

THE REVELATION – LESSON 1

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Introduction: Staggering events will soon shock the whole world! Great PROPHECIES in the book of Revelation show *how* and *when* these catastrophic events will occur.

Unrest grows daily around the world. Terrorism mounts. Bad news increases, while good news is increasingly *scarce*. Conditions worsen daily!

Man has tapped the power of the atom. Science and technology have seemingly run amok, producing more horrific new inventions. Now, more and more countries possess weapons of mass destruction. This danger is compounded because mistrust and strife between nations has never been greater.

Also, human decadence and immorality, famine, disease, racism and competition among ethnic rivals, and crime and violence are exploding. Where are these downward trends leading? Will human life survive?

What does the future hold? All want to know. Many have opinions, but few recognize where to find the ANSWERS. Others *think* they understand the prophecies of the Bible—and this is probably most true of the book of Revelation. Yet all popular human interpretations of this book, at best, border on ridiculous. They are a complete jumble of ideas where a little truth is mixed with much error! They are almost painful to read—yet major magazines report that great numbers do believe these dangerous, counterfeit scenarios.

What is the *truth* about prophecy? What does the Bible really say about events preceding Christ's Return? His disciples wanted to know. They asked Him, "What shall be the SIGN of Your *coming*, and of the *end of the world* [age]?"

Sobering world conditions make this question loom larger than ever before.

- ***Nothing that has occurred over the past 6,000 years even remotely compares to what is yet to come upon this world!***

The Bible foretells a time of world peace, happiness, abundance and universal prosperity. Many may think there is no hope for this world—but there is!

Wonderful, good news lies beyond today's bad news. The great Creator God will soon intervene and save humanity from itself.

- Before this occurs, world trouble will greatly increase—intensifying to staggering proportions.
- This will be followed by unexpected and cataclysmic events that will *shake* the whole world!
- ***Civilization as we know it will forever change***

God has not left mankind without a SOURCE of answers that reveals in detail what lies ahead. Tragically, believing things will eventually “turn out alright,” many hide their eyes, choosing to pursue pleasure and the accumulation of material goods. But for the short term, things will *not* turn out alright. World conditions are—and will become—far more serious than most realize.

God understands human nature and where it always leads when left to its own devices. This allows Him to know, and to *guide*, the awesome future events that will occur from now on!

It has become God's time to REVEAL what lies ahead. The stage is set and He has lifted the curtain on the future. This world must be WARNED while there is still time! And so must *you* be warned.

- Revelation describes soon-coming terrible plagues and world-shattering—truly earth-shaking—events! Take heed. If you do, you can *escape* them (Luke 21:36).

Signs, seals, symbols, vials, visions, trumpets, thrones, plagues, angels, beasts, heads, horns, witnesses, woes, wars, numbers, multitudes, messages and *mystery*! Revelation contains all of these terms. But what do they *mean*?

- **Most believe that the book of Revelation is sealed, *closed* from understanding.**
 - It is called a MYSTERY BOOK *without meaning*. Yet it is an entire book of important—vital—MEANING.

- It is filled with answers. The above terms *can* be unlocked! They *can* be understood—and this eye-opening booklet contains the necessary KEYS!
- This is why John called it The Apocalypse – The unveiling or *revelation*

You will be intrigued—even fascinated—by the clarity of what *can* be known from the book of Revelation. Events are building to a final culmination—a tremendous CLIMAX! You can know them.

- **One-third of the Bible is PROPHECY**—the future written in advance!
 - The Bible is approximately 750,000 *words*, with about 250,000 devoted to many, many prophecies.
 - Almost half the books of the Old Testament are included in either the so-called “major” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) or “minor” *prophets* (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, etc.).
 - The apostle Paul explained that the New Testament Church was “...built on the foundation of the apostles *and prophets*” (Eph. 2:20).
 - **Recognize that, since the Church stands on the words of the prophets, Christians must understand prophecy.**
 - If God commands men to “live by *EVERY WORD* of God” (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4; Deut. 8:3), He would not *exclude* the full third that is prophecy!
 - The prophet Daniel spoke of a time when “...many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (12:4). Then, speaking of the end time, he said, “...**the wise shall understand**” (vs. 10).
 - Christ directly paraphrased Daniel in the New Testament Olivet prophecy. This is where He answered the disciples’ question about the sequence of events to occur at “the end of the age.” He reinforced Daniel’s statements about those events by saying, “**Whoso reads, let him UNDERSTAND**” (Matt. 24:15).

God has opened up—REVEALED!—to His servants what lies ahead. He wants *you* to understand. He does not want you confused, ignorant or fearful of the future.

WHY DID GOD GIVE US THIS BOOK?

1. All scripture is **inspired** and **profitable**
 - a. All 66 books are worth our effort to study through them
2. It guarantees a **blessing**
 - a. Revelation 1:3
 - b. **This is the only book that promises special blessing** for those who read and hear its words. Keep in mind that the book also closes with a restatement of this blessing for those who, in addition to reading and hearing the Word, also “keep it.” (22:7)
3. Jesus is the Spirit of **prophecy**
 - a. **Biblical** Perspective - Revelation 19:10
 - b. **Political** Perspective – Events in our world today laid out in 16 chapters unfolding before our very eyes.
 - c. This book provides clearer detail of Bible prophecy than any other book in the Bible! For example, John describes the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, the governmental operation of the “Man of Sin,” the terrible events of the Tribulation Period, the future position of saints, and the city that Christ is preparing for His church. **Without this book, we would not have some of this vital information!**
4. This book completes the **circle** of Bible truth. God is not only the “Alpha;” HE IS ALSO the “Omega!” That which God began is completed and concluded in this great book. For example:
 - a. *GENESIS* shows humanity beginning in a beautiful paradise. *REVELATION* shows the wonderful paradise to come.
 - b. *GENESIS* shows how human beings lost a chance to eat of the tree of life. *REVELATION* shows that humankind will yet eat of that tree.
 - c. *GENESIS* tells of humanity’s first rebellion against God. *REVELATION* promises an end to humanity’s rebellion against God.
 - d. *GENESIS* records the first murder, drunkard, and rebel. *REVELATION* promises a city where “nothing impure will ever enter into it...”

TITLE, AUTHOR, SETTING AND TIMEFRAME: REV. 1:1

1. The *Book of Revelation* was written by the **Apostle John** and is called *The Apocalypse* (“Unveiling” or “Disclosure”). This profound book contains twenty-two chapters and is the last book of the New Testament and the Bible.

- a. John was Pastor in Ephesus (Asia Minor / Modern day Turkey)
 - b. He had relationships with all the churches mentioned in chapters 2-3
 - c. There are 365 churches today on Patmos
- 2. The Book reveals Jesus:
 - a. His person
 - b. His power
 - c. His program
- 3. This book records the account of John's vision that he experienced while a prisoner on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Turkey. It was written approximately 95-96 A.D. According to scripture and tradition, John was the last of the twelve original apostles, and **did not die until he saw Christ coming in His Kingdom! (John 21:21-23)** John was the son of Zebedee and brother of James. His mother was Salome, one of the women at the tomb of Jesus. She is regarded as a sister to Mary, Christ's mother. John's family members were well-to-do fishermen. Salome, John's mother, financially supported Jesus' ministry. (Luke 8:1-2)
 - a. Clement said John returned from Patmos in 96 A.D. after the death of Domitian. Irenaeus states that John died in Ephesus after returning from Patmos.
- 4. The Book is called the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*: Rev. 1:1
 - a. The Revealing of Christ as the High Priest (Rev. 1:12-18)
 - b. The Revealing of Christ as the Prophet-Judge (Rev. 14:14-20)
 - c. Revealing of Christ as the King of Kings (Rev. 19:11-16)
- 5. *Revelation* records events in two primary arenas: the **terrestrial** (earthly) and the **celestial** (heavenly). Confusion comes when the student does not discern which arena events take place in.

INTERPRETATION OF THE REVELATION:

- 1. **Historical Interpretation** = Some teach that the book has already been fulfilled throughout the past 2000 years of history. The Seventh Day Adventists use this interpretation. As we will see, this is not a correct interpretation and has led to many erroneous teachings!
- 2. **Preterist Interpretation** = Preterism, a Christian eschatological view, interprets some (partial preterism) or all (full preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened. This school of thought

interprets the Book of Daniel as referring to events that happened from the 7th century BC until the first century AD, while seeing the prophecies of the Book of Revelation as events that happened in the first century AD. Preterism holds that Ancient Israel finds its continuation or fulfillment in the Christian church at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

- a. Comes from Latin meaning “past”
3. **Allegorical Interpretation** = This doctrine states that each chapter contains a spiritual truth; but the words cannot be taken literally. Although this book does contain many spiritual truths, this is still an improper interpretation.
4. **Spiritual Interpretation**= This method of interpretation is similar to the allegorical. According to this method, the chapters all contain a spiritual truth that can be applied to practical living. (This is the source of “Replacement Theology.”)
5. **Literal Interpretation** = This method is the most correct and complete method for interpreting this book. This book contains a revelation concerning the time of the end and its events, involving the tribulation and the Second Coming of Christ. This is clearly the correct method of interpretation!

UNDERSTANDING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE:

1. The Biblical record of the human race:
 - a. **Gentile** Era - The first 2000 years of human history – creation to Abraham (up to Genesis 12)
 - b. **Jewish** Era – Genesis 12 – Acts 1 – Gentiles and Jews
 - c. Gentiles, Jews and Christians – Acts 2 – Revelation 22
2. 4 apocalyptic books:
 - a. Zechariah
 - b. Daniel – Timeline for the **Gentiles**. It starts with the Babylonian Captivity and takes the Gentiles into eternity future
 - c. Ezekiel – Timeline for the **Jews**. It starts with the Babylonian Captivity and takes the Jews into eternity future
 - d. Revelation – Timeline for the **Christians**. It starts with the resurrection of Christ and takes Christians into eternity future.

SECRET TO INTERPRETING THE BOOK:

THE SECRET TO A CLEAR, SCRIPTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF ALL THESE THINGS IS TO KEEP THINGS IN EACH DIVISION OF THE BOOK TO WHICH THEY BELONG.

The most important key to understanding and studying this divine book is its key verse *Revelation 1:19*. This key verse outlines *Revelation* in three primary parts:

1. Things you have seen – Revelation 1
2. Things which are – Revelation 2-3
3. Things which shall be – Revelation 4-22

Revelation's roadmap of prophecy:

1. The rapture – Rev. 4:1-2
 - a. Space of 7 years – Tribulation
 - b. Rev. 6-19
2. The Return – Rev. 19:11
 - a. Millennial reign – Rev. 20:1-6
3. The Judgment – Rev. 20:11-15
 - a. Eternal perfect state – Rev. 21-22

Conclusion:

- Special suggestions for studying this book: One must remember that the whole focus in this book can be found in its title *Revelation*. This book is a revelation of Jesus Christ! This book is not trying to reveal coming events, the Antichrist, etc. The complete focus of *Revelation* is to use events, symbols, and people to reveal the eternal Son of God!
- Follow The Golden Rule of Interpretation: When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense! Take every word as its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate text, studied in light of related passages and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.
- The Language of the Book:
 - o **Literal** = If the interpretation of a word or phrase is literal, it will agree with other words or passages throughout the Bible and book.

- **Analogy** = This means that certain words or phrases are used to describe something by using a symbol.
- **Symbolic** = The symbolism in the book will always interpret itself, either in the text or in other references throughout the Bible:
- All Biblical symbolism can be understood and interpreted by one or a combination of three different ways:
 - The **Text** Itself: Usually a symbol will be interpreted within the text itself.
 - The Law of **First** Mention: If the text is unclear, then examine the first reference.
 - Other **Related** Scriptures: Examine scriptures-comparing scripture with scripture.