

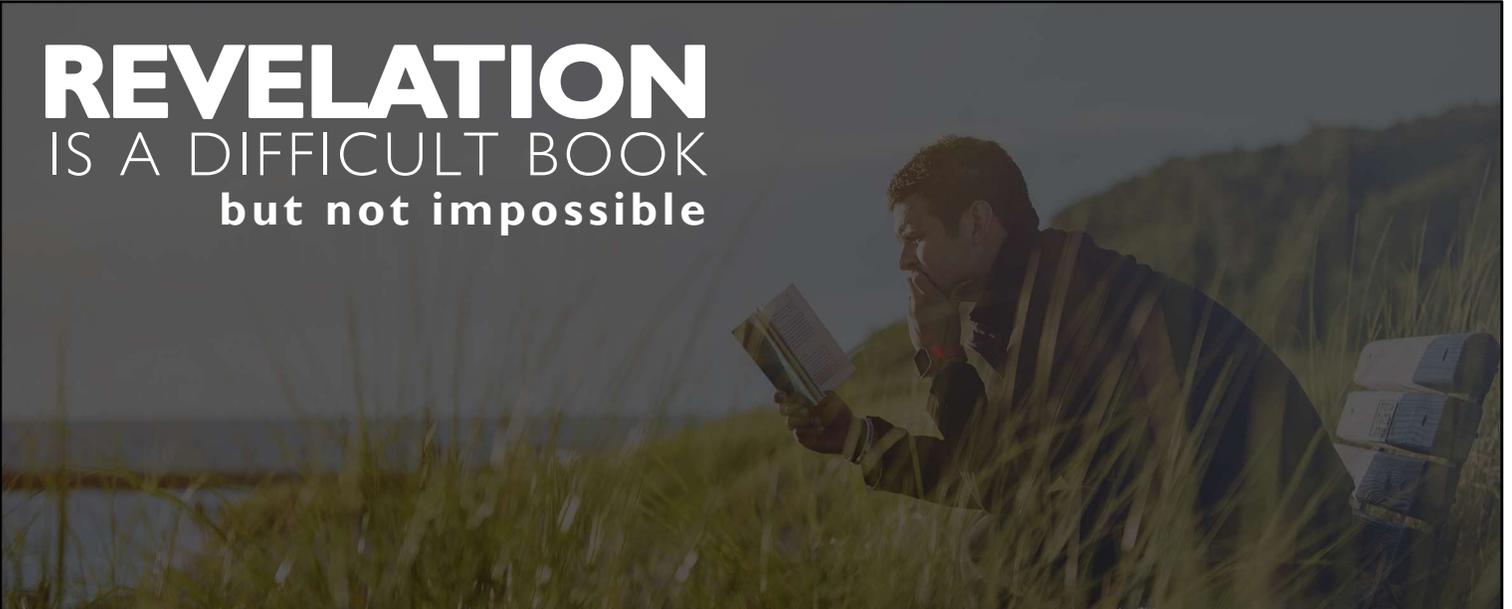
– an uncluttered approach –

SIMPLIFYING

REVELATION

REVELATION

IS A DIFFICULT BOOK
but not impossible



Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. (REVELATION 1:3)

- Does Revelation intimidate you?
 - Some are overconfident with the book, seemingly making things up on the fly as they explain it.
 - Others are terrified of the book and have convinced themselves they cannot understand it. That used to be me.
- It is a book **WE CAN UNDERSTAND**.
- The book pronounces a blessing for those who read & keep it (**REVELATION 1:3**).
- Folks take a variety of approaches in the interpretation of Revelation. The four most common are:
 - Historic – the book takes us on a journey through church (or human) history, or a segment (ie. 1st century or 2nd century persecution).
 - Preterist – all prophecies were accomplished by the

end of the 1st century.

- Futurist – describing events leading up to a future 1000 year reign (most common)
 - Idealistic – allegorical, events & people are not literal, but describe the battle of good & evil.
- No doubt there are other approaches, but these are the most common...

Don't depend on commentaries

Don't force a date theory

Don't force a series of historical events

Identify the spiritual principles in images

Don't take signs & symbols literally

It is a book about Jesus Christ



CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER

- Studying Revelation with Tom Rainwater years ago, he shared with me an article he wrote – “Clearing out the clutter.”
- There are 6 points to keep in mind as we enter a study of the book.
 - Don't depend on **COMMENTARIES**.
 - Don't force a **DATE THEORY**.
 - Don't force a series of **HISTORICAL EVENTS**.
 - Identify the **SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES** in images.
 - Don't take **SIGNS & SYMBOLS** literally.
 - It is a book about **JESUS CHRIST**.
- These will be the primary focus of our study this evening.

DON'T DEPEND ON COMMENTARIES

Adam
Clarke

All Jews converted to
Christianity

Albert
Barnes

Some selection from the church

John
Wesley

1st century Jews secured from
the plagues of that generation

Homer
Hailey

Total number of saints on the
earth at any given time

Arthur
Ogden

The saved of Israel under the
Mosaic covenant

CONFUSE
CLARIFY?



Who are the **144,000**?

- A search on Amazon.com reveals over 10,000 books on Revelation, a great number of them commentaries in one for or another.
 - Commentaries can be useful, but don't lay too much confidence in them.
 - It can be tempting in the case of a difficult book, like Revelation, to give undue consideration to a commentary; almost to use it as a guide book to the inspired text. After all, many commentaries are the product of men who are deemed scholars.
 - The concern is, while commentaries may help to **CLARIFY SOME THINGS**, they also have the potential to confuse & muddle things.
- Consider the question of **WHO THE 144,000** mentioned in Revelation 7 & 14 are.

- One would think identifying this group of people would not be too difficult a task. But notice:
- **ADAM CLARKE** identifies them as “All Jews converted to Christianity.”
- **ALBERT BARNES** is unwilling to commit, saying they are “Some selection from the church.”
- **JOHN WESLEY** identifies them as “1st century Jews secured from the plagues of that generation.” (saved from the destruction of Jerusalem, presumably)
- **HOMER HAILEY** says the 144,000 are the “total number of saints on the earth at any given time.”
- **ARTHUR OGDEN** identifies them as “the saved of Israel under the Mosaic covenant.”
- Five well respected commentators, and none of them agree on who the 144,000 are.
 - They can’t all be right. At least 4 of them are wrong, perhaps all 5 of them.
 - Note – some of these men fail to understand the Biblical purpose of baptism is. If they fail in such a simple thing, how much stock should we put in them when it comes to a

difficult book?

- We need to read slowly, read carefully.
 - Let the book interpret itself.
 - Let parallel images in other books assist.
 - Perhaps refer to commentaries here & there, but do not let them drive our understanding of the book.
- Revelation – to reveal.
 - We can understand the book.

DON'T RELY ON A DATE THEORY

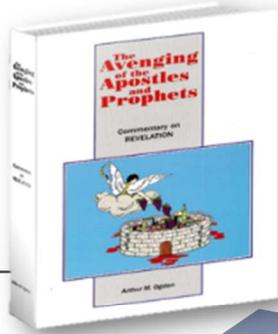


- The date of writing is not a big deal for folks who take a futuristic approach, but for those who believe the book is historic (ie. it foretold persecution in the 1st or 2nd century) or a preterist (whether full or partial preterism), establishing & supporting a specific date of writing becomes a necessity, as their theory depends upon it.
- Among brethren, a common question about Revelation has been “**DO YOU TAKE THE EARLY DATE** or the late date view?”
 - Early daters say the book was written before 70 AD and primarily deals with the fall of Jerusalem.
 - Late daters say the book was written near the end of the 1st century and primarily deals with persecution under Domitian.
 - A case can be made for either, but **NEITHER CASE** is

conclusive.

- Obviously the book was written at some point – there is a date of writing. But we don't know it conclusively, nor do we need to.
 - If we needed to know in order to understand the book, surely God would supplied evidence for the date. He did not.
 - Therefore, a date of authorship should not drive or dictate our understanding of the book.
 - If our interpretation depends on a date theory, and we get the date wrong, then the interpretation will fail also.
- We'll briefly note the flaws in each date theory...

EARLY DATE FLAWS



According to many prominent authorities, the number of the beast identifies Nero Caesar. The number is 666, and **Neron Caesar** (his name correctly spelled) computes to the magic number.

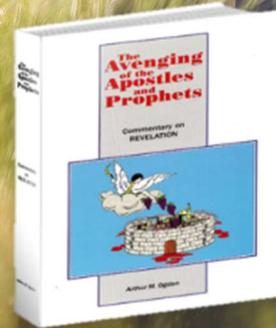
- Actual name : Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus
- Adopted name : Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus

- Arthur Ogden takes the early date. In his book, “The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets,” he states the following as **PROOF OF THE EARLY DATE:**
 - *“According to many prominent authorities, the number of the beast identifies Nero Caesar. The number is 666, and Neron Caesar (his name correctly spelled) computes to the magic number.”*
 - What is the logic behind the process to arrive at the number being Nero?
 - The letters of Neron Caesar in the Greek are translated to Hebrew, and then reduced to a numeric value.
 - And apparently when you do that, and add them up, Neron Ceasar adds up to 666.
 - But, note a few things:

- His name was not really Neron Caesar. He was born **LUCIUS DOMITIUS AHENOBARBUS**.
- Lucius was then adopted by Claudius and renamed **NERO CLAUDIUS CAESAR DRUSUS GERMANICUS**.
- The “evidence” that Neron Caesar is the beast of Revelation 13 demands that we ignore his given name and disregard 3/5 of his adopted name, and then translate his name from Greek into Hebrew, and then reduce the Hebrew letters to numeric values.
 - The 666 image is not some mysterious numeric code that requires alphabetic contortionism to arrive at the answer.
 - The same kind of process has been used to identify Bill Clinton, Bill Gates and others as the beast.
- When we get to Revelation 13, we will allow the book to interpret itself on the number of the beast.

Seven kings are mentioned (17:9-11): “five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come.” Josephus ... identifies Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula as the second, third and fourth emperors. Accordingly, Julius ... was the first king. Claudius was the fifth and Nero the sixth. This establishes Nero as the ruling king at the time John saw the vision.

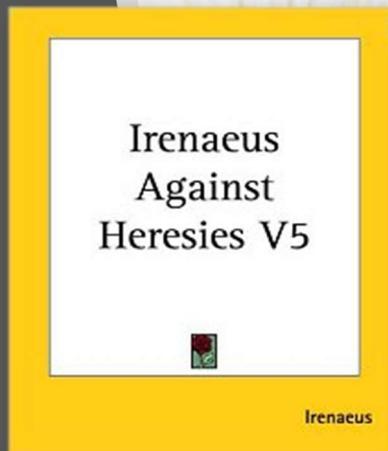
EARLY DATE FLAWS



- Again, Ogden uses the image of the seven kings in ch. 17 to prove the early date theory.
- He makes the “seven kings” image literal and with the help of Josephus, begins counting kings with Julius Caesar.
 - If the image is literal, then all facets of the image ought to fit the supposed fulfillment of it.
 - Julius Caesar was not king. He served Rome as a consul, a proconsul, an elected dictator, but not a king.
- Revelation 1:1 says the message of the book is given in signs. It is faulty to try to make the images literal.

LATE DATE FLAWS

“We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of the Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen not very long time since, but almost in our own day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.” (5:30:3)



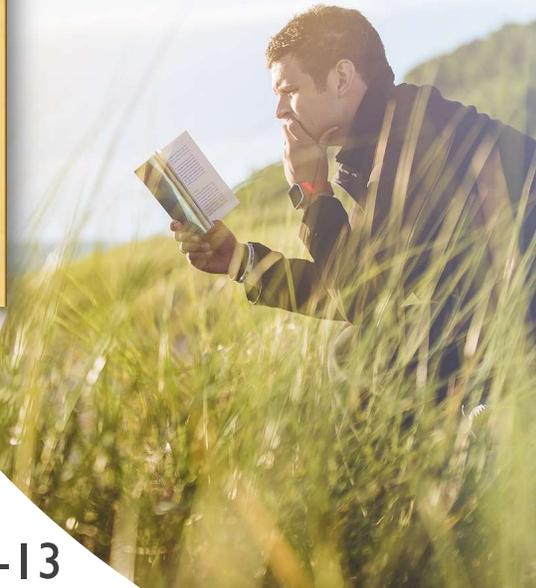
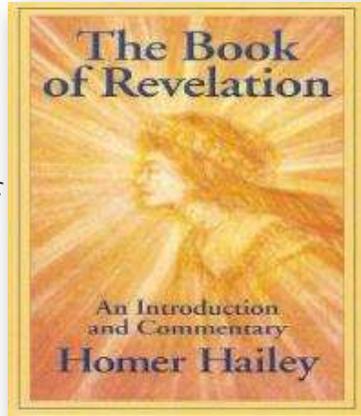
- Part of the late date case depends on this quote from Irenaeus (120-202 AD), a second century Christian apologist.
- Irenaeus links Revelation with the latter part of Domitian’s reign.
- The question is – can we trust Irenaeus’ date?
 - He was certainly closer to the date of writing than we are, yet I believe his reliability is questionable.
 - In volume 2 of his writings, he discusses how old Jesus was (2:22:5). He indicates that Jesus was between 40-50 years old.
 - As proof, he cites the Jewish leaders statement in John 8:57, “...You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”
 - How old was Jesus when He died? Luke 3:23 says Jesus

began His ministry “at about thirty years of age.”

- The gospels reveal His ministry lasted for 3.5 years. Thus, Jesus died at the age of either 33-34, not 40-50 as Irenaeus reports.

LATE DATE FLAWS

The general condition prevailing when John wrote fits the period of Domitian better than that of Nero. It was definitely a period of general tribulation shared by John and the brethren to whom he wrote (Rev 1:9). In these letters we detect a marked difference of condition and attitude in the congregations from that revealed in the letters of Paul and Peter.



Is there really a marked difference?

AC 14:19, 22; 19:23; 2 THES 1:6-7; 1 PET 4:12-13

- Homer Hailey took the late date theory and stated the tribulation under Domitian fits the book better than that which was under Nero.
- There are several texts which reveal the persecution the early church endured in the time of Nero.
 - **ACTS 14:19, 22** – *“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”* Paul returned, *“...strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.””*
 - **Acts 19:23** – *“About that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.”* (Ephesus riot, seized Gaius & Aristarchus; Paul forced to flee).

- 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 – *“...it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels...”*
- 1 Peter 4:12-13 – *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”*
- If there is a marked difference between these and what is recorded in Revelation, I am not sure what it is.
- I lean towards the book being written in the latter part of the 1st century, but the date of writing should be a non-issue in the interpretation, since we cannot establish the date conclusively.

DON'T FORCE A SERIES OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

Revelation is not:

1. A chronicle of end-time events
2. An almanac of church history
3. A prophecy about Jerusalem's fall
4. A record of Roman persecution

The Things Which Are - The Seven Churches						
Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
 Rev 2.1-7	 Rev 2.8-11	 Rev 2.12-17	 Rev 2.18-29	 Rev 3.1-6	 Rev 3.7-13	 Rev 3.14-22
First Church Age 33 - 100 AD Death of Christ 1st & 2nd Persecution	Second Church Age 100-312 AD The Caesars 2nd - 10th Persecutions	Alexandrian School Of Thought		Antiochian School Of Thought		
		Third Church Age 312 - 590 AD Constantine The Political Church	Fourth Church Age 590 - 1517 AD Middle Dark Ages The Idolatrous Church Catholic Church	Fifth Church Age 1517 - 1750 AD Reformation Protestantism	Sixth Church Age 1750 - 1925 AD Missionary Movement	Seventh Church Age 1925 AD - End Apostate Church
The Dispensations Of The Church Theory						
By Dr. Walter D. Huyck Jr. - copyright © 2009 www.thechristianjourney.com						

- I have yet to see a historical theory that fits the book of Revelation. If twisting or avoiding texts is needed, then the theory is wrong.
- Revelation is not **A CHRONOLOGY** of end-time events.
 - At one time (ie. Mid-80s) the beast was from Russia, then it moved to the middle east, and then to the European Union.
 - Where next? Jack Van Impe & those who are like him are creating end-time narratives that simply are not in the Bible.
 - Wild speculation goes hand-in-hand with the end-time chronology position.
 - In 1996, Terry Cook, a doom & gloom end-timer, warned folks that soon we'd be forced to have computer chips implanted in our bodies, and that

was the mark of the beast...

- Others cautioned the mark of the beast was the use of debit cards (in the hand, forehead facing the screen & receiving money) or computers (hand on the mouse, forehead facing the monitor).
- Revelation is not **AN ALMANAC** of church history.
 - Some have arbitrarily made up 7 periods to fit their concept of church history, generally using the letters to the 7 churches of Asia in ch. 2-3.
 - Here's **AN EXAMPLE**. Nothing in the Bible text would lead us to think the letters to the 7 churches are intended to be an almanac.
- Revelation is not **A PROPHECY** about Jerusalem's fall.
 - 1:4, "*...to the seven churches which are in Asia...*"
 - If this book is about the fall of Jerusalem, it was written to the wrong people!!
- Revelation is not **A RECORD** of Roman persecution.
 - Indeed, there was persecution from Rome,
 - But the application of the book extends beyond Rome.

- Revelation is not **A PREDICTION** of Rome's demise.
 - Rome didn't fall for another 300+ years after the book was written.
 - That would be little comfort to the recipients.
- The book is **NOT A CHRONOLGY**, rather it is circular.
 - As we study, we will find 5 cycles in the book, each one culminating in the judgment of the wicked & the victory of God's people (ch. 6, 11, 14, 16, 20).
 - That, of course, is the theme of the book – victory in Christ.

IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

What principles for **perseverance** are taught in the text?

THE SEVEN SEALS

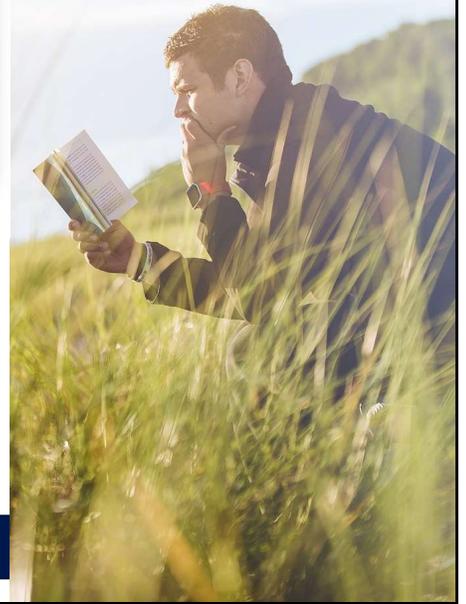
- four horsemen
- souls of slain saints
- earthquake
- receding sky
- falling mountains

...the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?
(REVELATION 6:17)

...they did not repent of the works of their hands...
(REVELATION 9:20-21)

- destruction on earth
- destruction in the sea
- destruction in heavens
- bottomless pit

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS



- Revelation is filled with amazing imagery. It is easy to get overwhelmed trying to analyze the details of the images.
 - The key is to understand the principles discussed in the book, not every detail of every images.
 - The book is not about the images, it is a message of victory in Christ.
 - As we look at the images, realize that not every detail must represent something. Some things are simply backdrop. We see the same in the parables.
 - Don't ask, "what is this?" but rather, "What is being taught here?"
- We'll look at the significance of each of the **SEVEN SEALS**, which contain great images about the struggle of life upon this earth.
 - However, the major theme they lead to is "**WHO IS**

ABLE TO STAND?”

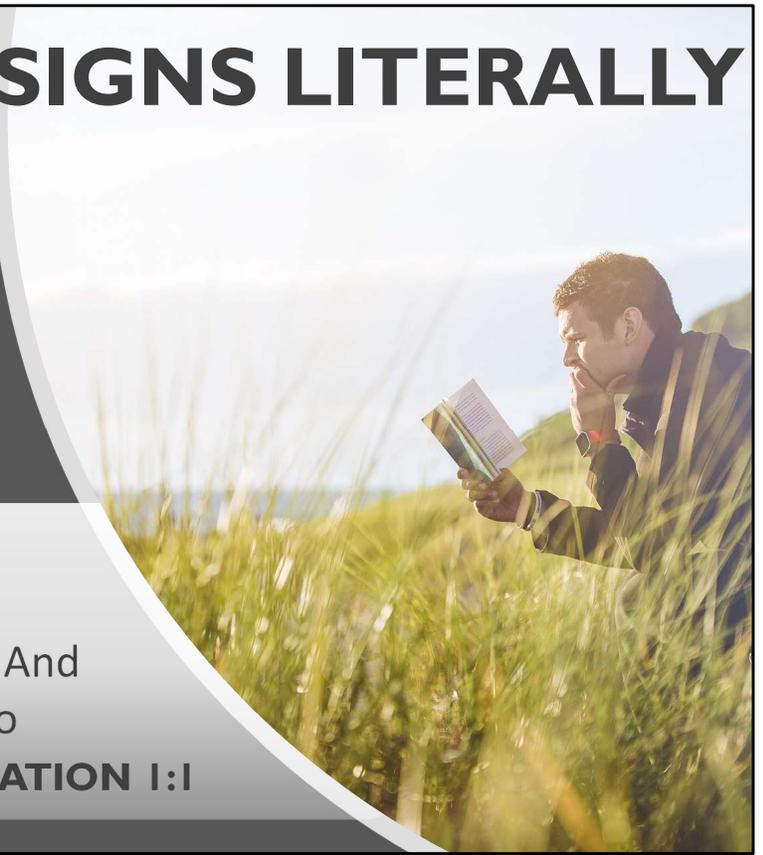
- The images are there to help prepare us for eternal life.
- We'll notice the images used in the SEVEN TRUMPETS, which are filled with all kinds of turmoil and destruction.
 - However, we'll keep our eyes focused on the major theme which encompasses them, which is that THE WICKED did not repent.
 - The images are not literal devastation happening to the earth, the sea & the heavens, but images to convey God's efforts to turn the wicked to repentance.
- If we focus too much on the images, we will miss the point!
 - So we will make an effort as we go through to find the spiritual principles;
 - Observe the images, spend a bit of time considering them,
 - But in the end, we want to grasp the spiritual implications of what is shown.

DON'T TAKE THE SIGNS LITERALLY

GENERAL RULE FOR BIBLE STUDY:

If the **common sense** makes **good sense**, seek **no other sense**.

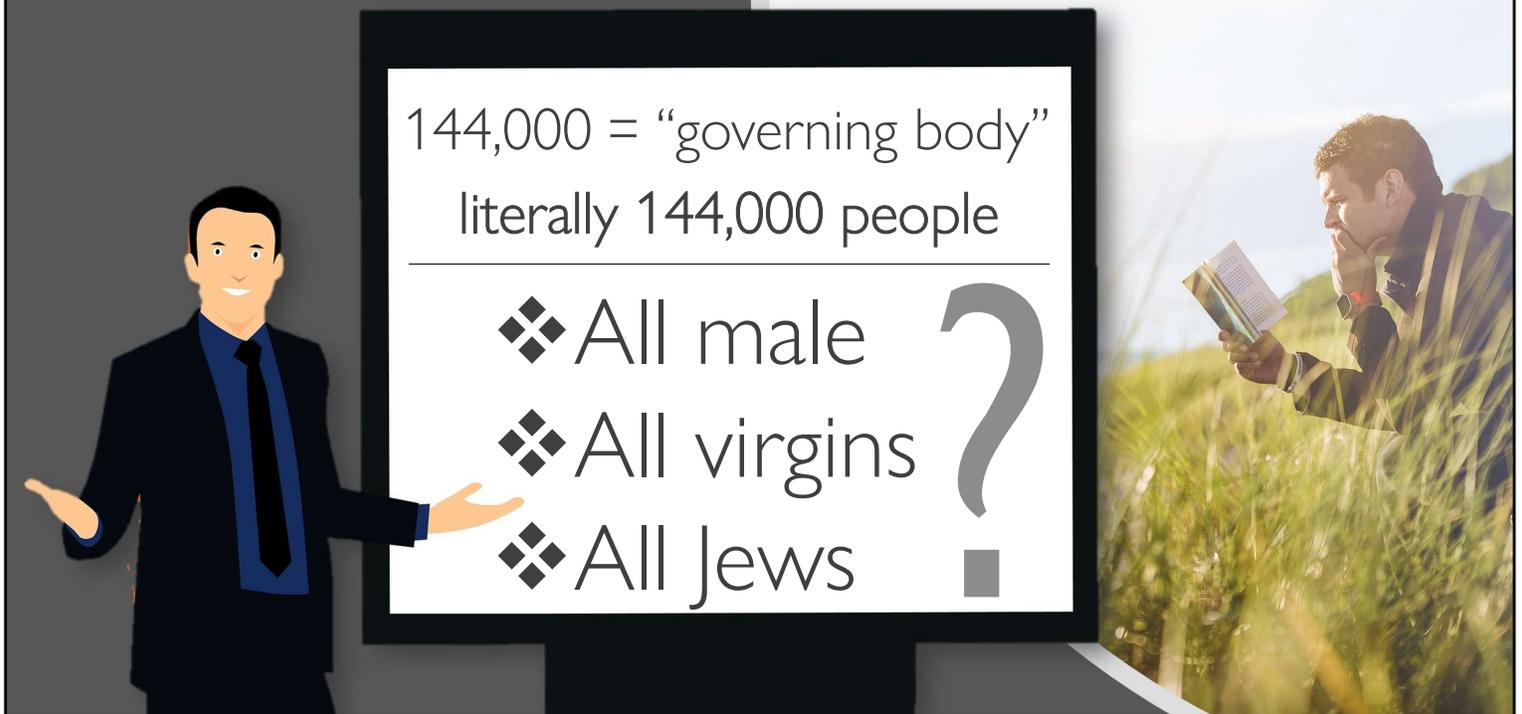
The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants – things which must shortly take place. And He sent and **signified** it by His angel to His servant John...
– REVELATION 1:1



- When studying Revelation, we must be careful not to take the images we find literally.
 - Mentioned this already with Ogden's use of the image of the "seven kings."
 - But it can't be stressed enough that we need to be cautious not to seek a literal fulfillment of the things we read.
- This can be difficult. There is a general rule that governs **GOOD BIBLE STUDY**.
 - Some of us may have learned this from a mentor or teacher;
 - Other may have realized it through the process of study.
 - God means what He says. And so if the common or literal meaning makes sense, seek no other sense.

- This works for the gospels, for Acts, for the epistles.
- However, it doesn't work for Revelation.
- **REVELATION 1:1** tells us it is a book of figures.
- It is a book of symbols & signs, emblems & images.
- Trying to interpret things literally will only lead to trouble & confusion.

DON'T TAKE THE SIGNS LITERALLY



- Consider an example:
 - The JWs believe the 144,000 of Revelation 7 & 14 is about “a governing body” which will reside in heaven, ruling over a refurbished earth & those who live on it.
 - They stress, there are **LITERALLY 144,000** people in the governing body.
 - They are inconsistent in how they deal with the 144,000 image.
 - **CONSISTENTLY WOULD DEMAND** that only 144,000 male virgin Jews (from the tribes specified) be in heaven.
- I’m not trying to pick on the JWs, but it is an excellent example of problems that will arise if we seek to apply a sign in the book literally.
 - We will stumble into inconsistency.

- We will make the text say something it does not.
- We cannot pick & choose what we'll interpret literally & figuratively.
- We must be consistent in our approach and honest with the text & the style of writing.

IT'S A BOOK ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

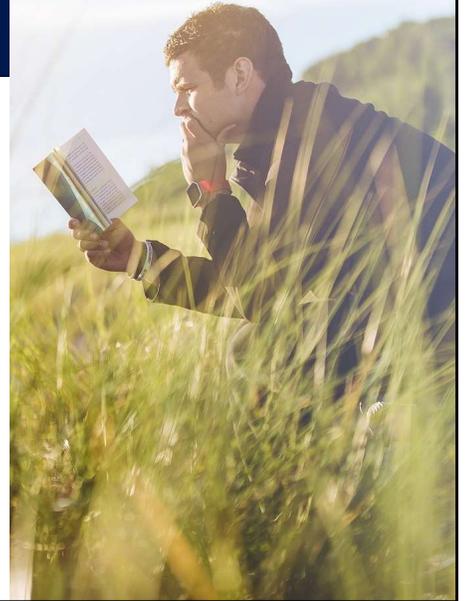
1:1 – “the revelation of Jesus Christ”
1:2 – “the testimony of Jesus Christ”
1:5 – “grace and peace from Jesus Christ”
1:6 – He has made us a kingdom of priests
1:7 – “Jesus is returning, will be seen by all”
1:8 – Jesus, the Alpha & Omega
1:9 – “the testimony of Jesus Christ”
1:13 – “One like the Son of Man”
1:17 – He is “the first and the last”
1:18 – “I am He who lives and was dead”

If we lose sight of the
Lord in the book...

22:1 – the throne of the Lamb
22:3 – the throne of the Lamb
22:4 – shall see His face and
wear His name on foreheads
22:7 – “I am coming quickly.”

22:12 – “I am coming quickly”
22:13 – “the testimony of Jesus Christ”
22:16 – “I, Jesus, have sent My angel”
22:17 – “the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’”
22:20 – “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”
22:21 – “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
be with you all”

...then we've missed
the message of the
book of Revelation.



- The book is about Jesus, from start to finish.
 - 1:1, “*The revelation of Jesus Christ...*”
 - 22:21, “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*”
- In fact, look at the focus in the 1st & last chapters:
 - **CHAPTER 1** specifically references him 10x, and in the latter portion of the chapter, gives a wonderful description of Him.
 - **CHAPTER 22** specifically references him 10x and focuses on His return.
 - Between those, we have:
 - Ch. 2-3, Jesus’ messages to the 7 churches of Asia
 - Ch. 4-5, Jesus, the Lamb who is worthy & Son who sits on His Father’s throne;
 - Ch. 6-7, the Saviour on the white horse, who is a

- comfort to slain saints & terror to the wicked in judgment;
 - Ch. 8-9, the God who seeks to provoke the wicked to repentance;
 - Ch. 10-11, the refuge and salvation of His people;
 - Ch. 12-13, the focus of the devil's hatred, but the protector of His people;
 - Ch. 14, the righteous judge who brings victory to the people of God & defeat to the wicked;
 - Ch. 15-18, the One who gives surety of Satan's defeat;
 - Ch. 19-20, the One who reigns and makes His people to reign with Him;
 - Ch. 21-22, the One who makes all things new – victory in heaven.
- He is not just in the first and last verses or first and last chapters of the book, He is the focus of the book throughout.
 - **IF WE LOSE SIGHT** of the Lord in the book, then we've missed the message of the book of Revelation.

Next week...

- ❖ What is Revelation?
- ❖ Symbolism in Revelation
- ❖ First century significance
- ❖ Sevens in Revelation

REVELATION 1

