

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION: "A GLIMPSE OF YOUR FUTURE"

The world has always been an uncertain place, today perhaps more than ever. We tend to fear the unknown. Perhaps that is why men seek to discover what the future holds. Unlike the rest of the world, the Christian does not need to live in fear of the future, because he knows that the sovereign God is in control. History has a goal. Although events seem to have no discernable purpose, the Christian knows that God is working out his divine plan for history. We may not know all the details, but God has revealed in His Word, the outline of history and its ultimate culmination.

The book of Revelation is an outline the future of the human race in a nutshell. Many people are confused. They think the book of Revelation is incomprehensible. Actually, Revelation is one of the easiest books to outline as a whole. It is only difficult to interpret some of the details. The big picture is almost impossible to miss. Revelation gives us the plan for the future of mankind in chronological order! It divides into 7 parts.

Before we launch into the outline itself, lets look at the introduction.

- It is not the book of revelations, but the unveiling or *Revelation* of Jesus Christ. He is the theme.
- It pulls back the veil of space and time allowing us to comprehend who Jesus Christ actually is.
- It is not just prophecy to satisfy our curiosity, but to encourage our faith through trial and apparent defeat- that the triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ is certain and sure! He will win. We who are faithful will win with Him, no matter how much it looks like we are currently losing.

These are *the last words of Jesus*. Many are in red-letter! God gave this revelation to Jesus, Jesus now, through an angel is giving it to John so John can write it down for us. While Jesus never wrote a book in his humanity, this is close. He did not write it, but he virtually *dictated* it. John is writing exactly what he saw as revealed by Christ. (vs. 2)

The things predicted in this book must "shortly take place and the time is near." Using these references and others some teachers have argued that the events of Revelation cannot be future, but must have been fulfilled in history- usually they suggest 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. They are known as "Preterists" and they insist that most of the book is history rather than prophecy. I believe Hank Hannagaph, the Bible answer man, for example, holds that opinion. While this is a difference of view among fellow believers, it is important.

Here are several reasons why this book is largely future prophecy rather than fulfilled prophecy.¹

1. **The word translated "shortly" can mean "quickly,"** "not necessarily that these events will occur immediately. Once the end-time events begin they will occur *in rapid succession.*"
2. **The 2nd Coming has not yet happened.** "The time is near" vs. 1:3 also concludes the book Rev 22:10, 12; In the same context Jesus says "I am coming quickly." The 2nd Coming of Jesus has not yet occurred and it has been 2000 years! Unless one is prepared to say we missed the 2nd Coming, this book is still future!
3. **Revelation was written after 70 AD.** Almost all evangelical scholars believe Revelation was written about 90 AD by John on Patmos. The Preterist viewpoint requires that it be written before AD 70 which was the destruction of Jerusalem.

Revelation is an "Open letter" to seven churches in the Roman Province of Asia (today's Turkey). Each church received a copy of the whole book.

The opening benediction is from God the Father, God the Spirit (7 spirits indicating perfection) and God the Son. The trinity is clearly mentioned here. The Christian faith is a Trinitarian faith- in which God the Son is honored to the same extent as God the Father. It is for his faithfulness to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ that John has been exiled on Patmos. He suffers for the name of Jesus.

This is why Christian chaplains must never yield in their commitment to pray in the name of Jesus. God, in general and undefined creates little offense. But let them mention Jesus, and people become upset. John didn't back down and neither must we.

I. THE AUTHENTIC JESUS! A Revelation of Jesus Christ Chapter 1

The first chapter contains of vision of what Jesus Christ IS in his exalted, glorified form today. He is no longer the merely human picture of the meek and mild Jesus, but the Son of Man in his regal authority. There is no "pushover" Jesus here! At his trial Jesus was condemned for claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God.

¹ Bible Knowledge Commentary, NT Page 928.

1. He claimed to be the Messiah of Daniel 7:13; "the Son of Man" who comes in clouds of glory and rules the whole world. (Mt 26:63-65
2. He claimed to be the One divine Son of God (Luke 22:69 & Ps 110:1).

The message of this book is that **the same Jesus** whom the world crucified is coming again in power and awesome judgment!

Revelation 1:7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen. (NASB)

This is a reference to Zechariah 12:10-14. The one pierced by men is none other than YHWH God.

Look at the Revelation of Jesus Christ! See who he is!

He is dressed in the garments of the Great High Priest and he stands in the midst of his churches 12-13. Thank God He ever lives to intercede for us!

Yet, Jesus is God **the judge**, before whom you and I will answer. He is a terrifying and awesome God, not one to be trifled with. His eyes, like a flame of fire, expose the truth about all men. They burn through us like X-rays. Nothing is hidden from him. His mighty voice thunders like Niagara Falls. His word can kill. His power is awesome. His glory is like the sun in its strength. No one can look long upon such glory.

Is this the Christ you serve? This is who Paul saw on the Damascus road! If we understood just a little of who Jesus Christ really is, I think our attitude toward Him would change! If we thought for one moment that we would have to face him and give account, it would change a lot of things in our lives, wouldn't it?

Notice verse 8 is a reference to Jesus. "I a the Alpha and the Omega (A-Z) the First and the last. Who is who was and who is to come. The same thing that is said of the Father in verse 4 is also said of Jesus in verse 8! Jesus is the Almighty and John can attest to that!

In response, John did what any of us would do. He fell at the feet of Jesus as a dead man. The shock knocked him cold. He was overwhelmed to unconsciousness.

This awesome Christ laid his right hand upon John and said, "Do not be afraid." I love that! Yes he is awesome, but Oh he is loving! - He still says to you my beloved, "Do not be afraid." I am the first and the last, the eternal one. I am the living one, I was dead and look I am alive forevermore. This is the Risen Christ! Death holds no more power over him and it will not defeat us! Jesus has overcome the jailer and wrested the

keys of death and hell from him. He can release us. That is what it says in verse 5

The outline of this book is in verse 19

The things you have seen:	Chapter 1
The things that are	Chapter 2-3
The things that will take place after	Chapter 4-22

II. 2000 YEARS OF CHURCH HISTORY - 2-3

Christ is not distant from his churches, then or now. He stands in their very midst (2:1). That is both comforting and alarming. The authentic Jesus is too honest for most of us. He judges all 7 churches in chapters 2-3. He first commends them, and then he criticizes them. Jesus' criticism is tough to take. The idea that the gentle Jesus isn't demanding and exacting perishes in these chapters. Only the church at Philadelphia escapes censure and rebuke.

The 7 churches were real churches in real cities in the 1st century. Every church (and Christian) can find warnings here that apply today. Some scholars believe that they also represent seven periods of church history. Christ may be revealing what the church will be like through the many years of church history between the advents of Christ.

Ephesus:	The Vibrant church	1st.
Smyrna	The Persecuted church	2nd-3rd.
Pergamum	The State church	4th - 8th
Thyatira	The Medieval church	9th- 11th
Sardis	The Corrupt church	12th-14th
Philadelphia	The Reformation church	15th-18th
Laodicea	The Apostate church	19th - 21st?

If this is correct, it reveals that the church in the last days will depart from the faith to an extent never before witnessed in the world. In the past ages the church has been corrupt, but almost always orthodox about Jesus Himself. Of course, in every age God has his remnant of true believers. As we see the professing church deny its historical faith and embrace immorality and heresy, we know we are approaching the last days!

III. JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE Rev 4-5

Although the church on earth sometimes fails to glorify God, the church in heaven suffers no such fault. Chapters 4-5 set the scene in heaven that prepare us for the terrific and terrible judgments on earth

during the last 7 years of man's dominion. John takes us on a journey to the center of the Universe: God's eternal throne itself. With a zoom lens the camera focuses upon GOD ALONE! And then like an epic film, the camera widens from God to his throne, to the 24 elders to the Lamb on the throne to the angels to every creature in all the universe worshipping the God of glory and might.

Oh that we all shared this perspective every Sunday morning! How would our worship be if we could realize that we join a worship service that is already in progress?

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

IV. COUNTDOWN TO ARMAGEDDON 6-18

The major section of Revelation deals with the last 7 years of world history before Jesus Christ returns to conquer the world. We cannot discuss all the details of this horrible period, but we will mention some. The countdown to Armageddon may begin with the taking out of the church.

The "rapture" may be the next event on God's prophetic calendar. The prophet Daniel was given a revelation recorded in Daniel 9:24-27 that specified 490 years remaining until the Kingdom came. The prophecy divides them into two periods of 483 years and one remaining period of seven years.

The clock began ticking down in 445 BC when the King of Persia issued a decree to Nehemiah to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 2).

Exactly 483 years later Jesus the Messiah rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to present Himself as King (Luke 19:29-48).

At that point the prophetic clock stopped ticking. Frozen as it were, seven minutes to midnight! He was rejected. Instead of enthroning Him, they crucified Him fulfilling Daniel 9:26 "The Messiah will be cut off."

But God resurrected Him in fulfillment of OT prophecy and 50 days later sent the Holy Spirit to begin the Church (Acts 2).

While the Church is God's program in this age, He is not finished with Israel. In the Pre-Tribulational scenario, when God is done with the church, He will rapture them home.

The Bible promises "the Great Snatch-Away" (1 Th 4:13-18). There is a day coming when the bodies of believers of this age will be instantly resurrected. Those of us who are alive at that moment and believe in Christ will be instantly transformed into glorified bodies like

that of Christ. In a blink of an eye we will literally "beamed up to glory." You could say, "I'm outta here!" One moment we will be here, and the next moment WE WILL BE GONE! It sounds unbelievable. That's why many don't believe it! The same type of people who laughed at Noah when he said it would rain, scoff at the idea of the rapture. They may very well scoff their way into the tribulation! Once those "terrible people" (read Christians) who resist progress because of their outdated morality and distrust of the *new world order* are gone, the world is going to have amazing unity.

The last 7 years (1 week) of Daniel's prophecy are initiated by the man of sin making (or confirming an already existing covenant, agreement or treaty) probably with Israel which may guarantee its security (Dan 9:27). Clearly the world awaits the revelation of the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction (2 Thess 2:2-3). [Could have just received the Nobel Peace Prize?]

A world leader will arise who promises to bring "peace on earth." People will love him. The world will hail this man as a savior. His real nature will not be evident at first. He will perform signs and wonders and possess supernatural powers surpassing any other human being (Rev 13:13 & 2 Thess 2:9-11). He will claim that he has achieved the ultimate of human potential. His political ability will astound the world as he achieves a "permanent" peace in the Mid-East by a seven year treaty (Dan 9). Probably he will allow Israel to rebuild their Temple on Mt. Moriah! (2 Thess 2:4). He will conquer nations who resist him (Rev 6:2). Nations will surrender their sovereignty to his one-world government. People will believe that Christ has finally come! Most of the world will worship him for 3 ½ years (Rev 13:4-5). But He will not be Christ, he is the devil's own substitute. He is "the beast," the "man of lawlessness." He will gain political and economic control over *the whole world* and he will persecute the saints (Rev 13:7).

At the midpoint of the 7 years, he will suddenly break his peace treaty and betray Israel (Daniel 9:27). He will go into the Temple and take his seat in the Holy of Holies and demand that the whole world worship him as God (2 Thess 2:4)! Israel will realize their mistake! Instead of *protecting* them he will *persecute* them mercilessly! (Rev 12:13-17) All who refuse to worship him will be killed, if caught (Rev 13:7). Instead of peace this "man of sin" brings world war, famine, pestilence and death (the 4 horses of Rev 6). Instead of prosperity, God strikes his counterfeit kingdom with plague and pestilence so great that at least three fourths of the world's population is destroyed (seals, trumpets and bowl judgments). By the time these 7 years are over there is not a city outside the Mid East left standing anywhere in the world! (Rev 16:18)

With his world government in ruins, nations will turn against one another and come with their armies to battle in the final war of all this age—the battle of Armageddon (Rev 16:16).

V. THE INVADER FROM SPACE (19)

As the armies of earth gather for the greatest battle in history, they intend to accomplish the total annihilation of the Jewish people (Zech 14:2). The Jews cry out to God for deliverance (Zech 12:9-10). Repudiating the false Messiah, they cry for God to send them their Long-Promised Savior. Just as Jerusalem is sacked and destroyed, the God of heaven responds! (Zech 14:2-4)

Suddenly, after centuries of silence God acts! God enters history in the most dramatic fashion. Suddenly, in the sky appears the sign of the Son of Man (Zech 14:5-7 & Mt 24:27-30). Israel's Messiah comes! It is an invasion from outer space. An Extra-terrestrial Being with all His armies of heaven descends out of space toward the planet surface. Target -- Landing Zone: Palestine: (Rev 19:11-16)

All the armies of earth unite in a fruitless attempt to resist this "alien" invasion. But with a mere word (the sword of his mouth) He destroys them all and personally judges his enemies.

VI. PEACE ON EARTH... AT LAST! 20

The beast and his accomplice (the false prophet) are destroyed and the devil chained. The binding of Satan is still future. The devil isn't bound today in the way in which he will be bound during the Millennium. [Those who insist that the Revelation is history (Preterit View) often comment that the devil is bound, but he's on a mighty long chain.] Those who died as martyrs for Christ in the terrible tribulation are resurrected probably along with all the OT believers (Dan 12:1-2) And they lived and reigned with Christ 1000 years! (Rev 20:4)

Finally, what we have prayed for so long will be fulfilled. *"Thy kingdom Come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* (Mt 6:10). Many of the glorious prophecies God made to Israel in the OT are now fulfilled in this wonderful kingdom age. Peace and prosperity will come not through the United Nations but through the Reign of the Prince of Peace.

One thing that the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ will demonstrate is that man is so sinful that an ideal environment cannot make

him good. Men will give outward obedience to the government of Christ, but inside their hearts they will rebel. Satan is released at the end of the 1000 years just long enough to allow mankind to demonstrate their rebellion. Given a chance they join the devil to try one last time to overthrow the rule of Christ! And once again God simply destroys them!

The final scene is the worst of all. It is the Great White Throne judgment. Some scoff at such a thing, but the Bible warns it is real! Every person who ever lived and did not receive God's Messiah will stand before God as judge. This judgment appears not to include believers, but rather only unbelievers. It is not to determine who goes to heaven and who goes to hell. It is held to prove the guilt of every hell-bound sinner throughout all of time. No one who appears here is ever saved. Everyone who has turned his back on God's salvation has the Lake of Fire as his destiny.

VII. THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING

21-22

Thank God for salvation! In contrast to those in the Lake of Fire, believers enter a New Heavens and Earth. God promises a re-created earth and heavens (virtually a new Universe in which sin is absent). Heaven which is a real, three- dimensional place, 1500 miles cubed, comes down from heaven and is placed in orbit over a renewed planet earth. The nations of the earth walk in its light because it occupies a place in the sky (from earth viewpoint). The culmination of all earth history finds God dwelling with men. This is not just a seer's dream, but hard reality.

It doesn't matter who you are or where you've been or what sins you have done. This is a glimpse of your future. The most exciting news is that ticket to this place is paid for.

Revelation 21:6 And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. (NASB)

It has been done by Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross almost 2000 years ago. This is the message we have been called to proclaim to lost men and women.