

**THE SEER, THE SAVIOR,  
AND THE SAVED**

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# **BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK**

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## **THE SEER, THE SAVIOR, AND THE SAVED**

**A NEW**

- **Commentary**
- **Workbook**
- **Teaching Manual**

**James D. Strauss**

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**College Press, Joplin, Missouri**

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## DEDICATION

I live daily by the vicarious efforts of others! I pray God's rich and abiding blessings upon my mother and father, who have graciously and ceaselessly sacrificed that I might continue to obtain an adequate education for the Glory of Christ.

Wayne and Janet Shaw have opened their home and hearts to me. They are stewards par excellence! They have supported me both spiritually and financially. My prayer is that I will be able to finish many literary projects which I have already started, and thus produce concrete results of their unending confidence in me.

There is no way that I can express, in mortal language, my gratefulness to my wife Jewel and our two little Godsend, Joye Lu and Jeaneen Kay. They have helped beyond all my capacity to repay or even express. There is only one vindication of the things they have never received, and the time which was theirs that I have taken from them, because of my prolonged schooling, and that is that it will bring much glory to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to declare that I live daily by the vicarious labors of others.



## PREFACE

### Emphasis in This Study

1. Word and Phrase Study will be emphasized because it is most fruitful for an initial study.
2. We will try to show O.T. source of imagery however, the O.T. does not always help in determining its significance in The Revelation.
3. We shall often take a position which is exegetically possible but not necessary the only position, without going into the critical grounds.
4. We shall take notice of various English translations but the basic text is the R.V. of 1901.
5. Notes and appendices will be provided to make available bibliographical data for further study.
6. Keep constantly in mind that many things cannot be settled about the message and often the imagery of the Book of Revelation even if we were writing a more technical work. We must have epistemological (source of knowledge) humility about many of the secrets of the book which have not yet been yielded up.
7. The Basic Message of the Book is clear, so we will strive not to become lost in minute details.
8. We shall provide an extended annotated bibliography on the Revelation in appendix of this study.
9. To the advanced student of the Word it will be apparent that we have been dependent on the great works of Charles, Swete, Beckwith, *et al.*





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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION

### I. *The Title:*

1. The oldest, extant form of the title of this book was *Apocalypse of John*.
2. The Greek word *apokalypsis* has the same meaning as the Latin root from which we get the word *revelation*.
3. The title is singular (*Revelation*) not plural (*Revelations*).
4. While the title of the book as it stands in our 1901 A.V. translation is *The Revelation of John*, it does not mean that the book is about John, or that origin of the revelation is John. Jesus Christ is both the revealer and the one revealed.

### II. *The Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature:*

1. Apocalyptic Literature was a type of literature which contained secret, hidden teaching which was not to be disclosed to the uninitiated - (only those who belonged could know).
2. Liberal scholarship tries to connect *The Revelation* with this very prevalent type of literature. A body of literature came into being and was called *The Apocrypha*. The book of Revelation is certainly in the lineage of this type of non-canonical literature. But the difference lies in the fact that *The Revelation* is in direct lineage with the inspired Apocalyptic Literature of The Old Testament, i.e., the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah respectively. One need not appeal to nonbiblical Apocalyptic Literature in order to account for its unique form and imagery. *The Revelation* is the book of this form in The New Testament. This accounts for the difficulties many find as they begin studying this inspired work for the first time.

### III. *The Authorship and the Canon:*

1. The first to refer definitely to the book as from John was the Justin Martyr (c. 140 A.D.).

2. Irenaeus (c. 180 A.D.) assigns the book to the Apostle John repeatedly and without question.--Irenaeus was the disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was the disciple of the Apostle John.
3. Papias (c. 130 A.D.) is quoted as referring the book to John.
4. It was questioned by the sect of the Alogoi (about 190 A.D.) who assigned it to Cerinthus the Gnostic.
5. Later, Dionysius of Alexandria (250 A.D.) made a study of the language and style and asserted that it could never have been written by the author of the fourth Gospel.
6. Many have suggested that John the Presbyter wrote the book.
7. The Reformers rejected it as not being apostolic.
8. However, we can be sure that the ancient tradition is overwhelmingly in favor of John the Apostle as the Author.
9. The modern negative critical view admits several possibilities of authorship:
  - (a) If the Apostle John wrote the Gospel and Epistles of John, then John the Elder may have written the Apocalypse.
  - (b) If the Elder wrote the Gospel and Epistles, then the Apostle may have written *Revelation*.--Hunter, *Interpreting the N.T.*, 1900-1950, p. 98, suggests that he was a Christian prophet of Asia Minor, (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1951).
10. The basis for the modern critical view:
  - (a) The style and vocabulary of *Revelation* is very much like that of the Gospel and epistles.--The Greek is barbarous and ungrammatical (See Charles Volume I, Introductory Section).
  - (b) The ideas and thought of *Revelation* are different from those of the other Johannine writings.
11. Arguments for John the Apostle as author:
  - (a) Godet and Alford contend that the similarities of these writings far outweigh the differences.--Consider *Word*, (19:13); *Lamb* (5:6); *water of life* (22:1).
  - (b) Many of the differences can be explained by the fact that the book is of a different character apocalyptic.

- (c) The so-called defects of style and grammar may well have been the advanced age of John, and the content of what John desired to say.
  - (d) In addition, the claim of Rev. 1:9, that the author was exiled on Patmos, is referred to John the Apostle by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.
12. Because of the style and grammar of the book, some have suggested an early date such as 68, 69 A.D.—The pre-supposition is that by the time he wrote the Gospel he had learned better Greek.
  13. Others date it at the time of Trajan, 112 A.D.
  14. However, the traditional date places the writing of the book under Domitian (81-96 A.D.)
    - (a) Eusebius says that John was sent to Patmos during the latter part of Domitian's reign.
    - (b) Irenaeus also places the book at the same time as does Clement of Alexandria.
    - (c) It is also declared that John was 90 years of age at the time of the exile. (—Hunter, *Interpreting the N.T.*, p. 98.)
  15. These facts give reason for us to date the Apocalypse at 95-96 A.D.:
    - (a) It fits in with the decadence of the churches of that day.
    - (b) It fits Domitian's policy of punishment by exile.
    - (c) It fits the Domitianic type of persecution which grew out of the refusal of the Christians to engage in emperor worship.

#### IV. *Ways of Interpreting The Revelation:*

- (a) *Preterist*—past - fulfilled largely in destruction of Jerusalem and fall of Roman Empire.
- (b) *Continuous-Historical*—survey of history of the church.
- (c) *Spiritual*—symbolical, figurative; teaches triumph of good over wickedness.
- (d) *Futurist*—Largely predictive of future events - See Thiessen, *Introduction to the N.T.* pp. 323-327; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan - was a very capable Evangelical Scholar.

Also see the following Words on *Interpretation*: The only extant early commentary on The Revelation available in English was written by Victorinus, Bishop of Patavium, died 303 A.D. This commentary is found in volume seven of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, pp. 344-360.

Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of St. John, Studies in Introduction with a Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, New York, 1919. This is the finest commentary produced by American scholarship.

E. E. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticæ*; or, a Commentary on the *Apocalypse, Critical and Historical*, four volumes - 5th rev. edition, London, 1862. He has a 400 page history of the interpretation of The Revelation - indispensable!

William Lee, *The Revelation of St. John*. In The Anglican Commentary - edited by F. C. Cook. N.T., volume 4, New York, 1890. Exhaustive survey of the different interpretations of chapter beginning or a disputed passage beginning with the Fathers.

Frederick Bleek, *Lectures on The Apocalypse*, ed. by T. Hossbach, 1875. Contains excellent 50 page "History of the Use of the Apocalypse in The Church."

1. Introduction, 1:1-8
2. The Patmos vision of Christ, 1:9-20
3. Christ and the churches, chaps. 2, 3
  - (a) Letter to the church in Ephesus, 2:1-7
  - (b) Letter to the church in Smyrna, 2:8-11
  - (c) Letter to the church in Pergamos, 2:12-17
  - (d) Letter to the church in Thyatira, 2:18-29
  - (e) Letter to the church in Sardis, 3:1-6
  - (f) Letter to the church in Philadelphia, 3:7-13
  - (g) Letter to the church in Laodicea, 3:14-22
4. Christ and the Great Tribulation, chaps. 4-19
  - (a) The seven seals, 4:1-8:1
  - (b) The seven trumpets, 8:2-11:18
  - (c) The seven persons, 11:19-14:20
  - (d) The seven bowls of wrath, chaps. 15, 16
  - (e) The fall of Babylon, chaps. 17, 18
  - (f) The second coming of Christ, chp. 19.



5. Christ and the Millennium, chp. 20
  - (a) The binding of Satan, 20:1-3
  - (b) The millennial reign, 20:4-6
  - (c) The loosing and final doom of Satan, 20:7-10
  - (d) The Great White Throne Judgment, 20:11-15
6. Christ and the Eternal State, 21:1-22:5
  - (a) The new heaven and the new earth, 21:1,2
  - (b) The new conditions, 21:2-8
  - (c) The new Jerusalem, 21:9-22:5
7. Conclusion, 22:6-21.

#### V. *Peculiarities:*

1. This is the last book of the Bible—the consummation of God's revelation and of God's plan of the ages.
 

(a) <i>Genesis depicts:</i>	(b) <i>Revelation depicts:</i>
Paradise Lost	Paradise Regained
Creation of Heaven and earth	The new heaven and earth
Earthly Paradise of God	Heavenly paradise
Satan's appearance, sin's beginning	Satan punished, sin wiped out
The rise of Babylon	The doom of Babylon
Man estranged from God	Man re-united with God
2. This is one of the most difficult books of the Bible to interpret, and yet it was written to be understood (an unveiling, a revelation).
3. Its place among the apocalyptic books of the Bible
4. The special blessing promised to those who read and obey the book, 1:3.
5. The pattern of sevens which runs throughout the book.
6. The unique letters to the seven churches.

#### IV. *The Basic Pattern of the Revelation:*

1. The book is mainly made up of 4 series of sevens generally with various parenthetical sections interspersed.
  - (a) The seven churches
  - (b) The seven seals
  - (c) The seven trumpets
  - (d) The seven bowls of wrath
2. The pattern of the presentation of the last three sets of sevens is the same:

*Seals Trumpets Bowls of Wrath*

- (a) The first six units Ch.6 8:2-9:21 15:1-16:12
  - (b) The paranthesis Ch.6 10:1-11:14 16:13-16
  - (c) The seventh unit 8:1 11:15-18 16:17-21
3. The use of the O.T. in the Book of the Revelation.
- (a) Various reckonings of the number of O.T. references in Revelation have been given.
    - (1) Hunter, *Interpreting the N.T.* op. cit. p. 97, says the Apocalypse has over 500 references to the O.T.
    - (2) Swete is referred to by Toy, *Quotations in the N.T.* as saying that the 404 verses of the Apocalypse contain 278 O.T. references.
    - (3) Merrill Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957. See excellent chapter XI, The O.T. Background of Revelation, pp. 101-116.
    - (4) Westcott and Hort', *Greek New Testament* gives over 500 references and allusions to O.T. in The Revelation.
    - (5) Wm. Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, Baker Book House, 1952, chap. 6, pp. 57-73.

VII. *The Nature of the Book:*

- 1. A book of symbols, 1:1
  - (a) This is implied by the word "signified"—to show by signs (1:1).
  - (b) These visions and symbols are given, not to show how these things look, but to teach certain truths concerning the person or event depicted.--Not that we are to imagine Christ standing encircled by literal candlesticks, but we are to see the truth that He is in the midst of the churches.
  - (c) Ezekiel and Zechariah likewise contain this apocalyptic characteristic.
- 2. A book of prophecy, 1:3
  - (a) John is a prophet following the tradition of the O.T.
  - (b) We must go back to the O.T. prophetic books in order to fully understand the symbols of the book--Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Revelation.

Points of Contact in the Writings of Ezekiel, Daniel,  
 Zechariah, and Revelation  
 (E. Stands for Ezekiel; R. for Revelation; Z. for Zechariah;  
 D. for Daniel)

I was among the captives	E. 1:1 R. 1:9
The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel	E. 1:3 R. 1:10
A whirlwind out of the north	E. 1:4
Four winds strove upon the great sea	D. 7:2
A fire infolding itself, & c.	E. 1:4
Lamps of fire	R. 4:5
Four Living creatures	E. 1:5
Four great beasts	D. 7:3
Four beasts	R. 4:6
The likeness of a man	E. 1:5
The first beast was made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.	D. 7:4
The third beast had a face as a man.	R. 4:7
Every one had four faces and four wings	E. 1:6, 10:14, 2
The third beast had four wings and four heads	D. 7:6
The fourfold nature distributed severally to each individual.	R. 4:7
Four wings	E. 1:6
Eagle's wings, four wings	D. 7:4, 6
Six wings	R. 4:8
The appearance of lamps	E. 1:13
Seven lamps	R. 4:8

Wheels	E. 1:16, 10:9, 12, 13, 16, 19 D 7:9
The colour of the terrible crystal Glass like unto crystal	E. 1:22 R. 4:6
Like the noise of great waters	E. 1:24, 43:2 D 10:6 R. 1:15
A throne	E. 1:26, 10:1 D. 7:9 R. 4:2, 3
The colour of amber, as the appearance of fire Like the beryl	E. 1:27, 8:2 D. 10:6 E. 10:9 R. 1:14-16 10:1
The bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain A rainbow	E. 1:28 R. 4:3, 10:1
I fell upon my face	E. 1:28, 3:23 44:4 D. 8:17 R. 1:17
Stand upon thy feet	E. 2:1, 3:24 D. 10:11 R. 1:17
A roll of a book A flying roll A little book	E. 2:9 Z. 5:1 R. 10:2, 8-10
Eat this roll	E. 3:1 R. 10:9

The spirit took me up	E. 3:12, 8:3, 19:1, 24, 37:1, 43:5
I was in the spirit	R. 1:10
A man clothed with linen	E. 9:3, 11, 44:17 D. 10:5, 12:6, 7 Z. 3:3-5 R. 15:6, 19:8, 14
A mark upon the foreheads	E. 9:4 R. 7:3
Come not near any one whom is the mark	E. 9:6 R. 9:4
Scatter the coals of fire over the city	E. 10:2 R. 8:5
Full of eyes	E. 10:12 R. 4:8
The living creature	E. 10:15, 20
Four living creatures	E. 1:5 D. 7:3 R. 4:6
The glory of the Lord stood upon the mountain	E. 11:23 Z. 14:4
The day of the Lord	E. 13:5, 30:3 Z. 14:1 R. 6:17, 16:14
Written in the writing of the house of Israel	E. 13:9 R. 20:12

The vine-tree	E. 15:2, 6, 17:6-9 19:10-14 R. 14:18, 19
The whore	E. 16:15-34, 23:1-21 Z. 5:7, 8 R. 17:1-6
Punishment of the whore	E. 16:35-43, 23:22-49 R. 17:16
A goodly cedar	E. 17:3, 22-24, 31:3-18 D. 4:10-12
Prophecy against the forest	E. 20:46-48 Z. 11:1, 2
Bring into the wilderness	E. 20:35 R. 12:6, 14
Mine holy mountain	E. 20:40 Z. 8:3
The sword	E. 21:3-5, 9-20, 28, 30:4, 24, 32:10 Z. 13:7 R. 1:16, 19:15
I will make the pile for fire great	E. 24:9-13
The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever	R. 14:11
A merchant of the people	E. 27:3, 33, 28:5 R. 18:3

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Fine linen, blue and purple	E. 27:7, 16 R. 18:12, 16
Ivory	E. 27:6, 15 R. 18:12
Precious stones and gold	E. 27:22, 28:13 Z. 9:3 R. 18:12, 16
Persons of men	E. 27:13 R. 18:13
Spices	E. 27:19, 22 R. 18:13
Horses	E. 27:14 R. 18:13
Lambs and rams and goats	E. 27:21 R. 18:13
They shall fall into the midst of the seas	E. 27:27, 34 Z. 9:4 R. 18:2, 21
They shall cry bitterly	E. 27:30 R. 18:9, 11, 15, 19
Thine heart is lifted up	E. 28:2, 17 D. 4:30 R. 18:7
There shall be no more any grieving thorn	E. 28:24 R. 21:4
The horn of Israel to bud	E. 29:21 D. 8:9, 10 Z. 6:12 R. 22:16

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I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean	E. 36:25 Z. 13:1 R. 1:5, 7:13, 14
The stony heart	E. 36:26 Z. 7:12
The breath came into them	E. 37:10 R. 11:11
They shall be my people and I will be their God	E. 37:23, 27 Z. 8:8 R. 21:3
My tabernacle shall be with them	E. 37:26, 27, 28 Z. 8:3 R. 21:3
Gog, the land of Magog	E. 38:2, 3, 39:1 R. 20:8, 9
I will bring thee forth and all thine army	E. 38:4, 9, 16 R. 16:14, 20:8
A great shaking	E. 38:19 Z. 14:4 R. 16:18
Great hailstones	E. 38:22 R. 16:21
Fire and brimstone	E. 38:22 R. 20:9, 10
I will give thee unto the ravenous birds	E. 39:4, 17-22



	R. 19:17, 18, 21
A very high mountain	E. 40:2, 43:12 Z. 8:3 R. 21:10
A city	E. 40:2 R. 21:10
Like the appearance of brass	E. 40:2, 1:7 D. 10:6 R. 1:15
A line of flax and a measuring reed	E. 40:3 Z. 2:1 R. 11:1, 21:15
The outward court	E. 40:17 R. 11:2
Pillars	E. 40:49 R. 3:12
They shall put on other garments	E. 44:17 Z. 3:4, 5 R. 7:13, 14, 19:8
He measured it by the four sides	E. 42:20 R. 21:16
The earth shined with His glory	E. 43:2, X:4 R. 18:1
I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever	E. 43:7, 9 R. 21:3
Most holy	E. 43:12, 48:14

	Z. 8:3, 14:20, 21 R. 21:2, 27, 22:3, 14, 15
They shall enter into my sanctuary	E. 44:16 R. 21:22, 24, 22:3, 4
The gate shall not be shut until the evening	E. 46:2
The gates of it shall not be shut at all by days for there is no night there	R. 21:25
The gate	E. 46:1, 9 R. 22:14
Four corners	E. 46:21-23, 48:16, 17
Four-square	R. 21:16
Waters issued out of the house	E. 47:1-5
A fountain opened	Z. 13:1, 14:8
Water of life	R. 22:1, 17
Very many trees	E. 47:7, 12
The tree of life	R. 22:2
Go into the sea	E. 47:8 Z. 14:8
The waters shall be healed	E. 47:8, 9 Z. 14:10 R. 22:2
On either side of the river	E. 47:12 R. 22:2
New fruit according to his months	E. 47:12 R. 22:2
The fruit for meat	E. 47:12 R. 22:2

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The leaf for medicine	E. 47:12 R. 22:2
Three gates	E. 48:31-34 R. 21:13
The name of the city shall be "The Lord is there"	E. 48:35 Z. 2:10 R. 21:3, 22:3

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*Special Study*The Status of the Book of Revelation in the  
Western and Eastern Churches

## OUTLINE

## INTRODUCTION:

The relationship of Early Christian Chiliasm (The belief in Christ's return to earth to reign during the millennium) (Montanism, etc.) and the general attitude toward the Apocalypse in Asia Minor.

## SECTION ONE:

The General attitude in the West in about the year A.D. 200  
The Muratorian Canon  
Tertullian  
The Alogoi  
Hippolytus

## SECTION TWO:

The General attitude in the East during the period of Origen  
Clement of Alexandria  
Origen  
Dionysius

## SECTION THREE:

Development of General attitude within the period of the early church fathers.  
The East Beyond Alexandria  
Alexandria  
The West in General

## CONCLUSION:

Conclusions concerning the attitude of the Church both East and West concerning the Apocalypse.

## INTRODUCTION

This essay is an elementary and cursory effort to trace what the early church Fathers have said concerning the status of the Book of Revelation. Many imperative issues can only be mentioned and passed over, because of the limited extent of this work.

We shall establish the general attitude of both the Eastern and Western Church. Inseparably involved in such a study is the history and development of the canon of the New Testament, the nature, function, and extent of authority involved in extra-biblical tradition.

Our purpose shall be confined to the tracing of the first explicit witness to the Apostolic origin and authoritative status through the number of voices raised in criticism of the tradition of the Apostolic origin of the Apocalypse and beyond to the more universal consensus.

What was the attitude of the early Church toward the Apocalypse? In order to give both the positive and negative positions we shall examine many of the positions extant only in Eusebius the historian and the titanic supply of Early (90-323 A.D.) Literature.

The enthusiasm latent in early Chiliasm is a vital aspect in our gaining a credible perspective to examine specific statements concerning the place of the Apocalypse in the ancient church.

I have no concern to give even a comprehensive survey of the history of chiliasm, but only to view it as it contributes to an understanding of the history of the canonical regard for the Apocalypse of John.

In the epistles of Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna there is nothing that suggests the doctrine of Chiliasm. Nevertheless, in I Clement we read<sup>1</sup> of a sudden coming of the Lord to judgment.

It is a striking fact that the earliest writer to use the Apocalypse with normative regard is also the first Christian Chiliasm (Papias).<sup>2</sup> It is also important to note that it is in Asia Minor where we note (to this I shall speak next) nearly all of the evidence for a use of and high regard for our work in the

first half of the second century. It was in Asia Minor where this doctrine had taken its deepest roots. Here, there was a general interest in apocalyptic and eschatological literature.

Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, volume III, chp. 3a vs. 3) and Irenaeus (*adv. Heresys* 5, 33, 4) provides most of our extant information concerning Papias. Though the description of Eusebius is not adequate to warrant the conclusion that Papias was completely absorbed in Chiliasm, it is the only extant information we have that Papias' millennial teaching was based on a misunderstanding of the message of John's Apocalypse. Yet, it points to his attitude toward the document under discussion.

Justin Martyr<sup>3</sup> also appeals to the apocalypse to support his belief in the millennium. It is very apparent that he was strongly influenced not only by the prophetic passages which he quotes from the Old Testament, but also by his regard for the Apocalypse. It is not likely that in his early Christian years in Asia Minor Justin came under the influence of the bishop of Hierapolis who at that time was at the peak of his influence?

In as much as Papias and Justin were the only authors of whom it can be safely stated that they were Chiliasts, and the eschatological expressions of many others exclude the specific connotation of the assertion that Chiliasm was an essential aspect of the faith of early Christianity needs revision. Chiliastic belief is usually accompanied by a high regard for the Apocalypse, and indeed it may well have been a factor which tended to make the work popular.

We must raise a more fundamental question concerning its general acceptance as authoritative writing—what was the real ground for its early use?

Did Papias and Justin accept its testimony because they with Christians generally regarded all prophetic utterances as divine and canonical, or was apostolic origin the prime criterion?

Though the Apostolic office held great influence in the Church there were other influences, and among these the Christian prophets<sup>4</sup> held a very high place of significance.

Especially interesting for our present discussion of the comparative authority of the Apostles and the Christian Prophets before the rise of Montanism is the witness of the Didache.<sup>5</sup> This volume furnishes irrefutable argument in support of the view that in the early Church Prophets were regarded as

spokesmen of The Spirit in a way the Apostles were not, and their messages were received on a par with the Old Testament. This is also the basic attitude in the other volumes in the Apostolic Fathers.

From the perspective of the preceding testimony we will examine the testimony of those writers whom we have found either to accept or reject the Apocalypse as an authority. Space forbids that we compare other prophetic works, such as the Shepherd of Hermas, with the Apocalypse of John. The Shepherd was also received in the Church as divine, but this paper is only concerned with pointing out the general attitude toward the Apocalypse of John.

In Asia and Gaul a new prophecy arose in the form of Montanism.<sup>6</sup> It is during this period that we note an intensification of attack upon the authority of the Johannine prophecy.

One of the difficulties facing the investigator of Montanism is that of distinguishing the source, which describe the movement in its original form from those which reflect later modification of it. In my study I have become convinced of the vital place the rise of Montanism played in the negative attitude toward the Apocalypse of John. This could become a thesis, but I will only mention it in passing.

According to the most credible data it was about the year 156 A.D. when Montanus first came forward with his prophetic message at Ardabau in Phrygia. The leader was soon joined by the prophetesses Priscilla and Maximilla. The center of the movement was soon changed to Pepuza and Tymion, two small Phrygian villages, but it spread rapidly throughout Asia Minor. There is extant a more complete body of sources concerning its movement into the West, but this was in a later period. The Montanists were finally driven out and excommunicated. It is possible that the Montanist use of the Apocalypse led some to reject the book altogether and ascribe it to Cerinthus.

From the Montanists and their certain use and acceptance of the Apocalypse we turn to examine the difficult question of whether there was a second century group in Asia Minor which rejected the work under investigation. The Alogoi<sup>7</sup> of Asia Minor are very difficult to examine, but we know enough for our present study.

Irenaeus mentions a group who denies both the Gospel and the book of the prophetic spirit, but he does identify them as the Alogoi. There is no evidence that the western Alogoi were



dependent for their criticism of the writings of John upon a second century source from Asia Minor.

The indirect reference in Irenaeus to certain anti-montanists is all of the specific details we have. A study of the relevant literature shows the diversity of opinion concerning this matter, but not even Zahn, Harnack, nor Bousset were certain in the efforts to make identification of Irenaeus' statement as having reference to Alogoi of Asia Minor.

Since Irenaeus is an important link between the Churches of Asia Minor and those of Gaul we shall conclude this elementary introduction by pointing out Irenaeus's positive attitude toward the Apocalypse.

Eusebius tells us of the positive attitude of both Melito of Sardes and Apollonius. Apollonius quotes the Apocalypse readily.

The Churches of Lyon and Vienne were much interested in the rise of Montanism in Asia Minor, and perhaps the earliest extant reference to this movement is contained in a letter sent by the brethren of these Churches to the Roman bishop, Eleutheros, by the hand of Irenaeus, who was then presbyter of Lyon. At the same time (ca. 177) a letter was sent to the Churches of Phrygia and Asia.<sup>8</sup> The high regard which these churches had for the Apocalypse is clearly shown in the long letter to the Churches in Phrygia and Asia concerning the severe persecution they had suffered under Marcus Aurelius. Besides a number of cases of the use of the language of this writing, Revelation 22:11 is the only direct quotation in the whole letter. And it is particularly noteworthy that here for the first time the Apocalypse is cited as a book of Scripture, the formula "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" being used.<sup>9</sup> As we have already stated Irenaeus was an important link between Asia Minor and Gaul, but now we turn to the situation in Rome and Carthage.

Between these two western Churches, there was fought out a battle of great significance for the future of the status of the Apocalypse. In the West Tertullian, Gaius, and Hippolytus are representative of different tendencies and attitudes. Before discussing the testimony of these prominent scholars it is necessary to note the important witness of an anonymous fragment named after its discoverer, the Canon Muratori.

SECTION ONE: General Attitude in the  
West Circa Two Hundred A.D.

The fragment, Canon Muratori, purports to present a list of canonical books received in the Catholic Church through the world, and also calls attentions to certain books which were not given canonical status. The scholarly concensus concerning this document is that it originated in the West. The limits for the date of its origin are determined by its statement that Hermas wrote "very recently in our times,"<sup>10</sup> and further identification of this with the times of Pius, bishop of Rome. This allows a choice in the period between 160 and 2???. Its attitude toward Montanism, which it regards as heretical, hardly allows a date much before the end of the century. The problem of dating the fragment is intensified by our ignorance as to whether the document was originally Latin or Greek. Wescott gives us the Latin text in his *On the Canon of The New Testament*. Without a word of comment or trace of a defense against expressions of hostility to the Apocalypse of John the author of the fragment states that the book is received. The author takes note of the opposition to the Apocalypse of Peter. It is an important factor that the author was not opposed to apocalyptic in general or he would have rejected the Apocalypse of John as he did the Apocalypse of Peter. Here we must note that, at least as far as the fragment was concerned the claim to apostolic origin was not an adequate defense nor reason for accepting documents as canonical. The Shepherd of Hermas was also rejected by the author of the fragment.

The whole attitude that at one time the Church possessed a canon of Apocalypses, which were accepted apart from any question as to their authorship and time of their origin is not grounded in fact, and particular the fragment under consideration goes against this position.

The Montanism of the West is not simply a later reproduction of the New Prophecy of Asia Minor. It made its way to Rome and Africa apparently after it became schismatic in the East. The modification of its belief and action enabled Montanism to enter into the Roman Church. Undoubtedly, the enthusiasm and rigorism as characteristics of western Montanism is due in no small measure to the fact that its history for two decades ran parallel with and often inseparable from the life of Tertullian.

In the writings which follow these stirring times Tertullian<sup>11</sup> has come out on the side of the Montanist, but as a Montanist trying to reform the Church from within.

We see accordingly that the Montanist prophecy confirmed Tertullian in his Chiliasm, and gave him the assurance that the coming of the Lord was imminent. Gaius' criticism of the Apocalypse seems to be based upon Montanist exegesis of it.<sup>12</sup> In Tertullian's treatise "On Modesty"<sup>13</sup> he discusses in chapter 12 to 19 the teaching of the Apostolic instrument on adultery, and in the final chapter refutes objections from the Apocalypse of John. The normative use of the work is apparent from the method of utilization. Tertullian never uses extra biblical Apocalypse as normative.

We may conclude that Tertullian agrees essentially with Irenaeus and the Canon Muratori with regard to the canonical significance of the Apocalypse.

We must now take into consideration the opposition to the Apocalypse. Gaius and the Alogoi were as was mentioned in the introduction, the brilliant opponents of the Apocalypse of John in the West during the second century A.D.

It was while Zephyrinus (199-217) was bishop of Rome that Gaius, a member of the Church of Rome, wrote a dialogue which recorded the arguments he had used in a dispute with a certain leader of the Montanists named Proclus.<sup>14</sup> This work was at the disposal of Eusebius, for he quotes from it more than once. Dionysius of Alexandria was apparently excerpting it in his criticism of the Apocalypse Hippolytus<sup>15</sup> (*kephaleŕa kata Gaion*) and the extant source of the fragments (Dionysius Bar Salibi) agree in reporting that these opponents of the Apocalypse ascribed it to Cerinthus, and there can be no doubt that the dogmatic motive back of this act was hostility to Montanism.

Gaius was also critical of the Gospel of John, but our meager extant sources do not permit use to examine the details of his criticism of the Gospel or the Apocalypse. The main thrust of Gaius' criticism centers around the tension between the Eschatology of the Synoptics and Paul (these were his criterion) and the specific statement in the Apocalypse concerning the details of the Judgment and Coming of Christ.

The details of our knowledge with regard to the criticism of the Alogoi rest ultimately on the single work of Gaius and Hippolytus' (of Rome) answer to it is confirmed in that all these sources reveal the work of a critic who is moved by dogmatic motives.

All of these sources attribute the Apocalypse to Cerinthus, a docetic Gnostic. None of these sources point out the Jewish elements in the Gnostic heresey of Cerinthus; therefore it would be very difficult for anyone to account for his writing the Apocalypse.

In the Alogoi we have the bold and unscrupulous attempt of certain extreme opponents of the Montanists to discredit certain writings of which the Montanists were particularly fond, even though these writings had long enjoyed a place of honor among the authoritative writings which were, at least, as early as the time of Irenaeus spoken of and used in normative manner.

The last witness to be mentioned concerning Western attitude toward the Apocalypse will be Hippolytus of Rome. His dependence upon Irenaeus is unmistakable, but he was not a mere repeater of another's learning. The contact Hippolytus makes with the Apocalypse is again the indirect attack upon Montanism.

His use of and regard for the Apocalypse are easily discovered from his exegetical treatise *On Christ and Anti-Christ* and *Commentary on Daniel*. Hippolytus, when he was still a presbyter in the Church at Rome, took a very active part in the anti-Montanist struggle of the West.

We may conclude that as an exegete, apologist, and polemicist the great Hippolytus took his stand upon the canonical Scriptures among which, the Apocalypse was numbered.

## SECTION TWO: The General Attitude in the East During the Period of Origen

In Alexandria and its area of influence, the Apocalypse experienced a somewhat different fortune. As early as the first decades of the third century its canonic position was very secure, it is equally clear, on the other hand, that the Alexandrian theology ultimately was a very weighty factor in lessening the regard for it in certain parts of the Church. The most important witness is Clement of Alexandria.

In a narrative recorded by Eusebius in a section devoted to the events of the reign of Trajan, Clement relates that after the death of the tyrant (Domitian), the apostle John as a very aged man passed from the island of Patmos to Ephesus; and this reference to his forced residence on Patmos suggests that

he believed that the visions of the Apocalypse were received at this time.<sup>16</sup> That Clement and the Church at Alexandria accepted the Apocalypse as Scripture is proved in a passage where he relates that certain women appealed to its description of the materials of the heavenly city in defense of their taste for precious stones, and he declares that they failed to understand the symbolism of the Scriptures.<sup>17</sup>

This survey of the evidence shows that circa 200 A.D. in Alexandria as in Rome and Carthage the Apocalypse was accepted as canonic. But this conclusion is somewhat premature, because Clement also utilizes the Epistle of Barnabas and the Apocalypse of Peter. The term *paradosis* applies to the witness of the Lord in the testimonies of the gospels, but also to the latter ecclesiastical explications of them.

The age of the Apostles is sharply separated from the succeeding period. The teaching of the Lord begins with Augustus - the preaching of His apostles at least to the end of Paul's ministry is completed under Nero. In contrast to this the heresiarchs like Basilides can trace their teaching only as far back as about the time of Hadrian.<sup>18</sup> - Clement does call the *Didache* - Scripture, but this may merely point out his ambiguous language; because he knows of only four canonical gospels but uses other records of the life of Christ. Even though Clement's statements are less decisive than the western fathers, this can be accounted for by the looseness of his language concerning apostolic and post-apostolic tradition. If this general attitude is not accepted, then the extant literature of Clement plainly contradicts itself on the matter under consideration.

The successor of Clement as head of the catechetical school at Alexandria will be the next consideration. Origen<sup>19</sup> (c. 185-254) literary activity extended over most of the first half of the third century.

Origen perpetrates the spiritualizing method of the school at Alexandria, but his testimony to the Canonic authority of the Apocalypse is distinguished both by the frequency of his appeal and the explicitness of his classification. That the Apocalypse had a secure place among the New Testament writings (as far as Origen is concerned) is confirmed by a passage preserved by Eusebius giving Origen's explicit expressions on the canon.<sup>20</sup> (Our paper is too elementary and cursory to discuss the very apparent differences in Origen's private opinion and that which he published in his works generally concerning the Apocalypse.)

This tension in no way points to an uncertain status for the Apocalypse at this time, because Origen uses it as normative and believes John to be a prophet.

Although certain books are still spoken of as disputed, the testimony of Origen shows that the Church was conscious of having received the New Testament from the tradition of the preceding generation.

Origen's eschatological viewpoint and his attitude toward Chiliasm are important for a proper evaluation of his testimony concerning the canonical status of the Apocalypse and the last witness (Dionysius) in this section of the paper.

Origen's allegorical hermeneutics plays an important part in his understanding of the Apocalypse. His viewpoint could be nothing but offensive to many of his contemporaries. His utter lack of sympathy with the Chiliastic expectations which were based primarily upon the Apocalypse, gives his unequivocal testimony to the canonical status of the Apocalypse.

The age of Origen was a time of tensions and persecutions under the policy of the Roman emperors and Egypt received its share of hostility.

Eusebius<sup>21</sup> relates how the opponents of Origen's hermeneutics found a spokesman in an Egyptian bishop, Nepos of Arisinae. In a work entitled, *Refutation of the Allegorists* Nepos defends the literal exegesis of the Apocalypse against that of Origen.

Dionysius,<sup>22</sup> bishop of Alexandria, who had been a pupil of Origen, settled this tension by a visit to the district where the difficulty was most intense and showed how the literalistic exegesis was untenable, and thus through his efforts restored peace.

The discussion is somewhat nubilous, but Dionysius has a pious regard for the work. Dionysius provides the framework of the critical analysis of the difference between the language, character, etc., of the Gospel and the Apocalypse. Dionysius did not believe John of tradition wrote the work, but he did not commit himself to another John as author.

There can be no doubt that Dionysius was first of all interested in destroying the influence of this writing which had given consolation to the Chiliasts.

He insists that the writer was holy, inspired, saw a revelation, etc., but at the same time his whole aim was to weaken the regard for it. In other words, no matter how much he affirms

that his remarks have nothing to do with the canonicity of the Apocalypse, he shows that this is his first concern. Origen's canon included the Apocalypse, and his student Dionysius realized that if his opinion that the Apocalypse was less worthy of respect was to gain ground effectively against the peculiar love for it on the part of the Chiliasts, its position in the Canon would have to be shaken. How successful he was remains to be considered in the next section.

### SECTION THREE: Development of the General Attitude Within the Patristic Period

In this concluding section I shall trace in a summary manner the history of the acceptance or rejection of the Apocalypse as having canonical status until circa the end of the fourth century, when the influence and authority of Athanasius in the east, and Augustine and the African councils in the west, the development of the canon came to a conclusion in the Catholic Church.

The fact that Eusebius championed the basic criticism of Dionysius caused certain eastern Churches to sustain their criticism concerning the Apocalypse.

Methodius<sup>23</sup> was an opponent of Origen's theology. His frequent use of it as Scripture shows that the criticism of Dionysius and Origen had made no impression upon him. The criticism of Dionysius therefore failed to take root in Asia Minor, and as we shall see in Alexandria, but we must look to Palestine as the soil where it first bore fruit.

Caesarea, in Palestine, had stood under the sway of the Origenist Theology. Here Eusebius came under the spell of this Theology. Of all the men who were in a position to carry to an effective conclusion the criticism which Dionysius had begun, none enjoyed greater advantage than Eusebius. Emperor Constantine commissioned him to prepare fifty Bibles for the Church. This points to the general esteem the Church had for Eusebius. It is also vital that we recall his place at Nicea.

The prominence which Eusebius gives the criticism of Dionysius upon the Apocalypse by devoting to it a whole chapter in his *Ecclesiastical History* is motivated by more than historical interest. Eusebius is strongly inclined to the view of Dionysius that the Apostle John did not write the Apocalypse and

believes that the double mention of John by Papias makes up in part for the deficiency in historical foundation under which this hypothesis suffers.

We have already mentioned Eusebius' three categories of literature recognized, disputed, and heretical. It is interesting to note that he lists the Apocalypse under both Recognized and Spurious.<sup>24</sup> Now this hesitating attitude can only mean that Eusebius was at odds with the Church. Personally he is quite ready to classify it with spurious works, but in deference to its acceptance as canonic not only in the west, but also by the leading teachers of the east, including Origen, he places it among the undisputed books. Although it may not be overlooked that Eusebius does not fail to mention testimonies to the use of the Apocalypse as authoritative.

It is particularly in Cappadocia of Asia Minor and in Syria that in the course of the fourth century, we meet with expressions of a hesitating or wholly negative attitude toward the Apocalypse. Two of the Cappadocian theologians, Gregory of Nazianzum (c. 389) and Amphilocius of Iconium (after 394), in giving lists of the New Testament books do not list the Apocalypse.<sup>25</sup> These witnesses make it apparent that among the influential theologians of Cappadocia the canonical position of the Apocalypse was insecure.

Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 386) held certain catechetical discourses as early as the middle of the century in Jerusalem, in the course of which he gave a list of the books of the Old and New Testaments which were read in the Churches should not be read in private either.<sup>26</sup> He is no doubt following Dionysius and Origen in their attitudes toward the Apocalypse.

Already in the second century the Apocalypse was accepted as an authoritative book in the Church at Antioch, but at the end of the fourth century it was evidently absent from the Bible of this Church. We must notice that in Antioch the Apocalypse was accepted (c 2nd century), because Theophilus uses testimonies from it in his writings.<sup>27</sup>

How are we to evaluate this rejection of the Apocalypse as a New Testament book in these eastern Churches? There are so many factors involved which could never be satisfactorily answered we can but contrast the eastern attitude with the Western acceptance of the Apocalypse.

There was no more commanding figure in the Egyptian (Alexandrian) Church during the fourth century than Athanasius,



who was bishop of Alexandria from 329 until his death in 373. In one of his annual Paschal Letters Athanasius included a list of the writings of the divine Scripture.<sup>28</sup> In distinction from Eusebius, Athanasius no longer speaks of anti legomena - there are only canonical books and he has no hesitation in listing the Apocalypse with the other New Testament writings. Sharply distinguished from these canonical books are those which were appointed by the fathers to be read for instruction. This unhesitating acceptance of the canonicity of the Apocalypse is characteristic of the Alexandrian Church, also in its later history.

After Hippolytus' refutation of Gaius there is no clear evidence of doubt as to either the Apostolicity or the authority of the Apocalypse. This seems to be the general attitude in the West, at least from the fourth century.

In the course of the fourth century the same high regard for the Apocalypse continues. With the reign of Constantine the Church entered upon a new period of development being no longer disturbed by persecutions.

Jerome (c. 419) was acquainted with doubts expressed with regard to the canonicity of the Apocalypse in the east, but is convinced that it has canonical and ecclesiastical authority. Jerome's translation of the Bible makes it apparent what his general attitude toward the canon was, because he included our present list including the Apocalypse.

Augustine (d.c. 430) cites the Apocalypse often in his *City of God*. In a passage in his work on *Christian Doctrine* he gives a list of the works in our present canon. The conformation of the Canon of the rest of the Church to that of Athanasius and Augustine was only a matter of time.

## CONCLUSION

Conclusions concerning the attitude of the Church both East and West concerning the Apocalypse.

Our main concerns have been to point out some of the positive and negative attitudes towards the Apocalypse and the circumstances under which the attitudes arose.

The factor of the nature of the Apostolic, Prophetic Offices are vital for understanding Montanism and Chiliastic thought in general.

It is also imperative to note how the above influences affected the attitude of various national Churches. The political forces involved in persecution gave impetus to the use of the Apocalypse and the distorted use created much of the negative thought. Since it is impossible to discover empirically the process of canonization we can only compare attitudes and the national Churches and their major theological emphasis.

We also noted that general apocalyptic<sup>29</sup> was not catagorically compared with the biblical apocalypse.

But with all our historical investigation we cannot say that the development of the N.T. Canon and the history of the Apocalypse as a member of it, has been fully explained. For we cannot but recognize that behind and through this historical process there was a guidance of the Holy Spirit.

*Note:* The use of The Book of Revelation in the Apostolic Fathers. See *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers: A Committee of Oxford Society of Historical Theology*, Oxford Press, 1905. This book discusses the text of *Revelation*:

- 1:7, 13 - p. 16
- 7:14 - p. 110
- 21:5 - p. 16
- 22:10 - p. 17
- 22:12 - p. 17, 58

A brief, broad outline might be helpful. Dr. Merrill Tenney has provided such an outline in his *Interpreting Revelation*.

- The Prologue: (1:1-8)
- Vision I: The Seven Churches of Asia (1:9-3:22)
- Vision II: The Process of World Judgment (4:1-16:21)
- Vision III: The Climax of Judgment (17:1-21:8)
- Vision IV: The Eternal City (21:9-22:5)
- Epilogue (22:6-21)

This framework was used in dividing our more extended outline into four sections in order to make study easier by dealing with a broad section at a time.

## FOOTNOTES

1. See Johannes Quasten's *Patrology*, Vol. I, The Beginnings of Patristic Literature, Newman Press: Westminster, Maryland, 1950, pp. 84-89-152-219-289-312; Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. III, Loeb Classics, Harvard University Press.

2. Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Apocalypse in The Ancient*, Oosterbaan, and Le Cointre Goes (Holland) 1929. This is the finest statement in English on this problem.

3. See Theron's, *Evidence of Tradition*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan, p. 89; Wescott's, *On the Canon of the New Testament* (Macmillan Co.: New York, 1889); F. W. Grosheide ed., *Some Early Lists of the Books of The New Testament* (Brill's: Leiden, 1948) pp. 20-24; *The Interpreter's Bible*, Volume 12 (Abingdon Press, pp. 351-354).

4. See for a good basic discussion H. A. Guy's *New Testament Prophecy*, Epworth Press: London, 1947; pp. 90-118.

5. See K. Lakes, *Apostolic Fathers*, Volume I, Loeb Classics, Harvard University Press.

6. For a good survey of this movement and how it is related to our problem see Knox's, *Enthusiasm* (Oxford University Press, 1950) pp. 25-49; and *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 15, article Montanism, pp. 750-751, 1957 edition.

7. For an excellent survey of the Alogoi and bibliographical literature see F. Cayre's, *Manuel of Patrology*, Vol. I Society of St. John the Evangelist, Desclée and Co., Paris, and Rome, pp. 106 and 132f., 1927.

8. This information is found in *Eusebius*, Vol. V, chp. 8:4, *ibid*.

9. *Ibid*. Vol. I:58.

10. Johannes Quasten's, *Patrology*, Vol. II, The Ante Nicene Literature After Irenaeus (Newman Press: Westminster, Maryland, 1950) p. 208.

11. For this material see, *Ante-Nicene Father's*, Vols. III and IV - gives English translation of writings of Tertullian. In all this paper I shall merely give sources in which I did research. The essay is so short that I do not give many quotations because that would take up too much of the paper.

12. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III 28:2 (Loeb series: Harvard University Press).

13. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. III - Tertullian's "Against Proxean."

14. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II 25:6f; VI 20 (Loeb series, Harvard University Press).

15. See Quasten's, *Patrology*, Vol. II, p. 197.

16. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III 23:5f Loeb series, Harvard University Press.

17. See *Anti-Nicene Fathers* for Clement's statement - II 12, 119.

18. *Ibid*. *Stromata* VII 17, 106.

19. An adequate statement on Origen concerning our problem would require a volume, but the essence of the relation of his concept of tradition and the place the Apocalypse plays in this tradition see the *Patrologies of Quasten and Cayre* (directly mentioned) Hanson's,

*Origen's Doctrine of Tradition*, S.P.C.K., London, 1954; Danielou's *Origen*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1955.

20. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* VI, 25, where he states that the New Testament books were divided into recognized and the disputed, and the Apocalypse is listed in the former group.

21. *Eusebius* VII 24:1f.

22. The information here given is found in *Eusebius, ibid.* 24:6f. As far as I know this discussion is only preserved in *Eusebius*.

23. H. E. W. Turner's, *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (Mowbray's: London, 1954) pp. 131, 143, 444, 450.

24. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* III, 25:2ff.

25. See Westcott's *History*, *op. cit.*

26. *Ibid.*, and *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, extant works of Cyril of Jerusalem.

27. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV, 24.

28. See the *Patrologies of Qausten and Cayre*, *op. cit.* for extant materials of Athanasius' Paschal Letter.

29. See H. H. Rowley's, *The Relevance of the Apocalyptic* (Lutterworth Press, 1955 reprint - for the literature involved.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

Outline Follows the Division of Nestle's Greek Test—basically from Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (pp. 37-38)

(Two Basic Divisions 1:9 - 11:14, and 12:1 - 22:5.)

### I. Prologue. Chp. 1:1-3

1. The writer's greeting to the Churches of Asia. vs. 4-8.

### II. Seven Churches of Asia

- 2-9. Messages to the Angeles of the Seven Churches. 2:1—3:22.

### III. Process of World Judgment

10. Vision of the Throne in Heaven. 4:1-11.
11. The Sealed Book and the Lamb. 5:1-14.
12. Opening of the first six Seals. 6:1-17.
13. Sealing of the 144,000 from the Tribes of Israel. 7:1-8.
14. Triumph of the Innumerable Multitude. 7:9-17.
15. Opening of the seventh Seal; the half hour's silence in Heaven; the first four Trumpet-blasts. 8:1-13.
16. The fifth Trumpet-blast, or first Woe. 9:1-12.
17. The sixth Trumpet-blast, or second Woe. 9:13-21.
18. Preparations for the seventh Trumpet-blast: the vision of the Angel with the open booklet. 10:1-11.
19. Further preparations; measuring the Temple; the testimony of Many Witnesses. 11:1-14.
20. The seventh Trumpet-blast, or third Woe. 11:15-19.
21. The Woman with child, and the Great blood-red Dragon. 12:1-17(18).
22. The Wild Beast from the Sea. 13:1-10.
23. The Wild Beast from the Earth. 13:11-18.
24. Vision of the 144,000 on Mount Zion. 14:1-5 (c.f. 7:1-8).

34 THE SEER, THE SAVIOUR, AND THE SAVED

- 25. Three angelic proclamations, and a Voice from Heaven. 14:6-13.
- 26. Vision of the Harvest and the Vintage of the Earth. 14:14-20.
- 27. Preparation for the last Seven Plagues. 15:1-8.
- 28. Pouring out of the Seven Bowls. 16:1-21.

IV. Climax of Judgment

- 29. Vision of Babylon seated on the Beast. 17:1-8.
- 30. Interpretation of the Vision of Babylon and the Beast. 17:9-18.
- 31. Doom of Babylon. 18:1-24.
- 32. Triumph in Heaven; two Hallelujah Psalms; an angelic message. 19:1-10.
- 33. Vision of the Crowned Warrior. 19:11-16.
- 34. Overthrow and end of the Beast and the False Prophet. 19:17-21.
- 35. The Thousand Years of Satan's captivity and the Martyr's Reign. 20:1-6.
- 36. After the Thousand Years: release of Satan; war of Gog and Magog. 20:7-10.
- 37. Vision of the General Resurrection and the Last Judgment. 20:11-15.
- 38. Vision of a New Heaven and a New Earth. 21:1-8.
- 39. Vision of the New Jerusalem. 21:9-27.
- 40. Epilogue: Last words of the Angel, the Seer, and the Lord. 22:1-21.
- 41. Final Benediction.

## SECTION 1

### Text 1:1-3

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bare witness of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

### Initial Questions 1:1-3

1. What does the word *revelation* mean to you?
2. Was Jesus the source or the object (or both) of the *revelation* mentioned in vs. 1?
3. Does God's knowledge of future events *cause* them to happen?
4. What does the word *signified* mean in vs. 1?
5. How many different Johns are mentioned in the New Testament and which one is - "his servant John" in vs. 1?
6. What does a *witness* do?
7. Is the testimony mentioned in vs. 2 about Jesus, or is it his testimony?
8. How can we be *blessed* by reading the Word of God?
9. What spiritual preparations must we make in order to "hear the Words of the prophecy?"
10. In what sense can we keep the things written?
11. What does - "the time is at hand" mean? - for what?

## Commentary

## Section 1

## The Prologue (1:1-8)

## Chapter I-Vs. 1

The English noun revelation is derived from a form of the Latin verb *revelare* which means to draw back the veil. The Latin form was transcribed into English. The Latin term was the translation of the Greek (*apo* - from and *Kalupto* - to cover). The meaning being to remove the cover from anything, and thus basically equivalent to the Latin term.) The earliest use of the revelation was in 1303 by R. Brunno. (See volume VIII of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1933). The Greek term *apocalypsis* always means something shown or observed plus the interpretation. The book of *The Revelation* is concerned with unveiling the will and purpose of the living God. How was the unveiling accomplished? John's next phrase provides us with the answer. The revelation is that which is given by Jesus Christ. The phrase "of Jesus Christ" can be either a subjective genitive (which means that Jesus is the object that is disclosed or made manifest); or an objective genitive (which means that Jesus is the source of the revelation). Both of these aspects must be kept in mind. The next phase makes this apparent. It states that "God (the father is meant as the definite article is used in the Greek Text) gave unto him." . . . The ultimate source of the revelation was the father, who gave (in a single act the verb is a first aor form) the revelation to Jesus Christ for the purpose of showing it to his servants (or slaves the term is a plural form of the ordinary term for a slave). What was Christ to show his servants? The next phase yields the answer to this question. Christ was to reveal to his servants "the things which must shortly come to pass." The term which is translated must is the Greek word *dei*, which expresses all manner of necessity. It expresses necessity in a mathematical sense, that is, it is absolutely essential for that which follows to come to pass. The text literally reads - "the things which must happen (or occur) with speed." It is most important that we see - the implication of the verb form of - the term translated happen (occur and/or come to pass). The aorist infinitive (the form of the verb) does not mean to begin to come to pass, but rather it speaks of a total completion, or complete fulfillment; the things



must happen "in their entirety." The source of the revelation was God; He revealed it to Christ, and now we note that Christ signified (aor, tense), or gave a sign and sent (*aposteilas* - aor participle) it through his messenger (tou aggelon) to his servant John. We now have a picture before us, tracing the genesis of the revelation from the living God to the mortal messenger - John.

### Verse 2

"Who (John) bare witness (aor tense - *emarturesen*) of the Word of God." This probably refers to the content of the book of Revelation as well as proclamation of the gospel of Christ, which caused him to be banned to the island of Patmos.

Note: See John 1:1-18; Hebrews 4:12-13; Revelation 19:13 and the appendix on *The Biblical Doctrine of the Word of God* after the 19th chapter.

The second factor to which John "bare witness" was the testimony (*marturian*) of Jesus Christ. The concept of witness plays a vital place in both the Gospel of John and The Revelation - (for other N.T. passages containing the term witness see Acts 1:22; I Pet. 5:1). The term witness and its various forms appears about 50 times, and about 40 times in the Epistles and the Revelation. The American Standard translators added the word *even* (italicized) which is not in the Greek text. The text literally reads "as many things as he saw." This clause is in opposition with "the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ," this clause marks these two features out as seen by John. The addition of *and* (not in the text either) in the K.J. version presents us with three separate aspects of John's work—"bare witness of the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all the things that he saw." This is wrong, if we take the last clause to be in opposition to the two preceding clauses. The verb saw (*eiden*) is used of the seeing of visions in the same sense that the Hebrew O.T. uses the noun *seer*, and the verb *see* or *saw*.

Note: The root meaning of the Hebrew verb is to see, but in the Prophetic literature it means to see supernaturally revealed visions.

As the book of Revelation is in the lineage of O.T. Apocalyptic literature, e.g., Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, we can better understand its imagery and message.

## Verse 3

In this verse appears the first of the seven beatitudes of The Revelation. They are found in the following passages:

1. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein; for the time is at hand. (1:3)
2. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them. (14:13)
3. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. (16:15)
4. Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (19:9)
5. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (20:6)
6. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book. (22:7)
7. Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. (22:14)

(Compare these promises of spiritual blessings with those in Matthew 5:1-12). What is revealed is the Word of God, and from this well of living waters may mighty blessings flow.

John declared that "he that readeth" or literally "the one reading" (*anaginōskōn*-a present participle) is blessed but what does he mean by this declaration? It is clear that John had in mind the reader of the word in public assembly. This was a practice of the Jewish Synagogues and was retained in the Christian assemblies. Specifically this does not apply to just any reader, but rather to the official reader. It is certainly true that any present day reader will be blessed by reading the Scriptures, but from a purely exegetical standpoint this verse does not so declare.

The blessing is also available to "they that hear the words of the prophecy." John makes it crystal clear that the hearers must continually listen to the Word of God - (literally "the ones hearing" - present participle - or the ones that keep on hearing). Our Lord has warned us all in His parable of The Sower (Luke 8:4-18)! He still warns us with these words - "Take heed

therefore now ye hear." How well do we hear the Word of God? The great paradox of hearing and not hearing was true in the time of Isaiah (chp. 6); in the time of Christ (Mk. 4:10f); and in the ministry of Paul (Acts 28:26-28); and it is still true today. But the reader of The Revelation has received a fresh warning that only "the ones who keep on hearing" shall be blessed and ultimately saved.

The noun prophecy comes from a verb form (*pro-phēmi* - means both to speak forth in the sense of preaching, and to fore-tell about future events. (Compare the amount of preaching to a present audience, and the amount of precision predictive prophecy in both the O.T. and N.T. literature). The next clause shows us that those who keep on hearing are the same class as those who "keep the things that are written therein." John uses another present participle (*tērountes* - keeping plus ta - the things) in order to show, as in the case of hearing, that one must constantly keep that which he heard. The participle form of this term *keep* implies a diligent *care for* and not a mere preserving of that which was heard. The imagery of John's language makes it very plain that in order to be blessed by the Word of God - each hearer must actively participate and not merely observe the word as we would an opera or T.V. The Church is burdened today by too many auditors and too few who actually participate in the dynamic life of The Church. It is for this reason that many congregations could just as well be called "Worshippers Anonymous." What specifically are the hearers to constantly keep? John replies "that are written therein." (The perfect participle form - *to gegrammena* literally means - *having been written* and therefore *stand written*). The perfect participle declares that the Word of God in The Revelation is finished; therefore, there will be no further revelation. What is the stated motive for "hearing and keeping" the Word? The season (*kairos* - means a fixed or specific period; *chronos* means a period of time whether long or short; *ōra* - time or period of nature) at hand is the motive!

Note: See the appendix in the closing pages on The Biblical Theology of Time and Eternity. . . . For basic discussion of the biblical vocabulary and its doctrinal import. (See the above appendix for a discussion of the contemporary effort of Werner Kümmel, [successor of Rudolph Bultmann] *Promise and Fulfillment*, Biblical Theology Monograph - to show that the term *eggus* used in this verse proves that the church expected Christ's immediate return and since this expectation was not realized, they and the N.T. were mistaken. N.T. Christians cannot accept this conclusion!)

The relevatory visions recorded in The Revelation cover the time from the first century and the historical situation of the seven churches of Asia to the coming again of Jesus Christ. In light of this fact, what then can the phrase "the time is at hand" (or near) mean? At hand or near for what? The answer to this begins to be given in the next section of the first chapter.

## SECTION 2

### Text 1:4-8

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and he made us to be a kingdom to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

### Initial Questions 1:4-8

1. Were the seven churches historical congregations?
2. What does the geographical term - *Asia* mean in the New Testament?
3. Is the nature of God being expressed in the phrases - *who is, who was, and who is to come?* vs. 4.
4. What are the *seven spirits* mentioned in vs. 4?
5. What do the names given to Christ in vs. 5 - *faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and ruler of the kings of the earth* imply about the person and work of Christ?
6. How is the love of God related to the *atonement* for our sins through the *blood* of Christ?
7. In what sense did Christ's atonement make us a *kingdom*? vs. 6.
8. What is the purpose of a Priest under the New Covenant? vs. 6.
9. What do the terms Alpha and Omega mean?

The Writer's Greeting to The Churches of Asia  
Verses 4-8

Verse 4

Now Revelation has been transmitted from heaven to earth. The human medium of revelation addresses seven historical churches of Asia Minor in the name of the living God in Christ.

Note: See C. F. Wishart, *The Book of Day*; an excellent examination of the significance of the various numbers which constantly appear in *The Revelation*.

Why were these seven churches singled out for examination? The seven congregations listed did not exhaust the congregations in Asia - at the time of John's banishment to Patmos. There were congregations at Hieropolis, Colossae, and Miletus. We cannot give any categorical answer to the above question - why were only seven churches mentioned? There have been many answers given to the question, but unfortunately for the answers they were not grounded in biblical exegesis; therefore, we are not bound to accept their speculative answers.

What are the geographical boundaries of Asia as it is used in *The Revelation*? The term is found in *Aeschylus*, *Pindar*, *Herodotus*. The geographers of the fourth century B.C. also used the term Asia Minor. The term is also used in the Books Maccabees and it there means the territory of the Seleucid Empire. The Territory which is signified in pre N.T. usage was identified, by the Romans, as that territory which Attalus the third, had controlled before the Roman conquest of his domain. In the N.T. Asia is always Proconsular Asia. Ramsay calls the "seven churches of Asia" representative only, because there were other congregations in existence at that time. This very narrow sense of the term Asia (in comparison to its pre-N.T. and/or contemporary use) certainly fits in with the biblical data (see Acts 19: 10 and 26). The boundaries of Asia were relatively small in N.T. times. (see any good recent *Bible Atlas* for the specific lines of demarcation.)

The salutation of "grace to you and peace". . . is reminiscent of Paul's greetings. The salutation bids unmerited favor and the holiness of God through a holy life (peace). The source of the grace and peace is Christ. John states that it follows "from him who is, who was, and who is to come." Those who reject the Scriptures as the unique Word of God often appeal to this verse of *The Revelation* and assert that the author did not

know Greek grammar, because this verse is a maze of grammatical confusion.

Note: See this charge made by C. H. Charles in Volume I of his commentary - Introductory section - the grammar of The Apocalypse.

Two things can be asserted in reply to this charge - (1) Contemporary Linguistics completely repudiates the now antiquated view that there is any thing like an absolute grammar which is binding on the user of any language. This thesis still survives through classical scholars who are unacquainted with linguistic development; (2) John could not have said what he wanted to say (and did in fact state) on the basis of standard grammar. Each of the three terms is a proper name for God. The first proper name is translated as "him who is." This present participle is the best that human language can do to express the eternality of God. (The *ho-ōn* is the same expression used in the Septuagint for translating the Hebrew tetragram in Exodus 3:14.) The second name comes from the imperfect form of the finite verb - (Greek has no imperfect participle following the parallel structure of the first name - present participle form) - see John 1:1ff where the imperfect is used regarding the person of the Word incarnate.) The third proper name is literally translated "the coming one." This is a present participle and is not to be confused with a future form which might be translated "who shall be." The term is about almighty God, and to use a future would imply that He does not now exist, but that He shall exist sometime in the future. This name points to His coming again as in 1:7 and 22:20. The salutation is also "from the seven spirits that are before his throne." Though the symbolism makes this figure enigmatic, I believe that Trench is correct when he says that this must be "the Holy Ghost sevenfold in his operations."

Note: See R. C. Trench, *Commentary on The Epistles to The Seven Churches*, Macmillan, 1867, p. 9.

Hardly any other interpretation fits into the pattern between the Father and the Son (vs. 5) - other than that this is a symbolic phrase for the Holy Spirit.

#### Verse 5

Jesus Christ is mentioned after the Holy Spirit because of the fact that what follows (vs. 5-8) relates to His person. The first title is a messianic title (Ps. 89:37). The Christ is a faithful witness because He is the medium of the revelation and

he has delivered without modification the will of God for man through a banned prophet on an isolated Mediterranean island. He faithfully discharged His work as the redeemer of men. The term thus becomes descriptive of the nature of His testimony. The next title is also descriptive of a vital aspect of His messianic work. "The first begotten of the dead" is also used by Paul in Colossians 1:18. This title asserts His absolute and final victory over death. Others have been raised from the dead (e.g. Lazarus John 11), but to die again. Christ and Christ alone is victor over the grave never to fall prey again to the dark chambers of death. Jesus "was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). The word translated first begotten is composed of *prō* plus a form of the verb *tiktō* - to bear or to bring forth. Though in classical Greek the meaning of *beget* is dominate, but in N.T. Greek the sense of *beget* is probably not found. There are one or two possible exceptions. The glory and majesty of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords shines through the third title. Through the triumph of the resurrection Christ is openly declared to be "the ruler of the kings of the earth." The glorified Christ reigns over every human domain. Swete aptly observes that the preceding three titles of Christ "answers to the threefold purpose of the apocalypse which is at once a Divine testimony, a revelation of the Risen Lord, and a forecast of the issues of history." (See his *The Apocalypse of John*, reprinted by Eerdmans, 1951, p. 7). See for further analysis of the titles of Christ in *The Revelation* in an appendix of this commentary.)

The first of the many beautiful doxologies to Jesus Christ appears in the next sentence of verse 5. The text literally reads "To the one loving us and having loosed us out of our sins by his blood."

Note: There is a textual problem here for those who want to consider the technical matters of the text see Jose Schmid, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse* - Textes, 1955, 2 volumes - imperative for serious textual study.

The K. J. translation "unto him that loved us" is wrong. The imagery is beautiful here. John is asserting the fact that Jesus Christ constantly loves us (*agapōnti*, present participle) and loosed (or freed) us (*Lusanti* - first aor. participle from *luo* - to loose - not washed as the K. J.) once for all out of our sins,

this imagery reveals that we have been in bondage to sin (Romans 6:1ff) but are now set free by the atoning work of Christ on the cross. The necessity of the blood atonement of Christ is asserted in the last phrase of the verse - "by his blood." How are we loosed from our sins? The vicarious work of Christ is the answer. No man can be loosed from his sins by being good; if he is saved at all, it will be because he has surrendered to the faithful witness, the first begotten from the dead, and Ruler of the kings of the earth.

#### Verse 6

What are some of the results of being loosed from our sins by the blood of Christ? John continues that Christ "made (epoiesen aor ind.) us a kingdom." The K. J. is wrong where it gives kings instead of kingdom. The term (basileian) means kingdom not king (this term is basileis). The N.T. does not apply the term king to Christians. We do not need to go to Luther's reformation doctrine of the "Priesthood of Believers," because its origin is in the N.T. (see I Pet. 2:9 - Royal priesthood) The kingdom of the King of Kings is the collective form of the committed community (The Church). Next, John asserts that the redemptive work of Christ has also made priests (*hierais*) of each Christian. In the O.T. the office of the priest was a special office held only by a limited, select group of men.

Note: (See Hebrew Epistle chps 2:17f; 4:14f; 5:1f, 7:1f.) B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to The Hebrews*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan reprinted, 1950, see p. 210; J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of The Older Testament*, Zondervan Pub. House, 1962, pp. 372, etc. Oelher's older work in Old Testament Theology; also has an excellent study on the place and purpose of the O.T. priesthood. There are many more advanced works, but the ones mentioned above are written by men who believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

After Christ's atonement every believer becomes a priest. What does this imply? In the O.T. the priest was a special person whose function was to make mediation between God and the community of Israel and himself. Now the Christian does not need any special group, whether a clergy system or the Roman Catholic priesthood. Each Christian has direct and immediate access to God through Jesus Christ. The distinction between clergy and laity is abolished. The New Testament uses forms of the terms clergy and laity, but they are applied to the same group, i.e., Christians. Each member of the kingdom is a priest! John concludes verse 6 by announcing that Christians



are priests unto "his God and Father; to him be the glory and dominion for ever and for ever. Amen." The universality of God's glory and dominion are clearly implied in the use of the definite articles with each noun. Glory implies honor, praise to God. The word probably means to be placed out in public view under the best possible conditions. Dominion asserts the universal sovereignty of the living God. He is not merely sovereign over the kingdom, but over the entire universe - physical and spiritual. The phrase "forever and ever" is the only way human, timebound language can assert the eternity of God. (See appendix on *The Biblical Theology of Time and Eternity* for further discussion.)

### Verse 7

To the preceding doxology, John adds the great and glorious declaration that the one who has all dominion and merits all glory is coming again. The cloud symbolism is used in Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30, etc.) His coming will be no secret! Every eye shall physically behold Christ's coming (*opsetai* - future tense of *horaō*). This verb denotes the result of seeing rather than the act of seeing. The compound relative "that they" covers the class of people who *pierced* (the verb form is aor. act. ind.) Christ. I take this to be that class of people of all ages from the actual crucifixion to His coming again who reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. The aorist form of the verb could be construed to mean those who actually crucified Christ, but I believe that the remainder of the sentence militates against this interpretation. John continues to describe the response of mankind to the coming again of Christ as he states that "all the tribes (phule-tribes - linguistic groups) of the earth will shall mourn (wail) over him. Even so (Yes) Amen." It is apparent from this statement that no man or group of men shall be exempt from the hour of his judgment. The remorse of men is intense (the verb translated mourn shall be translated wail - it is fut. ind. mid. voice of *koptō*). John is led by the Spirit to use a verb which means to smite, to beat or pound one's self in mourning. This picture presents men wailing (beating on their chests), because they have rejected the only one who can forgive their sins. The use of the middle voice form of the word points out that the cause of mourning is within themselves and is not caused by some inflicted external anguish.

## Verse 8

The alpha and omega were the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. The two titles (or one combined title) have the definite articles which assert the absolute first and the absolute last. The Lord God declares Himself to be the absolute first and last (that He continually makes that declaration is shown by the present tense verb to say *legei*). The three following descriptive titles of the Lord God are of the very same form as we found in verse 4. The term *pentokratōr* is a new descriptive term for God in The Revelation. It means all powerful, or completely powerful and is used only one time besides this instance in the N.T. - II Cor. 6:18. It is constantly used as a descriptive term for the Lord God in the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Hebrew O.T. In our age of power struggles we need to realize that power can be destructive as well as creative. Power can enable one *to take* what he wants or *to give* what he wants. It is in the latter sense (to give) that Paul asserts that "The Gospel is the power of God unto Salvation" (Romans 1:16).

## Review Questions

## Prologue 1:1-8

1. What is the origin or source of revelation according to vs. 1?
2. What two factors did John bare witness to according to vs. 2?
3. If we desire the blessings of God what are some of the things we must do according to vs. 3?
4. Were there other congregations in existence besides the 7 churches of Asia which are listed?
5. What do the three messianic titles listed in vs. 5 mean to you?
6. What are some of the results of our being loosed from our sins through the blood of Christ in vs. 6?
7. Will any escape on the great day of His coming again, vs. 7?

## SECTION 3

## Text 1:9-20

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony

of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet 11 saying, What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Laodicea. 12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. 14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not: I am the first and the last, 18 and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; 20 the mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

#### Initial Questions, 1:9-20

1. What *tribulation* was John speaking of in vs. 9?
2. Where is the island of Patmos located?
3. Why was John on Patmos?
4. Where are the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea located?
5. Is the symbolism of *seven stars* and *seven golden candlesticks* clearly defined in this section of scripture? vs. 20.

First Vision: The Seven Churches  
of Asia - 1:9-3:22

Vision of the Risen and Ascended Christ vs. 9-20

*Verse 9*

John personally addresses his readers. He relates to his audience by identifying himself as a brother, and also as a participator (not a mere observer) as John used here a term *sugkoinōnes* - a partner with the strengthening prefix *sun*.) What was it that John co-shared with his readers? John writes *The Revelation* during a time of intense persecution of the Church. John states that he was a co-sharer "in the tribulation" of his readers. The term *thlipsei* means an affliction i.e., persecution.

Note: See Herbert B. Workman, *Persecution in the Early Church*; also appendix of this commentary on *Persecutions and the Early Church*.

But John also shared the glories of the King of Glory, and the precious promises for all those who continue till the end. Being in Christ enables one to endure (*hupomonē* - endurance or patience) even banishment. John declares that he "was (*egenomēn* - 2nd aor. mid. indicative) on the Island of Patmos." The use of the past tense suggests that John was not there when he wrote *The Revelation*. The middle voice form of the verb implies that he banished himself. It might be that John, like the other apostles (Acts 4:14-22), was requested to modify his message, that is, if he wanted to continue to preach in public. As a faithful ambassador, John declined such conditions for preaching; and thus banished himself to Patmos. John was on Patmos (an Island about 28 miles south, southwest of Samos) "for the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus." This translation is not strong enough. Literally, John wrote that he was on the Island because or on account (*dia* with the accusative has casual force) of the Word and testimony of Jesus. This situation was similar to Paul's when he declares (I Cor. 4:10) that - "We are fools for Christ's sake." Literally, Paul said we are morons because of Christ (also *dia* with the acc. case). Christ is thus *the cause* of the world's attitude that they were fools. This is also the theme of Fyodor Dostoevski's *The Idiot*. Our English word idiot is from the Greek word meaning isolated one or one who can not live in a social context i.e., to be alone.

## Verse 10

John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (*tē kuriakē hēmera*). The phrase "on the Lord's Day" appears only here in the N.T. scriptures. This is not the eschatological phrase - "the day of the Lord" (II Thess. 2:2). The standard N.T. phrase for the first day of the week is *mia tōn sabbatōn*.

Note: See Acts 20:7; Matt. 28:1 - *eis mian sabbatōn* - toward one of the sabbaths. See the Appendix after this chapter - *The Lord's Day and Sabbath Controversy Revisited!*

The term translated Lord is *kuriakē* (imperial), and it is the same term found in I Corinthians 11:20 (*kuriakon* - concerning The Lord's Supper). John had prepared himself (mid voice - aor) to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and suddenly the holy silence was broken with the unexpected entrance of the voice of God. His voice was as the assembling tones of a war trumpet (*salpiggos* - war trumpet).

## Verse 11

The voice spoke directly and specifically to John, and commanded him to write (*grapson* - 1st aor. imperative the things that he was to see) in a scroll (*Biblion* - scroll rather than book). The use of the term book in our translation is an anachronism, because what we call a book was much later in developing than the New Testament period. The revelatory visions which were vouched safe to John and as he was commanded write so also he was commanded to send (*pempson* - 1st aor. imperative - active) the revealed information to the seven churches. (Note location of each city on the map.)

Note: Five of the seven cities were mentioned by Tacitus, *Annals*, 4. 53-56, p. 176-177; Modern Library edition, New York, 1942 - there was a debate over which of these cities was to be honored with the to-be erected Temple in commemoration of Tiberius.

## Verse 12

John turned to see who the speaker was (or source of the voice) who had entered conversation with him (*met emou* - means a conversation and not merely one person addressing a listener). After he had finished the act of turning, he was in a single act seven golden lampstands - the imagery is taken from the lampstand of the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:31).

## Verse 13

John declares that he saw one standing among (*en mesō* - in the middle) of the lampstands, and this royal person was like (*homion* - one like) the son of man (no definite article, but still the title of Christ and not merely a man) - See Daniel 7:13. This is one of the beautiful messianic titles used by the Lord Himself.

Note: See B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory*, reprinted Zondervan Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, N.D. - chpt. *The Witness of the Apocalypse*, pp. 286-297 (brilliant Calvinist - Bible believer of a past generation); for student grounded in the Word and able to evaluate the brilliant scholarship of one who does not hold a high view of the scriptures as revelation, see Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1956, chp. 10, *The Son of Man* - pp. 346-450 - also excellent contemporary bibliography; see also *Special Study* in this commentary on *The Titles for Christ in The Revelation*. The Interpreters Bible, contains the popularized negative critical attitude toward the scriptures. (Abingdon Press, 1954, Nashville, Tenn. Martin Rist and Lynn H. Hough authored the material on the Revelation. See page 375, volume 12, chp. 11:13 for a denial that Daniel's "Son of Man" concept is messianic. See the counter claim made by Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, Eerdmans, 1949, p. 154.

The remaining imagery of this verse is kingly or priestly in origin (See Daniel 10:5; Isaiah 6:1). With great flowing picturesque language, John describes our marvelous messiah. The garments which clothe Him reaches from head to foot - (*podērē* - from pous - foot, and aor - to fasten). This is a robe of honor, and symbolizes a person of the highest standing. The next beautiful imagery is conveyed by the phrase (*perizōsmenon* - *mastos*) and speaks of the priestly garment. The priest was bound at the breasts with a golden girdle. There is no question but that this symbolism is priestly, and that it applies to our messiah, who is prophet, priest, and king. This golden girdle was used as a symbol of righteousness, and power, etc., in the O.T. (Isaiah 11:5, etc., in Ephesians 6:14 - The Christian's girdle is truth).

## Verse 14

This verse continues the description of the one "like unto the son of man" (Daniel 10:6). As John continues to describe Daniel's Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9) he uses terms suggesting the pre-existing Christ (as John 1:1 asserts). The symbols of purity dance upon the stage of the great drama. The ancient of Days is set upon the stage of the human drama of sin and

salvation. John's next phrase was used over 700 years before the postman of Patmos sent heaven's message unto the Churches of Asia. Daniel said "His eyes were lamps of fire (Dan. 10:6). The imagery above probably relates to the eternality and purity of "the Son of Man."

#### Verse 15

The source of the imagery is still Daniel. The meaning of the term translated "burnished brass" (*chalkolibanō*) is not known for certain, but this fits the imagery very well. For the next imagery John reaches back into the Spirit inspired scroll of Ezekiel 1:24, 43:2, etc. Here the "voice as of many waters" flows to God's Patmos bound penman from the prophet beyond the Chebar (Ezekiel).

#### Verse 16

The one "like unto the Son of Man" hold seven stars in His right hand, "and out of his mouth proceedeth a two-edged sword." The imagery of the "two edged sword" is the Word of God (see Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15).

Note: For many O.T. examples of the symbol of the sharp sword see William Barclay, *The Revelation of John* Vol. I, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1962 impression, p. 63 - some excellent material in Barclay's works, but does not always show a high regard for the Bible as God's Word).

John takes us by the hand and leads us into the light of God's presence when he states "that his countenance shines (*phainei* - pres. tense - keeps on shining - see John 1:5) in the power of it." The 1901 text erroneously translates the present tense (*phainei*) "his countenance was (?) as the sun shineth in his strength." The use of this English past tense implies that the countenance used to shine but does not anymore. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Truly, Jesus is "the light that keeps on lighting every man that comes into the World" - John 1:9. Thanks be to God - Light shall prevail over darkness!

#### Verse 17

The effect of seeing one "like unto the Son of Man" was so awe-inspiring that John "fell (*epesa* - 1st aor. ind.) at his feet as one dead." The one who held "the seven stars in his right hand" now stretches it forth in a touch of mercy as "he placed his right hand on me saying: fear not (*mē phobou* - pres. mid.

imperative - the ability to obey the command was in the subject - thus the use of the middle voice literally stop being afraid!) The 1901 A.V. faultily translates the phrase "I was dead" (*egenomen* - 2nd aor. mid. act.) means rather that "I became dead" of my own free act (this is the significance of the middle voice). Christ was the only prey that death held no claim to, but for our redemption he "became obedient unto death" - Phil. 2:8. Through the glorious resurrection of Christ, the victim became victor "and behold (*idou* - look here) I am alive (literally living from present participle *zōn*) for evermore and, I have the keys of death and of hades." Christ is here asserting that He alone controls the realm of death and the realm of the unseen.

Note: See appendix on *Death* immediately following chap 2 for some brief thoughts: and see the *Special Study* in this commentary on the *Biblical Doctrines in The Revelation* for brief study on the Greek term *hades*. This English word is made by transcribing directly from the Greek word; it is not a translation of the term.

### Verse 19

John is again commanded to write (*grapson* - aor. imperative). He was to respond to this command by instantaneous obedience (the significance of the aor. imperative). What was he to write? He was to record instantly "the things which thou sawest (*eides* - 2nd aor. ind. act) and the things which are (*eisin* - present) and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." The 1901 translation is wrong in translating this last verb as future. The form of the verb (*genesthai* - and aor. inf. plus *mellei* - about) literally means "are about to come to pass;" therefore, the phrase should read - "the things which are about to occur or come to pass." The "hereafter" translates "*meta tauta*" and would more clearly be translated "after these things." What things? The things which are about to occur after the things which are. This verse probably relates the division of the book. It is about things which were, are, and shall be!

### Verse 20

The mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden lamp-stands is about to be unveiled. Christ identifies the "seven stars as the angles of the seven churches: and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches." The word mystery (*mustērion*) as it is used in the N.T. is always related to the fact of



revelation, though this word has a long pre-biblical history. The implication of secrecy, as in the Mystery Religions, or the Dead Sea Community, is absent from the N.T. usage.

Note: For those unacquainted with this term and its special problems see B. F. Westcott's *St. Paul's Epistle to The Ephesians*, Eerdmans reprinted - 1950, pp. 180-81; there will be a *Special Study* on the Greek term *musterion* in this commentary. Further bibliographical information will be given there.

Who are "the angels of the seven churches"? No final, categorical answer can be given to this question, but we can declare that they are not to be identified as Vincent, Trench, *et al.* do. The word angel is a Greek word that also means messenger, with no supernatural connotation as with angel. Archbishop R. C. Trench maintained that these angels were the bishops of the seven churches. From a purely biblical standpoint this is an impossible claim because the N.T. is very clear about the polity of the Church. There is always a plurality of Elders (Bishops) in every congregation. The single bishop, or monarchical episcopate was most certainly a post-biblical development. There is no explanation which is fully satisfactory regarding the identification of the messengers of the seven churches, but whatever conclusion one draws, if honest, he must reckon with Swete's position. He states that "the Apocalypse uses *aggelos* some sixty times, excluding those in which it is followed by *tēs ekklēsiōs* or *tōn ekklesiōn*, and always in the technical sense of a superhuman being employed in the service of God or of Satan. There is therefore a strong presumption that the *aggeloi tōn ekklesiōn* are angels in the sense which the word bears elsewhere throughout the book." (Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, Eerdmans reprint 1951, p. 22.)

The lampstands specifically and clearly identified as the Churches of Asia, and is a vital part of the imagery of chps. 2 and 3. Christ walks in the midst of the congregations and demands repentance, or else He will come and remove their lampstands.

### Review Questions

vs. 9-20

1. Was John personally involved in the great persecution of the body of Christ - vs. 9?
2. Is there a difference between the Lord's Day and the Sabbath - vs. 10?

3. Who commanded John to write and send the scroll to the seven churches - vs. 11?
4. According to vs. 12 - Was John merely a listener to the voice, or was he also engaged in the conversation?
5. What O.T. prophet is the source of the term "the Son of Man" - vs. 13?
6. What two characteristics of the Son of Man does the imagery of vs. 13 probably reveal?
7. To what does the imagery of the two-edged sword refer - vs. 16?
8. In vs. 17 John is commanded to do what?
9. What credentials of Christ were revealed in vs. 18?
10. What was John commanded to record in vs. 19?
11. Is it possible, from a biblical standpoint, that the angles mentioned in vs. 20 are the ruling bishops of each of the seven churches of Asia?

### *Special Study*

#### The Lord's Day - Sabbath Controversy Revisited

Why does confusion persist about the Lord's Day? How is it possible to confuse the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day? In this scope we shall provide a background and bibliography for further, more detailed study.

#### The Sabbath Day in Historical Perspective

The brilliant Catholic director of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem and editor of the *Revue Biblique*, Roland de Vaux, O.P., has placed all concerned with the Sabbath issue in his debt. (He is also an example of the R.C. Churches attitude toward her first-rate scholars who take some negative critical attitudes toward the scripture but never an extreme position). His classic work, *The Sociology of Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1961, pp. 475) provides us with the most recent research on this persistent but quite unnecessary confusion between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

The Hebrew word *shabbath* is not translated into English - rather it is transcribed into our English word Sabbath. In the Hebrew O.T. this word is used only in the context of the O.T.

religion (once used for entire week, Lev. 23:5). The O.T. also mentions the sabbatical year (occurs every 7 years - see Lev. 25:2,8, etc.). A longer term (*sabbathon*) is used of special feast days, etc., but it is most important that we realize that these days did not always fall on a Sabbath. With Linguistic skill available to very few men in the world today, de Vaux repudiates the theory of a Mesopotamian origin for the Hebrew Sabbath. Roland de Vaux declares that the simplest etymology root of the word) is the verb which means "to cease working, i.e., to rest." There are theories concerning a Babylonian, a Canaanite, a Qenite, a creation law, etc., source of the Sabbath. But what does the Bible say?

### Biblical Origin of the Sabbath

Certain sources are still persistent in declaring that the Sabbath had its origin in creation (Gen. 2:2-3). If this is a true assertion, it would be difficult to find out why an inspired prophet Nehemiah (9:13-14) was not aware of it. He declares that God made known the Sabbath from Mt. Sinai. In support of Nehemiah's contention, it must be pointed out that there is no biblical record of a holy Sabbath being given or observed before the Mosiac period. We must hasten to declare that Genesis, chp. 2:2-3 is no counter example to my claim, because the term Sabbath means *rest* not *seven* (as is claimed by the adherents of The Akkadian origin theory). There certainly was a Sabbath (rest day), but from this claim one cannot validly conclude that it was a seventh day Sabbath (i.e., Sabbath's fell on other days of the week than on what we call Saturday). Involved in this problem is the very intricate issue of calendaration, but it is too technical for us to consider here. There is not one verse in the O.T. which even intimates that any of the patriarchs knew anything about or observed a seventh day Sabbath. The unlearned continue to bring to our attention that the Hebrew word *zakor* (Ex. 2:8) necessitates long history of the Hebrew holy Sabbath (note the term in the parallel passage Deut. 5:12 - *shamor* - observe). All that can be grammatically and logically claimed for these terms is that they call attention to the fact that a few weeks before (Exodus 16) they had received the religious, holy Sabbath through medium of special revelation. (For advanced Bible Students grounded in the Eternal Word see the views of H. H. Rowley, *Moses and the Decalogue*, Bulletin of John Rylands

Library. Also, Sigmund Mowinckel, *Le Decalogue*, T. Wever, Boekhandel - 1951, Netherlands. The first biblical declaration (Ex. 16:22-30) about the Sabbath Day is associated specifically with the giving of the manna (and later stated as one of the Ten Commandments, Ex. 20:8-3). Besides the theory held by all Sabbatarianism, (some Baptists, 7th Day Adventists, *et al.*) the view already mentioned from the great work of de Vaux, is set forth as a live option - that is the Babylonian or Akkadian origin. This view must be rejected on critical linguistic and extra biblical grounds. Besides this the Babylonian *shabbatu* was determined by the phases of the moon, and thus did not necessarily fall on the seventh day. Their *shabbatu* was not a day of rest as was the Hebrew *Shabbath*. Neither did it have religious meaning, rather it was a day of evil omen.

(For further study, see R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1926, pp. 118; also Robert H. Pfeiffer's ridiculous claim that the religious significance of *The Shabbath* was impossible for wandering Israelite monads. See his *Introduction to Old Testament*, Harpers, N.Y., 1941, p. 231; even the negative critic James Muilenburg acknowledges that *The Shabbath* was a religious institution founded by Moses. This is some concession from him. See his work vol. V *Interpreters Bible*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1956, p. 687.

### The Seventh Day Adventists and the Sabbath

This group of Sabbatarianism attempt to escape the O.T. Doctrine of the Hebrew religious *Shabbath* by dividing the O.T. Law into moral and ceremonial law. They acknowledge that Christ nailed the Law to the Cross but only the ceremonial law, and the Sabbath Law is not ceremonial, but rather moral in nature. In fact, they identify the "mark of the Beast" of The Revelation with the change from the O.T. Sabbath which they attribute to the Roman Catholic Church, to the Lord's Day, Sunday. Is this a true claim? If the Lord's Day as a day of worship is found in the N.T. scriptures then it follows that the change was not effected by the Roman Catholic Church for the simple reason that no such institution existed at the time with all due respects to their claim to the contrary. (For an excellent popular style analysis of the Seventh Day Adventists' claim see Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh Day Adventism*, Zondervan Pub. House, p. 140-173, 1960.)

Note: For an examination of the attitude towards the Lord's Day - Sabbath, Lord's Day problem in the Patristic Literature, see Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy: Liturgical Studies*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1956; a few Patristic attitudes are also mentioned in Martin's work on *7th Day Adventism* mentioned above - pp. 152-4 - for brief discussion of the Sabbath and the year of the Lord see H. Riesenfeld, *Sabbat et Jour die Seigneur*, p. 210-217 in *N.T. Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1959.

### The N.T. and the Lord's Day

The N.T. is crystal clear about two things: (1) That the O.T. Sabbath is not the Lord's Day; (2) and that the Church, even though the book of Acts shows us that early Jewish Christians persisted in also worshipping on the Sabbath - (besides) the Lord's Day; in fact they worshipped everyday, - worshipped on the Lord's Day because that was the day when the Victim became Victor over sin and death. What does the term "the Lord's Day" mean? In a special sense, it is His day for His followers to gather to acknowledge Him as Lord of heaven and earth. The Old Testament religious Sabbath comes on the seventh day, but the Lord's Day is the first day of the week. Why and when was the change made? The Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Lord's Day were both commanded of the Lord, but for entirely different reasons, and for a completely different group of people. The Lord came forth from the realm of the dead to be our savior on the first day of the week and not on the seventh, that is why the change was made. The two days just had different purposes!

We cannot here critically examine the problem of chronology in the Gospel records, but we must realize that the date of crucifixion plays a determining role in the time of the resurrection. Those who are spokesmen for Sabbatarianism claim that Jesus was crucified on Thursday or late Wednesday and not on Friday as this author would claim. The Gospel authors clearly tell us that Jesus was crucified Friday afternoon, because the preparation was without any question, the day before the Sabbath. (Literally Matt. 28:62 declares - "and on the morrow, which is after the preparation.") The crucifixion account in Matthew concludes with the burial scene (Matt. 28:57-61), and evening had come (*genomenes* - 2nd aor. participle). Then in the very next section (vs. 62-66 we read "then on the morrow which is the day after preparation." Preparation comes on

Friday (there can be no valid challenge to this fact) and vs. 62 declares that on the next day (the Sabbath) the chief priests, *et al.*, took further precautions against the man on the middle cross. Why? Wasn't he dead? Then we read about *Eis mian sabbatōn* (or towards one of the Sabbaths) the grave did not and could not hold its prey. The above Greek phrase is the standard New Testament phrase for the Lord's Day (See Acts 20:7). This was a day commemorating Christ's victory over death. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" and received information about the past, present, and future never before vouchesafe to mortals. Empirical historiography does not have access to this information. It came by way of special revelation!

Roland de Vaux states well the biblical distinctions between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day when he says that Jesus claimed "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:28); he could therefore abolish the Sabbath, and he did in fact do so, for the New Covenant which he brought abrogated the Old Covenant, of which the Sabbath was the sign. The Christian Sunday is not in any sense a continuation of the Jewish Sabbath. The latter closed the week, but the Christian Sunday opens the week in the new era by commemorating the Resurrection of our Lord, and the appearances of the risen Christ, and by directing our attention to the future, when he will come again. And yet Sunday does symbolize the fulfilment of those promises which the Sabbath foreshadowed. Like all the other promises of the Old Testament, these promises too are realized not in an institution, but in the person of Christ; it is he who fulfils the entire Law. Sunday is the "Lord's Day" the day of him who lightens our burdens (Mt. 11:28), through whom, with whom, and in whom we enter into God's own rest (He. 4:1-11).

Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institution*, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., New York, 1961.

We have revisited this persistent and ill-founded controversy—now may we truly be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day!

## SECTION 4

### Text 2:1-7

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: 2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience,

and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; 3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary 4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. 4 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.

#### Initial Questions 2:1-7

1. Who is *he* who holds the seven stars in his hand and walks among the seven golden candlesticks - vs. 1?
2. How does the Lord commend the Ephesian Church - vs. 2, 3?
3. Were these commendable characteristics enough to save the Church from the purging power of Christ - vs. 4, 5?
4. What is our *first love* to be?
5. Does the Lord tell this Church that after all no one is perfect, therefore, they are not to worry too much about their spiritual condition - vs. 5?
6. Who were the Nicolaitans?
7. Is this message and warning applicable to us today?
8. If John was writing to the Church at Ephesus (singular in chp 2), why does John conclude with the plural - churches, vs. 7?
9. How long must a Christian remain loyal and continue to mature in Christ - vs. 7?

#### The Church in Ephesus Chapter 2:1-7

Dr. Merrill Tenney (*Revelation Interpreted*, pp. 50-69) has an excellent simple preaching - teaching break down of each of the letters to the seven churches. The analysis contains seven factors which are as follows: (from p. 51 of chapter 5)

1. The Commission
2. The Character
3. The Commendation

4. The Condemnation
5. The Correction
6. The Call
7. The Challenge

We shall not follow this analysis in our comments, but it might prove beneficial for outlines study of the seven letters. The first city which the Lord visited was the New York of Roman province of Asia. This great metropolis had heard the Apostle "born out of due time" preach Jesus Christ as saviour. Paul had resided in that city of sin three years (Acts 19:1-10; 20:17-38). The mystery cults flourished there. Their apparent self-satisfied attitude stood at marked tension with the man banned to Patmos just sixty miles away. Pliny called Ephesus the Light of Asia. The light of that city must be understood in view of its sanctioning the Temple of Diana where every vile act imaginable was committed. It was a religious city in need of a saviour fit for the problem of reclaiming souls from the sink-hole of sin. Only one other city in the ministry of the great Apostle received so much watering and gave so little increase, and that city was the imperial city itself - Rome.

It was to this proud, arrogant, religious city that John was *Commissioned* to write to the angel of the Church.

#### *Verse 1*

The speaker is identified as the one "holding the seven stars in his right hand." This was Jesus Christ (see imagery in 1:16)! The speaker's first hand knowledge of the congregation is brought out by the imagery latent in the word (*perapaton* - pres. part) "walketh." Literally it says - "the one walking around" observing the conditions. His knowledge is not second handed - hear-say or grape-vine information.

#### *Verse 2*

The personal knowledge of the spiritual condition of the church is further brought out by the verb "I know (*oida* - 2nd perfect with present) - sense. Here Christ's *commendation* of the Church seems, on the surface, to put that congregation in the fore of spiritual victory. "Thy toil" implies that they were an active (busy) congregation. The next very vivid descriptive term presents the congregation as engaged in an exhausting type of work. The term John used was *kopon* which means a work



which is very hard, i.e., requires much energy. This is indeed commendable - so far! Many contemporary congregations are also busy keeping its membership busy. The Church in Ephesus was also a paradigm of patience. Surely the Lord loves a Church which exemplifies characteristics like "the light Asia" does. This congregation was also morally alert. It could not bear evil men" (*bastasai* - aor.act.). (Paul uses a form of this term in Gal. 6:2 - "bearing each others burdens). This congregation hated evil men to the extent that put them to the test and found them wanting.

Apparently, there existed in Asia more than one (plural of Apostles) who made the claim that they were Apostles of the Lord. The Ephesian congregation put them to the test (the passage does not say what constituted the test) and found that they were not Apostles. From this situation it appears that the Lord's Apostles (or at least many of them) were not personally known in Asia, or else this situation could have never come about. This congregation was so committed that they gave priority to the truth.

#### Verse 3

So concerned were the Christians in Ephesus to protect the name of Christ, that they did not grow weary (*kekopiakos* - perfect, ind.). The use of the perfect tense implies that they have been laboring for the Lord, and their concern enabled them to avoid becoming weary or tired of their work.

#### Verse 4

What possibly could be wrong with a congregation that worked so diligently to protect the purity of the Lord's name? This active church was condemned for departing from their first committment. How could this be? John emphatically stated that this congregation was not merely in danger of or in process of leaving their first love; he stated that they had completed the act of leaving (*aphēkas*, 1st aor. act. ind.). This speaks eloquently against the denominational, anti-biblical doctrine of Eternal Security or Once in Grace Always in Grace.

Note: See Robert Shank, *Life in The Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*, Westcott Pub. Springfield, Missouri, 1960. This is a very fine study by a Southern Baptist Minister, who once held the doctrine of Eternal Security, but after finishing this study, he rejected the doctrine. It has caused a great deal of discussion among Southern Baptists - both present and past generations.

The fact of the possibility of apostasy from the Christian faith is categorically claimed in this verse. The first love is Christ!

#### Verse 5

They were commanded (*mnēmoneue* - sing. pres. imp.) as individuals to remember. The singular form of the term translated remember makes it apparent that repentance is an individual and not a group matter. What were they to remember? Before they could be restored, they must recall "whence thou art fallen" (*peptokas* - sing. perf. ind. - expresses the state of completeness) and repent (*metanōson* - sing. aor. imp.). As the command to remember was singular and imperative, so is the command to repent - singular and imperative - do at once before it is too late! Each individual member of the Church in Ephesus was commanded to repent! The consequences of repentance would be a restored relationship with the Lord or their first love. Christ declared unless they repented (conditional *ei de me* - "and if not") he would come and will remove (*kinēsō* - fut. ind. act.) their lampstand (the lampstand was identified as the church - 1:20).

#### Verse 6

After that warning, Christ again commends them for hating the works of the Nicolaitans. Who were they? The name is formed by combining *nikon* - to conquer, and *laos* - the people. Martin Kiddle is probably right in his views about the Nicolaitans. They were followers of Nikolaos, the "proselyte from Antioch" (see Acts 6:1-6). This view is at least the general patristic tradition. (See Martin Kiddle, Moffatt Commentary Revelation, Harper & Bros. N.Y., pp. 33-34 - In the liberal British tradition).

#### Verse 7

Jesus Christ warns and challenges the Church in Ephesus with these words (literally) "the one having an ear, let him hear what the Spirit keeps on saying to the Churches." Each individual is addressed, and charged with the responsibility of hearing (*akousatō* - sing. 1st aor. imp.). Each individual is commanded to hear immediately! This is not mere passive listening, but an active response to what is heard. Does this command of the Lord fit any contemporary congregations, or any of the legion of church attenders? How many of us listen

to the Word and just attend to what we like to hear? There is as much a responsibility to God to prepare to listen as there is responsibility on the part of the one who prepares to speak. Often Churches act as though only the speaker is responsible to prepare to speak and they are free from responsibility to prepare to listen.

Though it is to the Church in Ephesus that the warning is directed the conclusion is reached for all of the Churches (plural).

The promises of the Lord are available only for (literally) "the one overcoming (*nikōnti* - pres. part. i.e., continual victory). "I will give to him to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God." It is not to the indifferent Church member or to the infrequent attender that the promise is given, but rather to the one (individual) who continually overcomes (is ultimately victorious in his Christian life).

Note: See Ragnar Leivstad, *Christ the Conqueror: Idea of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament*, MacMillan, N.Y. 1954; also *Special Study* on Theme of Victory in The Revelation.

### Review Questions

1. Who is the speaker addressing the Church in Ephesus - vs. 1?
2. Does the congregation at Ephesus have commendable characteristics - vs. 2? What were they? Discuss.
3. Does being busy in Church work necessarily mean that we are pleasing God - vs. 4?
4. Is it possible to fall from the grace of God - vs. 4?
5. What was the initial condition for repentance as stated in vs. 5?
6. Does John declare in vs. 5 that individuals had actually completed the act of falling?
7. What would happen, if they failed to repent - vs. 5?
8. Is there a responsibility for each of us to prepare to hear and heed the Word of God - vs. 7?
9. Discuss the spiritual implications of the tense of the verb - "hear" in vs. 7.
10. Are the warnings of this section of scripture only applicable to the Church in Ephesus - vs. 7?

## SECTION 5

## Text 2:8-11

8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again 9 I know thy tribulation, and thy poverty (but thou art rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synogogue of Satan. 10 Fear not the things which thou are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

## Initial Questions 2:8-11

1. How can a poverty stricken Church be rich?
2. What does the term *blasphemy* mean?
3. Does John believe that the Devil was a real person and responsible for evil?
4. How would being thrown into prison, try or test our faith in Christ?
5. Does the Lord expect us to be faithful, even to the point of surrendering our own lives?
6. What does the phrase - "the second death" mean?

The Church in Smyrna  
Chp. 2:8-11

Professor William M. Ramsay called Smyrna the city of Life; it was also the seat of the Imperial Cult. Smyrna has existed from a millennium before Christ to the present. Today it is a city of over 250,000 inhabitants. "The Glory of Asia" stood 35 miles to the north of Ephesus. Damascus had her "street called straight"; and Smyrna has the Golden Street. This street was lined with infamous temples to Aphrodite, Asklepios, Apollo, and to the mighty Zeus. From a Christian perspective, its most notable contribution to the world of the N.T. was a congregation of the Lord's people. Polycarp was bishop of this congregation soon after its basic departure from the biblical concept of the Church and its polity. What did our Lord think of this Church?

## Verse 8

John was commanded to write (see vs. 1) to the angel of the Church in Smyrna. Christ addresses this congregation as the first and the last, who became (*egeneto* - II Cor. ind.) in a single act - dead and lived (*ezmsen* - I Cor. mid. voice in a single act lived again of his own will; the force of the middle voice). The King James erroneously translates this as a present tense "is alive." With His credentials of the fact of His resurrection, Christ addresses this Church. What greater grounds could there be for His demanding obedient response to His Lordship?

## Verse 9

Christ acknowledges that He is aware of their affliction. (*Thlipis* - pressure, i.e., burden - pressing down). Their suffering was not unknown to their God. The Lord's vivid imagery is again apparent as He speaks of their poverty (*ptōcheia* - is a man who has nothing. Another term, *penia* means a poor man or a man who works for a living.) The great contrast was that this great commercial metropolis was rich, but the Christians were destitute.

In what way could a poverty-stricken congregation be rich? They were wealthy with the things that last - faith, etc. They were building for Eternity! It was their committment to Christ which enabled them to withstand the railing (*blasphēnian* - from two Greek words which mean to speak, to hurt). It takes Christ given courage to maintain a progressive faith, when there were no physical signs of God's blessing (they were poverty stricken), and Jews of the synogogue of Satan were blaspheming their Christ by railing against them. The phrase "a synagogue of Satan" means that their assembly is dedicated really to Satan and not God.

In our day there are many learned documents written to set forth the thesis that contemporary anti-Semitism had its origin in the scriptures. They often fail to consider the Jewish enmity toward the cause of Christ (see Book of Acts) - as long as Christians were a minority group.

Note: R. Wilde, *The Treatment of the Jews in the Greek Christian Writers of the First Centuries*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1949; Jules Isaac, *Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?*, National Council of Christians and Jews, New York, 19, N.Y.; The Talmud speaks of good and bad Pharisees, but still Jewish and Liberal Christians continue to attach the biblical data with regards to

Christ's attack on the Pharisees, John's use of the term "The Jews, etc.": Jacob R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World*, The Jewish Pub. Soc. N.Y. second printing, 1961; David Daube, *The N.T. and Rabbinic Judaism*; Athelone Press, Univer. of London; H. Loewe, "Pharisaism," *Judaism and Christianity* volume I (ed. by W.O.E. Oesterley) gives summary of passages showing that Pharisees were opponents of legalistic Jewish religious as was Jesus. These give examples to what is found in the N.T.; C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, pp. 202-232 for other examples - A. T. Robertson's work, *Jesus and the Pharisees* - very defective study. Use it with care! John (4:22) said that "Salvation is of the Jews." Yet today, there are three Jews who influence the world more than our Lord - Freud, Einstein, and Marx. But ultimately the Jew from Nazareth shall prevail!

### Verse 10

In the midst of all their tribulation and persecutions, etc., Christ commands them "do not fear" (*phobon* - per. imper. mid.) the things there about to suffer." Had not they suffered enough for Christ's sake? Now He comes in person and tells them that things will grow worse than they are at present. That certainly was not a very comforting message. Christ declares that "The devil is about to throw some of you into prison in order that (this is a *hina* clause or a purpose clause, that is the purpose of their being cast into prison was) you may be tested" (*peirasthēte* - pl. 1st aor., passive voice, subj. mood). They were being put to the test (the implication of passive voice) in order to determine their ultimate commitment. They were to have affliction ten days. Next, the Lord commanded that they be faithful (*ginou* - sing. imper. present - means that each individual in the Church was commanded), because their faithfulness unto death was a necessary condition for receiving the crown of life (*zōes*) not *bios*. Christ does not offer mere biological existence. (He offers Life! - a sermon suggestion - "Passing from Existence to Life.")

### Verse 11

"The one continually having an ear let him hear what the Spirit keeps on saying to the Churches" (plural - therefore does not merely apply to the Church in Smyrna). The one who is continually victorious (*nikōn* - sing. pres. part. - the individual who constantly overcomes or is victorious) will by no means be hurt by the second death." What does "the second death" mean? From contemporary Jewish literature, we know that this means "damnation." Death of the body was physical death; death of the

God-given spirit, damnation by which it would be dead to all that it had been created for was "the second death" which could be avoided.

Note: For the Rabbinic literature, etc., see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 1922-1961 - 6 volumes in 7 parts - volume 3 contains *Briefe des N.T. und Offenbarung*, 1924. An indispensable work for any serious background study of any N.T. book; see appendix III at end of this chapter.

### Review Questions

1. What credentials did Christ set forth as He began to condemn the Church - vs. 8?
2. How poor was this congregation - vs. 9?
3. Study James chapter 2 and 3, and discuss in light of this poor-rich congregation - vs. 9.
4. What does phrase "the synagogue of Satan" mean - vs. 9?
5. What did our Lord command that these Christians do in view of the coming, more intense, persecution - vs. 10?
6. What were the necessary conditions for "receiving the crown of life" - vs. 10?
7. How are we to hear the Word of God - vs. 11?
8. What does "the second death" mean - vs. 11?

### SECTION 6

Text 2:12-17

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is; and thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwelleth. 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner. 16 Repent therefore; or else I come to thee quickly, and I will make

war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.

#### Initial Questions 2:12-17

1. Where was the phrase - "the sharp two-edged sword" used in *The Revelation* before this verse?
2. What was the teaching of Balaam?
3. Where is the Old Testament background for vs. 14 located?
5. Is it possible today that entire congregations like the 1st century Church in Pergamum needed to repent?

#### The Church in Pergamos Chp. 2:12-17

Pergamos, (the Greek form is Pergamum) stood approximately 55 miles N.E. of Ephesus in the valley of the Caicus. Pergamos was the capitol city of the Attalid realm. Later, the Romans made it the capitol of the province of Asia. The inland location of the city precluded it as a candidate for taking over the trade of Smyrna and Ephesus.

There are at least two things which should be remembered about Pergamos: (1) That it had a great library of 200,000 books, and the word parchment is derived from the city's name; (2) It was internationally famous as a center of Asklepios worship. Asklepias was the god of healing. Asklepios' chief descriptive title was (*sōter*) saviour. The emblem of this Asian saviour is the serpent.

Pergamos was the outpost metropolis of Greek civilization. Beyond the city's borders lie the hordes of barbaric Celts. It is particularly important for our study of the Revelation, to know that Pergamos gloried in the presence of the Temples to Athene, Zeus, and was a center of the Caesar Cult. Caesar claimed to be god, but the Church in Pergamos acknowledged only one saviour (not *asklepios*) and one God (not Caesar) but rather the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### Verse 12

John is once more commanded to write (same form as the other instances). Who is speaking, and how is He described?



Christ is speaking as "the one having the sharp two-edged sword." He speaks the word of God, and it "shall not return unto Him void." (The nature of the Word of God, in both O.T. and N.T. will be traced in a *Special Study* in this volume.)

### Verse 13

"I know where you dwell where the throne of Satan is." The word says that the Church was not to run away and hide but rather they were to dwell there permanently. (Here *katoikeis* or permanent resident versus *paroiken*, pilgrim or stranger.) The King James translation of *thronos* as seat is faulty. It means a throne from which he reigns as their 'lord.' There is no neutral ground - either Christ is our Lord, or Satan is our lord - which is it to be?

"And thou holdest (*krateis* - sing. pres. act. they were constantly holding on to the faith; and they were doing it individually (force of the sing.) the name of me." Semetic background is present here in the use of "name" which stands for the person. "And did not deny (*ouk ērnēsō* - sing. 1st aor. ind.) in one act of refusal to deny Christ, most of the individuals (the sense of the singular form 2nd per. sing.) held fast to "the faith once and for all delivered to the Saints." There was no compromise on the part of most church members in Pergamos (my faith). Christians at Pergamos held fast to Christ under heavy persecution, even under martyrdom. One martyr by the name of Antipas was singled out for special mention during the siege of hate. We know nothing more about Antipas than is mentioned here. We do know that Antipas held firm unto the end in the place where Satan continually dwells (*katoikei* - pres. tense). Satan did not merely drop in and out of this city, but it was his constant home base.

### Verse 14

Their stand for Christ was a gallant one, but they permitted "the ones holding the teaching of Balaam" to remain in the Church's fellowship. This is ample warning that the Lord is not merely concerned with the Church as a whole, but for every single individual claiming membership in it. It will not do to have available a "good statistical report" of the church. Many congregations today look on the surface to be progressing and successful; but what of the belief and behavior of "every" church

member? It is not simply a matter of how many (even if statistically small) heretics are continually present in the Church life, but rather, are there any at all? Who was Balaam? (See Numbers 25:1-9; Jude 11; and II Peter 2:15.)

There were two heretical groups in this congregation - the followers of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Condemnation was Christ's answer to the Nicolaite's contamination of this congregation. Who were the Nicolaitans? No absolutely final answer can be given to this question, but they were probably committed to some form of Gnosticism.

Note: An understanding of Gnosticism is also imperative for a study of the Johannine Epistles as well as The Revelation. For further study see J. Doresse, *The Secret Book of The Egyptian Gnostics*. Viking Press, New York, 1960; *The Biblical Archaeologist*, February, 1961 - Floyd V. Filson, *New Greek and Coptic Gospel Manuscripts*, pp. 2, Religion in Life, Winter, 1961-62 - William R. Schoedel, *New Gnostic Papyri*, pp. 99; Puech, Quispel, and van Unnik, *The Jung Codex*, Mowbrays, especially, van Unnik, *The Gospel of Truth and the N.T.* for a study in parallels; an excellent general study is R. Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem*, Mowbray, London, 1958. See also Jonas' two works, and Bultmann's *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, 1956 for a multitude of ridiculous assertions about the Gnostic origins of several N.T. ideas. Bultmann's thesis is invalidated, because he uses antiquated views of Gnosticism which have been destroyed by the *Nag Hammadi* finds.

### Verse 16

Under the above circumstances, what can the Church in Pergamos do in order to become again acceptable to the Lord? Christ gave an immediate answer - "repent thou" (*metanoeson* - sing. 1st aor. imper. each individual was commanded to completely repent immediately). Unless they fulfilled the necessary condition of repentance completely and immediately Christ says to them "I am coming to you quickly and will fight with (or against) them" (*autōn* - them - not the entire church, but the guilty, repentant ones) with the sword of my mouth. The Word of God shall prevail!

### Verse 17

"The one having (the appeal was always to individuals not to groups) an ear let him hear what the Spirit keeps saying to the Churches." To the ones who are continually victorious I will give to him the having been hid (*kekrummenou* - perf. pass. part)

man, and I will give him a white stone." It is impossible to completely identify the "white stone" symbolism, but it no doubt was a mark of identification to be given to all faithful Christians. On the stone would be inscribed their "new name" having been written (*gegrammenon* - sing. pass. pt. p. - the new name had already been inscribed on "the white stone"), which no one knows except the one receiving (it is supplied because the participle - the one receiving needs an object).

### Review Questions

1. Pergamos was the center of what religious cult?
2. What could the phrase "where the throne of Satan is" mean - vs. 13?
3. What does the use of "the name of me" suggest - vs. 13?
4. Was the Church in Pergamos free from false teachers? What did the Lord command that they do about them - vs. 14?
5. What is the O.T. background of Balaam (see Numbers 25:1-9) - vs. 14?
6. What did the Lord require of the Church in Pergamos - vs. 16?

### SECTION 7

#### Text 2:18-29

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass: 19 I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. 20 But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she willeth not to repent of her fornication. 22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say; I cast upon you none other burden. Nevertheless that which ye have, hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

#### Initial Questions 2:18-29

1. What were the commendable characteristics of this congregation - vs. 19?
2. The Lord acknowledged that the Church in Thyatira was a progressing congregation. But they failed to keep the doctrine and life of the Church pure. Is there anything so insignificant that we can let it pass by when it effects the belief and life of the Church?
3. How is the individual Christian to be judged - vs. 23?
4. Was the whole Church at Thyatira infected with deadly disease of false doctrines of Jezebel?
5. To what event does the phrase "till I come" vs. 25, refer?

#### The Church in Thyatira Chp. 2:18-29

The next congregation to receive the analytic glance of The Lord was the Church in Thyatira. Lydia, the first Christian convert from Europe was from Thyatira (Acts 16:11-15). Pliny called this city an insignificant city. Almost nothing is known of this city, therefore it is difficult to provide background information. But we do know that Thyatira was situated at the mouth of a valley which directly connected the Caicus and Hermus Rivers. A great road from the Byzantium (or Eastern Roman Empire) to Smyrna ran through this city making it easily accessible for evangelistic purposes. The province of The Lord utilized the great road-ways in the ancient Greek world.

## Verse 18

I am sure that the congregation in Thyatira would never have forgotten the day the "postman of Patmos" delivered this letter.

A new title of our Lord appears here - "The Son of God." (We shall discuss the titles of our Lord in a *Special Study* at the close of this volume.) This is a categorical assertion of the deity of Christ. The remaining imagery of this verse is to be found also in chapter 1:14-15. There we were told that "one like unto the son of man" was revealing the plan of the ages to John.

## Verse 19

The Lord highly praised this congregation. They exhibited self-less love and the faith and the service (ministry - we in the Restoration Movement need to make a serious study of The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry immediately in this generation.) Christ declared that they were a growing congregation and they were doing more now than before. They were to be commended for not using the "past" as a measuring rod for what can or ought to be done for Christ. In the seventh decade of the 20th century many among us are guilty of using the past as a criterion of where we are now with respect to growth and visible success.

## Verse 20

This highly rated Church had a surprise coming. Christ had something against them. What was it? They were not as concerned about the purity of their doctrine as they ought to have been. "The one calling herself a prophetess" Jezebel was seducing the saints. Christ said that you are continually permitting (*apheis* - sing. ind. present tense - each one of the congregation is charged with permitting this heresy to continue in the church). John's imagery takes us back to that infamous Jezebel, wife of King Ahab of Israel. She is so deceptive that she teaches (pres. tense - continuously teaches) and continuously deceives (*plana* could be either sing. subj. pres. or sing. ind. pres.) my slaves (lowly servants) to commit fornication (*porneusai* - 1st aor. inf.) or an act of fornication - the use of the aorist tense points to the fact that they had not repeatedly committed fornication) and to eat idol sacrifices." (Paul provides us with the revealed attitude toward eating idol sacrifices in I Cor. 8:1ff, 10:4ff.)

## Verse 21

Christ said "I gave her time in order that she might repent, (*hina*, clause or a purpose clause) but she did not wish to repent of her fornication.

## Verse 22

Look here, I am casting her into a bed, and the ones committing adultery (*moicheuontas* - adultery, this is not the same word as is found in vs. 20 - *porneusai* - fornication) with her into great affliction. This reveals the two actions of the Lord in Judgment "casting her into bed" and those guilty of immorality with her - "into great affliction." This act of judgment was conditional. Unless (*ean mē*) they shall repent out of her works (out of - *ek*; *autēs* - her, not their). Clearly repentance is not merely being sorry for some deed; true repentance results in changed behavior.

Note: The present author is preparing an exhaustive analysis of the vocabulary and theology of repentance for a work on *Biblical Theology* which he is writing at present. The basic Hebrew word, *Teshubah* does not mean precisely what the Greek *Metanoia* does. The Roman Catholic Church has finished the task, which was started by early Church Fathers, that of distorting the Biblical doctrine of *repentance* into the sacramental theology of *penance*. For a history of the doctrine of Penance see Oscar R. Watkins, *A History of Penance from the Whole Church to 1215*. This two volume work begins with the N.T. literature and moves up to 1215 A.D. Burt Franklin, New York 25, N.Y. reprinted 1961, originally printed in London in 1920.

Repentance was one of the great Biblical doctrines which caused Luther to revolt against the Roman system of works and mere penance. For his heated discussion see his letter to Stanpitz, May 30, 1518.

## Verse 23

"All the Churches (plural - not merely the seven churches but all congregations) will know of Christ's righteous indignation. He continues with an emphatic declaration "that I am the one searching (continually searching) the reins (literally *nephrous* - kidneys) and hearts, and will give to each one of you - according to your works." The organs of the body were used in Hebrew Psychology to refer to the seat or place of thoughts, feelings, etc.

## Verse 24

Christ raised His voice in warning those in Thyatira who had not committed the acts of immorality which are under his judgment. Those who were still pure did not know about (had not personally experienced "the deep things of Satan." This is probably another reference to evil Gnostic cults which dominated the Spiritual lives of so many in that congregation. They had apparently paid no heed to Christ's words "to be in but not of the world."

## Verse 25

Christ said that their burdens were so great that "I am not casting on you another burden." That great little word "nevertheless (*plēn*) what you have at this present time hold (*kratēsate* - 1st aor. act. imperative - they *plural* were commanded to hold on to it at all costs - do not surrender it) until I shall come (the particle *an* shows that the time of his coming is not certain). Christ promised that He was coming again - so hold on. The suffering will not compare with the glory which shall be those "that love His appearing." This also applies to the persecuted Christians on all far-flung mission fields today.

## Verse 26

Christ's immutable promises are here set forth - only for the faithful. The person who used to be a good church member will receive the wrath of God, not the crown of life. To whom are the promises given? "The one continually overcoming and the one continually keeping my works until the purpose of God has matured or been fulfilled. (*telous*, the end or that which is fulfilled or matured.) Christ will give the faithful servant power or authority over the nations (*ethnōn* - literally the Gentiles and probably in contrast to true spiritual Israel - see Romans chp. 9-11).

## Verse 27

The great Shepherd of the sheep "will shepherd them with an iron staff, as the clay vessels (or vessels of the potter) are broken (*suntribetai*, sing. pass. present ind.). The 1901 translation is not exactly correct.

## Verse 28

"The morning star" is probably Christ. (See Rev. 22:16 - Christ says *ho astēr ho lampros ho prōinos* - the bright morning star.)

## Verse 29

The conclusion to this letter is the same as the others.

## Review Questions

1. What new title for Christ appears in vs. 18? What does it mean or imply about the person of Jesus?
2. Would most contemporary N.T. congregations feel satisfied with the commendations given to Thyatira by our Lord - vs. 19?
3. Was the doctrine of this congregation orthodox or right teaching - vs. 20?
4. What does Paul tell us about eating idol sacrifices in I Cor. 8:1ff? What does it say about the condition of the Church in Thyatira?
5. Name and discuss the two acts of the Lord's judgment mentioned in vs. 22?
6. What will the basis of judgment be - according to vs. 23?
7. What does Christ promise the faithful Christian - vs. 26?
8. Who is the morning star - vs. 28?

## Special Study

## The Word of God and Death!

Hebrews 9:27 (Greek Text) - "And as it is reserved (or appointed) to men once to die and after this judgment" - (there is no verb *cometh* in the text.)

What is the Hebrew view of man? How does Hebrew anthropology relate to the Old Testament view of death?

The Old Testament view of a "wholistic man" antedates the contemporary views of man by over 3000 years. Faculty Psychology has fallen; and the dynamic view of man has prevailed since Freud. There is an inrefutable interaction between body and spirit. H. Wheeler Robinson's essay on Hebrew Psychology (see *The People and The Book*, ed. A. S. Peake, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1925) clearly states the Old Testament case



for a dynamic view of man as interpretation of body and spirit. (See for an exhaustive study of Hebrew Psychology J. Pedersen's *Israel, Its Life and Culture*, Oxford, 1946-47, 2 volumes - These are indispensable volumes.)

The Old Testament doctrine of "corporate personality" is an essential aspect of biblical anthropology. The Old Testament view of the relation of sin (Adams and the individuals) to death is crystal clear. This view stands in irreconcilable contradiction with the naturalistic notion of death as a natural phenomenon. The scholarly works of R. H. Charles (*A Critical History of The Doctrine of A Future Life*, 2nd edition, 1913) (not the 1899 edition); L. B. Paton (*Spiritism and the Cult of the Dead in Antiquity*, MacMillan, 1921); Edmund F. Sutcliffe, (*The Old Testament and Future Life* - London, Burns Oates and Washbourne, LTD, 1946); Robert Mortin-Achard (*De la Mort, A la resurrection de' apres l'Ancien Testament* - Neuchatel et Paris Delachaux et Niestle, 1956) all agree in their critical evaluation of the available Old Testament materials. The classic work of Charles, and the work of the Catholic scholar Sutcliffe, and the protestant scholar Nortin-Achard concur in a negative critical attitude to the biblical literature. Those of us who believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God can readily learn the biblical view of death by a *perusal* of its pages.

The Hebrew term *nephesh* and its derivatives communicate the spiritual aspects of man. Another vital term which speaks of man's spiritual life is *ruach*. Ezekiel's valley of dry bones was inanimate until the four winds (*ruachoth*) brought *ruach* and life returned. *Ruach* and *nephesh* overlap in speaking of the volitional and emotional range of human existence. *Neshamah* (Gen. 2:7) is the God breathed factor of human life. There is no mind/body dualism in the Hebrew view of man. Other Hebrew terms which would require examination, if our study was to be thorough, are *dam* (blood), *basar* (flesh), *geviyyah* which is the basic term for body, living or dead, occurs only fourteen times in the Old Testament.

Greek influence is apparent in the doctrine of man in *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha*. In this extra biblical literature the soul becomes mortal and it is pre-existent. This is strict Platonism! Rabbinic Judaism perpetrates the two views mentioned above in the *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha*. The major difference between the above two bodies of Literature is found in the Rabbinic emphasis upon the heart as the battle ground between good and evil.

The New Testament view of death stands firm upon its Old Testament foundation. The New Testament doctrine of man and the resurrection includes the biblical teaching concerning the use of *psuche* (soul), *pneuma* (spirit), *sarks* (flesh), *soma* (body), *suniodesis* (conscience), *nous* (mind), *esu anthropos* (the inward man). Dr. S. D. F. Salmond's *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality* is still the best single source for study. Dr. Wilbur M. Smith's article on "resurrection," found in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, 1960, pp. 448-456 is an excellent survey of the issues regarding the biblical doctrine of the resurrection. The New Testament teaching about man and the resurrection of the dead through the work of Jesus Christ is a unique phenomenon in the world of the apostolic church.

The Hebrew word for death - *maweth* and the Greek *Thanatos* both expresses observable, physical death.

From Genesis to Jesus the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6: 23). Paul declares (I Cor. 3:21-22) that death is a human possession. This is one possession that men would gladly surrender! Paul asserts that unbelievers are "dead" because of sin (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13). Jesus declared that the Prodigal "was dead," but is alive forevermore (Lk. 15:24,32). John saw Jesus open the fourth seal (Rev. 6:8) and he saw Death on a pale horse and he had authority over one quarter of the earth. Sin is inseparably related to the biblical doctrine of death. Christian hope is grounded on the atonement of Christ and His victory over death the reigning monarch. Death has been dethroned by the work of Christ. Paul makes this apparent in Rom. 6:9, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him."

The biblical teaching is grounded in the resurrection of Christ which assures every Christian of the resurrection of the dead. The New Testament does not teach the immortality of the soul, in the Platonic sense, but rather the resurrection of the body.

Death be not Proud - for Thou art overcome! All the forged fetters of darkness could not hold its prey! The power of death has been dissipated; its strength has been spent. Paul says - "But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." (II Tim. 1:10)

Contemporary Man is pre-occupied with death, and a repudiation of the Christian view of man, hope, death, resurrection. The Postman of Patmos was pre-occupied with declaring that because of Christ - "death shall be no more" (Rev. 21:4)!

## SECTION 8

Text 3:1-6

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that livest, and thou art dead. 2 Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

Initial Questions 3:1-6

1. Is it possible to be a very active and successful congregation and yet be spiritually dead?
2. What can you tell about a congregation who starts many worthy projects and finishes none of them - vs. 2?
3. Where in the Gospel records can we find the same warning as given here in vs. 3 - in the earthly ministry of Christ?
4. What do the "white garments of vs. 5 signify?
5. What is the "Book of Life" - vs. 5?

## The Church in Sardis

Chp. 3:1-6

The Church in Sardis received the most complete condemnation from her Lord, of the seven Churches. They are in a very serious spiritual condition, and they are consequently in grave danger of the Lord's judgment. He might come to judge Sardis as a "thief in the night" (Thess. 5:2) unexpectedly. There is only a small remnant at Sardis who shall share in Christ's triumph.

Sardis was the capitol of ancient Lydia until 549 B.C. The ruins of her great temple to the goddess Cybele is still observable. A small village exists today near the site of ancient

Sardis, its name is Sert. Ancient Sardis was wealthy from the gold and silver which she found in her rivers and hills.

### Verse 1

The Lord addresses this congregation as He did the others. Christ told them that "you have (*echeis* - sing. pres. ind. - you have at present) a name that you are alive (*zēs* sing. pres. ind. alive now) but you are dead (*nekros* - i.e., pres. ind. dead right now). How is it possible that a congregation can think that it is alive and in reality it is dead? Is it possible that a large active church can be actually spiritually dead?

### Verse 2

"Be thou (imperative - they were commanded to be watching) constantly watching and establish (*sterison* - 1st aor. act. imp. through one final act get the complete remaining things established) the remaining things that or which were about to die." Next, comes the most serious indictment of all to this very busy congregation. "For I have not found any of your works having been fulfilled (*peplē rōmena* - perf. pass. participle means - you started a lot of things but you never finished a single thing) before my God (literally God of me).

### Verse 3

What could Christ say to a congregation that never finished anything it started? He commanded them to "remember" (see 2:5) how you have received (*eilēphas* - perfect tense - means that they had permanently received) and did hear (*ēkousas* - aor. tense - means the single act of hearing) and keep (*tērei* - pres. imp. commanded to keep on keeping) and repent (*metanoēson* - 1st aor. imper. commanded to completely repent in a single final act). Christ told them that (literally) "If therefore you do not watch, I will come as a thief, and you by no means know at what hour I will come on you."

### Verse 4

The *alla* (but) is to contrast the general lack of spiritual concern and "the few names in Sardis which did not defile their garments." They were very careful, like Bunyon (in *Pilgrim's Progress*) not to soil their white robes. "They shall walk around with me in white (garments - not in text); because they are worthy." They are worthy, because of their close walk with

Christ - not through any self-righteousness. Christ is their righteousness!

*Verse 5*

Who are going to receive the white garments of righteousness? Christ responds immediately - "The one continually overcoming thus shall be clothed (to throw around) in white garments." These names alone will remain in "the scroll of eternal life." I will confess (*homologēsō* - future ind. act.)

*Verse 6*

Same Conclusion as the other Churches.

### Review Questions

1. What did Christ mean by charging the Church of Sardis with being "dead" - vs. 1?
2. What are some of the spiritual implications of the charge?
3. Had Sardis really *received* the Word of God - vs. 3?
4. What does vs. 2 tell us about how the Word of God is to be handled by Christians - vs. 3?
5. What do we learn about the need for Christian growth - vs. 5?

### SECTION 9

#### Text 3:7-13

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth: 8 I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. 9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. 12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the

name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

#### Initial Questions 3:7-13

1. What is the relationship between God's purpose and will and human efforts - vs. 7?
2. What is the "synagogue of Satan" - vs. 9?
3. What is the relationship between our loyalty to God and the availability of His power in times of trial - vs. 10?
4. What are the spiritual results for those that overcome - vs. 12?

#### The Church in Philadelphia Chp. 3:7-13

The congregation of the Lord in the city of brotherly love was the only one of the seven churches which was not condemned by Christ. Philadelphia was the second most important city in Lydia. It was situated southeast of Sardis. Under heavy persecution this congregation had remained loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the Lord had "caused a door to be opened." This Church kept the Faith!

#### Verse 7

Christ is "the holy one," "the true one," the one having the key of David." Christ is the separated one. He is separated from sin, but not the repentant sinner. He is set apart to do the will of His father. The term *hagios* means holy in the sense of separation. In Isaiah, chp. 6:1ff we read of the thrice holy God of Israel.

The Greek language has two words which can be translated true (first one is *alēthēs*, second is *alēthinos*). The first word is applied to propositions or assertions which are either true or false, depending on the actual state of affairs. The second term means true in the sense of genuine. The word is formed with an *a privative* which makes the word mean to uncover or to reveal to the observer whether or not something is real or spurious - i.e., claiming to be true when it is not. The term true is one of the central words in all of John's works.

The third title comes from a quotation from Isaiah 22:22. This messianic use of this O.T. background enables Christians to be in the presence of the living God.

The next title is "the one opening (*anoigōn* - pres. parti., the one who keeps opening) and no one shall shut (*kleisēi* - fut. to be hard-hearted or to lack compassion) and shutting and no one opens (*anoigēi* pres. ind. no one keeps opening).

#### Verse 8

Christ has placed a "door having been opened" (*ēneōgmenē* - perf. pass. participle) which no one is able (lacks the power because God has opened it) to shut it." This door was opened for them by God Himself, because "they kept on keeping" the Word of God ("my Word") and did not deny my name." Here the name stands for the person of God in Christ. The great door of opportunity has been opened by God and no man or congregation can ultimately shut.

#### Verse 9

Christ promises two things here, first that their persecutors will be humbled; second that in the general persecution that is coming upon the entire populated earth they will be spared. These two promises coupled with Christ's promise in vs.7 concerning the door "having been opened (or which He caused to be open) constitute three hope creating words from the living Christ. The former two promises will be fulfilled - Christ "will make them to come and worship before thy feet" and the second promise is found in verse 10.

#### Verse 10

"Because you did keep on keeping the Word of my patience (endurance) I will keep you out of (*ek*) the hour of trial shortly to come upon the inhabited earth (*eikoumenēs* - the word Ecumenical means - dwellers in the household then figuratively - the populated earth.)

#### Verse 11

Christ announces "I am coming quickly; hold on to what you have and do not let go; in order that (*hina* - purpose clause) no one takes your crown." Hold so that no one takes your crown.

#### Verse 12

The imagery of this next promise was certainly available around Philadelphia. The ruins of some Temples left only the

supporting columns remaining upright. Christ has promised a vital place in the temple of God for every faithful Christian. The faithful will have the name of God and New Jerusalem inscribed on the faithful one. (See *Special Study* on Jerusalem: in *History and Symbolism*, also compare with Rev. 21:1ff.)

### Review Questions Chp. 3:7-13

1. What do the titles for Christ given in vs. 7 tell us about His person and work?
2. In what way, if at all, is it possible for sinners to refuse to go through God's door of opportunity - vs. 8?
3. Christ made three promises to the faithful - one in vs. 7 and two in vs. 9. Discuss them and their relevance for the 20th century Church!
4. Does Christ's promise to come again give you courage for daily Christian living? If so, in what ways - vs. 11?

### SECTION 10

#### Text 3:14-22

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.



## Initial Questions 3:14-22

1. With respect to the Christian life is neutrality possible - vs. 15?
2. Is a *lukewarm* Christian life satisfactory to Christ - vs. 16?
3. Is there ever a stage of Christian maturation where the Christian need not or cannot develop beyond - vs. 17?
4. Is there any sarcasm apparent in vs. 18?
5. Does God really chasten or test those whom He loves? How?
6. Is every individual responsible before God's Word - vs. 20?
7. Does vs. 20 relate to us how vital, wonderful, and close our relationship with Christ will be?

The Church in Laodicea  
Chp. 3:14-22

The name of this city means "justice of the people." The congregation in this city attempted the impossible - they tried to be neutral with respect to their Christian commitment. Laodicea was generally condemned, but it was not a hopeless situation. They were helpless but not hopeless!

Much of the imagery in this section of scriptures comes from the surrounding country-side, i.e., hot springs, the "salve to anoint your eyes," etc. There was a great medical school there. They indeed "hath need of a Divine Physician."

Laodicea was situated about 40 miles S.E. of Philadelphia. (See Sir William Ramsey, *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia*, Nothing better available!) The only new title for Christ found in this verse is "the origin or source of the creation of God." See appendix immediately after chp. 3 - for a brief discussion of the crass distortion this title receives at the hands of The Jehovah's Witnesses Cult.

## Verse 15

Christ again asserts first hand knowledge of the spiritual condition of the Church in Laodicea. He charges that they are neither (*oute*) cold (*psuchros*) nor hot (*zestos* - boiling). They were attempting the deadly compromise! There can be no real commitment to Jesus Christ and be liturgically cold at the same time. A. T. Robertson says that "there is no real Christianity without enthusiasm." Christ must mean more to us than the valid conclusion of polemical arguments. There must be the

delicate balance between heart and head. Christ said that "I would that you were cold or hot"; one or the other but not lukewarmness. This message is still a warning to individuals and congregations alike. Being tepid (lukewarm) and a Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Christ does not actually declare that He is going to vomit them out; He asserts that He is *mellō* or about (or might do it) to do it. The imagery is very clear - tepid Christians do not set well with God.

### Verse 17

Here we begin to take note of a self-sufficient congregation. What do they need with God. It is alright to be a Christian, if it does not interfere with our daily lives. The Lord did not feel about them, as they felt about themselves. What did Christ actually think of them, Christ said you are the wretched one (*talaipōros* - miserable one) and pitiable (*eleeinos* - used only one other place in N.T. I Cor. 15:19) it means an object of pity - or a person (or thing) to be pitied, AND POOR (*ptōchos* - this term is used over 30 times in N.T. and expresses every degree of need and want) and blind and naked. This congregation thought of itself more highly than it had reason to so judge. Christ uses sarcasm in this verse. He had just shown them in the preceding verse their actual spiritual state was in radical contrast with the high opinion they had of themselves. Now, He begins to chide them! "I counsel you (rather than commands) to buy from me gold having been refined by fire." This ironic challenge is like a sharp shaft to the spirit. These people, who claimed to have need of nothing are really in need of the truly valuable things of life. The remaining part of this verse is built on *hina* or purpose clauses. God in Christ counsels them to buy Gold from Him - Why, "In order that or for the purpose that you may be clothed and "the shame of your nakedness may not be (publically) manifested." The imagery of this last clause fits nicely into the background of the city of Laodicea. One of the great medical schools of the day flourished there. "And eye salve to anoint your eyes in order that or so that you may see." How would they have responded to this chain of ironic rebukes (Holy Sarcasm)? How would a contemporary congregation respond to preaching like this?

## Verse 19

"As many as I love I rebuke (*elegchō* - put to the test) and I chasten (*paideuo* - training or nurture, see also Heb. 12:6) be hot (*zeleuo* - sing. imper. pres. - each individual is commanded to get hot and stay hot, or really be spiritually boiling) therefore and you repent (*metanoēson* - sing. 1st aor. imper. each one immediately repent) in an act of repentance.

## Verse 20

After this scorching denunciation of the Christians in Laodicea, the Lord begins His exhortation to His erring children. Look Here! "I stand in front of the door and I knock;" Christ not only knocks, but also speaks, so no one will be able to say that they never heard the voice of the master. The conditional clause - "if anyone hears. . .and opens, then I will enter to him and I will dine with him and he with me." The reciprocal relationship generated by a human response is clearly brought out by the repeated (*meta* - with) proposition. It is not merely that we will have fellowship with Him, but He also with us.

## Verse 21

"To the one who is continually victorious I will give him to set (*kathisai* - aor. inf. to set down in a single act.) with me on my throne, as I also overcame (*enikesa* - 1st aor. act. in one final act Christ overcame) - His was no process of overcoming. We need not wait for the outcome; and sat with (*meta* - reciprocal relation) my Father on His throne." The thundering voice of Christ must be heard again not merely among the seven Churches of Asia, but must be heard around the world. "The one having an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches."

## Review Questions

1. How do the Jehovahs Witnesses translate the title of Christ - "the source of origin of the creation of God, vs. 14? (See appendix immediately following.)
2. Do we show enough intelligent enthusiasm in our congregations?
3. What can be done about tepid Christians in our congregations - vs. 16?
4. How did Christ describe the Christians of Laodicea - vs. 17?

5. What is the reason for Christ's strong chiding in vs. 18?
6. Would your congregation like to hear this kind of preaching?
7. Note the marked contrast between Christ's rebuke and His sweet exhortation - vs. 20!

### *Special Study*

#### The Christology of the Jehovah's Witnesses

We shall use the new translation of the New World Bible Translation Committee, which is the official work of the Jehovah's Witnesses, in our study of vital passages in the New Testament concerning Christ and the doctrine of Hell. This is an anonymous work and the J.W.s will not reveal names of those who did the translation. Our common ground in the discussion is the fact that they claim to believe that the Bible alone is their source of doctrine. Therefore whatever that Bible really says about the person of Christ and the reality of Hell is the divine standard for belief.

Many people (Unitarians, Jews, most contemporary Theologians) along with the J.W.'s deny the deity of Christ and the reality of Hell, but not for the same reason. Any competent scholar knows what the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures have to say about both of these doctrines, but they are denied on grounds other than the statements of the Bible.

It is vital that we point out one more factor before we begin our examination of specific statements of the Bible relating to the two doctrines under consideration—in the literature of the J.W.'s one sees the names of competent Christian lexicographers, grammarians and exegetes used in defense of their strange manipulations of the Word of God, but we must remember that men such as A.T. Robertson, (S. Bapt. Greek Scholar and often quoted by J.W.'s) believed the scripture taught both the deity of Christ and the reality of Hell. Our real concern is, what do the authors of the N.T. teach!

#### Doctrine of Christ

The J.W.'s affirm that Jesus is the spirit-creature named Michael the first of God's creation, and it was through him as secondary cause that God created all things. This view is clearly revealed in their New World Translation. This position

was originally set forth by the Arian Heresy. The New Testament Doctrine of Christ stands in irreconcilable conflict with this presentation of the person of Christ.

Before we examine several specific passages from their translation we must say a word about their use of the term Jehovah. In their appendix on "Jehovah" (from page 759f) they list over two hundred times in the N.T. where they have inserted the name Jehovah into the text when it is not based on the Greek text. In the foreword they make an effort to show how the Greek text has been altered and that originally the term "Jehovah" appeared in the text. The serious fallacy in both their technical understanding and logic becomes apparent when it is pointed out that the best manuscript evidence put forward is a 14th century A.D. Hebrew text of Matthew.

Technically, the pronunciation of the tetragrammation is unknown (no one knows if Yahweh, etc., is correct or not). The term which appears in English as Jehovah or Yahweh could have come from two Hebrew roots, one meaning become, the other to happen. Dr. W. F. Albright and Dr. T. W. Nakarai, *et al.*, illustrate the possible differences in translation by emending the Hebrew consonants with, for example, first simple active or fifth stem (causative) vowels. The vowels used in most popular translations of *Jehovah* or *Yahweh* (it is apparent that the vowels in these two words are different) are arbitrarily taken from the Hebrew word for lord - *Adonai*. After the exile the name of God became so sacred that they did not pronounce it. The Hebrews reason - if there is only one God then we do not need a name because names are for distinction. To this day the name Yhwh is unpronounced in the services of the Hebrew Synagogues, even when it appears in the Scripture text, or prayer book.

The Church has from the N.T. period to the 20th Century affirmed that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh and the final, complete revelation of the nature, purpose, and person and will of God of the O.T. The J.W.'s deny this affirmation - so let us turn to the Scriptures and hear their testimony.

One of the passages listed where "Jehovah" appears in the *New World Translation* is *Mk. 1:3*. At *Mk. 1:2* (1901 R.V.) which is a quotation from *Mal. 3:1*, we note a change in the pronouns from the Hebrew of *Mal.* to the Greek of *Mk.* In the Hebrew of *Mal. 3:1* God is speaking and says "to prepare *my* way (or the way before me) and the pronoun is changed to refer to Christ

(thy face) in *Mk. 1:2*. (1901 R.V.) Here we have a passage of scripture containing *Yahweh* and it is employed by an inspired author in referring to Jesus Christ.

The New World Translation of *Acts 2:21* which is a quotation from *Joel 2:32*—"anyone that calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

(For those who desire to study the passages critically the following data is essential. In the Hebrew text, chp. 2 runs to vs. 27 - vs. 28 begins chp. 3, which contains 5 verses and the Hebrew Text contains chp. 4:1-21. The English Translation (R.V. 1901) places the 5 verses of chp. 3 with chp. 2 - therefore in the English chp. 2 runs to vs. 32. Chp. 3 of the Hebrew becomes the last vs. of chp. 2 of E.T. and Chp. 4 of Hebrew is Chp. 3 in E.T.)

In the Acts passage the reference is to Christ, but another passage uses the same quotation and is also unmistakably applied to Christ - *Romans 10:9-13*. Here Christ is source of fulfilling the Joel passage. The total misunderstanding of the N.T. use of the term Lord is at the heart of the perversion in the N.W.T. The term *Lord* is unmistakably used for *Yahweh* and without hesitation the full import is applied to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

In John 1:1 of the N.W.T. we learn that Jesus is merely *a god*. It reads:

"originally the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *a god*."

We must take note of their erroneous translation of "a god" because there is no definite article before the noun. Before we analyze this point we must remind the reader that John was a Jew who had been reared on strict Jewish Monotheism (belief in one God) and to speak of "a god" would have been nonsense and repugnant or idolatry. It would not be difficult to sustain, by many examples, Dr. Ernest C. Colwell's rule of the definite article - "a definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb". . . . The absence of the article before God (*theos*) of the last clause of John 1:1 in no way permits the translation found in the New World Translation "*a god*." Our standard English translation reads "and the Word was God," but the literal translation of the statement would be "and God was the Word." The appendix found in the N.W.T. in an effort to justify their distortion quotes thirty-five other passages in John where the predicate noun has the definite article in

Greek. These examples provide poor evidence for their translation of "*a god*," because all 35 examples show that the predicate noun stands after the verb. The examples quoted in N.W.T. from the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) merely sustain Colwell's rule of the use of the Greek article or the meaning of its absence.

Another passage which is distorted by the N.W.T. is Phil. 2:6-8 (vs. 6 - N.W.T.):

"Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God."

This is such a perversion of the Greek text that only an extended statement on each word would be an adequate reply - since space forbids this we shall comment upon two words from the context of vs. 6-8. The word translated "form" in verses 6 and 7 is (*morphē*). From Homer (classical literature) forward (*morphē*) is used in an outward sense or appearance. Plato uses (*eidōs*) in contrast to (*morphē*) or intrinsic reality. This meaning is also present in N.T. Greek and this specific passage. In vs. 7 we have a reflexive pronoun (*heauton*) which clearly states that He emptied - not His attribute (as God) out of Himself, but Himself out of one form (God) into another form (slave or servant). It is essential to note the impact of this reflexive pronoun. He was *not* emptied by *someone else*; rather He emptied Himself. Even the Unitarian Lexicographer, Joseph Henry Thayer, who denied the deity of Christ, admitted that the Greek of this section of Scripture speaks of Christ's deity. (See Thayer's Lexicon, pg. 418 concerning verse 6—

"yet did not think that this equality with God was to be eagerly clung to or retained."

This is one time the J.W.'s would not dare use the help of their Unitarian cohort, Thayer, as they do so often. Clearly the passage affirms the Deity of Christ as the Greek of Paul's Epistle stands in radical contrast to the English translation of this passage in the N.W.T., the official translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Paul's statement in Col. 1:15-17 is another disconcerting passage to the deniers of Christ's Deity. The N.W.T. Col. 1:15-17 states—

"because by means of him all *other* things were created in the heavens and upon the earth - all *other* things have

been created through him and for him. Also he is *before* all *other* things and by means of him all *other* things were made to exist." (Italics mine)

We take note that the adjective "other" appeared four times and it does not occur even once in the Greek Text. The words "other" and "before" were inserted to emphasize that Jesus was also created. The J.W.'s are perpetrating the Colossian Gnostic heresy which Paul was seeking to destroy. This heresy affirmed that Jesus was a created being between God and Man. At no time does the New Testament apply the verb *to create* to the relationship of the Father and the Son. We do not find the Greek word (*prōtoktistos*) which means first-created, but the word (*prōtokos*) which means first-begotten, and is used in the N.T. in reference to Christ. The adjective "*first*" gives Christ priority of status and time. Christ has priority over all created things plus His sovereignty over the same. In *Col. 2:9* (R.V. 1901) - Paul affirms that—

"in Him dwells (present tense verb - continually dwells) all of the fulness (*plērōma*) of the Godhead bodily."

This is a direct affirmation of deity!

The translation found at *Rev. 3:14* is also warped to fit the Arianism of the J.W.'s (see N.W.T., vs. 14).

"the beginning of the creation by God." (Italics mine)

The Greek Text of the Revelation passage does not say "*by God*," but has the genitive case meaning "*of God*." The translation which appears in the N.W.T. would require a different grammatical structure with the preposition (*hupo*). As in *John 1:1*, the term (*archē*) appears here also. From the period of Homer forward it has the sense of beginning, first cause, government (as in *Eph. 6:12*.) The Greek scriptures declare that Christ is the *source* and *origin* of "all things"—not all "other" things as stated in the New World Translation.

The N.W.T. of *John 8:58* is the strangest misrepresentation of all of the texts we have mentioned so far. The translation says—

"Before Abraham came into existence, *I have been*."  
(Italics mine)

The footnote calls this translation a perfect indefinite tense. No standard grammar or lexicon has ever heard of such a translation of a simple present tense verb (*eimi*). Jesus simply affirms His eternal existence before Abraham - He said, "Before Abraham was, I am."



The passages in the N.T. which speak of Christ's subordination (e.g. I Cor. 12:1-2) only speaks of his self-emptying incarnation and not as the N.W.T. suggests, that Christ is less than God the Father.

The favorite book (The Revelation) of the J.W.'s has a doctrine of Christ which stands in marked contrast to their anti-Christian view of Christ.

Old Testament passages which speak of Yahweh are without hesitation applied to Jesus Christ (*Deut. 10:17* see *Rev. 17:14*, *Dan. 7:9* see *Rev. 1:14*, *Zech. 4:10* see *Rev. 5:6*. Jesus Christ has co-sovereignty with the Father, see *Rev. 11:15*; He also shares one throne, see *Rev. 22:1,3*. The author of Revelation identifies Christ with God, yet he knows nothing of two Gods. Here we see a strict montheism (belief in one God only). Another point which does not adjust well to the thought of the J.W.'s is that the author identifies the glorified Christ with the Christ of the self-emptying incarnation.

These brief statements necessitate our agreement with Dr. Bruce Metzger (see his article listed in the bibliography) that in light of their doctrine of Christ the J.W.'s can in no manner be termed Christian! (See following Bibliography for further study material on Jehovah's Witnesses.)

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

For Further Study See: Books and Booklets, etc., written by Jehovah's Witnesses, necessary for a primary understanding of their position. These are obtainable from *Watchtower, 117 Adams St., Brooklyn 1, N.Y.*

*New World Translation of N.T.* in one volume. The O.T. is not yet complete, but four volumes containing Genesis to Lamentations are available. Their creedal position is easily determined in *Make Sure of All Things; What Do the Scriptures Say About Survival After Death?; The Trinity—Divine Mystery or Pagan Myth?; Hell Fire—Bible Truth or Pagan Myth?; Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*: This is an annual report on growth and progress. *Jehovah's Witnesses: The New World Society*. This is their official history.

Books and Articles, etc., written as criticism of this movement. See these accurate, but simple presentations.

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Walter R. Martin, Editor, *Religious Research Digest* (deals only with the cults—*A Must!*) This is a new quarterly published by the Christian Research Institute Inc., 122 Beaufort Ave., Livingston, N.J. (Subscription price \$2.00 per year.)

Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, "*The Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus.*" This is an article in *Theology Today*, April, 1953, P.O. Box 29, Princeton, N.J.

William J. Schnell, author of *Into the Light of Christianity*, which effectively debunks brainwashing and heals affected minds of this malady, has in his possession 7,591 letters from converted Jehovah's Witnesses. Price of author's second and more important book is \$2.95. He now publishes the bi-monthly *Converted Jehovah's Witness Expositor* which is sent a whole year as a Missionary into the homes of your Jehovah's Witness friends for *sixty-five cents*. A new booklet *How To Witness to Jehovah's Witnesses* may be had for *fifteen cents in single copies*, or *\$9.00 in 100 copy lots* and is a great help in effectively dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses at your doors and in use of book studies in their homes. Order directly from *William J. Schnell, 2889 Guss Ave., Youngstown 8, Ohio, USA.*

## SECTION 11

### Text 4:1-8

After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter. 2 Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; 3 and he that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. 4 And round about the throne were four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like unto crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. 7 And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying

eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

#### Initial Questions 4:1-8

1. Has there been a transition from earth (considering the seven churches of Asia) to heaven - vs. 1?
2. What does it mean to be "in the Spirit" - vs. 2?
3. Do you know the Old Testament source of the imagery of vs. 4ff? (See Ezekial, chp. 1)
4. Wherein the Old Testament do we find the "thrice holy" praise of God - vs. 8? (See Isaiah chp. 6:3)

### Second Vision: Process of World Judgment 4:1-16:21

#### The Vision of the Throne in Heaven

##### Chp. 4:1-11

##### (First Section 4:1-8)

#### Verse 1

"After these things (*meta tauga* - K.J. falsely translates "after this") I saw." What is John's point of reference when he says "after these things"? The immediate context would point to the vision concerning the seven churches in chapters two and three. The act of seeing (prophetic vision) provided John with the context of his vision.

It is very important to note the transition from earth, in the preceding two chapters, to heaven - H. E. Dana calls this the beginning of the "Drama of Redemption." (See his *The Epistles and Apocalypse of John*: Baptist Book Store, 1937, p. 112.) Chapter four sets the stage for the remainder of the book. Though we will not here enter into a technical discussion concerning the literary structure of the remaining sections of *The Revelation*, it is *highly probable* that the various scenes repeat the same things (i.e., from the general situation in John's Day to the second coming of Christ) from differing perspectives. Chapter five strengthens the foundation of Chapter 4 by revealing the sovereignty of God through the ultimate victory of Christ.

Note: There is nothing in the literary structure of The Revelation which implies that it is a *Drama* re: *Dana, op. cit.*, Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb*, Broadman, Nashville, 1951; and Edward A. McDowell, *The Meaning and Message of the Book of Revelation*, Broadman, 1951; but it might make the preaching and teaching of the book simpler, and therefore more accessible to the general Bible Student.

John "saw" a door having been opened (*ēneōgmenē* - per. pass. part) in heaven." (See Matt. 3:16, Acts 7: where heaven is open - A.V.) The 1901 translation implies that John witnessed the opening of the door, but he "saw a door having been opened" - already before his vision.

Sermon Note: There are three important opened doors mentioned in The Revelation: (1) The door of opportunity - Rev. 3:8; (2) Door of the heart - Rev. 3:20; (3) the Door of Revelation - Rev. 4:1. For good teaching see W. Barclay, *The Revelation of John* - volume I St. Andrews Press, Edinburgh, 1962 - pp. 189. This two volume set is a very inexpensive set of paper backs.

Note the transition in imagery from seeing to hearing. John declares that "the first voice which I heard as of a trumpet speaking with me (this verb of speaking breaks the silence), saying (*legōn* - the second verb is the act of addressing John) come up (*anaba* - sing. 2 aor. imperative - John was commanded to come up immediately) here, and I will show you things which must (*dei* - necessary, must) occur after these things. Immediately I became (*egenomēn* - sing. 2 aor. middle voice - John was in the Spirit in one immediate act) in (*the* not in text) spirit. (The King James and 1901 version place this clause with verse 2. It is concerned with the problem of verse divisions, and we need not discuss it further for our purposes here.)

### Verse 2

John's vision placed him in the very Throne Room of the Universe. From here we are to have vouched safe to us the will and purpose of the Lord of history. We are here privileged to see the providential hand of the Living God in the things which pertain to earth until the coming again of Jesus Christ.

Before we begin our journey through these challenging pages of the Word of God, we must call attention to the many possible pitfalls and dangers. We must pay close attention to the specific words of the scriptures. We must avoid attempting to interpret the following material from some "anti-biblical system of interpretation," such as Dispensationalism, Premillennialism, Post millennialism, etc.

Note: We shall speak critically of these "systems of interpretation" in a *Special Study* of this textbook. We would like to call your attention to one specific source of scandalous distortion, i.e., *The Scofield Reference Bible*, the new edition. This is the source of much very irrefutable "help" in interpreting the Word of God. Another, more general source of error can be found in the legion of popular works on *The Book of Revelation*. There are so many of these that a list here would be very impractical. One must wisely query—if that is so, why another popular work such as the present volume? This present, popular work differs from the hundreds of other popular study aid commentaries in that the author strives to stick to an analysis of the specific declarations of the "Postman of Patmos" by striving to throw light on the text through a word and phrase study. There are two very good but by no means complete studies of the vital vocabulary and fearful phrases of *The Revelation* in A. T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Studies*, Broadman, Press, and Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies in The New Testament*, Eerdmans, 1946. These two older works, by two of the most competent Greek scholars of a past generation, can be used to great advantage, but there are so many words and phrases which they do not see fit to analyze, that further work along this line is called for. The present author believes this approach to be the safest way to begin studying this majestic work of divine symbolism, so as not to be led astray by the "clear and distinct systems of interpretation" mentioned above. The author is providing some additional bibliographical help so that the concerned student who so chooses, can go on to another stage of analyzing this revealed word.

John said - "Look here (or behold) a throne was set (*ekeito* - imperfect tense - means that John did not witness the placing of the throne. It was already there when he saw a throne) in heaven, and one sitting on (*epi*) the throne (*kathēmenos* - present part., continuously setting).

### Verse 3

John begins to describe the one sitting on the throne of the universe. This description is, of course, in human language. "And the one sitting was like an appearance to a jasper (*iaspidi*) stone. . . . It is most important that John sees no form for God in this vision (Exodus 24:10). This valuable stone was the first of the twelve stones placed in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19). It was also used in the wall of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:18). The stone was also used on the breastplate of the Highpriest (Exodus 28:20, 29:13). The imagery of this stone would therefore have been common knowledge in John's age. "And a sardius" was the sixth stone in the foundation of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:20). Its name is derived from its place of discovery - Sardis. "And there was a

rainbow round the throne". . . . The rainbow imagery is used here and in chapter 10:1. (See Ezekial 1:26,28 for the phrase round the throne.) "Like in appearance to an emerald." The beautiful imagery of this verse strove with the finest building blocks available in the human tongue to describe the throne room of the Lord of the heaven and earth. The materials which form the backbone of John's description have been taken primarily from Isaiah 6:1f, Ezekiel 1:1f, and Daniel 7:1f. Though the imagery is Old Testament, we must never forget that John's is a Christian and not a Jewish vision. John reaches into the past for his masterful imagery, in order that he might project far beyond the time of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, yea, even his own time, until the Messiah of the prophets and the saviour of John comes again.

#### Verse 4

"And round the throne were (verb added not in text) twenty-four thrones: and on the thrones *I saw* (added to translation - not in the text) twenty-four Elders sitting" (*kathēmenous* - present part., continuously sitting). Who were these twenty-four Elders? The number 24 occurs only in The Revelation and with respect to these Elders (see 4:4,10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4). The twenty-four Elders have no Old Testament counter part. Though there are many identifications suggested the present writer thinks that they are angelic beings who constantly worship God.

Note: See the brilliant discussion by the late Ned. B. Stonehouse in *Paul Before the Areopagus*, The Tyndale Press, 1957, chp. 4. The Elders and the Living-Beings in the Apocalypse, pp. 88-108. Dr. Stonehouse's (of the Westminster Theological Seminary) unexpected death robbed us what would have been the greatest conservative commentary on The Revelation.

"The twenty-four Elders sitting having been clothed (*peribebēmenous*, perfect passive part. - which means that act of clothing is complete and that the act of clothing was performed by someone else (passive voice)). (The prefix *peri* means that their garment was wrapped around them (see 3:5) "in white garments and on their heads golden crowns" (*stephanous* - crowns of lesser persons than kings). The ordinary word for the crown of a king is *diadema*. The distinction between these two words lost some significance in later Greek, but in *The Revelation* the distinction seems to hold.

See Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, University of Chicago Press, 1952. *Stephanos* pp. 774; *Diadema*, p. 181.

#### Verse 5

"And out of the throne come forth (*ekporeuoutai*) present ind. the tense graphically changes to the present - keeps on proceeding) lightnings and voices (sounds) and thunders" (Exodus 19:16). This imagery can mean God's judgment, strength, etc. "And the seven lamps of fire are burning (*kaiomenai* - present, passive, participle) before (in front of) the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." Here the seven burning lamps are identified as (*ha eisin* - which are) the seven spirits and these have already been discussed in chapter 1:4.

#### Verse 6

The imagery of this verse plainly comes from Ezekiel 1:5-10; 10:5-20; and Isaiah 6:2-3. We must not permit ourselves to become lost in the details of the imagery. John is describing The Throne room of the universe and chooses that great imagery of the prophets.

#### Verse 7

John now identifies the four living creatures of verse 6. "The first is like a lion, and the second living creature is like a calf, and the third living creature having the face like a man and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle." Though the imagery cannot be identified with absolute certainty by anyone, I believe Swete provides the sanest statement - "The four forms suggest whatever is noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest in animate nature. Nature, including man, is represented before the Throne, taking its part in the fulfillment of the Divine will, and the worship of the Divine Majesty." Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, *op cit.*, p. 71, 72.

#### Verse 8

This imagery comes from Isaiah 6:1ff. The four living creatures "they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was; who is and the coming one." Isaiah's great vision in the Temple provided John with these powerful words.

## SECTION 12

Text 4:9-11

9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, 10 the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created.

Initial Questions 4:9-11

1. Who are the "living creatures" - vs. 9.
2. Is the imagery of vs. 10 that of lesser sovereigns surrendering completely to the Lord?
3. Who alone is worthy to receive the "glory and the honor and the power" - vs. 11?
4. What is the source of all created things according to vs. 11?

Verse 9

"And whenever (*hotan* - plus future tense implies constant repetition of the act of worshipful praise) the living creatures shall give glory and honour and thanks to the one sitting on the throne to the living one unto the ages of the ages; The same is the constant worship of God which takes place in The Throne room itself.

Verse 10

"The twenty-four Elders will fall (*pesountai* - future ind.) before the one sitting on the throne, and they will worship (*proskunesousin* - future ind.) the living one unto the ages of the ages, and will cast (*balousin* - future) their crowns (see comment on vs. 4) before (in front of) the throne saying: The "will cast" down their crowns relates their act of surrender or complete submission to the Lord.

Verse 11

Compare this verse with Paul's declarations in Colossians 1:16. The only one worthy to receive the continued praises



is the Lord God Himself. This verse is important for what follows in chapter 5. The declaration has been made that the only one who is found worthy of praise is almighty God, then in chapter 5 - we see that Jesus Christ is found worthy. This is a clear assertion of the deity of Christ.

Note: Compare vs. 11 with John 1:1-18 and Hebrews 1:1-4. Jesus Christ is there declared to be the source of creation. For an excellent analysis of those eighteen verses see, M.E. Boismard, *St. John's Prologue*, Blackfriars Pub., 34 Bloomsbury Street, London, W. C.1 M. E., Boismard's Commentary on *The Revelation* is one of the best Roman Catholic Commentaries available. We shall discuss this work later.

### Review Questions

#### Chp. 4:1-11

1. What is the point of reference when John says after these things - vs. 1?
2. How important is chp. 4 for the remaining parts of The Revelation - vs. 1?
3. What and who did John see - vs. 2?
4. What is the possible difference between *stephanous* and *diadēma* as discussed in vs. 4? Discuss the significance of the difference.
5. What Old Testament sources were mentioned for the imagery in vs. 6? Read the Old Testament passages, and then discuss.
6. Much of the imagery of The Revelation is taken from the Old Testament. Is there anything added as it is used in this Christian book which would enable us to see a transition from Jewish to Christian imagery?

### SECTION 13

#### Text 5:1-10

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: 5 and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe

of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof. 6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came, and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sing a new song, saying,

Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.

#### Initial Questions 5:1-10

1. In the World of the New Testament, what was the place of a seal on official documents - vs. 1?
2. What were the requirements which must be fulfilled before one would have been worthy to "open the book and loose the seals thereof"? The highest expression of manhood was unworthy!
3. Do these messianic titles (e.g., the Lion - that is of the tribe of Judah, Root of David) relate the Kingdom come through Christ with the Old Testament prophecies of the Messianic Kingdom?
4. What symbolism does the "Lamb standing as though it had been slain" call to mind - vs. 6? (e.g., sacrifice, atonement, etc.)
5. What view of the person of Christ is implied in His accepting the worship and praise of creatures - vss. 9-10?
6. What were the results of Christ's work mentioned in vss. 9-10?

#### The Sealed Book and The Lamb

##### Chp. 5:1-14

#### 5:1-10

#### Verse 1

John's vision continues—"And I saw (*eidon* - aorist. - in a single act John saw) upon (*epi*) the right hand (hand - not

in text) of the one sitting upon the Throne a scroll having been written within and on the reverse side, having been sealed (katesphragismenon - perf. pass. part. - the prefixed preposition *kata* means sealed down) with seven seals." The seals signified the authentication marks of the document. Charles says that "a will in Roman law bore the seven seals of seven witnesses." He was an expert in the background sources of the Apocalypse. The imagery would have been meaningful to every literate person in the New Testament world.

The book that John saw is the title deed to earth. The book contained the judgments of the living God as represented in the seven seals of trumpets, and the seven vials of wrath." These judgments are essential in order to bring the earth under the control of the Lord of the universe. When the call to open the book is made public by "a strong angel proclaiming in a loud voice"; no one is found able, but the Root of David. The angel continued to proclaim (kerussouta - present parti. - continually proclaimed) and after extensive inquiry no one was found "who is worthy to open the scroll and to loosen the seals of it?"

#### Verse 3

"----- no one was able (*edunato* - imperfect) in the heaven nor on the earth nor underneath the earth to open the scroll nor to look at it." The entire universe declines the challenge! No man nor angel was found who could respond to heaven's challenge. Why? What were the requirements?

#### Verse 4

"And I kept on weeping much - (*eklaion polu* - perf. act. plus *polu* - this weeping was so audible that one of Elders kept speaking much to me.

#### Verse 5

"And one out of the Elders says to me: Stop weeping (*mē klaie* - neg. plus present imperative). Look here (behold)—The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David overcame" (*enikesen* - 1st aor. act. ind. - the victory was won in a single act, not in a process - overcame by one act! the root verb is *nike* - victory). The 1901 translates "hath overcome" and thus does not show the singularity of the victory act," "to open the scroll and the seven seals of it." The only one worthy was also the only one able to open the seals, the Son of God, the rightful sovereign of the universe. Who was able?

The Messiah, a descendant of Judah and David (Genesis 49:9; Jeremiah 23:5; Matthew 1:17; Luke 3:31; Acts 2:30; Matthew 22:41-45) won the victory once and for all on the Cross. (See Isaiah 11 for the prophecy about the shoot of Jesse.)

#### Verse 6

Here we are taken to the very center of the Throne room. "And I saw in the midst of the Throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the Elders a Lamb standing (*hestekos* - perfect participle) as having been slain (*esphagmenon* - perfect passive participle - this verb suggests violence and also sacrifice, both are involved in the cross and the atonement) having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God having been sent forth into all the earth." Here we notice the paradoxical imagery of a slaughtered Lamb, yet, standing. The great fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is without question in the background. The Book of Acts (8:32) identifies this Lamb as Jesus Christ. (See Edward Young, *Studies in Isaiah*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954, chp. 4 "Of Whom Speaketh the Prophet This? pp. 103-125).

#### Verse 7

"And he came (*elthen* - 2 aor. indicative - the single act - came) and has taken (*eilēphen* - perfect tense) out of the right (hand - not in text, but implied) of the one sitting upon the throne." Christ came and has taken the scroll from the hand of the Father. His work on the Cross and the empty tomb has qualified Him to open the seals of doom which are about to be hurled upon the earth.

#### Verse 8

"When he (Christ) took (*elaben* - 2 aor. active - single act - took) the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four Elders fell (*epeson* - 1st aor. ind. act. - fall instantaneously, those closest to the one sitting on the throne fell quickest) before (in front of) the Lamb," in an act of worshipful surrender those surrounding the Throne acknowledged the deity of The Lamb, "each one having a harp and golden bowls (plural) being full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." The *kithapa* (harp) probably signifies a lute or guitar.

## Verse 9

"They keep on singing (*adousin* - present tense) a new song saying: Worthy art thou to receive the scroll and to open the seals of it, because thou wast slain (*esphagēs* - 2 aor. passive) and didst purchase (*egorasas* - 1 aor. ind. act., through the act of being slain Christ did purchase by a single act) to God by thy blood out of every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation." Here we see the clear and categorical assertion of the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. Alien sinners can be restored to God, but only by acknowledging the Lordship of Christ. Forgiveness of sin is available only in Him. This fact makes missions and evangelism imperative!

Note: See the appendix and *The Lamb and His Blood in the Revelation* immediately following this chapter. For an excellent study on the vocabulary of redemption see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of The Cross*, Eerdmans, 1956—terms analyzed—Redemption, Covenant, The Blood, Propitiation, Reconciliation, and Justification.

## Verse 10

What was the result of Christ's work? See 1:6 for discussion of "kingdom" and "priests" and "they will reign."

## SECTION 14

## Text 5:11-14

11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 saying with a great voice,

Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

13 And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying,

Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

## Initial Question 5:11-14

1. Does the contrast between "every created thing" in vs. 13 and--unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever" clearly state the deity of Christ?

A New Segment of the Vision  
Chp 5:11-14

*Verse 11*

John not only "saw" but declares "I heard a sound of many angels round the throne and the living creatures and the Elders, and the number of them was (*ēn* - imperfect) ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands." An untold number of worshippers surrounded the Throne. They expressed the thrill of the presence of God by drawing deep into their spiritual reservoir and continually sing the praises of God. The ability to sing God's eternal praises is one of the acid tests of real spiritual concern in our own Christian lives today. Oh, the dearth of great Christian music in our age! Why?

*Verse 12*

In one united voice they shouted "worthy is the Lamb"--see 5:6. The victory of the Lamb in overcoming sin, hell, and the grave won for Him "the power." Power can be forgiving or taking. Christ's power is for giving eternal life or that which no man can attain for himself. Though there is only one article for all the characteristics mentioned, I agree with Vincent that the "one article includes all the particulars, as if they formed but one word." Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 492.

The next thing Christ receives is "the riches." II Cor. 8:9 "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." Christ is worthy to receive all the riches of glory for His work of redemption. The others of the "seven excellencies" are wisdom, strength, and honour, and glory, and blessings. These last glorious attributes are added beyond the great praise to the Lamb by the Elders, etc., in 4:11. The doxology which is offered to the Lamb is more exhaustive than the doxology to the creator in the concluding verse of chapter four. No one could compare these great doxologists without concluding that there is

no other single place in scripture where the deity of Jesus Christ is more emphatically declared.

### Verse 13

Now the whole universe is marshalled together to sing His praises. Here we see a marvelous affirmation of the deity of The Lamb. In chapter 4:8-11 we noted how the "living creatures" worshipped "the one sitting on the throne." Now we see a clear act of worship which is received by one other than the Father. Who is it? John heard them "saying: To the one sitting on the Throne and to the Lamb the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the might unto the ages of the ages." No angel ever accepted worship in the biblical records (see 19:10 - where the angel refused worship) contrary to the claim of Jehovah's Witnesses Theology. Jesus is never called an angel in the apocalypse, or any place else. (Some identify Jesus with the angel of Yahwah in the Old Testament, but we cannot enter that discussion here. This thesis cannot be exegetically established). The characteristic attributed to the Father (chp. 4) are here attributed to The Lamb!

### Verse 14

The four living creatures said *amen* to the praises of members of the universe, i.e., creatures in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and now the occupants of the Throne room of heaven says *amen* to these glorious words of praise. "And the elders fell (*epasan* - 1st. aor. ind. fall in a single act.) and worshipped (*prosekunesan* - 1 aor. ind. - worshipped in a single act). The worship of the Lamb (chp. 5:8-14) is composed of three songs: (1) The Song of Creation (4:9-11); (2) The Song of Redemption (5:8-10) and (3) The Song of the Universal Chorus (5:11-14).

Note: See the Special Studies for sermon suggestions on the biblical doctrine of worship, and a sketch of an outline for a sermon series.

## Review Questions

### Chp. 5:1-14

1. What was the significance of seals in Roman Law - vs.1?
2. Who was found in vs. 2 that was able to open the seals?
3. How did John respond to the failure to find one who was worthy to open the seals - vs. 4?

4. One was found worthy and able. What messianic terms were used to describe Him - vs. 5? Read the O.T. passages given. Discuss.
5. From what vantage point does John receive the vision mentioned in vs. 6?
6. What is the Lamb of Isaiah 53? Where in the N.T. is He identified - vs. 6?
7. Why was the Lamb worthy according to vs. 9?
8. Who is found worshipping the Lamb according to vs. 13?
9. Read and discuss the content of the three songs sung to the Lamb - vs. 14!

### *Biblical Theology of Worship*

#### *Why Go To Church?*

When You Go, Do You Find?

- I. Anticipation of receiving something by preparation?
- II. Participation versus the religious observer?
- III. Spiritual Satisfaction?

Conclusion: Why Do *You* Go To Church?

### *Recovering The Thrill of Worship*

At least these five elements are present in the biblical doctrine of worship.

- I. Recollection: The Church exists and we are saved, because of something God in Christ has done. (The events of the Gospel).
- II. Recollection generates Thanksgiving.
- III. This necessitates that we Participate by being spiritually mature enough to accept the forgiveness of Christ.
- IV. Real Participation means that we are also engaged in Proclamation.
- V. Proclamation genders expectation (and vice versa).

Conclusion: James S. Stewart of Scotland, the greatest preacher who uses the English tongue said of the American Churches—"they seemed to have lost the original spark or thrill of worship."

### *Do We Leave as We Entered?*

Introduction: We go into the House of God troubled or burdened! How do we come out?



- I. Act of Reverence.
- II. Act of Fellowship.
- III. Act of Dedication.
- IV. Act of Renewal

Conclusion: If we seriously examined our worship life as Christians, what would we find out about our real relationship to Jesus Christ?

### *Special Study*

#### *The Biblical Doctrine of Worship*

is much broader than a few hours each week being set aside for corporate worship. Archaeological evidence is irrefutable that Church buildings were a later innovation. Many people have the false notion that an hour or two on the Lord's Day exhausts the biblical requirements of worship.

- I. The Place of Worship.
- II. The Times of Worship.
- III. The Content of Worship.

Excellent insight can also be gained by studying the vocabulary, both Old and New Testaments, which are translated singularly by our English word - worship. It is highly improbable that one English term can adequately translate several words from either the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament.

### *Outline*

#### Seminar: Biblical Theology of Worship

Introduction: Hebrew and Greek Vocabulary of Worship.

- I. Antecedents to Old Testament Concept of Worship. Worship among Neighbors of Israel.
- II. Worship in Historical Perspective: Worship in Various Periods of Old Testament History.
  1. Law - Genesis, chapter 1-11  
Genesis, chapter 12ff.  
Pentateuch
  2. Historical Books In Promised Land - Joshua - Judges - Ruth
  3. Prophets - Worship
    - a. True Worship
    - b. False Worship

4. Wisdom - Wisdom Literature - Worship
- III. Post Old Testament Literature and Worship  
Intertestamental Literature and Worship
- IV. Antecedent Worship Concepts of New Testament Period in environment
  - Greek
  - Hebraic—Judaism
  - Roman
- V. Worship in The Gospel Records and New Testament Proper
  1. Synoptics - Matthew, Mark, Luke
  2. John
  3. Acts
  4. Epistles - Pauline
  5. Epistles - Johannine
  6. Epistles - General Epistles
  7. Hebrews - Revelation

Theological Vocabulary of Worship: O.T. and N.T.

Vocabulary - Multiple Hebrew Vocabulary - One English Word - Worship

1. Persons
2. Places
3. Ceremony
4. Personal/Corporate Worship
5. Revelation - Worship
6. Worship and The Word
7. Worship and Holy Spirit
8. Worship and Spiritual Preparation
9. Worship and Spiritual Maturation
10. Necessary and Sufficient Aspects of Worship
11. Worship as an Activity: Intentionality of the Participants  
(Behaviorism and Activity): A Real Human Act or Mere Activity and Worship.
12. Worship and Biblical Doctrine of Unity
13. Preaching and Worship
14. Teaching and Worship
15. Baal Worship - Hosea
16. Vocabulary - Idol, Image - types of graven, carved  
Grove  
High Place
17. The Ten Words and Idols - Deut. 5: Ex. 20:
18. Jewish Architecture
19. Roman Catholic Translation of Decalogue

- Latin
- Trent on Idolatry
- Aquinas
- Catholic Use of Idols
- 20. Standard Denominational Churches
- 21. Free Churches
- 22. Worship in The Protestant Creeds
- 23. Ecumenical Theology Worship
  - A. Ministry
  - B. Sacraments
- 24. Conscience - Worship - Offense, Offended, Offender
  - I Cor. 8 - Romans 14: - Commands, Imperative moods
  - More than one conscience involved!
- 25. O.T. Prophecies of worship in the Messianic Kingdom and Dispensationalism's Hermeneutics
- 26. Use of Matthew
  - Literal fulfillment - return to O.T. Sacrificial system, Temple, etc.
- 27. Cornelius - Acts 2
  - Acts 10
  - Synagogue - Paul in Acts
  - Paul's consistency and synagogue participation
- 28. Criterion and Method for determine the Essential from the non-essential Aspects of Biblical Christianity.
- 29. What is universal, necessary, sufficient for Christian Worship!
  - A. Commands
  - B. Examples Same also for Restoring N.T. Church, e.g.
  - C. Expediency Imperative form e.g., Acts 2:38
- 30. Worship and Biblical Doctrine of Truth
  - emunah* means truth, faith, trust
  - Re: Worship in Spirit and Truth
- 31. The Biblical concept of worship and the problem of non-Christian concepts of worship and the problem of missions.

#### Brief Annotated Bibliography on Worship

Ilion T. Jones, *A Historical Approach to Evangelical Worship*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1954. Good, basic work giving historical perspective.

N. Micklem, editor, *Christian Worship*, Oxford, reprinted, 1954. Made up of 15 articles divided into 3 basic sections: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Studies.

Louis M. Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, SPCL Press, London, 5th edition, 1956. Covers the Latin (Western) Liturgy to the time of Charlemagne.

*Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Article on Worship, Vol. 4, pp. 879-90, Abingdon, Nashville, 1962. This Dictionary was written by scholars who do not accept the Scriptures as the very Word of God, but this article is very good and has bibliography.

*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15, pp. 710-713. Robert Appleton Co., N.Y., 1912. Official R. C. position with bibliography.

Consult any major Bible Dictionaries such as *Hastings, 20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*; also consult the *Jewish Encyclopedia* for article on worship. There is a vast literature on Worship but there is no competent work on the biblical doctrine worship, especially the N.T. doctrine. We hope and pray this gap will be filled by one committed to Biblical Christianity.

### *Special Study*

#### The Lamb and His Blood in The Revelation Chapters 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 12:11

The word blood occurs in the following four passages:

- Chapter 1:5 - "*en tō haimati autou*" - "by his blood."
- Chapter 5:9 - "*hoti esphagēs kai ēgorosas tō theō en tō haimati son*" - "because thou wast slain and didst purchase to God by thy blood."
- Chapter 7:14 - "*en tō haimati tou arniou*" - "in the blood of the Lamb."
- Chapter 12:11 - "*dia to aima tou arniou*" - "because of the blood of the Lamb."

John the Baptizer addresses Jesus as the Lamb (*amnos* - the ordinary word for Lamb - John 1:29 and 36) or God, which taketh away the sin of the cosmos." C.H. Dodd denies that John could have had in mind the passover lamb, and the lamb of Isaiah 53:1ff. How Dr. Dodd came by this amazing information is not revealed in his work. For those interested in examining Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53 see S.R. Driver, A. Neubauer, *The Fifty Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*, volume I, *Texts*, ed. by Driver and Neubauer; Volume II, *Translation*, same as above, Oxford University Press, London, 1876-77.

In The Revelation the term *Lamb* is used of Christ twenty-eight times. The fundamental idea is always sacrificial. It is

very significant that of all the N.T. Literature it is only in John's Gospel and The Revelation that we find references to the *Lamb of God*. (We need not consider the problem of the different terms for Lamb in John (*he amnos*), and in the Revelation (*to arnion*) respectively). In the Revelation the Lamb has two vital characteristics. He is first of all the sacrificial Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world"; secondly He is the conquering Lamb. (See Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to The Theology of The New Testament*, Harper & Bros. New York, 1958, pp. 225-229 - neither a liberal nor conservative study).

Through the symbol of the lamb, John was able to transmit the marvelously complex soteriological and Christological teaching in one symbol. John also combines the glorified and suffering aspects of our saviour's life. The imagery of the death of Christ always moves in the realm of exaltation and glory. In the Revelation we see the beautiful correlation of the death and glory of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

The Lamb never appears except in the grand scenes of enthronement pageantry. In John's vision of heaven he saw the redeemer as "the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the shoot of Jesse." In a lightening flash John identifies the object of his vision, then immediately he changes the imagery from a Lion to a Lamb. In the very Throne room of the universe John declares that he saw "a Lamb standing, as having been slain" (5:6). The divine paradox seems inconceivable—how a Lamb can stand, and look as if it is slain at the same time. This great imagery was meant to convey ideas; it was never meant to torture the imagination.

The relationship of the saint's victory and the blood of the Lamb is specifically stated in the second vision (7:9-17). John saw a great multitude in white robes, and these "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (7:14). These have passed through the great tribulation victoriously. But their victory was not attained by their own blood, but rather "the Blood of The Lamb."

Everywhere in *The Revelation* the Blood of Christ is asserted to be the vicarious sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the great vision of the elect (7:9-17) the *Lamb* has become the great *Shepherd* who is leading the redeemed to the water of life.

The Christian's victory over Satan and his darkness is directly attributed to the power of the "Blood of the Lamb" (12:11). All evil is overcome in Christ's victory. His was the only

sacrifice in the history of man in which the victim became victor through the act of being the victim. This is the paradox of the ages, and will not be unraveled until He comes again, and we speak with Him.

We must also note that John calls the Apostles, "the Apostles, of the Lamb," (Rev. 21:14). Here we see that the ones sent (apostles) went as ambassadors of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the cosmos."

It is very possible that the hymns to the Lamb in *The Revelation* were songs of the apostolic church. (See J. Bonsirven, *Theologie du Nouveau Testament*, Paris; Aubier, 1951, p. 193). We can still hear the ancient saints singing: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us for God with thy blood." In this same vein a more recent saint, Isaac Watts (1647-1748) sings the same glorious song.

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed, and did my  
Sov-reign die?  
Would He devote that sacred head for sinners such as I?

or

When I survey the wondrous cross, On which the Prince  
of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on  
all my pride.

See the following for brief outline studies of the *Biblical Doctrine of the Blood*.

*A Companion to The Bible*, edited by J. J. von Allmen with introduction by H. H. Rowley, Oxford University Press, New York, 1958, pp. 38-41. Only those who can discern what the biblical doctrine actually is should consult this mediating work.

*A Theological Word of the Bible*, ed. by A. Richardson, MacMillan and Co., New York, 1950, pp. 33-34.

*The Apostolic Preaching of The Cross*, Leon Morris, Eerdmans, 1956, pp. 108-124. He discusses the views of B. F. Westcott's Sandy and Headlam, *et al*.

*The Meaning of the Word Blood in Scripture*, A. M. Stibbs, The Tyndale Press, London, 1958 reprint. A very good, brief study by a British Evangelical. Excellent place to start studying this central biblical teaching. This is not a technical discussion.

## SECTION 15

Text: 6:1-2

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I Heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come. 2 And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon has a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer.

Initial Questions 6:1-2

1. After the Lamb opened one of the seals John was commanded to "come" and then he saw what - vs 2?
2. What does the "crown" symbolize?
3. Who is the "he came forth conquering, and to conquer" - vs. 2?

## The Opening of The First Six Seals

Chp. 6:1-17

First Part of the Vision Chp. 6:1-2

All that has gone before was preparatory for this moment of the breaking of the seven seals. We should note the outline that John follows through the next six chapters. The first four seals will be broken at once, and will together form one picture. Then the 5th and 6th seals will be broken, together structuring one complete picture. Then there will be some intermediate material leading finally into the breaking of the 7th Seal. The 7th Seal, in turn, is the introduction to the 7 trumpets that follow. The same general outline is followed concerning the seven trumpets. This structure is the product of the Semitic mind, which runs through the same picture again and again. Therefore, we must not apply the logical canons of Western thought of this book.

After the seal had been opened, John heard one of the four living creatures saying - Come (*erchon* - present imperative - a command to come). The symbolism of the horse is related to the first four seals (see Zechariah 1:8ff; 6:1ff) as the symbol of the horse is used in the scripture, it is always connected war, conquest, strength, etc. (See also Rev. 9:7; 14:20; 18:13; 19:11.)

Though we would not be dogmatic about the identification of "the rider on the white horse," we do not concur with Lenski (*Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, Wartburg Press, Columbus, Ohio, 1935; an excellent commentary by late conservative Lutheran), and W. Hendriksen (*More Than Conquerors*,

Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan, 1952 - a fine popular statement by excellent conservative Presbyterian Scholars), that the rider on the white horse is Christ. Oscar Cullmann is also mistaken in this identification (see his *Christ and Time*, pp. 169ff). It is improbable that the rider on the white horse in chp. 6:2 is the same person as the rider on a white horse in chp. 19:11ff. From a mere consideration of the symbol one could draw the conclusion that the two riders are the same, but in view of the context the identification of the two riders with the Christ seems to this author to be highly unlikely. (See Swete, *op cit.*, p. 86.)

A. T. Robertson (See N.T. World Studies) is probably right in identifying the rider on the white horse with the white horses of Persian Kings and Roman conquerors in their processions of victory. This particular identification would certainly be understood by John's readers, and in the light what follows it can stand as an undogmatic interpretation. The rider is prepared for conflict. This rider carried a heavy war bow. And the one sitting on it having a bow and was given to him a crown, (*stephanos* - victors crown see 4:10) and he went forth overcoming (*nikon* - present participle - constantly overcoming) and in order that (*hina* - clause or purpose clause) or for the purpose that he might overcome (*nikēsē* - 1 aor. subjunctive).

In view of this one conquering we can do no better than to remind ourselves of Paul's words to the Church at Rome. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)

## SECTION 16

Text: 6:3-4

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. 4 And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Initial Questions 6:3-4

1. The opening of the second seal revealed what - vs. 4?
2. Who gave the rider permission "to take peace from the earth - vs. 4?
3. What does the great sword symbolize?



## Verse 3

The second seal was opened and the second living creature commanded that John "come" in order to see the content of the second seal.

## Verse 4

War is the content of this seal. "And another horse went forth, a red horse (horse implied but not in text - the horse was flame colored - *purros* from *pur* - fire) and to the one sitting on it was given (*edothē* - 1 aor. ind. pass. the pass. voice - means that someone else give or permitted him to take peace from the earth, and the aor. tense means that this power was given in a single act) to him to take peace out of (*ek*) the earth and in order that, (or for the purpose that--another *hina* clause) they shall slay one another - (reciprocal killing--each other), and a great sword was given (passive voice) to him. The word translated sword (*machaira*) is used in the Septuagint for the sacrificial knife used by Abraham (see Genesis 22:6,10).

This condition of war is probably a precursor to Harmagedon (chp. 16). Jesus' great discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world in Matthew 24:1-51 will provide much insight for this section of *The Revelation*. James speaks of the ultimate source of war (chp. 5:1ff). Ours is an age when war has become normal. What does this say of the spiritual foundations of western civilization? Who is involved in this war mentioned in this verse - Church against world, or nation against nation?

Note: War and Peace are two dominate themes in 20th century thought. The prophet of Israel taunted "You cry Peace - Peace, when there is no Peace." Men still cry peace, and we are participating in a most precarious peace. Shall evil or righteousness prevail? The Revelation was written to give the answer that righteousness shall prevail over persecution, pain, and war, because God in Christ won the victory over darkness. This is one of the central reasons for the resurgent relevance of *The Revelation* in our day. It is a book for times of crisis. (See Pedersen's monumental work on *Israel*, Oxford University Press for an excellent analysis of the concept of *peace* in the O.T.)

Christ is the righteousness of God! The root of the Hebrew term for righteousness means three things: (1) righteous one; (2) innocent one; (3) victorious one. Christ's victory stands in marked contrast to the grotesque, barbaric Greek understanding of victory. There shall be no *Peace* upon the face of the earth

until the *Prince of Peace* reigns in every mortal heart. Peace cannot be brought about by a "One World Government"! If men want ultimate Peace, it is to be found in the *wholeness* of the holiness of God in Christ.

## SECTION 17

### Text 6:5-6

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse: and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not.

### Initial Questions 6:5-6

1. What does "the balance" symbolize - vs. 5?
2. Wheat and Barley is very scarce and expensive - vs. 6. What does this imply?
3. Where in the Old Testament does this symbolism of the scarcity and expensiveness of basic food stuffs originate? (See Ezekiel Chp. 4:16; 5:16f.)
4. Why the command not to hurt the oil and wine?

### Verse 5

The third seal revealed "a black horse, and the one sitting on it having a balance in his hand." Black signifies famine and weeping (see Jeremiah 4:28; 8:21; Malachi 3:14 - where mourning is literally "in black.") The rider on the black horse carried a pair of scales (*zugon*). What was the purpose of this scale or balance? John hurries to inform us!

### Verse 6

John heard one of "the four living creatures saying: a choenix (a measure of some kind) of wheat for a denarius (about a penny), and three measures of barley for a denarius; and the oil and the wine do not harm." Famine is the key to this imagery. Food was scarce, and what was available had an exorbitant price tag on it. Though our present day inflation would make the prices vary considerably, we can see the picture from

I. T. Beckwith's, (*The Apocalypse of John*, MacMillan, N. Y. 1919, p. 520 - excellent, a must for advanced study.) statement that grain sold at twelve times its regular cost. We can see the picture better when we know that a denarius was a day's wages. Here we clearly see the results of war. Wheat, barley, oil, and wine were the staple foods in Asia Minor and Palestine in the first century. Luxuries were unavailable, and even the staples were not abundantly available. Only those who survived with enough money could purchase the scarce food items. What does this imply for those who could not afford the high cost of famine and suffering? Scarcity is the ultimate cost of human conflicts (See Leviticus 26:26 and Ezekial 4:16.)

## SECTION 18

### Text 6:7-8

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. 8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts the earth.

### Initial Questions 6:7-8

1. Who was the rider of the "pale horse" - vs. 8?
2. Who followed behind this rider?
3. How extensive were his powers and how great his authority - vs. 8?
4. How is the devastation spoken of in vs. 8 - related to the will and purpose of God?

### Verse 7

John was again commanded to "come" and see the content of the seal.

## Verse 8

He saw - "A pale green horse, and the one sitting upon it, his name (was) Death, and hades (transcribed from the Greek term *hadēs* - this is not a translation of the term) followed with him," . . . . The name of this rider, following the Semitic pattern was called by his chief characteristic. Semitic names were always descriptive of a major attribute of the bearer. What follows war and famine? Plagues and pestilence are always hard on the heels of war and scarcity. This rider is described as pale, livid, corpse-like. The imagery is ghastly! "And was given (pass. voice someone else gave them this authority - it was not an intrinsic characteristic,) to them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with famine and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth." (*hupo* instead of *en* indicating actual agents) See Ezekiel 14:21 and the judgments discussed there). John reveals this terrible situation which comes upon the Christian and unChristian alike. Does faith in Jesus Christ make any difference when intense evil is inflicted upon the earth? Our Faith must be the victory! The third verse of that grand old hymn is very much to the point.

*Faith Is the Victory!*

To him that overcomes the foe - white raiment shall be  
giv'n;  
Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in  
heav'n;  
Then onward from the hills of light, Our hearts with  
love aflame;  
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus' con-  
qu'ring name.  
Faith is the Victory----Faith is the Victory----  
Faith is the Victory that overcomes the world.

## SECTION 16

## Text 6:9-11

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a

great voice, saying, How long, O master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.

#### Initial Questions 6:9-11

1. Where were the souls of the slain found - vs. 9?
2. Why were they slain - vs. 9?
3. Does vs. 10 relate the cry of those impatient for justice? (Note Habakkuk's cry in the Old Testament.)
4. What does the "white robes" of vs. 11 signify? Who received them?

#### Verse 9

The fifth and sixth seals go together. When the fifth seal is opened, the martyrs are standing under God's altar, crying for vengeance. They are told that they must wait for God's appointed time. The altar imagery is taken directly from the tabernacle (Exodus 39:39; 40:29). This is the altar of sacrifice (*thusiastēriou*). This is the term used in Acts 17:23 (an altar to an unknown god). We must not lose sight of the imagery that the souls were underneath or covered over by the place where the sacrifice for sin was made. John saw "the souls of the ones having been slain (*esphagmenōn* - passive perfect participle - the term has a sacrificial significance, and implies violence) because of (or on account of - *dia* with the accusative has causal force) the Word of God, and because of (same structure as previous phrase) the witness which they had. The reasons for their being slain were the same for John being banded to Patmos.

#### Verse 10

The martyrs cried for vengeance! The O.T. prophet Habakkuk asked God the same thing regarding the apparent victory and prosperity of the wicked—"How long?" Abraham asked the Lord of Heaven - "will not the judge of the whole earth be righteous (or do righteously?) Why do the martyred saints cry for vengeance? How does this passage fit in with the contemporary resurgence of the heresy of universalism (that everyone is going to be saved ultimately)? With great volume "they cried saying: until when (how long), master, the holy and true, judgest