

WAY OF LIFE  
COMMENTARY  
SERIES



REVELATION  
DAVID W. CLOUD

*Revelation*

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An enlargement of the *Advanced Bible Studies Series* course on

Revelation

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# Introduction

## 1. Revelation's purpose ("The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Re. 1:1)

The book of Revelation exalts Jesus Christ.

J. A. Seiss says it well: "This is the key to the whole book. It is a book of which Christ is the great subject and centre, particularly in that period of his administrations and glory designated as the day of his uncovering, the day of his appearing. It is not a mere prediction of divine judgments upon the wicked, and of the final triumph of the righteous, made known by Christ; but a book of the revelation of Christ, in his own person, offices, and future administrations, when he shall be seen coming from heaven, as he was once seen going into heaven" (Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, p. 16). Theodore Epp rightly observes: "If after studying this Book of the Revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ does not mean more to you than He did before, either I have failed in teaching it, or the Holy Spirit has not been able to reveal this glorious truth to you. The unveiling of Jesus Christ is the central content of the Book" (Epp, *Practical Studies in Revelation*, p. 13).

The following are some of the marvelous ways that Christ is revealed in the book of Revelation:

He is the faithful witness (Re. 1:5), the one who is utterly dependable, the one to whom the wise man commits his soul for eternity and whom he trusts every day of his earthly journey.

He is the first begotten of the dead (Re. 1:5), the resurrected Son of God for whom death's sting is forever past and whose resurrection is the guarantee of our salvation.

He is the prince of the kings of the earth (Re. 1:5), the One who holds all authority in His own hands and who has the final say in all matters, the one that the kings of earth are exhorted to worship before it is too late.

He is the one who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood (Re. 1:5), thus providing the perfectly-sufficient atonement by which our eternal salvation is purchased and assured.

He is the one who will come with clouds (Re. 1:7), in the glory of God and with the authority and power to put down all rebellion and to establish God's kingdom on earth.

He is the Alpha and Omega (Re. 1:11), the eternal God, the great I Am, the Creator, the one who holds all things in His own hands and by whom all things consist, who knows all things and sees all things, who is able to work all things together for the good of them that love Him and are the called according to his purpose.

He is the one who stands in the midst of the churches (Re. 1:12-13), as their one legitimate Head, leading them and caring for them and warning them and judging them.

He is the glorified high priest (Re. 1:13-16), who has brought us to God through the sacrifice of Himself and ever lives to intercede for us on the basis of that Sacrifice, who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities and through whom we can come boldly unto the throne of grace to obtain mercy and to find grace to help in time of need.

He is the one who lives, and was dead, and is alive for evermore (Re. 1:18), who has gotten eternal victory over death and through whom the believer has the same victory, who has said, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

He is the one that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth (Re. 3:7), the One who has all authority in and earth, for whom nothing is impossible and through whom we can do all things.

He is the Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns (Re. 5:6), the meek and lowly one who made the perfectly sufficient eternal sacrifice upon which all of our blessings are based, the one who has all authority in and in earth.

He is the one who opens the seals (Re. 6-9), the Word of God, the Author of divine revelation, the light that lighteth every



man that cometh into the world, the Source of all wisdom and the Teacher of all truth.

He is the Son of man who reaps the harvest of the earth (Re. 14:14-16), into whose hand all judgment has been committed, who is not only a gentle lamb but the lion of the tribe of Judah, not only the Saviour but the Judge.

He is the Bridegroom (Re. 19:7-10), the One who loved the church and gave Himself for it so that it would be joined to Him and become members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him forever.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords who returns on a white horse (Re. 19:11-21), the One who will put down all rebellion against God and will rule and reign forever with His saints.

He is the One who reigns over the kingdom of God for a thousand years (Re. 20:4), who will cause the nations to beat their swords into plowshares and to practice righteousness and justice and truth and to make the lion to lie down with the lamb, and the child to play safely on the adder's nest, and the desert to blossom as the rose, and whose righteous rule will be maintained by the rod of iron.

He is the Judge on the Great White Throne (Re. 20:11-15), before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord.

He is the giver of the water of life (Re. 21:6), the one who loves the world and gave Himself so that men might be saved and have life more abundantly.

He is the one who will come quickly (Re. 22:7, 12), the one who is standing before the door and for whose return we must be ready at all times.

He is the temple of the New Jerusalem (Re. 21:22), and through Him we will have a continual and perpetual intimacy with God and in whose presence will be fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

He is the light of the New Jerusalem (Re. 21:23), and we will walk in this light and there will be no darkness at all; we will delight in its glory and be enlightened through its instruction.

He is the root and offspring of David (Re. 22:16), the inheritor of all of God's promises to Abraham and Jacob and David, the Lord and Saviour of Israel.

He is the bright and morning star (Re. 22:16), the one who appears in the Rapture for the New Testament saints before the darkest part of the Tribulation night and before the dawn of the Second Coming.

The book of Revelation is the finale of the revelation of God's eternal plan.

The Bible is the revelation of God's eternal plan, and Revelation is the crown and capstone. It is the grand finale. God's plan is "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him" (Eph. 1:10). The Bible begins with the first Adam in paradise and ends with the last Adam in paradise. The first Adam plunged the first creation into sin, but the last Adam bought redemption and brought many sons into the glory of the new creation (Heb. 2:10).

The book of Revelation challenges New Testament saints to be ready for Christ's imminent return.

Though the churches will not be on earth to experience the events described in the largest portion of the book (chapters 6-19), the book is addressed to the churches to challenge them. There is a great sense of urgency to this book. The very first verse says these are "things which must shortly come to pass," and this is repeated in Re. 22:6. Four times the expression, "Behold, I come quickly," is repeated (Re. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). And twice the expression "the time is at hand" appears (Re. 1:3; 22:10). The amazing events described in Revelation are imminent. They can begin at any time. The book of Revelation, literally interpreted, is a great motivator for zealous Christian living.

The book of Revelation presents a heavenly perspective of earth for the New Testament saint.

From beginning to end, Revelation is God's perspective of man's business on earth. It is the perspective of the resurrected Christ in chapter 1, of the throne of God in chapters 4-5. The judgments of chapters 6-18 are all issued from heaven, from God's throne, by God's direction, via God's holy angels. Only what God determines matters.

This is the only right perspective of man's affairs. Man was made *by* God and *for* God (Col. 1:16). He was made to love God with all his being (De. 6:5). Anything less is idolatry. Men can align themselves with God's perspective in this present time by repenting of their sin against Him and submitting to His authority and putting their trust 100% in Jesus Christ and His atonement.

## 2. Revelation's meaning (Re. 1:1)

The Greek word for revelation, *apokalupsis*, means "an uncovering." Elsewhere it is translated "lighten" (Lu. 2:32), "manifestation" (Ro. 8:19), "coming" (1 Co. 1:7), and "appearing" (1 Pe. 1:7). God does not intend for the book of Revelation to be confusing. It is a revelation, not a veil; its purpose is to manifest truth, not hide it. While it contains symbolic language, it everywhere describes literal truth.

The book of Revelation contains "THINGS which must shortly come to pass" (Re. 1:1). It thus describes literal events, literal things that will occur in this world.

The book of Revelation is not a sealed book (Re. 22:10).

Whenever Revelation has been interpreted literally rather than allegorically, it has been an open book and has taught God's people to expect the imminent fulfillment of its prophecies. As we will see, this was true during the early centuries of the church age. Church historians admit that the early Christians interpreted Revelation literally. For example, the Lutheran historian Philip Schaff wrote: "The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene age [before 325 AD] is the

prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment” (History of the Christian Church, 1884, II, p. 614). It was only after the invention of the allegorical method of interpreting Revelation in later centuries that the key to understanding this important book was lost among many professing Christians. “What a rebuke to the negligence, the neglect, the sneering, ignorant arrogance, shown by most of Christendom toward The Revelation. Our Lord Jesus may declare it an open, unsealed, understandable book; men say it is filled with ‘unintelligible language’ and ‘mystic symbols.’ Christ says: ‘Blessed is he that readeth’; men say: ‘Let it alone, you cannot understand it.’ Some day all these will give an account of their insolent, insulting attitude toward this holy, open book of plain prophecy, given by God to Christ for us, and distinctly left unsealed” (Newell).

On the other hand, the Old Testament prophecies of the end times were sealed until the time of their fulfillment drew nigh (Daniel 12:9). We believe that this explains why prophecy took on a new light in the 19th century and began to be understood more clearly than ever before. It was sealed until the time of the end, until men would run to and fro and knowledge would be increased (Da. 12:4). The knowledge explosion began in the 19th century and by the 20th men were certainly running to and fro in such a manner that previous ages could not have conceived, with the invention of automobiles and trains and turbine powered ships and airplanes and rockets. Most commentators who wrote on prophecy before the 19th century were simply confused by it.

### **3. Revelation’s symbolism (“he sent and signified it,” Re. 1:1)**

Why did God give this book in symbolic language rather than by direct prophecy? I believe the following are some of the reasons:

The symbolic language in Revelation is powerful. It is alarming and shocking, and it is supposed to be. It is intended to wake

men up and bring conviction and repentance. It is very effective, for example, to describe the Antichrist as a wild beast rather than merely as a wicked man (Re. 13), or to describe Jesus' omniscience and judgment under the symbol of "eyes as a flame of fire" or His word as "a sharp two-edged sword" coming out of his mouth (Re. 1:14, 16).

The symbolic language in Revelation is timeless. If God had described events that occur in the 21st century or beyond in direct language, people in other times would have been confused.

The symbolic language in Revelation is mystical. The symbolic language hides the truth as well as reveals it. The prophecy in Revelation is plain enough to the believer who interprets it literally, but it is also confusing to the willful unbeliever who only approaches the Scripture as a critic.

#### **4. Revelation's urgency ("things which must shortly come to pass," Re. 1:1)**

There is a great sense of urgency to this book. The events described therein are described as imminent. They can begin to occur at any time. The believer, therefore, must be ready. The book of Revelation, literally interpreted, is a great motivator for zealous Christian living. The imminency of Christ's return is emphasized throughout the New Testament. See Mt. 24:42, 44; 25:13; Ro. 13:11-12; 1 Co. 1:7; Php. 4:5; 1 Th. 1:10; 2 Th. 3:5; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; Jas. 5:8-9; 1 Pe. 5:7.

#### **5. Revelation's own outline and key (Re. 1:19)**

In a sense the book of Revelation is a very simple book. It contains the clearest outline of any New Testament book, as follows:

The things which thou hast seen. These are the things described in Revelation one, John's vision of the glorified Christ standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

The things which are. These are the Lord's messages in Revelation 2-3 to the seven churches that existed in John's day.

The things which shall be hereafter. These things are described in Revelation 4-22. Beginning in Revelation 4 the book is prophetic.

## **6. Revelation's authorship and canonicity**

Though the book's canonicity and apostolic authorship have been doubted by a few men since the early centuries, it has generally been received as divinely inspired and authored by the apostle John.

The statement in Revelation 1:1-2 points to John the apostle. It claims to be written by the John who had previously borne record of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. This refers to the Gospel of John and his three epistles. "Now, that 'bare witness' is in the Greek aorist and signifies completed past action. That is, the servant John to whom this apocalypse was given is the John who had borne witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. I know that some are disposed to evade the natural grammatical force of this aorist by calling it the epistolary aorist. There is no reason to resort to this expedient. In his Gospel John had done just what this aorist affirms, so that verse 2, not only identifies the author as the apostle John but clearly proves that the gospel preceded Revelation" (B.H. Carroll).

The simplicity of the author's introduction points to John the apostle. "Fausset well says, 'John--the apostle: for none but he (supposing the writer an honest man), would thus sign himself nakedly without addition. As sole survivor and representative of the apostles, and eye witness of the Lord, he needed no designation but his name, to be recognized by his readers'" (Newell).

Adam Clarke gives a summary of the book's reception as Scripture in the earliest centuries as follows:

"We are now come to the last book of the New Testament, the Revelation; about which there have been different sentiments among Christians; many receiving it as the writing of John the

apostle and evangelist, others ascribing it to John a presbyter, others to Cerinthus, and some rejecting it, without knowing to whom it should be ascribed. I shall therefore here rehearse the testimony of ancient Christians, as it arises in several ages.

“It is probable that Hermas read the book of the Revelation, and imitated it; he has many things resembling it. It is referred to by the martyrs at Lyons. There is reason to think it was received by Papias. Justin Martyr, about the year 140, was acquainted with this book, and received it as written by the Apostle John; for, in his dialogue with Trypho, he expressly says: ‘A man from among us, by name John, one of the apostles of Christ, in the revelation made to him, has prophesied that the believers in our Christ shall live a thousand years in Jerusalem; and after that shall be the general, and, in a word, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all together.’ To this passage we suppose Eusebius to refer in his ecclesiastical history, when giving an account of Justin’s works, he observes to this purpose. He also mentions the Revelation of John, expressly calling it the apostle’s. Among the works of Melito, Bishop of Sardis, one of the seven Churches of Asia, about the year 177, Eusebius mentions one entitled, ‘Of the Revelation of John.’ It is very probable that Melito ascribed this book to the apostle of that name, and esteemed it of canonical authority. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, about A.D. 178, who in his younger days was acquainted with Polycarp, often quotes this book as the Revelation of John, the apostle of the Lord. And in one place he says: ‘It was seen not long ago, but almost in our age, at the end of the reign of Domitian.’

“Theophilus was bishop of Antioch about 181. Eusebius, speaking of a work of his against the heresy of Hermogenes, says: ‘He therein made use of testimonies, or quoted passages, from John’s Apocalypse.’ The book of the Revelation is several times quoted by Clement of Alexandria, who flourished about 194; and once in this manner: ‘Such a one, though here

on earth he is not honoured with the first seat, shall sit upon the four and twenty thrones judging the people, as John says in the Revelation.' Tertullian, about the year 200, often quotes the Revelation, and supposes it to have been written by St. John, the same who wrote the First Epistle of John, universally received: 'Again, the Apostle John describes, in the Apocalypse, a sharp two-edged sword coming out of the mouth of God.' He also says: 'We have Churches that are the disciples of John. For though Marcion rejects the Revelation, the succession of bishops, traced to the original, will assure us that John is the author:' by John undoubtedly meaning the apostle.

"From Eusebius we learn that Apollonius, who wrote against the Montanists about 211, quoted the Revelation. By Caius, about 212, it was ascribed to Cerinthus: it was received by Hippolytus about 220, and by Origen about 230. It is often quoted by him. He seems not to have had any doubt about its genuineness. In his Commentary upon St. John's gospel, he speaks of it in this manner: 'Therefore John, the son of Zebedee, says in the Revelation.' Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, about 247, or somewhat later, wrote a book against the Millenarians, in which he allows the Revelation to be written by John, a holy and divinely inspired man. But he says, 'He cannot easily grant him to be the apostle, the son of Zebedee, whose is the gospel according to John, and the catholic epistle.' He rather thinks it may be the work of John an elder, who also lived at Ephesus in Asia, as well as the apostle. It also appears, from a conference which Dionysius had with some Millenarians, that the Revelation was, about 240 and before, received by Nepus, an Egyptian bishop, and by many others in that country; and that it was in great reputation. It was received by Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, about 248, and by the Church of Rome in his time, and by many Latin authors. The Revelation was received by Novatus and his followers, and by various other authors. It is also



probable that it was received by the Manichees. It was received by Lactantius, and by the Donatists; by the latter Arnobius about 460, and by the Arians” (Adam Clarke, quoting from Lardner).

A chief argument used against John’s authorship is the difference in the language between Revelation and John’s Gospel and his Epistles. B.H. Carroll answered this flimsy argument as follows: “The difference between the Greek of Revelation and the Greek of John’s Gospel arises from a difference in the nature of the two books; John’s Gospel is history; this book is not only an apocalypse, but one run in the mold of ancient Hebrew symbolic imagery--one following the apocalyptic analogues of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. Not only so, but its symbols are not limited to the apocalypses of ancient prophecy; they are drawn from all the Old Testament books. It derives its plumage from the paradise and the serpent of Genesis, the plagues of Exodus, the wilderness of Numbers, the Lion of Judah, the Holy City of Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon, the Jezebel of Israel, Babylon and the Euphrates, just as well as from the apocalyptic Seraphim of Isaiah, the Cherubim of Ezekiel, the locusts of Joel, the horses and witnesses of Zechariah, and the beasts of Daniel. More than all the New Testament books, Revelation is enswathed in Old Testament imagery. While it never quotes directly from the Old Testament, yet it is throughout reminiscent of it. A careful computer of its allusions and references to the Old Testament reckons them at four hundred. So remarkable is this feature of the book that Dr. Broadus, as I have been informed, was accustomed to devote an entire lecture to this feature alone whenever he taught Revelation. Of course this necessitated Hebraistic idioms rather than pure Greek. Compare the Classic Greek of Luke’s Dedication with the Hebraistic Greek of the first chapters of his Gospel. But with all this external unlikeness in Greek, there must be taken into account one instance of

likeness in the Greek of all John's writings--great Greek scholars have called their student's attention to it, that is, that a student of New Testament Greek finds John's Greek, whether in his Gospel, his letters or Revelation, the easiest Greek to learn" (B.H. Carroll, *The Interpretation of the English Bible*).

It is important to note that the arguments against the apostolic authorship arose primarily in the third century in the heretical school of theology at Alexandria, Egypt. False teachers such as Clement and Origen promoted the allegorical method of interpretation and discarded the literal approach that had been held by the apostolic churches. "At that time the Alexandrian School of Theology, including Dionysius, opposed the doctrine of the millennial kingdom which is plainly taught in chapter 20 with its reference to the thousand years. An attack by them on the authorship of John tended to weaken the force of this prophecy. ... It is true ... that Revelation was slow in gaining universal recognition as Scripture. Important in the reasons for this is opposition to the chiliasm [millennialism] which is expressly taught in Revelation 20. Other theological objections arose from various sects which for the most part were heretical. The more orthodox churches seem to have had less difficulty in accepting it as Scripture" (John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*).

## **7. Revelation's place in the canon of Scripture**

It is important to observe that this book closes the canon of Scripture. This is the 66th and final book of the Bible. With it God closes the door to revelation in this age. Those who respect God will not try to go beyond the Scripture. They will not lust after more revelation. They will be satisfied with the prophecy that God has given. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (De. 29:29). "Not merely in date of

composition, but in fitness of content it closes the canon of the Scriptures. It finishes. It completes. It perfects. It not only dispenses with all need of further revelation, but is not susceptible of subtraction. Ignorance, impiety, or blasphemy alone would undertake to add to or take from its finality of content. It is the climax of history embodied in prophecy. We may indeed expect new light to continuously break out of God's Word, but we may not expect a new word" (B.H. Carroll, *The Interpretation of the English Bible*).

### **8. Revelation's date of authorship**

It is the general testimony of ancient authors that John was banished on Patmos during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian and restored by the emperor Nerva. Since Domitian died in 96 A.D., it is assumed that the book was written in 96 or 97 A.D. In Revelation 1:9 it appears that John is looking back on this experience after he was restored.

### **9. Revelation's time element**

The events described in Revelation 6-19 will occur just prior to Christ's return. This is what we would expect from reading the book itself, since the events of Revelation 6-18 are immediately followed in chapters 19-20 by the return of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. This is confirmed by Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24. He describes the same events (the Great Tribulation) and says they will occur just prior to His return. See Matthew 24:29-30.

The events of Revelation 6-19 will be seven years in duration. The prophecy of Daniel 9:22-27 reveals the length of the Great Tribulation. Daniel was told that 70 weeks were required to complete God's judgments upon rebellious Israel and to bring in the kingdom. We know these are weeks of years (490 years) because of the way the first 69 weeks were fulfilled. From the time that Jerusalem was rebuilt until the coming of the Messiah was 483 years (69 X 7). The Lord Jesus came as the promised Messiah, was rejected and cut off

(crucified) in fulfillment of prophecy. Following His resurrection, He ascended back to to await the time of His return in power and glory. Israel was set aside temporarily and God began calling out a people for His name from among all nations. When the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, God will fulfill His promises to Israel (Ro. 11:25-27). The 69th week of Daniel 9 expired during Jesus' first coming. One week remains; therefore, we know that from the time the New Testament believers are removed from the world until the Second Coming of Christ will be seven years, the final week of Daniel's prophecy.

The events of Revelation 6-19 will be divided into two 3.5 year periods. The seven-year Tribulation will be divided into two distinct parts. The first half will be less intense than the last.

Daniel 9:27 indicates that the last week or seven years is divided into two 3.5 year periods, and the mid-point is marked by the occasion in which the Antichrist will desecrate the Jewish temple. Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. The Lord Jesus described this same event in Matthew 24:15. Matthew 24:4-14 describes the first half of the Tribulation, while Matthew 24:15-30 describes the last half. The watershed is the abomination brought into the temple by the Antichrist.

The prophecies of Revelation describe this division of the Tribulation into 3.5 year periods. For example, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 will preach for 1260 days, or three and a half years (Re. 11:3). Israel shall flee into the wilderness for 1260 days, or three and a half years (Re. 12:6), and Antichrist will rule for 42 months, or three and a half years (Re. 13:5).

Thus, the events of the Great Tribulation in Revelation 6-19 occur during a seven-year period following the removal of the church-age believers and ending with the Second Coming of Christ. The first three and a half year period is called "the beginning of sorrows" (Mt. 24:5-8), while the last three and a half year period is called the "great tribulation" (Mt. 24:15-21).

## 10. Revelation's summarization of Bible prophecy

All of the great prophetic themes of Scripture find fulfillment in Revelation. "Revelation does not originate or begin anything. Rather it consummates and concludes that which has been begun somewhere else in Scripture. It is imperative to a right understanding of the book to be able to trace each great subject of prophecy from the first reference to the terminal. This is the reason that a knowledge of the rest of the Bible is imperative to an understanding of the Book of Revelation. It is calculated that there are over five hundred references or allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation and that, of its 404 verses, 278 contain references to the Old Testament. In other words, over half of this book depends upon your understanding of the Old Testament" (J. Vernon McGee).

Some of these themes are as follows:

The Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation is a revealing of Jesus Christ (Re. 1:1). We see Him as the eternal God, the Alpha and Omega (Re. 1); the glorified High Priest of the churches (Re. 1-3); the Lamb slain for the sins of the world (Re. 5); the One who controls the events of the world (Re. 6-18); the Good Shepherd (Re. 7:15-17); the eternal King (Re. 11:15); the Bridegroom (Re. 19); the Word of God (Re. 19); the Captain of the saints (Re. 19); the Judge of all men (Re. 20); the One sitting on the eternal throne of God (Re. 22:3).

The Church. New Testament prophecies regarding the church (using the term in a general and institutional sense) also find fulfillment in Revelation. There are two major aspects to church prophecy. The true church will persevere through the centuries and the true New Testament believers will be taken out of the world before the Great Tribulation begins (Mt. 16:18; 1 Th. 4-5). This finds fulfillment in Revelation 4. The apostate church will grow increasingly corrupt and finally will be judged (2 Ti. 3). This finds fulfillment in Revelation 17.

Satan and Evil. Genesis 3 records the beginning of Satan's work in this world and the beginning of evil among men. This wickedness has progressed in the world through the centuries, and the book of Revelation records the end of this matter. There will be one final period of intense evil in the world when Satan is given free reign. Christ will then return and put down evil and the evil one.

Israel. The Bible's prophecies regarding the blessing of Israel and the establishment of the Davidic kingdom (Isa. 9:6, 7; 35:1-10; 60:1-22) find fulfillment in Revelation. First, there are the judgments preceding the establishment of Israel's kingdom (Zec. 13:8-19; Re. 6-18). Then Israel's Messiah will come in power to destroy their enemies and set up the kingdom (Zec. 14; Re. 19-20).

The Antichrist. All Bible prophecies regarding the man of sin (Da. 8-11; 2 Th. 2; 1 Jn. 2) find fulfillment in Revelation (Re. 13, 16, 19).

The Gentile Nations. The prophets had much to say about the nations of the world. Consider, for example, Isaiah 15-24. All such prophecies find ultimate fulfillment in Revelation. The nations will be judged (Re. 6-18), will be ruled over by the saints after Christ's return (Re. 20:4), and will bring gifts into the New Jerusalem (Re. 21:24-27).

Mystery Babylon. All of the Bible's teaching about Babylon and the "mystery of iniquity" and the spirit of error in this world find fulfillment in the book of Revelation chapters 17-18.

## **11. Revelation contrasted with Genesis**

The following is from J. Vernon McGee:

Notice also that there is a tie between Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible. Genesis presents the beginning, and Revelation presents the end. Note the contrasts between the two books:

In Genesis the earth was created; in Revelation the earth passes away.

In Genesis was Satan's first rebellion; in Revelation is Satan's last rebellion.

In Genesis the sun, moon, and stars were for earth's government; in Revelation these same heavenly bodies are for earth's judgment.

In Genesis the sun was to govern the day; in Revelation there is no need of the sun.

In Genesis darkness was called night; in Revelation there is "no night" (see Re. 21:25; 22:5).

In Genesis the waters were called seas; in Revelation there is no more sea.

In Genesis was the entrance of sin; in Revelation is the exodus of sin.

In Genesis the curse was pronounced; in Revelation the curse is removed.

In Genesis death entered; in Revelation there is no more death.

In Genesis was the beginning of sorrow and suffering; in Revelation there is no more sorrow or tears.

In Genesis was the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation is the marriage of the Last Adam.

In Genesis we saw man's city, Babylon, being built; in Revelation we see man's city, Babylon, destroyed, and God's city, the New Jerusalem, brought into view.

In Genesis Satan's doom was pronounced; in Revelation Satan's doom is executed.

## **12. Revelation's great messages**

Taken as a whole, the book of Revelation contains many great and important messages to mankind:

Jesus Christ is Lord. He has been given a name above every name, and He is the one who will judge the world and bring righteousness to this world. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be

angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him” (Psalm 2:10-12).

Jesus Christ is the only Saviour. Those who reject Him have no hope of salvation. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The New Testament believer is a king and a priest and will be in heaven during the Great Tribulation (Re. 1:5-6).

Churches are God’s lights on earth today and are obligated to submit to Christ in all things and are under His constant watchcare. Those that corrupt the New Testament faith doctrinally or morally or that abandon their love for Christ are judged and ultimately rejected.

God is a God both of unfathomable love and of unfathomable wrath. We see His unfathomable love in Revelation’s description of the Lamb, the very Son of God, that was slain for man’s sins, and we see His unfathomable wrath in the astonishing judgments that are poured out upon this sin-cursed world and in the horrible lake of fire. Those who think that God will not judge men are deceived and are in for a very rude awakening. Revelation teaches us that God is angry with man’s sin and rebellion and that He will ultimately punish the world with great judgments.

Sin is a horrible thing that God hates. Sin is not a light matter. Man’s sin has corrupted everything on earth, and God hates it so much that He is going to pour out terrible judgments upon earth and mankind. Two things show us the horribleness of sin as God sees it: Christ’s cross and the lake of fire. God hates sin so much that He turned His back on His own Son on the cross, and He hates sin so much that He will torment the unsaved sinner forever in the lake of fire.

The events described in Revelation are imminent. The judgment of this world could begin at any time. Thus the



believer must be ready at all times to meet the Lord. The imminency and certainty of Christ's return is a great motivation for zealous and holy Christian service. It is also a great motivation to preach the gospel before it is too late. "I would remind my hearers that time for us is flying by quickly. If any of you is unsaved, it is well for you to remember that mercy's day is quickly gone. Gospel light already seems to be vanishing from the earth; the darkening apostasy is making rapid strides; a famine for hearing the Word of the Lord will soon be here. Oh, that now, in this day of grace, men would heed the testimony of the Scripture of truth, receive the virgin-born Son of God as Saviour and Lord, and spurn the lies of every Antichrist" (Ironsides).

Man will never bring in an age of peace by his own efforts. All of his political efforts and scientific achievements and religious dialogue will not result in an age of peace but of judgment.

The future of this world is not rosy. It will yet experience the greatest period of trouble it has ever seen.

The world will not end at man's hands or by a mindless environmental catastrophe such as global warming. The "nuclear clock" in Chicago allegedly shows that man will end the world through nuclear war, but this will never happen. Though there will be great wars during the Tribulation, this will not end the world. The future of the world is described in the book of Revelation for all to see.

Angels have a large and intimate role in the affairs of this life.

The devil is a real creature who has been involved in man's affairs since the beginning of history (Re. 12:9). He is mentioned 13 times in Revelation.

Events on earth are under the direction of heaven. The God of hosts is on His majestic throne, and though the devil is presently "the god of this world" (2 Co. 4:4) and fallen men

are pursuing their own will, God remains in ultimate control and His shall ultimately prevail.

When the Church age ends at the Rapture the nation Israel will again assume the prominent place in the Lord's program and will be converted and prepared to receive Christ at His return. Because of her rejection of the Messiah, Israel was temporarily put on a shelf, but when the church age is complete she will be restored to a place of prominence in God's program (Ro. 11:25-29).

After the Church is raptured to heaven, the church-age saints will be judged before Christ and will be married to Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

The return of Christ will bring in the establishment of the Millennial reign on earth for 1,000 years during which the devil will be bound in the Bottomless Pit.

The Millennial reign will end with one final revolt led by the devil, which will be destroyed by fire from heaven. The devil will then be cast into the Lake of Fire and his reign of terror will be over forever.

After this the unsaved will be raised and judged before the Great White Throne and cast into the lake of fire.

The book of Revelation ends with a description of the new heaven and the new earth and the glorious New Jerusalem where the saints shall live forever.

### **13. An outline of Revelation for this course**

Since the title of the book is "the revelation of Jesus Christ," our outline will reflect this.

Revelation 1 -- Christ is revealed to John

Revelation 2-3 -- Christ speaks to the churches

Revelation 4-5 -- Christ receives the title deed to God's kingdom on earth

Revelation 6-18 – Christ judges the world

Revelation 6 – Christ open the first six seals

Revelation 7 – Christ seals and commissions the Jewish evangelists

Revelation 8-9 – Christ releases the first six trumpet judgments under the seventh seal

Revelation 10 – The mighty angel and the little book (an interlude preparing John for the final bitter judgments on his own people)

Revelation 11:1-13 – The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:14-19 - The opening of the Seventh Trumpet

Revelation 12 – Satan’s wrath against Israel

Revelation 13 – The Antichrist

Revelation 14 – Events at the midpoint of the Tribulation

Revelation 15-16 – Christ pours out the seven vial judgments

Revelation 17-18 – Christ judges Babylon

Revelation 19 – Christ’s Marriage and Return to earth

Revelation 20:1-10 -- Christ’s Millennial Kingdom

Revelation 20:11-15 -- Christ’s Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 21-22 – Christ rules eternally

**REVIEW QUESTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION**

1. What are the three purposes of the book of Revelation?
2. What are five ways that Christ is revealed in Revelation?
3. What does the term “imminent” mean?
4. What does the word “revelation” mean?
5. What does the meaning of the word “revelation” tell us about the nature of the book of Revelation?
6. In what way did the early Christians interpret Revelation?

7. Why was Old Testament prophecy not understood properly in prior centuries?
8. What are two of the reasons why God gave the book of Revelation in symbolic language?
9. What verse in Revelation contains the outline to the book?
10. What is this three-fold outline?
11. According to Revelation 1:1-2, who wrote this book?
12. Why is the language in the Gospel of John different in some ways than the language in the book of Revelation?
13. When and where did the attack against John's authorship of Revelation begin?
14. The fact that the book of Revelation closes the canon of Scripture has what significance?
15. Who was the Roman emperor when John was banished to an island?
16. What verse says that Christ will return "immediately after the tribulation of those days"?
17. What Old Testament prophecy gives the length of the coming Tribulation period?
18. How long are the two segments of the Tribulation?
19. What event marks the division between these two segments?
20. What are seven great themes of Bible prophecy that find ultimate fulfillment in Revelation?