

## Overview of the Book of Revelation

**We must unlearn most of what we think we know about the Book of Revelation.** This “unlearning process” will initially raise more questions than it answers. We must be patient as we work our way through the symbolism of the Book of Revelation over the course of our study.

1. When Jesus says to John, “Write...the things which shall be hereafter,” (1:19) He does not have in mind specific political events in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Rather, John sees and writes “things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1), “things which must be hereafter” (4:1), because “the time is at hand” (1:3; John 16:13).
2. The Seven Churches of Revelation (Chapters 2 and 3) are not representative of “seven dispensations” of increasing apostasy from the first century to the twenty-first century. (C. I. Scofield and Clarence Larkin)
3. The Beast, the False Prophet, and the Harlot are not specific individuals/entities yet to be revealed.
4. The “mark of the Beast” is not 666. It’s not even an actual mark (or microchip, or your Social Security Number).
5. 42 months, 1260 Days, and 3 and a Half Years is not the second half of the Tribulation Period. It’s numeric symbolism for the entire Church Age from the ascension of Jesus to His Second Coming.
6. The “Two Witnesses” in Chapter 11 are not Moses and Elijah. They are not actual individuals at all.
7. The “144,000” is not a select number of witnesses sent to preach the gospel during the Great Tribulation.
8. The “1,000 years” in Chapter 20 does not refer to a future “Millennial Reign” after a rapture.

### Why Was This Book Written?

To comfort the militant Church in its struggle against the forces of evil from the ascension of Christ until His Second Coming. The book was intended for people living in John’s day and age. It is God’s answer to the prayers and tears of severely persecuted Christians (6:10) scattered about in cities of Asia Minor. The book is also intended for the encouragement of believers in every generation since the ascension of Christ and until His return in glory.

### What is the Book About?

The conflict between the Church and the World and the ultimate victory of Christ (and of His Church) over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers: 1:18; 2:8; 5:9ff; 6:2; 11:15; 12:9ff; 14:1, 14; 15:2ff; 19:16; 20:4; 22:3

While it *seems* as if the Church is being overcome by Satan and the world, the Book of Revelation assures us that things are *not* as they seem (John 16:33).

**Key Verse:** Revelation 17:14

### Seven Sections Under Two Divisions

Each of the seven sections is a unique perspective on the entire church age, from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ. Each section except for the first ends with the coming of the Lord in judgement.

The Seven Sections are divided into two parts: the first part describes *the surface conflict* between believers and unbelievers; the second part describes *the unseen conflict* between Christ and Satan, which is the ultimate cause of the persecution, trials, and afflictions of the Church (see John 15:18 – 21; Acts 9:1 – 5; Ephesians 6:10 – 12).

## First Division: The Visible War on the Church (Chapters 1 – 11)

1. *The Seven Churches: Chapters 1 – 3*  
Each of the letters to the seven churches describe conditions that are true of the church throughout history. Christ is in the midst of His Church: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (age)” Matthew 28:20.
2. *The Seven Seals: Chapters 4 – 7 Judgement: 6:15 – 17*  
The Son of God, exalted in glory, governs the world in the interest of the Church  
  
*The Seven-Sealed Book* is God’s Eternal Decree. As the seals on the book are broken, trials and persecutions are unleashed that affect not only the unbelievers in the world, but believers as well. The trials purge and purify the Church and are overruled for the good of the Church.  
  
*The Sealed Multitude (144,000)* is a symbolic number. The multitude is the complete number of those who were chosen by God from the foundation of the world to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (compare 5:9, 7:9 and 14:4 – 5).
3. *The Seven Trumpets: Chapters 8 – 11 Judgement: 11:16 – 18*  
Judgments upon those who persecute the Church, intended to warn unbelievers to repent. These judgements are God’s answer to **the prayers of the saints in 6:9 – 11.**  
  
*The Two Witnesses* (Chapter 11) are symbolic of the Ministers and Missionaries who carry on the work of the Church under extreme persecution by the World and Satan

## Second Division: The Invisible War on Christ (Chapters 12 – 22)

4. *The Woman and the Man-Child, the Dragon, the Two Beasts, the Harlot: Chapters 12 – 14 (Judgement: 14:14 – 20)*  
  
The Woman is the Church  
The Man-Child is Jesus Christ  
The Dragon is Satan  
The Beast Out of the Sea is World Governments  
The Beast Out of the Earth is World Religion  
The Harlot is Worldly Seduction
5. *The Seven Bowls: Chapters 15 – 16 Judgement: 16:16 – 21*  
The final outpouring of God’s wrath on those who did not repent after the Trumpets
6. *The Fall of the Harlot and the Two Beasts: Chapters 17 – 19 Judgment: 19:19 – 21*
7. *The Judgement of the Dragon, the New Heaven and the New Earth: Chapters 20 – 22 Judgement: 20:11 – 15*

### A Note on Interpreting the Book of Revelation

Our study of The Book of Revelation presents one of many varied and acceptable interpretations. Respected Bible teachers reach conclusions about eschatology (the study of prophecy) that differ on questions related to the nature of the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Reign, the Rapture, the Tribulation, etc. We hope that this study will cause you to search the Scriptures to test and affirm your view of Bible prophecy.