

THE
FINAL
MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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The Final Message
Understanding the book of Revelation
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This book is dedicated to my loving wife Yvette without whom I may have never had the courage or the confidence to undertake such an endeavor. Thank you for always being there for me.

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| Introduction

Prologue

It has been twenty years since I first penned this work and still there are things I would like to delve into deeper. The book of Revelation will always be my passion. I have included any additional insights that I have gleaned since my last update. Throughout these twenty years, it has truly been my privilege to interpret this last and enigmatic book of the Bible. I sincerely hope you are as blessed from reading this work, as I have been from writing it.

Why write another book on Revelation? I wrote the Final Message because today there is more confusion than ever, but the true meaning still eludes us. What makes this book different from the hundreds before it? Most books on Revelation are simply rehashing traditional interpretations with slight variations. There are four basic schools of interpretation the Preterist, Historic, Futurist, and Idealist. Each camp leaves far too many questions unanswered. For this reason, I have interpreted Revelation principally through the scriptures and not history or

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tradition. I call my method the *Scriptural Interpretation* or view. The Holy Scriptures are the barometer to determine whether my findings are fact or fiction.

Revelation is apocalyptic literature. Therefore, symbolism is the rule and literalism is the exception. Symbols require decoding. The best source is the scriptures themselves. The primary rules of interpretation (Hermeneutics) we should employ are Definition, Precedent, Context and Unity. If a writer decodes a symbol for us, this is the surest use of the rules of *Definition*. We then need to insure we follow the rule of *Precedent*, by not changing the definition of a particular symbol to fit our needs. Every word you read must be understood in the light of the words that come before and after it, that is the rule of *Context*. Last, we must incorporate the rule of *Unity*, meaning our interpretation must be consistent with the rest of the Bible. The core of this method assumes the Holy Spirit is guiding the interpreter. Using these tools almost every vision in Revelation, can be interpreted through scriptures (biblically) and not world events. I urge you to compare this work to any other book on Revelation (dated on or before this work) and prove for yourself what is true.

“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident.”

Arthur Schopenhauer

Since Revelation is meant to be understood, by its readers, why did John use so much imagery? Revelation is full of symbols. “John was in prison when he wrote it, and some believe he used symbols to smuggle it to the outside world. They seem to believe that he had to convince the prison authorities these were the writings of a lunatic. Others believe God had John write with symbols to make us study the entire Bible in order to understand their meaning. Whatever the reason, the symbols make some people believe you need a PhD to understand Revelation.”¹

Thankfully, it is not as complicated as we think, true there are numerous symbols, but John explained many of them for us. Therefore, we are sure these symbols are correct. We need to use them consistently as we go forward.

1. Candlesticks = Churches (Rev. 1:20)
2. Stars = Angels or Church Leaders (Rev. 1:20)
3. Lamps of Fire = the Holy Spirit (Rev. 4:5)
4. Eyes = the Holy Spirit (Rev. 5:6)
5. Dragon = Satan or the Devil (Rev. 12:9)

6. Frogs = Unclean Spirits (Rev. 16:13)
7. Heads = Mountains or Kingdoms (Rev. 17:9,10)
8. Beast = King or a Kingdom (Rev. 17:11)
9. Horns = Kings or Kingdoms (Rev. 17:12)
10. Many Waters = People or Multitudes (Rev. 17:15)
11. The Woman = the Great City (Rev. 17:18)
12. Fine Linen = Righteous Acts (Rev. 19:8)
13. Serpent = Satan or the Devil (Rev. 20:2)
14. The Bride = New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2)

John gives us the interpretation of these symbols and they are keys to unlock the text. They will prove invaluable to us as we interpret the book. We can begin our study with confidence, knowing we already understand at least fourteen symbols.

Besides the symbols, Revelation uses more numbers than any other book in the Bible. Consequently, it is imperative we have a general understanding of the fundamental numbers used by John, so we can correctly interpret the visions. The meaning of the numbers below are taken from Watchman Nee's books – How to Study the Bible and Aids to Revelation. With a basic understanding of the symbols and numbers of Revelation, we can now begin to decipher the various visions.

One	God the Father
Two	Jesus the Son / Witness or Testimony
Three	Holy Spirit / Completeness
Four	The World or Earth
Five	Man's separation / Incompleteness
Six	Man (humanity) / Beasts (animals)
Seven	Temporary or Dispensational completeness
Eight	Resurrection or newness
Nine	Fullness of blessing
Ten	Human completeness / Testing
Eleven	Incompleteness (pertains to the number 12)
Twelve	Permanent completeness

When we see how God uses numbers in the Bible, we gain a greater appreciation for the wisdom and deepness of God's Word.

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The Bible opens with Genesis the book of beginnings and it aptly closes with Revelation the book of consummations. Since Revelation consummates the Bible, we need to search both the Old and New Testaments, to understand its proper connection to all things. Only by interpreting scripture (Revelation) with scripture (Old & New Testaments) can we arrive at a true understanding of this last and enigmatic book.

At the beginning of the each chapter, I give you the essentials of what it contains. For instance, the timeframe or dispensation we are looking at, the physical location, which group of people is the focus, the key symbols and scriptures involved. Unlike most books on Revelation, this work is loaded with scripture references so you can clearly see if the interpretations are true or if I am taking something out of context.

| Chapter 1

John's Introduction (Revelation 1)

Chapter Essentials

Dispensation:	Present
Location:	Earth
Focus:	The Church
Key Symbols:	Stars and Candlesticks
Key Scriptures:	Revelation 1:19

The Revelation given to Christ

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

2 who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:1-2

The first thing we should look at is the meaning of the title, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The word *revelation* means unveiling, disclosing or uncovering. Consequently, the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” translates into the *Unveiling of Christ*. Through the book of Revelation, we should gain a deeper understanding of the work and character of Jesus Christ in these visions.

The first verse summarizes the purpose of this prophecy. God has given this revelation to Jesus Christ to show His servants (the Church) things that must happen shortly. Since God has given this prophecy directly to Christ, we can be certain it is a sure (true and accurate) word from the Lord.

Why does Revelation state these things must take place soon? This warning keeps the Church in a state of perpetual readiness. The Lord has not given us the precise time of His return, but He implores us to be ready.

St. Matthew 24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.

This requires the Church to remain vigilant, prayerful and keep itself pure (unspotted) from the world. The Lord has entrusted His kingdom to His servants until He returns. The weight and responsibility of this privilege has tremendous ramifications.

The Blessings of this Prophecy

3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Revelation 1:3

Blessings are to everyone who reads or hears the words of this prophecy and keeps its commands. The principal outline of these promises is in the seven

messages to the Churches. As we begin to unfold John's prophecies we will see the myriad of blessings for turning to God (repentance) and the fatal consequences for not.

The Audience (7 Churches of Asia)

**4 John, to the seven Churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,
5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,**

Revelation 1:4-5

John gives a salutation to the seven Churches in Asia. It is important to keep in mind John's intent was to strengthen these Churches. If they could not understand at least his basic message, how could they possibly gain comfort through it?

Despite the symbolism of the book, the central message of Revelation must have been understandable to the original readers. The Church was going through a severe period of tribulation and persecution. John's words originally encouraged and built up these seven Churches, the same is true for the Church today.

Remember seven is the biblical number for dispensational completeness. Therefore, this prophecy is for the universal or whole Church, not just to the seven listed.

How does blood free us from sin? Whenever we break the law there is a penalty of some sort involved. The penalty for sin is death. This is not an arbitrary fine instituted by the Lord.

God is the essence of life. Therefore, going against God (sin) produces death. Since the Lord is life, separation from Him is death. Likewise, blood is equated to life in the Bible (Leviticus 17:11), and loss of it is death. Sin results in death

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and blood is the physical proof of death. God's law cannot be broken. This is why Jesus needed blood to free us from sin. It proves the penalty of sin has been paid and that the law of sin and death has been satisfied.

The Christians Role on Earth

6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 1:6

Note the role of believers. They are a kingdom and priests unto Christ and God. This is the position of every believer now, not in the afterlife. A priest in the Old Testament was a person set aside to minister (serve) to God. They represented the people before God and offered various sacrifices for them. This office was regulated to the tribe of Levi and then exclusively to the family of Aaron within the Levite tribe. Now the Lord has given this sacred office to every believer and commissioned us to reconcile the world unto God.

*2 Corinthians 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and **hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.***

*2 Corinthians 5:20 **Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.***

Normally we hurry past John's introduction to reach the so-called deep parts of the prophecy, but God has placed a gem right under our noses. Every believer has a tremendous responsibility before God, because we are His priests. Since the priest is the one who offers sacrifices and Christ is our eternal sacrifice, what do we offer to God?

*Romans 12:1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.***

The picture presented here is a crucifying or mortifying of the flesh, denying or dying of self. This sacrifice is not for our sins because Christ has already taken care of them. We sacrifice ourselves to draw others to Christ. Crucifying the

flesh is our reasonable service or priestly duty, denying ourselves for the sake (salvation) of others. No Christian can fulfill their sacred role as a priest without continually (daily) offering their selves as a living sacrifice.

Consequently, a believer's personal conduct is crucial to their witness. Not only do our actions affect us, but also they are a determining factor in drawing people to God. Our daily conduct is a far more effective witness than even our most compelling words. It is impossible to reconcile others to God, if we as priests do not offer the proper sacrifices (our bodies). This means sometimes foregoing our legitimate wants and needs, to minister to the necessities of others.

The Second Coming of Christ

7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Revelation 1:7-8

Prophets foretold the First Advent of Christ long before His arrival and some doubted that it would ever happen. The same is true with His Second Coming many doubt it is validity, nevertheless the Word of God is true. The Second Advent of Jesus is a principal theme in John's prophecies and the Christian faith. His first coming brought joy to the world, but His return will bring mourning! Such a contrast, is this the same Christ? His First Advent ushered in salvation to those that believed, but His Second Coming will commence a time of judgment to all that do not.

How will an event as big as the coming of Christ, come like a thief in the night? For nearly two thousand years the Church has cried, "He is coming," but when? The reply is always soon; repent for the time is at hand. As a result, people have fallen into a state of apathy. The call to repentance has become rhetoric, salvation seems needless and holiness is passé. Who expects Christ to come right this minute and more important who is living as if He will? This apathetic attitude is precisely why the day of the Lord will catch many by surprise.

The Lord's Day

9 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.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 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.

Revelation 1:9-11

John states that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, what is the Lord's Day? Today, we commonly call Sunday the Lord's Day and this has led many to assume that is also its meaning in Revelation. The problem with adopting this belief is there is no scriptural evidence to support it and it violates the rule of *Usage*. The rule of Usage dictates we cannot give a term a different meaning than the one the original readers understood.

*Acts 13:42 And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, **the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.***

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

*Acts 13:44 And **the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.***

The scriptures show that Paul and Barnabas in their ministry to the Gentiles (Church), still gathered on the Sabbath to hear the Word of God. The saints did have meetings on the first day of the week (Sunday), and other days for prayer, breaking bread and general fellowshiping. However, Sunday was not the

principal day of worship until the formation of the Roman Catholic Church, long after the writings of John. Therefore, the *Lord's Day* cannot refer to Sunday.

We should always interpret scripture in the light of other scriptures.

There are no exact matches of the phrase “the Lord’s Day,” but there are several variations of it in the Bible. I have listed just a few of them. Only when there are no related scriptures should we seek other sources for interpretation.

Day of the Lord’s Wrath	Zephaniah 1:18
Day of the Lord’s Anger	Zephaniah 2:3
Day of the Lord	2 Peter 3:10
Day of God	2 Peter 3:12
Day of God Almighty	Revelation 16:14

Looking at the abbreviated list, we see this day has many names. Still the reference is always to the same prophetic event. The day of the Lord occurs in both the Old and New Testaments. According to the Bible, it is a time set aside for the wrath of God (judgment) to be poured out, upon the world. If we look at the “Lord’s Day” as another synonym for the term, “the Day of the Lord” then John would be in the Spirit viewing the time of God’s wrath. This interpretation agrees with the theme and visions in Revelation.

Why are we spending so much time over something that is so seemingly inconsequential to our understanding of Revelation? It is important we get our terms right, otherwise major events will soon become confused.

This delineation is significant because the “Day of the Lord” and the “Great Tribulation” are not the same event.

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For instance, a common belief in the Church states, Christians will not endure the period known as the *Great Tribulation*. Most futurist believe the *Tribulation* is something reserved for the wicked, not the Church.

Futurist – a major traditional view of Revelation that believes most prophecies are still in the future. This is by far the most popular view today.

Observe what the scriptures have to say about the *Day of the Lord* and the *Great Tribulation*.

Day of the Lord (the Wrath of God)

*St. Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, **who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?***

*1 Thessalonians 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even **Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.***

*1 Thessalonians 5:9 **For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.***

As we can see from the preceding scriptures believers will not experience the wrath of God, also known as the *Lord's Day*. However, are they also exempt from the *Great Tribulation*?

The Great Tribulation

*St. John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

*Acts 14:22 **Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much [great] tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.***

Revelation 1:9 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.

The *Great Tribulation* is an event that all believers will share. We must understand that tribulation or persecution is a normal part of the Christian experience. The kingdoms of this world and the kingdom of God are diametrically opposed to each other. The tribulations we suffer are because of the war of the flesh, but thanks to Christ, we have the ultimate victory. The book of Matthew gives us the timing and duration of the Great Tribulation.

St. Matthew 24:21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

St. Matthew 24:22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

St. Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

St. Matthew 24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

St. Matthew 24:31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The scriptures clearly state the rapture of the Church will occur immediately after the Great Tribulation.

The *Great Tribulation* is a direct result of the war between the people of God and world. As a result, every Christian will experience persecution at some level in their walk with the Lord. On the other hand, the Lord's Day (judgment) is reserved for all who reject the Lord. Christians are exempt from this dreaded event, instigated by the Lord himself. This ordering is in complete agreement

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with the scriptures and is crucial to our understanding of Revelation going forward.

In order to place the tribulation after the rapture we must blatantly ignore the words of Jesus (St. Matthew 3:7, St. Matthew 24:21-31). Even, John the author of Revelation, states, he is our brother and companion in tribulation. In view of this, how can it possibly occur in the future?

The Description of Christ

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and *his* hairs *were* white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes *were* as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance *was* as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 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:

18 I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Revelation 1:12-18

This portrait of Christ is specifically for the seven Churches so they will understand His role and relationship to them. John goes through pains to describe Christ. What is the purpose of such an enumerated description? Each element speaks of His character or nature.

Description of Christ

1. Clothing (garment to the foot and a golden girdle)
2. Head and Hair (white)
3. Eyes (like a flame of fire)
4. Feet (like fine brass)
5. Voice (sound of many waters)
6. Right Hand (seven stars)
7. Mouth (sharp two-edged sword)
8. Countenance (like the sun)

Eight elements describe the Lord's character. Remember, eight is the number of resurrection. Accordingly, this vision is an implicit (using numbers) description of the resurrected Christ. His clothing speaks of His office. A long garment (to the foot) and girdle are items of a king or high priest. Paul tells us in Hebrews that Christ has become our eternal high priest², reconciling us to God. His head and hair being white like wool denotes both His purity and wisdom. The head is the covering for the mind, which controls the thoughts and actions of an individual. White is the symbol of purity and here it speaks to the purity of Christ's thoughts and deeds. When white references the color of the hair, it expresses the wisdom of the aged. Christ is the ancient of days and is full of wisdom. Accordingly, His every word and action displays the great perspicacity of His personage.

Next, his eyes like a flame of fire speak of His seeing past our actions right to our motives. God sees the heart and every intention of humanity. His feet are as brass burned in the furnace. Brass symbolizes testing. This allusion points to Jesus' First Advent, as the Son of man He was tempted yet He was found blameless, righteous and holy. The Lord's voice was as the sound of many waters, through this we see the many nations that makeup the Church. Remember, John disclosed this to us.³ Many waters or seas represent nations or peoples. Through the Gentiles, the Church is a multi nation entity symbolic of the body of Christ. John is showing us that Jesus is Lord over all of creation. His voice speaks to and through every nation.

In His right hand are seven stars, this shows His special protection and care of the Church's leaders for they must guide His flock. Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword, this symbolizes the righteous judgment of the Lord (the Word of God). This sword is to kill the flesh (self-centeredness) so that we may live by the Spirit (God-centered).

Last, His countenance like the sun speaks to His righteousness and His glory. The brightness of His glory (appearance) is the same as God's. This speaks to the deity of Jesus, as the Son of God.

Key to Prophecy



19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Revelation 1:19

Most study edition Bibles and commentaries agree that Revelation 1:19 is the key verse to the entire book of Revelation. Therefore, it is imperative to divide this prophecy into three separate dispensations in order to understand it, the past, present and future.

“Revelation is one of those books that have the key (the outline) right in the door, in Rev. 1:19.”

The Life Plan Study Bible (NKJV) 2004

“**Three major divisions of Revelation must be recognized.** John was commanded to write concerning (1) things past ... (2) things present ... and (3) things future ...”

The Scofield Study Bible (NKJV) 2002

“**This is the key verse of the book;** it indicates the threefold plan of the prophecy; **and it is the only safe guide to its correct interpretation.**”

King James Bible Commentary 1999

Fortunately, the Lord Jesus gives us the key right away, in the first chapter of Revelation.

1. What you have seen (**Past**)
2. What is now (**Present**)
3. What will take place later (**Future**)

From this, we can see that Revelation is not just a foretelling of end times, but it should give us a comprehensive view of the history of humanity from a heavenly

perspective. It is the epic of battle for man's soul between the forces of good and evil, from the Garden of Eden to Armageddon. Through John, we have the unique privilege to get a behind the scenes look at the world past, present and future.

I believe dividing Revelation into the past, present and future is correct, but the traditional (Futurist) breakdown is wrong.

**Correctly identifying the past, present and future is
absolutely critical to interpreting the book of Revelation**

An incorrect separation of dispensations will lead us to erroneous interpretations and I believe this is one of the main reasons we have not understood Revelation to date. From this point on, whenever I address the traditional view I am referring to the futurist perspective, since it is the most popular interpretation today.

Traditional timeline of Revelation:

Past	Revelation 1:9-20
Present	Revelation 2 & 3
Future	Revelation 4-22

The table reveals the divisions are one-sided, but that does not make it wrong necessarily. However, it leaves us with several problems.

The Past (Rev. 1:9-20)

These verses portray the risen Christ about to deliver messages to the seven Churches in Asia and nothing else. There is not even an inference to the past (Old Testament Era) in this chapter. Assuming the traditional view is correct, what information do we receive about the past in these verses? If chapter one represents the past, where is the crucifixion of Jesus? The birth (First Advent), death and resurrection of Christ are major milestones in the Bible and Church history. One or all of these events must precede any biblical record of this present age.

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The Present (Rev. 2 & 3)

These two chapters contain the letters to the seven Churches in Asia. The letters contain condemnations, corrections and encouragement to the Churches of Asia, but that is it. Clearly, the letters belong to the present dispensation. However, if the seven letters represent the entire Church Age, where is the start of the Church or the rapture? The rapture or resurrection of the Church ends this present age. There is no mention of clouds or the blast of a trumpet.

The Future (Rev. 4-22)

In the traditional view, the bulk of Revelation takes place in the future. A major problem with this premise is, “If we go along with dispensational interpreters in finding the Rapture of the Church at Revelation 4:1, then the book becomes completely irrelevant, not only to the original readers, but also to all Christians of any age.”⁴

Besides these problems, we have already established through the scriptures that the Church will experience the *Great Tribulation*. Therefore, not all the prophecies in Revelation chapters 4 through 22 can be about future events, since the *Great Tribulation* is spoken of in chapter seven. I will delve into the proper breakdown in detail when we get to chapter four.

Christ and the Church

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven Churches.

Revelation 1:20

What is the mystery of the seven stars and candlesticks, also called lamp stands? Happily, the Lord immediately gives us the interpretation. The seven stars are seven angels over the Churches and the seven golden candlesticks are the seven Churches of Asia. The angels mentioned here are not literal angels, but they are the leaders or pastors of these Churches. How do we know this is true? We must apply the rule of *Logic*. In the next chapter, Jesus instructs John to write to these angels. Humans do not deliver messages to angelic beings. To the contrary, angels are messengers of God to humanity.

Christ is seen by John in the middle or midst of the candlesticks (Churches), meaning He is intimately acquainted with them and constantly watching over them. The Church as a candlestick relates to its purpose. It gives light to the world. The description of Christ and the seven letters (chapters 1-3) appears before the so-called meat of Revelation. Why are the letters first?

*1 Peter 4:17 "For **the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?**"*

Judgment rightfully begins with the Church of God. This is precisely the reason the seven letters are first and distinctly separate from the seven seals, trumpets and bowls. The former addresses the judgment of the Church, while the latter concerns itself with the judgment of the world. The Bible divides all people into 3 groups, Israel (Jews), the Church (Jewish and Gentile) and the World. The Old Testament details the judgment of Israel. Therefore, Revelation focuses mainly on the judgments of the Church and the world.

The description of Christ (Revelation 1:12-16) shows us that He is undeniably worthy to judge the Church and that His judgments are just and true. He has given His life for the Church and correspondingly He has been given the responsibility of judging it. Judgment in this case is not a condemnation or punishment, but it is a measuring stick or evaluation by the Word of God. It is a corrective step to ensure the children of God (believers) do not miss the fullness of the Lord's blessings. This is in line with Him being a God of love and mercy.

Now that we have finished John's introduction, we are ready to begin deciphering the visions of Revelation. We have 14 symbols already decoded for us. In addition, we know the meaning of the basic numbers used in the prophecy. Last, John gives us the key to the whole book, which is separating the visions into the past, present and future.

The Final Message

¹ Duck, Daymond. Revelation. God's Word for the Biblically-Inept Series. (Pennsylvania: Starburst Publishers, 1998) p. 5

² Holy Bible. Hebrews 2:17.

³ Holy Bible. Revelation 17:15

⁴ Gregg, Steve. Revelation Four Views. A Parallel Commentary. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, Inc., 1997) p. 42.