

## THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST – DAY 1 - 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008

Welcome.

The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is essentially a prophetic book. It looks towards the very end of time and gives us a 'blow by blow' account of what is going to happen in the last 7 years of the earth's history before the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

This book is the culmination of **Jewish** history. It is also the culmination of the history of the nations of the world – many as we will see will not believe, even though the judgements contained in the book are horrendous, as God pours out His righteous indignation on the unbelieving nations and the nation of Israel in particular.

We must always keep in tension the fact that the Bible is a Jewish Book. Jesus is a Jew and Israel is the centre of the World as far as God is concerned – neither London nor New York has any clout, the whole book is about the history of one particular nation – Israel. If you keep that in mind, you will see quite clearly where we as Gentiles fit in. We will include in our study a some insights regarding '*the times of the Gentiles*' and what that means but first I want to lay down a few guidelines or rules of interpretation and cover one or two other points to assist our understanding of the book .

### **Rules for interpreting the Bible:**

The first things I want us to look at are the rules of interpretation. These are general rules which can be applied to all scripture; they do not just apply to the Book of Revelation, we could find more if we weren't looking specifically at prophecy –

1. The first is **the** 'golden rule' -

*'When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense! Therefore take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal, meaning, unless the immediate context indicates clearly otherwise'.*

Simply put, the plain law of reading scripture is that all passages are to be taken exactly as they read unless there is something in the text that indicates it should be taken other than literally. There will be figures of speech, but even these usually have a literal background. God intended that His word should be understood easily.

The bible does use symbols too, but they are usually explained if you read on. So this first rule is by far the most important. The Bible means what it says without allegory it or making it all picture language! There are symbols in the book of Revelation but we won't resort to guess work – we will look to see where they are mentioned elsewhere; either in a different part of the Book of Revelation or in some other part of the Bible. The Bible is invariably its own commentary, though we may have to dig a little deeper in some instances than others to establish what is being spoken about.

2. The second rule is called the '**law of double reference**' –

This law observes the fact that often a passage or block of scripture contains within it two different persons or two different time frames. In the passage itself they are blended into one picture, and the time gap between the two persons or two events is not presented by the text

itself, the fact that a gap of time exists, is known because of other scriptures or the first event having been fulfilled.

A good example of this law is some of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the First and Second comings of the Messiah. Often these two events are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a time gap. Zechariah 9:9 - 10 is a good one.

*<sup>9</sup>Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly, and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup>I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations. His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.'*

Verse nine is speaking of the first advent of Jesus but verse 10, is speaking of the Second Coming.

You will remember that Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 21:2

*<sup>2</sup>Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey, tied and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to Me.'*

In doing this He fulfilled verse 9 of Zechariah 9.

Verse 10 is yet to come – when He comes a second time His dominion shall be from 'sea to sea and to the ends of the earth'.

Another easy example would be Isaiah 61:1, 2 which speaks of the first advent of the Lord Jesus but halfway through it says '*the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God*'. There is a 2,000 year plus time gap here, because when Jesus came the **favour** of the Lord was released, and will continue until the day of vengeance, which is the Tribulation.

Some of you may be familiar with the parallel passage in Luke 4:18, 19, when Jesus stood in the Temple and declared His mandate for the earth – He stopped halfway through verse 3 of Isaiah 61. Let's look at both of these –

First, **Isaiah 61:1,2** –

*<sup>1</sup>The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...and the day of vengeance of our God;'*

Luke 4:18, 19 –

*<sup>18</sup>The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, <sup>19</sup>to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.'*

So there we have two examples of the law of double reference, two things contained in the same verse with a time gap in between the first and second fulfilment of the verse.

I don't want to confuse you but there is another law called the '**law of double fulfilment**' with which I do not personally agree, this says that the same passage can refer to *two different time frames*, near and far and two different people.

For instance that something could have been fulfilled in Isaiah's time and in our time as well. I do not agree with this because if the verse is **prophetic**, there can only be **one** fulfilment of it. An example would be Isaiah 7:14 where Isaiah is having a conversation with Ahaz the king, who has a galloping case of unbelief, he's been told not to fear because God has got everything in hand, but he's still wobbly. Here we find a prophecy relating to the birth of Jesus –

*<sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name, Immanuel.'*

The near view would be that it would be a child born in Ahaz's day, to Ahaz; the far view that it was a Messianic prophecy. Clearly in light of history, this was indeed a Messianic prophecy; the Child was born to a virgin. For me the law of double fulfilment muddies the water, is inaccurate, therefore I do not use it.

3. The third law then is the '**law of recurrence**' this is the 'law' of **repetition**. In some passages, maybe Genesis 1 and 2 are classics of this - I always liken it to newspaper headlines - we get the headline first then the detail. The law of recurrence is just this. In Genesis 1:1-2:3 we see the record of the 7 days of creation in chronological order; it ends in verse 3 with the 7<sup>th</sup> day then in Genesis 2:4-25 we see the same thing; it goes back to the sixth day to provide more detail about how Adam and Eve were created etc.

This law is particularly seen in the book of Revelation, and it is a Hebrew way of writing; headline news first, then infill detail, very simple, just the way you would read your newspaper.

In Revelation chapters 6-16 detail the *chronological* sequence of the events of the Tribulation period ending with the battle of Armageddon and the Second Advent. Chapters 17-18 *follow the law of recurrence* – they are infill detail. Chapter 17 gives us more detail about the first half of the Tribulation and chapter 18 about the second half. Not rocket science.

4. The final 'law' is '**a text out of context is a pretext**'! A verse can only mean what it means in its context – we must not take it out of context. When it is taken out of context it is often presented as meaning something that it does not mean. This leads to people saying you can prove anything you want from the Bible, no you can't we must keep the verse firmly in the context of what is being said or we will get into error. A classic of this is the teaching that you can lose your salvation. You cannot, and if you want to know just exactly why, please ask me and I have an explanatory sheet on this. Again, it is taking text out of the textual context.

So there we have the basic, fundamental rules of biblical interpretation. As I said there are more, but they are our foundational boundary lines within which we will stay.

Another thing we need to look at before we start our study is the word dispensation. Sounds boring, but it is very important.

**Dispensations:**

Briefly, a dispensation is '*a Divine ordering or management of affairs and events in the world.*' A dispensation is a '**God ordained**' time period relating to a certain people group.

It is a fixed period of time – for instance, **the dispensation of the church** started on the day of Pentecost – Israel's last chance to believe before the Lord turned to the Gentiles - and will end with the catching away or rapture of the church. You will remember at the end of the book of Acts Paul said,

**Acts 28:28 -**

<sup>28</sup> *"Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"*

The **dispensation** of Israel started with Abraham and will end with the Second Coming of Jesus to His people, the Jews, in Jerusalem.

As we will see we are looking at two distinct people groups here, Israel and the church.

For a comprehensive study of these issues you need to get the paper or the CD's entitled '*The truth about Israel*' which was part of our first study on the book of Revelation, together with '*Will the church go through the Tribulation?*' which was also part of that first study.

**Two people, two destinies - Israel and the Church:**

When we are looking at end time prophecy, we are looking at *two distinct people groups*, Israel, and the Church.

Israel is the '**wife**' of Jehovah; the Church is the '**Bride**' of Christ.

If we do not separate correctly the destinies of these two, we will find ourselves muddled and confused about what the Bible is actually saying, and will apply scriptures which are meant for Israel to the church and vice versa, which leads to error regarding God's purposes for the nation of Israel, as well as us, the church.

The Old Testament never spoke of the '**Church**'; it was a '*mystery*', hidden until Jesus revealed His intentions to Peter, in Matthew 16:18 '*on this rock (of truth) I will build my church.*' Peter here receives the revelation that Jesus is indeed the long awaited Messiah and on this rock of revelation Jesus will build something called His church. This was all '*Greek*' to Peter, he had never heard about this before, and you will remember he had to be put in a trance like state to recognize that God was now including people and things he considered to be unclean, in His Kingdom rule. Bit of a shock no doubt – some slight mindset change there! (Acts 10:13)

If we are to comprehend what is happening with the '*catching away*' or '*rapture*' of the church we need to understand the position of Israel in God's purposes -

**Israel, the wife of Jehovah:**

In the Old Testament, God consistently referred to Israel as being *'married'* to Him in covenantal relationship. When they worshipped other gods, he called this *'adultery'*. The Old Testament prophets always viewed this covenant relationship as a **marriage contract**, but, adultery was committed.

Israel's marriage contract, or covenant, is the whole book of Deuteronomy. It is in the format of both an ancient treaty and an ancient marriage contract. **Deuteronomy 5:1-3** -

*'<sup>1</sup>And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgements which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. <sup>2</sup>The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. <sup>3</sup>The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive. <sup>4</sup>The Lord talked with you face to face on the mountain from the midst of the fire. <sup>5</sup>I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the Lord; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain.'*

He goes on then to detail the commandments of the covenant; this passage declares God entered into a covenant with His people at Mt Sinai. Jeremiah has the unenviable task of calling the wayward wife back to her husband and in Jeremiah 3:1 -5 we see him saying -

### **Jeremiah 3: 1 – 5**

*'<sup>1</sup>They say, 'If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, may he return to her again? Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me,' says the Lord. <sup>2</sup>Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them like an Arabian in the wilderness, and you have polluted the land with your harlotries and your wickedness. <sup>3</sup>Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; you refuse to be ashamed. <sup>4</sup>Will you not from this time cry to Me, 'My Father, You are the guide of my youth? <sup>5</sup>Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?' Behold you have spoken and done evil things, as you were able.'*

and poignantly v20.

*<sup>20</sup> "Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel," says the Lord.'*

Because of this adultery, God's heart was broken and the original marriage contract was annulled. Jeremiah shows that the problem was not with the Husband, but the wife, who persisted in going after other gods and so became guilty of the great adultery. Then comes the divorce, and finally the chosen people, under the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of discipline, are carried away into captivity from their own land; and when Jesus comes they reject their Messiah, and are dispersed into all nations. For a full understanding of the way God dealt with Israel in her apostasy, you need to either read or listen to the teaching on the five cycles of discipline.

As a result of the rejection of their Messiah, Israel's history is on 'hold' during the **dispensation** of the church, though some Jewish people are born again and become part of the church, the major evangelistic thrust will be after the church has been bodily removed, when they **will** recognize their Messiah.

So there is yet a 7 year period of their history which remains and this is known as the time of **'Great Tribulation'**, or **'the time of Jacob's trouble'** or **Daniel's 70th week**.

### **Jeremiah 30:5**

*'This is what the Sovereign Lord says "Cries of fear are heard – terror, not peace. Ask and see: can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labour, every face turned deathly pale?" verse 7 'How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a **time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it**'.*

This is the scripture which foreshadows the time of the end and the time of Great Trouble for Israel, but they will be saved out of it by the Second Coming of Jesus.

**The Church – His Bride** is, as yet in the betrothal stage. Radically different to Israel.

### **2 Corinthians 11:2 –**

*'For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.'*

Espoused and being prepared – this is why stuff has to be dealt with and go out of our lives, we are being prepared and adorned for our marriage – it's called sanctification!

Unlike Israel when the union comes between Christ and the church the church will be presented as a pure virgin. What's the process?

### **Ephesians 5:25 – 27 –**

*<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.'*

Continual **'washing of the water of the word'**, beloved we cannot neglect the word it is our mirror.

So having seen that the Tribulation is the time of **Jacob's trouble**, is there any other reason why we should be so certain that the Great Tribulation period isn't for us?

### **Grace before Judgement:**

Here we need to look at how God deals with the righteous and the unrighteous, when He brings judgement. Does He actually lump us all together and say, 'well you're part of this and so you have to go through judgement.'

God is a God of principles and the principle is, there is **always** grace before judgement. God **never** sends judgement, or discipline, of any kind without first giving grace and that grace is in the form of increasingly severe warnings to the people concerned.

Another principle is that He never judges believers and unbelievers together, the righteous and the wicked. That is one of the reasons why I absolutely know that we as believers will be removed before the end time judgement of this earth begins - God's character is at stake in all of this. Does He change? No, of course He doesn't, He is immutable. Jesus took our judgement on the cross, there is henceforth no condemnation for us, and we are in Him.

That aside, let's look at what happened in the past. On two occasions in Genesis God removed the righteous **before** He brought judgment on the wicked –

- The *universal flood* and righteous Noah - his family are removed **before** judgement comes
- Sodom and Gomorrah and righteous Lot his wife and his daughters are led away by angels **before** judgement comes.

We would appear to have established a **principle** that God removes the righteous, separates them from the unrighteous, before He brings judgement. So, whether you are mature or not, getting it right (whatever that may be) or not, you are made **righteous** by the blood of Jesus, you are not made righteous by anything but **His precious Blood**, so that makes you a candidate for being removed **before** universal judgement of the earth takes place for the second time.

Having looked at the Old Testament principle, let's look at some New Testament scriptures and see what we find - is there consistency? We need to see that God is exactly the same in His dealings with mankind in the New Testament as He was in the Old.

Let's look what Jesus said in Matthew 25 -

**Matthew 25: 31-33,46** this is the **Second Advent**, at the end of the Tribulation, and Jesus is talking to the **Jews** :

<sup>31</sup>When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.' Verse 46 'And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'

So at the end of the age, He will do exactly the same thing again – unrighteous will be on His left hand side and believers or the righteous, on His right and the next thing Messiah will do will be to **remove** all the unbelievers from the earth and leave only believers on it, to go into the Millennial Kingdom and repopulate the earth.

The point is there is always a **separation** going on before the final judgement at the Great White Throne, begins.

So we now have a New Testament principle, and we have established that God is exactly the same in the New Testament as in the Old, which does away with the 'God is a God of wrath in the Old Testament and a God of love in the New' belief system – no way! He **never** changes, what has happened is that we do not understand His ways with mankind.

**Moving on:**

What I hope to cover over the next three days are some of the things I didn't cover in the last course where the Lord led me to address specific topics. In this course we are endeavouring to work our way through the book, picking up chronologically on the things we didn't address before. So we will be looking at things like –

- The times of the Gentiles what exactly is this?
- The seven churches, in a little more detail.
- Daniel's 'beast'.
- The woman clothed with the sun.
- Mystery Babylon.
- The difference between the battles of Gog and Magog and Armageddon.
- The Great White Throne judgement versus the judgement of believers works.
- The Millennium and what we will be doing.
- If we get that far, the eternal state.

We cannot study the Book of Revelation without drawing in many other portions of scripture. What we find in Revelation is nothing new, *until* we get to the last two chapters.

Revelation has no *direct* quotations from the Old Testament, but it has over 500 references *back* to the Old Testament. The majority of the things found in the first 20 chapters are found in the Old Testament. What happens in Revelation is that these references are brought together.

Revelation brings the Old Testament prophecies and puts them in some sort of order for us so that we can see what the sequence of events is likely to be. It therefore helps us a great deal when studying the Old Testament because we can pinpoint where things mentioned there, fit in. After this study you will probably find you understand a lot more of the Old Testament than you do right now.

When it comes to describing the eternal state, however, this is all completely new to us because the prophets of the Old Testament did not see beyond the Messianic reign of Jesus - the millennium - to the eternal state. So the eternal state mentioned right at the end of the Book is the high point of New Testament prophecy and Revelation 21 and 22 provide new information as they describe what is to come. Brilliant! We are in for a feast.

Firstly then, we will do an overview of the Bible –

Many non-Christians are fearful about the future and so are many Christians. The way to overcome this is to know what the Bible says about tomorrow. God has a timetable for this earth and most people aren't aware of it. So I'm going to take an overview of world history, up to and including now and fast forward to the end of it, so that we might see what we have in the world today and also what we can expect to happen according to the scriptures. So this is just a broad-brush overview, giving you the relevant scriptures – I won't fill in any detail; this is a first press as they call it. If I gave you too



much information about the subject at this point, it would just overwhelm you. We are looking at the overall plan of God from Genesis to Revelation which is to have a people for Himself.

World history in the Bible is split into three:

- Genesis 1 – 11 deals with 2,000 years of the history of mankind
- The remainder of the Old Testament covers the next 2,000 up to the time of Jesus
- And then we have the Church age, which we are in now

In Genesis 1 – 11 we have all we need to know about the world's history – it isn't all but it is enough. Picking up now on **Genesis 10: 6 – 12** -

*<sup>6</sup>The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. <sup>7</sup>The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan. <sup>8</sup>Cush begot **Nimrod**; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD." <sup>10</sup>And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. <sup>11</sup>From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah, <sup>12</sup>and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).*

Here we see the lineage of the grandchildren of Noah and we find someone called Nimrod. The name Nimrod means rebellion, and any of you who know me know that I have been looking at the background to Christmas, and of course, needless to say, it starts with him! Because it means rebellion he decides he is going to be king of the earth and not God. So in verse 10 he begins to build his kingdom by building a city in the land of Shinar, or **Babylon**. In the Old Testament you will also find it referred to as Chaldea or the land of the Chaldees, where Abram lived in a place called Ur.

Now, if we 'fast forward' to Revelation 17:5 we find 'Mystery Babylon the Mother of Harlots' and the downfall of this system. So we see **Babylon** from Genesis to Revelation. It is important that we understand the beginnings of this system, because at the end of the age it will surface again with great power -

### **Genesis 11:1**

#### ***The Tower of Babel***

*<sup>1</sup>Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.'*

At this time these people have 'one language and one speech', and this is very important, what it means is that they were of **one mind and one thought, they were in agreement** – God actually says, nothing will stop them if I don't call a halt at this point.

### **Genesis 11:5-6**

*<sup>5</sup>But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. <sup>6</sup>The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."*

God had told them to scatter and repopulate the earth, but they had said 'No Sir!' we're sticking together. So God comes down and says '*I will scatter you.*' So He changed their languages – God interrupts man's plans and scatters them because things were happening far too fast. God has a timetable and it doesn't include their plans.

From this we see a stream of rebellion which began at the tower of Babel - Roger Price describes it like this on his tape on the tower of Babel - '*A little stream which began here at the Tower of Babel and went downhill and as it went down it gained more and more water and in our day it is like a mighty river, but **it is absolutely nothing like it is going to be in the days to come***'. It will be like a tsunami at the end of the age the wickedness, absolute and utter evil that is going to come upon the earth.

Today this river is largely hidden, it is an attempt by mankind to be totally independent from God – this, you will remember is what Satan tempted Eve with – the right to self-rule or independence from God. At the end of the age it covers every area, politically, commercially and religiously.

It is this system that is called in Revelation 17:5 **Mystery Babylon** – a mystery in the bible remember means something that is hidden, and then suddenly unveiled. So you could say this is hidden Babylon. What began at the tower of Babel, man trying to get together for political, economic and religious union - one nation – will culminate at the end of the age where again the determination for self rule will explode into a global ruler, a global economic system and a global religion - man will have his way, for a short time, three and a half years, the second half of the Great Tribulation, as we will see.

So going back to Genesis, into the midst of this comes the Lord Jesus Himself, as He does, and He scatters the people of Babylon and at the end of Genesis 11, verse 26 onwards we see Him calling out one man from the Babylonian system, who would father His beloved people, the man from whom the nation of Israel would come. This nation was going to be God's missionary base to the world and most of the Old Testament from then on deals with the call of Abram and the setting apart of the nation, who God chose to be His very own. The rest of the Old Testament then, is the history of this nation, and in Matthew 10: 5 – 7 we see Jesus sending out His 12 disciples with a specific command -

### **Matthew 10:5 – 7**

Sending Out the Twelve

*<sup>5</sup> These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. <sup>6</sup> But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

Jesus having come as the long awaited King of the nation of **Israel**, sends his disciples to the lost sheep of Israel.

He is rejected by them and, as a result of this and according to God's eternal plan, He raises up a new people for Himself and begins to speak about something He calls 'the church'. On the day of Pentecost the church is born, and today we are God's missionary base for preaching the gospel to the world.

So, now on the earth we have three major people groups:

- The church
- The unbelievers
- The nation of Israel.

The church is made up of Jew and gentile. God still has a future for Israel and He is most definitely not finished with them yet. Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week has yet to come be fulfilled.

So now we are up to date and we need to see what is to come and there is a scripture which will show us what is the next thing on God's timetable for the Jewish nation – Jesus here speaking to His disciples about the **sequence of events to come**, in response to their question – and the first thing He does is that He predicts the destruction of their Temple -

### **Matthew 24**

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of the Temple

*<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."*

The Signs of the Times and the End of the Age

*<sup>3</sup>Now as He sat 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?" <sup>4</sup>And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. <sup>6</sup> And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. <sup>8</sup> All these are the beginning of sorrows. <sup>9</sup> "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. <sup>10</sup> And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. <sup>11</sup> Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. <sup>12</sup> And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup> But he who endures to the end shall be saved. <sup>14</sup> And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

The Great Tribulation

*<sup>15</sup>"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup> "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup> Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup> And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup> But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup> And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the*

*Sabbath. <sup>21</sup> For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup> And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. <sup>23</sup> "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. <sup>24</sup>For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>25</sup> See, I have told you beforehand. <sup>26</sup> "Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it. <sup>27</sup> For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. <sup>28</sup> For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together.*

#### The Coming of the Son of Man

*<sup>29</sup>"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>30</sup> Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.'*

As we study the events of the book of the Revelation we will see these sequential, or chronological, prophecies unfold before our eyes. But Jesus here speaking to His disciples in the Olivet discourse and He tells them first about the destruction of their temple, which took place in AD 70, by which time all but John had probably died, and then He goes on to outline events right up until His Second Coming and ends by saying - '*Immediately **after** the tribulation of those days....the Son of Man will appear*'.

What is the tribulation of those days? Trouble is what tribulation means, verse 21 shows us that this is a period of trouble the like of which the world has never seen described here as '**Great**' tribulation, as opposed to the tribulation of every day life. Verse 29 shows us what's coming, verse 30 after the tribulation of that time we have the **Second Advent of Jesus**. Jesus comes back to the earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and this is what follows these troublous times.

#### **Matthew 25:31-33, 46**

*<sup>31</sup>When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.' Verse 46 'And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.'*

This is the Second Advent and first there is the battle of **Armageddon**, then **judgement** and King Jesus separates the believers from the unbelievers, and the unbelievers are removed from the earth to await the Great White Throne judgement verse 46.

After this separation of sheep and goats, righteous and unrighteous, **the Kingdom** is set up on earth for 1,000 years, **the millennium**. Believers start living on the renewed earth and children are born to them and the earth is repopulated. So we have the kingdom on earth for a thousand years and during this time, **Satan is locked up**.

At the end of the 1000 years Satan is released for a short time and at the end of history you see the apostasy of the nations, Satan is let loose and the majority of the nations follow him and we have the last great battle, ***the Gog and Magog rebellion***, right at the end.

What we are going to see as we study the book of Revelation is the consummation of the ages, which is fast coming upon us.

All we are ever told to do as believers is to, watch, wait and look up, for our redemption draws near. So in studying this book, our eyes are turned heavenward to look for the King of Glory, who will shortly return to catch away His bride in order that she may be with Him eternally.

That is a general sweep of history - the rebellion of mankind against God, which started in Genesis, is there, right to the end of the book of Revelation and the final judgement.

### ***The Times of the Gentiles:***

Having set the scene with that overview, let's look at what the Bible means when it speaks of the ***'times of the Gentiles'***. The scripture reference we want for this is ***Luke 21:24*** –

*'And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled'.*

Surprisingly, the *'times of the Gentiles'* do not refer just to the church age, but to the period of time from the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Empire and the carrying away to captivity, to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, during which time the Gentile nations have *dominance* over Jerusalem by way of occupation.

In saying this, I am not ruling out the temporary Jewish control of the city, but all such Jewish control will be only temporary until the Second Coming.

Even though the Jews are currently back in the land, their control is only partial of the city of Jerusalem itself. This time of the Gentile rule will end only as Jesus feet ascend the Mount of Olives, at that time the Gentile rule will be over. There will be no gradual phasing out; it is a sudden and complete end.

Now, I want to introduce you to four empires which will feature highly in our study, these are:

1. The Babylonian Empire – under Nebuchadnezzar
2. The Medo-Persian Empire – under Darius the Mede and Cyrus
3. The Greek or Hellenistic Empire – beginning with Alexander the Great
4. The fourth Empire – which was and is to come again - we will look at this in more detail when we study Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the book of Daniel,

### **All of these are Gentile empires.**

The *'times of the gentiles'* is a fascinating study on its own, but it is sufficient for us now to know that the *'times of the Gentiles'* is that long period of time from the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem,

until Jesus' return at the Second Coming when He will set up the Messianic Kingdom and reign and rule in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

Now let's start to break it down a little -

### **REVELATION 1:1-3**

*'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John; who bore witness of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.'*

So here we have right at the beginning of the Book, the angelic presence – if you came to the teaching in October about angels you will know all about how many times they appear in the scriptures. We shall see a lot of them during our time in Revelation.

Angels were frequently used in the revelation of prophecy, so it is not unusual to find them involved in revealing events in this book. They will play a prominent role not only in revealing prophecy to John, but also in carrying out the judgements, as they did in the Old Testament, as we will see.

Just to clear up one point the phrase *'even the things which must **shortly** come to pass:'* has been somewhat misunderstood. What is being said here in using the word **'shortly'** is **not** that the prophecies were to be fulfilled soon after they were given, but once they do start, once the day of fulfilment comes, there will be no delay and it will all unfold quickly and in this order.

There is a wonderful promise in verse 3 that anyone reading, hearing and studying this book will be blessed. *'Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear...'* There is a unique blessing, therefore, for reading and studying this book. The believers who *'love His appearing'* too are promised a special crown.

There is also a blessing to those who *'keep the things which are written therein'*. The word 'keep' also means 'watch'. The believer, therefore, who after reading and listening to what the Book is teaching, should also be **watching** for these things to come to pass and be on the alert for the fulfilment of the prophecies.

### **Revelation 1:4-8:**

*'<sup>4</sup>John 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 that are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he comes with the clouds and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'*

There are a few interesting little bits here. Firstly verse 4 tells us **to whom** the book is being written, the seven churches that are in Asia.

Much has been written about who is meant by these 7 churches. John uses the definite article, *'the'* and Arnold Fructenbaum in his book, *'The footsteps of the Messiah'* makes the point that in using the Greek definite article John is indicating *totality*. In other words 7 is the number of completion or perfection. Throughout the scriptures, the number seven signifies completeness, the point here being that this is a message to the whole church. When John speaks to the seven churches of Asia, he is signifying that all believers are to learn from what will be written to the seven churches of Asia.

Incidentally just keep an eye open for the number of times the number 7 is mentioned in this book – it is the number of totality, and it crops up time after time, it signifies that this is the end folks. Man's rebellion is totally complete and judgement must come.

Three people are mentioned *'from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne and from Jesus Christ'*. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The originator was God the Father, in verse one, and here described as the One who is and who was and who is to come, mentioned next is the Holy Spirit, described as the seven Spirits that are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness. The triune God.

John turns from this to glorify Jesus who *'loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'* He loosed us, made us a kingdom, and priests to God the Father.

Glory to His name John says. Then in verse 7 he gives the theme of the Book – *'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'* Thus the main theme of the Book is the **Second Coming of the Messiah**.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth is the central theme of the book. In verse eight Jesus describes Himself as the Eternal One, encompassing the beginning and the end. He is the overall sovereign God Who alone is in control of history and will bring to pass the events described in the Revelation.

What John **saw** was the glorified Son of Man, our Man in glory –

### **Revelation 1: 9-11 -**

*<sup>9</sup>I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet saying, what you see, <sup>11</sup>write in a book and send it to the seven churches, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum and unto Thyatira and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.'*

Clearing up a little misunderstanding here about what John meant when he said he was *'in the Spirit on the Lord's day'* – because we are Gentile believers and Sunday is our day of worship, it has often been represented as though John got this vision on a Sunday.

It doesn't matter very much, but that is not what the text is saying, it is actually saying *'I was under the control of the Holy Spirit in such a way that I lost myself'*. The Greek the term translated 'Lord' is

not a noun, but an adjective, it is describing how he felt – it was a day in which John was enraptured by prophetic and Divine ecstasy and received Divine revelation. It was a day in which he fell under the control of the Holy Spirit to such an extent that he was carried away in the Spirit, like many prophets before him. For him it was more literally a ‘Lordy’ day where he saw things and was commissioned to write what he saw to the seven churches.

John was exiled to Patmos by the Roman Emperor Domitian. He was about 96 years old at the time he sees this vision. Here’s John then, lifted in the Spirit on this day, to receive Divine revelation -

### **Revelation 1: 12 – 20**

*<sup>12</sup>Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. <sup>13</sup>And in the midst of the seven lampstands One **like** the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden band. <sup>14</sup>His head and His hair were white **like** wool, as white as snow, and His eyes **like** a flame of fire; <sup>15</sup>His feet were **like** fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many water; <sup>16</sup>He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was **like** the sun shining in its strength. <sup>17</sup>And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me saying to me “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup>I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. <sup>19</sup>Write the things which you have seen and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. <sup>20</sup>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 which you saw are the seven churches”.*

John hears a voice, he sees the candlesticks - **THEN** he sees Jesus – a Jesus He has never seen before – the Glorified Son of Man, and he falls at His feet, as dead.

**THIS** is King Jesus. **This** is a Jesus we have never yet seen. Our glorious coming King.

What follows is John’s description of what he saw, and notice that he uses the word ‘**like**’ all the time, he has never seen anything like this and he, like the prophets before him has to use a likeness in order that we will understand something of the glory he beheld. You see this frequently in Ezekiel when he tried to describe what he saw in the Throne room.

Jesus is Prophet, Priest and king.

- He functioned as Prophet when He first came,
- He functions as High Priest now (Great High Priest Hebrews 5:6, 7:17,21 and 8:1) and
- He will come as undisputed King.

The **primary** purpose of the book of Revelation is to **reveal King Jesus**; it is the revelation of **Him** in all His glorious majesty, supremacy and might.

A King has many roles, one is **judge** and He will judge the world at His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming - so a secondary theme of the book is - **judgement**. After the revelation of Jesus, the whole book deals with one judgement of God upon mankind after another.