

REVELATION

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As we come to this study, we must come armed with all the Bible knowledge which we have accumulated through the years. The clear and true understanding which we possess about the word of God will not be contradicted by a study of the Revelation given to John. Do not fear this study by thinking that it will overthrow the teachings of God already established throughout the rest of the Bible; it will not. This study will adopt “very definite and sane principles of interpretation.” This will help guard against fanciful, speculative, imaginative, and novel explanations that often introduce more questions than answers and that often throws the student into the horns of a dilemma of trying to believe contradictory teachings. Nothing is more unsettling to the Bible student than being saddled with apparent contradictions caused by faulty exegesis. This study is intended to give the careful student of the Bible a framework and structure for interpreting figurative prophetic language. [Credit and Reference: More Than Conquerors, W. Hendriksen]

1. **PURPOSE: To comfort the church in its struggle against evil.**

- a. Promises:
 - i. God sees their tears – 7:17; 21:4.
 - ii. Their prayers will rule the world – 8:3-4.
 - iii. Their final victory is assured – 15:2.
 - iv. Their blood will be avenged – 6:9; 8:3.
 - v. Their Christ lives, and reigns forever and forever. It is he who governs the world in the interest of his church (5:7-8). He is coming again to take his people unto himself in “the marriage supper of the lamb” and to live with them forever (21, 22).
- b. Joy and anticipation of Christ’s return.
 - i. This was the ever abiding hope of all Christians. Their lord is coming again.
 - ii. The Christian ever looks for the Lord Jesus coming in the clouds.
 - iii. This longing bursts forth in words, “and the Spirit and the bride say, Come.”
- c. He is with us now and gives us assurance.
 - i. While we look for his actual return, we see that even in his absence he is in a very real sense with us, walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands (1:12-20).
 - ii. We see that though he is gone, he is with us always.
 - iii. He says, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

2. **THEME: The victory of Christ and of his Church over the Dragon (Satan) and his helpers.**

- a. Things are not what they seem.
 - i. The beast that comes up out of the abyss *seems* to be victorious.
 - (1) The beast wars, the beast kills, dead are in the streets and are looked upon for three and half days.

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- (2) After they that dwell on the earth rejoice over the dead and make merry, they send gifts to one another.
- (3) 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.
- ii. But the rejoicing is premature.
 - (1) In reality it is the believer who triumphs.
 - (2) We read, “after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet and great fear fell upon them that beheld them. The dominion over the world became the dominion of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever” (11:11ff).
- b. Throughout the prophecies of this wonderful book the Christ is ever pictured as the Victor, the Conqueror (1:18; 2:8; 5:9ff; 6:2; 11:15; 12:9ff; 14:1,14; 15:2ff; 19:16; 20:4; 22:3). He conquers:
 - i. Death.
 - ii. Hades.
 - iii. The dragon.
 - iv. The beast.
 - v. The false prophet.
 - vi. The men who worship the beast, etc.
 Christ is victorious; hence, so are we, even when we seem to be hopelessly defeated.
- c. The band of believers.
 - i. Their garments splashed and filthy. They wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14; 22:14).
 - ii. Are they “in great tribulation?” They come out of it (7:14).
 - iii. Are they killed? They stand upon their feet (11:11).
 - iv. Are they persecuted by the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet? In the end you see them standing victoriously on Mount Zion. Rather, you see the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads (14:1).
 - v. They triumph over the beast (15:2).
 - vi. Does it *seem* as if their prayers are not heard (6:10)? The judgments sent upon the earth are God’s answer to their prayers (8:3-5).
 - vii. Do they *seem* to be defeated? In reality they reign!

- d. And what happens to those who *seem* to be conquerors?
 - i. We see them arise out of the abyss, the sea, the earth. Yes, we see them: the dragon (12:3); the beast (13:1); the false prophet (13:11); and Babylon (14:8), in that order.
 - ii. And then? We see them go down in defeat: Babylon (18:2); the beast and the false prophet (19:20), and the dragon (20:10), in that reversed order exactly.
- e. The theme of the book can be found in 17:14: “These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him *are* called, and chosen, and faithful.”

3. FOR WHOM WAS THE BOOK INTENDED?

The book was intended for Christians of the first century. They understood what Jesus was saying to them. They were comforted. Nevertheless, although it is true that we must take our starting point in the age in which John lived, and must even emphasize the fact that the conditions which actually prevailed during the last decade of the first century A.D. furnished the immediate occasion for this prophecy, we should give equal prominence to the fact that this book was intended not only for those who first read it, but for all believers throughout this entire dispensation. This is because:

- a. The affliction to which the church was subjected in the days of the apostle John is typical of the persecution which true believers must endure throughout the entire dispensation (2 Timothy 3:12).
- b. Many of the predictions in which the book abounds concern principles and happenings which are so broad in their scope that they cannot be confined to one definite year or century – e.g., the seals, trumpets, bowls – but span the centuries, reaching out unto the second coming of Christ and our glorification.
- c. The epistles – chapters 2 and 3 – are addressed to the seven churches. Seven is the number which characteristically symbolizes completeness in the Bible. It clearly indicates that the admonitions and consolations of this book were meant for the entire church throughout the centuries.
- d. And very importantly, all those who read and study this book in any age are called blessed (1:3). As at the beginning, so also at the close of the book, the author addresses himself not merely to one group of men living in one decade, but to “every man that hears of the prophecy of this book” (22:18).

4. BASIC OUTLINE OF REVELATION. The book of Revelation consists of seven sections.

- 1-3. Christ in the midst of seven golden lampstands
- 4-7. The book with seven seals
- 8-11. The seven trumpets of judgment
- 12-14. . . . The woman and the Man-child persecuted by the Dragon and his helpers
- 15-16. The seven bowls of wrath
- 17-19. The fall of the great harlot and the beast
- 20-22. The judgment upon the dragon followed by the new heaven and earth

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5. THE SEVEN SECTIONS RUN PARALLEL.

a. The sections are parallel because they cover the same time period – From the first coming of Christ to his second coming. Look for either the mention of Christ upon the earth or the end of the world or both.

i. **Chapters 1-3, The central theme seems to be *Christ in the midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands*.**

- (1) These lampstands represent the seven churches (1:20).
- (2) To each congregation John is directed to write a letter (chapters 2 and 3).
- (3) As the number seven occurs repetitively in Revelation and is everywhere symbolical of completeness, we may likely conclude that such is the case here and that it indicates the entire church throughout the full span of its existence to the very end of the world.
- (4) Thus interpreted, each individual church is, as it were, a type, *not* indicating one definite period in history, but describing conditions which are constantly repeated in the actual life of the various congregations.
- (5) Hence, this section appears to span the entire dispensation, from Christ's first coming in order to shed his blood for his people (1:5), to his second coming unto judgment (1:7). The last of these seven epistles is written to the church at Laodicea.
- (6) It is evident that chapter 4 introduces a new, yet closely related, subject.

ii. **Chapters 4-7, the book with seven seals.**

- (1) Chapter four describes the One who is sitting upon the Throne and the worship of those who surround him.
- (2) In the right hand of the Throne-occupant there is a closed book, sealed with seven seals (5:1).
- (3) From the sixth chapter we learn that the Lamb opens the seals one by one.
- (4) Between the sixth and the seventh seals we have the vision of the one hundred forty-four thousand who were sealed and of the countless multitude standing before the Throne.
- (5) This covers the entire dispensation: from the first to the second coming of Christ.
- (6) The very first reference to Christ pictures him as having been slain and now ruling from heaven (5:5-6).
- (7) Toward the end of this section the final judgment is introduced (6:12-17; 7:9-17). When we read chapter 7:9-17 we see a picture of the entire church triumphant, gathered out of all nations and thus, in its entirety, standing before the Throne and before the Lamb. We have again spanned the entire Gospel age.

iii. **Chapters 8-11, the seven trumpets of warning that effect the world.**

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- (1) What happens to the church is described in chapters 10 and 11.
 - (2) The Angel with the little Book, the Two Witnesses.
 - (3) Also at the close of this section there is a very clear reference to the final judgment (11:15,18).
 - (4) Having reached the end of the dispensation, the vision ends.
 - (5) Do not miss how this sections covers the same period of time as the others, from the first coming of Christ to the end of the world.
- iv. **Chapters 12-14, The woman and the Man-child persecuted by the Dragon and his helpers.**
- (1) This section also covers the entire dispensation.
 - (2) It begins with a very clear reference to the birth of the Savior (12:5).
 - (3) The dragon threatens to devour the Man-Child.
 - (4) The Child is caught up unto God and to his Throne.
 - (5) The dragon now persecutes the woman (12:13).
 - (6) As his agents he employs the beast coming up out of the sea (13:1) and the beast coming up out of the earth (13:11-12). Also the great harlot, Babylon (14:8).
 - (7) This section, too, closes with a stirring description of Christ's second coming unto judgment (14:14ff).
- v. **Chapters 15-16, The seven bowls of wrath.**
- (1) This section describes the bowls of wrath.
 - (2) Here, too, we have a very clear reference to the final judgment and events that will take place in connection with it (16:20).
- vi. **Chapters 17-19, The fall of the great harlot and the beast.**
- (1) Notice the picture of Christ's coming unto judgment (19:11ff).
- vii. **Chapters 20-22, The judgment upon the dragon (Satan) followed by the new heaven and earth.**
- (1) This brings us to the final section. Christ's coming in Judgment.
 - (2) See the clear statement in 20:10-11ff.
 - (3) At this coming the present universe, fleeing away, makes room for the new heaven and earth, new Jerusalem (20:11ff).
- b. The parallel nature is also seen in that the different sections ascribe the same duration to the period described.
- i. 8-11 The main period of time is Forty-two months (11:2). Forty-two months is 1260 days (11:3).
These figures are computed using 30 days in a month.
 - ii. 12-14 1260 days (12:6)
a time and times and half a time (3 ½ years) (12:14) – 42 months
- c. The parallel nature is also seen in the trumpets of chapters 8-11 and the bowls of chapters 15-16 affecting the same thing. From the chart below notice how the first trumpet affects the earth, the second the sea, the third the rivers and so on. But notice also that the seven bowls affect the exact same things which are affected by the trumpets.

| | TRUMPETS | BOWLS | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|
| 8:7 | Earth | Earth | 16:2 |
| 8:8 | Sea | Sea | 16:3 |
| 8:10 | Rivers | Rivers | 16:4 |
| 8:12 | Sun | Sun | 16:8 |
| 9:1 | Throne of beast | Throne of beast | 16:10 |
| 9:14 | Euphrates | Euphrates | 16:12 |
| 11:15 | Second Coming | Second Coming | 16:17 |

6. THE SEVEN SECTIONS ARE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS.

- a. **In the first group, Chapters 1-11**, we see the struggle among men, that is, between believers and unbelievers.
 - i. The world attacks the church.
 - ii. The church is avenged, protected, and victorious.
- b. **In the second group of visions, Chapters 12-22**, we are shown that this struggle on earth has a deeper background.
 - i. It is the outward manifestation of the devil’s attack upon the Man-Child.
 - ii. The dragon attacks the Christ.
 - iii. Repulsed, he directs all his fury against the church.
 - iv. As his helpers he employs the two beasts and the great harlot.
 - v. All these enemies of the church are defeated in the end.
- c. In the first of these two major divisions, 1-11, we see the surface: the church persecuted by the world. It consists of three sections: 1-3; 4-7; 8-11.
- d. In the second division, 12-22, we see the underlying conflict between the Christ and the dragon (Satan). The second division consists of four sections: 12-14; 15-16; 17-19; 20-22. The book of Revelation, accordingly, reveals a progress in depth or intensity of spiritual conflict.

7. We are now ready to see the complete outline of Revelation.

Theme: The Victory of Christ and His Church Over Satan and His Helpers.

- a. **THE STRUGGLE ON EARTH: THE CHURCH PERSECUTED BY THE WORLD. THE CHURCH IS AVENGED, PROTECTED, AND VICTORIOUS, Chapters 1-11:**
 - i. Christ in the midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands, 1-3.
 - ii. The Book with Seven Seals, 4-7.

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