

OVERVIEW OF REVELATIONS SERIES

Here is a summary of the series so far. I have given you an overview, chapter by chapter, up to where we are now in the series. At the end of each summary are links to the relevant posts, and clicking the underlined sections will take you directly to that particular post where you will find more detail if wanted.

PART ONE

Revelation Chapter 1

Misconceptions (Post 1)

You may have heard of many schemes and theories trying to explain the book of Revelation, so instead of rigidly sticking to one of these, let's assume that all interpretations hold *some* truth and that if embraced holistically may yield a fuller and more valuable understanding of the book of Revelation.

Post 1. [Knocking down faulty foundations](#)

Introduction (Posts 2 - 4)

The book of Revelation is given to us by Jesus and concerns events throughout history from the 1st to the 2nd coming of Christ. The word 'revelation' is a translation of the Greek *Apokalipsis*, which means a disclosure, an unveiling of Jesus Christ, from Jesus, and about Jesus. Angels are consistently featured as narrators or agents in the book of Revelation. It is not a sealed up mystery awaiting future interpretation but for all believers who came before us and for us too. Remember Revelation 1:3: *'Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy...'*

Post 2. [Unlocking Revelation](#)

Post 3. [The Structure of the Book of Revelation](#)

Post 4. [A Panoramic Overview](#)

Symbols, sections and dimensions (Posts 5-7)

The book of Revelation is to be understood as an unveiling both of Jesus Himself and of principles, events, and characters, both heavenly and earthly, by means of appropriate symbols.

The book of Revelation is written in seven sections, each of which run parallel to one another and cover the same time period from the first to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.



So, here then is the floor plan of the book of Revelation, its literary structural schematic. I strongly suggest that you mark Revelation in your Bible with these seven parts and then read through the whole book, *bearing in mind that each time you start a new part you are returning to the period of Christ's first coming.*

What's more, Revelation uses three dimensions to unveil the underlying reality of the heavenly realm and its earthly manifestations. The Heavenly Dimension is set out in Revelation chapters 1, 4, 5, 12:1-12, 15, 19 and 20. The Earthly Dimension in chapters 8, 9, 13, 16, 17 & 18, and finally, the Ecclesiastical (church) Dimension found in chapters 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 12:13-17, 14, 21 & 22.

Post 5. [A Jesus-centred revelation](#)

Post 6. [Angels of the churches](#)

Post 7. [Jesus' letter to His church](#)

Revelation Chapters 2 & 3

Jesus writes to the churches (Posts 8 - 10)

The seven stars represent the angles of the seven churches, and the angels of the churches are guardians commissioned to watch over each individual church. The church leader would receive and act on the letter, but the

guardian angel of the church would be addressed together with him because of his joint role in the welfare of the church. The seven letters were dictated by Jesus Himself, and the churches were chosen to represent the whole of the church age, and therefore are very relevant to us too. Most of what Jesus tells the churches can be categorised under two headings: 1) Condemnation and warning, and 2) Commendation and Promise

Post 8. [What's in a name?](#)

Post 9. [The letters to the seven churches – background and historical insights](#)

Post 10. [The lesson of lost love](#)

Contents of the seven letters (Posts 11 - 21)

When we consider these churches we need to identify *in them* the traits we see in the church of our day. It is important to note that the names of the cities tie in with the character and condition of the churches, which are:

1. **Ephesus: Desirable One.** An otherwise faithful church who had, however, lost their zeal for Jesus, though were commended for their hard work, perseverance and rejection of false prophets.

Jesus wrote to Ephesus: "You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first." (Revelation 2:4-5). As disciples we are defined by our relationship with a divine person and not just biblical knowledge, ministry or life-style: These things are products of *who we are in Christ Jesus*. Our love for Jesus must be first in priority, just as it was when we first came to know Him.

2. **Smyrna: Burial Herb.** The first centre of emperor worship with many Christians being burned at the stake for refusing to say "Caesar is Lord"

Jesus pronounces that "*He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death*" (Revelation 2:11). When an unsaved person, who is thus already spiritually 'dead', dies physically there awaits a final resurrection, judgement and separation; a 'second death'. For this person there is much to fear in the second death because he or she will live on in spirit/soul separated from God... and that is called Hell! *However, if a person has been spiritually born again through faith in Christ Jesus, then the second death holds no terror because he or she will live on eternally in the presence of God.* Life is often laced with fret, bad decisions and demonic assaults, but whatever happens, Jesus is with us and as He proclaims in Mark 5:36 "*Don't be afraid; just believe*"

3. **Pergamum: Marital Consummation.** The city hosted an altar to Zeus and a temple devoted to a serpentine god of healing: The seat of Satan worship and practice of idol worship and sexual immorality.

In the letter to Pergamum Jesus identified an astonishing reality with the words "*I know where you live – where Satan has his throne.*" In three places in the Gospel of John Jesus is recorded as referring to Satan as 'the prince of this world'. If Satan fell from heaven, and was referred to as the prince of this world, then where does he now live? He lives right here in the spiritual dimension of our earthly habitation. It doesn't take much perception to see that the devil effectively rules over much of humanity, despite the fact that he has no right to do so. Temptations abound, and life is often hard... yet we always have the ability to remain true to Jesus and never deny Him whose words to us in Matthew 10:32 are: "*Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.*"

4. **Thyatira: Incense.** Ashtoreth (whose name means incense) was worshipped here as mother goddess.

Jesus wrote to the believers in Thyatira; "*I will not impose any other burden on you only hold on to what you have until I come*". I have highlighted these words in my Bible but I have never seen them as an encouragement to do nothing more (in this life) than 'huddle with the holy' until Jesus comes again. Rather, I understand that the call is to focus on what Jesus has taught and modeled and not be led astray by the complex teachings of any so-called prophets. Jesus expects me to simply stay true to Him and His Way. We need all do this and HOLD ONTO WHAT WE HAVE.

The Morning Star (post 20)

Jesus personally concludes the book of Revelation by saying, "*I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.*" (Revelation 22:16). So, when Jesus promises persevering believers in Thyatira the 'morning star' He is assuring them of His presence in their lives; His authority, His power, and His indwelling companionship is a wonderful promise indeed! The devil makes all sorts of false promises to those who choose to believe him and 'masquerades as an angel of light' (2 Corinthians 11:14). *Jesus, however, is the light of life and makes the greatest promises of all to His faithful disciples ... eternal life, purpose, peace, and most of all, himself!*

5. **Sardis: Precious Remnant.** Hugely wealthy city whose church had grown complacent and 'fallen asleep'.

Jesus has nothing to commend this church for, but He does say that they have '*a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes*'; in other words, there is a faithful remnant within this church. The lesson to the church both

then and now is obvious – Wake up! How? *By repenting and being obedient.* Jesus said (to the faithful in Sardis) *“I will never erase his name from the book of life”* and we too can take comfort from this.

6. **Philadelphia: Brotherly Love.** Founded as a missionary city for Greek culture and language.

Jesus has opened a missionary door for us which nothing can shut and, although there may be delays and interferences, the ‘doors’ will stay open – we just need to walk through them. Prayerfully submit decisions and strategies to God and listen to His instruction - Jesus has promised to help us along the way. God knows we have ‘little strength’ and human frailties galore, but He will help us. This does not mean we will succeed at everything we feel is biblical or worthwhile, but it does mean that *if we are convinced that what we are doing is initiated and commissioned by Jesus then nothing can prevent its completion.* It might be hard, and it may take a long time to accomplish, but it will happen.

7. **Laodicea: Rule of People.** A well-developed city with a large banking sector whose people had been caught up in their wealth and were considered ‘tepid’.

Though Jesus described this church as deluded, complacent, and spiritually blind, He also encouraged by saying: *‘Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline’.* If He didn’t care, then He wouldn’t bother to correct us. *So, never give up on the church.... Jesus hasn’t. Yes, you may find hypocrisy, apathy, greed, and pride in the church, but you will also find love, spiritual passion, wisdom, and healing. And bear in mind that you and I are part of the church; part of its problems and part of its glory. The leaders or members of the church may sometimes offend you or even hurt your feelings but they, and you, are members together of the Body of Christ, and He loves his church. Never give up on it because you are a part of it and Jesus will never give up on you.*

- Post 11. [More about Old Nic](#)
- Post 12. [The Tree of Life](#)
- Post 13. [The Second Death](#)
- Post 14. [The sexy, sozzled, soothing snake](#)
- Post 15. [Healing under the scalpel](#)
- Post 16. [Satan’s Deep Secrets](#)
- Post 17. [The Morning Star](#)
- Post 18. [The Remnant](#)
- Post 19. [Loving promises](#)
- Post 20. [Jesus loves the church](#)
- Post 21. [Let whoever has an ear, hear](#)

PART TWO

Revelation Chapters 4 - 7

The Throne in Heaven (Post 22)

Revelation chapter 4 starts with an invitation to John to view the heavenly realms, and he describes his experience with the words: *‘At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it’.* This part of Revelation is complex because God dwells in multidimensional timelessness and we are creatures of only three dimensions of space, locked into a one-way progression of time... but it is a WONDERFUL disclosure of who occupies the center of everything – God. The three gemstones referred to in relation to God are of the colours Red, Green, and Blue, which are refractions of pure white light. 1 John 1:5 records *that ‘God is light; in him there is no darkness at all’.* Incidentally light is usually categorised as visible, infrared, and ultra violet – just as we have traditionally categorised God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- Post 22. [The Throne in Heaven](#)

Model and Reality (Post 23 & 28)

When Moses built the Tabernacle he was given very specific instructions regarding its dimensions and arrangements and a detailed description of the original Tabernacle can be found in Exodus 30:1-10. The Tabernacle was laid out in three areas: (1) The Outer Court, (2) The Holy Place, and (3) The Holy of Holies/Most Holy Place that contained ONLY the Ark of the Covenant.

The book of Hebrews 8:5 speaks of the Tabernacle as, *‘a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven’.* When comparing the Old Testament description of the earthly Tabernacle to the vision of the heavenly realms in Revelation we notice that much of the layout is mirrored, except for a few things which are missing from the depiction of the heavenly realms in Revelation:

- The Alter of Sacrifice is missing from the depiction of heaven. This is because the cross of Christ on which He died as an atoning sacrifice applies only to our earthly realm.
- The Table of Bread is also missing because this symbol is embodied in the fellowship and communion of the church on earth. Heaven comes to earth, to a degree, in the church.
- The Alter of Incense is not missing; it is mentioned later on in the book of Revelation (8:15).

Hebrews 9:2-4 describes the Golden Incense Altar as being together with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. This Incense Altar appears to have 'moved' from the Inner Court to the Holy of Holies. So, what is going on here? Could Hebrews be wrong? Of course not, something has changed!

Matthew records that when Jesus died on the cross, *'the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom'* (Matthew 27:51). The author of Hebrews explains this by setting out the wonderful fact that we who believe can enter *'the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body.'* (Hebrews 10:19-22). The Incense Altar is a symbol of prayer and worship: our means of approaching God, and this is why Hebrews describes the Golden Incense Altar as located inside the Holy of Holies before the throne of God. You see, as is clear from the contexts of both Exodus 30 and Revelation 8, this altar represents prayer and worship. There is no curtain of separation between us and God. *In other words: The Golden Incense Altar has moved because Jesus 'rearranged the furniture' to represent a new reality – no longer are we cut off from God by sin, but in Christ Jesus we have access to Almighty God!*

Post 23. [Model and Reality](#)

Post 28. [The Golden Altar of Prayer](#)

Revelation in the Stars (Post 24)

As writing only seems to have appeared around 3200 BC and the Jewish calendar started before that (in the year 3761 BC) passing on knowledge by word of mouth must have been used. So, in order to preserve the integrity of God's communication to mankind, it appears that the ancients linked their 'knowledge stories' to the fixed constellations in the night sky. This was done by identifying astral images (which star constellations suggest) and weaving their stories around these images – a secure way of passing down information without distortion.

This star-linked verbal record preceded the biblical revelation and so we should expect to find traces of it in the books of the Old Testament... and we do, in Job 38:32-33, Amos 5:8, and also in Job 9:9 which states that *"He (God) is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south"*. Job is most likely the oldest book of the Bible and the astrological connections continue all the way through to the book of Revelation. These astronomical elements help us understand some of the imagery in the book of Revelation:

- The North Star (for instance) marks the apparent 'center' of the heavens and lies directly under the constellation of Cepheus, which is depicted on most sky charts as a bearded man seated as if on a throne.
- Ursa Minor was originally shown, not as a bear, but as a mountain range, and in ancient times God was thought to rule from His throne of the Sacred mountain in the North.
- The 4 living creatures with many eyes (signifying many stars) were probably based on the 4 'royal' stars of ancient times which were said to rule the four corners of heaven. The depiction of these creatures is also remarkably similar to the names of those constellations, in other words the Living Creature which was like a lion aligns with the 'royal star' Leo (the lion).

Post 24. [Revelations in the stars](#)

Revelation Chapter 5

The sealed Scroll (Post 25)

In Revelation 5 John also saw in *"the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals."* This scroll represents the title deeds to Earth. The creation has always been God's possession, He did not give it to humankind, but merely placed it in their care and delegated authority over it to them. Satan never did get to own the earth, but because humankind submitted to him instead of to God *he did obtain temporary rights to it.*

John continues to describe the scene in the heavenly throne room by speaking of a mighty angel asking who was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. John says he wept and wept because he realised that no human could, and that humanity was doomed unless someone could be found who met the redemption conditions written on the outside of the scroll, which are:

- That the redeemer must be a man not an angel (because mankind had forfeited the title deeds)
- The penalty of death, incurred in the great rebellion, must be paid for on behalf of humankind

- The redeemer must be without sin.

No wonder John wept... this seemed impossible... or was it? Just then, someone pictured as a slaughtered lamb steps up as humanities' redeemer and takes the scroll from the Father. This is of course a representation of the Lord Jesus as the '*Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*' (John 1:29). All of creation, heaven and earth, burst into songs of praise.

Post 25. [The Seven-sealed Scroll](#)

Revelation Chapters 6 & 7

The Seals Opened (Post 26)

Revelation 6 starts with Jesus opening the first of the 7 seals and one of the four living creatures shouting "Come" (if you are reading an NIV version). This command is given three more times, and each time a horseman rides out to afflict the earth. But why would Jesus ask these horsemen to "come"? Looking at the Greek word translated as 'come' we realise it may equally well be read as "go".

This may be a little word but it has big implications, for what is happening here is that the devil is being given his eviction orders: "Go! Get out you squatter! Leave the earth you have illegally claimed as your own! Be gone!" Satan and his minions know they have to vacate the premises but they fight every inch of the way. What we see portrayed in Revelation 6:2-8 is something all too familiar in countries such as mine, where evicted squatters often do as much damage to the property as they can before being forcibly thrown out. The damage done to earth is through conquest, war, famine and disease.

Post 26. [Redemption and Eviction](#)

The Church on earth and in heaven (Post 27)

Revelation 7:3-4 continues with an instruction to the horsemen to "*not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.*" It continues, 'Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.' This number represents the church on earth in both the Old and New dispensations. The second group (Revelation 7: 9-17) represent the church in heaven – Old and New Testament believers who have completed their time on earth. If you would like more detail on how I have come to this conclusion please listen to the sermon on www.truthistheword.com called "Signed, sealed and Delivered".

However, the two key truths revealed in this chapter are, first: Christians on earth are enduring 'tribulation', and second: we are 'sealed' by the Holy Spirit during this time so that we can learn and develop through this experience.

Contrary to much popular teaching in our day, we are not guaranteed wealth, health, and comfort in this life, in fact it is quite the contrary. We are warned that we will experience 'tribulation' during our time on earth. There is a reason for this – *earth is our training ground for eternity*. The anointing and presence of the Holy Spirit seals and signs us as Children of God; an anointing that protects our spirits and helps us to learn and practice love, faith, and hope in this present tribulation.

The fifth seal represents persecutions of believers, and the sixth seal pictures the divine judgment that follows. This cycle of conquest, war, famine, death, persecution, and judgement continue throughout church history.

The 7th Seal introduces the next set of images, the trumpets.

Post 27. [Signed, sealed and delivered](#)

PART THREE

Revelation Chapter 8

The Trumpets (Post 29)

After depicting the Golden Incense Altar of prayer and worship, Chapter Eight describes a scene with seven angels each being given a trumpet to sound as an urgent warning to the world. These warnings are of ecological and social disasters that are to come upon the natural world and its inhabitants. The first four effect the environment (vegetation, oceans, rivers and the atmosphere) and the last two effect the minds and spirits of humanity. Note: *These disasters are warnings, not punishments. They are the results of human sin, not divine judgment.* The intention is that mankind should consider what it is doing to the ecology and take sober warning from this. Genesis 2:15 records that '*the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it*', yet humans have forever polluted

and destroyed the environment. Each succeeding generation has been responsible for a greater degree of environmental destruction, which has now reached unprecedented levels.

Post 29. [Warning Blasts from Our World](#)

Revelation Chapter 9

The Woes (Posts 30 & 31)

Chapter 9 shows us many bizarre images, so we need to use the interpretive principle of Revelation 1:20 that the *truth is conveyed through symbols, and is not meant to be reduced to concrete objects, dates, and numbers.*

The scene opens with a 'star that had fallen from the sky to the earth' (Revelation 9:1). According to the interpretive key 'stars' equal angels, so this depicts an angel that had fallen from heaven to earth. Jesus used very similar words when He exclaimed, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18-19). This fallen angel is given the key to the Abyss (the bottomless pit). Once again, we can look to Jesus to understand what this represents. Luke:8 26-33 records how Jesus confronted the hoard of demons possessing a man living in caves in the region of Gadara who 'begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss'. So, the Abyss is the name assigned to the state where demons are confined, and so the terrifying beings pouring out of the abyss therefore represent demons. All of this is supported by the added detail that 'they had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon' (Revelation 9:11), in other words, the devil.

The demonic locusts were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. So the target of these demon horseman is unsaved humanity: those who's spirits and souls are not sealed by the Holy Spirit and protected by the truth. The demons rob such people of life while not physically killing them. The locusts depicted in this seen are a vivid symbolic depiction of HUMANISM in its various forms - The godless pursuit and manipulation of science, medicine, philosophy, economics, etc. Defined in this way humanism is nothing less than the enthronement of self and the denial of the lordship of Jesus Christ... and that is indeed a demonic woe that has plagued mankind for millennia and will ultimately deliver a death blow to godless humanity.

The second demonic plague of Revelation Chapter Nine, pictured as grotesquely mutated horses, is connected in some way to the Altar of Incense (Revelation 9:13). This altar is a symbol of prayer and worship and Revelation 9:20 strengthens this connection by declaring that the victims of these invading demons are caught up in idolatrous worship.

Interestingly, the colours of the breastplates of these demon horses are red, blue, and yellow, the colours of *reflected* light, which when mixed together form Black. This represents the exact opposite of the beams of *refracted* light coming from the throne of God.

This demonic woe is RELIGION in all its forms. I see religion in an entirely negative light. An origin of the word is the Latin *religare: to restrain or bind*, and that is just what I believe it does. Christianity is not a religion (although many call it that), rather it is a living relationship with the living God. It is an eternal relationship and a supernatural relationship, and in this relationship we are set free, not bound! I see religion as the sum of The Occult, New Age Mysticism, World Religions, Cults, and Apostate Christianity. *Religion is in essence the enthronement of Satan and the denial of God. It is man's attempt to make a god in our image and then to prescribe a way of worshiping this idol.*

Religion has plagued our world for millennia and has caused endless destruction. What you will see in later chapters of Revelation is that Religion always partners with Humanism and together they form a formidable trinity of evil. Trinity, because the third 'woe' in the upside-down triangle of terror is Satan himself.

Post 30. [Woe is Us](#)

Post 31. [Religious Woe](#)

If you have any questions or comments regarding any aspect of what we have covered so far (up to Chapter 10 of Revelation), I invite you to email me at drchrispeppler@gmail.com so that you are up to date when I unpack the next section.