SURVEY of

REVELATION

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Revelation

Author of the book. - John the apostle, the son of Zebedee.

Date written - Two theories: During the reign of Nero after the burning of Rome in A.D. 64. Most probable date is during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). Early Christian writer used the later date and so do most modern scholars.

Name - apocalypse - the unveiling. The book is meant to be understood. It is a book of prophecy and filled with symbolism.

Relationship to other books - There are 278 verses that allude to Old Testament scriptures. The book that is most closely aligned is the book of Daniel.

Interpretation - There are four principal views concerning the interpretation of the book: (1). Preterist: This is the view that the prophecies of this book were fulfilled during the early church history. (2). Historical: the book covers from the time of John to the end of time. (3). Idealist: The timeless struggle between good and evil. (4). Futurist: Views most of book (chapters 4-22) as prophecy yet to be fulfilled. We will use the Futurist approach. Most of the book (Chapters 6-19) deals with the Tribulation period. It is important to understand the context. It is the period referred to as the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy. (See Daniel 9:20-27).

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, the disciple will be able to:
1. Explain the purpose of Revelation;
2. Identify the key divisions in the book;
3. Identify and define key characters: the two witnesses, the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, the 144,000, the multitude of Gentiles, etc.
4. Differentiate between the key periods: the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments, the bowl judgments, Armageddon, the Millennium, the White Throne judgment, etc.
Introduction

The book describes itself (1:1) as the "Revelation of Jesus Christ." Some have erroneously described it as John's Revelation. Actually, the Revelation was to John not by John.


The book presents Christ in all His glory. It presents the final victory of Christ over Satan. We see the final political structure of the world system and the most powerful dictator in the history of the world - the final Anti-christ. It provides more detail about end times and eschatology (future things) than any other book. We will see the 7 year tribulation and the 3 1/2 year Great Tribulation; the 2nd coming of Christ, the battle of Armageddon, the thousand year earthly reign of Christ, the Great White Throne judgment, the lake of fire and the new heaven and new earth. It presents many titles of Christ beginning in 1:5 (the faithful witness; the first born of the dead; and the ruler of the kings of the earth) to 22:16 (the bright and morning star). Revelation affirms the full deity of Jesus Christ.

Author - Four times in the book the author identifies himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The early church (until the 3rd century) agreed that the author was John, the son of Zebedee, the author of the Gospel of John and the 3 epistles of John and one of the 12 apostles. It was Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria (248-265), who seriously questioned John the apostle as the author of Revelation. His basis for the challenge was based on the fact that the language and style of Revelation is different from the other books. Theologians agree that the Greek in Revelation contains grammatical errors and is much less sophisticated than the Gospel of John and I, II, & III John. However, those books were written in Ephesus where John would have access to an editor. No such resources were available on Patmos. We must remember that John was a fisherman. Another factor is who else would be so well known that he could simply identify himself by his first name. Those are the primary arguments for those who continue to challenge the authorship. However, there is no more than hearsay evidence of whom else could have written it.

Date - Most hold to a date of about 96 A.D. during the reign of Domitian as the most likely date. Preterist (those who believe that the book of Revelation has already been fulfilled) go with an earlier date about A.D. 68 during the reign of Nero. Reasons include the fact that there is no mention of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70; 666 can be used to calculate Nero and that he was the 6th Roman Caesar; many also considered Nero the antichrist because of his persecution of Christians; some language used by
James and Peter in their epistles are similar to some used in Revelation and both died before A.D. 70. The early date was the predominant view in the 19th century. There is virtually no external material to support the earlier date except a statement in the Muratorian Canon that Paul follows the example of John and writes to only 7 churches. While Nero persecuted Christians, he did not care about emperor worship. Nero was certifiably insane. Domitian was both sane and an egomaniac. He hated Jews and Christians. Everyone who addressed him in speech or in writing was required to begin by saying "Lord and God." All over the Empire it was call Domitian god or die.

**Genre -** prophetic apocalyptic. It is the only prophetic book in the New Testament as compared to 17 in the Old Testament. This book is most closely related to the Book of Daniel. In fact, we will review Daniel chapters 9-12 before going very deeply into Revelation. Both are apocalyptic books. That refers to the revealing of something that was previously hidden. Both books contain symbols which must be interpreted. The difficulty is determining what is literal and what is figurative. Some things are obvious such as in 17:9 when it speaks of a woman sitting on 7 mountains. We know that is figurative but then comes the hermeneutical (art and science of interpretation of Scripture) task of determining its meaning. These challenges can mostly be overcome but there are some passages where theologians are not in agreement after many years of debate.

**Interpretation -** There are 4 main interpretative approaches to the book - preterist, historicist, idealist and futurist.

**Preterist**

The preterist view is that the book is not prophecy but records the history of the events in the first century Roman Empire. This view totally ignores the books claim to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18-19). It also ignores the fact that nothing in the first century matched what occurs in chapters 6-19. The word *preter* means past and is derived from Latin. There are full preterists and partial preterists. Both believe that the prophecies of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Chapters 1-3 are considered to describe the condition of the seven churches in Asia Minor before the Jewish War (AD 66-70). The remaining chapters and Matthew 24 are considered to describe the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans. They say that we are now living in the eternal state. Partial preterist believe that Revelation chapters 20-22 have yet to be fulfilled. Crucial to the preterist view is an early date for the writing of the book. They believe it was written before AD 70 and that John was writing to the church of his day and their condition. Church historians trace preterism to Jesuit priest Luis de Alcar (1544-1613). Some claim there is mention of the view in earlier church writings.
This view has become increasingly popular. R. C. Sproul, Hank Hanegraaff, Kenneth Gentry and the late David Chilton are all either full or partial preterists.

Historicists
The second view is the historicist. This view is that everything occurred from the apostolic times until the present. Supporting this view requires much allegorizing. It also totally ignores hermeneutical principles. It allows the interpreter to give events any meaning they desire. Many adherents of this position view chapters 1-3 as seven periods in church history. The breaking of the seals in chapters 4-7 symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent the invasions of the Roman Empire by the Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks. Among Protestant historicists of the Reformation period, the antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy. Chapters 11-13 in Revelation represent the true church in its struggle against Roman Catholicism. The bowl judgments of Revelation 14-16 represent God’s judgment on the Catholic Church, culminating in the future overthrow of Catholicism depicted in chapters 17-19. Prominent scholars who held this view include John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry. This view rose to popularity during the Protestant Reformation because of its identification of the pope and the papacy with the beasts of Revelation 13. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has declined in popularity and influence.

Idealist
The third view is that of the idealist. In this view Revelation is not historical or predictive. It is the continual battle between good and evil and plays out repeatedly. This view takes all of the meaning out of the book. It also ignores what the book says about itself. This view uses the allegorical method to interpret the Book of Revelation. The allegorical approach to Revelation was introduced by ancient church father Origen (AD 185-254) and made prominent by Augustine (AD 354-420). According to this view, the events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil. In this struggle, the saints are persecuted and martyred by the forces of evil but will one day receive their vindication. In the end, God is victorious, and His sovereignty is displayed throughout ages. Robert Mounce summarizes the idealist view stating, “Revelation is a theological poem presenting the ageless struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a philosophy of history wherein Christian forces are continuously meeting and conquering the demonic forces of evil.”
The futurist view and the one to which we subscribe is the futurist view which sees chapters 4-22 as prophecy. Critics say this approach robs the book of meaning for the first century Christian. Actually it provides them with the same meaning that it does us. Despite what we are going through and what we see happening in the world, we have certainty that God is in control and that Christ has defeated Satan. Chapters 6-19 deals with the 7 year Tribulation which is the 70th week referred to in the book of Daniel. It is for that reason we will go to the book of Daniel and review selected passages after the completion of Revelation Chapter 5 as well as look at the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24. The futurist view allows a straight forward interpretation of the Scripture as is given. Futurists apply a literal approach to interpreting Revelation. Chapters 4-19 refer to a period known as the seven-year tribulation (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God’s judgments are actually poured out upon mankind as they are revealed in the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Chapter 13 describes a literal future world empire headed by a political and religious leader represented by the two beasts. Chapter 17 pictures a harlot who represents the church in apostasy. Chapter 19 refers to Christ’s second coming and the battle of Armageddon followed by a literal thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth in chapter 20. Chapters 21-22 are events that follow the millennium: the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the arrival of the heavenly city upon the earth.

Futurists contend that the literal interpretation of Revelation started with ancient church father. Elements of this teaching, such as a future millennial kingdom, are found in the writings of Clement of Rome (AD 96), Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), Irenaeus (AD 115-202), Tertullian (AD 150-225) and others. Futurists hold that the church fathers taught a literal interpretation of Revelation until Origin (AD 185-254) introduced allegorical interpretation. This then became the popular view when taught by Augustine (AD 354-430).

The futurist view is very popular among Christians today. This is especially prominent among dispensationalists as taught by Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute. Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord and Tim LaHaye are noted scholars of this position.
The Millennium
It may be surprising to know that of all of the interpretive disputes in Revelation, one of the most disputed is the meaning of the millennial period in Romans 20. Is this a literal thousand year period of the reign of Christ or is it symbolic? There are three Christian views premillennialism, postmillennialism and amillennialism.

Premillennialism aka chiliasm is the belief that the second coming of Christ to the earth will come before the thousand year reign of Christ. Most take a literal approach that it will be a period of one thousand years that Christ will reign on earth with His saints before establishing the new heaven and new earth. This will be a period of peace before Satan is loosed again for a final test of humanity before the judgment. Dispensationalists are considered premillennialists with the difference being their focus on Israel. We will use this view.

Postmillennialism teaches that Christ will return at the end of the millennial period. According to this group the church will be so successful in its evangelistic outreach that almost all people will become Christian. This will result in a long period of peace and then Christ will come. A current group called the Christian Reconstructionists holds this view. Most hold believe in postmillennialism also are preterist. That way they resolve the dramatic predictions in Revelation by saying they have already occurred.

Amillennialism sees the thousand year period as symbolic, not literal. Therefore the millennial period is an indefinite of time. They see the reign of the saints as happening now. Of course as we look at the world today, it is difficult to view it as a period of peace.

Parallelism
Another area that is important to consider in the study of Revelation is parallelism. The book is not totally in chronological order. There is not universal agreement on which passages are parallel (presenting the same events) but definitely, some are. There are other books which contains parallelism. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are examples. So are Daniel chapters 2 and 7. The placement of the millennial period, for example, has an impact on this. In chapter 17 Babylon is described as in her glory but in chapters 14 and 16, Babylon has already fallen. We will work through those issues as we go through the Book.
Outline of the Book

The Introduction
A. The Prologue, 1:1-3
   - Communicated by His angel
   - Things which must soon take place
B. The Salutation, 1:4-8
   - The seven spirits
   - Coming with the clouds
   - The Alpha and Omega

II. The Things Which You Have Seen
A. Circumstances of the Vision, 1:9-11
B. Commissioner of the Vision, 1:12-16
   - Hair white like wool, as white as snow
   - Eyes like a flame of fire
   - Out of the mouth came a sharp two-edged sword
   - Voice sound of many waters
C. Consequences of the Vision, 1:17-18
   - The keys of death and Hades

III. The Things Which Are
A. Message to the Church of Ephesus, 2:1-7
   - You have left your first love
   - Nicolaitans
   - To him who overcomes
   - The tree of life in the Paradise of God
B. Message to the Church of Smyrna, 2:8-11
   - A synagogue of of Satan
   - The second death
C. Message to the Church of Pergamum, 2:12-17
D. Message to the Church of Thyatira, 2:18-29
   - Jezebel
   - The deep things of Satan
E. Message to the Church of Sardis, 3:1-6
   - The book of life
F. Message to the Church of Philadelphia, 3:7-13
   - The key of David
   - The New Jerusalem
G. Message to Laodicea, 3:14-22

IV. The Things Which Shall Take Place After These Things
A. Worship Before God's Heavenly Throne, 4:1-11
   - A sea of glass, 24 elders
- Four living creatures full of eyes

B. The Scroll, the Savior and the Song, 5:1-14
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah
- A Lamb standing as if slain
- Seven horns and seven eyes
- Song of praise

C. The Tribulation
1. The Seal Judgements, 6:1-17
   a. First Seal - Cold War, 6:1-2
      - A white horse with a rider with a bow
   b. Second Seal - Open War, 6:3-4 - Rider on red horse
   c. Third Seal - Famine, 6:5-6 - Rider on black horse
   d. Fourth Seal - Death, 6:7-8 - Rider on pale horse
   e. Fifth Seal - Martyrdom, 6:9-11
      - Underneath the altar the souls of the slain
   f. Sixth Seal - Natural Disasters, 6:12-17 - The Day of Wrath Begins
2. The Redeemed of the Tribulation (Interlude between 6th & 7th seals)
   a. The 144,000 Jews, 7:1-8
      - Sealed...on their foreheads
   b. The Multitude of Gentiles, 7:9-17
      - The great tribulation
3. The Seven Trumpet Judgements
   a. The Seventh Seal Open, 8:1-6
   b. First Trumpet - the Earth Smitten, 8:7
   c. Second Trumpet - Sea Smitten, 8:8-9
   d. Third Trumpet - Waters Smitten, 8:10-11
   e. Fourth Trumpet - Heavens Smitten, 8:12-13
   f. Fifth Trumpet - Men Smitten, 9:1-12
      - A star from heaven
      - The bottomless pit
   g. Sixth Trumpet - Angles loosed; men killed, 9:13-21
   h. The Interlude between 6th & 7th Trumpets, 10:1-11:14
      - Strong angel, 10:1-7
      - John eats little scroll
      - The Two Witnesses
      - Temple, 11:1-2
      - Time, 11:3
      - Traits, 11:4-6
      - Termination, 11:7-10
      - Translation, 11:11-14
   i. Seventh Trumpet, 11:15-19 End of Great Tribulation
4. War on Earth and in Heaven
   a. War on Earth Phase I, 12:1-6
      - The woman - Israel, 12:1
      - A great red dragon - Satan, 12:2-3
      - A son, a male child - Jesus Christ, 12:5-6
b. War in Heaven, 12:7-12
c. War on Earth Phase II, 12:13-17

5. The Beast and his Prophet
   a. The Beast out of the sea - political power, 13:1-10
   b. The Beast out of the earth - False Prophet, 13:11-18

6. The Triumphant Saints, 14:1-5

7. Angelic Announcements.
   a. Everlasting Gospel, 14:6-8
   b. Beast Worshipers, 14:9-13
   c. Harvesting of the Earth, 14:14-20

8. The Temple of Doom, 15:1-8

9. The Seven Bowl Judgements
   a. First Bowl - Grievous Sores, 16:1-2
   b. Second Bowl - Seas Smitten, 16:3
      c. Third Bowl - Rivers Smitten, 16:4-7
      d. Fourth Bowl - Scorching, 16:8-9
      e. Fifth Bowl - Darkness, 16:10-11
      f. Sixth Bowl - Euphrates Dried, 16:12-16
      g. Seventh Bowl - Widespread Destruction, 16:17-21

    a. Great harlot riding the wild beast, (17:1-7)
    b. Wild beast destroys the great harlot, (17:8-18)


12. The Triumphant Return of Christ
    a. Announcement, 19:1-10
       - The marriage supper of the Lamb
    b. Advent of Christ, 19:11-16
       - Rider on a white horse
       - The winepress of God's wrath
    c. Armageddon & hell opened, 19:17-21

D. The Millennium
   1. Satan Bound 1,000 years, 20:1-3
   2. Saints Resurrected, 20:4-6
   3. Sinners Rebelling, 20:7-9
      - Gog and Magog
   4. Satan cast into lake of fire, 20:10


F. Epilogue, 22:6-21
   - The bright morning star

Assignment - Read Chapter 1. Answer discussion questions 1 and 2.
THE BOOK

Revelation should provide comfort, confidence and assurance to every believer. It assures us of our eternal destination with Jesus Christ. As an apocalyptic book it contains many symbols and references. Of its 404 verses, 278 of them contain references to the Old Testament. The number 7 (the number of completion and/or perfection) is used 49 times. It is a book that reveals the kingship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. He is revealed as the Almighty God. The word throne is used 44 times and the words authority and power are used 40 times.

Revelation ends what begins in Genesis:
- In Genesis we see the creation of the heavens and the earth. In Revelation we see the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.
- In Genesis God creates the sun and moon. In Revelation there is no more sun and moon. Jesus and the glory of God will light up the city.
- In Genesis God makes the Garden of Eden for mankind. In Revelation He gives us the New Jerusalem.
- In Genesis Adam is given dominion over the earth. In Revelation Christ reigns forever.
- In Genesis Satan victimizes mankind and gets them kicked out of the garden. In Revelation Satan is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire.

I. The Prologue - Verses 1:1-3

Revelation (apokalupsis) - Unveiling
Source of the Revelation - God
Person of the Revelation - Jesus Christ
Content of the Revelation - Things which will soon (tachos -afterward) take place (prophecy)
Communicator of the Revelation - Angel
Writer of the Revelation - John
Recipient of the Revelation - Bond servants (doulois) of Jesus Christ

Blessings of the Revelation: to reader, hearer and heeder of the prophecy
Urgency of the Revelation: The time (not chronos but kairos) is near (close).

Salutation - Verses 1:4-8
To: Seven churches in Asia
From: 1. Him - who is, who was and who is to come. God.
2. Seven Spirits before His throne. Holy Spirit.
3. Jesus Christ - the faithful witness; the firstborn of the dead; ruler of kings of the earth.

Doxology: To Him - who loves us; who released us from our sins by His blood; made us a kingdom; made us priests to His God and Father.
To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Preview: Behold, He is coming. Every eye will see Him. He is Alpha and Omega. (Eternal). The Almighty (omnipotent).

II. The Things You Have Seen 1:9-20

Circumstances of the Vision: Place - Isle of Patmos because of preaching the gospel. In the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. Given instructions - write and send to 7 churches.

Commissioner of the Vision: Saw 7 golden lampstands. (7 churches per verse 20).
Voice like the sound of a trumpet; Saw one like a son of man; long robe (high priest’s robe); golden sash; (See Exodus 28:4; Lev. 16:4; Hebrews 2:17-18, 3:1, 4:14 7:25);
Head and hair white (leukos) like white wool, like snow (Dan. 7:9); eyes like flame of fire; feet like burnished bronze (See Dan. 10:5); voice like the sound of many waters; 7 stars (angels [angulas probably elders/pastors] per verse 20).in His right hand; two edged sword coming out of His mouth; face like the sun shining.

Consequences of Seeing Him: John fell at His feet like a dead man. Given comfort and reassurance. The I AM (ego emit), the first and the last, the living One. Was dead (Greek - became dead) and alive forevermore. Holds the keys (sign of authority) to death (the condition) and Hades/Sheol (the place).

Therefore write the things you have seen and the things which are (chapters 2 & 3) and the things which will take place after these things (chapters 4-22).

Read Chapter 2 and answer Discussion Questions 3 & 4.

III. The Things Which Are 2:1 - 3:22

Chapter 2 - The Letters to the First 4 Churches

A. Ephesus
The City - **Ephesus** - The largest and most important city in Asia Minor. The residence of the Roman governor with a population of over 250,000. It was the primary harbor in the area. It was also dedicated to the worship of Artemis (Latin: Diana) and had a temple considered one of the 7 wonders of the world.

The Commendation (2:2-3) - I know (oida) your deeds, your toil, perseverance, cannot tolerate evil men, test those who call themselves apostles, endured for the sake of Christ and hate the Nicolaitians (vs. 6).

The Concern/Charge - “...you left your first love.” (2:4).

The Command - Remember from where you have fallen, repent, do the deeds you did at first. (2:5).

The Consequence (2:7) - If not, will remove your lampstand out of its place.

B. Smyrna

The City - **Smyrna** (modern Izmir, Turkey) - Was the 2nd largest and considered the most beautiful city in Asia Minor and is the only one that still exists today. It was the first city to build a temple to Roma, the spirit of Rome. The city was destroyed about 600 B.C. and rebuilt in 290 B.C.

The Commendation (2:9) - works, tribulation and poverty but rich. Faced blasphemy from Jewish haters of Christianity.

The Charge - None.

The Command (2:10a) - Do not fear suffering and persecution by the devil.

The Consequence (2:10b-11) - Be faithful and receive a crown of life.

C. Pergamum

The City - **Pergamum** - Located about 100 miles north of Ephesus with Smyrna in between. It was not a port city but located about 15 miles inland. As its ancient capital, it was considered Asia’s greatest city. It survives today as the Turkish city of Bergama. It was built on a hill 1,000 feet up. Its library contained 20,000 volumes. It was also a center of worship for four deities - Athena, Asklepios, Dionysos and Zeus.

The Commendation (2:13) - “... you hold fast to My name and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”
The Charge (2:14-15) - Some hold to the teaching of Balaam and some to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

The Command (2:16) - Repent or else I am coming to you quickly and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

The Consequence (2:17) - The overcomer will receive hidden manna and a new name written on a white stone.

D. Thyatira

The City - **Thyatira** - The city is some 40 miles from Pergamum going north then east and southeast. Though it received the longest letter, it is the least significant city. It was known for fabrics - wool and dyed goods. In Acts 16:14 we find Lydia who was a convert of Paul. She came from Thyatira.

The Commendation (2:19) - Their love, faith, service, perseverance and their later deeds are greater than their first.

The Charge (2:20-21) - They tolerated a false prophetess called Jezebel who led the people astray and will not repent.

The Command (2:24-25) - Those who do not hold to false teaching should old fast until He comes.

The Consequence (2:26-29) - He who overcomes and keeps My deeds, I will give him authority over nations and give him the morning star.

E. Sardis

The City - **Sardis** - The city was founded in approximately 1200 B.C. It had been considered a great city about 30 miles south of Thyatira and sitting 1500 feet above the valley floor. The location also turned out to be the downfall of the city. It was captured by the Persians because the people of Sardis were so confident in their position, they did not even appoint someone to watch the steep walls which the Persians climbed.

The Commendation (3:4) - They had a few people who had not “soiled their garments” and were considered worthy.

The Charge (3:1d & 2b) - “You are dead... For I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.”

The Command (3:2a, 3a) - Wake up and strengthen what remains. Remember what you have received and heard and keep it. Repent.
The Consequences (3:3b, 5) - If they do not wake up, He will come like a thief. The ones who are victorious will not have their names blotted out of the book of life.

F. Philadelphia

The City - Philadelphia - About 30 miles from Sardis and another 2500 miles up on a plateau lays Philadelphia. It was the youngest of the seven cities being founded in 189 B.C. It was founded to be the center of Greek culture. The city was located on the edge of volcanic land which made the soil good for vineyards. Decades later the city changed its name to Flavia in honor of the ruling Roman Imperial family and was known by both names.

The Commendation (3:8-11a) - They had little power but kept His word and had not denied His name.

The Charge - None.

The Command (3:11b) - “Hold fast what you have, so no one will take your crown.”

The Consequences (3:10) I will keep you from (tereo ek) the hour of testing which is about to come upon the world - a reference to the Rapture - 1Thess. 4:13-18.

(3:12-13) - “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem.”

G. Laodicea

The City - Laodicea - It is one of a triad of cities (with Colossae and Hierapolis) about 100 miles east of Ephesus and about 40 miles from Philadelphia. It was a very wealthy city. It had been a banking center and noted for the production of soft, black wool. Its medical center also produced an eye salve that was used to treat eye diseases.

The Commendation - None.

The Charge (3:15-17) - They were lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. They thought they were rich and needed nothing but were actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

The Command (3:18) - “…Buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, white garments so that you may clothe yourself and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so you may see.”
The Consequence (3:19-21) - Be earnest and repent. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with Me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on My throne..."

IV. The Things Which Shall Take Place After These Things

A. Worship Before God’s Heavenly Throne, 4:1-11

This marks a major transition in the book. The phrase “after these things” begins the second vision given to John. The phrase will be used four more times (7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1) and each time represents the beginning of a new vision. The scene now shifts from earth to heaven.

The Door, 4:1a (also Ezekiel 1:1 & Acts 7:56)

The Voice like a trumpet, 4:1a (also 1:10) - Dispensationalist relate this to the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-18) of the church. The church is not mentioned again until chapter 22. However, the church is not mentioned in this verse, only John is transported.

On the Throne, 4:2-3a

This is a direct correlation to Isaiah 6:1, God sitting on a throne high and lifted up. The stones represent the brilliance of His glory.

Around the Throne, 4:3b-4

The rainbow represents God’s mercy and grace. (Genesis 9:13-17). The identity of the 24 elders (presbuteroi) has been the subject of much debate. Some say they are angels but angels are no place else referred to as elders and they do not have thrones. The logical conclusion seems to be that they are human and represent certain groups of humans. The number 24 is used to speak of completion. There were 24 officers representing 24 courses of Levitical priests. Some see them as a composite of the Israel and the church - 12 tribes and 12 apostles. Most agree that they represent the perfected church of redeemed saints of God.

Before the Throne, 4:5b-6a

John sees seven lamps of fire which are identified as the sevenfold Spirits of God. This describes the Holy Spirit in all of His fullness (Isaiah 11:2; Zechariah 4:1-10) wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity.

There was also something like a sea of glass like crystal. Sea has to be metaphorical because there is no sea in heaven. This is like a glass pathway to the throne.
In the Center and Around the Throne, 4:6b-8a
We are now introduced to the four living creatures that will play a role in various events in Revelation. Ezekiel 1:4-25 gives us an even more complete picture of the four living creatures. Ezekiel 10:15 identifies them as cherubim an exalted order of angels frequently associated with God’s power. Cherubim were placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden to prevent Adam and Eve from returning after being driven from the garden. (Genesis 3:24). It should especially be noted that Satan was called “the anointed cherub who covers and was to attend the throne of God. (Ezekiel 28:14).

Ezekiel saw each creature as having four faces but John saw each one separately. They are viewed several different ways. As representing God’s creation: lion - wild beasts; calf - domestic animals; eagle - flying creature; and man, God’s creative prize. Symbolically they are viewed as lion - strength; calf - service; eagle - speed and man - reason. Another view is they represent four portraits of Christ in the New Testament. The lion represents Him as King as He is presented in Matthew; the calf as Servant per the book of Mark; man as the Son of Man as presented in Luke and the eagle as the Son of God as presented in John. (This is a relatively late view by Hal Lindsey). Six wings are the same as the seraphim in Isaiah 6:2. The eyes everywhere on the creatures seem to have no particular meaning.

Worship to the One on the throne, 4:8b-11
The worship of the creatures was continuous and without a pause (anapausis). They declare the holiness of the almighty eternal God. It is a reminder to us of His holiness which seems not to be spoken of frequently in current times. His eyes are too holy to look upon evil with favor. (Hab. 1:13)

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”

Notice that when speaking of the 24 elders it is in the future tense. “…will fall down before Him…will worship Him…and will cast there crowns before the throne…” The will declare the worthiness of God the Creator. They fall prostrate before Him and cast their crowns because He alone is worthy. Also note that neither the creatures nor the elders are singing. They are oratory declarations.

“Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they have existed, and were created.”

B. The Scroll, the Savior and the Song, 5:1-14
The Lion of the tribe of Judah (1-5)
This chapter begins with God holding scroll that is sealed with seven seals. A "strong angel" asks who is worthy to open the book? Jeremiah 32:9-15 provides as example of the use of such a document. That passage is used to interpret this scroll as containing the deed to the earth and the actions that must be taken to fully redeem it. No one was worthy to open the scroll which caused John to weep. One of the elders tells John not to weep because the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome and can open the scroll. This is a definite reference to Jesus the Christ. No human or angel was worthy to open the book.

A Lamb standing as if slain (6-7)
Christ, the Lamb of God, bears the marks of His death (Luke 24:40; John 20:20, 27). Note that He is both the Lion and the Lamb. He could not be the Lion of judgment or King of Kings until He was first the Lamb of sacrifice. Seven horns symbolize His strength and power i.e. perfect power. Seven eyes reference His perfect omniscience. This is similar to Daniel 7:13-14.

Song of praise (8-14)
After the Lamb, our Savior, takes the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall before Him and sing a new song. Their song extolls the ultimate defeat of sin, death and Satan and the establishment of the Kingdom of God through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Each of the twenty-four elders held a harp and also “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” (Greek grammar in the original text indicates that the four living creatures did not have harps and bowls). Incense was used in the temple and symbolized the priestly work of intercession. The incense in these bowls represents the prayers over the years of the saints who have prayed for the coming kingdom of God.

In verse 11 John adds that he heard the voice of many angels around the throne and there was too many to count. Verse 12 -They began shouting (angels do not sing) with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

In verse 13 every created thing in heaven and earth and under the earth and on the sea join in the oratory. This reminds us of Psalm 150 - “Let everything that has breath, praise the Lord.” The four living creatures kept saying “Amen” which is let it be. The elders again fell down and worshipped.
C. The Tribulation

Each of the seven seals represents God’s wrath and judgment being poured out upon the earth. This is most commonly referred to as The Tribulation which is a 7 year period ending with the physical return of Christ to the earth. It is divided into 2 periods of 3 1/2 years with the second period being called The Great Tribulation. As indicated in 3:10, we believe in a pre-tribulation rapture of the church. There are others who believe in a mid-trib rapture occurring at the end of the first 3 1/2 years. Still others believe that the church will go through the entire rapture and be taken up afterward - post-trib.

There is a direct parallel between the seals and Jesus’ description of the tribulation in Matthew 24. The first seal represents a brief, false peace. Matthew 24:4-5 indicates a period where there are many pretending to be Christ. The second seal depicts worldwide war as in Matthew 7a. The third seal represents famine as in Matthew 7b. The fourth seal represents natural disasters such as earthquakes which are also presented in 7b. The fifth seal depicts martyrs under the altar which parallels Matthew 24:9. The sixth seal shows the sky going black which parallels Jesus’ prediction in Matthew 24:29. Finally the seventh seal reveals the final calamities which lead to the second coming of Jesus Christ as in Matthew 24:37. While historicists and preterists believe all of the things happened with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and subsequent events, as futurists we believe these events are yet to come.

1. The Seal Judgments 6:1-17

   a. First Seal (6:1-2) Cold War/False Peace - The rider comes on a white horse carrying a bow with no arrows. He is presented a crown (stephanos) which is a winner’s crown but not a king’s crown (diadem). He, the Antichrist, will conquer not through war but through being the false champion of peace.

   b. Second Seal (6:3-4) War - This rider comes on a red horse and is granted to take the peace away. This leads to worldwide war. The true character of the Antichrist will come out as strives for dominance. He will make a treaty with Israel and pretend to be their friend and protector. All of that will quickly end.

   c. Third Seal (6:5-6) Famine - The rider sat on a black horse. He brought famine. A denarius represents a day’s wages whereas a quart of wheat is less than enough to sustain one for a day. This means hardly being able to sustain one’s family.

   d. The Fourth Seal (7-8) Death - The next rider comes on a pale horse. A worldwide war and famine will lead to death of a fourth of the world’s population. Daniel 11:32-45 provides a description of the Antichrist and his actions which will be egregious will continue until Christ returns to defeat him.

   e. The Fifth Seal (6:9-11) Martyrdom - We no longer see riders on horses. John now sees the souls of those who were martyred during the time of the judgments. Remember, there will be those who accept Christ during the Tribulation. The gospel will
be preached (7:1-8; 11:3ff; 14:1-5). Many will be killed because of their testimony and refusing to abandon their belief in Jesus Christ.

Since there has not been the bodily resurrection of the Tribulation saints, their souls cry out (krazo) urgently for God to avenge their deaths. They are given a gift of white robes and told to wait a little longer.

f. The Sixth Seal (6:12-17) The Day of Wrath Begins - Luke 21:11 & 25-26 as well as Matthew 24:29 describes great earthquakes, plagues, the sun and darkened, stars (meteors) falling from the sky. The Abomination of Desolation (Daniel 9:27) where the temple is desecrated will have occurred. God causes worldwide chaos as have never been seen before.

This causes great fear throughout the earth. Presidents, dictators, kings, military leaders, the average worker, housewives, criminals, the homeless, all will try to hide and get away from the wrath of the Lamb.

2. The Redeemed of the Tribulation (Interlude between the 6th & 7th Seals) 7:1-17
   a. The 144,000 Jews (7:1-8) - John begins by saying “After this” which signifies the start of a new vision. Four angels are commanded to prevent any harm from coming to the earth. The four corners are references to a flat, square earth but to four quadrants as is used by mariners or geologists. We find the reason for the restraint is so the bond servants (the redeemed) can be sealed with the seal of God. Some say the 144,000 represents the church but they are specifically identified as Jews from each of the 12 tribes. It should be noted that there are 19 different ways of listing the tribes in the Old Testament.

   b. The Multitude of Gentiles (7:9-17) - John begins by saying “After these things” which as previously mentioned indicates the beginning of another vision. This is a diverse group that is too numerous to count. They are comprised of people from every nation and every group. They wear white robes as does the martyrs in 6:9-11 which suggests the same group. It also corresponds to 7:13-14. They carry branches indicating celebration and continually cry out with praise and worship. They are joined in the worship by angels, elders and the four living creatures. Then there is the great promise in verses 16-17.

3. The Seven Trumpet Judgments 8:1-11:19
   a. The Seventh Seal Opened (8:1-6) - When the Lamb, the rightful heir, opens the seventh and last seal, all of the praise and worship we had seen before stops. God’s final judgment was about to occur. His wrath would be poured out. In 6:9-11 the Tribulation saints had prayed for vengeance. In 8:3-4 we see the response to their prayers. In verse 5 the golden censer with the prayers of the saints are filled with fire and thrown down to earth almost as a warning of what is to come. The trumpets are given to “the” seven angels who stand before God. Stand is in the perfect tense which means continuous standing. Each trumpet announced a specific judgment.
b. The first trumpet sounds (8:7) - The Earth Smitten - which results in substantial destruction to the earth and the trees and all the green grass by hail and fire mixed with blood. The use of the term a third simply means substantial but all means all. Could this be a volcano? Is it real blood?

c. The second trumpet sounds (8:8-9) - The Sea Smitten - and results in an attack on the sea with something like a great fiery mountain being thrown in. Portions of the sea turns to blood, much sea life dies and ships are destroyed. Could this be a meteor?

d. The third trumpet sounds (8:10-11) - The Waters Smitten - and an attack on the rivers and springs which become poisoned and men die from drinking from them.

e. The fourth trumpet sounds (8:12-13) - The Heavens Smitten - and we see the sun, moon and stars darkened. Could this be a partial eclipse? Staying in the sky, an eagle announces three woes to those on the earth.

f. The fifth trumpet sounds (9:1-12) - Men Smitten - A “star” which had already fallen to the earth (Ezekiel 28:12-16) has the key to the “pit of the abyss” and releases locusts (actually demons released from the abyss who take on a strange physical form.) out of the smoke. The locusts are given the authority to attack mankind without the seal and torment them for 5 months but not kill them nor hurt anything else. The description of the locusts is strange - crown like things on their head, like human faces, long hair like women, teeth like lions, tails like scorpions with stings, etc. Their king is the angel of the abyss - Abaddon/Apollyon which means Destroyer. Then there is the warning that two more woes are coming.

g. The sixth trumpet sounds (9:13-21) - Men killed - The four angels bound at the Euphrates were prepared for this task were released. The fact that the angels are bound (perfect tense meaning they were continuously bound) indicates they are demons because holy angels are never bound. They have an army of two million. Now we have the opposite of the period when no one is killed. One third of the remaining population (The fourth seal killed one fourth 6:8.) will be killed. In this vision the horses are the instruments of death plagues of fire, smoke and brimstone which come out of their mouths. Even worse we find that those who were not killed did not repent and worshipped idols. It speaks to the hardness of the hearts of men during that period.

Discussion Questions

1. What type of genre is Revelation?
2. What is the purpose of the book?
3. Why do you think the seven churches are mentioned in chapters two and three?
4. What does it mean that Jesus will remove a church's lampstand?
5. Where do chapters 4-5 take place?
6. What is the relationship between the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls?
7. Who are the 144,000?
8. Why do the Jewish tribes appear to be listed incorrectly?
9. Who is the army of 200,000,000 in 9:13-19?
10. When does the war in heaven (12:7-10) take place?
11. Why does God allow the beast to make war against the saints?
12. How does the beast mimic Christ?
13. Who will be a part of the first resurrection (20:4-6)?
14. Where will the New Jerusalem be located?