

# Lesson 7 | April 18, 2021

## Mysteries in the Revelation

**Study Text:** Isaiah 11:1–5; Revelation 1:4–20; 3:1; 4:1–11; 5:1–6; 8:1–2; 12:1–9; 13:1–18; 14:1–11; 15:1 through 16:2

**Central Truth:** John’s revelation of Christ was given to reveal, not to conceal, truth.

### Key Verse: Revelation 2:7

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (KJV).

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches (NIV).

### Learning Objectives

- Gain better understanding of the mysteries of the Book of Revelation.
- Appreciate the reality that the purpose of Revelation was to reveal the truth of Jesus Christ, not to create misunderstanding or uncertainty about the end times.
- Commit to live out the Christian faith with hope in the soon return of Jesus Christ.

## Introducing the Lesson

**Say:** The Book of Revelation records the end of the gospel story by providing us with hope for the future, in spite of troubles we face today. As someone has said, “I read the end of the book, and we win!”

### Opening Activity—Important Numbers

*Ask: What numbers do you use in everyday life that are important to you? (Possible answers might include: phone numbers, birth dates, bank account numbers, Social Security numbers, driver’s license or car license numbers.)*

**Say:** Many numbers may have significance to us that are not significant to others. In reading the Bible, it is apparent that certain numbers are important to the unfolding of God’s Word, and He uses those numbers to communicate with us. While we don’t understand everything about those numbers or other details about Revelation, we know that God has made a marvelous plan to redeem us from this fallen world. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**First-century Jews held a long literary tradition outside the books of the Old Testament. A large portion of that tradition was apocalyptic literature (literature about the end of the age, or the world), much of it written during the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew. Revelation is the only apocalyptic book in the Bible. It bears many common literary traits with apocalyptic literature that was not accepted into our Bible. It also has some significant differences. Today’s lesson explores some of the more difficult passages within the fascinating but challenging Book of Revelation. From this**

study, we are reminded that God has given us His Word not to conceal truth or make it confusing, but to reveal truth for our benefit.

## **Part 1—The Seven Spirits of God**

### **The Seven Spirits Means “The Spirit”**

Revelation 1:4–5; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6

[Rev 1:4-20 KJV] **4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; 5 And from Jesus Christ, [who is] the faithful witness, [and] the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they [also] which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. 9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

[Rev 3:1 KJV] **1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.**

[Rev 4:1-11 KJV] **1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door [was] opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps**

**of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6** And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, [were] four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast [was] like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about [him]; and [they were] full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, 10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

**[Rev 5:6 KJV] 6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.**

**Say:** The number “7” appears almost five dozen times in Revelation, more than any other number. Reference to the “seven spirits,” the verses we are considering here, occurs four times. The number 7 is usually associated with fulfillment, completion or perfection. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

#### **Resource Packet Item 1: What Is Apocalyptic Literature?**

Distribute the information sheet. You may want to read it together as a class or send it home with students for further study.

**The number 7 describes no less than fourteen nouns in Revelation: churches, spirits, lampstands, stars, seals, horns, eyes, angels, trumpets, thunders, heads of the dragon, heads of the beast, golden bowls, and kings.** If John was using the number to indicate fulfillment or perfection, which seems most likely, then “seven spirits” refers to the Spirit of God in His fullness or complete perfection.

The context of John’s first usage seems to agree with this concept of Revelation 1:4–5. His salutation announces to the seven churches that a message is on the way. The sender is the eternal God himself, “who is, and who was, and who is to come” (verse 4, NIV), and from Jesus Christ, and from “the seven spirits before his throne” (NIV). Thus John declared that this prophetic word (verse 3) has as its source the Triune God in all His fullness, majesty, power, and authority (verses 5–8).

Later, in his letter to Sardis (3:1), John referred to the seven Spirits of God who are connected with the “seven stars” who represent seven angels (1:20) or messengers to the seven literal churches addressed in chapter 2. These messengers could be a metaphor for pastoral church leaders or even angels assigned to guard the churches. In either case we have the fullness of the Spirit engaged in rousing the church of Sardis out of sleep to remain spiritually alert and recognize where they have need of repentance and diligence to complete what they have begun.

With the next occurrence of the seven spirits (4:5), John took the reader to God’s heavenly throne, and there he described a scene of celestial splendor, majesty, and glory. The language is filled with symbols of divine royalty: twenty-four elders seated on thrones clothed with white garments (signifying purity) and wearing golden crowns (signifying royalty).

The revelation of divine splendor is seen in the language of theophany (the appearance of divinity to a human): flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, and fire all serve to remind us of God’s awesome presence on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19). In 4:5 the fire imagery is linked to seven lamps before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Also, some say Melchizedek was the pre-incarnate Christ.

### ***Discuss***

? Reflect on the perfection of God’s Spirit, and discuss what it means to know that the Holy Spirit lives within you.

## **The Messiah’s Anointing**

Isaiah 11:1–2

**[Isa 11:1-5 KJV] 1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; 3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.**

**Say:** Many people think of the Holy Spirit in relation to Acts 2 and the Day of Pentecost. But the Holy Spirit was active throughout the Old Testament, throughout the New

Testament, and is still active in the Church today. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

In addressing the “seven Spirits of God,” it is important to examine Isaiah 11:1–2. Although Isaiah did not use the title “Messiah,” **he saw the coming of the Messiah as Someone clearly marked by the Holy Spirit. This descendant of David (verse 1) would be anointed by the “Spirit of the Lord” (verse 2). What follows in verse 2 is a concept equivalent to the seven spirits of God in that it describes a person who is characterized by the fullness of the Holy Spirit. He will possess wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord.**

In 2 Peter 1:2–3, Peter declared that God’s divine power has granted to us everything that we need for His life and godliness. The Holy Spirit delivers the down payment (or, earnest) of our eternal inheritance (Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22). **The Holy Spirit is not some inanimate force, but a divine Person of the Godhead. Paul told us to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and be led by the Spirit (verse 18). He concluded by saying, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (verse 25, NIV).**

The Christian life is life in the Spirit. Cultivate that life. **Listen to the voice of Spirit, who is not only with you but in you. Study the Word of truth, heeding the teaching of the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The Spirit has come to deliver all the redemptive blessings of God’s salvation (Ephesians 1:3,13–14).**

[Eph 1:3, 13-14 KJV] 3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ: ... 13 In whom ye also [trusted], after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

### ***Discuss***

? Why does John refer to God the Father (Revelation 1:6), Jesus Christ (1:5), but then to “seven spirits” who are before God’s throne (1:4)? How can understanding how the Bible uses numbers help us answer questions like this?

## **Part 2—Numbers in the Revelation Significance of Seven**

Revelation 1:10–13,16,20; 5:1; 8:2; 15:1; 16:1; 4:2,4,6–11

[Rev 1:10-20 KJV] **10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send [it] unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto**

Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. 12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks [one] like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and [his] hairs [were] white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes [were] as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance [was] as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I [am] he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; 20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

[Rev 4:1-11 KJV] 1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door [was] opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4 And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, [were] four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first beast [was] like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle. 8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about



[him]; and [they were] full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. **9** And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, **10** The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, **11** Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

[Rev 5:1-6 KJV] **1** And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. **2** And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? **3** And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. **4** And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. **5** And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. **6** And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

[Rev 8:1-2 KJV] **1** And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. **2** And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

[Rev 15:1-8 KJV] **1** And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. **2** And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, [and] over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. **3** And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints. **4** Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for [thou] only [art] holy: for all nations shall come and worship

before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

[Rev 16:1-2 KJV] **1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.** 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and [upon] them which worshipped his image.

**Say:** We have noted how often the number “7” appears in Revelation, and that when linked to “spirits,” the number conveys the Spirit in His fullness and perfection. But what about when the number modifies things like “lampstands,” (1:12), “stars” (1:16) or the seals on a scroll (5:1)? (Share your highlights from the following text.)

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Numbers in Revelation**

Distribute the work sheet and complete it as a class as you move through the lesson. Note how God uses numbers to convey important principles in His Word..

The first step is to determine what the Bible says about what these symbolic terms represent. Then we can apply meaning to the modifying number “7.” **It is best not to assume that because “7” means the literal number 7 in one place (e.g., “churches” in 1:11), that we should conclude that the literal sense should be applied to every noun.**

**For example, John wrote of “seven golden lampstands” in 1:12 (NIV), referring to seven churches of Asia mentioned in verse 11. However, we can be quite sure that Asia had more than seven churches.** Luke wrote in Acts that he spent two years based in Ephesus so that “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10, NIV). Moreover John saw Christ standing in the middle of these seven golden lampstands and prepared them for the messages to the seven churches addressed in chapters 2–3. **Perhaps the seven golden lampstands, the seven churches, represent the entire church of that region in its completeness, comprised of perhaps hundreds of cell-like churches. Thus the messages to the seven churches of Asia ultimately serve as messages for the worldwide Church of the Lord.**



Another example of the symbolic nature of numbers is found in that John said he saw Christ seated at the right hand of God with a scroll sealed with “seven seals.” Seals were placed on documents to secure their safety and protect them from being opened by anyone except one who possessed the authority to do so. “Seven seals” would be clearly seen to offer full protection. **No earthly or heavenly power could open the scroll (5:3) and view its contents regarding divine judgments (see Revelation 6–8). Why? Because it held the complete seal of God himself. Only the Messiah (5:5) possessed the authority to open the scroll.**

### *Discuss*

? Why is it important to recognize the symbolic nature of many of the concepts in Revelation?

## **Significance of Other Numbers**

Revelation 4:4,6,8,10; 14:1; 12:1–9; 13:1,4

[Rev 4:1-11 KJV] 1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door [was] opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard [was] as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and [one] sat on the throne. 3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and [there was] a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. **4 And round about the throne [were] four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.** 5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and [there were] seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. **6 And before the throne [there was] a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, [were] four beasts full of eyes before and behind.** 7 And the first beast [was] like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast [was] like a flying eagle. **8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about [him]; and [they were] full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.** 9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, **10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,** 11 Thou art

worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

**[Rev 12:1-9 KJV] 1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and [to] his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred [and] threescore days. 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

**[Rev 13:1-18 KJV] 1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as [the feet] of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who [is] like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty [and] two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him,**

whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. 11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by [the means of] those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number [is] Six hundred threescore [and] six.

**[Rev 14:1 KJV] 1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.**

**Say:** In the Book of Revelation, several important numbers are repeated numerous times, including four, ten, twelve, twenty-four, 1,260, and 144,000. Let's look at some of these numbers. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**We first encounter the number four attached to “living creatures” who surround the throne in heaven, in Revelation 4:6.** If John was seeing a vision comparable to that seen by Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 1:15–18; 10:12–15), these creatures were probably angelic beings, perhaps cherubim, who totally surrounded the throne and guarded it. **The number four seems to signify totality or completeness, as the “four corners of the land” signifies all the earth in Ezekiel (7:2), and the four corners of the temple court represents the whole court (46:22).**

**The numbers twelve and 144,000 are connected within Judaism. Twelve is often identified with the tribes of Israel. Subsequently, the 144,000 men that God seals are made up of 12,000 from each named tribe of Israel (see Revelation 7:4–8).**

Again, in 21:12, the New Jerusalem is surrounded by a huge wall with twelve gates, guarded by twelve angels and bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet despite the symbolism, the New Jerusalem is not exclusively a place for Jewish believers in the Messiah. **In the wall are twelve foundation stones bearing the names of the “twelve apostles of the Lamb” (21:14). These same apostles were given the commission to go and preach the gospel to all creation and to make disciples of all nations** (see Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15).

**John mentioned twenty-four elders, a reference to people of status in Jewish communities who acted as legal representatives (see, for example, Deuteronomy 21:1–9). Who are these elders who are involved in leading worship (Revelation 4:5–10)? They may be twenty-four orders of priests who are leading the worship of God.**

**The numbers ten and seven both connote completeness, fulfillment, and perfection, but in Revelation 12, they are used in connection with Israel, a woman pregnant with child, and a great red dragon who seeks to devour her child who is destined to rule the nations. (This child is Christ; see Psalm 2.) The great sign that appears in heaven who is a woman with a crown of twelve stars, represents Israel. This woman gives birth to the Christ child (Revelation 12:5). The use of the sun, moon, and stars is common in apocalyptic imagery.**

The second sign is a “great red dragon” whom John later tells us is “that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (verse 9, NIV). **Satan is described as having seven heads with seven diadems, or crowns, and ten horns (12:3; cf. 13:1). Satan likely gave inspiration to the Roman emperors in John’s day who sought to receive divine honor and worship. In 13:1–2, a beast is described in the same way, indicating this to be the Antichrist, who seeks the same honor and yet worships the dragon (13:4). Thus the numbers seven and ten point to the idolatrous portrayal of Satan and the Antichrist who ascribe to themselves the complete and perfect honor, authority, and royal majesty that belongs to God alone.**

After the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12–17), and before John began to recount the events of “the great day” of God’s wrath and the wrath of the Lamb, John said that God seals the “servants of our God” (7:3). He specified their number at 144,000, and that they had come from every tribe of the sons of Israel (7:4). These are Jews, 12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel (7:5–8). **Oddly, Dan is replaced by Joseph (verse 8), possibly because of the tribe’s idolatry recorded in Judges 18 (cf. Leviticus 24:11; 1 Kings 12:28–29). The 144,000 are distinguished from (not equated with) the great (innumerable) multitude from every nation (7:9). They are mentioned later in Revelation (14:1–3) and they seem to be involved in special worship before the throne of God and preaching the gospel to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.**

The final number of our study is 1,260. It is mentioned in connection with the Great Tribulation. It designates the number of days that two prophetic witnesses of God are given power and authority to preach in Jerusalem before they are killed by the beast (Revelation 11:3–7). Also, in 12:6, the woman, Israel, flees into the wilderness to a place prepared by God. There she is nourished for 1,260 days, which is halfway through the seven-year tribulation period identified as the seventieth week of Daniel, in Daniel 9:25–27. This week, one week of years (seven years) is the period of distress that Daniel envisioned. He prophesied that in the middle of that week (1,260 days) the ruler who is to come (the Antichrist) arrives on the scene to destroy the city and put an end to Jewish temple worship.

### *Discuss*

? Satan and the Antichrist will try to take the place of God in the last days. How can we guard against Satan's schemes to do that in our lives today?

## **Part 3—The Mark of the Beast**

### **Mark of Authority and Loyalty**

Revelation 13:1,16–18

[Rev 13:1-18 KJV] **1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.** 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as [the feet] of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who [is] like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty [and] two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. 11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he



had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by [the means of] those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. **16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number [is] Six hundred threescore [and] six.**

**Say:** There is probably no number in the Bible more puzzling than the one attached to the beast in Revelation 13:18. The number 666 has been the object of intense debate and study, some quite legitimate and some founded on baseless speculation. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Attempts to identify the beast as the numerical equivalent of some Roman emperor (such as Nero or Domitian) have largely failed. Although both Greeks and Jews utilized numbers in their academic study, attaching them to the letters of their respective alphabets, the numbers simply do not add up in any reasonable way. For example, the Greek letters of Caesar Nero will only calculate as 666 if one translates the name from Greek to Hebrew. We should rightly observe, then, that John, who wrote in Greek, would have to expect his Greek-speaking audience to know Hebrew. For most Bible scholars, this is not a reasonable expectation. What do we know about the beast and this mark of identification? The beast is the personification of Satan, who mimics (and mocks) Christ. **Those who follow the beast will bow to satanic authority in worship of the dragon (13:4). His desire to compete with God for worship is made clear by verses 5–7. Note the beast’s worshippers call out words that parallel those used to praise the true God when He delivered Israel (compare Revelation 13:4 and Exodus 15:11). John invited readers to “calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man” (Revelation 13:18, NIV). A humble response might be to admit that the identity of the beast may only become clear during the Tribulation when these events occur. What we can say is that only those who align themselves with the beast and take his mark will have access to economic**



markets of commerce (verses 16–17). This ensures both their loyalty and their survival.

[Rev 13:4 KJV] **4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who [is] like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?**

[Exo 15:11 KJV] **11 Who [is] like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who [is] like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful [in] praises, doing wonders?**

### ***Discuss***

? What speculations have you heard regarding the mark of the beast? Why do you think people are especially intrigued by it?

### **Resource Packet Item 3: What Is Important, and What Do We Know?**

Distribute the work sheet and complete it as a class. Talk about how Christians can use wisdom in deciding how to discuss and debate the end times.

## **A Mark of Destined Judgment**

Revelation 14:9–11; 15:2; 16:2

[Rev 14:1-11 KJV] **1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred [and] forty [and] four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, [being] the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. 6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains**

of waters. 8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. **9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive [his] mark in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.**

[Rev 15:1-8 KJV] 1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. **2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, [and] over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.** 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for [thou] only [art] holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. 5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

[Rev 16:1-2 KJV] 1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. **2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and [upon] them which worshipped his image.**

**Say:** Judgment is a difficult subject for discussion. **Yet Revelation reminds us that Christians must see the reality of the judgment of sin, and learn from this sober truth.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**The beast appears again in Revelation 14. Those who follow him are destined for judgment (Revelation 13:14; 14:9–11). In the presence of angels and the Lamb (Christ), they will experience God’s anger and be tormented with fire and brimstone. We live in the world, but we are not supposed to live like the world. Such a life will lead to the judgment described in Revelation. Let us determine not to get caught up in the spirit of this world. In 1 John 2:18 and 4:3 we see that many deceivers would seek to lead us astray—deceivers who have the “spirit of antichrist.” May we resolve today to reject the influence of this evil spirit.**

### ***Discuss***

? What important truths can Christians, who live in the hope and assurance of everlasting life, draw from the judgment passages of Revelation 14–16?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** While we benefit by reflecting on the mysteries of Revelation, we must be cautious not to engage in unhealthy speculation. Let us stay focused on Jesus, knowing that His coming will bring immeasurable joy to His people.

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Take time to read the Book of Revelation, looking for nuggets of truth that will enrich your spiritual life.
- Reflect on how you would live this week if you knew Jesus was coming before the end of the week.
- Pray earnestly for those who are not ready for the coming of Christ.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

### **Monday:**

Ezekiel’s Apocalyptic Vision.  
Ezekiel 39:1–7

**[Eze 39:1-7 KJV] 1 Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I [am] against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that [is] with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and [to] the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken [it], saith the Lord GOD. 6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell**

carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I [am] the LORD. 7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not [let them] pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I [am] the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

#### **Tuesday:**

Daniel's Apocalyptic Vision.

Daniel 7:1–11

**[Dan 7:1-11 KJV] 1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, [and] told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first [was] like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and [it had] three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it [was] diverse from all the beasts that [were] before it; and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn [were] eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. 9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne [was like] the fiery flame, [and] his wheels [as] burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld [even] till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.**

#### **Wednesday:**

Zechariah's Apocalyptic Vision.

Zechariah 14:1–9

**[Zec 14:1-9 KJV] 1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against**

those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which [is] before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, [and there shall be] a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5 And ye shall flee [to] the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, [and] all the saints with thee. 6 And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] the light shall not be clear, [nor] dark: 7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, [that] at evening time it shall be light. 8 And it shall be in that day, [that] living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

#### **Thursday:**

Matthew's Little Apocalypse.

Matthew 24:4–14

**[Mat 24:4-14 KJV]** 4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all [these things] must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these [are] the beginning of sorrows. 9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

#### **Friday:**

Mark's Little Apocalypse.

Mark 13:24–31

**[Mar 13:24-31 KJV]** 24 But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, 25 And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven. 28 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth

forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: 29 So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, [even] at the doors. 30 Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31 Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

**Saturday:**

Luke's Little Apocalypse.

Luke 21:8–19

**[Luk 21:8-19 KJV] 8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am [Christ]; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9 But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end [is] not by and by. 10 Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: 11 And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. 12 But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute [you], delivering [you] up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. 13 And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14 Settle [it] therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15 For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16 And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and [some] of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17 And ye shall be hated of all [men] for my name's sake. 18 But there shall not an hair of your head perish. 19 In your patience possess ye your souls.**