

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.

- _____ 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 _____ and _____
 - a. All 66 books are worth our effort to study through them
2. It guarantees a _____
 - 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 _____
 - a. _____ Perspective - Revelation 19:10
 - b. _____ 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 _____ 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 _____ 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 _____ (earthly) and the _____ (heavenly). Confusion comes when the student does not discern which arena events take place in.

INTERPRETATION OF THE REVELATION:

1. _____ **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. _____ **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. _____ **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. _____ **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. _____ **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. _____ Era - The first 2000 years of human history – creation to Abraham (up to Genesis 12)
 - b. _____ 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 _____. It starts with the Babylonian Captivity and takes the Gentiles into eternity future
 - c. Ezekiel – Timeline for the _____. It starts with the Babylonian Captivity and takes the Jews into eternity future
 - d. Revelation – Timeline for the _____. 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:
 - **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 _____ Itself: Usually a symbol will be interpreted within the text itself.
 - The Law of _____ Mention: If the text is unclear, then examine the first reference.
 - Other _____ Scriptures: Examine scriptures-comparing scripture with scripture.

THE REVELATION – LESSON 2

CHAPTERS 2 & 3

It is impossible to cover adequately these chapters in a verse-by-verse format. They can be more clearly understood by looking at it with a broader scope. The messages to the seven churches and their pastors cover these two chapters. We will take an in-depth look at the seven churches and their interpretation. In doing so, we will cover all of chapters two and three.

The church will always be victorious despite the desperate attempts of the enemy. He promised, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it...* Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in John's vision. We see Christ walking among the lamp stand (candlesticks) shining forth the light to those floundering in darkness. As Christ walks among these churches, He gives each of them a divine commendation; condemnation; counsel and challenge, all of which are every bit as vital today as in the day they were written!

The seven churches of Asia selected by Christ are worthy of close scrutiny for there is a world of meaning contained in the messages and churches themselves. Opinion is divided as to the extent to which the teachings gained in the study of these messages and churches can be taken. It is generally agreed that these messages can have four applications:

1. **The Seven Churches of John's Day** – These were _____ churches of which John was FAMILIAR. Much of John's ministry was conducted throughout this area of Asia. The question must arise, *Why were these seven churches selected from the hundreds of churches located in cities all over the world of that time?*
2. **The Seven Divisions of Church** _____ – A study of history reveals that the church has gone through seven basic periods or stages. This belief does not deny that at the same time the seven churches are also historical and representative. Basically this theory holds that the seven churches:
 - a. Historically existent at the time of John's writing in A.D. 95-96.
 - b. Representations of the church through seven types of local churches that exist throughout the Dispensation of Grace
 - c. Seven aspects of the professing church which would successfully rise into prominence before Christ's second coming

THE SEVEN CHURCHES AND THE SEVEN PERIODS OF THE CHURCH AGE

- Ephesus the Apostolic Church - 33 to 100 A.D - Christ to _____
- Smyrna, the Persecuted Church - 100 to 313 A.D - John to _____
- Pergamos, the State Church - 313 to 476 A.D. - Constantine to Fall of _____
- Thyatira, the Papal Church - 476 to 1453 - Fall of Rome to Constantinople
- Sardis, the Reformed Church - 1517 to 1790 – Fall of Constantinople-_____
- Philadelphia, the Missions Church - 1790 to 1900's - From Missions to Last Period
- Laodicean, the Lukewarm Church - The _____ Age

3. **The Seven Types of Churches that Exist _____** – Although most of these phases of church history are now concluded, their influence still carries over from stage to stage. Some trends are still in existence even in our own day.

4. **The Seven Characteristics that Can Exist in any Church or _____** – This is simple the practical application of the message to these churches on a personal and individual basis. As we study these churches, we will see that these churches comprise seven methods of attack by Satan on the church or individual Christians within the church.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES:

1. THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS – REVELATION 2:1-7 (APOSTOLIC CHURCH 30-100)

Ephesus was one of the finest and largest churches of New Testament times. It was started by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-20). It was located in a very wicked city which was given over to the worship of the Goddess Artemis (Mother Goddess of the Earth, also known as Dianna). Of the seven churches mentioned, this is the only church where reference is made to the apostles, thus the *Apostolic Church*.

Ephesus means _____. This was the most desirable of the seven. It was characterized by fervent evangelism, mainly because of the large percentage of Jewish converts that made up the church. We owe the church the Jews a great debt. It is because of them that we have the Bible and our Savior!

A. Commendation

- i. _____ Church
 - 1) Jesus commended this early church for its faithful works and Christian Service
 - 2) It is important to understand that Jesus takes note and records all **FAITHFUL SERVICE!**
- ii. _____ Church
 - 1) False Prophets who came into the early church did not deceive the Ephesians. Rev. 2:2-3
- iii. _____ Church - Rev. 2:3
- iv. _____ Church - Rev. 2:6
 - 1) They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans
 - 2) *Nicolaitans* comes from two Greek words: *Niko* meaning *to conquer* and
 - 3) *Laos* meaning *the people, laity*.
 - 4) It seems that in the early days of the church, there were followers of a man named Nicolai. He held two serious heretical views:

- a. Sensuality by completely separating one's spiritual and physical natures, thus giving themselves a license to sin.
 - b. They tried to establish an Ecclesiastical order known as *Nicolaitanism*.
- 5) An effort was made to set up bishops, archbishops, cardinals and popes. (Who does this sound like?)
 - 6) Nicolaitanism, which is synonymous with modern day Ecclesiasticism, **is a CONCEPT that Jesus said He hates!**
 - 7) The history of the church is a continuous cycle of autonomous churches amalgamating into great conventions or denominations of Ecclesiastical hierarchies that eventually become apostate!

B. Condemnation

- i. _____ their first love
 - 1) There was only one condemnation against this church; but, it was a very serious one.
 - 2) This church allowed the most wonderful experience (salvation) to become commonplace.

C. Counsel

- i. _____ their faithfulness – Remember from where you have fallen
- ii. _____ – Turn back from coldness and indifference
- iii. _____ their first works – Do the first works

D. Challenge

- i. Hear what the Spirit says – **The true test of the hearer is seen in his conduct.** For the Word teaches, *be doers of the Word and not hearers only....*
- ii. Be an overcomer – *To him who overcomes I will give to eat the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.* Only overcomers will partake of the tree of life!

When one studies the circumstance of the Ephesian church, it is easy to understand how they might forsake their first love. They did not have a Bible to read every day to help strengthen their walk with God. In fact, Bibles were scarce; and the ones that existed were painfully copied by hand. ***There is no excuse, however, for the modern church.*** Most Christians have from three to ten Bibles at their disposal at any time. **The best way for a believer to maintain his walk with the Lord and keep it fresh is found in Colossians 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly....***

2. THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA—REVELATION 2:8-11 (PERSECUTED CHURCH 100-312)

Smyrna was a very wealthy city that had little time for Christianity. This city was one of the accomplishments of Alexander the Great and was known as the commercial city of Asia Minor. It was located on a direct trade route from India and Persia to Rome.

The church of Smyrna was a _____ church. When studying this passage, it is very evident that this church remained very faithful, even in the face of great persecution. This period is, safe-to-say, the most persecuted church period that Christianity has ever known. **The more Satan persecuted the church during this period, however, the more the church overcame the condemning characteristic of “leaving its first love.”** I believe that history and scripture bear out that the Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal this church to be the most outstanding local body of believers in church history.

Not one word of condemnation was given to this church. Satan learned a great lesson in Smyrna; **you can't defeat the church with persecution.** As a result, he unleashed against the next period of church history his most effective weapon—indulgence.

- Nero—54-68 = Paul beheaded and Peter crucified
- Domitian—81-96 = John exiled
- Trajan—98-117 = Ignatius burned at the stake
- Marcus Aurelius—161-180 = Justin Martyr killed
- Severus—193–211
- Maximinius—235–238
- Decius—249–251
- Valerian—253–260
- Aurelian—270–275
- Diocletian—284–305

Diocletian is considered the worst emperor in Rome's history and the greatest persecutor of the Christian faith. Under his rule many Roman cities conducted public burnings of scripture.

During the second and third centuries, persecution rose to a new level as multiplied thousands of Christians died for their faith in Christ. Hundreds were placed in amphitheaters in Rome to be fed to hungry lions while thousands watched and cheered. Some were crucified; others covered in bloody animal skins and tortured to death by wild dogs. Some were covered in tar and set on fire to serve as torches to light the streets. Other Christians were literally skinned alive from the feet up to prolong their suffering. Many were placed in boiling oil and burned at the stake. **It is estimated that during this persecution period, _____ Christians were martyred for the testimony of Jesus Christ. The real question here is this: “if it were you, would you be willing for you and your family to be martyred?”**

SPECIAL NOTE: THE LORD PREDICTED THAT THIS CHURCH WOULD SUFFER PERSECUTION 10 DAYS. THIS CHURCH SAW 8 OF THE 10 PERIODS OF PERSECUTION UNDER ROMAN EMPORERS.

Interestingly enough, the Bible was being spread at this time. It was translated into Syriac, Arabic, Persian, and Armenian, which became the official scriptures for the eastern churches. In the second century, the Bible was translated into Latin in what is called the Old Latin Version. This version became the Bible of the western churches and has been translated into many different languages. **The Word of God can and will withstand every attack of the enemy!**

THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THIS CHURCH!

A. Commendation

- i. _____ Church
 - 1) Rev. 2:9 = I know your...tribulation....
- ii. A _____ Church
 - 1) Rev. 2:9 = Because of persecution, it seems that the church went through a period of sever financial persecution. I know your poverty...but you are rich...
 - 2) The churches of the first three centuries were marked by material poverty and _____ ! Today it is just the opposite!!!
- iii. An _____ Church

B. Counsel

- i. Don't _____
 - 1) Rev. 2:10 = *Fear none of those things which you shall suffer...*
- ii. Be _____
 - 1) Rev. 2:10 = *Be faithful unto death...*
 - 2) Jesus will reward their faithfulness with a crown of life!

C. Challenge

- i. Hear what the Spirit says – Rev. 2:11
- ii. Be an overcomer – Rev. 2:11
- iii. Overcomers will not be hurt by the second death – eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14)

WHEN WE STUDY THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA, WE SHOULD BE REMINDED THAT THE WORLD IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING ANTAGONISTIC TOWARD CHRISTIANITY! AROUND THE WORLD OUR BRETHREN IN CHRIST ARE SUFFERING FOR THEIR FAITH. WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL FOR THE FREEDOM THAT WE HAVE AND ENDEAVOR ON EVERY LEVEL TO KEEP THAT BLESSED GIFT!