who live their entire lives rejecting Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Reasons for Christ's Return

[Revelation 19:11–21](#) looks forward to the moment of Christ's return. This is the day to which every Christian looks with eager expectation. It is the substance of our hope. Both the Old and New Testaments promise this triumphal moment for several key reasons. Jesus must return to . . .

1. Judge the nations for their wickedness
2. Remove Satan from his earthly dominion
3. Establish Jesus' heavenly kingdom on earth

How do each of Jesus' various titles in [19:11–16](#) support the idea that He is the only true judge who can hold humankind accountable for its wickedness? For some help, look at Pastor Chuck Swindoll's Commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or [Constable's Notes](#) at netbible.org.²

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

Satan often extends his wickedness throughout the world by corrupting national rulers. His approach is crafty and efficient. Corrupt the king, and his kingdom will follow his lead.

This is why the apostle Paul said, “For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world” (*Ephesians 6:12*). In light of this truth, how will Jesus’ defeat of Satan at the battle of Armageddon reclaim total dominion over the earth?

John’s original readers lived under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire. For the Romans, Caesar—and Caesar *alone*—was lord. How would the expression, “Jesus is Lord,” have hit the ears of loyal Romans? What does this reality reveal about the faith of the early Christians? How is their example instructive for citizens of the kingdom of heaven today?

Many of God’s promises remain to be fulfilled until Jesus returns to this earth. The nations are yet to be judged. Satan continues to have his way always under the permissive will of God. There will be no eternal kingdom until Jesus comes to rule and reign. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: A Royal Psalm

In *Revelation 19:15*, John observed King Jesus returning to earth to rule the nations “with an iron rod.” This image comes from *Psalms 2*, which is known as a *royal psalm*. These unique psalms look ahead to the coming of Israel’s Messiah—the future anointed king who would judge the wicked and vindicate the righteous.

This psalmist opened with a question: “Why do [the nations] waste their time with futile plans?” (*Psalms 2:1*). According to *Psalms 2:2–3*, what were these plans? According to *2:4–5*, why did the psalmist consider these plans futile?

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

The psalmist concluded that God would foil these wicked plans. According to *Psalms 2:6–9*, how did He promise to defeat these evil nations?

What final warning did the psalmist offer to the rulers of these nations in *2:10–12*? How does this conclusion correlate with the message of *Revelation 19:11–21*?

The Messiah. Israel's promised King. Jesus Christ. He promised to return to *rule* the earth. When He comes, He will extend His mighty iron rod—from the least to the greatest—and at the sight of His heavenly glory, even kings will bow before Him.



Application: Every Knee Will Bow

What a day it will be when the royal procession from heaven to earth announces the return of the long-awaited King of creation in all His majesty, splendor, and glory! As the one true King, Jesus demonstrates absolute power in three distinct ways:

- His presence will set the final stage.
- His name will be the final authority.
- His word will win the final battle.

At Armageddon, Jesus Christ will control the entirety of the battle and its outcome. Satan and his army of earthly kings don't stand a chance. Though many powerful people throughout history have denied this truth, *everyone* will eventually bow the knee to the King of all kings, the Lord of all lords.

The apostle Paul told us:

*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10–11, emphasis added).*

Here Comes the King of Kings

Revelation 19:11–21

This truth points to the heart and asks one of life’s most important questions . . .

Have you bowed before Him?

If you have *not* made the choice to confess Jesus as King of your life, what’s stopping you? How would making this decision change your life for the better? If you *have* bent the knee, in what areas do you need to submit more fully to His royal rule?

When Jesus returns, everyone will fall to their knees before His awesome glory. Yet He will stand before two groups: those who swear their allegiance to Him, and those who deny His majesty. If you follow Him today, you have nothing to fear. You will be spared His wrath. You will experience His mercy. And you will enjoy an eternity with Him in the new creation.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I confess that Jesus—and Jesus alone—is King over all who would call themselves “king” and Lord over all who call themselves “lord.” I bend my knee to Him in total submission and obedience and swear my eternal allegiance to Him. Use me to show others that He is the only true, righteous, just, and good King. In His royal name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY NINE

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10

Sin spoils everything—everything around us, everything inside us, everything about us. Everything. Sin is what’s wrong with our world.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

Do you ever look around at the brokenness of this world and say, “That’s just not how it’s supposed to be”?

A baby breathes his final breath in his mother’s arms. A tornado tears through a town, leaving a path of destruction in its wake. A woman is sold into slavery and is seen as nothing more than an object of her owner’s pleasure. A nation assaults another, killing and capturing innocent civilians standing in the way of its conquest. *That’s just not how it’s supposed to be . . .*

The underlying cause behind it all is sin. Sin brought the curse upon this world. Sin drives the evil atrocities in this world. In short, sin spoils *everything*.

Sin steals life. It rips apart loved ones. It robs our joy. It makes creation groan in pain. When the serpent persuaded Adam and Eve to turn their backs on God and His command, he introduced sin to God’s good creation. And at this moment, sin turned the world upside down.

Yet God has promised us that He would crush the serpent’s head. And defeat sin and death. And turn the world right-side up. In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we look to the time when Jesus Christ establishes His millennial kingdom on earth and makes His creation perfect as He intended it to be.



Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God feels pain like we do when He beholds the evils in the world. In His original design, creation was an idyllic environment—one that teemed with life and was free of natural disasters. As Christians, we look forward to the day when Jesus returns to restore creation to this pure and whole state. And so does God.

As you await that day, express your pain to God and ask for strength and endurance. Then thank Him for the remarkable hope He has offered us in Christ.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Everything in Revelation has been leading up to this—the moment when Jesus Christ makes His long-anticipated return to earth to conquer Satan, sin, and death. In the previous scene, Jesus marched from heaven to earth with His army of martyrs to defeat His earthly enemies: the beast, the false prophet, and rulers of all the world's most wicked nations.

With these earthly foes eliminated, the attention shifts to Jesus' final enemy. In this section, Jesus defeats Revelation's main antagonist: the dragon.



Observation: Jesus and Satan's Final Battle

Students of Scripture throughout time have offered a variety of interpretations of [Revelation 20:1–10](#), yet *all* agree that these verses sing a song of deliverance for the people of God. Focus on this key theme as you observe these verses.¹

Jesus' Millennial Reign—Revelation 20:1–6

This chapter opens with John's vision of an angel coming down from heaven with a key and a heavy chain ([Revelation 20:1](#)). Whom did this angel bind and lock away in [Revelation 20:2](#)? According to [20:3](#), where was the prison? How long was this figure trapped there?

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10

Next, John saw a group of thrones. According to *Revelation 20:4*, who sat upon these thrones, and what kind of authority did these individuals have? What qualified them to sit on these thrones? How long was their reign?

John described those who sat upon the thrones in *20:4* as having experienced “the first resurrection” (*20:5*). According to *20:6*, what kind of blessing did those who experienced this resurrection receive?

Satan’s Ultimate Defeat—Revelation 20:7–10

Earlier, John mentioned that Satan’s millennial prison was merely temporary (*Revelation 20:3*). Then, in *Revelation 20:7*, once the thousand years ended, Jesus released Satan. What did Satan do upon his release, according to *20:8–9a*?

In a final attempt to defeat Jesus, Satan resorted to his oldest trick: deceiving the nations. According to *20:9a*, what happened to the army that surrounded “God’s people and the beloved city”? What then happened to Satan in *20:10*?

This is the true golden age. Satan is bound. Jesus reigns. And the righteous rule under His authority. John saw a panorama of God’s resurrected saints ruling with Him. You and I will be reigning with Christ. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10



Interpretation: The Meaning of the Millennium

The millennium marks a turning point in the narrative of Revelation. Though we don't find the word *millennium* in our Bibles, the term comes from the Latin translation of the expression, “a thousand years,” which we find several times in this passage. Use your Bible-study tools to research the meaning of the millennium. Feel free to use Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or the article, “[What Is the Millennial Kingdom?](#)” at [gotquestions.org](#).

In what ways does the millennium anticipate the future everlasting reign of Christ when He introduces the new creation? How does it foreshadow the *final* defeat of Satan, sin, and death? In what ways are these realities still yet to be fully realized during the millennium?

How does the present rule of Satan on earth and the pervasive power of sin and death help us make sense of the horrible things this world and its inhabitants experience every day? How do we know that God is still good and sovereign even when we see Satan, sin, and death seeming always to have their way? How does the millennium offer hope in the present?

When Satan is bound, he will no longer have influence over the earth as he has had throughout our lifetime, and the lifetimes of our parents, and ever since Adam and Eve fell in the garden. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Gog and Magog

In *Revelation 20:8*, John notes that Satan deceived the nations of Gog and Magog, alluding to a key prophecy from *Ezekiel 38–39*. In this passage, God condemned “Gog of the land of Magog” (*Ezekiel 38:2*). It's unlikely that this oracle was directed at a specific person or nation. Instead, it's a message against *anyone* who would stand against the one true God—past, present, or future. The message is simple . . .

Stand against God, and He will stand against you (38:3).

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10

According to [Ezekiel 38:8–12](#), what did God say would happen in the future between Gog and Magog and His chosen people Israel? Why will Gog and Magog attack Israel?

How will God respond to this act of defiance according to [38:18–23](#)? What will God reveal about Himself in this process?

According to [39:25–29](#), what does God’s decisive defeat of Gog and Magog mean for His people Israel?

“I will leave none of my people behind. And I will never again turn my face from them” ([39:28–29](#)). *What an amazing promise!* In Jesus’ millennial kingdom, this promise will become a reality. As we wait for His return, we can trust that He will keep His promise . . . even when this world feels so broken and messy.



Application: How It’s Supposed to Be

Because we know that things in this world won’t be perfect until Jesus returns to deal with Satan, sin, and death for good, what should we do in the meantime? Pastor Chuck offers two suggestions.

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10

First, *live consistently and realistically*. Pain is an unavoidable part of the human experience. Don't assume that Jesus will shield you from all harm. What does it look like to trust God in those dark seasons of suffering? How can you rely on Him when the storm is calm?

Second, *witness faithfully and fervently*. Satan is strong, attractive, and deceptive. Without intervention from the Holy Spirit, every person will naturally follow the way of the dragon. How do you sense the Holy Spirit wanting to use you to point people to the Lamb?

Is anything in your life or in the life of a loved one making you think, *That's just not how it's supposed to be*? How has this study of Jesus' millennial reign assured you of God's sovereignty and His goodness? In what ways can you share this hope with a fellow believer who might be wrestling with God about the evils that fill this world?

Anyone—even a non-Christian—will notice that this world is upside-down. There is just too much evil, injustice, pain, and death swirling around us. Yet only a Christian has the hope that it will not be this way forever. One day, Jesus will return to introduce His followers to a perfect creation—one that is good and beautiful and whole and right.

And in that day, we will look around and exclaim, “This is *exactly* how it's supposed to be!”

Turning the World Right-Side Up

Revelation 20:1–10



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I confess that I sometimes fall for Satan's schemes and choose to follow his way rather than Yours. When I'm tempted to turn away from You, help me yield to the Holy Spirit so that I can follow You instead. Continue to transform me so I can look and act like Your Son Jesus Christ. I ask these things in His great name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY TEN

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15

We come to the final judgment. Humankind—men and women, old and young alike—will stand before God. No more hiding, no more running, it all comes to bear at this moment.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

READY or not, here I come!” This call kicks off a round of hide-and-seek—a favorite game for children across the world. The little ones who play this game best know exactly where to run and exactly how to hide.

Yet hide-and-seek isn’t just a game played by children. In fact, humankind historically has played this game at the highest of levels. As children, we run when we accidentally break our sibling’s favorite toy. As adolescents, we hide our failed tests from our parents. As adults, we hide our true character from loved ones, or we run before they can discover our flaws.

People think they can hide or run from their sins to make them and their consequences disappear. It may even work for a while, but eventually “your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). This study’s passage illustrates the ultimate “find” by God in the most cosmic and climactic sense. His books are opened. The thoughts, words, and deeds of those standing before Him are laid bare. Ready or not, they must face their Judge.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The thought of God’s coming judgment may frighten you, but today’s passage reveals that those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life will *never* be condemned. Offer a prayer of thanks to your loving heavenly Father. You know that you don’t need to hide. You’re found and you’re welcomed.



The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We're nearing the climax of Revelation. After years of intense tribulation, Jesus returned to earth as King of Kings to defeat the wicked and cast the beast and false prophet into "the lake of fire" (Revelation 19:20 NASB). Accompanying Jesus were the "armies of heaven" (19:14). Who were they? John identified them earlier as the "called and chosen and faithful" (17:14).

These were the New Testament saints, the followers of Christ who had been raptured before the tribulation (*1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*) and who were rewarded in heaven at the believers' judgment (*1 Corinthians 3:13–15*; *2 Corinthians 5:9–10*). Just as Christ promised (*Matthew 19:28*), they returned with Christ to reign with Him (*Revelation 20:4*).

Reigning alongside the New Testament saints were the martyrs who became followers of Jesus during the tribulation (20:4). These tribulation saints were resurrected at the beginning of the millennium in what John called "the first resurrection" (20:5). John assured them, along with all the resurrected faithful, that they had eternal life with Christ. They were "blessed and holy," John said, and over them "the second death holds no power" (20:6).

But what about the unsaved? What about those who worshiped idols rather than God? Who rebelled against God and rejected His grace? Who turned their backs on Christ's offer of salvation and embraced a lifestyle of self-worship and sin? These lost souls "did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended" (20:5). Their resurrection, however, was not "a resurrection of life" but "a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29 NASB).



Observation: The Great White Throne Judgment

In *Revelation 20:11–15*, the judgments in Revelation reach their long-awaited conclusion. Read these verses slowly and carefully, taking time to observe the details John included from his vision.¹

What did John see at the beginning of this vision in *20:11*?

The image of this great white throne was truly awesome, filling the entire scene. The earth and the sky had melted away in God's purging fire (*2 Peter 3:10*), and nothing remained in the vacuous space. *No one* could hide from the coming judgment.

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15

Whom did John see standing before God’s holy throne in [Revelation 20:12](#)? By what standard did God judge them?

What essential ideas from [20:12](#) does [20:13](#) repeat?

God keeps a perfect and complete record of every life. Not even the most righteous individual who has ever lived as a lost person earns the favor of God because the only way one can fellowship with an eternal God in heaven is to be as perfect as He is. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to [Revelation 20:14–15](#), what did the “lake of fire” represent in John’s vision? What powers were first thrown into the lake? What people were thrown in next? (Remember, in [20:10](#), the devil, the beast, and the false prophet had already entered this fiery lake.)

We call this the “great white throne judgment.” It’s great because it’s God’s throne—His eternal throne. It’s white because from it emanates justice, purity, and righteousness. As a throne, it represents a place of judgment. It is where God finally conquers sin and death. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide

Scripture affirms that followers of Jesus will live with Him forever in the new heaven and the new earth and that nonbelievers will experience eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. Each person’s eternal destiny is recorded in “the books [that] were opened,” John wrote ([Revelation 20:12](#)). What books are these?

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15

“The Book of Life” contains the names of those of whom Christ said, “I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine” (Revelation 3:5). How does a sinful human being get his or her name etched in the Lamb’s Book of Life? Compare [Revelation 3:5](#) with [3:20–21](#).

The second set is simply called “the books,” and they contain a record of every human’s actions, whether good or bad (20:12). We might call these the Books of Deeds. How are these books used to determine a person’s destiny, according to [20:12, 15](#)?

A person’s deeds won’t earn him or her a spot in the Book of Life. Paul wrote that God “saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness” (Titus 3:5 NASB). He washed away our sins and gave us “new life through the Holy Spirit”—whom God poured out on us “through Jesus Christ our Savior” (3:5–6). We have “confidence that we will inherit eternal life” (3:7) not because of our deeds but because of God’s grace.

Why do you think God will judge the lost according to their deeds? For some help, see Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#).²

When you trust Christ, His righteousness is credited to your account. And that is the righteousness God sees when you stand before Him. Those without Christ—no matter how good the deeds, no matter how great the works, no matter how fine the words, no matter how pure the motive—will never measure up to the perfect holiness and righteousness of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15



Correlation: The Original Game of Hide-and-Seek

Humans are great at playing hide-and-seek. We learned it from our original ancestors. According to [Genesis 3:7](#), what did Adam and Eve realize the moment they ate the fruit? What did they do in response?

According to [3:8](#), what did the man and the woman do when they heard God walking in the garden? What reason did the man give for this action in [3:10](#)?

Just like the serpent, Adam and Eve tried to deceive God. What was the *real* reason the man and the woman hid from God? What does this behavior reveal about humanity's response to sin?

Many today choose to follow in our first parents' footsteps, and those who do so will continue to have a fractured relationship with God. But those who step into the light and seek God's mercy through Christ will see Jesus welcoming them into His family.

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15



Application: Stop Running and Hiding

Revelation 20:11–15 offers a straightforward invitation . . .

It's time to stop running and hiding.

In what ways do you feel tempted to play a game of hide-and-seek with God? What kind of circumstances make you want to run from Him?

One way you can stop running and hiding from God is through the practice of confession. Is there a sin you've allowed to fester in your soul a little too long? Confess that to Him today. Remember, John said that “if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness” (1 John 1:9). Write down a prayer in the space below.

Next, consider confessing this sin to a trusted Christian brother or sister: your spouse, a close friend, a pastor, or a member of your small group. When we confess to other believers, we invite them to join the fight against sin by praying for us and by holding us accountable. Making a public confession is difficult, but not hiding is freeing. In the space below, write down an action plan. Whom will you speak with? When will you do it? What will you say?

Children who play hide-and-seek sometimes shout, “Come out, come out, wherever you are!” God is shouting these words to a lost humanity. His call is for everyone—regardless of where they are on the journey of life, and His voice is warm, tender, and inviting.

Come out from your hiding. Admit your need for a savior. Run to Jesus. And experience abundant life, joy, peace, and hope forevermore.

The Final Exit Interview

Revelation 20:11–15



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the reminder that Jesus Christ will one day rid the universe of the powers of sin and death for good. I know that day will be frightening for many, so give me the boldness to invite the lost to come out of their hiding so that they might one day be found in You. May my life always reflect your love, justice, and righteousness. In Jesus' just name I pray. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY ELEVEN

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

Popular opinions about heaven are almost always wrong. We're not going to be sprouting wings and strumming a harp on a cloud. Did you know that heaven in the future will be on solid ground?

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ALL people share a faint, nagging sensation that we are strangers in this world. Nothing about this earth convinces our hearts to settle down and make it home. Even in those cozy moments when we sit by a fireplace with a cup of warm coffee enjoying the company of the people we love, we know this feeling of home won't last. There must be something more. Something eternal.

In his book, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*, Peter Kreeft describes this homesick feeling:

We have a homing instinct, a “home detector,” and it doesn't ring for earth. That's why nearly every society in history except our own instinctively believes in life after death. Like the great mythic wanderers . . . we have been trying to get home. Earth just doesn't smell like home. However good a road it is, however good a motel it is . . . it is not home. Heaven is.¹

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we invite you to listen to your heart. Where does your heart long to be?



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Share with the Lord in prayer your longing to be at home with Christ. Let this prayer prompt your own words.

Father, the more I try to feel comfortable in this world, the more my heart yearns for my true home with You. Speak to me through Your Word and give me a soul-satisfying taste of the heaven I long for. In Jesus' faithful name I pray. Amen.



Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Revelation 21 marks the culmination of God’s original plan to redeem fallen humanity and restore creation. In Genesis, God promised a deliverer—the “offspring” of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). That messianic hope was passed on to Abraham, to his son Isaac, then to Jacob, and to Jacob’s descendants. It was illustrated in God’s deliverance in Exodus, longed for by the judges, amplified in the kings, and predicted in the prophets.

Finally, it was fulfilled in the Gospels when Jesus died for our sins and arose victorious over death. But not until the events in Revelation will the themes of redemption and new creation come to a climax—when the trumpet sounds and Christ returns to defeat Satan and sin once and for all.

In a great conflagration, the old, cursed creation “will melt away” (2 Peter 3:12), and God will fashion “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1). The saga of Scripture comes full circle. “The old order of things has passed away” (21:4 NIV). Paradise lost will be paradise reborn—only better!



Observation: Our Heavenly Home

Rather than a garden, though, God will provide a spectacular heaven-on-earth home in which His people will dwell. In God’s presence, our heart’s deepest longings will finally be satisfied. Let’s use our skills of observation² to find out what our eternal home will look like, what life will be like there, and who will be its residents.

What Heaven Will Look Like—Revelation 21:1–2

How did John describe what he saw in *Revelation 21:1–2*? What replaced “the old heaven and the old earth”?

In Revelation, the sea represented a foreboding place, a breeding ground for evil (*Revelation 13:1*). John’s readers associated the “sea” with darkness, death, and chaos. What would John’s statement, “the sea was also gone” (21:1), have meant to them?

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

What Life Will Be Like—Revelation 21:3–6

John’s vision commenced with a “loud voice like a trumpet blast” (Revelation 1:10). Loud angelic voices punctuated John’s vision many times. Here are a few significant loud-voice pronouncements in Revelation:

- “Who is worthy to break the seals?” (5:2)
- “Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne!” (7:10)
- “The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord.” (11:15)
- “The accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down.” (12:10)
- “It is finished!” (16:17)
- “Praise the LORD! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.” (19:6)

Now, in a climactic shout from heaven, what did the last angelic voice declare in [21:3–4](#)? What will *not* be in heaven?

God Himself then spoke from His throne. What words of hope did He offer in [21:5–6](#)? What will be in heaven?

We are caught in the web of a cursed world, surrounded by evil, fighting battles within and without. No wonder we turn to fantasy to escape. This is no fantasy! Heaven is the most “real” our existence could possibly be. We are surrounded with the Alpha-and-Omega presence of the living God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

Who Will Be There—Revelation 21:7–8

Who will be in heaven, according to *Revelation 21:7*? What promise did God give?

Who will not be in heaven, according to *21:8*?

Heaven is made up of those who have turned by faith alone to the Lord Jesus Christ alone and have found their thirst satisfied in Him. They are the overcomers. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: God’s Pronouncement from His Throne

Throughout Revelation, the Lamb spoke, the elders spoke, the angels spoke, but in *Revelation 21:5–8*, John wrote down what God Himself spoke. First, God pronounced, “Look, I am making everything new!” (*Revelation 21:5*), which is the climax of the book of Revelation and the culmination of all things.

The word *new* is qualitative, meaning “better.” God will not simply re-create His original design. Rather, He will make something new—what the original design was supposed to become. More wonderful than the beginning. What makes God’s “new” creation better? (Hint: look at the surrounding verses to draw your interpretation.)

God’s new creation won’t be a little like the old earth. It’s eternal. It’s brand new, fresh. It’s different in appearance. Different in atmosphere. It’s completely new. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

Second, God declared, “It is finished!” (Revelation 21:6). The Greek term suggests absolute finality—“a permanent condition that has fully arrived.”³ What was God communicating to His people languishing in a dead-end, sin-cursed world?

Finally, God made three “I” statements in [21:6–7](#): “I am . . .” (21:6), “I will give . . .” (21:6), and “I will be . . .” (21:7). These statements refer to God’s *person*, His *provision*, and His *presence*. Taken together, what do they tell us about God and His relationship with us?

What do these verses say to your heart?

Some think that earthly fame, fortune, or pleasure will satisfy, but these people aren't informed. They don't know that the water that's worth drinking is free! It comes from the One who alone can provide it. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: I Will Be Your God

God delighted in His close relationship with Adam and Eve as He walked with them “in the cool of the day” (Genesis 3:8 NASB). Sin, however, severed that intimacy when God “banished them from the Garden of Eden” (3:23). Ever since that tragic separation, God set out to restore His close relationship with those He loved.

From the following verses, write down the ways you see through biblical history God giving His people a taste of dwelling with Him and a promise of something better.

[Genesis 17:5–7](#) _____

[Exodus 6:6–7](#) _____

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

Leviticus 26:11–12 _____

Jeremiah 31:33 _____

Zechariah 8:7–8 _____

John 1:14 _____

2 Corinthians 6:16 _____

Ephesians 2:21–22 _____

All these incidences looked forward to the day that John foresaw when the angel declared,

“Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people.” (Revelation 21:3)

Our hearts long to be “home” with God—where God will be with us and we will be His people for eternity. What do you think that experience will be like for you?

“God Himself will dwell among us.” There will be an intimacy like we have never known before. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Heaven’s “No Mores”

The best way that John could describe our eternal home with God was to imagine what it will be like without sin’s effects. In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll lists “Twelve ‘No Mores’ in the New Heaven and Earth” from Revelation 21–22. Some of the points that appear later in Revelation 21–22 will whet your appetite for our next studies, but it’s encouraging to see them all in one place. As you read the list, hear the words sing to the deepest longing in your heart.

1. *No more sea*—because chaos and calamity will be eradicated (21:1).
2. *No more tears*—because hurtful memories will be replaced (21:4).
3. *No more death*—because mortality will be swallowed up by life (21:4).
4. *No more mourning*—because sorrow will be completely comforted (21:4).
5. *No more crying*—because the sounds of weeping will be soothed (21:4).

Heaven at Last

Revelation 21:1–8

6. *No more pain*—because human suffering will be cured (21:4).
7. *No more thirst*—because God will graciously quench all desires (21:6).
8. *No more wickedness*—because all evil will be banished (21:8, 27).
9. *No more temple*—because the Father and Son are personally present (21:22).
10. *No more night*—because God’s glory will give eternal light (21:23–25; 22:5).
11. *No more closed gates*—because God’s doors will always be open (21:25).
12. *No more curse*—because Christ’s blood has forever lifted that curse (22:3).⁴

What do you most long for in the new heaven and the new earth?

Take John’s vision of your future home in heaven with you today. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, you have a guaranteed place in heaven. Give Him praise!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, nothing this world offers compares to dwelling with You in my forever home in the new heaven and the new earth. I long for the day when there will be no more tears and sorrow, when my body is liberated from pain, and I soar free in the wonder of Your presence. May that day come soon! In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Peter J. Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 39.
2. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 301.
4. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, 301.

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY TWELVE

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

We all want to go to heaven, but we aren't certain that we want to go right now. Why not? What is there on earth that would keep us from wanting to be there?

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WHEN Jesus told His disciples, “I will be with you only a little longer” (John 13:33), the disciples’ hearts must have sunk. As they heard Jesus talk about leaving them, clouds of confusion and fear darkened their faces. So, Jesus lit a candle of hope:

“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.” (14:1–3)

Jesus’ flame of hope still flickers in the hearts of all who follow Him. Jesus is preparing a place for us, and He’s waiting for just right the moment to welcome us home. In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C. S. Lewis describes our eternal home’s custom design:

Your soul has a curious shape because it is . . . a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. . . . Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it—made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.¹

Would you like to take a tour of your future dwelling? Through John’s vision, you can see a preview of what Jesus has been preparing for you.



Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep,” Jesus said (John 10:14). Write a prayer to your Shepherd who knows you so well. Ask Him to reveal through His Word the wonders of the dwelling He designed just for you.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

We often think of heaven as a place above the clouds outside our realm. It is somewhere “up there.” When we die, our souls separate from our earthly bodies and go to this place where God is. “To be absent from the body,” Paul wrote, is “to be at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8 NASB). But God never intended humans to be disembodied spirits forever. There’s more to look forward to.

On resurrection day, “we will put on heavenly bodies” that are “made for us by God himself and not by human hands” (2 Corinthians 5:1–2). Then, we will inhabit our eternal home which, according to Pastor Chuck Swindoll, “is actually the *new* heaven and *new* earth. And the center of this new order of things will be the new Jerusalem.”²

The dwelling places that Jesus has been preparing for us are inside this magnificent celestial city. Let’s look inside.



Observation: The Celestial City

Use your skills of observation to write down John’s description of the new Jerusalem.³ In the vision, who showed John the city, according to *Revelation 21:9*? What is the city called?

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

Origin—Revelation 21:9–10

Where did the angel take John for a better view, and what did he show him in [Revelation 21:9–10](#)?

Compare these verses with [21:2–3](#). What similarities do you notice about the origin and the nature of the new Jerusalem?

God designed the new Jerusalem and crafted it as He wants it to be. It comes from the very being of God to us as our eternal home. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Appearance—Revelation 21:11

How did John describe the city's radiance in [Revelation 21:11](#)? What key words do you observe?

God's glory filled the holiest of places in the tabernacle just as it fills the new Jerusalem. It is a sacred light, representing His character. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Exterior—Revelation 21:12–14

What features of the wall did John record, according to [Revelation 21:12–14](#)? What's significant about the names of the gates and foundation stones of the city?

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

*The wall speaks of protection and the foundation represents permanence.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Dimensions and Materials—Revelation 21:15–21

What will be the city's dimensions, according to *Revelation 21:15–17*?

What materials make up the city in *21:18–21*? What do you notice about the colors, the clarity, and the quality of the materials?

*Talk about attention to detail—God even adorns the foundation stones!
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Distinctive—Revelation 21:22

What makes the city unique compared to all other cities in which God's people dwell, according to *Revelation 21:22*?

*In the new Jerusalem, we will have no temple, because almighty God and the Lamb will dwell among us, and they will be the focal point of worship.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22



Interpretation: The Bride

Interpretation seeks to understand the meaning of key sections of the passage. The new Jerusalem not only is “like a bride” (Revelation 21:2), it is called “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9).

Isn't the church the bride (*Ephesians 5:25–32*)? Should we conclude that the new Jerusalem is the church? Certainly, believers who comprise the universal church will be its residents. But believers aren't the only group of God's redeemed people called the bride in Scripture. What does the “bride” metaphor refer to in *Isaiah 62:1–5*?

What conclusion do you draw regarding meaning of the bride metaphor for the new Jerusalem?

The new Jerusalem as the “bride” in Revelation 21:9 encompasses all the redeemed of all the ages, from Adam all the way to the last person alive in the family of God on earth. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Architect and Builder

Correlation appeals to other Scriptures to shed light on our passage. The author of Hebrews mentioned the holy city as well, and he gave us an inside look at God's heavenly construction site.

According to *Hebrews 11:10*, what glimpse of the new Jerusalem did Abraham foresee? How did the author describe it?

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

By faith, Abraham traveled to the “land that God would give him as an inheritance” (Hebrews 11:8). But Abraham’s eyes of faith saw beyond the physical land to his ultimate inheritance, the city of God.

Use your eyes of faith to see beyond your current circumstances to the “city with eternal foundations . . . designed and built by God” (11:10). What do you, like Abraham, look forward to?



Application: Celestial Wonders Ahead

Two impressions linger in our hearts from our mountaintop view of the celestial city—first, from the streets of gold, and second, from the gates of pearl.

In the new Jerusalem, the gold will be so pure, it will be translucent, allowing God’s glory to radiate all around us. Why would God use pearls for gates? Oysters form pearls as a protective layer against foreign matter inside the shell. Gates of pearl are protective defenses, beautifully polished through the oyster’s pain. What lessons can we learn from these elements?

1. Like the transparent streets of gold that let the glory of God shine through, *let your transparent life display the glory of God.*
2. Like the gates of pearl that let the suffering of the Lamb live on, *let your bruised life remind others of the sacrifice of the Lamb.*

God is the architect and builder not just of His eternal city but also of your life! How has He built you to display the glory of God?

How do the painful experiences of your life draw others to His Son?

Open House at the Celestial City

Revelation 21:9–22

How would you like the Builder to work in you based on what you learned in this study?

Jesus sealed His promise of an eternal dwelling when He rose from the dead. Because Christ arose, so will we someday. And if you have placed your faith in Jesus, there's a place in God's holy city with your name on it, and when you see it, you'll be home at last.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, confined to this earth, I see glimpses of Your glory from Your Word, but they are always fleeting. I long to be set free to revel in the unlimited freedom of the new heaven and the new earth. I'll never feel at home until I am at home with You in my eternal dwelling. Thank You for preparing a place just for me! In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (n.p.: Epub Edition, 2009), 96.
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 310.
3. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

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Study 12 • Page 7

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY THIRTEEN

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

To communicate what it will be like to soar across the glories of heaven, God must adjust His language to our limitations.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

IMAGINE traveling back in time and explaining modern technology to people living in the dark ages. Concepts like electric light bulbs, jet planes, television, and smartphones would boggle their minds. Or imagine if you lived your entire life in the Arctic and visitors arrived from the Amazon with tales of lush jungles, monkeys, and parrots. You wouldn't have the faintest idea what they were talking about.

How do we begin to communicate to people who have never experienced what we're describing? One way is through negatives. In other words, pick something they know and describe how it's different. To our dark ages friend, we might describe cars as carts without horses. Or, to an Arctic dweller, we might explain the Amazon climate as warmth without a fire.

Imagine God's challenge of trying to describe heaven! It's impossible for humans to conceive of an existence outside time and space. The vastness of the new creation and the glory of the new Jerusalem stretches beyond our wildest imagination. So, John used negatives to describe heaven. What will life with God be like? "No more death or sorrow or crying or pain" (Revelation 21:4). He told us what heaven won't be to help us conceive of what it will be.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God gave Paul a glimpse of heaven, and he was at a loss for words to describe what he experienced. He exclaimed:

*"No eye has seen, no ear has heard,
and no mind has imagined
what God has prepared
for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)*



Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

Who can help us conceive the inconceivable? Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind to understand what we can know about heaven through His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Think about what we normally experience in our limited world. We drive on asphalt roads at speeds measured by distance and time. Roofs and walls shield us from the elements. Locks secure our doors. Bank vaults protect our treasures. Lights chase away the darkness—streetlights, headlights, spotlights, flashlights, porchlights. When we want to worship, we go to a sanctuary or, perhaps, a cathedral ornately decorated with images of heaven. But it isn't even close to what heaven is really like.

Revelation 21:21–22:5 is a description of heaven for earthbound minds. Read the passage and note the “negatives”—words like *no*, *nothing*, and *nor*. Write down what you find, and in the next section, we'll explore the passage in more detail.



Observation: Six Magnificent Negatives in Heaven

Previously, we learned that, in God's new creation, there will be no more sea, no more tears, no more death or mourning or crying (Revelation 21:1–4). There will be neither pain nor spiritual thirst nor wickedness (21:4–8). But that's not all. Use your observation skills to answer the questions below.¹

In *Revelation 21:21*, what makes the gates and main street of the new Jerusalem unlike anything we know?

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

We might assume that a majestic temple will occupy the center of the new Jerusalem like it was in the earthly Jerusalem, but no. Instead, what will be the city's focal point in [Revelation 21:22](#)?

There will be no need of what else in our heavenly home, according to [21:23–24](#)? How is this feature of the new creation different than God's original creation ([Genesis 1:14–18](#))?

What is the significance of the gates remaining open in [Revelation 21:25](#)? What will there be no need for?

What else is absent, according to [21:26–27](#)?

In [22:1–2](#), John takes us back to the original paradise. A river will flow through the celestial city and trees of life will adorn its banks, similar to the garden of Eden. How did John describe this river and these trees? What makes this city different than cities we know?

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

Best of all, what did John say will not be present, in *Revelation 22:3–5*? How did John describe our close connection to our heavenly Father?

We long for an eternity where there is a face-to-face relationship with the One who got you there. Where there's no darkness, no disease, no threat of death. An eternity in which there will be protection and security and safety for you and your loved ones. An eternity that you can finally call home.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: No Night There

Throughout Revelation, darkness has been a recurring theme. When the Lamb broke the sixth seal, “the sun became as dark as black cloth” (Revelation 6:12). The fourth trumpet judgment caused a third of the sun, moon, and stars to “become dark” (8:12). The kingdom of the beast “was plunged into darkness” when the fifth angel poured out his bowl of judgment (16:10).

When God makes all things new, His glory will eradicate all darkness. In the new Jerusalem, “there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them” (22:5).

What does darkness symbolize? What does the end of darkness mean?

Why do the gates never close in the new Jerusalem, according to 21:25? What is the meaning of open gates to John's readers, who lived in walled cities?

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

Why is it significant that God will be the source of light, not lamps or a sun?

No terror by night in the new creation. We will worship God and “reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5). We will know pleasures without end. This will be a reality, not a nice dream, not an idyllic setting that will stop. This will go on forever and ever. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Reverse the Curse

The roots of the curse go back to the fall. In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains what happened when Adam and Eve sinned.

In the beginning, God created the earth to be perfectly suited for human life: security without locks, food without famine, work without toil, crops without weeds, relationships without conflict. All of that changed when the first man and woman introduced sin into the world (Gen. 3:14–19). . . . From that moment on, humanity began to decline into disharmony, disease, and eventual death.²

What do these verses say about the consequences of original sin?

Genesis 3:22–23 _____

Romans 5:12 _____

Romans 8:20–21 _____

How does Christ's death and resurrection give hope to those living under sin's curse, according to these verses?

Romans 5:21 _____

Romans 6:23 _____

1 Corinthians 15:54–57 _____

Galatians 3:13 _____

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

In His new creation, God will finalize Christ's redemptive work. He will reverse the curse! What features of the new Jerusalem indicate the end of the curse and the return to paradise, according to [Revelation 22:1–5](#)? How is the new creation better than God's original creation?

What a magnificent hope God's people have! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Hopeful Anticipation

What “negative” of the new creation gives you the most hope? What are you looking forward to *not* experiencing?

What are you looking forward to experiencing?

As a young missionary trying reach a primitive tribe in Ecuador, Jim Elliot was killed along with four other missionaries. On a hilltop once, he seemed to get a glimpse of God's splendor, which he attempted to put into words in his diary:

“I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting, delicious, to stand embraced by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and give oneself again to God—what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth! I care not if I may never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him.”³

Heaven's Magnificent Negatives

Revelation 21:21–22:5

Jim Elliot wrote the following prayer in response. Let his prayer inspire you to write your own worshipful longing for heaven in the Final Prayer section below.

“O Jesus, Master and Center and End of all, how long before that Glory is Thine which has so long waited Thee? Now there is no thought of Thee among men; then there shall be thought for nothing else. Now other men are praised; then none shall care for any other's merits. Hasten, hasten, Glory of Heaven, take Thy crown, subdue Thy Kingdom, enthrall Thy creatures.”⁴



A FINAL PRAYER

Write your prayer here.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014), 316.
3. Jim Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 1981), 251.
4. Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor*, 251.

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY FOURTEEN

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

Testimonies from the angel, from John, and from Jesus encourage us to stand alone when standing alone is neither popular nor easy.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PUSHED along by shifting moral currents, the rudderless ship of culture has drifted into dangerous waters. These days, the concept of truth no longer exists. Anything goes! People follow whichever voice appeals to them most.

Paul warned about a coming day when “people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching,” and instead, “they will reject the truth and chase after myths” (2 Timothy 4:3–4). That day is now.

With no clear truth, people grope for something to hold onto. They long for a reliable road map to guide them through life’s tough terrain. They strain to see some light in the darkness to give them hope. They wonder, *Is there purpose in life . . . a reason to live? Are there any values worth defending . . . any ethical guardrails?* Most of all, what their hearts really yearn for is a lasting, secure relationship with their Creator.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we’ll find answers for our confused culture in the compelling words of an angel, of John, and of Jesus Himself—words about hope, faith, and truth. Living according to their words will take courage. We’ll be sailing against the current of our culture, which is a certain sign that we’re going the right direction.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Enter into a prayerful mind-set as you open the Scriptures.

Father, I need wisdom from Your Word if I am to live confidently in today’s world. Attacks against You and Your truth and Your people are launched daily and from all places. Fill me with Your peace, and give me Christ’s love for Your enemies. Help me respond with insight and grace. In Jesus’ name, amen.



Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The first message in our passage came from an angel who was identified in Revelation 21:9 as “one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues.” He initially appeared in [15:1](#) when the bowl judgments were introduced. He was also the angel who showed John the “great prostitute” (17:1)—which represented Babylon, the “great city that rules over the kings of the world” (17:18).

This same angel who led John on a tour through *sin city*, Babylon, returned in [21:9–22:5](#) to escort him through the *celestial city*—the new Jerusalem, the pure “bride, the wife of the Lamb,” (21:9). As he finished showing John the marvels of God’s holy city, he turned to John to deliver a special, concluding word of encouragement.



Observation: Messages from the Angel, John, and Jesus

Use your tools of *observation* to examine what each verse is saying, who is speaking, key words and phrases, and recurring themes.¹ Notice that we’ve entered the epilogue, the final section of Revelation that summarizes important concepts and offers lasting words to live by.

The Message from the Angel—Revelation 22:6–7

What was the first part of the angel’s message in [Revelation 22:6a](#)? How is this declaration foundational to the message of the entire book? Read similar phrases in [3:14](#); [19:11](#); and [21:5](#).

Who sent this angel, and what message was he to deliver, according to [Revelation 22:6b](#)?

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

To confirm his message, the angel quoted Jesus in [Revelation 22:7](#). Jesus' words amounted to His stamp of approval on the book, authorizing all that John recorded. Those who believe Jesus' promise must do what?

Revelation is designed to spur holy living. Knowing that Christ could come at any moment, we honor Him in the way we conduct our affairs. Something wonderful happens in our lives when we have a submissive spirit to obey God.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Message from John—Revelation 22:8–11

John spoke for himself next, which he hadn't done since the beginning of the book in [Revelation 1:9](#). What did John want us to respect in [22:8](#)? What emotions flowed spontaneously from John's soul?

Although John's heart was in the right place, the angel rebuked John in [22:9](#). How did the angel's words sum up a central theme in Revelation, which John's life exemplified?

What are we to remember, according to [22:10–11](#)?

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

John's message was this: respect the Word of God, worship God alone, don't fail to teach the truths of Revelation, and repent while there is still time.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Message of Jesus—Revelation 22:12–16

The angel and John moved aside, and into the spotlight stepped the Author of the vision. What did Jesus declare and what will He do, according to [Revelation 22:12](#)?

What did He affirm about His identity in [22:13](#)? This affirmation bookends the beginning of the vision and the end, [1:8](#) and [21:6](#). What point was Jesus making about Himself?

What hopeful blessing and sobering warning did Jesus give in [22:14–15](#)?

What did Jesus say about His authority in [22:16](#)?

Does Jesus know what is going on in the world? Yes! He is aware. He cares and He is working out His plan because He is the Alpha and Omega.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16



Interpretation and Correlation: A Source That Is Trustworthy

John's original readers probably struggled to interpret the symbols in the book, just as we do. They may have wondered, *How seriously should we take these prophecies?*

How did the words of the angel answer that question in [Revelation 22:6](#)? Why should we take seriously the prophecies in Revelation?

Information is only as reliable as its source, and the source of Revelation is Jesus Himself. Look closer at Jesus' "I am" statements in our passage. In the following chart, write down the meaning of Jesus' statements. Use the correlation column to enhance your interpretation.

Jesus' "I am" Statement	Interpretation	Correlation
"I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (22:12–13).		<i>Revelation 1:8</i>
"I am the root and the descendant of David" (22:16 NASB).		<i>Isaiah 11:1–10</i>
"I am the bright morning star" (22:16).		<i>Numbers 24:17; 2 Peter 1:19</i>

The angel assured us, "Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true" (22:6). The prophecies are pure gold. The source is Jesus Himself, God Almighty. David built the earthly Jerusalem, and his root and descendant, Jesus, will build the new Jerusalem. Jesus' coming is certain, and, like the rising sun, His coming will herald the dawn of a new creation.

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

Into the fog of our relativistic world, Revelation’s prophecies shine like a lighthouse, beaming the hope of history—*Jesus is coming soon!* We can navigate our lives by that hope. Jesus may come at any moment, and because that is true, how should we live?



Application: Living in Light of Jesus’ Coming

Don’t “seal up the prophetic words in this book,” the angel warned (Revelation 22:10). Don’t let them collect dust on a bookshelf. Instead, we should paste them on our mirror so we see them every morning and post them on our refrigerator so we can’t miss them throughout the day. Why take them so seriously? Because “the time is near” (22:10).

How does the truth of Christ’s return give direction to the following issues in your life?

Your Purpose for Living

The Values You Would Die to Defend

The Moral Standards You Live By

What difference does it make in the way you go about your day that the prophecies in Revelation are “trustworthy and true” (Revelation 22:6)?

Compelling Words for a Confused Culture

Revelation 22:6–16

Remember the words of our Lord:

“Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (22:12)

What courage do the words of Jesus give you to stand alone against culture’s tide?

As followers of Christ, we are anchored to truth itself, the coming Savior. Don’t let culture’s shifting currents pull you away from your confidence in Him. Hold fast! Stand firm!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, the prophecies of Revelation are more than curiosities to be scrutinized. They are truths to be cherished. At their center is Your glory and the glory of Your Son—the “bright morning star” who will usher in a new day when He comes. May I bask in His light and live for His praise. In His wonderful name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

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REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY FIFTEEN

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

We live in a weary world. Weary of wars. Weary of disease. Weary of heartbreak. Come soon, Lord Jesus, and deliver us. May we know the joy of being free at last.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LAST words are the most meaningful words. Thoughtful people weigh their words carefully when their days are coming to an end. Their statements become precious drops of wisdom, distilled from a lifetime of experience, worth listening to very carefully.

Paul's last words wrapped up his entire life's work. Knowing his time was near, he wrote:

I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful.
(2 Timothy 4:7)

Last words like Paul's resound with vital truth. They clarify what life is all about. They solidify a person's thoughts. They prioritize what's truly important. They summarize a person's life into principles others can live by. If we're smart, we pay careful attention to a person's last words.

What last words did John write? Let's listen closely as we study the final verses of the Bible's final book.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

“Encourage one another with these words,” Paul wrote, after promising Christ's return (1 Thessalonians 4:18). Ask the Lord to encourage your heart through His Word today.



Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

You recall, at the beginning of Revelation, the prologue set a tone of expectancy:

This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. . . . [God] blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near. (Revelation 1:1, 3)

Now Revelation’s epilogue echoes the same expectancy—“Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for *the time is near*,” the angel declared (22:10, emphasis added)—but it doesn’t end there. Expectancy leads to invitation.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus invited people: “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Christ’s offer weaves implicitly through Revelation. Each prophecy implies an invitation to come to Jesus before it’s too late. In the book’s final words, Christ’s appeal rings loud and clear.



Observation: Invitation, Exhortation, Benediction

Read [Revelation 22:17–21](#) as if John is speaking to you personally. One of the goals of observation is to feel the emotion of the writer’s words.¹ What emotions does this passage evoke in you?

Invitation—Revelation 22:17

What is the invitation in [Revelation 22:17](#), and who makes it?

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

The “Spirit” is the Holy Spirit, and the “bride” represents God’s people, those “from every tribe, and language and people and nation” who have been ransomed by Christ’s blood (Revelation 5:9; see [19:7–8](#); [21:2, 9](#)). At first, we might think that the “Spirit” and “bride” are appealing for Jesus to come, but here, the appeal is not toward Jesus but to whom? And what is being offered?

Come! Come! If you're without Christ, come! Don't wait until you're at death's door. The blessings, the benefits, the joys are more than we could number. It's an open-ended, unrestricted, wonderful invitation to all. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Exhortation—Revelation 22:18–19

Both Jesus and the angel had authenticated the prophecies in Revelation as “trustworthy and true” and worthy of our obedience (Revelation 22:6–7). In light of the book’s sacred nature and divine origin, what exhortation and warning did John give in [Revelation 22:18–19](#)? What two actions are forbidden?

Not just the general concepts but the “words” of Scripture must not be tampered with. Why was John so particular?

While we do not worship the words, the words are to be preserved, guarded, accepted, most importantly obeyed. These words form the standard of our faith and the basis of our practice. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

Benediction—Revelation 22:20–21

What do the last words of Revelation say, according to [Revelation 22:20–21](#)? What hope forms the capstone of the book, indeed, of all Scripture? What is the response? Who is the focus?

“Yes, I am coming soon” is Jesus’ final promise. Scoffers will deny it. Doubters will argue over terms. Agnostics will wonder what all the excitement is about. But God’s own people find their fire fueled by these words.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Coming Soon

Scripture traces God’s plan of redemption from the creation to the fall, from God’s covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David to the birth of Jesus, from Jesus’ death and resurrection to the birth of the church and the teaching of the apostles. While the final chapters of Revelation close Scripture’s story, they compose the opening chapters of eternity’s story.

Christ’s declaration, “Yes, I am coming soon!” looks forward to redemption’s next phase, the end of the curse and the new creation. But what did He mean by “soon”?

Some in Peter’s day tapped their toes impatiently, saying, “What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again?” (2 Peter 3:4). How did Peter reassure them in [2 Peter 3:8–9](#)?

An eternal God doesn’t measure time as timebound humans count time. *Soon* may mean millennia. But there’s a bigger meaning to the word. The word *soon*, as Jesus used it, emphasizes imminency rather than immediacy. Read the article, [“Is Jesus Coming Soon?”](#) at [gotquestions.org](#), and write down your conclusions on the meaning of “soon” and the imminent return of Jesus.

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

Christ's coming is the next event in God's prophetic timeline. Nothing else must happen first, so Christ could appear anytime, even before the end of this sentence! In addition, He won't give a warning—other than the warnings He's already given. He'll come unexpectedly . . . like a thief in the night.

Jesus said, "I am coming imminently, in any hour, at any time of the Father's choosing. I am coming!" He is coming at any moment.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Importance of Words

John cautioned those who hear these prophecies not to add to them or remove any of "the words of prophecy written in this book" (Revelation 22:18). The *words* themselves are to be preserved.

John's warning recalls God's warning to the people of Israel. Read [Deuteronomy 4:2](#) in the New American Standard Bible and write down God's command about His word.

Why might people try to add to or take away certain words in Scripture? What motive might they have?

Words are important. Those who take lightly the authority of Scripture tend to tamper with the words. How might people find ways around obeying Scripture by adding to or removing the words of Scripture?

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

What conclusion do you draw from John's insistence that the words of prophecy in Revelation, and the rest of Scripture, remain as written?

John's warning is directed to those who deliberately falsify and misrepresent Holy Scripture. Those who twist the truth to say what they want it to say for the purpose of deceiving. We must uphold, love, guard, and most importantly obey the Word of God. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Final Words

The prophecies of Revelation call to our hearts.

First is *a wake-up call*. To those who are indifferent or apathetic, the message is that Christ may come at any moment. Our present choices have eternal consequences. Believe in Christ now.

Second is *a call to peace*. To those who are anxious and fearful, God freely offers the water of life to quench your soul's deepest thirst and calm you through life's fiercest storms.

Third is *a call to hope*. To those who are lonely and lost, Jesus is the security your heart longs for. He's coming soon, and until then, His Spirit is with you always.

Which call of the three calls above do you hear in the final words of Revelation?

If John left you with a single message from this profound book to carry with you today, what might that be?

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:17–21

Families awaiting the late arrival of a loved one usually leave the porchlight on as a welcome whenever he or she might walk up the sidewalk and open the door. When John wrote, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!” he turned on the porchlight of planet earth. Our welcome never dims. Our love-light never fades. Our hope burns brighter every day.

Come, Lord Jesus! Come!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, as each page of the calendar turns, the day of Your Son’s coming gets nearer. Time never turns back but always moves forward, closer and closer to the day when time itself will end and eternity begins. I long for You to make things right in this world, but mostly, I long to feel Your presence, when You will be with me and I will be Yours for eternity. May that day come soon. In the name of the coming Savior, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the article, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

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Insight for Living Ministries

The Bible-Teaching Ministry of Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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REVELATION UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

Revelation 14–22

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Unveiling the End, Act 3

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