

# NOTES FOR THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

## FIRST BLESSING

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (Rev 1:3)

## ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### Organization of the book of Revelation:

Write the things which thou hast seen [vision of Christ Jesus], and the things which are [letters to the churches], and the things which shall be hereafter [seven visions] (Rev 1:19)

### Organization of the Bible Study of the book of Revelation:

- How to study the book of Revelation
- Seven blessings in the book of Revelation
- Vision of Christ Jesus (introduction)
- Letters to the seven churches
- Six visions
- Seventh vision (eternal state)
- Conclusion (John & the Angel, Epilogue, and Benediction)

## NOTES ON HOW TO STUDY

### You are blessed

It is wonderful that the book of Revelation is a book full of blessings. As one studies the book of Revelation, it may seem daunting to try and figure out what some of the passages mean and we may think we are not getting anything out of it. Frankly, it can seem confusing. That does not matter. The blessings in the book of Revelation are there to bless as one studies the book of Revelation. There should be no concern over how much one thinks they are comprehending. Regardless, people are blessed for studying the book of Revelation. Each Bible study will begin by discussing one of the seven blessings found in the book of Revelation (see Tomlinson, p. 109).

### Interpreting the book of Revelation

There are various methods people use to interpret and explain the book of Revelation:

#### **Literary structure:**

An example of a literary structure is organizing writing in groups of seven which indicates "perfection." There is an almost endless list of literary structures and devices used in Revelation which indicates that everything written in this book has a place and purpose. Tomlinson wrote: "it is one of the most nearly perfect structures in all literature" (Preface, vii)

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## **Imagery:**

Imagery creates a visual picture. An example of imagery is “raining cats and dogs.” An example from Revelation - “the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.” (Rev 12:6)

## **Symbols:**

A symbol represents a meaning different than its literal sense. Understanding what a symbol represents, similar to understanding a literary structure, can help to understand what the passage means. Symbols are numerous in the book of Revelation and below describes different ways people use to determine what a symbol stands for.

### Symbols explained in Revelation

Rather than using the word such as “angels,” Revelation uses a symbol (“i.e., “stars”) to represent “angels”. Sometimes Revelation tells you what the symbol means – “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” (Rev 1:20). To expand on the meaning, one could continue researching in the Bible. For example, Hebrews 1:13,14 describe angels as “ministering Spirits.”

### Symbols explained in the Old Testament

Many symbols are explained in the Old Testament. Kratzer wrote, “the symbolism of Revelation is the symbolism of the Old Testament prophecy revived” (Kratzer, p.36). An example - “his feet like unto fine brass (bronze in other translations)” (Rev 1:15) – Deut. 33:25 and Jer. 1:18 help explain this as these verses indicate that since bronze is a strong material it is used for protection. Also, bronze is known for being ductile which means that it “can flow under severe stress.”

### Symbols explained in mythology

Other times, according to Hoyt, some symbols have a background in Egyptian, Babylonian, and Greek mythology.

## **Numerology:**

Numerology is used for interpretation and prophecy. For example, the number five is considered to represent respect, kindness, grace. In Genesis 43:34, Benjamin is given five times the portion of food and the brothers were “merry with him” (meaning they respected him). Another example is the number seven which is considered to represent completeness and perfection.

Numbers in the book of Revelation are sometimes used to determine future events. This is an example – “they should be tormented five months” (Rev 9:5). Barnes’ commentary writes in part - “Five months – So far as the words here are concerned this might be taken literally, denoting five months or one hundred and fifty days; or as a prophetic reckoning, where a day stands for a year.”

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## **Apocalyptic:**

Apocalyptic literature is a type of prophecy that uses imagery and symbols and other devices to tell about future disasters and destruction.

## **Other types of interpretations.....**

Endless ways people find to interpret the book of Revelation.

## **In summary on different interpretation methods**

The intent or use of methods of interpretation is important to consider - In Deuteronomy 18:10 – “There shall not be found among you anyone that ....useth divination, or an observer of times.” Also Leviticus 19:26 – “...neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.” When it comes to using any literary device, one should consider how it is being used (the intent). Is it being used to understand a concept (or principle) or is it used being used to determine human events? Or perhaps another way to look it - how is it helping (or not) in our spiritual understanding?

Overall, the above types of interpretations can be discussed in the Bible study when helpful. In general, they are not the focus of this Bible study. There can be an endless nature of analyzing interpretations which becomes a pursuit in and of itself lacking in spiritual understanding.

## **An Open Book that is useful in our daily life**

The focus of this Bible study is to understand key messages in Revelation. The intent is to make this Bible study useful in our daily life. These messages are sometimes all too easy to find, and the book of Revelation is not that mysterious. It is an open book as Tomlinson describes it. Tomlinson wrote in the Preface of his book that the inspired writings of MBE made this an open book (Tomlinson, Preface, vii-viii). And indeed, Revelation tells us that with the “key of David,” that heaven will be opened (to our understanding):

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; (Rev 3:7)

After this I looked and behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were a trumpet talking to me; (Rev 4:1)

## **The key of David:**

And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. (Isaiah 22:22)

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: (Matthew 16:19)

The quote in Matthew above is when Jesus was talking to Peter and the other disciples, and he was saying to them that he will give them the means to understand God. *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* wrote this about the keys:

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The “keys” of it are abilities to open and explain the Gospel truths,...

In summary, our study of the book of Revelation seeks to accomplish the following:

- Learn about the  **blessings**  given in the book of Revelation and how we are blessed by studying this book.
- Understand  **key messages**  that can be easily found in the book of Revelation and be able to use them in our daily life

## REFERENCES

This section provides references that can be used for studying the book of Revelation:

### Primary reference:

Start with Part III on page 111. Refer to prior pages as needed.

The Revelation Of St. John An Open Book

by Irving C. Tomlinson; Publication date 1936

<https://archive.org/details/revelationofstjo00toml/page/n3/mode/2up>

### Other References:

Revelation Interpreted by Rev. G. A. Kratzer, Chicago, 1915

<https://downloads.plainfieldcs.com/Members/Revelation%20Interpreted%20by%20Rev.%20G.%20A.%20Kratzer,%202nd%20edition.pdf>

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nnc1.50336785&view=page&seq=1>

Studies in the Apocalypse of John of Patmos, A non-interpretive and literary approach of the Last Book of the English Bible; Columbus, OH, 1954

<https://archive.org/details/studiesinapocaly00hoyt>

Bible Hub: use to study specific verses and to read Bible commentary:

<https://biblehub.com/>

1828 Webster’s dictionary:

<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/>

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## COMMENT ON THE STUDY NOTES

The notes that follow are not the “answers” but to assist in preparing for the Bible study. Please feel free to prepare for the Bible study however it works best for you. Please read Tomlinson as that is being used as our guide for the study of the book of Revelation.

## VISION OF CHRIST JESUS

Rev 1:1-19

### First Vision of Revelation:

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. (Rev 1:1)

### DEFINITION OF THE WORD “REVELATION”

Revelation (Greek: apokaluptó) from Rev 1:1; Strong’s 601

1. properly, to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up; to disclose, make bare:

As Kratzer writes – “revelation (Greek *apocalypsis*) means “unveiling.”

Revelation - Webster’s 1828

1. The act of disclosing or discovering to others what was before unknown to them; appropriately, the disclosure or communication of truth to men by God himself, or by his authorized agents, the prophets and apostles.
2. That which is revealed; appropriately, the sacred truths which God has communicated to man for his instruction and direction. The revelations of God are contained in the Old and New Testament.

Ephesians 3:3 - Paul

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery

### S&H references from Tomlinson

The magnitude of Jesus’ work, his material disappearance before their eyes and his reappearance, all enabled the disciples to understand what Jesus had said. Heretofore they had only believed: now they understood. The advent of this understanding is what is meant by the

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descent of the Holy Ghost, - that influx of divine Science which so illuminated the Pentecostal Day and is now repeating its ancient history. (S&H 43:3)

Willingness to become as a little child and to leave the old for the new, renders thought receptive of the advanced idea. (S&H 323:32-2)

## LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

....What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. (Rev 1:11)

Notes for the following letters:

1. Ephesus
2. Smyrna
3. Pergamos
4. Thyatira

### The Church of Ephesus

Rev 2:1-7

**Material condition:** Unfaithfulness, lack of fruitage ("left thy first love," Rev 2:4)

**Spiritual quality:** Faithfulness ("do the first works," Rev 2:5)

**Blessing:** Eternal fruitage ("eat of the tree of life," Rev:2:7)

#### Tree of Life

Genesis 2:

9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Proverbs 3:18

She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is everyone that retaineth her.

*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*

Wisdom allegorized as a tree of life—whose fruit preserves life, gives all that makes living a blessing.

S&H (145:32)

Our Master's first article of faith propounded to his students was healing, and he proved his faith by his works.

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## The Church of Smyrna

Rev 2:8-11

**Material condition:** Hypocrisy, blasphemy, false teachings (“blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not,” Rev 2:9)

**Spiritual quality:** Honesty (“be thou faithful,” Rev 2:11)

**Blessing:** Eternal life (“shall not be hurt of the second life,” Rev 2:11)

Hebrews 11:27

By faith he [Moses] forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Misc. (226:9-12)

What has an individual gained by losing his own self-respect? Or what has he lost when, retaining his own, he loses the homage of fools, or the pretentious praise of hypocrites, false to themselves as to others?

S&H (596:29)

VEIL. A cover; concealment; hiding; hypocrisy

S&H (453:16)

Honesty is spiritual power.

## The Church of Pergamos

Rev 2:12-17

**Material condition:** Sensuality (“to commit fornication”) Rev 2:14

**Spiritual quality:** Praise God (“overcometh,” Rev 2:17)

**Blessing:** Sustenance (“hidden manna,” Rev 2:17)

Psalms 68:4

Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah, and rejoice before him. [“Jah” is a shortened form of “Jehovah”]

Psalms 119:5

Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

Message for 1900 (13:17)

The city of Pergamos was devoted to a sensual worship.

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## The Church of Thyatirax

Rev 2:18-29

**Material condition:** Mental malpractice ("that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess," Rev 2:20)

**Spiritual quality:** Acknowledge God ("keepeth my works unto the end," Rev 2:26)

**Blessing:** God leads us in the right path ("I will give him the morning star," Rev 2:28)

Matthew 10:22

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary

Matthew 10:16-42 Our Lord warned his disciples to prepare for persecution. They were to avoid all things which gave advantage to their enemies, all meddling with worldly or political concerns, all appearance of evil or selfishness, and all underhand measures.

Proverbs 3:6

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Psalms 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Misc. (22:15-17)

The malicious mental argument and its action on the mind of the perpetrator, is fatal, morally and physically.