**SUMMARY OF REV. 4-7**

We have covered the first three chapters of Revelation. We do not plan to cover in detail all 22 chapters of the book. The next chapter we plan to cover in detail is chapter eleven. But it does not seem proper to just skip over chapters with no comment on them. They are all very much a part of the prophecy of Revelation. There is a continuity that exists between all of the chapters in the book. In order to maintain that continuity, we are going to provide a summary of chapters 4-7 with this lesson and others later. We believe that the content of those chapters form a lesson that is joined together in one chain of thought. Providing a summary of these chapters will help us connect them with other chapters where we offer more detail.

**CHAPTER 4**

This chapter begins in V1 with the thought of: “After this”. That is, after receiving the revelation of things covered in the first 3 chapters relating to the messages to the 7 churches. I do not think that it means “after the ending of the Laodicean church”, but after having received the message to these 7 churches, he is now about to receive more “revelation” that will also transpire during the age of he church (and not out into eternity). Let us be reminded that the entire book of Revelation is a message for the age of the church. All of the visions and events yet to be shown will be found to fit within the bounds of the church age. In chapter 22:16, Jesus says that his message (of the book) was to the churches. It is in this sense, I believe, that this first verse declares that John will be shown things which must be hereafter. That is, there are other things that John is to be shown that go beyond his present time. Just as the 7 churches covered events beyond the day John lived, so also here, John is about to be shown more revelations of things to come (beyond his day).

The vision of this chapter is of thrones, 24 elders (representing both the Old Testament and New Testament), living creatures, lightening and thunders, and a scene of these living creatures along with the twenty four elders worshipping. Just as the scenes of the 7 churches were related to events transpiring within those ages of the church, so likewise here, John is about to be shown more things to come. Evidence of this is seen in the scene of an open door in heaven. This does not refer to some “outer space” adventure but to a scene about to be shown occurring within the (kingdom of) heaven, the church. After all, chapter 1 of the book tells us that the book is a message to the church. The thrones mentioned here of God and of the elders points us to a scene within the kingdom of God, or kingdom of heaven. Unfortunately many theologians teach a “yet to come kingdom of heaven” at the return of Christ. But there is too much evidence supporting the kingdom of heaven as being the church, established at Pentecost and continuing ever since.

The 4th chapter is preparing our thoughts for things to come within the church of God. Some of these things, as we have already seen, are not good, but they nevertheless will occur within the church age. Verse 7 and the 4 living creatures will help us with this. The first is a lion, representing strength and power as exemplified in the first age of the church. The second is like a calf, signifying slaughter or persecution as was the case in the second period of the church. The third had a face like a man, suggesting the rise of man’s thoughts and rule in the church above God, as we saw in the third church period. (see II Thess. 2). The fourth living creature is shown as a flying eagle, denoting the flight of the church from original truth into the wilderness of the dark ages. (see also ch. 12).

We will see that the flow of this chapter carries us on into the 5th chapter. Remember that the chapters and verses were not in the original letter, but were added later. While this is a good thing, we should not let it make us think that when we get to the last verse of a chapter that the pattern of thought abruptly ends there. The summary of this chapter is of a church worshipping before the throne of God.

**CHAPTER 5.**

Chapter 5 continues the vision which was begun in chapter 4. Here we are shown a book in the right hand of him on the throne which is sealed with “7 seals”. In verses 2-4, we are told that no one has been found able to break these 7 seals so that the contents of the book might be known. This evoked much weeping that there was no one who could open, read or look upon this sealed book.

Then (V5) one of the elders (of ch. 4) encouraged John not to weep. The reason is that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and break the seals. V6 then describes a Lamb slain, having 7 horns and eyes, which represent the 7 Spirits of God (see ch. 1:4) sent forth into all the earth. There can be no doubt what this “Root of David”, “Lion of the tribe of Judah”, and the slain “Lamb” represents. It is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 7 says he took the book and in Verse 8, that the four living creatures (the first 4 church eras) and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, with the prayers of the saints (praying for the opening of the book). (Note: The book referred to in all of this is the “book of this prophecy”; see ch. 22:7, 10, 18, and 19).

Verse 9-10 confirm this as they sing a new song of the worthiness (power and ability) of the Lamb to open the book. They proclaim the redemption he has provided by his blood for all mankind and that we have been made kings and priests unto God. Again, this portrays conditions and activities within the church (on earth V10).

There follows in verses 11-14, a scene of rejoicing and worship that the Lamb slain for the church has the power to open this 7 sealed book and reveal the things that are written therein. There was weeping at the closed and sealed book (of things hereafter, 4:1). Now there is praise and rejoicing that the Lamb can open the book and break the seals. The book of Revelation begins by being called the “revelation” of Jesus Christ; not the mystery that cannot be known. Therefore it is altogether appropriate that the seals can be opened.

When John received this revelation, it was yet for a time to come, and therefore was said to be sealed. In Daniel’s prophecy he was told to shut up the vision for it was for a time yet to come. Now, in Rev. 4 & 5, we are shown a book of things “hereafter” which is sealed up. But one is found who has the power to break the 7 seals and open the book. We should underline the fact that only the “Lamb” can open the book (of this prophecy). It is abundantly true for us today that only the revealing power of Jesus Christ can unlock the contents sealed in this book with 7 seals. We must seek it from him.

**CHAPTER 6.**

The continuity of chapters 4 and 5 is extended into chapter 6. In chapter 4 John saw living creatures and 24 elders worshipping before the throne of God. In chapter 5 a book was brought forth sealed with 7 seals, which no one could open but the Lamb of redemption. This book contained those “hereafter” items that John was to be shown.

Now chapter 6 begins as the Lamb opens one of the seals and at the same time one of the 4 beasts of 4:7, invites him to come and see. We traced the 7 churches of chapters 2 and 3 throughout the entire church age, each covering conditions and events of their respective era. We concluded that the 7th church age would extend to the end of all things earthly. In our lesson on “Principals of Prophecy”, we noted that one of them was that of “repetition”. That is, something or some time era covered under one vision would also be covered again, this time bringing out added details. The Bible teaches that every word should be established in the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses. The dreams of Joseph were repeated with different details. The dream of Pharoah was shown under two distinct symbols of representation. We have reviewed the 7 churches covering the entire church age. Now we have 7 seals before us which will also cover the church age, using different symbols and offering additional details along the way. If you know the history of the 7 churches, you will also be familiar with the history that the 7 seals cover. I have provided a chart with this lesson that shows how the 7 churches are parallel with the 7 seals.

Without outlining the many details of these 7 seals, I will list a summary of them with their respective messages also summarized.

 1. V2. The first seal covers the first era of the church, full in its strength, power and purity in God. This is symbolized by the lion, king of the jungle. The first seal also was shown with a white horse, representing the Roman Empire in some of its best days as shown by the white horse. During the first era of the church the empire was united, powerful, and most of all, not at war with the church. Even though the religion of Rome was Pagan, still they were not hostile and seeking to destroy the church as was the case in the second era.

 2. V3-4. The second seal opens to reveal a calf and a red horse. The calf reflects the persecutions of the church of Smyrna, while the red horse reflects an empire red with the blood of the martyrs of the church. The rider of the red horse had power to take peace from the earth, that is, to send its power against a docile church in an attempt to blot it out.

 3. V5-6. The third seal reveals a rider on a black horse along with the beast with a face as a man. This is the era that parallels the church of Pergamos, when the mind of man exerted itself through usurpation of leadership over the church and the development of creeds and doctrines that the apostles did not teach. This is the Constantinian era when the empire had granted equal footing to the church with other religions, but also when the church became “baptized pagans”. For the empire it was an era of much unrest, invasion by barbaric tribes and a weakening of its strength. It was in this era that the empire divided and finally fell in 476 AD.

 4. V7-8. The fourth beast which was described as flying like an eagle is coupled with a pale horse. The rider of the horse is death, followed by hell. The horse and its rider is a picture of an empire that for all practical purposes is dead. This is because it is nothing like it was in earlier days and also because its imperial strength is mostly usurped by the power of the papacy. So death is a fitting symbol for the empire under these conditions. The beast like a flying eagle represents the church in her wilderness journey as described in Rev. 12:6. The church is carried into the wilderness of dark-age corruption where it remains for 1260 years. This fourth period starts with the time of Justinian, 529 AD, under the code of laws he established, that gave imperial support to the Orthodox Church with its corruption and tyranny. It is the age when the church and state are “married” (as symbolized by Ahab and Jezebel).

 5. V9-11. The fifth seal is opened in the time frame of the church of Sardis. It reveals souls under the altar slain for their devotion to the word of God (which the Orthodox Church had cast out). It is the time of the reformation when thousands gave their lives in order to bring about a new day of the word of God in the world. (In other lessons we have characterized this time under the expression “the battle of Armageddon” because it was a life and death struggle to overcome the tyranny of Rome). Notice that there are no more horses with riders or beasts mentioned from the fifth seal onward. The souls under the altar cried for deliverance (from the religious tyranny they endured). They were told that it would be yet a little while before that deliverance came.

 6. V12-17. When the sixth seal is opened, a “tsunami” of catastrophic events begin to take place. This is at the end of the 18th century, and also the end of the above mentioned battle of tyranny. It will also be the prelude to the great deliverance that was sought under the fifth seal, but was postponed for a time. Let me remind you as we look upon these events that we are still dealing with symbols and these must especially by interpreted in this manner. First we witness a great earthquake along with the darkening of the sun and the moon turning to blood. No one believes (I hope) that the moon literally turned to blood. Symbolically these phenomenal events tell us that either the political or ecclesiastical heavens are shaken (perhaps both). Then we are told of falling stars; of heaven departing like a scroll being rolled up (think of that); and “every mountain and island being moved out of their places”. Unbelievable! Yet this was the scene described by every historian as the 18th century ended with the French Revolution which spread throughout Europe. It was indeed in both the political and ecclesiastical realm that was so affected. It revealed kings, great men, rich men and mighty men hiding in (symbolic) caves, crying for the mountains to fall on them. This was the time of the overthrow of the “Holy Roman Empire”, both ecclesiastical and political. The power of the pope was reduced to Vatican palace. The world, again both politically and religiously, was freed from her bondage. This freedom came about because the great day of God’s wrath (upon this desolating system) has come. And, as God has done throughout history, he uses the powers of this world to chastise, discipline and overthrow a wayward religious system, disobedient to his will. The word of the Lord through the work of reformers exposed the blatant errors of Romanism and the temporal powers of the earth dissolved her power. In the unbelievable short time of less than 10 years at the end of the 18th century, the once mighty “Holy Roman Empire”, both religiously and politically was overthrown!

**SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7.**

We have not reached the 7th seal yet as it will be opened in the 8th chapter. In reality the 7th chapter continues, or rather extends the story of the previous chapter. And it is an amazing story. Yet another strange and symbolic event unfolds here. The church has endured almost 13 centuries of the tyranny of the Roman church-state system, with many souls under the altar martyred for their faith in God. Now, at the end of the 18th century, that has all ended. We now see four angels holding the four winds of the earth that it should not blow on land or sea or trees. That is to say, their stormy tempest powers are held in abeyance. Then comes this angel with the seal of God, crying with a loud voice for the winds not to bring any hurt to the earth and the sea until we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them that were sealed and it was 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel. From this point commentators forget all about the rule of symbolism and go off the deep end by applying these numbers in impossible ways. Just think about how improbable it would be to have exactly 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel converted to Christianity, as Dr. Adam Clarke presumes. These are symbolic numbers. In addition, expositors of this passage only see this number of 144,000, and completely overlook the multitude which no man could number of all the nations (Gentiles) of the earth. So we have two sets of figures to deal with: 144,000 of Israel, and a number too great to be counted from all other nations of the earth. All of these stood before the throne clothed in white robes, giving glory and honor to God. In fact that is all they were doing, giving honor, thanksgiving, glory and blessing to God.

What is going on? Why is there such a multitude, too large to even be counted, all at once just filled with gratitude, praise and worship of the Lord God. What has God so recently done for them that has evoked such praise from them? Step back and take a look at what we have covered. We have come through 6 seals. They began with the first part of the church and continued on throughout its history, including the tyranny of the dark ages. Multitudes too great to number, so the historians tell us, gave their lives for their faith in God. They sought the Lord for deliverance (under the 5th seal) and were told to wait awhile. Then in the sixth seal we witnessed the overthrow of the power and bondage of the Roman church-state system near the end of the 18th century. Now we see an innumerable company of people, both Jew and Gentile, worshipping and praising God for what he has done. Who is this multitude, which are to be sealed by God in their foreheads?

Look at verses 13-14. One of the (24) elders came to John asking who these were which were arrayed in white robes? And whence came they? And John said, sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me:  **THESE ARE THEY WHICH CAME OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION, AND HAVE WASHED THEIR ROBES, AND MADE THEM WHITE IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB!** There in one statement of one verse you have the explanation as to what both the 144,000 represents and what the other innumerable multitude also represents. They represent the vast multitude of people who for centuries remained true and faithful to God and his word in the face of opposition of the most inhumane nature. And this fact is not confined only to the church age but also extends to the O.T. Look back at the days of Daniel and others and consider again the captivities, oppression and religious suffering endured throughout the ages, by both Jew and Gentile who had served the Lord.

Indeed they should now be singing praises and blessings and gratitude to God. Those dark nights of their spiritual soul has ended. And this great number stands (only) in symbolic terms for those who “have washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”. Therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him both day and night. You might ask how is it that these dead can serve God in the church age? The answer is that “their works do follow them” and still today, we draw inspiration and hope from their sacrifice and labors. Look back over the centuries covered by Daniel and Revelation and consider those giants who have lived for God and given their lives for him in spite of the hardship upon them. History is full of this multitude of people. They are both Jew and Gentile. They are sealed in their foreheads; that is the anointing of God is upon them. The long period of 2300 years of Daniel chapter 8, is now over. The time remaining still is for the ending of the program of God among men, culminating with his return and the resurrection and translation and eternal life for this multitude and any who live for God after them. They have endured the “daily sacrifice” of paganism and the abomination of desolation of the “Holy Roman Empire”, and now they have a “jubilee” in the Lord. And if you will but review history of the 19th century you will find it to be a time of the phenomenal spread of the word of God; world-wide revival and a great out pouring of the Holy Ghost upon the church.

Finally, the great tribulation (of Roman desolation) of the dark ages is past. Those who endured this period of tribulation now raise a posthumous shout of praise. Their united chorus is one of thanksgiving and praise that the tyranny has ended and their steadfastness and faithfulness to God has been justified (sealed) by the victorious providence of God over corrupt Romanism. They who died as heretics, outcasts and infidels (in the eyes of Romanism), now stand justified before the throne of God, for they are worthy. Providence has set them free. History has exonerated them and God has honored their high and holy service to his kingdom and his word. Therefore, while these great numbers used (symbolically) are not intended to identify each of them as a spotless member of this kingdom, yet they stand in stark contrast to the other multitude who “worshipped the beast and his image”, and are therefore reckoned as “washed in the blood of the Lamb”. This innumerable multitude whose symbolic shouts of praise ascended before the throne of God about 1800, is then joined by a swelling chorus of the vast company who, over the next century, were beneficiaries of their suffering, and who now go forth in a new day of spiritual freedom.