

Introduction:

1. If you're like me, you aren't too likely to go see a movie without at least first knowing something about it.
    - a. Is it a comedy? Action? Drama? Chick-flick?
    - b. Is it animated? Live action?
    - c. What is it rated? Why is it rated that way?
    - d. What is it about?
    - e. Perhaps tops on the list of whether or not I want to see it is if my sister recommends it.
      - i. If she does, it's most likely not worth watching.
  2. When you want to study a book of the Bible, doesn't it make sense that you'd kind of want to know what it's about before you get into reading it?
    - a. Sure, you could just read through a book, but it makes much more sense if you first have an idea what the book is talking about ahead of time.
    - b. Just read through I Thessalonians, and you will be able to gain some helpful knowledge.
      - i. However, if you read through I Thessalonians with the understanding that it was a congregation Paul planted,
      - ii. and within three weeks the Jews had gathered a mob of thugs which persecuted the Christians mercilessly,
      - iii. to the point where the disciples sent Paul out of the city
      - iv. thus the Christians there had only received THREE WEEKS TOTAL of teaching about the New Testament
      - v. It makes the book much more meaningful, especially when you read about how worried Paul was that they would give in to the pressure from the Jews.
    - c. Knowing something about the book and its meaning is much more important when you are reading a book like Revelation.
      - i. There are prophetic books in the Old Testament that you need to know background on to truly understand them (Zechariah, Daniel, Ezekiel, etc...).
      - ii. This is also true of Revelation.
  3. Today, we are going to go through parts of the book in order to show what the book is all about.
    - a. Then next week, we will begin going through the text itself.
    - b. Before we begin, I wish to read a quotation from Arthur Ogden, a Christian who wrote a commentary on Revelation entitled "The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets."
    - c. "The book of Revelation is the greatest piece of literature ever penned. It is a masterpiece presentation. It challenges our...power to reason, judge, comprehend and understand. It challenges our imagination... It challenges our observation...It challenges our overall knowledge of the Bible and our will to learn, because so much study must go into learning, even generally, what is revealed in this book. It tries our patience...to keep on studying when we have just learned that we were wrong about previous conclusions, and it challenges our endurance... It is indeed a masterpiece in literature. It brings together Old Testament prophecies, both of victory and desolation, and shows their impending fulfillment as things "shortly come to pass (1:1)..."
- I. First, it must be understood that the book of Revelation is exactly what it claims to be: a book which REVEALS (1:1).

## Revelation (03) – What is the book talking about? - 2

- a. The word translated "revelation" is APOKALUPSIS (from which we get our word Apocalypse), and it means an unveiling, an uncovering, or a revealing.
    - i. So, according to the very first verse, this book was written to reveal something, not to conceal it.
  - b. But what was it supposed to be revealing?
    - i. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ.
      - 1. It was given by Jesus (through His messenger), concerning Jesus, and about something Jesus was going to do.
    - ii. This revealing was "of things which MUST shortly come to pass."
      - 1. This gives us our first big clue to what the book of Revelation is all about.
      - 2. Last week, we saw from Scripture that all books of the Bible were completed prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70).
        - a. The book of Revelation was written sometime in the mid-60's.
      - 3. Because of this, we can know that the things in the book were fulfilled SHORTLY after the book was written.
        - a. John was told the events were "at hand" (1:3).
        - b. John said the kingdom was "at hand" about 3 ½ years before the kingdom came into existence on Pentecost.
        - c. If we were to really stretch it, we could say that the events in the book were to happen within 5-10 years of when the book was written.
        - d. Let us stretch it even more, and be liberal about it, to 20 years.
        - e. At the latest the events in Revelation would take place by 85 AD.
        - f. We will be narrowing this down considerably in a moment.
- II. Revelation describes a "coming with clouds" (1:7).
- a. Isaiah 19:1-4 describes God coming, riding on a cloud, and it is a scene of judgment against the nation of Egypt, whom God will overthrow.
    - i. Since most of the imagery in Revelation comes from the Old Testament, we need to look there to help us understand what different symbols mean.
    - ii. If coming with clouds in the Old Testament described a coming in judgment, then we should assume (and if we read through the book, it becomes clear) that when it is used in Revelation, it means the same thing.
  - b. Jesus described His coming in judgment on Jerusalem as a "coming in the clouds" (Matthew 24:30).
  - c. So, the Book of Revelation describes a coming in judgment which took place between AD 64 and 85.
- III. "All kindreds of the earth shall wail" (1:7).
- a. This exact wording (in Greek) is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:30, but there (in the KJV) it is translated, "all tribes of the earth shall mourn."
    - i. Jesus stated this in context of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-34).
    - ii. The tribes under consideration would be the literal tribes of Israel.
    - iii. Since it is the exact same words in Greek, it seems logical to suggest the same meaning would apply here.
  - b. So, the Book of Revelation describes a coming in judgment which took place between AD 64 and 85, which would cause the physical Israelites to mourn.

- IV. The great harlot is identified (Revelation 17).
- a. 17:1 – the judgment is upon the great harlot who is called Babylon (remember that the book is about a coming in judgment).
  - b. 17:18 – the harlot is the great city which rules over the kings of the earth.
    - i. We are introduced to "the great city" back in 11:8 – "the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."
    - ii. Jesus was only crucified in one city: Jerusalem.
    - iii. Jerusalem was called "Sodom" in the Old Testament (Isaiah 1:9, Jeremiah 23:14, Ezekiel 16:46-56).
    - iv. Jerusalem was called the faithful city which had become a harlot (Isaiah 1:20).
      1. Jerusalem is frequently viewed as a harlot in the Old Testament.
  - c. "BUT," the argument comes, "Jerusalem didn't rule over the kings of the earth!"
    - i. The word "earth" is *ge* (as in geology), and is often translated "land" (as in the Promised Land).
    - ii. The early church specifically said who the "kings of the earth" were (Acts 4:26-27).
      1. Herod and Pontius Pilate
      2. These men only ruled over one land: Palestine or Israel.
  - d. The Book of Revelation was written describing a coming in judgment against a city which took place between AD 64 and 85, which would cause the physical Israelites to mourn.
    - i. By now, perhaps you have an idea of which city is under consideration, but let us continue.
- V. The cause of the judgment against Babylon the Great (Revelation 18:20-19:2).
- a. The judgment upon the city called Babylon was so that God could avenge the blood of the apostles and prophets (18:20).
  - b. The judgment upon the city called Babylon would be violent (18:21).
  - c. The city was guilty of the blood of prophets, of saints, and of ALL that were slain on the earth (18:24).
  - d. Now, let us compare this with something that Jesus said while He was here on earth (Matthew 23:34-39).
    - i. To Jerusalem, Jesus says, "I send unto **you** prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them **ye** shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city, (35) that upon **you** may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (36) Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. (37) O **Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent [Gr. Apostles] unto thee..."
    - ii. The judgment upon the city called Babylon was because the blood of the apostles and prophets were being avenged (Revelation 18:20).
      1. Jesus said that the blood of the apostles and prophets were going to be avenged on Jerusalem.
    - iii. The judgment upon the city called Babylon was because they were guilty of the blood of the saints (Revelation 18:24).

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1. Jesus said that the blood of ALL the righteous (saints would be the righteous ones) would be avenged upon Jerusalem.
- iv. According to Jesus, God would avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets, and all the righteous upon the city of Jerusalem.
  1. According to Revelation, God destroyed the city called Babylon in order to avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets and all the righteous.
  2. Only two options exist at this point:
    - a. Babylon is Jerusalem, and Matthew 23:34-39 is describing the same events as Revelation 18:20-19:2.
    - b. Or God somehow messed up and didn't actually avenge the blood of the apostles, prophets, and saints when He destroyed Jerusalem and had to find another city to destroy to finish the avenging.
  - e. The Book of Revelation is describing a coming of Jesus Christ in judgment upon the city of Jerusalem in AD 70, which caused the physical Israelites to mourn and wail.
- VI. What purpose does it serve to have a book about the destruction of Jerusalem?
  - a. Considering now that we understand the book of Revelation was written about the destruction of Jerusalem, the once faithful city that had turned (spiritually) into a harlot and was guilty of the blood of Jesus, the apostles, the prophets, and all the other righteous, the question still remains: why would God give us a book about it?
  - b. It shows the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (the destruction of Jerusalem was mentioned in Zechariah 14:1-2, Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 3:12-4:2, Joel 2:28-32; also throughout Deuteronomy).
  - c. It shows the visible end of the Old Testament system.
    - i. Jeremiah spoke of the New Covenant that God would make with His people (Jeremiah 31:31).
      1. We know that this new covenant was instituted on the Day of Pentecost after the death and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2).
      2. But the Old Testament system, the Law of Moses, was still being followed by the majority of the Jews.
        - a. The fact that they could still practice the Old Law caused many Jews to think that Christianity couldn't be the New Covenant.
      3. With the destruction of Jerusalem, of the temple, of the genealogical records, it became physically impossible to follow the Law of Moses.
        - a. There has been no altar for sacrifices to be made since AD 70.
        - b. There has been no temple in which the High Priest could enter with the Day of Atonement sacrifice for the people since AD 70.
        - c. There have been no records of lineage proving descent from Aaron for someone to be a High Priest since AD 70 (there have been no high priests since that time).
        - d. God made it physically impossible for anyone to follow the Law of Moses since AD 70.
    - ii. Physical Jerusalem was destroyed so that the New Jerusalem could shine forth.
      1. After the judgment scene in Revelation 20, the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven and is described as glorious.

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2. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, Christianity was generally viewed as a "sect" of Judaism (Acts 24:5, 28:22).
3. It has been accurately stated that Christianity grew up under the umbrella of Judaism.
4. Some might (and some have) argued that the destruction was irrelevant to the church except that the persecutors (the Jews) were silenced.
  - a. However, let me ask you a question:
  - b. In the Old Testament, when did Israel become a nation?
    - i. It was when they crossed the Red Sea and were freed from Egyptian bondage (God called them a nation shortly thereafter when He gave the Law to Moses).
  - c. However, even though they were a nation with laws from God, there was a way in which they hadn't fully arrived as a nation until they entered the Promised Land 40 years later.
  - d. The church was God's new nation beginning from Pentecost, but there was a sense in which the church wasn't completely revealed until the Old Jerusalem was done away with, 40 years later.
  - e. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the church was seen clearly in its full glory as the New Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God (see Revelation 21).

### Conclusion:

1. Though many of the symbols in Revelation may seem confusing, we can know the overall picture of the book, and as such, we can have a better understanding of the details:
  - a. The book of Revelation paints a vivid picture of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and all it stood for, the complete abolishment of the Old Testament system, the avenging of the blood of all of God's servants, and the status of the church of Jesus Christ as the only way to have access to God.
2. Do you want access to God?