

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## Prophecy

### December 8: Revelation 1-6 (John Morris)

Reading for December 8, 2017

REVELATION 1-6

Today, we jump into the last book of God's written record, the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Revelation is the account of an extended visionary experience had by the apostle John during his exile on the island of Patmos during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. Patmos is a small, rocky island (8 mi. long x 5 mi. wide) in the Aegean Sea, about 40 miles W of the nearest point on the Asian mainland (western Turkey, today). The best evidence indicates that John saw the Revelation near the end of Domitian's reign (AD 96), meaning that he would have been a very aged man at the time, nearing the end of his life. The "powers that be" had banished him from his home, time had stripped him of his strength. But God was not hindered in using him for great good. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God..." (Rom. 8:28).

#### CHAPTER 1:

John is "in the Spirit" on the Lord's Day, and while in this state, is brought face to face with "One like the Son of Man" ("one like a son of man" - NAS/ESV/NIV). The description of this being is strikingly similar to the description of the heavenly man who visited Daniel (Dan. 10:4-6), yet the words are the clearly the words of the Lord Jesus: "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

#### CHAPTERS 2-3

Jesus commands John to write to the messengers of the seven churches of Asia. These were members of their respective congregations (2:24). Each letter follows a sevenfold structure:

- (1) To whom the letter is sent: "To the angel of the church of...."
- (2) By whom the letter is sent: In each letter, Jesus offers a brief description of himself. When pieced together, they recreate the description given in chapter 1.
- (3) A statement showing Jesus has full knowledge of their situation: "I know your works" "I know your tribulation" "I know where you dwell"
- (4) A description of the condition of the church: commendation, and in the case of five of the congregations, criticism, as well.
- (5) A warning/admonition to persevere or repent
- (6) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the seven church."
- (7) A promise to those who "overcome"

#### CHAPTER 4-5

John is called to enter into heaven, and there sees the throne of God and its environs. The description harkens back to visions seen by Isaiah (ch. 6) and Ezekiel (chs. 1 and 11). God is holding a scroll, and the only one worthy to open is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins

of the world. The heavenly host around the throne praise the Lamb and His God, and the stage is now set for the Lamb to open the seals.

## CHAPTER 6

The first six seals. There are a number of schools of interpretation concerning Revelation, but the historicist view has long made sense to me, and continues to as the years go by. As a result, I understand the remaining symbols of the book to provide a prophetic panorama of the history of the world, beginning with events that began to transpire soon after John saw the Revelation (1:1, 3; 22:6) and stretching all the way to the end of time (20:11ff). For a good comparison of the different views of Revelation, as well as a useful resource for historical details, you can check out Steve Gregg's book, "Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary."

The first four seals all have horses. This reminds us of Zechariah 1:7-8 and 6:1-8. This commonality seems to indicate that this group of seals share a common thread. That common thread, I believe, is war. Horses were the tanks of the ancient world.

In the first seal, we see the Roman Empire experiencing vast military success, as it did during the near century-long Age of the Antonines, particularly under Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) soon after the Revelation was given. The white horse, and garland on the rider's head, symbolize military victory, since they were granted to a victorious general upon his return to Rome. The bow was the known weapon of the Cretans, from whose stock the first emperor in this epoch, Nerva, sprang.

In the second seal, we see civil war within the Empire. The red horse indicates bloodshed. Peace is taken from "the earth" (a reference to the Roman world in Revelation), and the sword serves as the instrument by which "people should kill one another." The aforementioned Age of the Antonines ended in AD 180. From AD 192-284, the Empire saw near endless upheaval. During that time, 32 emperors and 27 pretenders alternately cast each other from the throne by incessant warfare.

In the third seal, we see the common consequences of extended war (within and without the Empire): taxation and scarcity of food. Scales, in those days, were used in taxation. And eating "bread by weight" is a biblical expression for scarcity of food (Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 4:16). The prices listed for wheat and barley here are famine prices, exorbitantly high. During the incessant warfare of this period, Rome increased its burdens on the people. Emperor Caracalla (AD 218-222), for example, granted citizenship to all free men of the Empire, but only so he could tax them more. Edward Gibbon (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*) references "the land tax, the capitation and heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and wheat, exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army and the capital." During these days, landowners deliberately reduced production, and even destroyed their crops, to avoid the oppressive taxation. This led the government to issue an edict forbidding the destruction of olive trees and grapevines ("do not harm the oil and the wine").

In the fourth seal, we see more consequences of relentless warfare and lack of food—death ("pale" is certainly the color of death) by sword, starvation, disease, and even wild animals as the weak and sickly (and shrinking) population's ability to protect itself is diminished. Edward Gibbon tells us that from AD 248-296, "five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns that escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated." He also states that sword, famine, and pestilence were responsible for this wreaking of havoc in the Empire. Additionally, Eusebius (the "father of church history") adds: "Death waged a desolating war with...famine and pestilence...Men wasted to mere skeletons, stumbled hither and thither like mere shadows, trembling and tottering. They fell down in the streets...Some indeed were already the food for dogs" (*Ecclesiastical History*, 3:6).

In the fifth seal, our attention is drawn away from warfare to a new subject. Here, we see the persecution of the saints, perhaps the persecutions under Emperors Maximian and Diocletian which stretched from AD 270-304. For Diocletian's part, he had been counseled by his advisors that the Empire's trouble was rooted in its abandonment of the Roman gods. This, of course, was the fault of the Christians, so they had to go. Christians were prohibited from assembling, meeting houses were burned to the ground, scriptures destroyed, our brethren massacred. The deceased faithful are wondering how long the Lord will permit this to go on.

In the sixth seal comes the answer. A LOT could be said here, but I'm running out time! Diocletian abdicates the throne, and Constantine assumes power. Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration which gave formal and legal recognition to Christianity, accepted Christianity, himself (though he imperfectly understood it), and almost overnight, the world changed for Christians. It was shaken to its foundations. The old powers in the pagan political heavens were cast down, and so striking were the events that it appeared to the enemies of the faith as if Christ Himself was making war on them...which, He may well have been. Sorry so little on this last seal. Lord willing, Dan Huff and I are headed to Colorado in about 35 minutes. For further study on this seal, you can check out: Is. 34:4; Rev. 16:20; Hos. 10:8; Lk. 23:30 and many more!

The Lord bless and keep you today.

### **Comment:**

Rev 5 "WORTHY IS THE LAMB!"

"Agnus Dei" Latin for Lamb of God  
<https://youtu.be/7RzWrznHlvY>

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, John! Rich stuff! My prayers for you and Dan's travels!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Most excellent notes, John! Thank you so much for walking us through the first 6 chapters of Revelation. Your discipline in studying academics and God's Word is a blessing to all of us. May the good Lord bless your fellowship with Dan and brethren in CO.

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright's

Most excellent! Thank you John!

### **Comment:**

Doug Twaddell:

Thanks John. It has always struck me that when no one can open the seal, not even the "strong angel," John weeps thinking this important information will go unknown. I think about what kind of magnificent being and display he probably believed he was about to witness when told that the "Lion of Judah" was going to arrive and open it. Then to see "a lamb as if it had been slain" opening the scroll. What an amazing object lesson in the importance of the sacrifice of Christ and the symbolism as the Passover lamb. God be with you and Dan.

## **Comment:**

Lowell Hermon:

The bow of the Cretans was proof enough for me that the historical approach to interpret the book was the correct way to go.

## **Comment:**

Fred Brady:

Thanks, Mark. Always appreciate study from Revelation.

# **December 15: Revelation 7-11 (Wade Stanley)**

## Introduction

I have attached a general outline of the book of Revelation that organizes it into five visions. Organizing it in this way helps me to better digest the book as a whole. Notice that each vision ends with a prophetic view of the day of judgment which serves as God's signpost that the vision has concluded.

Chapters 7-11 chronicles the middle to the end of John's second vision in Revelation. Here are a few comments.

## Chapter 7: God preserves His people

In the fifth seal, we see those who have died for their faith at the hands of a persecuting powers ask God for vengeance. Chapter 7 shows an angel "sealing" 144,000 from twelve of the tribes of Jacob. (Note: Ephraim and Dan are excluded from the list. Dan was the first tribe to succumb to idolatry in the time of the judges. Ephraim, the royal tribe of the northern kingdom, led Israel into idolatry and captivity.) The ceremony represents God claiming ownership of His people and pledging to preserve their souls through a time of great tribulation should they remain faithful (see verses 14-17).

## Chapter 8: The conquering of the Western Roman Empire

The seventh seal is a direct response to the prayers in seal #5 (see verses 3-5). From the seventh seal comes the seven trumpets, God's judgment upon the power of Rome which co-opted, corrupted, and suppressed His church. In trumpets 1-4, the Western Roman Empire is conquered; in trumpets 5-6, the Byzantine empire (or the Roman empire of the east) is conquered.

Trumpet 1: Goths under Alaric sack Rome (410 A.D.)

Trumpet 2: Vandals conquer northern Europe, north Africa, destroy the Roman fleet at Carthage, sail to Rome and sack it

Trumpet 3: Attila the Hun conquers eastern and central Europe

Trumpet 4: Conglomeration of Germanic tribes conquer Rome

Chapter 9: The conquering of the Byzantine empire

Trumpet 5: The rise of the Mohammed and the Arab Muslim power; the Abassid caliphate is established and so begins the “Golden Age of Islam”

Trumpet 6: The rise of the Turkish Muslim power (eventually becomes the Ottoman empire); successive bids to conquer Constantinople; Constantinople is conquered in 1453.

## Chapter 10

Like the sixth seal, the sixth trumpet has an interlude. John consumes a little book which, in my estimation, represents the remainder of Revelation following the seventh trumpet. The seals and trumpets are connected to the material in chapters 12 and onward by two elements: the 144,000 (depicted in both chapters 7 and 14) and a time period referred to variously at 1,260 days, 42 months, or time, times and 1/2 a time. This particular vision is about to draw to a close, but there is more to say about what will transpire in the future. It will be revealed from a different perspective.

## Chapter 11

John is tasked with measuring the church. As we will see in chapters 12, 13 and 17, Satan will work hard to oppose the church with both hard power (persecution) and soft power (apostasy). The trees represent the testimony of the word of God.

Chapter 11 concludes with a proleptic vision of the day of judgement, signaling the conclusion of the second vision. However, the sealed of chapter 7, the consumption of the little book, and the time period of 1,260 days connect us to the events depicted in visions 3 and 4.

Happy reading!

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/417si7vtj6r0pp0/General%20Outline.docx?dl=0>

- I. Prologue: 1:1-8
- II. Vision 1: 1:9-3:22
  - A. 1:9-16: John sees a representation of the glorified Christ
  - B. 1:17-20: The vision interpreted
  - C. 2:1-3:22: Letters to the seven churches of Asia
- III. Vision 2: chapters 4-11
  - A. 4:1: "I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven"
  - B. 4:2-5:14: Throne scene
  - C. 6:1-8:5: The seven seals
  - D. 8:6-11:19: The seven trumpets
  - E. 11:15-19: The seventh trumpet is the judgment day
- IV. Vision 3: chapters 12-14
  - A. 12:1: "a great sign appeared in heaven"
  - B. 12: Satan versus the servants of God
  - C. 13: Manifestations of Satanic power in the world
  - D. 14:1-13: God's people preserved through persecution
  - E. 14:14-20: The judgment day
- V. Vision 4: chapters 15-20
  - A. 15:1: "then I saw another sign in heaven"
  - B. 15: Prelude to the 7 bowls of wrath
  - C. 16: The seven bowls of wrath
  - D. 17: The beast and harlot interpreted
  - E. 18: Woes
  - F. 19-20: The judgment day
- VI. Vision 5: chapters 21-22:5
  - A. 21:2: "Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God"
  - B. 21:3-8: God restores His dwelling with people; the wicked cast out of His presence
  - C. 21:9-27: John tours the city
  - D. 22:1-5: The river of water of life, the tree of life
- VII. Epilogue: 22:6-21

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Wade!

### **Comment:**

Francisco Pagulayan:  
Wade good idea, it can help better understanding, good job my brother

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:  
You and John make Revelation an easy study. Thank you for these most excellent notes, Wade!  
And I can't help but post good memories from Rick Sparks during the 2014 2 week meeting.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wcze7EGorOk&feature=youtu.be>  
"The Four Lads-Istanbul"

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:  
That was so nice you said it twice!

### **Replies:**

Wade Stanley:  
Whoops. Christopher Valdivieso sent me a message about that but, admittedly, I was not firing on all cylinders this morning. I could not figure out what he was talking about.  
Thanks guys!

### **Comment:**

Steven Wright:  
Nice work! Thanks bro!

## **December 22: Revelation 12-17 (John Morris)**

Reading for December 22, 2017  
REVELATION 12-17

Today, we continue our overview of Revelation, and in doing so, touch upon some of its most challenging chapters.

Revelation is divided up into two main sets of visions. The first runs from 4:1 to 11:18, the second from 11:19 to 19:21. As a result, we'll be spending today perusing the majority of the second part. I'll do my best to keep it light, yet informative. The nature of the content will make that challenging, though. =)

### **CHAPTER 12**

John sees a woman who represents the church. She is clothed with the "Sun of Righteousness" (Mal. 4:2)—that is, Jesus Christ. She stands upon the lesser light of the Old Covenant, and has her head crowned with the twelve apostles (stars served as symbols of

human messengers earlier in the book (1:20; 2:24)). The church is in pain (persecution), but preparing for greater growth (symbolized by the coming childbirth). In light of this, the “male Child” cannot be Christ, who was born under the law, but Christians, born of the bride of Christ (Is. 66:7; Gal. 4:26; Philemon 1:10). Verse 5 does not pose an insurmountable challenge to this interpretation, since Christians, because of their connection with the Savior, will also “rule all nations with a rod of iron” (2:26-27).

But the growing church has an enemy—the pagan Roman Empire (see “ten horns” of Dan. 7:7) animated by Satan, the dragon. He intends to kill her offspring using the empire-wide persecutions of Maxentius and Diocletian (AD 270-304) whose purposes were to completely eradicate Christianity from the Empire.

But God had a different plan. He was not willing to see His saints perish from the earth, so “the male child was caught up to God and His throne.” God provided them protection, and changed the way the world viewed His people. Diocletian, incredibly, abdicated office of his own free will, Constantine (a professed Christian) came to power, and Christians, in less than a generation, went from being threatened by their government to being protected by it! In fact, before the fourth century was over, they would witness the complete overthrow of paganism in the Empire.

All of these events on earth were accompanied by (ran parallel to?) events in heaven (compare Dan. 10:13, 30-11:1). Satan lost in both realms.

But the dragon was not done trying to destroy the saints. Cast down to the earth, his intentions remained the same. Only his methods changed. He continued to wage war on the church, but now, by means of a revamped beast, a renovated Roman Empire, if you will—the beast we’re about to read about in the next chapter (13:1-8). This phase of his efforts went on for “a time and times and half a time” (12:14) (3 ½ years), an epoch also styled as “1,260 days” (12:6) and “42 months” (11:2)—1,260 prophetic days (years), as I understand it. This time period is described in three different ways in the Bible, but seven times altogether. During this time, the church was in “the wilderness,” out of the public eye and hidden, for the most part, from historians, but alive and well, nourished and protected by her God (12:6, 14).

## CHAPTER 13

John now sees Satan’s new vehicle for persecution. This beast possesses seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns just like the “fiery red dragon” of 12:3 (and is, therefore, a Roman power), but has some significant additional qualities. Noteworthy among them is that this beast is worshipped, and speaks blasphemies against God and His church. That this is the dragon’s new tool for persecuting God’s people during their time in the wilderness is indicated in vss. 5-7.

But there’s another beast (13:11-18). This one, unlike the beast before it, does not arise out of the sea, but out of the earth. He’s distinct from the “first beast” of the chapter, but works in close connection with him (“in his presence”), and on his behalf. He supports the first beast by causing the world to worship him. He claims divine authority—the authority of the Lamb of God (“horns like a lamb”)—and works “signs” to prove it, but he’s really a deceiver, and his words are those of the dragon (“spoke like a dragon”). He is elsewhere called the “false prophet” (19:20).

Who are these beasts? The best explanation I have found is that they are representations of the political and ecclesiastical power of papal Rome—Rome as she continued to wield authority over Europe, even after the dissolution of the Empire. It is a fact of history that the Roman Catholic Church gradually stepped into the vacuum left by the waning Roman Imperial

authority, and eventually morphed into a religious version of the Roman Empire. Says historian C. Warren Hollister (and I'll try not to do too much quoting):

"Before the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West...Trinitarian Christianity had absorbed and turned to its own purposes much of Rome's heritage in political organization and law, carrying on the Roman administrative and legal tradition into the medieval and modern world. The Church modeled its canon law on Roman civil law. The secular leadership of the Roman Empire gave way to the spiritual leadership of the Roman Church. The pope assumed the old Roman republican and imperial title of pontifex maximus (supreme pontiff) and preserved much of the imperial ritual of the later Empire. In this organizational sense, the medieval Church has been described as a ghost of the Roman Empire."

The political arm of the Roman Catholic Church (the first beast) for centuries crowned and cowed kings, mustered armies, fought wars, acquired territory, did all the things that political entities do. But it also killed Christians, perhaps millions of them, murdering them in the name of the Lord, calling them "heretics." And the kings and commoners of Europe put up with it. Why? Because they believed the "Church" spoke with the authority of Christ. The second beast, embodied in the clergy (with special emphasis on the college of cardinals, perhaps), told them they courted eternal damnation if they didn't submit to the demands of the "Church." Pages upon pages upon pages of historical quotations would bear this out. Just as 13:16-17 states, "heretics" were denied even the right of engaging in simple commerce, because they wouldn't conform.

There isn't enough space to build the case for all this here, but we don't want to leave this chapter without commenting on 13:17-18. What is the meaning of the "number of the beast," "the number of his name"? It's something we have to calculate, John says. Irenaeus seems to have hit the nail on the head back in the second century AD. He submitted the name "Lateinos" (the Greek spelling of the Latin name "Latinus," the man who reputedly served as the founder of the Latin people). Like the Romans, the Greeks used letters for numbers, and if you add up the values of the letters in Lateinos, you get 666.

This all fits. Rome is the ancient capital of the Latins. The Romans spoke Latin. The Roman Catholic Church for centuries performed all its services in Latin, the meetings of its high officials are still conducted in Latin, and it has long been known, even officially, as the Latin Church (to distinguish it from the Greek Church).

#### CHAPTER 14

This chapter serves as an interlude, as did chapter 7. After hearing that such terrible things are in store for the saints, God offers some encouragement. Even though there will be a great deceiver who will succeed in causing so many to worship the beast in Rome, there will continue to be a pure church, undefiled, made up of souls who follow the true Lamb wherever He goes, and among whom He stands (14:1-5). And the day will come, after many dark centuries of persecution and deceit, when the true gospel will again be proclaimed openly and to a large audience (14:6-7) (Restoration Movement?), spiritual Babylon (14:8; 17:5, 9) will fall, those who worshipped the beast will receive their reward (14:9-11), and the ripe righteous will be gathered to God.

#### CHAPTER 15

This is the prelude to the seven judgments (bowls) that will finally consume spiritual Babylon and bring the world to a close. Some of this remains unfulfilled. Note how the bowls are called the "seven plagues" in vs. 6. Reminds us of the ten plagues of Egypt. God used those to judge a godless power that persecuted His people, but afterward delivered Israel. Similarly, the seven bowls describe a progressive erosion of papal Rome's power (Daniel and Paul both

describe this process with the word “consume” (Dan. 7:26; 2 Thess. 2:8), distinct from the idea of “destroy”) which will precede the final deliverance of the Israel of God.

## CHAPTER 16

Said I was going to make this post “light.” If I haven’t already failed in that, I will for sure if I get into very much detail here. Will just mention a few highlights on the first six bowls, and acknowledge now that it remains to be seen how the seventh will be fulfilled. We can only speculate.

Note how the first four bowls parallel the first four trumpets: Earth, Sea, Rivers & Springs, Sun. Also, notice how the timeframes of the first four bowls roughly coincide (end of the 18th century, very early 19th century), though each depicts a separate aspect of the crisis that befell the papacy at that time.

First bowl: This is poured out on those who worshipped the beast. This “foul and loathsome sore” seems to be the French Revolution (1793). In that historic upheaval, moral corruption (atheism, murder, etc.) featured prominently. France was always more significant than other European countries in its role as papal supporter, and was known as “the eldest son of the church.” When it killed 24,000 Catholic priests and turned 40,000 Catholic churches into stables, it was evident that the papal power had taken a severe hit.

Second bowl: This judgment concerned the sea. France, Spain, and Portugal were the only papal-supporting nations who possessed a navy. Of these, France was the most formidable. In the great naval war between France and England that began in 1793 (and continued for 20 years), the naval resources of France and Spain that the pope had once been able to call upon were dramatically reduced by disastrous defeats at the hands of the British. Nearly 200 “ships of the line” were destroyed, 300-400 frigates, and countless other seagoing vessels of war and commerce.

Third bowl: This bowl is poured out on the rivers and springs of water. Beginning in 1793, France launched invasions against Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Northern Italy (northern Italy is crowded with rivers). These wars occurred on the Rhine and Po, as well as on other streams. B. W. Johnson writes: “In 1796, [Napoleon], age 27, led a French army across the Alps. On the river system of Italy, on the Rhone, the Po and its tributaries, he battled with the Austrians and their allies. It is remarkable that every one of his great conflicts were fought upon the rivers.” Significantly, all the affected regions were papal states and territories.

Oh, and one other point. Vs. 6 mentions that this judgment is good and right, because “they have shed the blood of saints and prophets.” History bears out that in the very regions of these rivers (Rhine, Danube, Po), multitudes of believers had been murdered at the command of the popes.

Fourth bowl: This bowl is poured out on the sun. The sun is a symbol for a prominent authority (Gen. 1- the sun “rules” the day; in Joseph’s dream, the sun is his father). After the pouring, it says, “power was given to HIM to scorch men with fire.” The sun is a “him,” and that him is almost certainly Napoleon Bonaparte. He was the brightest and mightiest star in the time period under consideration, and Europe was certainly scorched by the intensity of his heat. From 1796 to 1815, Napoleon was engaged in unceasing war. It is estimated that 2,000,000 men perished in those wars. And, of course, who knows how many more suffered or died as a result of the conditions the wars created?

Fifth bowl: The “throne of the beast” would be Rome. This may refer to events that began to transpire in late 1797 when the French commander-in-chief, Berthier, was ordered to advance rapidly into the papacy’s territories. Upon entering Rome, the French military engaged in a

systematic pillaging of the city. The possessions of the “Church,” as well as those of the Roman nobility, were plundered and/or destroyed, and the city was forced to make an enormous contribution of money, food, and animals to the French. Additionally, Pope Pius VI was forcibly removed from the Vatican, and sent as a prisoner to France where he later died.

Sixth bowl: This bowl fast forwards a bit to the 20th century. The Euphrates was connected with the Turks in the sixth trumpet, and probably refers to the same power here. The Turkish (Ottoman) Empire gradually declined in strength and land (“dried up”), until its final dissolution in 1922. Who are the “kings of the east”? Perhaps the modern Muslim nations in the Middle East which have come into existence since the Ottoman Empire’s collapse. Is the phrase “so that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” referring only to the rise of those nations, or to something they are yet to bring about? I don’t know, but I wonder about the latter.

As for the rest of this bowl, I can only speculate. We have an “unholy trinity” here: the dragon (Satan), “the beast” (the first beast of Rev. 13), and “the false prophet” (the second beast of Rev. 13 (19:20)). And unclean spirits (false doctrines, 1 Tim. 4) like frogs are coming out of their mouths. Is this past, present, or future? Again, I don’t know, but the pope has certainly been playing a bigger role in international affairs in recent years, getting more global and ecumenical. Are these efforts part of his contribution to bringing the nations (Gog and Magog) together to surround the camp of the saints for the final spiritual showdown, “the battle of that great day of God Almighty”? (16:14-16; 20:7-10) We shall just have to wait and see.

Seventh bowl: This one is unique in that it is poured out into the air. Again, it is impossible to know with certainty what unfulfilled prophecy is predicting, but ours is certainly the era of the air: airplanes, airwaves, air warfare, etc. Are the hailstones in vs. 21 bombs, missiles? Maybe. Maybe not. What is certain is that the foundations of this world are not indestructible. The day is coming, and it may not be very far away, when the Lord is going to destroy the earth and the works that are in it. Already, our world is increasingly “filled with violence” as it was in the days of Noah (Gen. 6). As the end nears, Babylon “the great city” (14:8; 18:10) will suffer division of some kind. Political? Theological? Again, we’ll just have to wait and see. But let’s keep our eyes open, brethren, not only looking around, but looking up. The world will blaspheme when these difficult days come. But we can rejoice. Our redemption draws near!!

## CHAPTER 17

This chapter and the next focus in on the identity and final destruction of papal Rome.

### **Comment:**

Christopher Valdivieso:

Good summary! The humanism and religious hostility of the Revolution lingers in French society to this day.

### **Comment:**

Butch O’Neal:

Thank you, John!

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

I don't want to stir a pot of varied interpretation here in Rev., but I think the male child in chapter 12 can be Christ. The description of the woman evokes recollection of Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10, where the sun, moon, and 12 stars (Joseph's brothers being 11 stars, himself the 12th as Jacob interpreted the dream). God associated the 12 patriarchs with his

people, as well as the 12 apostles. I think we are looking at God's people described as his wife (remember Hosea, for example, in the OT) and the bride of Christ (as in Eph 5:22ff in the NT), the barren woman who nevertheless had great progeny. The wedding supper of the Lamb encompasses the redeemed of all ages, the names of the 12 apostles and the 12 tribes of Israel identify the foundation stones and gates of the heavenly Jerusalem. The singular language describing the male child, the reference to his authority in 12:5, as in Psalm 2:7-9, cited in Heb 1:5 of Jesus as well as the references in Rev 2:27, 19:15 where the prophecy of the rod of iron is attached to Jesus, point most obviously to that identity. Yes, Jesus says the one who overcomes "to the end" will share with him in 2:27, but he's the one, the son, who was appointed to this and has achieved this authority.

The language also stirs recollection of Isaiah 9:6, "to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders."

It was when victory seemed to be in Satan's grasp that through death Jesus overcame the one who had the power of death and freed those who had been in fear of death (Heb 2:14-15), which enabled believers to become children of God, identified as Jesus' brethren in the preceding verses of Heb 2. Christians are the children of the woman in Rev 12:17, the objects of the dragon's wrath, but Jesus surely is that firstborn male child who the dragon tried repeatedly to destroy before his conception, while he was an infant, and repeatedly in his life.

The breadth of this sign as a cosmic event, not merely a historical episode, is also alluded to by mention of Michael, identified in Daniel as the "great prince who protects your people" (12:1), and reference to the casting down of Satan, a shared victory accomplished by the blood of the Lamb, point to the inclusion of faithful Israel and Christians. The achievement of Rev 12:10 is proclaimed in Acts 2, the kingdom and authority of the Christ had come, Jesus reigned on the throne as promised to and through David.

## Replies:

John Morris:

I understand your overall position, I think, and the reasons you give for it. Could you help me with your understanding of 12:11? Do you see the overcoming in that verse and the casting down of Satan to be concurrent? If so, how does "the word of their testimony" and the fact "they did not love their lives to the death" factor into the above interpretation? Thanks!

Marc Hermon:

The last time I taught this book I settled on this idea also. We all agree that this woman is clearly symbolic and not the Mary with a halo of stars standing on the moon that you see in Christian art. I struggled having her represent the Jewish people but then switching the symbolism to the church when she goes into hiding for 1260 years. The symbolism of the male child representing Christ is too strong for me to explain it in other ways especially when reading the last verse when the dragon goes after the rest of her offspring (those that have the testimony of Jesus). These problems seem to go away when we explain the woman as God's betrothed or God's people. Whether the children of Israel or the Church, whenever they or we are disobedient God has compared it to adultery. Symbolizing her more generically as God's people fits with the imagery of her being clothed with the Sun (light of Christ and the church) while standing on the foundation of the lesser light (the 1st Testament). I think this same type of symbolism can be used in Rev 21 when we have the next change in the ages. We read Rev 21 as a description of heaven but isn't it really a description of the church? Again, I think the answer is simply Yes! It is once again a description of God's people.

As a side note I heard a Muslim speaker one time that said they were very offended with Christian art because it represented Christianity "stomping" on Islam whenever Mary was pictured standing on the crescent moon. I decided not to argue with him because perhaps after the crusades some Christian artists actually did interpret the passage that way. It's been difficult for each generation since the 1st century to not read their own life events into the symbolism. Most people today want it to still be a book of prophecy rather than primarily a book of history. As Charles Dickens wrote, each generation thinks of itself in the superlative degree.

Charles Fry:

John, you're not trying to be tricky, but concurrent is a tricky word and I don't want to say more than I understand. Yet, here I go. Ha!

When Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." (Luke 10:48) was he referring to a primeval event in space/time history shortly after the beginning, that he witnessed as the divine Word, or was he referring to the consequences of the ministry of the 70, perhaps ironically, which was the context of the comment? I tend to think the latter, especially in view of the next two verses there in Luke, but I've heard the former taught, and particularly connected to Isaiah 14:12, and can't definitely say it isn't what Jesus meant, or at least alluded to (even if he was using hyperbole and irony in addressing the disciples enthusiasm about the power and success they had enjoyed). But I don't think what John hears in Revelation 12:11 describes a primeval event, even if it was foreordained in the same sense that the death of the Lamb was foreordained, speaking of what is not as though it were already accomplished.

In Rev 13:8 John does refer to "the Lamb that was slain from the creation [foundation] of the world." Jesus did die in space/time history at "just the right time" (Romans 5:6, Galatians 4:4) in about 33 A.D., but in terms of the cosmic purposes of God, the "eternal covenant" (Hebrews 13:20) and shedding of Jesus' blood was determined before the creation itself (1 Peter 1:19-20, Ephesians 1:4, Titus 1:2). Thus, I don't want to be overly narrow in limiting God's eternal purposes (overcoming sin, destroying the devil's work, 1 John 3:8) to a singular event in human history. There is a purposeful interconnected process from Alpha to Omega, from beginning to end, involving promises and covenants and prophecies and commandments.

In historical terms, there surely is a climactic change of status for Satan and his team when the blood of the Lamb is shed; the dragon being defeated through death, the devil's access to the assemblies of the sons of God (Job 1-2) as the accuser has been revoked by the atonement of Jesus (Romans 8:28-39), and the strong man has been bound and his house plundered (Matthew 12:29). The prince of this world has been driven out and he stands condemned (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The blood of Jesus must connect to the casting down of the dragon, both the cosmic achievement and the personal participation in victory.

How then does the testimony and facing death connect, in Revelation 12:11? Notice the emphasis on the testimony of believers in Revelation (1:2, 9, 6:9, 11:7, 12:11, 12:17, 17:6, 19:10 esp., & 20:4). The testimony, I think, applies even to the faithful angels (ie Jude 9, various examples of angels identifying themselves as servants of the Lord, including Rev 19:10, 22:8-9), but especially applies to people willing to die for their faith. It is the "spirit of prophecy". This (personal) victory is possible only because of the blood of the Lamb, and is shared by those who lived by faith before the cross, and after the cross (Hebrews 11-12, noting especially 11:35-38, 11:39-40 w/ 12:1-3, 23, Hebrews 9:15). For the believer following Jesus we have the assurance that we can resist the devil successfully, with God's help (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:9). The victory of saints (and

angels) over the dragon and his host depends upon the blood of the Lamb, and the testimony (of faith). From the foundation of the world, until now, this is the victory. It was made real in human history in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It is real for anyone who is "crucified with Christ." and "lives "by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20). So, yes, I would say it is concurrent, the redemption of all the saved is concurrent with the casting down of Satan by the blood of the Lamb, no matter when we come to participate in the atoning blood of Jesus or when our testimony is given. It all depends upon the blood shed on the cross..

## **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Thank you so much, John! As I mentioned to Wade last week, your knowledge of history and prophecy have been extremely insightful and edifying. Thank you so much for the details covering chapters 12-1; it was very helpful!

## **December 29: Revelation 18-22 (Wade Stanley)**

Hello everyone! Here is our final look at prophecy for 2017.

In vision 3 (chapters 12-14), we are introduced to the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (aka the second beast) who oppose God and His people. Vision 4 (chapters 15-19) forecasts the judgment of the beast and false prophet (aka the second beast in chapter 13). The retributive bowls are poured out against the two agents of the dragon (chapter 16). In chapter 17, John sees the harlot Babylon the Great riding atop the powers of the world. The great harlot is juxtaposed with the woman of chapter 12 who represents the people of God from Adam and Seth forward. The Bible is a tale of two cities and two women: Jerusalem and Babylon. The harlot represents the spirit of rebellion first led by Nimrod, propagated by ensuing generations through idolatry, and culminating with an apostasy which clothes itself with the name of Jesus Christ. The powers of the earth have been both accomplices to and beneficiaries of her rise.

Chapter 18 describes the fall of the apostate church. Enriched by commerce and emboldened by her political dominance, she thought of herself as unassailable. In a short time period, she is reduced to a shell of her former self. Her fall is a wonder to the world. God urges His people to "come out of her," bringing to mind His entreaties to those Jews who remained scattered abroad following captivity.

Chapter 19 offers another proleptic vision of the judgment day. Verses 6-8 talks of the marriage supper of the bride and of the Lamb which awaits those who reject apostasy and hold true to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vision 5, the final vision of Revelation, begins in 19:11, "Then I saw heaven opened..." Vision 5 shows the conclusive victories of Jesus over the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon. Our Savior appears as a synthesis of the various ways that He is described throughout the book: 1:13-16, 6:2 (note: in the past, I have believed that seal #1 represents the age of the Antonines. However, the imagery of 6:2 along with the symmetry of the book seems to better fit Jesus as the rider on the white horse.), and 14:14-20. Our Lord's victory over the beast and false prophet will end with both entities and their followers thrown into the lake of fire. I believe this is the battle called Armageddon in chapter 16. However, I do not subscribe to the literal interpretation of Armageddon favored and sensationalized by futurists.

Chapter 20 is, perhaps, the most difficult chapter of a difficult book. It offers a different perspective of Armageddon, this time with a view toward the fate of the dragon, Satan. In other words, I see 19:11-21 and 20:1-10 as concurrent and not successive events.

Since my overarching view of Revelation comes from the historicist perspective, I am led to conclude that Satan has either been bound or has been loosed. Admittedly, others may have a more refined interpretation of chapter 20. I am confident enough to say this: during this time period of binding, Satan's power to deceive nations will be limited, a power he exercised without restraint in chapters 13 onward. The time period of 1,000 years represents a long period of time from a human perspective, but a short period from God's perspective. Numerous passages in both the Old and New Testaments use the number 1,000 and the time period of 1,000 years in this way. The first resurrection is experienced by everyone who is buried with Christ in baptism. Those true Christians who are raised with Christ to walk in newness of life and hold true to Him to death will go to be with Him (see Philippians 1:18-23). The second death, hell, has no dominion over those who are raised with Christ!

When Satan is loosed to deceive the nations once more, he will use his influence to gather the world (represented as Gog and Magog) against the church in one final, but futile, attempt to conquer God's people (aka Armageddon). God will deliver His people and cast Satan into hell.

20:11-15 gives us the final prophetic view of the day of judgment. Death and Hades, the final enemies of mankind, are cast into the lake of fire along with all those who are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Chapters 21-22 show us the heavenly Jerusalem in all of its resplendent and transcendent glory. In a book heavy with symbolism, the descriptions of Jerusalem are not to be understood literally. At the center of the closing chapters is the ultimate thrust of Revelation: the Lamb is victorious over all enemies and God accomplishes His ultimate objective of restoring His communion with mankind that was lost in Eden. The book concludes with assorted warnings and invitations, urging us to take the message of the revelation to heart and to be prepared for the Lord's return.

I will join the chorus in thanking Marc for organizing this venture through the Bible. I also thank John for joining in early on and trading weeks with me throughout the year. Thanks also to Charles for stepping in a couple of times, including when John and I were in the Philippines. I could not imagine two better companions with which to lead these weekly commentaries.

I leave you with the words of our Lord and His apostle, John:

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (Revelation 22:20-21).

### **Comment:**

Beverly Schoonover Wattenbarger:

Thank you Wade and also John for your time and input to this study. I am looking forward to continuing on in 2018. God bless you both and your families

### **Comment:**

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Wade! Very much!!

### **Comment:**

Yvonna Hartman:

Thank you Wade for your work and also for John's work. I have benefited from this year long study.

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

Oh! So that's how it ends! Victory in Christ!

### **Comment:**

Marc Hermon:

You should have titled your post, "...and that's why it's obvious that Magog is North Korea!"

Would've really drew the reader in. 🤔

### **Comment:**

Charles Fry:

Wade and John, you have done an admirable job of presenting the prophets in brief, in some ways perhaps very challenging due to these books being less familiar to many brethren. Thank you for interesting and informative comments, brothers.

### **Replies:**

Wade Stanley:

And a hearty thanks to you as well. You helped cover some gaps and made some helpful comments along the way. Team effort!

Lowell Hermon:

Go Team!

### **Comment:**

Gaylene Green:

Thanks to all!

### **Comment:**

Ginger Hermon:

Wade & John: I thank God for you, dear brothers! Friday's lessons were likely the most difficult to present. Yet, it could be debated as the most important. Fulfilled prophecy is one of the best evidences I know of that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Prophecy can be used as a very effective tool of evangelism. Every aspect of the life of Jesus was prophesied - and fulfilled. Prophecy assures us that Jesus is coming back, that He will resurrect us, and that He will take us to live forever with our Lord in heavenly Jerusalem! Prophetic knowledge encourages patient waiting, earnest watching, serving, having hope and holy living. I'm grateful for the significant time you put toward Friday studies. It helped transform my daily living - to constantly think about scriptures and consider His return, which I anxiously anticipate. The book of Revelation promises blessings to those who read/hear it and obey it (Rev. 1:3). We have been blessed indeed. Thanks for participating in this spiritual feast!

### **Comment:**

Kevin Crittenden:

Thank you Wade and John!