

Church of God

Sunday School

THE BIBLE — NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** This is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1-3).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** The Revelation was given to John (Revelation 1:4, 9-11).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** This book tells of things past, present, and future (Revelation 1:19).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Jesus is the "Alpha and Omega" (Revelation 1:11; 21:6; 22:13).
- ❑ **Friday:** The Gospel Day is divided into seven periods (eras) of time (Isaiah 30:26).
- ❑ **Saturday:** At the end of seven days, God will shut the door (Genesis 7:16; Matthew 25:10).

MEMORY VERSE: *"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand."*
—Revelation 1:3

Why Was the Revelation Given?

The only New Testament book wholly given for prophecy is the Book of Revelation. Another name for this book is the *Apocalypse*. In today's language this word means "a great disaster," but in the Greek language *Apocalypse* means "an uncovering." This book is to give understanding concerning the past, present, and future (1:19) of God's people (the Church) in the Gospel Day. Because this was given to John, who wrote it down in approximately A.D. 96, the majority of the events were in the future.

Before studying the Book of Revelation, it is important to understand who wrote it, who it is for, and the language (writing style) of the book. The Apostle John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos by the Emperor Domitian (*do-MISH-un*) during a time of intense persecution. While there on the island, he received this "Revelation of Jesus Christ." (As with Moses in the desert [Exodus, Chapter 3], Elijah in the wilderness [1 Kings, Chapter 19], and John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison, it was often in exile that God was able to speak clearly to His servants. No doubt, this was true with John as well.) John was told, "What thou seest, write in a book" (1:11). Who was this for? "His servants" (1:1)—all who are saved.

The Book of Revelation is written in symbolic language. The very first verse tells us it was "signified" (*signified* means "expressing or communicating by signs or symbols"). Symbolic language can also be found in other verses in the Bible. The disciples were called the "salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13) and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Jesus told us that He is "the door" (John 10:9). To understand the symbols of Revelation, keep in mind who was receiving the vision first. John was a Hebrew (Jew), so the understanding of the symbols can often be found in the Old Testament (Jewish history). A good key to understanding symbols in the Revelation is to find another Scripture that sheds light on that verse (Isaiah 34:16). A revelation (understanding) only comes by Jesus Christ, who said, "I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 13:35). Things that were once "secret" (not understood) are now being explained by Jesus.

The Gospel Day is the period of time from the Day of Pentecost to the end of time. It is also referred to as "the last days," "the day of salvation," and "the accepted time."

The Seven Churches of the Revelation

In ancient times the number *seven* was regarded as the perfect number. This same number is used throughout the Bible to show that something is perfect or completed (Genesis 2:2; Exodus 12:15; Joshua 6:4, 15). In the Book of

Revelation you will find that the number *seven* is used 52 times. The first time is in Chapter 1, verse 4, where we read that John wrote letters to "the *seven* churches which are in Asia." Do you think there were only *seven* congregations in Asia at that time? No! Those *seven* churches together represent God's (entire) Church during the Gospel Day. What John wrote was to help all of God's people.

The Gospel Day (A.D. 33 to the end of time) is divided into seven periods of time. Isaiah 30:26 prophesied that the Gospel Day would be as the "light of seven days." Each period of time is represented by one of John's letters. God chose each church carefully. He knew that the character, location, and spiritual problems of that individual congregation best represented what God's people would be dealing with in a later time period.

The *seven* congregations and the time periods they represent are:

- ▶ **Ephesus** (A.D. 33 to 270)
- ▶ **Smyrna** (A.D. 270 to 530)
- ▶ **Pergamos or Pergamum** (A.D. 530 to 1530)
- ▶ **Thyatira** (A.D. 1530 to 1730)
- ▶ **Sardis** (A.D. 1730 to 1880)
- ▶ **Philadelphia** (A.D. 1880 to 1930)
- ▶ **Laodicea** (A.D. 1930 to end of time)



In the days of Noah, the people had *seven* days to get into the ark (Genesis 7:4) before the door was shut. It is the same during the Gospel Day: there are *seven* days (periods of time) for people to be saved before the door will be shut (Matthew 25:10), and eternity will begin.

The Seven Series of the Revelation

Have you ever seen a textbook with transparent overlays? Perhaps of all the systems of the body? First, you see the page with the skeletal system overlay; then the digestive system is laid down; next, the circulatory system overlay is added. If you continue until all the systems are laid down together, you have a complete picture of the human body. The Book of Revelation is somewhat like that. There are *seven* series in this book, with each series giving additional information about God's people during the Gospel Day. For example, the first series is the *seven* letters to the *seven* churches (Chapters 2 and 3). When you look at all *seven* series together, you get a complete picture!

The Seven Spirits of the Revelation

Another important instance of *seven* in the Revelation is the "seven Spirits of God" (3:1; 4:5; 5:6). Since there is only one Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:4), why does Revelation talk about *seven* Spirits of God? Just as the *seven* churches (congregations) represent the complete Church during the Gospel Day, the *seven* Spirits represent the Holy Spirit's complete work throughout the *seven* periods of the Gospel Day.

Bible Study



Understanding the Revelation

Why do so many people misunderstand what the Revelation is about? First, for true understanding, you need to be saved (John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 13:5). God's Word tells us that God's truth is "sealed," or hidden, from people whose hearts are not right with God (Isaiah 29:11-14; Matthew 11:25). Second, true understanding comes through Jesus (Luke 24:45). If you have Christ in your heart, He will reveal truth to you. Third, you must put forth effort (2 Timothy 2:15). Daily Bible reading, Bible study, and prayer are some of the ways God can help you understand what so many other people try to comprehend, yet are "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). Ask God to help you. He wants to share the truth of His Word with you! Do not be discouraged if you do not understand it all at first. As you grow spiritually, God will give you a greater understanding (Hebrews 5:14).

Bible Quiz



1. What are the two different meanings of *Apocalypse* and which one describes the Book of Revelation? _____

2. What is the Gospel Day? _____

3. Where was John when he received the Revelation and why was he there? _____

4. What is the writing style of the Revelation? _____

5. What is the key word in verse 1 that tells us the writing style of Revelation? _____

6. How do these Scriptures show that the number seven represents perfection or completeness?

Genesis 2:2 _____

Exodus 12:15 _____

Joshua 6:4, 15 _____

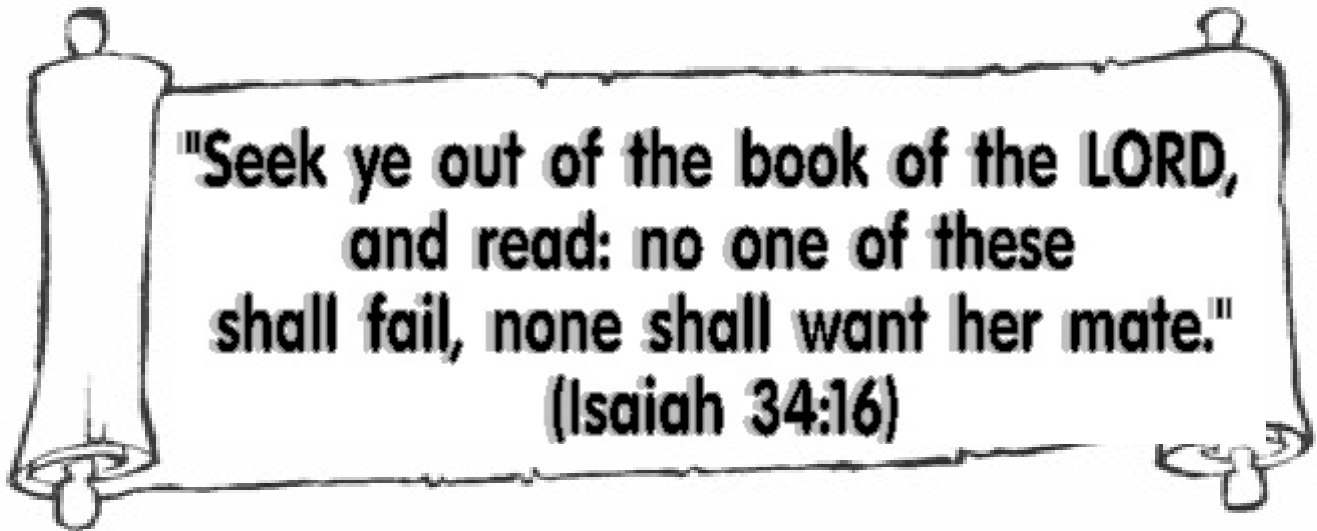
7. Many people misunderstand the Revelation. The Revelation was given for "his servants." Who are they?

8. What are the three requirements for understanding the Revelation?

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____



WRITE THE CORRECT ANSWER ON THE LINES BELOW

What is the sword? (Revelation 19:15) _____

Who is the lamb? (Revelation 17:14) _____

Who are the angels of the churches? (Revelation, Chapters 2 & 3) _____

What do white garments represent? (Revelation 3:4) _____

What does the color scarlet represent? (Revelation 17:1-4) _____

What are the seven golden candlesticks? (Revelation 1:12) _____

SIN (Isaiah 1:18)
THE MINISTRY (Galatians 1:8-9; 4:14)
THE SEVEN CHURCHES OR THE ENTIRE CHURCH (Revelation 1:20)
JESUS (John 1:36)
WASHED IN THE BLOOD—FREE FROM SIN (Revelation 7:14)
THE WORD OF GOD (Hebrews 4:12)