

A Study Of The Book Of Revelation

February 16, 2020

Introduction:

Controversy abounds in the book of Revelation.

- Who is the beast with seven heads and ten horns?
- Who is the false prophet or the harlot who sits atop of the beast?
- Who wrote Revelation?
- When was it written?
- What is the proper method of studying the book?

Can It Be Understood?

Revelation 1:1-3, *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and **signified** (it) by his angel unto his servant John; who **bare witness** of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand."*

Can It Be Understood?

- **Revelation 22:6**, *"And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass."*
- **Revelation 22:10**, *"And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand."*

Can It Be Understood?

Some principles we should follow in order to derive the truth therein.

1. What did the book mean to the people of that day?
2. That would also raise the question of the date Revelation was written.
 - **Early Date:** Some defend the date between 60-70 AD.
 - **Late Date:** The second defended date would be about from 96-98 AD.

Can It Be Understood?

Some principles we should follow in order to derive the truth therein.

3. How shall we understand the book in the light of the **Old Testament** prophets?
 - There are in Revelation some 400 or more **allusions** to the Old Testament, but not one single direct quotation. (There are only 404 verses in the book of Revelation.)

Can It Be Understood?

Some principles we should follow in order to derive the truth therein.

4. We must understand the book of Revelation in the light of the New Testament Scriptures.

Revelation and Apocalypse

The “**Revelation**” does have some marked differences from typical apocalyptic literature.

- It is called a prophecy. (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19); and apocalyptic literature is usually distinguished from prophecy. This prophecy is given directly to the living writer.
- The “*Revelation*” dealt with real churches that had real problems at the present time and needed to repent then.
- The Revelation writer gave his real name (*John*), not a pseudonym.

Revelation and Apocalypse

The “**Revelation**” does have some marked differences from typical apocalyptic literature.

- The pessimism of the apocalyptic writers is not found in Revelation. The writing is very optimistic.
- Apocalyptic writers characteristically retrace history under guise of prophecy. From the standpoint of a person in the remote past, they forecast what will happen in their own day. Not so with the “Revelation.”

Revelation and Apocalypse

The “**Revelation**” does have some marked differences from typical apocalyptic literature.

- The apocalypses normally contain a great deal of vision explanation from the heavenly guide. Some of this is present in Revelation (17:7ff) but not like it is in apocalyptic writing outside the inspired writings.
- In general, the apocalyptic writers looked forward to the coming Messiah.

➔ In the “Revelation,” the Messiah has already come and won a decisive, resounding victory!

Revelation and Apocalypse

“It is essentially a literature of the oppressed who saw no hope for the nation simply in terms of politics or on the plane of human history. The battle they were fighting was on a spiritual level; it was to be understood not in terms of politics and economics, but rather in terms of ‘spiritual powers in high places.’ And so they were compelled to look beyond history to the dramatic and miraculous intervention of God who would see to right the injustices done to his people Israel.”

- D.S. Russell, as quoted by Ferrell Jenkins,
Old Testament in the Book of Revelation, Page 35

Why Write In This Form?

- Easy to instruct and encourage God’s people without playing into the hand of the enemy.
- Danger to the writer and recipient if understood.

Why Write In This Form?

- This method is both “prudent and brilliant” – Homer Hailey
- To conceal and reveal.
- Somewhat comparable to parables. (Matthew 13:10-15)

13

Why Write In This Form?

“The historical situation of the day was always relevant in apocalyptic literature. What if the enemy confiscated the manuscript on which was written a message he easily understood as declaring his defeat? For example, what would a Roman soldier do who found a Christian in possession of a message from John saying that the emperor was a false god and that Rome would fall? The Christian would be certain to be accused as a traitor, and the scroll would be confiscated. On the other hand, if he read that ‘Babylon is fallen,’ he would be more likely to label the document, ‘a fool’s message in the hand of a fool.’ Everyone knew that Babylon had fallen over six hundred years earlier.” Robert Harkrider

14

Warning!

Very easy to let Apocalyptic Literature become the foundation of fallacious interpretations!

15

Significance of Numbers

- 1 – Unity (Deuteronomy 6:4) One Jehovah God.
- 2 – Strength (Revelation 11:3)
- 3 – Divine number (see Matthew 28:19)
- 4 – Nature, Creation, World (Revelation 7:1)
- 5 – The whole man is represented by this number example (Revelation 17:10)
- 6 – Short of 7 – failure (Revelation 13:18)
- 7 – Completeness – perfection, totality, sometimes the combination of 3 and 4
- 10 – Power – world power Number 5 multiplied twice. Refer to Revelation 13:1. Ten horns.
- 1000 – Multiple of 10 X 10 X10. Whole or fullness
- 12 – Religious number
- 3½ – 42 months; 1260 days (Revelation 12:14).
Broken 7 – incomplete – indefinite period

16

Significance of Symbols

- Additional symbols used in the book of Revelation include: birds, beasts, persons, cities, elements of nature, weapons, light, darkness, and precious stones of different kinds.
- These are used to give us pictures of triumph of righteousness over evil.

17

Significance of Numbers and Symbols

- “Proper use of Numbers and Objects in Revelation.
- Understanding the symbolic meanings usually attached to numbers in this style of literature is necessary; numbers do not have real numerical value.
- We must discard our mathematical ideas and seek to discover their symbolical significance.
- A large part of the unscriptural dispensationalism of the day is based upon a false view of the value of numbers employed in Revelation.” (Robert Harkrider)

18

Purpose Of The Book

To impart comfort to persecuted believers.

Assurances:

- God sees their tears. 7:17; 21:4
- Their prayers rule the world. 8:3-4
- Their death is recognized as precious. 14:13; 20:4
- Their final victory is assured. 15:2
- Their blood will be avenged (vindication). 6:9; 8:3

19