

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The Approach

If you were to read through the book of Acts, and then read through the book of Revelation, you might notice a few differences. It doesn't take a doctorate degree to realize that this is a different *type* of book. Thus we take a slightly different approach than we might when reading the book of Acts.

The Style

In a sense, this book was written in the style of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our New Testament was originally in Greek, the Old Testament in Hebrew. The Revelation *was* written in Greek, yet in the **style** of the Hebrew language. Greek, by its very nature, is typically analytical. But this is a language of pictures and symbols.

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters – **Psalm 23**

One of the reasons this book calls for a different approach than other New Testament writings is the fact that it's written in a style that has become known as *apocalyptic*. Disregard any doomsday scenarios connected with this word. An apocalypse means, quite literally, an unveiling or revealing – a **revelation**. It is transliterated from the Greek word 'apokalupsis' which is translated "revelation". This is why the book is sometimes called the Apocalypse instead of the Revelation – they mean the same thing. Simply said, *apocalyptic* typically refers to speech that is made up of symbols. All metaphors and figurative uses of language, however, do not necessarily fit into the category of *apocalyptic*. While it is difficult to determine a system of qualification, this kind of speech has certain defining qualities unlike any other, which will set it apart. The vivid, and often violent, images intrigue the mind and capture our imagination. While the entire book is not made up of this type of speech, the majority of it is, so much of our discussion will be geared towards understanding this style.

The Symbols

The Revelation is very much a book of symbols. It is appropriate that the book be written in the style of the Hebrew, because so many of the symbols point us back to the Hebrew Scriptures. Most of the images we see are from either the Old or the New Testament, or both! Besides word images, we see many highly symbolic numbers. These numbers have always played an important role in God's word, and we see them over and over again throughout the Scriptures. For this reason, we tend to understand that there is a deeper meaning to the vision we've been given in the Revelation.

The Situation

When this book was written, the Christians in the first century Church were about to suffer heavy persecution under the Roman Empire. In addition to the outside physical forces against them, there would be internal conflict as well, not to mention the greater spiritual forces behind it all. Things looked awfully dim. So the Lord sent a message through his servant, John, to comfort them, and reveal the things which must take place.

The Message

The faithful Christian *always* wins. This is the overwhelming message of this book. God is in control, no matter the appearance of the world around us. He is faithful and true, He will win the victory and we will be there with Him. Whatever happens around us, we're on the winning side. They can take away our lives, our belongings, our health, even our freedom, yet even still, we win with Christ. No one can take away our faith and devotion to our Lord, but we can give it up. Jesus says don't give up – "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

The Eternity

The book was written to prepare the saints for the persecution (and destruction) of the Roman Empire and to reveal things that **are**, that **were**, and that **will be**. Jesus reveals eternal principles which are true for us now, as they were then, and will be always. Most of the time we think of prophecy as predicting the future, however, this isn't always the case. True, many prophecies have to do with things in the future, but many times they speak about things that are happening or that have already passed. In this sense, they speak more about the eternal things that just *are*. Here we have the central battle of good versus evil. It prepares us for spiritual warfare against Satan and his allies. On God's side, we cannot lose. He's already won!

The Blessing

The Author of this book promises a blessing on "he who **reads** and those who **hear** the words of this prophecy, and **keep** those things which are written in it." I certainly believe that God blesses anyone who opens up His word and takes it to heart, and here we have a *special* blessing on those who read this particular book. I can affirm that the truths of this epic story have certainly been a blessing in my walk with Christ and my battles against Satan. *We're not alone*, our brothers and sisters are right beside us. We **need** one another. In this Book, we will find a positive message for our lives and I have faith that it will be such a wonderful blessing for us all.

Significance of Numbers in Revelation

Throughout the Scriptures, certain numbers tend to play a prominent and crucial role. Numbers like three, seven, ten, and twelve are seen over and over again. This is especially true in Revelation. It should be noted that not every number in the Bible is to be taken symbolically because it happens to be one of these special numbers. In fact, the majority of the time it seems these numbers are just...numbers. However, in a book like Revelation - or any of the other apocalyptic prophecies - we approach it with a sense of rich, deeply-rooted symbolism. Why these particular numbers have been given special designations is beyond my scope, yet still I find great comfort in the order and precision of their frequency, and more importantly their meaning.

This is a guide to help make connections between the numbers in Revelation and what they have come to represent. The cited passages are not necessarily symbolic references but uses of the number that correlate with their use in Revelation, where they are alluded to.

ONE – singularity, God, unity, oneness (Deut. 6:4, John 10:16, Eph. 4:1-6)
Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

TWO – strength, number of witnesses (Ecclesiastes 4:12, Deut. 17:6, John 5:31, 8:17, 2 Cor. 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19, Zechariah 4:11-14 [Leviticus 8/ 1 Samuel 10,16], Mark 6:7, Matthew 10:1,18:16, Genesis 41:32)

By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established.

THREE - of God, perfect and complete, the essence of a thing (Gen 18:2, Ex. 19:11, Matt. 28:19, Acts 10:16, Matthew 3:16-17, Matthew 28:18-20, Jonah 1:17/Matthew 12:40)

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

3 1/2 etc. – (also 42 months, 1260 days or ‘time, times, and half a time’) protection during persecution, sustained through suffering, nourishment in the wilderness (1 Kings 17:1-14, 19:1-8, James 5:17, Luke 4:25, Dan 7:25, 12:7)

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

FOUR – universality, creation, concerning the earth or the world, gospels (Ezekiel 1, 14:12-23, 37:9, Daniel 7, Isaiah 11:12, Matthew 24:31)

**He will set up a banner for the nations,
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.**

FIVE - a few, half of ten/incomplete (Matthew 25:2, 1 Corinthians 14:19)

And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.

SIX - incomplete, number of man, falls short of perfection (Genesis 1:26 – 31)

On the sixth day the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

SEVEN – fullness of power, completeness, unity, perfection, sabbath rest, of God (Genesis 2:1-3, Genesis 7, Matthew 18:22)

Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

EIGHT – day of the week – beginning again, resurrection, (Genesis 17:8, Ex. 22:30, John 20:19-29, Leviticus 12:3, 14:10, 25:8, Luke 1:59-60)

It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.

TEN etc. – fullness, complete, period of trial (Daniel 1:12 -16, Genesis 31:7, Deut 4:13)

So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

TWELVE - God's people - patriarchs (Acts 7:8), apostles (Matthew 10:2-4)

So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

TWENTY-FOUR - completeness, restoration of God's people (1 Chronicles 24:7-18, 27:1-15)

Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled

ONE-THOUSAND etc. – ultimate – to the nth degree (Psalm 50:10, Deut. 7:9) emphasizes its inner quality, a myriad is ($10^4 = 10,000$) – a myriad myriad ($10,000 \times 10,000$ - a hundred million) is the largest named number in the language.

And they blessed Rebekah and said to her:

**Our sister, *may you become*
The mother of thousands of ten thousands;
And may your descendants possess
The gates of those who hate them.**

no study next week – I'll be in Costa Rica serving on a mission effort – *please pray for us!*
a full archive of devotional materials can be found on my website:

www.parkwaycoc.org/faithmatters

I encourage you to check it out over the break – it's always beneficial to study God's word.