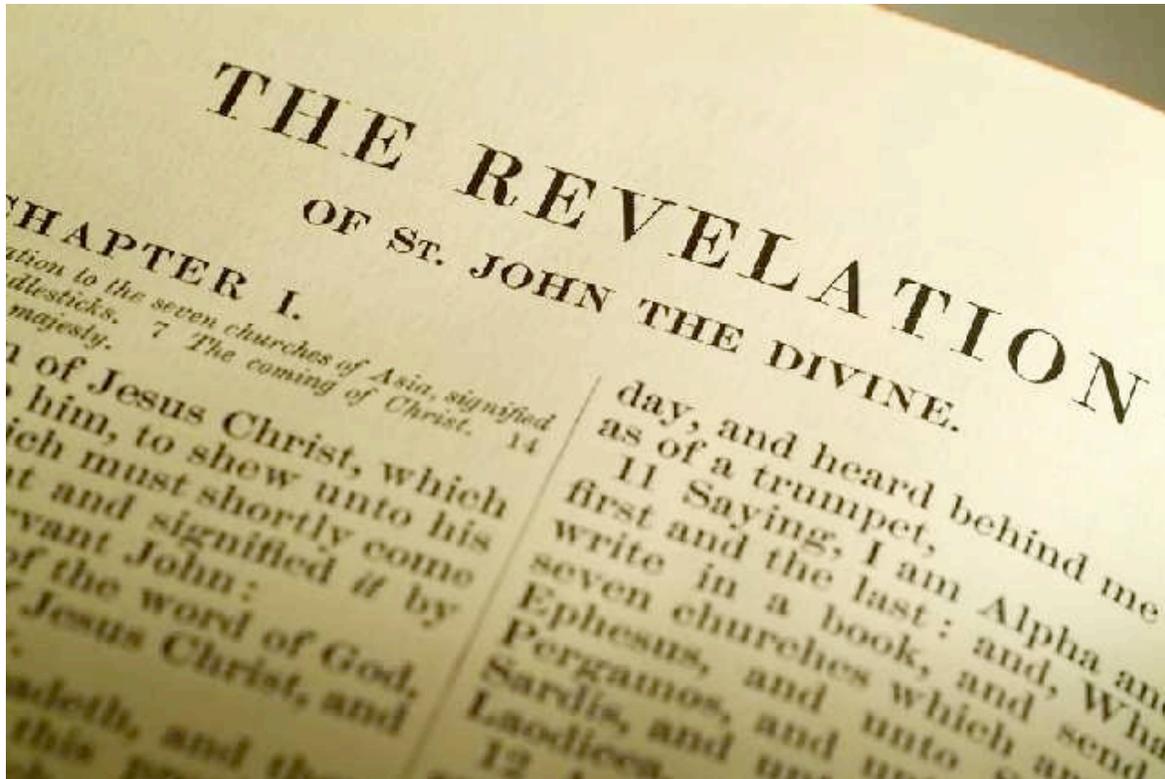


# THE FIFTH FACET: REVELATION 12-15



*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

T. M. MOORE

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Revelation: The Fifth Facet*  
*Revelation 12-15*

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## Revelation 12-15

As John leads us to consider this fifth facet of the Lord's engagement ring – the book of Revelation – we discover just how powerful sin can be, and how hard it can be to persevere in seeking the Kingdom amid the trials and tribulations of these last days.

John shows us a vision of sin becoming “institutionalized” in abusive government and false religion. The wrath of men turns against the people of God, driven by Satanic influences, while the wrath of God is poured out and coming against all those who rebel against Him.

Meanwhile, the redeemed of the Lord continue in their testimony of Jesus and obedience to the commandments of God. Thus, aided by angels, they prove the reality of Christ's resurrection and life-changing power.

This facet ends with a solemn portent of judgment coming in the sixth facet unto the end of days.

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We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

T. M. Moore, Principal  
[tmmoore@ailbe.org](mailto:tmmoore@ailbe.org)

## 1 The Spiritual Backdrop

### *Week 7, Monday: The Child, the devil, and the Church*

Jesus is showing John visions to help us exercise patient endurance amid the tribulations of this world as we seek more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God (Rev. 1.9). In chapter 9 we were introduced to a spiritual power which was unleashed on the earth, bringing great harm to human beings. This is the same power referred to in Revelation 2.9, 13, and 24, and Revelation 3.9 as working to subvert the cause of Christ from within His churches as well as from without.

Revelation 12 takes us back to the beginning of this spiritual upheaval, and thus provides a larger backdrop for understanding what has previously been described concerning Satan and his ways.

### *Read Revelation 12*

### *Meditate on Revelation 12.1-17*

1. Let's approach this chapter chronologically. The first event, in the order of events, is what we see in verses 7-9 and verse 4a. Meditate on Ezekiel 28.11-19 and Isaiah 14.12-21. These two passages from the prophets have a historical grounding (Babylon and Tyre), but they clearly also point to the situation described in Revelation 12.7-9, 4a. What similarities bring these three passages together? Taking the three passages together, outline the reason for Satan's being cast out from heaven:
2. The next event in time is Revelation 12.1. 2. What does this describe? What do you make of the ways the woman is described? What does this description of her suggest about the Child she bears?
3. Next in time come verses 4b, 5a, 10, 5b, 13, and 14. How can you see in these verses a summary of the four gospels and the book of Acts? Which specific events can you identify? Notice also the connection between the time mentioned in verse 14 and that mentioned in 11.2, 3 – each of which is approximately 3 ½ years. Any thoughts about this?
4. Verses 15 and 16 follow next, and include all the events in time which John has seen thus far. What do you make of the image of the earth “helping” the woman, and who does the woman now represent?
5. Finally, verse 17 should be taken together with verses 11 and 12. How can you see the “Kingdom, tribulation, patient endurance” theme being played out here? How are the “offspring of the woman” described? Who are they (chapter 11)?

### *My Reflection*

Should you consider yourself one of the “offspring of the woman”? If so, what are the implications of this for your everyday life?

### *The Glory of God*

This chapter reminds us that God is sovereign over all things, whether in the spiritual or material worlds. How can you see that? How should this affect our confidence in God as we “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”?

### *Glory to Glory*

God is glorious, even in the background, as in this chapter. How should you expect God to show His glory

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through you during this time of Kingdom, tribulation, and patient endurance? What kind of opposition can you expect as you pursue this course?

*Memorize*

Our memory verses for this week are Revelation 12.10, 11. Write these verses on an index card, using your preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage. How should these verses encourage you in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Closing Prayer*

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!  
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!  
For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;  
*He is* a great King over all the earth.  
He will subdue the peoples under us,  
And the nations under our feet.  
He will choose our inheritance for us,  
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves. *Selah*  
God has gone up with a shout,  
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises!  
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!  
For God *is* the King of all the earth;  
Sing praises with understanding.  
God reigns over the nations;  
God sits on His holy throne.  
The princes of the people have gathered together,  
The people of the God of Abraham.  
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;  
He is greatly exalted.

Psalm 47

## 2 The Beast from the Sea

*Week 7, Tuesday: Political power abused*

Jesus directs our attention now from the background spiritual events of our experience in the world to the historical details and challenges facing the Church – the offspring of the woman – in every age. A great beast emerges “out of the sea” and commands the loyalty of all those whose names do not appear in the Lamb’s book of life.

We’re still “reading” the contents of that book, and we’re still having to contend with this self-vaunting, rapacious “beast.” Sin, we see, is becoming institutionalized.

*Read Revelation 13*

*Meditate on Revelation 13.1-10*

1. There are good reasons to suppose that this “beast” represents political power – not a *particular* political entity so much as a *general tendency* and *recurring trend*. To what would you point in this vision to support that?
2. Meditate on Romans 13.1-5. Is all political power a “beast”? According to Revelation 13.1-10, what turns God’s “servants” into “beasts” like the one in this vision?
3. This beast speaks “great things and blasphemies.” When governments make laws that put them in the place of God, or that countermand teachings of God’s Law, they are exalting themselves and blaspheming against the Lord. What would be some examples of governments or nations doing this? Have governments throughout the “last days” (note the time parameter in verse 5) done this?
4. The people of the earth “worship” (literally, “kneel before”) this beast. Is it necessary to describe such obeisance in strictly “religious” terms? How else might we think of such “bowing” before government? When people “worship” political power like this, what are they really “worshipping” (v. 4)? Does this mean they are necessarily *aware* of this fact?
5. How can you see in verse 7 a snapshot of what we saw in chapter 12? No nation, tribe, or people is free from the exercise of political power (v. 7), and political power that will not submit to God *must* submit to the enemy of God and His people. What does this suggest for the believer’s calling to seek the Kingdom within any political framework?

*My Reflection*

Can you afford to be indifferent to political matters? Meditate on Ephesians 5.15-17. What opportunities for influencing government are available to you? If believers fail to make the most of these opportunities, what can we expect?

*The Glory of God*

God is in the background still, and we know that He is sovereign. Meditate on Proverbs 21.1, John 19.10, 11, and Romans 9.16-24. How do these help us in understanding why God might unloose such a “beast out of the sea” on earth during these last days?

*Glory to Glory*

Politicians and governments have real power, and they exercise it over the lives of real people. We do not

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look to politics and government for salvation, but to God. But we *do* look to government to fulfill its calling as God's servant for good. What does that require of you, both in terms of loving God and loving your neighbors?

*Memorize*

Let's look more closely at our memory verses, Revelation 12.10, 11. Recite your memory verses aloud. Is the "accuser of our brethren" seeking to use government against the purposes and plans of God in our day? How does your memory verse counsel us to "overcome" this effort?

*Closing Prayer*

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth;  
Break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.  
Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
With the harp and the sound of a psalm,  
With trumpets and the sound of a horn;  
Shout joyfully before the LORD, the King.  
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness,  
The world and those who dwell in it;  
Let the rivers clap *their* hands;  
Let the hills be joyful together before the LORD,  
For He is coming to judge the earth.  
With righteousness He shall judge the world,  
And the peoples with equity.

Psalm 98.4-9

### 3 The Beast from the Earth

#### *Week 7, Wednesday: False religion*

A second beast emerges, having a strictly “earthly” provenance. He is introduced by spiritual referents, but his purpose is anything but holy. This beast embodies every false religion that has sought to make people captive to merely human schemes and power, some of which we’ve already seen in Jesus’ letters to the churches of Asia Minor.

#### *Read Revelation 13*

#### *Meditate on Revelation 13.11-18*

1. How many different “spiritual” referents can you identify associated with this beast (cf. vv. 11, 13, 14, 15)? But how can you tell from verses 15-18 that the “spiritual” purposes of this beast are not in line with God’s economy?
2. Again, this beast does not represent any *particular* false religion, but *any* and *all* “religions” that enslave people to human schemes and power. In this respect, is secularism a false religion? Explain.
3. This beast can perform “great signs.” However, we need not think of these in supernatural terms only. “Great signs” are simply works that impress people enough to cause them to “worship” those who perform such works. Might *all* kinds of false religions be capable of “great signs” – including the false religions of *scientism* (not science *per se*), secularism, and so forth? Explain.
4. A close alliance exists between false religion and abusive political power. Can you cite any examples of this from your lifetime? Do you suppose this has been true throughout the “last days” since John was writing to the present?
5. Much is made of the “mark” of the beast – 666. But this is simply a way of indicating people who are committed to manmade and earthly schemes, rather than to God and His economy. The “mark” indicated on the “hand” or “forehead” may refer to the works or thoughts and plans of people (cf. Deut. 6.6-8). How can we tell when our works or thoughts or plans are beginning to stray from the divine economy to resemble more the works and thoughts and plans of false religion? Is there a hint to this answer in verse 17?

#### *My Reflection*

Does economic wellbeing ever threaten to become an idol in your life? How might you know if or when that was beginning to be the case?

#### *The Glory of God*

Again, God continues in the background. We’ve already seen that His book is unfolding these scenarios before us, and His angels are working out all the details of God’s sovereign rule on earth. How might God intend to use false religion to “test” the faith of His people (cf. Deut. 13.1-5)? Is it good for us to have to endure such “tests” from time to time? Why?

#### *Glory to Glory*

Many people in your Personal Mission Field are slaves to false religion, whether in the form of materialism, liberal Christianity, postmodernism, or other forms. What is your responsibility with respect to these people? Meditate on 1 Peter 3.15 as you think through your answer.

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*Memorize*

Recite your memory verses aloud: Revelation 12.10, 11. Share them with a Christian friend. Share any way that these verses have begun to affect your daily walk with the Lord.

*Closing Prayer*

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth.  
Why should the Gentiles say,  
“So where *is* their God?”  
But our God *is* in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases.  
Their idols *are* silver and gold,  
The work of men’s hands.  
They have mouths, but they do not speak;  
Eyes they have, but they do not see;  
They have ears, but they do not hear;  
Noses they have, but they do not smell;  
They have hands, but they do not handle;  
Feet they have, but they do not walk;  
Nor do they mutter through their throat.  
Those who make them are like them;  
*So is* everyone who trusts in them.

Psalm 115.1-8

## 4 Followers of the Lamb

*Week 7, Thursday: The redeemed of the Lord*

While all this horror is unfolding before us on earth – strictly according to what is written in the Lamb’s book – the redeemed of the Lord pursue their Kingdom course with patient endurance.

*Read Revelation 14*

*Meditate on Revelation 14.1-5*

1. How do we know that this part of John’s vision takes place “on earth”? What does Mt. Zion stand for here (cf. Heb. 12.18-23)? How can we see that there is a strong unity between these people on earth and those in heaven?
2. The “144,000” are the same we saw in Revelation 7.1-9. How would you describe their basic orientation to life? Should we expect the worship they display to affect the way they live on earth, like the “worship” given to the beast out of the sea? In what ways?
3. Verse 4 uses a common referent – defilement with women – to describe the general moral character of the redeemed of the Lord. Why is this a particularly apt referent? The implication here – taking in also verse 5 – ties back to the description of the offspring of the woman in Revelation 12.17. More specifically, how could we describe the moral character of those who are among the redeemed of the Lord?
4. The redeemed of the Lord sing a “new song” only they have truly learned. What do you suppose that “song” might be (think of all the songs we’ve seen thus far in Revelation)? Why are they the only ones who sing it?
5. So, while all around them wars, economic uncertainty, environmental contamination, lawlessness, oppression, political power-mongering, and false religion abound, what are the redeemed of the Lord doing? How does this harmonize with what we learned in chapter 11?

*My Reflection*

What forms does that “new song” take in your life? How many different ways do you “sing” that “song”?

*The Glory of God*

How does it glorify God that a people such as the redeemed of the Lord should continue to exist and bear witness during such times as we see unfolding on earth around us? What role does the believer’s “song” have in making God’s glory known?

*Glory to Glory*

Have you ever had a song or a melody get stuck in your brain for days on end? Have you ever been deeply moved by a song or concert of people singing? Do you have a favorite hymn or song that you just never seem to tire of hearing or singing? What does this suggest about the power of song? And what does the image of a “new song” suggest about the uniqueness of the Christian life during these last days? Does your life as a believer come to the world as “new song”? In what ways?

*Memorize*

Recite Revelation 12.10, 11. As you recite these verses, think about how you might put them into a song, perhaps using a familiar hymn tune or praise melody. Practice singing your song throughout the day.

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*Closing Prayer*

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!  
Sing to the LORD, all the earth.  
Sing to the LORD, bless His name;  
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.  
Declare His glory among the nations,  
His wonders among all peoples.  
For the LORD *is* great and greatly to be praised...

Psalm 96.1-4a

## 5 The Ongoing Gospel

*Week 7, Friday: The progress of the Gospel continues*

Angels are involved in the work of the Gospel, and the Gospel may be something other than what you typically think of when that term is in view.

*Read Revelation 14*

*Meditate on Revelation 14.6-13*

1. According to verse 9, how does the Gospel come, and to whom? But wait a second, aren't these the same people who are caught up in all the tribulation and trouble going on in the world? What's the message to the Church here?
2. According to verse 7, what is the first requirement of the Gospel (cf. Deut. 10.12-16)? Is this really part of the Gospel? Why? Is it possible truly to *believe* God or to *love* Him if we don't also *fear* Him? Explain.
3. Meditate on verses 7-11, and compare this with Romans 1.18-32. How is judgment presented here? In *final* terms only? Is the world presently under God's judgment? Should our proclamation of the Gospel include words of warning about judgment?
4. The "patience of the saints" – as they continue in the Kingdom amid the tribulation of the world – is found just here, in the work of the Gospel. Compare verse 12 with Revelation 12.17 and 14.4, 5. What is the "patience" of the saints"? What, therefore, is the Good News?
5. The saints who were truly in the Lord when they died (v. 13) are those who are distinguished as saints by their "labors" and "works" In what sense do the labors and works of true saints "follow them" (cf. Ps. 45.17; Matt. 28.18-20; 2 Tim. 2.2; Matt. 5.13-16)?

*My Reflection*

Based on what you've seen thus far in Revelation, write an outline of the Gospel as you might share it with someone in your Personal Mission Field?

*The Glory of God*

We don't know exactly how God uses angels to help with the proclamation of the Gospel. But *that* He does is clear enough from our passage. How should this encourage you in your own work of making God's Good News known?

*Glory to Glory*

What "labors" and "works" will follow you at the end of this week? Are you planning for them now? Praying about them daily? Making the most of the opportunities presented to you (Eph. 5.15-17)?

*Memorize*

Review Revelation 12.10, 11. Write a prayer based on these verses.

*Closing Prayer*

Pray the prayer you wrote from your memory verses. Write it on a card and carry it with you to pray it over and over today. Pray it and keep praying it until you sense your hunger for God's Word increasing.

## 6 The Harvest

*Week 7, Saturday: Another glimpse toward the end*

Again, we receive a glimpse toward the end, to assure us of the final disposition of all things, so that we will continue our patient endurance in the Kingdom amid the tribulations of these last days.

*Read Revelation 14*

*Meditate on Revelation 14.14-20*

1. Meditate on the parable of the wheat and the tares, Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43. In what ways does this parable resemble what we've seen in the book of Revelation? What in particular connects this parable with our passage today, and how does that help us to think about the timing of our passage?
2. Who is coordinating this "harvest"? How is He described (recall Daniel 7.13-27)?
3. What is the particular focus of this aspect of the harvest? How should knowing this help us to continue in patient endurance, seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God?
4. The Son of Man is advised that the time for harvest has come by an angel coming from the temple of God. Only the Father knows the time of the harvest, as Jesus testified (Acts 1.7, 8). Should believers speculate on such matters? Why not? What *should* we do, with respect to the coming harvest?
5. Again, we note that angels are involved in this harvest. Angels seem to have a lot to do with the unfolding of the divine economy, as we have seen. Meditate on Psalm 35.1-6. Should we seek the protection of angels? How? And for what reasons? And if we do, how should that affect our "new song"?

*My Reflection*

Would you say that "harvest" is a word that describes your approach to working your Personal Mission Field? Why or why not?

*The Glory of God*

Which aspects or characteristics of God come to light in His judgment? How is God glorified in judging the wicked?

*Glory to Glory*

Knowing that judgment is coming, indeed, is even now ongoing, how should this affect your approach to seeking the Kingdom and exercising patient endurance in the world of your Personal Mission Field? What is one step you can begin to take that will find you moving in that direction more consistently?

*Memorize*

Recite Revelation 12.10, 11. Pray through these verses in the light of everything we've seen so far in Revelation 12-14. Make the words your words. Tell the Lord how you plan to live for, serve, and worship Him as you "ride forth" with Him today.

*Closing Prayer*

The Lord *is* at Your right hand;  
He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath.  
He shall judge among the nations,

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He shall fill *the places* with dead bodies,  
He shall execute the heads of many countries.  
He shall drink of the brook by the wayside;  
Therefore He shall lift up the head.

Psalm 110.5-7

## 7 The Seven Plagues

*Week 7, Sunday: The beginning of the end*

This chapter could go in either the fifth or sixth facet. We include it here, with the fifth facet, to remind us that what occurs at the end of chapter 14 is not actually the end of all things, but merely a glimpse toward one aspect of it. More is yet to come, and more must be understood in order for the Church to continue enduring in the Kingdom amidst the tribulations of the world.

*Read Revelation 15*

*Meditate on Revelation 15.1-8*

1. It's safe to assume that what's about to follow is a further unpacking of the Lord's work of judging the earth in anticipation of the final judgment to come. All the parties in heaven seem to be pretty worked up about what's about to happen. Why? What are they anticipating?
2. The saints in heaven stand *on* the sea of glass and *above* the fire that is within it. What do you suppose this is meant to symbolize (given what we have seen about fire in Rev. 14.18)?
3. Here is another song from the chorus in heaven, celebrating the works of God (vv. 3, 4)? Which works appear to be in view? How should men respond to these works? Compare verse 4 with Philippians 2.9-11. How would you describe the "worship" which seems to be in view here?
4. Seven plagues of judgment are about to unfold on earth during the last days. These again are meant to be symbolic, intended as a measure of the severity of sin and the hatred God has of it. Meditate on Hebrews 12.3-11. Does God judge His people? In what ways? Why? Is that judgment meant to be pleasant? But is it meant to accomplish a good purpose? How might you summarize, in a general and overall sense, the role of divine judgment in the unfolding of the divine economy?
5. Entering the temple appears to be symbolic of coming into the unobstructed, unmediated presence of God. On previous occasions God kept people out of His presence because they were not prepared to meet Him in His holiness (cf. Ex. 40.34, 35; 2 Chron. 7.1, 2). The implication is that we will not be fit for that final state of being in God's presence until all His judgment has been completed. But, recalling Isaiah's experience in the temple (Is. 6), what do we hope for in the face of God's judgment (cf. Rom. 8.1)? How does the judgment of God put this hope (Good News) in proper relief?

*My Reflection*

Can you say that you fear the Lord? Should you? Why is fearing God essential to loving Him, as seems to be implied in Deuteronomy 10.12-16 (recall Friday's lesson)?

*The Glory of God*

The glory of God can be understood as the presence of God. Based on what we see in this chapter, how should the glory of God affect us? How should it affect us according to Psalm 16.11? Is it possible to experience both of these responses at the same time? Explain.

*Glory to Glory*

Make a list of the unbelievers you expect to see today. Spend some time in prayer for them. Make a point to initiate a conversation with each one today, for the sole purpose of opening a conduit for the grace of God

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(Isaiah 6) to flow to them in the midst of whatever trial or tribulation – or judgment from God – they may be experiencing. Is it reasonable to expect angelic help in this effort?

*Memorize*

Today, share your memory verses for this week (Revelation 12.10, 11) with a Christian friend, and briefly explain what you have learned about these verses.

*Closing Prayer*

Praise the LORD!

Praise, O servants of the LORD,

Praise the name of the LORD!

Blessed be the name of the LORD

From this time forth and forevermore!

From the rising of the sun to its going down

The LORD's name *is* to be praised.

The LORD *is* high above all nations,

His glory above the heavens.

Who *is* like the LORD our God,

Who dwells on high,

Who humbles Himself to behold

*The things that are* in the heavens and in the earth?

He raises the poor out of the dust,

*And* lifts the needy out of the ash heap,

That He may seat *him* with princes—

With the princes of His people.

He grants the barren woman a home,

Like a joyful mother of children.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 113

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*Week 7: Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Revelation 12-15 doesn't tell us anything new – at least, not entirely new. How many different ways can you see that these chapters merely *enlarge* on matters already revealed in Revelation 2-11?
2. The focus in this facet is on the “institutionalizing” of evil. How can you see that? Does the fact that sin and evil become lodged in human systems compound the durability and harm of wickedness? Explain.
3. How does the institutionalizing of sin affect human beings? Creation? Why does the judgment and wrath of God make sense in such a scenario? Why does this situation make the ongoing work of bearing witness all that much more urgent?
4. What are the most important lessons for you personally from Revelation 12-15? Summarize those lessons:
5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

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Thank you.