

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

PART 2

Reasons for Studying Revelation. Here are seven reasons for studying Revelation:

1. It reveals God's prophetic program concerning the end-times (1:1-3, 19; 10:11; 19:10; 22:10, 18-19).
2. It reveals seven blessings that God offers (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).
3. It reveals Jesus as God and gives Him the supreme glory that He rightly deserves (1:9-18).
4. It reveals prophecy about Jesus Christ, because He is "the spirit of prophecy" (19:10).
5. It reveals Jesus Christ's relationship to the churches as their Lord (Rev 1-3), to God as His Lamb (Rev 4-5), to Satan as his Conqueror (Rev 6-19) and to all people as their rightful King (Rev 20-22).
6. It teaches the churches to love and honor Jesus Christ by obeying His commands (Rev 2-3). The seven historical churches of Asia Minor are an example for all churches about Christ's judgments for sin and His blessings for obedience.
7. It provides valuable teaching on such subjects as the Bible, God, man, sin, angels, salvation, the church and future events. Believers are deprived if they do not understand the book of Revelation.

Theme of Revelation. The theme of Revelation is the ultimate victory of Christ over sin and all His enemies. Every piece of literature, including Scripture, has its occasion for being written. The occasion for the message of Revelation was the persecution of Christians by Domitian, the Roman Emperor from A.D. 81-96. He was the first emperor to demand nation-wide worship as god. Revelation, therefore, has been and will continue to be an encouragement to believers that suffer persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ as their God. This book will be a special encouragement to those who are saved after the Rapture of the Church and live during the seven horrific years of Tribulation that precede the return of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom.

Key Principle. The key principle for studying Revelation is that any believer can understand it. This is implied by the blessing promised to all those who read, hear and keep the message of this book (1:3; cf. 22:10; 2 Tim 3:16). Three things need to be done to have a clear understanding of Revelation. First, a believer needs to know the Old Testament Scriptures to give him the setting for Revelation. Symbols and figures of speech, which mystify some people, can become clear by a working knowledge of the Old Testament. Second, a believer must receive its message. It needs to change his thoughts and life until he is an obedient servant of God. The Holy Spirit will not reveal truth to those that refuse to believe and live by His words (Mt 13:12). Third, a believer needs to seek an understanding of its message by using the right method of interpreting words. He should not give God's words new meanings that agree with his denomination's theology, but let the natural meaning of words change his theology until it agrees with the whole message of the Bible.

The Old Testament in Revelation. A believer must know the Old Testament Scriptures to have a good grasp of Revelation. There are at about 348 references to the Old Testament found in Revelation.

The distribution of 328 of these references is as follows:

Rev 1:1-8	11 references	Rev 17:1-21:8	95 references
Rev 1:9-3:22	18 references	Rev 21:9-22:5	24 references
Rev 4:1-16:21	164 references	Rev 22:6-21	16 references

The distribution of these references comes from these Old Testament books:

Pentateuch [57]

Genesis – 13
Exodus – 27
Deuteronomy – 10

Historical [11]

Poetical [45]

Psalms – 43

Prophetical [235]

Isaiah – 79 Daniel – 53
Ezekiel – 43 Jeremiah – 22
Zechariah – 15

As one can see, a good grasp of the Old Testament will shine much light on the book of Revelation.

God's Message to Believers. God gave this message to John so it could be read and understood like the other Scriptures. He did not intend for it to be a closed book. He sent it to charge the lives of His people so they would be bold and not be afraid to witness for Him. He wanted them to evangelize the world in spite of persecution and possible death. But Revelation has become a closed book to many believers because they have refused to believe and practice its message. So God has allowed their minds to be baffled by the symbols and figures of speech in the book and many are bewildered by the message in Revelation. The problem is not with the symbols and figures of speech; the problem is in the heart of the believer. He does not want to proclaim God's message in a hostile world, which may take his life. What Jesus taught His disciples regarding the symbols in His parables, can be said of the symbols and figures of speech in Revelation: he who receives the message, will understand it, but he who rejects it will not understand it (Mt 13:10-13).