

## REVELATION

**Synopsis:** \*^ The title of the book is taken from the first words of the text: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The book was written by John, during a time of severe persecution, “to the seven churches which are in Asia” (1:11). The message was an encouragement to the Christians suffering persecution that God will take care of their enemy. “The book has a simple message: Even though things look bad now, if you stay on God’s side, you will overcome; you will win!” (Roper). A key passage is 2:10, *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

**Author:** John

**Chapters:** 22

**Background:**^ The book is an example of apocalyptic literature. Other Bible examples of such literature are parts of Ezekiel, the last half of Daniel, and some of Zechariah. Apocalyptic literature was produced during times of trouble. It was written in symbols, to “reveal” the message to those for whom it was intended, but to conceal it from others.

Some examples of symbols used in Revelation are numbers and historical references. Certain numbers carried specific concepts to the ancients. Seven (7) and twelve (12) were considered complete or perfect numbers, as was ten (10) or any multiple of ten. “Babylon the Great” (represented as a city in chapter 18) seems to be a reference to the city of Rome, the source of persecution.

The writer identifies himself simply as John (1:1, 4, 9). This seems to fit best the apostle John, who was exiled on the isle of Patmos (1:9) off the coast of what is now Turkey. The original recipients (the seven churches) were located in the Roman province of Asia (now the western coast of Turkey). The time of writing is thought to be during the reign of Nero or Domitian, thus between A.D. 69-79 or 94-96.

### Five Great Lessons\*

1. God is in control of all things.
2. Jesus and the church will be victorious.
3. Some congregations are not faithful.
4. The blood of Christ washes away sins.
5. The church is the beautiful bride of Christ.

\*Butterworth, Ken. *God Hath Spoken: An Open-Bible Study Series – New Testament Workbook*, 2006.

^Roper, David. *Through the Bible: A Systematic Study of the Old and New Testament Scriptures*, 1999.

## Outline^

- I. Christ in the midst of seven golden lampstands: the seven churches (1-3).
- II. The book with seven seals: a revelation (4-7).
- III. Sounding of the seven trumpets: a warning (8-11).
- IV. Introduction of enemies of the church: the great red dragon and two beasts (12-14).
- V. Seven bowls of wrath poured out: punishment (15-16).
- VI. Enemies of the church destroyed: including Babylon the Great, except for the dragon (17-19).
- VII. Destruction of the dragon, and the new heaven and a new earth (20-22).

## Lessons ^

The “number of the beast” (13:18) rather than being a literal number that someday will be stamped on the foreheads of men, is symbolic. The number “6,” being almost “7” (completeness), was considered by the ancients to be a number representing both deception and failure. The number “666” means that the beast (forces of evil) may deceive many people, but ultimately will fail.

The “thousand years” of Revelation 20 is also symbolic. The “1000” is 10x10x10, i.e., “completeness” intensified. This refers to the complete, perfect, total reign of Jesus, which began when He ascended to heaven. It may look as if evil has control of the world, but Jesus is in control. He will win!

The message for Christians is to stay with the Lord, remain faithful, no matter what comes. Someone has said, “I’ve read the last chapter of the book—and our side wins!”

## Challenging Themes\*

- 2 Some congregations refuse to walk with Christ (1-7), some realize that spiritual riches are more important than material wealth (8-11), others become doctrinally unsound (12-17), and some have allowed the immoral to feel comfortable in their midst (18-28).
- 3 Some congregations possess the right name but are otherwise spiritually dead (1-6), others make God so very proud by their good works (7-13), and some have wealth and all the finer things of life; yet they are poor, blind, and naked in God’s eyes (14-22).
- 20:11-15 God will reward the saints and punish the wicked.
- 21:1-2,9-10 The Lamb’s bride is the church.
- 22:18-19 God will not tolerate anyone trying to change His Word.

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