

The Book of Revelation

By

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND VISION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

I was holding meetings in Spokane, Washington. For months men had been working on a monument of Abraham Lincoln. The great day came. A large canvas covered the statue; a balloon tugged at the ropes. The President in Washington D. C. touched a button; the balloon was released and the monument unveiled. It is thus with the book of Revelation. It is the unveiling of JESUS CHRIST. It is not a closed book; it is an open book. It is His Revelation and is written to "**shew**" unto His servants certain things.

The Old Testament prophets spake of CHRIST; the gospels set Him forth in humiliation, and this is His unveiling. Here we see Him as the Great Head of the Church; as Lion of the tribe of Judah; as Lamb of GOD; as Kinsman-Redeemer; as the Great Bridegroom; as the Hero of Armageddon; as the illumination of the New Jerusalem, and in various other angles of His work.

Special Blessing

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein."

This is the only book in the Bible that holds out a special blessing to the reader. Or if we cannot read, then get someone to read to us so we can "**hear**" - above all things, get this book of Revelation in our minds and hearts. It does not say we have to understand it all to receive the blessing. Just read and keep.

Jump into the lake and you have no choice, you will get wet. Walk up to a hot stove and you will become warm. Read and keep the Book of Revelation and you will receive a special blessing. How diligent the children of GOD should be to place themselves within this sphere of special blessing.

"Behold I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).

So important is this book to the life of His own that our Lord opens and closes its pages with a special call to study and "**keep**" its message. Our Lord is coming "**quickly**" (suddenly). There will be no time for preparation, but happy will that person be who has stored this message in his mind and has permitted it to bring forth fruit in his life.

All of this, coupled with the fearful warning in the last chapter of the book to those who would stretch forth a hand to "**add**" unto the prophecy of this book or "**take away**" from its words, gives us but a small realization of the great value that our Lord places upon this book. What we read determines the thoughts of our day.

Newspapers carried great write-ups and pictures of a peculiar suicide. Within a few weeks, many people had taken their own lives in such a manner as to prove they received their incentive from those articles. Reading the paper worked a curse in their lives, but Revelation will work a blessing.

A Prophecy

This book is a "**prophecy**." A college boy, eating soup, sandwiches, and other cheap foods would often call to the other boys reminding them that soon he would be eating steaks and full plate dinners. The burdens of present life were lightened as he looked forward to the death of an uncle who would leave a rich estate to him.

So we that study the Book of Revelation may little know the blessings that such a study will bring into our lives as we live on in the present by the light of the future as set forth in this book.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of studying this book. Several times we are admonished to "**hear what the Spirit said unto the churches**." It is CHRIST's last message to His people. After He had been in Heaven for some sixty years He came back to the Isle of Patmos and gave it to His beloved disciple.

And yet, many ten thousands of earth's humanity read not a page, while others mock and abuse its sacred words. His enemies reject it and its friends neglect it; and few indeed are they who, with true purpose of heart and sincerity of purpose, set out to read and pray and study the message it is intended to convey.

With all the urgency that human language can demand, this book is presented to us for our profit. If we truly love Him, will we not delight to do His will?

Picture Language

He sent to "**signify**" it. This word "**signify**" is a key word. Many there are who neglect this book because of its symbolic character. And so it is. It is written in sign or picture language and we must find the meaning of the picture to get the meaning it would present to us.

We often see pictures of a terrible giant; a great stick in his hand; cannon and guns upon his back, and wading through rivers of blood. In it we recognize "Mars" the god of war.

As the old year takes its leave, the papers present a signified cartoon of an old man with a sickle and an hour-glass and we know at once that it is old Father Time. The little tot who comes marching on the scene is the personification of the new year. And so with the book of Revelation. It is written in sign language. Find the meaning of the sign and all is well.

One illustration will suffice. John saw our Lord in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and with seven stars in His right hand. We need not look far for the meaning of these two pictures, for in verse twenty we find that the candlesticks represent churches and the stars are angels (pastors) of the churches. Thus all through this great book we must know the meaning of the pictures before we can know the message.

Beginning with chapter four we are on Old Testament ground and must look to its pages to solve its puzzles and read the signified language of the remaining chapters of the book.

Peace from the Trinity

"**Grace be unto you, and peace.**" It is characteristic of our Lord, in this book, to comfort and assure His own before revealing some terrible judgment.

Awful things are to come to pass. The earth will quake; mountains will overturn; the courses of rivers will be changed; the sea will roll high; islands will be jostled out of their places; the sun, moon and stars will be affected, but - "**grace be unto you, and peace.**"

But who promises peace in such a time? Is it some mere man? Ah, no. It is the triune GOD who promises to keep us in perfect peace when others are crying for the rocks and mountains to fall on them.

"**From the seven Spirits,**" does not mean there are seven HOLY SPIRITS. The book of Revelation is a book of sevens. It is GOD's number of completeness. Thus the HOLY SPIRIT in His fulness backs up the promise of peace in such a time.

The Blood

"**Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.**" It is out of fashion in our day to preach about the blood of CHRIST. Some hymn books have even been shorn of that blessed doctrine. However there is power in that blood, and up in heaven they make much of the blood, and redeemed humanity and the heavenly host ascribe glory and honor to the Lamb that was slain on Calvary's tree.

Kings and Priests

"**And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.**" This book takes us up to the end of what we call time. Eternity is still young. GOD is unlimited. There are on this earth, below man, many and varied forms and species of life: beasts, birds, fish, reptiles, bugs and countless forms of insects. Above men are principalities and powers, angels of various ranks and orders, archangels, cherubim and seraphim.

As this earth swings round its orb year in and year out bearing its precious freight and teeming with life, there are countless other suns and stars and planets, each created for its purpose and probably many of them carrying countless strange and unknown forms of intelligent life. These people must be governed and cared for by the Lord of glory, and He is now getting helpers for the ages and ages to follow our brief sojourn upon this earth.

He "**hath made us kings.**" With what glory and unspeakable joy will we sometime lead realms as yet unknown into the knowledge of the mighty GOD.

A king had exalted a humble shepherd to high degree. At times this man would enter his private room, close the door and draw the shades. Men suspected him and told the king. His room was searched and there in a drawer was found a humble suit of worn and ragged shepherd's clothing. When he was asked concerning his strange action, they found that he did it to keep himself humble, for it made him love and serve the king more fully when he meditated upon what he once was and to what high position the king had exalted him.

And so with the redeemed of mankind. May our hearts ascribe glory to His name and rejoice in the love that He has set upon us. Imagine if we can, the fishermen of Galilee finding themselves on a throne; Moses, caring for Jethro's flocks, suddenly in charge of countless myriads; John the Baptist, languishing in Herod's foul prison, suddenly opening his eyes to a kingdom in the heavens.

The Lord's Day

"**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.**" In John's time, Sunday was known as "**the first day of the week**" and not "**the Lord's day**," thus John must not be speaking of Sunday. If we try to arrange these chapters, after the fourth, into the history of the church, we will have difficulty.

Many times the Old Testament speaks of the "**Day of the Lord.**" "**Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand**" (Isaiah 13:6). It is presented as a day of terrible judgment upon the earth. John was living at the beginning of the church age. He was lifted up and carried "**in the Spirit**" to the "**day of the Lord**" after the church age has run its course. There John was given, in vision, the events that are to take place at that time. It is a rehearsal of the day of the Lord and not a history of the church.

The Three Divisions

"**Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.**"

Revelation divides itself into three divisions.

- "**The things which thou hast seen.**" That is, the vision of chapter one.
- "**Things which are.**" That is, the messages to the churches, in chapters two and three.
- The third division, "**the things which shall be hereafter**", is from chapter four to the end, during which time the church is off this earth and GOD is again dealing with Israel.

The Vision

John heard a voice behind him and turning, saw his Lord in blinding glory. **"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire."**

His hair, not growing old with age, but reflecting the very purity of Heaven, was white as snow. Nothing was hid from those blazing eyes, but **"all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."**

They penetrate and pierce even to discerning the very thoughts of the heart. Those eyes are upon us, and that should influence our life and conduct.

"Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

His words carry their own execution He speaks and it is done.

He was **"in the midst of the seven candlesticks"** and **"had in his right hand seven stars."** In verse twenty we find that the candlesticks represent churches, and the stars represent the angels of the churches. These angels, or messengers are probably the pastors of the churches. John was certainly not given a message to certain supernatural beings, although it is true that the air is peopled with both good and bad spirits. In chapters two and three these angels are charged with certain blame and given certain admonitions that seem to point to the earthly shepherds of these flocks.

Light in Darkness

These candlesticks and stars are light givers and the realm is in the darkness and sin of this old world. The only light this old world has is reflected from the people of GOD.

The candlesticks are gold - the most precious thing on earth to the Lord is His church - pure gold. His right hand is jeweled with seven starry jewels. The church is precious to the heart of the Lord, but He holds the pastors in His right hand, where a man holds that which he treasures most dear.

CHRIST **"[dwelleth] in the light, which no man can approach unto,"** and when John saw His whole countenance **"as the sun shineth in his strength,"** it undid his humanity and **"he fell at his feet as dead."**

But CHRIST laid His right hand upon him, saying, **"I am he that liveth, and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore."**

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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