

## The Book of Revelation

### Introduction:

Writer: Apostle John on the isle of Patmos

Date: 95-96 A.D. John was banished to the isle of Patmos at the end of Domitian's reign as the Roman Emperor. An earlier date of 78 A.D. has also been cited based upon the beasts described in Chapter 17, Verses 7-11.

### Principles to remember for correct interpretation:

1. John wrote primarily for the edification and encouragement of first-century Christians who were under severe persecution (1:3).
  - a. Study the church in the first century.
  - b. Study the conditions from which John wrote
2. See Revelation as a revealing, a vision, as a whole and not over so many details of symbolism.
3. Remember the interpretation is to determine our view, not our view to determine the interpretation.

Purpose of the message: To present and maintain the incentive to "be faithful unto death" (2:10). Christians needed to know they would be vindicated. Their suffering was not for a lost cause. Every faithful child of God is victorious (3:21). VICTORY IN CHRIST!

### Two-step outline:

1. Chapters 1-11: The church's conflict in and with the world
2. Chapters 12-22: The inner struggle between Christ and Satan

### Theories of interpretation:

1. Futurist – A book of unfulfilled prophecy. This theory is inconsistent with the first verse of the book: "things which must shortly come to pass" - in the Greek language implies immediate fulfillment. Remember that the first principle of prophecy is that of its relation and teaching to its own generation. Hal Lindsay's book, The Late, Great Planet Earth, is futuristic. (See separate page for details)
2. Continuous – historical - A description of the Roman Catholic apostasy. This interpretation puts the book out of touch with the situation the first-century Christians found themselves in. Places too much emphasis on the Roman Catholic Church which was not in complete existence in the first century.
3. Preterist – Opposite of futurist. "Preter" = past, beyond. This view believes someone other than John wrote Revelation in the third century. No respect for inspiration of the Scriptures.
4. Historical background; prophetic principle – The writer wrote primarily for the edification and encouragement of the people of his day. Make a study of the church of that day, the writer of the book, conditions from which he wrote, relationship to those to whom he wrote, then make an application of your own day. Symbolic language: What is the picture, and what does it mean? Don't become overly concerned about all the details of symbolism.

### Symbolism:

"1" – Man saw a single object and came to associate the number one with the idea of unity or independent existence. Stood for that which was unique and alone. The number one does not appear symbolically in Revelation.

"2" – When man went out to fight or hunt, he found strength and courage in companionship. Two were far more effective than one, thus the number two stands for strength, confirmation and courage. In Revelation, the truth is confirmed by two witnesses who are slain and rise again. Two beasts are a formidable foe.

"3" – Man found love in the home. Father, mother and son or daughter. Three come to be the number for perfection and ~~care~~ the thought of the divine, the Godhead.

CRUCIFIX

Chapter	Verses	Symbology
4	4	24 elders – represent God's redeemed on both sides of the cross – 12 tribes of Israel in O.T. and 12 apostles in N.T. Around the throne and crowns symbolic of rulership and victory.
5	6	The Lamb is Christ. 7 <del>hours</del> <sup>heads</sup> = perfect strength or power; 7 eyes = perfect knowledge, sees all things; 7 spirits of God = the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus (Acts 2:33) with the power and knowledge to take care of His people.
6	1-2	White horse = Christ conquering in the gospel. White is the symbol of purity, holiness and victory.
	3-4	Red horse = Danger, blood or war. Satan rides this horse, but in reality, it's the Roman Empire.
	5-6	Black horse = Forerunner of death – economic discrimination. Scarcity of food for the Christian
	7-8	Pale horse = Death and hell
7	4	144,000 – Who is represented by this number? (1) The entire vision is symbolic, so why not the 144,000? (2) John views the 144,000 in heaven, not on earth. (3) The 144,000 represent all of the saved of the O.T. times (to the Jew this would be fleshly Israel). (4) 144,000 is a definite number, for an indefinite people. (5) If 144,000 is literal, we accept predestination. (6) Verses 9-17 indicate many others are saved also
9	1-12	Locusts = Universal symbol of destruction. Internal decay of the Roman Empire.
	13-21	Army = External enemies of Rome seeking destruction
10	1-7	7 unrecorded thunders = no more warnings by God to call the wicked to repentance
	8-11	The little bitter sweet book = a sorrowful message to the non-believer, but to the obedient, the gospel is indeed the "good news".
11	1-2	Measuring the temple = God knows His people and will protect them.
	3-14	Two witnesses = Their testimony states that gospel preaching will ultimately triumph.
12	1-6	V.5, male child = Christ; V.6, woman = God's covenant people laboring to bring forth the Messiah
13	1-10	Sea beast = civil persecuting power of Rome
	11-18	Earth beast = Rome as false religion (emperor worship)
	16-18	Mark of the beast, number 666 = Economic discrimination; Roman Empire rulership over Christians
14	1	144,000 – Are these the same as in 7:4? The number is symbolic, representing the saved. In both chapters 7 and 14 the purpose is to encourage faithfulness by foretelling the final success (victory) of the saints.

## GLOSSARY OF SYMBOLS IN REVELATION

This is a quick reference of the possible meanings of the symbols used in Revelation. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive discussion of each symbol listed.

**Altar:** Sacrifice for one's faith.

**Alpha & Omega:** The encompassing authority of Christ; His pre-existence, sovereignty and deity.

**Armageddon:** Conflict between good and evil.

**Armies:** Those aligned with either God or Satan.

**Babylon:** Luxury; immortality; worldliness; deception.

**Beast from the abyss:** Satan.

**Beast from the land:** False religion; evil teachers; deceptive prophets.

**Beast from the sea:** Rome; ungodly governments.

**Black horse:** Famine; prejudice against saints (Christians).

**Book of life:** Eternal record of faithful believers.

**Bottomless pit (abyss):** Torment; the place of evil spirits.

**Bowls of wrath:** God's judgment process or evil men.

**Bride:** The church of Christ.

**Brimstone (fire, smoke):** Chastening by God; plagues arising on earth because of sin.

**Chains:** Restraint; control; limitation.

**Court without:** Those outside the temple; the lost.

**Crowns:** Reward for faithfulness; victory; authority and power.

**Dragon:** Satan.

**Eagle:** Swiftmess; disaster.

**Earth:** Worldliness; evil governments; persecution of saints.

**Elders:** The representatives of God's covenant people.

**Euphrates:** Boundary beyond which God's judgments on sinful Israel had come; restraint; longsuffering of God.

**False prophet:** Religious error; same as land beast.

**Forehead:** Thoughts; attitudes; intents of the mind.

**Fire:** Judgment; cleansing process; trials and tribulations.

**Four living creatures:** Angelic order of cherubims.

**First resurrection:** Baptism; spiritual renewal by obedience.

**Frogs:** Uncleanmess; sin; allies of Satan who oppressed saints.

**Right Hand:** Power; authority; strength; deeds & actions in life.

**River of the water of life:** Abundant eternal life; peace.

**Robe:** One's life; actions; activities. A "white robe" was life wholly dedicated to God.

**Sackcloth:** Mourning; sadness; humility meekness.

**Scarlet Beast:** Ungodly governments; Rome.

**Scroll (book):** God's scheme of redemption.

**Sea:** Separation; distance in fellowship.

**Sealed of God:** Identified as God's person; obedient to the gospel's commands.

**Seals:** Hindrances to God's scheme of redemption being fulfilled.

**Second Death:** Eternal hell.

**Serpent:** Satan.

**Seven churches:** Applies to those specified in Asia but also encompasses all churches of Christ.

**Sodom & Egypt:** Carnal; idolatrous; opposed to God; persecuting God's followers.

**Song of Moses & the Lamb:** Victory; triumph; trust.

**Sword:** Destruction; death; sacrifice; the gospel message.

**Tabernacle:** Presence of God; fellowship with God.

**Tail:** Power & strength.

**Throne:** Power; dominion; authority; governments.

**Tribes of the earth:** World's population.

**Tribulation:** Trials & struggles of the world; "great tribulations" used by Satan to persecute saints.

**Trumpet:** Warnings; announcements; used for emphasis.

**Virgins:** Purity from sin & free from compromise with Satan.

**Wall:** Protection; safety; security.

**Washed robes:** Baptism for remission of sin.

**Waters:** Population of earth deceived by Satan.

**White:** Purity; righteousness; sinlessness.

**White horse:** Righteousness; Christ's triumphant victory.

**Winepress:** Divine judgment.

**Wings:** Swiftmess in serving God.

**Woman number one:** Faithful Israel thru which Christ came (12:1).

**Woman number two:** Babylon; seduction; evil compromise (17:3).

**Women:** Deception; seduction by sin (9:8).

needed to overpower Satan's works. It would stop him in their lives.

This Resurrection is not a literal or bodily resurrection. It speaks of "Souls" of those beheaded, indicating no body. The very expression "first resurrection" infers it is not literal, for the rest of the New Testament knows only of A Resurrection.

The living and reigning on Thrones, judging, is not literal, but a figure of speech. In some sense, they lived and reigned with Christ and were judging someone.

- (a) Who? It was those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God! It was those who had not worshipped the beast, neither his image! It was those who had not received the mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands!
- (b) Were these ever mentioned before? Rev. 6:9-11. Their number was not complete as yet, wait and would be given white robes now. They only had to wait a little season longer. Rev. 20:1-6 pictures them as complete, triumphant, and reigning, sitting in judgment. "This is the first resurrection".
- (c) What is? The completion, exaltation and triumph of God's Cause through the martyrs. It is a resurrection, a triumphing of a cause! God's people had suffered, endured, died by the thousands, but it was not in vain, for the church would eventually triumph over its persecutors! They would not stamp it out. The church survived the worst the Devil and his cohorts could do. In Chapter 6, the souls were under the altar crying for judgment. In Chapter 20, the souls were on thrones having been raised up. In one, a cause has suffered in defeat, so it seemed. In the other, a cause has been crowned with victory. Taking the souls out from under the altar and placing them on thrones is a figure denoting a resurrection (a raising up).

The 1000 years is not literal either, but a concept denoting completeness; their victory was complete, their triumph full.

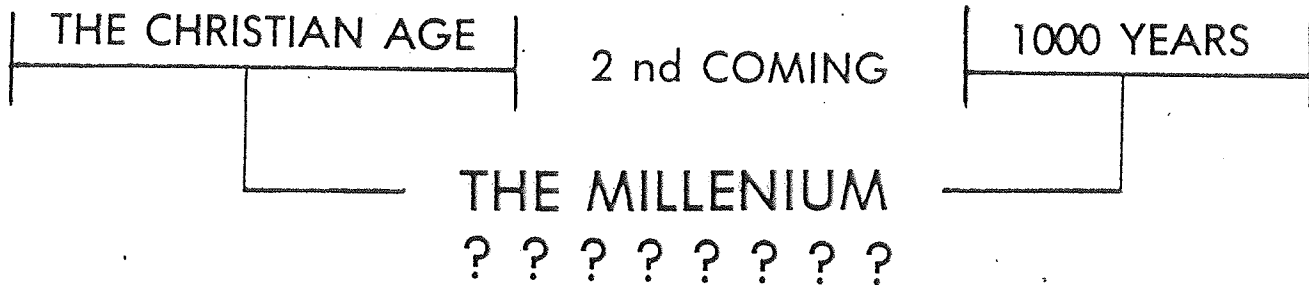
The "rest of the dead" would refer to the ceasing of the persecutions. The ungodly and wicked had done their worst and had failed. The "persecutors" cause was now dead.

What about the second death? Rev. 2:11; 20:6; 20:14. The first resurrection is equivalent to the expression ... "these that overcome", that are victorious! Those who are victorious will not be cast into the "lake of fire" (experience God's wrath)!!

### REASON FOR REJECTING THE PRE MILLENIAL THEORY

#### 1. What the Theory Advocates

- (a) That the kingdom of God has not yet come.
- (b) Even though announced by John and Jesus as being at hand, it was postponed because the Israelites rejected Christ.
- (c) The church was set up as an emergency measure until the Jews are ready for Christ to set up His kingdom in Palestine.
- (d) That Jesus is in heaven, not as King over His kingdom in reality, but only in the sense of His promised right to be someday.



There are many erroneous ideas advocated in connection with the second coming of Christ. Possibly the most prominent and all-encompassing is "the millenium". The doctrine is usually supported by a misuse of Old Testament passages about Christ and His kingdom, by a perversion of the signs in Matthew 24, and a complete misunderstanding of Revelation 20:1-6 as well as other passages. Old Testament prophecies have reference to the church or God's kingdom that was set up on the day of Pentecost and has been in existence ever since; otherwise, you have Scripture contradictions of major proportions. It becomes very obvious upon a study of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 that the signs were leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. However, the passage in Revelation 20:1-6 deserves a closer look than most people give to it. The Millenium stands or falls on this passage alone. If this passage can be dealt with, the others are not as important or necessary.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Millenium: A Latin term meaning 1000. The Greek term for this is "Chillism", which is rarely used any more in such discussions.
- Pre-Millennialism: A belief that Christ's second coming will proceed the Millenium. That Christ will return to earth, certain things will transpire, and then He will sit on David's throne in the city of Jerusalem and rule the world for 1000 years of peace and prosperity.
- Post- Millennialism: The belief that Christ's second coming will occur after the Millenium, or the 1000 year reign of Christ.
- A- Millennialism: It is insisted that you must choose one or the other (Pre or Post), but some prefer a 3rd alternative: "A", meaning "NO" 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth. Therefore, the 1000 year concept would be understood as figurative and not to a literal reigning of a 1000 year duration.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT REVELATION 20:1-6

1. The passage says nothing about a 1000 year reign on earth!
2. There is nothing about Christ reigning a 1000 years on earth!
3. The emphasis is not upon Christ reigning, but upon a peculiar and special "living and reigning" of beheaded souls with Christ.