

# Interpretation — the Book of Revelation

## *Indispensable Things Which MUST Be Understood*

(Material in this article has been written to provide information concerning certain things about the Book of Revelation, seeking to promote a correct study of this book.

Very little, if any, support has been given for statements in the article itself, for a number of these statements, properly explained and supported, would require numerous pages of data, which are already available elsewhere.

Rather, following each section in the article, attention has been called to different places where this information can be found [articles, chapters in books, or complete books, written by the author]. And the referenced books are some of the main books, *not* the only books, where particular referenced information can be found.)

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John” (Rev. 1:1).

”And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10).

The Book of Revelation is about *a particular subject, transmitted a particular way, through a particular means. And THIS has ALL been revealed in the opening verse.*

## Understanding the Opening verse

Understand what has been revealed in this opening verse, introducing the book, *and you will have God's provided key to properly understand that seen throughout the book.*

*BUT, fail to grasp the introductory things revealed in this opening verse and there can be NO proper understanding of the things revealed in this book.*

### 1) About a Particular Subject

The Book of Revelation, throughout, by its own introductory statement, has to do with a revelation, a revealing, of "things which must shortly come to pass." The book *is about events during FUTURE time, NOT about events during PRESENT time.* And this revelation of FUTURE events *begins in chapter one, NOT, as almost universally taught, in chapter four.*

This introductory verse, followed by eight additional introductory verses (vv. 1-9), reflecting back on that stated in the opening verse, takes the reader to the beginning of the "things which must shortly come to pass" (vv. 10ff)

### 2) Transmitted a Particular Way

The Book of Revelation, dealing throughout with an *unveiling* ("The revelation ['unveiling'] of Jesus Christ," a making known, a bringing "the mystery of God" to completion [Rev. 10:7]), does this in such a manner that the book throughout, as previously seen, is a revelation of "things which must shortly come to pass."

And, to accomplish the preceding, material throughout the book has been given in a particularly stated use of lan-

guage, shown by the word “signified.”

To emphasize a fundamental approach to the book, as opposed to some type spiritualizing approach, it is common to hear individuals state that *the book should be taken “literally.”*

That is all good and well, *BUT* far from complete without taking into account *HOW the book states in the opening verse that the language throughout has been structured.*

For information concerning the word “signified,” refer to the author’s article, “Salvation Realized in Revelation.”)

### 3) *Transmitted through a Particular Means*

Material in the book, originating from God, revealing His Son, was given by God’s Son to John through an angel. This angel was introduced in the opening verse through a simple, oft-overlooked statement, and is not seen again until Rev. 19:10.

Everything between these two verses (1:1-19:10) has to do with that which God had given to His Son to be made known “by [‘through’] his angel unto his servant John.”

And this revelation, in relation to events, begins with the removal (rapture) of the Church at the end of the dispensation and continues to the time of Christ’s millennial reign.

Thus, this revelation covers events immediately preceding, during, and following Daniel’s unfulfilled Seventieth Week.

(Note that the preceding four paragraphs contain seeming peculiarities in relation to the chronology of events in Rev. 19 [e.g., apart from an understanding of prior revelation in the book and the manner in which the book has been structured, an individual might be led to believe that events in vv. 1-10 occur before events in vv. 11-21, though in actuality, events in the former verses occur after events in the latter verses].

The preceding will be dealt with and discussed later in this article [pp. 9b-13a], following an overview of the book up to that point.

And parallel statements in the book at the beginning and end of this time [time covering events occurring immediately before the removal of the Church to the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom] will be discussed in this latter part of the article as well.)

Note these parallel statements referenced in the last paragraph of the preceding material:

“...the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:2, 9)

“...the testimony of Jesus...it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus” (19:10).

### **Chapters One through Three**

As previously stated, this book, following nine introductory verses, begins its revelation of future events by showing John being removed from Man’s Day on earth into the Lord’s Day in heaven (v. 10), depicting (signifying) the Church being removed from Man’s Day on earth into the Lord’s Day in heaven at the end of the present dispensation:

“I was [‘I became’] in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.”

And the book, continuing from this verse, deals with events surrounding the Church following the rapture.

Thus, *at THIS point*, the book continues with events at the end of the present dispensation, continuing from there with future events throughout the remainder of the book.

In these subsequent verses (vv. 11ff), verses following the rapture, the complete Church (“seven” Churches, showing

*completeness*), dealt with in chapters two and three, is seen in heaven, in Christ's presence, with Christ *NO LONGER* occupying His high priestly position (a position occupied throughout the present dispensation) *BUT, NOW* (following the present dispensation), He is seen occupying the office of *JUDGE*.

And the judgment scene from chapter one, regarding the seven Churches in chapters two and three, simply continues into and through these two chapters. And this is accomplished by both the manner in which the book is structured ("signified") and the additional manner in which each of the seven epistles to these seven Churches is structured (a manifestation of works, with a view to either overcoming or being overcome).

As well, it is evident that chapters two and three, drawing from and directed to seven existing Churches in Asia during the first century, have to do with more than just a revelation of particular future events, continuing from chapter one. It is evident that a history of the Church throughout the dispensation has been set forth in these two chapters as well.

*BUT*, though this is the case, the primary interpretation of that seen throughout these two chapters *can ONLY be understood, contextually, as continuing from chapter one*. The opening verses in the book, along with that seen in 1:10ff, *would prevent ANY other primary understanding of these chapters*.

The historical aspect, also seen in chapters two and three (or any aspect of God dealing with Christians during the present dispensation rather than following the rapture), *can ONLY be a secondary understanding of these chapters, NOT the primary interpretation*.

(For additional information concerning the preceding, refer to the author's books, *The Time of the End* [Chapters IV, V], *Christians After the Rapture*, *The Rapture and Beyond*, and *I Know Thy Works*.)

## Chapter Four

Chapter four drops back and begins *at EXACTLY* the same place that the revelation of future events began in chapter one, with the removal of the Church from the earth at the end of the dispensation.

And, viewing the historical aspect of chapters two and three, this is *EXACTLY* what is seen elsewhere in Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments — the Church removed at the end of the dispensation, preceding the Tribulation.

(Beginning at the same point in time previously dealt with [the rapture (1:10;4:1, 2a)] is in complete keeping with the way that matters are often dealt with throughout the book [a feature of Biblical revelation seen *NOT ONLY* in this book *BUT* throughout Scripture, discussed later in this article].)

Then note Rev. 1:19 in connection with what has been covered thus far, a verse which provides a divisional layout for the entire book:

“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [‘after these things’].”

“The things which thou hast seen” are the things preceding this verse in chapter one following his removal from Man’s Day on earth into the Lord’s Day in heaven (vv. 10-18).

“The things which are” then continue from chapter one into chapters two and three, with the complete Church in heaven, in Christ’s presence, being judged.

And “the things which shall be hereafter [‘after these things’]” has to do with revealed events following this judgment — events beginning in chapter four and continuing throughout the remainder of the book.

Then note how the latter, beginning at the same point in time as the former [1:10], is set forth in Rev. 4:1, 2a:

"After this ['After these things'] I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter ['after these things'].

And immediately I was ['I became'] in the spirit..."

Note the words "hereafter" and "after this" in 1:19 and 4:1 ("hereafter" in 1:19 and both "after this" and "hereafter" in 4:1).

These words, in all three instances, are translations of the Greek words *meta tauta* and should be consistently translated "after these things." The use of these two Greek words in both verses point to the same time — the time following the judgment of Christians, with additional information provided beginning immediately following their latter usage, in 4:2b ff.

Chapter four has to do with twenty-four crowned elders seated on thrones before God's rainbow-encircled throne.

And the introduction and action of these twenty-four elders — arising from their thrones and casting their crowns before God's throne — is an event which *could NOT occur UNTIL this point in time, UNTIL AFTER Christians had been judged.*

This is the first thing mentioned following the judgment of Christians and *is significant beyond degree.* This has to do with action anticipated since the creation and fall of Adam, *something which, as previously stated, could NOT be done BEFORE this time, 6,000 years later.*

*This could NOT be done BEFORE issues of the judgment seat (chs. 1b-3), BEFORE a revealing of those who are to occupy the throne as co-heirs with Christ when He takes the kingdom, BEFORE a manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:18-23).*

And this relinquishment of crowns is with a view to that day. It is with a view to the transfer of power from the hands of angels into the hands of man (Heb. 2:5).

(For additional information concerning the actions of the twenty-four elders in this chapter, refer to the author's article, "Crowns Cast Before God's Throne.")

## Chapter Five

*NOT ONLY* must fallen man be redeemed, Christ's co-heirs be shown forth, and the transfer of power from the hands of angels to the hands of man occur, *BUT* the domain over which angels have ruled and man is about to rule *has to be redeemed as well*.

*And THAT is what chapter five is about.*

In connection with man's fall, the domain, the previously restored earth, was cursed. And, to lift this curse *REQUIRES* redemption, *which, whether man or the earth, REQUIRES death and shed blood* (Gen. 3:17, 21; 4:8-11; Heb. 12:24).

Then, in connection with death and shed blood, God's further judgmental terms for the earth's redemption *MUST* be carried out.

Both are seen in chapter five (death and shed blood, and the seven-sealed scroll).

Then, the breaking of the seals on the scroll — by the One Who had died and shed His blood, revealing the judgmental terms for the redemption of the inheritance — are seen in chapters six through nineteen.

Redemption of the preceding nature is initially seen in Gen. 1. The earth was restored, and man was created to hold the sceptre in the stead of Satan and his angels.

Then, the same thing is seen again 6,000 years later in Rev. 5. The earth is to be restored, and redeemed man is to hold the sceptre in the stead of Satan and his angels.



(For additional information concerning the redemption of the inheritance in this chapter, refer to Chs. VIII, IX in the author's book, *The Time of the End*.

Also see the author's article, "Salvation, Old and New Testaments." This latter section of the article {pp. 13-20} deals with restoration in both Gen. 1 and Rev. 5ff.)

## **Chapters Six through Nineteen**

As previously stated, Rev.6-19 has to do with the redemption of the inheritance, the domain over which Christ and His co-heirs are to rule for 1,000 years, ultimately effecting a cosmos (orderly arrangement) out of a chaos (disorderly arrangement [ref. I Cor. 15:24-28]).

These chapters have to do with Christ, the One Who died and shed His blood, breaking the seven seals of the scroll which He had taken from His Father's right hand in chapter five, resulting in a carrying out of all the judgments required by the Father to effect the redemption of the inheritance, the earth. And individuals and events, in association with the breaking of these seals and ensuing judgments, are dealt with in different chapters throughout this time.

Attention was called to two things earlier in this article (pp. 3b, 4a), stating that these would be dealt with later, after necessary groundwork had been laid. And, with chapter nineteen taking one to the end of the judgments having to do with the seven-sealed scroll and the redemption of the inheritance, both will be dealt with at this point in the article, prior to going beyond this into Christ's millennial reign.

### *1) Structure of Revelation, Scripture As a Whole*

Scripture throughout, beginning in the opening chapter of Genesis, *is uniformly structured, EXACTLY the SAME WAY.*

And, within this structure, *both the Old and New Testaments begin and continue EXACTLY the SAME WAY* (understanding that John, NOT Matthew, begins the New Testament).

The first thirty-four verses of Genesis relate the complete story in skeletal form, with the remainder of the Old Testament forming commentary.

The first sixty two verses of John, in complete conformity with the first thirty four verses of Genesis, relate the complete story again in skeletal form, with the remainder of the New Testament forming commentary.

Genesis begins with the restoration of the ruined material creation, immediately followed by the creation of man, who was to rule this restored creation in the stead of Satan and his angels (Gen. 1:26-28; Ps. 8:3-8).

John begins with the restoration of ruined man, with a view to the restoration of the material creation, allowing man to fulfill the purpose for his creation in the beginning.

As Moses records both (in Genesis), John, as well, records both (in his gospel and the Book of Revelation).

And revelation throughout *BOTH Testaments has been structured in THIS manner, with the SAME end in view* — complete sequences of events, with commentary following, ending where it began, with man ruling a restored domain, the earth.

And within these sequences of events and following commentary, one will find an abundance of repetition, other sequences of events, and commentary.

Also within this repetition there will be additional information; and, providing this additional information, the matter may be stated another way (e.g., in types, metaphors, parables, etc.).

*And the SAME END, seen throughout, as well, is ALWAYS in view. which is NOT eternity BUT the Messianic Kingdom, as clearly seen the way both Testaments begin and continue.*

For example, Genesis is filled with foundational sequences of events, with commentary. And this, in turn, provides the foundational material for a complete sequence of events extending from Exodus through Joshua, *having to do NOT ONLY with Israel (type) BUT with Christians (antitype), ending in the Messianic Kingdom* (ref. Heb. 3-6).

And this complete sequence contains individual sequences, with the whole of the matter covering, once again, time and events dealt with in previous revelation, providing additional commentary (additional material, or revelation which could take any number of forms).

*And the layout of the New Testament, of necessity, is in COMPLETE conformity with the Old.*

Not understanding or ignoring the way Scripture is structured in this respect is where people often go wrong when studying the Book of Revelation, seeking to see one continuous chronology of events throughout the book.

There are chronologies of events in the different sections of the book; *BUT*, events seen in different succeeding sections, as previously stated, invariably drop back in time, covering, once again, the same time as events in preceding sections, providing additional commentary.

For example, it is evident that the breaking of the first four seals of the seven-sealed scroll (6:1-8) is much like the first thirty four verses of Genesis or the first sixty-two verses of John. The whole of the matter concerning the redemption of the inheritance — that which an angel revealed to John, extending from 6:1 through 19:10 — is dealt with *in a succinct, skeletal form through the actions of four horsemen in these initial eight verses* (ref. the author's article, "Salvation Realized in Revelation.").

Or, note that Christ's return, with ensuing events, is seen three places in chapters six through nineteen (6:12-17; 14:14-20; 19:11-21). And *THIS* is *WHY* events seen during

the first ten verses of chapter nineteen occur *AFTER* events seen in verses eleven through twenty-one.

Events seen in this latter section have to do with Christ's return and the destruction of Gentile world power.

*BUT*, these events have already been dealt with two previous places in the book, along with being alluded to a number of other places (e.g., the complete sequence is brought to a conclusion once the judgments involved in the breaking of the seventh seal have been brought to pass [Rev. 10:7; 11:15-19; 16:17-21]).

Thus, Rev. 19:10 is the scene which this book presents relative to the completion of the redemption of the inheritance, the same as the scene previously presented in Rev. 10:1ff. And that which follows (vv. 11-21) is simply a third and final account of that which has already been dealt with in the book (commentary containing added details, similar to the sounding of the seven trumpets [chs. 8, 9] and the pouring out of the seven vials [ch. 16] — the latter forming added commentary for the former).

(For additional information on the way Scripture is structured in the preceding respect, refer to the author's book, *By Faith* [a commentary on Heb. 11], which begins in Genesis with Abel.

For additional information on the Book of Revelation as a whole, refer to the author's book, *The Time of the End*.)

## 2) "The Testimony of Jesus...Is the Spirit of Prophecy

"The testimony of Jesus" and "the spirit of prophecy," as seen in Rev. 1:2, 9; 19:10, are used in relation to the things which God gave to His Son, to be revealed through an angel unto John.

Thus, "the testimony of Jesus...the spirit of prophecy," is simply the revelation of God's Son, transmitted in a manner ("signified" through an angel unto John) which would reveal "things which must shortly come to pass."

This has to do with a making known of and readying events surrounding the sons of God who are to reign as joint-heirs with God's Son during the coming age (chs. 1b-4); and it has to do with the redemption of the inheritance, the domain over which Christ and His co-heirs will rule, along with an end to the times of the Gentiles, the destruction of Gentile world power (chs. 5-19).

(For additional information concerning events during and following the Tribulation — time when the seven seals of the Scroll will be broken and the inheritance redeemed — refer to the author's books, *Distant Hoofbeats*, *The Olivet Discourse*, and *The Time of the End* [Chapters X-XXXI].)

## **Chapter Twenty**

Chapter twenty has to do with events which begin following the completion of the redemption of the inheritance and concludes with events which occur 1,000 years later, following Christ's millennial reign, anticipating the eternal ages which follow.

This sequence of events begins with a mighty angel coming down from heaven, taking Satan (which could only include his angels as well), and binding him and casting him into the abyss, where he would remain for the entire duration of Christ's millennial reign (vv. 1-3).

The sequence then continues in the next three verses (vv. 4-6) with Christ and His co-heirs reigning over a redeemed earth for one thousand years.

Then in verse seven matters move to events following the millennial reign — Satan being loosed, his actions, God's final and complete dealings with Satan, and the judgment of all the unsaved dead, covering man's entire time on earth, dating all the way back to his creation 7,000 years in past time (vv. 7-15).

### 1) *The Thousand Years in Revelation*

The expression “one thousand years” appears six times in Revelation chapter twenty (vv. 2-7), and well-meaning Bible students often commit mayhem through how they look upon and deal with this expression.

These six verses are sometimes stated to be the only place in Scripture where the thousand years are mentioned.

Then, some from this group contend for the literality of the thousand years, others see the thousand years as non-literal (calling attention to the previous extensive use of symbolic and metaphorical language in the book, seeking to apply this type use of language to the thousand years).

### 2) *The Thousand Years in Both Testaments*

That believed and stated by either of the two groups in the previous section need *NOT* be dealt with though. *WHY* deal with error when presenting the truth from previous Scripture about Christ’s millennial reign will take care of matters?

That is to say, simply allow the truth to expose this and any other error which might surface.

Suffice it to say that reference to the thousand years *begins in Genesis, NOT in Revelation* — in Gen. 2:1-3, referencing a seventh day following six restorative days of work.

And it is seen as well in John 2:1-11, the way John’s gospel begins the New Testament, in complete conformity with the Genesis account, referencing a seventh day following six restorative days of work.

Then, the Sabbath was given to Israel *as a SIGN*, referring back to Gen. 1:1-2:3 (*cf.* Ex. 20:8-11; 31:13-17) *in order to keep ONE central thought EVER before the Jewish people. EXACTLY* as in the foundational account opening Genesis (showing *HOW* God restores a ruined creation, and *WHY* the creation was restored — things revealed at the very opening of Scripture in Genesis, *which can NEVER change*).

*A latter ruined creation, inseparably associated with the former, in the manner seen, can ONLY be restored EXACTLY as the former, for EXACTLY the same purpose.*

God is presently completing six more days of redemptive work, 6,000 years, to effect the restoration of both man and the material creation, allowing man to realize the reason for his creation in the beginning.

Thus, *EVERY TIME* an Israelite kept the Sabbath, or attempts to keep the Sabbath today, that Israelite, by his very actions, showed/is showing that a day of rest, 1,000 years of rest, will follow six days, 6,000 years of redemptive work.

Then, there is the septenary structure of Scripture throughout, with *NOT ONLY parts BUT the whole of Scripture* showing the truth of the thousand years in Rev. 20 — 1,000 literal years of rest (the earth's Sabbath) following a previous 6,000 literal years of redemptive work.

It may appear strange, though it shouldn't, that the era toward which *ALL* previous Scripture has moved is dealt with toward the end of the Book of Revelation in six verses (actually, in three verses [vv. 4-6]).

But *NOTHING* in addition to this succinct section need appear at this point in the book. The matter has already been introduced and dealt with different ways *throughout the WHOLE of previous Scripture*.

Revelation 20:2-7, referencing the 1,000 years six times, simply forms a capstone, calling attention to the arrival of that toward which *ALL previous Scripture*, beginning with the opening two chapters of Genesis, has moved.

In this respect *ANYTHING* beyond that recorded in these six verses would be superfluous material.

As Nathaniel West said well over a millennium ago, "If the thousand years are not in Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, they have no right to be in John."

(For additional information concerning events immediately preceding, during, and immediately following the Millennium, refer to the author's book, *The Time of the End*, Chapter XXXIII.)

## Chapters Twenty-One, Twenty-Two

These two chapters, closing the New Testament, move beyond the foundation upon which all preceding Scripture rests (as seen in the opening verses of both Genesis and John). These two chapters form the longest section in all Scripture dealing with the unending ages beyond the 7,000 years, beyond the time comprising Man's Day and the Lord's Day, during time comprising "the day of God" (II Peter 3:10-14).

Scripture as a whole deals with "time," NOT with "eternity." And anyone studying the Scriptures, to properly understand the Scriptures, *MUST remain within the parameters set forth at the beginning of each Testament regarding "time" rather than "eternity," i.e., regarding 7,000 years rather than the eternal ages beyond.*

And rather than dealing further with this subject, attention will simply be called to places where material regarding the matter can be found.

(For additional information regarding the immediately preceding remarks — "7,000 years rather than the eternal ages beyond," — refer to the author's article, "Biblical Subject and Structure.")

Also, see the Author's book, *From the Beginning*.

For additional information concerning events following the Millennium, beyond the Lord's Day in the Day of God, refer to the author's book, *The Time of the End*, Chapters XXXIV-XXXVI.)