

# Behold, I Come Quickly...

## A Study of Revelation

### PART 1

#### Revelation 1:1 - 3:22

## The Seven Churches

### LESSON 1

#### Revelation - Introduction

## John - The Son of Thunder

**Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.** (Revelation 22:7)

**REV 1:1** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant **John**:

**2** Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

### The Title

The book is known variously as "Revelation," "The Revelation," "The Revelation of John," "The Revelation of the Apostle John," or "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." This book is also known by the same assortment of various titles as "The Apocalypse." "Apocalypse" is a Greek word meaning "revelation" or "disclosure."<sup>1</sup>

### A Blessing to Those That Read

**Rev 1:3** Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Six other blessings are mentioned in the book of Revelation.<sup>2</sup> See Appendix Figure 1 for a complete list.

### Curses to Those That Add or Take Away

**Rev 22:18** For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, **if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:** **19** And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, **God shall take away his part out of the book of life**, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

<sup>1</sup> David Noel Freedman, et al, (Editors) , "Apocalypses and Apocalypticism," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992, Vol. I, p. 279. Freedman, "Revelation, Book of," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. V, pp. 694, 695.

<sup>2</sup> David M. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, Bellmawr, NJ, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministries, 1999, p. 17.

## The Spirit of Prophecy

**Rev 19:10** And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for **the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

"This means that the true purpose of prophecy is to provide testimony to the person and program of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

## John - The Son of Thunder

The writer of Revelation is John. John's name means "Jehovah is gracious."<sup>4</sup> John, the brother of James, was a son of Zebedee. That John was the youngest is reasoned from his being called "the brother of James."

**MAT 4:21** And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother**, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

John's mother is thought to be Salome, who was an onlooker at the Cross. Mark mentions that Salome was present at the crucifixion, while Matthew indicates that John's mother was present.<sup>5</sup>

It is believed that John was about 10 years younger than Jesus, and that he lived until the reign of Trajan, after 98 AD. John would have been over 90 years old at that time.<sup>6</sup> John was a cousin of Jesus, since his mother, Salome, was the sister of Mary. John, like Peter, in the eyes of Jewish scholars, was unlearned.<sup>7</sup>

The family's fishing business was successful to the extent that they could afford servants.

**MAR 1:20** And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with **the hired servants**, and went after him.

They were businessmen. Jesus Himself was a tradesman, a carpenter. They fed and gave alms to the poor. John's family, as indicated, was no exception.

John was acquainted with a high priest and owned a house in Jerusalem, or Galilee, where he received Jesus' mother.<sup>8</sup>

**JOH 18:16** But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out **that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest**, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

**JOH 19:27** Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! **And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.**

In Mark's list of disciples, Peter is mentioned first, while James and John are next, indicating the earliness of their call and the importance they enjoyed among the twelve. In the other Gospels only Andrew, Peter's brother, is listed before them.<sup>9</sup>

Probably because of their impetuosity, Jesus referred to the brothers James and John as "Boanerges," "the Sons of Thunder."

**MAR 3:14** And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, **15** And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: **16** And Simon he surnamed Peter; **17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:**

They showed their impetuosity in the following verses:

<sup>3</sup> Levy, *REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word*, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Philip Schaff, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910, reprinted 1995, Vol. I, p. 413.

<sup>5</sup> Freedman, "John (Disciple)," *THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY*, Vol. III, p. 883.

<sup>6</sup> Schaff, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, Vol. I, pp. 413, 414.

<sup>7</sup> Schaff, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, Vol. I, p. 414.

<sup>8</sup> Schaff, *HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*, Vol. I, p. 414.

<sup>9</sup> Freedman, "John (Disciple)," *THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY*, Vol. III, pp. 883, 884.

**LUK 9:51** And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, **52** And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. **53** And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. **54** And **when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?** **55** But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. **56** For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

Their mother certainly showed ambition on their behalf, of which they acquiesced and were rebuked.

**MAT 20:20** Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. **21** And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, **Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.** **22** But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. **Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.** **23** And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

The call of James and John, like Peter and Andrew, is noted by the abandonment of their work. Not only that, they seem to have been the business partners of Peter and Andrew.

**LUK 5:1** And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, **2** And **saw two ships** standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. **3** And **he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's**, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. **4** Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. **5** And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. **6** And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. **7** And they beckoned unto **their partners, which were in the other ship**, that they should come and help them. And they came, and **filled both the ships**, so that they began to sink. **8** When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. **9** For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: **10** And so was **also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.** And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. **11** And when they had brought their ships to land, **they forsook all, and followed him.**

Peter, James, and John were permitted to be alone with Jesus on a number of occasions, including witnessing the Transfiguration and the Agony at Gethsemane. It was to Peter, James, John, and Andrew that Jesus gave his prophecies of what was to come, the Olivet discourse.

**MAR 13:3** And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, **Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately**, **4** Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

John is mentioned as a pillar of the Jerusalem church, together with James and Peter. They gave Paul the "right hand of fellowship," sending Paul and Barnabas to minister to the Gentiles.

**GAL 2:7** But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; **8** (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) **9** And **when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars**, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they **gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.**

James was killed by Herod Agrippa I in 43 AD.

**ACT 12:1** Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. **2** And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

John seems to be linked together with Peter whenever John is mentioned in the book of Acts. Peter appears to have the principal role on these occasions.<sup>10</sup> John is identified as the "Beloved Disciple" of John's Gospel by tradition. John is identified as the author of the fourth Gospel, the Gospel according to John.<sup>11</sup>

John alone, of all the disciples, was at the Cross. John outran Peter to be the first to gaze at the empty tomb, and was the first of the disciples to recognize the risen Lord on the shore of Lake Galilee.

Because of the gentle and spiritual tone of his Gospel and epistles John might seem soft, but his character was not. He burned with a holy fire. It wasn't for nothing that he was referred to as one of the "sons of thunder." According to Irenaeus, John once encountered the Gnostic heretic Cerinthus in a public bath. John refused to stay under the same roof with him lest it fall down because of his denial of the incarnation of our Lord.<sup>12</sup> It is with this in mind that we have no difficulty in attributing the Revelation to John, warning of the impending fire and brimstone of God's wrath to come. In contrast, his gentleness is evident as Jerome indicates that in John's extreme old age he was carried by his disciples to the meeting-place exhorting repeatedly "Little children, love one another," and when questioned, adding "This is the Lord's command, and if this alone be done it is enough."<sup>13</sup>

It appears that John never married, but remained celibate. According to Ambrosiaster, all the apostles were married except John and Paul.<sup>14</sup>

## Ephesus and Patmos

John eventually moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus where he remained until his death, by natural causes, sometime after 98 AD.

Some say that he remained in Jerusalem until after the death of Mary, about 48 AD, and probably did not leave for Ephesus until after 63 AD, but the most reliable traditions say that Mary died at Ephesus. If this is true, then he was in Ephesus by 48 AD, or Mary died in Jerusalem or Galilee. Alternately, Mary died in Ephesus after 63 AD. It was probably the deaths of Peter and Paul that induced his move to Ephesus to take charge of the orphaned churches of Asia Minor. There is no evidence that John resided at Ephesus while Peter and Paul were alive.

Ephesus was the center of Grecian culture, commerce, religion, and the temple of Diana. It was in this setting that the forces of orthodoxy would face the early Christian heresies. Sandwiched in time between Jerusalem and Rome, Ephesus would be the chief theater of church history in the latter half of the first and for much of the second century.

It was while he was at Ephesus that he was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he received the visions for the book of Revelation. His exile could have been as late as 95 AD. After his release from Patmos he returned to Ephesus.

There is a tradition that, while in Rome with Peter, John miraculously survived martyrdom by being boiled in oil. This tradition points to John's exile being during Nero's persecution, about 68 AD, in which Christians were covered with inflammable material and burned as torches.

The church historian Eusebius places the composition of Revelation in the reign of Domitian, about 95 AD. Irenaeus indicates that the book of Revelation was seen at the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD). The implied date is 95-96 AD. Victorinus of Pettau testifies that John was banished by Domitian to a mine, or quarry, on Patmos where he saw the vision, and indicates that the book was written during the time of Domitian.

After Patmos, John returned to Ephesus where he remained until he died sometime after 98 AD. John's tomb can be seen at Ephesus, but his remains are missing. A 1971 report by an English speaking Turkish guide indicated that John's remains had been removed to the British Museum, but that report is denied by British Museum authorities.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Acts 3:1-11; 4:1-22; and 8:14-25.

<sup>11</sup> Freedman, "John (Disciple)," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. III, p. 885.

<sup>12</sup> Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. I, p. 430.

<sup>13</sup> Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. I, p. 430.

<sup>14</sup> Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. I, p. 430.

<sup>15</sup> Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. I, pp. 424-431. Eusebius Pamphilus, Christian Frederick Cruse, (Translator), THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF EUSEBIUS PAMPHILUS, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, translated 1850, reprinted 1990, pp. 101, 102, 104, 105. Freedman, "Revelation, Book of," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. V, pp. 700, 701. Freedman, "Ephesus," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. II, pp. 548, 549. Henry M. Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers; San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers,

## Christian Persecutions during the Time of John

There were two periods of Roman persecutions of Christians during John's time. The first was during the reign of Nero, who reigned from 54 to 68 AD. The second was during the reign of Domitian, who reigned from 81 to 96 AD. It is believed that it was during Domitian's persecutions that the book of Revelation was written. Both Roman emperors were cruel, but it wasn't until the time of Domitian that emperor worship was enforced presenting Christians with a choice, worship God or worship Caesar as god.

It was in this setting that the book of Revelation was written as an encouragement and call for repentance for the persecuted church.<sup>16</sup> The book is a victory book for those who persevere until the end.

## Tribulation

The setting of the greater part of the book is prophetic of a future tribulation period that will last seven years. This period is referred to as the seventieth week of Daniel, or the Tribulation period. The primary Biblical reference for the future seven-year tribulation is found in Daniel 9:27. A gap is inferred that allows for the Church Age. This gap is inferred because the preceding verses are so specific regarding the first coming of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. Of Daniel's 70 weeks of years only 69 weeks have so far been fulfilled. Only the 70<sup>th</sup> week remains. It is this final 70<sup>th</sup> week that is the topic of the Book of Revelation. As we study the Book of Revelation, please keep in mind that the purpose of the Tribulation is for the salvation of the Jewish nation.

**DAN 9:24** Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and **prophecy**, and to anoint the most Holy. **25** Know therefore and understand, **that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem [445 BC] unto the Messiah the Prince [Jesus Christ] shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks [69 weeks of years]:** the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **26** And **after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off [32 AD]**, but not for himself: **and the people of the prince that shall come [the people = the Romans/ the prince that shall come = Antichrist]** shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. **27** **And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week [seven years]: and in the midst of the week [after 3-1/2 years] he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.**

Please see Figure 2 in the Appendix for an illustration of the Seventy Weeks prophecy of Daniel.

## Divisions and Comparisons

### Five Divisions of the Bible<sup>17</sup>

The Bible may be thought of as having five divisions:

1. The Old Testament has for its subject - The King and His coming Kingdom, in promise and prophecy.
2. The Four Gospels - The Kingdom offered and rejected. The King crucified by Israel in the Land.
3. The Acts and earlier Pauline Epistles - The King and Kingdom re-offered; and rejected, by the Dispersion in Rome. (Acts 3:19-21; 28:25-28).
4. The Later Pauline Epistles - The Kingdom in abeyance. The King made Head over all things to the Church.
5. The Revelation - The Kingdom is set up with Divine judgment, in Power-Glory. The King enthroned.

The language of the book is Greek, but the thoughts and idioms are Hebrew, which links it to the Old Testament. An intimate knowledge of the Old Testament is required for an adequate understanding of the book

1983, p. 49. William Steuart McBirnie, THE SEARCH FOR THE TWELVE APOSTLES, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1973, pp. 110, 115, 116, 121.

<sup>16</sup> Steve Gregg (Editor), REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997, pp. 14-18.

<sup>17</sup> E. W. Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1935, 1984, p. 3.

of Revelation. This demonstrates that its major theme is God's final dealings with the Jews and Gentiles; and not the Church of God.<sup>18</sup> In fact, the Church is missing throughout most of the book of Revelation, as it is in the entire Old Testament. However, even then, we learn what is to be the future destiny of the Body of Christ.<sup>19</sup> Even though God came first to the Jews through Abraham, He is calling all people to Himself.

**Amos 9:11** In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: **12** That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of **all the heathen, which are called by my name**, saith the Lord that doeth this.

**Acts 15:14** Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. **15** And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, **16** After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: **17** That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and **all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called**, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

The various imagery and the judgments, receive their reflection from the Old Testament. The judgments, in particular, follow on the lines of the Mosaic plagues of Egypt.<sup>20</sup> The book of Revelation has not less than 285 references to the Old Testament (Matthew has 92; Hebrews has 102).<sup>21</sup>

In regards to the Church, Paul indicates that the doctrines contained in the Gospels (i.e. the Church of God) were kept secret, but now during the Church Age are revealed.<sup>22</sup> The Church was hidden in the Old Testament, but revealed in the New Testament.

**ROM 16:25** Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to **my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,**

Figure 3 in the Appendix of this lesson lists a comparison between Genesis and Revelation. It is extremely revealing to note that what was begun in Genesis is finished in Revelation.

## Framework

There is a four division framework of Revelation as follows:

### The Framework of Revelation<sup>23</sup>

<b>Chapters 1 - 3</b>	<b>Church Age</b>	<b>Unknown Duration</b>
<b>Chapters 4 - 19</b>	<b>Period of Judgment</b>	<b>Seven Years</b>
<b>Chapter 20</b>	<b>Kingdom Age</b>	<b>One Thousand Years</b>
<b>Chapters 21 and 22</b>	<b>Eternal Age</b>	<b>Endless Years</b>

## Numbers in Revelation

The number seven runs through the book of Revelation. Seven means "perfection," "fullness," or "completion." God completed His mighty work of creation and rested on the seventh day. God will complete His mighty works of redemption and judgment with a system of sevens.<sup>24</sup> Refer to Figure 4 in the appendix to this lesson for the references to the number seven in Revelation.

Seven is not the only number we will find as we study the book of Revelation. We even find a numerical riddle that has puzzled men for centuries - the number of the beast, 666.

## Alternating Scenes of Heaven and Earth

The Book of Revelation presents alternating scenes of heaven and earth.

<sup>18</sup> E. W. Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1935, 1984, pp. 4, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, pp. 7-9.

<sup>20</sup> Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, pp. 5, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, pp. 6, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Bullinger, COMMENTARY ON REVELATION, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 31. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 16.

## Alternating Scenes of Heaven and Earth<sup>25</sup>

- In Heaven: Blessing from God (1:1-8)  
On Earth: John imprisoned (1:9)
- In Heaven: The glory of Christ (1:10-20)  
On Earth: Letters to the churches (2:1-3:22)
- In Heaven: The Lamb and the throne (4:1-5:14)  
On Earth: The seals broken (6:1-17)
- In Heaven: The 144,000; silence (7:1-8:6)  
On Earth: The trumpet judgments (8:7-9:21)
- In Heaven: The little book 10:1-11)  
On Earth: The two witnesses (11:1-13)
- In Heaven: Worship (11:14-19)  
On Earth: Israel persecuted by the beasts (12:1-13:18)
- In Heaven: The 144,000 in glory; angelic activity (14:1-15:8)  
On Earth: The seven vials; the two Babylons (16:1-18:24)
- In Heaven: The marriage of the Lamb; its consequences (19:1-16)  
On Earth: Final judgments (19:17-20:10)
- In Heaven: The last judgment; the celestial city (20:11-22:21)

According to John Phillips in his commentary of Revelation, the reason of this alternation is in fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer. It is the fulfillment of God's plan that begins in heaven and ends in heaven.<sup>26</sup>

**MAT 6:10** Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done **in earth, as it is in heaven.**

### Interpretation

There are four general methods of interpreting the book of Revelation. These methods are of necessity based on the personal bias and assumptions of the interpreter. These are as follows:

1. **Continuous Historical Approach** - That the book of Revelation is being fulfilled throughout church history.<sup>27</sup>

*Those who teach this view believe that God revealed the entire church age in advance through the symbolic visions of the Apocalypse. For example, the breaking of the seven seals (chs. 6--7) is often said to be the barbarian invasions that sacked the western Roman Empire. The scorpions/Locusts that come out of the bottomless pit (ch. 9) are the Arab hordes attacking the eastern Roman Empire, followed by the Turks, represented as the horses with serpents for tails and flame-throwers for mouths. "The beast" (ch. 13) represents the Roman papacy.<sup>28</sup>*

2. **The Preterist Approach** - This view considers the fulfillment of Revelation was intended for the time immediately following its writing in 95 AD, but failed to be fulfilled. Others subscribing to this view feel that the book was written before 70 AD and that many details were fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup>

**A major problem with this view is that there are definite details that cannot be identified as having occurred during the fall of Jerusalem, and that there are details that definitely have a future fulfillment.**

3. **The Spiritual Approach (Idealist)** - This view supports no single specific fulfillments. The book of Revelation only reveals spiritual lessons and principles depicted symbolically. This view is generally associated with theological liberalism.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> John Phillips, EXPLORING REVELATION, Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1974, 1987, reprinted 1991, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, EXPLORING REVELATION, p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 34-37. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 37-40. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 14.

**D. T. Crafer traces the modern emergence of this view to William Milligan:**

*There is one other method of interpretation worthy of mention; it is that associated with Milligan himself. He divorces the book almost completely from history, and finds in it little more than a noble expression of those great principles of the divine government whose operation we can trace in every age of the world.<sup>31</sup>*

**J. Barton Payne has observed:**

*Allegorizing commentators may treat the Apocalypse according to principles of mystical interpretation... or according to theories of liturgical, poetic, or dramatic literary forms such as have been proposed by modern critics; but all writers of this type unite upon reducing the book's 'real' teaching to certain matters of timeless truth, or at least to interpretations that are devoid of concrete, historical specification.<sup>32</sup>*

4. **The Futurist Approach** - This view says that everything after chapter three awaits fulfillment in the future. This is the view held by the majority of the most popular contemporary evangelical writers and Bible teachers. This view allows for a literal view of the book of Revelation.<sup>33</sup>

**Henry Morris makes this point:**

*It is inevitable that literalistic expositors of Revelation will be primarily futurists since practically none of the events of Revelation 4--22 have yet taken place in any literal sense. Many futurists do accept a cyclical development, but probably most (including myself) follow a strictly chronological approach.<sup>34</sup>*

**Charles Ryrie, another prominent dispensational futurist writes:**

*The concept of literal interpretation always raises questions since it seems to preclude anything symbolic, and the book obviously contains symbols.... Futurists do recognize the presence of symbols in the book. The difference between the literalist and the spiritualizer is simply that the former sees the symbols as conveying a plain meaning.<sup>35</sup>*

The Futurist Approach is the approach we will be using in our study of the book of Revelation.

## Other Interpretive Considerations

This study is based on the following considerations:

**First** – The **dispensationalist method** is assumed. According to Lewis Sperry Chafer: *“Dispensationalism is derived from normal, or literal interpretation of the Bible. It is impossible to interpret the Bible in its normal, literal sense without realizing that there are different ages and different dispensations.”<sup>36</sup>*

All of the dispensations represent covenants between God and man. These dispensations represent God's progressive revelation of His divine purpose of salvation to mankind.<sup>37</sup>

The seven dispensations are:

1. Innocence (The Edenic Covenant) – from Adam to the Fall (man communicated directly with God);
2. Conscience, or self-determination (The Adamic Covenant) – from the Fall to the Flood (God ruled through man's conscience);

<sup>30</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 43-46. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 46.

<sup>33</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 40-43. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 15.

<sup>34</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 40, 41.

<sup>35</sup> Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, John F. Walvoord (reviser), MAJOR BIBLE THEMES, 52 Vital Doctrines of the Scripture Simplified and Explained, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1926, 1953, Revised edition 1974, p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> John F. Walvoord, THE FINAL DRAMA, 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993, pp. 33, 35, 48.

3. Civil [Human] government (The Noahic Covenant) – from the Flood to the Tower (God gave man authority over the lives of men);
4. Promise (Patriarchal rule) – from the Tower to Egyptian captivity;
5. Mosaic Law (Rule by Old Testament Law) – from the Egyptian captivity to Jesus Christ;
6. Grace (Salvation for all based on Christ's works) – from Jesus to the Second Coming;
7. Millennium (Direct rule by Jesus Christ) – Second Coming to end of the Millennium.

Through these various dispensations, God would slowly reveal Himself, prove the need of salvation through the continual failures of man, and lead mankind toward their salvation by redemption through the Savior Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup>

**Second** – Our approach will be **Premillennial**. The teaching of a coming earthly kingdom (premillennialism) was the common belief of the first century church. Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will come again and set up a thousand year reign on earth. Even amillennialists (no millennium) agree that a literal interpretation of the Bible leads to a premillennial understanding of the coming kingdom as the only possible interpretation.<sup>39</sup>

**Third** – We will consider the rapture of the Church to be **pretribulational** – occurring before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation.

### **The Golden Rule of Interpretation**

**When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at primary, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.<sup>40</sup>**

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<sup>38</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, DISPENSATIONALISM TODAY, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1965, pp. 16, 22, 57-64. Leon Bates, A BIBLE MAP. Sherman, TX: Bible Believers Evangelistic Association, Inc., 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Walvoord, THE FINAL DRAMA, 14 Keys to Understanding the Prophetic Scriptures, pp. 10-19.

<sup>40</sup> Tim LaHaye, UNDERSTANDING BIBLE PROPHECY FOR YOURSELF, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998, 2001, p. 14.

## APPENDIX

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### Fig. 1 – Seven Blessings in the Book of Revelation<sup>41</sup>

1. Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.
  2. Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.
  3. Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
  4. Rev 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.
  5. Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
  6. Rev 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
  7. Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.
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<sup>41</sup> John F. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966, p. 36. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 17.

## Fig. 2 – DANIEL’S VISION OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS<sup>42</sup>

The calculation goes like this:

### Daniel’s 70 Weeks Calculation<sup>43</sup>

14 March 445 BC to 14 March 32 AD = 476 years of 365 days =	173,740 days
14 March 32 AD until 6 April 32 AD (Palm Sunday) =	24 days
Add 116 Leap Days =	<u>116 days</u>
	<u>173,880 days</u>

This is Daniel’s 69 “weeks” of years exactly.

Some believe that the decree was in 444 BC and the crucifixion was in 33 AD. The calculation works equally well.

### The 483 Years in the Jewish and Gregorian Calendars<sup>44</sup>

**Jewish Calendar**  
(360 days per year)

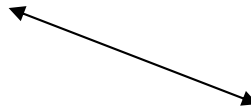
(7 X 7) + (62 X 7) years = 483 years

483 years  
X 360 days  
173,880 days

**Gregorian Calendar**  
(365 days per year)

444 BC to 33 AD = 476 years

476 years  
X 365 days  
173,740 days  
+ 116 days in leap years  
+ 24 days (March 5 - March 30)  
173,880 days



The above calculations account for sixty-nine of Daniel’s seventy weeks, leaving one week remaining to be fulfilled. It is that week (seven years) that we will examine during much of this study.

<sup>42</sup> Grant R. Jeffery, *ARMAGEDDON - APPOINTMENT WITH DESTINY*, Toronto, Ontario, CAN: Frontier Research Publications, 1988, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> Jeffery, *ARMAGEDDON - APPOINTMENT WITH DESTINY*, pp. 28-31.

<sup>44</sup> John F. Walvoord, *THE PROPHECY KNOWLEDGE HANDBOOK*, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990, p. 254.

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**Fig. 3 – Comparison of Genesis to Revelation<sup>45</sup>**

<b>PROBATIONARY WORLD (Genesis)</b>	<b>ETERNAL WORLD (Revelation)</b>
Division of light and darkness (1:4)	No night there (21:25)
Division of land and sea (1:10)	No more sea (21:1)
Rule of sun and moon (1:16)	No need of sun or moon (21:23)
First heavens and earth finished (2:1-3)	New heaven and earth forever (21:1)
Man in a prepared garden (2:8, 9)	Man in a prepared city (21:2)
River flowing out of Eden (2:10)	River flowing from God's throne (22:1)
Tree of life in the midst of the garden (2:9)	Tree of life throughout the city (22:2)
Gold in the land (2:12)	Gold in the city (21:21)
Bdellium and the onyx stone (2:12)	All manner of precious stones (21:19)
God walking in the garden (3:8)	God dwelling with His people (21:3)
The Spirit energizing (1:2)	The Spirit inviting (22:17)
Bride formed from her husband (2:21-23)	Bride adorned for her husband (21:2)
Command to multiply (1:28)	Nations of the saved (21:24)
Garden accessible to the Liar (3:1-5)	City closed to all liars (21:27)
Man in God's image (1:27)	Man in God's presence (21:3)
Man the probationer (2:17)	Man the heir (21:7)
<b>CURSED WORLD (Genesis)</b>	<b>REDEEMED WORLD (Revelation)</b>
Cursed ground (3:17)	No more curse (22:3)
Daily sorrow (3:17)	No more sorrow (21:4)
Sweat on the face (3:19)	No more tears (21:4)
Thorns and thistles (3:18)	No more pain (21:4)
Eating herbs of the field (3:18)	Twelve manner of fruits (22:2)
Returning to the dust (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Coats of skins (3:21)	Fine linen, white and clean (19:14)
Satan opposing (3:15)	Satan banished (20:10)
Kept from the tree of life (3:24)	Access to the tree of life (22:14)
Banished from the garden (3:23)	Free entry to the city (22:14)
Redeemer promised (3:15)	Redemption accomplished (5:9, 10)
Evil continually (6:5)	Nothing that defileth (21:27)
Seed of the woman (3:15)	Root and offspring of David (22:16)
Cherubim guarding (3:24)	Angels inviting (21:9)

What was begun in Genesis is finished in Revelation.

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<sup>45</sup> Henry M. Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Prophetic Book of the End Times, Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers; San Diego, CA: Creation-Life Publishers, 1983, p. 22.

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## Figure 4 – System of Sevens<sup>46</sup>

1. Seven churches (Revelation 1:4, 11, 20)
2. Seven Spirits (Revelation 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
3. Seven candlesticks (Revelation 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1)
4. Seven stars (Revelation 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1)
5. Seven lamps (Revelation 4:5)
6. Seven seals (Revelation 5:1; 5:5)
7. Seven horns (Revelation 5:6)
8. Seven eyes (Revelation 5:6)
9. Seven angels (Revelation 8:2, 6)
10. Seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2, 6)
11. Seven thunders (Revelation 1:3, 4)
12. Seven thousand (Revelation 11:13)
13. Seven heads (Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9)
14. Seven crowns (Revelation 12:3)
15. Seven angels (Revelation 15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)
16. Seven plagues (Revelation 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9)
17. Seven vials (Revelation 15:7; 17:1; 21:9)
18. Seven mountains (Revelation 17:9)
19. Seven kings (Revelation 17:10, 11)
20. Seven beatitudes - the statements beginning with "Blessed..." (Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14)
21. Seven years of judgments (Revelation 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5)
22. Seven divisions of each of the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2 and 3)
23. Seven "I am's" of Christ (Revelation 1:8, 11, 17, 18; 21:6; 22:13, 16)
24. Seven doxologies in heaven (Revelation 4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2, 3; 15:2-4; 19:1-6)

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<sup>46</sup> Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, pp. 28-30.