

Understand the Revelation

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.

Study Session One

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INTRODUCTION

Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand. (Rev. 1:3)

These divinely authorized words of blessing were pronounced over nineteen hundred years ago and they were recorded for the benefit of the whole Believing Assembly in the **Revelation**, the last book of the Bible.

Yet, sad to say, even at this critical period in earth's history, few believers really study the book of Revelation, let alone *keep those things which are written therein.*

Why?

Because the Revelation is considered by many to be a closed book, a mystery book, a **book of riddles and bewildering symbols** which cannot possibly be understood by the average believer.

The result is, the book is left unopened by the majority in the assembly.

Others, who profess to have studied its pages, contend that the book is of little practical value to the committed Christian awaiting the **Secret Rapture**.

Why? Because most of the events it foretells, they believe, are going to occur **after** the main body of the assembly has been caught away to heaven.

In other words, the book need not concern true believers because they will not be on earth when the events it predicts come to pass.

References in the Revelation to *Yahweh's people*, they maintain, concern the Jews and perhaps a few Gentile converts who have, for some reason or the other, missed the **Rapture**.

But it does not concern the great multitude of believers from all over the world who acknowledge Messiah Yahshua as their Savior.

Millions of copies of the Left Behind series by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye have served to reinforce that belief.

Believe it or not, these are the popular opinions many Christians hold about the book of Revelation.

And so widespread are their views that multitudes of believers know little or nothing about this greatest of Bible prophecies.

But, are their opinions correct?

Is the Revelation a mystery book of little value to the Ephramite believer today?

Does it have a message for you – for me?

I have come to believe that the message of the Revelation was given by the Almighty to His assembly **to be understood.**

And it is insulting Yahweh's sense of judgment to suggest that the book cannot be understood.

The very word 'revelation' means 'that which is revealed, made plain or disclosed.'

The title of the book '*The Revelation*, 'in other words, is the very antithesis of mystery; so how can anyone sensibly claim that *it cannot be understood?*

The book, I further believe, has been given to the assembly as a warning message; for Yahweh wants His people to prepare themselves for the stormy future that lies ahead.

For, believe it or not, **the assembly is not going to be secretly caught away to heaven before the Great Tribulation.**

Any believer, therefore, who persistently ignores Yahweh's warning message, is courting disaster!

On the other hand, those who diligently study the book of Revelation, allowing the Scriptures to interpret themselves, will soon understand the prophecy.

To their amazement and delight they will come to find that they are in possession of a spiritual survey map which charts the future of humanity with awesome accuracy.

Instead of the fear and uncertainty which characterizes the people of this world, they will have the confidence and hope that belong to the enlightened people of Yahweh.

SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

The book of Revelation is written mostly in symbolic language.

This, admittedly, does seem daunting at first, but once the reader becomes acquainted with symbolic language and learns how to interpret it, ***by comparing scripture with scripture***, the Revelation becomes a veritable storehouse of information about the future of mankind.

A *symbol* is something which represents or stands for something else.

Examples of symbols used in the Revelation are:

- **A lamb:** this symbol represents Messiah Yahshua the innocent Son of Yahweh. (Rev. 5:5-6, John 1:29)
- **A candlestick:** this represents the light-bearing assembly of Yahweh. (Rev. 1:20)
- **White robes:** this symbol represents righteousness. (Rev. 7:13-14, Rev. 19:7-8)
- **Chains:** a symbol of captivity.
- **A sword:** a symbol of war.
- **A crown:** a symbol of royal authority. etc.

Symbolic language is used throughout the Bible but more so in the prophetic books.

The parables of Yahshua are also good examples of how *symbolic* or *figurative language* is used to illustrate and explain spiritual realities.

When interpreting the Revelation, therefore, **it is important to first establish if the language used is literal or symbolic, or a mixture of both**

Utmost caution should be exercised here; because if a symbol is incorrectly taken in a literal sense, confusion will result.

Similarly, if a literal object or element is mistakenly treated as a symbol, an equally warped picture of the future will emerge and the reader will not be prepared for the reality of last day events when they occur.

Bear in mind also that the Revelation is a *prophetic warning message* given by the Almighty to the assembly so that all believers may prepare themselves for the final events due to occur on earth.

For the plain truth is this, YAHWEH the Elohim of Israel wants His people to be ready for the last days.

He wants every member of His assembly to have a clear understanding of what is going to happen just before His Son **YAHSHUA** returns.

He wants us all to know what He is doing and what He is going to allow Satan to do.

The Almighty does not want us to be terrified of the future, but to be patiently confident amidst the total confusion which is going to reign when this present civilization collapses in ruins about us.

For even though **Yahweh** is going to protect His *obedient followers* in those difficult days, *He still wants them to know about future events before they actually occur.*

The Revelation is, in short, another example of that divine trait whereby

Surely the Master Yahweh will do nothing, but he reveals his secret unto his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

Yes, it is Yahweh's will that all His assembly know of the future; and not only that we know what to expect, but that we come into line with His will soon, so that we may be accounted worthy to escape punishment.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:36)

Make no mistake, an understanding of the will of the Almighty Yahweh as outlined in the Revelation will be of utmost value and importance in the very last days.

Indeed, your life and the lives of your family could well depend on it.

Remaining willfully ignorant is a fatal mistake.

The Almighty says in Hosea 4:6.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...

Oh, how true that statement is going to prove with this end-time generation; a generation woefully and willfully ignorant of the truth, yet so eager to believe any and everything but the Word of the Almighty Yahweh.

THE SEVEN ASSEMBLIES

The Revelation begins with the prophet seeing a vision of Yahshua the Messiah the Son of Yahweh, walking amidst seven candlesticks.

A candlestick is a symbol of an assembly group from which the light of Yahweh's truth shines.

... and the seven candlesticks which you saw are the seven assemblies. (Rev. 1:20)

Seven is the number which represents wholeness, completeness and totality.

The messages to the seven assemblies therefore are for the whole assembly, the entire body of believers, Jew and Ephraimite alike, in all ages.

It is a mistake to think that most of the messages to the seven assemblies apply to the assembly in past ages; or that this or that assembly group is the **Smyrna** assembly, the **Laodicean** assembly, the **Philadelphian** assembly etc.

For the fact is that in every assembly group in all ages, there were - and still are - individuals to whom one or more of the seven messages apply.

You may be sure that even in your own congregation there is the Laodicean believer who is in danger of being *'spewed out'* by Yahweh.

There is also the Smyrna group who are enduring great suffering for their Lord.

There are those who classify themselves as *'Messianic'* (true believers) but who are not; and there are those who have not denied the Master's name.

Yes, almost every type of believer is present in the average-sized assembly group.

This is as true in our day as it was in the past.

The letters to the seven assemblies, in other words, are for our congregation as well as all other believers.

It is not the purpose of this study, however, to explain the letters to the seven assemblies; because with prayerful study most believers can arrive at a good understanding of those messages by themselves.

Instead, in this study our aim is to briefly outline and explain the prophecy of the Seven Seals which is introduced in Revelation chapter four.

Revelation Chapter Four

This chapter begins with the prophet seeing a vision of the Almighty seated on His throne.

In Yahweh's right hand the prophet sees a scroll which is sealed with seven seals.

The only one in the universe who is qualified to open the sealed scroll is **Yahshua the Messiah** the Son of the Living Elohim.

He is symbolized as the Lamb of Yahweh (John 1:29).

The heavenly hosts around the Almighty's throne rejoice at the fact that at last someone has been found worthy to open the scroll and tell its contents.

From this we may infer that the angelic host are intensely eager to learn about the future of those things which must shortly come to pass.

Oh that the congregations on earth would display a similar interest in the sealed scroll and the future of humanity.

It is true, multitudes are apparently interested in the future, because great sums of money are spent each week by people who *consult witches, fortune tellers, astrologers and mystics* of every shade and type; but how few, by comparison, consult the **Word of Yahweh** or study the prophecies in order to find out what the Almighty says about the future? **How very few!**

We trust that when you have thoroughly studied this material, you will have taken a great step forward in understanding what the *real future* holds in store for humanity at large and for yourself in particular.

And though the knowledge of it may initially fill you with dread, you may be sure that if you place your trust in the Almighty and do His will, your fears will gradually give way to a growing sense of confidence, a confidence that will stand you in good stead when the terrors of the last days begin to occur in your neighborhood.

THE FIRST SEAL

And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him and he went forth conquering and to conquer. (Rev. 6:2)

Here we are shown the first of the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, the **White Horse**.

The rider on the white horse carries a bow and goes forth conquering and to conquer.

This means that he is victorious and invincible; nothing can halt his advance.

Before we explain what the white horse represents, let us first draw the reader's attention to the **FIRST CLUE** to understanding Bible prophecy.

There are many who understand that the white horse represents deception. Everyone needs to realize that it could represent both or either. I can see where it would apply to both. Earl

It is *comparing scripture with scripture*: of letting the Bible interpret itself; of searching for the meaning of one obscure passage in another part of the Bible which describes the same subject or event in a simplified way.

It is perfectly obvious that there is only one future, and it follows that no matter how many Bible prophecies there may be concerning the future, **they cannot contradict each other and still all be correct.**

Therefore, if one prophet describes the future in **symbolic language** in one book, and another tells of the same future in another part of the scriptures in **simple language**, a comparison of one scripture with the other will obviously direct us to the real meaning.

To help us understand the **symbolic language** of the Revelation we will first consider another Bible prophecy describing the same end-time scenes in **simple language**.

The prophecy we will look at is our Messiah's famous Olivet prophecy recorded in **Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21**.

In that prophecy the Master spoke of the **end-time**, the period in earth's history which occurs just prior to his return to earth.

The Olivet prophecy is in *plain language* with a minimum of symbolic references.

The order of events in the Savior's *plain language* prediction, therefore, ought to be similar to those described in *symbolic language* in the Revelation, for both prophecies deal with the same events in the last days.

When we examine the two prophecies side by side, that is exactly what we find.

One complements the other, explains and fills in details which the other lacks: and together they provide us with a detailed picture of the world's future as it will occur just before the Master returns to earth.

Using this method of allowing one scripture to interpret another, we find that the white horse of Revelation 6 corresponds with the Savior's warning message in Matthew 24.4-5

And Yahshua answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Messiah; and shall deceive many.

This is plainly a WARNING message: Take heed! says the Master.

The vast majority of Bible prophecies are in a sense **warning messages**, given by the Almighty to warn people of approaching punishment or danger.

In order to warn effectively, a prophet must do at least two things:

- He must warn of error and its consequences.
- And he must point to the Truth and a way of escape.

This is what the Master is doing in Matthew 24.4.

He is opening his truth-filled warning message with the words **'Take heed!'** and he closes by pointing to a way of escape.

The prophecy of the Seven Seals is no different; for, like the great prophecy in Matthew 24, it begins with a truth-filled warning message symbolized by the invincible rider on the white horse and goes on to point to a way of escape.

The color white represents purity and truth. (Isaiah 1:18, Rev. 19:8)

The rider on the white horse corresponds to the Messiah's truth-filled, warning message of *'take heed'* in Matthew 24.4.

This rider symbolizes **Yahweh's Invincible Truth**, which by its very existence warns us to beware (*take heed*) of deception and counterfeit in the assembly: the *counterfeit baptism* of the Holy Spirit, the *counterfeit Sabbaths* being celebrated by believers, the *counterfeit messiah* that is shortly to arrive on the world scene and the *counterfeit Bibles* which are currently being foisted on unsuspecting Believers.

The rider on the white horse is even now galloping across the globe and there is no power in the universe that can check his advance.

Yahweh's Truth is currently demolishing the strongholds of human ignorance and error and there is scarcely a country on earth where the light of the gospel has not begun to shine.

Thousands of people are suddenly being drawn to the Torah, with its instructions regarding the Feasts, Sabbaths and our relationship with Yahweh and our fellow man.

People may, of course, choose not to believe Yahweh's Truth, but there is absolutely no way any person or government can stop its advance.

Yes, the events under the first seal have already begun.

THE SECOND SEAL

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. (Rev. 6:4)

In this seal the symbolic language used is almost self explanatory.

The rider on the red horse, we are told, was *'given a great sword'* and power was given to him to *'take peace from the earth.'* Clearly this rider represents **bloodshed and war**; for red is the color of *blood* and a *sword* is the universally accepted symbol of war.

And that is exactly how the Master put it when he followed his take heed warning with:

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. (Matt. 24:7)

One doesn't need great spiritual insight to recognize in this verse a picture of our day.

Violence, bloodshed, revolution and international turmoil are now commonplace and global war is a constant threat.

The world, it seems, is glutting itself on an ever-increasing diet of violence, carnage and death; with each blood-bath being dwarfed by the enormity of the next.

Read any daily newspaper, switch to any radio or TV station and the same, sad catalogue of violence and bloodshed fills the news.

And always, above and behind it all, there lurks that fearful specter of a *nuclear war* – a war which could well nigh obliterate life from this planet.

What's more, all the efforts of world leaders, politicians, economists, scientists and even the theologians of all the faiths, cannot stem the tide of slaughter which is threatening to engulf mankind.

Nothing, it seems, anyone can say or do can prevent the on-coming holocaust.

Only the Almighty can stem this tide of evil which He so accurately predicted so long ago.

Yes, there is little doubt, the second horseman of the Apocalypse, the rider on the red horse, like the white horse before him, is even now breaking into a gallop; and the thunder of his hoof beats can be heard around the world.

***Power was given unto him to take peace from the earth,* said the divine messenger, and oh how true those fearsome words have proved to be.**

Peace on earth is a vanishing memory and war is taking its place.

The prophet Jeremiah also predicted war on a world-wide scale. (Jeremiah 25:15-38)

THE THIRD SEAL

Rev.6: 5: And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6: And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

From the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, we learn that a *denarius* (translated 'penny' in this verse) was then the ordinary wage for a **day's work**. (Matthew 20:2-13)

Here we are shown a symbolic picture of hyper-inflation, crippling food shortages, rising prices and mass starvation!

The rider on the black horse represents famine – **world famine!** when food prices for even the barest of life's necessities will sky-rocket out of control.

Can you imagine the world's economy so depressed that a man would work *all day* for the price of a few loaves of bread?

I'm sure that not many of us can imagine this happening, even though rising food prices are all too familiar.

But, according to this prophecy, runaway inflation coupled with frightening food shortages are due to occur in the last days.

Indeed, in many countries they have already arrived, Prices are rising daily in all the markets of the world and there is very little anyone or any government can do to stop them.

The rider on the black horse may not be moving at speed in the West, but I can assure you that in the East, in South America and Africa he is out there in the field and he is soon to break into an earthshaking gallop.

Famines generally follow war.

In this and the Olivet prophecy Yahshua the Savior confirms this when he says:

Nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be famines. (Matthew 24:7)

THE FOURTH SEAL

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Rev. 6:8)

The color of the fourth horse is given as *deathly pale* or sickly, yellowish green. Again comparing the Revelation with the Master's Olivet prophecy we find that the **sickly pale horse symbolizes pestilence: deadly disease epidemics and plagues** that so quickly lay low millions of humans engulfed in war and famine.

This is not to mention the agricultural pestilence (pests) that periodically wreck havoc on our farms.

When the pale horse breaks into a gallop it will appear as though the finely tuned forces of nature have become dislodged.

Disease epidemics of all kinds will sweep across the globe bringing death to millions of people, their cattle and their crops.

The severe food shortages pictured by the black horse will most certainly exacerbate the problem of pestilence, as the world's population, weakened by war and famine, struggles to keep alive.

To be sure, the rider on the pale horse has begun to ride and death is following closely at his heels.

SUMMARY OF THE FIRST FOUR SEALS

1) First, there is the **white horse**: the Almighty's truth-filled, **warning message!** which exposes the various spiritual counterfeits that abound in our day.

2) Second, there is the **red horse**: whose rider wields a great sword which symbolizes violence, revolution, bloodshed and - **war!**

3) Third, there is the **black horse**: which pictures hyper-inflation, sky-rocketing food prices and mass starvation – **famine!**

4) And last of all, the **sickly pale, yellowish-green horse**: which stands for disease epidemics and plagues on an international scale – **pestilence!**

WAR, FAMINE, PESTILENCE, that terrifying trio which invariably overtakes civilizations given to sin.

Reading through the prophecies of the Bible one can hardly fail to recognize the fact that **warnings** rejected are always followed by **war, famine and pestilence**; for that is the Almighty's way of dealing with those who persistently ignore His truth and reject His commandments.

*... but I will consume them by the **sword**, and by the **famine**, and by the **pestilence**.*
(Jeremiah 14:12)

*And I will send the **sword**, the **famine**, and the **pestilence**, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.* (Jeremiah 24:10)

The great prophet Jeremiah analyzed the messages of all the prophets of Yahweh that had gone before him and summarized their work in these telling words:

The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.
(Jeremiah 28:8)

Oh yes, **divine warning** is the opening theme of almost every Bible prophecy, and when rejected is always followed by **war, famine and pestilence**.

But will mankind ever take heed and recognize this fact, that if warnings are rejected there always follows war, famine and pestilence?

It is doubtful.

People, it seems, are quite unable or unwilling to link national calamity with national sin.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have, nonetheless, begun to ride, **and as described in Revelation 6:8:**

Power was given them over a fourth part of the earth to kill with sword with hunger and with death.