

**OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE  
THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
CHAPTERS 1-11**

**March 27, 2019**

**Answers to Lesson 44 – 1, 2, and 3 John / Jude**

*Page 227* – In the *Gospel of John* the contrast between light and darkness is echoed throughout 1 John. In 1 John the emphasis on *abiding* in Christ is reminiscent of John 15. In John 13-17 the word *love* occurs numerous times and in the epistles love for one another and for God is a predominant theme.

The time is somewhere between 85 and 95 AD, during the reign of Domitian but prior to the widespread persecution that erupted at the end of his reign. Tradition tells us that John was ministering in and around Ephesus at that time. At that point in history, John was the only apostolic witness living in an age when traditional Christianity began to be challenged.

*Page 228* – Gnosticism taught that God and the spiritual realm were perfectly good while matter and flesh were inherently evil. The spiritual part of humans was imprisoned in the body and could only be released through a special secret knowledge (gnosis). Salvation was achieved by enlightenment. These dualistic ideas led to either strict asceticism or lax behavior.

*Doctrinal Test:* A sound theological understanding of Christ and his redemptive work is the first test of a true Christian. False doctrines have always threatened the church but the author warns his readers to test the spirits to see whether they are from God.

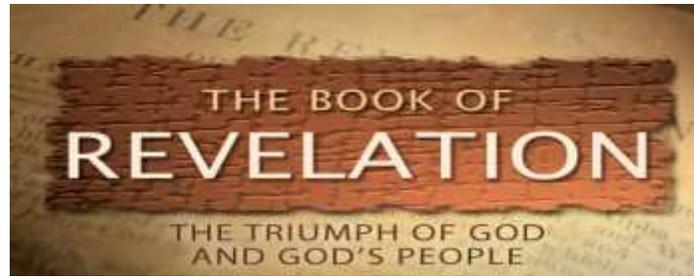
*Moral Test:* The author reiterates time and again the requirements of holiness that God places on his people. We cannot claim to know God and still walk in darkness. The Christian and sin are incompatible. A genuine Christian will not practice a sinful lifestyle.

*Social Test:* Love for God expresses itself in love for others. The author reminds his readers that God is love and that love comes from God. God's love in sending his Son for our salvation is both an example and an incentive for us to love one another. Our actions towards our brothers and sisters are an easily read indication of our love for God.

*Page 229* – In 2 John the author is saying not to contribute food or shelter to those who spread false teachings so as not to encourage them. He is not forbidding Christians to invite them into their homes for a conversation or for sharing.

In 3 John the author commends Gaius for his faithfulness in sharing with others. However, he condemns Diotrephes, who refuses to welcome his brothers in Christ. The author rebukes him for trying to stop those who want to be hospitable and for trying to put them out of the church.

*Page 230* – These false teachers now threatening the church have followed the ways of Cain, Balaam, and Korah by their selfishness, greed, hatred, and rebellious leadership. They will be judged.



Message of the *Book of Revelation* is meant to be one of comfort and encouragement. It may appear that the forces of evil are triumphant but that is far from the truth. God remains in control of the universe and all that takes place within it. World is fallen and Satan is working his evil throughout but we share in the victory of Christ.

#### Importance of the Old Testament in understanding the *Book of Revelation*

Isaiah 6 is the foundational vision for later revelations (when the Lord is seen enthroned). There is much in Ezekiel that is the basis for the imagery in Revelation. Daniel was heavily influenced by the Jewish Apocalyptic literature. In Zechariah Satan is the accuser and it helps us understand how Satan is depicted in Revelation. When the earthly temple is gone then the reality of the heavenly temple is still present. Nowhere in Revelation is there a direct quote of the Old Testament (but influence is there).

#### Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

This kind of material was prominent during the time of 1 Maccabees. It was a time period when there was no prophetic voice in the land. Great ordeals were taking place and the people needed hope. They were focused on the heavenly reality because everything seemed so bad in the world. In the end of time God would make all things right. 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews were comfortable with this type of writing. Up until the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD this was the literature of the day. After the temple was destroyed the Jews redefined themselves. Their literature was directed more towards laws to govern their daily lives.

Author of the *Book of Revelation* tells us four times that his name is John. Scholars believe he was a well-known figure among the churches of Asia Minor. Early church fathers believe he is St. John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of James. Tradition indicates that St. John spent the last years of his life in Ephesus around 70 AD. John was later banished from the city to the island of Patmos around 81-96 AD. Tradition dates the *Book of Revelation* to be around 95 AD.

The *Book of Revelation* is to be read as one continuous vision with a prologue and an epilogue. In any Apocalypse the most important scene is the heavenly throne room. Chapters 4 and 5 make this the central scene in the book that interprets the rest of the chapters. Seven seals, trumpets, and bowls depict the reality between first and second coming of Christ. They do not represent any particular event that took place in human history. In each vision there is an escalation in the described events.

An apocalypse is an unveiling of divine mystery not just a prophecy of the future. It uses figurative and symbolic literature to convey its message. Eschatology deals only with the future.



### **Revelation 1**

What unfolds is Jesus' revelation (which was given to John through an angel). Revelation was given to Jesus by the Father and was meant for all believers in Christ. Christians in every generation are to constantly keep watch and be ready for Christ to come. John bears witness to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (one and the same). As Christians we are told to read, study, learn, and digest the words of this book of the Bible. John is writing as a prophet in line with the Old Testament prophets. He is speaking on behalf of God and message is as true as those of the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus Christ is the true king.

Christ is the faithful martyr who bore witness to his Father and to the truth of his Word. Revelation 1:4-6 is one of the clearest testimonies of the *Holy Trinity* in the New Testament. We do not worship the Spirit apart from the reality of Christ (who points us to Christ). The number *seven* is used in the Bible as the symbolic number for perfection or fullness. Seven churches listed are seven historical congregations. Seven lampstands are the seven churches. Seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.

Revelation 1:7 gives us a depiction of the Second Coming of Christ.

Great consternation will take place on earth as judgment occurs.

God never promises us an easy and glorified life in this world.

We will suffer and our glory will come when we enter his eternal kingdom.

Whatever we suffer on earth cannot compare to the glory that is already ours in Christ.

### **Revelation 2**

Christ addresses each of these historic churches (Map on Page 236).

He applies specific examples of Law and Gospel to each of them individually.

In Ephesus the church is facing three challenges: False teachers, pagan influence and harassment.

In Smyrna there were repercussions for being Christian and people suffered economically.



John also experiences the same worship scene around the throne of Isaiah (Sanctus). It is because God is the Creator that he is due all honor, worship, praise and glory.

Seals were put upon scrolls during that time period.  
Scroll with seven seals represents the fact that God is in control of human history.  
It is only when Christ opens the seals that anything happens.  
When he takes the scroll the living creatures and elders fall down before him in worship.  
Christ is not only depicted as the Passover Lamb but as the Atoning Sacrifice.

Revelation 4 and 5 dramatize the exaltation of Christ as it appears from heaven.  
Description found in Acts 1:6-11 is from the perspective of those on earth.

### **Revelation 6**

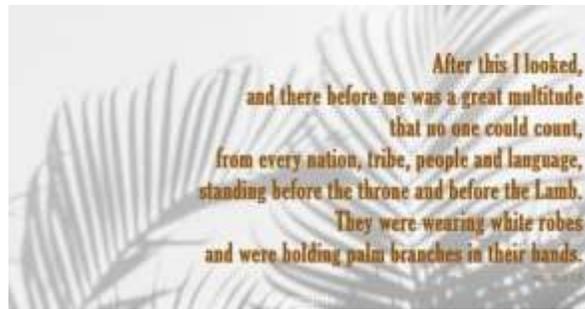
3 *Sevenfold Visions of Judgment* cover time from Ascension of Jesus to the Last Day.  
Visions are not to be interpreted literally.  
Symbolic imagery reveals what is happening in the world now and what will come on Last Day.  
Visions depict the reality of sin in the world but also assure us that God is in control.  
Purpose of each vision is to seek repentance and give the encouragement of faith and hope.  
Three visions are given instead of just one to show the longsuffering and patient nature of God.

In apocalyptic literature symbols are used to portray events common to human experience.  
First horseman represents every form of tyranny won by power and force.  
Second horseman rides a red horse that represents warfare and bloodshed.  
Third horseman rides a black steed which symbolizes death.  
Fourth horseman rides a ghostly green horse demonstrating that death is a result of bloodshed.  
Death follows the first three horsemen to collect their victims and commit them to the grave.

When the fifth seal is open the saints beneath the altar are all the saints who kept the faith.  
At the opening of the sixth seal John sees a vision of the Judgment Day.  
Imagery makes it clear that we will not miss the event.  
When Christ returns he will be revealed to all people as the ruler over heaven and earth.

### **Revelation 7**

Four corners of the earth describe the entire cosmos.  
We see a reference that the Last Day will not come until the last of God's elect are saved.  
Every Christian is a part of the royal priesthood.  
Number 144,000 is used symbolically to refer to all believers of all time (12 x 12 x 1000).  
12 is a number that signifies all believers (Old and New Testament).  
There were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 disciples.  
10 is a number of completeness so multiplied times 3 means ultimate, absolute completeness.  
Revelation 7:15-17 is a condensed version of what we will see in Revelation 21 and 22.  
It is what we look forward to and is what sustains us as we live in this vale of tears.



### **Revelation 8**

According to 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch the creation of the universe was preceded by silence. A similar silence will precede the creation of the new heavens and new earth on the Last Day. After the judgment the whole company of heaven joins in silent prayer and meditation. Old Testament often speaks of keeping silence in the presence of God to prepare for his works. Seven angels are used by God to make extremely important announcements. They also carry out his judgments. These are not the same seven angels of the seven churches. In Scripture trumpets are used to give signals for the initiation of events like battles. Seven archangels blow their trumpets to announce various plagues which will strike humans. The other angel that appears is Christ himself.

At the first trumpet hail and fire and blood are thrown upon the land (seventh plague).  
Second judgment affects the sea (first plague).  
At the third trumpet the fresh waters will be unsuitable for drinking (first plague).  
At the fourth trumpet the heavens are affected (ninth plague).  
In Old Testament many announcements of coming judgment include an image of an eagle. Eagle is a metaphor for destruction for those who do not believe. For those who believe it is a source of comfort.

### **Revelation 9**

At the fifth trumpet a star falls from the sky (the fallen angel Satan). From this point on (in Revelation) Satan will be a primary figure. He is the enemy of Christ and his church. He will do everything in his power to keep people from salvation. Satan cannot harm the people of God who have received the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Satan and his followers are armed with weapons of deceit to go into the world and capture souls. They will act with human intelligence and will use human reasoning to afflict human beings. They will be seen in ways that appear to be pleasing and good. Goal is to make sin look attractive so that people long for it and believe it is good.

At the sound of the sixth trumpet John hears a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar. It is the voice of Christ who holds the censer of incense. Four angels are released (the same four we heard about in 7:1-3). What we heard in the 7 trumpet judgments is a retelling of what we heard in the seal judgments.

Revelation teaches us that the closer we come to the return of Christ the worse things will be. In the church most people will reject or fall away from the faith. Attacks are not limited to short periods of time but are continuous until the end comes.

### **Revelation 10**

As in the seven seal judgments, we see an interlude between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> judgments here. Interruption focuses on the mission of the church and God's protection of her in that mission. It is Christ who accomplishes the mission of the church (it is his mission and not our mission). Mission of the church is to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the world (to give life).

Christ promises that there will be no more delay when the seventh angel blows his trumpet. Before that day the prophets will continue to prophesy in his name. All Christians are called to share the Gospel of Christ with the world. Message they must proclaim will not always make them popular among others. Mission involves much more than simple witnessing. We are to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them and teaching them.



### **Assignment for April 3**

Read *Revelation 11-22 (The End)*

No pun intended ☺