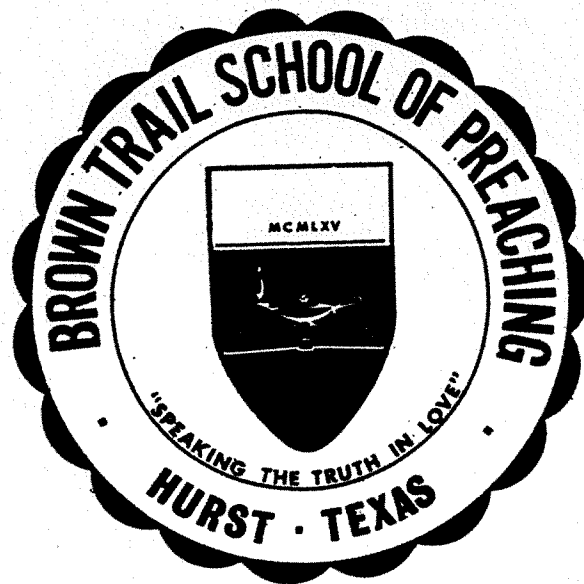


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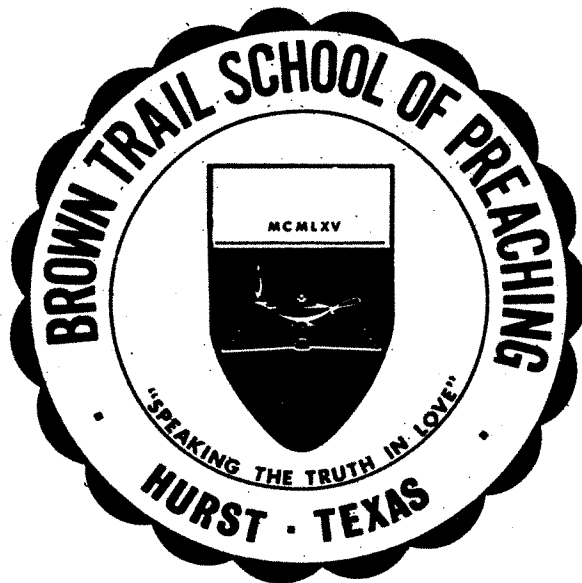
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE BACKGROUND AND MESSAGE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION



Roy Hardeman Deaver

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LECTURE NOTES
Roy Hardeman Deaver

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PREFACE

The material in this book was originally prepared for use in the "Revelation" course at the Brown Trail Preacher Training School. The aim of this course is to enable the student of the Bible to come to understand and appreciate the last book in the New Testament—a truly magnificent climax to the whole of God's revealed word.

Though shrouded by apprehension and ignorance, and most often approached only with reluctance and doubt, the book of Revelation can become a source of hope, inspiration, faith, courage, and strength for the Christian of our day, just as it did for the Christian of the first century. IF he will make an effort to be among those "who read, who hear, and who keep the things that are written therein," (Rev. 1:3). It is the aim of this present work to enable the Christian to gain an understanding of this truly marvelous book, so that he may be able to "keep the things that are written therein."

The present work, though based solidly in scholarship, is not written for the scholar. Though a genuine attempt has been made to retain scholarship and accuracy at every point, this book is written for the ordinary reader who loves God's word, and who has a deep craving to come to understand God's last inspired book. For the sake of simplicity, therefore, this work has not been footnoted. For the student who desires to do additional study, we have included a list of books that have been most helpful as source materials, and have occasionally suggested sources for additional reading. The problem still remains that the ordinary reader has not usually had access to the necessary source materials, so we feel that a valuable service has been rendered by summarizing and condensing much of the desirable material and including it in the "Background" section of these notes. The material found in the "Background" section is common knowledge and is available in a wide variety of sources and no claim is made for originality on my part of any of the material contained in this section. Our only contribution in this regard is in making this information available to the reader in an orderly and simplified manner. It is absolutely essential that the reader become acquainted with the BACKGROUND before beginning the study of the actual text of the book of Revelation.

The "Interpretation" portion of this book is strictly the result of my own study of the book of Revelation within its proper historical framework. I am firmly convinced that the approach we have taken to this study is a valid approach and that the interpretation is accurate.

If you, the reader, will approach this study without pre-judgment, you will find that upon its completion you have been richly blessed with greater appreciation for the magnificent Revelation—

- A message of hope in the time of despair;
- A message of strength in a time of weakness;
- A message of victory at a time of apparent defeat.

You will find Revelation to be—

- Absolutely magnificent
- Astoundingly beautiful
- Amazingly simple

and you will be surprised to find it—

UNDERSTANDABLE!!!

May the Lord bless the reading and the diligent study of His Word.

Roy H. Deaver
Bedford, Texas
July 29, 1979

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for picking up this book. It indicates your desire to come to understand the marvelous book of Revelation. I have very good news for you! You can come to understand Revelation. It is my hope that the book in your hand will help you. Through a unique (?) approach, so simple it has been overlooked by many, a key has been found which will help to unlock the mystery of the book of Revelation. This book begins with the basic assumption that God intended for man to understand all the books of the New Testament—including Revelation. Countless thousands of Christians have never made an effort to come to understand the book of Revelation because they have been under the impression that it was not meant to be understood. Nothing could be farther from the truth. After all, the very title “Revelation” indicates that something is to be revealed. What is the message God desired to reveal? That message is unfolded in the following pages. It is so simple that in many places you will be absolutely astounded at its beautiful simplicity.

The most unique of the New Testament books has been found by many to contain strange prophecies yet unfulfilled. By other interpreters, it has been viewed as holding the key to the fortunes and destinies of the church throughout the middle ages. Still other scholars look at the book as a curious piece of ancient literature with absolutely no message for Christians living today.

Any responsible interpretation of the book of Revelation, must, however, take into consideration the Literary Background and the Historical Background of the book. It must also proceed on the assumption that Revelation, like all the other books of the New Testament, was intended to be understood by those to whom it was addressed, and that it primarily contains a message for them. As is true with all the other books of the New Testament, once we learn its primary meaning in its own time and setting, we may THEN be able to make applications of its teachings to current needs and problems. One of the basic principles of Biblical interpretation is this: To understand the meaning of the Bible for today, we must first learn its meaning in its original setting.

This present work is an attempt to do just that. We aim to look into history, in order to make a study of the type of literature contained in the book of Revelation, and to make a study of the historical problems and needs that caused the book to be produced. This approach will be referred to as Historical-Literary Exegesis. In explanation let me add, that “Exegesis” is simply the process of bringing out the meaning of a passage of scripture. The word “Historical” in the phrase simply means we attempt to place the book in its proper historical setting, as we would do with the epistles of Paul and other New Testament books. The word “Literary” simply means we will try to come to understand the type of literature found in the book of Revelation, and consider the meaning of its words and phrases in keeping with this literary context.

When I first began to try to study the book of Revelation for the purpose of bringing myself to a point where I could teach the book to my students, I began to think of several possible approaches. In my own college days, the standard approach was to give three or four possible explanations for each symbol in the book and let the student take his choice. I am convinced that such an approach is entirely worthless. While pondering the possibilities, I realized that the book of Revelation should be approached in exactly the same manner as other books of the New Testament which I had previously taught. So I began to study Revelation exactly like I would study any other New Testament book. I began to study the type of literature and was amazed at the amount of information available on that subject. Next I began to consider the historical setting of the book, and was equally amazed at the amount of information available to shed light on the circumstances surrounding the writing of the book of Revelation. With the literature understood, and the history of the times more clearly understood, the message began to ring out loud and clear.

I have but one request as you read this book. Please **forget** what you have heard and read about Revelation. Evaluate this book without prejudice. The approach follows sound Hermeneutical principles and is as valid for Revelation as for any other book of the New Testament. It is my conviction that the interpretation is equally valid. Study the book carefully and prayerfully. You will be amazed at the strength and courage you find as you come to understand Revelation.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART I – BACKGROUND

I. LITERARY BACKGROUND

1. Apocalyptic Literature:

- (1) The book of Revelation falls into a distinct class of writing known as “Apocalyptic Literature.”
- (2) The Greek title of the book *αποκαλυψις* literally means an unveiling, hence the English translation “Revelation.” As the term suggests, the purpose of the writer of apocalyptic literature, was not to “cover up” his message, but to make it especially clear by “unveiling” it through the use of very vivid and descriptive language. The message is made more picturesque by means of the symbols and signs employed to help “reveal” the writer’s thoughts.
- (3) Though apocalyptic literature is found in a wide variety of religious and ethnic backgrounds, Judaism is especially abundant as a source of apocalyptic writing, most of which was written between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D.
- (4) Apocalyptic writing always had its roots in extremely troublesom times. Severe trials, suffering, sorrow, and despair were the conditions which called forth the apocalyptic writing. In such desperate conditions, the immediate need was that of encouragement through the assurance of a future that would see the end of suffering and sorrow.
- (5) The nature of the apocalyptic work, produced in adversity, always described the difficult conditions of the present, but in contrast to them, it presented a picture of the future as a time of deliverance and triumph. This was expected to come through the intervention of God in human affairs, bringing judgment upon unrighteous powers and setting up His own government.
- (6) The **purpose** of these writings was to stress the virtue of loyalty and to stimulate faith by showing in a vivid and picturesque way the certainty of the overthrow of evil and the final victory of God’s righteousness. (The writers of apocalyptic books performed an invaluable service in encouraging faith and loyalty under extremely turbulent conditions.)
- (7) One of the most prominent features of the Jewish apocalyptic writing is the use of the “vision” to introduce the message of the writer. (Note: A close study of the book of Revelation indicates that the visions described in the book were objectively real to John.)
- (8) In the case of Jewish apocalyptic, specific political conditions called forth an influx of apocalyptic literature:
 - A. Exile of the Jews in Babylon (cf. Daniel, Ezekiel)
 - B. Persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes (Jewish revolt under the Maccabees)
 - C. Persecution under Roman emperors – Nero, Domitian
- (9) Apocalyptic literature was written in dangerous times. The personal safety of both the writer and the reader was endangered if the persecutors understood the true meaning of the book. For this reason the message of the apocalypse was written so as to conceal and reveal – to conceal the message from the persecutor, but to reveal the message in unmistakable terms to those for whom it was intended.
- (10) Apocalyptic literature possessed certain definite **characteristics**:
 - A. Apocalyptic literature always possessed a **historical** significance. There was invariably some critical historical situation with which it was connected. (A knowledge of that historical situation, when possible, greatly aids interpretation.)
 - B. Apocalyptic literature was generally of **pseudonymous authorship**. (This, however is not true in the case of Revelation. John was already known to the persecutors and was already in exile at the time of writing because of his faith). The writing was generally ascribed to some great Jewish leader such as Moses, Abraham,

or Enoch, in order to lend authority to the message, and to conceal the true identity of the author.

- C. **Visions** were the literary vehicle used to present the message of the author. (Remember that God was responsible for John's vision.)
- D. The **predictive** element is always present in apocalyptic literature. The predictions, however, appear in broad general references to events much broader than the specific isolated events foretold by the Old Testament prophets. (Ex. "Victory of righteousness" is general – "Christ to be born in Bethlehem" is specific.)
- E. Another prominent characteristic of Apocalyptic literature is the prevalent use of **symbols**. Especially prevalent in Jewish apocalyptic writing is the symbolic use of numbers (to be discussed in detail later) where numbers are used to represent a specific idea rather than a mathematical quantity, and the vast amount of figurative language deliberately exaggerated for dramatic effect.
 Note: Symbolism is a system in which qualities, ideas, and principles are represented by things concrete. The writer employs symbols as a means of communicating his thoughts to those who are familiar with this process and at the same time concealing his ideas from those unaccustomed to this practice.
- F. The **dramatic** character of apocalyptic writing is one of the most effective instruments of the writer in making the truth he desires to teach as vivid and forceful as possible. Frequently the figures are presented for the purpose of adding vividness and to aid in creating the desired impression. The details are of significance only from this viewpoint and are not to be pressed for specific meaning. (Revelation uses many grotesque symbols to accomplish these purposes.)

2. Jewish Background of Symbolism:

Numbers as Symbols

A reading of the book of Revelation, and other apocalyptic writings, causes us to become aware immediately of the fact that certain numbers are repeated frequently. This arouses our curiosity! To satisfy that curiosity – to learn why specific numbers occur so frequently – we must probe the Jewish mind. The answer to our question is found in the **symbolism of numbers**. The inner significance of numbers was a kind of device which always had fascination for the oriental mind. When language was primitive, one Hebrew word was sometimes compelled to serve a wide variety of purposes. Under such conditions men came naturally to use numbers as we use words. **THEY WERE THE SYMBOLS OF MORAL OR SPIRITUAL TRUTH**. A certain number would suggest a **definite concept**. (Just as the sound of a given word by long habit calls up the corresponding idea, so a certain number, by acquired association, called up a definite concept.) Such numbers became symbols and cannot be read with the literal mathematical exactness to which we have become accustomed. The basic symbolism of certain numbers which are used most frequently in apocalyptic literature are given below.

- (1) "1" – expresses the idea of "unity" or sometimes "independent existence."
- (2) "2" – came to stand for "strengthening," for "confirmation," and "redoubled courage and energy." (Two witnesses confirm the truth . . . see Rev. 11:3-12; two beasts strengthen and support each other . . . Rev. 13:1,11.)
- (3) "3" – came to carry the thought of the "divine."
- (4) "4" – came to be the "cosmic" number . . . representing the world in which men live, worked, and died.
- (5) "10" – came to stand for "human completeness" or "completeness as related to human beings." (A perfect, full-rounded man was one who had all his members – fingers – toes – intact, and had not been deprived of some of his members through misfortune or accident.)
- (6) "7" – The perfect "world" number "4" added to the perfect "divine" number "3" came to express completeness or perfection through union of earth with heaven thus a "sacred" number.
- (7) "70" – The "sacred" number "7" multiplied by the "complete" number "10" resulted in the very sacred "70" – both "sacred and complete."

- (8) "12"— The "world" number "4" multiplied by the "divine" number "3" came to represent "organized religion in the world;" (12 tribes, 12 apostles, etc.) God's revealed religion.
- (9) "3½"— The "perfect" number "7" cut in half came to represent that which is not perfect, or that which is "incomplete."
- (10) "1000"— Multiples of "10" the number for "human completeness," are used to express a greater degree of completeness, or "ultimate completeness" (as numbers are multiplied, the **emphasis** on the idea they represent seems to become greater.)
- (11) "144,000"— The number "12" representing religion on the earth, multiplied by itself for emphasis, then by 1000 for ultimate completeness, would represent the "sum total of all the righteous on the earth."
- (12) "6"— The number "7" represented perfection; the number "6" something which fell short of perfection, and was thus bad or "evil." It had within it the stroke of doom. It was for the Jew what the number 13 is for people today — "an evil number." (The beast 666, for example, would represent tremendous evil.)

Objects as Symbols

In addition to the symbolism of numbers used in Revelation, there is an abundance of figurative language in which many specific objects are used to represent ideas and principles in a way similar to the Jewish use of numbers. Birds, beasts, persons, cities, elements of nature, weapons, precious stones, and many other objects are used symbolically by the writer as he presents a picture of the triumph of righteousness over evil. Remember that the Oriental mind was quite at home in the midst of such imagery. The writer intended to present vividly the picture of a conflict and a triumph. In each part of this picture, characters were chosen which would best portray the **specific idea** the writer desired to present. (Note: In each vision, many minute details are supplied merely for the purpose of making the picture vivid, and are not to be pressed for specific meaning. They are merely incidental and are used simply to "fill in the picture." The major characters of the visions, however, were no doubt chosen with great care for the qualities they were intended to symbolize.) How is the **meaning** of a symbol to be determined? In **producing** symbolic literature, the author of the work no doubt selected the symbol which would most easily and naturally convey his thought when read for the first time by those to whom it was written. Symbols were selected for their clarity — not for some remote or obscure representation. Generally speaking, the most **natural** and **obvious** meaning of a symbol is to be preferred. When dealing with symbols, we must consider the following Hermeneutical principles. The following rules for interpreting figurative (symbolic) language are summarized for your consideration. (Detailed explanations may be found in standard works on Hermeneutics by D.R. Dungan, Clinton Lockhart, and M.S. Terry.)

- (1) Interpretation should be made according to the known purpose of the author, and in light of the topic under consideration.
- (2) Interpret by the resemblance of the things compared. (Ex. Christ is compared to a lamb, a lion.)
- (3) The facts of history and biography may be of assistance in interpreting figurative language.
- (4) Be careful not to demand too many points of analogy.
- (5) Remember that figures are not always used with the same meaning. (Ex. "A lion" may not always symbolize the same thought. Both Christ and Satan are compared to a lion.)
- (6) When interpreting figures based on similitude or analogy, the nature of the imagery must be well considered.
- (7) In figures of similitude or analogy, very few points of comparison must be expected.
- (8) In extended figures based on similitude, interpret first the major points; then proceed outward to minor points reservedly.
- (9) In figures of analogy, distinguish essentials from embellishing parts.
- (10) In the interpretation of figures based on similitude, follow carefully the indications given by the author.
- (11) Study a figure of similitude carefully as if pure history, in light of the times, but supply no details by imagination.

- (12) Interpret no particulars out of connection with the main thought, unless indicated by the author.
 - (13) If elements apparently inconsistent with each other or with the nature of the subject appear in the passage, the intended force must be carefully sought until a reasonable meaning is discovered.
 - (14) The extent of the meaning of any figure must be determined by the nature of the subject and intent of the author as well as by the figure itself.
 - (15) Only one function must be assigned to any part of a figure in its interpretation.
- Note: In the book of Revelation, word **pictures** are painted. There is one **central message** to be gleaned from each **picture** as it helps to unfold and reveal the overall message of the entire book.

3. Historical Need for Apocalyptic Literature:

Jewish Apocalyptic

Jewish apocalyptic literature was always dependent upon a specific historical need for its production. Where no **need** existed, no apocalyptic literature was produced. As was seen previously, the "need" of the time usually grew out of extremely difficult circumstances in which the Jewish nation found itself. The circumstances might vary from decade to decade and from century to century, but whatever historical circumstances might have arisen to produce the desperate conditions for the Jews, the **need** existed – or no apocalypse was produced. The "need" of the Jews most often was a need for deliverance from severe persecution – the Messianic hope was tied to this need. Sometimes there was a deep-seated national longing to be ruled by God and "no one else;" sometimes an emancipation from natural calamities, physical suffering, and a generally intolerable life. In such disastrous conditions encouragement was sorely needed. The encouragement came through the apocalyptic literature whose very **purpose** was created to meet the needs of the hour:

- (1) To lend encouragement to the downhearted;
- (2) To assure that suffering will soon come to an end;
- (3) To assure that God is in control;
- (4) To assure that God will deliver;
- (5) To encourage endurance in view of a brighter future; and,
- (6) To encourage loyalty to truth and right, even in extreme difficulties, because "the trouble will soon be over."

In the Jewish apocalyptic, there was **always** a binding cord linking the apocalypse with the historical need. Just as surely as no problem can be solved which does not exist, and no need can be satisfied which does not exist, **no apocalyptic literature was produced when there was no need for it, and conversely, where apocalyptic literature does exist, we may be certain there was a need for it.**

Christian Apocalyptic

As seen in the study of Jewish apocalyptic literature, the apocalyptic messages grew out of the needs of the time. Just as surely as the Jews needed encouragement in difficult times, Christians found themselves more often than not the object of persecution during the first century – sometimes being persecuted by fellow countrymen, sometimes by pagan citizens of the same community, sometimes by the Roman government. In such conditions (which will be discussed in detail later) Christians were certainly in **need** of encouragement. We might compare the historical **needs** of Christians with the needs of the Jews (discussed previously) and with the very **purpose** of apocalyptic literature. We observe extreme similarity in each case. In such a time of need, one is not surprised to find the specific type of literature designed precisely to meet those needs. Christian apocalyptic, obviously, relates to the problems and needs of Christians, rather than the Jewish nation. Henry Barclay Swete, in his book **The Apocalypse of St. John**, discusses Jewish and Christian apocalypses in Chapter II of the Introduction. He discusses the need for Christian apocalyptic, as well as similarities and differences between Jewish and Christian apocalyptic. Excerpts from this discussion are printed below.

Revelation (αποκαλυψις) is the converse of concealment, the process of casting aside the veil that hides a mystery. Paul uses the noun in reference both to the gift of spiritual vision and to its results; the gift is a "πνευμα αποκάλυψεως" and

its exercise is an “ αποκαλυψις .”
 Note: Cf. Mt. 11:25; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3; Gal. 1:12 for meaning; Eph. 1:17 for “ πνευμα
 αποκαλυψεως ,” and I Cor. 14:6, 26, and II Cor. 12:1 for “ αποκαλυψις .”

The gift of revelation took its place as an instrument of edification by the side of the gift of prophecy; it was in fact a particular manifestation of the prophetic spirit, in which the spirit of the prophet seemed to be carried up into a higher sphere, endowed for the time with new powers of vision, and enabled to hear words which could not be reproduced in the terms of human thought, or could be reproduced only through the medium of symbolical imagery (see II Cor. 12:4-7). While the prophets normally dealt with human life in its relation to God, reading and interpreting the thoughts of men, and thus convicting, exhorting, or consoling them according to their several needs, he who ‘had an apocalypse’ strove to express his personal realization of the unseen or of the distant future. The “apocalypses” which in Paul’s day might be heard at times in the Christian assemblies were unpremeditated utterances, flashes of light which suddenly illuminated the consciousness of men who spoke, and suddenly vanished. Of these revelations, no trace remains, nor were they ever, so far as we know, committed to writing. The Revelation of John is the only written apocalypse as it is the only prophetic book of the Apostolic Age. (This ends direct quotation from Swete.)

Differences

That the book of Revelation is a Christian apocalypse is obvious from the beginning; it is “The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.” Though Revelation is a part of a distinct type of literature used extensively by the Jews, there are differences to be seen in the Christian apocalypse and the Jewish apocalyptic writings. Swete suggests the following:

- (1) Jewish apocalypses are without exception pseudepigraphic; the Christian apocalypse bears the author’s name.
- (2) Jewish apocalypses, using fictitious names, consequently suggest fictitious dates, making them difficult to pinpoint as to date and location. The apocalypse of John, on the contrary, makes no secret of its origin and destination; it is the work of a Christian undergoing exile in one of the islands of the Aegean and is addressed to the Christian congregations in one of the chief cities of the adjacent continent, under circumstances which practically determine its date.
- (3) Whatever view may be taken of John’s indebtedness to Jewish sources, there can be no doubt that he has produced a book which, taken as a whole, is profoundly Christian, and widely removed from the field (subject matter RD) in which the Jewish apocalyptic occupied itself. The narrow sphere of Jewish national hopes has been exchanged for the life and aims of a society whose field is the world and whose goal is the conquest of the human race. The Jewish Messiah, an uncertain and unrealized idea, has given place to the historical, personal Christ, and the Christ of the Christian apocalypse is already victorious, ascended and glorious. The faith and the hope of the church has diverted apocalyptic thought into new channels and provided it with ends worthy of its pursuit.
- (4) The tone of John’s book presents a contrast to Jewish apocalypses. “It breathes a religious spirit which is not that of its predecessors; it is marked with the sign of the Cross, the note of patient suffering, unabashed faith, tender love of the brethren, hatred of evil, invincible hope, and notwithstanding the strange forms which from time to time are seen to move across the stage, the book as a whole is pervaded by a sense of stern reality and a solemn purpose which forbid the approach of levity. The Apocalypse of John is differentiated from the Apocalypse of Baruch or of Ezra as the book of Daniel is differentiated from the book of Enoch. However the fact may be explained, the two canonical apocalypses possess the notes of insight and foresight which suggest inspiration; the attentive reader becomes conscious of something in both of them which is better than the unchastened imaginings of the mere mystic who conceives himself to possess a key to the secrets of life. In the apocalypse of John the presence of the Spirit of revelation is unmistakably felt, and the Christian student may be pardoned if he recognizes in this book a fulfillment of the promise of a Paraclete “who shall declare . . . the things that are to come” (John 16:13).

The Need for "Revelation" – A Summary

In the last years of the first century, the Church, which had begun her course with the promise of a rapid success, was reeling under the blows dealt her by the world. The two empires, the Kingdom of God and the World-power, were already at open war. Men were asking what the end would be, which of the two forces would prevail. A Christian in those days who was conscious of possession of the spirit of revelation could not but endeavor to read the signs of the times, and so far as it was given to him, to disclose the course and outcome of the struggle which had begun between the Empire and the Church. On some such lines we might have sought to reconstruct the apocalypse of John, had only fragments of it survived, guided by what we knew of the beliefs and hopes of the Apostolic Age and of the history of the last thirty years of the first century. As a matter of fact, these are the lines on which the book has been written. It is an apocalypse of the glory of the exalted Christ; it is also an apocalypse of the sufferings and the ultimate triumph of the militant church. (Swete page XXX) The book of Revelation was produced, because, according to what we know of the circumstances of the times, it was greatly needed.

4. Systems of Interpretation:

The interpretation of the book of Revelation depends upon the method of approach. Throughout Christian history a number of widely differing methods of interpretations have been used. One method attempts to find the meaning of Revelation in the "future" of the church, while another looks at the past. The methods that have been used to unlock the meaning of this book are so varied, that any "student" might select a method that would insure the book's "interpretation" fit his preconceived notion if he so desired. This unfortunate situation has caused Justan A. Smith (*An American Commentary on the New Testament*) to utter the following noteworthy remark:

"Learned works on this remarkable portion of the inspired volume do, indeed, abound . . . But the views of the writers (Expositors of Revelation) are so utterly conflicting . . . that the student of them soon finds himself driven to take from each whatever useful suggestions he may find there, and then proceed independently in his search for the meaning and lesson of the book."

In the material to follow, we simply intend to briefly survey a few of the more prominent methods of interpretation that have been used in "interpreting" the book of Revelation.

The Futurist Method

(1) Basic Philosophy of Interpretation:

This approach to interpretation views Revelation as completely eschatological - dealing with the events of the end of the world. It is a book of unfulfilled prophecy. Chapters 4-22 depict the events connected with the second coming of Christ. Chapters 4-19 cover the "seventieth week" of Daniel 9:24-27. Most futurists are literalists in their interpretation of Revelation.

(2) Two basic groups of "futurists":

A. Darbyite dispensationalists are identified with John N. Darby, founder of Plymouth Brethren. These hold that Jesus came to the earth to establish a visible rule on earth; John the Baptist preached this kingdom was at hand. Jesus made known his plans to establish an earthly kingdom; when the Jews rejected him, the offer was withdrawn, and the kingdom postponed until the second coming. Christ, as an afterthought, established the church, to last until he could return to set up his kingdom.

B. A second group of "futurists" rejected this dispensationalism. They hold to a "future" view of Revelation, but deny the distinction between the "rapture" and the "revelation." They hold that all believers will pass through great tribulation; Babylon will be rebuilt and that the personal "Anti-Christ" will rule. They do not hold that all the events in Revelation must take place in the space of seven years.

(3) Objections to this method:

A. It is inconsistent with the statement made by John that these things must "shortly come to pass."

- B. It leaves Revelation altogether out of relation to the needs of the church to which it was addressed and which first received it.
- C. Much of the symbolism of the book of Revelation is incompatible with the futurist method.
- D. (Subjective) The futurist method is associated with a materialistic philosophy of the kingdom of God and a basis of triumph for the cause of righteousness which appears to be unscriptural throughout. (Note: This dispensationalism is Jewish theology, and not New Testament theology. Cerenthus is often given credit for introducing this view into the church.)
- (4) Strong Points: ?? (Though I personally do not consider the following to be strong points, the following claims are made by futurists in support of their view RHD).
 - A. The futurists claim their method just takes the Bible at its word, literally without adding or subtracting. (Note: It is faulty procedure to interpret symbol as fact. RHD)
 - B. Futurists claim that their method is the only one which will keep alive an active hope in the return of the Lord.
 - C. Futurists hold that to take any view of Revelation other than the one which holds a millenarian position precludes any evangelistic fervor or endeavor.

Continuous Historical Method

- (1) Basic Philosophy:
This method considers Revelation to be symbolic forecast of the history of the church.
- (2) Notable adherants to this system include Wycliff, Luther, Bullinger, Fox, E.B. Elliott, Albert Barnes. (Whether this method is true or not, its scholars have done a remarkable job of fitting Revelation to History. (See sample of Barnes' outline in *Worthy Is the Lamb* by Ray Summers, pp. 36-37.)
- (3) Objections:
 - A. Revelation, understood from this viewpoint, is entirely out of touch with the situation of the Christians to whom it was originally written.
 - B. This method attaches undue importance to the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church.
 - C. The horizon of this method is too narrow. It is confined to countries where Roman Catholicism has been predominant.
 - D. This method of interpretation stoops to details as absurd as those of the futurist school. See Summers p. 39 for examples.
 - E. This method of interpretation leads to calculations of times and periods which have constantly been falsified by the events, and which have done much harm in the kingdom.
- (4) Strong Points:
Apparently it has no strong points, except that it avoids a literal interpretation of the book and foresees the complete overthrow of evil.

Philosophy of History Method

- (1) Basic Philosophy:
This method views Revelation as a discussion of the forces underlying events of history, but not the events themselves. It is seen as an expression of the great principles of God's government as seen in every age, or as repeated in history.
- (2) Objections:
 - A. This method removes the book too far from the situation for which it was originally written.
 - B. This method confines the book to too narrow a channel . . . it holds that the symbols refer to forces or tendencies and that there are no specific prophecies or specific events in the book.
- (3) Strong Points:
 - A. This method does recognize that the book of Revelation did have some meaning to those who first received it. (This meaning is rather limited but it is present.)

- B. This method also recognizes the hand of God in history.
- C. This method recognizes that the goal toward which all history is moving is the complete triumph of the cause of God among the affairs of men.

The Preterist Method

- (1) Basic Philosophy:
The preterists, in the strict meaning of the term, say that all the book was fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire. (Note: This method is practically the opposite of the futurist which contends **none** of the book has been fulfilled.)
- (2) Two main divisions: Right Wing and Left Wing.
 - A. **Right Wing:** (Stuart, Beckwith, Swete)
These receive Revelation as inspired literature. They hold that most of it was fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire under Domitian. The final judgment and the perfected state of mankind yet await fulfillment. They look upon Revelation as a book for the day of persecution in Asia Minor but feel it has only a literary interest (no real message . . . RD) for people of our day.
 - B. **Left Wing:**
This group has no respect for Revelation as inspired Scripture. They view it as parallel with other apocalyptic literature of the day and as valuable only as literature. According to them John knew nothing of the future by inspiration. These are "Preterist" in the strictest meaning of the term.
- (3) Objections:
 - A. The Left Wing may be discarded immediately because it rejects inspiration.
 - B. The Right Wing appears to have more strong points than weak points; the chief weakness being that they hold Revelation has no message for our day.
- (4) Strong Points: (Right Wing)
 - A. It is true to the background of the work. No literature can be properly understood apart from its background.
 - B. This method makes the book of Revelation meaningful for those who first received it.
 - C. This system yields an interpretation which is consistent with scriptural teachings throughout the New Testament.

Historical Background Method

- (1) Basic Philosophy:
This method seeks to interpret the book of Revelation in its own historical setting according to the ordinary rules of interpretation. It contends that Revelation did possess a message for the Christians of Asia Minor to whom it was addressed, and that message is also important for Christians today.
(Note: Compare with **Historical-Literary Exegesis**, RD)
- (2) This is the method used by Ray Summers. He describes some of its basic principles (which demonstrate sound hermeneutical principles, RD).
 - A. This method keeps in mind that the writer wrote his message primarily for the encouragement and edification of the Christians of his own time. (Therefore in order to know that message, one must become familiar with the historical background.)
 - B. A second principle of interpretation which must be kept in mind is that the book is written largely in symbolic language. (For this reason, rules for interpreting **figurative** language must be considered and kept constantly in the reader's mind.)
Note: The interpreter has a double duty: Not just to read the story revealed; but to understand what it symbolizes.
 - C. A third principle one must keep in mind is that Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meaning.
Note: Figures of speech are not always used with the same intended meaning.
 - D. For the true meaning of Revelation, one must seek to grasp the visions or series of visions as a whole without pressing the details of symbolism.

- E. A fifth principle of interpretation is suggested by Albertus Pieters when he stresses the fact that Revelation is addressed chiefly to the imagination. (The books of the Bible are directed to the different faculties of man. Romans is addressed to reason, Psalms to the emotions, etc.)

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Authorship

(1) Pseudonymous Authorship or not?

As has been studied previously, all Jewish apocalyptic literature was pseudonymous. As was also discussed earlier, there are a number of specific differences to be seen when comparing Jewish apocalyptic literature, and the Christian apocalyptic book – Revelation. It was also seen that the conditions which would generally require a pseudonymous authorship do not seem to ring true in the case of the authorship of John. John's Christianity was well known by officials and he was already in exile for his faith, thus no additional fear of being associated with the content of his book is present with John (see also Acts 4:19; 5:29). The other major reason Jews wrote pseudonymously was to lend authority to their words. John already exercised a tremendous amount of authority and influence over those to whom he wrote. It is my conviction that the book of Revelation was NOT written pseudonymously. John claimed the visions recorded in the book came to him personally and were intended for the people of his own day.

(2) Suggested Authorship:

Two authors have been suggested at different times by a variety of scholars. The two are:

- A. John, son of Zebedee
- B. John the Elder

As our chief concern is really whether or not John the apostle of Christ (son of Zebedee) is the true author, this material will be limited to that which is relevant to his authorship.

(3) What does the book of Revelation tell us about its author?

(Information gained from reading Revelation.)

- A. His name is John
- B. He was a Jewish Christian

Note: Charles, I.C.C. "Revelation of St. John" contends that the book itself indicates that whoever wrote the book, his familiarity with apocalyptic literature shows he spent the major part of his life in Galilee before coming to Asia Minor because that was the literary "home" of Jewish apocalyptic.

- C. He was a man of profound spiritual insight.
- D. He was a man who was very positive in his statements.

(4) Evidence for the authorship of John, the son of Zebedee:

A. External Evidence:

Statements of authorship from external sources must, as is the case with textual criticism, be "weighed, not counted." A large number of statements either for or against authorship of a particular person prove little. We must consider the following in evaluating external evidence:

The writer's –

- a. Proximity to the original author.
- b. His opportunity to know the truth of the matter.
- c. His sources of information.
- d. His honesty, integrity, motives, character, and general reliability.

B. Statements favoring the authorship of John are to be seen in the following:

a. Writings of Justin Martyr

(Dialogue with Trypho the Jew – @140-160 A.D.) See Ante-Nicene Fathers. Vol. I, p. 240.

"... and there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him.

that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and in short, the eternal resurrection and judgement of all men would take place." We observe that "the fact that Justin Martyr's home and principal field of service was in Asia Minor where the churches addressed in Revelation were located makes his statement a striking one." (Ray Summers, **Worthy is the Lamb**, p. 59) Justin was martyred under Aurelius about 166 A.D.

Note: The doctrine of millennialism referred to had its source in a heretic named Cerenthus, a contemporary of John and resident of Ephesus. Following Cerenthus' teaching, many early Jewish Christians transferred their hope for a messiah and an earthly kingdom to the coming of Christ. Polycarp, however, who was a close personal friend of John, denied that John taught the doctrine of a millennial kingdom, and he also reveals that John considered Cerenthus an enemy of the truth. (See Maddox, **The Eternal Kingdom**, p. 116ff for additional evidence of early doctrinal departures.)

b. Statements of Iranaeus—

Several times in his books Iranaeus says that Revelation was written by John the disciple of the Lord and identifies him with the John who lay upon the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper. (See Iranaeus, "against Heresies" **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Vol. I, p. 240.) Iranaeus was born and raised in Asia Minor - the territory of the seven churches of Revelation. He was a pupil of Polycarp, who was an elder in the church of Smyrna and personal friend of John.

Iranaeus later went to Lyon, France where he died in 190. (Incidentally, on p. 560 of **Ante-Nicene Fathers**, Iranaeus states John wrote Revelation in time of Domitian.) Iranaeus' witness is a strong one as he was only one step removed from the author. Only 70 or 80 years had lapsed between the writing of the book, and the statements of Iranaeus. "This period was one well within the memory of men who could have corrected the statements if they had been false. There is no reason for believing that Iranaeus and Polycarp would have been dishonest about the matter." (Summers, p. 59) When we pass Iranaeus, we find no one else who had personal knowledge as to the authorship of the book. Several later writers did continue to hold to the authorship of John even though they did not have first hand information.

c. Other early writers who hold to the authorship of John are:

1. Clement of Alexandria (@223 A.D.)
2. Tertullian of Carthage (@220 A.D.)
3. Origen of Alexandria (@223 A.D.)
4. Hypolytus of Rome (@240 A.D.)

Note: Eusebius treats the authorship as uncertain but he does so in spite of the above testimonies. He quotes Origen as saying:

"What shall we say of him who reclined upon the breast of Jesus, I mean John? Who has left us one gospel, in which he confesses that he could write so many that the whole world could not contain them. He also wrote the Apocalypse, commanded as he was, to conceal and not to write the voices of the seven thunders." (See Eusebius, **Ecclesiastical History**, Bk. VI, Chap. XX, p. 246.)

Note: In connection with the qualifications of these men, let me say they represented the chief centers of the Eastern Church. Hypolytus seems to concur that the belief in Rome was also that the Apostle John wrote Revelation. Albertus Pieters observes that the distribution of statements in point of time falls something like this: 140-160-200-220-233-240. It is observed that the longest interval is thirty years at the end of the apostolic era.

C. Internal Evidence For John the Son of Zebedee:

- a. The author refers to himself as John four times. The manner of so doing implies a name well known and sure to be recognized by those who received the book.
- b. The writer is a combination of "tenderness" and "severity" characteristic of "gentle John" and "Brother Thunderstorm."
- c. Similarities in Revelation and the gospel of John are numerous. Example: John is the only gospel writer that tells us the spear pierced Jesus' side. John 19:34, cf.; Rev. 1:7.

(5) Evidence **against** the authorship of John:

A. External:

- a. The major witness against the authorship of John is a statement by Dionysius of Alexandria in 265 A.D. Dionysius was a pupil of Origen, but he disagreed with his teacher on this point.
- b. Eusebius is frequently cited as a major witness **against** John. However, Eusebius does not really **deny** that John wrote Revelation, he merely recognizes that Dionysius had questioned the authorship, and concurs that "John the Elder" whose name he had discovered in the writings of Papias, was a **good** candidate for the most likely author.

B. Internal

- a. A comparison of the grammar of Revelation with that of the gospel of John shows the two to be very different. (This was the reason Dionysius had suggested a different author.) The Greek of the gospel of John is simple and very precise grammatically with very few departures from accurate and ordinary construction. Revelation is simple, but is extremely rough grammatically, especially in the area of **agreement** within sentence construction.
- b. Some had denied John's authorship on doctrinal grounds—they interpreted the book literally (thousand year reign, etc.) and assumed the heretic Cerenthus wrote the book, but they **knew** John wouldn't be teaching false doctrine.
- c. The grammar—According to Ray Summers, in writing the gospel, John could be clear and precise; in writing Revelation he hurriedly and **excitedly** scribbled down things he heard and saw with neither time nor care for preciseness at that golden moment as he faced his risen master. Consider the following quotation from Summers.

"John saw his Lord, whom he had last seen ascending to the Father from the Mount of Olives about sixty years ago. It was the same Lord, yet different. He was glorified and transcendent. With the voice of authority (a voice like the voice of many waters) he said to John: 'stop fearing. I am no ghost. They killed me but I am still alive. I hold the keys of death and destiny. I will give you a message which you may send to your churches—a message of comfort, assurance and victory. Write what you see and hear and send it to the broken churches of Asia.' " (*Worthy is the Lamb*, pp. 76-77)

Note: It is the position of this writer, however, that there are special reasons for the grammatical differences; and that John wrote precisely what he intended to write. (RHD)

Additional Study

For additional study on the authorship of John with a thorough and excellent discussion of major problems, I recommend a careful reading of, *Worthy is the Lamb*, by Ray Summers pp. 58-79.

2. Date: Two possible dates need to be considered for the writing of Revelation.

(1) Time of Nero - 69 A.D.

A. Evidence of Neronian date:

(evidences for Neronian date are primarily of an internal nature)

- a. The temple at Jerusalem was still standing (Rev. 11).
- b. Written during persecution—it is well known that Nero persecuted Christians.

- c. Nero was the 6th emperor.
- d. Hebrew numerical value of letters of "Nero" is a total of 666 (Arthur Weigall, *Nero*, p. 3f, 394f.)

B. Objections:

- a. It cannot be safely concluded that the temple in chapter 11 was still standing.
- b. Revelation indicates that Christians were persecuted because they refused to worship the emperor. There was to such demand in the time of Nero.
- c. Neronian persecution was confined to Rome.
- d. Exile is never mentioned as a form of punishment during the Neronian period. (Josephus gives a careful account of the forms of persecution used by Nero.)
- e. Weigall's case for Nero (the number theory) is very insecure.
- f. There are no real witnesses in the early church for the Neronian date, though there are several reliable witnesses for the Domitianic date.

Note: Consider also the internal conditions of the churches of Asia Minor at about 69 A.D. as seen in Paul's letters to Ephesians @62, 63, to Timothy in Ephesus @64-67, II Tim., I and II Peter, and compare with the date and church conditions of epistles of John.

(2) Time of **Domitian** - 96 A.D.

A. Evidence for the time of Domitian:

- a. Apparently the early church held to Revelation as having been written during the reign of Domitian. This is seen in the writings of Irenaeus, Origen, Victorinus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Heggessippus and Jerome.
- b. The general situation presupposed by the book of Revelation is consistent with the Domitianic date.
- c. The condition of the Asian churches indicate a much later date than would be consistent with the date of Nero's death. (See Summers, p. 83 for details.)
- d. The persecution of Christians which is reflected in the book fits the Domitianic period alone. "Domitian (81-96) is the emperor who has gone down in history as the one who bathed the empire in the blood of Christians." (Summers, p. 83)
- e. The reign of Domitian reached an insistance upon emperor worship. Under him, Christianity was to enter a life and death struggle with imperial power.
- f. Under Domitian, the major portion of persecution fell in Asia Minor, the stronghold of Christianity.

B. Evidence against the Domitianic date:

- a. Arguments against the Domitianic date primarily consist of the names of earlier scholars who had accepted the Neronian date.
- b. Ancient scholarship and tradition held to the Domitianic date; Scholarship later swung toward the Neronian date, and now is swinging back to Domitian.
- c. William Hendrickson, author of **More Than Conquerors**, summarizes the evidence this way: "We have not found a single really cogent argument in support of the early date" but adds, "the late date has very strong support." (p. 19).

3. Place of Writing:

- (1) The book was written during John's exile on the island of Patmos.
- (2) Patmos is a small island off the coast of Asia Minor opposite Ephesus.

4. To Whom Written:

- (1) A sound interpretation of Revelation must take as its starting point the position that the book was intended for believers in John's day and age, and that the book owes its origin at least in part to contemporary conditions. The seven Churches of Asia are specifically addressed, but it seems to be intended for all Christians (Rev. 1:3). It is God's answer to the prayers and tears of severely persecuted Christians scattered about in the cities of Asia Minor. (See Hendrickson, p. 15)

Hendrickson adds this thought:

Though "the conditions which actually prevailed during the last decade of the first century furnished the immediate occasion for this prophecy, we should give equal prominence to the fact that this book was intended not only for those who first read it but for all believers throughout this entire dispensation." His reasons are stated as follows:

- A. The affliction to which the church was subjected in the days of the Apostle John is typical of the persecution which true believers must endure throughout the entire dispensation.
 - B. Many of the predictions in which the book abounds concern principles and happenings which are so broad in their scope they cannot be confined to one definite year or century . . . but span the centuries reaching out to the Great Consummation.
 - C. The epistles—ch. 2, 3— are addressed to the seven churches. Seven is the number which symbolizes completeness. It clearly indicates that the admonitions and consolations of this book were meant for the entire church throughout the centuries.
 - D. All who read and study the book in any age are called blessed at its beginning (Rev. 1:3) and at its close (Rev. 22:18) where the author testifies to "every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book."
5. Purpose of Writing:
- (1) The book of Revelation was written to comfort the militant church in its struggle against the forces of evil. It abounds in consolation for the afflicted believers, and it assures them—
 - A. God sees their tears – 7:17; 21:4.
 - B. Their prayers rule the world – 8:3, 4.
 - C. Their death is precious in the Lord's sight and the glory of heaven awaits – 14:13; 20:4.
 - D. Their final victory is assured – 15:2.
 - E. Their blood will be avenged – 6:9; 8:3.
 - F. Their Christ lives and reigns forever and ever – 5:7, 8.
 - G. He is coming again to take His people unto Himself to live with Him forever in a rejuvenated universe – chapters 21, 22.
6. Theme of the Book: Revelation 17:14
- (1) The theme of the book is the victory of Christ and of His church over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers.
 - (2) Revelation intends to show that things are not what they seem! The beast that comes up out of the abyss may seem to be victorious, but the dominion over the world becomes the dominion of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 17:14:

"These shall war against the Lamb, And the Lamb shall conquer them, For he is Lord of Lords and King of Kings; And they also shall overcome that are with him, Called and Chosen, and Faithful."

EMPEROR WORSHIP

**Brief Study
of its Background
and consequences**

Roy H. Deaver

EMPEROR WORSHIP

During the last decade of the first century, the New Testament church was in grave danger. With the problems of heresy inside the church, and persecution from Rome and others outside the church, it became evident that Satan was using every available weapon to utterly destroy New Testament Christianity.

The persecution of Christians was seen in many varied forms. Sometimes the persecution was economic—with the means of livelihood threatened for the faithful Christian who refused to participate in the practices of the local trade guild which were diametrically opposed to Christianity. Sometimes the persecution was seen in the form of mental anguish which resulted from the social expulsion of one who became a Christian. Sometimes the persecution became more physical as pagan idolators began to afflict the Christian who was vocal in his denunciation of idol worship. Jewish Christians were frequently persecuted by their former Jewish friends who now considered them to be traitors.

Near the end of the first century, a persecution arose which was intended to annihilate Christianity. Unlike the other persecutions just mentioned, this persecution had the official sanction and support of the Roman government. This persecution centered around the practice of emperor worship. This persecution included mental, economic, and physical persecution, as anyone who was found guilty of wearing the name Christian would have his property confiscated, be banished from society, or be burned at the stake. It is little wonder that Christians began to wonder if Satan was going to be victorious. It seemed almost like Satan had hired the Roman government to fight his battle. We want to explore at this time the role of Rome in persecuting Christianity, and especially to look at the background and consequence of emperor worship as it related to Christianity.

THE BACKGROUND:

Cesar worship developed over a long period of years. It was actually the result of a blending of various needs and attitudes: specifically, (1) the attitude of the people of the empire toward Rome, and (2) Rome's need for a unifying factor. When these two elements were mixed with the vanity of man, and officialized by the Roman government, a dreaded monster appeared on the scene to enter a life or death struggle with the church.

Emperor worship had begun as a spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome. It is not to be thought that the provincials resented Roman government. More than one king had deliberately willed his kingdom into the possession of Rome. The people of the empire owed much to Rome, and they knew it. Under the rulership of Rome, men enjoyed the "Pax Romana" — the peace of Rome. Rome certainly provided her citizens and the population of the empire with a long list of benefits, and for the most part, the citizenry desired to make known their appreciation to Rome.

At first, this display of appreciation and devotion toward Rome was a spontaneous and voluntary affair and originally it was found primarily in the East. The eastern provinces of the empire might be said to be the home of this devotion to the rulership of Rome, because since the very beginning of the eastern nations, the inhabitants of those areas had considered their kings to be divine. So we see that worship of kings and emperors was not a new concept but simply a very ancient concept now turned toward the direction of Rome. It is no wonder that in the eastern regions of the province the cult of emperor worship spread so rapidly.

As Rome conquered the world, her responsibilities increased. The nation which had gained much through conquest, also had returned much to the conquered peoples in terms of benefits. One of the greatest problems Rome encountered at this time was the question of how to achieve unity and loyalty from her subjects. How could Rome unify the multitudes of people with such widely divergent backgrounds and interests. The empire was a gigantic conglomeration of races, cultures, and religions. What could be done to unify all these people! To find a solution to this question was Rome's most pressing problem.

None of the religions currently being practiced in the empire was capable of universal acceptance. Religions varied from extreme legalism to extreme mysticism, with everything imaginable filling the gap between these two extremes. No single religion could be forced upon **all** the people of the empire. What was the one thing that all people of the empire had in common . . . Rome itself. Rome was recognized by the rich and poor, the slave master and the slave, the Roman, the Asian, and the African, as the head of all nations. The **one thing** capable of being universalized was the spirit of Rome itself.

At first there was a vagueness about the conception of the spirit of Rome, but there was one person who incarnated and embodied that spirit, and that one man was the **emperor**. In him, the spirit of Rome assumed a visible form. So emperor worship arose. The early emperors deprecated this worship and some shrank from it. But the movement which had begun spontaneously could not be halted. First the worship was accepted; then it was officialized and the emperor was officially created a god.

On January 16, 27 B.C., the Roman senate conferred on Octavian the title of Augustus and recognized his supreme authority (the name Augustus means "worshipful"). Though the earlier emperors actually declined from accepting worship, certain later emperors demanded it. Emperor worship had begun as a spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome; but toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, the final step was taken and **Caesar worship became compulsory**. Once a year the Roman citizen must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the god-head of Caesar; and having done so, he was given a certificate to guarantee that he had performed his religious duty. (See a copy of this certificate in Appendix IV)

THE CONSEQUENCES:

Emperor worship was actually forced upon the Christians as a test of their loyalty to the state. Christians were required to perform the ceremonies of loyal service and worship to the emperor. Specifically, each worshipper was required to place a pinch of incense upon the altar to be burned in honor of and in worship to "Lord Caesar." To refuse to perform this act proved "disloyalty" to the state; to participate was to prove that one was not a Christian. We should note at this point that there were evidently many who saw in this meaningless act nothing harmful to their Christianity and so performed it so as to escape punishment. They were practically ostracized by their fellow Christians for denying the faith.

Thus we observe that near the end of the first century, Rome had become not only the center of government and wealth, but also the headquarters for religion. According to Roman law, the emperor was to be considered to be divine. At this period of the empire in which we are interested, there was definitely a renewed and zealously executed emphasis upon emperor worship. Domitian delighted in being looked upon as divine, and in being worshipped. Thus we find in the last decade of the first century a compulsory emperor worship. To the Christian, emperor worship was idolatry and to participate meant denial of one's faith. To the Romans, the refusal to worship the emperor was a sign of disloyalty to the state and an act of **treason**. So we see the direct conflict between the commands of Christ and the commands of Rome.

As the demand for emperor worship grew, Christians were outlawed as a body as soon as their adherence to the Christian belief became known. Detailed methods were worked out to enforce the State religion and to punish Christians. (Note: See correspondence between Pliny and Trajan in Appendix II.) There was appointed an official body known as the "Praefectus Urbi" for the enforcing of emperor worship in each town. These committees were responsible for punishing disloyal people in the various cities over a province. The group with the greatest authority was the "concilia" composed of deputies sent from various towns or divisions of a province. Their duty was to build images of the emperor, altars for his worship, and in every way sponsor the state religion and make it effective. They forced the people to worship the emperor, identified all who did, and punished in various ways all who refused. Many Christians were beheaded, some were exiled, others had all their property confiscated and were reduced to poverty.

One thing is clear. The burning of this pinch of incense was obviously not a test of man's religious orthodoxy; it was a test of his political loyalty. (The Roman government was generally tolerant of religion.) Once a man had made this sacrifice and received his certificate, he could go and worship any god or goddess he liked provided that worship did not conflict with public decency and order. **But**, if he refused to burn that pinch of incense, he was by his refusal automatically branded as a disloyal citizen. No government the size of Rome could afford disloyal citizens - they would become storm centers causing perpetual trouble. Therefore any man who refused to burn this pinch of

incense was rendered by his refusal an outlaw.

All the Christian had to do was to burn that pinch of incense and say "Caesar is Lord," receive his certificate, and go away and worship as he pleased. But this is precisely what the Christian could not do. He could give no man the name of Lord; that name he would reserve for Jesus and him alone. Uncompromisingly the Christian refused to go through the forms of Caesar worship, and therefore all Christians were outlaws and liable to persecution at any time.

Persecution was not continuous, but was liable to break out at any time, because informers were frequent and numerous. Smyrna was one of the great centers of Caesar worship. Christians here were in constant peril. Nowhere can life have been more dangerous for a Christian than in Smyrna. As far back as 196 B.C. Smyrna was the first city in the world to erect a temple to Dea Roma, the goddess Rome. In A.D. 26, Smyrna strove with six other cities of Asia Minor for the right to erect a temple to the godhead of Tiberius, the reigning emperor, and won it. Smyrna was an enthusiastic center of emperor worship. For a man to become a Christian anywhere in the world was to become an outlaw. In Smyrna above all places for a man to enter Christ was literally to take his life in his own hands.

Pergamos was also a center of Caesar worship. Pergamos was the city which called itself the "neokoros" (sweeper) of the temple where Caesar was worshipped. Pergamos was a city where Caesar worship was most intense; it was a city dedicated to glorying in the worship of Caesar. This to a Christian would be nothing less than the worship of Satan. There were cities in which danger fell upon the Christians on the appointed day when the pinch of incense had to be burned, but where, for the most part, the Christians were left in peace the rest of the year.

In Pergamos, however, a Christian was in jeopardy 365 days a year. The Christian in Pergamos had taken his life in his hands for the sake of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

With this background, it is easy to see the purpose for the writing of Revelation. The book clearly grows out of the needs of the people. John writes to encourage the Christians to maintain their loyalty to Christ at all costs, even in the face of martyrdom. He instructs them to stay close to Christ and to resist the temptation to compromise, even if such compromise would remove the persecution. John helps them to continue to look to the "eternal" rather than to the "temporal." Revelation was certainly written at a time when Roman power and Christianity were on a collision course. Asia Minor at this time was a place for heroic faith.

THE SECOND BEAST OF REVELATION 13

**A Term Paper
Presented to Roy H. Deaver
Brown Trail School of Preaching
Bedford, Texas**

**As a Requirement in
Revelation**

**by
Jeff Hood
March 2, 1976**

The Second Beast of Revelation 13

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deathstroke was healed" (Revelation 13:11, 12).

It is the position of this writer that the first beast mentioned in Revelation 13:1ff is the emperor of Rome who at the time of the vision of John was Domitian. But what of the identity of the second beast? What or whom does it represent? We can most easily answer this question by looking at the scene set before us by John; the picture can be summarized thus: the Dragon is Satan (12:9). He has shared his authority and power with the first beast (the Roman Emperor) who is compelling all men to worship himself. The second beast is said to make all the earth worship the first beast. This second beast can, then, be none other than the committee located in Asia which had as its duty the enforcing of emperor worship.

We propose to look at the history behind this committee as it developed in the Roman empire. Our objective will be to see the stages of development of this council and to see how well it fits the description of the second beast given to us by John.

The problem of unity had long been a concern of the growing Empire as men of different nations, races, languages and beliefs were brought together. In dealing with this problem the emperors of Rome adopted the policy of having one or more representatives report to Rome, expressing the interests of the individual areas of the Empire. At first, as the empire was being won in battle, the general who had caused the submission of an area became its representative; or as colonies were founded, the founder would hold this position. Later men of prominence within a city were given this place. This system worked fairly well as the emperor could know the needs and requests of individual portions of the empire and integrate these into his policies so as to best represent and hence unify all his subjects.

After a while, however, the limits of this system came under strenuous attack. A new plan was instituted which proved to be more effective. It was suggested and accepted as policy that these representatives be chosen from the Senate. In this way men who were known by the Emperor and who had already been brought to a position of authority could be appointed. To hold such a position was a great honor, mainly because the members were nominated by the emperor. The members wielded much power and accompanied the emperor on his travels so as to be able to judge and rule more effectively. This group was known in Greek as the "Koivov" and in Latin as the "commune." It was also referred to as a "concilia." At first these councils had as their only purpose keeping abreast of local opinion, but much later they did take on religious overtones.

This system of appointing these men to the councils by the emperor developed into a situation of "mutual back-scratching." To be chosen was an honor for these senators, hence these offices were greatly desired. Once appointed these men would do all they could to honor the emperor knowing that their "thoughtfulness" would not go unnoticed. And so it went, the emperor honoring the senators by appointing them, the senators then remembering this and honoring the emperor, who in turn delighted in recognizing their attention to him, etc.

The commune which is the point of our interest was established long before the rule of Augustus, but it was "remodeled" into the latter form mentioned above during his reign. Its headquarters were located in the temple built to Augustus at Pergamum; this seems to be the import behind the statement of John that Satan's throne was located in this city, Rev. 2:13. Here was the center of the state religion; here was the source of the power and legislation which caused Caesar to be worshipped from this authoritative arm of the state. To the Asian mind in general this represented the bonding element of unity so eagerly sought in the empire; but not so with the Christians. To them this body is described as a beast or monster.

By this time the function of this body had become totally "religious." The state religion was organized from this point to the extremities of all Asia. The ritual of burning the incense to the emperor was originated as the test of devotion to the empire. The penalties to those who refused to participate in this rite, to those who made themselves traitors and enemies of the state, were also legislated by this council. A few years earlier the commune had been in charge of such things as the annual celebration of the festival, often accompanied by games in honor of Rome and the emperor; the Asiarchs

mentioned in Acts 19:31 were no doubt members of this council (cf., footnote in the ASV). But by the time of Domitian, this function had taken a subordinate role.

John states that the second beast made all those in the earth to worship the first beast. Surely, this statement means that there was **at that time** a command that homage should be paid to the emperor, but according to Caird, this statement has a deeper meaning. He states that "it would never have occurred to Augustus to claim divinity, if the eastern provinces, accustomed as they were to the worship of their previous oriental rulers, had not taken the initiative in elevating him to a place among the immortals, city striving with city for the right to erect a temple to Rome and Augustus." This sentiment was related to the emperor through the commune; in fact it was the commune that gave orders for the construction of statues of the Imperial gods, especially the statue of the Divine Augustus in the temple at Pergamum (cf., Rev. 13:14).

As we return now to the vision recorded we can see how well the description of the second beast conforms to the commune and its characteristics. "Two horns like a lamb (11) indicate an outward religious appearance; the lamb was a religious symbol. His having only two horns may symbolize his limited power as over against the seven horns of the Lamb of God (5:6). The voice of a dragon indicates that he spoke with the destructive authority of Satan.

Concerning the working of miracles mentioned in verse 13, it may have been that some of the commune were performing pseudo miracles, for that there would be false Christs and false miracles had been prophesied, II Thess. 2:9.

Again (in verses 15 and 16) we have reference to the worship commanded by the second beast to be directed toward the first beast. Whenever one complied with the terms of the annual ritual of Caesar worship he was given a certificate which enabled him to do business within the Empire. Marriage settlements, wills, transfers of property, even trading in the marketplace - none of these things could be completed legally without the certificate signifying that the bearer had completed the acts of worship to Caesar.

What an awesome display of power this beast represents, a force that seems almost invincible. Yet the very next chapter begins with a description of the glorious state of those who had overcome temptation; a picture of those who had overcome the second beast of Revelation 13.

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A COMPARISON BETWEEN PERSECUTIONS

**A Term Paper
Presented to Roy H. Deaver
Brown Trail School of Preaching
Bedford, Texas**

**As a Requirement in
Revelation**

**by
Ron George**

A COMPARISON BETWEEN PERSECUTIONS

“And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgement seat, saying ‘This fellow persuadeth men to worship contrary to the law.’ And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews reason would that I should bear with you; but if it be a question of words and names and of your laws look ye to it for I will be no judge of such matters and he drove them from the judgement seat. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgement seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things.”

Acts 18:12-17

The above mentioned incident occurred during the second missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. The year is thought to have been some time between 52 A.D. and 54 A.D. Gallio had just been sent by Rome to become the new procounsel of Corinth. He was therefore well acquainted with Roman Law. The law we are most concerned with at this time is that which allows freedom of religion in the empire. It is obvious from this case that the Christian religion was not outlawed in the empire. The Roman government did not seek to destroy Christianity and wide spread persecution was unknown.

As the years went by the Apostle Paul in his preaching of the Gospel finally came to the city of Ephesus. Here, meeting head on, Paul challenged paganism’s most beloved idol, Diana of the Ephesians.

This idol was worshipped throughout the province of Asia and beyond. Her worshippers were devoted to making her the chief goddess in paganism. To these ancients Diana’s temple was one of the wonders of the world.

Ephesus, being a city where West meets East, the worshippers of Diana combined the Greek ideas of worship with their own and also added many mysterious and magical ceremonies to her worship. It is no surprise then to find Paul right in the midst combating this great religion. In Acts the 19th chapter the 20th verse we see the results of this battle. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”

It has been stated previously that the word continued to be preached continuously so that all which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10). The worshippers of Diana were declining because of this. It came to the point that those that made small images of the great Diana were in danger of being put out of business. “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsman; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, not alone at Ephesus but almost through out all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people saying that they be no gods which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised and her magnificence should be destroyed whom all Asia and the world worship” (Acts 19:24-27). Yes, Diana was being destroyed and those that made a living by making idols were greatly disturbed. It made them angry. “They were full of wrath and cried out saying Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And the whole city was filled with confusion and having caught up Gaius and Aristarchus men having traveled with Paul they rushed with one accord to the theatre” (Acts 19:29). This mob was looking for Paul and not finding him they took his companions. The exact intent of the mob is unknown, but we do know that it was not to honor these men. The scriptures say the assembly was confused and that the most part knew not why they were gathered together.

In the meantime Paul heard of the disturbance and was wanting to enter into the people, but the disciples suffered him not. It is also stated that certain of the chief officers of Asia that were his friends asked him not to go into the temple. The word goes on to tell us that the town clerk finally had to quiet the crowd after two hours of shouting ‘great is Diana of the Ephesians’ and convince them that **there had been no law broken**, and if they thought that their law had been violated, then there were the right channels to go through. By his pleading he finally got the crowd to go home and no charge was brought against anyone.

The above account took place sometime between 54 A.D. and 57 A.D. It is interesting to note that this is the time that Nero became emperor of Rome. Some interesting facts that we learn from

this event are: (1) The gospel was rapidly growing; and, (2) its growth aroused opposition and persecution. This persecution was local, in fact, the rulers of the city were friends of Paul. We can see no evidence of persecution on a wide scale especially coming from the Roman government.

Following the life of Saint Paul there have been two incidents of persecution. In both we readily saw that it was brought about by local people who were opposed to Christianity. These groups were small and were not supported in their charges against Christianity by public opinion. In the first case it was Jews that opposed the Christians unsuccessfully and in the second it was Greeks who were unsuccessful. If you are thinking that the Greeks were opposed in mass against the Christians reread Acts 19:34. It says, "and when they knew he was a Jew all with one voice cried out great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The first account we have of the Roman government becoming involved with the persecution of the church is in the case of Paul and his imprisonment by the governor of Judea. It should be noted that Paul was kept prisoner by Felix for two reasons: (1) he hoped to have money given him of Paul, and (2) he wanted to gain favor with the Jews.

When Festus became governor, he heard Paul's case and would have released him except that Paul appealed to Caesar. This had brought us to about 60 A.D. Still we see no persecution on any extended scale by the Roman government. Paul was one man and his imprisonment was more political than anything else.

Even after he is taken to Rome we are told "and Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, NO MAN FORBIDDING HIM" (Acts 28: 30, 31). The date is approximately 63 A.D.

We can see that Christianity was not persecuted by the Roman government to a great extent up to this time. It was a year after Paul was released that the great fire in Rome broke out. To take the blame off himself Nero placed it on the Christians there in Rome. This became the first harsh persecution of Christianity. To give us a view of the times, a study of II Timothy would be most appropriate since it is the epistle written during Paul's second imprisonment caused by the persecution which had arisen.

After Paul's release from his first imprisonment in early 64 A.D., he probably went on to Spain as he had indicated he wanted to do in his letter to the Romans. Having preached the Gospel in the western part of the Empire, Paul returned about 66 A.D. to Ephesus. There he found that the apostasy he had warned the Ephesian elders about had started to show its ugly head. During this time he wrote letters to Timothy and Titus. The problems that Timothy and Titus were faced with did not come from an outside source such as the Roman government but from the inside, from heretics, those who were going into apostasy. In the letter to Timothy we can see and read Paul's admonition to Timothy not to let certain men teach a different doctrine neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies (I Timothy 1:3,4). Paul states to Titus that the reason he left him in Crete was that he should set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city as I gave thee charge (Titus 1:5). Then in verse 13, after giving the qualifications of an elder Paul states, "This testimony is true. For which cause reprove them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith. Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men who turn away from truth." In both I Timothy and Titus, Paul urges the two men to pray for rulers and kings so that we might live a tranquil and quiet life (I Timothy 2:1,2 and Titus 3:1). The persecution at this time by the Roman government was not widespread and did not effect Titus in Crete and Timothy in Asia Minor like it did those in Rome. Those in these two areas were separated by culture and distance. The people of this area were not mad and did not have the urge to use someone's persecution as a means to vent their anger.

Not long after writing these two letters Paul went to Nicopolis to work. It is probably while there that he was arrested the second time. We see Rome reaching out to persecute for the first time. Nicopolis was not on the Italian peninsula. It was located across the Adriatic sea in what we now know as Greece. (Note: Paul may have left Nicopolis and actually moved into Italy prior to his arrest, but Nicopolis is the last place we can locate Paul prior to his arrest. RHD)

Paul was only one of thousands that died because of this persecution by Nero. His death came somewhere between the summer of 67 A.D. and the spring of 68 A.D. It was also during this time that thousands of others in this persecution were killed. After Nero's death the persecution against Christians subsided. Emperor worship which became a major cause of persecution of Christians was not practiced by emperors from 68 A.D. to 81 A.D. In fact, Vespasian would not permit anyone to

praise him as a God. Upon his death bed he said he was afraid that he was becoming a god; Titus and Domitian, Vespasian's sons, followed as Rome's emperors. Titus reigned for two years and died. There is not much we can say about his feelings toward emperor worship but his younger brother, Domitian, we know, thought of himself as a god. He was the first to demand that all in the empire call him lord and god. He began a persecution against Christians all over the empire but his major thrust was against the churches in Asia Minor. His persecution was as terrible or more so than that of Nero. During his reign it indeed was a dark future that the Christians faced.

Because of the fact that the letter of Revelation was written to churches in Asia Minor, the Domitianic date for the writing of Revelation seems much more probably as the date for its writing. Nero's persecution was concerned only with Rome itself, but Domitian's was concerned with the whole empire.

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BACKGROUND OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Source: *Letters to the Seven Churches* by William Barclay

I. EPHEBUS

1. Ephesus was a city of the greatest **commercial** importance. In a time when roads were neither plentiful nor good, trade tended to flow down the river valleys. Ephesus was located at the mouth of the river Cayster, and therefore commanded all the trade of the river valley. Ephesus was one of the greatest seaports in the world.

Three great roads converged at Ephesus

- (1) The great trade route from the Euphrates reached Ephesus by way of Colossee and Laodocia bringing trade from the East.

- (2) The road from Galatia came by way of Sardis bringing trade from Asia Minor.

- (3) A third road came up from the South bringing trade from the Meander Valley.

Ephesus could fitly be called the "vanity fair of the ancient world," and the picture described in Revelation 18:12-13 seems to come straight from her market place. In terms of commerce and wealth, few cities surpassed Ephesus.

2. Ephesus was a city of the greatest **political** importance. Ephesus proudly wore the title "Supreme Metropolis of Asia." She was a "free city" and therefore had the right of self-government. She had a democratically elected governing body. Ephesus was also an "assize" town, which simply meant that the Roman governor came through Ephesus to try the most important legal cases of the region. Ephesus was also the center of the Panionian Games, which ranked with the Olympic Games. These games were held in the month of May (Artemesion) sacred to Artemis (Diana). The men who arranged and financially supported these games were called "Asiarchs" (chiefs of Asia). To attain such an office was the high point of any man's career.
3. Ephesus was a city of the greatest **religious** importance. Its greatest glory was the temple of Diana. Since recorded history, there had been a temple in Ephesus. The third temple, which existed in John's day, was one of the seven wonders of the world. The temple was 425' long, 220' wide and stood 60' high. The roof was supported by 127 pillars, each the gift of a king and all made of marble with 36 of them being overlaid with gold and jewels. The image of Diana was so old that no one knew where it came from. The figure of Diana was anything but lovely. It was a black, squat, repulsive figure covered with many breasts (symbol of fertility); it held a club in one hand and a trident in the other. On the base were many strange signs whose meaning no one knew. Yet to millions of people, this strange image was the most sacred thing in the world. In the inner shrine of the temple of Diana, the local people deposited their valuables for safe keeping. The temple of Diana was the "Bank of England" of the ancient world, and it is interesting to note that even in war the temple would not be violated. The worship of the temple was weird, ecstatic, and hysterical. Shouting, wailing, burning incense and playing flutes, the worshippers worked themselves into an emotional and hysterical frenzy in which the most shameless things could and did happen. Perhaps it should also be noted that the temple possessed the right of asylum. Any man who had committed a crime was safe within the temple area. The safe zone included a perimeter which extended 200 yards in all directions. This small area was said to have housed the choicest collection of criminals in the world.
4. The character of the people of Ephesus was notoriously bad. They had the reputation all over Asia of being fickle, superstitious, and immoral. A famous philosopher of Ephesus, Heraclitus (known as the weeping philosopher) said the morals of the temple were worse than the morals of beasts; for even the promiscuous dogs do not mutilate each other. He said that inhabitants of Ephesus were fit only to be drowned and that the reason why he could never laugh or smile was because he lived amid such terrible wickedness and uncleanness.

Note: This is the city in which Paul stayed longer than any other city, and it was there that some of the greatest victories of the gospel were won. Sometimes we say it is hard to be a Christian in a modern, industrial, competitive civilization; let us remember Ephesus and that there were Christians there

II. SMYRNA

1. Smyrna is one of the very few churches to whom the Lord gave unqualified praise; (and it is interesting to note that to this day, half the population of Smyrna is "Christian" – i.e., Greek Orthodox center of learning).
2. Smyrna had a number of claims to distinction.
 - (1) Smyrna was a great trade city. She possessed a great harbor which could be totally enclosed in time of war.
 - (2) Smyrna was an outstandingly beautiful city, and claimed to be the "Glory of Asia." She was famous for the street called "Golden Street." At the sea end of the street stood the temple of Cybele. Along the street were temples of Apollo, Asklepios and Aphrodite. Inland, where the street met the foothills, stood the temple of Zeus. Here the splendors of heathen worship were in such prominence that Christianity might have been suffocated. Smyrna was also famous for her stadium and her library.
 - (3) Smyrna was also politically important. It was a free city and was said to have had the most municipal pride of any Asian city. To Smyrna, "earthly honors were the first and last," not God.
3. Two characteristics of Smyrna made life perilous for Christians:
 - (1) Smyrna was a great center for emperor worship.
 - (2) Smyrna possessed a large Jewish population. Again and again it was the Jews who informed against the Christians and who gained the ear of the local governor and invited him to unleash an attack of persecution upon the Christians. In later days, it was the Jews who were responsible for the martyrdom of Polycarp. The Jews even gathered firewood on the Sabbath day for his death. Christians were always in danger because of the blasphemy of the Jews. (See Appendix III Martyrdom of Polycarp)
4. The Christians of Smyrna were of such heroic caliber that the words of the risen Christ to them were words of undiluted praise.

III. PERGAMOS

1. At the time John wrote Revelation, Pergamos had been a "capital city" for 300 years. Originally it was the capital of the Attalid Kingdom (231-133 B.C.) – one of the parts into which the kingdom of Alexander the Great broke up. (Later, in 133 B.C., its king willed it into the possession of the Roman Empire. Pergamos had become part of the empire by deliberate choice.) The Romans then made it capital of the province of Asia; an honor Pergamos retained until 130 A.D.
2. Pergamos possessed one of the most famous libraries in the world. The library contained over 200,000 books (all written by hand). Parchment had its beginning in Pergamos as a material for books.
3. Pergamos also possessed international fame religiously--
 - (1) Pergamos was well known for the worship of Asklepios who was usually called "Asklepios the Savior." Asklepios was the god of healing and was represented symbolically by a snake. Sick people would spend the night in the temple with the tame snakes crawling around. The touch of a snake was supposed to be the healing touch of the god. The temple had associated with it both a medical school and medical wards.
 - (2) The worship of Zeus and Athena, the two greatest Greek gods, was to be found in Pergamos. Situated about 800 feet up the side of a hill stood a gigantic altar of Zeus. The altar stood on a ledge jutting out of the side of a hill: it was 90 feet square and 20 feet high. No one could live in Pergamos and fail to see it.
 - (3) Pergamos was a center for Caesar worship, and the headquarters for the concilia. Pergamos called itself the sweeper of the temple where Caesar worshipped. In Pergamos, the life of the Christian was in jeopardy 365 days a year.
 Note: The Christian in Pergamos was living in a city where the power and influence of Satan were exceedingly great and they had to go on living there; it was **there** they must show they were Christians, for no man ever became a better Christian by running away.
4. Some in Pergamos were trying to entice Christians to eat things sacrificed to idols, and commit fornication.

Note: The false teachers in Pergamos were trying to get Christians to conform to the accepted standards of the world and to stop being different. The early church was in constant danger of being led back into the world. Remember God's wrath is revealed upon the "Christian" who goes back into the world and encourages others to do likewise.

IV. THYATIRA

1. Thyatira was probably the smallest and least known of the seven churches, but she received the longest letter.
2. In Thyatira, the big threat to the church came from the inside – a woman called Jezebel is at the root of the problem.
3. Thyatira's major claim to greatness lies in the fact that it was the gateway to Pergamos. (During wars, she simply fought a delaying action until Pergamos could prepare for battle.)
4. Thyatira was not a special center of heathen worship; nor was she a special center of emperor worship.
5. Thyatira was a commercial center. Remember this was the home of Lydia, the seller of Purple. Purple dye sold for about \$200 a pound.
6. Thyatira possessed more and better organized **trade guilds** than any other city its size.
7. The threat to the church was a direct result of these trade guilds or trade unions.
8. The social activities of these guilds were immediately bound up with the worship of heathen gods. Drunkenness and fornication were the accepted activities at these feasts.
9. For the Christian to participate in the activities of these guild functions was to insure the continued means of his livelihood, but to refuse to participate meant loss of income. Christians were tempted to **compromise**.
10. At the center of the situation was a woman referred to as "Jezebel." She called herself a prophetess and was probably some mystic claiming special divine revelations. She apparently was trying to teach the Christians that it was all right to be a Christian and still participate in the affairs of the guild. This certainly would have been a great temptation for the Christians – just **compromise** a little for the sake of earning a living.
11. When Gentiles came into the church, according to Jerusalem conference (Acts 15), they were commanded to abstain from meats sacrificed to idols; and abstain from fornication. There was a very great temptation for Gentile Christians to go back to their old ways of living in Thyatira – after all, their source of income was at stake.

V. SARDIS

1. The physical position of Sardis made it one of the world's great trading centers. She was located on the junction of five different roads.
2. Sardis had been the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Lydia; and in 560 B.C. Croesus, one of the most wealthy of the ancient rulers, was its king.
3. The first coins ever to be minted in Asia Minor were minted in Sardis in the days of Croesus. (Sardis was the place where modern money was born.)
4. The history of Sardis reveals that she had been captured twice because of her failure "to watch" (she had been captured by both Cyrus and Alexander).
Note: The word "watch" is the key word in the letter to Sardis.
5. In 17 A.D. an earthquake destroyed Sardis. Tiberius, the reigning Roman emperor, remitted all taxation for 5 years and contributed over \$600,000 to aid the city in the rebuilding process. By 26 A.D. it had risen from ruin to regain its former grandeur. It is little wonder that Sardis was competing with Smyrna for the right to build a temple to the godhead of Caesar.
6. Sardis was a great commercial center and extremely wealthy. Through it ran the gold-bearing river called the Pactolus.
7. Sardis was the great center of the woolen industry. It was the market place for the sheep raised all over Phrygia, and was also a center of trade in costly dyes.
8. Sardis was not a center of emperor worship although it would have liked to have been. It was the center of the worship of Cybele – a wild, frenzied, hysterical affair. (This was not as dangerous to the Christian as Caesar worship would have been.)
9. The people of Sardis were notoriously loose living, pleasure-loving, and luxury loving. Every day Sardis grew wealthier, but the more wealthy it grew, the more it lost all claim to greatness.

10. The strange fate of Sardis was that life had been too easy for it. It had grown flabby and had sunk into an easy and voluptuous decadence. The fate of the church at Sardis was the same.
11. In the letter to Sardis, there appears no threat from Caesar worship nor any persecution; there was no threat from the malignant slanders of the Jews; there was not even any threat of internal heresy from within the church. The church at Sardis was completely untroubled from without and from within. The Church at Sardis was at peace – but it was the peace of the dead.

VI. PHILADELPHIA

1. Because of its geographical location, Philadelphia was the “Gateway to the East.” It was on the great highway that led from Europe to the Orient, it was the gateway from one continent to the other.
2. Philadelphia was founded for the purpose of being a missionary city -- to spread Greek culture to the barbarians of Phrygia.
3. It was most likely that this was on the mind of the risen Christ when he said, “I have set before thee an open door.” Their position could be used advantageously for spreading Christianity.
4. When the earthquake of 17 A.D. destroyed Philadelphia, it was rebuilt with funds provided by Tiberius Caesar. Because of his assistance, the town was given the new name of “Neocaesarea,” but the name didn’t stay with them long.
5. Philadelphia was located on the slopes of a volcano where volcanic ash gave them fertile soil for Philadelphia’s grape-growing industry.
6. Because of their location, the city of Philadelphia lived in constant fear of earthquakes. They were constantly fleeing their city and returning, “going out and coming in.”
7. Philadelphia was a center for pagan worship with Dionysus (the god of wine) being the chief deity. Philadelphia had so many gods and so many temples that it was sometimes called “Little Athens.”
8. Philadelphia had a custom which concerned these temples. When a man had served the state well, when he had left behind him a noble record as a magistrate, or a public benefactor, or a priest, the memorial which the city gave to him was to erect a pillar in one of the temples with his name inscribed on it. Philadelphia honored its illustrious sons by putting their names on pillars in the temple so all who came to worship might see and remember.
9. The letter to Philadelphia is a letter of undiluted praise.

Note: When Christ spoke to the church in Philadelphia, he took its history, he took the things which happened in everyday life, he took the civic practices which all men knew, and out of these earthly things he formed a heavenly message.

VII. LAODECIA - The Lukewarm Church

1. Laodicia was founded by Antiochus II in 250 B.C. and named for his wife.
2. Laodicia was a town of great commercial prosperity, and her position made her one of the richest commercial centers in the ancient world.
3. Laodicia had an extremely large Jewish population-@7500 adult male Jews.
Note: Selucid Kings usually granted free citizenship to Jews in their towns because Jews always brought in revenue. (Jews were very influential in Laodicia.)
4. Laodicia was the banking center of Asia Minor.
5. Laodicia was so wealthy that when the city was destroyed by an earthquake she refused financial aid from Rome and the local people rebuilt the city with their own finances and restored it to its own prosperity.
6. A considerable part of the wealth of Laodicia came from the cloth and clothing industry. (Laodicia was world famous for her black wool sheep which produced a soft, glossy, black wool.)
7. Laodicia was also famous for her medical school, and especially famous for two kinds of medicine, an ointment made of nard which was used to cure sore ears, but most famous for a certain eye powder.
8. The Laodicians were people who put their trust in material prosperity, in outward luxury, and in physical health to the utter neglect of the soul.

Part II
INTERPRETATION

FACTS IN REVELATION

1. Christ is alive and in control - and He cares. Chapter 1
2. The Churches stand in need of consolation and correction. Chapters 2, 3
3. God is on His throne and rules. Chapter 4
4. Christians suffer partly because of the difficulties common to all inhabitants of earth and partly because they belong to God. Chapters 5, 6
5. God knows them that are His. Chapter 7
6. God uses nature to warn men to repent in view of coming judgment. Chapter 8
7. God warns the wicked to repent in view of coming judgment by means of severe affliction. Chapter 9
8. God warns of the coming judgment by means of widespread death. Chapter 9
9. In view of man's lack of penitence, God's message must be proclaimed. Chapter 10
10. As God's message is proclaimed, it is greatly resisted, but ultimately produces partial penitence; then judgment comes. Chapter 11.
11. Because of his opposition to God, Satan tries to destroy Christ, and all the children of God. Chapter 12
12. Satan uses human power to try to defeat the church on earth, but God rewards the Christians who endure the tribulation. Chapters 13, 14
13. God's wrath will be poured out upon the wicked. Chapter 15, 16
14. The earthly power which persecutes the church will fall. Chapters 17-19
15. Satan and his followers will be punished eternally. Chapter 20
16. The righteous will dwell forever with God. Chapters 21, 22

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REVELATION

PART II - INTERPRETATION

THE FIRST VISION

"Christ in the middle of the Seven Golden Candlesticks"

Revelation 1:1-3

I. THE PICTURE

John, on Patmos, in the Spirit, on the Lord's day, was instructed to write down what he saw and send a message to the seven churches.

NOTES: Looks like an inspection - Authority-

- (1) Christ in the middle of the seven golden candlesticks (seven stars in his hand).
- (2) Location - in the midst of seven lampstands
- (3) Intention - send a message to His churches to comfort, warn, encourage

2. Letters to the Seven Churches--

(1) Ephesus - 2:1-7

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Commended
- C. Reproved
- D. Warned
- E. Admonished to hear what the Spirit says to the churches

(2) Smyrna - 2:8-11

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Warned of suffering

(3) Pergamum - 2:12-17

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Commended
- C. Reproved
- D. Warned - repent or else
- E. Promise
- F. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

(4) Thyatira - 2:18-29

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Commended
- C. Reproved
- D. No other burden
- E. Exhorted - hold fast till I come
- F. Promise
- G. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

(5) Sardis - 3:1-6

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Commended
- C. Reproved
- D. Promise
- E. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

(6) Philadelphia - 3:7-13

- A. Christ knows you
- B. Commended
- C. Preserved in affliction
- D. Exhorted - hold fast (no one can take thy crown)
- E. Promise
- F. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

- (7) **Laodecia - 3:14-22**
 - A. Christ knows you
 - B. Reproved
 - C. Advice
 - D. Admonition to repent
 - E. Promise
 - F. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

II. THE MESSAGE

1. Chapter 1:20 - The seven stars are messengers; the seven lampstands represent churches.
2. Christ is in the midst of the churches - Christ knows what is taking place. (**consoling** to some and produces fear in some).
3. Seven congregations are specific, but their number, their location and the messages to them indicate they are representative of the universal church.
4. The Church is beset by persecution from without, decay from within.
5. The church shall realize—
 - (1) Christ is among them and knows them, their thoughts, and their deeds.
 - (2) They will suffer or are suffering.
 - (3) Steadfastness will be rewarded.
 - (4) Wickedness will not be tolerated.
 - (5) False teaching is not to be accepted.
 - (6) They must heed the message -- repent or else.

Problems Exist, but repentance and faithfulness must be forthcoming. A Promise is given to those who overcome.

Note: Problems are no excuse for failure.

The Conditions described depict problems which are found throughout the **universal church**. However, God is never satisfied with our failure even when we have a good excuse for failure.

Note: If you have ears use them – hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (The Message is for all)

III. REVIEW OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

1. **Ephesus - the church which left its first love.**
(Loved things more than Christ.)
 - (1) Commendation
 - A. I know your works, toil and patience.
 - B. You cannot tolerate false teachings.
 - C. You have not grown weary.
 - (2) Reproof - you have left your first love.
 - (3) Warning - repent and do first works (Remember, repent, repent)
 - (4) Promise - to him that overcomes, I will him give to eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God.
2. **Smyrna - the church which was faithful unto death.**
(Emperor worship, blasphemous Jews instigating persecution.)
 - (1) Commendation - I know your tribulation and poverty (but you are rich)
 - (2) Reproof - none.
 - (3) Warning - warned only of suffering.
 - (4) Promise - "be faithful unto death, I will give thee a crown of life, he that overcomes will not be hurt of the second death."
3. **Pergamos - the church dwelling in Hell's Headquarters.**
(Emperor worship, Concilia)
 - (1) Commendation - you have held fast to my name and not denied the faith even in persecution.
 - (2) Reproof - some were holding to the doctrine of Nicolaitanes.
 - (3) Warning - repent or else.
 - (4) Promise - to him that overcomes, I will give to eat of the hidden manna; I will give him a white stone with a new name written upon it.

4. **Tyatira - the church which was threatened from within.**
(Trade guilds, false teachers, toleration of sin)
 - (1) **Commendation** -
 - A. I know your works, your love, your ministry and your patience.
 - B. Your works have increased.
 - (2) **Reproof** - you permit the woman Jezebel to seduce my servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols.
 - (3) **Warning** - except you repent. . . I will kill her children with death.
 - (4) **Promise** - he that overcomes and keeps my words to the end, I will give him authority over the nations. . . and I will give him the morning star (8:29; 22:16).
5. **Sardis - the church of the living dead.**
(Wealth, luxury, life of ease)
 - (1) **Commendation** - none.
 - (2) **Reproof** - you are dead, I have found no works completed before God
 - (3) **Warning** - if you will not watch I will come upon you as a thief in the night and you will not know that I have come upon you.
 - (4) **Promise** - those that have not defiled their garments shall walk with me in white. . . I will confess his name before the father.
6. **Philadelphia - the church which kept the faith; the church with the open door.**
(Blasphemous Jews causing persecution)
 - (1) **Commendation** - you have a little power; you have kept my word, and did not deny my name.
 - (2) **Reproof** - none.
 - (3) **Warning** - hold fast that which thou hast, that no man can take thy crown.
 - (4) **Promise** -
 - A. The Jews . . . will know that I have loved thee.
 - B. Because you have kept my word, I will protect you during the trial which is about to come upon the earth.
 - C. He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.
7. **Laodecia - the church which made God sick or the lukewarm church.**
(Wealth, luxury, life of ease)
 - (1) **Commendation** - none.
 - (2) **Reproof** -
 - A. Because you are lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth.
 - B. You say you have need of nothing and don't know that you are wretched and poor and blind and naked.
 - (3) **Warning** - be zealous and repent.
 - (4) **Promise** - he that overcomes, I will give to sit down with me in my throne.

IV. Key Phrases

1. **Ephesus**
 - (1) "You did leave your first love" 2:4. These brethren were no longer in love with Christ as they had been when they first learned the gospel.
 - (2) "I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is the Paradise of God" (2:7). The triumphant will be permitted eternal sustenance around the throne of God.
2. **Smyrna**
 - (1) "Blasphemy of them that say they are Jews" 2:9. It was the Jews who frequently informed against the Christians, thus leading to their persecution.
 - (2) "You shall have tribulation ten days" 2:10. An expression "ten days" is frequently used to denote a relatively short, but complete period of time.
 - (3) "Be faithful unto death, I will give thee a crown of life" 2:10. Remain faithful even if it costs your life; heaven will be your reward, eternal life will be yours.
 - (4) "Not be hurt of the second death" 2:11. Eternal condemnation is the second death and will have no effect on the righteous.
3. **Pergamum**
 - (1) "Where Satan's throne is" 2:13. Roman government was being used as an instrument

3. **Pergamum**

- (1) "Where Satan's throne is" 2:13. Roman government was being used as an instrument of Satan and was enforcing emperor worship. Pergamos was a very strong center for the enforcement of emperor worship and was actually the headquarters of the Concillia. Satan rules in Pergamum.
- (2) "Nicolaitans," "Teaching of Balaam" 2:14, 15. This sect tried to seduce Christians to lower their standard and accept the standard of the world, commit fornication and eat meat sacrificed to idols. They tried to pervert the lives of Christians.
- (3) "Hidden Manna" 2:17. Will be spiritually sustained by God.
- (4) "White Stone" 2:17. Symbol of new, victorious life (divine favor).
 - A. Acquited of crime
 - B. Winner of a race
 - C. Victorious warrior
 - D. Freed slave

4. **Thyatira**

- (1) "That woman Jezebel (your woman Jezebel)" 2:20. Some woman in the church is given the name Jezebel because of her ideas and practices which follow the example of the original Jezebel (teaching God's people to go after pagan gods and follow pagan practices)
- (2) "Searcheth reins and hearts" (kidneys and hearts) 2:23.
 - A. Kidney = seat of emotion
 - B. Heart = seat of thought
 - C. Therefore, "Christ knows our innermost thoughts and feelings."
- (3) "Know not keep things of Satan" 2:24. Have not become deeply involved with Satan's evils.
- (4) "Morning Star" 2:28. Christ 22:16.
- (5) "Rule over nations" 2:26,27. Symbolic of victory with Christ.

5. **Sardis**

- (1) "If you will not watch" 3:3. Sardis knew the cost of failing to be watchful. She had twice been conquered because she failed to watch. What had happened to the town could happen to the church.
- (2) "Walk with me in white" 3:4. Symbolic of purity, victory with Christ.
- (3) "Not be blotted out of the Book of Life" 3:5. In ancient times, when a citizen died, his name was stricken from the citizens roster; Christ assures, "your name won't be stricken from my book."
- (4) "You have a name, that you live, but you are dead" 3:1. There was plenty of outward activity, but no inner spirituality.

6. **Philadelphia**

- (1) "Open door" 3:8. A door of opportunity to spread Christianity, rather than Greek culture.
- (2) "Keep you from that which is to come upon the whole earth" 3:10. The Lord would assist them and guard them in the coming trials.
- (3) "That no one take thy crown" 3:11. Do not forfeit your crown or your right to eternal life.
- (4) "Pillar in temple" 3:12. Recognition in throne room of God rather than in earthly temple.
- (5) "Go out thence no more" 3:12. Promise of safety, security, (no fear of death).

7. **Laodemia**

- (1) "Have need of nothing" 3:17. These brethren were wealthy and felt self-sufficient, needed nothing physically and tended to feel self-sufficient spiritually. They felt they needed no help from either man or God.
- (2) "I would that you were hot or cold" 3:15. I wish you were either for me or against me.
- (3) "Naked and poor and blind" 3:17. Laodiceans were proud of their beautiful clothes, their wealth, and their eye medicine.

(4) "Buy of Me" 3:18. Christ is the source of true prosperity.

Note: The church of Laodecia stands as a warning to those who remember intensely that man has a body and forget completely that man has a soul. It stands as a warning to those who put their trust in material things and who leave God out.

THE SECOND VISION
The Book With Seven Seals
Revelation 4 - 7

I. The Picture:

Note: John saw a door opening into heaven—

He was invited to come up where he would be shown the things that would shortly come to pass.

1. **God** is sitting on the throne in heaven.
He holds a book in His hand.
2. **Twenty-four elders** are sitting on thrones around the throne of God.
3. **Four living creatures** are near the throne praising the one on the throne. (Elders also join in the worship.)
4. The **book** in God's hand is sealed shut by means of seven seals.
5. A **lamb** (appears to have been slain) is standing among the elders, the four living creatures, and near the throne of God. He is the only one worthy to open God's book.
6. A new song of praise is sung in honor of the lamb.
7. The Book with seven seals is opened. (ch.6)
 - (1) Rider on a **white horse** carrying a **bow** came conquering.
 - (2) Rider on a **red horse**, came carrying a **sword**, came taking away peace.
 - (3) Rider on a **black horse**, came carrying a **balance** in his hand.
 - (4) Rider on a **pale horse**, **Death**, came with the authority to kill; Hades followed him gathering in the dead.
 - (5) **Souls under the alter** are seen; these are the ones that had been slain for the Word of God. They cry for God to avenge their blood . . . God says "not yet."
 - (6) The day of the Lord begins. God's vengeance upon the wicked **begins** "(The beginning of the end.)" but is **delayed** for a short time, until the righteous are gathered.
 - (7) **Four angels** wait to unleash total destruction upon the earth. They are instructed to delay for a little while until all the servants of God are marked with God's seal.

II. The Message

1. John is allowed to know the events that will "shortly come to pass." The stage is set for the drama, and John describes the **scene** and the characters.
2. As the lamb opens the book with the seven seals, the future of the church and the world unfold. The message is portrayed in pantomime rather than read.
3. The book with seven seals contains the **mystery of God** —it unfolds before John's eyes.
 - (1) The first four seals appear to depict conditions upon the earth.
(Christians suffer partly from being upon the earth.)
 - A. 1st seal — time of unrest
 - B. 2nd seal — time of war
 - C. 3rd seal -- time of famine
 - D. 4th seal -- time of death

Note: Four living creatures (earth creatures) say, "Come" —takes place on the earth.
 - (2) The next three seals relate to the divine part of the tribulation and persecution.
 - A. 5th seal — time of persecution in the church
Note: This shows that Christians suffer partly because they belong to God. They cry out for God to avenge their blood—God says "not yet."
 - B. 6th seal — God later begins to unleash His fury to destroy the unrighteous—but wait—until all God's servants are marked.
 - C. 7th seal—seven trumpets warn of God's impending judgement (ch. 8-11) to be studied in detail later. (see the Third Vision)

III Key Phrases

III. KEY PHRASES

Chapter 4

1. "door opened in heaven" (4:1) - John was granted access to the throne room of God.
2. "show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter" (4:1) - John was about to observe God's plans starting from the present time and reaching to eternity.
3. "a throne in heaven" (4:2) - The center of activity for this vision is the throne room of God.
4. "four and twenty thrones - four and twenty elders" (4:4) - Twenty-four elders represent the religions of two dispensations (number 12 represents organized religion)
5. "seven lamps of fire" (4:5) - representing the Holy Spirit
6. "Four living creatures - lion, calf, man and eagle" (4:6) - four is the earthly number. The earth is represented in God's drama by these four creatures.
lion = wild life; calf = domestic animals; man = human life; eagle = bird life; together they represent life on earth.

Chapter 5

7. "a book" (5:1) - God's book evidently containing the "things which must come to pass."
8. "close sealed with seven seals" (5:1) - the message was apparently unavailable to John - causing him to weep.
9. "lamb standing as though it had been slain" (5:6) - Christ
10. "seven horns and seven eyes" (5:6) - Seven means divine, horns equal power or authority. Therefore seven horns equals divine power. Seven eyes represent the Holy Spirit. - (Christ and the Holy Spirit are closely associated in revealing God's will)
11. "takes it (the book) out of right hand of him that sits on the throne" (5:7) Christ takes God's book, containing things which must come to pass, so he can loose it seals and reveal its contents.

Note: Its contents are dramatized rather than read.

Chapter 6

12. One of the four living creatures says "come" (6:1,2) - One of the earth creatures gives the signal for the first part of the message to be revealed (rider comes forth from the book).
Note: 1st four seals depict conditions on earth - last three divinely related.
13. "White horse - him that sat thereon had a bow - came forth conquering and to conquer." (6:2) - First rider represents unrest on the earth.
14. "Red horse - take peace from the earth, etc." (6:3,4) - Represents war
15. "Black horse - balance in his hand - measure of wheat for a shilling" (6:5,6) - This picture depicts great scarcity or "famine" on earth.
16. "Pale horse - name was death - Hades followed" (6:7,8) - Represents death on earth; Hades followed gathering in the dead; a portion of the earth will always experience these calamities.
17. "earthquake - sun became black - moon became blood" (6:12) - events signalling the end of the world (Cf. 2 Peter 3)
18. "great day of their wrath" (6:17) - Time has arrived for God to begin unleashing his wrath upon the wicked - (But Wait !!!)

Chapter 7

19. "four angels - holding four winds" (7:1) - temporarily restraining destruction.
20. "Hurt not . . . till we have sealed servants of God" (7:3) - Destruction would be restrained until all God's faithful servants were identified and marked with a seal as belonging to God.
21. "144,000" (7:4) - All those from God's organized religious system on earth. (Sum total of the righteous)
22. "These are they that have come out of great tribulation, washed robes, made them white in the blood of the lamb." (7:14) - Those who have obeyed the gospel and lived faithfully even in persecution.

THE THIRD VISION

The Seven Trumpets of Judgment

Revelation 8 - 11

I. THE PICTURE:

1. As John watches, the seventh seal is removed from the book which the Lamb has taken from God. As the seal is removed, John sees seven angels standing before God and each angel is given a trumpet.
2. As John observes this scene, another angel comes into the picture – he adds incense to the prayers of the saints which go up before God. The angel then fills the censer with fire and casts it down upon the earth.
3. The seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets.

(1) First Angel Sounds . . .

- A. Hail and fire mingled with blood smites the earth
- B. 1/3 of earth, 1/3 of trees, and grass is burned up

(2) Second Angel Sounds . . .

- A. A great burning mountain is cast into the sea
- B. 1/3 of the sea became blood; 1/3 of the sea life was destroyed, 1/3 of the ships on the sea were destroyed.

(3) Third Angel Sounds . . .

- A. A great burning star falls from heaven upon 1/3 of the rivers.
- B. 1/3 of the rivers became bitter -- many men died from drinking the water.

(4) Fourth Angel Sounds . . .

- A. 1/3 of sun, 1/3 of moon, 1/3 of stars are darkened.
- B. Therefore 1/3 of the day has no light from the sun and 1/3 of night has no light from the moon or stars.

INTERMISSION: (8:18) Following the first four trumpets, an eagle announces three "woes" that are to come by reason of the last three angels which are about to sound their trumpets.

(5) Fifth Angel Sounds . . .

- A. The pit of the abyss is opened.
- B. Creatures out of the abyss are loosed and given authority to hurt "only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads."

(6) Sixth Angel Sounds . . .

- A. The angels that were bound at the Euphrates were to be loosed to destroy 1/3 of men.
- B. John observes a tremendous number of horsemen, whose horses breathe out fire and smoke and brimstone to destroy 1/3 of men.

NOTE: The purpose of the partial destruction was to try to cause men to repent.
9:20,21

- C. John is instructed to take a "little book" from the angel, to eat it . . . then told he must prophesy over many people of many nations.

(7) Seventh Angel Sounds . . .

- A. The time of Judgement has come.
- B. Vengeance is taken upon the godless.
- C. Rewards are given to God's "servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, both small and great."

II. THE MESSAGE

1. The seven trumpets of judgment announce (and warn) of the coming judgment.
2. The first four trumpets sound . . .
Partial destruction is seen in four categories of nature – earth, sea, fresh water, sky. The number 1/3 appears to denote partial destruction but at the same time a rather large part is destroyed. Partial destruction warns of ultimate and total destruction of the earthly system.

3. As the fifth angel sounds the trumpet, God authorizes severe punishment of the godless . . . no doubt in order to bring them to repentance.
4. As the sixth angel sounds, a major calamity sweeps over all mankind, destroying the third part of them. We are made to believe that this was intended to produce repentance, but are specifically told that those who were not killed "repented not."
5. "In light of the lack of penitance, John is told that he must "prophecy over many peoples," and that God's message will be revived.
6. Men have been warned of judgment, given opportunity to repent, to learn God's message, now judgment comes!

III. KEY PHRASES

Chapter 8

1. "First sounded" (8:7) - Natural calamity involving land -
2. "Second sounded" (8:8) - Natural calamity involving sea -
3. "Third sounded" (8:10) - Natural calamity involving fresh water -
4. "Fourth sounded" (8:6) - Natural calamity involving sky -

Chapter 9

5. "Only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4) - Affliction aimed especially at wicked (most probably the terrible result of sinful life.)
6. "Not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months" (9:5) - This particular affliction was not intended to kill but to produce repentance and it was to last an indefinite period of time.
7. "Kill a third part of men" (9:15) - Death was to come to a large portion of men to cause others to repent.
8. "Repented not of the works of their hands." (9:20) - God's efforts to produce repentance has been ignored by men and they would not repent.

Chapter 10

9. "Then is finished the mystery of God." (10:7) - When the final trumpet sounds, we see the end of God's plan - the final judgment and eternity.
10. "Take the book . . . eat it up" (10:9) - John was to become totally concerned and familiar with God's message.
11. "Thou must prophecy" (10:11) - God's message must be proclaimed.

Chapter 11

12. "Measure the temple and them that worship therein" (11:1) - Evaluate the Jewish system and its relation to Christianity (has become the enemy of the truth, and greatly resisted God's message; but among the Jews there was partial penitance).
13. "Seventh angel sounds" (11:15) - time of final judgement (time of dead to be judged, rewards to servants, destroy wicked).

THE FOURTH VISION

Woman and Man-Child Persecuted by Dragon and His Helpers

Revelation 12 - 14

I. THE PICTURE:

1. John sees a woman cry out in pain to be delivered of her child.
2. A red dragon stands before the woman who is about to be delivered of a child, so that he may devour the child as soon as it is born.
3. A son is born to the woman -- and he is caught up to heaven.
4. The woman then fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place for her.
5. The scene shifts -- John observes a **War in Heaven** - as a result of the war Satan and his angels are expelled from heaven, cast down to the earth. When Satan (dragon) saw that he was cast down, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child. Unable to destroy the woman or the man-child, the dragon became extremely wroth, went away to make war with the rest of her seed.
6. The dragon is now joined by a beast, and he gives his authority to the beast.
7. The world worshipped the dragon and the beast.
8. The beast was given authority to make war with the saints and to overcome them.
9. A second beast joins the first and he receives authority from the first beast. The second beast makes those who dwell on the earth to worship the first beast and kills those who refuse.
10. John then sees the lamb, standing with his followers.
11. Three angels are seen flying in heaven --
 - (1) 1st proclaims good tidings to them on earth - says, "Worship God - not the beast" - because of the coming judgment.
 - (2) 2nd proclaims "fallen is Babylon the great."
 - (3) 3rd proclaims God will execute wrath upon them that worship the beast.
12. The time for the earth to be reaped has come -- a sharp sickle reaps the earth.

II. THE MESSAGE

1. The Christians on the earth are suffering for their faith; the underlying reasons for this persecution are revealed.
2. Satan was waiting to thwart God's purpose - to prevent Christ from coming to save man.
3. Because of warfare in heaven, Satan and his followers are expelled from heaven, and cast down to the earth - this produced joy in heaven, but created difficulties on earth. (Verses 7-13 explain why Satan is on earth)
4. Upon the earth Satan unleashed his fury upon those who followed Christ.
5. Satan is seen in alliance with a beast (human power) who is worshipped as Satan's authorized representative (Roman Empire - Domitian).
6. A second beast assists the first. He succeeds in enforcing the worship of the beast (emperor) and he kills those who refuse. (The second beast is the Concilia).
7. But -- the Christians are pictured victoriously with Christ; and are told by three angels not to fear but rather (1) worship God - not the beast; (2) they are assured of the defeat of the beast, and (3) that God's wrath will be poured out upon those who worship the beast.
8. Christians are encouraged, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labors and their works shall follow them" (14: 13).
9. The Christians observe that at the "reaping of the earth" the wicked fall under the wrath of God.

NOTE: Satan, the beast, and the second beast present a dreadful force and appear to be victorious in destroying God's faithful children; but this sinister alliance falls in defeat before God, his Christ, and "the reaping of the earth" which is the judgment.

III. KEY PHRASES

Chapter 12

1. "Woman" (12:1) - Represents continued line of chosen people of God. First representing physical Israel through whom Christ came into the world. Then following the ascension of Christ she continues to represent the chosen people of God, Spiritual Israel, the Church.

2. "With child in pain to be delivered" (12:2) - was time for the coming of the Christ -
3. "Dragon standing before the woman that he may devour the child" (12:4) - Satan was waiting to thwart God's plan by killing the Christ. -
4. "Delivered of a Son a man child, who is to rule nations with rod of iron" (12:5) - Christ.
5. "Child caught up to God and unto His throne" (12:5) - God preserved His Son, Satan could not destroy Him. The Son reigns with the Father.
6. "Woman fled into a desert place prepared by God" (12:6) - God assisted the Woman (church) in helping to protect her from Satan and nourished her.
7. "War in heaven" (12:7) - Satan and his followers engaged in terrible conflict with God as they rebel against him.
8. "Rejoice O Heaven, Woe for the earth" (12:12) - Satan's expulsion from heaven produced joy in heaven, but it meant trouble for the earth.
9. "He persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child" (12:13) - In his extreme wrath because of his expulsion from heaven, Satan tried to destroy the Woman, but was unable to do so.
10. "Make war with the rest of her seed" (12:17) - Being unable to destroy the Christ and the church as an institution, Satan turned his attention to the affliction of individual Christians.

Chapter 13

11. "I saw a beast" (13:1) - Beast no doubt represents the Roman Empire (Domitian as head of that empire).
12. "Dragon gave him his power" (13:2) - Satan delegated his power and authority to Rome. Human power was used by Satan to accomplish his purpose.
13. "They worshipped the dragon because he gave power to the beast and they worshipped the beast" (13:4) - Primarily worship of the beast (emperor worship).
14. "It was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (13:7) - Satan uses Rome to persecute Christians.
15. "All the world shall worship him (the beast) except those whose names have been written in the book of Life (13:8) - Everyone will worship the beast except Christians.
16. "Another beast" (13:11) - The Concilia, the arm of the Roman government charged with enforcing emperor worship.
17. "Makes the earth to worship the first beast" (13:12) - the specific task of the concilia.
18. "As many as should not worship the beast should be killed" (13:15) - The concilia executed those who refused to worship the emperor.
19. "His number is 666" - "(Here is wisdom)" (13:18) - Understand that the beast is here among us. He is a man, an extremely evil man (6 is evil number). The number 666 would strike terror into the hearts of those who heard it read. Domitian was the beast who was terrorizing the saints.

Chapter 14

20. "Lamb standing — 144,000" (14:1) - Christ pictured with all the redeemed.
21. "Fear God — worship Him that made the heaven" (14:7) - Message of the first angel is "Worship God - not the beast."
22. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great" (13:8) - God can and will destroy the evil power, Rome. Her destination is so certain it is announced here as already having taken place.
23. "If any man worships the beast . . . wrath of God" (14:9, 10) - Those who do worship the beast, will assuredly become victims of the wrath of God.
24. "Here is patience of saints" (14:12) - In view of the dreadful conditions of the time the real patience (steadfastness) of the saints is seen in obeying the commandments of God, even in the face of death.
25. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (14:13) - Many of the righteous would die for Christ; they would be truly blessed.
26. "Send forth thy sickle and reap" (14:15) - Righteous are gathered from earth.
27. "Vintage of earth was cast into winepress of wrath of God" (14:19) - The wicked were reaped from earth and crushed under the wrath of God.

THE FIFTH VISION

Seven Bowls of Wrath

Revelation 15 - 16

I. THE PICTURE:

1. John observes another sign in heaven; the righteous are seen rejoicing as God prepares to release His wrath upon the wicked. He sees seven angels which have seven final plagues to send forth upon the earth ("which are last - for in them is finished the wrath of God").
2. The angels are given seven bowls full of the wrath of God.
3. They are instructed to "pour out" the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.
4. The Seven Angels "poured out" the seven bowls of wrath:
 - (1) First - The first angel poured out his bowl upon the earth; it became a grievous sore upon those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped the beast.
 - (2) Second - The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea; it became as blood; everything in the sea died.
 - (3) Third - The third poured out his bowl into the rivers; it became blood. (The angel of the rivers praised God for his righteousness - the wicked poured out the blood of the saints, now God gives them blood to drink.)
 - (4) Fourth - The fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun and it scorched men with fire. (The men continued to blaspheme God, and refused to repent.)
 - (5) Fifth - The fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast. (They gnawed their tongues for pain). They continued to blaspheme God and refused to repent of their works.
 - (6) Sixth - The sixth poured out his bowl upon the great River Euphrates - the water was dried up. This seems to describe the preparation for the battle between evil and righteousness.
 NOTE: Ray Summers calls the three frogs (evil spirits) "Satan's re-recruiting agents."
 - (7) Seventh - The seventh poured out his bowl upon the air (Habitation of demons). - Voice said, "It is done" - lightning, thunder, earthquakes. Plague of huge hail stones beat down upon men. They blasphemed God.

II. THE MESSAGE:

- NOTE: The martyred saints (chapter 6) had been told to wait, the time of God's vengeance had not come. **Now the time has come.**
1. The bowls of wrath are poured out - God takes final and complete vengeance. (Note: The trumpets of judgment only warned of judgment by means of partial destruction - now total destruction accompanies the final judgment as God's wrath is poured out upon the wicked.)
 2. The first four bowls of wrath are poured out upon the "natural system" - the earth is destroyed - see 2 Peter 3:10.
 - (1) First - destruction of land - (final and complete)
 - (2) Second - destruction of the sea - (final and complete)
 - (3) Third - destruction of rivers (fresh water)
 - (4) Fourth - destruction of heavenly bodies - (removed from normal function, and used to punish man)

NOTE: These four indicate the four categories of nature and signify ultimate and complete destruction of the earth.
 3. The next three bowls of wrath are poured upon the evil spiritual powers.
 - (1) Fifth - God pours out His wrath upon the very throne of the beast.
 - (2) Sixth - God pours out His wrath upon those who hear and follow Satan - gathers them for final battle in which God will completely destroy them.
 - (3) Seventh - God pours out His wrath upon the air - considered to be the habitation of all evil spirits and powers - and upon men. Final and complete victory for God as He visits His wrath upon Satan and his followers.

NOTE: Thus is pictured the final judgment with the righteous rejoicing in heaven while God destroys the earth and the wicked. See 2 Peter 3:10.

KEY PHRASES

Chapter 15

1. "In them is finished the wrath of God" (15:1) - God's final and complete wrath is to be visited upon the wicked.
2. "Victorious from the beast" (15:2) - Though the Christians were slain by the beast, it was the Christian who has won the victory, for the beast and his followers are about to be destroyed.
3. "Seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God" (15:7) - The "bowls containing God's wrath" are to be poured out upon the earth. God's wrath will be executed upon the wicked.

Chapter 16

4. "Go ye and pour out the seven bowls of wrath" (16:1) - Time has come for God to avenge the blood of the saints and is pouring out his wrath on the wicked.
5. "First bowl . . . noisome sore upon them that had the mark of the beast" (16:2) - First plague directed at the earth afflicted those who worshipped the beast.
6. "Second bowl . . . every living soul died that was in the sea; Sea became blood." (16:3) - No longer partial destruction; this time everything in the sea is killed.
7. "Third bowl . . . rivers and fountains of water became blood" (16:4) - God uses this part of nature to afflict wicked.
8. "Fourth bowl . . . poured out bowl upon the sun" (16:8) - God uses Sun to afflict the wicked.
9. "Fifth bowl . . . poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast" (16:10) - God's wrath is directed at the very seat of the worldly power used by Satan - Rome.
10. "Sixth bowl . . . poured out his bowl on Euphrates that the way might be made ready for the Kings that come from the sunrising." (16:12) - As this bowl is poured out Satan is seen gathering his forces to prepare for the final battle between wickedness and righteousness.
11. "Seventh bowl, poured out his bowl upon the air" (16:17) - The air was considered to be the domain of all evil spirits. God's vengeance is poured out upon the very home of evil spirits.
12. "It is done" (16:17) - With the final plague, God's wrath was completed.
13. "Babylon the Great was remembered" (16:19) - At the time when God was rending his vengeance, there was a special place for Rome who had wrought havoc among the Christians. God would avenge the blood of the saints.

THE SIXTH VISION

Fall of the Great Harlot and of the Beast

Revelation 17 - 19

I. THE PICTURE:

Such great importance was attached to Rome as the center of the persecuting power of the first century that three whole chapters are given to portray her doom. This is a series of scenes to show the fate of Rome as had previously been indicated in Revelation 14:8 and 16:19. As the picture begins, an angel invites John to come and see the judgment upon the Great Harlot and the Beast.

1. John first sees a **woman** sitting upon a scarlet colored beast. The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet and wears ornaments of gold, and pearls, and precious jewels.
2. On the woman's forehead are written the words "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and the Abominations of the Earth."
3. She is described as being "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."
4. The beast is described as having seven heads and ten horns.
5. John now hears another angel of great authority crying "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great . . ." Rev. 18:3
6. Another voice from heaven is heard calling God's children out of the wicked city so they will not be hurt by the plagues that are about to come upon her, "for she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her." 18:4-9
7. John sees a strong angel take a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea saying, "Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all." 18:21
8. John then hears a great multitude in heaven praising God because of His righteous judgment . . . "for He hath judged the great harlot . . . and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand." 19:1,2
9. Next John hears a multitude of voices praising the Lord and rejoicing . . . "for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." 19:7
10. As John watches, the heavens are opened and a white horse comes forth. The rider is called "Faithful and True" and is also called "The Word of God." He comes forth to judge and to make war.
11. As the beast gathers the kings of earth to make war with him that sat on the white horse, the Rider on the white horse comes prepared for battle. The beast and his associates are soundly defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

II. THE MESSAGE:

1. As John is taken by the angel to view the Scarlet Woman and the Beast upon which she rides, he is told that he is about to learn the MYSTERY of the woman and of the beast.
2. The woman, Rome, is guilty of spiritual fornication in her idol worship, and she entices the kings of the provinces as she conquers them to partake of the evil with her. She is pictured as lavishly clothed in luxury and sin, and described as one who is "drunk" on the blood of the saints. The **beast** is no doubt the vast empire which supports the wicked city.
3. Throughout this section, the main thing in the writer's mind is the fall of Rome. At this point, an angel invites God's people to come out from association with the wicked woman, because she is about to be punished for her wickedness.
4. In connection with the fall of Rome, it appears that God will use human powers to bring about her fall with its accompanying loss of both her glory and prosperity, (17:16); and ultimately in the judgment God's final wrath will be visited upon the great wickedness of this city.
5. The time then comes for Christ to be united with his bride, the church. As this time comes, the Christ is pictured as preparing for a confrontation. The beast has gathered the kings of earth to make war against the Christ. The victorious Christ is seen conquering the host of evil forces and the beast and the false prophet are then cast in the lake of fire.
6. These three chapters, in vivid and picturesque language assure the suffering saints that the very power responsible for their suffering will soon **fall** before the righteous judgment of

God, and that the blood of the martyrs will be avenged in the day of God's wrath.

III. KEY PHRASES

Chapter 17

1. "I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot" (17:1) - God is about to reveal to John visually the fact that Rome is doomed.
2. "I saw a woman" (17:3) - Represents Rome.
3. "Woman drunken with blood of saints" (17:6) - Rome delighted in the execution of Christians, and was intoxicated with the pleasure of watching the saints die.
4. "I will tell thee the mystery of the woman and the beast which carries her" (17:7) - God is about to reveal to John that both the woman (Rome) and the beast (the empire) are doomed.
5. "They are seven kings; five are fallen, etc." (17:10) - Seven is most likely the divinely appointed numbers of the Roman Emperors. Several have already died, one rules, and others yet to come. Thus the problems which the Christians were having with Rome were not over, but God would avenge the blood of the saints at the appropriate time.
6. "The ten horns are ten kings" (17:12) - These are the puppet rulers of the Roman Empire which are in alliance with Rome, which give support to her.
7. "These shall war against the lamb and the lamb shall overcome them" (17:14) - Christ will be victorious over Rome and her allies and will utterly destroy them.

Chapter 18

8. "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" (18:2) - An angel of the Lord announces the doom of Rome.
9. "Come forth my people" (18:4) - A voice calls God's people out of Rome so they will not be hurt by the plagues that are to fall on Rome.
10. "God hath remembered her iniquities" (18:5) - At the time of judgment, God will remember Rome and repay her for her persecution of the saints.
11. "The kings of the earth . . . shall weep" (18:5) - The kings who supported and shared the evil of Rome mourn her destruction because they fall with her.
12. "The merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her" (18:11) - The merchants who benefited greatly by the rule and luxury of Rome, will weep over the fall of the city because they fall with it.
13. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven and ye saints" (18:20) - Heaven and the righteous rejoice because of condemnation of Rome.

Chapter 19

14. "Great multitude in heaven singing Alleluia" (19:1) - Saints are seen rejoicing in heaven.
15. "Her smoke goeth up forever and ever" (19:3) - Rome destruction will be eternal.
16. "The marriage of the lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready" (19:7) - The time has come for the bride (the church) of Christ to be united eternally with the bridegroom (Christ).
17. "In righteousness he doth judge and make war" (19:11) - The time had come for Christ's final victory over the beast and her allies.
18. "They two were cast alive into the lake of fire . . . rest were killed" (19:20, 24) - The final eternal destruction of the beast the false prophet, and their allies are seen.

THE SEVENTH VISION

Judgment upon the Dragon (Satan) Followed by a New Heaven and Earth
and New Jerusalem
Revelation 20 - 22

I. THE PICTURE:

1. John saw an angel take hold upon the dragon (Satan) bind him and cast him into the abyss. (He is to remain bound for a thousand years, then he must be loosed for a little while.)
2. He also saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus reigning with Christ.
3. "Following the thousand years," John is told, "Satan will be loosed from his captivity and will come forth to deceive nations for a little while. Then he shall be cast into the lake of fire (where the beast and false prophet were cast - 19:20) to be tormented day and night forever."
4. John next observes a great white throne, and those who had been dead standing before the throne, and **THE BOOKS WERE OPENED**. The dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books. Men were judged according to their works; and if any man's name was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire . . . "This is the **SECOND DEATH**."
5. John is then permitted to see the glorious new dwelling place prepared for the righteous. He refers to the new dwelling place as "the Holy city - the New Jerusalem." Its glory and beauty are beyond comprehension by our limited imaginations, but we are assured of the fact that the righteous servants of God will dwell around the throne of God forever.

II. THE MESSAGE:

1. Once again, John has been carried in time from the beginning of God's dealings with man to the culmination of God's plans. In accordance with God's will . . .
 - (1) Satan is confined to the abyss for a thousand years (lengthy period of time) where he is held captive.
 - (2) He is released "for a little while" during which time he will "deceive nations" and "gather them to make war."
 - (3) Those who follow Satan will be destroyed; Satan and the false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire to be "tormented day and night forever."
 - (4) The dead are judged according to their works; those whose names are not found written in the Book of Life, are cast into the lake of fire.
 - (5) God has prepared a "new" dwelling place for those who are righteous and God himself will "dwell with them."
2. In addition to the main thrust of the message in this last section we are impressed by the repetition of the following facts (22:6-20).
 - (1) These words are true, and they reveal what must shortly come to pass. 22:6
 - (2) This message must be proclaimed with urgency because "the time is at hand." 22:10
 - (3) Preparation must be made! "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life . ." 22:14
 - (4) This message comes from the risen Christ. "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches." 22:16
 - (5) This message must not be changed. 22:18, 19

NOTE: It is interesting at this point to observe that the Scriptures **begin** and **end** with man in the presence of God near the tree of life. The pages between depict the **plan** of God and the progress of that plan while following the footsteps of man on his journey **first** as he is expelled from God's presence and forbidden access to the tree of life; **then** as he recognizes his sinful state, and turns back toward God, washes his garments in the blood of the Lamb, and is once again **given** the right to come back to the presence of God and the tree of life.

III. KEY PHRASES

Chapter 20

1. "He laid hold on Satan and . . . bound him for a thousand years" (20:2) - Satan is no longer allowed "free reign" in the affairs of men, God will restrain him for a long period of time.

2. "They lived and reigned with Christ" (20:4) - Though slain for their faith in Christ, the righteous live victoriously in Paradise awaiting the Resurrection.
3. "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison" (20:7) - After having been restrained for a long period of time, Satan will be permitted to gather his followers together for the final conflict with God.
4. "And the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" (20:10) - This depicts the final, eternal condemnation of Satan.
5. "The books were opened" (20:12) - Time has come for final judgment.
6. "Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire" (20:14) - Both death and Hades (the realm of the dead) have both served their purpose and are now discarded forever.

Chapter 21

7. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1) - God will prepare a new spiritual dwelling place for his people.
8. "He shall dwell with them" (21:3) - God will dwell in the midst of the righteous. He will no longer remain separated from them.
9. "I saw no temple therein . . . for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof" (21:22) - There is no need for a temple to symbolize God's presence among his people in the new city because his actual presence will be enjoyed.

Chapter 22

10. "Seal not up the words of this prophecy . . . for the time is at hand" (22:10) - God intended that the message be revealed to his people and its message was truly relevant for them.
11. "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life" (22:14) - Those who have washed their robes in the blood of the lamb are granted eternal sustenance in the presence of God. (cf. 7:14)

REVELATION – A SUMMARY

In the year 96 A.D., near the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian, forceful attempts were made to cause Christians to worship the Roman emperor to prove their loyalty to Rome. No Christian could worship another man. To refuse, however, brought severe persecution. The aged apostle John, himself in exile on the Isle of Patmos because of his faith, at the direction of the Holy Spirit penned the Book of Revelation and addressed it to the suffering churches in Asia Minor. The message is one of strength, comfort, and hope. The terrible persecutions of the present day would one day give way to the glories of heaven. That hope would be the factor which would enable the Christians to endure the present difficulties.

As the message of the book begins to unfold, and as the brethren in the seven churches heard its message read for the first time, they received greater understanding of God's eternal purposes and plans. As they gained that understanding, they were motivated to "hold fast to that which is good" and to correct any deficiencies existing in their lives, because some day the Lord would reign victoriously – and all the faithful would reign with Him. Rather than deciding to turn away from Christ because of Roman persecution, the Christian learned that Rome and her allies would one day fall before the mighty army of the Lamb. The choice then simply became this – "shall I serve the forces of Satan and escape the persecution in this life, or shall I remain faithful to Christ even if it costs my life and later on enjoy the glories of Heaven." The Book of Revelation provided the Brethren with the information needed to make the proper choice. It provided the motivation which enabled the brethren to boldly confess Christ as they were about to face death in the arena of hungry lions or be burned at the stake.

As these persecuted saints faced death, no doubt many recalled the message of the risen Christ in Revelation 2:10 "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life." As they recalled the message of the inspired apocalypse, no doubt the following concepts from Revelation brought comfort to the martyr's mind:

Christ is still dwelling in the midst of His churches and he knows what I am doing.

If I am faithful to Him, though I suffer now, I will soon reign with Him.

I realize that I suffer partly just because I am on the earth where unrest, wars, famine, and death constantly cause troubles.

I also realize that it is my lot to suffer partly just because I belong to Christ.

I realize that there is a judgement coming and that God has used every means possible to warn men to repent in view of that coming judgement. Many still refuse to repent, but I am ready for it.

I realize that Satan has constantly tried to fight against God, and that my suffering now is just simply a small part of that same battle – Satan is trying to get me to turn away from my Savior, but that is something I will not do.

I realize that those who are about to take my life think that they are winning a great victory over me and over Christ's church. If they only knew what was awaiting them!!!

I realize that as the executioner's sword severs my head from my body, he has done me no harm – he has only opened for me the door to heaven.

I realize that at my death, as a faithful child of God, as one who "has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb," I have the right to dwell eternally in the presence of God near the tree of life.

So why should I forfeit my crown? Why should I abdicate my position? I will be faithful unto death, for the crown of life awaits.

The church of our Lord has never been a place for cowards and weaklings. It is a place for heroes. It is a place for men and women of courage and conviction. Such courage and conviction was seen in the faith of the martyrs of the first and second century. I declare to you in no uncertain terms that the Book of Revelation played a very precise role in helping to produce that heroic courage and conviction in the lives of those early saints – and it will do the same for us.

APPENDIX

RELEVANT HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

- I. Concerning Persecution of Christians Under Nero @ 65 A.D.
Statement by Tacitus
- II. Concerning Persecution of Christians in Asia Minor Under Trajan
Correspondence Between Pliny and Trajan @ 112 A.D.
- III. Concerning the Martyrdom of Polycarp @ 156 A.D.
- IV. A "Libellus" - Certificate of Sacrifice
- V. Map of The Seven Churches

I. CONCERNING THE NERONIAN PERSECUTION 65-69 A.D.
Statement by Tacitus

Source: Documents of the Christian Church by Henry Bettensen p. 1-2

Note: Tacitus was a Roman historian who despised Jews and Christians.

“But all the endeavours of men, all the emperor’s largesse and the propitiations of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire had been ordered. And so, to get rid of this rumour, Nero set up as culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Checked for the moment, this pernicious superstition again broke out, not only in Judaea, the source of the evil, but even in Rome, that receptacle for everything that is sordid and degrading from every quarter of the globe, which there finds a following. Accordingly, arrest was first made of those who confessed; then, on their evidence, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even towards men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of an individual.”

II. Concerning Persecution of Christians in Asia Minor Statements by Pliny

Source: Documents of the Christian Church by Henry Bettensen, p. 7-57

Note: Pliny was sent by Emperor Trajan to govern Bythinia in Asia Minor in 112 A.D.

1. Letter to Trajan.

"It is my rule, Sire, to refer to you in matters where I am uncertain. For who can better direct my hesitation or instruct my ignorance? I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know what are the customary penalties or investigations, and what limits are observed. (2) I have hesitated a great deal on the question whether there should be any distinction of ages; whether the weak should have the same treatment as the more robust, whether those who recant should be pardoned, or whether a man who has ever been a Christian should gain nothing by ceasing to be such; whether the name itself, even if innocent of crime, should be punished, or only the crimes attaching to that name.

Meanwhile, this is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. (3) I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist I sentence them to death. For I do not doubt that, whatever kind of crime it may be to which they have confessed, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished. (4) There were others who displayed a like madness and whom I reserved to be sent to Rome, since they were Roman citizens.

Thereupon the usual result following; the very fact of my dealing with the question led to a wider spread of the charge, and a great variety of cases were brought before me. (5) An anonymous pamphlet was issued, containing many names. All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged, because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence, with incense and wine, to your image which I had ordered to be brought forward for this purpose, together with the statues of the deities; and especially because they cursed Christ, a thing which, it is said, genuine Christians cannot be induced to do. (6) Others named by the informer first said that they were Christians and then denied it; declaring that they had been but were so no longer, some having recanted three years or more before and one or two as long ago as twenty years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods and cursed Christ. (7) But they declared that the sum of their guilt or error had amounted only to this, that on an appointed day they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, not for the commission of any crime but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery and breach of faith, and not to deny a deposit when it was claimed. After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food; but it was ordinary and harmless food, and they had ceased this practice after my edict in which, in accordance with your orders, I had forbidden secret societies. (8) I thought it the more necessary, therefore, to find out what truth there was in this by applying torture to two maidservants, who were called deaconesses. But I found nothing but a depraved and extravagant superstition, and I therefore postponed my examination and had recourse to you for consultation.

(9) The matter seemed to me to justify my consulting you, especially on account of the number of those imperilled; for many are being put in peril by accusation, and this will go on. The contagion of this superstition has spread not only in the cities, but in the villages and rural districts as well; yet it seems capable of being checked and set right. (10) There is no shadow of doubt that the temples, which have been almost deserted, are beginning to be frequented once more, that the sacred rites which have been long neglected are being renewed, and that sacrificial victims are for sale everywhere, whereas, till recently, a buyer was rarely to be found. From this it is easy to imagine what a host of men could be set right, were they given a chance of recantation."

2. Trajan's Reply.

"You have taken the right line, my dear Pliny, in examining the cases of those denounced to you as Christians, for no hard and fast rule can be laid down of universal application. (2) They

are not to be sought out; if they are informed against, and the charge is proved, they are to be punished, with this reservation -- that if any one denies that he is a Christian, and actually proves it, that is by worshipping our gods, he shall be pardoned as a result of his recantation, however suspect he may have been with respect to the past. Pamphlets published anonymously should carry no weight in any charge whatsoever. They constitute a very bad precedent, and are also out of keeping with this age."

III. Concerning the Martyrdom of Polycarp A. D. 156

Source: Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I, pp. 37-44.

INTRODUCTION

Internal evidence goes far to establish the credit which Eusebius lends to this specimen of the martyrologies, certainly not the earliest if we accept that of Ignatius as genuine. As an encyclical of one of "the seven churches" to another of the same Seven, and as bearing witness to their aggregation with others into the unity of "the Holy and Catholic Church," it is a very interesting witness, not only to an article of the creed, but to the original meaning and acceptance of the same. More than this, it is evidence of the strength of Christ perfected in human weakness; and thus it affords us an assurance of grace equal to our day in every time of need. When I see in it, however, an example of what a noble army of martyrs, women and children included, suffered in those days "for the testimony of Jesus," and in order to hand down the knowledge of the Gospel to these boastful ages of our own, I confess myself edified by what I read, chiefly because I am humbled and abashed in comparing what a Christian used to be, with what a Christian is, in our times, even at his best estate.

That this Epistle has been interpolated can hardly be doubted, when we compare it with the unvarnished specimen, in Eusebius. As for the "fragrant smell" that came from the fire, many kinds of wood emit the like in burning; and, apart from Oriental warmth of colouring, there seems nothing incredible in the narrative if we except "the dove" (chap. xvi), which, however, is probably a corrupt reading, as suggested by our translators. The blade was thrust into the martyr's left side; and this, opening the heart, caused the outpouring of a flood, and not a mere trickling. But, though Greek thus amended is a plausible conjecture, there seems to have been nothing of the kind in the copy quoted by Eusebius. On the other hand, note the truly catholic and scriptural testimony: "We love the martyrs, but the Son of God we worship: it is impossible for us to worship any other."

Bishop Jacobson assigns more than fifty pages to this martyrology, with a Latin version and abundant notes. To these I must refer the student, who may wish to see this attractive history in all the light of critical scholarship and, often, of admirable comment.

The following is the original INTRODUCTORY NOTICE:-

The following letter purports to have been written by the Church at Smyrna to the Church at Philomelium, and through that Church to the whole Christian world, in order to give a succinct account of the circumstances attending the martyrdom of Polycarp. It is the earliest of all the Martyria, and has generally been accounted both the most interest and authentic. Not a few, however, deem it interpolated in several passages, and some refer it to a much later date than the middle of the second century, to which it has been commonly ascribed. We cannot tell how much it may owe to the writers (chap. xxii.) who successively transcribed it. Great part of it has been engrossed by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* (iv.15); and it is instructive to observe, that some of the most startling miraculous phenomena recorded in the text as it now stands, have no place in the narrative as given by that early historian of the Church. Much discussion has arisen respecting several particulars contained in this Martyrium; but into these disputes we do not enter, having it for our aim simply to present the reader with as faithful a translation as possible of this very interesting monument of Christian antiquity.

THE ENCYCLICAL EPISTLE OF THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to the Church of God sojourning in Philomelium, and to all the congregations of the Holy and Catholic Church in every place: Mercy, peace, and love from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied.

CHAP. I – SUBJECT OF WHICH WE WRITE

We have written to you, brethren, as to what relates to the martyrs, and especially to the blessed Polycarp, who put an end to the persecution, having, as it were, set a seal upon it by his martyrdom. For almost all the events that happened previously (to this one), took place that the Lord might show us from above a martyrdom becoming the Gospel. For he waited to be delivered up, even as to the Lord had done, that we also might become his followers, while we look not merely at what concerns ourselves, but have regard also to our neighbours. For it is the part of a true and well-founded love, not only to wish one's self to be saved, but also all the brethren.

CHAP. II – THE WONDERFUL CONSTANCY OF THE MARTYRS

All the martyrdoms, then, were blessed and noble which took place according to the will of God. For it becomes us who profess greater piety than others, to ascribe the authority over all things to God. And truly, who can fail to admire their nobleness of mind, and their patience, with that love towards their Lord which they displayed? – who, when they were so torn with scourges, that the frame of their bodies, even to the very inward veins and arteries, was laid open, still patiently endured, while even those that stood by pitied and bewailed them. But they reached such a pitch of magnanimity, that not one of them let a sigh or a groan escape them; thus proving to us all that those holy martyrs of Christ, at the very time when they suffered such torments, were absent from the body, or rather, that the Lord then stood by them, and communed with them. And, looking to the grace of Christ, they despised all the torments of this world, redeeming themselves from eternal punishment by (the suffering of) a single hour. For this reason the fire of their savage executioners appeared cool to them. For they kept before their view escape from that fire which is eternal and never shall be quenched, and looked forward with the eyes of their heart to those good things which are laid up for such as endure; things “which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, neither have entered into the heart of man,” but were revealed by the Lord to them, inasmuch as they were no longer men, but had already become angels. And in like manner, those who were condemned to the wild beasts endured dreadful tortures, being stretched out upon beds full of spikes, and subjected to various other kinds of torments, in order that, if it were possible, the tyrant might, by their lingering tortures, lead them to a denial (of Christ).

CHAP. III – THE CONSTANCY OF GERMANICUS.

THE DEATH OF POLYCARP IS DEMANDED

For the devil did indeed invent many things against them; but thanks be to God, he could not prevail over all. For the most noble Germanicus strengthened the timidity of others by his own patience, and fought heroically with the wild beasts. For, when the proconsul sought to persuade him, and urged him to take pity upon his age, he attracted the wild beast towards himself, and provoked it, being desirous to escape all the more quickly from an unrighteous and impious world. But upon this the whole multitude, marvelling at the nobility of mind displayed by the devout and godly race of Christians, cried out, “Away with the Atheists; let Polycarp be sought out!”

CHAP. IV – QUINTUS THE APOSTATE

Now one named Quintus, a Phrygian, who was but lately come from Phrygia, when he saw the wild beasts, became afraid. This was the man who forced himself and some others to come forward voluntarily (for trial). Him the proconsul, after many entreaties, persuaded to swear and to offer sacrifice. Wherefore, brethren, we do not commend those who give themselves up (to suffering), seeing the Gospel does not teach so to do.

CHAP. V – THE DEPARTURE AND VISION OF POLYCARP

But the most admirable Polycarp, when he first heard (that he was sought for), was in no measure disturbed, but resolved to continue in the city. However, in deference to the wish of many, he was persuaded to leave it. He departed, therefore, to a country house not far distant from the city. There he stayed with a few (friends), engaged in nothing else night and day than praying for all men, and for the Churches throughout the world, according to his usual custom. And while he was praying, a vision presented itself to him three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, "I must be burnt alive."

CHAP. VI – POLYCARP IS BETRAYED BY A SERVANT

And when those who sought for him were at hand, he departed to another dwelling, whither his pursuers immediately came after him. And when they found him not, they seized upon two youths (that were there), one of whom, being subjected to torture, confessed. It was thus impossible that he should continue hid, since those that betrayed him were of his own household. The Irenarch then (whose office is the same as that of the Cleronomus), by name Herod, hastened to bring him into the stadium. (This all happened) that he might fulfil his special lot, being made a partaker of Christ, and that they who betrayed him might undergo the punishment of Judas himself.

CHAP. VII – POLYCARP IS FOUND BY HIS PURSUERS

His pursuers then, along with horsemen, and taking the youth with them, went forth at supper-time, on the day of the preparation, with their usual weapons, as if going out against a robber. And being come about evening (to the place where he was), they found him lying down in the upper room of a certain little house, from which he might have escaped into another place; but he refused, saying, "The will of God be done." So when he heard that they were come, he went down and spake with them. And as those that were present marvelled at his age and constancy, some of them said, "Was so much effort made to capture such a venerable man?" Immediately then, in that very hour, he ordered that something to eat and drink should be set before them, as much indeed as they cared for, while he besought them to allow him an hour to pray without disturbance. And on their giving him leave, he stood and prayed, being full of the grace of God, so that he could not cease for two full hours, to the astonishment of them that heard him, insomuch that many began to repent that they had come forth against so godly and venerable an old man.

CHAP. VIII – POLYCARP IS BROUGHT INTO THE CITY

Now, as soon as he had ceased praying, having made mention of all that had at any time come in contact with him, both small and great, illustrious and obscure, as well as the whole Catholic Church throughout the world, the time of his departure having arrived, they set him upon an ass, and conducted him into the city, the day being that of the great Sabbath. And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and endeavored to persuade him, saying, "What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?" But he at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, "I shall not do as you advise me." So they, having no hope of persuading him, began to speak bitter words unto him, and cast him with violence out of the chariot, insomuch that, in getting down from the carriage, he dislocated his leg (by the fall). But without being disturbed, and as if suffering nothing, he went eagerly forward with all haste, and was conducted to the stadium, where the tumult was so great, that there was no possibility of being heard.

CHAP. IX – POLYCARP REFUSES TO REVILE CHRIST

Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, "Be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp!" No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, (the proconsul) sought to persuade

him to deny (Christ), saying, "Have respect to thy old age," and other similar things, according to their custom, (such as), "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists." But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heave, said, "Away with Atheists." Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;" Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"

CHAP. X – POLYCARP CONFESSES HIMSELF A CHRISTIAN

And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar," he answered, "Since thou art vainly urgent that, as thou sayest, I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretendest not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I am a Christian. And if you wish to learn what the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and thou shalt hear them." The proconsul replied, "Persuade the people." But Polycarp said, "To thee I have thought it right to offer an account (of my faith); for we are taught to give all due honour (which entails no injury upon ourselves) to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God. But as for these, I do not deem them worthy of receiving any account from me."

CHAP. XI – NO THREATS HAVE ANY EFFECT ON POLYCARP

The proconsul then said to him, "I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent." Be he answered, "Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous." But again the proconsul said to him, "I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent." But Polycarp said, "Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt."

CHAP. XII – POLYCARP IS SENTENCED TO BE BURNED

While he spoke these and many other things, he was filled with confidence and joy, and his countenance was full of grace, so that not merely did it not fall as if troubled by the things said to him, but, on the contrary, the proconsul was astonished, and sent his herald to proclaim in the midst of the stadium thrice, "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian." The proclamation having been made by the herald, the whole multitude both the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the many Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods." Speaking thus, they cried out, and besought Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. But Philip answered that it was not lawful for him to do so, seeing the shows of wild beasts were already finished. Then it seemed good to them to cry out with one consent, that Polycarp should be burnt alive. For thus it behooved the vision which was revealed to him in regard to his pillow to be fulfilled, when, seeing it on fire as he was praying, he turned about and said prophetically to the faithful that were with him, "I must be burnt alive."

CHAP. XIII – THE FUNERAL PILE IS ERECTED

This, then, was carried into effect with greater speed than it was spoken, the multitudes immediately gathering together wood and fagots out of the shops and baths; and Jews especially, according to custom, eagerly assisting them in it. And when the funeral pile was ready, Polycarp, laying aside all of his garments, and loosing his girdle, sought also to take off his sandals, – a thing he was not accustomed to do, inasmuch as every one of the faithful was always eager who should first touch his skin. For, on account of his holy life, he was, even before his martyrdom, adorned with every kind of good. Immediately then they surrounded him with those substances which had been prepared for the funeral pile. But when they were about also to fix him with nails, he said, "Leave me as I am; for He that giveth me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile."

CHAP. XIV – THE PRAYER OF POLYCARP

They did not nail him then, but simply bound him. And he, placing his hands behind him, and being bound like a distinguished ram (taken) out of a great flock for sacrifice, and prepared to be an acceptable burnt-offering unto God, looked up to heaven, and said, "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who

live before thee, I give Thee thanks that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both the soul and body, through the incorruption (imparted) by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as Thou, the ever-truthful God, hast fore-ordained, hast revealed beforehand to me, and now hast fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen."

CHAP. XV – POLYCARP IS NOT INJURED BY THE FIRE

When he had pronounced this amen, and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And as the flame blazed forth in great fury, we, to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like flesh which is burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odour (coming from the pile), as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there.

CHAP. XVI – POLYCARP IS PIERCED BY A DAGGER

At length, when those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. And on his doing this, there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one, having in our own times been an apostolic and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the Catholic Church which is in Smyrna. For every word that went out of his mouth either has been or shall yet be accomplished.

CHAP. XVII – THE CHRISTIANS ARE REFUSED POLYCARP'S BODY

But when the adversary of the race of the righteous, the envious, malicious and wicked one, perceived the impressive nature of his martyrdom, and (considered) the blameless life he had led from the beginning, and how he was now crowned with the wreath of immortality, having beyond dispute received his reward, he did his utmost that not the least memorial of him should be taken away by us, although many desired to do this, and to become possessors of his holy flesh. For this end he suggested it to Nicetes, the father of Herod and brother of Alce, to go and entreat the governor not to give up his body to be buried, "lest," said he, "forsaking Him that was crucified, they begin to worship this one." This he said at the suggestion of urgent persuasion of the Jews, who also watched us, as we sought to take him out of the fire, being ignorant of this, that it is neither possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of such as shall be saved throughout the whole world (the blameless one for sinners), nor to worship any other. For Him indeed, as being the Son of God, we adore; but the martyrs, as disciples and followers of the Lord, we worthily love on account of their extraordinary affection towards their own King and Master, of whom may we also be made companions and fellow-disciples!

CHAP. XVIII – THE BODY OF POLYCARP IS BURNED

The centurion then, seeing the strife excited by the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and consumed it. Accordingly, we afterwards took up his bones, as being more precious than the most exquisite jewels, and more purified than gold, and deposited them in a fitting place, whither, being gathered together, as opportunity is allowed us, with joy and rejoicing, the Lord shall grant us to celebrate the anniversary of his martyrdom, both in memory of those who have already finished their course, and for the exercising and preparation of those yet to walk in their steps.

CHAP. XIX – PRAISE OF THE MARTYR POLYCARP

This, then, is the account of the blessed Polycarp, who, being the twelfth that was martyred in Smyrna (reckoning those also of Philadelphia), yet occupies a place of his own in the memory of all men, inasmuch that he is everywhere spoken of by the heathen themselves. He was not merely an illustrious teacher, but also a pre-eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, as having been altogether consistent with the Gospel of Christ. For, having through patience overcome the unjust governor, and thus acquired the crown of immortality, he now, with the apostles and all the righteous (in heaven), rejoicingly glorifies God, even the Father and blesses our Lord Jesus Christ,

the Saviour of our souls, the Governor of our bodies, and the Shepherd of the Catholic Church throughout the world.

CHAP. XX – THE EPISTLE IS TO BE TRANSMITTED TO THE BRETHREN

Since, then, ye requested that we would at large make you acquainted with what really took place, we have for the present sent you this summary account through our brother Marcus. When, therefore, ye have yourselves read this Epistle, be pleased to send it to the brethren at a greater distance, that they also may glorify the Lord, who makes such choice of His own servants. To Him who is able to bring us all by His grace and goodness into his everlasting kingdom, through His only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, to Him be glory, and honour, and power, and majesty, for ever. Amen. Salute all the saints. They that are with us salute you, and Evarestus, who wrote this Epistle, with all his house.

CHAP. XXI – THE DATE OF THE MARTYRDOM

Now, the blessed Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus just begun, the seventh day before the Kalends of May, on the great Sabbath, at the eighth hour. He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation. Amen.

CHAP. XXII – SALUTATION

We wish you, brethren, all happiness, while you walk according to the doctrine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; with whom be glory to God the Father and the Holy Spirit for the salvation of His holy elect, after whose example the blessed Polycarp suffered, following in whose steps my we too be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ!

These things Caius transcribed from the copy of Irenaeus (who was a disciple of Polycarp), having himself been intimate with Irenaeus. And I Socrates transcribed them at Corinth from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all.

And I again, Poinius, wrote them from the previously written copy, having carefully searched into them, and the blessed Polycarp having manifested them to me through a revelation, even as I shall show in what follows. I have collected these things, when they had almost faded away through the lapse of time, what the Lord Jesus Christ may also gather me along with His elect into His heavenly kingdom, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

IV. A "Libellus" - Certificate of Sacrifice

Source: *Doctrines of the Christian Church* by Henry Bettensen, p. 18.

A "libellus" (certificate of sacrifice) discovered at Fayoum (Egypt), 1893: Milligan, *Greek Papyri*, 4.

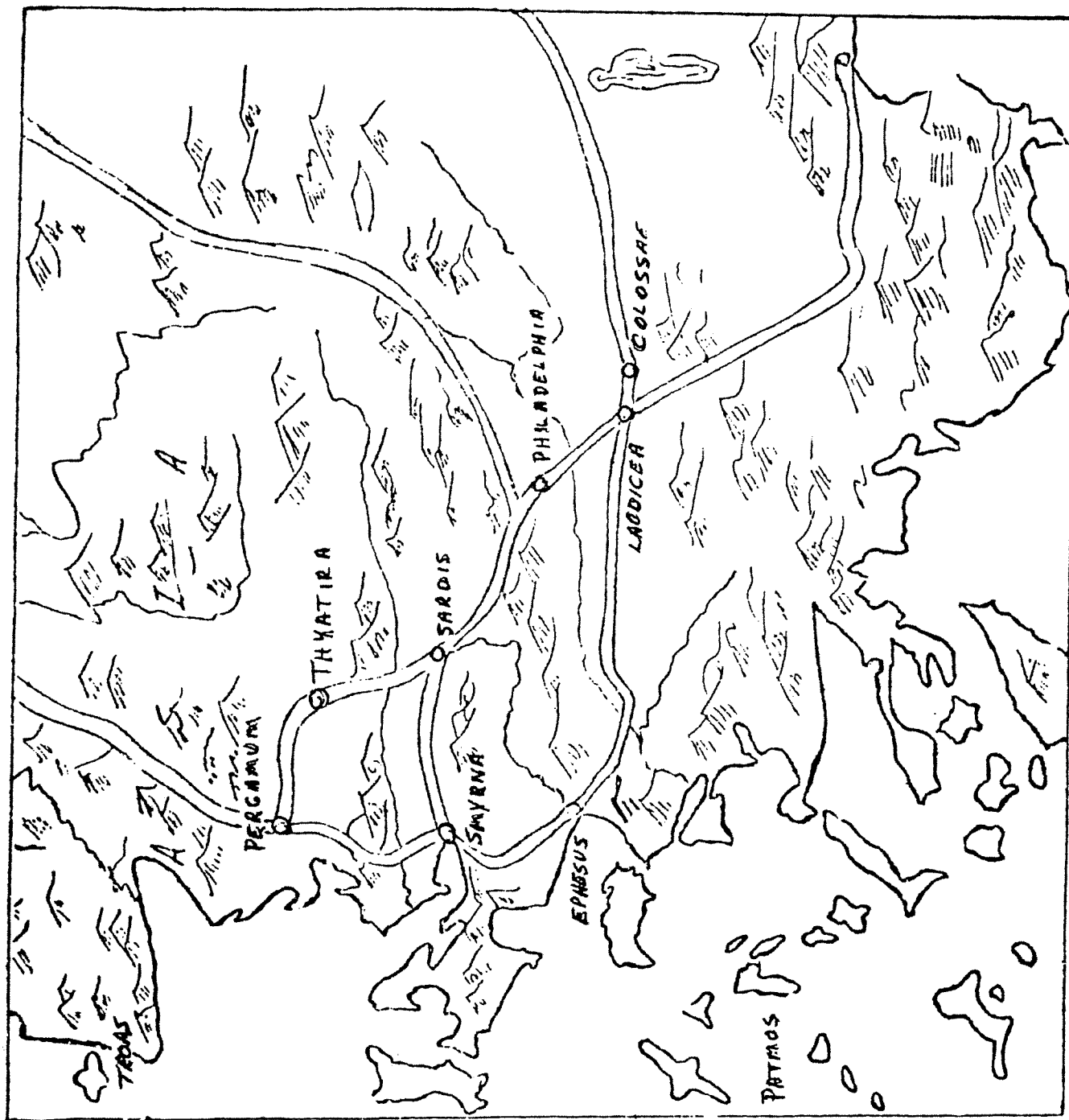
(The Edict of Decius, 250, commanded provincial governors and magistrates, assisted where necessary by local notables, to superintend the sacrifices to the gods and to the genius of the Emperor, to be performed by all on a fixed day. Many recanted; others brought certificates or had them procured by pagan friends. There seems to have been wholesale connivance of the officials.)

TO THE COMMISSIONERS FOR SACRIFICES IN THE VILLAGE OF ALEXANDER'S ISLAND
FROM AURELIUS DIOGENES, SON OF SATABUS, OF THE VILLAGE OF ALEXANDER'S ISLAND, AGED 72; SCAR ON RIGHT EYEBROW.

I have always sacrificed to the gods, and now in your presence, in accordance with the terms of the edict, I have done sacrifice and poured libations and tasted the sacrifices, and I request you to certify to this effect. Farewell.

PRESENTED BY ME, AURELIUS DIOGENES. I CERTIFY THAT I WITNESSED HIS SACRIFICE, AURELIUS SYRUS.

Dates this first year of the Emperor Caesar Gaius Messius Quintus Trajanus Decius, Pius, Felix, Augustus, the 2nd of Epiph. (26 June 250).



MAP OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

