

LESSON EIGHT

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN

A. REVELATION:

The word "Revelation" comes from the Latin "revelatio" which means to reveal or unveil. The title was given to the book in the Latin Vulgate. The Greek title is "Apocalypse" taken from the first word in the Greek text "Apokalypsis."

The meaning is the revealing of something previously hidden such as removing a veil from a statue or picture.

B. THE WRITER:

The Apostle John was the writer or scribe. Jesus Christ was the real Author who instructed John to write. John was the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee. He had previously written the gospel and his three epistles.

It is believed that the book was written in the year AD 96. By this time John was a very old man, the only apostle who was still living. When he wrote the book, he had been banished to the isle of Patmos. This was during the Persecution of Domitian. Patmos was a small rocky island about twenty-eight miles off the coast of Asia Minor in the Aegean Sea. The length of the island is about eight miles and its greatest width is six miles. Its area is approximately twenty-two square miles. Here, shut off from the rest of the world, John entered into a communion with his Lord and was commanded to write the revelation, as it was unfolded before him.

This command to write was repeated many times throughout the book:

"... What thou seest write in a book..." (Revelation 1:11). "

"Write the things which thou hast seen..." (Revelation 1:19). "

"... Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord..." (Revelation 14:13).

"... Write, Blessed are they which are called..." (Revelation 19:9).

In the second and third chapters he was instructed to write to each of the seven churches. Not only was John commanded to write but also Jesus Christ told John exactly what to write.

C. THE LORD'S DAY:

Scriptural Reference:

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day..." (Revelation 1:10).

Some have claimed that the "Lord's Day" was the first day of the week. However, undoubtedly it meant the Day of the Lord. This term applies to the Day of the Lord's return and includes both the Tribulation and the Millennium.

John was caught up in the Spirit and he saw a panorama of unfolding events that would take place during the time of our Lord's return.

D. A BOOK OF PROPHECY:

The book of Revelation is a book of Prophecy as stated in several places throughout the book:
"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy..." (Revelation 1:3).
"... In the days of their prophecy..." (Revelation 11:6).
"... For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Revelation 19:10).
"... Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).
"Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book..." (Revelation 22:10).
"... The words of the prophecy of this book..." (Revelation 22:18).
"... The words of the prophecy of this book..." (Revelation 22:19).

Revelation is a prophetic book and as such reveals the future.

E. INTERPRETATIONS:

There have been many methods of interpretations of Revelation. We shall mention four of these methods:

1. **PRETERIST:** This is a claim that the greatest part of the book has already been fulfilled in the early history of the church.
2. **HISTORICAL:** This is a claim that the book deals with the whole period of church history from John's time to the end of the world.
3. **SPIRITUALIST:** This interpretation spiritualizes the teaching of the book and separates the teaching of the book from any historical events.
4. **FUTURIST INTERPRETATION:** This is the correct interpretation, which affirms that the major part of the book deals with what is still future. Apart from the first three chapters the book deals with the Lord's coming and the judgments that will still take place.

The book should be given as much as possible a literal interpretation with an understanding that most of the events unfold in a chronological order.

F. PLAN OF THE BOOK:

The key to the book of Revelation is given in Revelation 1:19. *"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."*

Here is stated the three clear divisions of the book which do not overlap 1) The things which thou hast seen; 2) The things which are; and 3) The things which shall be hereafter.

Keeping to these clear divisions we study the book by dividing it into three parts: 1) Chapter One - Thou has seen; 2) Chapter Two & Three - Which are; and 3) Chapter Four to Twenty-Two - Shall be hereafter.

If we keep to this clear outline we shall have little difficulty in studying and understanding the book.

G. PROMISE OF BLESSING:

This prophecy is to be read, studied and understood. The book was to remain an unsealed book. *"And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:10).*

This meant that God planned for the book to be an open book of understanding. In fact, there is a blessing promised to the person who reads, hears and obeys the words of this prophecy. *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Revelation 1:3). "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).*

God would never have promised these blessings if the book were a mystical book that could not be understood. The book could never be obeyed if it could not be understood. God planned that the prophecy should be read with clear understanding.

H. THE CLIMAX OF GOD'S REVELATION OF TRUTH:

As Genesis gives understanding concerning the beginning of everything, Revelation teaches concerning the consummation of all things. We might compare the two books:

<u>GENESIS</u>	<u>REVELATION</u>
Paradise lost	Paradise regained
The first city, a failure	City of the Redeemed
Beginning of the curse	No more curse
Marriage of the first Adam	Marriage of the second Adam
First tears	Every tear wiped away
Satan's entrance	Satan's doom
Old creation	New creation
Communion broken	Communion restored

This book gives a total revelation. Nothing is to be added or taken away. A curse is pronounced upon those who would add to or take away from this book. *"... If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life..." (Revelation 22:18-19).*

I. THE NUMBER SEVEN:

The number seven is God's number of perfection and completion in the book of Revelation. There are SEVEN SEVENS that we might study as we read this wonderful book.

1. Seven Churches	Revelation 2:1	-	Revelation 3:22.
2. Seven Seals	Revelation 6:1	-	Revelation 8:5.
3. Seven Trumpets	Revelation 8:7	-	Revelation 11:19.
4. Seven Personages	Revelation 12:1	-	Revelation 13:18.
5. Seven Vials	Revelation 15:1	-	Revelation 16:21.
6. Seven Judgments	Revelation 17:1	-	Revelation 20:15.
7. Seven New Things	Revelation 21:1	-	Revelation 22:5.

J. HOW TO READ AND UNDERSTAND THE BOOK:

We must keep clear in mind that John recorded those things he saw and heard, as they were unfolded before him. The revelation unfolded in a chronological order and we should accept the revelation as literally as possible. The moment we attempt to spiritualize and explain away the meaning we are in difficulty. It is clear that John did not understand much of what he saw but he faithfully recorded it in terms that he understood. To illustrate we might refer to the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12). This is a description of an atomic war but John did not understand. He simply recorded what he saw.

When we refer to a literal interpretation, we simply mean the 144,000 were 144,000 not just a symbolical number. New Jerusalem is a real city. The millennium is real. There will be one thousand years in Christ's Kingdom upon earth.

Keeping these principles in mind, this book becomes an exciting, challenging study. Just as the Lord promised, we can be blessed throughout our study of this wonderful prophecy.

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SELF HELP TEST

Fill in the following blanks:

1. The Greek word for Revelation is _____.
2. The writer of Revelation was _____.
3. It was believed that Revelation was written in the year _____.
4. "The Lord's Day" includes both the _____ and the _____.
5. Revelation is classed as a book of _____.
6. The book should be given a _____ interpretation.
7. The key verse giving the plan of the book is _____.
8. There is a blessing attached to those who _____ and _____ the book.
9. The number _____ is God's number of completion.