

SPECIAL STUDY: ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation of the Risen Christ—Not of John. Apocalypse—An unveiling. Signified—Communicated by signs or Symbols.

INTRODUCTION Inscription, 1:1-3. Prologue, 1:4-8

1:3—"Time is at hand"	Preterist)
1:1—"Things which must shortly come to pass"	Continuous)
4:1—"Things which must come to pass hereafter"	or Historical)
	Futurist) Views

A.D. 96—PART I	A.D. 96—PART II	A.D. 96—PART III
Vision of the Seven Candlesticks Ch. 1:9-20 Seven Letters: Chs. 1-3	The Kingdom Vision of a Door Opened in Heaven; the Book with Seven Seals Chs. 4 & 5, Chs. 4:1—11:18	The Church Vision of the Open Temple of God in Heaven Chs. 11:19 to the End
The Church at Ephesus Period, 2:17 Post-Apostolic Age	Opening of the First Six Seals 6:1—7:17	The Woman and the Dragon Ch. 12
The Church at Smyrna Period, 2:8-11 Age of Persecution	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse 6:1-8	History of the Beasts Ch. 13
The Church at Pergamum Period, 2:12-17, Union of Church-State	The Opening of the Seventh Seal 8:1-2	The Seven Vials of Wrath 15:1-16:21
The Church at Thyatira Period, 2:18-29 Period of Apostasy	The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets 8:3—11:19	The Mother of Harlots an Abomination of the Earth Ch. 17
The Church at Sardis Period, 3:1-6 Reformation Age	The Angel with the Open Book Ch. 10	Fall of Babylon the Great Ch. 18
The Church at Philadelphia Period, 3:7-13 Restoration Age	The Measurement of the Temple 11:1-14	Zion's Glad Morning Ch. 19:1—20:6
The Church at Laodicea Period, 3:14-22, Period of Lukewarmness	Christ Comes, 11:15-18	Christ Comes 19:11—20:5
Christ Comes 3:20		

Closing Prayer— Conclusion 20:7—22:5
"Come, Lord Jesus!" Epilogue, 22:6-20

The accompanying diagram of the content of the New Testament book of Revelation follows in part the presentation that appeared in a book by H. C. Williams, a Christian preacher of a century ago. Unfortunately, this book, entitled **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**, first published in 1917, is now out of print. I consider it one of the sanest treatments of the Apocalypse that has ever been published (exclusive, of course, of the time-setting sections in it).

Much as I dislike the overworked word, "interpretation," with reference to the Bible, still and all this book of Revelation is a book which must be interpreted, and interpreted in terms of prophetic symbolism. The content, a series of visions vouchsafed the Apostle John, while the latter was an exile on the barren Aegean island of Patmos, is explicitly said to have been "signified" to the Apostle (1:1). This means, of course, that the Unveiling was couched in symbols. John himself introduces the record of the series of visions with the statement "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (1:10). The book is generally supposed to have been written toward the end of the first century of our era. (Incidentally, there is a growing conviction among archaeologists in our day that all the books of the New Testament canon were in existence by the seventies or eighties of this first century.)

Three interpretations of the book of Revelation have been suggested by different scholars, namely, (1) the **preteristic**, according to which the events (described by symbols) were fulfilled prior to, and ending with, the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70; (2) the **continuous** or **historical**, according to which the book is a record of the trials and triumphs of Christianity throughout the present or Christian Dispensation; and (3) the **futuristic**, according to which the events recorded will have their actualization in connection with the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the present

Dispensation. For obvious reasons it is the historical view which is accepted and presented here.

Based on the evident fact that Biblical prophecy runs in parallels, it seems clear that we have in the Apocalypse three streams of prophetic utterance presenting the same general history, but from three different points of view as follows: (1) Part One (chs. 1:9 - 3:22): here we have in the seven letters addressed to the seven churches a kind of prophetic survey of the moral and spiritual changes that were to occur within the visible church; (2) Part Two (chs. 4:1 - 11:18): in this section we have the record of the Messiah's Kingdom (Reign), of the conflicts between earthly governments and the divine government, until "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ" (11:18); (3) Part Three (chs. 11:19 - 22:5): here we find portrayed the struggles to take place between the true Church, the Bride of the Redeemer, and Satan, the Adversary (working through heresy and apostasy), continuing until the Church, the New Jerusalem, triumphs as the Lamb's wife, and Satan and his rebel hosts are cast into the lake of fire (forever segregated in hell, the penitentiary of the moral universe). (Cf. Eph. 6:12, Luke 10:18, 2 Cor. 4:4, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6.) Each of these Parts is introduced by a distinct vision: Part One, by the Vision of the Seven Golden Candlesticks; Part Two, by the Vision of the Door Opened in Heaven; Part Three, by the Vision of the Open Temple of God in Heaven. Moreover, each Part comes to an end with the announcement of the Second Coming of Christ. In its very symbolism, the entire book is a work of exquisite literary beauty: indeed it is unrivaled in its imagery by anything in either secular or sacred literature.

For all who might be interested, the following sequence of sermon subjects covering the content of the book of Revelation is suggested:

- (1) **"The Things to Come"** (Introductory).
- (2) **"The Seven Churches of Asia"** (Are we now living in the Laodicean Period, the age of lukewarmness and irreligiousness? Is this truly the age of "good-natured accommodation" to anything that anyone believes? The age of what has rightly been called "convictionless religiosity"?)
- (3) **"Heaven Through an Open Door"** (The Great White Throne and the Lion of the Tribe of Judah)
- (4) **"The Opening of the Seven Seals"** (The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and the Sealing of God's Servants)
- (5) **"The Sounding of the Trumpets"** (The Three Winds—The Angels of Woe—the Barbarian Invasions—The Rise of the Papacy and of Mohammedanism)
- (6) **"The Angel with the Open Book"** (Martin Luther and the Reformation)
- (7) **"The Measurement of the Temple"** (The Restoration of Primitive Christianity, its Laws, its Ordinances, and its Fruits)
- (8) **"The Woman and the Dragon"** (The Great Falling Away and the Rise of the Medieval Semi-paganized Church)
- (9) **"The Wild Beasts of the Apocalypse"** (The Roman Empire — Constantine and the "Christian" Roman Empire —The Papacy)
- (10) **"The Mother of Harlots and the Abomination of the Earth"** (The Dark Ages — the Rise and Decline of Papal Dominion)
- (11) **"The Fall of Babylon the Great"** (The Image of the Beast—the Union of Church and State—the Rise of Antichrist—Atheistic Leninism—the Zionist Movement and Establishment of the State of Israeli)

What meaneth these things? Are we now witnessing the gradual development of the coalition of the Beast (atheistic totalitarian civil power, misnamed "Communism"), and the Dragon (Oriental paganism), and the False Prophet (Mohammedanism) for the purpose of driving the Jews from Palestine? Will freedom-loving powers of the earth, whether nominally or actually Christian, both Catholic and Protestant, unite in a common defense against this coalition, against the powers that would destroy Christianity (and monotheism) by force? Is this going to be **ARMAGEDDON**? Is God's D-Day close upon us?

(12) **"Zion's Glad Morning"** (The Great Judgment Day—the New Heavens and New Earth. "Come, Lord Jesus!")

(13) **"The City of God"** (The Tabernacle of God is with Men—The City Foursquare—the Great Consummation)

The foregoing subjects may also be used as topics for study by Bible classes. For additional information, see **The Campbell-Purcell Debate**, and **The History of Apostasies** (by Rowe, Hudson, et al). These books may be purchased from DeHoff Publications, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, or from the Old Paths Book Club, Rosemead, California.