



Revelation:
A Study of End-Time Events

by
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Statement of Faith

About God...

We believe in One Eternal God, Creator and Ruler of all things, existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinct but inseparable; identical in character, essence and perfection. God is righteous and holy; full of love and mercy.

About Jesus Christ...

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God, both eternal God and fully man. He took on human form as He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin, Mary. He lived a perfect and sinless life as the Savior promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. Because of His great love for us and His obedience to the Father, He voluntarily paid for our sin by His death on the cross. He physically rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God the Father, as our Intercessor and Advocate. One day He will return to Earth to judge the living and the dead, and will reign over all things forever.

About the Holy Spirit...

We believe in the Person of the Holy Spirit, Who convicts the world of judgment and sin, drawing sinners to faith and righteousness in Christ. He comes to live in believers from the moment of spiritual birth and guarantees their inheritance as God's adopted children. The Holy Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of Christ, and equips and empowers them for spiritual growth and obedient service. The fullness and power of the Holy Spirit are manifested in the believer's life by faith in God, obedient surrender to Him, and a life of prayer.

About the Bible...

We believe that the Bible is the living and active word of God, received as the Old and New Testaments, and inspired by God in its original writing. Its teachings are entirely trustworthy, serve as our highest authority in faith and life, and endure forever. In the Bible, God reveals Himself to humanity, as well as the way we can be made right with Him, and the way to live a life that pleases Him.

About Human Beings...

We believe that God created us, as human beings, male and female, in His own image and for His good pleasure. God gave us free will and dominion over all the earth. Through the willful disobedience of the first man (Adam) all humanity fell under the power of sin, and became separated from God.

About Being Made Right With God...

We believe that in order to be in right standing with God, we must acknowledge that our own sinfulness has separated us from God, and trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ as the only way to be reconciled to God. We can do nothing to earn our salvation; it is solely a gift of God's grace, received exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Only Jesus Christ is able to rescue us from the present power of sin, and the eternal penalty of sin.

Revelation:
A Study of End-Time Events

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Revelation: A Study of End-Time Events

Lesson One: Introduction & Chapter 1

This study is a compilation of cross-references to other passages in the Bible that will shed light on the prophecies in Revelation, allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. We are each responsible to test everything against the Word of God.

For small group study, no teacher is required. One person may read the lesson, with others sharing the reading of the Revelation verses, as well as the other passages as referenced. In fact, what we refer to as the “book” of Revelation was a letter circulated to the churches and usually read by the pastor of the church.

Let the Holy Spirit guide you as you simply share in the reading of God’s Word. You will not lack for discussion. When there is a question, make it your assignment to search the Scriptures for your answers. If one lesson requires more than your allotted study time, please allow the lesson to carry over to your next session rather than skipping any part of it. While you will not learn all there is to know about the book of Revelation through this study, you will learn far more than you ever imagined. May God richly bless you as you study His Word.

I. Introduction

Have you been afraid to read the book of Revelation? One friend said her father had frightened her as a child, when he talked about it. Another friend thought the writer (the Apostle John) must have been on drugs! I can assure you, he was not. Just for a moment, put yourself in his place. He was trying to describe things he had never seen before with the language of his day. What might be the result?

Let’s say that John saw a helicopter, and was trying to describe it based on his own experience and the knowledge of his day: “It looks like a giant locust with wings on its head and (if he saw the pilot) the face of a man! Pretty scary, right? That is, in fact, similar to some of the descriptions in this book.

You may have heard of many things that come from the book of Revelation: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.... The Great Tribulation... The Antichrist... Armageddon. Do these things sound familiar?

- A. The book of Revelation is actually the unveiling of Jesus Christ in His glory and majesty, and the magnificent climax of world history – as it relates to Him.
- B. This study will give you a basic understanding of the book of Revelation in order to dispel your fears and confusion.

In fact, did you know that a blessing is conferred on anyone who reads this book and takes it to heart? We'll see that promise in our study of Chapter 1.

- C. This study guide presents a panoramic view (the big picture):
 - 1. It will highlight major events and figures. We will see a sequence of events. We will not set dates.
 - 2. It will give you a desire to study God's Word in greater depth.
 - a. We must let Scripture interpret Scripture. God's Word is a treasure, and we are on a treasure hunt.
 - b. Much of the symbolism of Revelation is explained in the book of Daniel and elsewhere in the Bible.
 - c. We will look at other passages of Scripture that shed light on what we're reading in Revelation.

For example, the "Rapture" is not covered in Revelation, so we'll need to look elsewhere in Scripture to understand the teaching, since it is an essential aspect of the end times.

- D. So ... would you read a good book and stop just before the final chapter? Why not? You want to see how the story ends!

Have people told you that Revelation cannot be understood?

Any interpretation of the book of Revelation that discourages a believer from studying it, or a pastor from teaching it, is not the correct interpretation!

How can we know this is a true statement?

2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

1. We will be interpreting the words of this prophecy based on Revelation 1:19 where John was told, “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now, and what will take place later.”

That word “later” in the Greek (*meta*) means after... after what is now. We will see that most of what occurs in the book of Revelation is in the future.

2. Scripture is not understood primarily through our intellect, but rather truth is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Therefore...

ALWAYS BEGIN YOUR STUDY OF GOD’S WORD WITH PRAYER

II. Background (generally accepted history):

- A. Author: Traditionally held to be the Apostle John, who also wrote one of the Gospels, and three letters.
- B. Place: The book of Revelation, which was in the form of a letter circulated to seven churches in the same region (modern day Turkey), was written from the nearby Isle of Patmos.
- C. Date: John was exiled by Roman Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95 for preaching faith in Christ alone. (Domitian demanded that he be worshipped as a god). John was released soon after Domitian died in A. D. 96. It was during that brief period of time that John experienced and recorded *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*.
- D. Purpose: While there was a future purpose in recording this prophecy, the immediate purpose in John’s day was to encourage believers to hold fast to their faith. Some in the church at that time were advocating compromise in order to avoid persecution.¹

¹*The NIV Study Bible*, Copyright © 1995 by Zondervan Publishing House, p. 1922.

1. What are some ways that we compromise in our culture to avoid persecution/rejection?
 - a. Silence our voice against sin?
 - b. Silence the gospel truth that Jesus is the ONLY way to be reconciled with God the Father?
2. Through John's vision, God is encouraging ALL believers to stand firm in the truth of Jesus Christ, in the midst of persecution, ridicule or rejection.

With all of Scripture, the writers were addressing believers during their day, about events of their day. Yet, there is a spiritual application for today. Once we've determined what the writer said, and what he meant within the context of the passage, we can make a spiritual application to ourselves today.

Example:

2 Chronicles 7:14 "...if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Here, the Lord was speaking to Solomon concerning the people of Israel, but it is so relevant to the Church today.

4. So too, with the book of Revelation. All Believers are encouraged by:
 - The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Christ is revealed in glory, majesty, and victory at His second coming.
 - Showing them (and us) the sovereign control of God in world events and the final outcome, without violating anyone's free will.

*Shouldn't knowing that the Lord has control
over the circumstances of our lives –
and the chaos we are facing in our world today –
give us a sense of peace and security?*

III. Chapter One - Overview

We will see, in this first chapter, that the Apostle John was exiled on the Island of Patmos where he received a vision from an angel: a Revelation of Jesus Christ. There is a blessing conferred on anyone who reads or hears, and takes to heart, what is in this vision. John is told to write down what he sees, and he does so in a letter to seven nearby churches, in what is modern day Turkey. Jesus Christ identifies Himself as the One who loves us and freed us from our sins by His blood.

At that point, we will need to step outside of the text of Revelation, into other passages of Scripture that tell of the love story between the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church (corporately, everyone who has trusted Christ as their Savior since the birth of the Church at Pentecost). It is essential that we cover the passages dealing with the return of Christ for His Bride, at what is commonly referred to as the “Rapture” so that it is not confused with His Second Coming, as described in Revelation 1:7. In fact, we will see in Chapter 19 that the Bride will return to earth *with* Christ.

In the vision, John saw and heard Christ speaking to him as He stood in dramatic appearance among seven lamp stands, later explained to be symbols of the seven churches. At this point, John is told to write what he has seen (Christ in glory, as Righteous Judge), what is now (the churches and Christ’s messages to them), and what will take place later, in the future. It is in Revelation 1:19 that we are told how to interpret the book itself.

Please turn to your Bible and read the passages in Revelation as indicated at the left margin, in bold. It is also essential that you read every verse or passage referenced.

1:1-2

- 1) The Greek word for “revelation” is *apokalupsis*. Does that sound familiar? It should... it’s the word from which we get the word “Apocalypse” which has come to mean the “end of the world.” Actually, it is defined as “a disclosure of that which was previously hidden or unknown.” God wants us to know about these coming events.
- 2) The word “soon” (*en tachei*) used here obviously doesn’t mean right away because it was written 2,000 years ago. Instead, it means “quickly or suddenly coming to pass.” When it happens, it will happen suddenly.

1:3

- 1) The blessing here is promised to anyone who reads or hears, and takes to heart, what is written: to all believers of all time. Even an unbeliever will be blessed, for he may come to faith in Christ by it. “Faith comes by hearing... the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).
- 2) We are told that this time is near. But let’s look at the meaning of the original Greek word for “time” (*kairos*).
 - a) It refers to a “period of time.”
 - b) “Near” (*engus*) means “ready to take place at any time.”

We will see in our study that this is “a period of time” (the return of Christ and the events leading up to that event) that is “ready to take place at any time.” As we saw in verse 2, this period of time will come upon the world suddenly.

1:4-6

- 1) The seven churches mentioned here are both literal and symbolic. The number seven as used in Scripture, 54 times in Revelation, is commonly accepted as being symbolic of perfection or completion.

These seven churches are representative of the Church Age,
which includes all true believers from Pentecost until the Rapture of the Church.

- 2) The word “Trinity” is not found in Scripture, but is used to identify the three persons in one God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). God is ONE in essence, character and perfection. Scripture tells us that Jesus is not only the Son of God. He IS God.

Read Philippians 2:5-7. Did you know that cults (false religions) deny that Jesus is God, and the ONLY begotten Son (He is not one of many gods!).

- 3) To Him who loves us:

Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom, the Church is His Bride

At this point, we will step outside of the book of Revelation to look at other Scriptures that tell us of the Rapture of the Church, which is not to be confused with Christ's Second Coming.

Because the Church is the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:2-31) for whom He is returning, it is essential that we understand the Old Testament wedding tradition: When sons married, they added onto their father's house as they prepared a home for their bride. The bride would prepare herself, not knowing exactly when her bridegroom would arrive to take her to his father's house. When the home was ready, the bridegroom would go to his bride and take her to the wedding ceremony and feast.

- a) Read John 14:1-6. Jesus is preparing a place for us.
- b) Read I Thessalonians 4:16-18. Christ will return for His Bride

Note: The dead in Christ will not be forgotten. Their souls are present in heaven (2 Cor. 5:8), will return with the Lord at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:14-15), and will be reunited with their resurrected bodies at that time. Please read 1 Cor. 15:51-54.

Those who are still alive are "caught up" to be with the Lord in the air. (The word "rapture" comes from the Latin for "caught up"). This is the return of Christ for His Bride, which will include every believer since the birthing of the Church at Pentecost.

- c) Read 1 Cor. 15:51-52. The Bride/Church will be caught up at the sounding of the last trumpet. This is not the last of the trumpet judgments, as we will see in our study of Revelation. Just as the Old Testament Jewish Feast of Pentecost marked the birth of the Church in Acts 2, the Feast of Trumpets points to the Rapture of the Church.
- d) Read Rev. 19:6-8. This passage refers to a future scene in heaven, immediately before Christ returns to earth at His Second Coming.

Return to Revelation 1:7 – The Announcement of Christ's Second Coming

1:7-8 This event is not the Rapture. At Christ's Second Coming, His Bride (the Church) will be *with* Him, as referenced in 19:6-8 above. Please read Rev. 19:14 as well. The fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.

Refer to the Revelation Timeline – Ages Only at the end of this lesson.

1:9-15

- 1) “Son of Man” is a reference to Christ in His humanity. Jesus is fully God and fully human. Read John 3:13-16 and Philippians 2:5-8.

Have you trusted Christ as your Savior, and received the free gift of eternal life? You will be given an opportunity to pray a prayer of salvation at the close of this lesson.

- 2) The symbolic meaning of the lampstands is given in v. 20. They are symbols for seven literal churches in John’s day. Jesus is standing in their midst.

1:16

A “double-edged sword” speaks of the Word of God:

- 1) Read Hebrews 4:12
 - a) The word used for “sword” here (*machaira*) is defined as a “large knife for cutting flesh; small sword.” It’s the same word used in Ephesians 6:17: “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”
 - b) The word “flesh” is also a biblical term that refers to our ego, will and appetites functioning independently of God. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is used to cut away our “flesh” so that we may be conformed to Christ and walk under the Holy Spirit’s control.
- 2) That is NOT the same Greek word used here, in Rev. 1:16, where “sword” is *rhomphaia*, “a large sword used as an instrument of judgment.”
- 3) Read Rev.19:15. “Strike down” (*patasso*) is “to smite down, cut down, to kill, slay.”

1:17-18

- 1) Believers have been delivered from God’s wrath. Read John 3:36
- 2) Christ holds keys of death and Hades (“the realm of the dead”).
Review the attached Chart on Hades. Be sure to read the related passage in Luke 16:19-31, as well as the other Scriptures referenced in the chart.

1:19 This verse is the key to interpreting the book of Revelation:

- 1) ***What John has seen:*** (Chapter 1) Christ in glory, as the Righteous Judge.
- 2) ***What is now:*** (Chapters 2 & 3) Christ's messages to specific churches of John's time and to all believers of present "Church Age."
- 3) ***What will take place later:*** Later (*meta*) means "after" (after the Church Age, which will end with the Rapture of the Church). Chapters 4 through 22 are yet future. The Church is never again mentioned on earth after Chapter 3, and in Revelation 4:1, John is told, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."

1:20 Here we are told that the lampstands represent the churches, and the stars are "angels". The Greek word for "angels" here is *angelos*, which means "a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God."

John is told repeatedly in Chapters 2&3 to write these things to the angels (messengers) of these churches. He would not be writing to angelic beings, but rather to the pastors, who would read the messages to the believers in these churches.

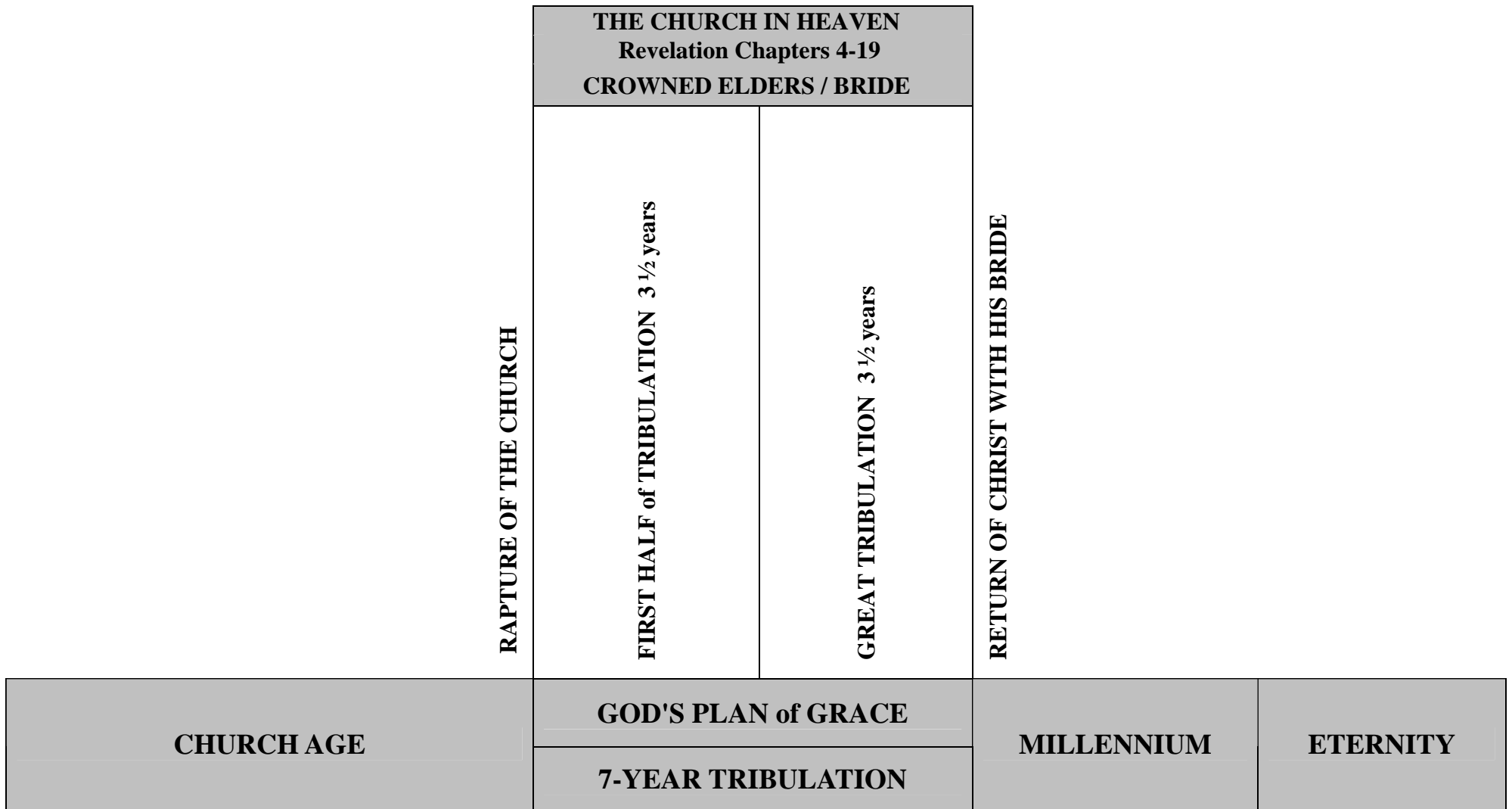
If you realize that you have never trusted Christ as your personal Savior, asking for His forgiveness, you can pray this prayer of faith right now – and He will receive you as His own. If you have already trusted Christ as your Savior, you can pray this as a profession of the faith you already possess, and walk side-by-side with those who would come into God's kingdom today:

"Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the only begotten Son of God, that You are fully God and fully human. I believe that You led a sinless life and that You died on the cross for the sins of the world – including mine. I believe that God the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, raised You from the dead and that You will come again to judge the living and the dead. I ask you to forgive me and save me so that I can be reconciled with my Heavenly Father, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and live with You forever. In Christ's Name, I pray. Amen."

ATTACHMENTS:

REVELATION TIMELINE – AGES ONLY

HADES CHART



HADES

Before Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins:

Man died... His soul went into Hades (Ex: Rich man and Lazarus: Luke 16: 19-31)

“Bosom of Abraham”

(Also called Paradise in Luke 23:39-43)

Place of peace and contentment where the souls of deceased Old Testament saints awaited Christ’s death on the cross to pay the penalty for their sins.

Christ died on the cross to pay for our sins.

Matt. 12:40; Luke 23:39-43

Ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9); The souls of O.T. saints are led to heaven by Christ (Eph. 4:8-10);

Paradise now located in heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4)

NO LONGER IN HADES (Rev. 20:14)

TODAY: At death, the believer’s spirit goes immediately into the Lord’s presence (2 Cor. 5:8), to await their physical resurrection and reward at the Rapture of the Church.

“Torment”

(Luke 16:23)

At death, the souls of ALL those who have rejected God’s provision of salvation through Christ, enter “Hades” to await their final judgment before God.

After they are physically resurrected, they will stand before God to be judged. Then they will be cast - body and soul - into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

When a lost person dies today, their soul goes to this place of torment. Since there is no longer a place in Hades for believers, “Hades” is now translated “Hell” by some scholars. The Greek word for “Hell” is “gehenna,” which speaks of the lake of fire, the final destination of the lost.