

Mount Up Wednesday
The Wednesday Night Bible Study Ministry of
East Mount Zion Baptist Church
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The Book of Revelation-The beginning to the Midway Point of the Tribulation Period

The book of Revelation is best understood by taking it apart and putting it back together again. First, it helps to understand that the book is not written in chronological order, therefore attempting to understand it in the order of chapter one to chapter 22 will not prove beneficial.

Next, the book is written primarily about the Jewish people and how God's plan through them has saved us. The Church is significant in the book; however, its presence is, for the most part, hidden. The word "church" appears several times in the first three chapters and then doesn't appear again until chapter 22:16. It is important to note that the symbolic representation of the church is present, in the form of the 24 Elders, all throughout the book.

The reason for the mystery of the Church in the book of Revelation is not to conceal understanding. This discreet method reveals the make-up of the Kingdom of God. There are several times in scripture where God conceals. The entrance to the Garden of Eden, Noah's Ark, to name a few. But most importantly, the mystery of the plan of Salvation through Jesus the Christ to the children of Israel.

So to understand the book of the Revelation, we start from the historical beginning, Rev. 12:1-5. These verses introduce us to the nation of Israel, the Messiah, Satan's plan to kill Him and how this plan brought 1/3 of the angelic host to the earth. Once we shift to chapter one, we come to understand what the book is, who it is about and why it was given to us.

Chapter one tells us that God the Father gave this Revelation of Jesus Christ to Him so He could show us things that are about to happen. We also find out that the one writing down the events is the Apostle John, the last living Apostle who has been exiled to the Island of Patmos to die because he refuses to stop preaching and teaching about Jesus. It goes on to introduce us to the first vision of John, that of the glorified Christ, who will be dictating to John messages to give to seven churches.

We are blessed if we read or hear the Revelation.

Chapters two and three are the letters to the seven churches. These are letters to actual churches of that time, but they are written to provide correction and edification for all

who will read. The churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

The end of the messages to the churches on the earth is most likely the place of the Rapture- the Church being taken up to the 3rd Heaven (I Thes. 4:16-17). At this point, the 2nd Heaven, where demons battle with angels to hinder our prayers, will be done away with (Rev.12:7-13).

After chapter three, John is invited up, via a vision, to the Throne Room of God. In the Throne Room, John sees God the Father, sitting on the beautiful, colorful Throne. The Father's Throne is surrounded by 24 Elders sitting on 24 thrones, each wearing golden crowns. These Elders represent the Church. Also in front of the Throne are seven lamps representing the Holy Spirit and a sea of glass. One of two seas mentioned in the book. In the center and around the throne are four living creatures, possibly angelic beings, each representing a different figure; lion- royalty, power and strength, calf – service and sacrifice, man – humanity and wisdom, and eagle – swiftness, and divine vision. The Throne Room is in the splendor of worship, as the Elders cast their crowns at the Father's feet.

Chapter five takes us into the ceremony of the Lamb. (This is a replica of the Orthodox Jewish Wedding Ceremony.) Here we see Jesus coming down the aisle as a lamb that was slain, approaching God the Father who is sitting on the Throne holding a scroll (the title deed to the earth). Jesus takes the scroll because He is the only one worthy to do so. At that moment worship all created things will break out in worship (Rev 5:13). At this moment, 144,000 Jewish men will be enlightened and will be anointed to preach the gospel for 3.5 years, during the 1st half of the Tribulation Period. Simultaneously, two witnesses, possibly Moses and Elijah, will be sent down to the earth from the 3rd Heaven to also preach to the world for 3.5 years.

Chapter Six begins with a vision of Jesus as the Lamb, opening up the first of seven seals. These are the Seal Judgements, the beginning of God's plan to rid the earth of evil and give man another opportunity to return to Him, even though they had many opportunities when before the Rapture. There are three sets of Judgements, the Seal, The Trumpet and the Bowl. Each set is worse than the one preceding it.

Meanwhile, in the kingdom of Darkness, the first Beast of Satan, the Antichrist, is brought up from the sea. This is the second time a spiritual sea is revealed. This is the evil sea. The Seal Judgements reveal war, famine, death, and natural disasters. They end with the release of the Trumpet Judgements, where there are attacks against the land, bodies of water, and cosmic disruptions. These are so catastrophic that people will long to die, but many won't turn to Christ. The first "woe" will be introduced here as well.

This brings us to the midway point of the Great Tribulation.