

The Book of Revelation: “The Blast of the Trumpet” *a wake-up call to the churches*

A new exposition of the book of Revelation

Revelation: it has a reputation for being the hardest book of the Bible; D.H. Lawrence called it the “Judas of the New Testament”. Where is Jesus’ message of love, reconciliation and forgiveness? With few obvious links to any other N.T. work, what relevance could it have for the 21st century church?

Some however have stressed its relevance to their generation, even believing that the Holy Spirit wanted John to tell the churches about bar-code implants, a Sino-Russian alliance against the West, Apache helicopters in Vietnam and even the E.E.C.

Do we give up trying to understand it? This is not an option for those who believe the Bible, because God has included Revelation in our Bible. Nor is it an option for those who care about the world; religious confusion is multiplying on this topic at the dawn of our new Millennium. No, we will be a beacon of light and truth as we deal correctly with commonly asked questions on these topics. Let’s not run away from what is hard to understand, but key off popular interest and direct them to the heart of Revelation, the Lamb upon the Throne!

So what is it all about? The Church exploded from Jerusalem and Antioch across the known world in the apostles’ lifetime, breaking down barriers of Jew and Gentile, men and women in a united worldwide revolution of love and dedication to God and their fellow-man. What a time to be alive! However, by the time the N.T. documents were being completed, seeds of complacency were already appearing. “Remember the earlier days...” was the appeal!¹ *By the time the last book of the N.T. was being penned by John on Patmos, many churches needed a wake-up call.* Some-one was knocking (Rev 3:20), and for those deaf to the knock John gave them a veritable blast from the trumpet!

As God’s modern-day movement, we are entering a second generation, and ignore John’s wake-up calls at our peril. The message of Revelation is about as dry and technical as the alarms on the Titanic, but with the passage of the centuries we need a little more help to recognise the alarms than our first century brothers and sisters.

Let’s focus minds and hearts today on hearing the blast of the trumpet and apply the message to our own lives!

1. **T**imes and circumstances of Revelation
2. **R**elevance for the churches of the first century and today
3. **U**nderstanding the symbolism
4. **M**essages to the Churches
5. **P**lan of the book
6. **E**xplaining False Doctrines

¹ Hebrews 10:32

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LESSON 1 – Times and Circumstances of Revelation

1. **Revelation**, not Revelations
2. **John the Revelator** (and he wrote about the city of God...!) The apostle John was the author. Tradition is that he took Mary, Jesus’ mother with him and their ministry was based at Ephesus.
3. **Place of Revelation:** The island of Patmos where John wrote Revelation (see 1:9) is off the coast of Asia Minor. Mary’s tomb is supposed to be in Ephesus.
4. **Date:** First century, some time between 69 and 96 AD. Evidence for the later date is Irenaeus (AD 180), who wrote that the Apocalypse “was seen no long time ago, but almost in our own day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.” Evidence for the earlier date is based on key passage Revelation 17:9², but the amount of symbolism in Revelation cautions against any hard and fast position based on internal evidence!
5. **Audience:** The 7 pillar churches of Asia Minor (see map). Letters could be delivered in a round trip. Why 7 churches chosen? For all church. 7 was the number of wholeness. This was a letter with universal significance.
6. **A Tale of Two Cities:** how the Church saw Rome. Asia Minor was well into Emperor-worship, most loyal and prosperous province of the Roman Empire. If written in reign of Domitian, he was a hero in Asia Minor. He was a good administrator, popular in provinces, hated by aristocrats. The 90s were a period of peace and apparent affluence. “The Roman Dream”- do we have an “American Dream” or an “English Dream”?
7. **A Tale of Two Cities:** how Rome saw the Church – as it had done in N.T. times. They only clashed with the church when issues of public order arose, the notable exception in the first century being Nero’s persecution in AD64. However, this was local to Rome, and Nero was by no means taken seriously even by the Romans themselves. Both Nero and Domitian did claim divinity, and Domitian required to be addressed as “Lord and God” (*dominus et deus*). However, during the reign of Domitian “There is no evidence for large-scale or widespread persecution of Christians”³ Imperial correspondence with Pliny, governor of the province of Bithynia, in the early second century confirms a lack of *general* anti-Christian persecution by the Romans.⁴

² Internal evidence is that it is written 69-79 AD, maybe even before destruction of Jerusalem. (D.J’s view) Key passage is Rev 17:9. 5 Roman Emperors gone (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero), one is (Vespasian, who destroyed temple), the other has not yet come (Titus). The beast is the eighth (Domitian). This puts the date in the reign of Vespasian, 69-79 AD. But temple is still standing (Rev 11:1), so must be before 70AD.

³ John Sweet, *Revelation*, London 1979, p. 25

⁴ The lack of an Empire-wide policy against Christians prior to the persecutions of 250 can be seen from a letter from Emperor Trajan to Pliny, governor of Bithynia when asked for advice on what to do about the proliferating Christians in his province. “You have adopted the proper course, my dear Secundus [Pliny], in your examination of those who were accused to you as Christians, for indeed nothing can be laid down as a general ruling involving something like a set form of procedure. They are not to be sought out... [Anonymous tip-offs] ought not to be admitted in any charge, for they are a bad example and unworthy of our time.” Trajan’s letter to Pliny, translated in J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, SPCK 1987 p. 20

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CONTEMPORARY HISTORY AND MAP OF THE CHURCHES

Dates

27 BC – 14 AD	AUGUSTUS
14-37 AD	TIBERIUS
1.5	CALIGULA
40	Statue in Temple
1.6	CLAUDIUS
1.7	NERO
64	Fire in Rome, Peter killed
65	Christians persecuted
1.8	Year of instability and four Emperors GALBA OTHO VITELLIUS
1.5	VESPASIAN
2.	Fall of Jerusalem
73	Jews’ last stand on Masada
2.5	TITUS
79	Eruption of Vesuvius
2.6	DOMITIAN
92	Famine in Asia
2.7	NERVA
2.8	TRAJAN Pliny governor of Bithynia

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LESSON 2 – Relevance for the Churches of the First Century and Today

The Bible is God’s Word. The fundamental purpose of all Bible Study must therefore be to ask “What’s the point?” “On this one thing, however, there must surely be agreement. *A text cannot mean what it never meant.* Or to put that in a positive way, the true meaning of the biblical text for us is what God originally intended it to mean when it was first spoken. This is the starting point.(italics in original)”⁵

1. The Speculative View: Written to give us detailed knowledge of the acts of God in the future so we would be ready for when the end comes. Some proponents: Hal Lindsey, Barry Smith

In 1970, **Hal Lindsey** wrote that the second coming would be in 1988 or thereabouts⁶ Why? The arrival of a tenth member of the “common market”. This reminded him of the 10 horns of Dan 7 and the 10 toes of Dan 2. Now there are many more and 1988 has been and gone!

Sixth seal is the first nuclear war⁷

Sixth trumpet is 200 million Chinese preparing to cross the Euphrates⁸

Barry Smith quotes:

Rev 13:7 is a world force such as the United Nations⁹

Rev 17:3 has links with an Australian children’s T.V. series called Captain Planet with a heroine called Gaia. Why? KJV uses word “wilderness” and this word occurs in title of a 1987 environmental convention and there is an environmental movement called the “Gaia movement”¹⁰

Another classic: Jeremiah 51:53 helps us identify Babylon in Rev 17:5 as America, because modern Babylon will have space travel. Also New York is 666 (adding up letters)¹¹, so is Computer and Kissinger. (You can have fun with your friends’ names too!)

Another variation: The ***Continuous Historical View***, see Ferguson p 17; this view sees in the seals, trumpets and bowls the history of the Church up until present day

But totally wrong:

1. Exegetically and theologically: Failure to understand apocalyptic language and Old Testament themes
2. Practically: Why would a disciple in Asia Minor in the first century be encouraged to stand firm in his faith by knowing the second coming would be during the E.E.C.? Or by knowing that the locusts of Revelation 9:7-11 were in fact U.S. helicopters in the Vietnam War?
3. ***Internally inconsistent: the things predicted in Revelation are to come soon (Rev 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20 and 1:3), whereas Daniel was told to seal up his vision “for it concerned the distant future” for a 400 year prediction (Dan 8:26). If Revelation was about the 21st century, wouldn’t the distant future be a better description?***

Conclusion: What has the book of Revelation got to do with our century, America, United Nations? Absolutely nothing! Or has it...

⁵ Fee and Stuart, *How to read the Bible for all its worth*, Scripture Union, 1994, p. 26,7

⁶ H. Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Zondervan, 1973 pp. 53-4. This was the best-selling book of the 70s, selling 28 million copies (source: Newsweek, Nov 15th 1999, p. 78). Sales slumped after 1988.

⁷ H. Lindsey, *There’s a New World Coming*, Vision House Publications, Cal., 1973 p. 108-11

⁸ *ibid.* 139-142, 221-5

⁹ Barry Smith, *better than Nostradamus*, Wellington, N.Z. 1996, p. 187

¹⁰ *Nostradamus*, p. 203

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 146

2. The Traditional View: Written to encourage Christians facing opposition under the regime of Emperor-worship

This has been the standard view in the ICOC up until now, influenced by the likes of Jim McGuiggan. For example

- John Oakes: “*The implicit purpose of Revelation was to prepare disciples of Jesus Christ for the great persecutions under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian...*”¹²
- Steve Kinnard: “*This interpretation of Revelation... takes into account the historical events that prompted its writing in the first place. The book gave great assurance and hope to Christians who were undergoing very real persecution in the first century.*”¹³
- Jim McGuiggan: “[*Revelation*] is a book written expressly to comfort the Church of God. Go ahead and enjoy it!”¹⁴

But the evidence does not point to the prime need of the church at this period being comfort.

1. There is no evidence in the Bible, patristics or in external history of organised state opposition in the first century. It is true that state-sponsored programs did occur, but only much later in the 250s and again in 305 under Decius when the church had become sizeable. Before this any oppression occurred locally due to specific tensions e.g. the riot in the theatre due to the threatened silver statue trade in Ephesus, the martyrdom of Polycarp, the 170 AD persecutions in Vienne, Gaul.
2. Pliny (Governor of Bithynia, next to Asia Minor) was zealous, and writing in 115 AD could find no evidence of an earlier policy on the Christians!¹⁵ Nero’s persecution in 64 AD (in which Peter was probably killed) was regarded even by Romans as the acts of a madman, not a precedent to be followed.
3. The letters reveal only two churches facing persecution and one martyr, Antipas. But even the martyrdom is old history! (“in the days of Antipas...”)
4. In the letters, the oppressors are not Romans, but Jews!
5. We assume the hour of trial in 3:10 is persecution, but why? If it is going to effect those who live on the earth, not just the disciples, it sounds more like a natural disaster, like the famine in Asia in AD 92
6. Even McGuiggan admits that full scale persecution came later – not the impression you would get from a number of prominent ICOC evangelists. A church under intense persecution in the first century preaches well!¹⁶ But what an expensive mistake to make if we stop halfway in our exegesis and miss the real meaning the Spirit intended for us and the original hearers!

3. The Radical View: Written to warn Christians against losing the radical edge and compromising with the morality, affluence and materialism of the Roman world. Written to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable”.

¹² Dr John Oakes, *Daniel, Prophet to the Nations*, Highlands Ranch 2000, p 13

¹³ Dr Steve Kinnard, *The Final Act*, Boston 2000, p. 118

¹⁴ Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation*, Lubbock 1978, p. 19

¹⁵ “Pliny was active in the law courts at Rome and his ignorance of procedure in relation to the Christians suggests that persecution of Christians was comparatively rare. In spite of Pliny’s ignorance, he had been executing Christians who refused to sacrifice because of their failure to obey a Roman magistrate.” Richard Alston, *Aspects of Roman History AD 14-117*, p. 316

¹⁶ “With [Domitian] began the empire policy which later grew into fierce persecution...” He then cites his authority, Stewart Perowne, who writes of Nero’s attack, “That was a mere shift, not a settled policy,” and then of Domitian’s brutality, “Here again, there is no evidence of any thought-out and enduring legal procedure.” McGuiggan continues, “Perowne goes on to discuss the reason for the slowness of the development of out and out, full scale persecution against the church...” McGuiggan, p. 27

Evidence? The book must be read in context. It is a letter, written to address needs. And what needs are disclosed by the letters? Main problems are: loss of first love, materialism, false doctrines being tolerated and Jewish persecution. In short: they were no longer radicals. Can you see similarities in problems facing the Church today? Who has taken the place of the Jews? Are the reasons for persecution similar?

Method: To unmask the Roman world and reveal the real effect of compromise and reward of staying radical. Don't put your trust in Rome, even though it seems very harmless and noble now! (N.B. We're not saying Revelation does not talk at all about the final judgment and heaven – but only in general terms and to back up the argument that we should not put our trust in the world.)

The irony is that history records that the Church made it through the persecutions of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, only to be destroyed in its apparent greatest triumph – the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Emperor Constantine as his personal religion in 312 AD. The beast won! The church was destroyed by becoming “respectable”. It started to persecute Jews, burn down their synagogues. The Persecuted became the Persecutor.

Think: do we want a place on the World Council of Churches? HOPE has United Nations recognition. What if they threatened to take it away? Would it bother you? Would you like us to be so big in the U.K. that we could lobby Parliament and the media would be afraid to criticise us? We so often long for positive publicity, respectability etc. that we may sell our soul to it. The message of Revelation is: DON'T! We must not love the world. *Are you on the radical edge today, or comfortable? Do you have a good reputation, belong to a good company, have good qualifications that you are scared to lose? Companies, institutions, regimes – none will deliver on their promises. Don't sell your soul to them! The message of Revelation is not about how the world will be consumed, but whether the world will consume you! It is not so much about the physical war of persecution, as about the sabotage of Satan through getting comfortable.*

Caveat: I am not saying that Revelation did not comfort the church during its times of persecution, nor that it has not comforted and strengthened the church up to the present day. The message of the “solid joys and lasting treasures” of the Kingdom compared with the “boasted pomp and show”¹⁷ is certainly an encouraging one!

However, biblical exegesis is about ascertaining the meaning of the text for the original hearers. If we get this wrong, then we will be deaf to part of God's message to the church of the first century and be impoverished as a result. If, as the evidence indicates, the prime aim of the book is to shake up a church struggling with collaboration with the values of the world, surely this is the message we should be powerfully preaching to today's church with the full weight of John's warnings behind us.

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¹⁷ The hymn “Glorious things of thee are spoken” is full of allusions to the book of Revelation.

LESSON 3 – Understanding the Images

Here are seven keys:

4. Appreciate the Old Testament

Someone once said: Don't read Revelation until you have read the O.T. twice, and don't read the O.T. until you have read the N.T. twice!

What themes can you see in the whole book? How about, say, chapter 12?

Check out especially Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel and Exodus

5. Apocalyptic

This is a genre of literature describing historical and spiritual realities in cosmic, colourful and cataclysmic terms. As with O.T. apocalyptic, N.T. apocalyptic is not meant to be taken literally, although the message conveyed through this type of literature is meant to be taken very seriously indeed.

Apocalyptic language has to do with unmasking or uncovering the hidden reality.

3. Adultery

Marital unfaithfulness is an analogy for materialism. See Hosea, Ezekiel 23, James 4:4, friendship with the world is adultery to God. The harlot is what Rome may become to the church, luring her away into the unfaithfulness of materialism. Jezebel is a frequent character. Rev 14:4 – Sex is not defiling within marriage!

6. Arithmetic puns¹⁸

Greek and Hebrew letters of the alphabet had numerical equivalents

IESOUS (Greek for Jesus) in Greek adds up to 888 (well-known to any first century Christian¹⁹)

NERON KAISAR (Greek) adds up to 666²⁰

But this can be taken too far...!

5. ALIEN!

- The 4 beasts of Daniel 7 re-emerge combined as the beast of Rev 13:2 (and see slides of Darius I's palace in Susa, city mentioned in Dan 8:1, 2)
- Witness and measuring the temple (11:1 ff.) are themes of Zechariah 2 –4. The witness is the faithful, evangelising disciple or leader, and measuring normally means destruction or protection.
- The stone with secret engraving in Rev 2:17 was in Zechariah 3:9. Means being known by God, symbol of protection.
- Multicoloured horses are a theme of Zechariah 6. Any ideas? Gordon Ferguson has some... Meaning of all colours may have been lost. White generally means purity or victory

6. Alphanumerics

3 = God

4 = Earth (7:1) 4 seasons, 4 winds, 4 corners of the earth, 4 types of creature (4:7 Four living creatures represent all living creation (fish excluded!) Lion = wild, ox = tame, man = man, eagle = birds)

6 = imperfection, 7-1, parody of the perfect, Christ dies on 6th day (Friday)

7 = perfection, wholeness

8 = number of Christ, raised again on 8th day (1st day of new week)²¹

¹⁸ These were better known in the ancient world than today. For example, a piece of graffiti in Pompeii read "I love her whose number is 545". A little more sophisticated, maybe, than "Rob 4 Lucy"!

¹⁹ See the Christian *Sybilline Oracles*, I. 324ff

²⁰ but only if transliterated into Hebrew. Probably an identification used by both Jews and Christians who had cause to equate Nero with the Antichrist. See Appendix 4 for more on the meaning of 666!

²¹ Early church buildings were often octagonal, reflecting the prizing of the 8th day.

12 = organised religion, 12 apostles, 12 tribes, 12 months.
Multiplication intensifies, e.g. Mat 18:22 (forgive not 7 times, but 70 x 7 times)

Rev 14:1 So 144,000 saved means the total group of all saved people from O.T. and N.T. times, even if there may be 5,000 or 5 billion; the number is a theological number, not a literal number. 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10 The Jehovah's Witnesses are dead wrong!

7. Awesome number to make the perfect number of points!

So what's the point of the imagery?

1. Christian code? Hardly – see Rev 17:7 for an uncryptic description of Rome
2. To speak to the heart in a way we find it hard to relate to today; even today we try multi-media presentations to move the heart. Before the days of video and DVD, this kind of graphic language was the best they could do!
3. Revelation is written in similar circumstances to Daniel. The biggest danger facing the people of God was assimilation. After all, hadn't Jehovah deserted his people? The temple was gone, the ark taken – what point was there in following this God? Daniel urged them to see God was still in control!

Apocalypse literally means unveiling. The reader, informed by the prophetic message which pierces through appearances, sees behind the veil and gains a spiritual view of the cosmic battle raging all around us.

So what is unveiled?

- The unmasking of the Roman dream. All that glitters is not gold!
- Rev 13:4 “Who is like the beast?” This worship is only for God. “Who is like our God?” Were disciples saying, “We have never had it so good”?
- Parodies: bride and harlot, Lion and beast, sea and river of life, city and the New Jerusalem, the trinity and the dragon + two ugly sisters triumvirate
- Rome seems a nice and successful place you would want to emigrate to! 18:11-13 – until you see the last sentence about slavery. England, America? Perfect places? Heaven on earth? Depends who you ask... The wealth and luxury of Liverpool and Bristol was built on slavery too.
- What about 666? Only comes one other place in the Bible: the amount of gold Solomon received (1 Kings 10:14) It is a number of tragedy, irony, the waste of a potentially great spiritual leader who was led astray by women

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LESSON 4 – Messages for the Churches²²

See Map

The wake-up call: Luke 12:35-40; Rev 3:20; Rev 16:15, Rev 22:7

Ephesus Notes (OHP slide)

- Temple of Diana
- Paul and the theatre
- Hard on false doctrine, endurance
- Fallen from first love
- Nicolaitans – who were they? Probably people who found way to justify Emperor worship, Irenaeus linked with Nicholas (one of the seven), but guess really.

Smyrna Notes

- Slander of the false Jews, the Synagogue of Satan
- About to suffer, but it will be limited (10 days)

Pergamum Notes

- where Satan has his throne. Built in 29BC, it had the oldest Temple of Rome in Asia, the capital of Emperor Cult in Asia
- where Antipas my faithful witness was put to death
- tolerating false doctrine

Thyatira Notes

- Growing spiritually!
- Sin of toleration – Jezebel

Sardis Notes

- Capital of ancient Kingdom of Lydia, ruled by Croesus
- Dead, but reputation of being alive. Hence no opposition!
- Will come like a thief

Philadelphia Notes

- Jesus holds the key of David, so Christians are true successors to Israel
- Synagogue of Satan again
- Have endured, protection from the hour of trial promised

Laodicea Notes

- AD61 earthquake, refused Imperial offers of assistance to rebuild
- Had Banking centre, medical school with ophthalmologists and famous clothing industry.

²² For further detailed information about these cities, see W.M.Ramsay's *The Letters to the Seven Churches*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994 (originally 1904). This is a classic, and this version is an updated version of the original.

- Lukewarm
- Knocking motif

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LESSON 5 – The Plan of the Book

(Chapter numbers can sometimes obscure the flow, so have been omitted from the structure offered.)

Why 3 sets of 7 judgments? Leviticus 26:21, 24, 28

Seven Letters to Seven Churches Gives the context and an idea of the needs the book will address

The Eternal Throne God the Creator is revealed in heaven and his Salvation Plan through Christ is set before us. These truths are eternal.

Rolling Waves of Judgment Wave after wave of judgment pounds the values of the world, but we see the church protected, like a small boat on the sea.

A Tale of Two Cities Dressed up as a prostitute and a bride respectively, the World City falls, and the Church City has her marriage day.

The End of the Letter We are not left in heaven, but back on earth – with decisions to make!

Some highlights...

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LESSON 6 – Explaining the False Doctrines²³

[copy D.J.’s False Doctrines Sheet here]

²³ Thanks to Doug Jacoby for this material, taken from “*Mine Eyes have seen the Glory*”, Revelation Mini-Campaign, Washington, July 1997, 6

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LESSON 7 – Ten Practical Verses and a Study

1. Rev 1:10 Sunday already special day for disciples
2. Rev 2:5 Recapture your first love: Remember, Repent and Repeat
3. Rev 2:20 Sin of toleration
4. Rev 3:20 Praying Jesus into your heart?
5. Rev 12:11 Evangelism - The Blood of the Lamb and the Word of their Testimony.
6. Rev 17:9 Rome’s seven hills
7. Rev 21:4 “No more crying there, we are going to see the King.”
8. Rev 21:8 Lying is a sin
9. Rev 22:10 Fulfilment of Revelation was contemporary, not future
10. Rev 22:17 Salvation IS open to all: this verse is a cruel joke for Calvinists!

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A Study

Introduction

Rev 1:9-11 Revelation was written by John on Patmos. Jesus told him to write a scroll to seven churches in Asia Minor, which is now Western Turkey. None of these churches exist now. They needed God’s message.

Rev 1:1-3 Prophecy simply means God’s message, and is not always about the future. Some people say Revelation is about the United Nations in the 21st century or even events next century. But John tells us that for his prophecy, the time is near – not 1900 years away!

Rev 1:17-18 Jesus gives John the message for the churches. How do we know it is Jesus? (he was dead and is alive) He is alive today too!

The Message

Rev 2:1-6 Jesus encouraged them and also told them to get back their first love. How could Jesus tell if you were lukewarm? By your deeds (**Rev 3:15,16**). What areas would Jesus encourage you for? What areas could you do better in?

Revelation contains many encouragements for the church as well as warnings. Let’s look at some of the things Jesus told the churches to do:

1. **To believe Jesus died for their sins and he was the son of God.** **Rev 5:9** tells us Jesus bought us to be his people with his blood shed on the cross. Now we are kings and priests! **Rev 5:1** says God was sitting on the throne, and in **5:6**, the Lamb is on the throne. How can this be? They are the same person! (contradicting what Jehovah’s Witnesses teach)
2. **To overcome Satan by preaching the Word.** John was on Patmos for preaching (**Rev 1:9**) The message is wonderful and pure, but also challenging, like the little scroll (**10:9-10**) Satan wants to destroy the church (**12:17**) just as he almost destroyed the baby Jesus (**12:4**). He can only do this if we stop preaching – but we will overcome if we never stop (**12:11**)! What does it take for you to give up?
3. **To flee from sin.** Revelation talks of a judgment day (**20:11-15**) and God’s punishment for those who do not flee from sin. **Rev 21:8** lists some sins. How are you doing? **Rev 2:20** talks of the sin of toleration. How are you doing in this?
4. **Not to become materialistic.** Only God should be worshipped (**14:7**), but in the first century people gave this worship to Rome (**13:4**). They thought Rome would never fall. John warned them not to trust in Rome (**18:11-17**). He told them to love Rome was like loving a prostitute (**17:1-6**) It looked nice, but one day would drink the blood of the Christians. What dreams do we have for career/family/house/respect from others/popularity? If we are married to Christ, have we committed adultery, or spiritual lust?
5. **To never quit.** It is worth it! (**Rev 21:6,7**) Have you thought of quitting?

Dangers of Revelation

Revelation uses a lot of symbolism, called apocalyptic. This kind of symbolism is also found in Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah in the O.T. If you don't understand it, you can fall into many false doctrines. Rev 2:6 and 24 says the church should reject false doctrine. Here are some common ones:

1. **Only 144,000 will be saved (Jehovah's Witnesses)**, based on Rev 7 and 14. If this is meant to be taken literally, then they will all be Jews (but not from the tribe of Dan – sorry), and not be men who've slept with women (sorry, marrieds!) (14:4). John actually says in 7:9 that no-one can count then number who will make it – not even the J.W.s! The numbers are symbolic (12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10, representing all the saved people of God (12 O.T. tribes and 12 N.T. apostles x 1,000 for completeness))
2. **The end of the world can be predicted** (e.g. to year 2,000!) No! Jesus says he will come like a thief (Rev 16:15) and therefore without warning.
3. **There will be a millennium, when we will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.** (20:1-5) If this is literally true, then the only ones reigning will be the ones who have lost their heads (literally!) v. 4 In fact, the millennium means complete victory for Christ. God owns the cattle on a 1,000 hills (Psalm 50:10) and promises to love 1,000 generations (Ex 20:6) – a long time, but still not literal!
4. **666 is connected with an international economic conspiracy.** Actually, the numbers are symbolic. 6 stands for imperfection, 7 for perfection and 8 for Christ (raised on 8th day). Multiplication intensifies. The call for wisdom (Rev 13:18) is not a call for mathematical genius, but for common sense – to recognise that the world is sinister and not to be worshipped and possess our hearts.

Conclusion

True spirituality in the Bible is equated with obeying God, and not with knowing the future in detail. 1 Cor 8:1 Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

2 Peter 3:10-14 says if we are concerned about how the world will end, we should be just as concerned about our spiritual condition so we are ready for what comes!

Rev 22:17 The Holy Spirit invites everyone to come and take God's gift of eternal life. Do you need to respond? The church (bride) is doing the Great Commission with the Holy Spirit too! Is your church doing this? Lastly, every true Christian who hears Revelation and responds joins the Spirit and goes out making disciples.

For further reading:

Gordon Ferguson, *Mine eyes have seen the glory*, DPI, Woburn, MA 1996

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