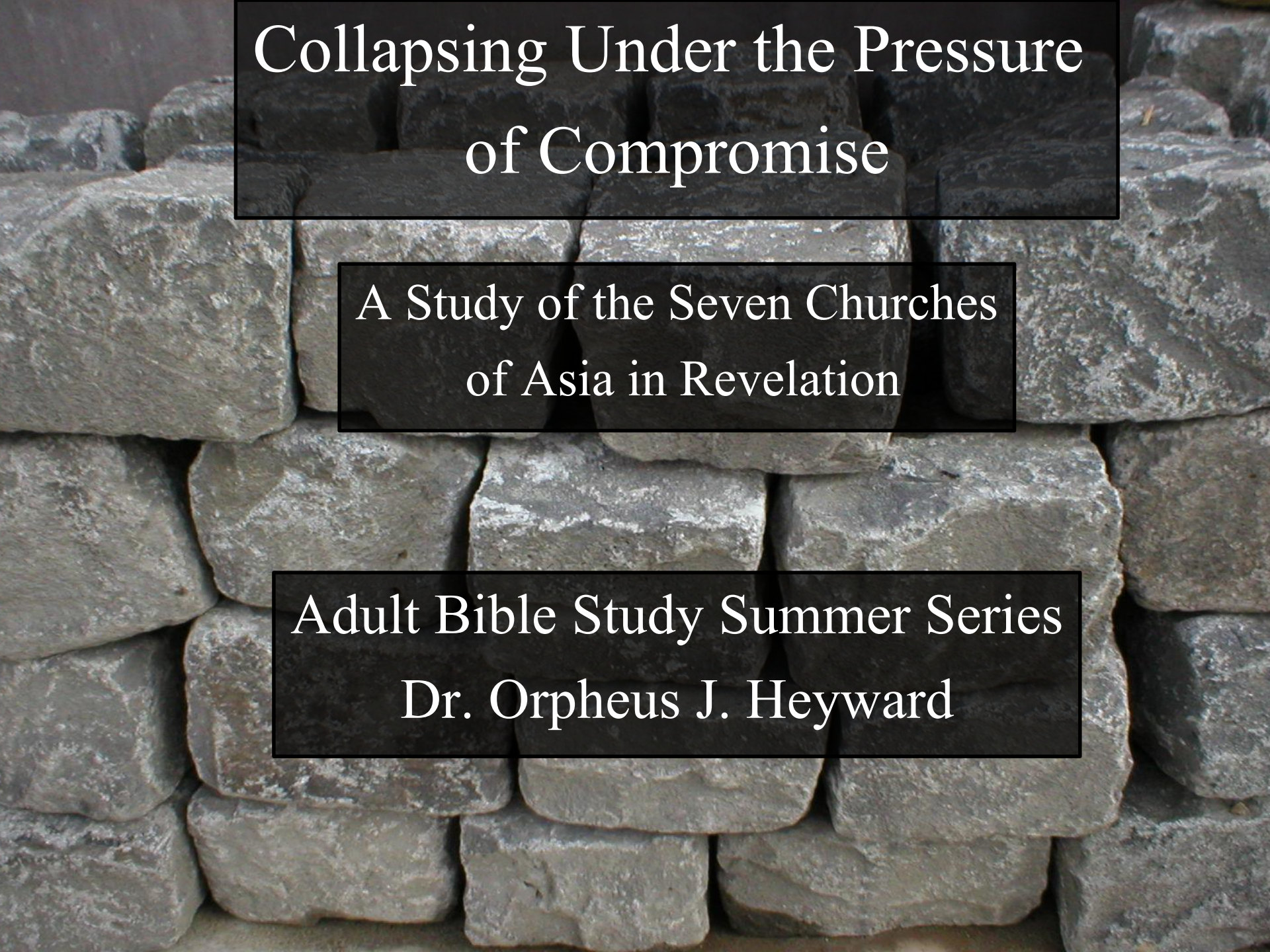




Collapsing Under the Pressure of Compromise

A Study of the Seven Churches
of Asia in Revelation

Adult Bible Study Summer Series
Dr. Orpheus J. Heyward

Surveying the Book Of Revelation – Understanding its Literature

- The book of Revelation is apocalyptic language.
- The term “apocalyptic” means “an unveiling”
- Common kind of Literature in Judaism
- Vivid, pictorial, and exaggerated
- It was utilized in times of trouble, and often used to provide hope

The book of Revelation belongs to a special class of writings known as apocalyptic. There is a certain amount of obscurity about such literature.

Some readers frankly neglect Revelation because of this seeming obscurity. It is far better to recognize that in this type of writing we have an unveiling of a message. This unveiling comes only as we search diligently the writer's purpose and method of making that purpose known. The Greek word ἀποκάλυψις is a compound word which means "an unveiling." The purpose of the writer was not to cover up his message but to make it increasingly vivid by "unveiling" through signs and symbols.

RAY SUMMERS

The personal safety of both writer and reader was endangered if the persecutors understood the true meaning of the book. For this reason the message of the apocalypse was written so as to conceal and to reveal-to conceal the message from the outsider but to reveal its message to the initiated.2

RAY SUMMERS

The Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature

1. Written at a critical point in history.
2. A knowledge of the historical situation aids interpretation.
3. Often received through visions
4. The apocalypse had a predictive element always pointing to vindication or deliverance
5. Uses an abundance of symbolism.

Surveying Revelation – Its Historical Background

- Written by the Apostle John toward the conclusion of the 1 century. Some date the book as early as the 80's, but conservatively around A.D. 90.
- The Church is experiencing persecution from the Romans empire.
- This book is not designed to frighten the Christian reader, but to inspire hope in the midst of despair.

Remember:

.....the book arises out of local and temporary circumstances, that it is the answer of the Holy Spirit to the fears of the Asian Christians under the perils toward the end of the first century, and that all that throws light on Asia Minor from a.d. 70–100 and upon Christianity there in that period is of first importance to the interpreter of Revelation.

— Ray Summers

Setting the Stage for the Messages to the Seven Churches

Historical Background

Historical Background Keys

- Internal evidence suggest the church was in the midst of persecution from the Roman Empire.
- During the first century, the Roman emperors held sway over the world, from Augustus to Domitian
- The Apostle John at the present time of the book was exiled to Patmos.

The purpose of the book was to strengthen the courage and faith of the Christian by visualizing the downfall of the Roman Empire and the final victory of the Kingdom of God and the victorious Christ. The author writes from a situation that is apparently hopeless

A Quote from William P. King

RAY SUMMERS

Interpretive Principles

- The book of Revelation (after the first three chapters) is a divine picture book, a pictorial presentation, through symbols of certain forces which underlie the historical development of the Christian Church and its conflict with the Roman Empire through satanic influence.
- For this reason the ordinary rules of interpretation cannot be followed. Usually the words of any passage of Scripture must be understood in their plain and natural sense, unless there is some reason to take them figuratively. The presumption is always in favor of the literal meaning; if one takes it otherwise, he must show the cause. This is not the case in Revelation. In this book, presented in pictorial form, one must assume that the symbols are to be taken figuratively unless there is good reason for regarding them as literal.

Chapter 1 Summarized

- John's Introduction – God sends a message of peace to the recipients rooting hope in gospel truth.

(Revelation 1:1-8)

- God has sent his Prophet, Priest, King Jesus to fight the the governmental enemy who has sought to destroy Christianity, and to provide a message of faithfulness to the people of God during a time of persecution.

(Revelation 1:9-20)

Exegetical Analysis

Revelation 1:1–4 (NASB95)

¹The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

²who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

³Blessed 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.

⁴John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, **from Him who is and who was and who is to come**, and **FROM THE SEVEN SPIRITS WHO ARE BEFORE HIS THRONE**,

“Soon” -τάχος

quickly | 3 of 7

Lk 18:8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

Ac 12:7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter’s side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands.

Ac 22:18 and I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.’

soon | 2 of 7

Re 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John,

Re 22:6 And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.

shortly | 1 of 7

Ac 25:4 Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly.

before long | 1 of 7

1 Ti 3:14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;

Exegetical Analysis of Introduction

Revelation 1:5-6 (NASB95)

To be loosed or untied

⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, **and the ruler of the kings of the earth.** To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—

⁶and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Three Affirmatives of Encouragement

- I. He Loved us
- II. Released us (KJV – Washed Us)
- III. He Made us a Kingdom

KJV 1900	NASB95	ESV	NLT	YLT
	32.6% difference	34.9% difference	40% difference	26.1% difference
Re 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,	Re 1:5 °and from Jesus Christ, °the faithful witness, °the °firstborn of the dead, and the °ruler of the kings of the earth. °To Him who loves us °and °released us from our sins °by His blood°—	Re 1:5 °and from Jesus Christ °the faithful witness, °the °firstborn of the dead, and the °ruler of °kings °on earth. °To him °who loves us °and °has freed us °from our sins °by his °blood°	Re 1:5 °and from Jesus Christ °. He is the faithful witness to these things, °the first °to rise from the dead, and the °ruler of all the kings of the °world. °All glory to him °who loves us °and °has freed us from our sins °by shedding his °blood °for us.	Re 1:5 °and from Jesus Christ, °the faithful witness, °the first °-born out of the dead, and the °ruler of the kings of the earth°; to him °who did love us, and °did bathe us from our sins in his °blood,

Exegetical Analysis of Introduction

Revelation 1:7–8 (NASB95)

⁷BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

Zechariah 12:10, John
19:36-37

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

Old Testament language descriptive of God coming in Judgment
Isaiah 19:1-2

Introductory Vision

Ezekiel 8:3



I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and
I heard behind me a loud voice like the
sound of a trumpet,

**11 saying, "Write in a book what you
see, and send it to the seven churches: to
Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum
and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to
Philadelphia and to Laodicea."**

Recipients



Introductory Vision

Revelation 1:12–16 (NASB95)

¹²Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

¹³and in the middle of the lampstands **I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.**

¹⁴His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

¹⁵His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

¹⁶In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Understanding the Imagery

The Symbols	Their Meaning
Clothed with a Robe to his feet	Priestly Garments
His hair on his head white like wool	The Eternal One (Daniel 7:9)
His eyes were like blazing fire.	The Omniscient One (Daniel 10:6)
Feet Like Bronze	Judgment (Ezekiel 1:7, Micah 4:13)
Voice like the sound of rushing Water	The Word of Jehovah (Ezekiel 43:2)
Holding the seven stars	Providential One (Job 38:31)
Double Edged Sword	Vindicator (Isaiah 11:4)

Introductory Vision

Revelation 1:17–18 (NASB95)

¹⁷When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

¹⁸and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Introductory Vision

Revelation 1:19–20 (NASB95)

¹⁹“Therefore write the things which you have **seen**, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

²⁰“As for the mystery of the seven stars which you **saw** in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

Messages to the Seven Churches

Revelation 2:1-8

The Church At Ephesus - Background

The city of Ephesus was the first and greatest city of Asia Minor because of the trade routes in that area. It had the greatest harbor in Asia and large caravans of camels brought their goods to Ephesus to be shipped on to Rome. This made Ephesus the richest city in Asia Minor.

The Church at Ephesus – Background....Continued

Ephesus had three political distinctions: it was a free city — a miniature Rome — which meant that anyone born in that city was automatically a Roman citizen and he was given every right as if he had been born in Rome itself. It was a judicial city in which one of the courts of that province met. Many referred

His providential care His Presence

Revelation 2:1–2 (NASB95)

¹“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

²I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

Revelation 2:3–4 (NASB95)

³and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

⁴But I have this against you, that you have left your **first love**.

The Commendation

Jesus commended the church in Ephesus for five different things. **They were an active church** “**I know your deeds.**” **They were a toiling church** “**I know your . . . hard work.**” Toil is work that is produced at the cost of pain. **They were a persistent church** “**I know your . . . perseverance.**” They were an intolerant church

The Condemnation

They were doing everything they ought to do, but the spark was gone. They were no longer on fire with love for Jesus. Jesus was actually more concerned with the spark they had lost than He was with their deeds. He was more concerned with their love than with their doctrine. He praised them for being doctrinally right and for their activities in the Kingdom, **but He condemned them for no longer being in love with Him.**

The Exhortation

Revelation 2:5 (NASB95)

⁵‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.

Revelation 2:6–7 (NASB95)

⁶‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’

