



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

DANIEL &
REVELATION

Week 4

Coming on a Cloud

Revelation 14

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever listened to a concert of harp music?
How would you describe it?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What did John see (v. 1) and hear (vs. 2-3)?
2. How do the redeemed in verses 4-5 contrast with the unrepentant in 9:20-21?
3. What do you make of the phrase “and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb” (14:4; see Jas 1:18)?
4. How does the voice from heaven give assurance in the face of death (v. 13)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. In what ways has your life become a “new song” (v. 3)?
2. Do you enjoy a sense of “rest” in your life (note v. 11)? What role does your faith play in that?
3. Is something calling for “patient endurance” (v. 12) in your life today?

WINDOW
on the Word

“Those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure” (v. 4) refers not to literal virgins, but to the pure hearts of the redeemed men and women alike who are not corrupted by the spiritual adulteries of Babylon the Great (v. 8), which, like the beast and its image (v. 9), is another symbol of the enemies of God under Satan’s dominion. **Two symbols of judgment** are used: the first is the image of the cloud on which is seated one “like a son of man” (v. 14), which is taken from Daniel 7:13. The son of man came in judgment to gather his elect, using his sharp sickle (Rev 14:14) with which the earth was harvested (v. 16, see Mk 13:26-27; Joel 3:13). The second image of judgment is that of the angel (Rev 14:17), who also had a sharp sickle and gathered clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine (v. 18) to be trampled in the winepress outside the city (v. 20), symbolizing the martyrdom of the saints (compare 16:6), on whose blood the great prostitute gets drunk (17:1-6). Although the saints first share in the sufferings of Christ through martyrdom, they remain safe in his care and will also share in his victory and the glory of his kingdom.

Song of the Lamb

DAY 23

Revelation 15

What victory songs do you like to sing?

1. Who was victorious (v. 2)?
2. What were they holding (v. 2)? What were they doing (v. 3)? Compare verses 2-3 with 14:2-3 and 5:9.
3. How does the song of Moses (see Ex 15:1) relate to the song of the Lamb (Rev 15:3-4)?
4. What was opened in heaven (v. 5)? What came out of it (v. 6)?
5. Smoke (v. 8) is a common symbol of the glory of God in the Old Testament (see Isa 6:4). What had to happen before anyone could enter the Temple?

1. Have you come through a severe trial? When it was over, did you feel like singing songs of praise and thanksgiving to God?
2. Are you still waiting for a severe trial to end? How can the song of the Lamb help you endure?

*Just as the Israelites had stood safely on the shore after God had brought them through the Red Sea, in which he had destroyed the pursuing Egyptian army, so the saints stand **beside the sea**, victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name (v. 2). The **harps** identify them as the same group already described in 14:2. The **song of Moses** (15:3) is combined with the song of the Lamb in confirming not only God's deliverance of his people, but also his turning their martyrdom into victory, which moves the nations to "come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (v. 4).*

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*“The fifth angel
poured out his bowl
on the throne of the
beast, and his
kingdom was plunged
into darkness. Men
gnawed their tongues
in agony.”*

Revelation 16:10

**Artist's rendering of the
plague of darkness.
Such plagues in the
book of Revelation
depict political and
religious catastrophes
rather than specific
chronological events.**



Artwork by Basil Wolverton—PTM

Revelation 16

Have you experienced an earthquake? How did it make you feel?

1. Who received the effects of the plagues (vs. 2, 6)? What did they refuse to do (vs. 9-10)?
 2. What had the kingdom of the beast done (vs. 6, 11)?
 3. How are the military plans of the enemies of God depicted (v. 13)?
 4. What warning is inserted in verse 15? Compare Luke 12:37, 39.
 5. How is the fall of Babylon described (Rev 16:18-21)?
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1. Are you able to trust God even when life is painful and difficult?
 2. What are some of the things you do to stay awake spiritually?
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Powerful **geophysical images**—including the unparalleled earthquake (v. 18) in which every island fled away, the mountains could not be found (v. 20) and huge hailstones fell from the sky (v. 21), and which result in the split of the great city into three parts, the collapse of the cities of the nations and the punishment of Babylon (v. 19)—are used primarily to depict a supreme political or religious catastrophe, not necessarily a natural one (compare 6:12-17).

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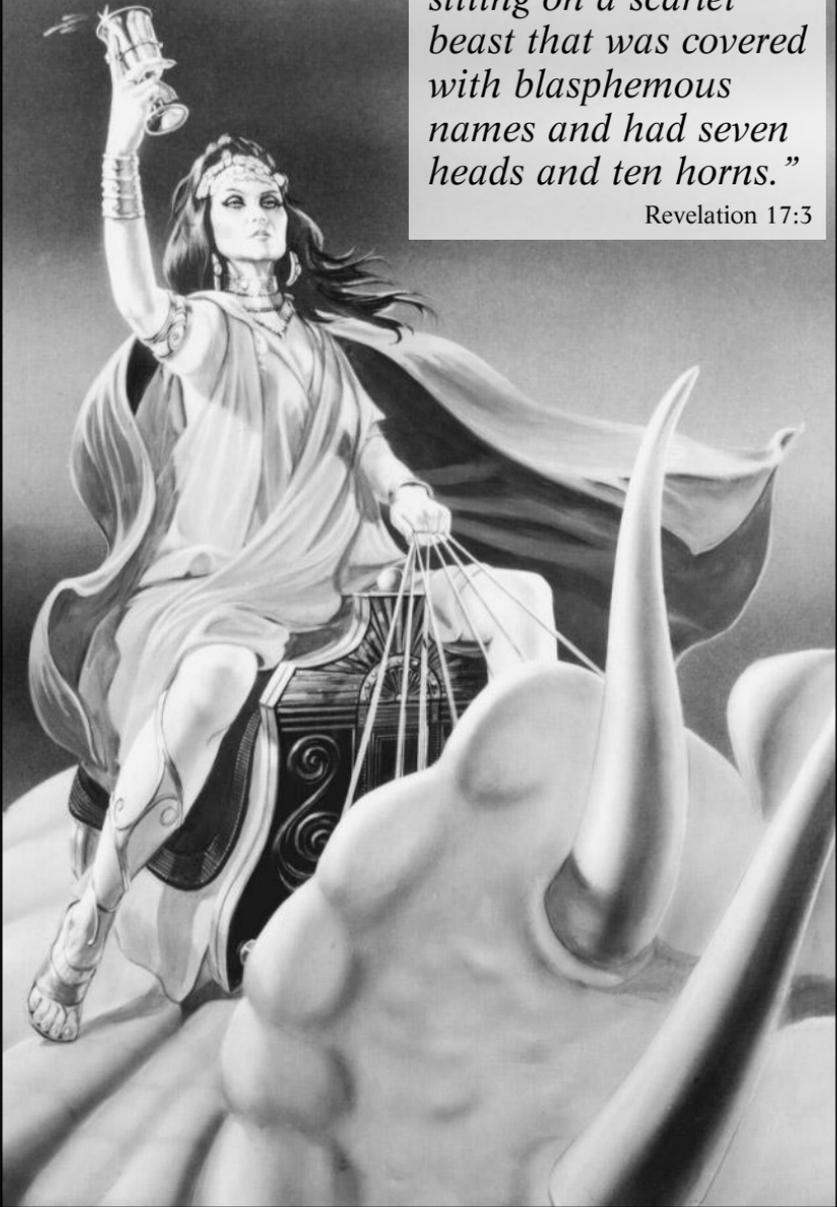
out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

*“Then the angel
carried me away in the
Spirit into a desert.
There I saw a woman
sitting on a scarlet
beast that was covered
with blasphemous
names and had seven
heads and ten horns.”*

Revelation 17:3



Artwork by C.W.Taylor

The Bigger They Are, the Harder They Fall

DAY 25

Revelation 17

Have you ever been the victim of political shenanigans—at work, school, church or in other community or social groups? How long did the people who banded together against you remain allies?

1. Where did the Spirit take John (v. 3)?
2. What is another name for the great prostitute (vs. 5, 18)?
3. What caused the drunkenness of the great prostitute, Babylon the Great (v. 6)?
4. What image identifies the great prostitute (v. 9) with ancient Rome?
5. What alliance will result in the great prostitute's destruction (vs. 12, 16-17)?
6. Where is the beast going (v. 8)? Why will the Lamb overcome the beast and the ten kings (v. 14)?

1. Have you ever suffered patiently when you were innocent? Did your patience in suffering as “a lamb to the slaughter” result in someone's change of heart or their repentance?

*Chapter 17 is another view of the punishment of the **great prostitute** (v. 1), who is the same as Babylon the Great (v. 5). The imagery of **adultery with the kings of the earth** (v. 2) depicts political corruption, not literal adultery. The **wine of her adulteries** with which the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated (v. 2) portrays the dependence and addiction of the masses on ancient Rome's political, religious and commercial grandeur. Rome was known as the **city of seven hills** (v. 9) and is here shown to be the center of power of the great prostitute, or Babylon.*

OPENING

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Pride Comes Before the Fall

Revelation 18

OPENING
up to the Word

Has your desire for money or goods or prestige ever prompted you to behave dishonestly?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What became of Babylon the Great, the great prostitute (vs. 2-3)? Why (v. 3)?
2. What warning was given to God's people (vs. 4-5)?
3. What was decreed against Babylon (vs. 6-8)?
4. How do Babylon's allies react to her destruction (vs. 9-10)?
5. How do the merchants of the earth react (vs. 11-19)?
6. What image is used to portray the effect on humanity of Rome's ruthless political and economic policies (end of v. 13)?
7. What image conveys the thoroughness and finality of Babylon's fall (v. 21)?

LIVING
out the Word

Do you trust God to vindicate you, or do you feel a need to pay people back when they hurt you?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Because the martyrs were already dead (see 16:6; 17:6) and the rest of the faithful were already safe in the wilderness (see 12:14), the admonition "come out of her my people" (18:4) can be seen as another call of grace to those who had not to this point repented. Those who respond at the "11th hour" are rightly called God's people just as are all others who embrace God's grace. John's visions here point to the **fall of Rome**, not specifically to the "end of the world," as shown by the fact that the kings of the earth (v. 9), the merchants of the earth (v. 11) and sea captains (v. 17) are still able to weep and mourn over her and stand far off and cry over her (vs. 9-10, 15, 17-19). However, the fall of Babylon depicted in Revelation does epitomize the end of the world, as well as all times of persecution and unjust suffering throughout history.*

Hallelujah! Let the Celebration Begin!

DAY 27

Revelation 19

In your lifetime, what do you consider to be the greatest victory celebration (the end of a war, a political victory, etc.)?

1. Compare verses 1-3 with 18:20. What was being celebrated? By whom?
2. Who was made ready (v. 7)? What was given to her (v. 8)? What did the gift of fine linen mean? Contrast this with the attire of the great prostitute (17:4).
3. Who is the King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11-16)? How is he dressed (v. 13)?
4. How is the fall of Babylon's military might pictured (vs. 17-18)?
5. What happened when the beast and armies of the kings gathered to make war against the rider on the horse (v. 20)?
6. What happened to the beast and the false prophet (v. 20)? What happened to the rest of the kings and their armies (v. 21)?

How do you praise God as he brings you through times of trouble? Do you celebrate God's victories on your behalf? In what ways?

*The "fine linen, bright and clean" (v. 8), representing righteous acts, was not achieved by the saints, but given to them as a gift. Likewise, entrance to the **wedding supper of the Lamb** (v. 9) was by invitation, not earned. **The angel** (vs. 9-10) would not allow himself to be worshiped, but declared, "Worship God!" Compare Hebrews 1:14. As **the one who is faithful and true** (Rev 19:11), it is with justice that Jesus Christ judges and makes war with all the powers that destroy humanity for their own greed and lust. Even though the saints were continually subject to horrible cruelties under Rome's vast religious and military power, their patience and faith in God are vindicated in their glorious salvation. The same is true throughout all generations.*

OPENING

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DIGGING

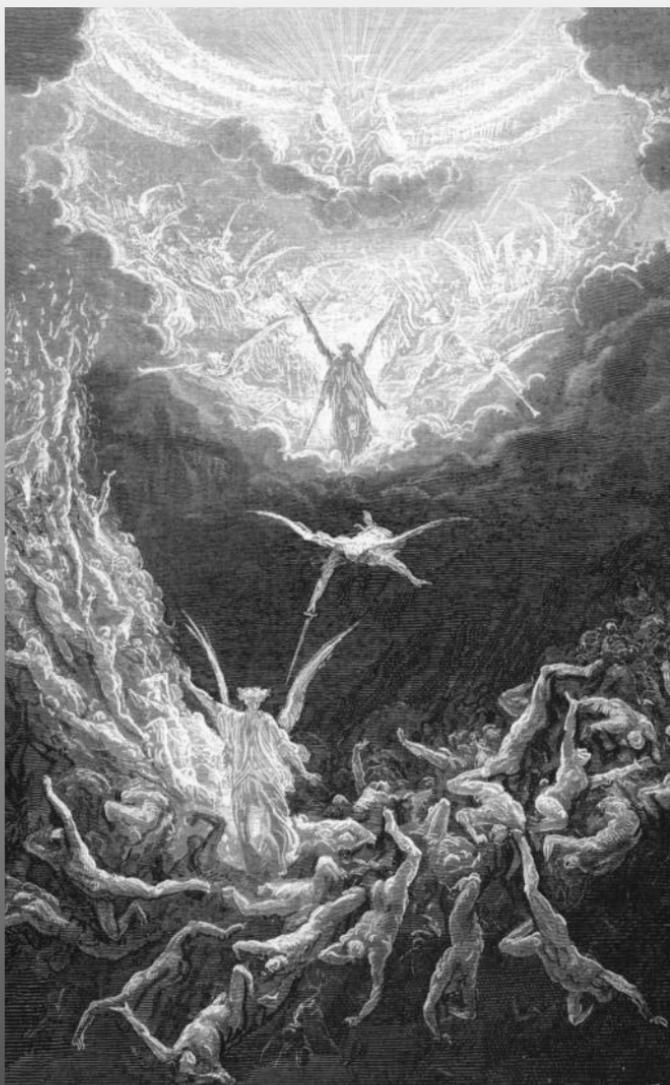
into the Word

LIVING

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“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”

Revelation 20:12

Revelation 20

Can you think of a good example of “the tables being turned,” or of “the shoe being on the other foot”?

1. What happened/happens to Satan (vs. 1-3)?
2. Now who occupied the positions of authority (v. 4)? How is the permanence of their new situation pictured (v. 6)?
3. What will happen when the “thousand years” are over (vs. 7-10)? Who will be tormented for ever and ever (v. 10)?
4. How is the incomparable superiority of God’s power over all things symbolized (v. 11)?
5. Who was judged (vs. 12-13)? What was opened for the judgment (v. 12)?
6. What happened/happens to death and Hades (v. 14)?
7. Who is/was thrown into the lake of fire (v. 15)?

1. If you are to be judged on your works as recorded in the books (vs. 12-13), how do you think you will fare? What is your only “saving grace”?

2. How do names get into the “book of life”? Compare Romans 5:1-11.

3. How does Revelation 20 illustrate Romans 5:2-3, 11? How has this been true in your life?

*The **thousand years** (vs. 2-7) may not be literal, but symbolic of a very long time. Compare Ps 50:10 and Job 9:3. While the idea of a literal thousand-year reign prior to the final judgment has been an interpretation some Christians have had for many centuries, it has never been the universally accepted understanding of the body of Christ, and it often leads to a materialistic interpretation of the kingdom of God—with undue emphasis on physical prosperity. The prevailing interpretation is that the thousand years symbolize the period between the resurrection of Jesus and the final judgment. **Gog and Magog** (Rev 20:8; compare Eze 38–39) symbolize everything that is against God.*

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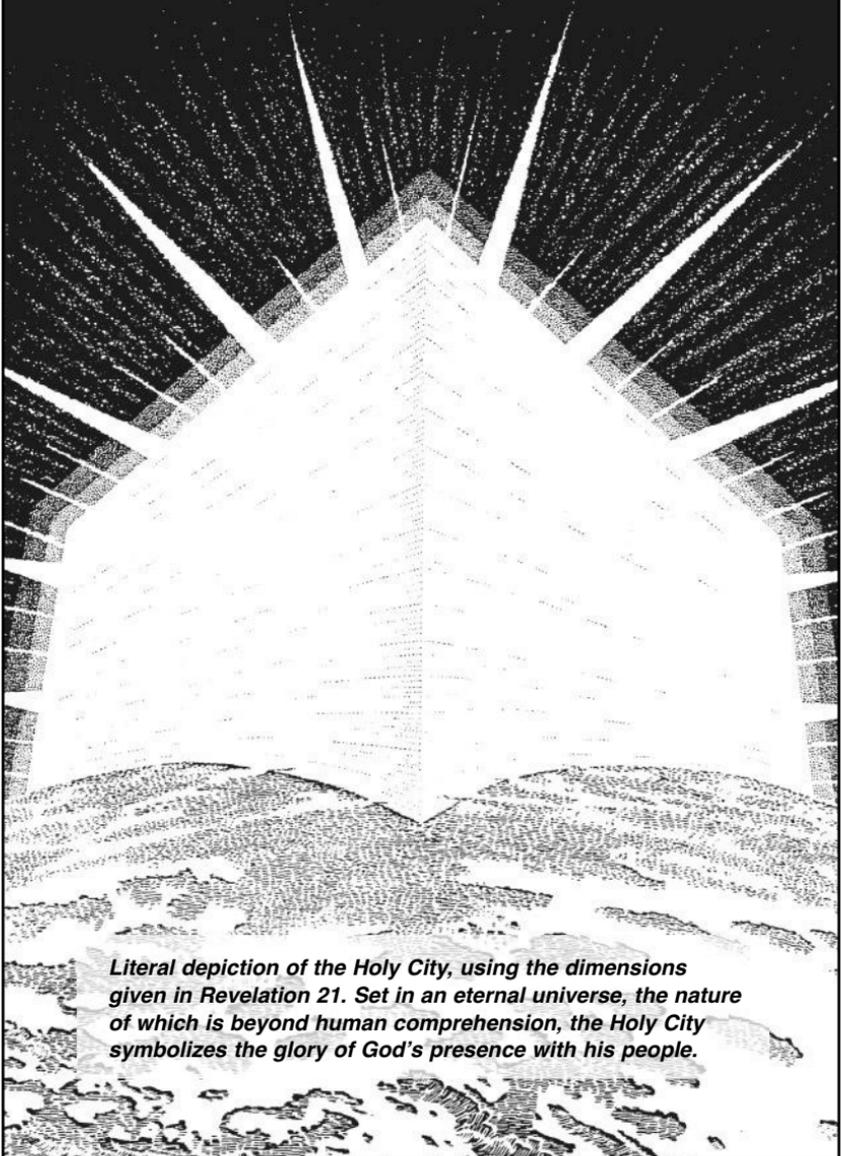
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WINDOW

on the Word

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”

Revelation 21:2



Literal depiction of the Holy City, using the dimensions given in Revelation 21. Set in an eternal universe, the nature of which is beyond human comprehension, the Holy City symbolizes the glory of God's presence with his people.

Revelation 21

In your lifetime, what are some of the new things that politicians have promised?

1. What had “passed away” (vs. 1, 4)? What was new (vs. 1, 5)? Compare Is 65:17.
2. How is the relationship between God and humanity depicted (Rev 21:3-4)?
3. Compare verse 6 with 1:8; 22:13; Is 55:1 and Jn 4:10. Now read Col 1:18-20. How would you say Jesus Christ is the key to understanding all the Bible?
4. Who will inherit “all this” (Rev 21:7)? How is this overcoming done (12:11)?
5. What came down out of heaven (21:2, 10)? How is its beauty and glory depicted (vs. 11-21)?
6. Why was there no temple in the new Jerusalem (v. 22)?
7. How will the nations relate to the new Jerusalem (vs. 24-27)?

1. Take a few minutes to close your eyes and reflect on verses 3 and 4.
2. Do you trust God to make all things new in your life?
3. In what ways does the light of God enable you to see yourself as you really are and to see others as they really are?

*In the ancient world, **the sea** (v. 1) was regarded as a dangerous and unpredictable enemy. Its end is symbolic of the end of things hostile to God and humanity. The description of the **new Jerusalem** (vs. 2-3, 9-27) is prefigured in a variety of Old Testament passages and symbolizes the surpassing glory, beauty and perfection of the new heaven and new earth in which God dwells with his people. “**On no day will its gates ever be shut**” (v. 25) illustrates the open invitation to humanity to enter, so that only the impure (v. 27), which are the defiantly sinful as opposed to repentant sinners, will stay out. “**No night there**” (v. 25) illustrates the end of everything that creates fear and ignorance.*

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“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

Revelation 22:1

Revelation 22

Can you think of a time when you saw a river with water “as clear as crystal”?

1. How is universal peace, plenty and wholeness depicted (vs. 1-2)? What is its source (v. 1)?
2. What will the servants of God and the Lamb see (v. 4)? Compare Mt 5:8 and 1 Jn 3:2.
3. How is the need for patience expressed (Rev 22:11)?
4. What is the way to wash one’s robes (v. 14; 7:14)?
5. Who is invited to “come” and take of the free gift of the water of life (22:17)?

Jesus says he is coming soon (vs. 7, 20), but he has not yet come, at least not in his Second Coming (as in 1:7). How do you explain this promise? In what ways has Jesus already come to you? In what ways do you still expect him?

*The symbolism of the **river of the water of life** (22:1) and of the **tree of life** (v. 2) is foreshadowed in Ezekiel 47:1-12, as well as in Genesis 2:8-16 and 3:6. They represent the free gift of full reconciliation, healing and fellowship with God open to all humans through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. “**I am the Root and the Offspring of David**” refers to Isaiah 11:1. “**I am the bright and morning star**” recalls Numbers 24:17 and John 8:12. The **warning** (Rev 22:18-19) is a common ending to ancient books. Regarding the final two verses, William Barclay wrote, “There is both pathos and glory in the way in which the Revelation ends. Amidst the terrible persecution of his day, the one thing which John longed for was the speedy return of Christ. That hope was never realized in the way in which he expected, but we can never doubt that Christ nevertheless abundantly kept his promise that he would be with his own even to the end of the world (Mt 28:20). Then comes the glory. Come what may, John was sure of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and equally sure that it was sufficient for all things. It is surely symbolic, and it is surely fitting, that the last word of the Bible should be GRACE.”*

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