

A STUDY WORKBOOK FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

# **A Study of Revelation**

*Victory In Jesus*

By  
MIKE HUGHES

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# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## Purpose

The word Revelation comes from the Greek word Apokalupsis from which comes the Latin term Apocypse which in the English is Revelation. The word means to uncover that which is hidden or anything view as prophetic. Hence, it is a “showing to others” that “which was not know before by them. Thus God is showing to man the nature of man and at the same time God showing to man the nature of God. Also, God showing to man the nature of “his will and purpose” concerning man. God shows all these things to man by either “words” given to and spoken by the various prophets, and Christ, by commandment, spoken by the Apostles and by the written word. By Law All of God’s commands are “Law” whether spoken or written. By signs that were given to man as a “works “ of God to cause man to know the Power of God. To fear God To obey God To know that He is God. By signs given to man also to cause Him to turn to God to cause man to believe in God or by signs given to man as a “code” written in “symbols and figures” such as found in the book of Revelation. Thus the whole Bible is a “Revelation” of God to man concerning the “relationship” between “man and God’ and between “man and his fellowman”, with the Book of “Revelation” written for a special purpose fitting a special occasion, and need of the church at that time. The book contains the revelation of Jesus Christ Revelation 1:1 . It is a book of prophecy Rev. 1:3 . Therefore; the future from the time that John wrote was involved. A key to the structure of the book is found in three statements that are contained within it. Revelation 1:19 . “Things which are” things that then existed when John wrote. “Things that shall be hereafter” are things that were to transpire in the future experience of the church.

Since many of the things that were spoken of were to “shortly come to pass” Revelation 1:1 from the time John wrote, we should consider the book in the light of history rather than from the standpoint of prophecy. The context of the book were signified - shown by signs and symbols - unto John (Rev. 1:1). Signify means to sign i fy to set forth in signs, Just as a type cannot be made to typify itself, neither can a sign signify itself, but is to stand for something else. Since the word signified is a key word to the proper understanding of the book.

The book of Revelation reveals the conflict of the church with persecuting powers. This advanced history was set forth in signs for a purpose. No other book in the New Testament is like it. What was that purpose? Similar circumstances that were to face the church from the time John wrote, also faced Jesus and his disciples during His personal ministry. They were confronted with the persecution of the Jews. Hence, Jesus said to His disciples *“Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.”* Matthew 13:11 13 . If Jesus had told the Jews in plain words what he put in symbolic language in parables, it would have called forth premature persecution. Thus he concealed in parables the mystery of the Kingdom. Only the disciples could understand. Upon the same basis if Christ had put the truth of the book of Revelation in literal language, the pagan persecutors would have immediate information concerning the prophetic fate of their empire, and would have engaged in premature struggle against the church. Thus the symbolic language concealed such information from them.

## Author and Date and Place of Writing

The author the Apostle John was the most able and best fitted to write “Revelation” being close to Jesus when He was on earth, and being one who Loves most and Understood the Nature of God more so than anyone else.

The “Revelation” was received on the Isle of Patmos, which is about 60 miles southwest of Ephesus, and about 6 miles wide 10 miles long. In the persecution of Domitian A.D. 95 John “Was” exiled here some Authorities claim, others believe the Exile to be under Nero. But the fact Revelation 1:9 uses the past tense “was” in Patmos seems to indicate John received the vision in Patmos, and later released and then elsewhere writing the book.

There were ten imperial persecutions: Beginning with Nero, who in 64 AD cause the great fire in Rome, and accusing the Christians ordered their punishment. Thousands of Christians were put to death in the most cruel and horrible ways, and Paul and Peter was claimed to be among them. Many authorities believe that during the second great persecution, that of Domitian 96AD was when John was banished to Patmos in exile. These persecutions, some authorities claim, as the reason for the “Revelation” of Christ to John, given to encourage and to strengthen the faith of Christians at this time, and that the body of Christ the church would eventually triumph over the forces of evil. Those persecutions lasted through 253 260 AD under Diocletian, the last and most sever of all throughout the whole empire. Thus the signs and symbols of “Revelation” and the difference in style and diction seem to indicate the stress and pressure under which this writing was done, in comparison with the Gospel of John.

## **When Was Revelation Written?**

There are two schools of thought when it comes to the dating of the book of Revelation. Traditionally Biblical scholars have taken 96 AD as the date of the writing of the apocalypse. Lately there have been several authors who advocate a date of penning to be around 68 AD. This view has a fixation on the impending destruction of Jerusalem which would come in 70 AD. Thus stating the book has little use for a post 70 AD audience. Within the church there are three well known preachers to advocate the early date view: Foy E. Wallace Jr.; Arthur M. Ogden; and Max R. King, main advocate of the Realized Eschatology, in his book the Parosia.

My thought is there is too much internal and external evidence to support the late date for the writing of the book of Revelation that can't be ignored.

Some external evidence include a quote from Irenaeus 180 AD a student of Polycarp who was a disciple of John stated, “The Apocalyptic vision was seen not very long ago, almost in our generation at the close of the reign of Domitian” Against Heresies, V. 30. Clement of Alexandria who lived from 155 to 215 AD says “John returned from the isle of Patmos “after the tyrant was dead.” Who Is The Rich Man, pg. 42. Eusebius, who was a renoun church historian stated “the tyrant was Domitian” Ecclesiastical History Vol. III, pg. 23. Victorinus in his commentary, Commentary on Revelation in chapter 10 page 11 states, “When John said these things, he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by Caesar Domitian. he thought he would be released due to his suffering, but Domitian being killed, he was liberated.”

Some internal evidence for the later date is as follows: 1. The spiritual conditions of the churches mentioned in chapters 2 & 3 harmonize better with the late view. As an example the church at Ephesus was founded by Paul in the latter part of Calaudian's reign, when he latter wrote them from Rome in 61 AD he didn't reprove for their lack of love but rather commented them for their love and faith. Eph. 1:15. 2. The book was written while John was exiled to Patmos 1:9 . It is a well know fact that Domitian was very fond of this type of persecution. 3. The church at Laodicea is stated as having conditions of great wealth. “You have said, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing.” 3:17 . It is historically documented that in 60 AD Laodicea had been almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake. It seems that it would have take more than eight or nine years to once again rise to the description given in the Apocalypse. 4. Persecution seems to be stated as taking place all over Asia Minor example 2:13 . It is a historical fact that Nero's persecution was confined to Rome and was not for religious reasons.

## **SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION**

During the first three centuries the early return of Christ was expected, to be followed by a millennial reign of Christ for a Literal thousand years. The persecuting power protrayed in Chapters 13 & 17 was

assumed to be Pagan Rom and the symbols were given a Spiritual interpretation.

The reformation saw the development of “Three systems” 1 Preterist 2 Historical 3 Futurist more have been added since 4 Spiritual, 5 Liberal, 6 Realized Eschatology, 7 Early Preterism, 8 Late Preterism. All eight systems have their faithful followers today.

#### Preterist System Past

The followers of this system, believe the events of revelation of as already fulfilled saying that Revelation was written for the benefit of the church during the persecution of all Christians, in the Roman Empire. Since this is over and past, so the Revelation is fulfilled, is their belief. This system is adopted by the Roman Catholic church. Those who take this view, regard a large portion of the Revelation as referring to the Neronian persecution and the Jewish Rebellion. In other words, the Preterist system considers the Revelation chiefly refers to the events of the day, pertaining to the conditions and circumstances of Christians, written in a “code” which the church of that day would understand and be comforted, by it, and so would be fulfilled now.

#### Historical System Panoramic

This system considers the Revelation was a general view of the whole period of church history From John’s time to the end of time, given as a series of figures, in signs and symbols, showing that in the end the church would overcome and have the final victory. This system identifies the Roman church as the persecuting power. This system can also be subject to much speculation, but nevertheless it is the most widely accepted of all the Systems, and is the Protestants choice.

#### Future System Future

The futurist system sees the History of the church, in the second and third chapters with the remainder to be fulfilled, in a more or less literal way, in connection with the Second advent of Christ. This is the Premillennialist’s choice.

#### Spiritual System Ideal

The Spiritual or Ideal system, regards the Revelation as the Pictoral unfolding of Great principles in constant conflict, that is the great principles of Christianity are revealed through constant conflict and in various ways.

#### Liberal

Liberalism, has a so called historical critical approach, it alleges that John was predicting the fall of Rome and the end of the world in the immediate future. The theory rejects the concept of Bible inspiration.

#### Realized Eschatology

This theory says that all Bible prophecy, including the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the judgment day and the end of the world; which are spiritualized events) were fulfilled by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. This theory has no Scriptural support.

#### Early Preterism

This view has the book of Revelation dealing with the Jewish and Neronian persecutions in the primitive church as its primary focus. It has the book being written in the late 60’s and its fulfillment being completed by 70 AD. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was a primary advocate of this position. This view is negated by the evidence that the book was not written until a quarter of a century after 70 AD. Hendriksen in *More Than Conquerors* on page 19 says, “*We have not found a single, really cogent argument in support of the earlier date.*”

#### Late Preterism

Those who would advocate this idea see Revelation as being for the most part fulfilled when Constantine legalized Christianity 313 AD, or by the time of the fall of Rome 476 AD thus stemming the tide of Rome’s

oppression. Two prominent preachers had argued for this view. J.W. Roberts in his Commentary which is a part of the Sweet commentary series and Jim McGuigan. This view was originally conceived by a Catholic priest.

A weakness of this view is that of failing to recognize the correlation of Revelation with other prophetic literature for example Daniel.

Another fallacy as stated by Robert Mounce, a well known Greek Scholar states in his book about Revelation on page 41 says *“the decisive victory portrayed in the latter chapters of the apocalypse was never achieved with any proximity to the fall of Rome.”*

## Sign Numbers

In the very beginning of the Bible, are the seven days of creation, a little farther on, Naaman Dipped seven times in the river Jordan, Seven priests and seven days, and seven trumpets, used by God in the destruction of Jericho. We see seven colors in the rainbow, and in the last book Revelation are the seven churches. Seven starts Seven angels Seven seals Seven trumpets Seven Bowls Seven Thunders Seven Plagues Seven Blessings Seven candlesticks, and many others. Notice the following numbers.

<b>The Sign Number</b>	<b>The Commonly Assigned Meaning</b>
1	“Unity” Singleness, The only The divine.
2	The “Fact” and the “Witness” to Establish
3	God or The Godhead, or Divine Wisdom.
4	Pertaining to Natural things, Nature Creation The “Testimony” of the “Fact”
5	2 plus 3 Divine Wisdom established or in Progress of Establishment. The Gospel of Christ.
6	Insufficient - Not complete - Unfulfilled - Unknown.
7	4 plus 3 The sign of Totality “All” “Whole”
8	New Creation Salvation New Beginning
9	Concerning The Gospel and Man. God’s Revelation.
10	Authority - Power - Servitude - Influential.
11	Judgment Reward or Penalty Decree Finality.
12	Pertaining to man in the formation of the Kingdom of Christ 1st Apostles and it’s growth. The Kingdom of heaven the church- Christian body. “man” in the fulfillment of God’s purpose.
1000	The Extreme Uttermost Power and Authority The highest and Greatest.
144,000	The total church the church complete.

These meanings blend and intermix, and sometimes Lap over in various Scriptures.

# An Outline of Revelation

**THEME:** THE VICTORY OF JESUS AND HIS CHURCH OVER SATAN AND HIS HELPERS.

- I. **THE STRUGGLE ON EARTH: THE CHURCH PERSECUTED BY THE WORLD. THE CHURCH AVENGED, PROTECTED, AND VICTORIOUS.** Chapters 1-11
  - A. Christ is in the midst of Seven Golden Lampstands, 1-3
  - B. The Book of Seven Seals, 4-7
  - C. The Seven Trumpets of Judgment, 8-11
  
- II. **THE DEEPER SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND: JESUS (AND THE CHURCH) PERSECUTED BY THE DRAGON (SATAN) AND HIS HELPERS. CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH ARE VICTORIOUS.** Chapters 12-22
  - A. The Woman and the Man Child persecuted by the Dragon and his Helpers the Beasts and the Harlot 12-14.
  - B. The Seven Bowls of Wrath, 15-16
  - C. The Fall of the Great Harlot and of the Beasts, 17-19
  - D. The Judgment upon the Dragon Satan followed by the New Heaven and Earth, New Jerusalem, 20-22

## Progressive Parallelism

1. The Christ indwelt church in the world, 1-3 Lampstands. Matthew 28:20; 5:14
2. The church suffering trial and persecution, 4-7. Seals. (John 16:33)
3. The church avenged, Protected, Victorious, 8-11. Trumpets. Luke 18:7
4. Christ opposed by Satan the Dragon and his helpers, 12-14, Christ and the Dragon Genesis 3:15
5. Final wrath upon the Impenitent, 15-16. Bowls Romans 2:5
6. The Fall of Babylon and the Beasts, 17-19. Judgment 1John 2:17
7. The Dragon's Doom; Christ & the church victors, 20-22. Consummation of all things. Romans 8:37

### Propositions:

- I. The Book of Revelation consists of seven sections. They are parallel: each spans the entire dispensation, from the first to the second coming of Jesus.
  
- II. The Seven sections may be grouped into two major divisions. The first major division, chapters 1-11 consists of three sections. The second major division, chapters 12-22, consists of 4 sections. These two major divisions reveal a progress in depth or intensity of spiritual conflict. The first major division, chapters 1-11, reveals the church indwelt by Jesus persecuted by the world. The church is avenged, protected, and victorious,. The second major division, chapters 12-22, reveals the deeper spiritual background of this struggle. It is conflict between Christ and the Dragon, in which the Christ hence, His church is victorious.
  
- III. The book is one. It is a book of unity. The principle of human conduct and of divine moral government are progressively revealed: the lampstands give rise to the seals, the seals to the trumpets, etc.
  
- IV. The Seven sections of the Apocalypse are arranged in an ascending, climatic order. There is progress in the emphasis: For example, the final is first announced, then introduced, and finally described. Similarly, the New Heaven and Earth are described more fully in the final section than in the previous six sections.

- V. The fabric of the book consists of moving pictures or visions. The details that pertain to the picture should be interpreted in harmony with its central thought. We should ask two questions: First, What is the entire picture? Secondly, What is its predominant idea?
- VI. The Seals, Trumpets, Bowls of wrath and similar symbols refer not to specific events, particular happenings, details of history, etc., but to principles of Human conduct and of divine moral government that are operating throughout the history of the world in this dispensation.
- VII. The Apocalypse is rooted in contemporaneous events & circumstances. Its symbols should be interpreted in the light of conditions which prevailed when the book was written.
- VIII. The Apocalypse is rooted in Sacred Scriptures. It should be interpreted in harmony with the teachings of the entire Bible Daniel 7:2-8; Revelation 13:1-10
- IX. The Apocalypse is rooted in the mind and revelation of God. God in Christ is the real author. Hence, this book contains the purpose of God concerning the history of the church.
- X. **Helpful Comments:**
1. The main purpose of the Revelation is to comfort the militant church in her struggle against the forces of evil. It abounds with consolations for afflicted believers. The theme is the victory of Christ and His church over the Dragon Satan and his helpers. The Apocalypse intends to show you, dear believer, that things are not what they seem! Throughout the prophecies of this wonderful book the Christ is ever pictured as the Victor, the Conqueror. He conquers death, hades, the Dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the men who worship the beast, etc. He is victorious, hence, so are we! Even when we seem to be hopelessly defeated.
  2. This book was intended not only for those who first read it but for all believers throughout this entire dispensation. This is shown by: (a) the affliction to which the church was subjected in those days of the apostle John is typical of the persecution which true believers must endure throughout the entire dispensation. 2 Tim. 3:12, and especially just before Christ's second coming. b Many of the predictions in which the book abounds concern principles and happenings which are so broad in their scope that they cannot be confined to one definite year or century e.g. the seals, trumpets, bowls but span the centuries, reaching out to the consummation of all things, the end of the world. c The epistles chapters 2 and 3 are addressed to 7 churches. Seven is the number that symbolizes completeness. It clearly indicates that the admonitions and consolations of this book were meant for the entire church throughout all the centuries. d Finally, all those who read and study this book in any age are called blessed, 1:3. As at the beginning so also at the close of the book the author addresses himself not merely to one group of men living in one decade, but to "*every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book*" 22:18
  3. The author of the Apocalypse is constantly speaking in terms of seven. That number occurs 54 times. What is even more striking is the fact that he again and again arranges his seven in groups of three and four or four and three.
  4. There are 7 sections in the book. Each section gives us a description of the entire Gospel age, from the first coming to the second coming of Jesus, and is rooted in Israel's history under the old dispensation to which there are frequent references. The 7 sections are parallel. We find exactly the same thing in the prophecies of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar's dream image Daniel 2 corresponds exact with the four beasts of Daniel's dream, chapter 7. Thus the same period is covered twice and is seen under two aspects.