

Pepper Road Church of Christ

REVELATION

Defending God and Encouraging His People

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Lesson 1 – Introduction

Written to first century Christians who were suffering extreme persecution, even martyrdom, the New Testament book of Revelation provided comfort, hope, and encouragement. Although this book would have applied especially to those original recipients, it continues to apply to modern Christians.

Writing Style

A cursory scan of the book will reveal fantastic images, pictures beyond imagination. These are the words of **apocalyptic** literature, ominous words written concerning pending judgment and imminent doom. They are figurative, symbolic, and representative. They should not be literally interpreted. The opening of the book straightforwardly tells us as much:

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – **things which must shortly take place**. And He sent and **signified** it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to **all things that he saw**. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the **words of this prophecy**, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near**. (Revelation 1:1-3)*

Furthermore, throughout the book references are made to “*signs*”, “*visions*”, and “*prophecy*” (**Revelation 9:17; 10:11; 12:1, 3; 15:1; 22:6-10**), which allude to the need for figurative interpretation. Furthermore, the book is a record of what John “*saw*” and “*heard*” after “*coming up*” into heaven while being “*in the Spirit*” (**Revelation 1:2, 10; 4:1-2**).

Although the Greek word, *apokalupsis* (**Revelation 1:1**), and English word, “*revelation*”, indicate uncovering or making known, the letter’s symbolic writing style actually obscures or hides the true message for certain readers. Revealing truth to one party while simultaneously obscuring truth from another party (and hardening them) is not an unprecedented strategy for God (**Matthew 13:10-17**).

For readers familiar with the Scriptures, the borrowed Old Testament imagery would have been quite clear. Considering that a few of the late first century saints may have still possessed spiritual gifts, that they all were living through the applicable events, and that no one then doubted the letter’s date of writing, those early Christians could have understood Revelation much more easily than us who are two thousand years removed from the related events.

However, to outsiders and persecutors, Revelation would have been horribly cryptic. It would have been judged as the raving of a madman, discovered in the hands of another madman.

Since these symbols can be arbitrarily interpreted by humans, some additional source of divine revelation must be supplied to interpret them correctly. For modern readers, this source is found in the Old Testament. This exact same writing style is employed in parts of some Old Testament prophets (principally, **Zechariah**, **Daniel 7-12**, much of **Ezekiel**, parts of **Isaiah**, parts of **Joel**) and to some extent by Jesus (**Matthew 24**). Although *no Old Testament writers are directly quoted* in Revelation, between 260 to 400 allusions are made to Old Testament symbols (Hailey, 53). Therefore, understanding the original symbols is not only required but paramount to proper interpretation of this letter.

Date of Writing

Although some significant portions of this book are clearly retrospective (**Revelation 12:1-11**), the vast majority of the book is prospective, even if that future is not so distant (“*things which **must shortly take place ... for the time is near***”, **Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-7, 10, 20**). Therefore, Revelation must have been written before the majority of its events were fulfilled, which has tremendous influence upon the interpretation of the book. Consequently, no other New Testament book’s interpretation is as dramatically affected by the date of writing as is Revelation. Among all the postulated possibilities, two date ranges are most commonly advocated.

The “early date” of AD 54-69 corresponds to a time either during Roman Emperor Nero’s reign or shortly thereafter (AD 54-68). Some interpret the symbols of the great harlot and the fallen city of Babylon as literal Jerusalem, which indeed persecuted Christians and fought Christianity. Based on this interpretation, the early date range is favored because it predates the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the end of Nero’s reign in AD 68 (*Overcoming with the Lamb*, 19; Harkrider, xxxii-xxxiii).

The second prominent date is called the “late date”, which is generally thought to be around AD 95-97. This time is set based on a comment from Irenaeus in the 2nd century who stated that the book was written near the end of Roman Emperor Domitian’s reign, which would have occurred about AD 96 (*Overcoming with the Lamb*, 19). Given the near application requirement, this would imply that letter applied more to Christians suffering persecution under the hand of Domitian and emperors that followed him. This date is commonly held by early church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Victorinus, and Eusebius (Harkrider, xxxv-xxxvi)

Author

The writer identifies himself as “*John*” in four separate references (**Revelation 1:1, 4, 21:2; 22:8**). Although the writer never labels himself as an apostle, the language used by the writer and the description of his work is unique to the Apostle John:

*... to His servant **John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.** (Revelation 1:1-2)*

The only John who could “*bear witness ... to the testimony of Jesus Christ*” was the Apostle John (**1 John 1:1-4**). Only John the apostle referred to Jesus as the “*Word of God*” (**John 1:1**).

Johannine authorship was accepted and espoused by the earliest church fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Victorinus (Harkrider, xvi-xvii). Dionysius was the earliest writer to question if the apostle John wrote Revelation, and he provided only prejudiced uncertainty with no evidence to substantiate his suspicions (Harkrider, xvii).

Views of the Millennium

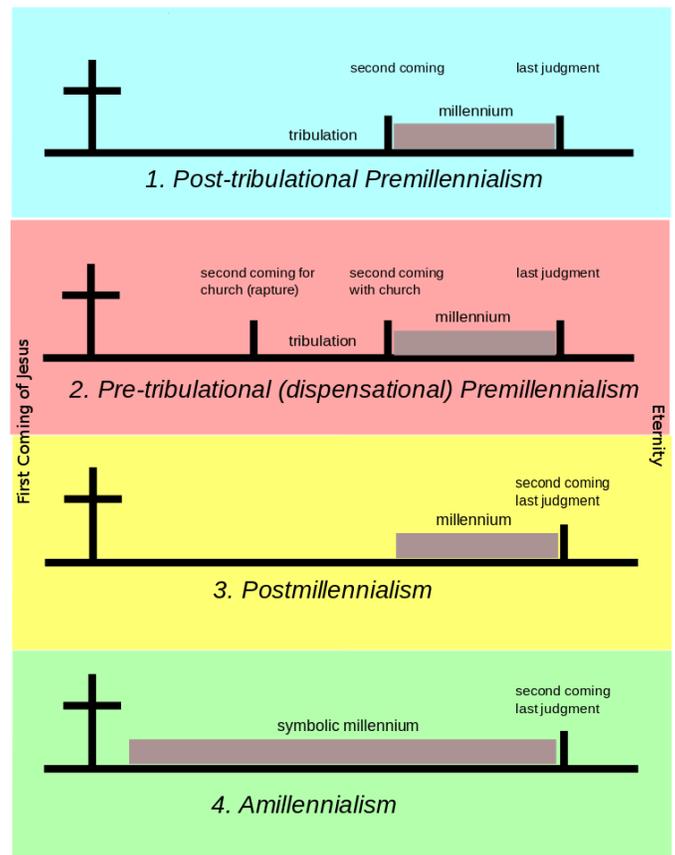
One of the most prominent symbols of Revelation is the one-thousand year reign of Christ mentioned in chapter 20 (**20:4-7**). Based on the timing of the second coming of Christ relative to a *literal* millennium, the various views of interpreting the millennium can be divided into the three following groups:

- **Premillennial** – This viewpoint believes that Jesus will return *before* a *literal* 1000 year period, at which time He will subdue and bind evil forces, ushering in a literal millennium of political

peace on the earth as He reigns on a physical throne in Jerusalem. A climatic battle and eternal judgment follows this 1000 year reign.

- **Postmillennial** – Proponents of this theory advocate that Jesus will return **after** a **literal** 1000 year period. The current state of politics and religion will generally continue, except Christianity will increasingly influence the world, ultimately bringing unity, harmony, and peace to the earth. Utopian concepts of eliminating world hunger, war, disease, and other social ills are virtues of this millennium reign of Christianity climaxing in the return of Jesus and eternal Judgment.
- **Amillennial** – Rejecting the literal alternatives, this viewpoint holds that the 1000 year reign is a **symbolic** representation of a long time in which saints reign victorious – not literally, but symbolically. Although this viewpoint may confess that Jesus will return after this time period, the symbolic interpretation separates this view from postmillennialism which looks for a literal physical reigning with political and material victories as opposed to the spiritual victory of the amillennial view. Plus, the amillennial view does not necessarily climax in peace on earth, but rather it is open to the opposite.

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



Views of Interpretation

There are four or five prominent views for interpreting Revelation. Within each of these there are variations and subdivisions. The following major views of interpretation of Revelation are subdivided based on their general, primary application to us – the modern readers:

- **Futurist** – The cornerstone of this viewpoint is the conviction that the majority of the fulfillment of Revelation lies in the **future**. Generally, the epistle is believed to apply to events in our future. Some would consider its fulfillment to be imminent, trying to match its verses to modern political events and natural disasters, while others may be more moderated in their expectation. All futurists would be premillennialists, and some would be dispensationalists.
- **Preterist** – This position holds that the bulk (not necessarily all) of Revelation’s foretold events reside in the **past**. That is, the events would have been a prophetic foretelling for the 1st century recipients; however, as we read Revelation, we are looking back on events that reside mostly in the past. Full (or hyper) Preterists believe the book was entirely fulfilled in the past, which is often considered the orthodox preterist position. Whereas Partial Preterists believe that most of the book was fulfilled in the past, allowing that some smaller part may still pertain to the future. Many preterists believe the book has little to no value for saints of today. It was both fulfilled

and valued in the past. Most full preterists believe all of the Bible was fulfilled in the past, including the 2nd coming, resurrection, and judgment, so care must be exercised to distinguish between full and partial preterists and whether all of the New Testament or just Revelation is in view.

- **Continuous Historical** – Instead of seeing the events as mostly lying before or behind us, this position believes that Revelation reveals the timeline of **all** history from the time of John until the end of the world. Events such as the Dark Ages, the corruption of the Catholic Church, the papacy, Martin Luther, the Reformation Movement, and other events throughout church history are symbolically outlined in Revelation. In other words, the book continues to apply to all of history, because it is specifically foretelling the continuum of all religious history. Not surprisingly, this was a popular view held among leaders of the Reformation and Restoration movements, who believed the harlot and Babylon symbolized the Pope and Catholic church.
- **Idealist** – Also known as the **Philosophy of History**, **Spiritual**, or **Symbolical** positions, this view maintains that Revelation reveals the specific events of **no** point in history, although it emphasizes that it applies to them **all!** According to this view, Revelation does not reveal the specifics details of any past or future events, rather it uncovers the fundamental, spiritual struggle and inner workings of the spiritual dynamic behind all events in this world. This view represents the most abstract and generic form of interpreting Revelation.
- **Historical Background** - Summers describes a fifth theory of interpretation, the **Historical Background** method, which is also advocated by Hailey, Jenkins, and Harkrider. This view essentially combines the partial **Preterist** and **Idealist** (Philosophy of History) positions. According to Jenkins, “Those who hold this view believe that the prophecies of Revelation have already been fulfilled. They also place emphasis on application of the principles of the book for today” (Jenkins, 7). This view can be further subdivided into 2 categories of application:
 - **Jewish Persecution** – According to this viewpoint, the primary threat to the original readers was Jewish persecution. Their judgment climaxed in the destruction of Jerusalem of AD 70. Generally, the millennium would symbolically represent a long period of church growth free from Jewish constraint and persecution. Such proponents must hold to an early date of writing.
 - **Roman Persecution** – This position sees the persecution of the Roman Empire to be the imminent threat applicable to the original readers. The fall of the Roman Empire and elimination of emperor worship permitted the church to enter a symbolic age of victory, allowing it to grow unfettered by such a massive political and religious empire duo.

The **Dramatic** view is also listed by some. It recognizes that Revelation can be divided into “seven acts with seven scenes in each act” (Jenkins, 8). But, this view applies more to the perceived **structure** of the book as opposed to its primary target **application**, and therefore, it could be combined with any or none of the four major views of interpretation, which differ on application not outline or structure.

Comparison of Interpretative Views

Harkrider provides multiple tables comparing the views of multiple authors associated with each view (Harkrider, lxvi-xciv). This enables convenient comparison of the views without painstaking research

and detail. His tables have been consolidated into the following table using the entries for a single representative author:

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
Church in Ephesus	Literal	Literal	Spiritual state of the church at the close of the first century, 65	Literal
Church in Smyrna	Literal	Literal	Symbolizes the persecution endured until Constantine, 65	Literal
Church in Pergamos	Literal	Literal	Biblical simplicity replaced with human creeds, 69	Literal
Church in Thyatira	Literal	Literal	Church corrupted by pagan philosophy & heathen religious rites, 75	Literal
Church in Sardis	Literal	Literal	Great mass of Christendom was dead though had a name it lived, 83	Literal
Church in Philadelphia	Literal	Literal	Loyal to the doctrine held by the apostolic church	Literal
Church in Laodicea	Literal	Literal	Outer religious worship without inner reality, 93	Literal
Open Door to Heaven	Beginning of Revelation, 124	Beginning of Revelation, 68	The church in heaven, 103	Beginning of Revelation, 165
First Seal White Horse	Christ, four horses represent panorama of war on Jerusalem described in Matthew 24, 143, 149	Roman emperors period of military triumph AD 96-180, 90	The Prince of Daniel 9:26 who heads up revived Roman Empire and becomes world ruler, 126	Christ going forth in the gospel, 189
Second Seal Red Horse	Unbelieving Jews persecuting Jewish Christians, 144	Period of civil warfare AD 192-284, 93	Military war breaks out and takes peace from world, 128	Persecution which follows the preaching of the gospel, 190

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
Third Seal Black Horse	Famine during Roman siege of Jerusalem, 146	During rule of Caracalla AD 211-217, 97	Time of famine, 129	Saints persecuted by discrimination in labor and business, 191, 193
Fourth Seal Pale Horse	Death during the siege of Jerusalem, 148	Empire attacked by foreign invaders AD 260-268, 99	Time of the great tribulation; the latter half of Daniel's 70 th week, 132	Death brought upon society, affecting Christians as well as unregenerate, 193
Fifth Seal	Martyred Christians assured of vindication, 150-151	Martyrs are those who suffered before reign of Diocletian AD 303, 103	Saints martyred during the Tribulation period, 133	Martyred saints given assurance of vindication, 195
Sixth Seal	Events fulfilled at destruction of Jerusalem, 152	Changes during Constantine's reign permitting acceptance of Christianity AD 307-337, 108	Literal events at return of Christ in power, glory, and divine judgment, 136-137	Not the final judgment, but one against ungodly world power persecuting the saints, 197
144,000	True Israel (church) marked & preserved from impending judgments, 159-160	Saints on earth between sixth and seventh seal, 111	Literal Israelites brought safely through Great Tribulation, 143	The active faithful church on earth at any time, 206
Great Multitude	Heavenly scene of spiritual seed including people of all nations, 162	Saints in heaven, 113	Includes many Gentiles who also come to Christ in the Great Tribulation, 144	Saints in heaven made up of righteous ones from every race and tribe of people, 207
Seventh Seal	Seven Trumpets, 166	Seven Trumpets, 118	All the subsequent developments leading to second coming of Christ, 150	Divine response to the prayer of faith, 214
First Trumpet	Jewish persecutors devastated, 171	Gothic invasions under Alaric, 124	Literal hail and fire mingled with blood cast upon the earth, 153	Disasters of nature intended to warn the wicked of greater judgments to come, 218
Second Trumpet	Roman persecutors devastated, 172	Invasion of Vandals under leadership of	A great burning mountain falls into the sea destroying	

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
		Genseric, 126	a third of ships and life, 155	
Third Trumpet	Downfall of Judaism's rulers, 173	Attacks against Rome by Attila AD 433-453, 128	Heavenly body or mass from outer space contaminating rivers and waters, 155	
Fourth Trumpet	Darkness over Jewish Nation, 174	Final conquest of west by Odoacer in AD 476, 130	An eclipse darkens a third of sun, moon, stars, 156	
Fifth Trumpet	Vespasian's march on Jerusalem, 183	Mahomet and the rise and spread of Mahometanism, 133, (Religion of Islam)	Demons torment men who reject Christ, 161	Torment resulting from spiritual and moral decay, 233
Sixth Trumpet	Roman armies overrun Judea, 190	The Turks waged a war in defense of their religion, 138	Massive army from the east slays a third of human race, 167	Armies of the earth execute God's wrath, 239
Little Book	Promises of victory mingled with pronouncements of sufferings, 209	The word of God is given back to the people, 145	Symbol of the word of God as it is delivered to men, 173	Prophecies revealed in the remainder of revelation, 248
Temple Measured	Preservation of spiritual Israel, the church, 212	Determination of the true church and worship, 153	Literal temple existing during the Great Tribulation, 176	The true worshipers are known by God and promised protection, 251
Two Witnesses	Prophets and Apostles, 217	Old and New Testaments, 155	Two prophets, but their identity is obscure, 179	Apostles and saints preaching the gospel by the Spirit during a troubled period, 254
Seventh Trumpet	The finish of tribulation period; fall of Jerusalem; triumph of Christianity, 228	End of time when kingdom will be given back to God, 167	The Seven Vials of Wrath, 184	Song of victory as prelude to the events which follow, 262
Radiant Woman	The church, 259	True apostolic church, 174	Nation of Israel, 188	The spiritual remnant of God's people who had kept covenant with

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
				him, 268
The Man Child	The woman's seed who were martyred, 266	The increase of the church, 178	Christ, 190	The Messiah, 269, 271
Dragon	Satan, 264	Pagan Rome, the earthly agency of Satan, 176	Satan, 191	Satan, 269
Beast From Sea	Roman Empire, 288	Roman Empire, 190	The revived Roman empire, 197	The Roman Empire, 285
Beast From the Earth	Subordinate rulers of Palestine, 296	Apostate Roman Church, 196	Head of apostate church during first half of Daniel's seventieth week, 205 (<i>No Evidence Either Beast Is A Jew</i> , 211)	Paganism organized to enforce emperor worship, 293
666	Nero Caesar, 302	The Latin Church, the Roman Catholic Church, 205	The number of a man, 210	The complete and total failure of all human systems and efforts antagonistic to God and his Christ, 299
First Bowl	The four bowls symbolize events surrounding war against Jews and destruction of Jerusalem, 327	French Revolution 1789-1794, 230	Physical affliction bringing wide-spread suffering, 232	Disasters of nature execute God's full wrath against the unregenerate spiritual, political and moral forces, 325-326.
Second Bowl		Naval war from 1793 to 1815, 233	Perhaps not literal blood but corresponds to it in appearance and loathsomeness, 233	
Third Bowl		Series of wars from 1792-1805, 234	All rivers and fountains become blood, 233	
Fourth Bowl		Military successes of Napoleon Bonaparte, 236	Men scorched with fire as sun's intensity increases, 234	
Fifth Bowl		Darkness over Jewish state in fall of Jerusalem, 328	Napoleon declares end of Pope's temporal power	

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
		and takes him as prisoner to France, 238		God leads to loss of wisdom and understanding, 332
Sixth Bowl	Hostile forces of Judaism & heathenism surrounding the church which were overcome in the fall of Jerusalem, 335	Decline of Turkish Empire from which Mahometanism had arisen, 239	Kings of the earth are gathered at Armageddon and will be engaged in battle on the very day Christ returns, 236-239	The mustering of forces for the great spiritual battle wherein Rome and paganism are defeated, 334-336
Great Harlot	Apostate Jerusalem, 363	Apostate Roman church, 249	Not a literal city but apostate world church of the future which controls politically by ecclesiastical power, 256-257	Rome as symbol of the great world city of lust and seduction, 343
Eighth King Who Is Of The Seven	Domitian, 372	Christianized Rome dominated by the apostate church, 255	The revived Roman Empire, 254	All kings or kingdoms, past, present, and future that would oppose the kingdom of God, 353
Babylon, The City, Rev. 18			A rebuilt Babylon which is the political and commercial capital of the world, 262	
Rider on White Horse	Christ in conquest of Rome, 395	The Lord victorious against the apostate church, 269	Second coming of Christ to bring down judgment and establish his reign on earth for 1,000 years, 268-281	Christ in righteousness judging and making war against all who would hinder his purpose and destroy his kingdom, 382
Binding of Satan	Cessation of persecution and deceiving of nations into idolatry of emperor worship, 401	Satan restrained so that all who desire may serve God as the Scriptures teach, 282	A literal chain renders the devil inactive, 291	Satan is now restrained from deceiving the nations, trapping and controlling them as he did before Jesus came, 392

Symbol	Preterist	Continuous Historical	Futurist	Historical Background
Author	Foy E. Wallace Jr.	John T. Hinds	John F. Walvoord	Homer Hailey
1000 Year Reign	Symbolic of completeness of victory over imperial persecutors, 403, 412	A long but indefinite period, 280	The Millennial reign of Christ on earth from Jerusalem, 282, 301	The period of victory when Roman persecution ended and continuing until some time before the Lord's return, 392
Satan Loosed	A renewed struggle of the church with heathenism, 417	His regaining power to hinder voluntary obedience, 290	Relieved from confinement Satan leads this last gigantic rebellion of man against God's sovereign rule, 302-304	When restraining power of loyal devotion to the principles and cause of Christ no longer distinguish God's people, 396
New Jerusalem	The church on a spiritually renovated earth, 428	True church glorified, 299	Dwelling place of saints of all ages here seen in future eternity, 313	The church at home with God in final glory beyond the judgment, 404
New Heaven And New Earth	The emergence of the church from the opposition of heathenism and Judaism, 426	Final abode of the redeemed, 298	Eternal state immediately following millennial kingdom and destruction of old earth and heaven, 312	The final and eternal order beyond judgment, 406

Themes

Regardless of how one interprets the millennium, the exact source of persecution, or the date of writing, certain prominent themes fill the book, some more common and obvious than others. These lessons are impressed frequently, even if the specific words and images vary:

- **Sovereignty of God** – That “*God rules in the kingdom of men*” (**Daniel 4:17**) and that Jesus is “*Lord of Lords and King of Kings*” are frequent points pressed throughout the book (**Revelation 17:14; 19:16**). A battle rages between the kingdom of God and the armies of Satan, but regardless of all appearances, God will not only be **victorious** – He already **is** victorious through Jesus Christ the Lamb. It is only a matter of unveiling and unfolding it in His own time. Words such as *polemeo* (“to make war, to fight”) and *nikao* (“to overcome, to conqueror”) are found more frequently in this letter than any other New Testament book (Hailey, 51-52).
- **Righteousness of God** – God cares that we understand His character and that He is righteous (**Hebrews 8:10-11; Romans 3:3-5, 24-26**). Defenses of God's justice and explanations of His righteousness are prominent themes found throughout the Bible. Revelation is no exception. Just as Solomon and other wise men were disturbed by the prosperity of the wicked and the

suffering of the righteous (**Ecclesiastes 3:16-17; 4:1; Psalm 73**), so does Revelation address the temporal success of the persecutors and the death of the Lord's martyrs. Despite temporary strains on justice, God remains and acts in righteousness. Judgment and reckoning are coming (**Revelation 6:9-11; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:10**).

- **Worthiness of the Lamb** – Jesus is often pictured as a lamb, indicating His role as our sacrifice, suffering and overcoming death. Because of His triumph and nature, He is granted right to execute God's plan, avenging God's people and bringing judgment on persecuting forces in high places.
- **Love of God** – Although it might seem strange, God's love is evidenced throughout the book. He revealed what was hidden and could not otherwise have been known (**Revelation 1:1**), He comforts and encourages the persecuted (**Revelation 2:10, 13; 3:10**), He speaks patiently to those who question Him (**Revelation 6:9-11**), He warns hoping for repentance when He could rightly destroy (**Revelation 2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19; 9:20-21; 16:9-11**), and He provides the ultimate, blessed reward to His faithful (**Revelation 21-22**).
- **Faithful unto Death** – Although the Lord sees, knows, cares, and had already begun enacting His plan of judgment, He also demanded that His servants not only be prepared suffer – they must also be ready to sacrifice their very lives in service to Him. Being "*faithful until death*" and "*loving not their lives unto the death*" are oft repeated and emphasized throughout the book as prominent applications (**Revelation 1:18; 2:10-11; 6:9-11; 12:11**). Patience, trust, hope, and premeditated commitment must be developed by every saint who wishes to share in the Lord's victory. It is a book that requires "*keeping*", "*righteousness*", and "*holiness*" (**Revelation 22:6-12**)

God knows! He sees! He cares! His victory is secured. Judgment is coming. Make sure you overcome with Him – no matter the cost, so you can partake in His victory.

Numeric Symbols

One does not need read very far before the repeated use and significance of numbers is impressed upon the reader. Although somewhat fuzzy or abstract, the following meanings – or something close to the following – are implied with each use of number:

- **One** – Either unity or solidarity, uniqueness (**Revelation 17:13**).
- **Two** – Reinforcement, strength, or confidence (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-11; Luke 10:11; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Revelation 11:3-4**).
- **Three** – Deity, the Godhead.
- **Three and a Half** – Half of Seven (see Seven) – broken or interrupted Seven. In regards to years, appears equivalent to "*a time, times, and half a time*", 42 months, and 1260 days.
- **Four** – The earthly world, as in the four corners of the world, or as in the four directions: north, south, east and west (**Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 49:36; Ezekiel 37:9; Daniel 7:2; 11:4; Zechariah 2:6; Matthew 24:3; Matthew 13:27; Revelation 7:1**).
- **Five** – Half of Ten (see Ten) – a broken or interrupted Ten (**Matthew 25:2**).

- **Six** – Man and Failure – falling short of Seven, not divine or not approved (**Revelation 4:8; 13:18**).
- **Seven** – Extent or Measure of God – either a measurement of Him or a measurement enforced by Him. Maybe based on number of days in creation. This number occurs “twenty times more in this book than in all other books of the New Covenant combined ... fifty-four times...” (**Hailey, 45**).
- **Ten** – Explanations vary. Generally, “completion”. Number of emphasis or power, emphasizing the other number when multiplied by ten. Or, implies the extent or measure of man’s power (maybe based on man’s 10 fingers).
- **Twelve** – God’s people in any one place or dispensation (maybe based on the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve apostles, etc.).

Often, these numbers are combined to emphasize or mingle meanings. For example, the millennium is calculated from $10 \times 10 \times 10$. Does this represent the full extent of mankind’s potential? The census of saints resulted in 144,000, which is $12 \times 12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$. Does this represent the full number of all of God’s people in all the earth? Combinations of 7 and 10 could represent boundaries determined in some measure by both God and man.

Some interpretation of numbers is obviously required given their frequent use and consistent application. However, the exact meaning of these numbers is difficult to specify, since it is based ultimately on harmonizing all occurrences of these numbers throughout Scripture, taking care not to overemphasize irrelevant data.

For more details, see Hailey, pages 41-48.

Structure and Outline

Detailed study of the structure and outline of Revelation is in and of itself fascinating. Some divisions are obvious, such as the letters to the churches versus the visions of John. Some repetition of themes is obvious. The structure of their repetition is so consistent to tempt using the structure as the key to interpretation. Hendrikson advocates such a position, believing the same sequence is repeated seven times throughout the book. Others divide the book into separate visions, which are simple to distinguish.

The problem with each of these divisions is that they ignore some elements of previous sections that are resolved in later sections, which make it difficult to consider the sections as independently cyclical, since they do not entirely stand alone. The sets, waves, or cycles of Revelation seem to be best interpreted as incremental escalation of the conflict between God and His enemies. The exception to this structure is the vision of chapter 12, which appears to be a “flashback” revealing an underlying conflict not yet introduced in the book, necessary to explain the fundamental nature and reason for conflict, which is resolved in the last half of the book. Therefore, a simple sequence of progressing scenes seems the best overall method for outlining the book.

- I. Christ Among the Lampstands
 - a. Revealing the Author and Authority of Epistle, the glorified Jesus Christ – **1:1-20**.
 - b. Individual Message to 7 Churches of Asia – **2:1-3:22**.
- II. Revealing God’s Plan for Judgment – **4:1-8:1**.

- a. Description of the Judge on the Throne – **4:1-11**.
- b. Worthiness of Lamb to Execute God’s Plan for Judgment – **5:1-14**.
- c. Design Elements of Plan to be Executed (The Seven Seals) – **6:1-17, 8:1-2**.
- d. Protection and salvation of saints from Judgment – **7:1-17**.
- III. Warning of God’s Plan through Partial Judgment (The Seven Trumpets) – **8:1-11:19**.
 - a. First Four Trumpets – **8:2-12**.
 - b. Last Three Trumpets and Corresponding Three Woes – **8:13-11:19**.
 - i. Fifth and Sixth Trumpets, First and Second Woes – **9:1-21**.
 - ii. Prophecy to be Completed and Fulfilled – **10:1-11**.
 - iii. Measuring Temple & Preaching of Two Witnesses – **11:1-13**.
 - iv. Seventh Trumpet and Third Woe – **11:14-19**.
- IV. Fundamental Source of Conflict and Recipients of Judgment – **12:1-14:20**.
 - a. The Devil, Persecuting Church after Failed Sabotage and Spiritual War – **12:1-17**.
 - b. Land and Sea Beasts Waging War against Saints – **13:1-18**.
 - c. The Victorious Lamb, salvation of His victorious saints versus His judgment against the beast and his worshippers – **14:1-20**.
- V. Executing God’s Plan for Final, Earthly Judgment – **15:1-20:10**.
 - a. Pouring out the Seven Bowls of Wrath – **15:1-16:21**.
 - b. Destruction of the Great Harlot and City of Babylon – **17:1-18:24**.
 - c. Saints rejoicing over judgment – **19:1-10**.
 - d. Lamb destroys Land and Sea Beasts – **19:11-21**.
 - e. Devil is chained, and saints reign with Christ for 1,000 years – **20:1-6**.
 - f. Devil is released, gathers new army, is destroyed, and is cast into eternal hell – **20:7-10**.
- VI. Executing God’s Plan for Eternal Judgment – **20:11-15**.
 - a. Eternal Judgment after Death including the End of Death – **20:11-15**.
 - b. Glimpse of heaven and its inhabitants – **21:1-22:7**.
- VII. Conclusion – **22:8-22**

A few anachronisms apparently violate this simple sequential view. For example, some verses are written in the apparent past tense. Some of these could be better understood as the “prophetic past tense”, which is commonly found in the Old Testament prophets. This records from God’s point of view where everything is either already accomplished or as certain as already accomplished (**Romans 4:17**). Consequently, some statements recorded in the past tense may be better understood as future tense for people at that time, resolving several apparent anachronisms.

Some visions seem to provide more detail for events summarized in previous visions, which may explain other apparent anachronisms.

Summary Reminders

When studying Revelation please keep in mind the following helps:

1. Revelation was written to a people suffering extreme persecution; therefore, it should principally answer the questions and doubts that primarily plagued them. We can find application for ourselves as we find ourselves in similar situations, even if less severe.
2. Revelation consists of a succession of scenes to be interpreted symbolically. These should be used to form an overall “picture” of the message before interpreting the details. Don’t lose sight of the forest because of the trees!

3. Revelation's symbols are rooted in Old Testament usage from Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, and other apocalyptic books. However, John adapts their meaning to his own. Understand their message first; otherwise, you cannot hope to understand his message built on top of their message.
4. Interpret difficult passages in the light of clearer passages. Let the simple teachings of the rest of the Bible set the boundaries for all answers to Revelation's complicated questions.
5. Although many details of interpreting Revelation may be very difficult, the overall message is abundantly clear and impressed even by an introductory study of the book violating neither **Ephesians 3:3-5; 5:17** nor **2 Peter 1:3**.

Questions

Please answer the following questions in preparation for the first class:

1. Is this a book to be interpreted *literally*? How do you know?
2. Define apocalyptic literature? Why encrypt the message in symbols if intent is to reveal? What are the best sources for decoding its usage in Revelation?
3. What are the two most common date ranges advocated for the writing of Revelation? What is the fundamental reason for accepting each?
4. Name and define the 3 most common views for interpreting the millennium of chapter 20?
5. Name and define the 5 most common views for interpreting the entire book of Revelation?
6. What prominent themes appear throughout Revelation?

7. How are numbers generally used to communicate in this book?

8. What is the overall message of the book?

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Pivotal Passages for Interpretive Views

Futurist

Preterist

**Continuous
Historical**

Idealist

**Historical
Background**

Lesson 2 – Christ among the Lampstands #1

Overview

The Book of Revelation opens as a conventional New Testament epistle, including author, greetings, and blessings. However, it also includes critical information concerning its timeframe and required manner of interpretation. The central character of Revelation is Jesus Christ, and chapter 1 provides a grand description of the ascended Lord of Lords and King of Kings. In it, He is depicted not only as living and powerful but also as knowledgeable and concerned. This risen Lord has examined His churches, and He has readied both encouragement and exhortation that John is to deliver.

Bible Reading With Questions

Introduction – Revelation 1:1-7

1. Grammatically, the “*Revelation of Jesus Christ*” could refer to a message **about** Jesus or a message **from** Jesus. From the context, can you tell which meaning is intended? If so, what are the implications?
2. What general time frame was provided for the fulfillment of the visions recorded in Revelation? How does this impact the various views for interpreting Revelation?
3. How was the Revelation communicated to John? How does this impact the various views for interpreting Revelation?
4. How is Jesus described in the greeting? How would this description help first-century Christians suffering persecution?
5. Does Jesus' coming – as recorded in verse 7 – necessarily refer to His return at the end of the world? Why or why not? If not, to what other events could it apply? Please investigate the phrase, “*the day of the Lord*”, as used throughout the Bible.

Lesson 3 – Christ among the Lampstands #2

Overview

Having introduced the resurrected Lord, John now dictates brief messages to seven of the Lord's churches in chapters 2 and 3. Each message begins with a brief introduction of Jesus and ends with a final benediction. The introductions are taken from the image of Jesus from chapter 1. These seven churches may be representative of churches in general, or these churches may have suffered more so than others, or maybe both. Regardless, churches and their members today can benefit greatly from studying these lessons.

Bible Reading With Questions

Introduction

1. Are these seven churches the only churches in Asia Minor? What do this fact and the number seven suggest about the role of these churches in conveying Jesus' message?
2. What positive virtues does Jesus acknowledge and commend in the Ephesian church? What lessons can we learn from what they did right?
3. What rebuke did Jesus provide the Ephesian church? Was this merely an attitude or motivation issue? How can you tell? What lessons can we learn from their failures?
4. Often people complain that churches spend too much time on doctrine and others spend too much time emphasizing love and grace. Based on Jesus' review of the Ephesian church, what can we learn of His expectations for us?

Church of Smyrna – Revelation 2:8-11

5. How would Jesus' introduction of Himself and sharing His knowledge of the church in Smyrna have strengthened their faith?

6. Was the church in Smyrna being persecuted by literal Jews? If not, how would these people have been figuratively, spiritually similar to Jews?

7. Jesus expected them to be prepared to suffer to what extent? Was this a literal “*ten days*”? If not, what did it represent?

8. How would His final benediction to them have exhorted them?

Church of Pergamos – Revelation 2:12-17

9. What commendation did Jesus provide the church in Pergamos?

10. Was everyone in Pergamos similarly uncompromising? How had they compromised? Why might they have been more vulnerable or open to this form of compromise compared to Antipas' exhibition of conviction? What lessons can we learn from them?

11. What did the Nicolaitans teach? How would have Jesus' closing benediction have diminished their appeal?

Church of Thyatira – Revelation 2:18-29

12. How would Jesus' introduction of Himself to the church in Thyatira have substantiated His objections?

13. What unusual mercy did the Lord show the woman known as Jezebel? Was this a literal Jezebel? If not, who did she represent or typify?
14. What ultimate judgment did Jezebel and "*her children*" face? If these children are not to be literally interpreted, who do they represent or typify?
15. What reward did Jesus extend to those who overcame?

Lesson 4 – Christ among the Lampstands #3

Bible Reading With Questions

Church of Sardis – Revelation 3:1-6

1. What was wrong with the church in Sardis? Why was this surprising? What lessons can we learn from this judgment?
2. What choice did Jesus provide for the church? And, what would be the outcomes of the 2 possible options? What lessons can we learn from this admonition?
3. Did this pending judgment apply to everyone at Sardis? Why or why not? What can we learn about staying versus leaving a church?
4. In what other passage did Jesus promise to confess the name of saints before His Father? How might this relate to this context?

Church of Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7-13

5. Why was an "open door" presented to the church in Philadelphia? How else has this figure been used in the Bible? How might it apply to this church?
6. What imminent rewards did Jesus promise them? Why were they to receive this blessing?

7. What eternal rewards awaited them? What was expected of them to receive this final blessing?

Church of Laodicea – Revelation 3:14-22

8. Jesus claimed to be the “*Beginning of the creation of God*” (3:14). Does this necessarily imply that He was created? What does this mean?

9. What was the fundamental failure of Laodicea?

10. What was the remedy provided by Jesus? What can we learn from Jesus’ message to this church?

Lesson 5 – The Center of Existence

Overview

The center of all things is depicted for us in chapter 4. Here sits One Whom all of creation praises voluntarily, joyfully, humbly, thankfully. This is the unmoving center of holiness, righteousness, mercy, power, and wisdom. There is no higher court. Whatever evils exist in the world, they are seen and known here. Any judgment, decision, and plan to reckon such evils, no matter how high, sinister, or powerful, must originate from here, because of God's identity and nature – because of Who He is. This is the God we serve, in Whom we trust, and upon Whom we wait to act.

Bible Reading With Questions

One Seated on the Throne – Revelation 4:1-5

1. As this vision opens, where is John transported? What is the timeframe of its fulfillment?
2. Who is represented by the One sitting on the throne? How is He described? What does this description suggest about Him?
3. Who do the 24 elders represent?
4. What is the significance of the elders' crowns and robes?
5. Who or what is represented by the 7 burning lamps of fire before the throne? What is suggested by this description?

Those Before the Throne – Revelation 4:6-11

6. What is the significance of the “*sea before the throne*”? Please consider other references to “*the sea*” in Revelation before answering (4:6; 5:13; 7:1-3; 8:8-10; 10:1-8; 12:12; 13:1; 14:7; 15:1-2; 16:3; 18:17-21; 20:8, 13; 21:1).

7. Please compare this description of the “*four living creatures*” to the four beings mentioned in **Ezekiel 1 & 10**. How are they similar? How are they different? Who are these creatures, and what can we learn of them from these 2 depictions? Also see **Exodus 25:17-22; 1 Samuel 4:4; Psalm 18:9-11; Isaiah 6:1-7; and Ezekiel 41:18-20**.

8. Could there really be creatures immediately before God who “*do not rest day or night*”, constant in refrain of praise to God? How could heaven be paradise with such monotonous tasks?

9. What is the central meaning of the songs proclaimed by the creatures and the 24 elders?

10. Why would the elders “*cast their thrones before the throne*”? What is symbolized by this gesture?

11. What do you think are the main points, lessons of this throne scene?

12. Who is conspicuously missing from this scene that should be present? Assuming this is significant, how does this help us date this scene?

Lesson 6 – The Worthy Executor

Overview

In the first 3 chapters, “*tribulation*” and “*persecution*” were introduced that were targeted at God’s saints (1:9; 2:9-10, 13; 3:8-10). In chapter 4 we are shown the great throne of the center of creation. All things that are good recognize, praise, and bow down to Him. Naturally, the questions arise, “Does He know?” “Does He care?” “What is He going to do?” Chapter 5 introduces a scroll that represents the will, plan, and judgment of God, presumably upon the agents responsible for this persecution. The problem is that not just any one can execute God’s will in this matter. The focus shifts to the only One who is worthy to execute God’s plan for reckoning, justice, and victory – Jesus Christ. As He takes the scroll, the praise previously given to God is now accepted by the worthy Lamb. This is the One upon Whom we wait and trust to execute God’s will.

Bible Reading With Questions

Who Will Open the Scroll? – Revelation 5:1-4

1. How is the scroll described? What do you suppose is the significance of this description?
2. How important is this scroll? How do you know from the context?

The One Worthy to Open the Scroll – Revelation 5:5-10

3. How is this description of Jesus in chapter 5 different than the description of chapter 1? What is the meaning of the description provided here? What OT prophecies used similar descriptions?
4. From the clues provided in the text, why was Jesus worthy to “*to open the scroll and loose its seven seals*”?
5. What are the implications of the 24 elders carrying harps and bowls of incense, falling down before Jesus, singing a “*new song*”? What was their expectation of Jesus?

Recognition and Praise of All Creation – Revelation 5:11-14

6. In addition to the elders, who else praised Jesus?

7. How are the songs offered by the whole host different? (Contrast verse 12 with verse 13.)

8. What can we conclude since the entire host of all creation offered the same praise to both God and Jesus? What is the significance of them sharing the same worship?

9. Looking back on the chapter, does this scroll refer to the plan of salvation, the gospel, and Jesus “*slain from the foundation of the world*” (**Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20**) – or something else? How do you know?

Lesson 7 – Revealing the Plan

Overview

Having obtained the scroll, the Lamb begins to open the seals, one by one. As the first four seals are opened, agents of God are commissioned to go and execute the wrath of God in various ways. The fifth seal provides a structural interlude, but it also reveals one of the main reasons for the plan, what is being addressed and resolved by the execution of the plan. The sixth seal clearly looks forward to imminent, foreboding judgment.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Four Horsemen – Revelation 6:1-7

1. Please compare the four horsemen of **Revelation 6** to similar visions found in **Zechariah 1:7-11** and **6:1-8**. How are the images of the horsemen similar and different? What is their overall significance in **Revelation 6**?
2. Who could be represented by the rider on the white horse? How does this fit with the chronology established in chapters **1, 4, and 5**?
3. Who would be most injured by the economic disruption caused by the 3rd seal?

The Fifth Seal – Revelation 6:9-11

4. What is the significance of the souls being “*under the altar*”? Was the altar **covering** these people?
5. What is the complaint of those revealed by the 5th seal? What can we learn about the nature of God and His judgments based on His revealed response?

The Sixth Seal – Revelation 6:12-17

6. Do the events caused by the opening of the 6th seal refer to literal earthquakes, eclipses, red moons, falling stars, receding skies, and displaced mountains? If not, how are these symbols used in the Old Testament prophets? What do these symbols here foretell? Does this represent the end of the world?

Lesson 8 – Protecting the Lamb’s Saints

Overview

Having seen the agents of God’s wrath, who were commissioned and sent to execute God’s vengeance, a natural question arises, “What about God’s people?” “How will they be affected by God’s judgment?” “What will happen to them?” Before the Lamb opens the 7th seal, chapter 7 pauses to anticipate and answer these questions using established Old Testament imagery. God’s people are known and accounted in God’s plan. Ultimately, they will be saved and reside in heaven with the Lamb, no longer persecuted or suffering, but they will be sustained by God and the Lamb.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Sealing of Israel – Revelation 7:1-8

1. What is suggested by the imagery of the four angels holding back the four winds of the earth?
2. What is the significance of them waiting until the number of God’s people was sealed?
3. Please compare and contrast this message to that depicted in **Ezekiel 9**? How does this enrich the meaning of the sealing of **Revelation 7**?
4. Who does Israel represent in this chapter? What is the significance of their number, 144,000?

The Eternal Home and Paradise – Revelation 7:9-17

5. How is this heavenly host described? What might be the significance of the “*palm branches*”?

6. What is ironic about the color of their robes and how they obtained that color?

7. What state is described for God's people? What application would this hold 1st century saints? How does it help us? At what other time or times did God "*dwell among*" His people?

8. Does this image represent the then current state of those saints or does the symbol allow for this to pertain to the future? How do you know?

Lesson 9 – The First Four Trumpets

Overview

Having assured us that God’s people are known, accounted, protected, and provided, the narrative resumes with the opening of the final seal. After a period of silence, seven trumpets are distributed among seven angels. Amidst incense and prayers of the saints ascending before God’s throne, an angel throws a golden censer to the earth, which causes noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake. Now the seven trumpets begin to sound, one by one just as the seals were opened. With each trumpet, judgment is executed. Although these trumpets signify punishment and judgment, they also indicate warning. Each trumpet blast meets partial judgment – not final – and provides opportunity to repent, as the chastening increases.

Bible Reading With Questions

Opening the Seventh Seal – Revelation 8:1-6

1. What is the significance of the “*silence in heaven for about half an hour*”?
2. If incense previously represented the “*prayers of the saints*” (5:8), then what is the “*much incense*” offered “*with the prayers of the saints*” in 8:3?
3. What is implied by the angel filling his censer with “*fire from the altar*” and throwing it “*to the earth*”?

Sounding of the First Four Trumpets – Revelation 8:7-13

4. Compare and contrast the sounding of the first two trumpets to the 10 plagues of Egypt. What was the purpose of those plagues? How might these trumpets be similar?
5. Based on OT prophets’ usage of “*mountain*”, what might be symbolized by a “*burning mountain*” being cast into “*the sea*”?

Lesson 10 – The First Two Woes

Overview

Following the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the first four trumpets, chapter 9 covers the sounding of trumpets five and six, which are the first two of three woes. Since the final three trumpet blasts are described as woes, we can assume that they indicate more severe punishments as well as more obvious warnings. In this first woe we receive our first glimpse into the possibility that a far more sinister force is driving this conflict than may have first been suspected.

Bible Reading With Questions

The First Woe – Revelation 9:1-12

1. What was the source of the first woe (sounding of the 5th trumpet)? What is suggested by this source? What does it represent?
2. What effect did it have on the elements? Is this literal? If not, what does it mean?
3. Describe what came out of the pit? Please provide your best guess as to the significance of each attribute? Please compare and contrast their description to that of the day and army described in **Joel 2:1-11**?
4. Who was their target? What can we learn from this?
5. How long did they afflict men? What might this mean?

6. Who is their king? How is he their *king*?
7. What might this woe represent? What are these locusts? How do they really torment men? Is it suggesting a plague of demon possession?

The Second Woe – Revelation 9:13-21

8. Do the four angels bound at the Euphrates represent real angels? Are they good or evil? What is the significance of these angels having been “*prepared for the hour and day and month and year*”? What could these angels represent?
9. Describe the army lead by them? Do they represent good or evil forces? How can you tell?
10. What was the expected result of these woes and trumpet blasts? From this, what can we learn about the nature of God and our own human nature?

Lesson 11 – Proclamation of Delay No Longer

Overview

Between the first two woes and the last one (which woes correspond to trumpets five through seven), the narrative is interrupted by an additional scene, just as the sixth and seventh seal were interrupted with the sealing of Israel. A tremendous angel of incredible description straddles land and sea to swear by God that there will “*be delay no longer*”. He also states that the sounding of the seventh trumpet will conclude the mystery as revealed to God’s prophets. John is told to eat the little book that the angel held, which tasted sweet in his mouth but turned sour in his stomach. He is informed that he must continue his prophesy “*about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings*”.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Mighty Angel and the Little Book – Revelation 10:1-7

1. Describe this “*mighty angel*”? How does he compare to descriptions of other beings recorded thus far in Revelation?
2. Could this “*mighty angel*” be Jesus?
3. What is the significance of him standing on both the sea and the land?
4. Why were the words uttered by the seven thunders sealed? Why is this told to us, if we cannot know what they said?
5. What is this “*mystery*”? The Messiah dying on the cross? Unification of Jews and Gentiles? Or, something else?

6. What exactly is no longer delayed? What can we conclude from learning that *“in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel ... the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets”* regarding the applicability of the OT?

John Eats the Little Book – Revelation 10:8-11

7. What other prophets were commanded to eat books and scrolls? What is the significance of them eating these messages? What is implied by the book being *“as sweet as honey in your mouth”* but making John’s stomach bitter?
8. What was the meaning behind John’s prophetic work being unfinished at this point in the book?

Lesson 12 – Two Witnesses and Seventh Trumpet

Overview

Before the seventh trumpet sounds, John is told to measure the temple, essentially drawing a line between the temple and its worshippers versus the outer court and city, indicating that it would be overrun for 42 months. Then we are shown two powerful witnesses for God, who testify with no one able to stop them. However, after their work is finished, they are slain by “*the beast from the bottomless pit*”. It seems the entire world celebrates their death, denying their bodies to be buried, but they are resurrected to the people’s great fear. God then calls the witnesses, who ascend into heaven, as witnessed by their enemies. This completes the second woe, and then seventh trumpet sounds. It seems all of heaven shouts with thanksgiving and recognition of pending judgment and victory. The scene closes by ominously revealing the temple in heaven, where God’s ark resides, harbinger of the coming storm.

Bible Reading With Questions

Measuring the Temple – Revelation 11:1-2

1. In **Ezekiel 40-48**, a similar symbol of measuring and proclaiming the temple’s dimensions is employed. What is the purpose of the symbol as originally used (**Ezekiel 40:1-5; 43:1-12; 48:35**)? How is the measuring of the temple used in **Revelation 11**?
2. How would “*Gentiles ... tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*”?

The Two Witnesses – Revelation 11:3-14

3. How are these two witnesses described? What Old Testament prophets had similar powers? Who could these two witnesses represent? Please also consider **Zechariah 4:1-14**.
4. What cities have been “*spiritually called Sodom and Egypt*”? What did these symbols convey when originally used? Is this a literal reference to Jerusalem? How do you know?

5. Why would “*peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations*” celebrate the death of these two witnesses?
6. What is symbolized by the death, resurrection, and ascension of these two witnesses?
7. What events climax the second woe? How is this target different than recipients of previous judgments?

Sounding of the Seventh Trumpet – Revelation 11:15-19

8. Summarize the declarations and worship extended after the seventh trumpet sounded?
9. Does this refer to the literal end of the world? If not, what does it mean?
10. What is the significance of manifesting the temple containing the ark of the covenant from heaven in verse 19?

Lesson 13 – The Child, the Woman, and the Dragon

Overview

Beginning with chapter 12, the narrative is profoundly interrupted until it resumes in chapter 15. It seems that something similar to a “flashback” is provided, which unveils a far deeper spiritual conflict than could have been previously conceived. Persecution arises ultimately from a dragon, “*called the Devil and Satan*”, who seeks to destroy God’s saints on the earth in great wrath. This deep anger seems to stem from his failed attempts to destroy both the male child and his mother. In this chapter, we learn the secret to how those saints overcame his persecution, which is what we must do if we are to likewise overcome.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Long-Awaited Birth – Revelation 12:1-6

1. When are we first introduced to a serpent at war with a woman and her male child? What could this symbol represent? Who is represented by the child, the woman, and the dragon?
2. What is the significance of the dragon having 7 heads, 10 horns, and 7 crowns? What does it mean that he used his tail to knock down one third of the stars of heaven?
3. What was the dragon’s intention? Why did he not succeed?
4. What happened to the woman? What does this signify?

War in Heaven – Revelation 12:7-11

5. What happened in heaven? Do you think this represents a literal war? What changed for the Devil after these events?

6. How did “*they*” overcome? What lessons can we learn from this statement?

The Dragon’s Wrath – Revelation 12:12-17

7. After the failed assassination and war, what general tactic did the dragon choose next? Why?
8. How was the woman attacked and saved? What does this represent?
9. With the woman out of reach, whom did the dragon target next? What lessons can we learn from this verse and chapter as a whole?

Lesson 14 – The Sea and Earth Beasts

Overview

After the Devil's war in heaven fails, and he is cast down to the earth, he launches a war against God's people on earth. He uses two distinct agencies that are represented by two different beasts, which John sees in his vision – a sea beast and a land beast. These beasts not only actively make war, but they ultimately glorify the Devil as his agents. The first beast is very similar to a composite of the 4 beasts described in **Daniel 7**. Understanding those symbols as originally used will be key to unlocking this chapter.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Sea Beast – Revelation 13:1-10

1. What was the origin of the first beast? How might this help us understand what the beast represents?
2. Describe this first beast, and compare it to the beasts described in **Daniel 7:1-28**. What did the beasts and their attributes in **Daniel 7** originally represent? How does this help us better understand this first beast of **Revelation 13**?
3. Compare the description and activities of the horns of this beast of **Revelation 13:1-7** to the horns of the fourth beast in **Daniel 7:8, 19-22**. Could these be referring to the same kind of events or possibly even the exact same events? Explain.
4. What general events are depicted in **Daniel 7** that are *not* represented in **Revelation 13:1-8**?

5. What general events are provided in **Revelation 13:1-8** that were *not* disclosed in **Daniel 7**?
6. What is the “*patience and faith of the saints*”? What did this mean to the early saints? How does it apply today to us?

The Earth Beast – Revelation 13:11-18

7. What was the origin of the second beast? How might this help us understand what the beast represents?
8. Describe the second beast and explain how this depicts his true nature and behavior.
9. What kinds of things does this second beast do? What seems to be its primary purpose or role?
10. What restriction does this second beast impose that will make life difficult for Christians?
11. What number is associated with which beast? What is the significance of this number? What ultimate lessons can we learn from this numerical assignment?

Lesson 15 – The Lamb and His Army

Overview

Having seen the Devil and His agents, through John we now are given witness to the Lamb and His army. In this chapter, the battle lines are clearly and fully drawn. Previously, we have seen the agents, intentions, and machinations that the Devil will employ. As a counter, we are shown who stands with the Lamb and what tools He will employ. As we gaze upon His army, understand that the intention is not to impress us with their power (as if in contrast with the beasts from the last chapter), rather the point seems to comfort through joyful hope. We are also shown His powerful tools, which reside not in “beasts” but in “messages”, proclaimed throughout the earth. With the battle lines drawn, we are given a glimpse of the coming battle and its prerequisite – the salvation of those who responded to the messages.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Lamb of Zion and His Saints – Revelation 14:1-5

1. Where does the Lamb stand? What is the significance of this, especially when contrasted with the origin of the preceding beasts?
2. How does the Lamb’s host compare to those who followed the beast in chapter 13?
3. Who do these people represent?
4. What lessons are implied in the text by these symbols? What applications can we make for us?

The Three Angels’ Proclamations – Revelation 14:6-13

5. How does the first angel’s proclamation represent “*the everlasting gospel*”?

6. Who is Babylon that the second angel references?

7. How do you explain the angel referring to the fall of Babylon in the past tense? Had it fallen at that time? If not, why use the past tense?

8. Why was Babylon judged? What can we learn about God from this? What lessons should we make for ourselves?

9. What is the “*patience of the saints*” in this verse? What application can we make?

10. Why is it important to understand that blessing follows those “*who die in the Lord from now on*”? What is confusing about death, especially the death that was awaiting many of those early saints?

Harvesting the Earth – Revelation 14:14-20

11. Who is represented by the rider on the cloud of the first harvest? Why is this important? What is its significance?

12. What is being gleaned in these two harvests? Are they reaping the same harvest? If not, how are they different?

13. Compare the use of the “*winepress of the wrath of God*” here to the original uses by Old Testament prophets (**Isaiah 63:1-6**; **Lamentation 1:15**; **Joel 3:9-16**). What is the meaning of this symbol?

Lesson 16 – Prelude to Bowls of Wrath

Overview

With the battle lines drawn and intentions made clear, the instruments of God’s final wrath – seven bowls or vials of wrath – are distributed among seven angels. The saints of God are seen standing on the now burning crystal sea of glass, praising and justifying God. The very temple of heaven fills with smoke just before God’s wrath is poured out.

Bible Reading With Questions

Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath – Revelation 15:1-8

1. Does the following vision represent a retelling of the already told story, or is it a continuation? How do you know?
2. Where else has the symbol of the “sea” been previously used in Revelation? How is the “sea” here connected to those references, if any? What is the significance of the symbol in this case?
3. What lessons can we learn from the song sang by those “*standing on the sea of glass*”? How does this compare to previous questions and songs offered to God by His saints?
4. What were provided to the seven angels, and what was represented by them?
5. What happened to the temple, and what is the point of this occurrence?

Lesson 17 – The Seven Bowls of Wrath

Overview

God's final wrath is measured and dispensed in seven increments. However, although the primary intention is to destroy in judgment, the metered escalation of final judgment provides ample opportunity for men to repent, yet sadly and tellingly they refuse God's final extensions of unappreciated mercy. These bowls exhaust God's mercy, ushering in God's justified and final judgment – execution.

Bible Reading With Questions

The First Three Bowls – Revelation 16:1-7

1. What happens in the outpouring of the first three bowls of wrath?
2. Who is targeted by these plagues? Who is not affected?
3. What Old Testament story also contained plagues that targeted one group while sparing another? What was the lesson then? Might the same lesson apply here as well?
4. According to the "*angel of the waters*", why was God justified in His judgment of wrath?
5. What might these bowls of wrath symbolize?

The Fourth and Fifth Bowls – Revelation 16:8-11

6. What was affected by the fourth and fifth bowls? What might this symbolize?

7. What remarkable event did not occur following each of these plagues? What can we learn about God and men from this common, recorded observation?

The Sixth Bowl – Revelation 16:12-16

8. In the vision, what was accomplished by the sixth bowl of wrath? What could this represent?
9. Is the releasing of the three frogs part of the outpouring of the bowl, or are they a response to it? How do you know?
10. Why is Jesus' warning interjected at verse 15? How does this relate to the context?
11. What is the significance of Megiddo in the Old Testament? What might be the significance of Mount Megiddo (Armageddon) in this context?

The Seventh Bowl – Revelation 16:17-21

12. Who or what is the target of the seventh bowl of wrath?
13. Does this represent final destruction? How do you know?
14. Why is men's response to this plague so unjust and shameful?

Lesson 18 – The Scarlet Woman and Beast

Overview

With God's mercy exhausted, His judgment complete, and execution looming, the narrative pauses to examine the recipients of this doom. Two entities are first described in brief, and then they are reexamined in more detail to explain exactly who they are. Beyond identifying the underlying reality behind these symbols, the description emphasizes why they are to be executed, especially the harlot. This not only justifies the execution, but it also serves to ultimately answer the question raised by the martyred saints. The clarity and detail of the provided explanation in this chapter provide an anchor to help harmonize and interpret the other primary characters in this book.

Bible Reading With Questions

Description of the Woman and the Beast – Revelation 17:1-6

1. What is the scope of this harlot's influence? How many people is she affecting?
2. How is she influencing other people? What powers are attributed to her?
3. Upon whom or what does the harlot sit? How is this second entity described? How does this entity relate to previously described characters?
4. What name is assigned to the harlot? Is this a literal name? If not, what does it mean?
5. What prompts John to marvel at the harlot?

Explanation of the Woman and the Beast – Revelation 17:7-18

6. What is meant by the description of the beast that “*was and is not and yet is*”?

7. How does the angel interpret the heads of the dragon? How does this help us understand who the beast really is?

8. How are the horns of the beast interpreted by the angel? How do the horns support the dragon’s agenda?

9. What is the significance of the “*waters ... where the harlot sits*”?

10. What surprising, ironic attitude do the horns manifest toward the harlot? What do they do to her – and ultimately, why? What weakness does this exhibit within the dragon’s army?

11. Who or what does the harlot represent? Who or what does the beast represent?

Lesson 19 – The Fall of the Great Harlot

Overview

Having previously described the harlot and explained the cause for her execution, her doom described as a great, sudden, and catastrophic fall is provided in this chapter. Reaction is provided by multiple sympathetic parties and by those supportive of its reckoning. The cause for her destruction is again reiterated and emphasized, as is the instruction for God's people to separate themselves from Babylon and its pending destruction.

Bible Reading With Questions

A Great Fall to Be Avoided – Revelation 18:1-8

1. Compare the description of this harlot's destruction and condemnation to similar uses of this symbol in Old Testament prophecy (**Nahum 3:1-7; Isaiah 23:15-18; 47:1-15; 1:21; Jeremiah 2:20**).
2. How is the harlot's fall as recorded in **18:1-3** different than the message proclaimed **14:8**?
3. How are the stated lessons similar? Why is this theme being repeated and emphasized? Where else in Scripture is this same theme emphasized?
4. What is the significance of the harlot being served "*double ...in the cup which she mixed*"? Does this indicate an unjust punishment exceeding that of the crimes committed? Explain.
5. What would happen to Babylon "*in one day*"? Did this literally happen? If so, when? If not, what does it represent?

A Great Fall Mourned – Revelation 18:9-20

6. Why did the *“kings of the earth”* mourn over Babylon’s fall?

7. Why did the *“merchants of the earth”* mourn the fall of Babylon?

8. Why did the ship owners and sailors mourn her fall?

9. What did these three parties do to defend her or prevent her fall? Lessons.

10. How are God’s people contrasted with these three parties?

A Great Fall Suddenly and Entirely – Revelation 18:21-24

11. What significance was attached to the millstone being thrown into the sea?

12. How is Babylon described after its fall?

13. Can these symbols be reconciled with history? If so, how? If not, to what do they apply?

Lesson 20 – The Marriage Feast

Overview

With Babylon's fall, the hallelujahs begin to ring throughout heaven and earth. God is praised, but the heavens also rejoice because of the pending marriage between the Lamb and His bride. The bride is described, standing in stark contrast to the harlot seen in earlier chapters. John worships the angel delivering the message and is sternly corrected. Next, John sees Jesus with His army, prepared for battle. Finally, a great host of carrion is called to feast on the slaughter produced by the great battle. Of his many agents and great army, only the Devil himself survives the battle and following executions.

Bible Reading With Questions

Rejoicing over the Harlot's Destruction – Revelation 19:1-6

1. Who was praising the Lord and why?
2. How is God described in this context, and how does the judgment against the great harlot reflect this conclusion?

Preparation for the Marriage Feast – Revelation 19:7-10

3. Research the primary phases of Jewish weddings. What is the general significance of the "*marriage supper*" or marriage feast?
4. How is the Lamb's wife described? What might be represented by this description?
5. Who is represented by the Lamb's wife? Where else is this symbol used in Scripture? What might the "*marriage supper*" represent in this symbol?

6. Why was it inappropriate for John to worship the angel? What is the significance of John falling at the feet of the angel to worship him?

Jesus and His Army Poised for Battle – Revelation 19:11-16

7. What quality of Jesus is emphasized in verse 11? What is the significance of his fiery eyes and unknown name in verse 12? What can we learn from His robe and name given in verse 13?
8. How is Jesus' army described? What lessons can be learned from this?
9. How is Jesus described in verses 15 and 16, and how is this related to the looming battle?

The Battle of Armageddon – Revelation 19:17-21

10. Is the "*feast*" described in this section the same as the "*marriage supper of the Lamb*" mentioned verse 9? Explain.
11. Who is arrayed against the Lamb and His army? What previous passage tells of the Lamb's opponents gathering their armies? In that passage, what location is named for this great battle?
12. What is the result of the battle? What is meant by this "*lake of fire*"? What does it represent? Which of these participants can return and which cannot?
13. How much detail of the actual battle is communicated? Significance?

Lesson 21 – The Millennium and Eternal Judgment

Overview

Having lost the great battle at Armageddon, the Devil is imprisoned for a millennium. During those 1000 years, saints are depicted as reigning with Christ. Although few verses are devoted to explain and emphasize this millennium, that does not prevent it from being the cornerstone of multiple false doctrines that find their essential proof texts in this chapter. (Please review the section regarding the views of the millennium in the introductory lesson.) After the millennium concludes, the Devil is released from prison, and he turns the entire earth on God's people. Before the battle can begin, fire from heaven falls and devours the army. The next scene shows us the throne of God, who renders eternal judgment for all individuals. Those who are not recognized in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire, along with the Devil, the beasts, death, and hades.

Bible Reading With Questions

The Millennium – Revelation 20:1-6

1. What happened to the Devil after his loss at Armageddon? What is the significance of this 1000 year imprisonment? Explain both the length of time and nature of the imprisonment.
2. What other Scriptures refer to saints reigning with Christ? What is the significance here of the beheaded saints reigning with Christ for 1000 years?
3. Please compare the account up to this point with **Daniel 7:8-28**.
4. Should we interpret this resurrection literally? How could this be described as a "*resurrection*"? In what way would it be the "*first resurrection*"?
5. Where and how do these saints reign? Are they on heaven or earth? Explain.

6. Which of the millennial views best fit the context? Why?

The Devil's Last Rebellion – Revelation 20:7-10

7. Who will the Devil enlist to help him in his final rebellion? What is the significance of this symbol?

8. Who will the Devil and the army attack this last time? Should this be interpreted literally? If not, who and what are represented by this symbol?

9. What is the result of this battle?

10. Does this represent a temporary or eternal judgment? How do you know? Please provide supporting Scriptures to reinforce your conclusion.

The Second Resurrection and Eternal Judgment – Revelation 20:11-15

11. Why does "*heaven and earth*" want to flee from the One who sits on the "*great white throne*"? Why is there "*no place ... found ... for them*"?

12. What is the extent of this judgment? Who is being judged? And, what is being used to judge them?

13. What else is destroyed at this time? What is the significance of their destruction?

14. Can any of these condemned entities return? Are there any more remaining chances for forgiveness and second efforts at this point? How do you know?

Lesson 22 – New Heaven, Earth, and Jerusalem

Overview

Having judged and condemned all the enemies of the Lamb and His people, we see through John next the new realm of God’s people. This new dwelling place is reserved for those who overcome and have cleansed themselves of abominable sins. The city of dwelling is depicted in radiant beauty, but the greatest glory is the immediate presence of God and the Lamb, having direct access to them, and being led directly by them. What a glorious God! What a glorious hope! As is implied throughout this chapter, let us renew our efforts and ensure that our names are “*written in the Lamb’s Book of Life*”!

Bible Reading With Questions

The New Heaven and the New Earth – Revelation 21:1-8

1. Why is a “*new heaven and new earth*” required? What is the significance of there being “*no more sea*”?
2. What is special about the new dwelling place? Who else will be there?
3. How is this new dwelling place described? Should this be interpreted literally? Please explain.
4. What promise does the Lord extend to those who “*overcome*”?
5. What promise is extended to those who fail? How are they identified?
6. In what way would the “*lake which burns with fire and brimstone*” be considered a “*second death*”?

Lesson 23 – Conclusion of All Things

Overview

As chapter 22 opens, the vision of heaven closes, depicting both the river and tree of life. Both the profound access and light from God are restated and emphasized. Conflicts, heartaches, and issues from the beginning of time are finally resolved. An eternal reign in paradise is extended as the vision closes and is sealed. Both John and we are reminded multiple times that the events foretold lay just before the original recipients and that their fulfillment was near to them. The requirements to enter the city and kind of people forbidden from it are repeatedly emphasized. Steadfast obedience cannot be lost. The Revelation of Jesus Christ closes with an invitation from Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the bride, and even modern saints to those reading, who may be unconverted, uncommitted, or disobedient. A final warning to not alter the book under penalty of suffering its plague seals the book as we are reminded one last time that Jesus' coming is near.

Bible Reading With Questions

Paradise Regained – Revelation 22:1-5

1. What flowed through the city? Where else is this symbol used in the New Testament? What does its usage here suggest?
2. What grew in the city, and what did it provide? Where else is this symbol used Scripture? How is it used here?
3. How does this final scene resolve the conflicts and questions that arose in **Genesis 3**?
4. What remains unresolved or unsettled at this point? What is left to accomplish or decide?

Urgency and Immediacy of Application – Revelation 22:6-21

5. Throughout this book multiple things and people are designated as “*faithful and true*”. What is the significance generally attached by this label, and how is it used here?

6. What is said that indicates this book applied to events close to the people of the 1st century? How can this be reconciled with parts of chapters 20-22 which seem to refer to the end of the world and eternity in heaven, events transpiring 2000 years later?

7. How would one “*keep the words of the prophecy of this book*”? What does it require of men?

8. What can we learn from John’s second attempt to worship the angel? What does this imply about the message, nature of angels, and nature of God?

9. Why was John told to “*not seal the words of the prophecy of this book*”? In contrast, what Old Testament prophet was instructed **to** seal up his prophecy? What reason was given to him? What was the object of fulfillment for his prophecy? How does this help us interpret the book?

10. Why would God want the “*unjust*” and “*filthy*” to continue in their sins? How can this be reconciled with **2 Peter 3:9** and a God who wants everyone to repent and be saved?

11. Almost 2000 years have passed since Jesus left and promised to return, “*coming quickly*”? Even if He returned today, how could that be considered “*quickly*”? Or, is something else under consideration?

12. What contrast is again emphasized by Jesus? Why is this being repeated?
13. Why are the number, nature, and identity of the people inviting us especially encouraging?
14. What warning is attached to this book? Does it only apply to the book of Revelation? Why or why not?
15. Why does Jesus remind one last time, "*Surely I am coming quickly*"? Lessons?
16. What is the overall lesson of this book? What are the most important lessons you have learned from the study of this book? How will this affect your outlook on life, decisions you make, and commitment to Christ?
17. **Bonus:** Seven blessings are dispersed throughout the letter. Find them and record them here.

Appendix – Related Prophecies of Daniel

Overview

The Old Testament books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, and Zechariah are filled with the same symbolic, figurative language that is found in the New Testament book of Revelation. These books are useful to show that many of the same symbols used in Revelation were used previously to apply the judgment and destruction of nations proceeding the writing and application of Revelation. However, the Old Testament book of Daniel is especially important because it does not just use some of the same symbols, it foretells many of the same events that are being repeated and fulfilled in Revelation. Both books apply to much of the same events in history. Consequently, a better understanding of related prophecies found in the book of Daniel is critical to a correct understanding of Revelation.

Key Dates, People, and Events

- 2000-1900 B.C. Abraham
- 1441 / 1290 B.C. Exodus
- 1400 / 1250 B.C. Enter Canaan
- 1000 – 961 B.C. David's reign
- 721 B.C. Fall of Samaria
- 640-609 B.C. Josiah's reign
- 605 B.C. 1st Babylonian Invasion (Daniel)
- 597 B.C. 2nd Babylonian Invasion (Ezekiel)
- 588-586 B.C. Fall of Jerusalem
- 536 B.C. Zerubbabel's Return

Relevant Empires and Capitals

- **Assyrian** – Nineveh (**Genesis 10:8-12**), 3000 (???) - 612 B.C.
- **Babylonian** (Chaldean) – Babylon, (2000 B.C. – **Genesis 11:28**), 612 B.C. - 539 B.C.
- **Medo-Persian** – Shushan (**Nehemiah 1:1; Esther 1:2**), 539 - 331 B.C.
- **Grecian** – Pella (Macedon), Alexandria (Ptolemaic), Antioch (Seleucid), 331 - (167) 64 B.C.
- **Roman** – Rome, (753 B.C., 264 B.C.) 64 B.C. – 476 A.D.

Bible Reading With Questions

The goal of these questions is to better understand the prophecies of Daniel as they relate to the book of Revelation; however, these prophecies are generally part of a greater context within Daniel. Consequently, the Bible reading will be broad to encompass supporting context, but the questions will be few, focusing on the most relevant verses.

Although chapters 10-12 are relevant, their writing style is very different than that of Revelation. For this reason, their detail, and the complexity, they will be omitted from this study.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream – Daniel 2

1. How does Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving for God revealing the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream describe God relevant to nations, kings, and the future?

2. What was the occasion for Nebuchadnezzar's dream? What provoked God to reveal it to him? What was the time of its applicability?

3. Describe the image or statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream? What did each of these segments represent?

4. What was the significance of the materials used in each segment? Why was one material used over another?

5. What happened to the statue? How would this one be different than those represented by the statue? What is represented by this?

The Four Beasts and the Son of Man – Daniel 7

6. What is the origin of these four beasts? What is suggested by this symbol?

7. Describe the four beasts. What is suggested by their descriptions?
 - Lion –

 - Bear –

 - Leopard –

 - Terrible –

8. How do these beasts compare to the segments of the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:28-45)?

9. Who interrupts the rampage of this fourth beast? How is He described? Why might He interject at this point?

10. What happens to the beasts, and what is suggested by this?

11. Who is brought near to the One seated on the throne? How is He described? What event is suggested by this description? What parts of Revelation are parallel to this event?

12. According to the angel helping Daniel, what do the beasts represent? How can this be reconciled with the explanation of verses 23-24?

13. What terrible things will the fourth beast do? For how long?

14. What judgment will be made against the "*pompous horn*" and his kingdom?

15. Who will be granted rule? Practically, how is this accomplished? Is this equivalent to the establishment of the church?

The Ram and the Goat – Daniel 8

Note: Use Gabriel's interpretation to answer the interpretative questions about Daniel's vision.

16. Describe the first beast. How does Daniel's depiction of his geography in his vision help identify the first beast? Who is represented by the first beast?

17. How are its two horns described, and what might this suggest?

18. How is the second beast described? What is notable about its horns, and what might this suggest?

19. What did the second beast do to the first, and what is represented by this?

20. What is indicated by the breaking of the large horn into four other smaller horns?

21. What was accomplished by the horn that grew to the southeast? What did he do the "*Glorious Land*" and for how long? What would ultimately happen to him?

22. Gabriel pins the application of the vision to what time? How is this to be understood?

23. What was Daniel to do with the vision? Why?

The Seventy-Weeks Prophecy – Daniel 9

24. The provision of the seventy-weeks prophecy to Daniel is a response to what request from him? How does this influence a proper understanding of its applicable target?

25. Enumerate the things to be accomplished during the seventy-weeks. Could the prophecy be completed without these things being fulfilled? What might these mean?

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26. When does the seventy-weeks period begin? What event marks its beginning?

27. What two events mark the end of weeks 7 and 69 (7 + 62)?

28. What is to transpire over the period of the last week? What event occurs in the middle of the last week?

29. What would occur during the period between the mid-week event and the end of the last week?

References

- http://www.wordsfityspoken.org/audio/fc_lectures/Phil%20Roberts%20-%20The%20Seventy%20Weeks%20of%20Daniel.mp3