

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

The Existence, Power, Sovereignty, Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

Revelation reveals the Lord Jesus Christ's holy hatred and righteous judgment on Satan, sin, and sinners who rejected the blood atonement of the loving and sacrificial Saviour. When sinners reject the love of God through the free gift of salvation, they will receive the judgment of God's fiery wrath (6:16-17).

When The lamb of God is rejected by the world, the Lion of the tribe of Judah will judge the kingdoms of the world in order to establish His everlasting kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-7; Revelation 11:15). The Lord Jesus is coming back, and boy is He mad!

Revelation parallels the book of Daniel. It is one of the easiest to understand by honest and sincere students of the word; however, it is also one of the most difficult to believe because of the strange doctrines and events. The book of Revelation and the book of Jonah are two of the most maligned books in Scriptures. Revelation is probably the most fascinating and the most misunderstood book in the entire Bible.

Statistics: 22 Chapters, 404 verses, and 11,995 words

Author, date, and place:

The author of Revelation is plainly John the Apostle; you can tell that by the style of writing and by John's reference to himself in the book (Revelation 1:4, 9). He wrote the book sometime between A.D. 91 and 96, long after Nero was dead, probably during the reign of Domitian. Thus Revelation was written about A.D. 95-96 from the island of Patmos.

The Destination:

The destination of the letter is the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (1:4; chs. 2-3). From Patmos, they would have been delivered clockwise from Ephesus to Laodicea, the order found in chapters 2-3.

The Occasion:

Revelation was written during a time of persecution (1:9; 2:10,13) under Domitian who was the first emperor to demand worship during his lifetime. This caused conflict with the church and great consternation among Christians. For this reason John had been exiled to the small remote island of Patmos (1:9).

It was here Jesus Christ revealed Himself to John and commanded him to record the vision (1:10-19). John writes in simple obedience to the command of Christ Who wanted

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to address some moral and doctrinal errors in the Asian churches and reveal the future of God's program.

The Purpose:

The purpose is affected by how Revelation is interpreted. There are four major schools of interpretation:

- 1) The preterist school denies the prophetic significance and claims Revelation is a symbolic description of the events of the early centuries under Rome.
- 2) The historicist school considers the book an allegorical panorama of all of church history.
- 3) The idealist school divorces Revelation from history and makes it a symbolic depiction of the conflict of ideas and spiritual principles.
- 4) The futurist school considers chapters 4-22 to be future and attempts to discern the literal meanings behind the symbols. This view also recognizes the influence which the first century conflict with Rome had on the themes of the book.

Assuming the correctness of the futurist view, the dominating purpose of Revelation is to reveal the consummation of God's program for the world. These end-time events extend from the tribulation to the second advent of Christ and His establishment of a new world (chs. 4-22). As such it also completes all the prophetic themes in the Bible.

A second obvious purpose is to correct moral and doctrinal problems in the churches of Asia (chs. 2-3).

A final purpose can be inferred from the triumphant tone of the book. This purpose is to comfort the readers in the ultimate victory of Christ over all earthly and spiritual adversaries. The blessing for those who read and obey the words of Revelation is promised in 1:3.

Argument:

The introduction to Revelation (1:1-8) first signifies the nature of the contents: it is Christ's revelation of Himself and the future (1:1-2). A blessing is then promised to those who read and obey the words (1:3). This may be a blessing of comfort concerning ultimate victory as well as a blessing for the churches which follow Christ's admonitions in chapters 2-3.

The greeting to the churches (1:4-8) would bring comfort by the description of the position of Christ and those related to Him and the reminder of His coming.

From this point, the book unfolds in three distinct sections denoted by the key verse 1:19. John is commanded to write "the things which you have seen" (1:9-20), "the things which

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are" (2:1-3:22) and "the things which shall take place after these things" (4:1-22:5). The first section relates to his vision, the second to the churches and the third to future events.

The first section about "the things which you have seen" concerns the vision of Christ (1:9-20). Christ commands John to record the vision and deliver it to the seven churches (1:9-11). The description of Christ includes many features relevant to His role as Judge and King in the events of Revelation. These attributes are also the basis of His appeal to the churches (Cf. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). The readers can take comfort in the sufficiency of their Lord.

In the second section, "the things which are," Christ addresses the seven churches of Asia through a common format of commendation, complaint, counsel and promise (2:1-3:22). These were literal contemporary churches, but the issues addressed apply to churches in any age. (Chapters 2-4).

Each church's circumstances are addressed individually by the Lord. The church at Ephesus (2:1-7) was characterized by works, patience and spiritual discernment, but had left its first love.

The church at Smyrna (2:8-11) was marked by tribulation, poverty and impending persecution. At Pergamos (2:12-17) the church was steadfast in the faith, but tolerated the false doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.

The fourth church, Thyatira (2:18-29), was known for its works, love, faith, service and perseverance, but it tolerated the immorality of the false prophetess Jezebel. The church at Sardis (3:1-6) had a reputation for being alive, but except for a remnant they were dead.

The Philadelphian church (3:7-13) was faithful and in a place of opportunity to witness for Christ. Finally, the Laodicean church (3:14-22) was self-sufficient, but sinfully complacent.

Christ applies commendation, criticism and counsel where needed. That most churches were told to repent shows His concern for their moral purity. The focus on the return of Christ and the promises related to the future are a motivation to repent and an encouragement to persevere in the present circumstances. The events of the rest of the book are an amplification of these themes related to the future.

The last section of Revelation makes up most of the material (4:1-22:5). Its concern is "the things which shall take place after these things" or events future to John's experience. Most of this section describes the tribulation with Jesus as Judge (4:1-18:24), but it ends with Him coming as King to triumph over evil (19:1-20:15) and usher in the eternal state (21:22:5).

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Jesus Christ judging the world in tribulation marks the first part of the end-time events (4:1-18:24). After the prelude to judgment, there are basically three movements of seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls of judgment.

Inserted at various places are parentheses of events or signs. There is also a notable increase in the intensity of these judgments as they are progressively unleashed upon the earth. The purpose of these judgments is not only to explain the future, but also to comfort the readers in Christ's sovereign control.

Two chapters form the prelude to the judgment of the tribulation (4:1-5:14). The first scene is of the Judge seated on His throne (4:1-11). The glory of the Judge on the throne and the worship of the heavenly beings emphasize the sovereignty and right of the Judge to exercise judgment on the earth.

The second scene focuses on the scroll in the hand of the Judge and the worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll (5:1-14). This depicts the commitment of the power and authority to judge the earth to Christ. His redemptive work and worthiness to judge is lauded by every creature (5:8-14).

These chapters should comfort readers by demonstrating that Christ is in control of judgment. The readers may also be comforted by the suggestion that they will be present with Christ in heaven when the earth is judged, if indeed the twenty-four elders around the throne depicts the church (4:4,10).

The judgment of the tribulation actually begins with the opening of the seven seals (6:1-8:6). The judgments of the first four seals unleash the work of Antichrist and submerge the world in bloodshed, famine, and mass death.

The fifth seal shows martyrs in heaven crying to God for vengeance which He answers with an assurance of His control over the coming events (6:11). When the sixth seal is opened, there are great cosmic disturbances and men recognize that "the great day of their wrath has come" (6:12-17).

After the sixth seal John is treated to a comforting interlude that focuses on the redeemed of the tribulation (7:1-17). God is saving many during the tribulation. First are the 144,000 of Israel which He seals and protects (7:1-8).

Next is the great multitude from every nation who praise God for His salvation (7:9-17). These are the Gentiles saved during the tribulation (7:14). The passage offers much comfort to the readers. They can see that salvation belongs to God (7:10) and that even believers during the terrible tribulation period can enjoy the presence and protection of God (7:15-17).

The opening of the seventh seal (8:1-6) is a time of silence during which the prayers of the saints ascend to God. The ominous silence prepares the readers for the terrible contents of the seventh seal which are the seven trumpets.

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The judgment of the seven trumpets (8:7-11:19) increases the intensity of God's wrath on the earth. The earth's vegetation, the sea, fresh water and the heavenly bodies are all destructively diminished by one-third in the first four trumpets. Demonic creatures and an army of 200 million continue to torment and kill the people of earth under the fifth and the sixth trumpet.

Another interlude separates the first six trumpets from the last. The interlude describes events focusing on a little book and two witnesses (10:1-11:14). The first part of the interlude describes a mighty angel and a little book (10:1-11). The angel swears that judgment will be delayed no longer (10:5-7) and gives the little book to John to eat (10:8-11).

The book is probably the message of judgment which is bitter in its words of condemnation and sweet in its assurances of God's triumph over evil. The second part of the interlude describes the ministry, death and resurrection of the two witnesses in Jerusalem (11:1-14). They continue to proclaim God's judgment to the earth and are vindicated by God. They demonstrate the presence of God's grace during the tribulation and perhaps spark a revival (11:13).

The seventh trumpet (11:15-19) opens with praise to God because He has received the kingdoms of this world and is about to reward His servants. This anticipates the final victory, but the narrative is interrupted by an extended parenthesis.

The parenthesis is composed of explanatory prophecies which reveal other aspects of Satan's activity and God's program (12:1-14:20). A war with the dragon, Satan, is described first (12:1-17). In spite of his persistent persecution of Israel and Christ his efforts are frustrated and ultimate victory in the coming of Christ's kingdom is proclaimed. The readers can be comforted by the promise of victory through the blood of Christ and their testimony about Christ (12:11).

The vision of the two beasts is next (13:1-18). The first beast is the Antichrist who, after rising to world prominence, blasphemes God and persecutes believers (13:1-10). The second beast is the satanic false prophet who promotes worship of the Antichrist, deceives those on earth and kills believers (13:11-18).

In contrast to those who worship the beast are the 144,000 of the Lamb whom are sealed and preserved by God (14:1-5). Another vision describes three angels who proclaim the gospel to the whole earth, the fall of Babylon and the eternal torment of the beast's followers (14:6-13).

The blessing pronounced on those who "die in the Lord" would be a comfort to Christians of any period. The final vision of the parenthesis depicts a harvest of the earth in judgment (14:14-20). Throughout the parenthesis, God's program proceeds under His control and with the anticipation of final triumph over evil.

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The seven bowls of judgment (15:1-18:24) are the last movement in the tribulation period and elicit from the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) which was interrupted by the parenthesis. The prelude to the bowl judgments (15:1-8) is a solemn scene of worship and an awesome display of divine holiness which is the basis for God's judgment.

The bowls are then poured out in rapid succession. From them come tormenting sores, damage to salt and fresh water, scorching heat, darkness, the convergence of armies on the Holy Land and terrible cosmic phenomena. Though these are the severest judgments yet, the reaction of man is not repentance, but blasphemy (16:9,11,21).

The destruction of Babylon (17:1-18:24) concludes the tribulation as a climax of judgment upon evil. The destruction of religious Babylon is first (17:1-18). Babylon, depicted as a harlot, is the epitome of immorality, blasphemy and antichrist sentiment (17:1-6). Though she at first wars with Christ in league with the beast (Antichrist), the beast turns and destroys her (17:7-18).

Babylon as a commercial center is also destroyed (18:1-24). The city is described as a center of wickedness and her destruction is total (18:1-8). The mourning over the devastated city denotes a finality in judgment (18:9-20) and a note of triumph announces that God's long awaited vengeance has finally come (18:20).

This final phase of tribulation bowl judgments and the destruction of Babylon describes the final crushing blows to the earth and its systems of evil. The false religious, political and economic systems of this world are destroyed forever. God is triumphant throughout the tribulation and all believers can draw comfort from this. But the triumph of God climaxes in the next section.

The next major phase of God's future program is the triumph of Christ over evil in His coming as King (19:1-20:15). The triumph of Christ's second coming is described first (19:1-21). Heaven celebrates the final victory seen in the judgment of the harlot, the anticipation of Christ's reign and the union of Christ with the church in the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:1-10).

Finally, Christ appears in heaven and soundly defeats the armies of the beast who is thrown into the lake of fire along with his false prophet (19:11-21).

Christ then establishes the millennial kingdom (20:1-15). Satan is bound for the thousand years (20:1-3) as church saints and raised tribulation martyrs reign with Christ (20:4-6). At the end of the thousand years there is a final rebellion of Satan and humanity which the Lord immediately crushes (20:7-10).

Satan is finally cast into the lake of fire (20:10). After the millennium there is a second resurrection of all unbelievers who are judged and also cast into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

The triumph of this section about Christ's advent and kingdom is a tremendous assurance and comfort to the readers of Revelation. There is the assurance of final victory over evil

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and the promise of a restored kingdom lost to man in the fall. Yet even this is not the ultimate comfort; there is the eternal state.

The consummation of earthly history gives way to a greater glory as Christ ushers in the eternal state (21:1-22:5). John describes the vision of the new heaven and earth (21:1) and the descent of the New Jerusalem (21:2-8).

The New Jerusalem is the ultimate comfort for believers because God's personal presence will eliminate sorrow, death and pain. He reminds the readers that this is their inheritance (21:7).

The description of the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5) also should encourage the readers in their present circumstances. The eternal residence is splendidly glorious in its appearance, design and materials (21:9-21), but the essence of its glory is the presence of Christ Himself (21:22-27).

The New Jerusalem will be a center of worship for all the people of the world. Furthermore, the river of life will insure an endless supply of God's grace and the abolishment of the curse forever (22:1-5). The people of God will be comforted eternally as they reign "forever and ever" (22:5).

The conclusion to Revelation (22:6-21) brings the readers back into the historical occasion of John's vision. The main message of the book is reiterated by the angel: Jesus is coming soon (22:6-11). Christ also extends a final message that assures the readers of His coming and invites them to take His free gift of life (22:12-17). John adds a warning about tampering with the words of this book (22:18-19) and closes with an invitation to Christ to come soon (22:20).

John has faithfully recorded the messages to the seven churches and the visions of future events. Christ's messages should motivate the churches to correct their problems. But a greater motivation for all readers is the future judgment, appearance of Christ, millennial kingdom and eternal state. The record of Christ's ultimate triumph should comfort, encourage and motivate the readers in their present Christian lives.

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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. The destination of the letter is the _____ churches in the Roman province of Asia.
2. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must _____ come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant _____:
3. I am the _____ and _____, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to _____, the Almighty.
4. And he causeth _____, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to _____ a _____ in their _____ hand, or their _____:
5. And that _____ man might buy or sell, save he that hath the _____, or the _____ of the beast, or the _____ of his name.
6. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the _____ of the beast: for it is the _____ of a man; and _____ number is _____ threescore and _____.
7. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the _____, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
8. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the _____ years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
9. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the _____ 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.
10. For I testify unto every man that heareth the _____ of the prophecy of this book, If any _____ shall _____ unto these things, God shall add unto him the _____ that are written in this _____:
11. And if any man shall _____ away from the _____ of the _____ of this _____, God shall take away his part out of the book of _____, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this _____.

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“God takes His Words very seriously!!!!!!”