

Bible studies on :
the book of Revelation

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Preface

Many young Christians are fascinated by the book of Revelation. They would like to be able to explore this book, but very few teachers are prepared to go on that adventure with them. Revelation 1:3 describes as blessed “*he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*” Revelation should therefore be a source of blessing and encouragement for believers.

10-20 studies

This manual contains ten Bible studies on ten key passages from Revelation. They will give the teens a first glimpse of the message addressed to them. The studies are sufficiently detailed to be divided into two parts. A half-way marker appears in the text so that you will know where to split the lesson.

For teens or young people

The teaching is aimed first and foremost to young Christians aged at least 13-14 years old, and encourages them to persevere in their walk with the Lord. Each study pursues a three-fold objective targeting knowledge, emotions and actions. Some studies also provide the opportunity to specifically address the unsaved.

Line of interpretation

The interpretation of Revelation has provoked numerous debates. This manual endeavours to take the diversity of viewpoints into consideration. It often suggests several interpretations and avoids the most controversial subjects. Several commentaries were consulted, in particular a remarkable study by G.K. Beale : *The Book of Revelation (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999.

Teaching tools

The studies are ready to use. However, preparation in prayer and careful examination of the Bible passages are necessary. The manual proposes three types of questions to lead the teens in the study: text observation, comprehension and application questions. These will prompt them to examine what the passage says, to think about what it means and to prepare themselves to put it into practice. Icons in the margin point to other tools: introductions, conclusions and various methods to make the study interactive.

New King James version

It is difficult to study Revelation with teens if they have several Bible translations. This manual contains handouts with Bible passages in the New King James version. If you prefer to use a different version, you will need to adapt the questions and worksheets provided.

Worksheets available in Adobe® Acrobat® PDF

In this manual you will find attractive worksheets for the teens to fill in during the study.

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Introduction : The contract

Before exploring the book of Revelation we need to enter into a contract! We won't be able to interpret this book correctly or discover its message unless we follow some basic principles. Here are the clauses of the contract:



Put aside our preconceived ideas!

When we hear a lot about a film we go to the cinema with a certain amount of advance knowledge: "The spectacular decor is the result of special effects", "The hero isn't the one you think", "The film ends tragically", etc. All these ideas inevitably influence our interpretation of the film.

Let's be careful not to do the same thing when we study Revelation. Various ideas are circulating, some of them unreliable, about this book and the subjects it tackles (the battle of Armageddon, the 144,000, etc). Some of the ideas are completely erroneous and can cloud our interpretation considerably. We risk projecting these ideas onto the Bible text. So it is better to try to put them aside in order to take a fresh look at this book and to be ready to listen to what the Lord wants to tell us.



Prepare yourself to enter unknown territory!

In studying Revelation, we are going to enter a strange world full of angels, trumpets, dragons, etc. This book is very different to the ones we are used to. (Perhaps we could compare it to the fantasy literature or films appreciated by certain teens.)

The first readers of Revelation, who lived at the end of the first century, were not as disoriented as we are. At that time there was an apocalyptic literary genre. Dozens of religious writings of this type have been discovered. They were written between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D., in a literary style very close to that of Revelation. We will need to familiarise ourselves with this genre and take its special features into consideration.



Don't take everything literally!

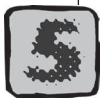
Sometimes we resort to picture language in order to express ourselves: "Don't get on your high horse", "He was born with a silver spoon in his mouth", "It was raining cats and dogs", etc. We do this because the picture speaks more loudly than abstract words. It transmits an emotion. Those listening to us know that they don't need to interpret these expressions literally.

Revelation often uses picture language, thereby giving weight and emotion to its message. Sometimes it will be difficult to decide between a literal or a figurative interpretation. As we study the text we will try to pinpoint the symbols (for example, the sword coming out of the mouth of the Son of Man) and then to "translate" them (the sword represents the Word of Christ by which He judges). We will need to be careful, however, not to lose ourselves in the details for the pictures in Revelation also need to be appreciated as a whole in order to understand their significance.



Consider the other books of the Bible!

If we had the time to compare the text of Revelation to books like Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah or Zechariah, we would be struck by seeing all that they have in common. The author of Revelation often picks up the same symbols, names, figures or themes. That is why we will be able to find precious clues in these books to understand Revelation and its picture language (for example, the symbol of the sword is probably drawn from Isaiah 49:2). Studying the text in the light of the rest of Scripture is one of the keys to a good interpretation.



Accept that you don't know when!

The book of Revelation brings to us great changes in the course of the history of the world. Naturally we would like to know when they happened or when they will happen, but these questions divide the greatest specialists in biblical interpretation, so we mustn't imagine that we can resolve them.

Revelation does not progress like a classic history book. When we are on the beach by the sea, we see how one wave succeeds another and ends its journey on the sand. If the tide is coming in the waves advance and finish up covering the whole beach. The chronology of Revelation can be compared to a succession of waves. Certain events seem to be narrated several times. As a whole, the text develops and leads us to the end of time.



Listen to God!

God's Spirit inspired the author of Revelation. We need to receive this book as being God's Word addressed to us. There are times when the text will shake us up and correct us, but it will also especially be a great source of encouragement.

Revelation reveals the flow of history and the forces involved in it. In spite of appearances, Jesus Christ is the absolute Master. He will crush Satan and his allies. His victory is sure. He will judge His enemies and He will save His people. The believers will take part in this final triumph.

Summary

- ◀ Let's approach Revelation by putting aside our preconceived ideas and asking the Lord to enlighten us.
- ◀ For us Revelation is a strange book but it was a well-known style at that time: apocalyptic literature.
- ◀ The text is packed with images, symbols and codes which are not to be taken literally; we will need to work out what they signify.
- ◀ Other books of the Bible will be able to enlighten us, particularly some of the Old Testament books on which Revelation seems to draw.
- ◀ We should accept that it is not possible to place all the events of Revelation in a time frame; the most important is to grasp the spiritual realities which they teach us.
- ◀ God has given us this book to show us that, in spite of appearances, He is leading human history and the believers will participate in His final victory.

The vision of the glorified Christ



Objective: We would like the believers:

- to discover the context in which Revelation was written: John is addressing believers living at the end of the first century who were tested in their faith.
- to marvel at the appearance of the glorified Christ; He is the divine Priest, Judge and King.
- to trust in Jesus Christ in the difficult circumstances they will face in their own lives.
- NC** The unsaved will be encouraged to acknowledge and accept Christ (see question 10).

[Distribute Revelation 1 in the New King James version and the worksheets, so that the teens can fill them in during the study. You will find these at the end of lesson 1. You may also download them from the Internet (see instructions given in the preface). If you prefer to use a different version you will need to adapt the handouts, as well as the questions you will ask the teens.]



Introduction: A timely message!

There are times when we all face difficulties: studies go wrong, a broken friendship, criticism from friends, etc. In circumstances like these, a message of encouragement from a friend can do us a lot of good. It reminds us that we are not alone and it gives us the strength to carry on.

Revelation is a letter of encouragement sent by an old man to his Christian friends to help them hold fast in trials and not give up. God revealed extraordinary things to this old man. (The Greek word for Revelation comes from “apocaluptein”: to unveil, to throw light on what is hidden.) He sends this message to his friends in order to revive their faith in God and their hope in a better future. This letter can also be a great encouragement to you in the times when you are facing difficulties.



Reading : Revelation 1:9-11

1. John is the author of Revelation. Which John can it be?

The book only gives us a few hints about this. The Christians of the day, however, believed that it had been written by the Apostle *John*, one of the twelve disciples of the Lord Jesus, known as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20), so close was he to his Master. John had been present at Jesus’ miracles (Mark 5:37-42), at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-3), at His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46), at His crucifixion (John 19:25-27) and he had been one of the first witnesses of His resurrection (John 20:1-10). *[Note: Later theologians noticed differences between the style of Revelation and that of the Gospel of John and the epistles of John, but it is difficult to draw conclusions. The question does not affect the message of the book in any way.]*

2. In verse 9, John mentions three things he has in common with his brothers. The first one is tribulation. Do you know what difficulties the Christians faced at that time?

When Revelation was written at the end of the first century, Rome dominated the civilised world. The emperor was exalted and considered as a demi-god. Everyone had to worship him. Not submitting to him was easily interpreted as an act of rebellion. We know that the Christians were at first exempt from this worship, in the same way as the Jews. Later, however, this favour

was retracted from them in certain places. At the end of the first century many were maltreated because they refused to worship the emperor. This book is God's answer to the prayers and tears of these persecuted Christians. [*"Like you, I am persecuted"*.]

3. John declares that he shares two other things with his friends: the kingdom and patience in his union with Christ. What does that mean?

John does not want his friends to forget another reality: they are united with Christ; as a consequence they are part of His kingdom! Those who maltreat them today are actually very limited in their power. Christ reigns over all things. He has all power and authority. The believers reign with Him. If the opposers seem to have the upper hand today, it is really Christ Who reigns supreme. His triumph has been set in motion. All those who believe in Him are part of it. That should encourage them to persevere in their union with Christ until the Kingdom of God is fully manifest. [*"Like you, I reign with Christ"; "Like you, I must persevere"*.]

4. Where was John and why was he there?

On the Island of *Patmos*. It is indicated by an arrow on the map of Asia Minor. Today this island is in Turkey. John was there for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Rather than take part in emperor worship, he had remained true to God and had proclaimed His Word. Now he was in exile in an "island prison" because of the position he took. Perhaps he had been condemned to forced labour. The text does not spell it out, but this was highly likely.

5. One Sunday, the Lord's Day, the Spirit of God laid hold of John. Does that remind you of the experiences of other Bible characters?

Joseph, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and others had such visions given by God. Then John lost contact with the physical world around him. He could see and hear things which belong to another reality. He heard a loud voice behind him, like the sound of a trumpet, giving him instructions.

6. John had to write down in a book what he saw and address it to seven churches. Look at where these churches are on the map. What do they represent, in your opinion?

These churches form an irregular circle in Asia Minor. Ephesus was the town closest to Patmos. We know that there were at least ten churches in this region. Why were seven of them chosen? The figure symbolises completeness. Numerous specialists agree that the seven churches represent the *entire church*, in all places and in all times.

The message of Revelation is not only addressed to the Christians of the first century, but also to those today who have much in common with them. If you have chosen to live for Jesus Christ, your walk with God probably brings many difficulties. You face pressures. Perhaps you are tempted to give up. Revelation unveils truths to you which can comfort you and consolidate your faith. Don't forget that, being united with Jesus Christ, you are taking part in His Kingdom. Persevere in your commitment to Him.

If you plan to divide the study into two parts, you could close the first part by letting teens share difficulties they face and then having a time of prayer.

LESSON BREAK

The rest of the text “takes your breath away”! Verses 12-20 describe Someone with an amazing and spectacular appearance. While you are reading the text try to identify Him.



Reading : Revelation 1:12-20

This passage is full of symbols and we are going to try to understand what they mean. [You could remind the teens about the explanations given in the introduction of the manual concerning the picture language used in apocalyptic literature.]

7. First of all John sees seven golden lampstands. What do they represent?

Verse 20 answers this question: the seven lampstands are the *seven churches*. As we already said when we were studying verse 11, these churches represent the *universal church*. The Bible speaks about lampstands in several places: there was a lampstand in the Tabernacle, in God's presence (Exodus 25:31); later several lampstands were placed in the temple (1 Kings 7:49); but the most interesting connection is with a passage in Zechariah 4:2-10, where the lampstand represents Israel, God's people. Revelation takes up and develops this image. It reminds us what God expects from His people: to shine before men (Matthew 5:14-16).

8. At the centre of these lampstands John sees Someone Who is like the Son of Man. What clues in the text help us to identify Him?

In verses 12-16 we have first of all a dazzlingly beautiful description of this character. But it is the words John utters in verses 17-18 that clearly show what they mean: He is the first and the last, that is the sovereign God Who leads history from its beginning to its end (a reference to Isaiah 41:4, Isaiah 44:6 and Isaiah 48:12 - cf. Revelation 1:8, Revelation 21:6, Revelation 22:13). He was dead but now He is alive for all eternity and has all power over death. Of course, it is talking about *Jesus Christ*! After He died for our sins, He was brought back to life and was raised to God's right hand.

John draws a majestic portrait of Jesus in verses 14-16. We tend to want to imagine this but it is not really possible (a two-edged sword coming out of his mouth!). We should try to understand the meaning of these images. Other Bible passages can enlighten us here. Here is the fruit of the research of several commentators. [Note: Revelation 1:14-16 and Daniel 10:5-6 have many similarities.]



Method - Work in groups

Divide the teens into groups of three or four. Their task will be to try to match the items in the left hand column with the commentaries on the right [see handout 1].

- ◀ *The long garment and the golden band about the chest* were at that time a mark of distinction of someone like a king, but it is also close to the kind of dress worn by the priest (Exodus 28:4,31).
- ◀ *The head and hair white like wool as white as snow* can be a reference to the wisdom of age, holiness or divinity (an identical description to that of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9).
- ◀ *The eyes like a flame of fire* probably refer to perfect knowledge enabling Him to judge (Daniel 10:6, Revelation 2:18, Revelation 19:12).
- ◀ *His feet like fine brass refined in a furnace* could mean moral purity (similar to Daniel 10:6).
- ◀ *The voice as the sound of many waters emphasises divinity*. This is how the voice of the all-powerful God is described in Ezekiel 1:24, Ezekiel 43:2. The illustration is very fitting for John who is on an island!

- ◀ *The right hand holding seven stars:* These seven stars are the angels - heavenly representatives of the seven churches (Revelation 1:20). The fact that Jesus has these stars in His hand shows that He protects and takes care of the church.
- ◀ *The mouth with the sharp two-edged sword coming out of it* refers to the Word of Jesus Christ by which He will judge the wicked (Isaiah 11:4, Isaiah 49:2, Revelation 2:16, Revelation 19:15, Hebrews 4:12).
- ◀ *The countenance like the sun shining in its strength* reminds us of Moses' face after he met with God, or that of the victorious warrior (Exodus 34:29, Judges 5:31).

9. The general impression emanating from this portrait is more important than each individual detail. What did you feel?

When we attend a great show or a multimedia presentation, we can't necessarily retain and understand everything. But it carries an emotion and brings us a message. We have just seen Jesus looking dazzlingly beautiful, clothed with power and majesty! That leads us to admire Him but perhaps also makes us afraid.

This text reminds the churches then and now of three great truths about Jesus: He is King, Priest and Judge.

- ◀ *The King of kings:* Jesus received all power in Heaven and on Earth. He is also the head of the church which must obey Him (1 Timothy 6:14-15).
- ◀ *The Great High Priest:* It is thanks to Jesus that we have access to God. He died on the cross for our sins. He obtained pardon for all those who place their trust in Him. He is interceding on behalf of the believers (Hebrews 3:1-2 and 4:14-15).
- ◀ *The supreme Judge:* Jesus will judge every man and every woman. He will honour those who have been faithful to Him and He will have to condemn those who have rejected Him (Acts 17:31).

Have you realised the greatness and majesty of the Lord Jesus? Have you given Him the place He deserves in your life? Don't be among those who ignore Him or oppose Him and expose themselves to His judgement. Recognise what He has done for you and ask Him to become your King. He will give you all you need to persevere in difficulties and to be a witness for Him.

When John had this vision, he fell down at Jesus' feet. But Jesus lifted him up and entrusted to him again the mission of communicating this revelation to the church.

10. What impact did this vision have on the Christians at that time?

The Christians were a minority group and were often persecuted. From a human perspective their situation was hopeless. But this revelation sent by a friend opened their eyes to a completely different reality. Jesus really was present among them. He is the King of kings, the divine High Priest and the supreme Judge. He is in charge. He would intervene in their favour. They shouldn't lose hope but persevere in their commitment to Jesus Christ and His Word.



Method : Case study

Read the following text with the teens then start a discussion using the questions.

Steve and Amy grew up in a Christian family. They recently moved house because of their father's job. It wasn't easy for Steve to fit in at high school and Amy at university. Steve's classmates were addicted to violent video games, while Amy's classmates were heavy smokers and were sleeping with older boys. The problems took a different turn when Steve's friends came to his house. They noticed that his family prayed at the table, read the Bible every day and even hung Bible verses on the wall. From then on Steve was the "guru" of the high school. Amy was also put in the category of "strange people" since she declined an invitation one Sunday because she preferred to go to church. Both of them regularly endured taunting and wondered why the

Lord allowed it all.

- 1. What did these two teens have to endure because they belonged to the Lord? How did they feel?*
- 2. Have you sometimes faced similar situations? Tell us about it. Why does the Lord allow these things to happen?*
- 3. What assurance does Revelation 1 give us? In what ways could these truths change our perception of trials and help us have the right behaviour?*

The vision of the glorified Christ

Revelation 1:9-11

9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Revelation 1:12-20

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last."

18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches. (NKJV)

Revelation



Chapter 1

The vision of the glorified Christ

Revelation is comparable to :

Revelation 1:9-11

The author : _____

He has three things in common with his brothers:

1. "Like you, I _____"
2. "Like you, I _____"
3. "Like you, I _____"

John is on the island of _____ because of his commitment to Christ.

The seven churches to which he is writing represent: _____



1. Ephesus 2. Smyrna 3. Pergamos 4. Thyatira 5. Sardis 6. Philadelphia 7. Laodicea

Revelation 1:12-20

The seven lampstands are _____ and represent _____.

The One Who appears in the midst of them is _____.

Symbolic description

The long garment and the golden band about the chest ➡

The head and hair white like wool as white as snow ➡

The eyes like a flame of fire ➡

His feet like fine brass refined in a furnace ➡

The voice as the sound of many waters ➡

The right hand holding seven stars ➡

The mouth with the sharp two edged sword coming out of it ➡

The countenance like the sun shining in its strength ➡

Probable meaning

☞ Perfect knowledge enabling Him to judge

☞ The clothing of someone of distinction: a king or a priest

☞ The voice of the all-powerful God

☞ Wisdom of age, holiness, divinity

☞ Moral purity

☞ Judgement of the wicked by the Word

☞ Divine manifestation, victory of the warrior

☞ Protection and care of the church

Jesus is the _____, the _____ and the _____!

Case study

Steve and Amy grew up in a Christian family. They recently moved house because of their father's job. It wasn't easy for Steve to fit in at high school and Amy at university. Steve's classmates were addicted to violent video games, while Amy's classmates were heavy smokers and were sleeping with older boys. The problems took a different turn when Steve's friends came to his house. They noticed that his family prayed at the table, read the Bible every day and even hung Bible verses on the wall. From then on Steve was the "guru" of the high school. Amy was also put in the category of "strange people" since she declined an invitation one Sunday because she preferred to go to church. Both of them regularly endured taunting and wondered why the Lord allowed it all.

1. *What did these two teens have to endure because they belonged to the Lord? How did they feel?*
2. *Have you sometimes faced similar situations? Tell us about it. Why does the Lord allow these things to happen?*
3. *What assurance does Revelation 1 give us? In what ways could these truths change our perception of trials and help us have the right behaviour?*

The letters to the seven churches



Objective: We would like the believers:



to compare two churches: Smyrna (committed to the Lord) and Laodicea (carried away by the world).



to be aware of the pressures the world exerts on them.



to persevere in their commitment to the Lord.



The unsaved will be challenged by the invitation in Revelation 3:20. They are included here although these verses are addressed first and foremost to the believers.



Introduction : Against the current!

When we are canoeing on a river, it is easy to follow the current. The canoe glides along quickly and without any effort on our part, but it can drift dangerously far away from its moorings. When it is time to come back upstream, everyone has to paddle hard!

The churches and the believers have always been exposed to strong currents. Sometimes they allow the world to draw them far from God's will. They need to paddle against the current in order to stay attached to the Lord and to be His faithful witnesses. *[Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]*

1. Do you know what you can find in Revelation 2 - 3?

Revelation 2 - 3 contain seven letters addressed to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea - cities already mentioned in Revelation 1:11. We know that these first century churches were persecuted by the local population and the authorities who were pressing them to take part in emperor worship (see lesson 1). When they refused they were persecuted and deprived of numerous social and economic privileges.

Some of them resisted and remained faithfully loyal to Christ. That is why Jesus Christ addresses letters of approval to them and encourages them to persevere. Their faithfulness will be rewarded. We will examine one of these letters - the one addressed to Smyrna, a letter of *approval*.

However, other churches became slack and accepted dangerous compromises. As a consequence they received letters of *reproach* and correction. We will spend time on one of them, addressed to Laodicea. The majority of the letters combine approval and reproach.

Let's remember that these seven churches represent the universal church (see lesson 1). That is why these letters concern not only the communities at the end of the first century, but also the ones we may belong to today. They deliver a message of encouragement and warning to us. We must be ready to hear it.

Every letter is constructed the same way: (1) Christ presents Himself in a way which is adapted to the needs of the church; (2) He approves and/or reprimands; (3) He gives instructions; (4) He makes promises.



SMYRNA : Poor yet rich

Reading : Revelation 2:8-11

Imagine what an inhabitant of Smyrna could see from his window. Smyrna was one of the largest cities in the region. It had a port, sheltered in a gulf, and it was a commercial crossroads. The city had been destroyed in 580 B.C. then rebuilt in 290 B.C. It was devoted to Rome and had obtained the authorisation to erect a temple for emperor worship. It was difficult for Christians to live in such a place without compromising themselves. Certain Christians were even behind bars for their faith.

2. Why did Jesus Christ present Himself to Smyrna as being “the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life”?

The lives of the Christians in Smyrna *were threatened and some were even going to die*. That is why Jesus reminds them that He is the First and the Last, He is the eternal God Who reigns over all of history. He has absolute power over death and life (Revelation 1:17-18). “Some of you will be put to death, as I was - but you will come to life again, just as I did!” What a comfort for these suffering Christians.

3. How does verse 9 describe the difficulties and pressures which the church at Smyrna underwent?

They suffered *tribulation*. Doubtlessly the difficulties began when the Christians had refused to worship the emperor and the Roman gods. They had been punished for their lack of patriotism. You need to understand that the entire economic life of a town like Smyrna depended on the devotion to Rome. You couldn't succeed in business without taking part in it. Now the Christians also experienced poverty. The word used in the original Greek text means extreme poverty. Perhaps their adversaries took over their possessions or prevented them from getting a good job. Furthermore they were confronted by the blasphemy of the Jews. The latter had gained the tolerance of the authorities and didn't want to be associated with the Christians and treated like them. They did not hesitate to denounce the Christians and to falsely accuse them. They had become Satan's instrument to oppress the church. That is why verse 9 confirms that their synagogue (the place where Jews came together) had become a synagogue of Satan.

4. In the same verse Christ emphasises the merit of the Christians in Smyrna. What word does He use?

The church in Smyrna was *rich*. It was not material but spiritual richness (see 2 Corinthians 6:10, James 2:5, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29), demonstrated by their faithfulness in difficulties. Materially they were impoverished, but spiritually they were filled with love, joy, peace and wisdom in the Lord. This is the true wealth which we should seek after.

5. The letter gives two instructions to the church in Smyrna. What are they? How could they achieve this?

They can be found at the beginning and the end of verse 10: *do not fear suffering and be faithful until death*. Persecution was going to intensify, that was certain, with several of them being imprisoned. Their trial was to last ten days, at the end of which they would be executed. (The text does not speak explicitly of an execution, but it is implied.) They would have to remember that their lives were in the hands of Jesus Christ Who had known the same suffering. He had been arrested, accused and executed, but He had come back to life. They too would live and reign with Him. Death and the enemy would not have the last word. [*The ten days of imprisonment could be an allusion to the ten days when Daniel and his friends were put to the test - Daniel 1:12-15. They had been models of resistance to idolatry. In the middle of the second century, it was at Smyrna that the famous Polycarpe, a disciple of John, died as a martyr for having refused to curse the Lord.*]

6. Finally the letter contains promises. What are they? See the end of verses 10-11.

The church in Smyrna was going to receive a prize for its faithfulness. The city was known for its games. It crowned its victorious athletes. Jesus Christ declares that the Christians who would be faithful to Him until death were going to receive the *crown of life*. Verse 11 adds that they would

not be hurt by the second death, which is the final judgement. (See Revelation 20:11-15 and 21:8.) God would reward them and would allow them to share in His reign for all eternity.

7. Is the situation of the church in Smyrna comparable to that of the Christians today? Explain.

Persecution is a reality in certain parts of the world, but quite a number of believers do not experience it with such intensity. On the other hand, the influence of the world is always there. It takes various forms but continues to threaten the church and the Christians. Let's try to follow the remarkable example of those in Smyrna who held out and remained faithfully committed to the Lord. An inestimable reward awaits the servant of Jesus Christ. The best is yet to come.



Method : Exchange in small groups

If you are planning to divide the study into two parts, end the first part with a discussion. Put the teens into groups of three or four and ask them to make a list of ten influences or dangerous currents that the Christians and the churches have to face today (materialism, sexual freedom, etc). When they have finished the list they can think about how these influences are exerted and how to succeed in counteracting them. Then get everyone together and give them the opportunity to share the fruit of their discussion.

LESSON BREAK

LAODICEA: Rich yet poor



Reading : Revelation 3:14-22

The city of Laodicea was located at the crossroads of several main routes and had a reputation for its commercial activity (one of the most prosperous cities at that time). It had many businesses, banks, textile factories and a school of medicine. Laodicea was proud of having overcome an earthquake in 60 A.D. using its own resources. A church had been established in Laodicea (probably after Epaphras preached there - Colossians 1:7-8 and 4:12-13), but the behaviour and involvement of the Christians was quite different to those in Smyrna. That is why Christ addresses the church sternly. Perhaps we too need the Lord to correct us.

8. The letter begins again with a description of Christ. He is "the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness". Why does Jesus Christ present Himself in this way?

The word "Amen" designates what is sure, true, solid. [Note: Isaiah 65:16 uses the expression "God of the Amen" in Hebrew which means "God of truth". To say "amen" at the end of a prayer means that you recognise the validity of what has been said.] The introduction insists on the faithfulness and truth of Christ so that the church in Laodicea will realise *that they are unfaithful and false*. They really must change and become more like the Lord! It is as if Jesus was saying to them, "I am faithful and true. You must become like me."

The end of verse 14 adds that Jesus Christ oversaw the entire creation. Being at the origin of all things, He has the supreme authority over them (John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-18). The Christians in Laodicea are part of the new creation in Christ. Their behaviour and their witness should show this. They need to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ.

9. What sharp reproach does Jesus direct in verse 15 to the church in Laodicea? How do you interpret it?

He denounces the Christians in this city for being *neither cold nor hot*. In order to understand this image it is useful to know the geographical situation of the city. Laodicea had a source of hot water but it was located outside the city. The water was channelled to the city, but by the time it got there it had become lukewarm. You could not compare it to either the hot water with medicinal properties used for bathing in Hierapolis, or the cold water which you could drink in Colosse. Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water is useful for nothing except

for making you nauseous. (A more contemporary illustration: we don't enjoy lukewarm drinks. Tea has to be hot and coca-cola has to be really cold!)

The lives of the Christians in Laodicea was comparable to their water: *useless!* They did not proclaim the good news of Jesus. They did not take a stand for Him. Their witness was ineffective, bringing neither refreshing life nor spiritual healing. Jesus Christ was on the point of vomiting them out, rejecting them, unless they changed. Are we lukewarm, useless, like the Christians in Laodicea?

10. Compare the words in verse 17 to those that Jesus had directed to the church in Smyrna (2:9). What do you notice?

The contrast is striking. The church in Smyrna was economically poor but spiritually rich because it had refused to take part in the local way of life marked by idolatry. In Laodicea it was exactly the opposite! The church was materially rich but spiritually poor. These Christians had accepted dangerous compromises with the prosperous city. The following verses show that they had even allowed themselves to be drawn into idolatrous practices. They believed that they were "at the top", self-sufficient, needing nothing, even spiritually. Do we have the same pretensions? In reality, this church was miserable and pitiable. Its true state is brought to light: *poor* in spite of its banks, *blind* in spite of its school of medicine and *naked* in spite of its textile factories! Christ is going to give them some instructions in verse 18 to remedy these three problems.

11. In verse 18 Christ tells them to buy three things. What are they? Why?

- ◀ *Gold refined in the fire*: the Bible uses this image of gold in several places to talk about someone's need of being purified (Job 23:10, Proverbs 27:21, Malachi 3:2-3).
- ◀ *White garments*: This second image delivers the same message to the Christians. Their clothes are dirty because of their sinful behaviour. They need to change into white clothes (like certain Christians in Sardis, Revelation 3:4). (Several Scripture passages denounce idolatry by speaking about the shame of nudity: Ezekiel 16:36, Ezekiel 23:29, Nahum 3:5.)
- ◀ *A salve for their eyes*: The Christians of Laodicea need this because they lack discernment. They do not realise the danger of letting themselves be carried away by the world. They need to realise what is happening. Only Christ can open their eyes (John 9:39).

Perhaps today we still need to buy certain things from the Lord's shop.

12. We will spend time on verses 19-20 later on. Let's finish filling in page 1 first. What promises does Jesus make at the end of the letter in verse 21?

"To him who overcomes He will grant to sit with Him on His throne." This is the royal honour which awaits the faithful Christian. Jesus Himself already won the victory and He is enthroned with His Father. The Christian in turn can win the victory and reign with Christ.

13. What moved Jesus Christ to correct the Christians in Laodicea (verse 19)?

He did it *out of love*. He rebukes and chastens those He loves. This show of love is touching and unexpected, for of all seven the church in Laodicea is the one which deserves it least! It must listen to the Lord's reprimands and come back to Him. No matter what state you are in, the Lord looks on you in love and invites you to change. [*This verse reminds us of Proverbs 3:12.*]

14. Verse 20 uses a beautiful illustration. What stands out for you as you read it?

Up until now the letter has been addressed to the church in general, but this verse speaks of "anyone". It concerns each individual. The image highlights several things:

- ◀ *Jesus' desire*. He stands at your door and keeps on knocking, in the hope that you will respond to Him.
- ◀ *Your freedom of choice*. It is your decision to open the door to Christ or not.

- ◀ *The possible relationship.* He wants to eat with you. The word used in the original text designates the main meal of the day, when people took time to talk together. It wasn't a quick snack. By adding "he with Me", Jesus is emphasising the closeness which He desires in His relationship with you (see John 14:23).

It is a very tender invitation which is given to each one of us. Let us not ignore it. Perhaps you have never opened the door of your life to the Lord. Let Him in; then you will know true richness and you will be able to inherit the promises of eternal life. Or perhaps you need to open the door again and allow Jesus into your life in a new and fuller way.

Method : A letter for you

God wants each of us to take stock of our relationship to Him. Suppose that Jesus Christ wrote a personal letter to you. What would it contain? [*Give the teens some time for personal reflection during which, if they want, they can try to complete the letter at the end of the handout.*]



The letters to the seven churches

Revelation 2:8-11

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

9 “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

Revelation 3:14-22

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.

15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

Revelation

Chapters 2 - 3 The letters to the seven churches



Smyrna : *poor yet rich*

Revelation 2:8-11

The letter to Smyrna is a letter of

Description of Christ

Jesus presents Himself as "the First and the Last who was dead and came to life" because the life of the Christians

They faced several difficulties: _____

Approval

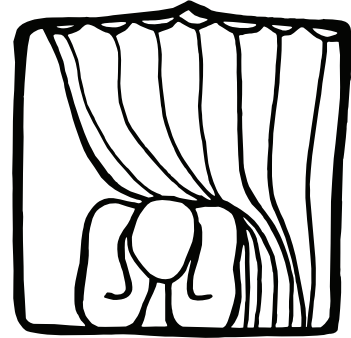
Jesus considers them as _____

Instructions

When persecution increases, He requests two things of them: _____

Promises

He promises this to the faithful ones: _____



Laodicea : *rich yet poor*

Revelation 3:14-22

The letter to Laodicea is a letter of

Description of Christ

Jesus presents Himself as "the Faithful and True Witness" so that the church will realise

Reproach

They are _____

which means that they are _____

In spite of its banks, its textile industry and its school of medicine, they are

Instructions

He urges them to buy certain things:

Promises

He promises this to the victors: _____

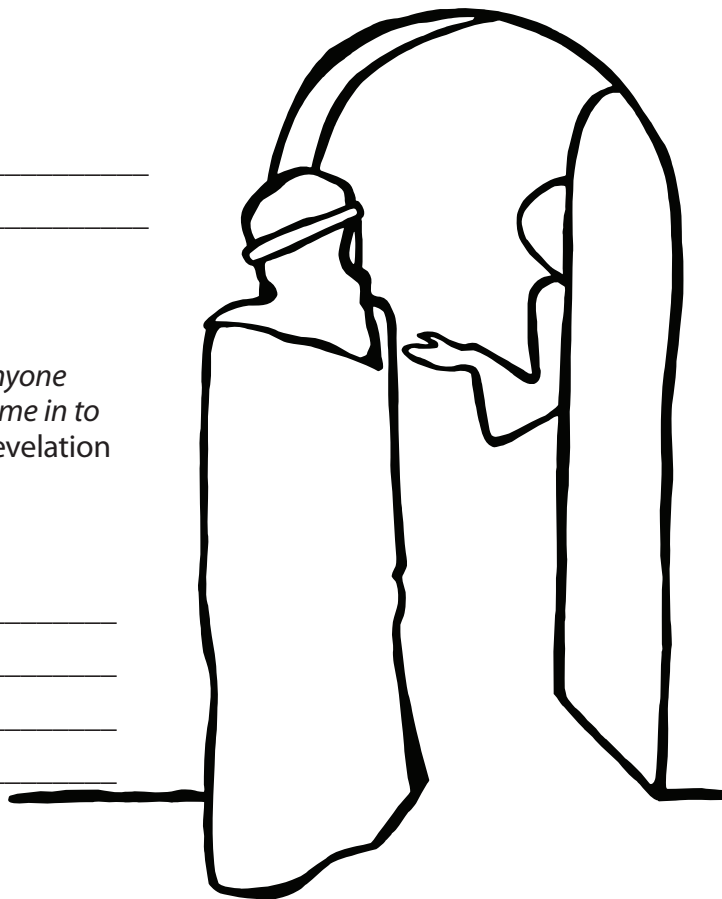
Zoom in on verses 19-20

Why does Jesus correct us?

The invitation which He gives to you:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Revelation 3:20.

It shows :



Dear _____

Never forget that I am : _____

I have reasons to be proud of you : _____

But I must reproach you for this : _____

Here are my instructions : _____

They come with promises : _____

Out of love for you,

Jesus.

The throne, the scroll and the Lamb



Objective : We would like the believers:



to understand what is represented by the heavenly throne and the scroll, and identify the Lamb.



to recognise the perfect work and the supremacy of Jesus Christ.



to worship Him and serve Him.



The unsaved will be encouraged to commit their lives to the Lord.



Introduction: People with power and authority

Ask the teens to make a list of the people with authority in our society. It could be written up on a board (e.g. statesmen, journalists, businessmen, magistrates, bankers, teachers, the police, etc).

Then ask them:

- In your opinion, which categories hold the greatest power?
- Is their power justified and accepted? Explain.

Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation describe a new vision which was granted to John. It reveals who is really in control of the world and of the circumstances of our lives. [Note: This passage has great similarities with Daniel 7 and Ezekiel 1 - 2.]



Reading : Revelation 4:2-8

1. Thrones were more common in the first century than today. Which throne came particularly to mind to the first readers of Revelation?

The Roman emperor's throne. He dominated the civilised world of that time with a firm hand. His power seemed to be absolute. He claimed to be a demi-god and required the worship of his subjects.

2. But John sees a much higher throne: God's heavenly throne. What does this vision teach us?

God's power is greatly superior to that of an emperor. He is above all the thrones and all the political, military, judiciary powers, etc. *God is sovereign.* He reigns over the entire universe. He controls every circumstance, even if appearances sometimes seem otherwise. The Christians of the first century needed to grasp this reality and so do we. [The word "throne" is used 17 times in this chapter. It is mentioned 62 times in the New Testament, 47 of which are in Revelation.]

3. In verse 3, John tries to describe the appearance of the One Who is on the throne. To what does he compare Him?

To *precious stones* for the One Who reigns is *dazzling and majestic*! It is difficult for us to identify the stones spoken of by John, for at that time they were still not listed in the way they are today. So the jasper in the first century probably does not correspond to what we call jasper today. But the general impression is what matters in this vision, rather than every detail: the One Who reigns on the throne is splendid, inestimable, magnificent! John draws on the most beautiful and precious things he knows in order to describe God's majesty. [Note: Twelve stones were placed on the high priest's breastplate, the first being a sardius and the last one a jasper (Exodus 28:17-21). The names of the twelve tribes were written on these stones. These stones are mentioned in Old Testament texts at times when God manifested His majesty. This could also be an anticipation

of the more complete list of stones in Revelation 21 when God's glory will be fully revealed. These stones intensify the light around the throne by reflection.]

4. John sees a rainbow shining like emerald, which surrounds the throne. When is the rainbow first mentioned in the Bible? What did it represent then?

After the flood, God gave the rainbow as a sign of *the covenant* which He entered into with man (Genesis 9:12-17). The presence of this rainbow around the throne is a beautiful reminder that the One Who reigns is the God of the covenant. This covenant will last for ever. God is not only the judge before Whom we must all appear, but also the One Who gives grace to all those who have put their trust in Him and have chosen to enter into His covenant. [*The rainbow evokes God's glory in Ezekiel 1:28.*]

5. Let's take a look at the heavenly entourage. Who are the twenty-four elders described in verse 4 who are seated around God's throne? What do their white robes and golden crowns represent?

The reason for which there are twenty-four heavenly beings is probably because they represent *all of God's people*. Revelation speaks of the twelve tribes of Israel to designate God's Old Testament people, and the twelve apostles for God's New Testament people (see Revelation 21:12,14). Here we have the sum of both, that is all the believers together. They are seated on thrones because they reign with God (as seen already in Revelation 1:9 and 3:21). The colour white is often that of *victory, triumph*. At that time golden crowns also evoked victory or celebration, more so than royalty. [*Note: The figure twenty-four can also refer to the organisation of the service of the Levites in the temple - 1 Chronicles 24-26. They represented the people of Israel before God.*]

6. We don't have time to linger over each element of this vision. Let's take a quick look at verses 5-6.

- ◀ The lightnings, thunderings and voices remind us of other manifestations of God, like the one on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16). They inspire respect. [*See also Revelation 8:5, 11:19 and 16:18 at the conclusion of each series of judgements.*]
- ◀ Seven lamps of fire were constantly burning before the throne. These are the seven spirits of God. They probably represent the Holy Spirit. [*In Zechariah 4:2-10, the lampstand and the seven lamps are associated with the Spirit of God.*]
- ◀ The sea of glass like crystal. Nowadays transparent glass is common, but in the first century it was generally very dark and opaque. It was only in the most sumptuous palaces that you could find transparent glass in all its splendour! [*Note: This sea has been the object of numerous interpretations which we won't go into in detail. It can be a reference to the tank in Solomon's temple, called the sea. Others see in it a sign of God's holiness, separated from others by this sea. It is possible that we have here a reference to the Red Sea in Exodus. The sea is sometimes the source of trouble, which is now conquered by God.*]

7. We know that the twenty-four elders represent God's people. But how do we interpret the four living creatures spoken of in verses 6-8?

These four living creatures seem to be very important, because they are in the middle of the throne and all around it; they are very near to God. One of them resembles a lion, another a calf, the third one has a face like a man, and the fourth looks like a flying eagle. Together they probably represent *all of creation*. A very old saying has been found which says: "The eagle is the most powerful of the birds, the bull the most powerful of the domestic animals, the lion the most powerful of the wild animals, but man is the most powerful of all" (rabbinic saying from 300 A.D.). That helps us to understand in what way these four beings can represent all of creation: they evoke what is most remarkable in God's creation. Twice the text speaks of the eyes of these beings. They are full of eyes around and within. They have perfect vision. [*Note: These beings have similarities to the cherubim in Ezekiel 10:2,20.*]

8. What do these representatives of God's people and creation do?

They worship God constantly. The four beings praise Him for His *holiness* and recognise His

Lordship (remember Isaiah 6:3). God's holiness will triumph over evil. They recognise His *might*; He has all power. The expression "Who was and is and is to come" (verse 8) reminds us of His *eternal existence* and *sovereignty*. Then in verse 9, the representatives of the people of God join the representatives of creation in worship. They worship God, pay homage to Him and acknowledge Him. Casting down their crowns is a way of recognising that only God reigns. All other authorities must submit to His authority. In verse 11 they praise God as being worthy to receive glory, honour and power as Creator of all that exists. Creation is the work of His power. It is by God's will that everything was created and exists. [*These heavenly beings worship God again in Revelation 5:8,14, Revelation 7:11 and Revelation 19:4. They are also associated with the divine judgements and with the accomplishment of His will in Revelation 6:1-7 and 15:7.*]

9. Let's place this vision in the perspective of the difficulties faced by the Christians in the first century. What does it encourage them to do?

They were sometimes overcome by doubts in the face of the Roman domination. This vision taught them that God has established His throne above that of Rome. It is He Who truly controls the world. The emperor could only act within the limits imposed by God. They were not to worship the emperor but the only true and holy God. The Christians had to maintain their trust in God and worship Him. This vision was inviting them to join with the heavenly beings in worship, in recognising His sovereignty over creation.

This passage makes us think about our perception of things. The "greats" of this world - businessmen and politicians - have great power, but in reality it is limited. We can turn our eyes to Heaven where God's throne is established. He reigns and His power is absolute.

LESSON BREAK

The vision of the celestial throne continues in chapter 5. John's attention is drawn by an important element:

Reading : Revelation 5:1-8



10. John notices a scroll in the right hand of the One Who is sitting on the throne. What is it like?

At that time, books were different to the ones we have today. Most of them were scrolls. According to verse 1, it was *written on both sides and was sealed with seven seals*. A seal is a stamp that you can apply to a document to show to whom it belongs, to authenticate it and to make it inviolable. It would seem that the scroll which John saw was made in such a way that by opening one seal, only one part of the contents of the scroll was revealed. It could be opened one section after the other.

The first readers of Revelation would probably have compared it to a Roman will or testament. Usually this was set up in the presence of seven witnesses who sealed its contents. It was only on the death of the testator (the person who made the will) that the seven seals were broken and the will was executed by someone worthy of this task. So the opening of seals led to the revelation and the execution of the will. It could be that a summary of the will was written on the outside.

11. What does this sealed scroll represent?

Most commentators agree that it represents *God's plan*. God has a plan of *redemption* (He is going to set free those who belong to Him) and of *judgement* (He will condemn those who have rejected Him). His perfect plan is written in the book. Like a sealed will it cannot be changed or falsified. Only someone worthy will be able to open the seals. Then God's sovereign plan will be unveiled and carried out. [*Note: some people believe that this scroll is the Old Testament or the book of Revelation or even the Book of Life, but these interpretations don't take into account the background of Daniel and Ezekiel and the events which the opening of the seals in Revelation 6-8 set off.*]

12. What problem is raised by verses 2-4?

An angel asks who is worthy to open the scroll and to break its seals, but *no-one is able to open the scroll, or to look at it*. No angel in Heaven, no creature on Earth, no-one is worthy to execute God's plan of redemption and judgement. This causes John distress and many tears. Will the divine plan not be carried out? Will God not intervene on behalf of the believers? Is there no hope?

13. But an elder comforts John by revealing to him that there is Someone worthy to open the seals. Who is it, according to the description in verse 5?

The scroll can be opened by "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" Who has won the victory, "the Root of David". We won't be able to take time over these titles. These are expressions used in the Old Testament to speak of the Messiah (Genesis 49:9, Isaiah 11:1,10). No doubt the elder is talking about *Jesus Christ*. He has fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament and won the victory by His death and resurrection. That is why He is in a position to break the seals and to execute God's plans.

14. Then a Lamb appears in the midst of the throne. It seems to have been slain. Why is Jesus represented this way?

This symbol (used 29 times in Revelation) reminds us of what Jesus has done for us: *He died as a sacrifice for our sins*. The image of the sacrificed Lamb sends us back again to texts in the Old Testament. At Easter each Hebrew family had to sacrifice a Lamb and sprinkle its blood around the door of the house in order to escape from the condemnation which was going to come down on Egypt. This event prefigured the death of Jesus. Isaiah 53:7 described the sufferings which Jesus was going to endure: maltreated without uttering a word, similar to a lamb led to the slaughter. But He conquered death, He came back to life.

How grateful we can be for the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf! We all deserve to be condemned because of our sins. But the blood of the Lamb has been poured out to satisfy God's justice. His sacrifice on the cross allows you to escape from condemnation. If you haven't already done so, put your trust in Jesus Christ. Then you will benefit from His perfect sacrifice.

15. In the second part of verse 6, John points out two characteristics of the Lamb. What are they? What do they mean?

The Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God. The figure seven indicates perfection. *The perfect Spirit of God dwells in Christ*. Horns often represent strength, while eyes may symbolise knowledge. *Christ's strength is complete. His knowledge is perfect*. He is the all-powerful and all-knowing Lord. He alone can open the seven seals so that God's plan can be put in motion.

16. The Lamb comes forward and receives the scroll. What does this event initiate?

An explosion of praise and adoration. Even before the sealed scroll has been opened, the heavenly beings and the elders bow before the Lamb in anticipation and sing in His honour. In the following verses, the circle of those praising Jesus Christ grows larger and larger. In verse 11, a countless number of angels join in the praise, then in verse 13 all the creatures of the universe. They all acknowledge the excellence of the Lamb! There are many subjects of praise: Jesus is the only One worthy to open the scroll and to fulfill the divine plan, because He was put to death and by His blood He redeemed men from all nations. He made them into a people of kings and priests in the service of God. He is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, praise and power for all eternity. Glory to Jesus Christ! Chapter 4 was inviting us above all to praise the Creator, then chapter 5 invites us to praise the Redeemer.

17. What place do we give to worship in our personal life and our church life?

In the Bible the verb "worship" does not only mean praise. Worship consists in acknowledging God, His nature, His attributes and His works. It is expressed by the praise of our hearts and voices, but also through the works we accomplish out of gratitude.



Method: Panel or report

You could invite two or three church leaders to participate in a panel discussion where you would ask them several questions on the subject of worship. Look for competent and motivated people. Let them have the questions in advance. Don't hesitate to set up the panel like a television set.

Here is a suggested outline:

- 1. Presentation of the guests and introduction to the theme.*
- 2. Questions to the guests: What does "worship" mean to you? Which Bible passages (apart from the ones in Revelation) speak to us of worship?*
- 3. Opinion poll to the audience: Do you give worship the place it deserves in your personal life? Give it a mark between 1 and 5.*
- 4. Questions to the guests: Why are the majority of Christians dissatisfied by the way they worship God? If we have trouble worshiping God, what should we do? What are the benefits of worship?*
- 5. Opinion poll to the audience: Do you consider that the church you belong to gives worship enough place? Give it a mark between 1 and 5.*
- 6. Questions to the guests: What are the different forms of worship in church? What difficulties do we meet? How can they be solved?*
- 7. A word in closing: In Heaven God's throne is at the centre. In our life it needs to be the same. Worship consists in putting the Lord at the centre of our existence. Then everything on the periphery will find its proper place.*

If you are unable to organise a panel, here are some alternatives: :

- You can call with some church leaders to record interviews with them. You can choose the most interesting parts of the recording to play to the teens in your group.*
- Prepare a written opinion poll using questions suggested for the panel. Divide the teens into groups. Send each group to interview a different leader. Put the information together and examine it with the teens.*

The throne, the scroll and the Lamb

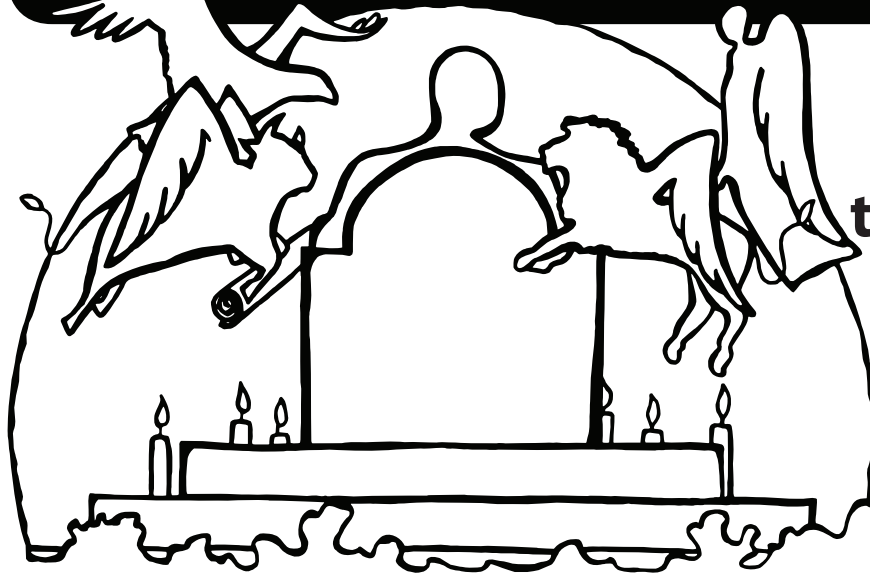
Revelation 4:2-8

- 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.
- 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.
- 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.
- 5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.
- 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.
- 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.
- 8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:
“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

Revelation 5:1-8

- 1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.
- 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?”
- 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.
- 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.
- 5 But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”
- 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
- 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.
- 8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (NKJV)

Revelation



Chapters 4 - 5

The throne, the scroll and the Lamb

Revelation 4:2-8

The vision of a heavenly throne teaches us that _____

The One sitting on the throne is like _____

for He is _____

Let's identify what is around the throne:

The rainbow reminds us of _____

The twenty-four elders represent _____

who reign with God.

Their white robes and their golden crowns evoke _____

The four living creatures represent _____

What is the heavenly entourage doing? _____

Attributes of God mentioned in their praise: _____

“The eagle is the most powerful of the birds, the bull the most powerful of the domestic animals, the lion the most powerful of the wild animals, but man is the most powerful of all” (rabbinic saying from 300 A.D.).

Revelation 5:1-8

The scroll in the hand of the One Who is sitting on the throne:

What are its characteristics? _____

(Comparable to a Roman will sealed by seven witnesses.)

What does it represent? _____

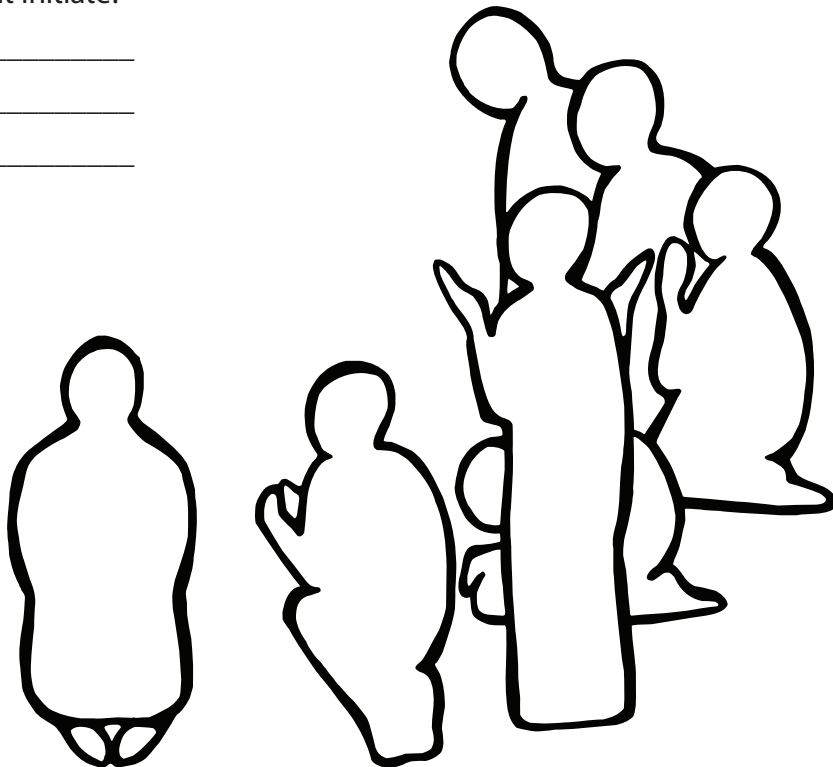
What problem arises? _____

Only One is worthy to open the scroll: _____

Why a slain Lamb? _____

Characteristics of the Lamb: _____

The Lamb comes forward and receives the scroll. What does this event initiate?



The seven seals



Objective: We would like the believers:



to understand that God will intervene to judge the world at His chosen time.



to be grateful for the spiritual protection that God grants to believers.



to remain fully trusting in Him.



The unsaved will realise the importance of turning to God immediately.



Introduction : Unwavering trust

Show the young people several photos: performers executing a dangerous circus sideshow, a rally racer and his co-driver helping him to navigate, rock climbers securing one another. They can be downloaded for free on the Internet (see instructions in the preface). Then ask the teens what stands out from the photos. Each one shows a tricky situation in which one person must place their complete trust in another.

Revelation tells us about several series of disasters that affect the world. These events are tragic. We may be tempted to overlook these passages and go straight to the end of the book, but if we do that we will miss essential lessons. Before knowing the happiness of Heaven, God's people must go through hard times. Divine judgement will fall upon humanity but God assures believers of His protection. They must trust in Him. *[Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]*

[Note: The first series of disasters will be set off by the opening of seven seals; the second by the sounding of seven trumpets; then the third by the pouring out of seven bowls. Many theologians believe that these three sequences refer to the same events, presenting the same disasters but from different angles. Consider the illustration of the rising wave used at the start of the manual - we may have three successive waves in this case.]



Reading : Revelation 6:1-8

1. Let's remind ourselves what we discovered as we studied chapter 5. Who is the Lamb? What does the sealed scroll represent? What does the opening of the seals mean?

The Lamb is *Jesus Christ* who died as a sacrifice for us and rose again. The sealed scroll represents *God's plan of redemption and judgement*. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to open the seals, thus initiating *the execution of the divine plan*.

2. The Lamb opens the first four seals in sequence. What happens when each seal is opened?

One of the four living creatures around the throne says, "Come and see." He calls a horse rider and sends him to fulfil a task. Each horse rider represents an event that affects the history of humanity.

[Note: There is a striking similarity between this passage and Zechariah 6:1-8. The colours of the horses are almost identical but, in Zechariah, there are groups of horses pulling chariots. They are God's agents who carry out His judgements and are sent to go throughout the Earth to punish the nations who are oppressing God's people.]

3. Fill in the table on the worksheet as we move on. From verse 2, note the information about the first horse rider. What stands out from this

description? What does he represent?

His horse is *white*, often a symbol of victory at that time. This horse rider is a warrior, armed with a *bow*. The description of him underlines the fact that he is a winner. Moreover he receives the *crown* that is given to the winner. The end of the verse adds that he went out conquering and to conquer. It therefore represents a *successful military conquest*.

[Note: Some consider this first horse rider to be Christ, because in Revelation 19:11-19 Christ rides on a white horse and conquers His enemies. Other passages refer to Him as being the conqueror (Revelation 3:21, Revelation 5:5 and Revelation 17:14). However, this language is not used exclusively in reference to Christ (Revelation 11:7 and Revelation 13:7). The four horse riders also seem to make up a whole and should therefore be of the same nature. It would be unusual that one of them were Christ.]

4. When the second seal is opened, another horse rider is sent out. Describe what he looks like, according to verse 4. What does the colour of the horse remind us of? What does this horse rider represent?

This second horse is *fiery red*. The colour probably symbolises the *blood* shed as a result of war. This horse rider is equipped with a large *sword*. He is given the power to *take away peace* so that people will kill one another. While the first horse represents military conquest, this one seems to represent *civil war*. It results in nations being torn apart from within. These battles result in mass deaths. It is worth noting again that this warrior's power and his weapon have been given to him.

5. From verses 5-6, what colour is the third horse? Also, what is distinctive about the horse rider? What does the sending of this rider represent?

The horse is *black*. The horse rider is holding an unusual piece of equipment - he has a pair of *scales* in his hand. This most certainly makes reference to the scales used to weigh bread. The sending of this horse rider unleashes new problems, this time *famine*. Instructions are given to him to specify the severity of the famine. With one day's salary, there will only be enough to buy a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley. A worker will have only just enough to feed his family. The necessities for survival will remain accessible. But these prices are eight to sixteen times higher than those charged in the Roman empire of the time. Families will therefore not have enough to provide for other basic needs. Oil and wine will be normally priced but people will not have enough to buy them. The third horse therefore represents famine, but a controlled famine [Ezekiel 4:9-16; 2 Kings 7:1].

6. From verse 8, describe the colour of the fourth horse. What is distinctive about the horse and it's rider? What does the sending of this rider represent?

The fourth horse rider is then called forward. His horse is *pale*. It is the colour of a *corpse*. Unlike the preceding horses, this one has a name: "*Death*". He is followed by *Hades* (the place where the dead are held - Acts 2:27,31). Even death and Hades are controlled by God. Also, unlike the previous horse riders, this one does not carry a symbolic object. Since the horse and its rider are only allowed to operate within a quarter of the Earth, the disaster that they bring will only have a partial effect. The end of verse 8 tells us how men will be killed: with sword, hunger, death, beasts of the Earth.

7. Who unleashes these events and gives the horse riders destructive power?

Jesus Himself opens the seals. The horse riders are called by the four living creatures around the throne. It is only at their command that the horse riders act. They were given equipment, authority and instructions. The voice that addresses the third horse rider comes from the midst of the four living creatures. It is probably the voice of Christ Himself. The deployment of these destructive agents is therefore recorded in the sovereign plan of God. They are completely under His control and can only do what He allows them to do. They will act only within the limits that He has established.

8. Why must these disasters occur?

If we look at the broad context of other passages in Revelation (and Zechariah 6:1-8), we can conclude that these disasters have a dual purpose. The first purpose is to *condemn those who continue to reject God and persecute the church*. God is holy and just. He must intervene against

those who oppose Him and His children. The second purpose is to *prepare believers for the return of Christ*. Believers are also struck by military invasion, civil war, famine and death. These circumstances probably lead to an even greater persecution. We will see in the remainder of the text how God takes care of His own. But He allows His own to go through this test so that they can be sanctified. In this way the evil are judged and the faithful are purified. These horse riders represent judgement for some and sanctification for others. God's divine plan of judgement and redemption is unfolding.

9. When do the events take place in the course of history?

It is hard to know because military invasion, civil war, famine and death have always been a part of human life. For example, in the 20th century, more than one hundred million people died as a result of war, fifty million of which were during the Second World War. The sending out of these four horse riders may refer to past, present or future events. Opinions on this issue differ. [In *Matthew 24:4-14*, Jesus says that these are signs of the beginning of end times.]

If we hear the thundering hooves of these horse riders, we should remember that Christ reigns and controls history. In His justice, He must condemn those who insist on rejecting Him. Make sure you are not one of them. Ask God for forgiveness for rejecting Him for such a long time. Believe in Him and you will be saved. He took the weight of your sins on the cross.

If you have already trusted in Christ, do not think that you will be immune to disasters. Keep trusting in Him. Put your life into His hands. Accept being sanctified through testing. Recognise that these difficulties will prepare you for His return.

LESSON BREAK

We will not be able to study all the events that take place when the fifth, sixth and seventh seals are opened. We will only be able to look at some verses that interrupt the narrative to reveal the outcome for those who belong to Christ. What happens to the believers when these frightening events strike the Earth?



Reading : Revelation 7:1-4

10. John now sees four angels. Where are they and what are they doing?

They are *standing at the four corners of the Earth*. This reminds us once again that God exercises His sovereignty over the whole world. His angels can intervene at any time and in any place. The four angels are responsible for *holding back the "four winds"*, preventing them from blowing.

11. What do these four winds represent?

This expression is used in the Old Testament, specifically in Jeremiah (49:36, 4:11-12 and 51:1-2) to talk about the devastating winds sent by God to judge a rebellious nation. These winds therefore represent *disasters that will strike the Earth and its inhabitants*. They naturally cause us to think about the four horse riders from chapter 6. [Indeed it may well refer to the same events but taken from a different perspective. In *Zechariah 6:1-8* the four horse riders are referred to as the four winds from Heaven.] But God commanded the four angels to hold back the winds before they devastate the Earth, the sea and the trees, all of which represent life on Earth. The remainder of the text explains why they are held back in this way.

12. Another angel appears. Where does he come from? What is he holding? What instructions does he give?

He appears from the east, which would imply that he is bringing a blessing. [Note: *The garden of Eden was in the east (Genesis 2:8); the glory of God came to the temple from the east (Ezekiel 43:2); the wise men announcing Christ's birth also came from the east (Matthew 2:1-2).*] He is holding *the seal of the living God* and orders the four angels to wait until *God's servants are sealed on the*

forehead.

13. Do you know what a seal was used for at the time?

We have already briefly discussed the scroll with seven seals. The seal had three purposes: 1. *It affirmed authenticity.* In this way, authorities would put their official stamp on a document to ensure its validity. 2. *It denoted ownership.* For example, in the timber business, the trunks that had been purchased were stamped with the seal of the purchaser before being transported. At that time, some slaves also had a similar seal to indicate who their master was. 3. *It secured from trespass.* A place was impregnable when the king's seal had been placed at the entrance (Daniel 6:17, Matthew 27:62-66). Thus the seal secured and protected.

14. What can we conclude from this about God's seal?

When a Christian receives the divine seal, this shows that his *faith is real*, that *he belongs to God* and that *he is safe*. The destructive intervention of the four winds must not be unleashed by the four angels while believers have not been marked by the protective seal. It will not prevent them from being physically affected by the disasters that will strike the Earth. Believer and unbeliever alike will suffer. However, the faith and salvation of God's servant will be assured. He will be able to face the test trusting in God. The role of this seal is spiritual. Tests will purify God's servants, while they will harden the rebellious.

Note: God's seal of protection is also considered in Ezekiel 9, then the seal of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14 and 4:30, 2 Corinthians 1:22. Other passages from Revelation are 9:4, 14:1 and 22:4. The wicked are marked with another seal: Revelation 13:16-17, 14:9, 16:2, 19:20 and 20:4.

15. John learns how many will have the mark: one hundred and forty-four thousand from the tribes of Israel. What do this figure and the reference to the tribes of Israel mean?

Note: These verses raise numerous debates and should be approached prudently. Some people take the figure of 144,000 literally. Others believe that Israel refers only to the Jews. We suggest another opinion. You may choose not to consider this passage or to suggest other interpretations.

We know that in Revelation, figures are often symbolic. The figure twelve refers to God's people in the Old Testament (twelve tribes) or in the New Testament (twelve apostles). Note that $144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 1,000$. Some theologians believe that the figure 144,000 refers to *all of God's people*. [Revelation 14:1-5 also mentions the figure 144,000 and seems to confirm that it is all those who have been redeemed. In chapter 21, the twelve tribes and twelve apostles are again mentioned in the structure of the heavenly city where the wall measures 144 cubits high - it gathers together all of God's children.]

The "tribes of Israel" do not necessarily refer to the ethnic group of the Israelites. Many tribes lost their national identity following the exodus. The expression rather refers to the church, in a figurative language, as it does in many other passages of the New Testament (Romans 9:6-8, Galatians 3:29, Galatians 6:16). In this way all the servants of God are marked with a divine seal (while later others will be marked with the seal of the beast). In the remainder of chapter 7, they stand in the presence of God and know an eternal peace.

16. What overwhelming assurance does this passage give to believers?

Being God's servants does not mean that we are immune to problems. But we benefit from a spiritual protection that enables us to face trials trusting God. God protects us and promises a wonderful way out. One day we will be with Him and we will enter into His rest. God's plan is unfolding and Christ Himself is in control. Keep trusting!

Method: Photo language

Get about fifty photos from magazines or the Internet. Lay them out on a table. Ask the young people the question, "When you consider your future, what makes you afraid?" Give them a few minutes to look at all the photos on the table. At your signal each person should select a picture that will go with their answer. If several teens choose the same one, it is not a problem. They should then take turns to show their picture and answer the question. For example, one could show a photo of



a bed and explain that they are afraid of having a serious illness. Another one could choose a single tree in the middle of a field to express their fear of loneliness. You could give them these examples to ensure that they understand how photo language works. End with a moment of silence where each one can give their fears over to the Lord and thank Him for His spiritual protection.

The seven seals

Revelation 6:1-8

1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."

8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 7:1-4

1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed. (NKJV)

Revelation



Chapter 6 - 7

The seven seals

Revelation 6:1-8: The four horse riders

Recap of the last study: the Lamb is _____

The sealed scroll represents _____

The opening of the scroll brings about _____

	Colour of the horse	Features of the horse rider	Disasters that strike the world
1			
2			
3			
4			

The dual purpose of these disasters:

1. _____
2. _____

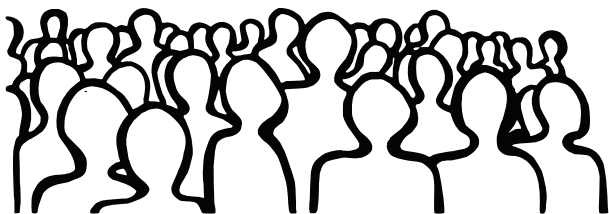
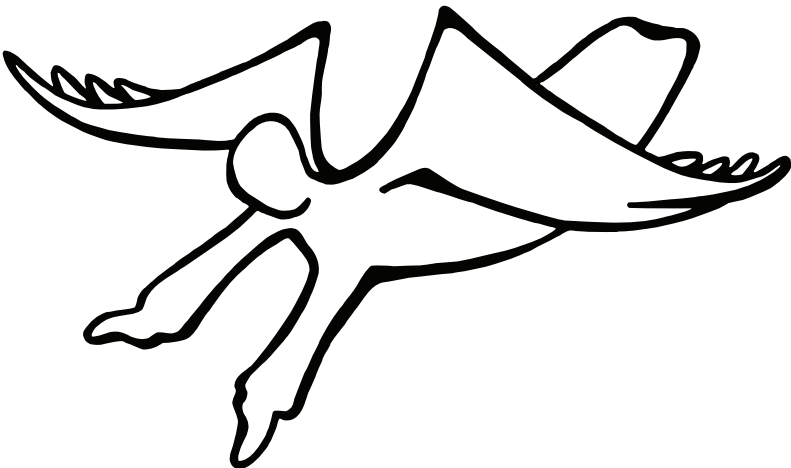
Revelation 7:1-4: The four riders

Four angels are found _____
They are holding back _____
These winds represent _____
An angel is holding _____ and orders to wait until _____

	Purposes of the seal at that time	Spiritual significance of the divine seal
1		
2		
3		

Who are the one hundred and forty-four thousand from the twelve tribes of Israel?

What overwhelming assurance does this passage give us?



The seven trumpets



Objective: We would like the believers:



to understand that God gives warnings to mankind before the Day of Judgement.



to realise that those who are against God will be destroyed and those who believe in Him will be rewarded.



to pray for those who have not yet received Christ and witness to them.



The unsaved will be encouraged to heed God's warnings and to come to Him today to receive salvation.



Introduction : Mount St. Helens

In May 1980, Mount St. Helens in the USA erupted. Clouds of grey smoke rose several hundred metres above the crater. The authorities gave a warning and got all the residents together to evacuate them as quickly as possible. But Harry Truman refused to leave. He had a holiday home only 8 km (5 miles) from the volcano. The police and neighbours begged the old man to follow them. His sister called him and reasoned with him. But he ignored the warnings and said he knew the mountain better than anyone. He continued to look after his garden and his animals. But, at 8.31 am on 18 May, the mountain exploded. Tonnes of rock, mud and ashes devastated the area and Harry Truman lost his life.

- What reasons did this man have for staying, and what reasons did he have for leaving?
- How would you describe this man's attitude?

The passage in Revelation that we will study today describes disasters that strike the world. It is difficult for us to know when these events take place in history. These catastrophes serve as warnings. Let's heed these warnings and act on them. *[Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]*



Reading : Revelation 8:6-12

1. John talks about seven angels with seven trumpets. Can you think of any passages in the Old Testament where trumpets play a significant role? What did they announce?

Trumpets are often sounded in the Old Testament to announce war, victory, the coronation of a king, etc. But the seven trumpets remind us particularly of the *taking of Jericho* in Joshua 6. For six days the people circled the city. Seven priests sounded seven trumpets and walked before the Ark of the Covenant. On the seventh day, at the trumpet sound, everyone gave a loud shout and the walls of the city collapsed. God's judgement fell upon the city of Jericho. In Revelation 8, seven trumpets sounded again to announce divine judgement. *[Note: In the New Testament the sound of the trumpet heralds the return of Christ at the end of time to gather His people together (Matthew 24:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16).]*

2. Do the disasters that strike the Earth remind you of another Old Testament passage? Which one, and why?

They remind us of the *plagues of Egypt* in Exodus 7-11 (hail mixed with fire in Exodus 9:22-25; water turned into blood in Exodus 7:20-25; the darkness in Exodus 10:21-23). God intervened against the Egyptians because they were living in idolatry and oppressing His people. He demonstrated His great power. The Egyptians, however, hardened their hearts and continued to

reject God. This scenario is repeated in Revelation: men would not renounce their wicked ways (Revelation 9:20-21).

3. What happens when the first trumpet is sounded?

Hail and fire mixed with blood fall on the Earth. It is hard for us to know exactly what this means. We consider the damage that hail storms or lightning storms can cause, but what John describes seems to be much more devastating. Fire burns a large part of nature, but the effects of this are limited: a third of the trees were burned up, as well as all the grass. [Note: Some commentators believe that this imagery may indicate that there will be a famine because part of the vegetation is consumed.]

4. What happens when the second trumpet is sounded? What does this mountain-like mass refer to?

Judgement follows and *something like a great mountain burning with fire is thrown into the sea*. Is it possible that this description represents an erupting volcano that falls into the sea? This time calamity severely strikes the marine world since *a third of the sea becomes blood, a third of sea creatures perish and a third of ships are destroyed*. [Once again, this may be imagery. Mountains often represent kingdoms (Revelation 14:1, 17:9 and 21:10) while fire is a symbol of judgement. It is therefore very possible that John is referring here to the judgement of a sinful nation. Revelation 18:21 would support this interpretation - see also Jeremiah 51:25.]

5. What disasters does the sounding of the third trumpet bring? Why is the star called "Wormwood"?

A great star falls from the sky. It is burning like a torch. While the two previous calamities affected vegetation and the sea, this one affects a third of all rivers and springs of water. Water becomes undrinkable. The star is called Wormwood because this bitter herb can contaminate water and make it dangerous for human consumption if taken over a long period. [Note: This may once again be a metaphor. Heavenly creatures are often compared to stars (Isaiah 14:12-15). They can represent people or earthly kingdoms. The fall of this star may therefore suggest the judgement of a heavenly authority or of an earthly kingdom.]

6. Finally, what happens when the fourth trumpet is sounded?

The sun, moon and stars are struck, but again they are partially affected. *Their clarity is reduced by a third* by day and by night. We know how crucial light is to life. It is once again hard to imagine how such a thing can happen. But we see that God uses many different elements of the universe, even the "heavenly lights", to warn those who reject Him and persecute His children. [This partial obscurity could be directed particularly at idolaters who worship the stars.]

7. Why is only a third of natural elements affected?

Judgement is partial because it is only starting. *These first stages announce the final judgement* which will soon take place. When unbelievers witness these demonstrations of God's greatness and justice, they should repent. C.S. Lewis said, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world" (The Problem of Pain, 1940). Man's reaction is often to ignore divine warnings and to continue in sin (Revelation 9:20-21). [The division into thirds may also refer to God's judgement by thirds in Ezekiel 5.]

What is your attitude? Is it like Harry Truman who refused to heed the warnings given? Don't forget that God is holy and just. He must intervene to judge the world that rejected Him. But He is also a God Who loves you deeply. He demonstrated it by sending His Son, Jesus, to save you. He is giving you warnings so that you will stop ignoring Him and ask Him for His forgiveness and His protection. If you are among those who have already put their life in His hands, you can hold out in difficult times because God's seal protects you (see last study and Revelation 9:4).

Method: Share prayer requests

Give each teen a piece of paper on which he will write down five names of people (family, friends, etc) who have heard the Gospel but have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Then ask each teen to choose a prayer partner with whom he will exchange lists and have a time of

prayer.

LESSON BREAK

Once again we will not be able to study the events that occur at the sounding of each trumpet. Let's consider the most crucial point - the sounding of the seventh trumpet which announces the final judgement.



Reading : Revelation 11:15-19

8. At the sound of the last trumpet, voices resound in Heaven praising God. Whose voices are these? Why are they praising God?

The passage does not identify them. They may be the voices of angels or, more likely, they are *the multitude of saints in the heavens* (as in Revelation 7:9-10 and 19:1,6). The heavenly entourage praises God because from now on *the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of the Lord and Christ*. In the New Testament the word "Lord" is generally used to designate Christ, but in Revelation it is used to refer to the Father. [When the text says "He shall reign", it is difficult to determine if the subject is the Lord or Christ. Perhaps the singular form implies both as an inseparable unity.]

9. But was God not already reigning? What has changed?

It is true that God has always reigned. His dominion stretches through all of history. But until that point, His enemies were not yet crushed and His reign was not fully established. Now His adversaries are *judged and destroyed*. The rebellion of evil is overcome. Heavenly and earthly enemies are subdued once and for all. This complete and universal victory is *now manifested*. The eternal reign of the Lord and Christ is fully visible for all to see.

10. Do you remember who the twenty-four elders who sit before God are? What do they do in verse 16?

They represent the *whole of God's people* from the Old and New Testament. They respond to the proclamation of God's reign by *falling on their faces and worshipping God*. They recognise His lordship and His omnipotence, giving Him thanks because He has displayed His great power and established His reign. Evil has been dethroned.

11. The words that they address to God in verse 17 are similar to those in Revelation 4:8. What same expressions are used in both verses for God?

[The two verses are shown side by side on the worksheet]. God is referred to as "Lord God Almighty" and "The One who was and is and is to come" (also in Revelation 1:4,8). He is the God of the past, present and future. In His sovereignty, He has directed the course of world history, continues to do so, and will bring it to its conclusion when He overthrows His enemies and establishes His eternal kingdom. But notice that part of the expression is in brackets on the worksheet. There is a significant difference between the two verses that is not rendered in New King James version. In the Greek text, the part "who is to come" is dropped in Revelation 11:17 (also in 16:5) because *the end of time has now been reached*. The enemies have now been overthrown and God's reign is now fully established. His kingdom is in place and visible for all to see.

12. According to verse 18, what will happen to those who are against God and His people?

At the right moment, the wrath of God will come upon the nations who are against Him and His people. *The dead will be judged. God will destroy those who destroy the Earth*. Notice that the punishment is proportionate to the crime committed. The sanction will correspond to the seriousness of the sin. On the Day of Judgement those who are against God will get what they deserve.

13. What will God do for His people? What will this reward be?

This will be a day of deliverance for His people: they will be freed from the hands of their

enemies. But there will be even more than this. The middle of the verse declares that God's servants, the prophets and the saints, those who fear His name, small and great, will be rewarded! In the light of other passages in Revelation, we know that the reward will be, above all, a position: *they will sit with God and share in His reign for eternity.*

14. The vision ends in verse 19 with the opening of God's temple and the appearing of the Ark of the Covenant. What does this mean?

In the Old Testament, the ark was placed in the tabernacle or the temple and represented *God's presence among His people*. In John's vision, the temple is wide open and the ark can be seen. Believers can from now on enjoy a perfect communion with God. The atoning death of Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood have made this possible (Hebrews 10:19). Revelation 21 will tell us more about this intimate and constant relationship that we can enjoy with God for all eternity (Revelation 21:3,22). The ark's appearance is accompanied by lightning, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail, probably to indicate that God has also come to judge.

Method: Personal survey

Hand out the survey.

You may download it on the Internet (see instructions in the preface).

Under each question, there is a scale from -3 to +3, which the teens should mark with a cross according to the answer they want to give. If -3 is marked, this signifies a categorical "no". If +3 is marked, this means a definite "yes". But they can also mark somewhere in between if their answer is not clear cut.

The survey must be anonymous. Make it clear to the teens that their anonymity will be respected and encourage them to answer the questions honestly.

- 1. Do you think that final judgement is coming soon?*
- 2. Do you think you are ready for that day?*
- 3. Do you think you will be among those who will be rewarded by the Lord?*
- 4. Are there people close to you who should be warned?*
- 5. Are you trying to make them aware of their need of salvation before it is too late?*

Collect the surveys and draw conclusions. Take time to discuss them with the teens, being careful to respect their anonymity at all times.



The seven trumpets

Revelation 8:6-12

6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

8 Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

Revelation 11:15-19

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

17 saying: " We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,

The One who is and who was and who is to come,

Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,

And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,

And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,

And those who fear Your name, small and great,

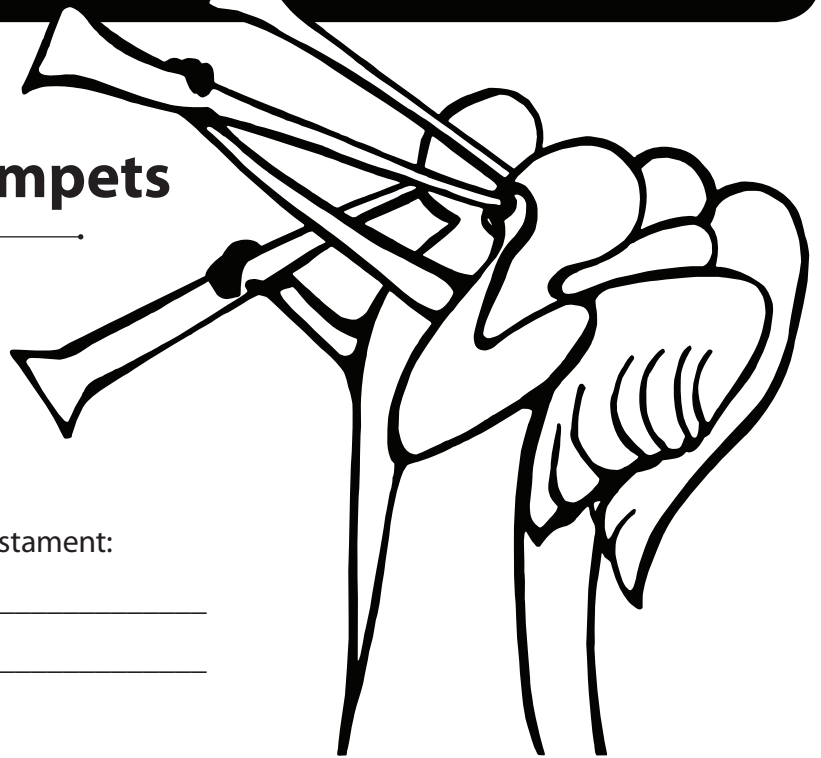
And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. (NKJV)

Revelation

Chapters 8-11

The seven trumpets



Revelation 8:6-12

Two striking parallels in the Old Testament:

	Calamity	Consequences
First trumpet		
Second trumpet		
Third trumpet		
Fourth trumpet		

Why is only a third of natural elements affected?

Revelation 11:15-19

The voices are probably those of _____

They are praising God because _____

His enemies have been _____ and His victory is _____

The twenty-four elders represent _____

At the proclamation of God's reign, they _____

Compare these two verses of praise:

4:8

*Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,
Who was and is and is to come!*

11:17

*We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty,
The One who is and who was
[and who is to come],
Because You have taken Your great power
and reigned.*

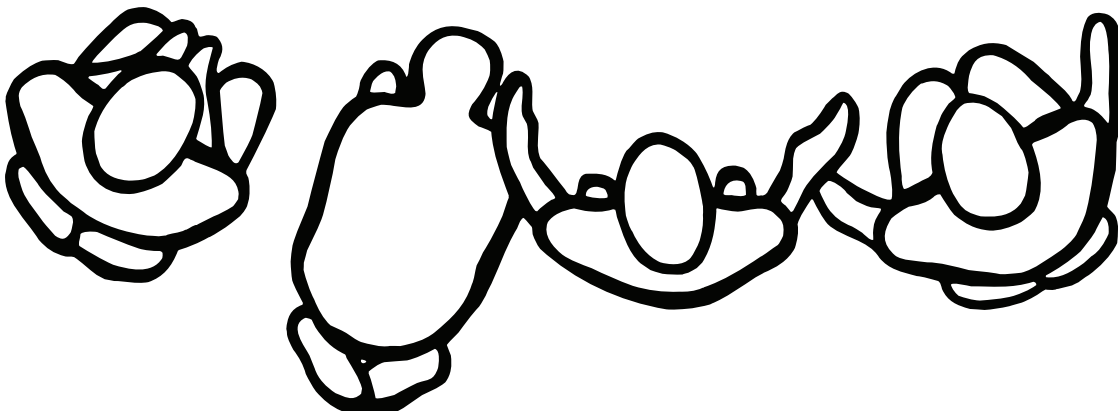
In Greek the expression "and who is to come" is gone in Revelation 11:17.

Why is there this variation?

What will happen to those who are against God and His people? _____

What will God do for those who belong to Him and who worship Him?

What does the opening of God's temple and the appearing of the Ark of the Covenant mean?



The woman, the Child and the dragon



Objective : We would like the believers:



to understand that since the death and resurrection of Christ, Satan is defeated but he can still attack believers.



to be thankful for God's protection: He prevents the enemy from achieving his purposes.



to be on their guard and take refuge in God.



The unsaved will be invited to consider carefully on which side they are.



Introduction : The greatest battles

Ask the young people to name a few decisive battles, both from ancient and recent history (Trojan War, Crusades, Battle of Trafalgar, American Civil War, Pearl Harbour, Vietnam War, September 11th, invasion of Iraq, etc). The young people might want to share their memories of various conflicts that have been recently reported by the media.

Following the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the seven trumpets, we are introduced to a new section in Revelation: the seven signs (12:1 - 15:4). These signs shed further light on the unfolding of history. We will study the first of these, which is found in chapter 12. This passage describes a conflict which, by its very nature and its repercussions, far surpasses any battle we have just mentioned. The entire human race and the heavenly beings are engaged in a massive spiritual battle. *[Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]*



Reading : Revelation 12:1-6

1. In this amazing vision, John sees a woman, a dragon and a child. We are going to look at each of these individually, starting with the woman. What do we learn about her in verse 1? What does she represent?

She is clothed with *the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a garland of twelve stars on her head*. She represents *God's people*. The Old Testament actually uses the sun, the moon and twelve stars to figuratively depict the children of Israel. Remember Joseph's dream described in Genesis 37:9. The sun represented his father Jacob, while the moon represented his mother and the eleven stars his brothers bowing before him, the twelfth son. Jacob's sons became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. Further on in Revelation 12, we will find confirmation that the woman represents God's people. *[We have also seen that in Revelation, the number twelve generally relates to the twelve tribes of Israel or to the twelve apostles.]*

2. According to verse 2, the woman is pregnant. To Whom will she give birth?

In verse 5, John gives clear indications as to the identity of the Child. This Boy is to *rule all nations* with a rod of iron. It is a quotation from Psalm 2:9 which speaks of the Messiah ruling with a rod of iron. So the woman is about to give birth to the *long-awaited Messiah: Jesus*. But if this Child is Jesus, isn't it natural to assume that the woman is Mary? This is not possible, not only because of the symbolism of verse 1 which we have just discussed, but also because of verse 17 which indicates that this woman will have other children who will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. She therefore represents God's people. She gives birth to Jesus because He is a Child of Israel, God's people in the Old Testament. *[Note: This may well be a reference to Mary, but only on a secondary level. This woman's labour pains probably refer to the persecution of Israel before the birth of Christ. Other Old Testament texts talk about*

the nation of Israel as a woman, for example, Jeremiah 4:31. In Isaiah 26:17, Israel is depicted as a pregnant woman whose labour pains symbolise their suffering in captivity while the imminent birth implies future deliverance from foreign oppression.]

3. Another surprising sign appears in the sky: an enormous dragon! Who is it? See verse 9.

This dragon is the *devil*. Once again, John draws from expressions and images used in the Old Testament. The words “dragon” or “sea monster” were used for wicked kingdoms that persecuted God’s people. The sea monster in Psalm 74:13-14 could refer to Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt. God fought against him and destroyed him in order to deliver His own people. The devil is the head of all kingdoms and other forces which persecute believers (see also Revelation 20:2).

4. Describe this dragon. How do we interpret its features?

- ◀ The colour red represents *blood*, as we have already explained in a previous lesson. It highlights the oppression exerted by this dragon on the people of God - he wants to annihilate them.
- ◀ The heads and the horns demonstrate the *strength and greatness* of this dragon. Their number indicates that he aims to have *complete* power.
- ◀ The diadems show the dragon’s intention to *compete with the Lamb who wears many crowns* (Revelation 19:12). The devil would like to take the place of the King of kings. He aims to have universal authority.

5. What is the dragon doing in verse 4? What does this signify?

He draws a third of the stars from the sky and throws them to the Earth. This probably means that he is *persecuting believers*. [The scene is very similar to that of Daniel 8:10 where the stars are angels who represent believers living on Earth. In Revelation 1:16,20, the stars are angels representing the earthly churches. Thus the sweeping away of the stars and throwing them down to Earth could indicate that the devil is harming the saints. Note that the proportion of one third implies limited effects (Revelation 8:7-12). Only a part of God’s people are affected. This time of persecution precedes the return of Jesus.]

The dragon then further pursues his evil intentions by standing before the woman in order to *devour the Child*. The devil is preparing to *kill Jesus* who is going to be born. This reminds us of all of the attempts made by the devil at the time of Jesus’ birth to kill Him, particularly the massacre of all the children as ordered by Herod (Matthew 2:16).

6. However, the dragon does not succeed in his attempt. What does verse 5 tell us?

It gives us an overview of Jesus’ life mentioning *His birth, His ascension and establishment on the throne*. After the resurrection, Jesus was taken up into Heaven. He took the place He deserved on the heavenly throne and now governs all nations. His death could have led us to believe that the devil had achieved his purposes, but God raised Him from the dead and has exalted Him above all authority. [Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:2-6, Hebrews 5:5.]

7. To escape from the dragon, the woman flees into the wilderness where God protects and feeds her. What does this represent?

Because the dragon couldn’t harm the son, he seeks to attack the woman. She escapes to the desert where God has prepared a refuge for her. There she is protected and fed. Now she represents God’s people from the New Testament, the church. This scene illustrates *the protection which God gives to the church after the ascension of Jesus Christ*. God takes care of the community of believers. He ensures its existence. This divine protection is comparable to that of the seal which we have already discussed (7:1-8): above all, it is a spiritual protection. Christians experience persecution, but their faith, their relationship with God, is preserved and nurtured. The child of God is confronted by a double reality: tribulation in the world and safety in God. [Note: The woman’s escape reminds us of Israel’s escape from Egypt to the desert where God kept them and fed them (Deuteronomy 2:7). It also reminds us of Elijah’s flight in 1 Kings 17 and 19:3-8.

LESSON BREAK



Reading : Revelation 12:7-17

8. The death and resurrection of Christ have repercussions in Heaven. What happens in verses 7-10?

A great confrontation breaks out in Heaven: *Michael and the angels of God against the dragon and his angels. Verse 8 gives us the outcome of this celestial combat: the devil and his angels are defeated. They lose their place in Heaven and are cast down to Earth.* These four verses are the heavenly counterpart to the victory of Jesus at the cross and the resurrection. The effects of His triumph are reflected immediately in Heaven by the victory of God's army against the adversary's army. This is the beginning of the reign of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

9. Several expressions are used in verse 9 to describe the adversary. What do they remind us of?

- ◀ The "serpent of old" reminds us of the *tempter in the garden of Eden* (Genesis 3:1-15).
- ◀ "Devil" means *slanderer, accuser*.
- ◀ "Satan" means *adversary*.
- ◀ He is also the one "who *deceives the whole world*".

The adversary always operates in the same way, be it by lying, by slander, or by deceit. From the very beginning, he cast doubt on God's Word and motives. Today he continues to deceive and mislead on a global level. We need to be on our guard.

10. What position did the devil lose? What does it mean?

We will not be able to go into verses 10-12 in great detail where a voice announces the reign of Christ and the fall of the devil. Nevertheless, let us consider the explanation given in verse 10 regarding the position lost by Satan: the accuser of our brethren, he who accused them before our God day and night has been cast down, thrown out of Heaven. Before the death of Christ on the cross, Satan *could accuse the children of God and call for their condemnation* because of their sins. However, since Christ's death, he no longer has a basis to do this because Jesus took the punishment that they deserved. The fall of the devil means that the salvation of the believers is protected from all satanic attacks. He remains active on the Earth, assaults believers and makes them suffer, but he cannot do anything about their spiritual position. They are protected because of Christ's sacrifice.

11. In verses 13-14, the woman is threatened yet again. How does she escape this time? What do the wings she receives represent?

The dragon very actively pursues the woman. Notice the escalation of violence directed against her. Now that he has lost certain privileges, he concentrates his efforts on persecuting the church on Earth. But God intervenes again, as shown in verse 6. This time, the woman receives the *wings of a great eagle*, so that she can fly away. Thus, she manages to get to the place prepared for her, safe from the threats of the serpent, under God's protection. The Bible uses the imagery of an eagle or of wings to show *divine protection*. [Exodus 19:4, Deuteronomy 32:10-12. David asked that the wings of God protect him from his persecutors and accusers: Psalm 17:8-9, Psalm 36:7-8.]

12. Verse 15 tells us of a new assault from the dragon. What does he resort to?

This text tells us of a new attempt to annihilate the people of God. This time the dragon spews *water out of his mouth like a flood* so that the woman will be carried away. When we read of anything coming out of someone's mouth in Revelation (be it a sword, fire, etc), it represents words and their effects. The devil tries to drown the church in *lies and false teachings*. He continues to mislead with the flood of his words, just like he has done since the fall. [Note:

Persecutions are compared to a flood in 2 Samuel 22:5 and Isaiah 43:2. The danger of false teachings is dealt with in a number of New Testament texts: Matthew 24:24, 2 Corinthians 11:3,13-15, Romans 16:17-20, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Timothy 5:15.]

13. How does God intervene this time to save the woman (verse 16)?

He does it once again in a surprising way: the Earth “*opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood*” that threatened to carry the woman away! He completely frustrates the adversary’s plan and protects the church from false teachings. The devil will not be able to destroy the church. [This is again undoubtedly a reference to the Exodus and the crossing of the desert. The Earth swallowed up the Egyptians who were pursuing Israel (Exodus 15:12). Later on in the desert the Earth swallowed up the Hebrew families who had rebelled against God (Numbers 16:32).]

14. Having once again failed in his attempt to exterminate the entire church, to whom will the dragon turn its attentions?

His frustration and rage only increase with each defeat. He is now going to make war with the *rest of the woman’s offspring*. Since he was unable to destroy the entire church in his last assault, it seems the dragon will now attack *Christians individually*. He tries to mislead them by persecution and deceit. But God overrules and enables His own to remain loyal to Him. [Note: The transfer of the persecution from the woman to her children is not easy to understand and has been interpreted in different ways.]

15. What are the main lessons we can draw from this passage?

We can better understand the conflict in which we are currently involved. The devil is *the great instigator of persecution and tribulation* that believers must endure. Behind earthly persecutors there are forces of evil, orchestrated by the devil himself (Ephesians 6:12). He has, however, been defeated by the death and resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 1:19-23). Now that he has been dethroned, he continues to *attack the church and its believers and to spread false teachings*. He tries to mislead us. His rage will only be manifested for a limited time, as appointed by God. He will wreak as much havoc as possible, but he will not succeed in annihilating the church and its believers *because of God’s rescue*. We can find refuge in Him. He protects us and nurtures our faith.

16. What should you do?

You are inevitably involved in this war which the devil wages against God. There is no place for bystanders! *Make sure you are on God’s side*. It is easier to allow yourself to be swept away by the deceit of the adversary, to enjoy the pleasures of this world and to ignore God. But what will happen one day? God invites you to join His side. This choice exposes you to the attacks of the adversary but places you under divine protection and gives you an assured victory. One day the “old serpent” will be annihilated forever and believers will be rewarded. Therefore, choose well!

17. What are the two marks of believers according to verse 17? Do you think they describe you?

They “*keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*”. Rather than allow ourselves to be misled by the deceit of the adversary, we should remain faithful to the Word of God and put it into practice. The Word urges us to persevere, to draw strength from God and to put on the armour He provides (Ephesians 6:10-17).

Method: Debate on the media’s influence

Record a few advertisements or video clips that are broadcast on television. Make sure there is nothing too extreme. Show these to the teens and engage them in a discussion. Can television be a means of communication that the devil can use to mislead us? Have you noticed an influence that is contrary to the Word of God? What impact could this have on us? How can we resist these influences? How can we seek help from God?



The woman, the Child and the dragon

Revelation 12:1-6

- 1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.
- 2 Then being with child, she cried out in labour and in pain to give birth.
- 3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.
- 4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.
- 5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.
- 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Revelation 12:7-17

- 7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,
- 8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.
- 9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.
- 10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.
- 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.
- 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."
- 13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.
- 14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.
- 15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.
- 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.
- 17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

Revelation



Chapter 12

The woman, the Child and the dragon

Revelation 12:1-6

The woman

She is clothed _____

She represents _____ (see Genesis 37:9)

The Child

He is to _____ (verse 5)

as in Psalm 2:9. He represents _____

The dragon

According to verse 9, the dragon is _____

The Old Testament uses the word dragon to refer to wicked kingdoms and leaders that persecuted God's people (Psalm 74:13-14).

The colour red represents _____

The seven heads and ten horns demonstrate _____

The diadems show the dragon's intention to _____

The fact that he draws the stars and throws them down to the Earth means that _____

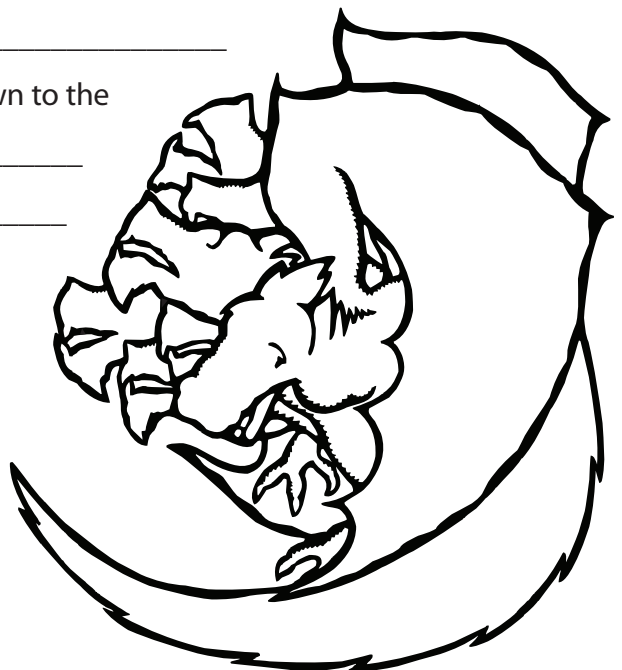
He stands before the woman to _____

but it fails in its attempt.

Verse 5 gives us an overview of His life:

The woman flees and finds refuge in the desert.

This scene illustrates _____



Revelation 12:7-17

Battle in Heaven

A confrontation breaks out in Heaven: _____

The outcome: _____

The significance of the names given to the adversary:

The serpent of old: _____

The devil: _____

Satan : _____

He is the one who _____

Since he was cast out of Heaven, this means that the adversary can no longer _____

Battle on Earth

When the adversary attacks the woman/the church again she receives _____

In the Bible this means _____

The adversary vomits _____

He wants to flood the church with _____

But the Earth _____

The adversary then decides to attack _____



What have you learned from this great scene?

- The devil is _____

- He has been defeated by the death and resurrection of Christ but he continues to _____

_____ and to spread _____




- He will not succeed _____

What should you do when you are attacked by the devil?

The two beasts



Objective : We would like the believers...

-  to understand that Satan has agents who spread lies and encourage idolatry.
-  to become aware of the seductive tactics of these enemies.
-  to reject their deceiving influence and persevere in the faith.
- NC** The unsaved will realise their need to bear the name of God.



Introduction : Counterfeit

[Show the teens photos of counterfeits. You can download some on the Internet (see instructions in the preface).] Counterfeit is the act of reproducing or copying something without having the right to do so, in order to deceive people. It affects all areas of industrial production: watches, DVDs, electronic appliances, clothes, perfumes, medicine, etc. On a global level, the counterfeit industry is worth more than 500 billion dollars, which accounts for over 7% of the world's business. We will learn today that counterfeit is also present in the spiritual realm. [Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]

Remember the teaching from Revelation 12: since Christ defeated him at the time of His death and resurrection, the dragon (Satan) is furious and takes it out on the church. He attacks it in many ways. His aim is to persecute it, torment it and ultimately destroy it. Today we will be looking at Revelation 13, which reveals that the dragon has two agents at his service. These agents endeavour to imitate God in order to deceive men and turn them away from Him. The enemy's methods have not changed. As we consider these two beasts, let us think about the influence that Satan can have on us today. The first agent will emerge from the sea, considered at the time as a realm of chaos. [Note: This passage has parallels with Daniel 7 and Job 40-41.]

Reading : Revelation 13:1-10



1. According to verse 1, what are the characteristics of this terrifying beast?

- ◀ He has *seven* heads and *ten* horns (just like the dragon with whom he is in cahoots) showing his great power.
- ◀ He has *crowns* on his horns, indicative of royalty.
- ◀ He bears a *blasphemous name* on his heads. John does not reveal to us what name it is. Probably the beast attributes a title to himself which should be exclusively used for God.

2. What does the beast claim?

His features clearly indicate that the beast is claiming *the royalty and authority of Christ*. In Revelation 19:12,16 (which we will look at soon) Christ bears many crowns and the name "King of Kings and Lord of Lords". The beast aims to imitate and compete with Christ by bearing crowns and divine titles.

3. In verse 2, John continues with his astonishing description of the beast. To which animals does he compare him?

The beast looks like *a leopard*, with the feet of *a bear*, and the mouth of *a lion*. This verse brings us back to Daniel 7:3-8. Daniel had a vision in which he saw four beasts coming out of the sea. The first looked like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard and the fourth was particularly terrifying. Each one represented an empire. The beast described by John in

Revelation 13 combines all of these features. He is both extremely fierce and evil.

4. According to the end of verse 2, from whom does the beast get his authority?

The dragon, Satan, gives the beast his power, his throne and great authority. In our last study we saw that Satan lost his legal right as an accuser but he still has a certain degree of power he grants to his agents so that they can carry out his plans. [2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Ephesians 2:2.]

5. Notice to what extent the counterfeit goes in verse 3. What does the beast claim?

He claims *to have overcome death*. One of his heads was mortally wounded but the wound was healed. Verse 12 also describes the beast as the one “*whose deadly wound was healed*” and verse 14 talks about “*the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived*”. The beast thus aims to *imitate Christ in His death and His resurrection*. Remember that in Revelation, Christ is often represented by a Lamb which seems to have been slain (mentioned in verse 8; see also Revelation 5:6). The beast claims the same victory over death. The imitation is crude and deceitful, yet men will be convinced by it.

6. At the end of verses 3-4, what does the beast succeed in achieving through this deception?

All the world marvelled and followed the beast. Men worship the dragon who gave the beast his power and worship the beast that received the power. The world is completely in awe. The beast appears to men as being unique, unequalled and invincible. Note that this is a continuation of the mockery of Christ's life because Jesus, following His resurrection, received complete authority and many disciples committed their lives to Him and worshipped Him. Again the beast competes with Jesus Christ. [Note: The words of praise addressed to the beast are similar to those attributed to the Eternal God in the Old Testament: Exodus 15:11, Deuteronomy 3:24.]

7. According to verses 6-10, who does the beast blaspheme?

The beast opens his mouth in blasphemy against *God*. He exalts himself above God. He also insults *believers, those who dwell in Heaven* (Ephesians 2:6) and who belong to God. However, the text shows that this beast can only act within boundaries established by God Himself. He can only exercise his authority for a limited period of time (end of verse 5 - reference to Daniel 7) and he does not succeed in getting believers to worship him. God's people suffer because of him but remain spiritually protected in their commitment to the Lord. [We will discuss the “Book of Life” in lesson 9.]

8. According to verse 10, what should be the believers' attitude?

They need to demonstrate *patience and faith*. They must be prepared to be thrown into prison or even be faced with the death penalty (Revelation 2:10, 6:9 and 11:7). They should persevere and remain faithful to God. It may seem that Satan is winning the battle, but he is actually in disarray and defeated. Believers will soon share in God's victory. Satan and the beast will be crushed. How will you react when your faith is put to the test like this?

9. What does this first beast represent?

Let us summarise all the points that have been noted so far. He is an instrument of the devil; His appearance is a combination of the beasts mentioned in Daniel that represented different kingdoms; he claims divinity, bears a name which blasphemes God, imitates Christ and is worshipped by the majority of people; he persecutes believers, imprisoning and killing some of them. Many commentators believe that this beast represents the *Roman Empire*. The emperor was deified, was given divine titles and was worshipped. In Revelation 2 and 3, we saw that the church at the end of the first century was tried and persecuted because it refused to take part in emperor worship. It was very tempting to compromise and some had already given in. The beast's mortal wound and subsequent resurrection could be making reference to Emperor Nero who committed suicide in 68 A.D., which left the empire considerably weakened for a year. However, it quickly recovered and grew stronger. At the time there were rumours that Nero was not really dead.

This beast could also represent other political or economic powers, *perhaps even all powers that oppress God's people* - past, present and future empires that Satan uses to attack the church. Do you know countries in which believers are persecuted? [There are indications in the text to support this interpretation: the combination of different empires in verse 2; the forty-two months in verse 5; the expressions "every tribe, tongue, and nation" (verse 7) and "all ... whose name have not been written" (verse 8) do not only refer to people in the Roman empire.]

LESSON BREAK



Reading : Revelation 13:11-18

10. Revelation uses another name to describe the second beast. Read Revelation 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10. What is the name? What does it reveal to us?

In these passages, the second beast is referred to as the "*false prophet*". A true prophet is a spokesperson for God, responsible for proclaiming God's true message and encouraging men to worship Him and give Him first place in their life. The second beast, by contrast, *proclaims a deceitful and false message*, encouraging the Earth's inhabitants to worship someone else - Satan. *He drives people to idolatry.*

11. According to verse 11, how does the second beast differ from the first one?

He seems *much softer and kinder*. While the first beast came out from the chaos of the sea and looked terrifying, the second comes up *out of the Earth* - a more stable and reassuring place. He has two horns like a lamb. The fact that he looks like a lamb could be a further attempt at counterfeit, but the Lamb of God has seven horns, rather than two. The false prophet's inoffensive appearance will enable him to launch a more subtle attack. Satan uses many strategies to mislead men - some are more direct and aggressive, while others are more underhand. We must not be deceived. This second satanic agent is equally as dangerous, even more so because his evil influence is harder to detect.

12. What connection does this beast have with the dragon (Satan) and the first beast? What does this trio of evil remind us of?

The fact that he speaks like a dragon probably infers that he is *the dragon's spokesperson*. His message is satanic. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and causes people to worship the first beast (see also verse 14). He wants people to believe the first beast's claim that he was mortally wounded and resurrected. By making this assertion credible, he aims to make men worship the beast rather than Christ. This trio obviously reminds us of the Trinity. [First triangle on the worksheet: "*dragon*", "*beast*", and "*false prophet*". Second triangle: "*Father*", "*Son*" and "*Holy Spirit*".] God the Father sent His Son. The Son manifested the Father's glory and obeyed Him. The Holy Spirit's role is to give glory to the Son, not to Himself. He speaks about Christ, reminds us of Christ's teaching and causes men and women to worship and follow Christ. The similarity is striking. Satan offers an alternative to replace the Trinity. He drives men to idolatry by replacing the Holy Trinity with a trio of evil.

13. In verse 13, what does the beast perform to persuade men? Does this remind you of an Old Testament passage?

He performs great *signs causing fire to come down from Heaven*. The attempt at counterfeit continues. These amazing acts remind us of those accomplished by God through *Moses* (see Exodus 4:17,30, Exodus 10:2, Exodus 11:10) and, more strikingly, through *Elijah* - on Mount Carmel, God's fire fell from the sky in answer to his prayer (1 Kings 18:38-39; see also 2 Kings 1:10-14). These signs authenticated their prophetic ministry and their message. The false prophet uses similar ways to gain credibility and persuade men to worship the beast rather than God.

14. What other deception does the false prophet use in verses 14-15?

He convinces men to make an image of the first beast, then gives breath to this image so that it can speak. This type of deception reminds us of a pseudo-magic practice, common throughout history. A person was sometimes hidden inside a statue and holes were made for his eyes and mouth to give the impression that the statue was living. These tricks were used at the time of John in temples devoted to the emperor. The false prophet does everything he can to exploit men's naivety and convince them to worship the first beast.

15. According to the end of verse 15 and the following verses, how far does the pressure exerted by the false prophet go? What is the result?

Pressure is intensified so that men will conform. The false prophet does not think twice about resorting to the death penalty. If men do not worship the image, *they are killed*. [*This reminds us of the pressure placed on Daniel's friends in Daniel 3.*] He also causes them to receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. This signifies that they belong to the beast. He even makes sure that trade depends on their allegiance: those who refuse to be marked *can't buy necessities or sell produce* (Revelation 2:9, Revelation 6:5-6). This is how he puts everyone in an impossible position. They must worship and conform.

16. What does the number "666" mean?

A lot has been written on this subject. Interestingly, in both Greek and Hebrew, letters were used to denote figures. The first letter of the alphabet, alpha, corresponded to number 1 and so on. Anyone's name could, in this way, be "translated" into a number. In order to explain 666, many have used lengthy mathematical equations using the names of Roman emperors or other world leaders. It has also been suggested that 777 was the symbol of the perfection of the trinity, while 666 represented the failed attempt of the trio of evil to reach this perfection and take God's place. It would seem that no-one has been able to find a truly satisfactory explanation to this mysterious number.

17. We will now briefly look at Revelation 14:1. Which other mark can we receive?

We can be among those who bear *the name of the Lamb and His Father* (refer also to Revelation 7:1-8 that has already been studied). This name means that we belong to God, that we are identified with him and that we benefit from His protection. Here on Earth we can't avoid Satan's attacks, but we can refuse idolatry and remain faithful to Jesus Christ. God gives us strength to do it and guarantees our eternal destiny. One day we will be with Him and will be rewarded for eternity. Which mark have you chosen to bear?

18. The first beast not only represented the Roman Empire but probably also all empires that persecute the church. What does the false prophet represent?

The false prophet is at the service of the first beast. He performs signs to convince men to worship the beast, threatens them with death and puts great economic strain on them so that they are marked by him and belong to him. That is why the false prophet first represents *all political, religious and economical institutions of the Roman world*, which encouraged the population to worship the emperor. Emperor worship was present in all facets of life at that time, including business. In certain parts of the empire, pressure could be very intense, especially around the time of festivals. Imagine living in a country where you cannot go shopping to the market, go to the post office or belong to a sports club without agreeing to worship the president who thinks he is God! Within the church itself, there were those who chose to compromise themselves with the empire and who tried to get others to do the same.

The false prophet probably also represents all political, religious and economical institutions of *all times* who induce believers to live in idolatry. Even today schools teach the theory of evolution which denies God's existence; media encourages the love of money and possessions; councils prevent believers from building places of worship, etc. Even within the church, there may be false teachings which take Christians away from the Word of God. The false prophet is still at work. [*Additional reading: Matthew 7:15, Matthew 24:5,11,24, 2 Thessalonians 2:9, 2 Peter 2:1-3.*]

19. What are the main lessons we can draw from this passage?

Revelation 13 warns all believers to be on their guard. Satan prowls around and uses many ways to attack us (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12). His first strategy is to launch *direct offensives*. As in the time of the Roman Empire, *he can use leaders to persecute us*. While we must obey the authorities, as commanded by God (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-17), we must sometimes refuse to submit whenever they induce us to break God's law, and accept the punishment (1 Peter 2:18-20).

Satan's second strategy is much more *subtle, disguised and hidden*. *The influence of our society and of our friends can lead us to a form of idolatry*. These attacks can even come from within the church. Teachers who have been badly influenced can corrupt a community. We must remain faithful to the Word, do what is right and give God the first place in our lives (1 Peter 4:19; Psalm 1; Romans 12:2).



Method: Working in groups

Idolatry is replacing God with something or someone else, removing Him from His rightful place. The enemy skilfully uses today's culture to make us idolaters. To what do we devote our energy, time, desires and hopes? Have these things become our gods? We are now going to look at some examples and consider how believers ought to respond.

Divide the teens into three groups and give each one of them a different subject:

1. *Material possessions - Luke 12:16-21, 1 Timothy 6:10, Hebrews 13:5, 2 Corinthians 9:6-12.*
2. *Friendships - Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Proverbs 13:20, Proverbs 18:24, Proverbs 24:1-2, 1 Corinthians 15:33.*
3. *Television and the Internet - Philippians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22.*

Ask them to:

1. *Think about how the issue can become too important in our lives.*
2. *Read the Bible passages and see what they say on the issue.*
3. *Define a code of conduct for believers.*
4. *Once all the results have been gathered, share these with the other groups.*

The two beasts

Revelation 13:1-10

1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast.

4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Revelation 13: 11-18

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666. (NKJV)

Revelation

Chapter 13

The two beasts



The dragon (Satan) has agents at his service who do everything to turn men away from God.

Revelation 13:1-10 - The beast rising out of the sea

He has _____ heads and _____ horns adorned with _____

and bears _____

He claims _____

He has...1. the appearance of _____

2. the feet of _____

3. the mouth of _____

He combines the features of the beasts from Daniel 7:3-8 that represented empires.

He gets his authority from _____

His great claim: _____

By his deception, he successfully makes _____

The beast opens his mouth in blasphemy against _____

Believers must demonstrate _____

This first beast represents _____

and probably also _____

Revelation 13:11-18 : The beast coming up from the Earth

His other name : _____ (Revelation 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10.)

His activity : _____

His appearance : _____

His connection to the dragon and the first beast : _____

Trio of evil



Holy Trinity



This beast performs _____

which are counterfeits of those of _____

- If men do not worship the image

- If men refuse to be marked

Those belonging to God have:

The false prophet represents _____

We must be on our guard. Satan resorts to two strategies :

1. _____




2. _____



The fall of Babylon



Objective: We would like the believers:

-  to understand what the fall of Babylon represents.
-  to rejoice in the knowledge that Christ will bring this evil world to an end and establish justice.
-  to resist the many attractions the world has to offer that could lead them far away from God.
- NC** The unsaved will realise they need to flee from the grip of this evil world by placing their trust in God and obeying Him.



Introduction: Symbolic cities

Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study. Write the following cities on a board and ask the teens what each city represents for them: Liverpool (football capital), Paris (fashion capital), Hawaii (surfing paradise), Las Vegas (gambling capital), Rome (centre of Catholicism), etc. The Bible also gives a symbolic value to particular cities. Revelation 18 talks about Great Babylon. During the reading, think about what this city represents.



Reading : Revelation 18:1-8

1. What do you know about the city of Babylon, frequently referred to in the Old Testament?

In 600 B.C. Babylon was a great city at the head of *an extensive empire*. Babylonian troops attacked and conquered many nations, including Israel, the nation of God's people. Babylon was therefore powerful and *very arrogant*. It believed that no-one could undermine its supremacy. However, the prophets announced imminent divine judgement. The proud city *fell violently* in 539 B.C., taking with it all those who depended on it. The fall of the old Babylon is the backdrop of the passage that we are going to look at today. [Note: This chapter repeatedly makes reference to prophetic texts announcing the fall of Babylon and Tyre (Ezekiel 27-28).]

2. What does Babylon represent in Revelation?

- At the time when John wrote Revelation, the imperial city of Rome had a seductive power. This passage firstly points to Rome. [The previous chapter makes it clear: Revelation 17:9 indicates that the great prostitute (Babylon personified) reigns on seven mountains. Rome was renowned for its seven mountains.]
- More widely Babylon represents the *evil and seductive world throughout the course of history*. Many world powers have sought to seduce nations and men and have led them away from God. [Revelation 18:24 supports this interpretation: "in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth." This sentence seems to include persecuted believers of all times.]
- The political, commercial and cultural world today can still be very appealing and lead us far from God (1 John 2:16).

3. How did Rome entice or put pressure on people at that time? Remember what we said in previous studies.

Everything was done to encourage people to worship the emperor and other Roman gods. For example, if a merchant wanted to be successful in business, he had to take part in this worship. Other nations had to co-operate with Rome and accept its practices in order to benefit from "pax romana" (roman peace) and to develop their business throughout the Roman Empire. Such

were the benefits offered that it was almost impossible to resist. The Roman Empire had thus succeeded in extending its political and economic power and was very proud of this. Are we not under a similar world pressure to conform today? The media, politicians and global economic leaders display an arrogant attitude and exert a seductive influence which often leads people away from God. How long will their grip last?

4. John sees a glorious angel descending from Heaven. In verse 2, what does the angel announce?

Great Babylon. The flourishing city becomes “a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird”, a kind of ghost town. [The fact that demonic beings are present is evidence of the satanic nature of Babylon.] The angel does not elaborate on how judgement will come upon the city, but the reasons and the consequences of its fall are revealed. [Note: When we read Revelation 18, we often wonder if Babylon has already been destroyed or if judgement has yet to come. The usage of the past tense may well be a figurative style to reinforce the certainty of an imminent fall. It is worth noting that the past tense was also used in the Old Testament when the fall of the old Babylon was announced, shortly before the event actually took place. Verse 2 reminds us of Isaiah 21:9.]

5. In verse 3, the angel gives the reasons for Babylon’s judgement. What illustrations does he use to describe the bad influence of the city?

Nations gave in to Babylon’s seduction and indulged in her pleasures. Babylon, for them, was like a wine on which they could get drunk and like a prostitute with whom they could commit fornication. In the Bible prostitution is often associated with the sin of idolatry. When other nations, leaders and merchants co-operated with Babylon, they reaped many benefits. But this same co-operation led them far away from God. Great Babylon is judged for her idolatrous seduction. Those in power today who turn men and women away from God will one day be judged for it.

6. Another voice from Heaven addresses God’s people. What did it tell them to do, in verse 4? Why?

Believers are told to *come out of Babylon* for two reasons: “lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues”. The appeal is made initially to first-century Christians. The voice calls those who compromise with Rome (like the Laodicean church) to reject the idolatrous system into which they have been led. It also encourages the faithful (like those from Smyrna) to stay strong in their stance and persevere in their witness, even if this means they have to go without numerous privileges (Revelation 6:9, 14:12-13 and 16:15). However, the appeal is also made to us today. Are we actively involved in Babylonian sins? Will we be judged along with Babylon? We have to live in the world as witnesses of Jesus Christ, without taking part in its sinful practices [Note: This verse reminds us of Jeremiah 51:45 and Isaiah 52:11.]

7. According to verses 5-8, how is Babylon punished?

Her sins have reached to Heaven (*parallels with Jeremiah 51:9*). God has remembered her iniquities. Babylon will now receive a punishment *proportionate to the sins committed*, and will be treated in the same way that she has treated others. She will drink from the cup from which she has forced others to drink. In the same measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, she will now experience torment and sorrow. God is always just. She mistakenly believed that she could reign as queen and never experience grief. All the plagues will come upon her in a single day and she will be burned with fire. The Lord God, against whom she has sinned, is strong and He is able to execute His judgement. [Note: Is there a contradiction in these verses? They initially establish that Babylon will be punished according to her crime then go on to say that she will be doubly punished for her crimes. Biblical scholars Kyle and Beale believe that the text was mistranslated. The Greek expression may mean giving the equivalent rather than double.]

LESSON BREAK



Reading : Revelation 18:9-24

The rest of the chapter looks at reactions from different groups of people to Babylon's fall. We are going to go through the passage and complete the table on the worksheet. We must keep in mind that Babylon is still a reality today: the world flaunts its many attractions, whether commercial, cultural or political, to win people over and turn them away from God. But one day the world and its followers will be judged. On that day, will we be weeping or rejoicing? [Note the great similarity between this passage and Ezekiel 26 and 27.]

8. How do the kings react when Babylon falls? Why do they behave in this way?

They *weep and lament* when they see the city destroyed by fire, “*standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come’*” (verse 10). They are shocked to see such a great power wiped out in such a short period of time. They are also aware that this blaze is *God’s judgement being carried out*. These leaders were wrong to co-operate with the Babylonian system of idolatry in order to be successful in the political arena. In the first century, in Asia Minor, individuals could hold key positions by swearing allegiance to Caesar and worshipping Roman gods. They understand that this judgement implies *their own imminent judgement because they were accomplices to the city’s crimes*.

9. What about the merchants in verses 11-14?

They “*weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore*” (verse 11). While Babylon offered kings great political support, she also provided a great economic support for merchants, enabling them to develop their business and accumulate great wealth. The fall of Babylon leads to *the collapse of their businesses*. They lose their best customer and access to a vast distribution network. Verses 12-13 list the merchandise that will no longer be traded: minerals (gold, silver, etc), vegetable products (oil, flour, etc), animals (cattle, sheep, etc), and also human beings. Slaves were treated like everyday produce. This exploitation will now come to an end. Verses 15-16 are like a “chorus” repetition of verse 10. The merchants “*will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas ...’*” and are shocked by how quickly events unfold “*for in one hour such great riches came to nothing*”. Verse 16 compares the city to a finely-clothed lady, admired by kings and merchants, and in whom they placed all their hope. The shock is proportionate to the level of hope and dependency that had been placed in her! Political and economic pandemonium ensues!

10. What do verses 17-20 say about a third category of people?

Now we come to those who make their living from the sea: vessel-owners, captains, sailors, etc. For the third time, the same “chorus” is repeated: they “*stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning ... saying, ‘Alas, alas ...’*” (verse 17-19) They also are shocked by how quickly it happened, “*for in one hour she is made desolate*” (verse 19). *They have lost the benefits of trading with this prosperous city*. Their role was to transport produce by sea. They remember the incomparable greatness of Babylon - nothing could rival it. They *throw dust on their heads*, not as an act of repentance, rather they are lamenting the *loss of the source of their income*. It is the end of maritime trade.

11. Believers react differently (verse 20). Why is this the case?

God’s people are invited to *rejoice over Babylon’s fall* because *God has judged* the great city that had persecuted them (verse 24) and *has avenged believers*. The reason for their joy is not so much the ruin of Babylon, it is rather the successful divine intervention against evil and the establishment of justice. God is just and He has not let Babylon’s sins go unpunished. Idolatry and the seductive world have been judged. God has intervened on behalf of His people. The long-awaited hope of believers has become a reality. [This verse seems to be a reference to Jeremiah 51:48.]

12. An angel then performs a very significant act. What is it and what does it mean?

The angel lifts a stone, like a great millstone. A millstone, pulled by a strong animal to mill grain, was particularly heavy. The angel throws it into the sea where it completely disappears. Notice that the angel is not satisfied with just dropping the stone, rather it is thrown so that it will be buried on the seabed. This act illustrates the fact that *“with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down”* (verse 21). The stone will never resurface. It *“shall not be found anymore”* (verse 21). The evil and seductive world will disappear forever. This judgement is irrevocable. What cause to rejoice! [The imagery seems to be taken from Jeremiah 51:63-64 where this action has the same significance. See also Matthew 18:6.]

13. Verses 21-23 mention five significant aspects of Babylonian life that will cease to exist. What does each of them mean?

- ◀ The *sound of musicians* will no longer be heard - this will be the end of *pleasure* in the city.
- ◀ There will be *no craftsmen* of any type - even the most basic *services* will be unavailable.
- ◀ The *noise from the millstone* will not be heard anymore - basic *foods* will not be found.
- ◀ The absence of *light* will plunge the city into *darkness*.
- ◀ The *voice of the bridegroom and bride* will not be heard - *love* will be gone forever.

14. The chapter ends with a reminder as to why Babylon was struck (end of verse 23-24). What are the reasons?

The city and her allies, in particular the merchants, were single-minded in their ambition: to be great, powerful and self-sufficient. Instead of giving glory to God, they wanted to be above Him. Using their charms and sorcery, they managed to deceive nations and lead them into idolatry. They were also guilty of taking the lives of believers. Indeed many were martyred. By attacking God's people, they were attacking God Himself. But God intervenes and administers justice, bringing an end to this arrogant, pleasure-seeking world with its many temptations, material attractions and anti-Christian philosophy and culture. The judgement of Babylon is complete and definitive. Revelation 21 and 22 will reveal another city to us, the New Jerusalem, a total contrast to Babylon, where there will be complete joy in God's presence.

15. What are the main lessons we can draw from this passage concerning our attitude towards the world?

- ◀ Be aware that Babylon will fall (verses 1-2).
- ◀ Avoid its intoxication (verse 3).
- ◀ Come out of it (verse 4).
- ◀ Count on God's justice (verses 5-8).
- ◀ Make sure you are among those who rejoice and not among those who mourn (verses 9-20).



Method : Case study

Read the following text with the teens, then use the questions for a discussion time.

For fifteen years, Alexandra has worked in a large commercial company that exports its produce worldwide. After being paid a small salary for years, Alexandra has remarkably climbed the corporate ladder and has just been appointed Marketing Manager. Her husband, a struggling craftsman, has agreed that the whole family should move house so that his wife is closer to her new job. The company has provided a lavish home with the possibility of being able to purchase

it at a preferential price in a few years' time. The company has also offered Alexandra company shares so that the family's wealth depends on the company's success. Over the next months, Alexandra discovers that there are several questionable practices (hiding the true origin of products, deliberate and illegal industrial espionage, bribes to secure contracts, etc) and she also notices that the president has a big hold on the workers. Not submitting to his will results in immediate repercussions. Alexandra's parents are believers and they encourage her to leave the company immediately and to come back to God. But Alexandra and her husband do not want to lose the many assets they have gained. For the sake of the family's wealth, they accept the system and play along with it. It is out of the question to turn back.

1. How has this powerful company succeeded in firstly winning over Alexandra and then trapping her in an immoral and idolatrous system?
2. What is holding Alexandra and her family to this system?
3. What should Alexandra and her family do?
4. Are we also being won over and deceived?
5. What does the world offer us today? Is it leading us away from God?
6. How should we react?
7. What does Revelation 18 teach us?

The fall of Babylon

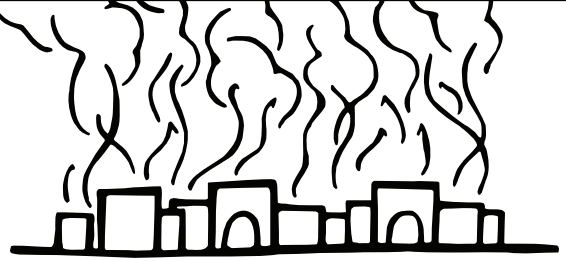
Revelation 18:1-8

- 1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.
- 2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!"
- 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."
- 4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.
- 5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.
- 6 Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.
- 7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'
- 8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

Revelation 18:9-24

- 9 "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,
 - 10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'
 - 11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:
 - 12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;
 - 13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.
 - 14 The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.
 - 15 The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,
 - 16 and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!
 - 17 For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance
 - 18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'
 - 19 "They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'
 - 20 "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"
 - 21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.
 - 22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore.
 - 23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.
 - 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."
- (NKJV)

Revelation



Chapters 14-18

The fall of Babylon

Revelation 18:1-8

Babylon, symbolic city

In 600 B.C. this city was at the head of _____

Its attitude was _____. But this empire _____ in 539 B.C.

Babylon represents:

At that time: _____

More widely: _____

Today: _____

The judgement of Babylon

An angel announces _____

The city becomes _____

This great city has led many men to idolatry.

Two illustrations: The city's seductive power is comparable to ...

1. _____

2. _____

Warning to believers

God's people must _____

For two reasons:

1. _____

2. _____

Babylon's punishment will be _____

Revelation 18:9-24 : Reactions to the fall of Babylon

	Reaction	Reason
Kings		
Merchants		
Those living from the sea		
God's people		

The millstone thrown to the bottom of the sea illustrates the fact that _____

Five things will no longer exist:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

God wipes out this powerful and arrogant city which has deceived many nations and martyred believers.




Case study

For fifteen years, Alexandra has worked in a large commercial company that exports its produce worldwide. After being paid a small salary for years, Alexandra has remarkably climbed the corporate ladder and has just been appointed Marketing Manager. Her husband, a struggling craftsman, has agreed that the whole family should move house so that his wife is closer to her new job. The company has provided a lavish home with the possibility of being able to purchase it at a preferential price in a few years' time. The company has also offered Alexandra company shares so that the family's wealth depends on the company's success. Over the next months, Alexandra discovers that there are several questionable practices (hiding the true origin of products, deliberate and illegal industrial espionage, bribes to secure contracts, etc) and she also notices that the president has a big hold on the workers. Not submitting to his will results in immediate repercussions. Alexandra's parents are believers and they encourage her to leave the company immediately and to come back to God. But Alexandra and her husband do not want to lose the many assets they have gained. For the sake of the family's wealth, they accept the system and play along with it. It is out of the question to turn back.

The final victory



Objective: We would like the believers:

-  to understand that at the end of time, Jesus Christ will defeat His enemies once and for all and judge them.
-  to be aware that all humanity must appear before the throne to be judged.
-  to thank God because their name is written in the “Book of Life of the Lamb slain” (Revelation 13:8) and they will not be condemned.
- NC** The unsaved will realise that they are not yet ready for Judgement Day and will be invited to place their trust in Christ.



Introduction : Brain storming

Write the following words on a board: “injustices in the world”. Then ask the teens to say what these words make them think of. Randomly write down all their answers on the board (e.g. war crimes, totalitarian regimes, child soldiers, battered women, abortion, rape, racism, racketeering). Then draw the teens’ attention to injustices regarding Christians. You could use information from the organisation Open Doors.

Who can effectively bring an end to all these injustices and judge all those who commit them? [Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]

Reading : Revelation 19:11-16



1. John sees Heaven open and a Horse rider on a white horse. Who does this formidable warrior represent and what battle is He engaging in?

It is evidently *Jesus Christ*. There are many clues in the text that allow us to clearly identify this Horse rider, notably the titles that are assigned to Him - we will look at these later. He comes to *judge and make war*. He is going to lead a final battle against the forces of evil. Satan and all his allies have long opposed God, have spread injustice and have mistreated His people. The time has come to put an end to their activity, to render justice to believers and to establish good once and for all. [Isaiah 11:4, Acts 17:31.]

2. The passage teaches us several things about the judgement. Fill in the crossword, but only the answers going down: the nature of the judgement (verse 11), the means of the judgement (verse 15a), and the outcome of the judgement (verse 15b).

- ◀ The Horse rider will judge in *righteousness* (verse 11). He is able to do this because his eyes are like a flame of fire - verse 12. This metaphor probably refers to the penetrating gaze of Christ: He knows everything and can therefore judge in complete fairness. [Revelation 1:14, Revelation 2:18.]
- ◀ The Horse rider will strike nations with a sharp sword going out of His mouth (verse 15a). This represents the *Word* of Jesus Christ by which all evil people will be judged. [Isaiah 49:2, Revelation 1:16, Revelation 2:12,16.]
- ◀ The Horse rider will tread the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (verse 15b). This is a hard image to express the *crushing* of God’s enemies. The judgement will be complete and permanent. Their sins have accumulated and radical intervention is required. The outcome of the battle is certain. Also notice that the Horse rider’s robe is already dipped in the blood of His enemies in

anticipation of His imminent victory (verse 13). [*Isaiah 63:2-6; Revelation 14:8,10,17-19.*]

3. Let us consider the three titles given to the Horse rider in verses 11,13-16. What do they remind us of about Jesus?

- ◀ “*Faithful and True*”: Jesus promised to return to dispense justice on behalf of His people. Believers have placed their trust in Him and have been long awaiting His return and judgement. The appearance of the Horse rider proves that they were not wrong to do so. He is “faithful and true” in the fulfilment of His promise. [*Revelation 1:5, Revelation 3:7,14.*]
- ◀ “*The Word of God*”: This title reminds us of the first verses of the Gospel of John. Jesus is the revelation or the perfect expression of God. [*John 1:1.*]
- ◀ “*King of kings and Lord of lords*”. His sovereignty is above all earthly and heavenly powers. His authority is complete and extends over the whole universe. [*Revelation 17:14.*]

4. The title “King of kings” relates to a feature of the Horse rider. According to verse 12, what does He wear on in His head? Compare this verse with Revelation 12:3 and 13:1.

His head is crowned with *many crowns*. The dragon and the beast also wear crowns: the dragon has *seven* (12:3) while the beast has *ten* (13:1). They fail in their attempt to imitate Christ. The Horse rider is the King of kings, crowned with many crowns. No-one can compete with Him. He is also the shepherd who rules with a rod of iron (verse 15). [*Revelation 2:27, Revelation 12:5; quotation from Psalm 2:9.*]

5. We have looked at three names or titles for the Horse rider. Verse 12, however, notes that He has another name known to Him alone. What does this mean?

When God revealed Himself to men throughout history, He did it progressively and using many names. Each one of them revealed a facet of His person that He wanted His people to know and experience. Sometimes God also gave His people a new name, to mark a new stage in their relationship. At the end of time, the relationship between Christ and believers will continue to strengthen until it reaches perfection. It is not therefore surprising that Revelation 19:12 says that the Horse rider, Jesus, will have a name that He alone knows, and that Revelation 3:12 notes that a new name will be given to believers (related to God’s name and that of the new Jerusalem - see also Revelation 2:17 and 22:4).

We can conclude from this that at the end of time, *Christ will reveal Himself in more fullness*. This revelation will affect His relationship with men: unbelievers will be condemned, while believers will enter into a perfect communion with their Saviour. [*See the prophecies from Isaiah 62:2-3 and 65:15 regarding the new name.*]

6. The Horse rider does not go to battle alone. Can we identify those who go with Him (verse 14)?

The heavenly armies from verse 14 are probably made up of *angels*, as in Revelation 12:7. [*Angels take part in the final judgement in Matthew 13:40-42 and 16:27.*] These troops may also refer to the saints who will overcome with the King of kings (Revelation 17:14). The angels and saints wear white and clean linen garments, symbolising victory or purity (Revelation 15:6 and 3:4-5).

We probably shouldn’t interpret this passage literally thinking that troops, armed with swords, are going to physically launch an attack as in the past. Once again Revelation employs figurative language to teach us a truth: Jesus Christ and His angels or servants will come to judge those who have opposed God. Nothing will stand against them.

LESSON BREAK

Reading : Revelation 19:19-21 and 20:7-10



7. We have just read two narratives recounting the confrontation between the Horse rider and His enemies. Fill in the table on the worksheet.

[Note: Some commentators believe that there is a single battle, reported from two different points of view. The link between chapters 19 and 20, as well as the chronology of events, are greatly debated. We will leave these controversial issues to one side and will not comment on verse 7 (the thousand years and Satan's release). We will instead go directly to the crucial part: victory!]

	Revelation 19:19-21	Revelation 20:7-10
The enemy's army	<i>The beast and the kings and their armies gather together to make war. The false prophet, the deceiver of men, is with them.</i>	<i>Satan deceives the nations from the four corners of the Earth and gathers together troops, whose number is as the sand of the sea.</i>
God's army	<i>The Horse rider and His army</i>	<i>The camp of the saints and the beloved city of God are surrounded.</i>
The outcome of the battle	<i>The beast and the false prophet are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. The other men are killed by the sword (the Word of Christ), and all the birds eat their fill of their flesh.</i>	<i>Fire comes down from Heaven and devours the enemies. The devil is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.</i>

[Note: Ezekiel 38-39 talks about "Gog and Magog" which bring the nations together to fight against Israel, but fire comes down from Heaven to judge them. Similarly, at the end of time, many forces gather together to attack God's people, but God intervenes and consumes them. The "camp of the saints" (Revelation 20:9) reminds us of the camp of Israel in the desert with the tabernacle at the centre - Deuteronomy 23:14. Additional relevant texts: Revelation 16:14; Zechariah 12-14; Psalm 2:2,9.]

8. What stands out from these accounts?

The beast, the false prophet and Satan (the dragon) deceive the nations and successfully gather together numerous enemies to launch an offensive against God's people, but their attempt fails. They are quickly and crushingly defeated and consumed. Judgement falls not only upon the leaders, but also on those who have followed them. Christ's victory is overwhelming and His sovereignty is fully displayed. According to His promises, He renders justice to believers and brings an end to their persecution. [2 Thessalonians 2:8.]

9. The "trio of evil" (the dragon, beast and false prophet) is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. What kind of suffering will they endure?

The lake of fire and brimstone is a *place of torment*. They suffer there *consciously* (implied by the expression "cast alive" in Revelation 19:20), *constantly* ("day and night" Revelation 20:10) and *eternally* ("for ever and ever" Revelation 20:10). [Note: The exact nature of these torments is debatable because Satan and his angels are spiritual beings. It is, above all, a spiritual suffering due to permanent separation from God. See also Revelation 14:10-11.]

Reading : Revelation 20:11-15

10. Verses 11-15 specifically describe the judgement of men. Where does it take place? Who must appear?

Divine judgement takes place *before the great white throne*. This vision reminds us of Revelation 4-5. John does not mention Who is on the throne. It may obviously be God the Father, but some texts speak of the judgement seat of Christ [2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 Timothy 4:1]. The throne is white: judgement is exercised by the One Who is perfectly holy and just. *All the dead, great and small*, appear before Him. We must all, one day, stand before the throne to give an account for our lives. [Daniel 12:2, John 5:28-29.]

11. In this text we find the basis on which men are judged: two types of books are opened. What is the first?

Books which record all of men's works (verse 12). Everything that they have done is scrupulously written down. Humanity is judged according to this comprehensive report and is found unworthy to enter God's holy presence. No-one attains the standard demanded by a Holy God. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all have sinned and fall short of God's glory, including you and me.

12. Another type of book is also opened. Which one? What is found in it?

The Book of Life that contains all the names of the believers (verses 12-15), all those who place their trust in Jesus Christ and who choose to live for Him. None of them is missing from the list. Revelation 13:8 more specifically refers to this book as the "*Book of Life of the Lamb slain*" (see also Revelation 21:27). Therefore those who are included in this book benefit from the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ on the Cross. He paid for each one of their wrongdoings, for each one of their sins. When the judge considers this second book, He forgets everything recorded in the previous ones. Our salvation is based exclusively on the perfect work of Christ. [Additional references: Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 14:10. These books may be a metaphor for God's infallible memory. Background reading: Daniel 12:1-2.]

13. Are you ready to appear before the throne?

The final judgement could soon be upon us. The Horse rider is coming. Do not ignore what the Lamb of God has done out of love for you. It is time to say "no" to sin and to say "yes" to Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb. He wants to save you and have you enter the heavenly city. We will look at the city of God in the next study, a place where there will be no more injustice. [Cross out all the injustices that you wrote on the board at the start.] We will be with Jesus for all eternity.

Method : Photo language - "Jesus is coming back, so what?"

Choose about thirty photos - from magazines or the Internet. Lay them out on a table. Announce the subject: "Jesus is coming back, so what?" Ask the teens to consider what Jesus' return will change for them. They should examine the photos in silence for five minutes and pick one that expresses what they would like to share with the group. They will in turn show their photo and explain why they have chosen it. Everyone's opinion should be respectfully heard. Examples: a photo of an alarm clock to express that it is time to talk about Jesus to our friends before it is too late; a field of sunflowers to affirm that believers will one day be turned towards Jesus in worship.

The final victory

Revelation 19:11-16

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 19:19-21

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 20:7-10

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Revelation 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (NKJV)

Revelation

Chapters 19-20

The final victory



Revelation 19:11-16

This formidable horse rider is _____

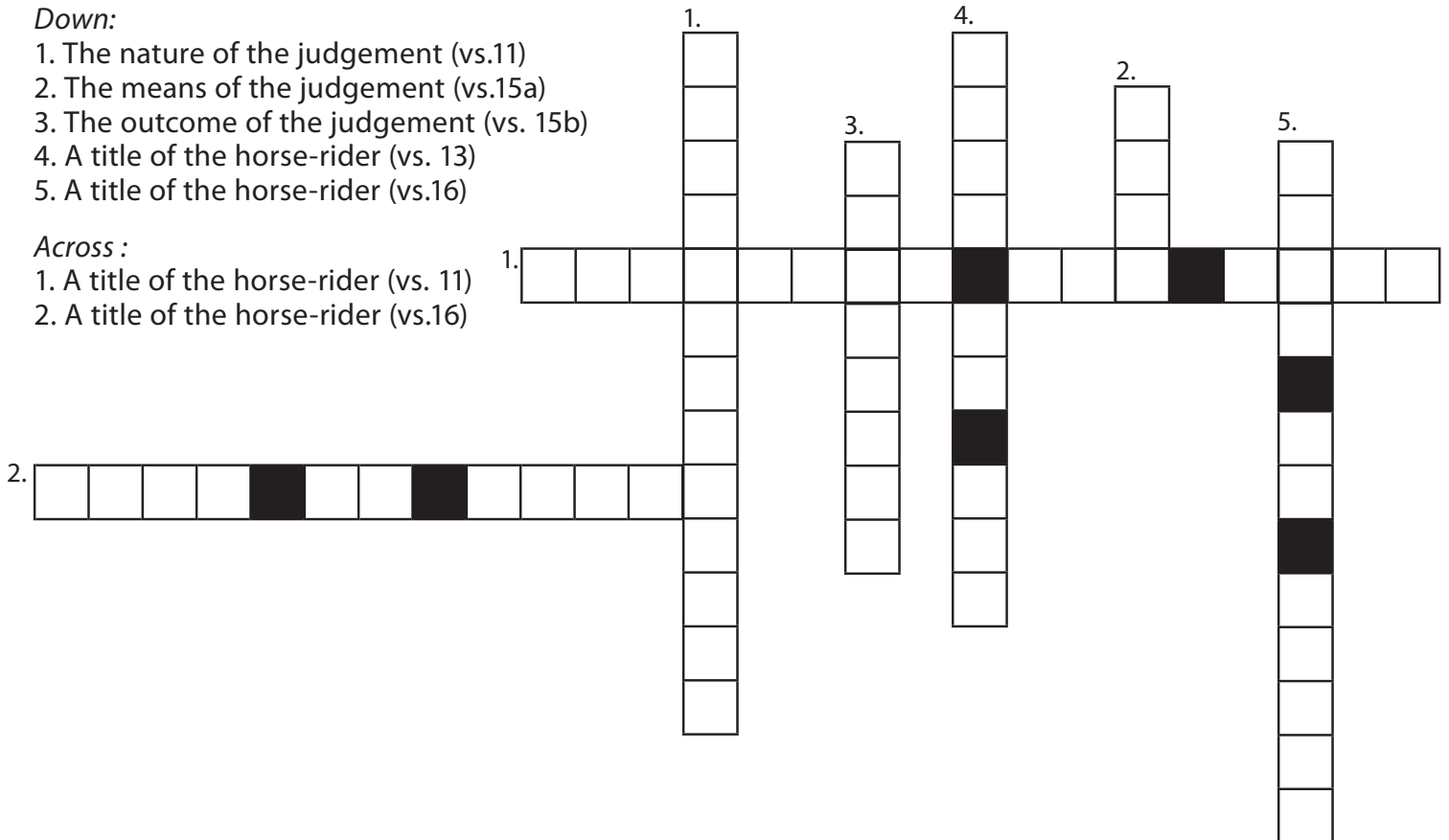
He comes to _____

Down:

1. The nature of the judgement (vs.11)
2. The means of the judgement (vs.15a)
3. The outcome of the judgement (vs. 15b)
4. A title of the horse-rider (vs. 13)
5. A title of the horse-rider (vs.16)

Across :

1. A title of the horse-rider (vs. 11)
2. A title of the horse-rider (vs.16)



His head is crowned with _____

The dragon has _____ and the beast _____ but they do not measure up to the King of Kings!

The fact that He has a name known to Him alone means that

The heavenly army that accompanies Him may be _____

Revelation 19:19-21 & 20:7-10

	Revelation 19:19-21	Revelation 20:7-10
The enemy's army		
God's army		
The outcome of the battle		

The trio of evil is cast in to the lake of fire. It is _____

Those who are there suffer _____

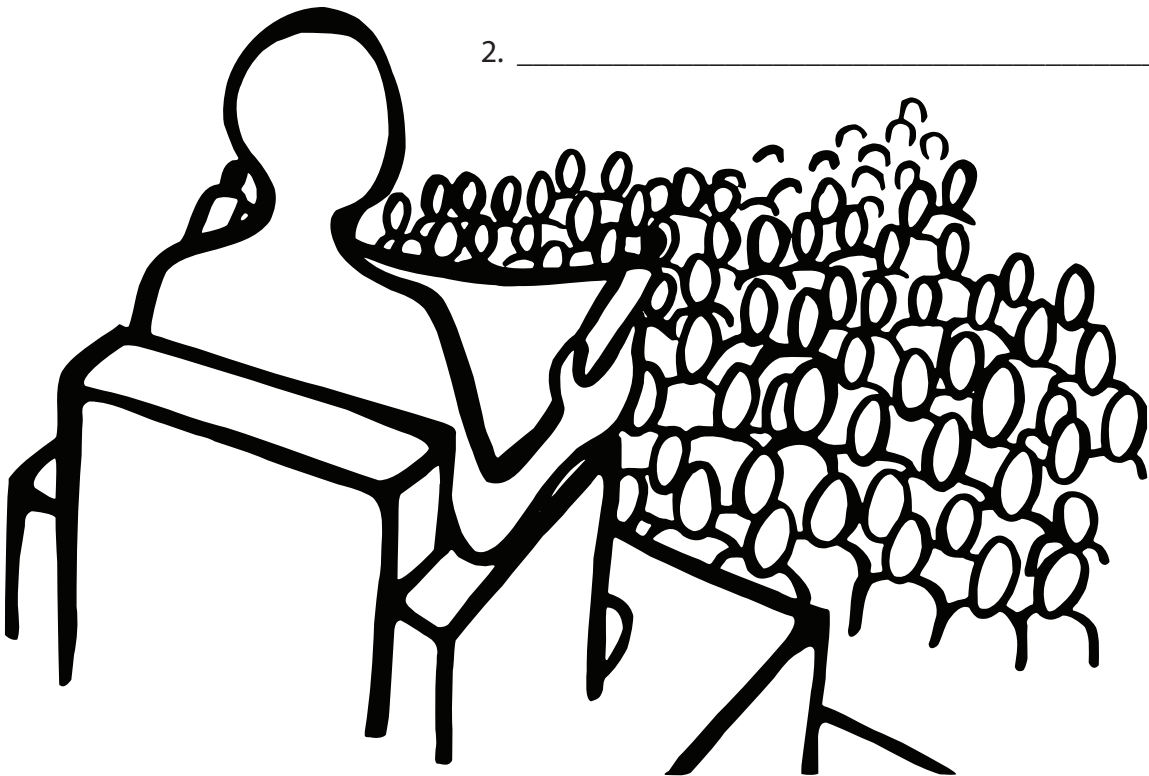
The final judgement of humanity: Revelation 20:11-15

Where does it take place? _____

Who is judged? _____

On what basis? 1. _____




2. _____



The heavenly city



Objective : We would like the believers:

-  to understand that the heavenly city represents the community of believers that will live eternally in God's presence.
-  to be thankful for the eternal security and perfect happiness that they will enjoy with God.
-  to be witnesses for Jesus Christ to their families and friends so that they too may be part of the heavenly city.
- NC** The unsaved will understand that nothing impure can enter into this city (Revelation 21:27) and will ask God to cleanse them by the blood of the Lamb so that they may be part of the redeemed community.



Introduction : My social network

Give each teen a pen and sheet of paper. They should divide the sheet into two columns. In the first, they will write down the different social groups they belong to, and, in the second, what each of these groups offers them. For example,

Group	What it offers me
My family	Security, love, advice, care, food, etc
My friends	Fun, outings, friendship, mutual support, etc
Internet network	New contacts, communication, exchanging photos, etc
Sports club	Health, discipline, team spirit, relaxation, friendship, etc
Church	Spiritual life, fellowship, praise, teaching, encouragement, support in difficult times, prayer, witnessing, etc

Give some of the teens the opportunity to share what they have written. Then ask them the following questions: For how long will you remain part of these different groups? Why is the church a very different network to other groups?

Only the church will remain active for eternity. Our experience within our local churches is only a foretaste of what God has prepared for us. At the end of time, He will gather together all believers. We will live with Him in complete security and in perfect happiness. This is the culmination of Revelation! [Hand out the Bible passage and the worksheets so that the teens can fill them in during the study.]



Reading : Revelation 21:9-27

1. An angel asks John to follow him. What is the angel going to show him, according to verse 9?

The angel is going to show him “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”, that is, the church. The church is like a bride waiting for her husband, the Lord Jesus, Who will take her to be with Him (Revelation 19:7-8; Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 25:1-13). The angel wants to show John the destiny of all those who have trusted Jesus Christ and who have waited for His return.

2. John is carried away to a great and high mountain. What does he see (verse 10)?

From this elevated position, he sees a magnificent city that he refers to as “the great city, the holy Jerusalem”. This glorious city is the church established at the end of the time, the community of

believers. [Later in this passage, this interpretation is confirmed especially by the presence of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles within the structure of the city. This vision has many parallels with the vision found in Ezekiel 40-48 - both seem to be making reference to the same point: the final and permanent establishment of God's presence with His people (Ezekiel 48:35).]

3. As John considers this city, what is the first thing that strikes him (verse 11)?

He is amazed by the brightness of the city full of "*the glory of God*". This heavenly church is shining like a precious stone. Its brightness is due to *the presence of God*. From now on God dwells among His people. Believers live with Him eternally. [Further reading: Revelation 4:3; Isaiah 60:19 and 62:1-5.]

4. In verses 12-14, John describes the structure of the city, starting with the great and high wall that surrounds it. What did city walls represent in the first century? What can we conclude from this regarding the life of believers with God?

Ramparts were crucial in order to provide protection: they ensured that enemies were kept outside the city. They meant *security* for the city's inhabitants. Unfortunately there were often gaps in the defences of the old city of Jerusalem. But the New Jerusalem is surrounded with a great and high wall that indicates that God provides *perfect protection*. Nothing can affect the intimate relationship we will have with the Lord. [Isaiah 26:1.]

5. The figure twelve is used five times in verses 12-14. Consider each use. What does it bring to mind?

John refers to *twelve gates* on which the *names of the twelve tribes of Israel* are written. *Twelve angels* guard them. Moreover the wall rests on *twelve foundations* that carry the names of the *twelve apostles*. We have already noted from previous studies that the figure twelve is often used to refer to *God's people*. The twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles are associated with the very structure of the city. This confirms that this heavenly city represents the glorious community of the redeemed, uniting believers from the Old and New Testament in the presence of God. [Revelation 3:12 already announced that the overcomer would be a pillar in God's temple. See also 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:21-22, 1 Peter 2:5.]

6. In verses 15-17, what does the angel do? What is the outcome?

The angel measures the city with a golden reed. The length, width and height are equal: *12,000 furlongs* (i.e. $12 \times 1,000$). This figure has a symbolic value: twelve represents God's people and 1,000 represents completeness. Then the angel measures the wall: *144 cubits*, i.e. 12×12 (this reminds us of Revelation 7:4-9 and 14:1-3). Again these figures link all of God's people to the Holy City. A furlong is a unit of measurement from that particular period, spanning about 185 metres, while a cubit is about 44.5 cm. Measuring the city serves to emphasise its perfect structure, and also, once again its perfect security. The redeemed are kept safe in the permanent presence of God and no evil can harm them (Revelation 21:27 and 22:14-15). [Many parallels with Ezekiel 40:5 and Zechariah 2:6].

7. In verses 18-21, John reviews the materials that make up the city. What are they? What do these materials bring to mind?

The wall is built of *jasper*; the city itself is made of *pure gold*; the foundations are *adorned with precious stones*; the gates are made of *pearls*; the main street is made of *pure gold*. It is quite spectacular! In every corner and crevice the *glory of a Holy God* is reflected by all these precious materials. The presence of God can be fully manifested in the city. [Note: This brings to mind 1 Kings 6:20-22 when Solomon covered God's house entirely with gold. This temple was a forerunner to the heavenly city at the end of time.]

8. Why do verses 19-20 list twelve precious stones garnishing the foundations of the wall?

We know the symbolic value of the figure twelve which reoccurs in this passage and makes reference to God's people. The Old Testament speaks of these twelve stones. They were found on the breastplate of the high priest when he entered into God's presence. The name of a tribe was inscribed on each stone. The high priest thus represented all the people before God. [*Exodus 28:17-21 and 39:8-14 - eight stones carry the exact name of the tribes while the others have semantic equivalents.*] But, in the holy city of the end of time, it is not the exclusive privilege of the high priest to enter into the intimate presence of God. The twelve stones representing God's people are part of the city. Believers have free access to Him and, as precious stones, are able to reflect His glory.

9. Then John looks inside the city and realises that something is missing (verse 22). What is it? What explanations does John give us?

The city does not have a *temple*, in the sense of a building. The temple had a significant role in the Old Jerusalem. God revealed Himself in the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could enter. But, in the New Jerusalem, *the Almighty God and the Lamb are themselves the temple*. Their glorious presence is not confined to a building; rather it fills the whole city. All believers are in perfect communion with the Father and the Son.

10. Verse 23 talks about a particular effect caused by the glorious presence of God? What does this mean?

The heavenly city needs *neither the sun nor the moon*, because the glory of God illuminates it and the Lamb is its light. Nothing in the universe can compete with the Lord's brightness. This glory cannot be compared to any other source of light. The book of Revelation was written long before electricity was invented. In the evening people had to make do with very basic means to have light. They must have been very impressed by this vision. The complete absence of any darkness in the city also means that *sin and its consequences have completely disappeared* (Revelation 21:27 and 22:3). [Isaiah 60:19.]

11. John describes a scene in verses 24-26? What does it represent?

John sees a continual procession of nations walking in the divine light and of kings bringing their glory into the city as they pass through the open doors. At the time, homage was paid to kings by bringing them extravagant gifts like the Queen of Sheba did when she went to see Solomon (2 Chronicles 9:1). The aim of this scene is to emphasise the majesty of God. At the end of time, an endless procession of worshippers from every nation will bring their glory, probably in the form of praise, and will submit to God. [*This passage has been the subject of controversial interpretations. Some universalists believe that the gates of the city open to those who are not elected. But this would be a total contradiction to the teaching of Revelation. John describes a typical scene of that time that must be considered as a whole. The prophecy from Isaiah 60:3,5,11 is fulfilled. Believers from every nation recognise the glory of God and worship Him. The term "nations" is often used in relation to the redeemed community - Revelation 5:9-10, Revelation 7:9.*]

12. According to verse 27, what is not allowed into the heavenly city? By contrast who will have access to perfect communion with God?

Whatever "*defiles or causes an abomination*" is excluded from the city. The terms used here refer to those who have chosen to live in idolatry rather than submit to God. [*Compare this with Revelation 17:4-5.*] These men have excluded themselves by rejecting God. Conversely, "*those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life*" will have access to the city. They have placed their trust in the Lamb, have been purified by His blood and can henceforth live in eternal security in the presence of God. This verse must cause us to ask ourselves the question: Have we given God the place that is rightfully His in our life? Have we asked Him to cleanse us from our impurity? The choices that we make today will have either happy or devastating consequences in eternity.

LESSON BREAK



Reading : Revelation 22:1-5

13. John resumes his description of the inside of the city. He sees the river of life in verse 1 then the tree of life in verse 2. Does this make you think of another event in Biblical history?

This description takes us back to the *garden of Eden*. God had planted the tree of life there (Genesis 2:9). A river flowed through this garden (Genesis 2:10). God revealed Himself openly to Adam and Eve. But the new Eden now observed by John is far superior to the original one.

[Verse 2 can be translated in two ways: there may be a single tree between the branches of the river, or many trees on either side of the river (as in Ezekiel 47:12). It is therefore possible that the tree of life from the first garden will now be replaced by several trees of life in the heavenly garden, where everything is intensified.]

14. Note the description of the river in verses 1-2. What does it show us?

- ◀ It is referred to as the “*river of water of life*” because it represents *eternal life with God*. In the heavenly city, we will be able to live in communion with the Father and the Son for eternity. *[This river reminds us of the prophecies of Ezekiel 47:1-9 and Zechariah 14:8. Water can also be the symbol of the Spirit as in John 7:37-39.]*
- ◀ It is “*clear as crystal*”. This transparency probably reveals a property of the river: it *cleanses*. We will be cleansed of every sin in order to dwell in the presence of the Holy God.
- ◀ It “*[proceeds] from the throne of God and of the Lamb*” because eternal life has its *source in God*. It is impossible to get it by ourselves or to merit it. It is by the grace of God that we receive it. This life will be abundant. The river flows in the middle of the main street because eternal communion with God is the essential characteristic of the city. Every inhabitant benefits from it. *[The saints are invited to take the water of life in Revelation 22:17. See also Revelation 7:17.]*

15. Look at the description of the tree in verse 2. How can we interpret it?

- ◀ It is called the “*tree of life*”. The presence of this tree gives us an additional guarantee of *eternal life with God*.
- ◀ It *yields twelve fruits for each month*. Its production will therefore be constant. It will not be interrupted at any time of the year. Similarly our *communion with God will be constant*.
- ◀ Its *leaves will be used to heal the nations*. Regardless of the country we come from, we will be able to benefit from the work of Jesus Christ. *Nothing will ever harm us again*. *[This verse refers to Ezekiel 47:12.]*

16. According to verse 3, what will there no longer be?

There will be no more “curse”. The Bible uses this term to talk about the consequences of man’s sin. Adam and Eve were banished from the first garden and distanced from the tree of life. In turn we have sinned and deserve to be judged and separated from God forever. But the Lamb was cursed in our place and took our punishment. If we trust in Him, we can have access to the tree of life, and to perfect, abundant and permanent communion with God. We will be freed from all the consequences of Adam and Eve’s fall, not only from the spiritual curse, but also from all forms of suffering (illness, persecution, etc). Evil and its effects will be removed forever.

17. Pick out everything verses 3-5 tell us about believers.

- ◀ *They will serve God.* Being aware of everything that we have received, we will approach the throne to serve God and the Lamb with a heart full of thankfulness.
- ◀ *They will see His face.* Often in the Bible, men have wanted to see the holy God but this was impossible. But now we will have the great privilege of seeing Him face to face. [Additional verses: Exodus 33:20, Psalm 27:4, Psalm 17:15, 1 John 3:2, Matthew 5:8, 1 Corinthians 13:12.]
- ◀ *They will bear His name on their foreheads.* This is a reminder of God's seal in Revelation 7:2-3 and 14:1, where believers are marked to denote their belonging to God and their security in Him. We will be under God's protection for eternity.
- ◀ *They will live by the light* of God shining on them. The complete absence of darkness means that sin, evil and all suffering that results from them, will be eliminated forever. There are no shadows in this scene!
- ◀ *They will reign eternally.*



Method: Planning an evangelistic campaign

The Lord has entrusted us with an essential task: to tell the good news in our social network so that more people can know the joy of the heavenly city. Tell the teens to think about the table they filled in at the start and to consider how to be witnesses for Jesus Christ in the groups they belong to. You could decide to have an evangelistic campaign (distributing tracts, website, concert, children's club, etc) in the near future and start planning it. Set the objectives and the preparation stages, define necessary resources and the timeframe, assign tasks, etc.

The heavenly city

Revelation 21:9-27

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife."

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.

18 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Revelation 22:1-5

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

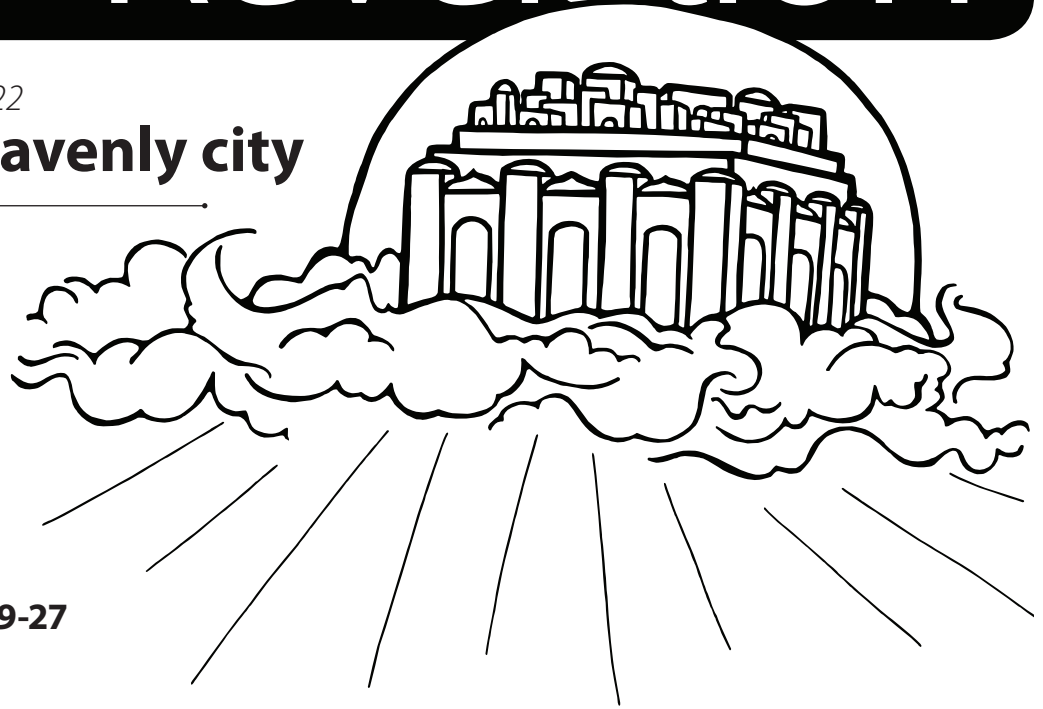
4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. (NKJV)

Revelation

Chapters 21-22

The heavenly city



Revelation 21:9-27

From a high mountain, John notices _____

which represents _____

Its brightness, as that of precious stones, is due to _____

The city's structure

The great and high wall symbolises _____

Use of the figure 12		

In Revelation, this figure represents _____

Length = width = height = _____ = _____ x _____

The wall = _____ = _____ x _____

The materials of the city

Wall : _____ City : _____ Foundations : _____

Gates : _____ Main street : _____

All these materials _____

The city does not need _____

because _____

The continual flow of nations bringing their glory reminds us of the way in which honour was given to a great king in old times (2 Chronicles 9:1). This scene emphasises the majesty of God.

Excluded from the city	Allowed into the city

Revelation 22:1-5

The description reminds us of _____

Description of the river	Description of the tree

There will be no more _____

Evil and its effects will be removed forever.

What do verses 3-5 affirm regarding believers?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

