

Bible Survey

Lesson 21 – Revelation

Revelation

1. The Author of the Book

Verse 1 tells us that the information comes to us from the Father to the Son to His angel to the bondservant, John.

2. The Recipients of the Book

- The **immediate** destination is said to be the 7 local churches of Asia (western most province of Asia Minor) – 1:4
- The **ultimate** destination as given in verse 1 includes all His bondservants, which would include all Christians everywhere of any age (including you and me).

3. The Date

95 AD

4. The Theme

The Revealing of That Which Will Come

5. The Key Verse

1:19 – *Write the things **which you have seen**, and the things **which are**, and the things **which will take place after this**.*

6. The Purpose of the Book

There is at least a two-fold purpose:

- a. **Predictive** – a revelation of things which must shortly come to pass – to give us information concerning the future.
 - 1:1 – *shortly come to pass* (yet future at the time of writing)

- 1:3 – *prophecy*
- 1:19 – *things which shall be hereafter*
- 10:11 – *prophecy*
- 19:10 – *prophecy*
- 22:10 – *seal not the words of the **prophecy** of this book*
- 22:18-19 – *prophecy*

We can safely conclude that the things that are written in this book were prophetic at the time they were written. The question then is have they been fulfilled.

- b. **Practical** – Not only is this book written to inform us concerning future events but also that we might condition our behavior on the basis of this information about the future.
- 1:3 – *keep those things which are written in it*
 - 2:7,11,29; 3:6,13,22 – *Let him hear* (take heed and obey). The reader is urged to respond to these exhortations and warnings.
 - 22:6,7 – *Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*
 - 22:14,17

7. The Character of the Book

- a. It is **Revelation** (revealing, making known) – not a hiding but a revealing of things that were previously hidden.
- b. It is **Prediction** – This was true in John’s day and remains true today. There had never been in the history of humanity such terror and judgment as we find recorded in this book. Even the destruction of Jerusalem was nothing compared to the great worldwide judgments that are prophesied in this book. This book speaks of resurrections that are yet future. God’s people are going to be raised from the dead. The wicked dead are going to stand at the Great White Throne judgment of God to be judged according to their works and to be sent into eternal perdition. A visit to any cemetery will show that the dead have not yet been raised. There are many who insist that we are in the millennium now. But if this can be the millennium, with all of the death and misery and heartache and tears and sufferings and war and fear and terror that we know in this present world, and if this is the binding of Satan, then there is no hope for us now or ever, because words must not mean what they say. The dead **are** going to be raised, but they are not raised yet. We **are** going to live in His sight, but we

are still under this bondage and sentence of death. We must conclude that these things are yet future.

- c. It is **signification**. The word *signified* in verse 1 means to show by means of *signs*. Sign-ified. So we must recognize that there is a wide use of symbols in this book.
- 1:20 tells us that the *seven stars* of 1:16 represent *seven angels*
 - 1:20 also tells us that the *seven lampstands* of 1:13 represent *seven churches*
 - 4:5 tells us that the *seven lamps of fire* represent the *sevenfold Spirit of God*
 - 5:6 tells us that the *seven eyes of the Lamb* represent the *sevenfold Spirit of God*
 - 5:8 tells us that the *odors of the golden vials* symbolize the *prayers of the saints*
 - There are many more. It is not our purpose here to consider all of these symbols. We only seek to point out that we admit that there is much symbolism in the book.
- d. It is **Practical Application** – 1:3
Blessed is he that reads, hears, keeps...

8. The Interpretation of the Book

It is conceivable that one could ask several different pastors or Bible teachers concerning the interpretation of a verse in Revelation and get completely different answers. How is this possible? It is possible because this book is interpreted in at least four different ways. Although we recognize that there are godly Bible scholars who defend each of these positions, they cannot all be correct. Anyone who has ever had his words misunderstood can appreciate this. To be misunderstood is to be misinterpreted. To misinterpret is to be wrong.

It is especially important that we do not misunderstand or misinterpret God's Word. For this reason it is important that we understand how this book is to be viewed.

1. **The Idealist View**

This view is also known as the *spiritual view*, the *nonliteral view*, the *allegorical view*, or the *symbolical view*. No matter what the title, those who follow this school of interpretation see *Revelation* as a

symbolic picture of the struggle between good and evil. They do not recognize the prophecy of any specific historic event. The prophecy that they see is that good will win out over evil in the end. Judgment day, for instance, is not viewed as a specific day or time according to this approach, but is thought to occur any time a great moral issue is decided. This point of view originated with the Alexandrian school of theology as represented by Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the 2nd century AD. Although the Alexandrian school of theology was generally considered heretical, they were able to influence such men as Jerome and Augustine and were responsible for turning the early church from its premillennial position to an amillennial position. It is suggested that Clement and Origen developed this method of interpretation to escape the teachings of a millennial reign of Christ.

2. **The Preterist View**

Preterist comes from the Latin word *praeter*, which means “past.” Consequently, the adherents of this view see all of the prophecy of *Revelation* as having already been fulfilled. It is seen as a record of the conflicts of the early church with Judaism and paganism. The last three chapters are believed to picture the triumph of the Church. A Jesuit friar by the name of Alcazar was the first to present this viewpoint in the early 17th century as a response to the reformers who had identified Babylon with the Roman Church. Alcazar attempted to offset their interpretation by showing that *Revelation* had no application to the future.

Some preterists believe that all of these prophecies were fulfilled in the days of Nero (54-68 AD). Peter and Paul were both martyred under Nero’s reign. He was the first Caesar to persecute the Church. He did it because he needed someone to blame for the burning of Rome, so he accused the Christians. Angry mobs burned the followers of Christ as torches on the streets at night.

Another group of preterists believe that the prophecies of *Revelation* were fulfilled during the days of Domitian (81-96 AD). They say that the two beasts in *Revelation* 13 are Nero and Domitian. Those who hold to this position of interpretation are mostly Roman Catholic interpreters. This answers the charge that the false religious system built on seven hills described in chapter 17 is Roman Catholicism.

The city of Rome, of course, has been identified throughout history as the city built on seven hills.

The Preterist interpretation invented by Roman Catholic theologians and still followed by Roman Catholic theologians claims this book had a message for those who lived in the days of Nero or Domitian but not for those living today.

3. **The Historical View**

The adherents of this view hold that *Revelation* outlines the entire course of the history of the Church from Pentecost to the advent of Christ in symbolic form. The breaking of the seals is said to represent the fall of the Roman Empire, the locusts from the bottomless pit are claimed to represent the Mohammedan invaders, the beast is supposed to represent the papacy, and so on. The fallacy in this method of interpretation is seen in the fact that the locusts have been identified as: the Vandals, Goths, Persians, Mohammedans, heretics, etc. Amillennialists and some postmillennialists hold to his view.

4. **The Futurist View**

Futurists understand a large portion of Revelation to be a prophetic description of what **will** happen from the time of Daniel's 70th week and beyond. The first three chapters are either viewed as referring to the seven churches at the time the book was written or as representative of seven periods of church history. Most futurists see everything from 4:1 on as yet future. This seems to be the only reasonable view. Although futurists differ in their view of when the Rapture will occur in relation to the Tribulation, they are united in their belief that most of the prophecy of this book will be fulfilled toward the end of this age. They identify the time of Tribulation described in Revelation with Daniel's 70th Week (Daniel 9:24-27). Generally speaking, the more consistent an interpreter is in recognizing the difference between Israel and the Church, the more likely he is to see the Church removed before the Tribulation. If one does not make this distinction at all, he more than likely will be a historicist and will not believe in a literal 7 year Tribulation at all.

9. The Chronology of the Book

- A. The period of the Church 1-3
- B. The period of the Tribulation 4-19
- C. The period of the Millennium 20
- D. The period of Eternity 21-22

10. The Outline

- A. **The Things Which You Saw – ch. 1**
- B. **The Things Which Are – chs. 2-3**
The Messages to the 7 Churches
- C. **The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter – chs. 4-22**
 - 1. Introduction – 4,5
 - 4 – 4 living creatures worship God on His throne
 - 5 – No one worthy to open the scroll except Christ
 - 2. Tribulation – 6-19
 - 6 – Seals 1-6
 - 7 – (Parenthetic – 144,000 – ENCOURAGEMENT)
 - 8 – Seal 7
 - 9 – Trumpet Judgments 1-6
 - 10-11 – (Parenthetic – Little Book, 10; 2 witnesses, 11 – ENCOURAGEMENT)
 - 11:15 – 7th Trumpet (10:7) *This is the end of the mystery of God.*
How? There are still 7 Bowl Judgments. Answer: They are included in the 7th Trumpet.
 - 12-14 – (Parenthetic – Satan cast out of heaven – ENCOURAGEMENT) This event marks the beginning of the 2nd half of the Tribulation.
 - 15 – Bowl Judgments introduced
 - 16 – 7 Bowl Judgments
 - 17 – Judgment of Great Harlot
 - 18 – Destruction of Babylon
 - 19 – Battle of Armageddon
 - 3. Millennium – 20
 - 4. Eternal State – 21
 - 5. Epilogue – 22

11. Highlights

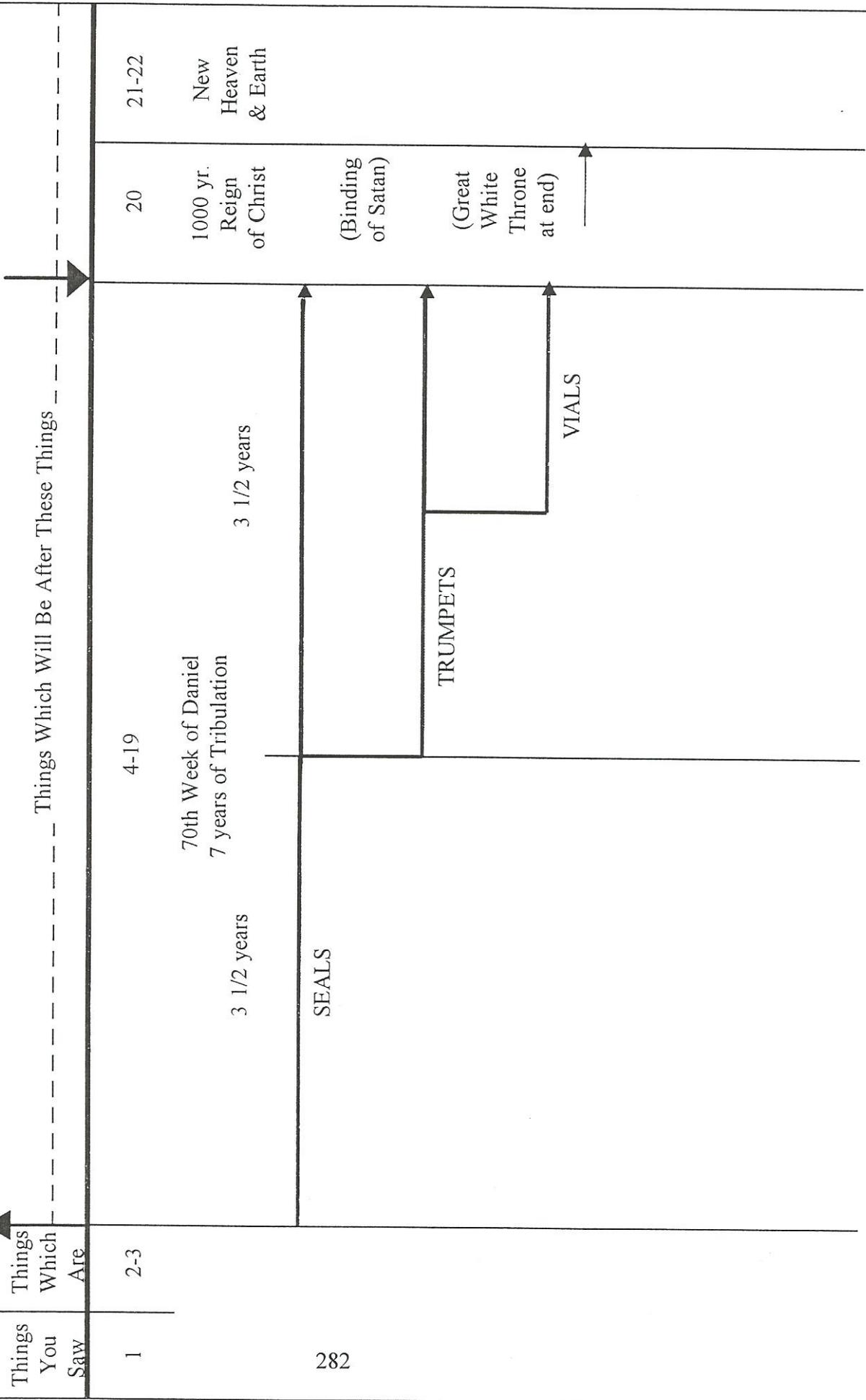
REVELATION

THE REVEALING OF THAT WHICH WILL COME

Things Which You Saw 1	Things Which Are 2-3 Messages to 7 Churches	Things Which Shall Be 4-22 Tribulation 6-19 Millennium 20 Eternal State 21
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Chronology of Revelation

2nd COMING



“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city...”

“...from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem...”

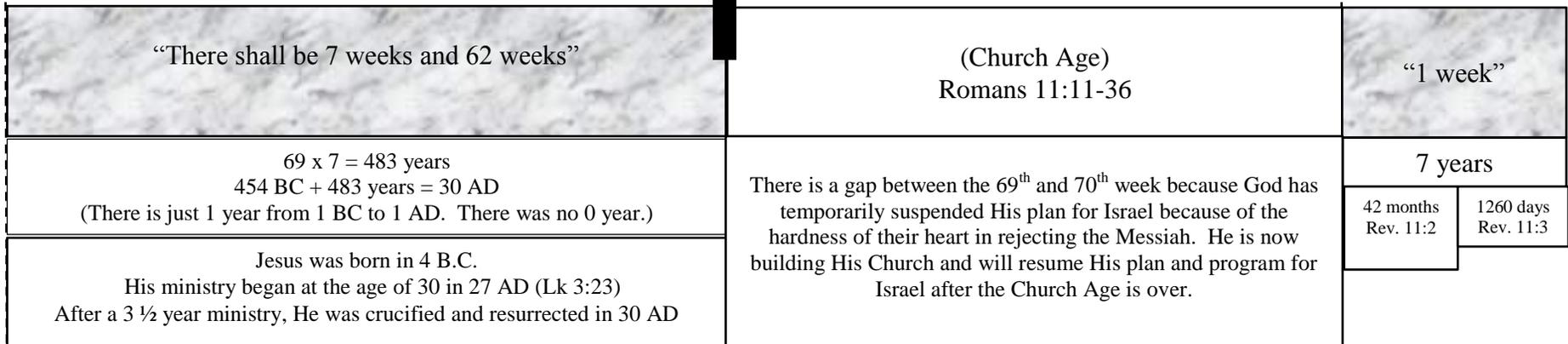
until

Messiah the Prince”

“The prince that shall come”
(Daniel 9:26)

69 weeks

70th Week
(Rev. 6-19)



This command was given in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1-8)
This must be referring to the 20th yr of his co-regency – 454 B.C.

Triumphal Entry
Luke 19:28-40
AD 30

To finish the transgression
To make an end of sins
To bring in everlasting righteousness

Things to Know

Revelation

- Theme – “The Revealing Of That Which Will Come”
- The Key Verse – 1:19
- The threefold outline from 1:19
 1. The things which you saw – 1
 2. The things which are – 2-3
 3. The things which shall be hereafter – 4-22
- Key Chapters
 - 2-3 – Letters to the 7 churches
 - 6-19 – Tribulation
 - 19 – 2nd Coming
 - 20 – Satan bound for 1000 years
 - 21 – New Jerusalem