

MAY 2018

CELEBRATING
30 *Years*

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First
and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

Revelation 22:13

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES

TODAY WITH GREG THORNTON

Interim President of Moody Global Ministries

Superheroes and the Supreme Hero



When I was young, many of my friends would save their allowance to buy comic books to read the latest adventures of their favorite

superheroes. Today, movies based on comic-book characters attract millions of viewers and make billions of dollars. We long for someone to fight evil and fix the problems of our world, even if these caped crusaders are fictional.

Aren't you thankful that we serve the Supreme Hero, the only One who can resolve our world's problems and vanquish evil once and for all? In the book of Revelation, John is given a glimpse of the end of this world's story. He looks to the future, when our Hero reveals His identity to the entire world, wins the ultimate battle, and secures our eternal destiny. By studying John's revelation, we can understand our future and be filled with certain hope.

Not even today's movie-making technology could capture the scenes in Revelation. John writes that Jesus will be "clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire"

(Rev. 1:13–14). He has power over the physical and spiritual world: "I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth" (6:12–13).

And Jesus has power over life and death, at last be revealed for all to see. "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (1:18). In comic books, superheroes fight the same villains over and over again. But Jesus will be victorious once and for all. He will reward the righteous and punish evil doers. Satan and his demons will never be freed again: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns" (19:6).

Only Jesus Christ can inaugurate a perfect kingdom and secure our eternal future. Knowing this glorious ending should set our hearts at ease: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (21:4). Certainly we serve the Supreme Hero worthy of our praise and devotion! ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

Ministering Spirits

Angels play an important role in the events that unfold in the book of Revelation, and their very name—*angel*—reveals something about their function. The term was used in ancient Greek to refer to a messenger or ambassador. Mentioned numerous times in both the Old and New Testaments, angels serve as God’s agents, appearing at critical moments in the unfolding story of redemption.

Angels are created by God differently than us. Humanity was created “a little lower than the angels” (Ps. 8:5). Yet at the Incarnation Jesus took on a human nature (Heb. 2:9). This dignifies humankind, which was created in the image of God and charged with the task of exercising dominion over creation (Gen. 1:26, 28). The redeemed will eventually judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3). For these reasons, Hebrews 1:14 calls angels “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” Angels sometimes appeared in human form (Acts 1:1), but the description of them as spirits implies that they do not have corporeal bodies like ours.

Angels were created holy, but Satan (who is also an angel) led some of them into a sinful rebellion against God, an event prior to the creation of Adam and Eve (Rev. 12:4). Fallen angels are called

demons and evil spirits. They can enter into and control the behavior of people and animals (Luke 8:33). Fallen angels are a spiritual source of many false doctrines (1 Tim. 4:1) and the objects of idolatrous worship (1 Cor. 10:20; Rev. 9:20).

Though Scripture mentions angels frequently, there is much we do not know. We know angels belong to different orders and that they exist in some kind of hierarchy, but we don’t know how it is arranged (Gen. 3:24; Isa. 6:1–6; Luke 1:19). Daniel and Revelation indicate that they influence human affairs, but we don’t know precisely how.

What is clear from Scripture is that Jesus is superior to all angels and more powerful than any demon (Heb. 1:4–14). Jesus gave His disciples power to cast out demons (Mark 3:14–15). Angels are not to be worshiped. They are our fellow messengers and servants (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). They serve us as we serve God. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more, read *Angels: Elect and Evil* by C. Fred Dickason (Moody Publishers).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Jamie Janosz

May Is Launch Month at Moody

This year, approximately 590 students will graduate from Moody's campuses in Chicago, Ill.; Spokane, Wash.; and Plymouth, Mich. The Class of 2018 includes men and women in Moody Bible Institute and Moody Theological Seminary as well as those pursuing studies through Moody Bible Institute Distance Learning. They are joined by missionary pilots and mechanics graduating from Moody Aviation.

This outstanding group of men and women joins more than 45,000 living alumni across the globe. They have studied the Bible and theology as well as prepared for ministry in the fields of communications, linguistics, counseling, teaching, pastoral ministry, education, cross-cultural ministry, urban ministry, and many others.

Many of you have given generously to help support the costs of their education. This tremendous gift enables Moody's students to graduate with no or minimal debt so they can more readily begin their ministry. We wanted to share some of their heartfelt words of appreciation:

ReNay writes, "Through my studies I know God is leading me to care for the broken-hearted. I hope to bring counseling in a creative way to the

inner city where biblical counseling is often unknown, misunderstood, or unaccepted. I am filled beyond words with gratitude for those who have helped make a school like Moody possible for me."

Dylan writes, "I hope to serve Christ and His church by translating the Scriptures into a language that does not yet have God's Word. Bible translation is a specialized field that requires a lot of training and preparation. Your gifts to Moody have allowed me to attain that training without incurring debt, leaving me free to go to the mission field. This is a great blessing. Thank you!"

When you visit Moody's Chicago campus, you will see a Bible verse engraved on the archway leading to Crowell Hall: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV).

We celebrate these students who have studied the Word in order to serve God, and thank each of you who has given on their behalf. Congratulations to the Class of 2018, and may you continue to pursue God and serve Him well as you leave Moody and bear His witness across the globe! ■

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

They waited for Him to come. From the Old Testament prophets to the writers of the New Testament, they all looked to the time when their Savior would restore all things and establish His kingdom. They longed for the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This month we invite you on a journey through the last book of the Bible, written by the apostle John and dedicated to the revelation of Christ who is the center of the entire book (Rev. 1:1). As we study Revelation with *Today in the Word*, we'll read about the slain and the risen Lamb, the war in heaven, the New Jerusalem, and the arrival of the King of kings. We'll be reminded of the priority of love and the poverty of riches. We'll marvel at the view of heaven and the death of death. Some symbols are explained; others remain mysterious. But, as *The Ryrie Study Bible* points out, "much of it is frighteningly clear."

The prophet in ancient Israel encouraged his people, as well as us today: "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come . . . he will come to save you" (Isa. 35:4). The Apostle seems to respond in the last chapter of Revelation: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). May this be our prayer amid the hardships and uncertainties of life, and may we live in the light of His coming! ■

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TUESDAY
MAY

1

*I am one who testifies for myself;
my other witness is the Father, who sent me.*

John 8:18

The Faithful Witness

Today we are beginning a study of what many consider to be the most challenging book in the Bible: the book of Revelation. Martin Luther was so puzzled by this book that he questioned whether it should even be a part of Scripture. John Calvin never wrote a commentary on Revelation. But both Christians and non-Christians are curious about the mysteries and obscurities found in this book. One reason for such widespread interest is the author's opening statement that the book's aim is to show "what must soon take place" (v. 1).

Although the book deals with events that will take place in the future, it is not really a history written in advance. John calls it "the revelation from Jesus Christ . . . and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (vv. 1–2). This identifies both the book's narrow focus and its source. Whatever its complexities, this

vision given to John the Apostle has Christ at the heart of all that it reveals. Specifically, Revelation is about events surrounding Christ's Second Coming. Here at the beginning of the book we find a snapshot of how the whole story will end: "'Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him' and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him.' So shall it be! Amen" (v. 7).

In these opening verses, John repeats several times that this revelation was given to him by Christ. However strange the book may seem to some, its content is not made up of John's own fancies. Revelation is the testimony of Jesus Christ about Himself. Even when we do not completely understand all that we read, we can still rely upon its truth because it is the testimony of the one who is "the faithful witness" (v. 5).

APPLY THE WORD

You might find it helpful to listen to an audio version of the book to get a sense of its overall flow of thought. You will be in good company—the original recipients of John's book would not have read it for themselves but rather listened as someone else read to them (v. 3). You can listen to an audio version for free at biblegateway.com.

PRAY WITH US

Thank you for lending your prayer support to the leadership role of our Trustees. May the Lord's hand always guide them in all situations! Please refer to the beginning of this issue if you want to pray for them by name.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

John 17:5

WEDNESDAY
MAY

2

The Glorified Christ

In the television show *Undercover Boss*, corporate executives disguise themselves and pretend to be ordinary employees. At the end of the show they meet with those with whom they have worked side by side. The employees are often astonished by the transformation.

Jesus did not come in disguise, pretending to be someone He was not. But He did temporarily lay aside the glory that was His due as God. According to John 1:1 and 14, prior to taking a human nature to Himself Jesus was both with God and was God. John saw Jesus glorified briefly when He was transfigured on the mountain (see Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). But during His earthly ministry Jesus revealed a different kind of glory. As John and the other disciples lived day to day with the God who had become flesh, they observed what New Testament scholar Leon Morris has described as

His “humble glory.” Not only was this the glory of Jesus’ lowliness, it was the glory of His holiness.

All of this changed with Christ’s resurrection and ascension. The Jesus who appeared to John at the beginning of the book of Revelation was the same person the Apostle had known before. But John had never seen Jesus like this, not even on the Mount of Transfiguration. John says that when he was confronted by Jesus in His glory, “I fell at his feet as though dead” (v. 17).

As if to reassure John that this was the same Savior he had always known, Jesus reassured His stricken disciple with a reassuring touch and words of comfort. Jesus interpreted the vision for John and assigned to him the task of recording what he had seen for seven churches in Asia Minor (now known as Turkey).

APPLY THE WORD

Have you become too comfortable with Jesus? Does your church’s worship do justice to His glory? Jesus’ words of assurance suggest that He does not necessarily want us to worship Him with our faces in the dirt. But John’s experience does tell us that we have probably underestimated Him. Ask the Savior to give you a fresh awareness of His glory.

PRAY WITH US

Would you pray today for the Strategic Marketing team at Moody Radio? Pray that God would give inspiration and perseverance in their mission to George Economos, Brittany Bernholdt, Hannah LaMaster, and Rhonda Carlson.

THURSDAY
MAY
3

If you love me, keep my commands.

John 14:15

Priority of Love

A wife once asked her husband, “What do you think the Bible means when it says that Ezekiel’s wife was ‘the desire of his eyes’? Looking at her tenderly, he answered, “I think it means that every time he saw her, Ezekiel experienced the same thrill he felt when he first saw her on their wedding day!”

Jesus also used the language of love to speak of His relationship with the church of Ephesus. Only in this case, Jesus issued a reproof. Instead of holding on to their first love, the Ephesian church had begun to slip in its devotion (v. 4). They were a stable and hardworking church. They cared about the truth and maintained a high standard of doctrine (vv. 2–3). But something was missing.

When Jesus urged them to return to their first love, He wasn’t referring only to chronology. The word *first* also referred to priority—what they

considered most important and best. When Israel was commanded to offer the first fruits, they were required to bring God the best of what they had, not merely the first things they harvested. The believers in Ephesus obeyed Christ, but they were capable of offering Him a better love.

This rebuke also suggests that there was a weakness in their community life. Just as their love for Christ had cooled, so perhaps had their love for one another. Is it possible that their devotion to sound doctrine had blunted the affection they once felt for one another?

The solution Jesus offered was not an either/or proposition. He did not ask them to set aside doctrine in favor of love. He praised them because they hated the practices of the Nicolaitans (v. 6). But in addition to uncompromising truth, they needed love.

APPLY THE WORD

Memory is one strategy Jesus recommends for returning to our first love (v. 5). Do you remember when you were first devoted to Christ? Action is the other ingredient in His prescription. Jesus urges them to do the things they used to do. Is there anything you can do today to help you recall what your first love for Christ was like?

PRAY WITH US

Today lift up in prayer Moody’s education ministry and its leadership. Ask God to continue to direct and to bless professors, students, and administrators, giving them wisdom and discernment to follow the Word of God without wavering.

You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Matthew 10:22

FRIDAY
MAY

4

Faithful unto Death

Savithri was a woman in India who became a follower of Jesus. Because her village was primarily Hindu, nobody objected when her husband beat her to death after she refused to renounce her Christian faith.

Savithri's strong faith did not shield her from death. We should not be surprised by this. Jesus warned His disciples that standing for the gospel can be dangerous. "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt. 10:21–22).

Smyrna was a wealthy seaport city, containing both a center for emperor worship and a large Jewish population. In this cultural environment the church was a religious minority whose message provoked Jews and

Gentiles alike. These Christians suffered economically and sometimes physically for their devotion to Jesus Christ. They were slandered and abused.

In order to encourage the suffering church in Smyrna, Jesus reminded them of three important truths. First, He was aware of their situation: "I know your affliction and your poverty" (v. 9). Second, things were not what they seemed. Although they may have been poor by human standards, these believers were rich in God's eyes. Third, their suffering was only temporary (v. 10). In the scope of an eternal perspective, it would be a relatively brief period of time.

What does God expect from those in such an environment? In a word, *faithfulness*, not survival: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown" (v. 10).

APPLY THE WORD

Your situation may not be as extreme as Savithri's. But no matter what opposition you face, God knows your situation. He has set a time limit on your suffering. By His power you too can be faithful to the end. Review the three truths in this passage to encourage your heart to love Jesus and trust His faithfulness.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, thanks the Lord for His faithfulness to Moody and invites you to pray for God's continued provision and our good stewardship of resources in the next fiscal year.

SATURDAY
MAY

5

*But you are to hold fast to the LORD
your God, as you have until now.*

Joshua 23:8

The Art of Holding Fast

The motto of Scotland’s Clan MacLeod is “Hold fast.” This could be the church’s motto. To be faithful we must hold fast to what we believe. More importantly, in order to be faithful we must hold fast to Jesus Christ. This can be hard to do when others around you compromise.

In the church in Pergamum, some claimed to be Christians but held to the teaching of Balaam, “who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality” (v. 14). In other words, they tried to fit in with pagan culture. They ate food that had been sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality, probably as a result of attending pagan worship services.

Pagan worship was so entrenched in Pergamum that Jesus called it the place “where Satan has his throne” and the city “where Satan lives” (v. 13). Poverty-stricken Christians were tempted to

participate in pagan festivals because free food was provided. Unfortunately, in addition to eating the food they also engaged in pagan worship and the sexual immorality that often accompanied it.

Jesus offered the example of Antipas. Church tradition says he was appointed bishop of the church by the apostle John and was eventually burned to death on a pagan altar. Jesus also reminded the church of His power, describing Himself as the one “who has the sharp, double-edged sword” (v. 12). The one who judges pagans also disciplines His church, and Jesus threatened to turn this double-edged sword against all who followed the example of the Nicolaitans instead of Antipas (v. 16).

To those who overcame the temptation to compromise their faith for the sake of a meal, Jesus promised to give “the hidden manna” (v. 17).

APPLY THE WORD

Have you been taking small steps away from the path of faithfulness? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any of your rationalizations or excuses for compromising your faith. Think of godly examples who can encourage you, and hold fast by God’s grace. Choose to be fed by Jesus’ manna rather than chastened by His sword.

PRAY WITH US

Patrick Friedline in Career Development helps Moody students and alumni to find part-time and full-time employment, leading to lifelong careers in ministry. Would you uphold his service in prayer today?

*A little yeast works through
the whole batch of dough.*

Galatians 5:9

SUNDAY
MAY

6

The Trouble with Tolerance

In recent years debates have flared up over the limits of free speech. Should anyone be given a platform, no matter his views? Can someone attempt to silence a person whom she finds dangerous or threatening? Some observers condemn the students for their intellectual intolerance, while others argue that reprehensible ideas should not be tolerated.

Are there limits to tolerance? The Bible's answer is yes. When it comes to the church, some practices should not be tolerated. The same is true for doctrine. False teaching should not be tolerated but must be rooted out. The church in Thyatira had permitted a false teacher who claimed to possess the gift of prophecy to mislead others. This had opened the door to both sinful practices and false teaching. Jesus nicknamed this false teacher "Jezebel," after the wicked queen who killed the true prophets of Israel and

enticed God's people to worship Baal (v. 20; see 1 Kings 19).

The nature of Jezebel's teaching was what Jesus had condemned in Pergamum. She claimed to reveal secret truth, enticing her followers to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. God had "tolerated" her ministry for a time, but only in order to give her a chance to repent (v. 21). Now the time for patience was over.

Jesus promised to "cast her on a bed of suffering" and "strike her children dead" (vv. 22–23). To a culture that values tolerance, this response seems harsh. But Jesus understood the destructive nature of her teaching and the vulnerability of this church. The cultural environment in Thyatira was so toxic that the only command Jesus gave to those who had not yet succumbed to Jezebel's false teaching was to "hold on" until His return (v. 25).

APPLY THE WORD

False teaching opens the door to immoral practice, and moral compromise is frequently justified by modifying biblical doctrine. Consider what beliefs or practices you have been willing to tolerate that might lead you away from the truth. Take the opportunity from God that Jezebel refused: repent from sin and hold on to Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

Anthony Turner, VP and dean of Student Enrollment Services, and his executive assistant, Samuel Roller, will appreciate your prayer support today as they advise prospective students, maintain enrollment database, and process applications.

MONDAY
MAY

7

*Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;
be courageous; be strong.*

1 Corinthians 16:13

Spiritual Sleepwalking

A man walking home at 2 a.m. in Dulwich, England, happened to notice a girl asleep at the top of an inactive crane. It turns out she was a sleepwalker and had climbed 130 feet up and 40 feet across to get there. Sleepwalking is more common than one might think. According to one recent study, 8.4 million Americans—nearly 4 percent of all adults—sleepwalk each year.

The problem Jesus highlights in the church at Sardis could be characterized as spiritual sleepwalking. Sardis had once rivaled Smyrna and Ephesus, but its best days were now in the past. And the church in that city had a reputation for being alive, but was in fact dead (v. 1). It had the motions of a living church but lacked the vitality of the Spirit. This church had started well but had failed to follow through. As a result, Jesus found its deeds “unfinished” (v. 2).

Jesus commanded the church in Sardis to wake up and remember what they had “received and heard” (v. 3). This is the language of biblical tradition (see 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; 15:2–3). The way to break out of spiritual lethargy is to recall the truth of Scripture, hold fast to it, and repent.

Jesus promised to come to this church like a thief and catch those who were spiritually asleep (see Luke 12:39–40; 1 Thess. 5:2, 4; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 16:15). Despite some similarity in language, this warning likely does not refer to the Second Coming. It is a promise to discipline this church in a way that will be both certain and unexpected.

And those in Sardis who were spiritually alive need not be afraid. Jesus promised that they would be dressed in white, and their names would never be erased from the book of life (v. 5).

APPLY THE WORD

This is a sober warning for the church. Do we rely more on systems and structures than we do on God’s Spirit? Do you appreciate your church because it has exciting programs or because people are growing in the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22–23)? It is possible to appear to be a “successful” church when we are really in spiritual decline.

PRAY WITH US

As Moody’s undergraduate students finish their spring semester today, Timothy Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, requests your prayers for the upcoming exams, for students to finish this academic year well, and for the restful summer break.

Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.

Colossians 4:3

TUESDAY
MAY
8

Open Doors and Secure Pillars

Small magnitude earthquakes can happen hundreds of times each day around the world. Major earthquakes take place about once a month. The ancient city of Philadelphia was located about 28 miles southeast of Sardis, in a region where earthquakes often took place. The city had nearly been destroyed by a large quake in A.D. 17.

The church too had been shaken by conflicts with those who opposed the gospel. Jesus characterized them as weakened with “little strength,” but despite this they had not denied Him (v. 8). In contrast, Jesus described Himself in terms that emphasize authority and power. He is the one who holds “the key of David” (v. 7). This allusion to Isaiah 22:22 highlights Christ’s ruling authority. When Christ opens a door, none can shut it. The open door that He had placed before this church was the opportunity to bear witness despite continued opposition.

Though rejected by some who claimed to have a relationship with God, a day was coming when Christ would show their persecutors that the Philadelphian believers were accepted by Him.

Jesus also promised to spare the church “from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth” (v. 10). The sweeping nature of this trial makes it unlikely that it is a merely local event. Some see this as a promise of the church’s protection from the tribulation described in the later chapters. Whether or not it refers to the Great Tribulation, this is a clear promise of future security.

Though weak now, the one who holds on will be a “pillar” in God’s temple (v. 12). This image speaks of immovability. Although shaken by their present troubles, the believer has a fixed and permanent place in God’s presence.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you feeling shaken by your circumstances today? Do you feel the burden of opposition from those who should be supporting you? Hold on to Jesus Christ. He is the only secure rock, and He has guaranteed your future. No matter how insecure you may feel, you always have a place and promise of protection with God.

PRAY WITH US

Sound doctrine is foundational for the life of every believer. Our Theology department faculty—Kevin Zuber, Bryan Litfin, David Rim, Gregg Quiggle, and Michael McDuffee—build this basis for our students’ ministry. Please pray for them today.

WEDNESDAY
MAY

9

Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13

The Poverty of Wealth

A recent study showed that people can tell whether you are rich or poor simply by looking at your face. According to psychologist Thora Bjornsdottir, a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto, even expressionless faces give off hidden signals about social class. According to today's passage, it is also possible to deceive yourself into thinking that you are better off than you really are. True riches are not a matter of money.

The city of Laodicea was located in the Lycus Valley, ten miles west of the city of Colossae and forty miles south of the city of Philadelphia. It was a wealthy city, famous for eye medicine and wool, and when devastated by the great earthquake of A.D. 17, they didn't even need government help to rebuild.

The church was also economically prosperous, which had produced an attitude of self-sufficiency and

complacency. The believers of Laodicea were doing well financially but languishing spiritually. Like the city's water system, which was tepid and tainted with lime deposits, Laodicea's Christianity left a bad taste. Jesus described their spiritual condition as "neither hot or cold" (v. 16).

In a world opposed to God, the gospel cannot help but create sharp lines of separation. "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth," Jesus warned His disciples. "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). The church in Laodicea seems to have attempted neutrality. Reluctant to appear either for or against Jesus and unwilling to rock the boat, they curried favor with the culture in a way that alienated them from the Christ they claimed to serve. These were real Christians who were living false lives. Used to fending for themselves, they failed to grasp their own spiritual poverty (vv. 17–18).

APPLY THE WORD

In a wealthy culture that preaches self-help and self-reliance, we can forget we need Jesus. More than our savings accounts and retirement plans, more than our friends and social networks, more than political power and economic security—we need Jesus. Confess your complacency, and cling to Jesus for His promise of true wealth and security.

PRAY WITH US

Continue to uphold in prayer the work of our Theology professors, John Clark, Marcus Johnson, Richard Weber, Sanjay Merchant, and David Finkbeiner, as they train students to "keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9).

I saw the LORD, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Isaiah 6:1

THURSDAY
MAY

10

A View of Heaven

In recent years many books claim to describe a visit to heaven, usually the result of a near-death experience. Some skeptics view these accounts as fiction, and others attribute them to chemical changes in the dying brain. In a few cases the authors have admitted they made it all up.

Today's passage is different. John doesn't describe a near-death experience but rather a vision of the heavenly throne room that he had while "in the Spirit" (v. 2). What John sees is similar to other visions recorded in Scripture by Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The phrase "after this" in verse 1 signals a shift in focus from John's present to things that will take place in the future (cf. Rev. 1:19).

In his vision John saw a throne with someone sitting on it. This unnamed figure who is clearly divine "had the appearance of jasper and ruby" (v. 3).

The throne was encircled by a rainbow and surrounded by twenty-four other thrones. This number suggests the twelve Patriarchs of Israel and the twelve Apostles, though the text does not specifically identify them.

Thunder and lightning emanated from the throne and seven blazing lamps stood before it to represent the fullness of God's Spirit. John also saw four "living creatures" (v. 6) whose description resembled the cherubim of Ezekiel 1:4–24 and whose cry echoed that of the seraphs of Isaiah 6:3. Whenever these beings gave glory to God, the twenty-four elders lay their crowns before the throne and declared God's worth.

This is the first of several scenes of heavenly worship. The images may seem strange, for they are intended to describe a heavenly reality in earthly terms. But what is clear is that God is at the center of all heavenly worship.

APPLY THE WORD

Worship is not a mode of entertainment. It's not merely our preferred musical style for church. It is a combination of experiencing God's presence and praising His worth. The hymn "Crown Him with Many Crowns" by Matthew Bridges attempts to capture the essence of this scene from our passage today. Why not find it in a hymnal and read or sing it?

PRAY WITH US

Moody's campus library provides our students, faculty, and staff with a wealth of resources. We are grateful for the expertise and faithful service of the staff: April Nelson, Ashley Smith, Blake Walter, and Christine Cherney. Will you pray for them today?

FRIDAY
MAY

11

*Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.*

Psalms 145:3

Worthy Is the Lamb

Every Easter you can find lambs in the shops—cute chocolate lambs or stuffed animals. They bear no resemblance whatsoever to the Lamb described in today’s chapter. The Lamb that John saw was not cute but scarred. It looked as if it had been slain. It also had seven horns and seven eyes. In the books of Daniel and Revelation, horns represent kingly power. The lamb’s seven eyes may be a symbol of omniscience. The fact that the Lamb is the only one worthy to open the seal and is worshiped by the twenty-four elders makes it clear that this must be Jesus Christ.

The elders worship Him while holding harps and golden bowls full of incense. Interestingly, verse 8 doesn’t say that the incense *represents* the prayers of the saints but rather that it *is* their prayers. What a beautiful picture of how Christ must view our prayers—not as whining or nagging but like a pleasing aroma.

As the elders worship the Lamb, an innumerable company of angels adds their voices, and they are joined by “every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them” (v. 13). Worship has a surprising trajectory. It moves from heaven to earth, not the other way around. This worship begins with God. His presence evokes it. This worship is also contagious. Its resonating quality enables others to join in. This heavenly worship is Christ-centered. It focuses on the Lamb who was slain.

The worship described in these verses invites us. When we worship, we do not imitate heavenly worship. We join worship already under way, adding our voices to that of the living creatures, elders, angels, and the rest of creation. God receives our prayers like sweet incense, and Jesus is glorified.

APPLY THE WORD

Everyone struggles with worship at times. We may not like the music, or the sermon is boring. We might be distracted with other worries or concerns. The next time you feel this way, remember what is really going on. You have the opportunity to join with heaven and earth in praising the Lord, and God receives your prayers as a sweet offering.

PRAY WITH US

Please lift up in prayer the staff of Moody’s library— Christopher Ullman, James Preston, Joel Warren, and Jonathan McDaniel—as they explore new areas in library science to help our students and staff find the information they need.

During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man mounted on a red horse. . . . Behind him were red, brown and white horses.

Zechariah 1:8

SATURDAY
MAY

12

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Popular culture has widely appropriated idea of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. It was the nickname of the Notre Dame football team's backfield in 1924. Rock band Metallica used it as the title for a song. The Four Horsemen made a brief appearance in the movie *Hellboy: The Fury* and appear in more than one Marvel comic story line. They were even featured in an episode of *The Simpsons*. All this may blunt the force of our encounter with them in Revelation 6.

The Four Horsemen issue forth from the first four of the seven seals on the scroll mentioned in chapter 5. Each horseman represents a mode of divine judgment, which is progressive. The horseman who conquers is followed by the horseman who takes peace from the earth (v. 4). He gives way to a black horse with scales in his hands

who brings want (vv. 5–6). The fourth horseman is the most terrifying: “I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth” (v. 8). And this is only the overture. Three more seals will follow and from the seventh seal will come another series of seven judgments.

We must remember that the Four Horsemen are not merely a cultural trope. They point to real events that will take place at the end of the age. These events are not random disasters. Only the Lamb can break the seals and set them in motion. They are an execution of divine judgment that will eventually culminate in God's ultimate victory.

APPLY THE WORD

The descriptions of the terror unleashed by the Four Horsemen should sober us, but we should not miss a key lesson here: God is in control. The stage is being set for Christ's return and the establishment of His kingdom. The same is true on a smaller scale in our individual lives. Jesus is the gatekeeper of everything that enters our lives.

PRAY WITH US

It's Commencement on Moody's Chicago campus today! We invite you to pray for Moody's graduate and undergraduate students as they receive their degrees. Let us thank the Lord for His work in their lives and send them off with a blessing.

SUNDAY
MAY

13

*Do not say, “I’ll pay you back for this wrong!”
Wait for the LORD, and he will avenge you.*

Proverbs 20:22

The Martyrs’ Cry

A popular saying goes, “I don’t get mad; I get even.” The desire for payback is understandable. In its righteous form, it reflects a longing for justice. When the fifth seal is broken, the martyrs cry from under the altar: “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (v. 10). No one reproves them for this sentiment. Just the opposite—each one is given a white robe and told to wait until the full number of their companions have been killed.

The appearance of the martyrs in heaven reminds us that God’s people are often affected by the collateral damage of divine judgment. This was certainly true in the Old Testament. When a famine came because of Israel’s sin, the godly went hungry along with the ungodly. When Israel was taken into captivity by the Babylonians, the righteous were carried off along with

the wicked. When God works out His plan in the Last Days, some who follow the Lamb will suffer. When the martyrs die, the sinful world loses—not only because God will call to account those who killed them but also the world loses the possibility of blessing from their presence.

Psalm 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants.” If this is true of death in general, how much more true of those whose lives are taken because of their testimony for Jesus Christ? God does not treat the death of the martyrs lightly. In John’s vision they are accorded a place of special honor. Their location under the altar signals the fact that God regards their death as a kind of offering. Just as the blood of the sacrifice was poured out before God, so too was their blood shed.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you struggling with an injustice done to you because of your testimony for Christ? Maybe it was a slight or a ruptured relationship. Perhaps it was the loss of professional opportunities or a public humiliation, or worse. Pray and put the matter in God’s hands. He does not take the matter lightly. He sees, He cares, and He will have the victory.

PRAY WITH US

The lives of Moody students and alumni reflect the love for God often instilled by their parents. On this Mother’s Day, join us in prayer to honor all the mothers in the Moody family and ask that God would encourage and strengthen them.

Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

Colossians 3:6

Day of Wrath

Giuseppe Verdi's great work *Messa da Requiem* is a brooding memorial to a poet and writer whom Verdi admired. One of its most famous sections is the "Dies Irae," which means "Day of Wrath." During this section trumpets surround the stage, signifying the call to judgment, and the chorus almost shouts: "Day of wrath, that day earth will be in ashes. . . ." The somber tone of Verdi's work might make contemporary churchgoers uncomfortable. In a culture in which the church tries hard to make people feel comfortable, the notion of divine wrath seems out of place.

God's wrath is the focus of the sixth seal. As the Lamb breaks the seal, a series of cataclysmic events unfold. A great earthquake rumbles. The sun turns black and the moon turns red. Stars fall from the sky "as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by

a strong wind" (v. 13). The heavens recede and every mountain and island is shaken. All creation is coming undone.

Is this symbolic language or a description of real events? Some try to link this description to natural or human causes, perhaps a large asteroid or a nuclear holocaust. The text suggests that the events are real but that the cause is supernatural rather than natural. And those who try to find a place of refuge will say: "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?" This is only the beginning. The events that will soon follow will prove the truth of Hebrews 10:31: "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

APPLY THE WORD

The day of wrath will be dreadful for those who have rejected God's grace. But those who know Jesus as Savior can stand confidently when final judgment comes, because Christ bore God's wrath for them. If you have never trusted in Jesus, repent of your sin and accept His work on your behalf. You can have the confidence of salvation in Him.

PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers James Hickman in Records Management. Ask for the Lord's help as he carries out a wide range of responsibilities in Moody's archives, safeguarding Moody Bible Institute's history.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Eric C. Redmond, Assistant Professor of Bible

Q In Matthew 18:17, Jesus says to treat church members who are in sin in the same way as tax collectors, but a few verses later Jesus says to forgive people 77 times. Are we supposed to forgive or shun people in sin?

A In Matthew 18, Jesus tells the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant to demonstrate what forgiveness looks like: a complete releasing from a debt that does not demand repayment for the wrong done. The first servant experiences relief from debts owed to the king without losing his family or being imprisoned. Later, however, the king condemns him for demanding payment from the second servant.

But the restoration of relationship does require an acknowledgment of wrongdoing by the offending party. You can release someone from a debt, refusing to require repayment, and yet refuse to restore the person to a status of trusted friend. If a Christian (i.e., “brother,” v. 15) commits an act of offense toward another believer and refuses to admit fault, seek forgiveness, and make restitution, the church should enter the conflict between the two parties.

The restorative process involving two or three witnesses and the church body seeks the holiness of the offending

person. A refusal to acknowledge offence allows one to stay in sin—and both the offense and the lack of seeking reconciliation are sins. Once the offender rejects the church body’s appeal to be reconciled, the offender is endangering the entire church body. That is, through his failure to admit fault and seek forgiveness at the request of the church, the offender is not recognizing the holiness of the church body, the authority of its leadership, its operation through its members’ love and humility, or its witness in the world.

The offending person who is unwilling to reconcile is not behaving like a Christian and should be treated like a tax collector—that is, removed from the church body. Although any such action is painful to the full local body of believers, it is the righteous thing to do in obedience to our Lord.

Q When a Christian dies, 2 Corinthians 5:8 says that when we are “away from the body” we are then “at home with the Lord.” When an unbeliever dies, does he go directly to hell?

A After a person dies, he faces judgment (Heb. 9:27). Jesus said, “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on them” (John 3:36). All verses

Forgiveness from the heart is a complete releasing from a debt that does not demand repayment for the wrong done.

on the eternal, conscious punishment of people in hell assume the person who left this world continues in some form of existence in the age to come—a form that can feel torment eternally (Mark. 9:48; Rev. 14:11). There is no intermediary step between departure from this world as an unbeliever and punishment in hell. The only hope is for an unbeliever to respond in faith to the gospel in this present life.

Q **If the Lord does not show partiality, why does the gospel go to the Jew first then to the Greek?**

A Scripture says that there is no partiality with God (Psalm 82; Prov. 28:21; Luke 20:21; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). Therefore, we can conclude that the idea of the gospel going to the descendants of Israel first cannot communicate the idea of partiality. Instead, the movement of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles should be understood as *priority* rather than *partiality*.

The Lord's dealings with humanity to provide redemption from sin began in Genesis 3:15 and advanced in Genesis 12 through the line of Abraham and his descendants. He narrows this line to Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. The descendants of Jacob—Israel—become the stewards of the promise

of redemption as both the recipients and the mediators to the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:3; 26:4; 28:14).

The Lord makes promises to Israel that He has sworn to uphold: “Theirs . . . are the promises . . . and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah” (Rom. 9:4–5; see also Heb. 6:13–14). The Lord gave stewardship of His word of promise to Israel, and when the gospel is preached, the Lord demonstrates His faithfulness to keep His promises to Israel by coming to them first.

If I had a plate of cookies on which all of the cookies were of equal quality and taste, I could offer to share the plate with my children. If I hold out the plate to the youngest first, I am not demonstrating partiality; I only am prioritizing her as the youngest child. Each child still has the offer of a cookie from the plate, and each child has the offer of a cookie of the same quality and taste.

When one preaches the death and resurrection of Christ to Gentiles, they receive the same gospel that Israel has been offered. As the Gospels and the book of Acts recount, the initial preaching of the gospel went to Jewish people. The Lord is faithful to Israel and His promises to them are true, and both Jews and Gentiles have equal access to Christ through the gospel by faith (Gal. 3:14; Rom. 3:30).

TUESDAY
MAY

15

God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his."

2 Timothy 2:19

Sealed by God

Important documents such as marriage licenses or certain contracts often have a seal on them. Some are fancy; others are plain. The important thing is not what the seal looks like but what it does. A seal is an authenticating mark that validates the document.

At the end of Revelation 6, those who realized that the time of God's wrath had begun asked, "Who can withstand it?" Today's chapter provides the answer: only those marked by God as His. This section is a pause or interlude that focuses on two important groups. One group is made up of 144,000 people drawn from the twelve tribes of Israel (see Rom. 11:25–26).

Another larger multitude is "from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (v. 9). While the 144,000 from

the twelve tribes of Israel are on earth, this much larger multitude appears in heaven. "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14). This is the group of Gentiles who will be saved during the pouring out of God's wrath described in the chapters that follow.

The promises of verses 16 and 17 probably allude to some of the sufferings they experienced during this period of tribulation, including hunger, thirst, and scorching heat. The text does not say why they suddenly appear in heaven at this point, but the fact that they came "out of" tribulation seems to imply that they are another company of martyrs.

APPLY THE WORD

The 144,000 and this innumerable company from every nation, tribe, people, and language share the same mark. It is the mark of one who was purchased for God by the blood of Jesus Christ. You too can have the mark of God's ownership. It is yours as a free gift by faith. Pray now and ask God to make you His through the blood of His Son.

PRAY WITH US

Janet Stiven, VP and general counsel, requests your prayers for her team in Legal department: Ryan June, Emmy Koh, Cassandra Blakely, and Amber Adames. We ask for God's guidance in their service dealing with legal matters.

*May my prayer be set before you like incense;
may the lifting up of my hands be like
the evening sacrifice.*

Psalm 141:2

Creation Groans

The Renaissance painter and inventor Leonardo da Vinci once observed, “Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence.” Silence can be emphatic. A pause in a sentence concentrates our attention on what is said next. In the same way, the silence that follows the opening of the seventh seal is a signal that what is about to take place is especially significant. What comes next? Not thunder or lightning, but “the prayers of all God’s people” (v. 3). Our prayers may only be whispers, but they have the potential to harness the power of heaven.

The fact that the censer used to offer the prayers of God’s people is the same one that initiates the judgments of the seven trumpets implies a connection. Could it be that these seven judgments are a response to those prayers? These judgments follow those of the seven seals and increase in intensity.

The first four trumpet judgments are directed primarily at creation. They also echo the judgments on Egypt before the Exodus. Hail and fire mixed with blood destroy the earth’s vegetation (cf. Ex. 9:18–26). An object “like a huge mountain, all ablaze” falls into the seas, destroying a third of all life there (v. 8). A great “star” falls from the sky and embitters a third of the planet’s water supply (vv. 10–11). Sun, moon, and stars are also affected so that their light is diminished (v. 12).

Are these natural or supernatural events? It seems likely that they could involve both. They are ecological disasters in the sense that they have a devastating effect on the planet and its inhabitants. But they are directed by God and initiated by His agents. In this way creation is both affected by the consequences of humanity’s sin and participates in its judgment. Yet it all begins with prayer.

APPLY THE WORD

Do you doubt the power of prayer? It is true that we cannot manipulate God with our words. But in some mysterious way the answers to our prayers are woven into the outworking of God’s plan. Notice how many times the prayers of God’s people have already appeared in the narrative of Revelation. What do you need to pray about today?

PRAY WITH US

Please commit to prayer Moody’s Media ministries—Moody Radio and Moody Publishers, headed by senior vice president Greg Thornton. Their work of sharing the Christian message reaches thousands of homes in the U.S. and across the world.

THURSDAY
MAY
17

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10

The Destroyer and His Army

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils,” C. S. Lewis wrote. “One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

The judgments of the fifth trumpet confirm the existence of fallen angels. An angel figuratively described as a star falls to earth and releases a demonic host from the Abyss. Who gave him the key? Since the Abyss seems to be a prison, we can assume that his authority to release them comes from God. When Jesus cast the demon out of the man who lived among the tombs, they begged Him not to send them into the Abyss (see Luke 8:31).

The power of satanic forces is on display. Unlike ordinary locusts that

feed on crops, these creatures will attack humans and torment them for five months. They are directed by Abaddon or Apollyon, whose name means “Destroyer.” In the Old Testament, *Abaddon* was the place of the dead. The devil uses the fear of death to enslave us (Heb. 2:14), but Jesus has broken this power by His own death.

At the sixth trumpet, a voice coming from the four horns of the golden altar calls for the release of “the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (v. 14). The fact that they are “bound” suggests that they are fallen angels who bring with them a mounted army whose purpose is to kill a third of mankind (v. 18). Surprisingly those who survive are not fazed by any of this. They refuse to repent from their sin.

APPLY THE WORD

Satan has only one ambition: to destroy. But his power is limited. He is not God’s equal, and he is subject to God’s greater plan. In the end he is fighting a losing battle. If you doubt that, skip ahead and see how the story ends! If you are suffering from his attacks of doubt or fear, remember that Jesus will win the victory.

PRAY WITH US

Keeping Moody’s media ministries in our prayers, please add Moody Radio’s administration to your list—Doug Hastings, Elsa Mazón, Lucrecia Lopez, Maureen Ber, and Tinakka Johnson—a dedicated team headed by Collin Lambert, VP of Moody Radio.

We declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

1 Corinthians 2:7

FRIDAY
MAY

18

The Wait Is Over

Sometimes it feels as if we spend most of our lives waiting. Couples engaged to be married mark the months until the wedding. Workers wait for the weekend. Schoolchildren long for summer vacation—and once it has begun, parents tick off the days until they can send them back to school.

Heaven experiences the same sense of expectation. Prior to the sounding of the seventh trumpet a mighty angel announces, “There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets” (vv. 6–7). The term *mystery* does not refer to a puzzle but rather to something that had been hidden and is now revealed. The seventh trumpet portends the fulfillment of all that God promised. It will usher in the final events of the tribulation period, which culminate in

the establishment of Christ’s kingdom, the final judgment, and the creation of a new heavens and earth.

Notice that even though the angel declares that there will be no more delay, things must still take place before the mystery of God is finally accomplished. The angel is not being contradictory. His declaration is both an indication that the seventh trumpet is the beginning of the end and a reflection of the certainty of the outcome. It is similar to the victory cry that Jesus uttered from the cross when He declared, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

We find the same perspective in Revelation 13:8, which describes Jesus as “the Lamb slain from the creation of the world.” From God’s perspective, the victory is already complete. We are just catching up in time to what God has already accomplished in purpose.

APPLY THE WORD

Are you tired of waiting for God? Understandably, those bound by time would be anxious to see God’s purpose unfold. We often say, “How long, O Lord?” Follow the example of the psalmist and ask. God is neither surprised nor put off by our struggle to wait. He welcomes our hurting hearts and offers comfort while we wait on Him.

PRAY WITH US

Would you include in your prayers Moody Radio’s WGNB station? It is managed and operated from studios in Zeeland, Mich., by a local Moody Radio team of professional broadcasters: Scott Curtis, Jack Haveman, and Perry La Haie.

SATURDAY
MAY
19

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Romans 1:18

The Power of an Unrepentant Heart

After terror attacks on September 11, church attendance spiked. “People thought this type of crisis of national significance would lead people to be more religious, and it did,” Mark Chaves, a professor of sociology at Duke University, observed. “But it was very short-lived. There was a blip in church attendance and then it went back to normal.” A single event doesn’t usually affect a society’s religious practice, and today’s passage is evidence that multiple events may not make a difference, either.

The temple in our passage today most likely refers to a reconstructed temple. The act of measuring the temple is clearly symbolic and seems to indicate something about the nature of God’s unfolding plan. Clearly events are following a divinely set timetable.

Scholars are divided about the identity of the two witnesses. The most reasonable

approach is to take the text at face value. These two unnamed prophets bear witness in Jerusalem, perform miracles, and are killed by the beast who comes up from the abyss. Their martyrdom sparks a celebration; people gloat over their deaths and send one another presents. The subsequent resurrection of these two prophets after three-and-a-half days will be accompanied by a great earthquake that will destroy a tenth of the city and kill seven thousand people. Those who survive will “give glory to the God of heaven” (v. 13).

The stage is set for the final act of this redemptive drama. It begins with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, announcing the arrival of the Messiah’s kingdom (v. 18). In an antiphonal response, the temple in heaven opens to display the Ark of the Covenant, along with flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a severe hailstorm.

APPLY THE WORD

Scripture says that one day every knee will bow before the Lord (Phil. 2:10). Will you bow out of love and praise, or will it take the power of God’s judgment to force your knee to bend? Accept His invitation to follow Him, and receive the blessing of His promise to be with you until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20).

PRAY WITH US

Natoshia Portis in Catering will be grateful for your prayers today. Ask for God’s favor and help for Natoshia and her student helpers in their gracious and appreciated service in the hospitality ministry on Moody’s Chicago campus.

*He replied,
“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*

Luke 10:18

War in Heaven

After the August 1945 surrender of Japan, which ended World War II, a number of Japanese soldiers refused to stop fighting. Some did not believe that the news of the surrender was accurate. Others simply refused to accept it. The last known holdout did not surrender until 1974.

In the same way, the announcement of the kingdom in the previous chapter does not end hostilities. The struggle continues as a great sign appears and a battle ensues.

The “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head” (v. 1) is likely a sign of Israel, and the child would be Jesus—Israel’s promised Messiah. The woman is followed by “an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads” (v. 3). The dragon, identified as the devil in verse

12, attempts to destroy the child but is thwarted. The child is “snatched up to God and to his throne” and the woman is given a place of protection (vv. 5–6).

The battle depicts Satan’s last-ditch attempt to take heaven by force (vv. 7–9). His defeat at the hands of Michael and his angels illustrates his weakness. Satan knows what this defeat means (v. 12). Victory is beyond reach, and his doom is imminent. He will attempt to vent his anger upon Israel. When his efforts to do so are thwarted, he will turn his attention to “the rest of her offspring—those who keep God’s commands and hold fast their testimony about Jesus” (v. 17).

These three descriptions use symbolic language to link historical events with those that are yet to come. But the verdict is already in—and Satan himself knows it.

APPLY THE WORD

God’s faithfulness in the past tells us what to expect from Him in the future. If you keep a spiritual journal or prayer record, review past entries to see how God has answered prayer and provided for you. When you face trials and uncertainties, hold on to the truth that God has worked in your past and He will be faithful in your future.

PRAY WITH US

Moody’s Customer Service representatives answer hundreds of people who call us every day. We thank God today in prayer for their service that demonstrates God’s love and Christlike attitude.

MONDAY
MAY

21

As you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour.

1 John 2:18

Satan’s Menagerie

Many people know some Bible facts. For instance, nearly everyone knows that Jesus said, “Judge not” (Matt. 7:1). Many have heard of the Antichrist and know that his number is 666—although they probably didn’t learn this from the Bible but got it from a movie. They might be surprised to learn that the Antichrist appears in the book of Revelation as a beast.

Revelation 13 describes two beasts. The first comes out of the sea with ten horns, seven heads, and ten crowns on its horns. Each of its heads bears a blasphemous name (v. 1). It seems unlikely that this is a literal, physical description. John’s depiction of the beast harkens back to the vision of Daniel 7:3–8 where this kind of imagery is used to speak of rulers.

If Jesus is the King of kings, the first beast is the enemy of enemies used

by Satan in a vain attempt to thwart His final victory. This beast will act as a false Christ. He will attempt to establish his own kingdom and will be worshiped by “all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life” (v. 8). He will even experience a kind of resurrection by bearing the marks of a fatal wound that has been healed (vv. 3, 12).

Another beast comes “out of the earth” (v. 11). The first beast is a false Christ, and this beast is a false lamb. He looks like a lamb but speaks like a dragon. The second beast will exercise authority on behalf of the first beast, perform miracles, and will set up an image of the first beast to be worshiped. He will demand that all the inhabitants of the earth receive a mark on their forehead or hands.

APPLY THE WORD

The pattern of these two beasts reflects Satan’s familiar strategy. He is a counterfeiter by nature. In place of God’s promises, he substitutes lies. In place of God’s blessings, he offers empty boasts (see Gen. 3:4; Matt. 4:9). Follow the example of Jesus and immerse yourself in the truth of God’s Word (see Matt. 4:1–11).

PRAY WITH US

Pastors’ Conference starts today on our campus in Chicago. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit would touch the heart of every participant, would comfort and strengthen them, and build up their faith.

*I have installed my king on Zion,
my holy mountain.*

Psalm 2:6

TUESDAY
MAY

22

The Lamb's Victory

Before software, newspapers set their type manually, reserving the largest type for momentous events such as the outbreak of war. This style was called the “Second Coming” typeface.

The momentous event depicted in today's passage makes all others pale in comparison. Christ is standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 who had been sealed in Revelation 7. The aim of this vision is not to describe the manner of Christ's return but rather to emphasize its certainty. His appearance with the 144,000 seems rather like an invasion. Commentator John Walvoord explains, “It is preferable to see this as a prophetic vision of the ultimate triumph of the Lamb following His second coming, when He joins the 144,000 on Mount Zion at the beginning of His millennial reign.”

The statement that the 144,000 had not “defiled themselves with women” and

had “remained virgins” has puzzled many (v. 4). It could mean that they deliberately refrained from marriage (see 1 Cor. 7:25–40). But the language of defilement makes this unlikely. Instead, this description seems to emphasize that they are wholly devoted to the Lamb.

Three angel figures appear, each with an important announcement. The first announces a message called “the eternal gospel” (vv. 6–7): the good news that the hour of judgment has come. The second angel brings a terse declaration of Babylon's fall (v. 8). Babylon is the capital of all who oppose God and the antithesis of God's holy city, Jerusalem. The third angel announces the impending doom of all who worship the beast. They will be subjected to eternal, conscious torment, forced to “drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath” (v. 10).

APPLY THE WORD

A note of grace and comfort appears in this sobering passage: “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” (v. 13). For those who belong to Christ, the worst that can happen is also transformed by God into a blessing. Do not be afraid. Not even death can separate you from God's love and salvation (see Rom. 8:38–39).

PRAY WITH US

Today, we invite you to pray for Bryon Poirier, George Brown, and Jamin Baxter from Sponsorship and Underwriting, as they assist our community partners who want to sponsor Moody's ministries. We thank God for these important partnerships.

WEDNESDAY
MAY
23

*God is a righteous judge,
a God who displays his wrath every day.*

Psalm 7:11

The Measure of God's Wrath

Many churches today want to give people a good experience. They want visitors to feel at home. The music is catchy and the sermon upbeat. This is understandable—we want visitors to return and members to stay involved. But if this is all we care about, we will rarely talk about God's wrath.

Today's text offers a glimpse of the measure of God's wrath. Seven angels appear with the last seven plagues that precede the coming of Christ. This is the judgment of the seventh trumpet and the culmination of the seventh seal. It may help to think of the relationship between the seventh seal, the seven trumpets, and the seven plagues as nested. Like Russian dolls, the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet contains the angels with the seven bowls of wrath.

The appearance of the seven angels prompts those who have gained victory

over the beast by following the Lamb to the point of death to break into song. Notice that those who are protected by the blood of Christ are not horrified at the thought that God's wrath is about to be completed.

The plagues contained in the seven bowls are more extensive versions of those from the seven trumpets. (They also echo the plagues visited on Egypt in the Exodus.) The beast counters with warfare led by three demonic spirits who perform signs to persuade the kings of the earth to take up arms against the Messiah.

When they gather together at Armageddon, the stage is set for the final war against the Lamb. It will not last long: it involves a shout, an earthquake, and a plague of 100-pound hailstones (vv. 17–21). Instead of repenting, those afflicted by this last judgment will curse God.

APPLY THE WORD

The Bible makes no apologies for God's wrath (see 16:7). It is the just and holy response to those who oppose His outpouring of grace and mercy and choose instead to follow the lies of Satan. Notice how the angels and martyrs praise God even in the midst of His judgment, for He remains holy, just, and true (16:5–7).

PRAY WITH US

Please mention while you pray Donor Resource Management staff who process donations from Moody's friends. Today we invite you to encourage Kyella Gilliam, David Kocourek, Amelia Mendez, and Patricia Fletcher in prayer.

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

1 Peter 5:13

THURSDAY
MAY

24

New Babylon

Filmmakers don't tell stories with words, though dialogue and narration are often included. Film is a visual medium, and one common visual device used by cinematographers is the zoom shot, which offers the viewer a different perspective.

The chapters we will study today and tomorrow give us a zoom shot that sheds more light on the judgment described in the previous chapter. In today's chapter, John's camera zooms out to help us grasp the wickedness of those who opposed the Lamb, describing Babylon the Great as a spiritual enemy. Tomorrow's chapter examines Babylon as a cultural enemy.

The reference to Babylon is probably symbolic rather than geographic. Babylon had long opposed God's people. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians conquered Judah, sacked Jerusalem, and carried its inhabitants into captivity.

Babylon was also a nickname that some believers in the New Testament era used to refer to the city of Rome (cf. 1 Peter 5:13).

Some scholars conclude that Babylon the Great will be both a worldwide religious system and a political empire similar to that of Rome. As a religious system, Babylon the Great will blend spiritual adultery with worldly power. It will persecute those who follow Christ and put them to death. The chapters we have already studied show that all this will be carried out with the help of satanic miracles. For this reason we can link the Babylon of Revelation 17 to all the false teaching and false religion that preceded it. It will be the culmination of Satan's enduring effort to deceive humanity and destroy God's people. Many antichrists have already come, indicating the ongoing opposition to the Lord (1 John 2:18). In the same way, Babylon is already here.

APPLY THE WORD

The war against the Lamb is already in progress. It has been ever since Eden, where we got our first glimpse of the nature of the struggle and its eventual outcome. The Lord warned Satan: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

PRAY WITH US

Again, remember before the Lord Moody's Donor Resource Management employees. Pray that God would give strength and joy in the workplace to Ruth Velaer-Wheeler, Samuel Siennett, Sean Wiedenfeld, and Sharon Cluff.

FRIDAY
MAY

25

Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

Revelation 18:2

The Great Fall

Sociologist Edward T. Hall has called culture “the silent language” that controls our lives in unsuspected ways. Because we are embedded in culture, we intuit the rules but rarely give them conscious thought. Hall warns, “Culture hides more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants.”

One reason *Babylon* is an appropriate name for the great city in Revelation is because it is a place where God’s people live as aliens. Because they are embedded in a culture whose practices are shaped by values opposed to God, they don’t always see the danger. Therefore, they are warned to “come out of her” (v. 4). This call is directed not only to those who reside there at the time of its fall but also to all the generations that have come before.

The cultural threat of Babylon is outlined in verses 9 through 20. In addition to the spiritual appeal of its false teaching, Babylon seduced its adherents through sensuality, pride, and greed. The cultural tone of Babylon was glory, luxury, and ease (v. 7). She promised to enrich all those who trafficked with her (vv. 11–14). These trappings of outward success masked the rottenness at the core of Babylonian worship and values. Only in her fall will the true nature of Babylonian religion and culture become evident to all (v. 2).

The call to “come out” of Babylon is God’s longstanding appeal to His people. It was issued to Israel and to the church alike (see Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; 51:6–45; 2 Cor. 6:17). In this respect we are always living in Babylon! We are always in danger of letting those values that are opposed to God’s truth press us into their mold.

APPLY THE WORD

We are often too complacent and uncritical about the values of our culture. They should always be tested by the measure of God’s Word. We must pray for wisdom, discernment, and the courage to come out from the ungodly worship of greed, self, and success. Join with others to pray together for God’s perspective to be sharpened in your lives.

PRAY WITH US

James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Bible Institute, requests your prayers for the students of Moody Aviation who have their Commissioning Celebration today. We praise God for these people whom He has called to His service in missionary aviation.

*I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy.
I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that
I might present you as a pure virgin to him.*

2 Corinthians 11:2

SATURDAY
MAY

26

Invitation to a Wedding

Most of us still get so-called snail mail, but we probably get a lot less than we used to. In the last decade the volume of mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service declined by 36 percent. It is presently at a 29-year low. A few things are still mailed—including *Today in the Word!* Many people also still send wedding invitations the old-fashioned way, although this too may be slowly changing.

In today's text, invitations to the Lamb's wedding are not sent by the postal service or Evite. First, the invitation is issued audibly by "what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder" (v. 6). The invitation is part of a larger ovation that celebrates the destruction of "the great prostitute" Babylon (v. 2).

Next, the Lamb's wedding invitation is put in writing. The angel tells John to write, "Blessed are those who are

invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (v. 9). Clearly these words are addressed to all who read the book of Revelation. In a sense, it is an invitation from the future that has been sent to those of us who have not yet arrived there.

The multitude says that the bride has "made herself ready" by arraying herself in "fine linen, bright and clean" (vv. 7–8). "Fine linen" represents the righteous acts of God's holy people, and a subtle implication in these words hints at the relationship between grace and righteous behavior. On the one hand, the bride puts on what has been given to her. On the other hand, she makes herself ready. The righteousness of the bride is not her own but is the righteousness of Christ, which comes as a gift and is reflected in her practice.

APPLY THE WORD

John falls at the angel's feet (probably because of the message), but the angel is only a "fellow servant" and is not worthy of worship (v. 10). In an age of celebrity preachers and writers, make sure to never confuse the messenger with the message. Don't ascribe the glory that belongs to God alone to those who merely speak for Him.

PRAY WITH US

Today is Commencement on Moody's Spokane, Wash., campus. Please pray for students receiving their degrees and certificates, as well as all those in attendance who will greet Moody's new graduates—ready to serve Christ around the world.

SUNDAY
MAY
27

The lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:8

The Arrival of the King of Kings

Many people gather at Christmas or Easter to hear a performance of the oratorio *Messiah* by George Frideric Handel. A highlight of the piece is the “Hallelujah” chorus, which acclaims Jesus as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Anyone who has heard the work cannot read today’s verses without hearing Handel’s resounding music.

Now that the invitation has been issued, the bridegroom appears. But He does not come to take the hand of His bride but rather to make war on the beast. He will overthrow him with “the breath of his mouth” and destroy him “by the splendor of his coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Jesus does not come alone: “The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean” (v. 14). Their clothing identifies them as the redeemed. Did you notice that when Jesus finally comes, His bride is already with Him?

Once Jesus appears, an angel issues an invitation to a different kind of wedding feast. This one is addressed to the birds, pictured like carrion circling above the battlefield expecting to feast on the corpses below: “Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small” (vv. 17–18).

Like the invitation to the wedding of the Lamb, this invitation is issued before the final blow falls. Indeed everything we have read in the past few chapters has been prelude to this announcement of Christ’s victory, the celebration over Babylon’s fall, and the invitation to the Lamb’s wedding. In other words, the victory dance is done before the battle has even been fought.

APPLY THE WORD

The enemies of God gather against Christ to no avail. The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur and their followers are killed. Notice that no details of the battle are given. That is because there were none. Jesus defeats them with glory of His presence and His word. What an honor to be part of His redeemed people!

PRAY WITH US

We’d like to extend our prayers to the Stewardship department, headed by vice president Jim Elliott. Today, we pray for Crystal Davis-Landrum, Eric Beckman, Kirsten Miller, and Lysa Ellis. May Christ’s love always guide their outreach to our donors!

*When the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne,
you who have followed me will also sit on twelve
thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Matthew 19:28

MONDAY
MAY

28

The Reign of Christ

Musical compositions sometimes have a coda, a passage that brings the piece to an end like the final paragraph in an essay or a story. A musical coda can be short, lasting for only a few measures, or it can be much longer. Some composers, including Beethoven, occasionally employ a “false” coda, a passage that seems about to draw to a close but then resumes.

After reading Revelation 20, yesterday’s text may feel a bit like a false coda. Isn’t the war over? Hasn’t Jesus been declared the victor? Today’s passage gives us more details and describes several things that happen after the victory.

First, Jesus dispatches His primary enemy and the chief instigator of all opposition against God. Satan is bound in the Abyss for a thousand years. As we will soon see, this is not Satan’s ultimate doom. It is a temporary

measure intended to keep Satan from deceiving the nations until the thousand years have ended (vv. 2–3).

Next the first of two major resurrections takes place. One is for “those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God” (v. 4). They are given a resurrection body and will reign with Christ for the thousand years. This is the fulfillment of God’s promise to restore the kingdom to Israel through the reign of the Messiah (Matt. 19:28; cf. Acts 1:6–7).

After the thousand years, Satan reappears to deceive the nations. This is not a setback or accident. Satan will not escape; he will be released (v. 7). It is all part of God’s plan. But this time his effort to thwart God’s plan is short-lived. Satan is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur with the beast and the false prophet. His long rebellion is over.

APPLY THE WORD

Even Satan is subject to God’s ultimate plan. When all things are against us, God is still working “for our good” (Rom. 8:28). This text does not deny the real challenge and difficulties that we encounter, and we need not pretend that we do not suffer or struggle. But we can still have confidence in God’s unshakable plan.

PRAY WITH US

As we continue to pray for Stewardship, please add to your list Field Representatives who maintain personal connection with our donors all over the country. Ask the Lord for safety and protection in their travels and for encouragement in their work.

TUESDAY
MAY

29

The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

1 Corinthians 15:26

The Death of Death

Theologian Helmut Thielicke said that death, although common, is unnatural. “This is what the Bible teaches us with uncompromising firmness: the death of man points to an ultimate disorder; it should not be, the dark boundary posts should not stand between us and the eternal life of God.”

In today’s passage we read about the impending death of death itself. Once Satan is consigned to the lake of burning sulfur, a second resurrection takes place, and with it a judgment. These are the remaining dead who were not included in the first resurrection, which only included believers.

The text uses curious language to describe the basis upon which judgment will be made when it speaks of different books. First, “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (v. 12). Scripture warns that this is a condemning record.

It proves how far we have fallen short of the righteousness of God (see Rom. 3:23). The other book is called “the book of life” or “the Lamb’s book of life” (Rev. 21:27). This is God’s record of acquittal. All those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life belong to the Lamb. Their sins have been covered by His blood.

In other words, we will either be judged according to the standard of what we have done and be declared guilty, or our judgment will be based on what Christ has done for us and we will be acquitted. Only those who are willing to let Christ stand in their place will escape the condemnation of the final judgment.

After this final judgment, death’s reign will be ended. Death was introduced into the human race when Satan tempted Eve, and Adam disobeyed. With Satan’s consignment to the Lake of Fire, death’s reign of terror is ended.

APPLY THE WORD

Can your name be found in the book of life? It is if you have trusted in Jesus Christ as your Savior. You are covered by His blood and will be free from the power of Satan and death. If you have trusted Jesus, call out to Him for His grace today. Only those who are relying on Him for eternal life can hope to avoid the lake of burning sulfur.

PRAY WITH US

Today, we focus our prayers on Moody’s Health Service staff: Ann Meyer and Kevin Thomas. We are grateful for their medical expertise, wisdom, and compassion when helping Moody’s students and employees.

*He who was seated on the throne said,
“I am making everything new!”*

Revelation 21:5

WEDNESDAY
MAY

30

A Whole New World

In *Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven*, Mark Twain wrote, “Singing hymns and waving palm branches through all eternity is pretty when you hear about it in the pulpit, but it’s as poor a way to put in valuable time as a body could contrive.” Twain was wrong on two counts. First, he was wrong about what occupies those who are in heaven. Second, he was mistaken about the believer’s location in eternity.

Today’s passage describes a whole new creation of a new heavens and a new earth. The world as we know it now will pass away. This might puzzle us, and some of the things John says about this new creation are hard to fathom. Indeed, it seems to be missing some of the aspects of the world that many consider beautiful: no sea (v. 1), no need for the sun or moon (v. 23), and no night (22:5). Other qualities seem mythical and maybe even

clichéd, such as a jeweled city whose great street is made of gold that shines like transparent glass (v. 21).

The problem is not with John’s description but with our imagination. This city is real. We will dwell on a solid earth. Yet John is also expressing heavenly realities in earthly terms. He must use the imagery of what we already know to speak of that which we have not yet experienced.

Whatever this new heaven and earth is, it cannot be less than all that John describes and we can be sure that it is much more. We’re reminded of Paul’s words: “‘What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived’—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9–10).

APPLY THE WORD

Do you sometimes feel unmoved by biblical descriptions of the life to come? We can view it now only through the darkened glass of our own earthly experiences. The reality is far better than we can know. We can trust that God is preparing a place for us that will meet our every need and allow us to fellowship with Him (see John 14:1–4).

PRAY WITH US

Please bring before the Lord, as you pray, the staff of Moody Publishers headed by Paul Santhouse, VP of Publications. Praise God for this ministry that spreads faith, hope, and love and edifies the church through the printed word.

THURSDAY
MAY

31

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

John 16:33

Paradise Regained

Some people like to skip ahead when reading a mystery in order to read the rest of the story with the end in mind. Others like to watch the game after it is over to anticipate the victory. Perhaps that is the point of the book of Revelation. It is not really “history written in advance.” It paints its picture of the end of all things in broad strokes, but clearly enough for us to know who wins!

John’s final vision in this book is one of Eden restored. But this isn’t the old Eden. There is no forbidden tree and no serpent. All the ills that plagued us in the old world are healed. All that once divided heaven and earth has been removed.

This involves more than seeing God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven. It is also more than heaven on earth. This

new world will be better than Eden, for God will not merely walk in the garden “in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). God’s dwelling will be with humanity. He will live with us. We will see His face and His name will be on our foreheads (v. 4; cf. Rev. 21:3).

This book does not promise “pie in the sky by and by.” The goal of John’s Revelation is to help God’s people here and now. The book concludes with several promises and warnings from Jesus Himself. First is a word of assurance that these things will come to pass soon (v. 12). Next is a promise and a warning: “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city” (v. 14). They can be washed only in the blood of the Lamb.

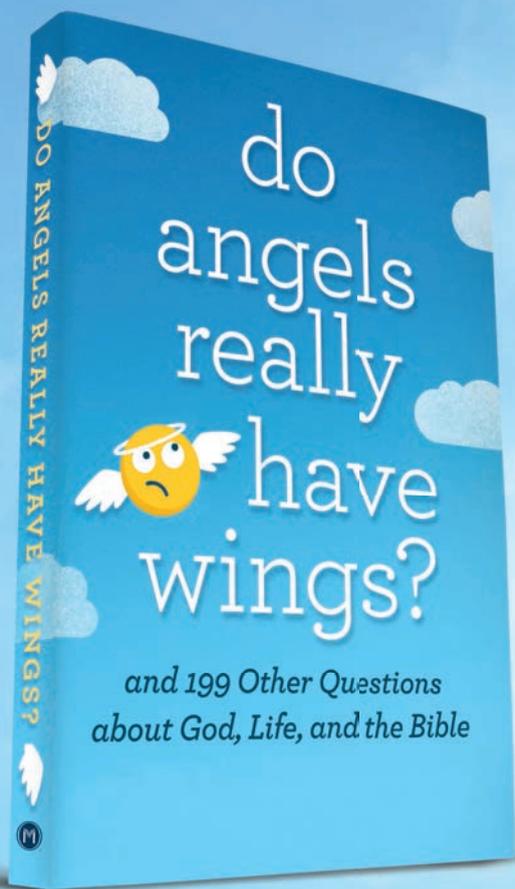
APPLY THE WORD

Revelation closes with a warning not to tamper with the words of this book. We may not understand them, but we dare not dismiss them. All that is written here will come to pass. We can only respond as John does—with worship and a longing to see our Savior. “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” Rejoice today in God’s promise for your future.

PRAY WITH US

As we come to the end of this month’s study, let’s thank the Lord for His Word that reveals to us deep things and awesome events not only from the past but also from the future. From all of us at *Today in the Word*—thank you for praying and studying with us!

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