References for Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook

DECEMBER 2-8

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | REVELA-TION 7-9

"An Unnumbered Great Crowd Is Blessed by Jehovah"

(Revelation 7:9) After this I saw, and look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands.

it-1 997 ¶1 Great Crowd

This poses the question: If the "great crowd" are persons who gain salvation and remain on earth, how could they be said to be 'standing before God's throne and before the Lamb'? (Re 7:9) The position of 'standing' is sometimes used in the Bible to indicate the holding of a favored or approved position in the eyes of the one in whose presence the individual or group stands. (Ps 1:5; 5:5; Pr 22:29, AT; Lu 1:19) In fact, in the previous chapter of Revelation, "the kings of the earth and the top-ranking ones and the military commanders and the rich and the strong ones and every slave and every free person" are depicted as seeking to hide themselves "from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Re 6:15-17; compare Lu 21: 36.) It thus appears that the "great crowd" is formed of those persons who have been preserved during that time of wrath and who have been able to "stand" as approved by God and the Lamb.

(Revelation 7:14) So right away I said to him: "My lord, you are the one who knows." And he said to me: "These are the ones who come

out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

it-2 1127 ¶4 Tribulation

About three decades after Jerusalem's destruction, the apostle John, with reference to a great crowd of persons from all nations, tribes, and peoples, was told: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation." (Re 7:13, 14) The fact that a great crowd 'comes out of the great tribulation' shows that they survive it. This is confirmed by a similar expression at Acts 7: 9, 10: "God was with [Joseph], and he delivered him out of all his tribulations." Joseph's being delivered out of all his tribulations meant not only that he was enabled to endure them but also that he survived the afflictions he experienced.

(Revelation 7:15-17) That is why they are before the throne of God, and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple; and the One seated on the throne will spread his tent over them. ¹⁶ They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat down on them nor any scorching heat, ¹⁷ because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them and will guide them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes."

it-1 996-997 Great Crowd

1

Their Identification. The key to the identification of the "great crowd" is found within the description of them in Revelation chapter 7 and in obviously parallel passages. Revelation 7:15-17 speaks of God as 'spreading his tent over them,' of their being guided to "fountains"

of waters of life," and of God's wiping "every tear from their eyes." At Revelation 21:2-4 we find parallel expressions: 'God's tent being with mankind,' his 'wiping every tear from their eyes,' and 'death being no more.' The vision there presented is concerning persons not in heaven, from where the 'New Jerusalem comes down,' but on earth, among mankind.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Revelation 7:1) After this I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds of the earth, so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

re 115 ¶4 Sealing the Israel of God

⁴ No doubt, these four angels represent four angelic groups, whom Jehovah uses to hold back the execution of judgment until the appointed time. When the angels release those winds of divine wrath to whirl at one time from north, south, east, and west, the devastation will be tremendous. It will resemble, but on a stupendous scale. Jehovah's use of the four winds to scatter the ancient Elamites, shattering and exterminating them. (Jeremiah 49:36-38) It will be a gigantic storm wind far more devastating than the "tempest" by which Jehovah annihilated the nation of Ammon, (Amos 1:13-15) No part of Satan's organization on earth will be able to stand in the day of Jehovah's fury, when he vindicates his sovereignty for all eternity to come. -Psalm 83:15, 18; Isaiah 29:5, 6.

(Revelation 9:11) They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss. In Hebrew his name is A-bad'don, but in Greek he has the name A-pol'lyon.

it-1 12 Abaddon

Abaddon, the angel of the abyss—who is he? At Revelation 9:11, however, the word "Abad-

don" is used as the name of "the angel of the abyss." The corresponding Greek name Apollyon means "Destroyer." In the 19th century there were efforts made to show that this text prophetically applied to individuals such as Emperor Vespasian, Muhammad, and even Napoleon, and the angel was generally regarded as "satanic." It should be noted, however, that at Revelation 20:1-3 the angel having "the key of the abyss" is shown to be God's representative from heaven, and rather than being "satanic," he binds and hurls Satan into the abyss. Commenting on Revelation 9:11, The Interpreter's Bible says: "Abaddon, however, is an angel not of Satan but of God, performing his work of destruction at God's biddina."

In the Hebrew scriptures just considered, it is evident that 'avad·dohn' is paralleled with Sheol and death. At Revelation 1:18 we find Christ Jesus stating: "I am living forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." His power with regard to the abyss is shown at Luke 8:31. That he has destroying power, including the power of destruction over Satan, is evident from Hebrews 2:14, which says that Jesus partook of blood and flesh in order that "through his death he might bring to nothing the one having the means to cause death, that is, the Devil." At Revelation 19:11-16 he is clearly represented as God's appointed Destroyer or Executioner.—See APOLLYON.

Bible Reading

2

(Revelation 7:1-12) After this I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds of the earth, so that no wind could blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. ² And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrise, having a seal of the living God; and he called 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 or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel: 5 Out of the tribe of Judah 12,000 sealed; out of the tribe of Reu'ben 12,000; out of the tribe of Gad 12,000; 6 out of the tribe of Ash'er 12,000; out of the tribe of Naph'ta-li 12,000; out of the tribe of Ma·nas'seh 12,000; 7 out of the tribe of Sim'e-on 12,000; out of the tribe of Le'vi 12,000; out of the tribe of Is'sa-char 12,000; 8 out of the tribe of Zeb'u·lun 12,000; out of the tribe of Joseph 12,000; out of the tribe of Benjamin 12,000 sealed. 9 After this I saw, and look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. 10 And they keep shouting with a loud voice, saying: "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell facedown before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying: "Amen! Let the praise and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

DECEMBER 9-15

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | REVELA-TION 10-12

"'Two Witnesses' Are Killed and Brought Back to Life"

(**Revelation 11:3**) I will cause my two witnesses to prophesy for 1,260 days dressed in sackcloth."

w14 11/15 30 Questions From Readers

Who are the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation chapter 11?

Revelation 11:3 speaks of two witnesses who would prophesy for 1,260 days. The account then says that the wild beast would "conquer them and kill them." But after "three and a half days," these two witnesses would be brought back to life, much to the amazement of all onlookers.—Rev. 11:7, 11.

Who are these two witnesses? The details of the account help us to identify them. First, we are told that they "are symbolized by the two olive trees and the two lampstands." (Rev. 11:4) This reminds us of the lampstand and two olive trees described in the prophecy of Zechariah. Those olive trees were said to picture "the two anointed ones," that is, Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua, "standing alongside the Lord of the whole earth." (Zech. 4:1-3, 14) Second, the two witnesses are described as performing signs similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah.—Compare Revelation 11:5, 6 with Numbers 16:1-7, 28-35 and 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45.

What is the common denominator that links these references? In each case, the account refers to God's anointed ones who took the lead during a difficult time of testing. So in the fulfillment of Revelation chapter 11, the anointed brothers who took the lead at the time of the establishment of God's Kingdom in heaven in 1914 preached "in sackcloth" for three and a half years.

At the end of their preaching in sackcloth, these anointed ones were symbolically killed when they were thrown into prison for a comparatively shorter period of time, a symbolic three and a half *days*. In the eyes of the enemies of God's people, their work had been killed, causing those opponents much joy.—Rev. 11:8-10.

However, true to the words of the prophecy, at the end of the three and a half days, the two witnesses were brought back to life. Not only were these anointed ones released from prison but those who remained faithful received a special appointment from God through their Lord, Jesus Christ. In 1919 they were among those who were appointed to serve as a "faithful and discreet slave" to care for the spiritual needs of God's people during the last days.—Matt. 24:45-47; Rev. 11:11, 12.

Interestingly, Revelation 11:1, 2 links these events to a time when the spiritual temple would be measured, or evaluated. Malachi chapter 3 mentions a similar inspection of the spiritual temple, followed by a time of cleansing. (Mal. 3:1-4) How long did this inspection and cleansing work take? It extended from 1914 to the early part of 1919. This period of time includes both the 1,260 days (42 months) and the symbolic three and a half days referred to in Revelation chapter 11.

How happy we are that Jehovah arranged for this spiritual refining work to cleanse a special people for fine works! (Titus 2:14) Additionally, we appreciate the example set by the faithful anointed ones who took the lead during that time of testing and thereby served as the symbolic two witnesses.

(Revelation 11:7) When they have finished their witnessing, the wild beast that ascends out of the abyss will wage war with them and conquer them and kill them.

(Revelation 11:11) After the three and a half days, spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell upon those who saw them.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Revelation 10:9, 10) I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. He said to me: "Take it and eat it up, and it will make

your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet like honey." ¹⁰ I took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet like honey, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

it-2 880-881 Scroll, Roll

Symbolic Use. There are several instances of symbolic use of the word "scroll" in the Bible. Ezekiel and Zechariah each saw a scroll with writing on both sides. Since only one side of a scroll was commonly used, writing on both sides may refer to the weightiness, extent, and seriousness of the judgments written in these scrolls. (Eze 2:9-3:3; Zec 5:1-4) In the vision of Revelation, the one on the throne held in his right hand a scroll having seven seals, preventing detection of what was written until God's Lamb opened them. (Re 5:1, 12; 6:1, 12-14) Later in the vision John himself was presented a scroll and was commanded to eat it. It tasted sweet to John but made his belly bitter. Since the scroll was open and not sealed, it was something that was to be understood. It was "sweet" to John to get the message contained therein but apparently had bitter things for him to prophesy, as he was told to do. (Re 10:1-11) Ezekiel had a similar experience with the scroll presented to him in which there were "dirges and moaning and wailing."-Eze 2:10.

(Revelation 12:1-5) Then a great sign was seen in heaven: A woman was arrayed with the sun, and the moon was beneath her feet, and on her head was a crown of 12 stars, ² and she was pregnant. And she was crying out in her pains and in her agony to give birth. ³ Another sign was seen in heaven. Look! A great fiery-colored dragon, with seven heads and ten horns and on its heads seven diadems; ⁴ and its tail drags a third of the stars of heaven, and it hurled them down to the earth. And the dragon kept stand-

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ing before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth, it might devour her child. ⁵ And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away to God and to his throne.

it-2 187 ¶7-9 Labor Pains

In the apostle John's vision in Revelation he saw a heavenly woman crying out "in her pains and in her agony to give birth." The child born was "a son, a male, who is to shepherd all the nations with an iron rod." In spite of the dragon's efforts to devour it, "her child was caught away to God and to his throne." (Re 12:1, 2, 4-6) The son's being caught away by God would denote God's acceptance of the child as his own, even as it was customary in ancient times to present a newborn child before its father for acceptance. (See BIRTH.) It would follow that the "woman" is God's "wife," the "Jerusalem above," the "mother" of Christ and his spiritual brothers.—Ga 4:26; Heb 2:11, 12, 17.

God's heavenly "woman" would, of course, be perfect, and the birth would be without literal pain. The labor pains would, therefore, symbolically indicate that the "woman" would realize that the birth was at hand; she would be in expectation of it shortly.—Re 12:2.

Who would this "son, a male," be? He was to "shepherd all the nations with an iron rod." This was foretold of God's Messianic King, at Psalm 2:6-9. But John saw this vision long after Christ's birth on earth and his death and resurrection. The vision would therefore appear to refer to the birth of the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of God's Son Jesus Christ, who, on being raised from the dead, "sat down at the right hand of God, from then on awaiting until his enemies should be placed as a stool for his feet."—Heb 10:12, 13; Ps 110:1; Re 12:10.

Bible Reading

(Revelation 10:1-11) And I saw another strong angel descending from heaven, arrayed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire, 2 and he had in his hand a little scroll that had been unrolled. And he set his right foot on the sea, but his left one on the earth, 3 and he cried out with a loud voice just as when a lion roars. And when he cried out, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 Now when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write, but I heard a voice out of heaven say: "Seal up the things the seven thunders spoke, and do not write them down." 5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the earth raised his right hand to heaven, 6 and he swore by the One who lives forever and ever, who created the heaven and the things in it and the earth and the things in it and the sea and the things in it: "There will be no delay any longer. ⁷ But in the days when the seventh angel is about to blow his trumpet, the sacred secret that God declared as good news to his own slaves the prophets is indeed brought to a finish." 8 And I heard the voice out of heaven speaking again with me and saying: "Go, take the opened scroll that is in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the earth." 9 I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll. He said to me: "Take it and eat it up, and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet like honey." 10 I took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet like honey, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. 11 And they said to me: "You must prophesy again about peoples and nations and tongues and many kinas."

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DECEMBER 16-22

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | REVELA-TION 13-16

"Do Not Fear the Fearsome Beasts"

(Revelation 13:1, 2) And it stood still on the sand of the sea. And I saw a wild beast ascending out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, and on its horns ten diadems, but on its heads blasphemous names. ² Now the wild beast that I saw was like a leopard, but its feet were like those of a bear, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave to the beast its power and its throne and great authority.

w12 6/15 8 ¶6 Jehovah Is "a Revealer of Secrets"

6 At the close of the first century C.E., the resurrected Jesus gave the apostle John a series of stunning visions. (Rev. 1:1) In one of them, John saw the Devil, represented as a dragon, standing on the shore of a vast sea. (Read Revelation 13:1, 2.) John also saw a strange beast rise from that sea and receive great authority from the Devil. An angel later indicates to John that the seven heads of a scarlet beast, which is an image of the beast of Revelation 13:1, represent "seven kings," or governments. (Rev. 13:14, 15; 17:3, 9, 10) At the time of John's writing, five of those had fallen, one was currently in power, and one had "not yet arrived." What is the identity of those kingdoms, or world powers? Let us consider each of the heads of the beast described in Revelation. We will also see how the writings of Daniel added detailed insights into many of these kingdoms, sometimes centuries before they came into existence.

(Revelation 13:11) Then I saw another wild beast ascending out of the earth, and it had two horns like a lamb, but it began speaking like a dragon.

(Revelation 13:15) And it was permitted to give breath to the image of the wild beast, so that the image of the wild beast should both speak and cause to be killed all those who refuse to worship the image of the wild beast.

re 194 ¶26 Contending With Two Ferocious Beasts

²⁶ What can it be? The Anglo-American World Power-the same as the seventh head of the first wild beast but in a special role! Isolating it in the vision as a separate wild beast helps us to see more clearly how it acts independently on the world stage. This figurative two-horned wild beast is made up of two coexisting, independent, but cooperating political powers. Its two horns "like a lamb" suggest that it makes itself out to be mild and inoffensive, with an enlightened form of government to which all the world should turn. But it speaks "as a dragon" in that it uses pressure and threats and even outright violence wherever its version of rulership is not accepted. It has not encouraged submission to God's Kingdom under the rule of the Lamb of God but, rather, to the interests of Satan, the great dragon, It has promoted nationalistic divisions and hatreds that add up to worshipping the first wild beast.

re 195 ¶30-31 Contending With Two Ferocious Beasts

³⁰ The outworking of history identifies this image as the organization proposed, promoted, and supported by Britain and the United States and known initially as the League of Nations. Later, in Revelation chapter 17, it will appear under a different symbol, that of a living, breathing scarlet-colored wild beast having an independent existence. This international body 'speaks,' in that it makes boastful claims to be the only one able to bring peace and security to mankind. But in reality it has become a forum for member nations to exchange verbal

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tirades and insults. It has threatened with ostracism, or a living death, any nation or people that does not bow to its authority. The League of Nations actually expelled nations that failed to abide by its ideologies. At the onset of the great tribulation, militaristic "horns" of this image of the wild beast will fulfill a devastating role.—Revelation 7:14; 17:8, 16.

31 Since World War II, the image of the wild beast-now manifested as the United Nations organization—has already killed in a literal way. For example, in 1950 a UN force took the field in the war between North Korea and South Korea. The UN force, along with the South Koreans, killed an estimated 1,420,000 North Koreans and Chinese. Similarly, from 1960 to 1964, United Nations armies were active in the Congo (Kinshasa). Moreover, world leaders, including popes Paul VI and John Paul II, have continued to affirm that this image is man's last and best hope for peace. If mankind fails to serve it, they insist, the human race will destroy itself. They thus figuratively cause to be killed all humans who refuse to go along with the image and worship it.—Deuteronomy 5:8, 9.

(Revelation 13:16, 17) It puts under compulsion all people—the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the free and the slaves—that these should be marked on their right hand or on their forehead, ¹⁷ and that nobody can buy or sell except a person having the mark, the name of the wild beast or the number of its name.

w09 2/15 4 ¶2 Highlights From the Book of Revelation—II

13:16, 17. Despite the hardships we may encounter in carrying out such everyday activities as 'buying or selling,' we should not allow ourselves to be pressured into letting the wild beast rule our lives. Accepting 'the mark of the wild beast in our hand or upon our forehead'

would amount to permitting the wild beast to control our actions or affect our thinking.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Revelation 16:13, 14) And I saw three unclean inspired expressions that looked like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and they perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty.

w09 2/15 4 ¶5 Highlights From the Book of Revelation—II

16:13-16. "Unclean inspired expressions" symbolize demonic propaganda intended to ensure that the kings of the earth are not swayed by the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's anger but instead are maneuvered into opposition to Jehovah.—Matt. 24:42, 44.

(Revelation 16:21) Then great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, fell from heaven on the people, and the people blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague was unusually great.

w15 7/15 16 ¶9 "Your Deliverance Is Getting Near"!

⁹ This will *not* be the time to preach the "good news of the Kingdom." That time will have passed. The time for "the end" will have come! (Matt. 24:14) No doubt God's people will proclaim a hard-hitting judgment message. This may well involve a declaration announcing that Satan's wicked world is about to come to its complete end. The Bible likens this message to hailstones when it says: "Great hailstones, each about the weight of a talent, fell from heaven on the people, and the people blasphemed God because of the plague of hail, for the plague was unusually great."—Rev. 16:21.

Bible Reading

(Revelation 16:1-16) And I heard a loud voice out of the sanctuary say to the seven angels: "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the anger of God on the earth." 2 The first one went off and poured out his bowl on the earth. And a hurtful and malignant ulcer afflicted the people who had the mark of the wild beast and who were worshipping its image. 3 The second one poured out his bowl into the sea. And it became blood like that of a dead man, and every living creature died, yes, the things in the sea. 4 The third one poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water. And they became blood. 5 I heard the angel over the waters say: "You, the One who is and who was, the loyal One, are righteous, for you have issued these judgments, 6 because they poured out the blood of holy ones and of prophets, and you have given them blood to drink; they deserve it." ⁷ And I heard the altar say: "Yes, Jehovah God, the Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments." 8 The fourth one poured out his bowl on the sun, and to the sun it was granted to scorch the people with fire. 9 And the people were scorched by the great heat, but they blasphemed the name of God, who has the authority over these plagues, and they did not repent and give glory to him. 10 The fifth one poured out his bowl on the throne of the wild beast. And its kingdom became darkened, and they began to gnaw their tongues because of their pain, 11 but they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their ulcers, and they did not repent of their works. 12 The sixth one poured out his bowl on the great river Eu-phra'tes, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the rising of the sun. ¹³ And I saw three unclean inspired expressions that looked like frogs come out of the

mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and they perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ "Look! I am coming as a thief. Happy is the one who stays awake and keeps his outer garments, so that he may not walk naked and people look upon his shamefulness." ¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Armageddon.

DECEMBER 23-29

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | REVELA-TION 17-19

"God's War to End All Wars"

(Revelation 19:11) I saw heaven opened, and look! a white horse. And the one seated on it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness.

(Revelation 19:14-16) Also, the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. ¹⁵ And out of his mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which to strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his outer garment, yes, on his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

w08 4/1 8 $\P3-4$ Armageddon—God's War to End All Wars

As long as wicked people hold power, righteous people will not enjoy peace and security. (Proverbs 29:2; Ecclesiastes 8:9) Realistically, we cannot divorce corruption and wickedness from the people who practice them. Thus, lasting peace and justice come at a price—the removal of the wicked ones. "The wicked is a ransom

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for the righteous one," Solomon wrote.—Proverbs 21:18.

Since God is the Judge, we can be sure that in every case the judgments against the wicked will be righteous. "Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" asked Abraham. The answer, Abraham learned, is that Jehovah is *always* right! (Genesis 18:25) Furthermore, the Bible assures us that Jehovah finds no delight in destroying the wicked; he does so only as a last resort.—Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

it-1 1146 ¶1 Horse

In the apostle John's symbolic vision, the glorified Jesus Christ is depicted as riding a white horse and as being accompanied by an army, all of whose members are seated on white horses. This vision was revealed to John as representing the righteousness and justice of the war that Christ will wage against all enemies on behalf of his God and Father, Jehovah. (Re 19:11, 14) Earlier, Christ's taking kingly action and the calamities that follow are represented by different horsemen and their mounts.—Re 6:2-8.

(Revelation 19:19, 20) And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the wild beast was caught, and along with it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who worship its image. While still alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulfur.

re 286 ¶24 The Warrior-King Triumphs at Armageddon

²⁴ The seven-headed, ten-horned wild beast out of the sea, representing Satan's political organization, is tumbled into oblivion, and along with it goes the false prophet, the seventh world

power. (Revelation 13:1, 11-13; 16:13) While still "alive," or still functioning in their united opposition to God's people on earth, they are cast into "the lake of fire." Is this a literal lake of fire? No, not any more than the wild beast and the false prophet are literal animals. Rather, it is a symbol of complete, final destruction, a place of no return. Here is where, later, death and Hades, as well as the Devil himself, will be hurled. (Revelation 20:10, 14) It is certainly not an inferno of eternal torture for the wicked, since the very idea of such a place is detestable to Jehovah.—Jeremiah 19:5; 32:35; 1 John 4:8, 16.

(Revelation 19:21) But the rest were killed off with the long sword that proceeded out of the mouth of the one seated on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

re 286 ¶25

The Warrior-King Triumphs at Armageddon

²⁵ All others who were not directly part of government but who were nevertheless an irreformable part of this corrupt world of mankind are likewise "killed off with the long sword of the one seated on the horse." Jesus will pronounce them deserving of death. Since in their case the lake of fire is not mentioned, are we to expect that they will have a resurrection? Nowhere are we told that those executed by Jehovah's Judge at that time are to be resurrected. As Jesus himself stated, all those who are not "sheep" go off "into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels," that is, "into everlasting cutting-off." (Matthew 25:33, 41, 46) This climaxes "the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men."-2 Peter 3:7; Nahum 1:2, 7-9; Malachi 4:1.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

9

(Revelation 17:8) The wild beast that you saw was, but is not, and yet is about to ascend out of the abyss, and it is to go off into destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth

—those whose names have not been written in the scroll of life from the founding of the world—will be amazed when they see how the wild beast was, but is not, and yet will be present.

re 247-248 ¶5-6 An Awesome Mystery Solved

5 "The wild beast . . . was." Yes, it had existed as the League of Nations from January 10, 1920, onward, with 63 nations participating at one time or another. But, in turn, Japan, Germany, and Italy withdrew, and the former Soviet Union was dropped from the League. In September 1939 the Nazi dictator of Germany launched World War II. Having failed to keep peace in the world, the League of Nations virtually plunged into an abyss of inactivity. By 1942 it had become a has-been. Neither before this nor at some later date-but right at that critical time-did Jehovah interpret to his people the full depth of meaning of the vision! At the New World Theocratic Assembly, N. H. Knorr could declare, in line with the prophecy, that "the wild beast . . . is not." He then asked the guestion, "Will the League remain in the pit?" Quoting Revelation 17:8, he answered: "The association of worldly nations will rise again." That is just how it proved to be—in vindication of Jehovah's prophetic Word!

Ascending out of the Abyss

⁶ The scarlet-colored wild beast did indeed climb out of the abyss. On June 26, 1945, with noisy fanfare in San Francisco, U.S.A., 50 nations voted to accept the Charter of the United Nations organization. This body was "to maintain international peace and security." There were many similarities between the League and the UN. *The World Book Encyclopedia* notes: "In some ways, the UN resembles the League of Nations, which was organized after World War I . . . Many of the nations that founded

the UN had also founded the League. Like the League, the UN was established to help keep peace between nations. The main organs of the UN are much like those of the League." The UN, then, is actually a revival of the scarlet-colored wild beast. Its membership of some 190 nations far exceeds that of the League's 63; it has also taken on broader responsibilities than its predecessor.

(Revelation 17:16, 17) And the ten horns that you saw and the wild beast, these will hate the prostitute and will make her devastated and naked, and they will eat up her flesh and completely burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought, yes, to carry out their one thought by giving their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God will have been accomplished.

w12 6/15 18 ¶17 Jehovah Reveals What "Must Shortly Take Place"

¹⁷ False religion, however, will not just fade away. The harlot will remain a potent force, attempting to bend kings to her will until God plants an idea in the hearts of those in power. (*Read Revelation 17:16, 17.*) Soon Jehovah will cause the political elements of Satan's system, as represented by the United Nations, to attack false religion. They will destroy her influence and devastate her riches. Such an event may have seemed unlikely just decades ago. Today, the harlot teeters on the back of the scarlet-colored beast. Even so, she will not slip slowly from her seat. Her tumble will be sudden and violent.—Rev. 18:7, 8, 15-19.

Bible Reading

(Revelation 17:1-11) One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me: "Come, I will show you the judgment on the great prostitute who sits on many waters,

² with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality, and earth's inhabitants were made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality." 3 And he carried me away in the power of the spirit into a wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet-colored wild beast that was full of blasphemous names and that had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and she was adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, and she had in her hand a golden cup that was full of disgusting things and the unclean things of her sexual immorality. 5 On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: "Babylon the Great, the mother of the prostitutes and of the disgusting things of the earth." 6 And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Well, on seeing her I was greatly amazed. 7 So the angel said to me: "Why is it that you were amazed? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the wild beast that is carrying her and that has the seven heads and the ten horns: 8 The wild beast that you saw was, but is not, and yet is about to ascend out of the abyss, and it is to go off into destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth—those whose names have not been written in the scroll of life from the founding of the world-will be amazed when they see how the wild beast was, but is not, and yet will be present. 9 "This calls for a mind that has wisdom: The seven heads mean seven mountains, where the woman sits on top. 10 And there are seven kings: Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet arrived; but when he does arrive, he must remain a short while. 11 And the wild beast that was but is not, it is also an eighth king, but it springs from the seven, and it goes off into destruction.

DECEMBER 30-JANUARY 5

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | REVELA-TION 20-22

"Look! I Am Making All Things New"

(Revelation 21:1) And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more.

re 301 ¶2

A New Heaven and a New Earth

² Hundreds of years before John's day, Jehovah had said to Isaiah: "For here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." (Isaiah 65: 17; 66:22) This prophecy was initially fulfilled when faithful Jews returned to Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E. after their 70-year exile in Babylon. In that restoration, they formed a cleansed society, "a new earth," under a new governmental system, "new heavens." The apostle Peter, however, pointed to a further application of the prophecy, saying: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) John now shows that this promise is fulfilled during the Lord's day. "The former heaven and the former earth," Satan's organized system of things with its governmental structure influenced by Satan and his demons, will pass away. The turbulent "sea" of wicked, rebellious mankind will cease to exist. In its place will be "a new heaven and a new earth"—a new earthly society under a new government, God's Kingdom.—Compare Revelation 20:11.

(Revelation 21:3, 4) With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them. 4 And he will wipe

out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

w13 12/1 11 ¶2-4 "Look! I Am Making All Things New"

"[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 21:4) What kind of tears will he wipe out? Neither tears of joy nor the tears that protect our eyes. God's promise refers to tears caused by suffering and sorrow. God will not merely dry off such tears; he will wipe them out completely by removing the causes of unwanted tears—suffering and sorrow.

"Death will be no more." (Revelation 21:4) What has caused more unwanted tears than the enemy death? Jehovah will release obedient humans from the grip of death. How? By eliminating the real cause of death: sin inherited from Adam. (Romans 5:12) Jehovah will lift obedient humans to perfection on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. Then the last enemy, death, will be "brought to nothing." (1 Corinthians 15:26) Faithful humans will be able to live as God purposed for them to live—forever in perfect health.

"Neither will . . . pain be anymore." (Revelation 21:4) What kind of pain will be no more? All the mental, emotional, and physical pain that has resulted from sin and imperfection and made life miserable for countless millions will be no more.

(Revelation 21:5) And the One seated on the throne said: "Look! I am making all things new." Also he says: "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

w03 8/1 12 $\P14$ Jehovah, the God of Truth

¹⁴ We should take seriously what Jehovah tells us in his Word. He is what he says he is, and he will do what he says he will do. We have

every reason to trust in God. We can believe it when Jehovah says that he will bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 1:8) We may also take Jehovah at his word when he says that he loves those who pursue righteousness, when he says that he will grant everlasting life to those who exercise faith, and when he says that he will eliminate pain, outcry, and even death. Jehovah underscored the reliability of this last promise by giving this instruction to the apostle John: "Write, because these words are faithful and true."—Revelation 21:4, 5; Proverbs 15:9; John 3:36.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Revelation 20:5) (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1,000 years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.

it-2 249 ¶2 Life

In his command to Adam, God implied that if Adam obeyed, he would not die. (Ge 2:17) So with obedient mankind, when man's last enemy, death, is brought to nothing, there will be no sin working in their bodies to bring death. To time indefinite they will not need to die. (1Co 15:26) This bringing of death to nothing takes place at the end of Christ's reign, which the book of Revelation shows is 1,000 years long. Here it is said of those becoming kings and priests with Christ that they "came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for a thousand years." "The rest of the dead" not coming to life "until the thousand years were ended" must be those alive at the end of the thousand years, but before Satan is released from the abyss and brings the decisive test on mankind. By the end of the thousand years, people on earth will have reached human perfection, being in the condition that Adam and Eve were in before they sinned. Now they will really have life in

perfection. Those who thereafter pass the test when Satan is released for a short time from the abyss will be able to enjoy that life forever.

—Re 20:4-10.

(Revelation 20:14, 15) And death and the Grave were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ Furthermore, whoever was not found written in the book of life was hurled into the lake of fire.

it-2 189-190 Lake of Fire

This expression occurs only in the book of Revelation and is clearly symbolic. The Bible gives its own explanation and definition of the symbol by stating: "This means *the second death*, the lake of fire."—Re 20:14; 21:8.

The symbolic quality of the lake of fire is further evident from the context of references to it in the book of Revelation. Death is said to be hurled into this lake of fire. (Re 19:20; 20: 14) Death obviously cannot be literally burned. Moreover, the Devil, an invisible spirit creature, is thrown into the lake. Being spirit, he cannot be hurt by literal fire.—Re 20:10; compare Ex 3:2 and Jg 13:20.

Since the lake of fire represents "the *second* death" and since Revelation 20:14 says that both "death and Hades" are to be cast into it, it is evident that the lake cannot represent the death man has inherited from Adam (Ro 5:12), nor does it refer to Hades (Sheol). It must, therefore, be symbolic of another kind of death, one that is without reversal, for the record nowhere speaks of the "lake" as giving up those in it, as do Adamic death and Hades (Sheol). (Re 20:13) Thus, those not found written in "the book of life," unrepentant opposers of God's sovereignty, are hurled into the lake of fire, meaning eternal destruction, or the second death.—Re 20:15.

Bible Reading

(Revelation 20:1-15) And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for 1,000 years. 3 And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not mislead the nations anymore until the 1,000 years were ended. After this he must be released for a little while. 4 And I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. Yes, I saw the souls of those executed for the witness they gave about Jesus and for speaking about God, and those who had not worshipped the wild beast or its image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand. And they came to life and ruled as kings with the Christ for 1,000 years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the 1.000 years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and they will rule as kings with him for the 1,000 years. 7 Now as soon as the 1,000 years have ended, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and he will go out to mislead those nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Ma'gog, to gather them together for the war. The number of these is as the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they advanced over the whole earth and encircled the camp of the holy ones and the beloved city. But fire came down out of heaven and consumed them. 10 And the Devil who was misleading them was hurled into the lake of fire and sulfur, where both the wild beast and the false prophet already were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 And I saw a great white

throne and the One seated on it. From before him the earth and the heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. The dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the Grave gave up the dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds. 14 And death and the Grave were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death, the lake of fire. 15 Furthermore, whoever was not found written in the book of life was hurled into the lake of fire.