

NOTES ON "THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST"

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1. THE WRITER: THE APOSTLE JOHN (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 21:²~~3~~; 22:8).
2. THE PLACE OF WRITING: ON THE ISLE OF PATMOS in the Aegean Sea where John had been exiled because of his ministry of the Word of God (Rev. 1:9).
3. THE TIME OF WRITING: probably the last of all of the New Testament books, about 95 or 96 A.D., during the persecution by the Roman Emperor, Domitian.
4. THE ORIGINAL DESTINATION OF THE BOOK: THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE ROMAN PROVINCE OF ASIA which occupied the greater part of western Asia Minor. Cf. Rev. 1:4, 11; 22:16. (These may also be the churches to whom Paul wrote the Ephesian letter.) Note their location on the map.

Thus, the book is primarily for believers.

5. METHODS OF INTERPRETATION.

There are not four interpretations of the Revelation, but there are basically four ways which men have chosen to interpret it. Needless to say, there are differences within each group. It would seem safe to say that no book has suffered more at the hands of interpreters than has the book of the Revelation. These four methods are cited here so that the reader might see why there is such a difference of opinion over this book. While there are elements of truth in each method, it is this writer's opinion that the fourth method is the true one.

- a. The Spiritualizing Method. This treats the book as an allegory with everything, or practically everything, symbolic. *Some call the Idealists method*

It is obvious the signs and symbols do play a large place in the book. This is indicated by John's use of the word, "signified", in 1:1. But this becomes a hopeless method of interpretation when the symbols and figures of speech are pushed to such ridiculous limits that it is impossible to agree on what they mean.

- b. The Preterist Method. Those who follow this method believe that the book was fulfilled in the early history of the church, although those who accept this view differ as to how far into church history it goes. (Preterist means past.)
- c. The Historical Method. This is a method of interpretation which treats the book of the Revelation as continuous history from John's time to the establishing of the new heaven and the new earth. As Angus-Green (p. 764) says, the application of this principle "seems to be arbitrary and hazardous in the extreme".
- d. The Futurist Method. Those who accept the book as dealing primarily with the last days are futurists. Most of the book has yet to be fulfilled. The major portion of the book deals with the period of time from the Tribulation to the Eternal State. This, we believe, is the right method.

6. BLESSINGS AND WARNINGS related to the interpretation of the book.

In view of the differences in methods of interpretation, would it not be wisest just to leave the book alone?

The answer to this is an emphatic, No! Dr. Ironside points out in his commentary (p.7) that Rev. 22:10 indicates that the book is not sealed. By its very name, Revelation, we learn that it is a manifestation, an unveiling. God revealed to John things which He wanted His people to know.

Add to this the fact that blessing is promised to those who read it and hear it and keep it (Rev. 1:3; 22:7).

But also note that a warning is issued to those who would either add to or take away from the book (Rev. 22:18, 19).

So, we are to take it as it is, expecting to be blessed, trusting the Holy Spirit to give us understanding here just as He does with any other book of the Bible.

7. THE PURPOSES OF THE BOOK. (We have already pointed out under #4 that "the book is primarily for believers".)

a. Reassurance.

John wrote during a time of persecution. Persecution often produces discouragement. Sometimes it leads to declension. People were undoubtedly asking, What will the outcome be? Are we really right in trusting the Lord?

Note the reassuring note in 1:3, 8, 12, 13, 17-18, 20b.

The Lord's awareness of what was going on in each of the seven churches was reassuring.

As one reads the book and notes the detail of the coming events culminating in the return of Christ to the earth (Rev. 19), and the events leading up to the close of the book, the reader realizes that, in spite of all of the opposition of men and nations, God's purposes will be carried out completely. This gives reassurance.

b. Warning.

As noted above, persecution sometimes leads to declension. The prevalence of evil often causes believers to get careless about their lives. To prevent these conditions from developing, the book contains warnings.

E.g., cf. Rev. 2:4, 5, 14-16, 20-23.

The whole book is a warning against evil doers. The person who really gets the message of the Revelation can never have a tolerant or indifferent attitude toward sin in any form.

c. Revelation.

God must reveal to men truth which cannot be understood in any other way. This book is certainly a revelation of future, prophetic events. But this is not the primary revelation given in the book.

Note the difference between the title given in our Bibles at the beginning of the book as compared with Rev. 1:1. Which is right?

The book of Revelation is primarily God speaking to His people about His Son.

It was not written to be sensational, nor just to satisfy our curiosity concerning the future. Much less did God intend it to be a subject of controversy.

IT IS THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

d. Prophecy.

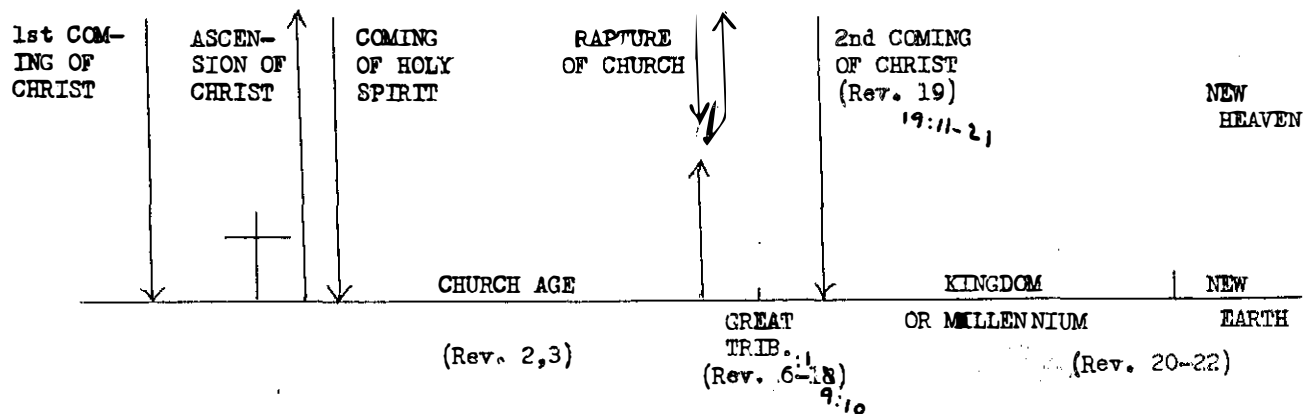
This is the concluding book of all Biblical prophecy. We need details from earlier prophecies, both Old and New Testament, to assist us in understanding Revelation. But here all loose ends are drawn together and details are added which are not found any place else in the Bible. Nothing is unimportant; nothing needs to be added (in spite of the work of some cultists). This is the reason for the warnings in Rev. 22:18, 19.

In view of the apprehension which we might feel in approaching such a book, it is good to be reminded that the Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would show us "things to come" (John 16:13).

e. Evangelism.

Although the book is written particularly for believers, Rev. 22:17 makes it clear that some may be expected to receive Christ as Saviour as a result of reading and hearing the truths of this book.

8. DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION IS RELATED TO BIBLICAL PROPHECY.



9. THE OUTLINE.

As others have recognized before, Rev. 1:19 gives the divisions of the book.

I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-8)

- A. The title and description (1:1,2).
- B. The benediction (1:3).
- C. The salutation (1:4-8)

II. THE THINGS WHICH JOHN HAD SEEN: the vision of Christ, the Son of man, as Judge (1:9-20).

III. "THE THINGS WHICH ARE": the letters to the seven churches of Asia (2:1-3:22). These have reference to the present church age.

- A. THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (2:1-7): the Church which had lost its first love.

- B. THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (2:8-11): the suffering Church, materially poor but spiritually rich.
 - C. THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS, where Satan's seat was (2:12-17): the Church that was contaminated by the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes.
 - D. THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (2:18-29): the Church that was permitting the false prophetess Jezebel to continue her evil work.
 - E. THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (3:1-6): the Church which had a good name, but spiritually was dead.
 - F. THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13): the Church of the open door.
 - G. THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (3:14-22): the luke-warm Church, materially rich, spiritually poor. (Contrast with Smyrna.)
- IV. "THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER" (4:1-22:5). This includes everything that will take place after the Rapture until the Eternal State is set up with its New Heaven and New Earth.
- A. THE VISION OF THE THRONE IN HEAVEN (4:1-5:14).
 - 1. John's attention is directed to the One (God) who is seated on the throne, surrounded by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures who are worshipping Him (4:1-11).
 - 2. Here John notices the book (or scroll) in the hand of God which is sealed with seven seals (5:1-14). Only Christ, called here both the Lion and the Lamb, is worthy to open the seals. He, too, like God the Father, is then worshipped.
 - B. ^{14:10}THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-~~18~~¹⁷). In this lengthy section we have the revelation given to John of the events of THE GREAT TRIBULATION. It is proper to list the whole section under one heading because, even though there are three series of judgments (the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, or bowls), they all develop out of the seals. That is, with the opening of the seventh seal we are introduced to the seven trumpet judgments, and with the sounding of the seventh trumpet we have the seven bowl judgments. And so it is important to note that all of the judgments are actually contained in the scroll with its seven seals. The trumpets come out of the seals, and the bowls come out of the trumpets.
 - 1. THE FIRST SEAL (6:1, 2).
 - 2. THE SECOND SEAL (6:3, 4).
 - 3. THE THIRD SEAL (6:5, 6).
 - 4. THE FOURTH SEAL (6:7, 8).
 - 5. THE FIFTH SEAL (6:9-11).
 - 6. THE SIXTH SEAL (6:12-7:17).
 - a. The general description of the judgment, here called "the great day of his wrath" (6:12-17).
 - b. The redeemed of Israel who are spared from death during The Great Tribulation (7:1-8). These are the 144,000.
 - c. The redeemed of Israel and the Gentiles who lay down their lives in The Great Tribulation (7:9-17).

7. THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1-^{19:10}~~18:24~~).
- a. The preparation for the seven trumpet judgments (8:1-6).
 - b. THE FIRST TRUMPET (8:7).
 - c. THE SECOND TRUMPET (8:8, 9).
 - d. THE THIRD TRUMPET (8:10, 11).
 - e. THE FOURTH TRUMPET (8:12, 13).
 - f. THE FIFTH TRUMPET, the first woe (9:1-12).
 - g. THE SIXTH TRUMPET, the second woe (9:13-11:14).
 - 1) The four angels and the 200,000,000 horses (9:13-21).
 - 2) The mighty angel with the little book (10:1-11).
 - 3) The two witnesses (11:1-14).
 - h. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET, the third woe (11:15-^{19:10}~~18:24~~).
 - 1) The heavenly announcement of the Kingdom (11:15-19).
 - 2) The three wonders, or signs (12:1-^{19:10}~~18:24~~).
 - a) The first wonder (12:1, 2). Here we have a woman travailing in birth with a child.
 - b) The second wonder (12:3-14:20). This has to do with the great red dragon and his activities in opposition to God.
 - (1) His unsuccessful attempts to destroy, first, the child, then the child's mother (12:3-17).
 - (2) His second plan: the two beasts (13:1-18).
 - (a) The first beast--a governmental ruler, the head of the revived Roman empire (13:1-10).
 - (b) The second beast--a religious leader, the Antichrist (13:11-18).
 - (3) God's answer to Satan's opposition: the final triumph of Christ, and God's judgment of the earth (14:1-20).
 - (a) The song of the 144,000 (14:1-5).
 - (b) The six angels (14:6-20).
 - c) The third wonder (15:1-^{19:10}~~18:24~~). The word, "sign," is the same word in the Greek as the word, "wonder," in Rev. 12:1, 3. This is a major point in linking together the trumpet judgments and the vial, or bowl, judgments ~~since these are the only three times the word "wonder" or "sign" is used in the book of The Revelation.~~ (IT IS USED ALSO IN 13:13, 14; 16:14; 19:20.)
 - (1) The preparation for the seven bowl judgments (15:1-16:1).
 - (2) THE FIRST BOWL (16:2).
 - (3) THE SECOND BOWL (16:3).
 - (4) THE THIRD BOWL (16:4-7).
 - (5) THE FOURTH BOWL (16:8, 9).
 - (6) THE FIFTH BOWL (16:10, 11).
 - (7) THE SIXTH BOWL (16:12-16). ^{19:10}
 - (8) THE SEVENTH BOWL (16:17-^{19:10}~~18:24~~).
 - (a) The judgment of Babylon announced (16:17-21).
 - (b) The details of the judgment of Babylon given (17:1-18:24).
 - i. Babylon's destruction ^{described} as a religious power (17:1-18).
 - ii. Babylon's destruction ^{explained} as a political power (18:1-~~24~~).
 - iii. Babylon's destruction mourned (18:9-19). This is (1) by the kings of the earth (vv. 9, 10), (2) by the merchants of the earth (vv. 11-17a), and (3) by the shipping industry (vv. 17b-19).

ERRATUM: REV. 12:1, 2
SHOULD BE REV. 12:1, 3

- C. THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOW THE GREAT TRIBULATION (19:1¹-22:5).
- ~~1.~~ THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB (19:1-10).
 1. ~~2.~~ THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE EARTH (19:11-21).
 2. ~~3.~~ THE MILLENNIUM (20:1-6).
 3. ~~4.~~ THE LOOSING AND JUDGMENT OF SATAN (20:7-10).
 4. ~~5.~~ THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT (20:11-15).
 5. ~~6.~~ THE NEW JERUSALEM (21:1-22:5).
 - a. The vision of the new heaven and the new earth with the new Jerusalem (21:1, 2).
 - b. The message of God (21:3-8).
 - c. The details describing the new Jerusalem (21:9-22:5).
- V. CONCLUSION (22:6-21)
- A. The divine affirmation of the message of the book (22:6-13).
 - B. The final invitation to drink of the water of life (22:14-17).
 - C. A solemn warning against tampering with the book (22:18, 19).
 - D. The closing supplication of the apostle (22:20, 21).