

CALDWELL COMMENTARY SERIES



VOLUME TWO | REVELATION 4-22

# The REVELATION of Jesus Christ



KATHERINE K. CALDWELL

# **REVELATION**

## **Vol. II**

**An in-depth study of  
" *The Hereafter Things* "**

**Chapters 4 - 22**

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This volume is dedicated to two very special couples in my life.

Both of them are true examples of what it means

to be “*the salt of the Earth*”

and “*the light of the world*”.

**Troy and Barbee Decker**

**Rob and Sybil Garner**

Great gratitude is again extended to another dear friend,

who has the extraordinary talent and patience

to diligently proofread my material

(and this book was *not* easy)!

**Mercedes Dean**

# **Revelation Vol. II**

## **Table of Contents**

<b><u>Lessons</u></b>	<b><u>Pages</u></b>
24. <b>“Revelation Review”</b> (Revelation 1-3)	1-8
25. <b>“Translation to Heaven”</b> (Revelation 4:1, 2)	9-18
26. <b>“The Throne and Its Occupant”</b> (Revelation 4:3, 5-9)	19-26
27. <b>“The Twenty-four Elders”</b> (Revelation 4:4, 10, 11)	27-34
28. <b>“The Significant Scroll”</b> (Revelation 5:1)	35-42
29. <b>“The Scroll’s Worthy Recipient”</b> (Revelation 5:2-14)	43-50
30. <b>“The Noise of Thundering Horses”</b> (Revelation 6:1-8)	51-58
31. <b>“Refuge in the Rock”</b> (Revelation 6:9-17)	59-66
32. <b>“Those Able to Stand”</b> (Revelation 7:1-17)	67-74
33. <b>“Seventh Seal Silence and Sounds”</b> (Revelation 8:1-13)	75-82
34. <b>“Liberated Locusts”</b> (Revelation 9:1-12)	83-90
35. <b>“The Bitter and the Sweet”</b> (Revelation 9:13-10:11)	91-98
36. <b>“Testimony Time”</b> (Revelation 11:1-19)	99-108
37. <b>“The Angry Red Dragon”</b> (Revelation 12:1-17)	109-118
38. <b>“The Satanic Trinity”</b> (Revelation 13:1-18)	119-130
39. <b>“Victory Visions”</b> (Revelation 14:1-13)	131-138
40. <b>“Here Comes the Judge!”</b> (Revelation 14:14-15:8)	139-148
41. <b>“Undiluted Wrath”</b> (Revelation 16:1-21)	149-158
42. <b>“Ecumenical Babylon’s Fall”</b> (Revelation 17:1-18)	159-170
43. <b>“Economical Babylon’s Fall”</b> (Revelation 18:1-24)	171-180
44. <b>“The Glorious Appearance”</b> (Revelation 19:1-21)	181-190
45. <b>“A World Theocracy and A White Throne”</b> (Revelation 20:1-15)	191-202
46. <b>“All Things New”</b> (Revelation 21:1-27)	203-212
47. <b>“Final Blessings and Beckoning”</b> (Revelation 22:1-21)	213-220
<b>HOMEWORK ANSWERS for Lessons #24 – 46</b>	<b>221-257</b>

## POEMS by Katherine

<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b>“Lord of a Thousand Wonders”</b> (Psalm 8)	18
<b>“Converted for Commitment”</b>	49
<b>“Thundering Hoofbeats”</b> (Revelation 6:1-8)	57
<b>“Kiss the Son”</b> (Psalm 2)	64
<b>“The Best Place to Be”</b>	66
<b>“As in the Days of Noah”</b> (Luke 17:26, 27; Genesis 6, 7)	108
<b>“Every Answer”</b>	130
<b>“A Song Unto the Lord”</b>	146
<b>“From the Depths”</b> (Psalm 130)	180
<b>“Fruit to the Finish”</b>	212
<b>“Death’s Birth”</b>	220

# **General Outline for the Book of Revelation**

From Revelation 1:19

- I. **The Person of Christ – Revelation Chapter 1**  
*“things thou hast seen”*
  
- II. **The Possession of Christ – Revelation Chapters 2, 3**  
*“things which are”*
  
- III. **The Program of Christ – Revelation Chapters 4-22**  
*“things which shall be hereafter”*
  - A. **The Tribulation Period**
    - 1, **The Heavenly Chorus**
    - 2. **The Earthly Chaos**
      - a. **The Seven Seal Judgments**
      - b. **The Seven Trumpet Judgments**
      - c. **The Seven Bowl Judgments**
  - B. **The Millennial Kingdom**
  - C. **The Eternal Kingdom**

**REVELATION**  
**Lesson #24: "Revelation Review"**  
Revelation chapters 1 to 3

Revelation (which in Greek is the word "*apokalypsis*," meaning "*unveiling*") is the sixty-sixth and final book of Scripture. It is the only prophetic book in the New Testament, whereas there are 17 in the Old Testament. In the God-inspired pages that reveal the Lord Jesus at yet-future *Second Coming*, we find Him no longer the gentle *Lamb* and the Suffering Servant. He is the judging Lion of Judah and the Sovereign King! In Revelation, He is fully "*unveiled*" in the glory, power, and majesty of His Deity.

Revelation 1:1 clearly states the book is "*the Revelation* [singular] *of Jesus Christ*". It is not plural ("the RevelationS of Jesus Christ") nor is it "The Revelation of Saint John the divine" (as some Bible editors have incorrectly labeled the book). The contents of the book were given by God the Father to His Eternal Son, Who sent it by way of an angel to John, the last living Apostle. The purpose of the book is presented in verse one: . . . *to shew unto His* [Christ's] *servants things which must shortly* [quickly or suddenly] *come to pass*". Revelation presents Christians with the unveiled glory of their Saviour and with things of the future beforehand. The emphasis is Christ and His future program for the world.

Unfortunately, many people never take the time to read much less study the Book of Revelation. Unbelievers think it is foolishness (I Corinthians 2:14). To them, it is like mythology, full of strange beasts (e.g., scorpion-type locusts with hair like women, faces like men, and teeth like lions) and unprecedented events (e.g., the sun, stars, and moon darkened; great bodies of water turning to blood). It talks of a woman clothed with the sun delivering a Man Child and being attacked by a great red dragon with seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns (Revelation 12:1-5)! It describes a beast empowered by that same dragon, described as a seven-headed leopard with bear-feet and a mouth like a lion (chapter 13). John speaks of seeing a great whore arrayed in purple and scarlet, decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls, and drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (chapter 17). The book climaxes with Christ coming from Heaven and using the sharp, *twoedged* Word of His mouth to destroy His enemies gathered in the Valley of Megiddo. When the New Jerusalem descends from Heaven, her description surpasses the most creative imagination, but to the unbeliever, all this is pure science fiction. Few unbelievers even read the book except when looking for verses of Scripture to mock.

The real tragedy is that even many Christians avoid studying the final book of canonized Scripture. Some say it simply cannot be understood because there are too many interpretations. Others "stay away" from prophecy, which is a poor position for a Christian to make since roughly 30% of the Bible is prophetic! Contrarily, some Christians do not study Revelation because they have been taught it is *not* prophetic! They have been led to believe the book has nothing to do with the future, and merely speaks symbolically of past events that have little benefit for the Church today.

Whatever reasoning may be used as an excuse not to study the Book of Revelation, it is invalid for anyone whose faith is grounded on the Bible. It is wrong to neglect any part of God's Word, for "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for [1] doctrine, [2] . . . reproof, [3] . . . correction, and for (4) instruction in righteousness . . .". God inspired His chosen human vessels to record His Word in 66 individual "books" that comprise one Book so that His people might be made ". . . perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16, 17). It is wrong to "pick and choose" the portions of His Word we take seriously and those we do not. The Book of Revelation reveals God's plan for the future, and understanding the future helps us live more effectively and meaningfully today.

Furthermore, the last book of Scripture is "*the Revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1:1). We cannot divorce the Person of Scripture from the program of Scripture, for without Christ there would be no fulfillment of the divine prophetic program for the world. Not only is Jesus the Subject of the Book; He is the Author. Contained in Revelation are His last words to the Church before His return for her. It contains His final words and warnings to the world before His Second Coming! These two factors alone make Revelation worth studying!

In chapters 2 and 3, Christ is the exalted High Priest Who ministers to His Church. He is also the Judge of those who have infiltrated her with false teachings. In chapters 4 and 5, He is the glorified *Lamb of God* Who reigns from Heaven's throne. In chapters 6 to 18, He is the rightful Judge of wicked men who have been deceived by Satan. In chapter 19, He is the conquering "*Lord of lords and King of kings*" and the beloved Bridegroom Who ushers His Bride, the Church, into the magnificent heavenly city, where she will dwell eternally with Him. To ignore Revelation is to miss a great opportunity to its Author better, and knowing Him better purifies the believer! Knowing Christ in

a deeper way promotes stronger faith, greater love, more faithful, heartfelt service for Him in reaching out to fellow believers and in witnessing to those who do not know Him! These are all reasons why He leaves us here after our salvation rather than immediately taking us into His presence.

Another reason Christians should study Revelation is because it completes the circle of many (if not most) Bible truths. It culminates the revelation of great Bible doctrines first revealed in Genesis and expanded in other Old and New Testament passages. For example, Revelation reveals a great deal about the Church (when the seven letters were given, they were yet-future in the prophetic realm of "spelling out" Church history). Revelation tells of the resurrection of the saints, the Tribulation Period (mentioned in Scripture as early as Deuteronomy 4:30, 31), and the yet-future end of Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Revelation 20:1-10), of his cohort, "*the man of sin*" (II Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 19:19-21), and of false religion (Genesis 11:1-9; Matthew 13; Revelation 17). It reveals the consummation of "*The Times of the Gentiles*" (Daniel 2:44; Luke 21:24; Revelation 18), and, most importantly, it reveals wonderful information about Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 19:11-16).

In the first lesson of Revelation Volume I (Caldwell Commentary series), we presented many interesting comparisons between the first (Genesis) and last (Revelation) books of Scripture. For example, Genesis reveals how man lost his opportunity to eat of "*the tree of life*" on Earth (3:22-24), whereas Revelation (22:2) demonstrates how redeemed mankind will have the blessed privilege of eating from that tree in Heaven! Genesis records man's *first* rebellion against God (chapters 3 and 4); Revelation tells of his *final* rebellion. Genesis reveals the tragic sorrow that resulted from sin (chapters 3, 4), while Revelation promises the end of all sorrow for His children (21:4). Genesis (3:1) introduced Satan, the tempter of man; Revelation (20:10) tells of his end. In Genesis, we learn how Earth was purged by the Flood (7:12). In Revelation, we learn how the New Earth is purified by fire (21:1). In Genesis, man's city Babel (Babylon) was built on a sin-cursed Earth. In Revelation, man's city ("Babylon") is destroyed. In its place, God's city, the New Jerusalem, is established on a New, sin-free Earth.

The first chapters of Genesis describe the perfect world God made for man and placed under his dominion. Even though sin and the resulting curse have intruded this world, God is never defeated in His ultimate purposes. All He intends for His Son, for mankind, and for the world will be accomplished. Sin and the curse on creation will be removed, and death will be no more! These are some of the exciting conclusions regarding God's completed redemptive plan we learn about in the Book of Revelation. Two-thirds of the book contains quotations or allusions to Old Testament Scriptures. There is nothing strange about it! Revelation is merely the consummation and capstone of God's program for history. Without it, the Bible would be an unfinished book.

Another reason Christians should study Revelation is because it is the only book in the Bible that both begins (1:3) and ends (22:7) **by promising a special blessing on those who study it**. Wow! It is also the only book that ends **by promising a curse on those who add to Scripture or take away from Scripture** (22:18, 19)! Some denominations have *taken from* the Word of God its final book! They completely ignore it, even saying it should not have been included in canonized Scripture! *THAT* is inexcusable and dangerous (note the curse mentioned above). It is inexcusable for denominations, churches, and individual Christians to do exactly what God told them not to do when He said, "*Seal NOT the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand*" (22:10). Unlike God's instructions to Daniel, who was told to "*seal*" his divinely inspired writings until "*the time of the end*" (12:4), Revelation is not a sealed book. Yet, entire seminaries and denominations (thus many ministers and ministries) have "*sealed*" the book to the sheep in their flocks!

Interpretation is a critical issue (in Lessons 2 and 3 of our Revelation Volume I, we discussed this in greater detail than we do now). Without an understanding of the four basic schools of interpretation, you may get confused when hearing interpretations that differ from what is taught in this study. The four primary methods of interpreting the book are: (1) the idealist (or allegorical) school, (2) the preterist school, (3) the historicist school, and (4) the futuristic school.

The **idealist** views Revelation as allegorical (figurative). They say John merely wrote about the on-going spiritual conflict between good and evil (and good wins in the end). According to the idealist, Revelation does not predict the future in any literal detail. Idealists do not believe in specific prophecy, evidently forgetting that God can easily predict the future, since He is God and knows "*the end from the beginning*" (Isaiah 46:10). His fulfilled prophecy statistic stands at 100% accuracy; to deny He can tell the future is ludicrous. He planned history in advance! It is HIS-story!

A problem with the idealist view is it loses the details of the book. Details are either ignored or cast aside as fictional stories or unimportant "symbol-pictures". The real danger of the idealist approach is that the authority in interpretation ceases to be the words of Scripture. That authority is replaced with the mind of the interpreter. We do *not* use the idealist interpretation for the Book of Revelation.

A second school of interpretation for the Book of Revelation is the **preterist** approach. This view says the book is merely a description of the problems and persecutions the Early Church experienced. The judgments of the book are non-literal and to be interpreted as God's judgments that fell on the Romans to vindicate their horrible persecution of the early Christians. Preterists teach that all the events of Revelation occurred back in the First and Second Centuries A.D.

The preterist view (as true of the idealist view) is anti-supernatural. It denies the ability of Revelation's Author to predict the future! Most liberal and neo-orthodox theologians hold to this view, which is why many seminaries and pulpits virtually ignore the last book of the Bible. Two major problems with the preterist view are: (1) none of the Roman emperors were the Antichrist, and (2) the judgments of Revelation did not and have not occurred to the global magnitude and detail given.

The **historicist** school of interpretation for Revelation considers the book to be a symbolic presentation of the whole of Church history. Historicists claim that the judgments described in chapters 6 to 18 have been continually happening for 2,000+ years. They do this despite the fact that the Book of Revelation itself (as well as the Book of Daniel) completely refutes this teaching by repeatedly stating that the events and judgments of Revelation chapters 6 to 18 will take place in a seven-year period, not a 2,000+ year period! Few historicists agree in their interpretations of the various features and details of Revelation. They seldom settle on the same historical incident to have supposedly fulfilled the book's successive prophesies. [Other problems with this view were presented in Lesson 2 of Revelation Vol. I.] We do *not* use the historicist view for our study of Revelation.

The fourth main school of interpretation for Revelation (and other eschatological prophecies of Scripture) is the **futurist** school. This method of interpretation is the only view that takes a literal approach to end-times' Bible prophecies. The idealist, preterist, and historicist, in one way or another, alter the original meaning of words to make them support their particular theories. The futurist follows the rule that **when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense**. He also understands that when something is obviously a figure of speech, symbol, parable, type, or allegory, he is to use Scripture itself to determine the meaning (particularly of a symbol).

Those who are confused about Revelation because they do not understand the symbols either forget or do not realize that God is His own interpreter. Genesis 40:8 states, "*Do not interpretations belong to God?*" Many of the symbols of Revelation are interpreted within the book itself or in other books of the Bible! In most cases, Scripture interprets its own symbols and leaves little room to the imagination of man to devise his arbitrary explanations. Futurists not only believe the prophecies of Revelation are to be taken literally, but that **Scripture is to be used to interpret Scripture**.

The futurist understands that the divine judgments of Revelation are to be poured out on this earth in a literal seven-year period, causing the devastation to the magnitude described. The futurist gives a reasonable, methodical, and simple approach to interpreting Revelation. It is the only method that interprets the words of Scripture literally (yet not blindly ruling out symbols). The futurist interpretation is the only safe check on false teachings regarding this book, for it grounds interpretation on God's Word rather than on man's imagination.

Futurists see most of Revelation as yet-future (chapters 4 to 22). Even a good portion of chapters two and three (which deal with the seven churches and present an amazingly accurate prophecy of Church history) were yet-future at the time John was divinely inspired and guided to write the book.

Still another reason we are using the futurist view of interpretation for this study of Revelation is that **none of the events after chapter 3 have occurred in history!** Even the two World Wars of the Twentieth Century did not combine to destroy half of the world's population! Nor has one-third of earth's greenery been burned up or one-third of the sea turned to blood (to name a few examples)!

Many people have thought and taught that Revelation is impossible to outline. But, with the futuristic view of interpretation, we find no need to develop a man-made outline! Why? Christ provided us with the outline in Revelation 1:19. How easy is that? (For that outline, see page "v").

The Apostle John, likely in his 90s, had been exiled to the deserted Isle of Patmos, located about 25 miles off the mainland of Asia Minor. He was banished there because of his faith in and testimony for Christ (1:9a). It was while he was suffering for the Lord on that rugged, lonely rock of an island that the resurrected, glorified Christ appeared to Him and spoke the important words of chapters one through three. After assuring the frightened John of His identity by way of a threefold reason not to be fearful, the Lord gave the old Apostle an important threefold assignment.

John was to: (1) "*Write the things which thou hast seen*" (the contents of chapter one - his vision of the glorified Christ standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks); (2) write ". . . *the things which are*"

(John lived in the time of the Church Age, so this part of his assignment dealt with the Lord's letters to the seven churches of Revelation chapters two and three). (3) Third, John was to write about ". . . *the things which shall be hereafter*" (the events following the seven church letters; the "*hereafter*" things of chapters 4 to 22). Since we are still in "The Church Age" (begun on the Day of Pentecost and ending with the Rapture), the events described in chapters 4 to 22 are yet-future.

The outline for this study is based on the outline Christ gave to John in Revelation 1:19 (page "v"):

- I. **The Person of Jesus Christ** [*"The things which thou hast seen"*] (Revelation 1)
- II. **The Possession of Jesus Christ** [*"the things which are"*] (Revelation 2, 3)
- III. **The Program of Jesus Christ** [*"the things which shall be hereafter"*] (Revelation 4-22)
  - A. The Tribulation Period (Revelation 4-19)
  - B. The Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20)
  - C. The Eternal Kingdom (Revelation 21, 22)

In our first volume on Revelation, we covered the first three chapters, and that took us through the first two divisions of the General Outline ("**The Person of Jesus Christ**" – chapter one; "**The Possession of Jesus Christ**" – chapters two and three). We will continue our study with chapter four (see Lesson 2), but for the remainder of this lesson, we want to briefly review both John's vision of Christ and the seven church letters.

In John's salutation of Revelation 1:4-8, we learned that the original recipients of the book were the seven churches of Asia Minor. The number "seven" in Scripture symbolizes *perfection* and *completion*. This special number appears many times in Revelation, but verse 1:4 of the salutation is the first occurrence. The seven churches were chosen by Christ to be the immediate recipients of His seven letters because together they represent His *complete* Church, as they also represent *all* Christian churches throughout the Church Age.

In Revelation 1:4 and 5, John stated that the salutation to the seven representative churches was extended from God the Father (referred to as He ". . . *which is, and which was, and which is to come*"), from God the Holy Spirit (designated by His sevenfold ministry and character), and from God the Son, the Lord Jesus. Christ was then referred to by the following three titles: (1) "*the Faithful Witness*" (reference to His past function as Prophet), (2) "*the First Begotten of the dead*" (reference to His present office as Priest), and (3) "*the Prince of the kings of Earth*" (His future position as King). Those three titles respectively testify to His faithful proclamation of God's Truth unto death, to His own victorious resurrection from the tomb of death, and to His triumphant, yet-future return to reign over this earth.

Also included in John's salutation is a twofold blessing for (1) *grace* and (2) *peace* (1:4). Grace speaks of God's attitude toward the believer, while peace speaks of the relationship between Himself and the believer. The combined result of God's grace in sending His Son to die in the sinner's place and His grace in drawing that sinner to His Son in saving faith is forgiveness of sin and reconciliatory peace *with* God (also the ability, by God's indwelling Spirit, to receive the *peace of God*)!

It is remarkable that, in a book full of anything but gracious and peaceful events (e.g., wars, bloodshed, plagues, famines, persecutions, martyrdom, worldwide idolatry and Satan-worship), the Lord first spoke of "*grace*" and "*peace*!" This is a reminder of His incredible love, which is such that He became Man so He could die for mankind's sin! He would much rather give *grace* and *peace* than send judgment. It is *NOT* His will that *any man should perish* (II Peter 3:9)! He presents mankind with the judgment predictions of Revelation to forewarn us of all that awaits those who rebel against Him by rejecting His Saviour. The book is a serious message of warning, so people everywhere can choose to accept the freely offered grace and peace from *God Almighty* and avoid His eventual judgment.

Following John's beautiful doxology (1:5b, 6) of praise to the Lord for loving us, loosing us, and lifting us (see Lesson 5), and following a strong promise for His Second Coming (1:7), and his (John's) explanation for being exiled on the Isle of Patmos (1:9), we then learn of the Apostle's "*Lord's day*" experience with the resurrected Christ. The bursting sound of "*a great voice, as of a trumpet*" (1:10) gained John's full attention. The booming voice said, "*I am Alpha and Omega*," and instructed John to write in a book the things he would see. He was to send the book contents to seven local First Century churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (1:11).

When John turned to see the Source of the great voice, he saw "*One like unto the Son of man*" standing in the midst of seven golden candlesticks (1:13). The vision was so brilliantly glorious, he fell down (at the Lord's feet) as though dead (1:17). From Christ (1:20), we learn the golden candlesticks represent the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:11), which means the entire vision pictured the Lord Jesus, Who is "*the Son of man*" standing in the midst of His Church.

John proceeded to describe the Lord. He was dressed in a garment that went to His feet, a golden girdle around His chest. Judges wore the long garment described, but only kings wore golden sashes. Christ's hair was white, like both wool and snow, but His eyes were "as a flame of fire" (1:14). His feet were "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," and His voice was like "the sound of many waters" (1:15). His right hand held seven stars (1:16), which Christ explained represented "the angels of the seven churches". Out of His mouth came a "sharp twoedged sword," and His face shined like the sun at its fullest strength (1:16).

John's description of the glorified Christ of the Patmos' vision reveals a number of significant truths about Him. The title "*the Son of man*" speaks of Christ's Humanity, as well as His Messiahship ("*the Son of man*" was an acknowledged Old Testament term for the Messiah). His attire denotes Him as both Judge and King. His white hair speaks of His eternality as Deity. John's description of Christ parallels the description of God, "*the Ancient of days*," presented by the Prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:9), giving us yet another Biblical proof Christ is one with God!

The Lord's eyes like fire and His blazing bronze feet denote His role as authoritative Judge. His *twoedged sword* speaks of the power of His Word. His voice like both "*a trumpet*" and "*many waters*" (1:10, 15) speaks of His power and authority. His shining countenance speaks of Him as the Light Source of His Church, and His right-hand possession of the seven stars of the seven churches indicates He is not only the Power (Light Source), but also the Possessor of His Church.

Because the Church belongs to the Christ, He has the right to examine her, which is exactly what He did in His seven church letters. Before presenting any message of judgment on the unbelieving, ungodly world, the Lord *first* calls His Church to repentance! "*Judgment must begin at the house of God*" (1 Peter 4:17). This is exactly what the Lord did as He commended and condemned and warned and reproved each of the seven representative types of churches in Revelation chapters two and three. However, before John presented the contents of those two chapters, he recorded the Lord's words to him after he had collapsed in shock from the trauma of what he heard and saw.

Reaching forth His right hand to tenderly touch the old Apostle and His dearest of earthly friends, the Lord Jesus said to John, "*Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*" (Revelation 1:17, 18). The Lord was giving John (and all believers) three reasons why he (and we) had nothing to fear.

The first reason is because the One in Whom John placed his trust is Creator God! He is "*the First and the Last*". This means He is the Giver of life! John did not need to fear anything in this life. God is eternal God, sovereignly in control of everything in John's life, which is likewise true for believers in Him today! The second reason John did not need to fear is because the One in Whom he placed his trust is He Who "*was dead*," but rose victorious over the grave! John did not need to fear death! Nor do we! Because Christ lives, we shall live also (John 14:19)!

Third, John need not fear eternity because the One for Whom he was suffering banishment on Patmos was also *the Keeper of the keys of Hell and death*. Those keys were "purchased" by His own shed blood and death. With His resurrection, Christ won the victory over death and Hell for all His followers! Amen!

If a believer need not fear anything in life, because he is in the hands of the Sovereign, Eternal, Creator God, and if he need not fear death, because he is in the hands of the One Who conquered death, and if he need not fear eternity, because he is in the omnipotent care of the One Who possesses the keys to release him forever from Hell and death, the conclusion is the believer (Christian) does not need to dreadfully fear anything! He or she is to have one "fear" only - reverential "fear of the Lord," for this is "*the beginning of knowledge*" (Proverbs 1:7)!

Following Christ's compassionate reassurance of Revelation 1:17 and 18, John was instructed to write the things he had seen (his vision of the Lord), the things that are (the seven church letters), and the things that would be after (after the Church Age) (1:19). The explanation for the seven golden candlesticks and seven stars was given in verse 20 by the Lord Himself.

We spent the remainder of our first volume (see Lessons 8 to 23) on Revelation discussing the seven church letters in outline Part I, "**The Possession of Jesus Christ**". We soon realized that the seven specific churches of Asia Minor were not randomly selected. Christ divinely established them and chose them to write specific letters to because their situations, struggles, and victories were representative of church situations that would be found in any future century of the Church Age. As stated earlier, the number "seven" in Scripture speaks of completeness; thus, the "seven" churches were selected to symbolically represent the entire Church. What the Lord said in each letter was not merely for the literal, First Century church congregation.

The seven churches were a purposed, selective list, and their God-given letters were to be read and seriously heeded by all churches. We know this because, the Lord concluded each letter with this appeal, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, and 22). In each case the plural word "*churches*" is used, even though the individual letter was addressed to a single Asia Minor church. The seven Revelation churches were not only literal, First Century churches existing in what is now modern-day Turkey, but they represented the seven types of churches that would exist during every century of the Church Age.

Although the Lord addressed each church as a whole, His message to the "*overcomer*" (the one who is truly *born again* by his or her faith in Christ) is addressed to the individual (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). As there are Ephesian-type churches, there are also Ephesian-type Christians or, in some cases, "professing Christians" (i.e., the tares of each church, especially abundant in the church of Laodicea).

The most fascinating aspect of the seven churches is **their sequential order, and how it prophetically foretold the historical development of the Church**. Each letter to each specific First Century church describes the dominant characteristics of seven succeeding periods of Church history. John could not have known what the Lord was doing. John lived at the beginning stage of Church history (the Apostolic era, represented by the first church of Ephesus). However, because you and I live in the seventh and final phase of Church history (when Laodicean lukewarmness dominates Christendom), we have the added benefit of seeing how Church history has *indeed* gone through seven stages and those seven stages precisely parallel the seven Revelation churches!

In our introductory lessons on the seven Revelation church letter, we presented six reasons for our prophetic interpretation of them in light of Church history. You can review those reasons on your own (see Lessons 8 and 9). One of the strongest reasons to support this teaching is found in the meaning of the Greek names of the cities of the seven churches. With those names, Christ was prophetically presenting the future of His Church. The best way to demonstrate this is to review what each Greek city name means and explain how that name perfectly suited actual Church history.

The word "Ephesus" means "*desirable*". The Early Church ("The Apostolic Church") was so pure in doctrine and so careful to keep out heretics, she was "*desirable*" to the Lord. "Smyrna," the name of the second church, comes from the word "*myrrh*" or "*bitter*". The interesting thing about myrrh (from which we get the word "*martyr*") is it must be crushed to release its beautiful fragrance. The more it is crushed, the more fragrant it becomes. Smyrna represents the crushed, persecuted church during the days of the Roman Empire.

Following (and somewhat overlapping) the Apostolic stage of Church history (which ended when John, the last Apostle, died) came the Persecuted Church. The more the Christians were crushed and martyred during the first two centuries A.D., the more the world caught the fragrance of their faith and love for Christ. Consequently, *the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church*. The Church grew greatly during this phase of her history, and she had a strong influence on the world. The Church was pleasingly fragrant to the Lord Jesus, and we know this because He spoke not a single word of condemnation to her.

The Greek word "Pergamos" is a compound word meaning "*thoroughly married*," which is exactly what happened to the Church universal in the third stage of her development. Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire "*married*" the Church to the State. The consequence was a time of serious doctrinal compromises which brought about a decrease in true spirituality and an increase in worldliness! The Church of Christ is *never* to be unequally yoked with the world (as believers in Christ are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers)! The Lord admonished the church of Pergamos for tolerating the false teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes (2:14, 15), which were both anti-Scriptural, worldly teachings. Pergamos represented the time in history from A.D. 313 to 590, the period of the State Church.

Thyatira, the name of the fourth church to which Christ addressed a letter, means "*continual sacrifice*". We went into much detail to explain how this name fits perfectly with the unbiblical teaching of Transubstantiation and the Mass of the Catholic Church, in which Christ is "*continually sacrificed*" by the priests. Catholicism dominated Christendom in the years A.D. 590 to 1517.

The church letter that followed Thyatira is Sardis, which means "*those escaping*". As with the other six church names, the name "*Sardis*" perfectly fits actual Church history. Sardis symbolically represents the Reformation stage of Church history, which officially began in A.D. 1517 with Martin Luther and the rise of the Protestant Movement (*those who "escaped" the Dark Ages' church dominated by Catholicism*).

After Sardis came the Lord's letter to the congregation at *Philadelphia*, a compound Greek word that means "*brotherly love*". The Philadelphia church represents the era of Church history when "*brotherly love*" dominated Christendom, for it was this love for lost mankind that caused Christians to take seriously "The Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19, 20). The world was launched into the tremendous Missionary Stage of Church history (A.D. 1750 to 1900). It was a wonderful time of much spiritual fruit, and, thus, the resurrected Lord had nothing of condemnation to say to this church! That was only true for one other church, the persecuted church of Smyrna.

The last church, "*the church of the Laodiceans*" (Revelation 3:14), prophetically pictured the Apostate Church. The word "*Laodicea*" in Greek means "*the people rule*" or "*the people speak*". This is the humanistic church where "*the people rule*" rather than Christ! In fact, Christ is standing outside the church, knocking for entrance (3:20)! Notice Scripture explicitly says this is the church "*of the Laodiceans*," rather than "the church of *Laodicea*". It is the "*lukewarm*" church that makes Christ so sick, He said He will spew it out of His mouth (3:16)! At the Rapture of the true Church, this is exactly what He will do! This apostate "church" will continue into the time of the seven-year Tribulation (with all the unsaved members of the other types of churches; "professing" Christians only, not true "*overcomers*").

There was a great deal more we learned about each of the seven churches and Christ's words to them, but to review all of it would require another sixteen lessons! They are very beneficial to study for they present a quick look at Church history from the Lord's perspective, helping us better understand how traditions, rituals, practices, heresies, ungodly philosophies, theories, and doctrines developed within greater Christendom, many with completely pagan roots. A study of the seven churches helps us see how we arrived where we are today, living at a time when many churches do not even proclaim true Gospel. These letters are beneficial in assisting us to examine the local church to which we belong. Even more importantly, they assist us in doing a searching self-examination to honestly determine what kind of a Christian we are! For us today, the second section of Revelation (chapters two and three) is the most practical, for it applies most directly to our lives.

In the next lesson, we begin to look at the third and final section of the General Outline for Revelation: "**The Program of Jesus Christ**". We learn what next happened to John, and how his experience may be a "clue" regarding the timing of the Rapture of the Church!

## **HOMEWORK QUESTIONS for REVELATION**

### **Lesson #24: "Revelation Review"**

Revelation chapters 1 to 3

1. Have you avoided studying the Book of Revelation for any of the reasons (or others) mentioned in this lesson? Would you be open enough to share with others in your discussion group your particular reason for not having previously studied it? PERSONAL
2. After reading the reasons given in this lesson for why Christians *should* study Revelation, which reason do you think is most significant – and why? PERSONAL
3. Give at least two comparisons between the Book of Genesis (the *first* book of the Bible) and Revelation (the *final* book of the Bible).

## HOMEWORK QUESTIONS for REVELATION – Lesson #24 (cont.)

4. TWO PART QUESTION. FIRST PART - What are the four main schools of interpretation for the Book of Revelation (and other eschatological passages of Scripture)?

SECOND PART - In one sentence, can you summarize what each view basically says?

5. MEMORIZE the three main sections of the Revelation outline, including the chapters (see page “v”). Also include the verse of Revelation from which this outline comes! CHALLENGE
6. How many different names for Christ can you find just in Revelation chapter one (name them)?
7. Why is it meaningful that Revelation begins with a salutation blessing of *grace and peace* (1:4)?
8. From John's description of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1:12-16, state what the various features of His appearance say about His Person.
9. What three reasons not to fear did the Lord give John in Revelation 1:17, 18, and which one means the most to you personally? TWO PART QUESTION. SECOND PART - PERSONAL
10. Make a chronological list of the seven Revelation churches of chapters two and three. Next to each name, put its Greek meaning and the "stage" of Church history each church represented.