

The Book of Revelation - Introduction

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

The Book of Revelation is a book of prophecy that reveals the consummation of the great prophecies given by the prophets of God in Old Testament times and the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Daniel 9:24, Matthew 24:4, 2 Peter 1:20, Revelation 1:3-4

Topics: "Bible Prophecy", "Revelation Studies"

Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches on the significance of the Book of Revelation as the capstone of the Bible, emphasizing its necessity for the completion of God's revelation. He refutes attempts to eliminate Revelation from the New Testament, highlighting the historical evidence supporting John as the author. Gaebelein explains the three main divisions of Revelation: the Patmos vision, the messages to the seven churches representing the Church on earth, and the future events after the Church's removal. He stresses the importance of understanding the Old Testament prophecies to interpret Revelation correctly and reveals the key divisions and interpretations of the book for a comprehensive understanding.

Transcript

Introduction

This great final Book of the Word of God may well be called the capstone of the entire Bible. A pyramid becomes a pyramid by the great capstone, and the Bible becomes the full and complete revelation of God through this document "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." If this book were not in the Bible, the Bible would be an unfinished book; the issues raised in the preceding documents would be forever unsolved.

This disposes at once of the miserable attempts which have been made by critics and others to eliminate the book of Revelation from the canon of the New Testament. Revelation is a necessity. "A book which offers in some way or other to open up those secrets of God which yet lie hidden in the future, seems wholly in place in our sacred Scriptures. It is towards some such book that our thoughts have been moving as we travelled through the Gospels, the Acts and Epistles; for all alike point forward to a consummation of all things, to a time when the kingdom of God shall be finally and completely established, when all creation shall cease to groan and travail, when the inheritance of which we have received the first fruits shall be wholly ours. It is, moreover, towards some such book that our hearts seem to yearn as we travel through the earlier volumes of experience, discovering the contradictions between what should be and what is, accumulating impressions of the Protean forms and tremendous power of wickedness, and craving for the manifestation of triumphant righteousness. Thus both the Christian Bible and the Christian consciousness

seem to demand a book of revelation for their completion or satisfaction" (C. Anderson Scott).

The Authorship

The title of the book as we find it in the King James Version is "The Revelation of St. John the Divine"; the better title would be to take the opening words of the book and call it "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." But the above title tells us that John is the author. This is confirmed by the book itself, for we read twice in the first chapter that the writer says "John to the seven churches," and again, "I, John, who also am your brother" (1:4, 9). Furthermore, at the close of the book he names himself again: "And I, John, saw these things" (22:8). The Church down to the middle of the third century has but one testimony as to the authorship of this book, and that is, the Johannine, that John, the beloved disciple, the son of Zebedee, wrote this book in the isle of Patmos when banished there. The only exceptions were the Alogians, a heretical sect which also rejected the Gospel of John, and a controversialist by name of Caius.

As it is of much interest to be acquainted with the testimony of the many early witnesses in refutation of the destructive critics, who attack this great book, we give a brief summary of these historical evidences.

The first witness is Justin Martyr, who wrote about the year 140 in the Dialogue, "that a certain man, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, prophesied in an apocalypse (revelation) which came to him that believers should reign a thousand years in Jerusalem. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, according to the historian Eusebius, wrote treatises on "the devil and on the Apocalypse of John." This was about the year 170. Then follow the testimonies of Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (180); and Apollonius.

A greater witness still is Irenaeus. We remind the reader of our introduction to the Gospel of John, and call to mind the fact that Irenaeus was in his youth acquainted with Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. A number of times Irenaeus speaks of "Ioannes Domini discipulus"--John the disciple of the Lord--and that he had written the Apocalypse. Tertullian (about 200 A.D.) refers in his writings four times to the Revelation as being the work of the Apostle John. The so-called Muratorian fragments quote from the Revelation, and it can be shown by the context of the passage that the Apostle John was believed to be author.

Clement of Alexandria (about 200 A.D.) mentions also John, the beloved disciple as the writer of the book. A scholar of Clement was Origen (233 A.D.). He made careful research about the canonicity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. While he reported carefully any doubts or disputes about different books, he has nothing to say about the Revelation and its author. He quotes from the book frequently, and it proves that in his time no question was raised about John being the author. Hippolytus, Bishop of Ostia (240 A.D.) quotes John's words many times and does not leave us in doubt that he means the son of Zebedee.

Then follow a host of witnesses. The first commentator, as far as we know, of the Revelation was Bishop Victorinus. He states positively that the Apostle John wrote the Revelation (about 303 A.D.). Ephrem Syrus (about 378), the greatest scholar in the Syrian church, repeatedly in his numerous writings, cites the Revelation as canonical and ascribes it to the Apostle John. The Syrian translation of the Bible, the Peshito, probably made in the second century, does not contain the book of Revelation, yet Ephrem Syrus possessed the Syrian translation. Scholars who have examined this question say that the Peshito in its original version had the book of Revelation, and that it was later detached, while others advanced the theory that the Peshito translation may have been made in the first century when the Apocalypse was not

yet generally known.

After citing many more witnesses, including Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Augustine--and others, Dean Alford says: "The apostolic authorship rests on the firmest ground. We have it assured to us by one who had companied men who had known St. John himself; we have it held in continuous succession by Fathers in all parts of the Church. Nowhere, in primitive times, does there appear any counter-tradition on the subject."

The First Critic

This unquestionable historical evidence of the Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse was first attacked by Dionysius, the disciple of Origen and Bishop of Alexandria. In the second half of the third century this scholar raised his voice against the solid traditional view, declaring that not the same man could have written the fourth Gospel, the Epistles of John and Revelation. He also pointed out the contrast between the language, the grammar, and the diction of the Apocalypse and the other writings of the Apostle John. He suggested another man by name of John, a presbyter of Ephesus, as the author of the Revelation. He spoke of two tombs in Ephesus, one in which the body of the apostle was buried and in the other John the presbyter. But Dionysius spoke of this John the presbyter, yet he was entirely unknown to him. It was a new idea he invented to back up his contention, for such a person was wholly unknown to the ecclesiastical tradition in the church of Alexandria in the middle of the third century. Nor does it appear that his opinion on the authorship of the Revelation made any permanent impression on the Alexandrian church. That this "John the presbyter" is a fictitious person, who never existed, is fully demonstrated by the entire, the complete disappearance of John the presbyter from the memory of the Church of the second century.

But modern critics like Bleek, Duesterdieck, Ewald, and others have seized upon this man of straw and followed the invention of Dionysius about the two Johns. Other critics have gone a step further and reject wholly the tradition that the Apostle John lived and died in Ephesus, thus making the other John the sole outstanding bearer of the name in that community, ascribing to him not only the book of Revelation but also the fourth Gospel. Modern critics reject the Johannine authorship of the Revelation. They hold that a work of small compass, by somebody, nobody knows who wrote it, was worked over by somebody else, then expanded by somebody else, passing through three or four redactions till it took on the form of the book we call "The Revelation." They also claim that at best the Revelation is "a Christian redaction of a Jewish apocalypse."

The book also received a strange treatment from the different reformers. Luther for a time treated the Revelation with suspicion and questioned its inspiration; later he greatly modified this opinion. Zwingli followed the theory of Dionysius and attributed it to another John; he excluded it from the Bible. Calvin, however, believed in its canonicity and upheld the apostolic authorship. Melancthon did the same.

All the criticism has not affected in the least the truth that John, the Apostle, the author of the Gospel of John and The Epistles, is the author also of the book of Revelation. The fact is, the Holy Spirit seems to have taken special care to preserve such historical evidences for the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which makes the true authorship and date unimpeachable.

"The apostolic authorship and canonicity of the Apocalypse were generally accepted, and went unchallenged, until toward the third century. Then contrary views began to make their appearance. But when the evidence, direct and indirect, on either side is weighed in respect of its date, its quantity, its

quality, its freedom from bias, the external evidence in favor of the Johannine authorship, outweighs the other at every point."

The Date of the Book

It is interesting to find that the modern critics have done the opposite with the date of the book of Revelation from what they have done with the other Bible books. They generally fix the date of a book later than the traditional view holds; but they assign to the Apocalypse an earlier date than that which the Church has held in the past. Some have dated it during the reign of Nero. They do so on account of some particular interpretation of certain historical allusions. Of late some of the critics have adopted the later date, the year 96 A.D., that is the traditional view held from the beginning. Irenaeus, the friend of Polycarp, who knew John, stated about the year 180 that "the Revelation was seen at Patmos at the end of Domitian's reign." Domitian reigned from 81 to 96 A.D. Then Clement of Alexandria left the testimony behind that John returned from his exile to the island of Patmos on the death of the emperor, which was Emperor Domitian, in the year 96. This is the correct date.

The Message and Interpretation

Revelation is marked out in the beginning as a book of prophecy (1:3). Of this we have more to say in the Preface and Key to Revelation, which follows this introduction. Furthermore, the book is in greater part written in symbolical language, which is a very important fact to be remembered in the interpretation. The message is prophetic, and this message is clothed in symbols, which are not difficult to interpret. Our analysis will show that the accusation brought against this book, as being disjointed a veritable chaos, is wholly unfounded. Like all the other books of the Word of God it has a perfect arrangement.

There are three modes of interpreting this book, with its prophecies and symbols. The historical interpretation claims that the book covers the entire history of the Church and pictures the antagonism of the forces of evil in the world against the church. This method was in vogue during the Reformation period and for several centuries down to the nineteenth, especially during the Napoleonic upheavals, it was the acknowledged method of interpretation. It still has supporters. The Reformers saw in the Antichrist, the beast, the pope and the Romish church. Luther was very strong on that. On the other side, the Catholic exegetes, who also employed the same method, branded Protestantism as the Antichrist, and discovered that the mysterious 666 was contained in the name of Dr. Martin Luther. Then Napoleon was seen by believers living toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries as fulfilling the thirteenth chapter in Revelation. Many predictions were made and the different numbers, the three years and a half, etc., applied to the stirring history of that time, just the same as men today are trying to figure out the duration of the "times of the Gentiles," and when certain events must occur.

The Preterist School of interpretation teaches that the greater part of the prophecies of this book have been fulfilled in the past in the struggles of the past, especially with the struggle of the Church with the Roman Empire, and that the victory of the Church as foretold in the book is accomplished. The third school is the so-called Futurist. This method of interpretation is the only satisfying one and in full harmony with the entire Prophetic Word. We follow this method in our annotations. Nothing beyond the third chapter of this book is fulfilled; all is still future, this is the claim of the Futurist school. The two chapters in which the word "Church" is exclusively found in Revelation (chapters 2 and 3) contain the prophecy concerning the Church on earth. This divinely given history of the Church is about finished and the predicted events from chapter 4 to the end of Revelation are yet to be accomplished. Chapters 5-19 contain the specific

prophecy of the end of the age, the last seven years, the unfulfilled 70th week of Daniel's great prophecy. The scripturalness of this interpretation will be readily discovered by reading the "Preface and Key to Revelation."

There are other theories of interpretation. One of them is the Judaizing interpretation of the late Dr. Bullinger, who taught that nothing is fulfilled in the Apocalypse, that the seven churches in Asia are yet to come into existence. We request our readers and students of the Word to study carefully the article which follows this introduction and the analysis of the book.

PREFACE AND KEY TO THE REVELATION

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him." This is the first sentence with which this last book in God's Word begins. The best title therefore is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Our Lord received, according to this opening statement, a revelation from God. This must be understood in connection with Himself as the Son of Man. As the Only-Begotten He had no need of a revelation; in His deity He is acquainted with all the eternal purposes. One with God He knows the end from the beginning. But He, who is very God, took on in incarnation the form of a servant, and thus being in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself (Phil. 2:7-8). And as the Man who had passed through death, whom God raised from the dead, and exalted at His own right hand, God gave Him this revelation concerning the judgment Of the earth and the glory of Himself. "God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory" (1 Peter 1:21). What this glory is which He received from God is fully and blessedly revealed in this book. It is the revelation of His acquired glory and how this glory is to be manifested in connection with the earth. And this revelation He makes known to His servants, because His own are sharers with Him in all He received from God.

Preeminently His Revelation

The Revelation is preeminently His revelation; the revelation of His person and His glory. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me ..." (Heb. 10:7) Martin Luther asked, "What Book and what person?" and answered, "There is only one Book--the Bible; and only one Person--Jesus Christ." The whole Book, the Word of God, bears witness of Him, Who is the living Word. He is the center, the sum total and the substance of the Holy Scriptures. The prayerful reader of the Bible will never read in vain if he approaches the blessed Book with the one desire to know Christ and His glory. His blessed face is seen on every page and the infallible Guide, the Holy Spirit, never fails to satisfy the longing of the believer's heart to know more of Christ. Inasmuch as this last Bible book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, an "unveiling" of Himself, we find in it the completest revelation of His person and His glory.

It is here where many expositions of Revelation have missed the mark. Occupied chiefly with the symbols of the book, the mysteries, the judgments and the promised consummation, they have neglected to emphasize sufficiently Him, who throughout this book is preeminently the center of everything. The reader of Revelation does well to read first of all through the entire book with this object in mind, to see what is said of our Lord, of His person, His present and His future glory.

We shall find all the features of His person and His work mentioned. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last (1:11); the Ancient of Days (1:14 compare with Daniel 7:9); the "I Am," that is, Jehovah, "I am He that liveth" (1:18); the Son of God (2:18). These terms speak of His deity. His earthly life in humiliation is touched upon in the statement, "the Faithful Witness" (1:5). His death on the cross is likewise mentioned--"He hath washed us from our sins in His blood" (1:5); "He was dead" (1:18); "the Lamb as it had been slain" (5:6); "worthy is the Lamb that was slain" (5:12). He is mentioned twenty-eight times as

the Lamb in Revelation and each time it reminds us of the cross and the great work accomplished there. His resurrection is seen for He is called, "the First-begotten from the dead" (1:5), and He speaks of Himself as, "He that was dead, and, behold, I am alive forevermore" (1:18); and again, "these things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive" (2:8).

Then we behold Him "in the midst" in glory, seen face to face by all the redeemed and worshipped by them, as well as by the heavenly hosts and ultimately by every creature, the fulfillment of Phil. 2:10-11, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Rev. 5:13-14). After the fifth chapter we have His revelation as the executor of the decreed judgments. He opens the seals; He sends forth the seven angels with the judgment trumpets and the seven angels with the judgment vials, in which the wrath of God is completed. "The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Then He is seen in the glorious union with the bride (19:7-10) and as the victorious Christ who passeth out of heaven followed by the armies of heaven (19:11-21), conquering the opposing forces of evil, executing the wrath of Almighty God, appearing as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The twentieth chapter reveals Him as the reigning Christ. He and His saints with Him will reign over the earth for a thousand years. And all which follows reveals Him and His glory as well as the blessed and eternal results of His work.

A Book of Prophecy

Aside from the title of the book, which indicates that it deals with things future, there is a direct statement which determines its prophetic character. In the first beatitude of the seven which are found in the book, we read that it is a book of prophecy--"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy" (1:3). It is known to every intelligent student of the Bible that a good part of it is prophecy. The great prophecies concerning the people Israel and the nations of the world are found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the New Testament there is but one book of Prophecy, the Revelation. As it is the capstone of the entire revelation of God, without which the Bible would be an unfinished book, we find in its pages the consummation of the great prophecies which were given by the prophets of God in Old Testament times.

For the study of this New Testament prophetic book, the knowledge of the chief content of the Old Testament Prophetic Word is therefore an absolute necessity. For instance, to a Christian who does not have a fair grasp of Daniel's great prophecies, or is ignorant of the place which the people Israel hold in the purposes of God, the book of Revelation is a sealed book, without any possible meaning. This is one of the chief reasons why this book has suffered so much both from the critics and from the hands of commentators. The Apostle Peter saith, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21). The better translation for "private interpretation" is, "its own interpretation." It means that the interpretation of prophecy must be done by comparing Scripture with Scripture. The holy men of God, the prophets, were the instruments of the Holy Spirit and made known God's purposes in a progressive way. To understand any prophecy is only possible by taking the entire Prophetic Word into consideration. That there is a wonderful harmony in the great body of prophetic dispensational truths as found in the Bible we have demonstrated in another volume. (Harmony of the Prophetic Word has been used under God's blessing to open the minds of many to the meaning of prophecy.) This principle finds its strongest application in the interpretation of the Revelation.

The Three Classes

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 the Apostle Paul speaks of three classes into which the human race is divided: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God. In the Old Testament there was no Church of God, for the Church is a New Testament institution. As the Revelation is the book of consummation these three classes must be seen in the contents of this book. Many expositors have seen nothing but the struggles of the Church in her history in this book. This is true of the so-called Preterist school and also of the Historical school of interpretation. The Preterist school teaches a fulfillment of all the apocalyptic visions in the struggles of the Church in the past. The Historical school also teaches that the visions concern mostly the Church. These schools of interpretation leave out the Jews and what is written concerning them and their final history during the end of the age, preceding the glorious appearing of our Lord. Of late another school of interpreters has come into existence. They teach that the entire book of Revelation concerns the Jewish people and that there is nothing about the Church in this last book of the Bible. Any interpretation of Revelation which ignores the Jews, the people Israel and fulfillment of Old Testament predictions concerning them is wrong. And any interpretation which teaches that there is nothing about the Church in Revelation is equally wrong. The Church and her destiny on earth, the destiny of the true Church and the destiny of the apostate Church, or Christendom, is found in the book. The Jews and what concerns them in the end of the age, the Gentiles, the nations of the earth, and the judgments in store for them, as well as the future of the earth, a future of glory and blessing: all this is recorded in our New Testament book of prophecy.

The True Interpretation

There is a true interpretation of Revelation which is in harmony with all previous prophecies and which opens the book to our understanding. But how are we to find this true interpretation? We answer, the book itself furnishes it. This is an important fact, both convincing and conclusive. It is therefore of no profit to examine the different theories and schools of interpretation. We shall avoid the terms Preterist, Historical and Futurist, and not try, as it has been attempted, to reconcile these different modes of interpretation. There must be one true interpretation, and we claim that this is given to us by the Lord Himself in this book.

The Key Which Fits

It has often been truthfully said, every book in the Bible contains a key which unlocks the book. The Revelation is no exception. John the beloved disciple was in banishment in the isle of Patmos, as Daniel the man greatly beloved, was a captive in Babylon. The Lord called these two great servants to behold the panorama of the future. Both wrote down their visions. While in the book of Daniel we find no direct command to write, we find such a command in the first chapter of Revelation. John received divine instruction how to write the Revelation. We find this in the nineteenth verse, "Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these." (This is the correct translation of this important verse.) John, guided by the Holy Spirit then wrote the Revelation according to the divine direction. In examining this command to write we find that three things are mentioned. He is to write first the things he had seen, then the things which are, and finally the things that are about to be after these. When John received these instructions he had already seen something and the vision he had he was instructed to write down. Then present things, the things which are, and future things, to be after present things have passed away, must be located in this book. So we have the past, the present and the future in this key verse.

Three Divisions--Where are They

It is then clear that the book of Revelation must be divided into three main divisions. How are we to locate these divisions? They are marked, so that we are not left in doubt about it. In the beginning of the fourth chapter we find a significant statement which shows where the third division begins. After these things, that is after the contents of the opening three chapters were past, John heard the same voice speaking to him once more. He sees a door opened in heaven and is told, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must take place after these things" (4:1). There can be no doubt at all that with the fourth chapter the seer beheld the things which take place after the preceding things which are have passed away. The third division of Revelation begins with the fourth chapter. John beholds future things from heaven into which he had been taken "in the Spirit." The things he had seen and the things which are, are therefore contained in the first three chapters of the book.

The first chapter contains the things he had seen. "What thou seest write in a book" was the first instruction John received (verse 11). In the nineteenth verse he is told, "Write therefore what thou has seen." Between verse 11 and verse 19 he saw a vision, which he was to write, and this vision constitutes the first section or division of the book. The second and third chapters form the second division, the things which are. The beginning of the fourth chapter to the end of the book is the final, the third division. There is no better and more logical key. And this key given in the book determines the true interpretation.

The Patmos Vision

"The thing thou has seen"--the first section of Revelation is the great Patmos vision, chapter 1:12-18. It is the vision of the glorified Son of Man in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (or lampstands).

The Things Which Are

The things which are, the present things, begin the prophetic section of the Revelation. The second and third chapters of Revelation, the things which are, contain the messages of our Lord addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor. These messages contain the first great prophecy of Revelation. The prophecy concerns the Church on earth. We shall show in our comment on these two chapters that we have in them a divine history of the Church on earth. It is one of the most remarkable sections of the Prophetic Word. What this present age is to be religiously and how it will end is made known in other parts of the New Testament. Our Lord in some of His kingdom parables (Matthew 13) reveals the characteristics of this age. The parables of the sower, the evil seed sown into the field, the mustard seed parable and the parable of the leaven are prophetic and teach, in part at least, what the Church messages reveal. The Holy Spirit in the Epistolar testimony also reveals the religious and moral characteristics of the age, and depicts its departure from the truth, and its end. The destiny of the true Church is heavenly. She has a "blessed hope," which is to be with the Lord in glory. She is the body of Christ, and He is the "Head of the body." The Church is also the bride of Christ and He is the Bridegroom. The body is united to the Head in Glory; the bride will be joined to the Bridegroom. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is the Scripture which reveals this end for the true Church on earth.

The professing Church, Christendom, which rejects the doctrine of Christ and goes into apostasy has a far different destiny. The Lord will disown that which has denied His Name, and judgment and wrath is to be poured out upon apostate Christendom (2 Thess. 1:7-9). These predictions concerning the Church on earth are contained in the seven Church messages. When we come to the close of the third chapter we find a significant promise, and equally significant threat. "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation

(trial) which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (3:10). This is the promise. It tells of the removal of the true Church, composed of all true believers, from this earthly scene. "I will spew thee out of My mouth" (3:16). This is the threat to the apostate Church. Both the promise and the threat will be fulfilled. After the third chapter the word "church" does not occur again in Revelation. The reason for this is obvious. The history of the Church on earth terminates with the close of the third chapter. Because the true Church is no longer here but has been taken up into glory, and that which professes to be the Church is disowned by the Lord, therefore no more mention of the Church is made in Revelation.

The Things Which Are After These

The future things, things after the removal of the true Church from the earth, occupy the greater part of this book. It is of the greatest importance to see that nothing whatever after the third chapter of Revelation has yet taken place. Some speak of a past and partial fulfillment of some of the visions found in this section. In view of the scope of the book that is impossible. The open door in heaven, the voice which calls the seer to pass through that open door into heaven, is symbolical of the great coming event, the realization of the blessed hope of the coming of the Lord for His saints. That this open door is mentioned immediately after the third chapter and John is suddenly in the spirit in the presence of the throne in heaven is very significant. It proves that the entire situation is now changed. And the first great vision is a vision of the saints in glory occupying thrones and worshipping God and the Lamb. With the sixth chapter the great judgment visions of this book begin. These great punitive dealings with the earth are executed from above. All transpires after the Lord has taken His saints into glory. No seal can be broken as long as this event has not been. But after the rapture, the seals of the book, which the Lamb received, are broken by Him, the trumpet and the vial judgments fall upon the earth. All this takes place after the home-going of the true Church and before the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (19:11, etc.).

Now this portion of Revelation from chapter 6 to 19 contains the events which transpire during the end of the age. It is the unfulfilled seventieth week of the great prophecy in the book of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27). This "end of the age" will last twice 1260 days, that is seven years. It is absolutely necessary to understand the scope of the seventy-week prophecy in Daniel in order to understand the greater part of these chapters in the Revelation. (The Prophetic Daniel by A.C.G. contains a very simple exegesis of Daniel's prophecies.) We are led back upon Jewish ground. Events in connection with the Jewish people and Jerusalem are before us. The times of the Gentiles have taken on their final form of ten kingdoms which Daniel saw on the fourth beast as ten horns, and Nebuchadnezzar on the image as ten toes. The empire in which these ten kingdoms come into existence is the Roman empire. It will have a revival and come into existence again. Then a wicked leader will take the headship of that resurrected Roman empire, and another beast, the false prophet, the Antichrist will domineer over the Jewish people and persecute their saints, the remnant of Israel, while the earth and the dwellers upon the earth experience the great judgments. The last half of these seven years is called the great tribulation. We must also remember that our Lord left behind a great prophecy concerning the end of the age. This prophecy is contained in the Olivet Discourse, the first part of which (Matt. 24:4-44) harmonizes in a striking manner with the events in Revelation 6--19. Our Lord calls special attention to Daniel and likewise speaks of the great tribulation. In our brief annotations we shall point out some of the interesting and convincing details.

The glorious climax is the visible manifestation of the Lord out of heaven, crowned with many crowns, the defeat and overthrow of the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, the binding of Satan, and the reign of Christ with His saints for a thousand years. (Compare Revelation 19:11-21 with Daniel 7:11-14 and Matthew 24:27-31.) After that follows the great white throne judgment, which is the judgment of the

wicked dead, the glories of the new Jerusalem, the eternal destiny of the redeemed and the eternal destiny of the lost.

If this last great book of the Bible is studied in this divinely given order it will no longer be, as is so often said, a sealed book. All fanciful interpretations and applications of these great visions to past or present history can no longer be maintained as soon as we reckon with the fact that these visions are not yet fulfilled, and are going to be fulfilled after the true church is no longer on the earth.

The Promised Blessing

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand" (verse 3). A blessing is promised to him who readeth, and who hears and keeps. It does not say that a blessing is for him who understands and knows everything which is in this book. If such were the condition the writer and reader would have no claim on this promised blessing. The Bible teacher, or any other man, who says he knows and understands everything found in this great finale of God's Word is very much mistaken. We cannot be sure about everything in some of these visions and the full meaning of some may not be understood till the world sees the fulfillment. The blessing is promised to all His people who give attention to the Revelation of Jesus Christ. What is the blessing we may expect through the reading and prayerful study of the words of this prophecy?

First of all we receive through this book a wonderful vision of our Saviour and Lord. This is what we need as His people above everything else, and it is this which brings blessing into our lives. As stated before, this book is preeminently His revelation, a blessed unveiling of His person and glory. But we also get another blessing. In reading through this book we see what is in store for this age, what judgments will overtake the world, and how Satan's power will be manifested to the full upon those who rejected His grace. Judgment, tribulation and wrath are swiftly coming upon this age. Out of all this our gracious Lord has delivered us. There is no judgment, no wrath for us who know Him as our sin bearer and our hiding-place. Praise must fill our hearts when we read the words of this prophecy and remember the grace which has saved us from all which is coming upon this age. Another blessing is the assurance of ultimate victory and glory. Dark is the age, and becoming darker, but in Revelation we behold the glory which is coming for His saints first of all and after the judgment clouds are gone, for Jerusalem, the nations and the earth. Reading Revelation fills the heart with the assurance and certainty of the outcome of all. It is a solemn atmosphere which fills the whole book of Revelation. As we continue to read and continue to breathe this heavenly and solemn atmosphere it will result in a closer walk with God, a more spiritual worship and a greater and more unselfish service for Him "Who loveth us and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us priests and kings unto God His Father."

The Division of the Revelation

Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

I. THE PATMOS VISION OF THE GLORIFIED SON OF MAN (1)

II. THE THINGS WHICH ARE. THE SEVEN CHURCH MESSAGES REVEALING THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH ON EARTH (2-3)

III. THE THINGS WHICH ARE AFTER THESE, THE END OF THE AGE, THE CONSUMMATION AND THE FINAL MESSAGES (4-22)

First Division: The Heavenly Scene and Before the Throne (4-5)

Second Division: The Opening of the Seven Seals (6-8:5)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Seal: A Parenthetical Vision (7)

Third Division: The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:18)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpets: Parenthetical Visions (10-11:14)

Fourth Division: Satan's Power and Satan's Masterpieces (11:19-13)

Fifth Division: The Power of God in Intervention: Grace and judgment Manifested (14)

Sixth Division: The Seven Angels Having Seven Plagues and the Vials of Wrath (15-16)

Between the Sixth and Seventh Vial, Parenthetical Vision (16:13-16)

Seventh Division: The Great Harlot, Babylon, and her judgment (17-18)

Eighth Division: The Manifestation of the King and the Millennium (19-20:6)

Ninth Division: After the Thousand Years and the Vision of the New Jerusalem (20:7-22:5)

Tenth Division: The Final Messages (22:6-21)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/arno-clemens-gaebelein-/the-book-of-revelation-introduction/>

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