

# **The Revelation to John**

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## **Introduction**

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I have chosen a wide range of books for reference and I will try to give a general overview of this book while mentioning some of the other interpretations. My personal understanding generally follows the Reformed view. Some people have made a lot of money out of their writings and movies on some of the topics involved and I am not a total proponent of those interpretations. I emphasize personal holiness as the driving force in studying the Word of God. This book is part of our Bible and should be studied but we always let the Bible interpret the Bible.

*2Tim 3:16 "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;"*

We always let the explicit interpret the implicit and there will always be concepts that we do not understand. I can only trust God for He is sovereign. I pray that we will all be blessed in this study.

## **Author**

There is some controversy about who wrote the book. There is no doubt that John wrote the book but it is not certain who John was. There are good reasons to doubt that this John was the Apostle and the writer of the Gospel and the other books of John the Apostle. In his other writings he never referred to himself by name but in Revelation he does. The subject matter is the love of God in the writing of the Apostle and it is the wrath of God in this book. There are other reasons but mainly people have focused on the writing itself. The Gospel of John and his epistles were written in impeccable Greek but Revelation is written in a very strange Greek. The writer seems to have thought in Hebrew and attempted to write in Greek. He probably spoke Aramaic. The writer of Revelation used seemingly incorrect Greek tenses and made other grammatical mistakes in his Greek writing. But others have argued that the subject matter was so different from the other writings of John that he may have brilliantly "slaughtered" the language to make his points. Other apocalyptic writers did not claim to be a prophetic writer but this author does make that claim. He also was said to be in an emotional state (in the spirit) and that may account for his strange manner of writing. This book could also have been written before he had a better understanding of the written Greek language. From experience I know that it is much more difficult to write in a language not your basic language than it is to speak it. Although John was a very common name, there are not many Christian Johns of that era to choose from as a possible author. The writer could not have been John the Baptist and probably also not John Mark. The consensus seems to be that the writer really was John the Apostle.

### **Date of Writing**

The date of the writing is difficult to determine. Since one verse talks about measuring the Temple, it would seem that the Temple still existed and that would put the date before 70 AD. However the worship of the emperor is very pervasive and most scholars think that this person would be Domitian who reigned from 81 – 96 AD. The letters to the seven churches indicate that they had existed for some time in the development described. Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 60-61 so it needed considerable time to develop into such a rich church as described. Some people thought that the emperor would be Nero for his great maltreatment of the Christians but his persecution was short-lived and mainly served to give him a scapegoat for the fire. Many people also refused to believe that Nero was really dead and that he would arise again but such a wide-spread belief would also take some time to develop. Most scholars now think that the time of the writing was during the reign of Domitian and thus date the writing in AD 90-95. Patmos is a rugged island, perhaps the crater rim of an extinct volcano, and was probably the site of a penal colony where the Romans placed political exiles. Jerome wrote that St. John was banished there in the fourteenth year after Nero and freed on the death of Domitian (ruled 81-96 AD). This means he was sent to Patmos about 94 AD and liberated about 96 AD.

### **Style of Writing**

The writing is apocalyptic, which was a style used in the first two centuries BC and AD and mainly used by the Jews. Such writings are difficult to understand and so many interpretations have appeared. The emphasis of all apocalyptic writings was on the evil in the world continuing to be worse and only a direct intervention by God could solve the problem of evil. Such writings also use strange symbolism that makes it even more difficult to understand the meaning of the writer. The book was not universally accepted into the canon and even Calvin left it out of his expansive set of commentaries. Luther considered it neither apostolic nor prophetic. Consequently many people have ignored the book except for a few chapters such as the end description of a wonderful new era. Then there are a few writers who have capitalized on the gullibility of many readers to make a lot of money on an interpretation that is very problematic.

### **Interpretations**

There are many interpretations of this book but they all fall under either the following designations or some combination of them.

#### **1. The preterist view**

This interpretation says that the entire book is about the church at the time of the writing and it does not hold any futuristic aspect. This view holds that the dominant force at this time was the Roman Empire and John writes about the church and its problems during this time. All events were then fulfilled in the time of the Roman Empire. Certainly this approach makes it a very meaningful book (assuming the form can be understood) for the

church at this time but it has no meaning for future generations. There are also several variations of this view.

## 2. The 'historicist' view

These interpreters view the book as a forecast of the whole of human history. This approach would have the advantage of being meaningful to future generations. Its value to the church at the time of the writing would be encouraging in that regardless of the persecutions the true believers will persevere and be saved.

## 3. The futurist view

This view holds that, except for the first few chapters, the book is about the end times and the second coming of the Lord Jesus. The meaning for all but the people at the end times is not clear. The main observation they could take from this interpretation is that God is in control of everything. Such a meaning is satisfying but hardly applicable in details to each succeeding generation.

## 4. The idealist view

This interpretation focuses solely on the writing as poetic and with no particular application to churches of any age. The application is only to the general principles of how God works in the world.

Surely a proper understanding of this book must take into account all of the above methodologies and more. The book was written to a very small church body that had endured much persecution and was anxiously awaiting the return of Jesus to bring an end to all the evil in the world. They waited and grew only slowly and their hope faded. They may have been doubting their faith as real and wondered if they put their trust in a false hope. To this church John wrote of the sovereignty of God and the truth of the final coming of Jesus. It would have been very comforting and edifying to this small church that then grew all over the world.

## **Promise**

Although difficult to interpret, this is the only book of the Bible with such a wonderful promise:

*Rev 1:3 "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near."*

## **My Approach**

So even though my attitude continues to be that nobody understands the end times and our command is to be holy and to live a life glorifying Jesus, I will do my best to give a thorough study of this great book. My interpretation is mainly based upon a Historical or Continuing basis. I continue with the attitude that God wants us to spend most of our time in our sanctification process:

*Rom 6:19 “I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”*

*1Thess 4:3-4 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,”*

Thus, although the promise of studying this book gives me the motive to do this commentary, my main emphasis will be on my personal sanctification and how that spiritual growth can assist my ministry to fellow Christians. I pray that your emphasis will be the same.

### **A Rough Outline**

I. Introduction (1: 1-8)

II. Letters to the Seven Churches (1:9 – 3:22)

III. Vision of the Scroll, the Trumpets, the Seven Signs, and the Seven Bowls (4:1-19:10)

IV. Vision of the Return of Christ and the End of the Ages (19:11 – 20:15)

V. Vision of the New Heaven, Earth, and Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)

VI. Conclusion (22:6-21)

### **The Chronology of Revelation**

If one attempts an interpretation of this book assuming that all chapters sequentially follow each other the result will be considerable confusion and mistakes in interpretation. Sometimes John will interrupt the sequence with an amplification of previous events and sometimes he will give us visions of praises in heaven for what has been done and/or for what will be done. Sometimes words are meant to have a symbolic meaning and sometimes words are to be taken literally. To be true to this book we must let Scripture interpret Scripture and not bring any preconceived end-times concept to our interpretation. In prayer and with much study, I have done the best that I can to be true to all Scripture in my interpretations. I pray that this method will bring encouragement, joy, and peace to all the readers.

Chapter one is an introduction, orders to send messages to seven real churches in the area, and a vision of Jesus Christ as Judge and Ruler. John is told to write the things he sees, the things which currently exist, and the things which will exist. The future revelation begins in chapter four and continues through chapter 16. He is told that in the vision to the churches the stars are the angels of the seven churches and the lampstands are the churches.

Chapter two is the letter to the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira.

Chapter three is the letter to the churches in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Chapter four is a future scene of the throne room in heaven.

Chapter five reveals a book of judgments that only Jesus can open and is a preliminary scene before judgments begin.

Chapter six shows the beginning of God's judgments upon the world and a wonderful scene of praise for the Lord Jesus Christ. John sees visions of the breaking of six seals of the book of judgments.

Chapter seven represents an interlude of praise in heaven and a peek at our final home before more judgments are released. John also sees that God's bond-servants are sealed for final spiritual protection. Jesus will never lose a single disciple.

Chapter eight resumes judgment with the breaking of the seventh seal and the sounding of four of the seven trumpets of judgment.

Chapter nine reveals the fifth and sixth trumpets of judgment as demons from the bottomless pit are released upon the earth and a huge army descends to kill one third of mankind.

Chapter ten reveals another interlude that occurs before the sounding of the seventh trumpet. John also is told to eat a book that reveals both love and judgment.

Chapter eleven gives John a scene of the two witnesses and the sounding of the seventh trumpet of judgment as the final reign of Jesus is foreseen.

Chapter twelve presents an overview of prior events and the first and second signs. Chapters 12-14 are a digression giving a different perspective on the previous power of God's wrath and a vision of God's final victory.

Chapter thirteen gives a vision of how Satan mocks God with his unholy trinity, an attempt at ruling over God, and the marking of his followers in another mockery of the marking of God's bond-servants.

Chapter fourteen presents a future scene of the eternal safety of God's people and the eternal destruction of God's enemies. John gives us a vision of the Lamb in the heavenly Mount Zion and the role of the reapers as he is given a preview of the total destruction of all of God's enemies.

Chapter fifteen shows the third and final sign and is the shortest chapter in the book. It presents a scene from heaven and a prelude to the final judgment.

Chapter sixteen gives the horrible visions of the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath as God gives out His final judgments on a sinful earth and all mankind are destroyed. Chronologically, chapter 19 follows chapter sixteen but John first gives us an aside.

Chapters seventeen and eighteen amplify on the previous judgments of the false church and the rule of humanism in the world's civil structure. Babylon is symbolic of a major city and the cities that follow its worldly prosperity with man as the center of worship. Babylon's lack of a future was foretold in Isa 13:19-22.

Chapter nineteen gives the vision of the heavenly praise for what has been done and the total elimination of Satan.

Chapter twenty is another behind-the-scenes look at what has happened regarding the judgment of Satan and his forces. We are told of the fourfold hallelujah, the marriage of the Lamb, the coming of Christ, and the doom of the beast and the false prophet. John also gives a vision of the "millennium" that I view not as a literal thousand year period of time but as an indeterminate time period (from our perspective) when God's martyrs reign in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter twenty-one gives us John's vision of a new heaven and a new earth.

Chapter twenty-two reveals more glorious details of our final home. This is a wonderful, encouraging end to a marvelous book that shows the final justice of God, the salvation of all of God's children from all ages, and our eternal home. Hallelujah! Come Lord Jesus!

### References

I have chosen a wide range of points of view for the references to help people understand the wide range of interpretations that have been made of this book of the Bible. The authors range from liberal to very conservative and all serve a useful purpose when all are looked at from a strict Biblical perspective. I do not mean to endorse any of them as I remain of the position that nobody really understands the end times and our primary emphasis should be on living each day to the glory of God.

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9. Tim LaHaye, "Charting the End Times", Harvest House Publishers, 2001.
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### An Aside on The End Times

#### **The Rapture**

Dispensationalists and others (like LaHaye) use the Scriptures below as proof for a rapture of the church to occur before the "Tribulation" period. I have already commented on them in my commentary on 1 Thes and 2 Thes and I repeat the 1 Thes Scriptures and comments below. I do not interpret the Bible as telling us that this is a description of a rapture of the church to remove it from a time of great tribulation on earth.

***1 Thes 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.***

***1 Thes 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.***

***1 Thes 4:15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.***

Paul uses the word "asleep" to mean that those people are physically dead. In the non-Christian world death indeed is the great enemy since those people have no hope of any kind of life after death. However in the Christian world there is hope for the life after death. Here Paul assures the Christian audience that those who died after being born again will be physically raised again and their souls will return with Jesus for His second coming. He also assures the readers that if Jesus comes back before we die that first His children who died earlier will physically arise and then we who have been born again will be also joined with Jesus in our glorified body. The rest of the world has no hope for anything of such wonder to happen to them. Those who die without being born again into the kingdom of God will face an eternal life of continuous wrath from God as payment for their sins before Him.

*John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

We will discuss the roles the soul and the body play in life after physical death later. We do need to be clear that when any Christian dies he is immediately with the Lord:

*2Cor 5:8 "we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord."*

We also need to be clear about what is meant by being with the Lord in regard to our physical body and our soul. As we all painfully know from experiencing many funerals,

the body stays here when someone ceases to function biologically (physical death). But the above verse tells us that we are absent from the body when we are physically dead so our soul is immediately at home with the Lord. That indeed is wonderful news for the children of God!

***1 Thes 4:16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.***

***1 Thes 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.***

Here Paul completes this section of his writing with a great assurance for all of us. Paul is talking about the Parousia or the second coming of our Lord. The Jewish tradition speaks of seven archangels. In 1 Enoch 20:1-7 their names are listed as Taphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel and Remiel. The trumpet of God might refer back to Isa 27:13 where the sound of the great trumpet summons the Jewish exiles home from Assyria and Egypt. The raising of the bodies of the dead refers to those children of God who had died before the second coming of Jesus. These people would be honored first by raising their glorified bodies as a reward for their serving Jesus unto death. After the rising of the dead saints the people who are left alive would be transformed into their glorified bodies to meet all the saints and Jesus in the air. Then we would all be together with Him forever! Some people have made too much out of Paul saying “we who are alive” to make it seem that Paul thought that he would still be alive when this second coming begins. However the totality of his writings does not support this conjecture.

In the two thousand years since he wrote these verses many Christians have died. Many of us today still wait for that second coming and know that we will be with Jesus when He comes again whether we are still alive or if we die before He comes.

Some writers also use the Scriptures below to refer to a church rapture and I also do not see such an application here. These verses are very comforting for those who have lost loved ones and those of us waiting for death.

*John 14:1 “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.*

*John 14:2 “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.*

*John 14:3 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*

Some people use 1 Cor 15:50-53 to say that the Bible tells of a church rapture in their context of end times. Certainly there will be a time when God’s people will be changed and taken into Heaven, but when it will occur is really unknown. Here are my commentaries on these verses from my commentary on 1 Cor.



**1Cor 15:50 “Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**

**1Cor 15:51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,**

**1Cor 15:52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.**

**1Cor 15:53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”**

Paul is now bringing this subject to a close. He tells us that, as we now exist, we cannot enter the kingdom of God for it is not a place for the earthly. We who are perishing cannot inherit the land of the imperishable. But he tells us a mystery. Not everyone will die before entering the kingdom of God. Some people will be transformed from the perishable to an imperishable body before dying! This process is also taught elsewhere as we have studied before:

*1Thess 4:17 “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.”*

*Phil 3:20 “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;*

*Phil 3:21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”*

Since Paul used the word “we”, some people thought that Paul thought that he was going to be raptured and would not physically die. I do not think such an extrapolation is warranted from all of the other writings of Paul. He just knew the process and it brought an admiration and expectation to him that should be in all of us. The last trumpet to which Paul refers will end the church age and all Christians will leave earth to be with our Lord. Maranatha!

In 1 Cor 15:52 Paul uses the word “moment” and that word comes from the same Greek word from which we get the word “atom”. So he is telling us that in the smallest possible division of time this change will occur!

### **The Great Tribulation and the End Times**

The “Olivet Discourse” is often interpreted by some people to apply to the tribulations mentioned in Revelation. Jesus is indeed addressing the question concerning the sign of His return and the end of the age, but by letting Scripture interpret Scripture we see that He is describing events after His resurrection and continuing into the future.

***Matt 24:3 "And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"***

***Matt 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you.***

***Matt 24:5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many.***

***Matt 24:6 "And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.***

***Matt 24:7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.***

***Matt 24:8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs."***

Certainly all of the above have happened many times in the past two thousand years and Jesus even modified His predictions by saying that the above are just the beginnings of the pangs of the birth of the end times. Of course we are accustomed to thinking of the birth process taking nine months but such happens in many different time spans among earth's animals. Since a birth does take some time, He is telling us that the "birth" of the end times will also take some unstated period of time.

***Matt 24:9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name.***

***Matt 24:10 "And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another.***

***Matt 24:11 "And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many."***

Certainly the tribulation to Christians has been occurring since the time of Jesus on earth and the hatred of Christians has been rampant. The falling away was spoken of by John:

***1John 2:19 "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."***

Of course John is not speaking of people who rejected their membership in the Family of God but of people who were not really born again but had been associated with churches. Paul and Peter also warned of false apostles who had been appearing in his time on earth. Peter told of false prophets in the Old Testament time period and warned of such that would appear early in the church period:

***2Peter 1:20 "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation,***

***2Peter 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***

***2Peter 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."***

Jesus also told of times past when there were false prophets:

*Luke 6:26 “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.”*

John also told us to use our gift of discernment to properly recognize such false ones:

*1John 4:1 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*

Paul warned the people of people preaching about a false Jesus, a false spirit, a false gospel, and false apostles and deceitful workers. He also warned of false brethren that had caused him dangers.

*2Cor 11:4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully.*

*2Cor 11:13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.*

*2Cor 11:26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;*

My point is tribulations and dangers as told by Jesus that would be present in the end times were present also in times past His time on earth and very much present against Christians beginning shortly after His resurrection and continuing as we live in 2008.

John also told his readers that they are all in the last hour at his time on earth.

*1John 2:18 “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.”*

Being in the last hour reminds me of the atomic clock that was prevalent during times when dangers of nuclear war seemed eminent. The time of 12:00 was representative of the time of nuclear war and people were moving the hands closer to that time as dangers became more evident. Only God the Father knows the precise time of the true end:

*Matt 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”*

It is certainly foolish then for any mere human to attempt to date the time of the second coming of Jesus and the End Times. Many have made attempts over the years but they were all wrong.

***Matt 24:12 "And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.***

***Matt 24:13 "But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."***

The lawlessness predicted by Jesus is the lack of obedience to the Law of God and that may take its form in many different ways including a church time when true worship is not practiced. We see many forms of this in the last ten years and increasingly now as church leaders are giving people more “comfortable” churches and a social gospel that is devoid of dying to self and living for Jesus. The love of people growing cold reminds me of the letter of Jesus to the church at Laodicea in Rev 3:14-22. I think his warning to that church as stated below is particularly applicable to many churches today:

*Rev 3:17 "Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,"*

Many churches today preach a prosperity gospel, which is certainly a false gospel, and messages just on self-worth and self-gratification, which is also not the teaching of the true Jesus. Jesus encourages us by saying that those who persevere will be saved. We only have to read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews to learn of many Christians who faced horrible persecution but yet persevered. We can also read of many horrible tribulations that have already occurred such as the following:

Ten million Christians and 1,900 Catholic priests were murdered, massacred, raped, starved, burned and humiliated during World War II. Approximately 5.4 million people were killed in the Vietnam War including 58,148 Americans. Over 40 million casualties resulted from World War I, including approximately 20 million military and civilian deaths. During World War II the Allies lost about 61 million people, and the Axis lost 11 million for a total number of human deaths of about 72 million including about 416,800 Americans. Many people have also been killed by infectious agents. Overall, the Spanish flu of 1918-1919 killed between 20 and 40 million people. The effect of the influenza epidemic was so severe that the average life span in the US was depressed by 10 years. So from 1918 until 1944, about 150 million people have been killed by major wars and epidemics. Many millions more have been killed in other wars and calamities.

Despite suffering many mental and physical tribulations, Christians are promised not to suffer the wrath of God:

*John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."*

*Rom 5:9 "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him."*

*Rom 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."*

However we are not promised freedom from the wrath of man and many Scripture verses above testify to the huge number of Christians who have suffered from the wrath of man, including Jesus Christ.

Jesus ends His teaching on the end times with the statement that the end will not come until:

***Matt 24:14 “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”***

Many people have tried to determine exactly what He meant and to try to tie efforts in world evangelism to predict that end time. Some have said that the church has already reached that goal and so the end can come at any time now. But only God can determine when that goal has been reached. Jesus did tell us the status of the world at the End Time: *For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, (Matt 24:37-38)* We can then see more about the status of mankind at this time from *Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. (Gen 6:11-13)* From these verses we can state that the End Time will be characterized by evil people from God’s perspective but that they will be enjoying themselves very much. I continue to state that we should not be overly concerned about trying to date this event and focus on:

*Matt 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”*

I will repeat that, although studying Revelation is rewarding, the main goal of the Christian is his own sanctification.

*1Thess 4:3 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;  
1Thess 4:4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,”*

Satan has lost us from his kingdom but he does not cease working to try to keep us from being workers in God’s Kingdom now. Therefore we must not become obsessed with the End Times and spend an inordinate amount of time reading books, seeing movies, and having discussions about the Rapture and the End Times. As part of our sanctification process we look forward to the time when Jesus will come again but we must be ready to meet Him at any time for we also do not know when we will physically die.

## **Basic End-times Systems**

*Amillennial* -- a belief that there is no literal thousand year time of peace, but that the Biblical reference is just to a long, indefinite time period between the ascension and ultimate return of Christ.

*Post-millennial* -- a belief that near the end of time the gospel will have produced a time of great peace which will last for 1000 years and then Christ will return. To have this view one must believe that man is becoming a better person as evolution proceeds.

*Pre-millennial* -- a belief that the world will not produce a peaceful time, but that Christ will return and rule for 1000 years with His saints (Rev 20:4-6). During this time period Satan will be locked away (Rev 20:2-3). At the end of the 1000 year rule of Christ Satan will be released and gather many with him to fight Christ. Satan is again defeated and judgment comes (Rev 20:7-15). At the end of this there will be a new heaven and a new earth (2Peter 3:10 , Rev 21:1-2).

Within the group of pre-millennial acceptors there are also three possibilities for further subdivision based upon 1 Thess 4:16-17 for the rapture and Daniel 12:7-11 for the seven year tribulation period divided into two groups of 3.5 years:

*Pre-tribulation* is a belief that the church will be raptured before tribulation begins.

*Mid-tribulation* is a belief that the church will be raptured after 3.5 years of tribulation.

*Post-tribulation* is a belief that the church will not be raptured during the tribulation but will rise to meet Christ as He comes back to rule after the tribulation period.

## **Numerology**

At least a basic understanding of numerology is an important component for a proper understanding of the material in this wonderful book. This subject is controversial and certainly of little respect among mathematicians but it was used a lot in the time period in which John wrote. I certainly do not support any use of numerology for making predictions or for any type of “spiritual” purpose. However understanding how numbers are expressed in other languages is very useful in understanding material that uses such terminology. So I will just give some basics that will be needed throughout the study of the book.

Neither Greek nor Hebrew had numbers in their writings. The situation is much like in the rather common use of Roman numerals such as X for 10, L for 50, M is for 1000, D for 500, and C for 100. When a letter is placed to the left of a number that is itself of greater numerical value than the first letter, the new letter subtracts from the value of the first number. For example, XL represents 40 because L is 50 and X to the left subtracts ten from the value of L. When a letter is placed to the right of a number that is itself of greater numerical value than the first letter, the new letter adds to the value of the first

number. For example XI is 11 and LII is 52. When two letters of the same value are placed side by side the value of the product is the sum of the values for the letters. For example XX has the numerical value of 20. Building upon this methodology, we then can write 2008 as MMVIII. What is the numerical value of DCCCXC? D represents 500, C represents 100 and the three C's to the right add to the total so DCCC is 800. The value of X is 10 so it subtracts from the C value so that the total value is 890. Easy! Ok, you learned that in high school and you see the Roman numeral method used in dating movies and some books so this is not terribly strange or new to most of you.

The use of numerical equivalents in Greek and Hebrew may not be new to most of us but the system is very similar. It would be too time consuming to give all the numerical equivalents of each letter in these languages. Since they use letters to express words and to write numbers, how did they know when they were using the letters for numbers rather than for words? The answer is just context of the writings. Just as the above with Roman numerals and with the English use of o for zero and for the letter and the use of l for one and for the letter, we know from context when we are stating a number and when we are writing words. Another interesting aspect of the use of Greek letters is that words had numerical equivalents. For example, the Greek name for Jesus is "iasous". The numerical equivalents of the letters is i = 10, a = 8, s = 200, o = 70, and u = 400. Rather than having some adding or subtracting scheme as used with Roman numerals, we just add the number equivalents of all the letters and we arrive at the total 888.

I will not try to make this gammatria (the number equivalent of a name or word) have any spiritual significance. However some people have tried to make the number totals have some deep meanings and that is what people usually have in mind when they discuss numerology. Below are the basic interpretations of many numbers that are commonly used in some writings.

1 represents unity.

2 represents division such as there are two types of people: sheep and goats.

3 is the number of divine perfection such as the Trinity. There are three qualities of the universe: space, time, and matter.

4 is the number of creation.

5 is the number for grace.

6 is the number for man.

7 is the number for spiritual perfection.

8 is the number for new beginnings.

9 is the number for judgment.

10 is the number for divine perfection or completion.

12 is the number for government.

40 is the number for probation or trial.