

Chapter 9

Getting Started with the Book of Revelation

“For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.”

– Habakkuk 2:3

The Big Picture

In the simplest of terms, the book of Daniel reveals two great truths for the final generation. First, the five prophecies in Daniel operate like “our Grandfather’s” clock that is faithfully counting off the years which God has predetermined for the duration of sin. In this sense, the rise and fall of kingdoms are like the swing of a great pendulum. The second truth is that God has a definite plan for Earth. He has not abandoned or forgotten this tiny fallen planet. God is not preoccupied with more important things in His ever expanding universe. With infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, God has identified the nations of Earth and their duration. He has also numbered each of our years and limited sin’s existence. (Daniel 2:45; 4:17; 5:26) The book of Daniel emphasizes this second point by deliberately using six prophetic time periods.

The book of Revelation also contains two great truths for the final generation. First, Jesus is not to be confused with the icon that people have made Him to be. During the past 2,000 years, Christianity has distorted the character, authority and teachings of Jesus, and a great gulf exists between today’s degenerate perception of Jesus and the actual truth about Jesus. During the Great Tribulation, this icon will be shattered and the truth about Jesus will unfold. The second truth is that humanity has a malicious and deadly enemy who is intent on our destruction. Because we cannot see Lucifer and his angels, we grossly overlook the fact that Lucifer and his demons have a powerful influence over the attitudes, decisions and passions of people. Therefore, our perception of life and human history is incomplete because we cannot see the intervention and influence of demons. However, this will change. During the Great Tribulation, God will permit the final generation to see Lucifer and his demons physically so that incarnate evil might be fully exposed. (Revelation 17:8)

When the books of Daniel and Revelation are properly aligned, one harmonious story unfolds. Daniel reveals that Earth’s days are

numbered and Revelation discloses the importance and majesty of Jesus. These two books assure us of a wonderful truth: In God's time, righteousness will triumph over evil and the saints will inherit the earth. Jesus will use circumstances during the Great Tribulation to separate people who love truth and righteousness from those who do not. At the end of the Great Tribulation, Jesus will appear in clouds of the brightest glory, majestically personifying the values and ideals for which many saints will die.

Obstacles in Understanding Revelation

Before we examine the book of Revelation, a few introductory words may be helpful. Everyone, including me, approaches the book of Revelation with ignorance, bias and baggage. Because apocalyptic prophecy reveals the comprehensive ways of God, the books of Daniel and Revelation are not easy to understand at first. It takes determined effort to become acquainted with all of the parts and pieces. For this reason, Jesus has promised to generously bless us with inexpressible joy and peace if we push forward with determination to understand His Word. (Hebrews 11:6; Revelation 1:3) Various obstacles often skew the intended meaning of prophecy and here are three significant hurdles that you should consider.

1. Traditional Views Conflict with End Time Truth

Because the book of Daniel was sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:4, 9), we must realize that Daniel cannot be completely understood until the appointed time arrives. As it turns out, the intended meaning of Revelation has also been sealed because many prophecies in Revelation depend upon certain facts established in the book of Daniel. The net effect is that traditional views on prophecy become obsolete when Daniel is unsealed. Discarding the old and embracing the new is not easy, but we have to press forward in faith. Longstanding views on Daniel and Revelation cannot be deemed accurate and reliable unless they conform with the rules found in Daniel.

Since the rules of interpretation were sealed in the book of Daniel, there was no need for God to seal the book of Revelation. (Revelation 22:10) When these two books are properly aligned, we can observe that Daniel mainly concerns the past and Revelation mainly concerns the future. We will also learn that Daniel and Revelation overlap on five prophetic events. This overlapping is important because it proves that Revelation uses the same rules as Daniel. We have twenty-six centuries of history and fulfilled prophecy with which to test and verify the rules in Daniel. If we apply Daniel's rules to Revelation, we find perfect harmony

between Daniel and Revelation. Once we have confidence in the validity of the rules, we can then assemble and understand obscure and mysterious portions of Scripture with a higher degree of certainty.

During the past two thousand years, Bible prophecy has received a lot of interest, but not much respect. The problem is that prophetic views come and go like newspapers. Hundreds, if not thousands, of prophetic views have been published, and few of them have proven to have any lasting value. Nevertheless, Bible prophecy continues to be a subject of interest because human beings are inherently interested in “future telling.” Unfortunately, the failure of prophetic exposition in ages past has predisposed many Christians to fall for the argument that a careful examination of prophecy is not important. Many Christians justify their indifference toward Daniel and Revelation with this argument: “All that matters is my salvation.” Loving the Lord and submitting to the authority of Jesus is the first step in salvation, but learning and growing into the character of Christ (sanctification) through a study of His Word is not optional. (Ephesians 4; 1 Thessalonians 4; Revelation 2 and 3) Bible prophecy singularly reveals God’s character, plans and purposes. Is it possible to truly love our Savior, eagerly await His arrival, yet refuse to examine His purposes and plans? Could our perception of God and the reality of God be improperly aligned in our thinking? In other words, will you be able to explain and justify the actions of God to others when His wrath breaks out against Earth? This is one of the benefits of understanding Bible prophecy. We have time to study and reflect on the ways of God so that when He does act, we will not be overwhelmed with surprise or discouragement.

We live in a world of many diverse religions that have enormous blinding power, so God has to level the playing field for all humankind during the Great Tribulation. He will test everyone with a simple test that will not favor any religious body! Everyone will be forced into making the same simple choice. The choice will be whether to reject traditional views which are vigorously defended by religious leaders, or accept the new light shining from God’s Word. God will test Christians and non-Christians to see who will receive His truth and reject their religious heritage. Of course, this will be very hard to do. Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to do it when Jesus came to Earth. Later, Catholic leaders would not accept the claims of Protestants when Luther revealed God’s truths to them. Unfortunately, the book of Revelation predicts religious systems of the last generation will not be able to abandon their traditions when truth is finally revealed. However, there will be individuals who will abandon the old and grasp the new because they

love truth. If we exalt religion and our longstanding traditions above the clearest presentation and evidences of God's truth, is that blasphemy? (Mark 7:7) However, giving up a "comfortable" church family for the isolation that often follows a new understanding of God's Word can be a very large obstacle. Incidentally, this was the same obstacle that hindered Nicodemus' interest in Jesus for several years. (John 3)

2. Revelation Depends on Daniel

The book of Revelation is a continuation of the book of Daniel. If the book of Daniel is not properly understood, the book of Revelation cannot be correctly understood either. These two books produce one integrated story written by two men who lived about seven hundred years apart. Because God designed the visions given to Daniel and John, they are in perfect harmony and, together, produce a matrix of data which positions the timing of each prophetic event. This matrix spans more than 3,500 years and includes all the prophetic elements found in Daniel and Revelation. Some elements in Revelation require the timing established in Daniel to make sense, and the opposite is also true. The story that unfolds from both books is comprehensive, and it takes diligence, time and determination to mentally surround all of the parts and pieces. Unfortunately, this prerequisite is a serious obstacle for many people who are too busy to study God's Word.

3. Five Essential Bible Doctrines

The books of Daniel and Revelation require an understanding of five essential Bible doctrines (the five S's) shown below:

1. Salvation through faith in Christ
2. The State of man in death
3. The Second Coming
4. God's seventh day Sabbath
5. God's use of parallel Sanctuaries or temples

Notice how these doctrines contribute to Revelation's story. First, the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus explains how a numberless multitude of people, coming from every culture, religion, nation and language, will be saved during the Great Tribulation. (Revelation 7:9-14) Second, the doctrine of soul sleep explains the necessity of two resurrections – the resurrection of the righteous will occur at the Second Coming and the resurrection of the wicked will occur at the end of the thousand years. Since people do not go to Heaven or Hell at the time of

death, the doctrine of parallel temples explains why and when the judgment of mankind occurs. The judgment of the dead began in 1844 and the judgment of the living will begin with the commencement of the Great Tribulation. The perpetuity of the Ten Commandments, particularly the fourth commandment, explains, in part, how the world will be trapped in a conflict over worship during the Great Tribulation. The laws of Babylon and the Antichrist will oppose the law of God. The conflict over worship will separate the people of Earth. One group will choose to obey God's commandments, while the other group will choose to obey the laws of Babylon and the devil.

Finally, the comprehensive doctrine of the Second Coming merges apocalyptic prophecy into a grand schematic revealing God's plan to terminate the problem of sin. Since most of Christianity rejects one or more of these five essential doctrines, most Christians struggle to understand the intended meaning of Daniel or Revelation. This is most unfortunate because the five essential doctrines explain "why" God will do what He has to do, and apocalyptic prophecy reveals "how" and "when" God will do all that He has to do.

God's Word is so vast and man is so finite. Even though the book of Revelation contains a mere 617 sentences, it speaks volumes. Contrary to what many people think, the book of Revelation is not concentrated on the end of the world! Instead, *the book of Revelation is focused on the revealing of Jesus Christ and His termination of the sin problem.* The book of Revelation describes an intricate process that climaxes with the glorious disclosure that Jesus Christ has the *same* authority, power and prerogatives as God the Father. This is why the last book in the Bible is named, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." (Revelation 1:1)

It is ironic that many people call this book by its shortened name, "Revelation," or "Revelations," without realizing that it predicts the *revealing* of Jesus. Most Christians associate the book of Revelation with the Antichrist or mysterious beasts rather than the Lamb of God. This perception will change for many people during the Great Tribulation. Man's great need of Jesus will become evident during the Great Tribulation. The good news, beaming from the book of Revelation, is that we have an Almighty Savior in Jesus if we are willing to love Him and submit to His authority. The bad news is that we have an omnipotent enemy in Jesus Christ if we cling to falsehood and insist on rebelling against Him. For this reason, the book of Revelation describes Jesus as a lamb and a lion. When He appears in glory, the righteous will see Him as "a lamb" slain from the foundation of the world, and the wicked will see "a lion" from the tribe of Judah.

Five Types of Prophecy in the Bible

It is important to know that the Bible contains five or more distinct types of prophecy and each type of prophecy has unique rules of interpretation. When interpreting Bible prophecy, we must use appropriate rules of interpretation for each type of prophecy. If flawed rules or the wrong set of rules are used to interpret prophecy, flawed conclusions will be the result. According to Webster, the word apocalypse means “any remarkable revelation.” This is why the last book of the Bible is named *Apocalypse* in the Greek language. The prophecies in Daniel and Revelation are unique from all other prophecies in the Bible. Consider these five types of prophecy:

1. Messianic prophecies: These prophecies concern the appearing and ministry of Jesus in either His first or second advent. Some scholars say there are more than 450 Messianic statements or prophecies in the Bible. Here are two examples of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament: Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. Here are three examples of Messianic prophecies in the New Testament: John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Matthew 26:64.

2. Judaic prophecies: These prophecies were given to the biological offspring of Abraham. When God renewed His covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai, He promised to send blessings *or* curses depending on Israel’s faithfulness to the terms and conditions stipulated in the covenant. (Exodus 19, Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28) This is a point which many Christians often overlook, even though the Bible clearly states the promise contains the possibility of blessings, as well as curses. Most of the wonderful things God promised to Israel were not fulfilled because Israel repeatedly violated their covenant. Therefore, God implemented the curses instead of the blessings He had promised. (Daniel 9; Hebrews 3:19; Romans 9-11) After the Jews rejected Jesus (John 1, Matthew 23), God *redefined* the nation of Israel. Believers in Christ became the “seed” (Greek: *sperma*) of Abraham – the twelve tribes. (Ephesians 2, Galatians 3:28, 29, James 1:1, 2:1) Judaic prophecies were abandoned in accordance with the terms and conditions of the covenant. Judaic prophecies are not to be confused with the *unconditional* promises given to Abraham. (Genesis 15-17) Everything promised to Abraham will be fulfilled to the *redefined* seed of Abraham. (Ephesians 2; Galatians 3, 4; Romans 11; Hebrews 11; Revelation 7:9-11)

3. Day of the Lord prophecies: These prophecies are numerous and are scattered throughout Scripture. Ultimately, these prophecies predict the triumph of God and/or the vindication of His people. Elements within these prophecies are general enough that we can see parallels between

them at different times in human history. Many Bible students (and scholars) succumb to the temptation of applying ancient “Day of the Lord” prophecies to modern settings. For example, Isaiah 24 and Ezekiel 7 are “Day of the Lord” prophecies that would have been fulfilled *if* Israel had been faithful to God (what I call “Plan A”). These prophecies did not happen because Israel rejected God and God has implemented a new covenant (what I call “Plan B”). However, there are direct parallels between ancient “Day of the Lord” prophecies and modern “Day of the Lord” prophecies. It is important to keep “Plan A” and “Plan B” prophecies separate and distinct. For example, Matthew 24 is a “Day of the Lord” prophecy. This prophecy contains predictions about the end of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Plan A) and the end of the world (Plan B). It is important to notice that some specifications in Matthew 24 concern the end of Jerusalem and other specifications apply to the end of the world. A Bible student must be careful when studying these types of prophecies to be sure the specifications are assigned to the right time period. In other words, details concerning the end of the world do not belong to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. “Day of the Lord” prophecies are noted for their ominous warnings and God’s vindication over evil through warfare.

4. Local prophecies: Local prophecies apply to specific people, places and times. For example, the prophecy concerning Nineveh (Jonah 1) is a local prophecy. Local prophecies require a messenger to explain or proclaim the prophecy. In the case of Nineveh, Jonah was the messenger. Before the flood, Noah was the local messenger. At the time of the First Advent, John the Baptist was the local messenger. Even though the messages of local prophets belong to a specific time and place, timeless principles sustain their value. God is constant and the history of local prophecies offer important parallels that we will observe as we approach the end of Earth’s history. Jesus compared the days of Noah with the end of the world saying, “**As it was in the days of Noah so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.**” (Matthew 24:37)

5. Apocalyptic prophecies: The apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and Revelation are chronological prophecies that outline a sequence of events that occur over the course of time. Apocalyptic prophecy is identified by the presence of a beginning and an ending point in time. Both the fulfillment and the sequence of events in this type of prophecy are unconditional. The first example of this type of prophecy can be found in Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar’s vision outlines a sequence of kingdoms which rise to power in the order predicted. Sometimes, the sequence or structure of apocalyptic prophecy is defined by numeric order. For example, the second trumpet in Revelation 8 occurs *after* the first

trumpet. The critical point is that chronological order is *always* maintained in apocalyptic prophecy, otherwise no one could determine the order of events.

Distinctive Treatment Necessary

It must be emphasized again that each type of prophecy deserves distinctive treatment. Mixing and/or merging rules of interpretation will reduce the interpretation of Bible prophecy to confusion. The Bible student must identify *the type* of prophecy under investigation before he can apply the right set of rules and reach the intended conclusion.

The Difference between Prophetic Truth and Prophetic Faith

There is an important difference between prophetic truth and prophetic faith. Prophetic truth looks to the past. Prophetic truth identifies those prophecies or elements of prophecy that qualify as fulfillments. Prophetic faith, on the other hand, looks to the future. Prophetic faith anticipates the fulfillment of prophecy. Since no one can prove that a prophetic conclusion about the future will be accurate, our prophetic faith should be carefully built on valid rules of interpretation that demonstrate perfect fulfillment in ages past. In other words, a valid set of rules will position and interpret the prophetic elements of the past and the future with the same precision.

What Is a Prophetic Fulfillment?

The second rule of apocalyptic prophecy states, “*A fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecy occurs when all of the specifications within that prophecy are met. This includes the order of events outlined in the prophecy.*” Every detail within a prophecy must be satisfied before a prophecy can be declared fulfilled. Because of the first rule, the chronological order of the prophecy must also be satisfied. For example, some people claim that the fourth trumpet of Revelation 8 has already been fulfilled. If this claim were true, they would have to demonstrate that *all* of the specifications of the fourth trumpet have been met, and they would have to demonstrate the fulfillment of the first three trumpets as well.

What Does “Soon” or “Near” Mean?

Some people argue that God’s sovereignty is limited if certain prophetic events *have to occur* before Jesus can return. This argument is without merit when we understand that God Himself established a course of events that will lead up to the Second Coming. The Father set the limits of time for the duration of sin according to His own authority before the

world began. (Acts 1:7) God has revealed His plan and schedule through apocalyptic prophecy, and He will fulfill all that He has predetermined. (Isaiah 46:11)

Some people claim the urgency expressed by Bible prophets should not be taken seriously. They say, “Words like *near* and *soon* should be understood from God’s perspective, because with God, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.” (Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8) For the following reasons, this use of God’s Word is faulty and these texts do not support the ambivalent meaning which is imposed on them. Think about this: *God deliberately embedded eighteen time periods in the seventeen prophecies of Daniel and Revelation so that students of prophecy might understand the timing of His plans!* Why would God use words like *near* and *soon* if He did not mean what He said? The words “soon” and “near” have to be understood within their intended context; that is, when the time for prophetic fulfillment arrives, words mean what they say. The problem, though, is that Bible writers shared an interesting phenomenon. They consistently interpreted their visions as though the end of the world was going to occur in their day! As you read these nine texts, notice **when** these words were written and their choice of words:

1. (Obadiah 1:15) “The day of the Lord **is near** for all nations.” (840 B.C.)
2. (Joel 2:1) “Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It **is close** at hand.” (820 B.C.)
3. (Isaiah 13:6) “Wail, for the day of the Lord **is near**; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.” (730 B.C.)
4. (Ezekiel 30:3) “For the day **is near**, the day of the Lord **is near** – a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.” (580 B.C.)
5. (Zephaniah 1:14) “The great day of the Lord **is near** – **near and coming quickly.**” (630 B.C.)
6. (1 Corinthians 7:29) “What I mean, brothers, is that the **time is short**. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none.” (A.D. 50)
7. (1 Peter 4:7) “The end of all things **is near**. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.” (A.D. 60)
8. (James 5:8) “You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming **is near.**” (A.D. 60)

9. (1 John 2:18) “Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know **it is the last hour.**” (A.D. 90)

Because thousands of years have passed since these words were written, should we say these Bible writers were wrong with respect to timing? Yes, they were premature. (Review item number six and smile!) Of course, we should neither lose faith in the prophets nor should we throw out the Bible, because these faithful Bible writers did not know that thousands of years would come and go before Jesus would return to Earth. In fairness to them, we must remember that their understanding of God’s plan was incomplete because the book of Daniel had not been written (in some cases) or unsealed (in others). Paul died before the book of Revelation was given and he knew there was more to God’s plan than what had been shown. Therefore Paul wrote, **“For we know in part and we prophesy in part.”** (1 Corinthians 13:9) The issue of timing is not hard to sort out if you properly understand the process of inspiration. God revealed selected scenes to His prophets through the ages which they *merged* into the reality of their day and time. Therefore, they all thought the end of the age was near. None of the disciples thought Jesus would wait two thousand years to return to Earth. Peter really believed what he wrote, “The end of all things is near.” Even the prophet Daniel could not know the timing of the events he was shown.

How can a person claim the coming of Jesus is *near* if he does not know the amount of remaining time? Recorded history has shown that twenty-one civilizations have come and gone. Just because our world is in a big mess today with immorality, wars, natural disasters and hatred, does not prove that Jesus is coming soon. These events have happened before. *One element conclusively proves* the coming of Jesus is near. When the book of Daniel is unsealed, the final generation will have proof that the end has come *before* the Great Tribulation begins! Of course, when the Great Tribulation begins, many people will conclude the end has come. Should we eagerly anticipate the end? Yes! The end of sin and beginning of eternal life is the insatiable desire of every “born again” heart! We are going home, and the books of Daniel and Revelation tell us when and how. God has a predetermined timetable for planet Earth. Outside of apocalyptic prophecy, there is no possible way to know the details of this timetable or when the end of time will occur.

Revelation’s Matrix Expands Daniel’s Matrix

In our study on Daniel, we learned how the prophecies of Daniel harmoniously “stack” on top of each other and form a matrix. As the stack grows taller – prophecy by prophecy – the story becomes more specific and less abstract. God uses repetition and enlargement to tell a very big story with very few words. No prophecy in Daniel or Revelation tells a complete story. *No prophecy stands alone.* However, if they are properly “stacked” on top of each other, the prophecies tell a comprehensive and compelling story that flows from a unified matrix. Because there is a deliberate “stacking” order to the prophecies of Daniel, each prophecy contributes something important to the bigger picture. This feature makes the study of prophecy difficult at first. You almost have to understand the whole story before you can appreciate the fascinating details of each part.

By putting the prophecies of Daniel in a matrix, God does not have to repeat foundational elements in succeeding prophecies once they have been introduced. This is why the books of Daniel and Revelation are so short. The prophecies of Revelation “stack” on top of the matrix which began in Daniel. Since most prophetic expositors do not understand this matrix and fail to comprehend the rules that are sealed until the time of the end, they cannot see “the forest” for trying to arrange “the trees.” The matrix resolves a number of issues by providing some *forcible* organization for all of the information.

I call it “forcible organization” because the rules organize the data. It is like organizing furniture in a room. The big pieces of furniture have to be put in their places *first*. If this simple point is overlooked, the mover could be forced to rearrange the entire room, or dispose the larger items that will not fit. (I know this from firsthand experience.) In a similar way, the matrix in Daniel and Revelation forces large events (like kingdoms and large time periods) and small events (like the appearing of the 144,000) to be placed in proper order. The rules produce an arrangement of big parts and little parts that would be otherwise impossible to determine.

The beauty of this approach is that the four rules force us to organize the prophetic elements of each prophecy in chronological order. Even though our understanding of some elements may be foggy or incomplete, we do know the order in which they occur. As we place the pieces in their stated order, the matrix aligns prophetic elements in the stack above with elements in the stack below. Soon, a comprehensive picture forms because the matrix forces all of the pieces into their proper places. Truth is always truth and when valid rules of interpretation are used, everyone can reproduce this process of discovery, regardless of religious bias.

Unfortunately, millions of Christians do not know about the five essential doctrines, the necessity of rules of interpretation, or the historical matrix which the book of Daniel produces. Consequently, they are easily misled by fuzzy logic. Preachers present sweet sounding prophetic interpretations which the Bible does not teach, and laymen cannot determine if their words are true or false. If my assessment of Bible prophecy is correct, the world will experience a rude awakening very soon. The Great Tribulation crisis will suddenly commence and most of the Christian world (not to mention the non-Christian world) will be overwhelmingly surprised. My observation is that the fulfillment of Daniel and Revelation will be very different than what most Christians expect.

A Brief Summary of Revelation

Before we examine the twelve prophecies of Revelation, a brief overview of the book of Revelation might be helpful. Of course, this summary may be different than anything you have read before, so please regard this summary as a hint of where this study on Revelation will lead us.

The Seven Churches

The messages sent to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are not apocalyptic prophecies because they do not conform to the four rules governing apocalyptic prophecy. For example, there is no beginning point in time or ending point in time for each church in Asia Minor. Chronological order cannot be imposed on the seven churches because all seven churches existed simultaneously. Nothing in Revelation 2 or 3 indicates that each message covers a phase or a time period in Christian history during the past two thousand years. In fact, textual evidence in Revelation 1-3 indicates the opposite. *All seven churches existed at the time John received the vision and there are specific statements given to each church concerning their particular situation at that time.* The Lord singled out seven of the churches in Asia Minor (there were more than seven Christian churches in existence at that time) because *these* seven churches faced issues and problems that would afflict all Christian churches until the end of time. The number seven indicates wholeness or completeness, and the principles underlying the messages to the seven churches are timeless and applicable in each generation.

The Lord told John to write everything he was shown and send it to the seven churches in Asia Minor for at least two reasons. First, Jesus wanted His followers to know that even though He had been in Heaven for sixty years, He closely watched over His churches on Earth. He

wants Christians in every age to know that He is very much alive and intimately concerned about us even though we cannot see Him. Second, Jesus directed John to send a copy of the Revelation vision to the seven churches to insure this vision would be preserved for centuries to come. Whether John made seven copies of the vision or whether each church made a copy for itself is unknown. The messages to the seven churches and the vision of Revelation have been preserved for about two thousand years. The messages to the seven churches require spiritual discernment. Those who have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit says can discern their true condition and position before the Lord by examining the awesome messages sent to the seven churches.¹

The Seven Seals

The story of the mysterious book sealed with seven seals is the first apocalyptic prophecy in Revelation. This story not only “stacks” on top of the matrix established by Daniel with perfect harmony, but it also adds new information to the matrix which other prophecies in Revelation will use. Revelation 4-6 is to the book of Revelation what Daniel 2 is to the book of Daniel. Both prophecies establish a foundational sequence of events on which other prophecies build. It is also important to know that Revelation 4-6 amplifies certain events recorded in Daniel 7-9.

The story of the seven seals has several purposes. First, it establishes order. Each seal is opened in chronological order. The first seal was broken in 1798 and the last seal will be broken at the end of the millennium. Next, the information written in the book sealed with seven seals ultimately resolves two problems that began *before* Earth was created. I conclude, from the evidence presented in Revelation and elsewhere in the Bible, that sin began with two clever arguments which Lucifer brought against the Father and the Son. First, Lucifer claimed that God was not a God of love. Second, He claimed that God used His incredible powers (omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence) to selfishly maintain control over the universe. Lucifer claimed that God did not offer freedom to His subjects. Lucifer argued that God loved authority and power, and Lucifer summed up God’s tyranny with this evil taunt to the angels, “It’s obey God and live or disobey God and die.”

¹ For a careful study and analysis of the seven messages sent to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, examine the November, 2002 through May, 2003 back issues of *Day Star*. These seven studies can be viewed or freely downloaded from our web site: www.wake-up.org. We also have these seven studies prepared in printed form if you wish to order them.

We should not underestimate the power or sophistry of the devil's arguments, because they deceived a third of Heaven's sinless angels. When the seventh seal is opened, and the contents of the book are exposed, God will prove that Lucifer's first assertion was nothing but a malicious lie. Moreover, God will absolutely prove that Lucifer's arguments were cleverly disguised to hide his evil motives to gain what belonged to Jesus. The second problem, which the unsealed book will resolve, centers around the humility of God. When the book is unsealed at the end of the thousand years, the universe will finally understand that, if necessary, Jesus was willing to lay down His life forever, so fallen man might have the possibility of salvation.

Because the Father foreknew the rise of sin and the hatred that Lucifer would eventually have for Christ and His followers, He created a simple, but profound, means to dispel all of Lucifer's lies *before* Lucifer was created. He wrote a complete history of life in a book which contains a complete account of every created being. If this book were opened prematurely, the argument could be made that God manipulated events to occur according to His will. So, the Father sealed the book so that nothing in it could be exposed or changed. Then, the Father commissioned certain angels to serve as recording angels. These angels record everything that is said and done by every living being. In the end, the sealed book will be opened and compared with the records of the angels. Amazingly, the two records will prove to be identical! This astounding evidence will exonerate God of all of Lucifer's charges. God will prove that He foreknew the outcome of everything before anything was created. More importantly, God will prove that He did not manipulate the decision making power of anyone. His creatures have the power of choice and they are free to obey or rebel against His authority. Last, God will prove that He does not use His awesome powers of omniscience, omnipotence or omnipresence to maintain the throne. Rather, He uses these unlimited powers to insure that the rule of love is eternally enduring. Faith in God always makes perfect sense when seen in reverse.

The 144,000

The opening of the fourth seal marks the commencement of the Great Tribulation. Just prior to the global earthquake that marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation, God will select 144,000 people on Earth to do a special work for Him. God will choose and empower these people, like Noah before the flood, and Moses at the time of the Exodus, to speak for Him. These people will be located all over the world and they will be selected from every religious group. In an effort to save the

maximum number of people, God will have “believing brothers” speaking to their biological brothers. The awesome power of God will rest on the 144,000, and even though they will have little or no communication with each other, they will proclaim the same terms and conditions of salvation in the clearest of words. Contrary to what most Christians believe, these people will not be biological Jews that suddenly convert to Christianity after a supposedly secret rapture. According to Scripture, these people will be Jews in God’s sight – that is, according to the *redefinition* of Israel that occurs through Jesus. (James 1:1; 2:1; Romans 2:28, 29; Ephesians 2; Galatians 3; Romans 9-11; Revelation 2:9; 3:9) A *numberless* multitude from all kindreds, tongues and nations will hear the 144,000, receive their testimony and be saved.

The Seven Trumpets

The Great Tribulation will begin with a global earthquake followed by four civilization threatening judgments in quick succession. (Revelation 8:2-12) A quarter of Earth’s population will perish within a few weeks. These horrific events will stun and overwhelm the survivors. Because the current religions of our world are highly antagonistic towards each other, it is almost impossible for people from different religions to discuss the subject of God. The Moslem cannot understand the Christian’s belief in Jesus. The Jew cannot understand the Catholic mass or the need for Mary’s intercession. The Protestant does not understand the enlightenment of Buddhism, etc. We live in a world that has many views about God, and it is impossible for one man to prove the superiority of his God over that of another man. To make matters worse, there is great diversity of thought about God within each religious system, and this keeps the world deeply fractured. Can a Catholic, Moslem, Jew, Mormon and Baptist worship the same God *together*? If so, what would the properties of such a God be?

Jesus will soon awaken the world to the reality of His sovereign authority and dominion as well as the authority of His 144,000 servants (both men and women). He will shatter the religious views of the world with a series of awesome judgments including a meteoric firestorm of burning hail that burns up a third of the trees on Earth, and two civilization threatening asteroid impacts causing darkness to cover the world for a period of time. These four judgments will destroy more than 1.5 billion people in a few weeks. By showing His authority with overwhelming destructive force, Jesus will gain man’s full attention and temporarily subdue the ongoing hatred, conflicts and wars between nations. When Jesus initiates these four judgments, everyone on Earth will realize that Almighty God is angry. The seven trumpets of

Revelation are seven judgments of mercy that will befall Earth, so that Jesus may gain our attention and speak to us with one voice through His servants. The 144,000 will present the terms and conditions for salvation; and the gospel of Christ will separate the people of Earth into two camps – the sheep and the goats.

The Two Witnesses

The Two Witnesses are the Bible and the Holy Spirit, and the 144,000 will be the arms and legs of the Two Witnesses. The 144,000 will present Bible truth, and the Holy Spirit will convict honest-hearted people (in every religion) with the truthfulness of that testimony. The Holy Spirit will do everything possible to move people into submission to the will of Jesus; even empowering the 144,000 to perform miracles. They will present three simple testing truths from the Bible and these testing truths (found in Revelation 14:6-12) will separate those who listen to God's Spirit from those who do not. Eventually, the *influence* of the Bible and the Holy Spirit will be killed during the Great Tribulation!

Jesus said the Father accepts the worship of those who worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24) In other words, God accepts the worship of those who humbly submit to His demands. If our will is more important than His will, then we have become an enemy of God (anti-Christ), because our Creator has a higher claim over us than we have over ourselves! When we become willing to go, to be and to do all that God demands, Jesus said it is like being born again. (John 3) The Holy Spirit does His best to bring us into perfect harmony with God's commands and will.

Because Jesus speaks for God, He is called "the Word of God." (John 1:1) People who worship Jesus in spirit and truth must be open-hearted (to the Spirit) and open-minded (to the advancement of truth) so they can mature in Christ. When a person rejects the Spirit and refuses to accept the clearest evidences of truth, God can do nothing else to save that person. By the time the seventh trumpet sounds, the influence of the Two Witnesses will be terminated. Their work will end because everyone will have made their decision for Lucifer or Christ. Many people, like one-third of the angels in Heaven, will choose to follow Lucifer and believe his lies. Consequently, the Two Witnesses, the Holy Spirit and the written Word (the Bible), will condemn them to death. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Jeremiah 7:28, 9:5; Daniel 8:12; 2 John 1:1, 2)

In Revelation 11, the two olive trees and two candlesticks (the Holy Spirit and the Bible) are personified as two *human* witnesses who will speak to the whole world. Personification is used in Revelation 11 for an

important reason. In Bible times, a person could not be put to death on the testimony of one witness; a minimum of two witnesses was required. (Deuteronomy 17:6; Hebrews 10:28) During the Great Tribulation, the 144,000 will forcefully and clearly present the demand to worship God; every person who refuses to submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit and obey God's fourth commandment will be condemned to die, because of defiance. No person will perish because he refuses to listen to one of God's 144,000 servants. People who reject the Holy Spirit and God's truth will commit the unpardonable sin and be condemned because of open rebellion. (Matthew 12:31) Many people think the Two Witnesses will be Moses and Elijah, but Revelation's story does not have 144,002 spokespersons for God. Revelation's story is about two divine witnesses from God (*which cannot fail*) empowering 144,000 servants.

The Rise and Fall of Babylon

After the "shock and awe" of the first four trumpets occur, chaos and lawlessness will follow. The mayhem that occurred after the war between the United States and Iraq in 2003 is a miniature example of this coming upheaval. Political leaders of all nations will immediately respond to God's overwhelming destruction by imposing martial law. Fear and anxiety will rule the day. Religious leaders will declare these events as "Acts of God," and they will move quickly to establish a coalition of religious and political authorities to discuss developments and options. The consuming issue will be the question of how to appease God so that His judgments will cease. Because every government will be on the brink of collapse as a result of God's judgments, religious and political leaders from all over the world will agree that a "crisis government" is necessary to deal with God's demands. The Bible calls this coming crisis government, "Babylon."

Ironically, Babylon will immediately attempt to appease God by imposing "sin-less" laws. These laws will, at first, prohibit sinful behaviors that were previously permissible. Eventually, laws mandating the worship of God will be imposed, but the diversity of humanity will prove to be an insurmountable obstacle! How should God be worshiped? Which religion has the truth about God? Every religion has a different view of God's requirements. To resolve this sticky problem, laws will be enforced in each nation that reflect the majority view of God. In other words, in countries where Catholicism is dominant, laws mandating the worship of God will favor Catholic theology. In countries where Islam is dominant, laws mandating the worship of God will favor Islamic theology. Because of the overwhelming destruction of the first four trumpets, in the United States, the Bill of

Rights and constitutional freedoms will be suspended. The laws of Babylon will stand in direct opposition to the fourth commandment and the juxtaposition of conflicting laws will put the people of Earth in an agonizing situation. If people obey God, the authorities will punish them for violating the laws of Babylon. If people obey the authorities of Babylon, God will punish them for violating His law. Babylon will severely persecute the saints for 42 months and ultimately, Jesus will destroy Babylon at the Second Coming.

The Appearing of the Antichrist

About 890 days after the Great Tribulation begins (or two-thirds of the way through the 1,335 days of the Great Tribulation), the fifth trumpet will occur. This event will prove to be awesome. Lucifer will be allowed to physically appear on Earth. The devil will be allowed to leave the spirit realm to physically appear before human beings to bring sin's drama to a close. Lucifer is the dreaded Antichrist. He will masquerade as Almighty God. He will perform great signs and wonders, and demand the worship that belongs only to God. Billions of wicked people will believe, on the basis of his miracles and signs, that he is really God. To ration scarce resources during the Great Tribulation, the devil will divide the people of Earth into groups of one thousand. Then, during the sixth trumpet, demons will kill a third of mankind to silence opposition against Lucifer, and he will assume absolute control of Earth. In order to buy and sell, the remaining two-thirds of the wicked will consent to wearing a tattoo on their right hand showing the number 666. This number, indicates the bearer belongs to the two-thirds who were spared from death (666 is two-thirds of 1,000). The devil will then exalt himself as King of kings and Lord of lords, only to be destroyed by THE true King of kings and Lord of lords at the Second Coming.

The Seven Last Plagues

The seventh trumpet marks the close of the gospel call. The influence of the Two Witnesses will be terminated at the end of 1,260 days. By that time, most, if not all, of the 144,000 will have been slain. Jesus' offer of salvation will end and the seven last plagues will begin. The seven bowls will fall exclusively on people who have the mark of the beast. The seven last plagues will last for seventy days. Seven judgments will be poured out on the wicked for two reasons. First, Jesus intends to avenge the suffering of His innocent saints. He will punish the wicked for the cruel treatment and the murder of His saints during the seven trumpets. Second, Jesus will display the wrath of God against obstinate rebellion so that through eternity, everyone will know how God's wrath against

defiance is demonstrated.

The Second Coming

When Jesus appears, three events happen in quick succession. First, the Lord will resurrect the righteous dead. Second, the living righteous will be caught up with the resurrected saints to meet the Lord in the air while the wicked watch. Last, Jesus will cast the devil and his regime into a lake of fire. Then, Jesus will speak a powerful command and the wicked people of Earth will die. Ironically, the same voice that raised the righteous dead to life will put the wicked to death.

The 1,000 Years

During the 1,000 years, the saints will be taken to their home in Heaven to reign with Christ. (John 14:1-3) Reigning with Christ means the saints will share Christ's authority. They will have authority, *along with Jesus*, to determine the amount of restitution (suffering) that each wicked person must provide. The wicked will then be annihilated in the purifying fire that will fall on Earth at the end of the thousand years. In other words, justice will be completely extracted from every wicked person before he is allowed to die. This is the golden rule: As you did unto others, it will be done unto you. (Leviticus 24:19-22; Deuteronomy 19:18-21)

A New Heaven and a New Earth

At the end of the 1,000 years, the saints will descend to Earth in the Holy City, New Jerusalem. The wicked will be resurrected to see their Maker and face their punishment which was determined by the saints during the thousand years. The seventh seal will be broken and the contents of the Book of Life will be presented for everyone to see. A world of many languages and religions will see that Jesus Christ is Almighty God just like the Father. The lies of the devil will finally be proven false. The defiance of the wicked will be seen for what it really is, selfishness. Jesus will see to it that everyone understands why He judged them as He did. When the wicked discover there is no hope for recovery, the devil will arouse them to make war against Jesus and His holy city. Jesus will then call fire down from Heaven and eventually, the wicked will be annihilated. Fire will purify Earth of sin. When the greatest sinner (Lucifer) finishes suffering, Jesus will create a new Heaven and a new Earth and the saints will live happily ever after.

Examine Chart 9.1

I have prepared a chart to give you a general picture of what this commentary on Revelation will discuss. Look at Chart 9.1 and notice the relationships between each apocalyptic prophecy with the layers above and below it. The matrix helps to explain elements that could not otherwise be understood. Once you understand the forced organization which the matrix produces, then this one picture is worth more than a thousand words of explanation.

Since space is limited when diagraming this much information, Chart 9.1 is not drawn to scale. Nevertheless, I have tried to vertically align all of the elements within the matrix. According to the first rule of apocalyptic interpretation, each prophecy is in its order, and each prophecy harmoniously aligns with those prophecies above or below it. Naturally, this chart cannot include everything mentioned in Daniel or Revelation, but it does show how the larger pieces of prophecy align with respect to timing as required by the four rules of interpretation.

There are three things in particular I would like for you to find. First, locate the word “Today.” It is located in the top row. Now, look down to the middle of the chart and notice that the opening of the fourth seal and the commencement of the Great Tribulation is about to begin! (Revelation 4-6) Next, notice how the Great Tribulation begins with the breaking of the fourth seal and ends with the breaking of the sixth seal (the Second Coming). Last, notice that the stern faced king in Daniel 8, the King of the North in Daniel 11, the angel king of the Abyss in Revelation 9 (fifth trumpet), and the lamb-like beast of Revelation 13:11 are the *same* entity. In other words, the appearing of the Antichrist is presented in several prophecies so there can be no mistake about the timing or the identity of Lucifer.

Now that these introductory matters have been addressed, we will begin our study in Revelation by examining its first prophecy. Prophecy #1 begins with Revelation 4:1 and ends with Revelation 6:17. According to Rule One, the events in this prophecy occur in the order in which they are given. With the five essential doctrines, the four rules, and the matrix established in the book of Daniel, let us see what we can discover!

Revelation Expands Daniel's Matrix

Rev 16 7 Last Plagues	Today					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rev 13:11 Antichrist Appears				Lamb- like Beast Appears								
Rev 13:1 Babylon				-----Persecutes Saints for 42 Months -----								
Rev 8-9 7 Trumpets				1234	5 Lucifer Appears as God	6 Mark of the Beast	7					
Rev 7 144,000				Begin	Everlasting Gospel The Living Judged			End				
Rev 4-6 7 Seals			Jesus Found Worthy 1 2	3	The Great Tribulation -- 1335 Days							
Dan 10- 12 King of the North				King of the North	Martyrdom of the Saints		Michael Stands Up					
Dan 8 Stern- faced King	---- 2,300 Years End ----		1844	Horn Power	Rules over Earth Takes the Daily Away from Jesus			Destroyed but not by Human Power				
Dan 7 Beasts	Rome The Monster Beast Falls in AD 476	538 Little Horn Rises	1798 Little Horn Injured	Court Seated, Cleansing Begins					Beasts Burned Up by Fire			
Dan 2 Image	Legs of Iron	Feet					Toes	Rock				