

THE BOOK OF REVELATION
FOR THE MODERN READER
In Four Lessons
First

This is intended as a four lesson course on the book of the New Testament commonly known as The Book of Revelation. The first lesson deals with the introduction to the concepts, origins and history of the text itself. The following three lessons, two, three and four, deal with the text itself. The intention is that this study be undertaken along with your reading of the text, starting after you have finished this first lesson. In this way, you will be able to encounter these scriptures directly. These as with all parts of the Bible, can be read for textual study and as an aid in life. The textual study will bring understanding and one hopes enlightenment. When read with a life challenge in mind, one will discover in scriptural texts, new meaning, that will help in dealing with the challenge at hand. This final section of the New Testament, above all others was written to those facing great and often fatal challenges in life.

The Book of Revelation is one of the more often quoted and least understood books of the New Testament. Much of its language is vivid, memorable, and confusing. It represents the last book in those writings we Christians call the Bible. The question of whether this book even should have been included in the canon of scripture has been controversial from the beginning. To start with, the entire book was not even contained in some of the original canons of scripture in the early Church.¹ It was ultimately included² and for many it has been a source of inspiration during difficult times. Just reading Revelation is daunting for most. If that has held you back from reading Revelations you should not feel alone. No less a person than John Wesley, felt this same reluctance. Wesley in his opening comments on the Book of Revelation said of the middle portions of the book as follows:

These, it is evident, we cannot consider too much; but the intermediate parts [of Revelations] I did not study at all for many years; as utterly despairing of understanding them, after the fruitless attempts of so many wise and good men: and perhaps I should have lived and died in this sentiment, had I not seen the works of the great Bengelius.³

So, if you have been reluctant to dive into the Book of Revelation for fear that you would not be

¹ *The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church*, Second Edition Revised, Oxford University Press, 1983. Page 1183. See also *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume I* Copyright © 1907 by Robert Appleton Company Online Edition Copyright © 2003 by K. Knight. The Article entitled Apocalypse, relates that there was doubt as the authenticity of its apostolic authorship and it was left out of some of the early lists “St. Cyril of Jerusalem does not name it among the canonical books (Catech. IV, 33-36); nor does it occur on the list of the Synod of Laodicea, or on that of Gregory of Nazianzus. Perhaps the most telling argument against the apostolic authorship of the book is its omission from the Peshito, the Syrian Vulgate.”

² To the extent that there is an >official= list, there are a commonly accepted lists within various denominations, but not necessarily >official= lists of the literature that is the ABible.@

³ John Wesley, *Commentaries, Notes on the Whole Bible, The New Testament*, The Ages Digital Library, 1999

able to make sense of the thing, join the club. You now have something in common with John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church and himself a noted preacher and scholar.

In order to begin our understanding it is important to note that the book was written to an audience that understood its message and could easily interpret its symbols and meaning. It was written to be mysterious only to the Roman authorities. The early church contained many Jewish people who were conversant in the type of literature and the language used in Revelation. The rapid expansion of the Church to Non-Jewish people, gradually robbed the community of its ability to easily interpret these writings until much of the meaning was lost.⁴ The meaning is being re-discovered today through modern Biblical study methods. Many have tried unsuccessfully to treat the symbolism and text as a cryptogram. This method seeks to align the symbols with some modern circumstances and from that to make a prediction. When the predictions are wrong, the calculation is blamed and not the method.⁵ This type of use has led to a great deal of mischief. The book was written because it had something important to say to the Church and it was written to people who easily understood its meaning.

Revelation is an example of a type of literature known as apocalyptic. By way of definition, [t]he word apocalypse is derived from the Greek word apokalypsis, meaning disclosure, unveiling, or revelation. Apocalyptic revelations are of two kinds: (1) symbolic visions (e.g. Daniel 7:12; Revelation) and (2) otherworldly journeys (parts of 1 Enoch; 2 Enoch; 3 Baruch).⁶ The Book of Revelation is only one of a number of such examples in the Bible. There are other parts of the New Testament that do contain apocalyptic themes, but Revelation is the chief example of such literature in the New Testament. One of the characteristics that mark such literature is its dualism, that tends to understand things as either good or bad. The existence of Good, represented by God and opposed by evil, represented by the Earth or Satan.⁷ In contrast to other such writings this book was written by a known contemporary to a known group of churches.⁸

Some other examples of apocalyptic literature from the Old Testament are listed in The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows, - Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature: In the Old Testament the second half of the book of Daniel (Daniel 7B12) [Different types of Beasts with human and animal parts] has long been recognized as apocalyptic in genre. Other Old Testament writings

4 *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 6

5 See *New Testament Writings*, Timothy Luke Johnson, Page 513.

6 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, Introduction to The Book of Revelation, Apocalyptic Literature.

7 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, Introduction to The Book of Revelation, Apocalyptic Literature. There are two opposing personified forces in the universe, one good and the other evil. Yahweh is, of course, the supreme God. In Jewish Apocalypticism the archangel Michael often functions as God's agent. Opposed to him is Belial, or Satan. The opposition of these supernatural figures is most clearly drawn in certain treatises among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

8 See Johnson, Luke Timothy and Todd C. Penner, *New Testament Writings, An Interpretation*, Second Revised Edition, Page 516, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999.

also contain passages that resemble the eschatological symbolism of the apocalypses: e.g. Isaiah 24:27 (the apocalypse of Isaiah), a very late addition to the Isaianic collection; Ezekiel 38:9, depicting the final victory over eschatological enemies by God=s people; Joel 2 and Zechariah 9B14. In the New Testament the leading example of apocalyptic genre is the book of Revelation; but apocalyptic materials are present also in Mark 13 and its parallels in Matthew 24 and Luke 12.⁹

The following are some of the other New Testament examples of Apocalyptic Literature:
Excerpt from Mark 13 - The Destruction of the Temple Foretold.

13 As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings! 2 Then Jesus asked him, Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.¹⁰

This is a part of the Gospel of Matthew commonly called the ‘little apocalypse.’ Excerpt from Matthew 24. The Destruction of the Temple Foretold

24 As Jesus came out of the temple and was going away, his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 Then he asked them, You see all these, do you not? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down.

Signs of the End of the Age

“3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? 4 Jesus answered them, Beware that no one leads you astray. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah and they will lead many astray. 6 And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: 8 all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

Persecutions Foretold

“9 Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. 10 Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another. 11 And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. 12 And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come.

The Desolating Sacrilege

15 ASo when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), 16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains; 17 the one on the housetop must not go down to take what is in the house; 18 the one in the field must not turn back to get a coat. 19 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing infants in those days! 20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For at that time there will be great suffering, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 22 And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 Then if anyone says to you, Look!

⁹ The *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, Notes from Article - Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature.

¹⁰ The *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, The Gospel of Mark, Chapter 13.

Here is the Messiah or There he is do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 Take note, I have told you beforehand. 26 So, if they say to you, >Look! He is in the wilderness, do not go out. If they say, Look! He is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

The Coming of the Son of Man

29 Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 11

To review then The Book of Revelation is an apocalyptic type of literature. This type of literature was well known to its readers in the early Church and to the Apostles. In modern terms this type of literature is often thought to be a prophesy or a forecast of the literal future. But to those in the early Church that was not its meaning at all. In Biblical times the word prophesy had a different meaning. It is a forth telling not a foretelling e.g. the Prophet tells what message God is sending. The Lord though the prophets in Old Testament writings generally reminds Israel of his past deeds [such as freeing them from Egypt], warns them of current unfaithfulness and states that if they continue with their unfaithfulness this is what God will do to you.... but if you repent this is what God will do for [you will be protected and then be as great as your ancestors.] AThe part we usually think of as a forecast is not a prediction at all. It is a conditional statement of what God intends to do with Israel's free will or choice being the determining factor.¹² The trick then will be to relate the meaning of the Book of Revelation to our daily lives, and lively faith, rather than try to figure out which team will win the world series next year or a theme for a talk radio show. That is just what we will try to do next week start to do in the next installment.

11 *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, The Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 24.

12 *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 4.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION
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Second

This is the second of a four lesson course on the book of the New Testament commonly known as The Book of Revelation. The first lesson dealt with the introduction to the concepts, origins and history of the text itself. This and the two remaining lessons will deal with the text itself. The intention is that this study be undertaken along with your reading of the text, starting after you have finished the first lesson. In this way, you will be able to encounter these scriptures directly. These, as with all parts of the Bible, can be read for textual study and as an aid in life. The textual study will bring understanding and one hopes enlightenment. When read with a life challenge in mind, one will discover in scriptural texts, new meaning, that will help in dealing with the challenge at hand. This final section of the New Testament, above all others was written to those facing great and often fatal challenges in life.

This is the second lesson dealing with the The Revelation to John in the first lesson we discussed the general nature of this type of writing known as Apocalyptic Literature. As we now work through the text, and you start or finish your personal review of the book, we need to keep a few points in mind. First, while the book seems to be coded, its intended audience knew the code well. The book was written to be relevant to a 1st/ 2nd Century audience, but it is most remarkable in that it still has a message for us today as well. The audience was familiar with this type writing and the book's symbols may be found used extensively in the Old Testament. While the origins of the book and its author may seem mysterious to us, the intended audience knew that the book was an intentional and direct communication written by a person known by that audience. Again, book was intended to be murky only to the Roman authorities of the second century.

Now we will consider the actual content of the Book of Revelation. This is a topic that one approaches with some fear and trembling. There are a number of entire books on Revelation and we are not going to spend that sort of time in this undertaking. The Book of Revelation is divided, into two basic sections. The first is a series of letters to the Seven Churches of Asia which is then followed by a series of seven mysterious and vivid visions; the last vision itself is composed of seven parts with a final postlude. There are a number of scholars and religious groups that see in the Book of Revelation a structure as divided into seven sections each with seven parts. Which organization sounds good until you realize that these divisions as between these scholars and religious groups are not all in the same places. There is some very good support for dividing the text into seven sections.¹ However, a person perusing the Book of Revelation for the first time will find that this neat seven sided structure is not readily apparent. The impetus for 'divining' such a structure is that the number seven denotes perfection in Biblical terms and has much significance in the Book of Revelation.

¹ *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 9. And See *The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church*, Second Edition Revised, Oxford University Press, 1983. Page 1182. Please note in deference to Rev Chapman=s greater learning that the divisions hereafter listed were not taken from his work and any inaccuracies or mistakes are mine and not the Rev Chapman=s.

The Seven Letters

The First section is a series of letters to the Seven Churches of Asia Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The letters are in some ways critical and in other ways offer praise. None of the Churches are seen in a completely positive light. The general message is endurance and resistance to the enticements of the world and culture around them such as materialism, infantilism, eroticism, hedonism and idols. Please keep in mind that the contemporary readers of this book were aware of and familiar with these churches and the cities named. “These letters – or more formally, decrees, or edicts – follow a strict four stage pattern: . . .”² The letters each with the command given to the seer to compose the letter. The next section then identifies Jesus by a series of epithets. The third section of each then describes the current situation in the particular church. The fourth and final section then issues an exhortation and a promise to the particular church.³

The following is brief synopsis of the seven letters.

Ephesus - The letter praises this Church for its patience, endurance and the fact that it refuses to tolerate evil doers. But they are criticized because they have lost their Love.⁴

Smyrna - The writer states that he is aware of their affliction and poverty even though they are rich. They are warned of an ordeal to come that will last for 10 days.⁵ Perhaps they are materially rich and spiritually poor.

Pergamum - The Church is praised because even though they are living in the midst of the enemy they have not denied their faith, but some of them have worshiped idols, or slipped away.⁶ Nicolaitans, are mentioned in both this letter and that to Ephesus. Nothing is known about this group [there is speculation that they allowed the eating of temple meat] or its beliefs other

2 Johnson, Luke Timothy and Todd C. Penner , *New Testament Writings, An Interpretation*, Second Revised Edition, Page 585, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999.

3 See Johnson, Luke Timothy and Todd C. Penner , *New Testament Writings, An Interpretation*, Second Revised Edition, Page 585-586, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999.

4 Revelation 2, V2 ‘Ephesus’ ‘2 ‘I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. 3 I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

5 Revelation 2 , V 8, Smyrna 8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life:

9 AI know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich. I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

6 Revelation 2, V 2 - Pergamum 12 AAnd to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword:

13 AI know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. 15 So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and make war against them with the sword of my mouth. NOTE Balaam is the famous wizard from the OT with the troublesome mule who was called to curse the Israelites for King Balak against the wishes of God. The sword was a judgment symbol from Hebrews 4:12.

than the fact they were not purely local and the author, John of Patmos, did not like their teachings.⁷

Thyatira - This Church is praised for its love, faith, service, and patient endurance, but criticized for its tolerance of⁸Jezebel.⁹ This is a person apparently leading some of them astray.

Sardis - This Church was praised for its good works in the past but now it is dead.¹⁰ Apparently, even perfect works without enthusiasm are seen as a problem.

Philadelphia - This Church is praised for its patient endurance which has been such that due to it they will be protected from a potential trial.¹¹

Finally, Laodicea - This Church is criticized for being neither too hot nor too cold.¹² This church is then mediocre.

There are some obvious observations that can be made about these letters. First the letters are a call for endurance for the community of the faithful in the face of adversity. It also appears that the author may be pointing out that in the various ways that these communities have dealt with adversity, that there are pit falls. Another way to view these letters is in the matter of balance of group integrity against tolerance and the need for love. In all this even Laodicea, which is neither too hot nor too cold, however, is apparently not just right. The New Testament author Luke Timothy Johnson, sees the letters as similar to Old Testament classic prophetic statement in that these communities are warned of a situation in need of attention and then told of the consequence of failure to remedy the situation and with the promise of the benefit of

⁷ *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. General Information at Pages 20 and 25. In *New Testament Writings*, Timothy Luke Johnson, the author speculates that this was a group that allowed the eating of temple meat.

⁸ Jezebel was the wife of King Ahab she tried to introduce idol worship and was killed.

⁹ Revelation 2, V 18 Thyatira -18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze: 19 I know your works your love, faith, service, and patient endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. 20 But I have this against you: you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her fornication. 22 Beware, I am throwing her on a bed, and those who commit adultery with her I am throwing into great distress, unless they repent of her doings; 23 and I will strike her children dead.

¹⁰ Revelation 3, V3 Sardis 3 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars:

AI know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. 3 Remember then what you received and heard; obey it, and repent.

¹¹ Revelation 3, V 10 Philadelphia 10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

¹² Revelation 3 V 15 Laodicea - 15 AI know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

following God's lead.¹³ The choice to accept this is one for that of the community.

The Visions

The next element of Revelation deals with a series of Visions that ultimately lead to the establishment of the New Jerusalem.¹⁴ The letter may have been intended for individual groups with the section of visions to follow meant for the entire community of Christians. These visions of course are hard for the casual reader to grasp. While dividing the visions into seven parts has theological significance, it can also have some practical value. This division breaks the text into manageable topics, allows one to more easily ponder them or in a group to discuss the meaning. Try to visualize the text sections as a written description of a video presentation or a scene in a movie. Some of the scenes are short, some long some simple and some complicated. Like a standard Christmas Pageant with different characters marching into place until there is a complete ensemble in costume. The author of Revelation sequentially describes various elements that are added together to form a whole picture. We will break out the visions into seven separate visions and some apparent interludes, with the last vision itself divided into seven parts. This division is according to this author and no other serious scholar. For an alternate, and more orthodox division, than that we will discuss see Appendix One to these Lessons.

For discussion purposes the visions can be seen as being made up of Seven Visions, consisting of six scenes followed by a seventh Vision that is itself a series of seven sequential scenes that as a group depict the resolution of good and evil or of God with the world. The text is divided as follows:

- First Vision - Revelation 4:1-5:11
- Second Vision - Revelation 6:1-6:17
- Third Vision - Revelation 7:1-7:17
- Fourth Vision - Revelation 8:1-9:21
- Fifth Vision - Revelation 10:1-10:11 and interlude or postscript at Revelation 11:1-11:14.
- Sixth Vision - Revelation 11:15-11:19
- Seventh Vision - This is a sequence of seven scenes followed by a final vision of the resolution.
 - Scene 1- Revelation 12:1-12:17
 - Scene 2- Revelation 12:18-13:10
 - Scene 3- Revelation 13:11-13:18
 - Scene 4- Revelation 14:1-14:12 -
 - Interlude 14:13
 - Scene 5- Revelation Is a three part vision 14:14-17:18 and S6- 18:1 - 18:24 and at 19:1-19:10
 - Scene 6- Revelation 19:11-20:15

13 See Johnson, Luke Timothy and Todd C. Penner , *New Testament Writings, An Interpretation*, Second Revised Edition, Pages 585-586, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999.

14 *The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church*, Second Edition Revised, Oxford University Press, 1983. Page 1183.

- Scene 7- Revelation 21:1-22:5
- The book ends with a Post log 22:6-21.

Synopsis of these Visions:

Vision 1 - 4:1-5:11 - Twenty Four Elders before the Throne with a scroll only Christ can open. The four living creatures also appear

Vision 2 - 6:1-6:17 - Four horsemen, white, black, red and green who are then sent out to do wrathful things.

Vision 3 - 7:1-7:17 - The appearance of people robed in white engage in perpetual worship.

Vision 4 - 8:1-9:21 - Upon the opening of the seventh seal, various woes are sent out to 1/3 of parts of the world. But people still did not stop the worship of idols.

Vision 5 - 10:1-10:11 - The writer is told not to write this one down. An interlude or postscript 11:1-11:14 - in the interlude, the 2nd and 3rd woes and two witnesses are killed and after three days rise.

Vision 6 - 11:15-11:19 - The twenty four elders worship with a song amid thunder peals

Vision 7 - This is a sequence of seven scenes followed by a final vision of resolution.

S1- 12:1-12:17 - A red dragon tries to devour the newborn infant of a woman clothed with the sun. The child is snatched away to God. There is war in heaven and the dragon is thrown out - and then purses the woman's other children who keep the commandments and testimony of Christ.

S2- 12:18-13:10 - The red dragon gives up power to an injured, seven headed leopard that does great signs and fools the earth and marks its followers on hand or head.

S3- 13:11-13:18 - The mark of the beast 666 and those without it cannot buy or sell.

S4- 14:1-14:12 - Three angels tell of the torment of Babylon before 144 thousand singing virgins as a call for endurance of the saints.

Interlude 14:13 - the blessed dead in the Lord.

S5- Is a three part vision:14:14-17:18 and S6- 18:1 - 18:24 and at 19:1-19:10 -

First The son of man comes on a white cloud, as angels emerge from a temple reaping with sickles, sending seven plagues - bowls of wrath the 6th angel dries the river Euphrates and seven foul spirit demons gather kings at Harmagedon to prepare for battle, then the 7th angel splits Babylon into 1/3's - shown as the whore of Babylon the mother of Earths abominations.

Second - 18:1 - 18:24 - Those on earth mourn the loss and tell about the effect on the economy of the greed of the great city for sailors and suppliers of goods.

Third - 19:1-19:10 - Those in Heaven rejoice at the loss.

S6- 19:11-20:15 - The Word slays the army of evil and the Beast and False Prophet are thrown into a lake of fire. The dragon is chained for 1000 years while those headed for belief Rule. Upon release the dragon gathers evil forces that surround the camp of the Saints, but the besiegers are consumed by fire from heaven forever, including the Beast and False

Prophet. Then all are judged according to what they have done those not in the Book of Life suffer the 2nd death and are thrown into a lake of fire.

Post log S7- 21:1-22:5 - Now the old heaven and earth are replaced with a new heaven and earth, where God will be with his people and the same angels that loosed the bowls of wrath show the New Jerusalem [1500X1500X1500 miles] with nothing unclean and where the water of life from the throne of God with the Lamb flows in the city and where the tree of life is now with 12 kinds of fruit.

The book ends with the writer's assurance that the book is true and that the Lord is coming soon.¹⁵

Another unity in the text is that within these visions, no matter how one views or divides them there are a number of repeating themes or characters. Some of these will be discussed in the next lesson. For now, using the above outline, pick one of the Visions and read the text indicated for that vision, using the outline to give a reference point to the whole.

As an exercise, you may want to try the following procedure, to test your understanding. Visualize some unfortunate incident of note in your experience from the past. Using a section of the text of the Book of Revelation, or any other part of the New Testament, just as it presents itself to you, do you see any parallel? Is there anything in the text that perhaps affirms or explains what happened in your incident? Is there anything in the text that helps put the incident into perspective, now that some time has gone past. Depending on the incident you choose and the text to which you related it, you may or may not find answers to the questions posed. If not pick a different vision and see if the incident brings any answers to these questions. Scriptures are intended to be encountered in a community rather than as an individual. One way to guard against this is to discuss your reading and conclusions with others. Individual interpretations can lead at times to misunderstandings. Other people will provide a sounding board and a community for support.

By J B Cross

¹⁵ The time frame is God's own, which like Noah's wait for the doves return may seem a long time to us.

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Third

This is the third of a four lesson course on the book of the New Testament commonly known as The Book of Revelation. The first lesson dealt with the introduction to the concepts, origins and history of the text itself. This and the second lesson deal with the text itself. The intention is that this study be undertaken along with your reading of the text, starting after you have finished the first lesson. In this way, you will be able to encounter these scriptures directly. These as with all parts of the Bible, can be read for textual study and as an aid in life. The textual study will bring understanding and one hopes enlightenment. When read with a life challenge in mind, one will discover in scriptural texts, new meaning, that will help in dealing with the challenge at hand. This final section of the New Testament, above all other was written to those facing great and often fatal challenges in life.

A reading of The Revelation to John reveals in the various visions some recurrent themes and characters. The book, particularly the last half, while it may be considered in sections does present a unified message that creation, the universe, will be reconciled with God, through the sacrifice of the Lamb. The text recognizes that in the here and now there is both good and bad, that bad things will happen, even to good people, but in the end somehow, everything will be balanced out. In some ways one might even see some elements of revenge, but in such sections pay attention to how the actions are resolved and by whom. Because often the final resolution is that mercy is extended even to the unjust, just as forgiveness comes to us all, not because of any personal merit, but by the grace of God alone. In the final battle the victory is won not by weapons that deal death but by the Word of Jesus by the sword from his mouth, his words. See Rev 19:21. In the final tally in which creation and God are reconciled, one must infer that even the revenge, will be reconciled with the offense.

These recurrent themes appear not only throughout the Book of Revelation but in much classical art and literature. A discussion of those themes will not only add to the experience of reading The Revelation to John, but will help with those other secular works.

Twenty Four Elders

The term 'elder' is also used elsewhere in the New Testament, with various meanings. In Revelation this term is used only in the context the Twenty Four Elders who appear throughout the visions.¹ In their first appearance each is shown on a heavenly throne from which all throw down their crowns and worship the one who lives forever. The Oxford Annotated Bible foot notes these as a representation of the twelve tribes of Israel plus the twelve apostles.² As with many observations about the Bible there is an apparent inconsistency in that if the Book was written by the Apostle John, then the seer would be addressing himself. These Elders are depicted in six basic appearances. In three of the appearances they are shown in an act of

1 Johnson, Luke Timothy and Todd C. Penner , *New Testament Writings, An Interpretation*, Second Revised Edition, Pages 582, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1999. Located at Rev 4:4, 10:5;5,6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16;14:3;19:4.

2 Oxford Annotated Bible, New Testament, at Page 369 notes that probably these beings are meant to symbolize 12 tribes and 12 Apostles.

worshipping. In another they appear only as a part of the scene with no action associated with them. In only two of the appearances [Rev 5:5; 7:13] they speak to the seer of Revelation. In Rev 5:5, one elder assures the seers that the root of David, another name for Jesus, will be able to open the seventh seal. In Rev 7:13 an elder asks a question of the seer about the identity of those robed in white. The seer's response turns the question back to the elder who has spoken. The Oxford Companion to the Bible a reference work observes; "Twelve, like seven, is a number of completeness and perfection. This number in particular must not always be taken literally. Israel was comprised of more tribes than the twelve that were actually counted, and the counting of the twelve was not always uniform (Genesis 49; Joshua 13-19; Revelation 7.7-8), but the number twelve meant all Israel." It was regarded as important that there were twelve apostles and that their number should be complete, but the lists do not quite tally The twenty-four elders (Revelation 4.4) clearly represent all Israel and the whole church.³

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse –

The image of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse is often used in a literary sense to indicate the possibility that very bad things may soon be expected. The four horsemen in Revelation are adapted from Zechariah 6 where patrols are sent by God to the four corners of the Earth.⁴ The passage in Zechariah 6- 6 states:

And again I looked up and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains of bronze. 2 The first chariot had red horses, the second chariot black horses, 3 the third chariot white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled gray horses. 4 Then I said to the angel who talked with me, what are these, my lord? 5 The angel answered me, these are the four winds of heaven going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. 6 The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go toward the west country, and the dappled ones go toward the south country. 7 When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, Go, patrol the earth. So they patrolled the earth. 8 Then he cried out to me, Lo, those who go toward the north country have set my spirit at rest in the north country.⁵

In the Book of Revelation individually these horsemen represent the kinds of things Christians must endure while waiting final redemption and victory. The White Horse and rider with a bow- is associated with a conquering general. The bow is associated with an eastern empire Parthia [now Iraq] the current persecution ongoing at the time of the Book of Revelation was ordered by the Roman emperor, Domitian, he was similar to Nero the first emperor to persecute Christians. There was a rumor in those days that Nero was not in fact dead but would lead a horde back to conquer. The white horse symbol then is Nero - [read Domitian] coming to attack Christians.⁶ The Red Horse / Huge Sword- is a fairly straight forward symbol that represents the blood shed of war.⁷ The Black Horse / Scale [not damaging oil or wine] -

3 Number Symbolism; Twelve, VAN DMLLEN, D.H., *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows.

4 *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. General Information at Pages 48- 50.

5 The Oxford Annotated Bible.

6 *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 49

7 *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota,

represents famine and the scale represents sacrilege of food. Scales concern the measuring of grains. There was in fact a famine at that time due to scarce grain. Domitian had ordered vineyards cut and grain planted but there was such uproar [apparently the thought of facing a famine in a sober state was worse than the plague itself] that the emperor reversed this order and made it unlawful to damage a vineyard.⁸ Finally, A Pale Green Horse - The color is Chlorous a pale yellow green that gave its name to Chlorox of Hades - death.⁹

Mark of the Beast -

This is a theme, which includes both the beast and the mark itself and which appears in several places in The Book of Revelation. The number 666 is itself revealed in Revelation 13, followed in Chapters 14 and 16 with general descriptions of the beast and mark.¹⁰ Revelation Chapter 19 depicts in gory detail the defeat of the beast by the one with a sword from his mouth a reference to an earlier description of Christ.¹¹ Revelation Chapter 20 refers again to those marked by the beast.¹² In the "Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church," Second Edition

By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 50.

⁸ *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 50.

⁹ *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 50

¹⁰ Revelation 13:11 Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. ¹² It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound H had been healed. ¹³ It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; ¹⁴ and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived; ¹⁵ and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell who does not have the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.

Revelation 14: 8 Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, A Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. C 9 Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, A Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, ¹⁰ they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name. C ¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 16: 2 So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.

¹¹ Revelation 19. The Beast and Its Armies Defeated ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, A Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders C flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great. C ¹⁹ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. ²¹ And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

¹² Revelation 20: 4 Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the

Revised, Oxford University Press, 1983, the significance of the number or mark is laid out with regard to the early Church: "Its hostility to Rome is such that it must have been after one of the persecutions such as Nero in AD 64 and the number of the beast is interpreted to mean Nero Caesar, however, the Neronian persecution is not believed to have affected Asia Minor, and that means a later Emperor such as Domitian, - the number then may refer to him as the second Nero, who was widely regarded as still alive [after his suicide] and that he was planning a return at the head of barbaric hordes." In the numbering system then in use which used letters instead of number the sum of the letters in Nero's name was 666." Also, remember that seven is the perfect number from a Scriptural stand point. The number Six is not seven, it is less than seven. Thus in context it does not appear that this mark really is a dark reference to credit cards or social security numbers, as some have proposed. It seems more likely to be a prediction of the defeat of the Roman Empire and the fate of those seduced to the side of that government and against Christians. The most powerful thing about this is that however farfetched¹³ that prediction was when made in the first century, it had largely come true by the third century.

Finally as with all things Biblical, once you have something worked out, you will find an exception. The Number 666 has a rather bad reputation. The number however has at least one happy or at any rate pleasant mention in the Old Testament. In the historical book called 1 Kings, the reigns of King David and his son King Solomon are described in great detail. This period was the heroic age of ancient Israel when blessed Kings ruled a nation that included the entire Promised Land in a time of great prosperity. In the section relating the glories of Solomon the text notes "1 Kings 10: 14: The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold."

The Number Seven.

The use of the number seven occurs throughout Revelation and in a very great number of contexts. Seven churches, lamp stands and innumerable other references are made to this number. The number seven also appears throughout the Old and New Testaments and our culture as well. There are the famous seven deadly sins or seven gifts of the Spirit. One reference from early in the visions concerns the Seventh Seal, which only Christ could open. "The Seventh Seal, the last seal is broken and there is two hours of silence in heaven - perhaps so that the prayers of those yet on earth can be heard. This is the final act before the trumpets are sounded which were a herald of the coming judgment of God."¹⁴ Numbers were important ancient symbols and seven is certainly a central one. A number of the references to the number seven are noted in the Oxford Companion to the Bible: "Seven, the sum of three plus four, of heaven and earth, signifies completeness and perfection. There were seven chief heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and the five planets known to the ancients), seven days of the week, seven archangels. The great festivals lasted seven days, and there were seven weeks between the Passover and the feast of weeks (Pentecost). Every seventh year was a Sabbath year, when the land would rest and lay fallow, and Hebrew slaves were allowed to go free; and every fiftieth year was a jubilee, when

souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

13 This was certainly even more incredible than the predictions of either credit cards or social security numbers.

14 The Message of the Book of Revelation, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 59 and 60. - Which also notes that a roman will was sealed with seven seals and not broken until death and the legacies were read.

alienated property had to be returned in Jubilee" from the rams horn that heralded its beginning). The seventh day represented God's completed work (Genesis 2.2-3), and in the book of Revelation the seventh seal, trumpet, bowl, etc., represent the completion of God's plan. The seven spirits of God (Revelation 1.4) represent either the seven archangels, or all spirits," or the Holy Spirit. Seven churches represent the universal church (Revelation 1.20). It is necessary to forgive, not just seven times, but seventy times seven times (Matthew 18.21-22; cf. Genesis 4.24), that is to say, always.¹⁵ Outside Israel seven was also known as a significant number and the monster Leviathan had seven heads. Later interpreters noted that the Hebrew Bible refers to God by seven different names: Later Christian tradition noted that the Gospels report seven last words or keys of Jesus in all."¹⁶

Woman Clothed with the Sun and on the Moon.

In this regard Revelation at Chapter 12 describes a woman, a great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. The next action step is a dragon, poised to devour the child. But, who or what is the woman. The foot notes to the Oxford Annotated Bible have this to say: The vision of the woman, the child, and the dragon portrays the conflict between Christ and Satan. 1: The woman appears to be the heavenly representative of God's people, first as Israel (from whom Jesus the Messiah was born, Revelation 12.5), then as the Christian Church.¹⁷ The symbolism in Revelation, which should be obvious at this point, offers a changing face. A woman portrayed in one place as a virgin, in another as a wife and in still another as a mother, can all stand for God's people.¹⁸ It is possible that the woman stands for Israel, and the turmoil produced by the early Christian movement. If this is so, this would certainly be a sympathetic symbol, especially given the strident reaction of the Jewish authorities as related in Acts. Perhaps by the time Revelation was written the Roman authorities were a greater threat.

15 Also See Symbolism and Interpretation, John Sweet, Oxford Companion to the Bible, Oxford University Press, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows There are seven planets, days of the week, colors of the rainbow. These are numbers of wholeness. The slain Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes (Revelation 5.6); the slain beast, the Antichrist that parodies his death and resurrection, has seven heads (Revelation 13.1; Revelation 13.3; Revelation 13.14)

16 VAN DMLLEN , David H., Number Symbolism, Seven, The Oxford Companion to the Bible, Oxford University Press, 1996

17 The *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows*, Revelation Footnote 12.1-17 The vision of the woman, the child, and the dragon portrays the conflict between Christ and Satan. 1: The woman appears to be the heavenly representative of God's people, first as Israel (from whom Jesus the Messiah was born, Revelation 12.5), then as the Christian Church (which is persecuted by the dragon, Revelation 12.13). 3: Dragon, identified in Revelation 12.9 as the Devil or Satan. His enormous size and power are suggested in Revelation 12.4. 5: Psalm 2.9 identifies the child to be the Davidic Messiah. 6: The church is sustained by God.

18 Symbolism and Interpretation, John Sweet, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. New Oxford Annotated Bible, Version 2.0 for Windows Symbolism and Interpretation. The symbolism of Revelation is kaleidoscopic and multivalent. One picture melts into another. God=s people can appear as a woman (who can be virgin, wife, or mother) or a city, and the great city where the two witnesses are killed is Spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified@ (Revelation 11.8)

By J B Cross, Jr.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION
FOR THE MODERN READER
In Four Lessons

This is the fourth and final of a four lesson course on the book of the New Testament commonly known as The Book of Revelation. The first lesson dealt with the introduction to the concepts, origins and history of the text itself. The intention is that this study be undertaken along with your reading of the text, starting after you have finished the first lesson. In this way, you will be able to encounter these scriptures directly. The passages in The Book of Revelation, as with all parts of the Bible, can be read for textual study and as an aid in life. The textual study will bring understanding and one hopes enlightenment. When read with a life challenge in mind, one will discover in scriptural texts, new meaning, that will help in dealing with the challenge at hand. This final section of the New Testament, above all other was written to those facing great and perhaps fatal challenges in life.

The question is what does this book have to say to us today in 21st Century America? The situations which the author of Revelation specifically addressed have long since ended. At the time the book was finally placed in the Canon Scripture in the Council of Nicea in 325¹, those situations had already largely been resolved.² Remember, what must be the most improbable victory in history had already occurred. Christianity a tiny sect in a forgotten corner of the Roman Empire, had grown at a phenomenal rate despite harsh persecutions. Rome, the consistent villain of Revelation, had itself converted and become a Christian empire. Why was Revelation then included in our Canon of Scripture? A recurrent theme of the Old Testament is one in which the people have turned from the faithful worship of God and after some calamity, God has decided to yet again forgive and take Israel back into his protection. Perhaps Revelation is the final act of that story of continuing redemption. The final affirmation that in the end God will forgive and redeem his people on this earth and the universe. The final battle of Armageddon being the assurance that good will prevail over evil and God will inhabit the Earth with his own.³ The battles described in the latter portion of the Book of Revelation are complete with dragons, plagues, and terrible fates [especially the one about scorpion stings]. Surely, no matter how overwhelming our problems seem, they are not as bad as those. We have the assurance through John's vision, that in the end that Satan will be ejected from Heaven, defeated and cast into a lake of fire forever.

In a corporate sense, that is concerning the Church universal and its individual congregations, the seven letters to the Churches of Asia may provide some insight. The Churches are alternately praised for love, endurance, patience, intolerance of evil and faithfulness and then criticized for coldness, lack of love and indifference. The individual letters are far too short to help with specific situations such as in Paul's many letters, or in Acts. But one can get a sense of the need for wisdom in the search for that delicate balance between tolerance or love on the one hand and intolerance for evil on the other. If love is the equivalent of inclusion and acceptance, how are we to tell when to love one another despite faults and when to reject the Jezebel in our midst? If we accept that the meaning of scripture should be something that is applicable for then, now and in the future, then maybe the message isn't what is the correct balance of these things, but rather that the balance whatever it may be in a particular circumstance, is a delicate matter that should be under constant consideration. That when we emphasize one trait to the exclusion of others we turn a good thing into a bad one.

In a less cosmic sense, the meaning of Revelation can be seen as a more personal message of encouragement and hope. The main themes in the Book of Revelation against the worship of Idols, the supremacy of Christ over the forces of evil, and endurance in the faith, are a source of encouragement to the modern American believer. Okay, so what do idols have to do with a member of Christ Church in Little Rock, in the 21st Century? After all there hasn't been a temple built to Jupiter in Little Rock in some time. What are our idols? Perhaps our idols are no longer Jupiter or Diana, the moon goddess. Perhaps the government is not passing laws forcing us to worship the Emperor or defining treason as being a Christian. But we live in a society that in many ways makes it difficult or unattractive to worship. The question can be answered in this way: What things confront us that take us away from our faith? In that light, the question has many answers.

What are our modern Idols?⁴ What road blocks does our society put in the way of our beliefs. Are the pursuit of money, career or the acquisition of possessions the idols we worship? Thus John on ancient Patmos, delivers his message to you, today. Don't be distracted by these things money, career or the acquisition of possessions. Or conversely, when times are hard, and financial or health problems seem overwhelming, maintain your perspective and focus. If nothing else, attend Church, make sure your kids, grand kids and friends attend. Work actively on your faith. For some that means study, but for others that could mean helping with Sunday School or some other volunteer effort at Church. Join or start a Bible study. None of these things will be easy. To this John on Patmos again speaks and encourages you to endure in your quest. With the pressures of modern life, it is easy to be distracted and to put Church in a box to be taken out on Sunday, with your Sunday Clothes. It is easy when the pressures of work make it seem that you have to make a choice between attendance and working on Sunday morning or a neat weekend trip. Perhaps this interpretation is less exciting than floods, or predictions about the ends of the Earth. Perhaps this conclusion is not nearly as much fun as trying to figure which of the horrible plagues will be visited on people with whom we are currently upset. But, in this light the Book of Revelation has something to say to our Church and to us personally. And it cannot hurt in the swirl of everyday life to think about a place and a time when God himself will live with us and "... (4) he will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more. . . ."⁵

And finally, for those who still wonder whether and how Revelation fits into the New Testament or the entire cannon of scripture. In the New Testament, Revelation serves as a fitting book end to the collection. The Gospels tell the story and ministry of Jesus the Christ in his time on earth and that He will return. The Book of Acts tells us about the immediate reaction of those who knew him and what they were moved to do. The epistles then in broad terms tell us about everyday life and the concerns of the early community. Revelation in this light tells what to expect in the future and at the final end of the world. In a larger context, there is also much to connect Revelation to the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. In Genesis 1:28 the world as first created from chaos is one where there is no death and both man and all of the animals eat only plants and not each other!⁶ The result of man's encounter with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is that this relationship of harmony is lost. Sin is a fact of this existence; in order to counter this fact, we require a savoir in the struggle for reconciliation. But, as a message of hope see Isaiah 11 where a world is described in which this relationship will be regained, where the lion and the ox will eat straw and so will man live in harmony with all animals.⁷ Then as a final prologue, John's Revelation tells that there will be no death in the world just as it was in the beginning as revealed by Genesis at a time before sin. In this light The Revelation of John then

has its fitting place in the scriptures.

By J B Cross

APPENDIX ONE

This followed by a series of Visions as Divided by the Oxford Dictionary of Christianity:

1. The initial vision is in several scenes -
 - A. first: Author sees the Glory of God and the Book with Seven Seals which only Christ can Open.
 - B. The second: As the first of the seals is broken, four horsemen appear, presaging the approach of the end.
 - C. The Third: concerns the 144,000 of Israel sealed on the Forehead, and an innumerable Multitude of the redeemed is seen in heaven.
 - D. The Fourth concerns: The opening the 7th Seal begins a series of Trumpet calls heralding various disasters.
 - E. The fifth: After the Seven Thunders which the seer is bidden not to record⁸, he is given the Angel's book to eat.
 - F. The sixth concerns: After the seventh seal is broken, the Kingdom of God and Christ is proclaimed.
2. Two Eschatological Visions [Deal with the theme of the end of Creation or end times]
 - A. The woman who is persecuted by a dragon [the woman is pregnant and the dragon waits to consume the child, but the child is taken away for 1200 days or three years]; and
 - B. War in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan.
3. Then a pair of visions
 - A. A beast from the sea who blasphemes against God
 - B. A. Beast from Earth who compels all men to worship the first beast.
4. Then, the Execution of a judgment against Babylon the Great is followed by world judgment in various forms. The destruction of Babylon now described as a Harlot is vividly described!
5. The marriage feast of the lamb, the beast and a false prophet are destroyed in a great battle and Satan is bound for 1000 years and then cast into a lake of brimstone forever.
6. The Book ends then with the general resurrection and judgment of souls and the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth and the New Jerusalem.⁹

¹ This is simply the date the entire Cannon was finalized in 325 AD. While there was not apparently an official list until the time of the Reformation, after 325 AD there was a general acknowledgment of the list.

² AJohn wrote to illuminate his own situation. Later, when his specific circumstances were forgotten, some took Revelation as a literal prediction of the future; others, in reaction against crude literalism, especially with regard to the millennium, interpreted it allegorically and saw the millennium as the present age of the church. In the twelfth century, Joachim of Fiore drew from Revelation (along with the rest of scripture) an understanding of the whole movement of history; his vision came to be widely influential. At various times, people have seen Revelation as a veiled picture of the subsequent history of the world or of the church, placing themselves at the penultimate moment and identifying beast and harlot with current bogeys, whether emperor or pope, church or sect. But it is now clear that John wrote for a past situation and that to look for literal fulfillments in the events of our day is misguided. In spite of Alexandrian doubts, Revelation has had a firm place within the New Testament canon; it has had an immense influence on later Christianity. It can be seen as the most un-Christian book—the Judas Iscariot of the New Testament, according to D. H. Lawrence (Apocalypse [1931]) but, with its echoes of the beginning, the tree of life restored and no more curse (Revelation 22.2; Revelation 22.3), it is a fitting climax to the whole Bible story. *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press, 1996 by Oxford University Press, Inc. *New Oxford Annotated*

³ *The Message of the Book of Revelation*, Charles T. Chapman, Jr., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, By the Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 1995. Page 9 AWe can summarize the message of Revelation in this way: John describes history as a cycle of nationalism, war, famine, and death. God warns the Roman emperor, who has declared himself to be a god and is persecuting the Church like a new Nero, that the empire will be destroyed if he does not repent. Various natural disasters underscore the warning. Next John describes the story of salvation as a cosmic battle between good and evil, with the person of Jesus Christ at its center. John then describes the destruction of Rome, the return of Christ as a victorious warrior, the era of peace which Christ establishes, the destruction of the old universe, and the creation of a new universe in which God lives in a new Jerusalem on a new planet Earth inhabited by all the blessed of God (the wicked along with death and hell, having been tossed into a lake of fire). He closes the message by urging his readers to pray that Christ will soon return.

⁴ An idol is often something that on its surface seems pleasant. Identifying an idol is no easy task. In Milton an idol is described as :

“Oft to the Image of a Brute, adorn'd
With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold,
And Devils to adore for Deities:

Then were they known to men by various Names,

And various Idols through the Heathen World. [375]” Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Book One. The point being that the harmful nature of the idol is disguised from us by the pomp and gold.

⁵ Revelation 21, V3-4

⁶ Genesis 1: A28 God blessed them, and God said to them, ABe fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. @ 29 God said, ASee, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

⁷ Isaiah 11 AThe Peaceful Kingdom

11 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

2 The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

3 His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;

4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.

7 The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;

and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

9 They will not hurt or destroy
on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

⁸ Revelation 10, V4 4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.

⁹ *The Oxford Dictionary of The Christian Church*, Second Edition Revised, Oxford University Press, 1983. Page 1183.