

## Preparing for Prophetic Study

### *The Message of the Old Testament Prophets: (all are united in these common themes)*

- The Lord is the **RULER** of all history: Empires of the world are simply **tools** in the hand of our God: Isaiah 10:5-15
- The primary **need** to be **right** with God: He is always at work to bring his people back to himself Amos 4:6-12
- The **moral foundation** of religion and society: There can be no religion without **morality**: Jeremiah 7:1-15. Once people are alienated from God, they cannot maintain right relationships with one another (Amos 2:7-12)
- A blend of **judgment** and **hope**: The threatening clouds of gathering wrath are pierced by a bright shaft of hope: Amos 9:9-15
- The **messianic** kingdom: The establishment of the **perfect covenant** relationship: Jeremiah 31:31-34

### *Approaching Revelation (the only book of prophecy in the New Testament)*

- Some basic pointers:
  1. We approach the book as we do any other Bible passage: we first establish what it meant to **the original readers**.
  2. Revelation is **apocalyptic**: poetic and **visionary**, expressing its meaning in symbols and imagery. To take this picture-language literally, or to treat the book as a timetable, is to go against the whole **spirit** of the book.
  3. Revelation is rooted in the **Old Testament**. There we will find the meaning of various symbols; always comparing scripture with **scripture**.
  4. This is a book of **visions**. We should treat these visions as we do **parables**, looking first at the whole picture and then discovering **the main idea**.
  5. Revelation should not necessarily be understood as revealing a **sequence of events** which follow one after the other. Rather, it is a gradual and repetitious portrayal of the same theme: Jesus Christ is **ruler of history, coming again** and his followers are **victorious in Him**.
- A brief overview:
  1. What is the purpose of the book? To **comfort** the militant church in its **struggle against** the forces of evil. God sees our tears (7:17; 21:4) and our prayers rule the world (8:3,4)
  2. What is the theme of the book? The **victory** of Christ and His people over the **dragon (Satan)** and his helpers.

3. When was it written & under what circumstances? Circa 95/96 A.D., toward the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. The church had already endured persecutions in the past, and the Roman Empire has become the great antagonist of the church. There are ever 2 great evils in history that exalt themselves over against God and His people: **anti-Christian government and anti-Christian religion.**

- A simple outline of Revelation in 7 sections: (courtesy of William Hendriksen)

1. Christ in the midst of the **Seven Golden Lampstands** (chapters 1-3)
2. The **Book/Scroll** with the Seven seals (chapters 4-7)
3. The **Seven Trumpets** of Judgment (chapters 8-11)
4. The **woman** and the male child persecuted by the **Dragon** and his helpers (the **Beast and the Harlot**) (chapters 12-14)
5. The **Seven Bowls** of wrath (chapters 15-16)
6. The Fall of the **Great Harlot** and of the **Beasts** (17-19)
7. The Judgment upon the **Dragon (Satan)** followed by the **New Heaven and Earth, New Jerusalem** (chapters 20-22)