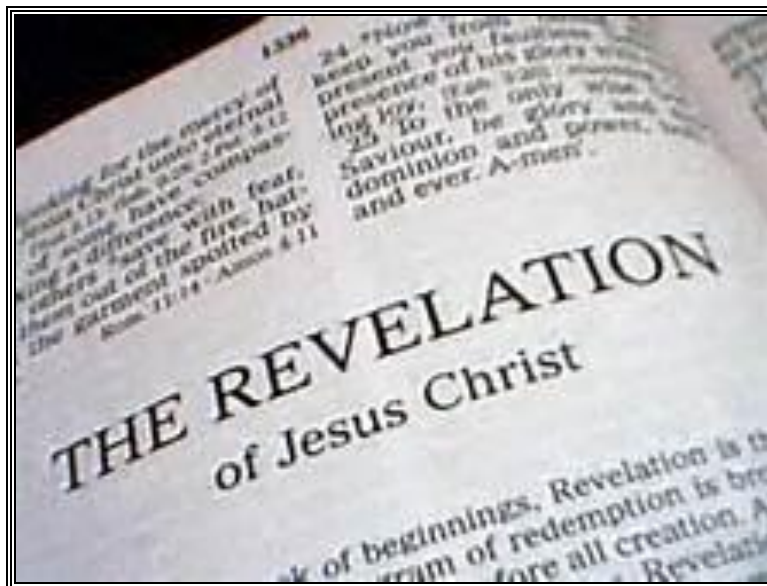


CLASS NOTES - OVERVIEW OF REVELATION

Taught By Robert Stapleton



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OVERVIEW ON REVELATION

Robert Stapleton

CLASS DESCRIPTION:

1. The main aim of this course is to conduct an overview study of pertinent information on the Book of Revelation. Several area will be covered, but time does not allow a verse by verse study of the book.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Each student is to write a paper on the importance of the Book of Revelation. The paper should consist of at least five double spaced pages, Times New Roman 12 Font, one inch margins all around. Paper should be turned in to instructor no later than the beginning of the last class – late papers count one grade per day off. Paper will count for 40% of your total grade. Watch for misspelled words and check your grammar.
2. Tests:
 - A. One scheduled test will be administered.
 1. It will account for 60% of your total score.
 2. Any additional credit will be at the instructor's discretion.

OVERVIEW NOTES ON REVELATION

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INTRODUCTION:

1. To conduct an overview study of the Book of Revelation without compromising the intent and meaning of the message, we must spend time “setting up” the letter so as to better understand the history, context, signs and symbols revealed to John by Christ.
 - A. In this overview we will make no assumption that we will completely and fully understand every detail of this book, as time simply does not allow such.

BODY:

1. THEME: GOD AND HIS PEOPLE ARE VICTORIOUS

- A. For many people, the Book of Revelation is not a favorite.
 1. People are confused by it.
 2. Some are repulsed by it.
 3. Most are intimidated by it.
- B. Consideration of the framework and structure of the Book.
 1. There are 22 total chapters.
 2. It is not the “Revelation of John” as indicated by the heading found in many of our Bibles.
 - A. Rather, it is the “Revelation of Jesus Christ to John.”
 - B. Which John was it?
 1. No doubt, the apostle John, not John Mark
 - A. Revelation has been attributed to the apostle John by early church leaders such as Papias, Justin Martyr and Irenaeus.
 - B. John moved to Ephesus around AD 70, which was the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - C. For the next 25 years he was a prominent Christian leader in Asia Minor.
 - D. During that time, he was exiled to the island of Patmos most likely during the reign of Domitian, and quite possibly by Domitian - Revelation 1:9.
 1. Patmos was used as a place of exile by many Roman emperors.
 - A. It served as a penal colony or settlement.
 - B. Patmos was a small (approximate 4 mile by 8 mile), rocky island in the Aegean Sea, some 50 miles southwest of Ephesus, off the coast of modern Turkey.
 - E. Historians have indicated that exile was preceded by scourging, and was marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground, a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers.
 1. John was likely quite old when he wrote the book around AD 94-96.
 3. It appears that John was Jesus’ witness and secretary - Revelation 1:1, 2.
 - A. John most likely penned the book.
 1. Some believe it was during Nero’s reign, but the evidence seems overwhelming that it was during Domitian’s reign in the late 90’s

- A. Evidence shows that the condition of seven churches fit the late 90's better than the 60's when Nero reigned.
 - 1. The church of Ephesus was thriving in the 60's whereas in the 90's it was struggling spiritually - Revelation 2:1-7.
- B. Revelation was written during a time of great persecution of the church.
 - 1. Rome ruled the world in the first century.
 - 2. Christianity had gone relatively unnoticed for many years.
 - 3. As time went on, Christians came into conflict with Rome and fellow countrymen.
 - 4. Several reasons Christianity became increasingly persecuted:
 - A. Discipleship – due to this it became an “illegal religion”.
 - B. Universality – available to all; Rome saw that as a threat to their power.
 - C. Christianity was “exclusive” in that it refused to accept anyone as a “brother” religion as it rejected the more common heathen and pagan traditions and customs of the day.
 - D. Converts were often the poor and outcasts of society.
 - E. Christians refused to compromise their faith in Christ and Rome hated that.
 - F. Christians would not worship the emperor.

2. THE AUDIENCE

- A. Written to the seven churches of Asia.
 - 1. Not the continent of Asia but the Roman province of Asia which was located along the eastern shore of Aegean Sea, which is now the western coast of Turkey.
 - A. Ephesus - Revelation 2:1-7.
 - B. Smyrna - Revelation 2:8-11.
 - C. Pergamum - Revelation 2:12-17.
 - D. Thyatira - Revelation 2:18-29.
 - E. Sardis - Revelation 3:1-6.
 - F. Philadelphia - Revelation 3:7-13.
 - G. Laodicea - Revelation 3:14-22.
- B. There was more than seven churches in that province.
 - 1. There was Troas, Colossae, and Hierapolis - Acts 20, Colossians 1 and 4.
- C. These seven were chosen as “typical” or “representative” churches.
 - 1. Note the “he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” - Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.
 - A. This extends even to the present day.

3. WRITING STYLE AND CHARACTERISTICS

- A. Some have said that this is not the same John that wrote the Book of John and 1, 2, and 3 John.
- B. Why is this claim made?
 - 1. The style of Revelation seems more awkward.
 - 2. There are very few similarities between Revelation and the other writings.
 - A. However, it should be noted that those similarities are strong and important.
 - 1. Only John referred to Jesus as logos (λογος) - John 1:1,14; 1 John 1:1;

- Revelation 19:13.
2. John favored John the Baptist's reference of Jesus being the "Lamb of God" - John 1:29, 36.
 - A. In Revelation we note the term "Lamb" in reference to Jesus some 22 times.
 3. Only John mentions in his Gospel account that Jesus' side was pierced - John 19:34.
 - A. This is mentioned in Revelation 1:7.
 4. Several other similarities between passages in John and Revelation may be found.
 5. Of course, they could be accounted for because of inspiration, but keep in mind that inspired writers' personalities were left intact.
3. The differences could be accounted for due to several things.
 - A. The content is different in Revelation from the other books.
 1. Revelation records symbols and visions which would be much different from writing a biography of someone's life or writing a conversational toned letter.
 2. The experience was different.
 - A. Much of Revelation seems to have been written while John was seeing the visions and hearing the voices.
 - B. This would be much different than recording observations after the fact.
 3. There is much difference in procedure.
 - A. John's other writings may have been written down with the help of a "secretary" or "amanuensis".
 - B. Revelation was most likely written in John's own hand.
 - B. The design was different.
 1. Although the style may have been awkward, it is rarely unclear.
 2. The "feel" of John's writing may have been done "on purpose" to achieve a certain effect.
 - A. This writing, as with the others, would have been guided by the Holy Spirit.
 - C. Revelation is part apocalyptic literature, part prophecy, and part epistle.
 1. Apocalyptic
 - A. Goes to the word "Revelation".
 - B. Revelation translated from the Greek -- *αποκαλυψις* — apokalupsis or Apocalypse.
 - C. Some translations use the term "The Apocalypse".
 - D. This is a special type of writing that's filled with strange symbols.
 2. Prophecy
 - A. See Revelation 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19.
 - B. Prophets were God's inspired spokesmen, concerned about "proclaiming any word from God – whether command, instruction, history or prediction."
 3. Epistle or letter
 - A. After the opening statement, the text moves into "letter greeting" - Revelation 1:4.
 - B. There is indication of an obvious author and recipient(s).

4. Apocalyptic literature
 - A. What does 'apocalyptic' mean?
 1. It has become a synonym for doom and devastation.
 - A. The Greek word apokalupsis does not have that connotation.
 2. It simply means "an unveiling".
 3. It combines the Greek words for "cover" (kalupto) and "from" or "away" (apo).
 - A. Thus meaning to "uncover".
 - B. It refers to anything which was unknown in the past and has now been revealed.
 - C. It, also, is applied to a special type of literature that flourished during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.
 1. The message is conveyed through symbols.
 2. It does not merely enhance the message, but constitutes the message.
 - B. Symbols
 1. Reference to that which is not ordinary or familiar.
 - A. Many are grotesque or nightmarish.
 - B. This makes it hard for us to relate to as our modern literature does not have this kind of language usage.
 2. Did the original readers understand it?
 - A. Surely, as this approach to writing was not uncommon.
 - B. It is seen in Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Joel, and Zechariah.
 - C. The period between the testaments (as written about in the Apocrypha) is full of apocalyptic writings such as The Book of Enoch, The Assumption of Moses, The Secrets of Enoch, The Book of Baruch, The Book of IV Ezra.
 - D. "When the Christian apocalypticist John held out to his suffering companions the hope of the destruction of Rome and the victory of God's cause, he was following a well-beaten path leading past many familiar landmarks. In confidently resorting to apocalyptic imagery for a solution of his difficulties he was moving in an atmosphere thoroughly congenial to many Christians, acquainted as they were with these Jewish antecedents of their own religion.", Summers, Ray, 1951, Worthy Is The Lamb, p. 16.
 3. Why was this approach used?
 - A. Writers were trying to tell men about the intervention of God in their affairs in such a way so as to hide the meaning from their enemies.
 - B. This kind of language actually aided communication rather than hindering it.
 - C. Political and religious climate.
 1. They were living in "troubled times".
 - A. Such as was seen in Ezekiel/Daniel and the Babylonian captivity.
 - B. The apocalyptic writings between the testaments was brought about by the oppression by the Syrians.
 - C. The Book of Revelation dealt with Christian persecution under

Nero and Domitian.

4. Symbolic language had two purposes:
 - A. To reveal the message to the initiated who understood the meaning of the symbols.
 - B. To conceal the message from the uninitiated.
 1. Jesus' parables were similar.
 2. Consider the message of Revelation and how it provided assurance to first-century Christians that their oppressor, the Roman Empire, would ultimately fall.
 - A. What if the Roman officials had understood the message?
 1. It was difficult for John to get his message off the island of Patmos.
 - A. The Roman authorities would never have allowed it to circulate.
 - B. It might have been used as evidence against Christians to "prove" their rebellion against the state.
 2. As it was, Roman officials would have likely paid it no mind to it.
5. Is the Book of Revelation meant to be understood?
 - A. The short answer is, yes.
 1. God has never dangled carrots of this kind in front of His creation.
 2. God expects us to understand the basic messages of Revelation.
 3. The book is intended to be a revelation, not a hidden message.
 4. It would be of no spiritual benefit and guidance if we were unable to understand the central teachings of the book, even if it wasn't originally written to us.

4. APPROACHES OF INTERPRETATION

- A. When a rocket is fired, a deviation of a few degrees at the point of departure can make a difference of hundreds of miles in where it lands.
 1. The same can be said in a study of Revelation.
- B. If we start from the right place, we will have a fuller and richer understanding of it.
 1. If we start from an erroneous place (as so many do), some bizarre conclusions can be drawn.
- C. So, how should we approach this kind of study?
 1. Two essentials to keep in mind in interpreting Revelation.
 - A. The book had to have meaning when it was written.
 1. Notice the phrases "things which must shortly come to pass" and "for the time is at hand" - Revelation 1:1, 3.
 2. It was written to persecuted Christians in a particular time in history.
 - A. As such, what it said had specific meaning to them in that context.
 - B. The book has meaning now.
 1. It had a universal message for all time - Revelation 2:7; 22:18.
 2. What meaning does it have for us today?

3. Proper hermeneutics will provide the answer.
2. There are four primary approaches to the interpretation to Revelation.
 - A. Futurist
 - B. Continuous-Historical
 - C. Preterist
 - D. Symbolic
 1. Our approach combines the Preterist and Symbolic interpretation methods with an emphasis on the symbolic.

5. PRIMARY APPROACHES TO INTERPRETATION:

- A. Countless variations.
- B. Point out strengths and weaknesses.
- C. The futurist method examined.
 1. This view leaves most of the book describing events in the distant future of when the book was written.
 - A. Suggests that most events are still in the future.
 - B. Events immediately preceding the second coming.
 - C. This is a very popular interpretation most commonly seen in Premillennialism.
 1. Suggests that Jesus will return before his thousand-year reign.
 2. Suggests that He will reign 1000 years on earth.
 3. Suggests that after that a general judgment will be held where people are assigned heaven or hell.
 - A. Some believe that final judgment is only for the wicked.
 2. According to this theory Jesus came to earth to establish an earthly kingdom but failed because the Jews rejected Him.
 - A. Because of this, Jesus' plans were postponed.
 - B. It is suggested that the "Church Age" is the present era wherein Jesus set up the church as a temporary measure until the kingdom could be established.
 1. The premillennialists make a great distinction between the "church" and the "kingdom".
 3. The premillennialists claim that Revelation chapters 1-3 tell of the almost 2000 years that the church has been in existence.
 - A. They further claim that the seven churches of Asia represent seven ages of the church.
 1. You may hear the phrase "dispensational premillennialism."
 - B. It is claimed that during the 1,000 years that Jesus is on earth the Jews will accept Him as Messiah and the plan will get back on track.
 - C. It is claimed that there will be the "rapture" which will be followed by seven years of tribulation.
 1. It is claimed that for believers, all of this will begin with the rapture.
 2. After the faithful have departed, a seven year period of tribulation will begin on earth.
 3. Jesus and his followers will hover in the air as chaos reigns on the earth.
 4. The premillennialists claim that chapters 4-19 provide details about the seven year period with most of the section referring to the Tribulation.

- A. Jesus' is to reign on earth for a 1000 years, often referred to as "a little season," and while doing so, He defeats His enemies, and sets up an earthly kingdom.
 - 1. It is claimed that He will reign in Jerusalem over this kingdom.
 - B. It is alleged that following the 1000 years will be a short period when Satan will be allowed to gather a mighty army, but will be defeated by Jesus in a great battle, called the Battle of Armageddon.
 - C. The Day of Judgment follows the battle.
- 5. Chapter 20, so they claim, tells of the 1000 year reign, the "little season" and the Day of Judgment.
 - A. Eternity follows the day of judgment with the righteous in heaven and unrighteous in hell.
- 6. It is alleged that chapters 21 and 22 tell of heaven.
- 7. The major flaw with all of this is that Revelation is a book primarily about the chaos on the earth during the seven years of Tribulation.
- 8. The alleged strengths of this view is the message is "repent...Jesus is coming soon!"
 - A. Also, they believe a strength is that they take Revelation literally, which is not true.
- 9. The weaknesses are many.
 - 1. An unbalanced view, focusing on the wrong thing.
 - 2. A view that is inconsistent with John's own statement in Revelation 1:1.
 - A. Must = moral necessity (dei).
 - B. Soon = quickly, shortly (en tachei).
 - 3. A view that has little or no message for persecuted 1st century Christians.
 - 4. A view that conflicts with plain Bible teaching.
 - A. It depreciates the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The church was a part of the eternal purpose of God - Ephesians 3:10, 11, 21.
- D. The continuous-historical interpretation method.
 - 1. This theory suggests that Revelation gives a detailed blueprint of history, especially the history of the church, from the first century to the end of the world.
 - A. It is sometimes referred to as the chronological view, outline-of-history approach, or historicist view.
 - B. This view is very popular among Protestants.
 - C. It is used to show the parallel/timetable of the history of Western Europe.
 - D. Many years, and symbols were interpreted to apply to the Roman Catholic Church in general and the pope specifically.
 - 2. Strengths:
 - A. Special appeal to those who oppose Catholicism.
 - B. The message for today: "The whole of history is under the control of God".
 - 3. Weaknesses:
 - A. Largely speculative and subjective – no solid evidence.
 - B. Interpretations vary greatly.
 - C. Arbitrary focus on events of Western Europe largely ignoring other places in the world.

- D. Often used to predict the second coming of Jesus.
 - 1. Generally assumes one day equals one year.
- E. Assumes that most of events are far removed from the first century.
- F. Generally views the visions as chronological, which presents problems throughout the book
- G. Would have held little comfort for persecuted Christians in the first century.
 - 1. It would not have made much sense at all.
- H. It's fatal flaw is that too often historical commentators place the final events of the book in their own day which makes for constant revision of the timetable in which Christ will return.
- E. Preterist
 - 1. Suggests that most, if not all, of the book tells what happened in the early centuries of the church – i.e., in our past.
 - A. From the Latin word meaning “beyond” or “past”
 - B. Extreme approach indicating that Revelation speaks of events already in the past at the time of the writing.
 - C. Advocated by those who support the “A.D. 70 theory”.
 - D. Teaches that the second coming was in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed.
 - E. Most common preterist view is a “contemporary-history view”.
 - 2. Strengths:
 - A. Solidly rooted in historical situation of the 1st century.
 - B. Strong message for Christians: “The Roman Empire may look invincible, but God is still in control. In the end, Rome will be destroyed and you will be vindicated.”
 - 3. Weaknesses:
 - A. Everything was fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire.
 - 1. Thus, the message today would be limited.
 - B. This view ignores teachings on “last things”.
 - 4. Many have modified their view and do believe the last few chapters speak of Judgment Day and of eternity.
- F. Symbolic
 - 1. Suggests that Revelation is speaking symbolically about the conflict between good and evil in every age, a conflict in which good will ultimately triumph.
 - A. More or less unconcerned with the historical background of Revelation.
 - B. Stresses that the overall thrust of the visions is more important than the details.
 - C. Symbols are not specific things, but general principles.
 - 2. Strengths:
 - A. “Least dangerous” because it concentrates on timeless ideas and principles.
 - B. Whether you know the historical background of Revelation, the message is still vital today: “The Lord reigns! Be strong in the Lord! His cause will triumph.”
 - 3. Weaknesses:
 - A. Lack of emphasis on the spiritual and political situation when Revelation was written.
 - B. Can't ignore the references to the current events of the day.
- G. Select-Wisely

1. A combination of the Preterist and Symbolic views seems best.
 - A. Importance placed on the history and the symbolic.
2. Interestingly enough, the idea of all four approaches are the same:
 - A. If we remain faithful to God, we will win!

6. REVIEW OF INTERPRETATION APPROACHES AND DISCUSSION ON SYMBOLISM APPROACH

- A. To many, Revelation is unknown territory and is viewed with the same fear that perhaps the first mapmakers had about the unexplored world...
 1. These areas were forbidding and dangerous.
 2. Often filled with mythical creatures – “here be dragons!”
 - A. For those who study Revelation, this is a true statement because in Revelation 12:3, we read about the great red dragon.
 3. Reminds us of sailors who had only the stars to navigate by.
 4. Throughout the book, many other strange and exotic creatures are seen:
 - A. Winged creatures with eyes in front and back - Revelation 4:6-8.
 - B. Locusts with tails like scorpions - Revelation 9:3-11.
 - C. A fearsome beast with seven heads - Revelation 13:1, 2.
 - D. Three unclean spirits that look like frogs - Revelation 16:13, 14.
 5. What’s the initial reaction to these?
 6. For the next little bit, we will review symbols in general and symbols particular to Revelation to help us get our bearings straight.
- B. Symbolism
 1. Symbol – sumballo
 - A. Compound of “with” (sun) and “to throw” (ballo).
 - B. Means “that which is thrown with [something else]”.
 - C. Refers to two concepts – one tangible and one intangible being “thrown together” to convey a concept.
 - D. Similar to the word “parable”.
 1. That which is thrown alongside.
 - E. Dictionary definition - “something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object use to represent something invisible”.
 2. We deal with symbols on an everyday basis:
 - A. Skull and Crossbones - poison
 - B. Elephant/Donkey - Republican/Democrat
 - C. Dove - peace
 - D. Horseshoe - luck
 3. In the book of Revelation, keep in mind that we must understand that visible objects will be used to represent invisible truths.
- C. Rules about Symbolism
 1. The book of Revelation conveys its message through symbols, and one must interpret them accordingly.
 - A. This is the reverse of the usual rule of interpretation.
 1. “A word or sentence is figurative if making it literal involves an

impossibility” (Hermeneutics, Dungan, p. 195).

- [illegible]

- A. We must be careful not to get bogged down in the nitty-gritty details and pick it to death.
- 3. Each Vision – as we consider:
 - A. Three steps to a correct understanding:
 - 1. Look at the big picture or the primary message.
 - 2. Move in to examine the details and see if they add anything to that message.
 - 3. Move back to see the big picture again so we don't lose sight of it.
 - B. In addition to the special rules of interpretation, we must also look to the general principles of interpretation:
 - 1. Never base a major doctrine on an obscure passage.
 - A. Example - Jesus will reign for a literal 1000 years in earthly Jerusalem.
 - 2. Never interpret a figurative passage in such a way that it contradicts plain teaching elsewhere.
 - A. Example - The teaching by J.W.'s that only 144,000 will go to heaven.
 - 1. The rest of the faithful allegedly live on a restored earth.
 - 2. Violates 1 Peter 1:3-5.
 - 3. No doctrine is found in Revelation that is not found elsewhere.
 - B. Teaching must be harmony between Revelation and rest of the Bible.
 - 3. The meaning of figures of speech can change.
 - A. A symbol can have one meaning in one setting and mean something different in another setting.
 - 1. Sheep
 - A. When people are compared: Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:25 - less desirable qualities are seen.
 - B. When Christ is compared: Isaiah 53:7; Acts 8:32; John 1:29 - more desirable qualities are seen.
 - 2. False assumption - symbol means the same no matter what or when or where.
 - A. Example - two women of chapters 12 and 17.
 - 1. One a holy one.
 - 2. One a harlot.
 - 3. Often times when comparing an Old Testament reference with it's counterpart, look for the twist.
 - 4. What to do when we do not know.
 - A. Some things are the secret things that belong to the Lord - Deuteronomy 29:29.
 - B. That is why we must beware of adding to or taking away from God's word.
 - C. And why opinions should never be allowed to disrupt the harmony of God's people.
- D. Kinds of symbols:
 - 1. Three dominate types of symbols in Revelation:
 - A. Numbers used symbolically.
 - 1. Use of numbers as symbols is huge in Revelation.

- A. In a time when a Hebrew word would have many meanings, the use of numbers became important as numbers would represent definite concepts or truths.
- B. Even today.
 - 1. Number 13
 - A. Unlucky
 - B. Some buildings do not have a floor “13”.
- C. Consider the following:
 - 1. Most numeric symbols are derived from only 3 numbers - 3, 4, and 10.
 - A. Three
 - 1. Number of the Deity.
 - 2. Concept of the “trinity” - Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
 - 3. Homer Hailey – “symbolic of a complete and ordered whole”.
 - B. Four
 - 1. “Cosmic Number”.
 - 2. Number of creation.
 - 3. Perhaps associated with four directions - North, South, East, and West.
 - 4. Often refers to all of humanity.
 - C. Combination of 3 and 4
 - 1. Seven
 - A. $3 + 4$
 - B. Very frequent in Revelation, used more than 50 times.
 - C. Appears throughout all the Bible.
 - 1. Starting with 7 days of creation.
 - D. Represented perfection.
 - E. Most sacred number to the Hebrews.
 - F. Deity plus the universe equals all that exists.
 - G. In Revelation, a listing of seven items often consists of a grouping of 3 plus a grouping of 4 or viceversa.
 - H. Other derivations:
 - 1. The number Six.
 - A. One short of seven.
 - 1. Imperfection or evil.
 - B. To many Jews of the day, same as our “13”.
 - C. Almost seven.
 - 1. Implied deception.
 - D. Used to forecast disaster.
 - 1. The number 666 - Revelation 13:18.
 - E. However, keep in mind that “6” is also “3 pairs”.
 - 2. The number Three and one-half.
 - A. Half of seven.
 - 1. Incompleteness.

- B. Generally associated with:
 - 1. Trial, hardship, testing.
 - 2. Implied a better day ahead.
 - C. Alternate ways of saying it:
 - 1. 42 months
 - 2. 1260 days
 - 3. "A time and times and half a time".
 - 4. See Revelation 12:6, 14.
 - 2. Twelve
 - A. 3 x 4
 - B. Another frequent number use throughout the Bible.
 - 1. 12 tribes
 - C. Even multiple of 12.
 - 1. 144
 - 2. Often found
 - D. Carries the idea of completeness since 12 resulted from 3 (Deity) multiplied by 4 (creation).
 - E. In Hebrew thought, related to religious completeness'
 - 3. Ten
 - A. Also signified completeness, fullness or power.
 - B. Perhaps stemming from "10 fingers" from a person.
 - C. Perhaps a pre-cursor to the decimal system.
 - D. As it multiplied, so did it's significance.
 - 1. 10 commandments - human completeness.
 - 2. 10^3 (10x10x10) = 1000 - perfection - strong symbol.
 - E. Also, 5, which is half of ten.
 - 1. Limited strength or duration.
 - 4. One
 - A. Idea of unity
 - B. Mainly used in the phrase "one hour".
 - 1. Something standing alone and thus weak.
 - 2. A short period of time that will pass quickly.
 - 5. Two
 - A. Double of one
 - B. A number of strengthening.
 - C. Revelation speaks of "two witnesses" (Revelation 11:3) and other numbers strengthened being multiplied by 2.
 - 6. Most other numbers. . .
 - A. Combination of the previous numbers.
 - D. Be careful of "modernized weights and measurements".
 - 1. Such as with NASB.
 - 2. 12,000 furlongs becomes 1500 miles.
 - 3. Numbers can lose their meanings when we modernize.
 - E. Fractions

1. Meant “a part but not the whole”.
 2. $1/10$ = a small part.
 3. $1/4$ = some.
 4. $1/3$ = a substantial part.
 - A. Dividing anything into 3 parts weakens it.
 5. McGuiggan suggested that fractions show “part payment”.
 - A. Rest to come later.
 - B. Credit is common concept today.
- F. Two warnings:
1. Do not let your imagination run wild.
 - A. Metzger said “Revelation is unique in appealing primarily to our imagination - not, however, a free-wheeling imagination but a disciplined imagination.”
 - B. These meanings come from study of Old Testament and other Jewish writings - especially apocalyptic literature.
 - C. They were not invented for Revelation.
 - D. They were not the result of someone’s “wild imagination”
 2. Understand that using numbers symbolically in apocalyptic literature is not the same as occult numerology - i.e., the study of the occult meanings of number and their supposed influence on human life.
 - A. Several attempts at analyzing Revelation under these circumstances has failed and been written about.
 - B. This is not numerology, but symbolism.
- B. Symbolism used from the Old Testament.
1. There are more than 400 references to the Old Testament.
 - A. Although none are direct quotations.
 - B. Most of these references are to characters or events.
 - C. There is borrowed symbolism from apocalyptic segments of the Old Testament.
 2. Also, when comparing Old Testament references, look for the “twist”.
 - A. The Revelation references will often have one or more details that vary from the Old Testament reference.
 - B. This indicates that Revelation is not referring to the exact same thing but to something similar - a similar concept.
 - C. Example: Revelation 7:4-8.
 1. List of the 12 tribes.
 2. List is not literal - it is wrong.
 - A. See lists in Genesis 35:22-26.
 - B. Levi is included.
 - C. Dan is missing.
- C. Symbols based on historical background.
1. What about those symbols connected with first-century historical background?
 - A. Knowing something about the history of the time is imperative and

extremely valuable.

B. This includes:

1. Cities
2. Doctrinal errors creeping into the church.
3. Knowing about the Roman empire.
4. Knowing about other nations not in the empire.

2. Let's take a quick survey of the Roman Empire and how it related to Christianity.

A. Early History

1. Legend - Romulus and Remus founded Rome in 753 BC.
2. It was built on 7 hills.
3. In 509 BC they drove out an oppressive king and established a republic.

B. Julius Caesar (49-44 BC)

1. A military genius and a politician.
2. In 49 BC, subdued the Roman Senate with military force and declared himself dictator.
3. For all intents and purposes, he was a dictator, not emperor.
4. He is given credit for starting the Empire.
5. Ultimately, "Caesar" was the title of the Roman emperor.
6. Recognized as a god and temples were dedicated to him.
7. On March 15, 44 BC, he was assassinated by Brutus, Cassius and other conspirators.

C. Augustus (Octavian) Caesar (27 BC–AD 14)

1. Julius Caesar's nephew - adopted by him and was made his heir.
2. When Caesar died, civil war erupted, eventually Octavian became emperor.
3. In 27 BC he restored the republican government and the Senate conferred upon him the title of Augustus, "the exalted one."
4. His rule prepared the way for Christianity.
 - A. Pax Romana (Roman peace).
 - B. The spread of the Greek Language.
 1. Koine
 - C. The building of massive networks of roads.
5. He was ruling when Jesus was born.

D. Tiberius Caesar (AD 14–37)

1. Was a stepson and son-in-law of Augustus.
2. He was ruling during the personal ministry and death of Christ.
3. He was still in power when the church was established.

E. Gaius Caligula (AD 37–41)

1. Great-nephew of Tiberius.
2. Became mentally unbalanced because of an illness.
3. Known as the "mad emperor".
4. Initiated some religious persecution, mainly against the Jews.

5. His own officers murdered him.
 6. He is not mentioned in the New Testament.
- F. Claudius Caesar (AD 41–54)
1. Nephew of Tiberius and uncle of Caligula.
 2. Declared emperor by imperial guards.
 3. During his reign, Rome became the commercial center of the world.
 4. Mentioned twice in the New Testament - Acts 11:28, 18:2.
 5. Drove the Jews from Rome - which probably included Christians.
 6. Was poisoned by his 4th wife (and niece) who wanted the empire for her son . . . Nero.
- G. Nero (AD 54–68)
1. Adopted son of Claudius.
 2. During the first part of his reign, advised by good men.
 3. He was Caesar when Paul appealed in Acts 25:10-12.
 4. About the time Paul was released from his first imprisonment, selfish and calculating rivals gained control of Nero - his reign quickly declined.
 5. In AD 64, when Nero was accused of starting the fire that swept Rome, he made Christians his scapegoat.
 6. The first real persecution of Christians by the Roman government.
 - A. It wasn't empire-wide, but set a precedent
 7. Was widely untrusted by Romans.
 8. In AD 68, Roman armies revolted and claimed Galba, their leader, emperor.
 - A. Nero fled.
 - B. He was tracked down, committed suicide.
 9. A myth arose that Nero would one day return.
- H. "Year of the 4 emperors" (AD 68–69)
1. A quick succession of 4 emperors.
 - A. Galba (June 68–Jan 69)
 - B. Otho (Jan–Mar 69)
 - C. Vitellius (April–Dec 69)
 - D. Vespasian
- I. Flavius Vespasian (AD 69–79)
- A. Confirmed by the Senate in Dec. 69.
 - B. To prevent civil war, he designated his son as heir.
- J. Titus (AD 79–81)
1. Destroyed Rome in AD 70.
 2. Famous for completing construction of the Colosseum.
 3. Eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed Pompeii.
 4. Died of fever in AD 81 - some think he was poisoned by his brother, Domitian.
- K. Domitian (AD 81–96)
1. Younger brother of Titus.

2. Was overly ambitious and kept out of government because of it.
3. Was an effective emperor in some ways.
 - A. Boundaries of the Roman Empire grew to it's height during his reign.
 - B. Restored many ancient practices, including emperor worship.
 1. He took it very seriously.
 2. Was referred to as "Lord and God".
 3. He erected images of himself.
 4. He forced people to pay homage to the image of him.
 5. To refuse was nothing less than treason - and worthy of death.
4. Initiated organized persecution of the church.
 - A. Common punishments.
 1. Torture
 2. Death by beheading
 3. Exile
 4. Confiscation of property
 5. Revocation of citizenship
 5. Became paranoid near the end of his reign.
 6. Was stabbed by an assassin in AD 96.
 7. Memory was cursed by the senate and his named was erased from public monuments.
- L. Late History and Fall
 1. Domitian followed by "five good emperors".
 - A. Nerva
 - B. Trajan
 - C. Hadrian
 - D. Antonius Pius
 - E. Marcus Aurelius
 2. During their reigns, the empire reached the height of it's prosperity.
 3. Also known as the "beginning of the end".
 4. Marcus' reign ended Pax Romana and 100 years of war followed.
 5. In AD 313, Constantine issued the "Edict of Milan", which made Christianity a legal religion.
 6. Rome fell in 476 following Constantine's death and a period of disorder that followed.
 7. Who knows how long Rome would have lasted had it not decided to take on God.
3. Why did Rome persecute Christians?
 - A. The moral elements had fallen out of the state religion.
 - B. Any official religion was nothing more than political or military tool used to promote solidarity of the state - not salvation.
 - C. Rome was a "polytheistic" state.
 1. Licensed
 2. Unlicensed

- A. Could be punished by law.
- B. Generally tolerant of other religions.
- C. Christianity was one.
 - 1. However, it was considered an offshoot of Judaism which was licensed.
 - 2. From Nero on, Christianity became suspect.
- D. Conflict between Rome and Christians was inevitable - why?
 - 1. Both were worldwide empires.
 - 2. Appeared on the scene within a few years of each other.
 - 3. Both asked for full allegiance.
 - 4. The Truth of Christianity would inevitably conflict with any error.
 - 5. Why was Christianity singled out for punishment among all unlicensed religions?
 - A. The idea of “kingdom” is foremost in Christianity and most people did not understand the difference between a spiritual kingdom and a temporal kingdom.
 - B. The “last times” view of Christianity sounded revolutionary to those who did not understand.
 - C. The sudden appearance of Christianity with so many adherents made the government leaders nervous.
 - D. Christianity was intolerant - an all or nothing venture.
 - E. Christianity was exclusive - not everyone was called “brother” or “sister”.
 - F. From the government’s viewpoint, Christians were obstinate since they wouldn’t do even the slightest thing - such as putting a pinch of incense on the altar.
 - G. Christians were considered atheists because they said that the gods of other faiths were not gods at all.
- E. Christians were inevitably blamed for every problem, catastrophe and disaster of the time.
- 4. Rome’s rival – Parthia
 - A. Noted in Acts 2:9 – among the nations present for Pentecost.
 - B. Located in what is now northern Iran.
 - C. By the time of Revelation, Parthia had taken over much of the old Persian empire.
 - 1. It was the only significant military power on the frontiers of the Roman Empire and a thorn in their side for hundreds of years.
 - D. Some of the imagery in Revelation may refer to Parthia.
 - 1. Revelation 6:2 - rider with the bow and crown.
 - 2. Chapters 9 & 16
 - A. “the great river Euphrates”.
 - B. Would have been a symbol to the Romans of Parthia - and the people of the time.
- 5. Why did Rome fall?

- A. 3 primary reasons.
 - 1. Natural calamity.
 - 2. Internal decadence.
 - 3. Outside invasion.
- B. But internal decay was the deciding factor:
 - 1. Rapid increase of divorce - undermined the family, the basis of society
 - 2. Higher and higher taxes and the rampant spending of public money for “handouts” and “welfare”.
 - 3. Mad craze for pleasure - remember the Coliseum.
 - 4. Building a great armament when the real enemy was within.
 - 5. Decay of religion and faith.
- D. Other kinds of symbols:
 - 1. Colors
 - A. White = victory.
 - B. Red = war or conflict.
 - C. Black = lack of something (food in famine, health in plague, etc).
 - 2. New Testament Symbolism
 - A. Jesus as the “lamb unblemished” - 1 Peter 1:19.
 - B. The church as the spiritual offspring of Abraham - Galatians 3:7.
 - C. Other images as found in the book.

7. THE MESSAGE

- A. Victorious Christianity.
 - 1. Νικάω (nikao) - verb form of the Greek word for “victory”.
 - A. Found 17 times in the 22 chapters.
 - B. Generally translated as “overcome”, “conquer” or “[be] victorious” - Revelation 5:5; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7.
 - 1. The message has three parts.
 - A. The conflict between good and evil.
 - B. The apparent defeat of good.
 - C. The ultimate victory of good.
 - 1. Example is Revelation 11:3-13.
 - A. Revelation 11:3-6
 - B. Revelation 11:7-10
 - C. Revelation 11:11-13
 - D. This would have been extremely important to 1st century Christians because they needed that hope.
 - 1. No matter how hopeless the situation might appear, God was still in control and ultimately the faithful would be on the winning side.
 - E. It is a message that is repeated over and over again – at least 7 times.
 - F. Revelation is not chronological.
 - 1. If you try interpreting it in this way, you will struggle with understanding Revelation.
 - 2. It actually jumps back and forth through time.
 - 3. “The book looks at the same period and the same events under

different aspects in its different parts.”

4. Seems as if it's divided into 7 sections and each section runs parallel to each other in regards to “time”.
5. Revelation might be thought of as a series of valleys and mountains.
 - A. Tallest and most majestic at the end of the journey.
 - B. The message is unified.
 1. There is a true harmony to the book of Revelation.
 2. This can be seen in developments of themes throughout the book . . . many of which are introduced in the letters to the 7 churches in chapters 2 & 3.

8. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

- A. Many commentators agree that the book naturally divides itself in two (more-or-less) equal parts with 11 chapters in each.
 1. The first section concentrates on surface battle between good and evil (church vs. the world).
 2. The second section more concerned with the battle beneath the surface (Christ vs. Satan).
 3. Chapter 12 seems an obvious dividing point because the chapter seems to restart the story with an account of the birth of Jesus.
- B. Simple Outline:
 1. Christ in the midst of the 7 seven churches - Revelation 1-3.
 2. The book with the seven seals - Revelation 4-7.
 3. The sounding of the seven trumpets - Revelation 8-11.
 4. An introduction of the enemies of the church - 12-14.
 5. The seven bowls of wrath - Revelation 15-16.
 6. The destruction of most of the enemies of the church - Revelation 17-19.
 7. The destruction of the dragon, followed by the new heaven and earth - Revelation 20-22.
- C. Note that there are “7” divisions.
 1. “3” in the first half.
 2. “4” in the second half.