

## Introduction to the Book of Revelation

by Armin A. Wolff

Why study the Book of Revelation? A comment once made by a Christian engineer: "In many of my textbooks, the answers to the problems are in the back of the book!" So too, are the answers to the mysteries of the Bible, especially the future, we seek today in the back of God's book.

- *It is relevant:*

Only the Biblically illiterate are unable to see that we are, indeed, in the "last days." We are seeing the stage being set right before our eyes for the final act of history, this being "HIS-STORY, the story of Jesus and mankind. The events and principles outlined have practical applications to our daily lives, in spurring us on to live holy, sanctified lives before the Lord. If you do not yet know Jesus, and are not living in obedience to Him, then the study of this book will be a terrifying experience for you, for it tells you where you will end up.

- *We win in the end*

This is a book of victory: We are overcomers! We are the ultimate winners in the game of life! We win, because Jesus has won for us! The Book of Revelation is a "lens" that puts the entire Bible into focus. The lens is focused on the person of Jesus Christ, and his destiny is imminent.

- *You have prayed for the fulfillment of this Book*

Every time you have prayed: "Thy kingdom come....", you have prayed for the unfolding of the events you will read in this book.

- *The only Bible Book with a Promise of Blessing*

Revelation is the only book with a Promise! Why? What makes this book so special? First of all, the Holy Spirit ministering through the Word will make it special to you.

*Revelation 1:3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

- *Only book in Bible that God Himself outlines*

God gives us an outline of the three main divisions of this book.

*Revelation 1:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.*

They are:

- *what you have seen*
- *what is now*
- *what will take place later*

In a study of this book, it is important to always keep this in mind.

- *The meaning of the name of the Book*

Revelation = "Apocalypse" = unveiling. (Note: singular, not plural !) Revelation of what? Of Jesus Christ, how He really is today, not just in "future events."

- *Why study "Prophecy"?*

Prophecy = God's entire plan in perspective. We are coming into a period of time about which the Bible says more than any other period of time in history—including the time that Jesus walked on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and climbed the mountains of Judea. There are 1,845 references to Christ's rule on the earth in the Old Testament. A total of 17 OT books give prominence to the event.

Of 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming. It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books (excepting three that are single-chapter letters to private individuals, and Galatians).

For every prophecy relating to His first coming, there are eight treating His Second Coming. Many people assume that the future is but a linear extrapolation of the present; life will just go on. But the Bible says otherwise:

*2 Peter 3:4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."*

There have been two major discontinuities since creation. The first was the Fall, and the second the Flood of Noah. The third and last one is the appearing of God in the person of Jesus Christ. First to provide salvation through His death and resurrection and later in time, to rule this Earth, culminating in the final judgment and dissolution of our present space-time Universe.

- *Who is your Bible Teacher?*

In any Bible study, but in Revelation in particular, the Holy Spirit must be your teacher. The Holy Spirit shall teach you all things .

*John 16:13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

Don't believe Armin Wolff (Acts 17:11).

*Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

I will do my best to be your guide, but you must do your own homework, and above all pray that the Spirit will open up the Word. I am an engineer by profession, and therefore tend to see God as the Great one who so carefully engineered this book and our created world.

- *Preparation to study*

Satan will not want you to study this book, because it talks of his ultimate demise. You must get ready for a supernatural experience, and this will only happen if you prepare by diligent prayer! Prepare to be challenged to alter your view of things. The careful study of this book may cost you some cherished ideas.

- *Interpreting Scripture*

Here are the presuppositions of biblical interpretation for this study:

- *God means what He says and says what He means.*
- *The Bible is an integrated whole. Every detail is there by design (Mt 5:17,18).*
- *Nothing is trivial: All things are for our learning (Rom 15:4).*
- *God is His own interpreter.*

- *Controversial issues*

In this book there are many issues that are controversial, so remember to test it against the "whole counsel of God," with Christ at the center. Christians are united not by what they believe, but in whom they believe.

"More sure word..." > 2 Pet 1:19

"Testimony of Jesus..." > Rev 19:10

"Volume of the book.." > Ps 40:7

"Search the scriptures..." > John 5:39

- *References the Old Testament*

One of the reasons this book strikes us as strange is because of our lack of understanding of much of the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation has 404 verses, and in those verses there are 800 allusions to the Old Testament. The more we know about the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, the more comfortable we will be with the idioms found in the Book of Revelation.

- *God uses models*

When an engineer or architect wants to have someone understand what a machine might do or a building will look like, he will often build a prototype or model. God does this extensively throughout scripture, and especially in this last book. There are: types, foreshadowings, and analogies. Theologians use the word "types" for what engineers refer to as "models" or "prototypes".

- *Types, Metaphors, and Idioms*

Hosea 12:10 *I spoke to the prophets, gave them many visions and told parables through them."*

- *Types:*

Abraham & Isaac > Gen 22

Nebuchadnezzar's Image > Dan 3

Ruth > Redemption of the Land, - kinsman-redeemer etc.

Joshua > Model of the Book of Revelation

- *Metaphors:*

Tabernacle

Burning Bush

- *Idioms:*

"Friend of God" - prophetic insights (Abraham, Gen 18; Disciples, Jn 15).

"Beloved" - apocalyptic writings (Daniel, Dan 9:23; John 13:23).

- *Written in code*

Signified by God = in "code" or "to give a sign or signal." There are, in the Bible, 4591 semaino { say-mah' -ee-no } from sema (a mark, of uncertain derivation); [Sememe = a basic unit of meaning]. It has two meanings: 1) to give a sign, to signify, indicate. 2) to make known. We get our word "semaphore" as used in railroads and on ships from this root.

- *All code explained*

Every code is explained in Scripture and every book is required. The word is translated "sign" ( 15 :1), "wonder" ( 12:1, 3) and "miracle" (19:20) is the same word as used by John for the miracles of Christ. It's a "spiritual code" understood only by those who know Christ personally. The railroad engineer has to know how to read the semaphore signals to safely control the train. Likewise, we must learn to read the Lord's "semaphores" in scriptures to run our lives.

- *Continuation of the Book of Acts*

Revelation is the continuation (climax) of Acts, covering the period of time from Acts (first 30 years of the Church) to Jesus' Second Coming (2000+ years of the Church).

- *Redemption is central*

Redemption is the key issue in the Book of Revelation (not salvation). Redemption is greater than the Creation. How can we know?

- *More space in Scripture:*

Creation: Two chapters in Genesis, few Psalms, few chapters in Job, Isaiah and a verse here and there.

Redemption: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus...Joshua, Ruth, the Prophets, Gospels...Epistles...Revelation!

- *More expensive:*

God created the Universe just by speaking His all powerful Word, but redemption cost God His Son!

Redemption = restoration to the original owner of that which was lost or forfeited

( Gal 3:13; Eph 1:14; Dan 8:26; Dan 12:4, 9;Lk 21:28; Rom 8:23;).

This book details the final restoration of creation; especially God's own blood bought humanity.

- *Writing history before it happens*

The Book of Revelation claims for itself to be a book of prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10,18-19; note also 10:11). There are many other Bible books that contain prophecy, but Revelation is the only one that explicitly claims this repeatedly. God made all time and thus is in charge thereof.

• *Genesis vs. Revelation*

A strong evidence that the whole Bible is a unified, supernatural message from beyond time and space is to do a study contrasting the first and last books of the Bible. Genesis speaks of the beginning and creation and in Revelation we read of the end and completion of everything. Assignment: Look up the scriptures given below, and don't just take my word for it. Do your homework.

## Genesis

Earth Created > 1:1  
Sun to govern day > 1:16  
Darkness called night > 1:5  
Waters He called seas > 1:10  
A river for earth's blessing > 2:10-14  
Man in God's image > 1:26  
Entrance of sin > 3  
Curse pronounced > 3:14-17  
Death entered > 3:19  
Cherubim first mentioned > 3:24  
Man driven out of Eden > 3:24  
Tree of Life guarded against > 3:24  
Sorrow & suffering enter > 3:17  
Religion, art, and science separated from God > 4  
Nimrod founds Babylon > 10:8-10  
God's Flood to Destroy evil generation > 6 - 9  
A bow: God's promise > 9:13  
A bride for Abraham's son > 24  
Marriage of 1st Adam > 2:18-23  
Man's dominion ceased and Satan's begun > 3:24

## Revelation

Earth passed away > 21:1  
No need of sun > 21:23  
No night there > 22:5  
No more sea > 21:1  
A river for New Earth > 22:1,2  
Man of Sin in Satan's image > 13  
End of sin > 21, 22  
No more curse > 22:3  
No more death > 21:4  
Cherubim final mention > 19:4  
Man restored > 22  
Access to Tree of Life > 22:14  
No more sorrow > 22:4  
judged, destroyed > 18  
Babylon falls > 17, 18  
Satan's flood to Destroy elect generation > 12  
A bow for remembrance > 4:3; 10:1  
A bride for Abraham's Seed > 19  
Marriage of Last Adam > 19  
Satan's domain ended and man's restored > 22

• *The Sevens in Revelation*

Numbers in the Bible have great significance. The number seven is the number of completion or fullness. Because this book is all about the completion of God's plan, it contains a particularly high concentration of sevens. Seven does not mean divine. Note that there are good and bad things associated with seven.

Seven Churches > 1:4, 11, 20  
Seven Lampstands > 1:12,13, 20; 2:1  
Seven Spirits > 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6  
Seven Stars > 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1  
Seven Lamps > 4; 5  
Seven Promises to the Overcomer 2;3  
Seven Seals > 5:1,6  
Seven Horns > 5:6  
Seven Eyes > 5:6  
Seven Angels > 8:2,6;15:1,6,7,8;16:1;17:1;21 :9  
Seven Trumpets > 8:2, 6  
Seven Thunders > 10:3, 4  
Seven Thousand > 11:13  
Seven Heads > 12:3;13:1;17:3, 7, 9  
Seven Crowns > 12:3  
Seven Plagues > 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9  
Seven Bowls > 15:7; 17:1; 21:9  
Seven Mountains > 17:9  
Seven Kings > 17:10,11

Also there are many sevens that are not quite as explicit:

Seven Blessings > 1:3, 14:3, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14  
Seven Years of Judgments > 11:3; 12:6,14; 13:5  
Seven "I Am's" of Christ > 1:8,11,17,18; 21:6; 22:13,16  
Seven Praise Anthems in heaven > 4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2,3; 15:2-4; 19:1-6  
Seven New Things > 20, 21

There are many other seven's. Do a study and see how many more you can find.

• *Escalation of Praise and Worship*

All of heaven sings praises to our Lord and King. As the book unfolds and the glorious end draws closer, the praises and songs build to a crescendo. Let's look at them:

*Praise*

Glory, dominion (2) > 1:6  
Glory, honor, power (3) > 4:11  
Blessing, honor, glory, power (5) > 5:13  
Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, might (7) > 7:12

*Songs*

Holy, holy, holy > 4:8  
Worthy art thou > 4:11;5:8-10  
Unto Him that sitteth > 5 : 13  
Salvation to our God > 7:9,10  
Kingdoms of the world > 11:15  
We give thee thanks .> 16-18  
Great & marvelous > 15:2-4  
Four hallelujahs > 19:1-8

Any praising and singing you do in the present life to your glorious King is practice for what will be a large part of your activities when you will see Him in all of His splendor and majesty.

• *Three Women*

In Revelation, in particular God gives us a picture three different female personality types. These appear also in other parts of scripture, but in this book they are contrasted.

Wife of YHWH > ( a picture of Israel) > Woman of Rev 12

Virgin Bride > (she represents the Church) > Bride of Christ at marriage

Harlot > (she represents the World system that passes away) > Mystery Babylon is destroyed

• *Personal preparation for study of this book*

Since the Book of Revelation is about the completion of God's eternal plan, of which you are a part, if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you need to gain understanding in the following:

- *In Genesis, the role of the "serpent," the "seed of the woman," the coats of skins, the Way of the Tree of Life;*
- *In Exodus, the concept of Redemption, deliverance from bondage, the plagues, the burning bush and why it wasn't consumed;*
- *In Leviticus, the Feasts, their offerings and the Jewish calendar;*
- *In Numbers, the way the Camp of Israel was laid out;*
- *In Joshua, the parallels between it and the Book of Revelation;*
- *In Ruth, the title of real estate, redemption, and the kinsman-redeemer;*
- *In 2nd Samuel, David dividing the priests into 24 courses;*
- *In Daniel, the 70 Week Prophecy;*
- *Distinction between Israel and the Church;*
- *Categories of "saints," "elect," etc.*

Next we will look at the first chapter of this book. In other studies we will consider the 10 points above as they are germane to a particular chapter of this fascinating last book of God's holy word. The first three chapters are especially applicable to us since they deal with the church. I pray that you will take the time to read these scriptures, so that you will have the maximum blessing from our great and holy God.