



2022 BIBLE DISCOVERY GUIDE

# DECEMBER

COLOSSIANS — REVELATION



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## DECEMBER 2022

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# The End & The Beginning

Where there is a beginning, there is an end. The Bible tells us that the universe and all things in it were created in the beginning. So the question is: When will the end be? That question was answered by Jesus Christ in Matthew 24 and 25. What is fascinating is how the Bible tells us about the end.

There are many pastors who avoid teaching on the book of Revelation because they feel it is too difficult or complicated for their congregation to understand. Yet in the book of Revelation, God clearly says, "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7). In His Word, God Himself re-enforces the idea of reading and knowing the end times' prophecy.

This month we will finish up the letters of the New Testament and spend the last ten days of the year studying the book of Revelation. This book is a revealing or unveiling of Jesus Christ, and provides

an almost complete overview of all of the prophets and theology. The new heaven and new earth are also described, and the fact that how we live in this life will affect our eternity. As we study, it is important that we ask the help of God's Holy Spirit so that our minds can capture what He is telling us and showing us in this remarkable book.

God will accomplish all that He said He would and everything will happen according to His Word. As God's people, it is in our best interest to stay informed about what the world will look like in the near future and what will happen in the days to come. As we conclude the year reading about the end of time, consider joining with us again in January as we begin with Genesis – the beginning!



Rod Hembree, Th.D, DE.



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# How to use this Guide

Make the most of your devotional time with our Guide to the Bible in a year. Each Guide provides valuable context and theological insight to help strengthen your faith and dig deeper into the richness of God's Word every day.

The following three tips will help you make the most of your daily Bible reading and Guide:



## SPOTLIGHT ON...

In every Guide, you'll find a section with specific highlights from the perspectives of history, apologetics, theology, and more. These viewpoints provide a holistic context from which to view the month's Bible reading, giving us a greater understanding of the Word, and equipping us to grasp the impact of the Bible in these important fields.



## DAILY READING

The readings are in traditional order, with a date corresponding to the Hebrew calendar. Each reading consists of a daily insight and a focus on three major takeaways from the day's Bible passage. Challenge yourself to meditate on the *Discovering The Truth* and *Today's Prayer* sections as you go about your day.



## WATCH THE DAILY SHOW

Catch our companion TV series for even more valuable insight and theological discussion, hosted daily by the Hembree family. Join Rod, Janice, Ryan and Corie in this thirty-minute devotional show that will change the way you see and read the Bible. Visit **BibleDiscoveryTv.com** to watch our show online or to find a TV channel in your area.



# The Seven Spirits

by Ryan Hembree



John the revelator, in his opening remarks, greets the seven churches of Asia in the name of “Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (REVELATION 1:4). While it is clear that both God the Father and God the Son are present here, what isn’t immediately obvious are the “seven Spirits” before God’s throne. What or who are these Spirits?

Interestingly, the expression “seven Spirits” occurs four times in Revelation (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) and while some identify them as angels, most scholars see it as a reference to the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> This is based on several clues. For one thing, equating the seven Spirits with the Holy Spirit would be the most natural understanding of Revelation 1:4 because it makes all three Persons of the Godhead present. Second, while these seven Spirits could conceivably be angels, they certainly could not be the angels of the seven churches of Asia, since those are listed separately and in addition to the seven Spirits in Revelation 1:4.<sup>2</sup> But third, and most important, Revelation is not the first occurrence of the sevenfold Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2, for example, could very well be alluding to this very thing. Speaking of the

future Messiah, the prophet declares that, “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.” Since the number seven in the Bible symbolizes the complete and perfect work of God (CF. GENESIS 2:2-3), it is no surprise that the Messiah was also to be endowed completely and perfectly with the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah leaves us little room for doubt regarding the identification of this seven-faceted Spirit. In Zechariah 3:9, this post-exilic prophet proclaims: “For behold, the stone that I have laid before [the high priest] Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription,” Says the Lord of hosts, ‘And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.’” “Here we have the perfect oversight, the providential care of God the Holy Spirit represented by the seven eyes engraved on the “stone” (probably a large gemstone) set before the high priest,” observed Old Testament scholar Gleason Archer.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, based upon the rest of Scripture, it seems that the “seven Spirits” before God’s throne in Revelation is indeed an image of the Holy Spirit of God. ■

# Roman Slavery

by Corie Bobecko



The events and theology recorded in the New Testament of the Bible happened in the first century AD, and in the vast area ruled by the Roman Empire. Knowing the cultural backdrop of the Roman world is important to understanding many references and cultural allusions of the New Testament, such as citizenship and slavery. There was a large status divide within Roman society between people who had Roman citizenship and those who were slaves.

Elite society was largely sustained through slave labor. In the Roman Empire, slaves could be captured in warfare, born into slavery, or go into slavery due to criminal activity. People could also choose to sell family members or themselves into slavery due to dire financial issues.

The circumstances in which slaves lived varied drastically. Slaves serving a family in urban settings often lived with their master families, having close relationships with them that could aid in them being granted positions of great authority within the family, or being given status as a freedman: A once slave turned free, and given Roman citizenship. Slaves living in rural conditions on country estates and farms were involved in physical labour, and not in close proximity to their master or family and, therefore,

did not have the same access for relationship development and opportunities. While urban and rural contexts would make a difference in the slave's life, slaves were entirely at the mercy of their owner's temperament, with legal protection favouring the owner.

When you became a Roman slave, all your previous relationships and social ties were cut. Marriages were nullified, family relationships severed, business and partnerships ended, legal protection was removed, anything related to the old life was removed and you now served your master with all of yourself. This concept of a slave dying to their old lives and living a new life for their master is interesting given the apostle Paul's discussion of how Christians were to see themselves: as slaves of Christ, purchased, dead to themselves and living only for God.

Roman slavery did not have to be permanent—slaves could purchase or be granted their freedom and become freedmen. They were still required to pay respect to their former owner, and work for them for a set time each year, but they could become legal citizens and rise quite high in Roman society. It is important to note however, that just because the possibility for freedom was there, did not mean that it was attainable for all or even most Roman slaves. ■



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COLOSSIANS — REVELATION



# God's Choices

## COLOSSIANS 1-2

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

Even though Paul the apostle never visited the church at Colossae, he wrote a powerful letter to teach and guide their thinking about faith in Christ. In the first chapter of Colossians, Paul opens with prayer and words of encouragement for their fellow believers. He begins to teach them the importance of Christ's presence in their community and the power of the Spirit working in their lives, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (v.19). The Holy Spirit is the evidence of God's presence working among them. Paul was concerned, as he also expressed in his letter to the Galatian church, that the Colossian believers would not be focused on anything other than the Good News of Jesus Christ, giving their lives to Him and not becoming entangled again with the law. To be a Christian means that we follow the LORD Jesus Christ. The law does not save us, only Jesus does.

### DISCOVERING GOD – COLOSSIANS 1:19-29

– 1 –

**The blood of Christ spilled at the cross was costly. It provided a way for peace between God and man.** Thank You, God, for the powerful blood of Christ. (v. 19-20)

– 2 –

**The gospel of Jesus Christ has saved us, not we ourselves.** When we choose to follow the LORD Jesus, He sends His Holy Spirit and changes us. (v. 21-23)

– 3 –

**Paul explains that living for Jesus Christ as LORD is the most important part of the Christian life.** We must live our life to serve Him and not ourselves. (v. 24-29)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

As believers, we must hold fast to the message of God's salvation through Jesus and commit our life to serving Him in everything we do. This can be difficult for many in today's culture who feel that what they choose is the most important. As followers of Christ, we choose what God chooses.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, HELP ME TO KNOW YOU,  
TO HEAR YOU, AND TO HAVE THE  
COURAGE TO FOLLOW YOU.**



# Living Life

## COLOSSIANS 3-4

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

Many are angry and frustrated today with everything happening in the world: wars, inflation, layoffs, gas prices, to name just a few. It may seem easy to forget, but it is vital that we remember: While we may live in the world our true citizenship is not of this world, we are citizens of heaven. When we begin to pay attention to and observe the ways of God, as written in the Bible, things begin to change in a real, big way. Much of it is learning how to truly live and love. When we come to Jesus Christ and surrender to Him, we give up our own ideas about how to live and take on His teaching. Jesus told us in John 8:31-32 that if we know and live in the Word, then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. Christ is the Word!

### DISCOVERING GOD — COLOSSIANS 3:18-25

— 1 —

**Wives are to be submissive to their husbands, as is fitting in the LORD.**

Husbands, too, have a specific responsibility before God: We must love our wives. (v. 18)

— 2 —

**Husbands must be men who love their wives and fathers who love their children.** Our world has a distorted view of love. As believers, we are called to demonstrate godly love.

(v. 19-21)

— 3 —

**As employees, we are to serve at our jobs as if we are working for Christ.**

In all areas of our life, the LORD will help us if we pray.

(v. 22-25)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

As Christians, we should not be people who demand the world change for us, rather we should aim to change the world through Jesus Christ. We do this through how we live our everyday lives, in how we act and react. We must remember that the examples for good behaviour come from those who love the LORD, and no one else!

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I CHOOSE TO LOVE AND FOLLOW YOUR WAY. HELP ME TO ALWAYS DO THAT.**

# The Spiritual Fight

## 1 THESSALONIANS 1-3

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

There is a very real spiritual fight between good and evil. When I say spiritual I mean things that we cannot see affecting things we can see. The Bible teaches us about the spiritual battles we will face and how to defend against evil attacks, temptation, and all kinds of struggles. A good example of this is found in Ephesians 6, where Paul writes about the armour of God. He instructs all believers to put on that spiritual armour daily to help us stand against the tactics of the devil. The truth is life is not about floating on a pleasure cruise. We live on a battleship, where there is a real spiritual battle all around us.

This world will not fully submit to God until Christ returns. Then, the thousand-year reign or the Messianic rule of Christ will begin. One of the keys to knowing how to live like Christ here and now is to understand this. Sin is conquered through Christ alone. Jesus Christ has already won the war, but we must learn to fight the battles.

### DISCOVERING GOD — 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-19

— 1 —

#### **The Word of God is the Word of the Holy Spirit.**

When we believe that truth, read, and heed God's Word, we change.

(v. 13)

— 2 —

#### **There is a very real battle for God to save men.**

We should order our lives so that winning souls becomes first, not second or third in our life.

(v. 14-16)

— 3 —

#### **Jesus Christ has won the war, but the spiritual battle remains real and vibrant.**

To be a Christian is to be a spiritual soldier with Christ as our Commander. (v. 17-19)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Jesus Christ won the spiritual war when He died on the cross, descended into hades, rose from the dead, and then ascended into eternal life. But the spiritual battle for the souls of mankind is very real and active. We must live to follow Christ and share with others what He has done for us and pray for the lost to come to Him.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I DESIRE TO SEE MANY PEOPLE CHOOSE YOU! I ASK FOR YOUR HOLY SPIRIT TO MOVE.**

# Do Not Complain

## 1 THESSALONIANS 4-5

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

The closing letters to the New Testament churches are stunning. Paul never lets any opportunity go by without reminding everyone who the Holy Spirit is and that His presence is the very presence of God. This is the case in 1 Thessalonians. Paul is inspired to write to the church in Thessalonica by the Holy Spirit. And because we have the Spirit within us, he says to “rejoice always” (1 THESSALONIANS 5:16). Paul urges and reminds the Thessalonian believers to rejoice, to praise God! There is nothing written by Paul to encourage complaining or making your demands known to the pastor. When we read these letters today, we need to remember that we live in the same world as the early Church did; the culture is different, but the human heart is the same. The battle for souls is still real, relevant, and difficult. Let’s not fall prey to idle thoughts and complaints. We should become examples of God’s love to the Church and the world.

### DISCOVERING GOD — 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-23

— 1 —

**The Bible says that we are to respect and love those who teach us the Word of God.** Our attitudes are to be different than those of this world. (v. 12-13)

— 2 —

**We are to help everyone, encourage fellow believers, and pursue what is good.** Jesus Christ is LORD, we follow His lead. (v. 14-15)

— 3 —

**We must stay sound and consistent in our worship of God.** Our lives must be lived as one pleasing to God. (v. 16-23)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Many are being cancelled by culture in this day and age because of what they said or did in years past. But true Christians, those who follow Christ, are different. We have experienced the forgiveness, love, and amazing grace of the LORD through faith. If anything, God has cancelled our sins!

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I PRAY FOR THIS WORLDWIDE CANCEL CULTURE MOVEMENT. HELP THEM TO SEE THE TRUTH.**

# Serious Disagreements

## 2 THESSALONIANS 1-3

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

The Church has marked many places in Scripture, such as Matthew 18, for how to handle heated disagreements or confrontations among brothers and sisters in Christ. But what happens when we go too far? There is no perfect answer for how to handle a conflict in the Church without the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the presence of God, which can gain the heart of those who are in serious disagreement with each other. Paul has to deal with this when writing to the church at Thessalonica. Paul speaks as the Holy Spirit directed him, but do we pay attention to what he said? When we read the Scriptures with an open heart to God's Holy Spirit, and do not let our own ideas interfere, the passages begin to teach and help us resolve our conflicts, and things begin to change.

### DISCOVERING GOD — 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6-15

#### — 1 —

**Paul warns against irresponsible behaviour as a Christian.** We should not promote irresponsible behaviour or fellowship with believers who persist in doing so. (v. 6)

#### — 2 —

**Paul set an example by working to provide for his own needs rather than be a burden.** We should not avoid work or take advantage of others. (v. 7-10)

#### — 3 —

**Paul encourages the Thessalonians not to grow weary in doing good.** We should be responsible in our work, not taking advantage of others but live in service to God. (v. 11-15)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

No matter who we are, what we believe is reflected in our behaviour and lifestyle. As Christians, what we believe should always be at the front of who we are. Jesus Christ is not ashamed of us. We should not be ashamed of Him.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I PRAY FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE MY FAITH AND TESTIMONY ABOUT YOU WITH OTHERS.**

# Leaders in the Church

## 1 TIMOTHY 1-3

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

Throughout history, we fall into a pattern in which leaders become off-set, seeking their own personal gain and fame rather than appointed task: to lead. Some would suggest that we are in such a time right now. But worldly leaders are different than Biblical leaders. God spoke through the apostle Paul and told Timothy how to select Church leadership. Many people today associate their leadership with their success and failure, but God never sets that in place. 1 Timothy 3 clearly makes known not only the moral requirements, but the attitudes of those who are selected by God to become leaders and pastors. There are very specific qualifications and spiritual requirements that only the Holy Spirit can achieve in us if we are selected to become Church leaders. There are two specific types of leaders mentioned: pastors and deacons.

### DISCOVERING GOD — 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

— 1 —

**The pastor (overseer) of any church has a specific moral code he must live and fulfill.** Only the Holy Spirit can help us achieve the leadership attitudes and code that God desires. (v. 1-7)

— 2 —

**A deacon must also meet and live specific qualifications and moral code.** Deacons are spiritual leaders within the church but are not required to be able to teach. (v. 8-10)

— 3 —

**Wives of church leaders are to live by a moral code, as well.** The active work of the Holy Spirit is the only way we can lead.  
(v. 11-13)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Living as God desires us to live is sometimes difficult because we are consistently giving up our selfish desires to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. But in spiritual leadership the Holy Spirit requires us to be careful and sure about every decision we make. Every decision we make is spiritual.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I PRAY FOR THE SPIRITUAL LEADERS IN MY CHURCH. HELP THEM TO FOLLOW YOUR HOLY SPIRIT.**



# Managing the Church

## 1 TIMOTHY 4-6

### DISCOVERING THE WORD

The Church of the LORD Jesus Christ is not a business. It does not exist because the State recognizes the organization. It is a Church only because Jesus Christ saved the people who are the Church. Remember that the Church is not a building and it is not defined by its assets. The Church of the LORD Jesus Christ is made up of people who have the Holy Spirit working in them because they have committed their lives to follow the LORD. Too many people today see the Church as an organization. For unbelievers that is expected, but for believers it is a clear sign of ignorance. The Bible clearly tells us that the Head of the Church is Jesus Christ. Someone who was dead and rose to life in the flesh, and fills the hearts of those who have invited Him into their life to forgive their sins and rescue them from the ravages of hell.

### DISCOVERING GOD – 1 TIMOTHY 5:17-25

– 1 –

**The role of a pastor (overseer) in the Church is worthy of pay.** Those leaders who work hard through preaching and teaching should be provided for. (v. 17-18)

– 2 –

**Accusations against a leader in the church should only be heard if it is well-established between two or three witnesses.** Social media or gossip is no way to deal with any accusation. (v. 19)

– 3 –

**Some sins are clearly seen, others are not. Some good works are clearly seen, others are not.** Selection of elders should not be quick but careful. We lead to serve the LORD, not man. (v. 20-25)

### DISCOVERING THE TRUTH

Paul gives Timothy some clear instructions about how to manage the church and select leadership for it. Our attitude toward sin is clear and we can make no concession for it. We must always put the LORD first in our service.

### TODAY'S PRAYER

**LORD, I PRAY FOR YOUR  
WORLDWIDE CHURCH THAT WE  
FOLLOW YOU BY THE POWER OF  
YOUR HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US.**