

# Revelation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ

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## In these studies we will explore:

- An introduction to the Book of Revelation (Chapter 1)
- Letters to the Seven Churches (Chapters 2,3)
- What is heaven like? What happens when you die? (Chapters 4,5)
- What happens when Jesus comes again? (Chapters 6-18, Mark 13, Matthew 24, Daniel 9)
- What happens at the end of the age? (Chapters 19-22)

## An introduction to the Book of Revelation

**Author** John, the apostle (1:1,2)

**Date** Around AD 95. The Book of Revelation was the last New Testament book to be written.

**Place** John was on the Island of Patmos 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's day, when he received this 'revelation of Jesus Christ'. (1:1, 9,10)

**Type** Apocalyptic literature. The Book of Revelation is a series of prophecies given to John in a vision. (The word for 'revelation' is *apokalupsos* meaning an *unveiling* or *disclosing*).

Because the Book of Revelation is prophetic we must interpret it to gain understanding, meaning and relevance. Unfortunately this is not easy to do!

There are many different ways that the various prophecies can be interpreted:

- *Preterists* say it describes events that have already taken place
- *Historicists* say it describes history from New Testament times through to the end times.
- *Futurists* say it describes the end times.
- *Idealists* say it is symbolic of truths eg. the triumph of good over evil.

As you read the Book of Revelation try not to make it 'fit' with some predetermined interpretation.

Rather, let the Lord speak to you from what is written. He will bless you if you take to heart what you are reading.

*Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near* 1:3.

Much of Revelation is written in symbolic language that is hard to understand and which must be interpreted. Always recognise that your interpretations may not be the right ones! Stay open to the Holy Spirit and don't be dogmatic.

Only when Jesus comes again will you know if your interpretations were right or not!

## Purpose

- Ultimately the purpose of the Book of Revelation is to reveal Jesus Christ. (1:1) As you read the prophecy stay open to learning more of Jesus.

The Book of Revelation was also given:

- to show what is going to happen in the future (1:1)
- to encourage Christians to resist Emperor worship and to stand fast during persecution. (At the time John received his revelation the Christian Church was being strongly persecuted by the Romans because they wouldn't submit to Emperor worship).
- to show that Jesus will come again.
- to demonstrate God's ultimate triumph over evil.
- to bring honour and glory to God.

*To Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, forever and ever. Amen. 5:13*

- to show how God's eternal purposes will be fulfilled:

*And He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ. Ephesians 1:9,10*

**Written to** The 7 Churches in Asia, and to all Christians.

## Chronology

Revelation is divided into seven cycles of events, and the number seven appears frequently as a symbol throughout the book.

The cycles could be interpreted as occurring one after the other; at the same time or even at different times. It is difficult to make sense of the events if the cycles are seen as occurring one after the other.

Perhaps the best way of interpreting the cycles is to see them as different aspects of God's judgment on the world, and to recognise that the events described are full of imagery and metaphor. They could apply to the historical period in which Revelation was written; to today, and to the end times.



## Key verses

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. 1:1*

*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." 1:7,8*

*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever. 11:15*

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 21:1-5*

## Outline

### A revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 1 John imprisoned on the island of Patmos, sees Christ who dictates a letter to his seven churches.

### Letters to the Seven Churches

Chapter 2 Letters to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and Thyatira.

Chapter 3 Letters to the churches of Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

### Heaven

Chapter 4 John is caught up into Heaven to the throne of God.

Chapter 5 John is given the scroll which no man can open except the Lamb of God.

### Judgment and tribulation

Chapter 6 The opening of six seals on the scroll.

Chapter 7 The 144,000 of the 12 tribes of Israel and the multitude in heaven.

Chapter 8 The seventh seal and the first four trumpet judgments.

Chapter 9 The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments.

Chapter 10 The mighty angel and the little scroll.

Chapter 11 The two witnesses in Jerusalem and their death and resurrection.

Chapter 12 Two great signs: war in heaven and the women fleeing into the wilderness.

Chapter 13 The Beast, the False Prophet and 666.

Chapter 14 The three angels warn humanity and the harvest of the earth is reaped.

Chapter 15 The seven angels with seven bowls, the martyrs in Heaven celebrate.

Chapter 16 The seven bowls of God's wrath.

Chapter 17 Mystery Babylon the Great.

Chapter 18 The fall of Babylon.

### The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Chapter 19 The wedding supper of the Lamb and the return of Christ.

### The Millennium

Chapter 20 The Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment.

### New Heavens and a New Earth.

Chapter 21 New Heavens and New Earth, and the New Jerusalem.

Chapter 22 Final words of warning and invitation.

## A Revelation of Jesus Christ

In Chapter 1 John greets the 7 churches and describes how he received his 'revelation of Jesus Christ'. It was given to *show his servants what must soon take place.* v1

*Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." 1:7,8 Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. 1:17,18*



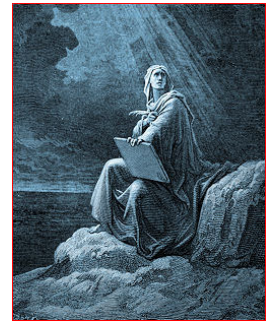
John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day when 'One like a Son of man' gave him the revelation and told him to write it on a scroll.

One like a Son of Man (Jesus)	What it could represent
Golden sash around his chest	Kingship
Head and hair white as snow	Purity
Eyes like a blazing fire	All seeing, all knowing
Feet like bronze glowing in a furnace	Purified
Voice like the sound of rushing waters	Life giving
Seven stars in His right hand (the angels of the 7 churches 1:20)	Concern for churches
Sharp two edged sword from His mouth	Source of the Word of God Ephesians 6:17
Face like the sun	Light Psalm 84:11

## Letters to the Seven Churches (Chapters 2 and 3)

The messages in these letters can be for:

- the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (all in modern day Turkey).
- for all churches
- for churches in the end times.
- for all Christians who are or have been part of the Church.

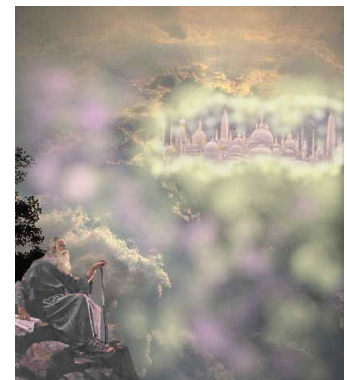


They can also be considered as representing the Church at different times in history:

Church	Description	Period of Church history
Ephesus	An active Church which had started to lose its first love	The early New Testament Church which evangelised much of the known world.
Smyrna	The suffering, persecuted Church. Poor, but rich!	The Church under the Roman Emperors Nero and Diocletian (up to 313AD).
Pergamos	The worldly, heretical Church, filled with idolatry and false doctrine.	The Church which became the state religion of Rome, under Constantine (up to 590AD). There was much idolatry and many false doctrines were introduced.
Thyatira	The deceived Church where pagan practices were approved and normal.	The Church in the Dark Ages. it had great political power, and led to the Inquisition where those who wouldn't conform to the false teachings were killed.
Sardis	The dead Church.	The Church as a powerful political organisation. This period ended at the Reformation when God started to restore His Church, bringing back life, salvation and reality in Christ.
Philadelphia	The Church with the open door: open to the Lord and to the needs of people.	The Church through the 18 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries. A period of restoration and much missionary work.
Laodicea	The luke-warm, self-satisfied Church. Rich, but poor.	The materialistic Church in the end times. At the end of this period the Lord Jesus returns.

Each letter is written in a similar format::

*To the angel of the church in ..... These are the words of .... I know your (good points) .... Yet I have this against you (bad points) .... A promise, command, encouragement, warning, threat .... He who has an ear .... (listen!) To him who overcomes (a promise).....*



***He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.***

## Letters to the Seven Churches

<b>Ephesus: the Church that had lost their first love 2:1-7</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> Him who holds the seven stars in His hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Good deeds, hard work, perseverance, not tolerating the wicked, testing false apostles, enduring hardships and not growing weary, hating the practices of the Nicolaitans.  <i>Condemned for:</i> Forsaking their first love.	<i>What they must do:</i> Remember the height from which they have fallen, repent, do what they did at first, or their lampstand will be removed.  <i>Promise for overcomers:</i> Will be given the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.
<b>Smyrna: the suffering Church 2:8-11</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> Him who is the first and last.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Afflictions, poverty, recognising slanderers. They are rich!  <i>Condemned for:</i> Nothing.	<i>What they must do:</i> Don't be afraid for what they are to suffer. Some will be put in prison and tested. Be faithful even to the point of death and they will receive the crown of life.  <i>Promise for overcomers:</i> Will not be hurt by the second death.
<b>Pergamum: the worldly Church 2:12-17</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> Him who has the sharp double-edged sword.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Remaining true to His name; did not renounce their faith when persecuted.  <i>Condemned for:</i> Hold to the teaching of Balaam (eating food sacrificed to idols, sexual immorality); having the teaching of the Nicolaitans.	<i>What they must do:</i> Repent or God will come and fight against them.  <i>Promise for overcomers:</i> Will be given some of the hidden manna, and a new name, known only to the one who receives it.
<b>Thyatira: the immoral Church 2:18-29</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> The Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Good deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance, and doing more than at first.  <i>Condemned for:</i> Tolerate Jezebel who misleads into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols.	<i>What they must do:</i> Those following Jezebel must repent or they will suffer intensely, and will be repaid according to their deeds; those not following Jezebel are to hold on to what they have.  <i>Promise for overcomers:</i> Will give authority over the nations and the morning star.

<b>Sardis: the dead Church 3:1-6</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> Him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.	
<i>Praised for:</i> A few who are worthy and who will walk with the Lord in white.	<i>What they must do:</i> Remember what they heard; obey it and repent for the Lord is coming and they don't know when.
<i>Condemned for:</i> Having a reputation for being alive, but being dead. Deeds not acceptable in God's sight.	<i>Promise for overcomers:</i> They will be dressed in white; will never have their name blotted out of the book of life, and will have their name acknowledged before the Father and His angels.

<b>Philadelphia: the faithful, persevering Church 3:7-13</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no-one can shut and what He shuts no-one can open.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Kept God's word; have not denied His name, and endure patiently. Those who oppose them will come and fall at their feet and acknowledge that the Lord loves them. Will be kept from the hour of trial that is coming to test the whole world.	<i>What they must do:</i> Hold on to what they have so no-one will take their crown.
<i>Condemned for:</i> Nothing.	<i>Promise for overcomers:</i> I will make you a pillar in the temple of God; will write on you the name of God; the name of the City of God; and give you a new name.

<b>Laodicea: the lukewarm Church 3:14-22</b>	
<i>Title used for Christ:</i> The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.	
<i>Praised for:</i> Nothing.	<i>What they must do:</i> Buy from the Lord gold refined by fire so they can become rich; white clothes to cover their shame and slave so they can see. Be earnest and repent. Hear God's voice, open the door and invite Him in.
<i>Condemned for:</i> Being lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. Saying they are rich, wealthy and don't need anything, but actually being wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.	<i>Promise for overcomers:</i> I will give you the right to sit with Me on my throne.



## What is heaven like? (Chapters 4,5)

Chapter 4: John is caught up into Heaven to the throne of God.

Chapter 5: Jesus is given the scroll which no man can open except the Lamb of God.

### Heaven

John was invited to to *Come up here* and found himself in Heaven *in the Spirit*. It was an overwhelming sight and John uses highly pictorial language to describe what he saw.

The Father	The Father sat on the throne, encircled by a rainbow. He had the appearance of jasper and carnelian and was accompanied by lightning and thunder. The Father was carrying a scroll in His right hand.
Jesus, the Lamb of God	Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David. He has triumphed! He looked like a lamb that had been slain, and was standing in the centre of the throne. Jesus was the only one who was able to open up the scroll and its 7 seals.
The 7 Spirits	Jesus had 7 horns and 7 eyes which are the 7 Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.
The 4 living creatures	The living creatures were like a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle. They had 6 wings and many eyes and glorified God day and night saying <i>Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come.</i> 4:8
The 24 elders	The 24 elders were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads and harps. They were on thrones surrounding the Father and were holding golden bowls of incense, which were the prayers of the saints. They were continually worshipping Him saying <i>You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for You created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.</i> 4:11
The angels	Countless thousands of angels encircled the throne and sang <i>Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise.</i> 5:12
All other creatures	Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them sang <i>To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever.</i> 5:13
The environment	Like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

There is a lot of praise going on in Heaven! That's because *He who sits on the throne* and *the Lamb* are worthy to be praised.

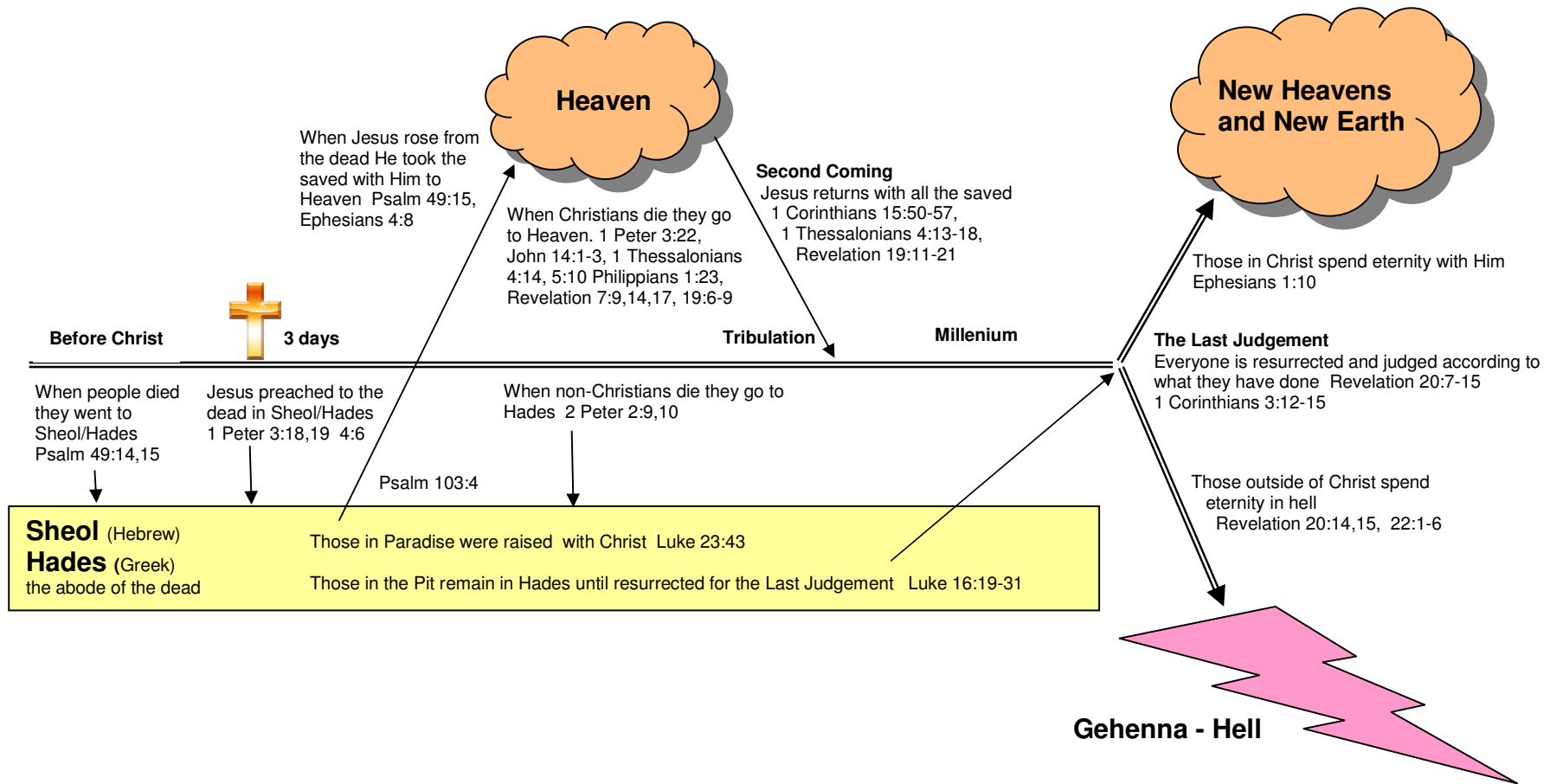




## What happens when you die?

John's vision of heaven in Revelation gives us a picture of what heaven is like. Ultimately heaven is the place (or state) in which Christians will spend eternity with God, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. *And He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ.* Ephesians 1:9,10

Many people wonder what is going to happen when they die. Will I go to heaven? Is there a hell? How do I know I am going to heaven? Here is one interpretation (of many!) that is based on many parts of the Bible that describe what happens when you die.





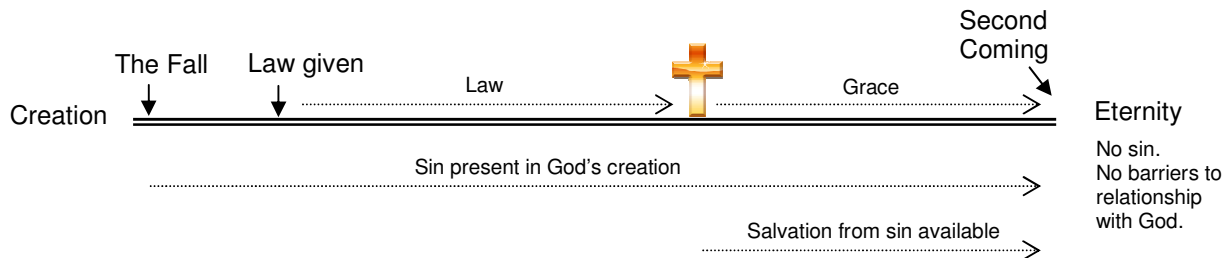
## What happens when Jesus comes again?

Chapters 6 - 22 of the Book of Revelation describe events around the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They include Judgment, Tribulation, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Second Coming, the Millennium, the Last Judgment and the New Heavens and New Earth.

Reading the prophecies in the Book of Revelation in context with other parts of the Bible means you are more likely to have a clearer understanding of what is going to take place. (But recognise that there are many theories for this and we will only know which one is correct when Jesus actually comes again!).

Here are some of the main aspects of Jesus' second coming taken from throughout the Bible.

- Jesus said He would come again. John 14:1-3, Matthew 24: 3, 30, 36
- Jesus' second coming completes God's great plan of redemption. It will bring the earth back to how it was before the fall and to how God wanted it to be all along. God will fellowship with His created people and they will bring Him pleasure for eternity. Revelation 4:11

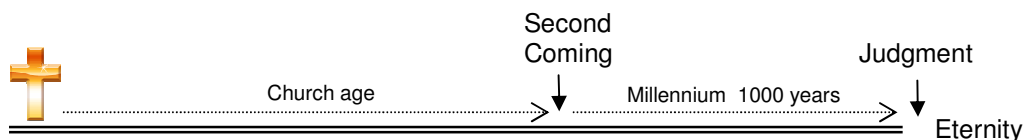


- The Bible is not completely clear about the order of events which take place leading up to and when Jesus comes again. There are many different theories! You will have to make up your own mind about what you believe, but do so on the basis of your own study of the Bible, not on what other people say! (and recognise that your ideas may change as you study more and your understanding grows!).
- Here are some of the main places in the Bible where it speaks about the Second Coming. (There are lots of other places as well).

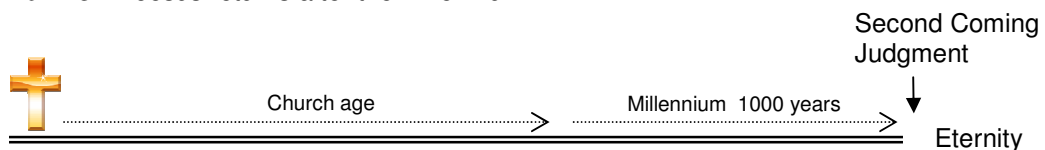
*Isaiah 65, 66; Daniel 9, 12; Joel 3; Zechariah 12-14. Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4,5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Timothy 3; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 2; Revelation 6-22.*

- There are three main ways of interpreting what the Bible says about the Second Coming of Christ:

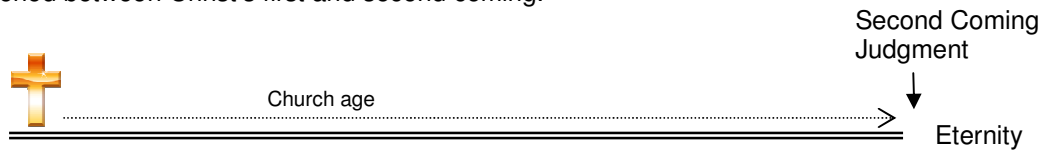
**Pre-millennial view:** Jesus returns before the millennium



**Post-millennial view:** Jesus returns after the millennium



**Millennial view:** the millennium is not literal. The events described in Revelation are symbolic and apply to the whole period between Christ's first and second coming.



- Here are the main events associated with the Second Coming (not necessarily in order!):
  - The Antichrist will be revealed and ultimately defeated.
  - There will be a period of tribulation, with widespread destruction of those who oppose the Lord.
  - Israel will have her last chance to acknowledge Jesus as her Messiah
  - There will be a final harvest of souls won for the Lord.
  - Jesus will return from heaven, along with those who belong to Him. Christians who are alive at the time will meet the Lord as He returns (the rapture).
  - There will be a final battle between the armies of the Lord and the armies of Satan, at Armageddon. (We win!).
  - Everybody will be resurrected and judged according to whether they belong to the Lord and according to what they have done. Reward in heaven or punishment in hell will follow.
  - Christians will receive a new spiritual body (the resurrection of the body).
  - The Kingdom of God will be ushered in with a new Heavens and a new Earth. There will be no more sin, sickness, death etc. Everyone will worship the Lord and live in relationship with Him for eternity.

*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever. 11:15*

#### **Exercise:**

Read Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21.

List all of the events that Jesus said would happen at the Second Coming. Then read Chapters 6-22 of the Book of Revelation and Daniel 9 in the light of this.

## **Judgment and tribulation**

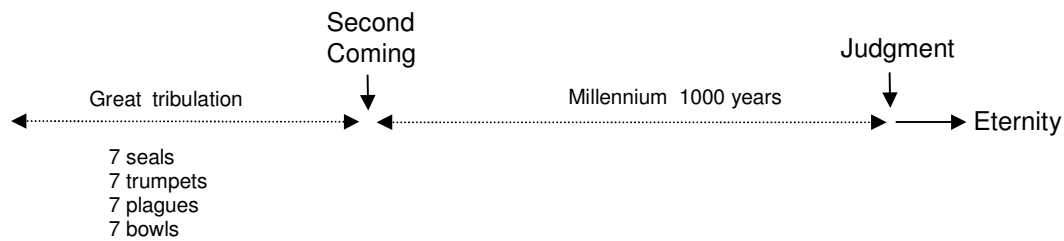
Chapters 6-18 of the Book of Revelation describe events before and around the Second Coming of Christ in which there is much judgment and tribulation. These chapters are not easy to interpret! They describe events in heaven and on earth in highly pictorial language, refer to many different groups of people and heavenly beings, and don't necessarily present events in linear order. All of this requires interpretation!

Most Christians interpret these chapters as describing the 'Great Tribulation' - the period immediately before Jesus returns again.

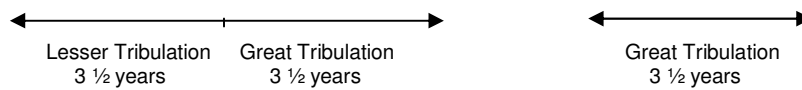
During the Great Tribulation:

- God gives Israel her final chance to receive His salvation through Jesus Christ.
- Satan has control of the earth through his three manifestations: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet.
- There is widespread judgment and destruction for those who reject the Lord.
- There is protection for those who genuinely love the Lord, but there are many martyrs.
- Satan is defeated in a big battle when Jesus returns.

Because it is hard to make sense of these chapters if they are interpreted in a linear way many Christians consider they describe the same time period from different perspectives.



Some consider the Great Tribulation is a 7 year period in two parts; others that it is 3½ years (with the 3½ years of Jesus' ministry on earth being the first part of a 7 year period):

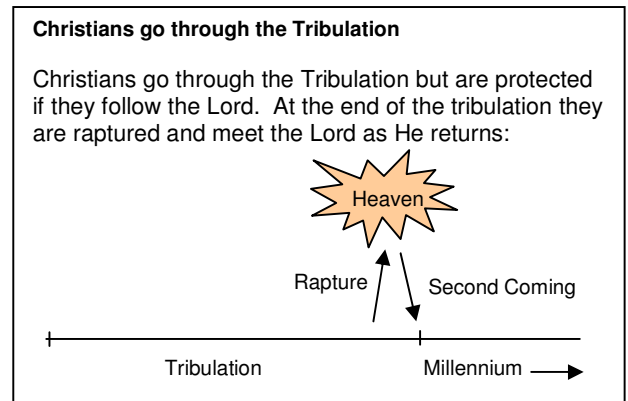
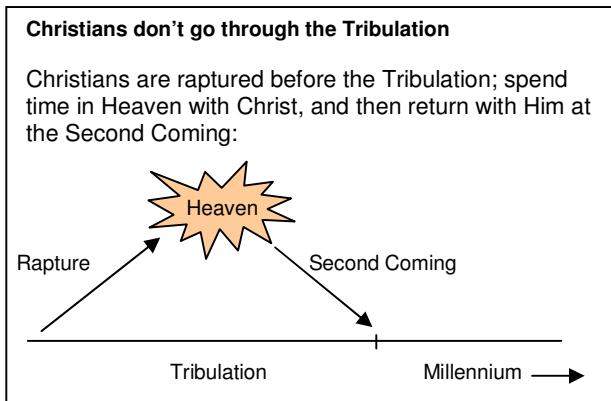


Then there is the question of when Jesus returns. Is it before the Tribulation (pre-tribulation theory); in the middle of the Tribulation (mid-tribulation theory), or at the end of the Tribulation (post-tribulation theory)???

Another much debated question is:

**Do Christians go through the Tribulation?**

There are two main views on this:



The messages for you in all of this!

- Make sure you are right with the Lord now! You don't know when the events described in these chapters will occur or when Jesus will return so always be prepared by staying close to the Lord.
- Work out for yourself what you think will happen at the end of the age. (And don't be too dogmatic about your theories! You might get a big surprise at the end of the age!

See Isaiah 65, 66; Daniel 9, 12; Joel 3; Zechariah 12-14. Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4,5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Timothy 3; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 2; Revelation 6-22.

## Chapter 6: The opening of six seals on the scroll.

The Lamb (Jesus) opens six of the seals on the scroll. As the first four are opened a horse and rider emerge bringing judgment. The fifth seal reveals the souls of those slain for being Christians and they are told that they will be avenged in a short while. There is a great earthquake and much destruction with the opening of the sixth seal. People flee to the mountains in an attempt to get away from God's wrath.

## Chapter 7: The 144,000 of the 12 tribes of Israel and the multitude in heaven.

Four angels are told not to harm the earth till a seal is placed on the forehead of the 144,000: 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. John also saw a great multitude in white robes worshipping God around the throne, along with angels, the elders and the four living creatures. They are ones who have *come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* v14. The multitude worship the Lord forever. They won't experience any more suffering as the Lamb will be their shepherd and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.



## Chapter 8: The seventh seal and the first four trumpet judgments.

When the seventh seal is opened there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. Then seven angels are given trumpets, and another angel offers incense to the Lord along with the prayers of the saints. There is powerful thunder, lightning and an earthquake. The first four angels blow their trumpets resulting in great destruction being poured upon the earth.

## Chapter 9: The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments.

When the fifth angel blows its trumpet locusts are released from the Abyss (whose king is called 'The destroyer'). They torture those who don't have the seal of God on their foreheads. When the sixth angel blows its trumpet four angels are released that kill a third of mankind. Those remaining still don't repent of their idolatry and sinful acts.

## Chapter 10: The mighty angel and the little scroll.

Another mighty angel with a little scroll said *There will be no more delay. When the seventh angel blows its trumpet the mystery of God will be accomplished.* John was given the scroll to eat and it was sour in his stomach.

## Chapter 11: The two witnesses in Jerusalem and their death and resurrection.

John was told to measure the temple of God, but not the outer court as it was to be trampled over by Gentiles for 42 months (3.5 years or 1260 days). During this time the two witnesses will prophesy, but at the end of the 42 months the beast will come out of the Abyss and kill them. Three and a half days later the breath of God will come into them and they will rise from the dead, and be taken up into heaven in a cloud.

When the seventh angel sounds its trumpet loud voices in heaven declare *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever.* 11:15 The elders bow down in worship to God and declare *The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great - and for destroying those who destroy the earth.* 11:18

## Chapter 12: Two great signs: war in heaven and the women fleeing into the wilderness.

A sign appears in which a woman gives birth to a son *who will rule all the nations.* 12:5 She is attacked by a dragon but is snatched up to God and taken to a place where she is protected for 1260 days. This leads to war in heaven where Michael and his angels fight the dragon (who is the devil, or Satan) and he is hurled down to the earth. He tries to chase the woman but she is taken away to the place where she is protected so he makes war on *the rest of her offspring - those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.* 12:17

Some think the woman stands for the Church (who brings forth a male child - Jesus) and that this chapter indicates that the Church must go through the Tribulation (but be protected somewhat from Satan's activities).

### Chapter 13: The Beast, the False Prophet and 666.

A beast emerges from the sea and is given power by the dragon to make war on the saints and overcome them. 13:7 The beast has a fatal wound that is amazingly healed so those who don't belong to the Lord start to worship him. *This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.* 13:10

Another beast then emerges (the false prophet) that deceives the inhabitants of the earth making them worship the beast, and forcing them to take a mark on their forehead so they can buy or sell. The number of the beast is 666.

The Dragon, Beast and False Prophet mimic the Godhead. The Dragon mimics the Father (as the ultimate source); the Beast mimics the Lord Jesus Christ (and has a 'resurrection' from the dead), and the False Prophet mimics the Holy Spirit (by influencing people to worship the Beast). There have been all sorts of theories as to what the number 666 means but it is the number of a man.

### Chapter 14: The three angels warning humanity and the harvest of the earth.

144,000 (who are 'first fruits', redeemed from the earth) worship the Lord along with the Lamb. Then three angels proclaim that the hour of God's judgment has arrived when He will pour His wrath on all who follow the beast. Then 'One like the Son of Man' reaps the harvest of the earth and another angel reaps God's judgement on those who remain.

### Chapter 15: The seven angels with seven plagues and the martyrs in Heaven.

Seven angels emerge from the temple with seven bowls of plagues that will complete God's judgment on the earth. At the same time all those who were victorious over the beast worship the Lord saying *Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty, just and true are your ways.* 15:3.

### Chapter 16: The seven bowls of God's wrath.

When the seven bowls of God's wrath are poured on the earth those who oppose the Lord are afflicted with painful sores; the sea and rivers turn to blood; there is fire; darkness; evil spirits that gather the nations to Armageddon for the last great battle; lightning, thunder, hailstones and a great earthquake. God pours His judgment on 'Babylon the great'. *Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.* 16:7



### Chapter 17: Mystery Babylon the Great.

John was taken to a desert and shown the judgment of a blasphemous woman on a beast. She is 'Mystery Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth'. The beast has seven heads which are seven hills on which the woman sits, and the ten horns are ten kings that will *make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords, and King of kings - and with Him will be His chosen and faithful followers.* 17:14 The woman rules peoples, multitudes, nations and languages but she is brought to ruin by beast.

The word 'babylon' means *confusion*. Some think the blasphemous woman stands for a system of confusion and deception that is still affecting all aspects of the world eg. terrorism, commerce, education, societal attitudes. The power of this anti-Christian system will be destroyed when Jesus returns.

### Chapter 18: The fall of Babylon.

Babylon falls and God's people are encouraged to *come out of her*, so that they will *not share in her sins, and not receive any of her plagues*. God is going to *pay her back double for what she has done.* 18:4

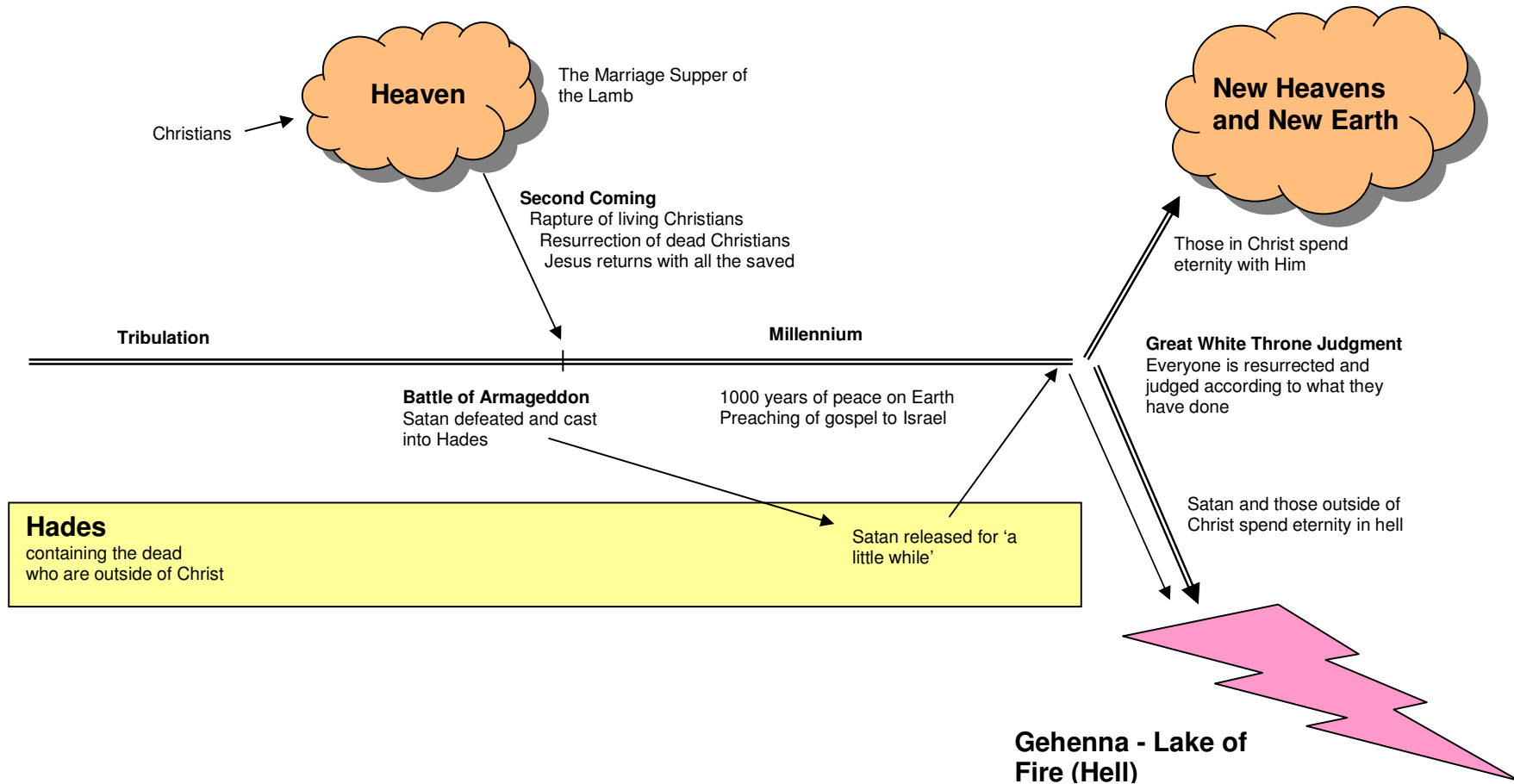
She has influenced political systems (v9,10), commerce (v11-17), travel (v17-21), and the arts (v22-24). Those who participated in her sins will weep and mourn because she has been brought to ruin. Babylon will be destroyed, *never to be found again.* 18:21



## What happens at the end of the age?

Chapters 19-22 bring the Book of Revelation to a triumphant close. Jesus returns; there is a period of 1000 years of peace on earth (the millenium); all are judged before the Great White Throne, and God brings in New Heavens and a New Earth.

Here is one theory for what happens at the end of the age:





## The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

### Chapter 19: The wedding supper of the Lamb and the return of Christ.

A great multitude in heaven rejoice because God has avenged those who harmed his saints. The time has come for the wedding of the Lamb (Jesus) to His Church, because His saints are now ready.

*"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God." 19:6-8*

A white horse whose rider is called 'faithful and true' and the 'Word of God' leads the armies of heaven in pouring out the fury of God's wrath on the forces of evil. This happens in a great battle and results in the beast and the false prophet being defeated and thrown into the Lake of Fire.



### The Millennium

#### Chapter 20: The Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment.

Satan is bound for 1000 years, but is released for a little while at the end of the millennium and has a last attempt to deceive the nations. He is finally thrown into hell and is tormented forever.

The souls of those who have died for Christ come to life and reign with Christ for the 1000 years. The rest of the dead are resurrected at the end of the millennium.

Christians and those in Hades are resurrected and judged at the Great White Throne. Judgment is based on what everyone has done, as recorded in a book, and on whether their name was recorded in the Book of Life. Anyone whose name is not in the Book of Life is thrown in the Lake of Fire (Gehenna, or Hell).

Remember that you will one day be judged by God! See Matthew 25.

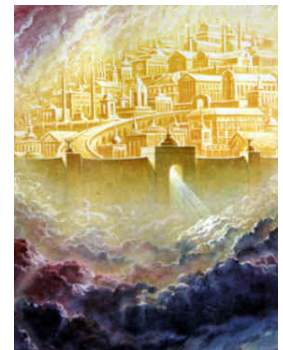
Make sure your name is in the Book of Life (by accepting Jesus as your Saviour) and that you serve Him faithfully throughout your life. You will receive your reward in Heaven!

### New Heavens and a New Earth.

#### Chapter 21- 22:6 New Heavens and New Earth, and the New Jerusalem.

The first heaven and earth pass away and are replaced by a new heaven and earth. The Holy City, New Jerusalem comes out of heaven like a beautiful Bride. There is no temple in the city because the Lord is its temple, and there is no need for light as the Lamb is its light. Nothing impure will be there, for all sinners will have been sent to the lake of fire. The river of life flows through the city bringing ongoing life. Everyone will worship the Lord, and see His face.

God is then able to have the kind of relationship with His creation that He had when He created the earth. The effects of the Fall will have been removed (sin, sickness, death etc.) and everything will be 'made new' - for eternity.



*Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them, and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. 21:3,4*

#### Chapter 22:7-21 Final words of warning and invitation.

John tried to worship the angel who brought the revelation to him, but is told to *Worship God.* 22:9

Jesus is coming soon! Those who follow Him will inherit eternal life as described in the prophecy, but those who follow sinful practices will not.



*Come! Whoever is thirsty, let him come, and whoever wishes let him take the free gift of the water of life. 22:17*

The angel gives a warning not to add to or take away from the prophecy because Jesus is coming soon.

The Book of Revelation closes with a triumphant benediction:

*"Yes, I am coming soon". Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen. 22:20,21*

Jesus is coming soon! Make sure you are ready.

*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

## Discussion questions

Why are there so many theories about what will happen in the end times, all based on the Book of Revelation? Why do many Christians get so dogmatic about their particular theory? What are the effects of this dogmatism?

What is your theory about what will happen in the end times? Which parts of this are you absolutely certain about? Which parts are you not so certain about?

Go through the Book of Revelation and identify all characteristics described for God the Father; the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. How does this enrich your understanding of God?

How does your Church stack up under the spotlights given in Chapters 2 and 3 for the 7 Churches? Is there anything that *the Spirit is saying* to your Church? What do you need to do in response?

Much pictorial language is used in the various prophecies and visions in the Book of Revelation. e.g. beasts, riders of horses, bowls of wrath, blood, 666, .... Do you think these images are literal or are they figurative, and given to illustrate a point?

What is Heaven like? Illustrate this from all relevant parts of the Book of Revelation. What are you expecting in the New Heavens and New Earth?

What is hell like? Why does there have to be a hell? Who will be in hell, and why will they be there?

A major theme in the Book of Revelation is God's judgment on Babylon, on individuals and on nations for their sin. Why does God judge? How do you reconcile this judgment (and all the horrible things described in Revelation that are associated with it) with God's nature, which is love. (1 John 4:8).

Do you believe we are currently close to the end times, when Jesus will return? Why? What are you doing in response?

What do you think it means to be the Bride of Christ? What are the blessing and responsibilities of being the Bride of Christ?

The great story of redemption started immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, and is described all through the Bible. How is the story of redemption completed and climaxed in the Book of Revelation?

What have you learned from your study of the Book of Revelation? How will this affect your life?