

# Revelation: The Church Triumphant Through Christ the Lamb of God

*Based upon Jim McGuigan's work on the book of Revelation*

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The Book of Revelation: Chapters One to Ten

Lessons Nine & Ten

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In this lesson, we will learn that ...

- Christ is described in terms that would be especially comforting to Christians about to battle Rome.
  - The throne that rules the world is not in Rome (or London, Peking, Moscow, or Washington either). It's in Heaven.
  - The color white in the book of Revelation is never used of anything or anyone evil.
  - The (trumpets) warning judgments take the form of plagues. Like the plagues on Egypt. If we keep the Egyptian plagues in mind we get the thrust of the trumpets and bowls.
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## *An outline of the book*

It's time we took a look at how the book hangs together. If we can remember the place given to each of the main characters and images it shouldn't be too difficult to gain at least an overall view of where the book's going and how it develops its message.

1. Introduction: chapter 1
2. The seven churches addressed: chapters 2-3
3. The throne and its occupants: chapter 4-5
4. The Seals: chapter 6
5. The People of God assured: chapter 7
6. The trumpets: chapters 8-9
7. A solemn warning and commission: chapter 10
8. The People of God are assured: chapters 11-12
9. The Roman beasts: chapter 13
10. The People of God are assured: chapters 14-15
11. The bowls of wrath: chapter 16
12. The great Prostitute/City: chapters 17-18
13. Celebration and then Armageddon: chapter 19
14. The vision of victory: chapter 20
15. The triumphant church in a new world: chapters 21-22

## *The introduction*

The introduction takes up the whole first chapter. When you go back to read chapter 1, having gained some sense of what the following chapters are about, chapter 1 is deeper and richer than before. All the themes that are developed in the book are hinted at in chapter 1. See if you don't find this to be true in your own study of the book.

The Revelation (unveiling) from God concerns things that are soon to transpire because the time was near. It came from the triune God (1:4) and it came to John while he was in prison. Precisely how he ended up there we're not sure. Was there some local tyrant that vented his spite rather than some official policy? Who knows but it worked out that he was there to receive the Revelation (1:9). His first vision is the resurrected Lord who twice tells him to record everything he sees and that includes the commission to write it down (1:11,19).

The Lord is dressed in high-priestly garments (1:13), his white hair speaks of majesty and purity and his burning eyes say he can see into the heart of things (1:14). His bronze feet can tread down enemies (1:15 and see Micah 4:13) while his word pierces in judgment (compare Hebrews 4:12). He has experienced death and conquered both it and Hades (1:18). He speaks the truth in an age of liars who inform on others and he's the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5). He loves his people, forgives their sins and gives them purpose to their lives (1:6). He dwells in the church, which is imaged as a seven-branched candlestick (1:13,20). Although the letter is written to seven actual churches in Asia Minor (1:11) the *seven* reminds us that it speaks to the universal church (see Lesson 7 on the number seven).

All these qualities would be especially comforting to the Christians who were about to undergo persecution by the Roman Empire. Those who would be lied about know He speaks the truth. Those who were to die would know that He has conquered death. And so on.

### ***The seven churches addressed***

Each letter is addressed to "the angel" of the church (2:1). Everything in Revelation has an "angel" whether it is a river, a book, the wind, trumpet or plague. The angel of a thing is the inner nature of that thing. It is the essence and heart of the thing. When he writes to the churches he writes to what they really are rather than what they appear to be (see 1:16,20 and 2:2,9,13). The constant "I know" reminds them that he isn't fooled by appearances.

The Lord *commends* each church where he can, then he *rebukes* them if he must, *appeals* to them and *warns* them. He threatens the disobedient that he will "come" and deal with them if they don't repent (2:5,16,25 and 3:3,11,20). This means the "comings" may or may not happen. We need to examine the "comings" of the Lord in their contexts.

The over-comers are those who remain faithful during this time of trial. They will be vindicated and blessed with things like white stones (2:17), immunity from the second death (2:11), reigning with Christ (2:26-27), and so forth. But overcoming implies that there is a test ahead.

### ***The throne and its occupants***

Chapters 4 and 5 go together. They are placed at the beginning to assure the saints that despite what they hear after this, everything is going to be all right. The throne that rules the universe is not in Rome, Italy where the emperors reside. The world is ruled from heaven and heaven is open to the people of God (4:1-2) who in Revelation are called "those that dwell in heaven" (12:12; 13:6 and see Philippians 3:20). Note that those who are allied to and worship the beast are said to be "dwellers on the earth" (13:8,12 and 14). Around the throne there is a rainbow (see Genesis 9:12-16) and there, too, are the living creatures (the cherubim) that are the executors of God retributive justice (see Ezekiel chapter 1 and elsewhere). The Church is there, represented by twenty-four elders dressed in priestly white. They are crowned with *stephanoi*, crowns of the over-comer, rather than diadems and they reign with God (see 3:5,21 and 4:4). Chapter 4 has God as *Creator* and chapter 5 has God as Redeemer (see 5:6). In the middle of the throne that rules the world is the self-giving Lord in the image of a Lamb. The Lamb bears the marks of having been slain and yet it is standing and reveals the immediate destiny of the saints by removing the seals from "the little book"(5:1-5). Then a song of praise goes up and redemption is acknowledged (5:9-12).

These two chapters strengthen the disciples in the face of what is to follow.

### ***The seals are removed***

Remember that to remove seals from a document (a scroll) is to reveal the contents of that book. The removal of the first seal reveals Jesus Christ as a warrior going forth conquering and to conquer (6:2). Only the "good guys" in the book of Revelation wear white or ride white horses. In the whole book of Revelation only one other white horse is singled out and its rider is the Word of God (19:11) and he leads his followers on white horses (19:14). So whatever else is revealed when the seals are ripped off, everything is going to be okay.

The second and third seals are torn away and they show great trouble that is soon to begin. The seals reveal that war, Death and Hades will slay many people using the sword, famine, plague and wild beasts (6:3-8). But Ezekiel calls these destroying elements, the "four sore judgments of God" (14:21). So these awful events are not just "bad luck" and while evil people are involved in bringing them about they are the holy judgments of God. So in the face of these the saints are still to trust because in the course of this trial on the earth many believers would die (6:9) and these are shown under the fifth seal with a question for God. The question is: would the ungodly get away with it? The righteous are called to be patient until God fulfils his purpose through the evil ones (6:11) since God would render judgment that would right all wrongs. This judgment is shown under the sixth seal (6:12-17).

### ***The people of God are assured***

Here is a pattern that exists throughout the book of Revelation. Because the saints are to face a profoundly trying time they are given numerous visions to assure them that they are safe in God's hands (notice this in the outline). Under the sixth seal a horrific judgment is to come on the earth and the people of God are assured that they are exempt from the judgment. *They are not exempt from the pain that is generated by the judgment.* It would be helpful if you went back and refreshed your mind about the 144,000 in Lesson 2. The sixth seal closes with the question in 6:17, "Who is able to stand?" and chapter 7 answers, "Those who are God's and wear his mark." So the judgment is announced and now it begins with the trumpets.

### ***The trumpets are blown***

The seventh seal reveals seven trumpets. These are warning judgments. And as the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets so the seventh trumpet will contain the seven bowls (8:1 and 10:7). The trumpets take the form of plagues and we're reminded of the plagues that fell on Egypt when God warned them to let his people go free. (See this discussed in lesson 6.) But, as in the case of Egypt, so it is with Rome. They did not repent despite the warning judgments (9:21).

### ***A solemn warning and commission***

Since they won't repent they will be warned no more (10:6). A mighty angel has a new commission for John. The commissioning takes the form of eating a book (10:8-11 and see Ezekiel 2:8—3:3). He is to tell his message of judgment wherever he goes through the whole Roman world and to its allies. Isaiah in chapter 6 had a similar message to carry to Israel—a message of judgment that would be preached until cities were devastated.

## Exercises for Lessons Nine & Ten

*Underline the scripture ...*

1. That speaks of the cherubim as creatures who do God's bidding.  
Ezekiel 1:4-28      Revelation 6:17      1 Chronicles 28:12
2. That speaks of the Church as twenty-four elders dressed in priestly white.  
Revelation 4:4      Revelation 9:20-21      1 Chronicles 24:1,18,19
3. That speaks of John eating a book.  
Ezekiel 2:8-3:3      Revelation 19:11      Revelation 10:9-10
4. That says the contents of Revelation were to happen during John's day.  
Revelation 2:5      Revelation 1:1,3      Revelation 22:6,10

*Complete the following statements.*

1. The Church is there represented by **twenty-four elders dressed in priestly white.** \_\_\_\_\_
2. They are placed at **the beginning to assure the saints that despite what they hear after this, everything is going to be all right.** \_\_\_\_\_
3. Everything in Revelation has **an "angel" whether it is a river, a book, the wind, trumpet or plague.** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **They are not exempt from the pain that is generated by the judgment.** \_\_\_\_\_
5. If we keep the Egyptian **plagues in mind we get the thrust of the trumpets and bowls.** \_\_\_\_\_
6. Only the "good guys" **in the book of Revelation wear white or ride white horses.** \_\_\_\_\_

*Check off each of the following references after you have read it.*

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|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 1:1-20<br><small>Introduction of all the themes</small> | <input type="checkbox"/> Exodus chapters 7-10<br><small>Plagues against Egypt</small>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ezekiel 14:12-21<br><small>Four sore judgments of God (believers comforted)</small> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Revelation chapters 4 and 5<br><small>The throne scene</small>     | <input type="checkbox"/> Ezekiel 10:1-22<br><small>Description of cherubim</small>  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Revelation chapters 6 and 7<br><small>The seals revealed</small>   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ezekiel 9:1-6<br><small>God's obedient people marked, suffer but saved while evil are judged</small> |  |

*True or False?*

1. Revelation was written to seven actual congregations. **\_\_T, but ...\_\_**
2. "Overcomers" are the faithful who resist the evil Roman Empire even if it means death. **\_\_T\_\_**
3. The "little book" of chapter five is the immediate destiny of the saints. **\_\_T\_\_**
4. Chapter seven answers the question: "Who is able to stand?" **\_\_T\_\_**
5. The living creatures represent the Church. **\_\_F\_\_**
6. The crowns on the elders are "diadems". **\_\_F\_\_**
7. God's four sore judgments are war, famine, wild beasts, and plague. **\_\_T\_\_**
8. Being sealed marks a person as belonging to God. **\_\_T\_\_**
9. Trumpets are warning judgments somewhat like the plagues on Egypt. **\_\_T\_\_**
10. These trumpets succeeded in bringing men to repent. **\_\_F\_\_**