

# REVELATION

triumph of the king

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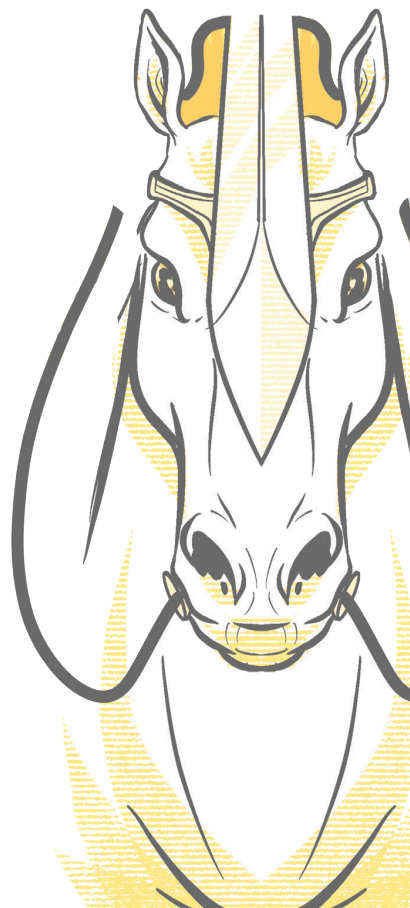
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# **REVELATION**

part three: triumph of the king

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The background of the right half of the page is a vibrant yellow. It features a dark silhouette of a dinosaur, possibly a T-Rex, facing right. The dinosaur is surrounded by various dark splatters and circular patterns of varying sizes, creating a textured, artistic effect. The text 'WEEK NINE' is centered over this background.

# WEEK NINE

## MESSAGE NOTES | OCTOBER 4

*The Origin of Satan—Revelation 12*

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# VISUAL AID

## CHIASM—ANCIENT POETRY

A chiasm is a way of structuring ancient poetry by ordering ideas in a symmetrical pattern, such as *A, B, C, B, A*. These are commonly found in Hebrew literature, particularly in the Psalms or Job, and also in Greek literature such as Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Revelation 12 introduces both the dragon and an extensive and interesting chiasm. We typically prefer scenes presented in a more linear fashion here in the West, but the chiasm was a powerful literary structure in the ancient Near East.

- A.** Introduction of the Dragon (12:1–17)
- B.** Introduction of the Two Beasts (13:1–18)
- C.** A View from Heaven (14:1–5)
- D.** Introduction of Babylon the Great (14:6–13)
- E.** Seven Bowls of God's Wrath (15:1–16:21)
- D.** Destruction of Babylon (17:1–18:24)
- C.** A View from Heaven (19:1–10)
- B.** Destruction of the Two Beasts (19:11–21)
- A.** Destruction of the Dragon (20:1–10)

## PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by YOU!

# DEVOTIONAL INSTRUCTIONS

This week, we are going to do our devotions a little bit differently—we will do a simple inductive Bible study of the text in Revelation. This Bible study style is simple, yet it leads to profound insights. It consists of reading the text, asking three key questions, and setting aside some space for questions you have yet to answer, that need further study, that could be brought to a group discussion, or that may need the help of a mentor.

## QUESTION 1

**What are the key facts I can OBSERVE from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?** Look at all of the key elements in this part of the study. Act like a newspaper reporter who wants to know all of the details of the situation in order to report with honesty. There is always more in this section than meets the eye.

## QUESTION 2

**What did this MEAN to the original audience (the seven churches)?** Try to put yourself in the shoes of the original audience. They are oppressed people under Roman domination. They are a small minority scared for their lives and looking for hope. What will they find in this passage? You can only know what a passage means for today if you first discover what it meant to the original recipients.

## QUESTION 3

**How does it APPLY to my world today?** In the passage, look for the following elements: a command to obey, a promise to claim, a model to follow, a truth to enjoy, and an insight to challenge. Try to walk away with at least one thing that can make a difference in your world today!

# DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 12

### REFLECTION

1. What are the key facts I can **OBSERVE** from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?

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2. What did this **MEAN** to the original audience (the seven churches)?

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3. How does it **APPLY** to my world today?

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### QUESTIONS

What questions do I still have from the text?

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### PRAYER

Pray that God would give you understanding of his Word and draw you closer to him this week.

# DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 13

### REFLECTION

1. What are the key facts I can **OBSERVE** from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?

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2. What did this **MEAN** to the original audience (the seven churches)?

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3. How does it **APPLY** to my world today?

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### QUESTIONS

What questions do I still have from the text?

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### PRAYER

Pray that God would give you understanding of his Word and draw you closer to him this week.

# DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 14

### REFLECTION

1. What are the key facts I can **OBSERVE** from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?

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2. What did this **MEAN** to the original audience (the seven churches)?

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3. How does it **APPLY** to my world today?

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### QUESTIONS

What questions do I still have from the text?

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### PRAYER

Pray that God would give you understanding of his Word and draw you closer to him this week.



# DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

DAILY READING: REVELATION 15

## REFLECTION

1. What are the key facts I can **OBSERVE** from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?

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2. What did this **MEAN** to the original audience (the seven churches)?

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3. How does it **APPLY** to my world today?

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## QUESTIONS

What questions do I still have from the text?

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## PRAYER

Pray that God would give you understanding of his Word and draw you closer to him this week.

# DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

DAILY READING: REVELATION 16

## REFLECTION

1. What are the key facts I can **OBSERVE** from the passage (who, what, where, when, how)?

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2. What did this **MEAN** to the original audience (the seven churches)?

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3. How does it **APPLY** to my world today?

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## QUESTIONS

What questions do I still have from the text?

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## PRAYER

Pray that God would give you understanding of his Word and draw you closer to him this week.



# DISCUSSION GUIDE

written by mark ashton

# THE ORIGIN OF SATAN

(Revelation 12)

## INTRODUCTION

Revelation 12 is a difficult-to-understand scene in John's Apocalypse. It depicts a dragon chasing a woman, a massive battle in heaven, and the return of Jesus. This scene ultimately provides the backstory for Revelation 13 in which the dragon enters the story of the future.

**Pastor's Note:** *If you attempt to arrange this passage in a sequence that fits the chronology of the rest of Scripture, you are going to drive yourself crazy. Instead, treat the passage like a dream sequence in which the symbolism of the imagery is the key notion, not the order of events.*

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Revelation 12 is like a good Star Wars, Marvel, or X-Men origin story (or, a flashback from *This Is Us* if that is more your groove).

- What is your favorite origin story from TV or the movies? Why is it your favorite?

## READ REVELATION 12:1-9

- List out every symbolic reference you can find in verses 1–5 (at least ten). As a group, discuss what you think each symbol represents.
- According to verses 7–9, how do the events in heaven impact what happens on earth?

## READ EZEKIEL 28:11-19

This is another background scene for Satan, who is thought to be the “King of Tyre.”

- Discuss which characteristics of the King of Tyre seem like Satan and which seem like a human king. Could this be a double prophecy, speaking of two things at once?

## READ REVELATION 12:10-17

- In the “smackdown hymn” in verses 10–12, what were the two factors that caused the saints to triumph over Satan? What do you think each factor means?

- Verses 13–17 seem to repeat the pattern of verse 6. They contain different details, but the key points are the same—*is the woman safe? What happens to the dragon?* In the real world, what do those things mean?

## REFLECT

What are some important lessons for us about the origins of Satan and our power over him?

## PRAYER POINTS

- Pray a prayer of **thanksgiving** for God's sovereign power over all things, including Satan.
- Pray a prayer of **confession** for when we fail to claim the Holy Spirit's power to fight against our own temptations.
- Pray a prayer of **supplication** for those who are currently in Satan's grasp.
- Pray a prayer of **adoration and recognition** that Jesus is king and God's kingdom will prevail.



# WEEK TEN

## MESSAGE NOTES | OCTOBER 11

*Evil Beasts and 666—Revelation 13*

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# PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by karl pagenkemper

## DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 12

*“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman[...] gave birth to a son, a male child, who ‘will rule all the nations with an iron scepter’...”*—Revelation 12:1, 5

### REFLECTION

Broadway troupes often require an actor to play more than one role. In the musical *Hamilton*, Daveed Diggs brilliantly performed both Marquis de Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson. However, figuring out who is who in a stage play without a playbill can often be challenging.

Unpacking the *dramatis personae* in Revelation 12–13 is puzzling. Yet the image of an “opened” heavenly temple (11:19) tells us these visions are especially important. A dragon, the lead player in an “unholy trinity” (along with two other beasts), actively opposes God. However, another character remains critical—and the roles represented are surprising and marvelous!

A child is born (Revelation 12:4–5). Although he started in a stable, he will “rule with an iron scepter” (cf. Psalm 2:9). He is the One who spoke with authority to the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:27) and will deal with the beast with prejudice at the end of the age (Revelation 19:15). The same One was also the Lamb in the throne room (Revelation 5), worshipped by so many, the only One worthy to open the seals of God’s plan (Revelation 6). The Ruler, the Judge, the Lamb, the worshiped One. Talk about multiple roles! Jesus is the real hero of this book, the central character and primary actor. So much in Revelation confuses, yet Jesus is always the central figure. Other powers will compete, but he is the primary actor of importance. Which character are *you* watching?

### QUESTIONS

1. Which of God’s qualities are you quick to embrace and which might you tend to de-emphasize?
2. What role does Jesus need to play in your life right now?

### PRAYER

*Father, the picture of Jesus is wonderful and richly complex. I want to see you and know you for who you really are. Thank you that I do not have to be afraid of what I will find as I get to know you. Thank you that you desire to reveal yourself and Jesus to me through your Scripture and your Spirit. Amen.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 12

*“That great dragon[...] who leads the whole world astray[...], the accuser of our brothers and sisters[...] Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you!”*—Revelation 12:9–10, 12

### REFLECTION

Conspiracy theories abound on social media platforms. These echo chambers easily extend the reach of even the wildest inventions. Despite limited information, we are hardwired to find explanations for why things happen as they do. When we are fearful and not in control, we feel the need for explanations, even unlikely ones. Revelation 12 assures us that there is a key conspirator who actually exists, and the conflict is more serious than the craziness of social media. The true power behind so much in this world is unveiled as the “dragon,” and oh my, is he angry! He is “filled with fury,” and accuses and deceives us all. Until his defeat, he wages war with “those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus” (v. 17).

To give meaning to all the turmoil (moral, social, or political), we must be aware that a primeval conflict has been at work all along. Christ-followers get to play key roles in God’s cosmic drama. John reveals that the conflict is ultimately spiritual, though often aided by confused and sinful humans. The impact of sin is individual and systemic (how could it be otherwise with sinful humans?), yet most fundamentally, it is spiritual. Not all is dark, but darkness is real; yet God remains on the throne. Leaning into the Son and living faithfully allows us to see the King at work in this age. Can you see him?

### QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel the need to explain hard times to yourself or to friends on social media platforms? What does Revelation suggest about the true source and identity of those in opposition to God’s ways?
2. In the end, who wins? Do you/we win this conflict, or someone else?

### PRAYER

*Father, we know we are not in control of the world around us. We often fear and worry about the intrigue of this world. Remind us the battles are not ours but yours. Remind us to be faithful to the Son. Only by his blood and our faithful testimony are we able to bring honor to your kingdom. Amen.*



## DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 13

*“I saw a beast coming out of the sea[...] to wage war against God’s holy people [...] This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness.” –Revelation 13:1, 7, 10*

### REFLECTION

In September 1964, the Warren Commission concluded Lee Harvey Oswald acted entirely alone when he assassinated America’s 35<sup>th</sup> President in November 1963. It also concluded that Jack Ruby acted independently when he subsequently killed Oswald just two days later. Those findings, of course, have been both supported and disputed—even reviled—ever since. This should not surprise us. Whether or not conspiratorial intent was behind JFK’s assassination, it remains both easy and foolish to assume events around us are all purely random.

John’s “beast[...] of the sea” (v. 1) would trigger ancient horror in Jewish readers (see Daniel 7). The beast, showing clear family resemblance to the dragon (Revelation 12:3), had long energized Israel’s foes to oppose God and his people. It is not that the monster was Rome (as a political power); rather, it was the dark power behind those political “monsters.” The “divinity” of the emperor of his day (Revelation 13:8) could not allow simultaneous worship of the true Son of God, Jesus. Political figures and God’s faithful people were on an inevitable collision course.

Sadly, dehumanizing political systems did not end with Rome. John’s bluntness is sobering: conflict may lead to captivity and death. Only through faithful witness and endurance (v. 10) will God’s people experience victory. That is God’s strategy. The dragon and the monstrous beasts remind us that Christian faith and holiness are deadly serious business.

### QUESTIONS

1. Do you see spiritual powers behind political powers? Do you know believers in other countries who experience struggle with such powers?
2. Why should believers be careful [wary] of political powers? What should we recognize if invited into such powers?

### PRAYER

*Father, help us to discern the “powers” of our day and avoid temptations when in power ourselves. Remind us that the true conspirator is no challenge for you! Help us toward “patient endurance and faithfulness,” as we “hold fast” our testimony in a world that needs to see his light. Amen.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 13

*“The second beast[...] had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon[...] and cause[d] all who refused to worship the image [of the first beast] to be killed.” –Revelation 13:11, 15*

### REFLECTION

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness” (Oscar Wilde). Imitation is the best these beasts can do!

Jesus, in God’s throne room, is both a lamb and a lion simultaneously (Revelation 5:5–6). In Revelation 13, the third monster (“second beast”) looks like a lamb but is anything but. This beast performs miraculous signs and wonders and deceives many, but is only an imitation—powerful but a sham. Completing an “unholy trinity,” the beast will require worship of the dragon and the first beast, and will threaten all who oppose.

In John’s world, these beasts (empowered by the dragon) were personifications of political power structures (vs. 1–2; cf. Daniel 7–8). The Roman Empire required reverence for itself, using intentionally religious symbols and liturgy. Coins announced Caesar as a “Son of God.” Meanwhile, the confession of the early church was, “Jesus is Lord.” With this, the opposite is also declared: Caesar was not Lord, nor was Rome or its political powers.

Wise political systems are terribly important in any country. Yet, at its best, power is derived from true Power; at its worst, power can be dangerous. It is unwise for believers to be naïve about how power works, even in our country.

### QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is the role of power? In governments? In the Church?
2. Why are God’s people to beware of power? John suggests wariness of such power. Does Revelation 13 speak to the times in which we live?

### PRAYER

*Lord, remind us of the spiritual nature of all we see. We need your discernment in our time, individually and corporately. Would you grant us eyes to see your hand in world events? Thank you that we know who controls the great and the small. We rely on your strength, wisdom, and goodness in our lives. Amen.*

# DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 13

*“[The beast] forced all[...] to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads[...] it is the number of a man. That number is 666.” –Revelation 13:16–18*

## REFLECTION

For centuries the number 666 has provoked intrigue. The film industry often uses it to project end-of-time scenarios and horrors. While 666 undoubtedly alludes to Caesar Nero, it points toward flawed human systems, less than divine (in Hebrew, Nero’s name is a cryptogram of 666). It parodies the perfection of 777: the “7 of perfection,” the multiple of 7 as “the most perfect.”

Jewish practices of reciting the *Shema* help us understand John’s meaning. In his day, many prayed the *Shema* three to five times per day. They declared: “Hear [*shema*], O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). God wants to shape community and family life, so Jews often tied texts “as symbols on [their] hands and [bound] them on [their] foreheads” (Deuteronomy 6:8). God’s values were to infuse all they did (hands) and thought (foreheads—between the eyes to govern what enters). It’s a wonderful image. With Scripture governing actions and thoughts, the mark of 666 on the hand or forehead would be inconceivable!

Such “marks” may not be physical, though some practiced tying Torah texts to their hands/wrists and their foreheads symbolizing submission to God. Physical or not, Jews understood heart allegiance was critical. It still is. Who is represented on your hands and forehead?

## QUESTIONS

1. How do you sense yourself being compromised by current economic or political pressures? Since deception is built into human systems on all sides, how do you know? What counts as compromise for you?
2. How should the Church exist in this world? Engaged? Separated? Both?

## PRAYER

*Lord, we need protection for our hearts, our actions (hands), and our thoughts (foreheads). We bow to your authority but need Spirit-informed discernment to live wisely and without fear amidst flawed systems and people. Thank you that you secure and protect us with hope for your kingdom. Amen.*



# WORSHIP JESUS ALONE

(Revelation 12–13)

**SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:**

Daniel 1–3

## INTRODUCTION

The journey through Revelation inspires followers of Jesus to worship him alone. Revelation 12–13 remind us that Jesus is worthy of our worship and that he will prevail over all others. In Daniel, four Hebrews taken into captivity by the Babylonian Empire chose to worship the Lord alone in an entirely secular environment.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Share about a time when you supported your favorite team in the opponent's venue. How did that environment affect your cheering?
- Share an example of a person's devotion to the Lord while in a hostile environment. What inspired you about their devotion?

## READ DANIEL 1:8

It was customary for the Babylonians to take the best and brightest from conquered nations and train them to serve in the royal palace. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were selected to be part of this training process. The Babylonians gave them new names, language, culture, and diet. These four submitted to all the indoctrinations except diet.

### Discussion questions

- Why do you think they choose to stand against the diet?
  - » *Since it is likely that the king's food would have been involved in a sacrifice to an idol, the four followed their conscience to abstain and trust the Lord.*
  - » Have you avoided an item or practice for your conscience's sake? How did God work in your life through that decision?
- These four young men came together to support each other in worshiping the Lord. How can your group support each other to worship Jesus in the coming week?

## READ DANIEL 2:20-23 & REVELATION 12:10-12

### Discussion questions

Daniel and the voice from heaven cannot help but break out in worship of the Lord.

- List the following from each prayer:
  - » Attributes of God
  - » Activity of God
  - » Provision of God
- From these expressions of worship, what will you incorporate into your worship?

## READ DANIEL 3:12, 16-30

In Daniel 3, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar built a statue of gold as a defiant statement against the prophetic dream about his kingdom that Daniel had interpreted in chapter 2. As an attempt to build a kingdom that would last forever, he required all government officials to worship the gold statue. The fiery furnace awaited all those who refused his order.

### Discussion questions

- Compare and contrast Nebuchadnezzar's versus God's ability to save their respective followers. What happens to Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers as compared to God's faithful in the furnace? How might this outcome affect the faith of those who worship and follow the Lord?
- God uses Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's<sup>1</sup> faith to bring Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge that God alone is able to save (v. 29). How does your faith help those around you discover that God is the one who saves?

## PRAYER POINTS

- Like the activity we did above for the prayers in Daniel 2 and Revelation 12, identify attributes, activities, and provisions of God that have recently impressed you personally. Share them with the group and worship Jesus together through prayer by expressing adoration and thanksgiving for these attributes.
- As a group, pray for specific people you know who are in the process of discovering that Jesus has the power to save.

<sup>1</sup> These are the same three named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in chapter 1.



# WEEK ELEVEN

# MESSAGE NOTES | OCTOBER 18

*Babylon Falling—Revelation 17 & 18*

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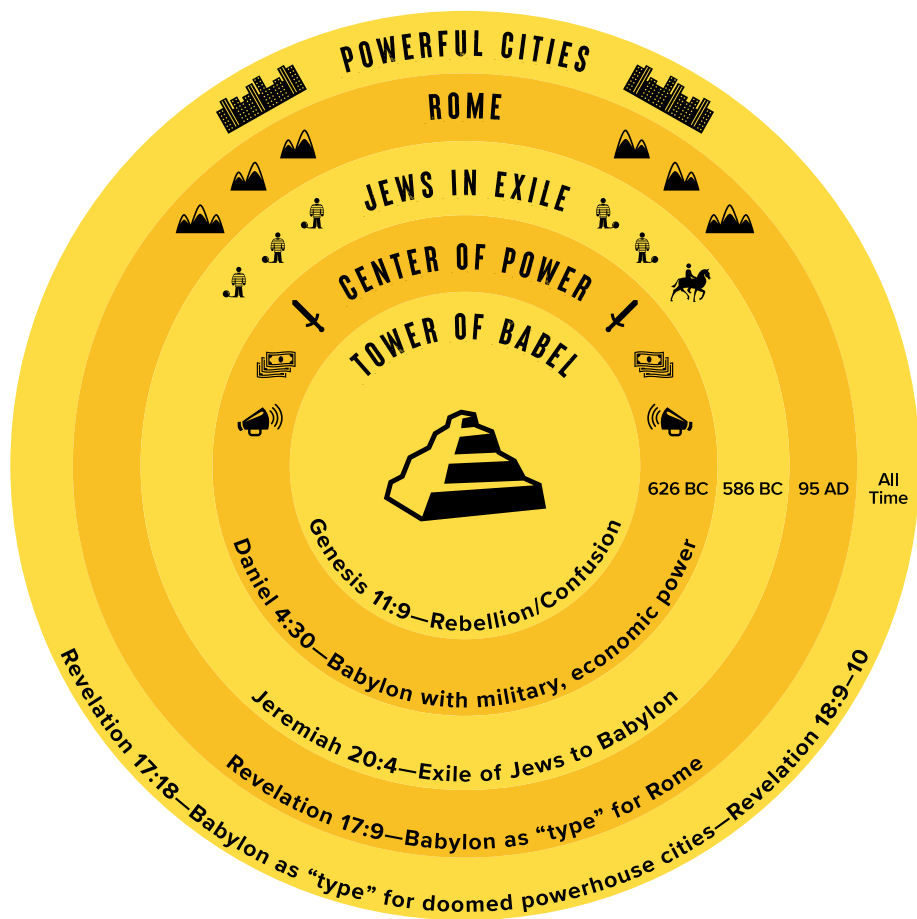
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# VISUAL AID

## BABYLON DIAGRAM



# PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by mark richards

## DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 14

*“They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers.”*—Revelation 17:14

### REFLECTION

The powers of Satan will one day engage in a literal battle against the armies of God. Ironically, the army of Jesus, “his called, chosen, and faithful followers,” is made up of those who committed treason. Treason is, of course, criminal disloyalty, acts of rebellion against the legitimate ruler. By default, we were once fighting against the rightful Ruler of the Universe, on the side of rebel Satan, as the Apostle Paul tells us, “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior” (Colossians 1:21).

We are not called his “faithful followers” because of our spotless record and inherent goodness. Instead, it is only because of God’s grace and forgiveness. When we each accepted his offer of salvation, he wiped out our sins, forgave us, and adopted us as sons and daughters. The measurement of “faithful followers” starts at that point, when we became “followers.” Jesus doesn’t look back beyond that point to ask how small or large our rebellion was against him. The question now is whether we will remain as faithful followers today. The past is past, and what matters is how we choose to follow Jesus today.

### QUESTIONS

1. What opened your eyes to see your life before Jesus as rebellion against the rightful Ruler of the Universe?
2. Are there aspects of your life or behavior which need to change so that you remain a faithful follower?

### PRAYER

*Almighty God, who was, and is, and is to come, allow us to love what you command and desire what you promise so that we may be labeled as faithful in our pursuit of you, through Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 15

*“For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose...”*—Revelation 17:17a

### REFLECTION

When my children were growing up, I discovered something about free will—I like free will for me but not for others. I would have preferred that they didn’t have the ability to make bad decisions. For whatever reason, God has chosen to grant free will to all, allowing the choice to work with him as “co-laborers in Christ” or to work against him. Yet, by some deeper mystery, even those who do not know God, and perhaps are actively fighting against him, are also accomplishing God’s purposes. Perhaps this is the ultimate irony. If they only knew.

Joseph recognized this when he told his brothers, “You meant it for evil, but God used it for good” (Genesis 50:20). That doesn’t mean, of course, that performing evil is God’s will. Heaven forbid. Yet God weaves even the evil works of people into his great story of time, which is marching towards an inevitable and inexorable conclusion and will culminate in God’s glory displayed for all.

Some day there will be no more evil which God uses for good—because there will be no more evil, period! Until that day, we can rest in the assurance that he who works against God is still working to achieve God’s purposes.

### QUESTIONS

1. How does the concept of “God used it for good” affect how you respond to those who sin against you?
2. Does the assurance that God’s purposes are never thwarted help reduce your fear in a broken world?

### PRAYER

*Almighty God, whose purposes are marching on despite the evil intents of sinful people, grant that we may catch a glimpse of your greater purpose. Give us the ability and willingness to forgive those who trespass against us, just as you have forgiven us who trespassed against you, through Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 16

*“Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins.”*  
—Revelation 18:4

### REFLECTION

Throughout Christian history, believers have tended towards one of two extremes. Some have advocated isolation and separation from the world, creating exclusive communities of believers to prevent corruption from worldly desires. At the other extreme, some have pronounced everything as acceptable, deciding the ways of the world can't be all that bad.

The Bible does not promote either of these extremes. Instead, we are told to be in the world but not of the world. We are to grow in the place we have been placed, allowing God's kingdom to come to our little patch of grass that is our neighborhood, our community, or our circle of influence.

Today we live in the world. We cannot come out of the world, or out of the city, to a place that is pure. There is no such place here on earth. There will be, one day, but not today. In the meantime, the commandment to avoid sharing in the sins of the world remains. We will never avoid sin completely in this life, but neither are we helpless in our ability to choose what is good. Grace, mercy, and forgiveness are always available when we fall into a dark hole of sin. But how much better off we are when we choose to avoid the hole entirely and not share in the sins of the world.

### QUESTIONS

1. What can you do to bring God's kingdom to your community?
2. Are there areas of your life where you need to leave behind the ways of the world?

### PRAYER

*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon us and on the whole world. Almighty God, grant that we listen to your Spirit and choose paths which please you rather than grieve you, through Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 17

*“In her heart she boasts, ‘I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn.’”* —Revelation 18:7

### REFLECTION

During one season of my life, I traveled to Japan regularly for business meetings. While there, it was not uncommon to be woken in the middle of the night by an earthquake. Those who have experienced earthquakes know the feeling of security being replaced by insecurity. That very thing assumed as stable—the ground below our feet—now is unstable, and it feels as though nothing is secure. *Terra firma* becomes *terra non-firma*. What is shaken is not just the ground but also one's confidence and feeling of security.

The queen of Revelation 18 is a woman of faith: faith that her position and possessions will never fail her. But her faith is tragically misplaced. She believes she is secure. Yet, in the same way that an earthquake leaves one insecure, she discovers her security to be hollow. A day comes when she realizes, too late, that any security is only as secure as the guarantor, and her possessions and position have no guarantor. Security found in the unsecured is no security at all.

When we put our confidence in anything other than God himself, we set ourselves up for the ultimate disappointment. Our security and our confidence are intended to be in God alone. Anything else is idolatry, taking the position in our lives which legitimately belongs to God. For God alone, and nothing else—indeed, no one else—can ever be a secure guarantor of our life, our future, our eternity.

### QUESTIONS

1. How does God speak to you?
2. What does it mean for us to receive God's Word?

### PRAYER

*God, thank you for speaking to me. Thank you for your Spirit inside of me that affirms and empowers your truth in my life. Help me to listen, become, and obey all you say to me. Amen.*



# DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 18

*“True and just are his judgments.”* –Revelation 19:2

### REFLECTION

You may have heard the terms “spin,” “positive narrative,” and even “plausible deniability.” They are used to influence an audience’s judgments to be favorable to a particular side or perspective. Regardless of the facts, the question is often how a best-sounding or least-damaging story can be told so that the judgments of consumers or voters or history are kind. Often it involves talking about how good motives were involved. Some are convinced by the narrative and some are not. Sometimes we even believe our own spin.

The judgments of God, however, are always true and just. There is no convincing God. His judgments are not swayed by spin or positive narratives and certainly not by anyone’s denial. God looks at the heart and no spin or “favorable narrative” will change the truth. I am also convinced that when we face God’s judgment, we will each immediately realize what parts of our words or deeds were honorable and good and what parts were dressed up, like lipstick on a pig.

The late Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias said, “Intent always comes before content,” meaning that what is said is secondary and of less importance than what was intended. Abraham asked the question of God, “Will not the judge of all the earth do what is right?” Indeed he will. The question is whether we will welcome that true judgment.

### QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever spend significant effort and words persuading people that you have good motives?
2. In what areas of your life do you know God’s true and just judgments will be different than what you hope people believe about you?

### PRAYER

*Almighty God, ruler and judge of the universe, have mercy on us and on the whole world, through Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



# BABYLON FALLING

(Revelation 17–19)

**SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:**

Genesis 11:1–9, Acts 2:1–12

## INTRODUCTION

As seen in Revelation 17–19, the Lamb will ultimately conquer evil, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings (Revelation 17:14). He is sovereign over all things, even the most powerful godless nations in the world. Genesis 11:1–9 describes how the Lord disperses the people and confuses their language at the Tower of Babel. The sin of man required justice but the Lord displayed mercy to his people. Acts 2:1–12 demonstrates the Holy Spirit unifying individuals of different languages and cultures for the purpose of proclaiming the miraculous works of God. Our Sovereign God reversed the consequences of Babel!

## CONVERSATION STARTER

- If you have ever traveled abroad, describe adjusting to another country's language and culture.
- Describe a moment from your favorite movie or TV show when good triumphed over evil.

## READ GENESIS 11:1-9

### Discussion questions

- Genesis 9:1 says, "And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" How do the actions seen in Genesis 11 defy the Lord's command to Noah?
- As seen in 11:4, the people desired to make a name for themselves—to be remembered.
  - » Where have you known others who "worked to make a name for themselves"?
  - » Where have you worked to make a name for yourself rather than proclaiming the name of Jesus?
- How does the disobedience seen in this passage impact the world today? What does this teach us about our own sin?
- When have you been a recipient of God's mercy?

## READ ACTS 2:1-12

### Discussion questions

- John the Baptist says, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11, ESV). Relate this to Acts 2:1–12 and the significance of being baptized with fire.
- Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit indwells individuals (Acts 2:3). How have you experienced the Holy Spirit move individually in you?
- In response to being filled with the Holy Spirit and given the ability to speak in other tongues, the people proclaimed the mighty works of God (Acts 2:11). Describe a time you were so astounded by God that you proclaimed his mighty works.

## PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for an increased view of God.
- Ask for continued refinement and purification of your soul and for the filling of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray through Psalm 100.
  - » Give thanks to the Lord because he is good.
  - » Rest in the knowledge that we are his people and he is our shepherd.
  - » Praise the Lord for his steadfast love and faithfulness.



# WEEK TWELVE

## MESSAGE NOTES | OCTOBER 25

*The Triumph of the King—Revelation 19:1–10*

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**ADDITIONAL INFO:** Armageddon *may* be a real location—“Har-Megiddo,” the mountain of Megiddo. Megiddo was a highly strategic location on the north end of a critical military/trade route. With a plain to the south and a mountain pass pinching the route to the north, it is a critical location for military battles to take place. Because it is the best land route to connect Africa to Asia and Europe, dozens of critical battles took place there throughout history (Judges 5:19 and 2 Kings 23:29 are two), so it may simply refer to a symbolic massive battleground. The most important fact of Armageddon: Jesus wins! See also Zechariah 14:2–5, Revelation 16:16, and Revelation 19:19–21.

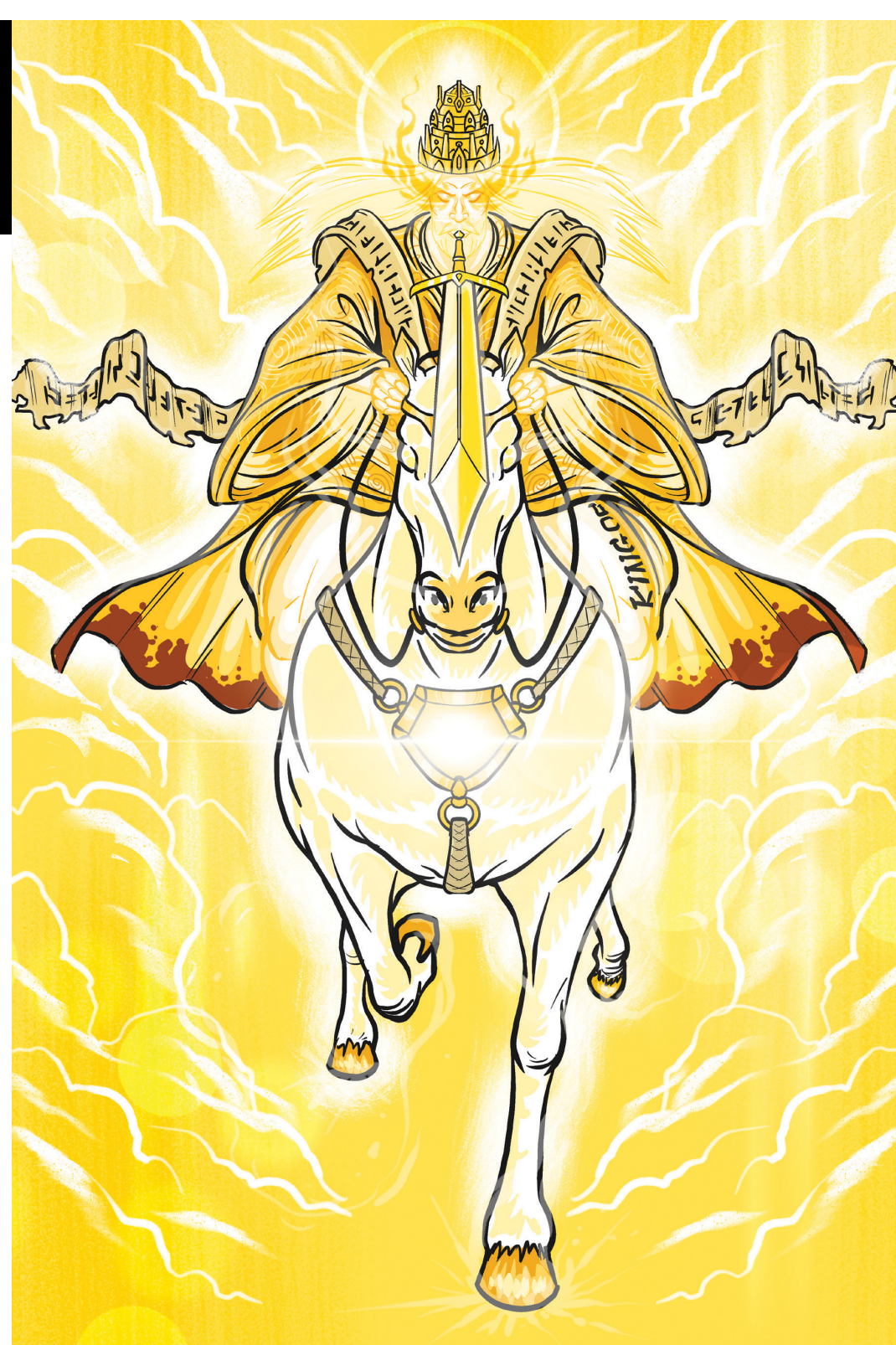
# VISUAL AID

## JESUS RETURNING ILLUSTRATION & SYMBOLS

The symbols below are used to describe John’s vision of “the Heavenly Warrior” as he defeats the beast. Look up the verses after each symbol to read where Jesus is described in these ways.

- **White Horse:** Revelation 19:11
- **Rider Called Faithful and True:** Revelation 19:11
- **Eyes Like Blazing Fire:** Revelation 19:12
- **Many Crowns:** Revelation 19:12
- **Robe Dipped in Blood:** Revelation 19:13
- **Armies of Heaven in Fine Linen, White and Clean:** Revelation 19:14
- **Sharp Sword from His Mouth:** Revelation 1:16, 19:15; Isaiah 49:2
- **Will Rule with an Iron Scepter:** Revelation 19:15; Psalm 2:9
- **Treads the Winepress:** Revelation 19:15; Isaiah 62:2–3
- **Thigh Tattoo of the Name “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”:** Revelation 19:16
- **Robe with the Name “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”:** Revelation 19:16

The original illustration and many other illustrations from this series are available to download for free at [cccomaha.org/revelation](http://cccomaha.org/revelation).



A horizontal yellow banner with a bokeh effect of various sized circles and a faint image of the moon on the left side.

# PERSONAL DEVOTIONALS

written by debbie raymond

## DEVOTIONAL DAY ONE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 19

*“Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy written in this scroll.”—Revelation 22:7*

### REFLECTION

Most of us know the story of Jesus’ first coming. He appeared as a meek and humble baby that many people overlooked. He was born in a humble stable in the small village of Bethlehem. The majestic angels rejoiced, and lowly shepherds came to worship at his birth. Jesus came and took the sin of the whole world upon himself at his first coming, and willingly became our sacrificial lamb.

Jesus’ second coming will be very different. No one knows the date of his arrival, but we know he will come in power and glory, and no one will miss it. It will be visible to the entire earth. At his second coming, people will mourn because he is coming as a judge and warrior, and many will not be ready. When he returns, he will come as the Lion of Judah and rule as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

His second coming is such a significant event that the Bible mentions it over 1800 times. Knowing that it is so important, how do we prepare? We follow God’s Word because it provides us with instructions for this very situation:

- Watch, stay alert, and pray for his return (Mark 13:32–33).
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:2).
- Remind others that he is coming soon!
- Watch, so no one deceives us (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3).
- Read the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16–17).
- Preach the gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10).
- Be ready (Matthew 24:44)!
- Live as if he is coming at any moment.

Remember, he loves us and is coming back for us!

### QUESTIONS

1. Are you ready for Jesus’ return, living as if at any moment he could appear?
2. Are you sharing the good news about his coming? If not, why?

### PRAYER

*Lord, thank you for dying as our sacrificial lamb. We eagerly await your return. Help us to be alert and live every day as if you are coming back. Give us a burning desire to share your good news with others. Lord, we watch and pray for your return.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY TWO

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 19

*“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire...”—Revelation 19:11–12a*

### REFLECTION

Jesus makes an entrance on his victorious white horse, returning as the righteous Judge and Warrior. He is called “Faithful and True”—faithful to deliver judgment and true to his word. He judges with justice. He is the One whom God appointed as Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:42).

Sometimes we want Jesus to ride into our lives on his big, white horse and dole out justice to those who have hurt us. We want him to use those eyes filled with flames of fire, look straight into our enemies’ hearts, and make them pay. We want justice, and we would like to appoint ourselves as the judge, banging our gavel and pronouncing our judgment in terms of what we think is best.

But what if the scene changes and now we are being judged? Jesus warned, “In the same way you judge others, you will be judged” (Matthew 7:2). We deserve condemnation; we deserve to pay for all the mistakes we have made. Jesus has every right to be our righteous judge, but instead he offers us his incredible love and grace. When we find ourselves wanting to be the judge, we need to get off the judge’s seat and return it to Jesus, the One and Only Judge. We need to think more about how we might be judged and begin to live a life worthy of the salvation we have received. Instead of judging others, may we offer some of the love and grace that God has so freely given to us.

### QUESTIONS

1. How have you appointed yourself as a judge? How can you let go and let God be the only true judge?
2. How have you experienced God’s grace?

### PRAYER

*Lord, convict us when we are judging others. You are the only rightful judge. Please remind us of the love and grace that you have given us and empower us to extend it to others. Lord, thank you that you are Faithful and True. Thank you for your grace and mercy.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY THREE

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 19

*“His eyes are like blazing fire...”* –Revelation 19:12

### REFLECTION

Imagine Jesus’ eyes. What do you see? We may imagine his newborn baby eyes brimming with innocent wonder, or his eyes filled with in-depth knowledge as he reads the scripture at twelve years old. We may envision his eyes full of intense compassion as he healed the sick, or his eyes tear-filled with grief at the tomb of Lazarus. Seldom do we think of his eyes burning with flames of fire as we see in Revelation. These blazing eyes are loaded with purifying power, ready to judge and wage war against his enemies.

When Jesus examines our souls with his purifying eyes, we may want to hide or escape, but we cannot. His eyes search us, not to condemn us as his enemies, but to set us free as his children. His fire is a sanctifying fire, and he is ready to equip us with his divine power to give us all we need to live a godly life.

Does that sound cliché? We may think, “You have no idea what I’m involved in—I could never get free.” But Christ can set us free. We can take the first step in freedom by consciously accepting Jesus’ gift of salvation. Next, we need to ask him for forgiveness and rely on him to resist sin. Finally, we must refuse to give up. Jesus’ eyes of love and compassion are ready to welcome you into his arms.

### QUESTIONS

1. Have you accepted Jesus’ free gift of salvation?
2. Did you know Christ Community Church has groups that help set people free? These groups are ready to welcome you and walk with you as Jesus sets you free (visit [cccomaha.org/renewal](http://cccomaha.org/renewal) for more info). Are there any that you might be interested in joining? How might they help you in your spiritual walk?

### PRAYER

*Lord, we pray that your purifying eyes search us and see where we need to change. Give us the courage to take the steps that we need to become more like you. Lord, we love you and ask you for strength to overcome our temptations. Thank you for your unending grace. We love you.*

## DEVOTIONAL DAY FOUR

### DAILY READING: REVELATION 19

*“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings...’”* –Revelation 19:17–18

### REFLECTION

As we watch our children during their wedding ceremonies, we hold our breath and hope that everything will go smoothly. We become flooded with memories of their childhood and fight back the tears. As the reception begins, we can throw off the worries and rejoice because it is time to celebrate!

Revelation 19:9 describes the blessing of being invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This marriage supper is a time of great rejoicing because the resurrected believers share the ultimate feast with the Bridegroom, Jesus. For this amazing banquet, we will be dressed in the fine linen of our righteous deeds. As glorified people, it will be a great time of celebrating and rejoicing because we are finally free of the weight of sin!

Contrasting the Lamb’s wedding supper (v. 9) is the great supper of God (v. 18). This supper is announced in a booming voice by an angel who is visible to all. The great supper is not a celebration but a time of vengeance. Instead of animals being sacrificed and feasted upon and great rejoicing, God’s enemies will be slaughtered and birds will feast upon the bodies. The slaughter will include people from every class: kings, commanders, and mighty men, the free and the slaves, the great and the small. No one can escape his judgment. The contrast that exists between the Lamb’s marriage supper for believers and the great supper of God for those who oppose Christ is eternal life versus eternal suffering. I want to attend the Lamb’s marriage supper one day and not the great supper of God. How about you?

### QUESTIONS

1. As we take an honest look at our own lives, which supper will we attend?
2. Are you looking forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb?

### PRAYER

*Lord, thank you that you have a wedding banquet prepared for us and that we will celebrate with you one day. We pray for those who don’t know you to place their faith in you so that they will attend the Lamb’s marriage supper.*



# DEVOTIONAL DAY FIVE

## DAILY READING: REVELATION 19

*“The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider...”*  
—Revelation 19:21

## REFLECTION

In perhaps the most dramatic scene in the Bible, as the Antichrist is about to be victorious over the Jewish remnant and followers of Christ, Jesus appears. Dressed in a robe dipped in blood, wearing many crowns, and riding a white horse, he is ready for the final battle. Following him are the armies of heaven, clothed in beautiful white linens and riding white horses. In this scene, the Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and their armies gather to wage war. Suddenly, the battle is over before it begins. The beast and false prophet are captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The sword of Jesus’ mouth, which represents the Word of God, slays the rest of the army. Jesus undeniably defeats his enemies with one word. His victory is certain—God wins!

We are in a spiritual battle, and our enemies are very real. They wage war against us; however, we can defeat them with the Word of God, just like Jesus defeats the Antichrist. What enemies in our lives do we need to overcome? How can the Word of God help us? Fight fear with Deuteronomy 31:8: “He will never leave you nor forsake you.” Discouraged? Remember Psalm 55:22: “Cast your cares on the Lord.” Battle anxiety by praying Psalm 94:19: “When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.” What about anger? Be reminded of Ephesians 4:26: “In your anger do not sin.”

With God, we can conquer our enemies with his Word. We know the outcome—God wins! And with his love and help, we can win our battles too.

## QUESTIONS

1. Which enemy is waging war against you? Have you armed yourself with God’s Word?
2. Can you discern what enemy is waging war against a friend or family member? Pray one of these verses over them.

## PRAYER

*Lord, we praise you for you are the great victor! Thank you for defeating the forces of evil. Help us to remember that we are in a spiritual battle. Lord, remind us to overcome our enemies by arming ourselves with your mighty Word. We love you, Lord, and thank you that you have given us this powerful weapon.*



# THE LAST BATTLE

(Revelation 19)

**SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:**

Isaiah 63, Acts 7

## INTRODUCTION

In Revelation 19, all beings worship God for his judgment of humanity; first, for his rightful judgment of Babylon (vs. 1–4), and second, for God’s reward for those who faithfully worshiped him (vs. 5–8). A triumphant Jesus enters on a white horse whose robe is dipped in blood from his previous victory (vs. 11–16), the last battle he fought on the cross (Isaiah 63:2–4). With the sword from this mouth, he deals the final blow and judges all those who worship the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:21). In the end, those who choose to worship God are not exempt from trials and tribulations; some will become martyrs for Christ. As believers who worship God, we, too, will go through various trials and temptations. We endure, because we have hope that God will victoriously judge all people and we will be reunited with Christ for eternity. Nothing will stop Jesus from redeeming humanity.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

Throughout church history, over seven million Christians have been martyred for their faith. In the 21st century, there are roughly 100,000 Christians who are martyred each year.

- What stories of martyrs do you know of—either in the Bible, throughout church history, or in the news today? Why were these people willing to be martyrs?
- What impact did they have on the gospel or on Christianity?

## READ ISAIAH 63:1–14

In this Old Testament prophecy, God judges his enemies (as in Revelation 19) because no one intervened to help God’s people who are oppressed. The prophet reflects on other times the Lord has shown mercy to his people and praises him for it, then asks for mercy on behalf of his people.

### Discussion questions

- In both Isaiah 63:1–6 and Revelation 19:15, God’s judgment is depicted as a winepress. Jesus has already fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah. In what other ways is God consistent in fulfilling his prophecies as seen in Isaiah 63 and Revelation 19?
- Why is the fulfillment of God’s prophecies important to us? How does this strengthen your relationship with God?

- In Isaiah 63:7–14, we see God continuing to show his people grace and mercy. What are some ways that you have seen God’s steadfast love? How does this affect your relationship with God (v. 7)?
- Why do God’s people wander and go through so many trials (Isaiah 63:17)? How do trials help us grow spiritually?

## READ ACTS 7

Stephen is standing trial for his preaching of the gospel, but he turns the table on his hearers, having them stand trial for their stubbornness, rebellion, and rejection of prophets God sent in the past. This testimony enrages the people and they stone him.

### Discussion questions

- What characteristics of Stephen should we as Christians emulate?
- Stephen gives examples of Israel’s stiff-necked attitude and shows us Israel’s history of rejection of those sent by God. How does God show patience to the people of Israel in Stephen’s message (vs. 1–53)?
- Where do you see God’s patience in your own life?
- Would Stephen’s accusation of being “stiff-necked” still be valid today? If so, why? How might we resist the temptation to be “stiff-necked”?

## PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for those facing persecution for their Christian faith.
- Pray for our belief in the story of God’s faithfulness and the fulfillment of his promises.
- Pray that we would delight in God as the steadfast rock we rely on in times of testing and trials.



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