

THE REVELATION

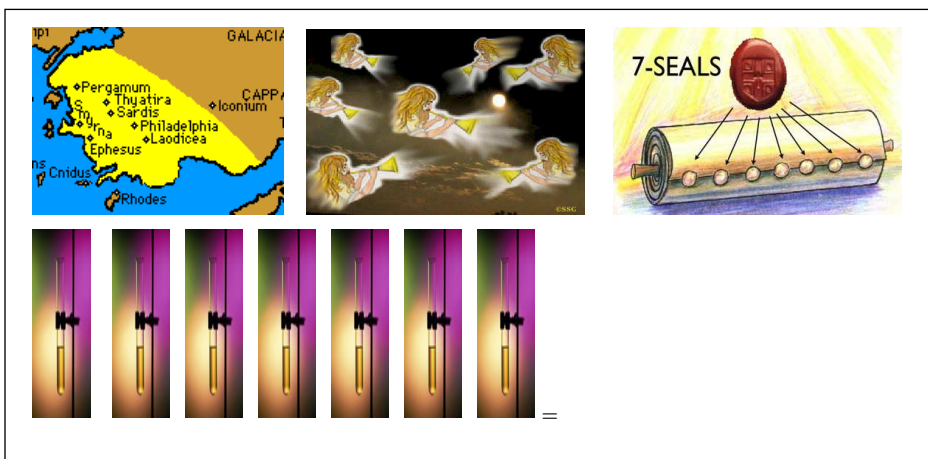
part one



PETER J GADSDEN

It is worth mentioning at this point, that the number seven is used frequently throughout the book, it is a key number.

There are
Seven Churches, with their seven Angels.
Seven Seals
Seven Trumpets
Seven Vials or Plagues.



Seven, as I am sure you all will now is symbolic of perfection, of completion, and there is no more appropriate number for this book, as it is the book of final things that will complete God's purposes here on earth.

No wonder the Apostle says that *"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,"* v3

Paul in this letter to Timothy lays down a very clear and important principle and is found in 2Timothy 1:15 here he says, we are to *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* The term *"rightly dividing,"* occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It means, *to cut straight, to divide right, to handle the Word of God correctly,* a divine principle, that when it comes to the Revelation and prophecy in general is thrown into the dust cart by many.

The study of the Revelation will be divided into a several sections. This is the first section will take us through the end of chapter three.

The Revelation was given to the Apostle John by the Lord Jesus. It was written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by the Apostle, generally believed to be about 95–96 AD.

This was whilst the Roman empire was at the height of its powers and ruled by Domitian, therefore, it is from this date we start our investigation.

Revelation one verse nine *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* John was at the time exiled on the island of Patmos a small rocky Island situated in the Aegean Sea. In John's Day it was a fairly prosperous place, the main occupations being mining and agriculture. It was however laid to waste by the Turks, and is today occupied mainly by a community of monks.

Studying this book is no different to studying any other subject in this regard and that we must set ourselves a proper and solid basis on which to build. I am going to set out the first three verses in such a way as to emphasise the relevant points which

we need to understand.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ;
Which God gave unto Him;
To shew unto His servants;
Things which must shortly come to pass;
And He sent and signified it;
By His angel;
Unto His servant John;
Who bare record of the Word of God,
and of the testimony of Jesus Christ,
and of all things that he saw;
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.”

Firstly, we see that the sequence of revelation was that God gave the revelation to Jesus Christ, who as the angel or messenger of God, transmitted it to John, who in turn shewed or transmitted it to us as the servants of God.
Which was a total waste of time and effort if He didn't intend us to understand what He was transmitting to us.

Secondly, we are to understand that this book is the unveiling of things that are to come to pass. How do we know this? Because The word Revelation comes from the Greek word Apocalupsis which means unveiling, and is made up of two words “Apo” which has the meaning of ‘to move away from’ and ‘calupsis’ means ‘cover’, when brought together we have the idea of, a cover being removed, or as we have said unveiling.



The sword in view is based on the ancient two-edged sword, the two edges were designed to cut both ways; and such a sword is a striking emblem of the penetrating power of *truth*, or of words that proceed from the mouth; and this is designed to show that His words, has the power of cutting deep, or penetrating the soul. So, in Isaiah 49:2 we read of the same person "*And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword.*"

The command given to John was to "*write the things which thou hast seen*" that is give an account of those things which you have seen, things that not only symbolised or represent the condition of the seven churches. But also, the Saviour whom he had seen, among the seven lamp-stands, holding the seven stars in His hand. These things although having a long-term prophetic application also spoke of the condition then actually existing in the seven churches. How can I say this? Because we are told so, listen v19 "*and the things which are,*"

The longer-term application is given us in the phrase, "*and the things which shall be hereafter.*" The Greek phrase rendered "*hereafter*" simply means "*after these things*;" that is, he was to make a correct representation of the things which then were, and then to record what would occur "*after these things*:" This expression refers to future times. He does not say for how long a time; but the revelations which were to be made referred to events which were to occur beyond those which were then taking place.

Nothing can be argued from the use of this language in regard to the length of time embraced in the revelation whether it extended only for a few years, or whether it embraced all coming time. The more natural interpretation, would seem to be, that it would stretch far into future years, and that it was designed to give at least an outline of what would be the character of the future in general.

congregations. And here was the great truth which He showed forth. That throughout the entire period of the seven stages of the future religious and spiritual life of His people, He was going to be there, as High Priest, interceding on their behalf.



He is the one walking among us. He knows and sees where we are in our lives. The Lord knows that we need be it encouragement, rebuke, guidance etc. Jesus is saying “I have the Pastor in my right hand and it is the Pastor’s responsibility to remain sensitive to my spirit so that he may give the message I command to the church.”

This was very powerful sight, this is of course a symbolic picture of the Lord Jesus He does not literally look like this., *And He had in His right hand seven stars. And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. And His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at his feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, FEAR NOT. I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead. And behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen. And I have the keys of hell and death.”* vv:13-18.



To give us some idea of the application of the word, we find it used in Luke 2:32 where we read of a “*light to lighten the Gentile,*” or if we paraphrase it a little, it reads something like this ‘a light for the revelation of the Gentiles’ or even more precisely “the drawing away of the veil of darkness that covered the Gentiles.’

The word is also found in Romans 16:25 where we read “*according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began,*” Paul here is speaking of the unveiling or uncovering of the purposes of God in the present age.

One final example of the word’s usage is found in Ephesians 1:17 “*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*”

Now as we come to the study of the book itself, there is a special sequence or format in the expressions used which, I believe, we must have clear in our minds

Now in this instant before us, the unveiling is coming from Jesus Christ, and it is the unveiling of the plan of God for the world, especially as associated with His servants, and the Church. Within the context described here, God gave the revelation to Jesus the Son to show His servants what must soon begin to take place,

In respect of the Lord Jesus, the book reveals Him to us as King of kings and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb that was slain, along with many more vivid descriptions of Him throughout the book. It gives us a full description of the glorified Christ in His heavenly glory. While at the other end of the scale, the gospels describe Jesus in His humility, without Revelation we would have a poorer understanding of the glorified Christ.

However, the main meaning and application of the revelation has to do with *"The things that must shortly come to pass."* The whole objective of this book is for Christ to reveal things that had been concealed, mysteries that until now God alone had known.

Now the fact that this is an unveiling implies a gradual process rather than an instant one-off thing. Notice also that there is no vast expanse of time indicated here, in terms of when these hidden things were to be made known. The things that are being revealed are to *"Shortly come to pass"* that is the things being shown will very shortly start to happen.

So, when we begin to read it, we must be translated back in time to the second century Christian and see it through their eyes. Now we must remember that Christians in those far off days, coming to this book would all have been, in the proper sense of the word, "Futurists" as at the time the entire revelation would be future. I do not mean "Futurists" in the modern Jesuitical sense; which is one of the great end time deceptions, formulated by the Church of Rome, to counter the truth.

When a Christian in, say the year 125 AD, received a copy of this document and read the words *"The things that must shortly come to pass"* they would immediately begin looking for the evidence that this was so, and there was plenty to be found, he would see the revelation, or at least part of it, as being relevant to his time.

The Christian, 100 years later, would approach the same way and look for some more evidence that some part had been or was being outworked, seeing clearly where the church of his day was in the overall plan of God. Is this an unfair idea? The answer is no, remember Nebuchadnezzar's dream, that of the great image whose head was made of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, whilst its feet were made from a mixture of iron and clay. Daniel interpreted this dream as a

John's testimony what he heard *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."* vv10-11



In vv13-15 we learn, *"In the midst of the seven candlesticks was one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters."*

What John saw was a vision of the Priest, complete in His linen robes, gleaming white, standing in the Tabernacle, as evidenced by the seven golden candlesticks. But this was no ordinary priest. This was the new High Priest. Here was Jesus Christ, the High Priest, consecrated to all eternity, standing in all the glory and purity of His exalted position.

He stood in the midst of the seven candlesticks, which we are told in verse twenty represent the seven churches, or

The coming of Christ in the unbelievable glory which will accompany Him, will be a most wonderful thing to behold. Every man-made system upon which man now depends will come under the immediate judgment and sentence of the King of Kings. Men will wail in sheer grief, at the destruction that comes upon them. But what is to be will be. It is as inescapable as yesterday's dawn.

So, in this manner John introduces and records the revelation which his beloved Lord gave him. And as he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, a voice suddenly sounded behind him, with the clarity of a trumpet. As he turned to see who it was who spoke to him, he saw a sight which no other person had to that time, nor has since, seen.

In contrast to the two verses which refer to the believers' riches and blessings in Christ, this verse brings mourning to the peoples of the earth who do not know the love of God and who are not cleansed from their sins. The word "*Behold*" is a powerful word, having the meaning of "Be aware" or "Know" "Be sure" "Understand" Let us be very clear on this point, the Lord Jesus has not gone back to heaven to stay there, He is coming again, and will come to "*judge the quick and the dead*".

The second coming will be a very public affair, every eye shall see him Matthew 24:30, he will bring retribution on those who do not know him, but will be marvelled at by the saints. The announcement of Christ's second coming is, for the church comfort and solace but for the world it will bring judgement. The promise is given here so that the saints, no matter what trials they may be called upon to endure, during the course of history, have the hope and assurance that all is well, that Christ is in control and the day is coming when all will be consummated.

consecutive sequence of kingdoms.

Had we lived at that time and been in possession of this information, we would have been able to identify exactly where we were within the framework of the prophecy, either in the head, or any part right down to the feet and the Lords first advent. Looking back, we would also have been able to see what had been fulfilled and how it had been completed

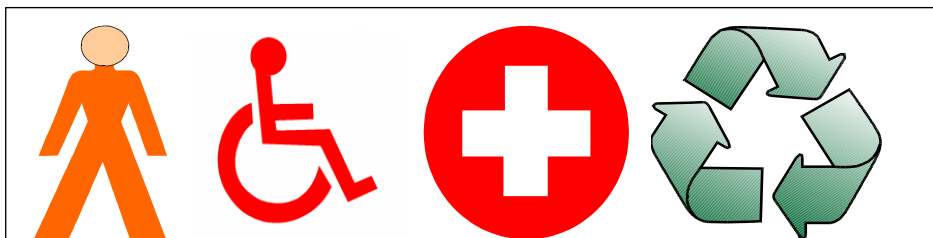
Had the Scribes and Pharisee's of the Lord's Day, understood these things as they ought to have done, they would not have ended up in the mess they did. So, it is with us when we come to the Revelation, we should also expect that after nearly 2000 years some of this prophecy will have been completed, whilst there is some to still be fulfilled, and we should be able to place ourselves within reason within this prophetic time frame, which is exactly what we can do.

Therefore., chapter one it contains very important information
The Revelation of Jesus Christ
The Recipients of the Book!
The Purpose of the Book
The Blessing of the Book
The Delightful Description
The Magnificent Prophecy
The Grand Description
The Introduction of the Churches

The method God adopted to unveil is given to us in the little phrase "*sent and signified*". Now these are two very important words, especially the word "*signified*."

First the word "*sent*" meaning not only to despatch the message, but also includes the authority of the one who sent it and that authority was invested in the Lord Jesus. The word which absolutely must be understood is the word "*signified*".

We cannot place too much stress and importance on this fact. The word means; “to shew by signs and symbols.” Something that is common to us today, for example.



Greek word used here is “Semanio” and simply means “to express in signs” in other words the unveiling was to be carried by signs, by picture language, an example of this is found in John 21:18-19 “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.*” Jesus spoke to Peter in such a way that he would only understand the meaning, when it actually took place, He signified by what manner of death he should die and by which he would glorify God. This is a very gracious method of dealing with what can be rather unpleasant situations, in Peter’s case, he would not be burdened with the fact he would suffer, as tradition holds, death by crucifixion. However, when the day did come, he would instantly know that this was what Jesus had said would take place.

The Revelation is written in the same way, it is in veiled language and can only be understood as the events takes or have taken place. To speculate on what will happen is both foolish and dangerous, which is the great problem with the

In the Old Testament a priest was a mediator between God and the people offering sacrifices and incense or prayers on their behalf and for their sins. In the New Testament the priesthood of believers means declaring to the world the good news of the gospel, that Jesus died for their sins and offering up prayer on their behalf.

He is The Word, embracing everything said or written. From the beginning, He created all things, and will continue in this work until total and complete perfection is finally reached. He is the first, the highest, and the foremost in all things. What a wonderful Lord and Saviour we have. No wonder we are warned in Hebrews 2:3, “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.*”

Following the description of Christ’s ministry and Person, we have the very first promise and indeed a most magnificent prophecy, that is Jesus Christ is to return to this earth, and that everyone, both from the present and the past, will see Him, verse seven “*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen*”, This is the culminating factor of the entire prophecy. Without this grand conclusion, the rest of the book would be absolutely superfluous.

The tremendous fact that we must accept is that the whole of history is heading towards, and has been ordained by God for this one great climax. Every event which has occurred, or which is yet to occur, is inescapably tied into this pattern and programme. Nothing that man can do, nor any decision that man can make, will alter the decision and intent of Almighty God to this end. It is already recorded in the annals of eternity. It is as certain as the very existence of God Himself.

his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” So, John is being absolutely consistent in this The Revelation.

In addition to loving us and dying for us He has made us to be a kingdom of priests, *“hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever Amen,”* verse six. This is similar to Revelation chapter five verse ten where we read that he *“has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* It is the Lord Jesus who has done this, taking a bunch of rebel sinners, and elevating us to this high and honourable position.

The church is called a kingdom, not just because it is a people under a king but also because they participate in the messianic reign of Christ. There is today great confusion on the matter of the Kingdom of God, some say that it is to come, whilst all the time to Bible clearly teaches that Jesus set it up.

However, the primary reference to kingdom and priests comes from Exodus 19:5-6, 1Peter 2:9. In Exodus 19:5-6 the Israelites were promised that if they obeyed God, they would be God’s treasured possession out of all the nations of the earth and would be for God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, the promise was conditional on their obedience, the tribe of Levites became the priests.

However, at the death of Jesus the veil in the temple was split into two because from then on, all the saints are priests, having direct access to the Throne of Grace, via Jesus Christ the Great High Priest. In 1Peter 2:9 the emphasis is that the saints are a chosen people, a people belonging to God, a royal priesthood and a holy nation who will declare the praises of God who called them out of darkness, that is Satan’s kingdom, Acts 26:18, into His wonderful light.

modern Jesuit doctrine of Futurism. Over the years the exponents of this system have made many foolish and unsubstantiated speculations at to what will be, only to end up with the proverbial egg all over their faces.

The problem has become so popular because many of those who follow these the speakers who themselves have fallen in love with heresy, have fallen hook, line and sinker for their ideas. We can only understand the meaning of the Revelation as the veil is gradually lifted. If we can understand this, then you will understand what I mean when I say, that the Revelation is, and this is not a contradiction by saying it has to be taken literally, the signs and symbols are not to be understood as literal, as these are only pictures of the events they depict, they are signs of literal events.

Now the signs should always fit the event, so the fulfilment will always explain the prophecy. Therefore, we should never come to the Revelation, as some do and see it as a horoscope, I mean horror scope. The language is picture language and as such protects us from undue fear.

We cannot emphasis too strongly the absolute importance of remembering this definition at all times whilst studying this Book. It is a book written in signs and symbols, just like the codes that are used during war time, or for secret messages, and which can only be interpreted and understood by the application of the correct keys. We must not however get caught up with the modern-day conspiracy mentality. The signs and symbols given here are easily and readily understood, by any genuine seeker after the truth, and as such will come the promised blessing.

So why give signs rather than literal detail? The answer is simple, a sign and symbol cover a greater area with less words than does say a historic essay, or a description of something that is totally unknown. A symbol may be seen as

a pictorial summary of major events, the symbol holding within itself sufficient detail to explain something that would take many thousands of words to detail.

We have many examples of this type of communication in modern life, we cannot get through a day with seeing some sign telling where to go, what to do and so on. Each sign is interpreted literally, there is nothing mystical, or of a conspiratory nature, about them, they are signs and symbols we accept without question. So it is with the Revelation, it is written in signs, the signs themselves are not literal, therefore they not to be interpreted literally.

However, what the signs represent are literal, they have literal interpretations or fulfilments. This means we must be very careful to:]

Firstly, understand the symbolic meaning associated with the particular statement, as this will take precedence over any literal meaning which might be seen to apply. It is lack of true understanding of what this wonderful book is actually teaching us is caused by a lack of appreciation and application of this simple rule.

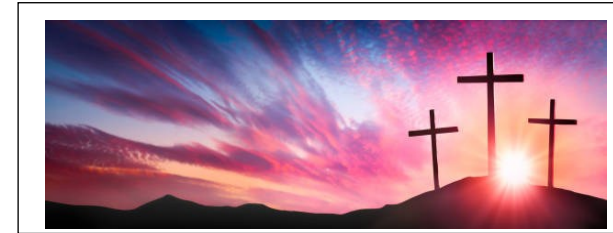
Today because the basic fact that Revelation is given in Signs and Symbols has been ignored by many so-called experts in prophecy, we end up with nothing more than man's imagination resulting in what can only be described as a Hollywood production.

By understanding that the Lord is using "signs and symbols" the very first thing we must do is to look for the Key to unlocking and explaining the true meaning of the particular sign or symbol which we are studying.

But where do we find these "keys" which will unlock the

two verse twenty-two and Revelation chapter seven verse fourteen, the significance being that of total and complete cleansing, a top to toe ablution, so any version that indicates a lesser function, such as loosing or freeing, should be treated with the greatest suspicion.

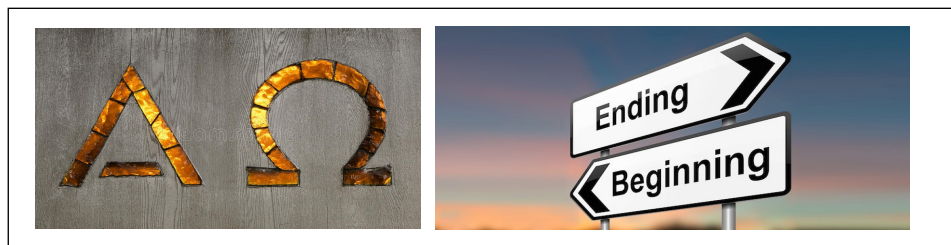
This book is written to those who are saved from the wrath of God through the blood of Christ and that alone is sufficient to cleanse and free us of our sins and make us acceptable to God.



In all circumstances the saints are more than conquerors through Jesus who loves us. Only those who acknowledge the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus will benefit or make sense of this book. Jesus is the only one who can save us from the wrath of God as indicated by the bowls of wrath, which we will be looking at in due course, and finally from the lake of fire.

Here is a book that speaks a great deal about judgement, yet we are right at the very beginning, reminded of the gospel that through the death and resurrection of Christ, *'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.'* 2Corinthians chapter five verse nineteen. The blood of Jesus, which purifies us from sin, is a theme of John's first epistle: as is the love of God 1John 4:7-11, *"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent*

showing us that He is not only the originator, or creator of all things from the beginning, but that He is also the originator of the final state of perfection for which we are all looking and waiting.



The word “*first*” means “foremost. The first of place, order, time, and dignity.” The word “last” has the meaning of “the extreme or most remote. That which concludes anything.” Thus, He can say that He is “*from everlasting to everlasting*”. Put together, we have this wonderful and powerful description of the ministry and position of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What follows is a description of the Lord’s work of salvation, just look at the last statement in v5 “*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*” Can there be anything more wonderful than this, He has loved us, and washed us from sin, and has done so in His own blood.

What we have here is a definition of a Christian, one who is loved by Christ and washed from his sins. The word translated “*wash*” is very important, because many modern versions, have down-graded it, and translated it “loosed”.

The Greek word used here is “*Louo*” and it literally means “to wash” and refers to having a bath, it is used in Hebrews chapter ten verse twenty-two, Acts chapter nine verse thirty seven, Acts chapter sixteen verse thirty-three, 2Peter chapter

meaning of the symbols? It must be obvious that if God promises such blessings to those who understand what He has recorded, then He would not leave us without the means of interpreting the various symbols, which He has used, it would be like installing a security lock on the front door of your home without giving you the security code to open it.

It would be ludicrous for Him to say that He was going to bless us if we understood the code He used and then refrain from giving us the key to understand and interpret that code. So where do we find this “key”? The answer is quite simple. We find it in the writings of “The Scriptures”, or as we now call them, the Old Testament.

When the Book of the Revelation was written, there was no New Testament, what was referred to as The Scriptures was the old. They constituted the only Word of God available to that time. There is no exception to this rule: -

Every symbol used in the Book of the Revelation is contained, and explained, in the Old Testament, and supported by historical events subsequent to Christ’s First Advent!

As we have said, when a Christian in, say the year 125 AD, received a copy of this document and read the words “*The things that must shortly come to pass*” he would immediately begin looking for the evidence that this was so, and there was plenty to be found, he would see the revelation, or at least part of it, as being relevant to his time. This means that some of the things prophesied have passed into history whilst others have yet to be fulfilled.

The Book of the Revelation is primarily A History Book. And

it can only be properly understood as the events described therein are applied to history. It covers the period from the First Advent of our Lord, up to and beyond His Second Advent. The wording contained in verses one and three of the first chapter surely leave no doubt as to the truth of this principle. Jesus Himself tells us in v1 that He is showing us *“Things which must shortly come to pass.”*

In verse three He says that the time for us to understand and watch attentively over what we learn is *“at hand”*. How could these two statements possibly be construed to mean that these events will not start to take place for some two thousand years or more from when they were written?

The statement *“at hand”* means that whatever is being spoken of is *“about to commence”*. If we go to the Book of Daniel, we find he is told, to *“Go thy way Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”* Daniel 12:9 while John on the other hand, is told to write down what he sees, he is not instructed to seal it, for; *“The time is at hand.”* when the things revealed will begin to happen

The word *shortly* actually refers to the initial action rather to the entire content of the book. It means that something is about to start, that will cover a period of time. This fact is even agreed by those people who push the events of the Revelation into the Future, their own futuristic method of interpretation acknowledges that it covers a period of time, in their case, it is a very short period of seven years, but nevertheless the principle of a time period is there. So, what we have is a process, one that like any good book, has a beginning, middle and end.

The other thing worth mentioning here is that of the common usage of the term, how often do we say, *“I have got to rush”* by this we simply mean, that we have to leave the present

The Alpha and Omega.

The Beginning and the Ending.

The First and the Last.

It is important that we understand the full meaning of these three last titles. They are as follows, for they express the dignity, deity, and eternity of the Lord Jesus.

THE GRAND DESCRIPTION: *“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”* v8. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, symbolically this should be thought of as the beginning and the end of history, He is the author of history.

THE LORDS DESCRIPTION OF HIMSELF

He is: -

The One which is, was, and is to come.

The faithful witness.

The first begotten of the dead.

The Prince of the kings of the earth.

The One who loves us.

The One who has washed us.

The One who has made us kings and priests unto God

The Revelation shows us that God is sovereign over human history, that God is both the beginning and the end is particularly appropriate to this book. This designation of Alpha and Omega is repeated in chapter twenty-one verse six and chapter twenty-two verse thirteen. The Lord Jesus Christ is shown to encompass everything that can be written or said. He is literally The Word, whether written or spoken.

The word *“beginning”* means *“the origin”*. The word *“ending”* means *“the fulfilment or completion of anything.”* It does not refer to its cessation. It denotes *“not the ending of a departed state, but the arrival of a complete or perfect one.”*

This means that in *“the beginning and the ending”*, our Lord is

Then when we study the locations of the seven churches as shown in verse eleven, it is interesting to note that this was a region to which many of twelve tribes of Israel migrated to, at the time of the great dispersion, and many of their descendants probably still resided in these regions.

It is apparent from the subsequent descriptions of the various “churches” in chapters two and three that these “churches” being the principle churches in the region and were representative of different consecutive periods of time starting from the time the Revelation was given through to the end of the age.

We thus have before us a description of the spiritual condition of the Church or spiritual Israel in its various stages from the time of writing onwards right up to the time of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here we have the pre-written history of the Churches relationship with her God from that time to the present day.

A study of chapter one reveals the Lord Jesus Christ in His very special relationship His people.

Look at the descriptions given of Him in verses 1 to 6.

He is: -

The One which is, which was, and is to come.

The faithful witness.

The first begotten of the dead.

The prince of the kings of the earth.

The One who loves us.

The One who has washed us from our sins.

The One who has made us kings and priests unto God, His Father.

Four things in respect to His personal glory and three in respect to His glory in the redeemed.

Then in verse eleven we have three additional descriptions given of our Lord, again, speaking of His glory:

situation more or less immediately, in order to start something new. However, the situation we have to rush off too, may well take us a long time. This common usage is employed in the Bible, for example in Acts 12:7 The angel of the Lord tells Peter to “*Arise up quickly*” This command began a series of events that lead to Peters escape from prison, the events were worked out over a period of time, albeit in this instance a fairly short period, for example: -

1, His chains fell off

2. He had to put his shoes on.

3. He had to put his coat on.

4. He had to walk through the prison.

5. He had to pass through the main gate.

6. He then had to make his way to the house of Mary.

We now look at another factor which is also of the greatest importance in understanding its message. And that is this Book is not one continuous succession of events starting with the first chapter and ending with the last chapter. For instance, the events recorded in the fourth chapter do not follow in chronological order after the events recorded in the first three chapters.

The events set out in The Revelation are recorded in cycles, each cycle recording a different aspect of the history of the Church over the same period of time, that is, from the Lord’s first advent to His second advent, and even beyond.

Now it is worth pointing out, that chapters two and three are seen in almost the identical manner by both the followers of Futurism and Historicism, it is when we get to chapter four that things begin to go astray, the Futurists throw chapter onwards into the distant future.

In chapter one verse four we find the message addressed to “*The seven churches which are in Asia.*” This presents us

with the immediate question, why these seven churches, why are not churches such as those in Rome or Jerusalem mentioned? The reason being is that this cluster of churches show between them the characteristics that would be seen in a great degree throughout the church age. These churches we might call “Representative or symbolic Churches” and it is from these we are able to learn much of great importance. Whilst the Churches say in Jerusalem and Rome, had not yet developed along these lines.

Secondly, what are we to understand by the term Church. If we do not understand this, then we are not going to be able to properly apply the message. We may just as well write a letter to a friend, and post it with only his name on the envelope but with no address.

The word ‘Church’ used here is translated from the Greek word ‘ekklesia’ literally means, ‘the congregation of the called-out ones. It was primarily used of the nation or ‘congregation’ of Israel as the ‘called of God’. For example, in Acts 7:38 we read; *“This is he, (Moses) that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:”* Some time ago I was asked, at a Bible Study, why I called Israel of the Old Testament the Church, well here is the answer, because the Bible calls it such.

From this it is clear that the original application of the word ‘church’ to Israel as a nation, who were the then church of God, a people whom He had chosen and separated from the rest of the world, to be a peculiar people to himself, to whom were given the Word and ordinances, the service of God along with the promises. God always had, and will have a church, though that is sometimes in the wilderness as we will see when eventually we get to Revelation 12. Suffice to say, the

Church of the New Testament is intimately related to that of the Old Testament, to separate them, as some do, is to tear the Church of God apart.

And the word ‘*angels*’ does not always mean heavenly beings with wings etc, the application is that of ‘messengers, the seven stars which John saw in Christ's right hand, represent the angels, messengers or ministers of the seven churches of Asia, and symbolism in them all the pastors and ministers of the churches in all the periods of time until Christ's second coming.

It should also be noted that the ministers of the Gospel are also compared to “*stars*”, the ministers of the Gospel are compared to stars. The question is “why stars?” Today we associate the application of stars to the rich and famous in the film and entertainment industry, so are ministers to be seen in this way? God forbid, although some of telly evangelists live such lifestyles.

The symbolising is this, just as God has fixed them the stars in the heavens, in their proper place, and for his glory. So, ministers are of the same nature in respect of the churches, God has set them in these places for His glory; and just as the natural stars receive their form and light from the sun, so preachers of the Gospel receive their light from Christ. Stars are also vast in number and variety, so the ministers of the Gospel are many, and their gifts different; their purpose is to reflect the light of Christ and direct others to Christ, and point out the way of salvation, and to rule over the churches.

Now the question is, how many of today’s breed of ministers understand this and the implications associated with such a positioning, indeed how many congregations understand this!