

# REVELATION

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## INTRODUCTION

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1. The Book of Revelation has suffered an unfortunate fate. On the whole either it has been abandoned by the reader of the Bible as being almost completely unintelligible, or it has become the happy hunting ground of religious eccentrics, who think that they can go there unchallenged.
  2. MARTIN LUTHER would have banished it from the pages of the New Testament. He noted the threats made for those who do not obey it, then asked; "How any man could possible keep the commandments of a book which no man has ever been able to understand."
  3. Still others have said that the Revelation either finds a man mad or leaves him so.
  4. ADDRESSED TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA.... what Asia?
  5. WHO IS JOHN? (The apostle John).
  6. IT'S PURPOSE: **TO PROCLAIM VICTORY!**
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## CHRIST or CAESAR

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- A. A dominant theme of Revelation is the conflict between emperor worship and the worship of Jesus Christ.
  1. Would include any other type of worship different from Christianity.
  2. False or forced religion will not succeed.
- B. THE RISE OF EMPEROR WORSHIP.
  1. The Roman empire had within its bounds a multitude of gods, but none that was universally accepted.
  2. Thus in order to maintain a sense of unity, to bind together all the people in a spirit of patriotism toward the empire, attempts were made to establish a national religion.
  3. The most logical way was the deification of Caesar.
- C. THIS REACHED ITS PEAK UNDER THE REIGN OF DOMITIAN.
  1. He insisted that he be called "*dominus et deus*" or "lord and god".
  2. Persecution and death to those who did not offer libation to the gods.
- D. DID NOT INTEND TO REMOVE ALL OTHER types of gods or worship.
  1. To those who were polytheists, one more god was not meant to present any problem.
  2. They were simply asked to add this one, new unifying god.
  3. To the authorities it was not a matter of "religion" but of "politics".

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## E. THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT.

1. They recognized only the God of heaven and His begotten Son as the objects of worship.
2. They knew to “render unto Caesar things that were Caesar’ (Matt. 22).
3. But they utterly refused to regard Caesar and his underlings as anything other than human.

## F. IT WAS EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT for the more tolerant Roman officials to understand the obstinacy of the faithful Christians.

1. From their point of view, the Christians were not being persecuted for their religious beliefs, but for treason.
2. Trial of Polycarp. (Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History, pp. 143-150)

## G. PERSECUTION UNDER REIGN OF DIOCLETIAN.

1. Edict.... “tear down the churches to the foundation, and destroy the sacred scriptures by fire.”
2. Entire towns were massacred because they declared themselves Christian.
3. READ Revelation 17:5-6.

## H. THE CONFLICT WITH ROME which the early Christians had to face was by no means the last on Christianity by a totalitarian state.

1. Japan...Germany...Italy....Communism, etc.
  2. Thus the message is as real and true today as it was then. (Acts 5:29).
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### Seven Golden Lampstands

## A. EVEN IN VIEW OF THIS PERSECUTION....They were, and were to be the light bearers to the world.

## B. In this imagery we are reminded of the seven-branched lampstand in the Jewish sanctuary. (Ex. 25:31,32, 37).

## C. It was the Lord’s will that the seven churches of Asia should enlighten the world about them. This is also His will for every Christian and congregation today.

1. The only way this can be is for every Christian to be a light bearer.
2. “*Ye are the light of the world.*” (Matt. 5:14ff).
3. This light is not initiated by us...but comes from Christ. (John 1:9).

## D. We must not fail to emphasize the presence of Christ with His churches.

1. Rev. 1:13.
  2. Matt. 28:20..... “I am with you always....”
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## **Lampstands Are The Churches**

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- A. The Number Seven is a recurring theme in Revelations.
    - 1. "The seven spirits" (1:4).
    - 2. Seven Golden Lampstands (1:12).
    - 3. Seven Stars (1:16).
    - 4. Seven Seals (5:1).
    - 5. Seven Trumpets (8:6).
    - 6. Seven Thunders (10:3).
    - 7. Seven Bowls (16:1).
  - B. This Number is used by both inspired and uninspired writers to symbolize completeness.
    - 1. Thus in the letters to the Seven Churches we have a message intended for all.
    - 2. These Epistles are as applicable to us today as when written.
    - 3. To every congregation of every age.
  - C. WHY THIS SEVEN?
    - 1. Because of their location?
    - 2. Because their problems and conditions being representative of all the the churches of Christ throughout the ages?
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## **THE LIVING CHRIST**

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- A. The heart of the first chapter of Revelation, as of the entire book, is the exaltation of the resurrected, living Christ.
  - 3. From the Christ of human history to the Christ of Eternity.
  - 4. It was the Living Christ that John saw in the vision on Patmos (1:17,18).
  - 5. The Christ who gave Himself for the church (Eph. 5:25), is no mere incident of passing significance in history, but He is the turning point in history.
- B. They needed the One who continues to live and to intimately relate Himself to the life of each individual child of God (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3,4; I John 5:12).
  - 1. The church of Christ still needs the power and presence of the Living Christ.

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2. Too many times we present Him only as the man of Nazareth, but have failed to present Him as our contemporary.
  3. We must have the historic Christ...and more.
  4. We have the Christ who is:
    - a. The Sacrificer of our single lives.
    - b. The Reader of hearts.
    - c. The Helper of our most private straits.
    - d. The Inspirer of our most deep and sacred confessions.
- C. WHAT HE MEANS AS A CONTEMPORARY TO THEM AND TO US.
1. To incite them to give reverent consideration to the special message He is soon to present them, by calling their attention to what He means to them.
  2. *"Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood;"* (Rev. 1:5b).
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## HE LOVES US

- A. It is the love for Christ that motivates Christians to obey His will (John 14:23). It is the response they make to the love He has for them. *"We love because he first loved us"* (I John 4:19).
1. HE LOVES US! As this sublime assurance was to throb in the heart of the members of the Seven churches of Asia, so also is it meant to throb in the hearts of Christians today.
  2. He loves us! Therefore His desire is only for our good.
  3. When He pointed out sin in their lives - it was because He loved them.
  4. When He points out sin in our lives - it is because He loves us!
- B. CONSIDER THE EVER-PRESENT, TIMELESS LOVE OF CHRIST!
1. Text written nearly half century after Jesus was buried.
  2. Written to Asiatic Christians, Greeks and foreigners.
  3. None of whom had probably ever seen Him in this world.
  4. In fact most of them were not even born when Jesus died.
- C. TO THESE PEOPLE JOHN DID NOT PROCLAIM A PAST LOVE. A CHRIST WHO LOVED LONG AGO....
1. But a Christ who loved them then, at the time the book was written.
  2. This is what we need to realize today. Not just that Christ loved us...  
**But THAT CHRIST LOVES US! LOVES US TODAY!**
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## LOOSED US FROM SIN

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- A. This is the greatest expression of Christ's love for His followers.
    - 1. Speaking of the Christian graces of life, Peter said; II Peter 1:9.
    - 2. When one forgets the cleansing from his old sins, he will just as surely forget the will of Christ concerning Christian living.
  - B. This was to be seen in the lives of some, in some of the churches.
    - 1. John is reminding them that Christ loves and loosed them from their sins.
    - 2. This to encourage them to renew their service to Him.
  - C. THE SAME PRINCIPLE TRUE TODAY.
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## KINGDOM OF PRIESTS

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- A. HE MADE US TO BE A KINGDOM, TO BE PRIESTS UNTO HIS GOD AND FATHER.
    - 1. He has told them what Christ **IS** ... Now he tells them what they **ARE**.
    - 2. This is the exalted position they occupy before their Father.
    - 3. Heavenly citizenship and a Priestly office.
  - B. WE CAN NEVER BE MOVED TO SIN WHEN WE REMEMBER THE WORDS OF PETER. (I Peter 2:5, 9).
    - 1. A Christian to be faithful to the Lord must never forget what he is.
    - 2. He is not of the world-But called out of the world to serve the Living God.
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## HE COMETH AGAIN

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- B. *"He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him."*
    - 1. The Living One, who has been made both Lord and Christ, who now sits on the Throne of His Kingdom, will some day come again. (Acts 2:29-39; I Cor. 15:23-25).
    - 2. Nothing is more plainly taught and more highly featured in the New Testament than the Second Coming of Christ.
  - C. John's Reminder To The Seven Churches Of The Lord's Second Advent Was Calculated To Encourage Them To Godly Living.
    - 1. When we realize that Christ is **living**, is **Reigning**; is **Coming**, we will **be encouraged to better living**.
    - 2. Notice how Paul connected his loyal living to 2<sup>nd</sup> coming (II Tim. 4:7-8).
    - 3. He is coming at a time we do not know. At His coming He will receive unto Himself the righteous, but will Reject the wicked. (Matt. 25).
  - C. THE LIVING CHRIST IS COMING AGAIN. ARE YOU READY?
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