

## INTERPRETATION AND NUMBERS OF REVELATION

- I. Time of the writing: Post 70 A.D. (69-79) most likely 79AD
- II. Key to the Book: REv. 1:1-3; 22:6-7
  - A. Must shortly come to pass - cf 2 Tim. 4:9-10
    1. shortly - imminent, in immediate future
    2. must - of moral necessity
      - a. God is going to avenge His saints who are being persecuted on the earth - cf 1:9-10
      - b. Great persecution came from Domitian
        - 1) Demanded worship to Him as God
        - 2) Established police force to enforce worship to him
        - 3) Yearly offering and confession of Him as God
  - B. Communicated - signified; shows signs of; to symbolize in picture form and vision.

John saw these things - 1:2; 1:12; 4:1; 5:1; 6:1, 12
  - C. Time at hand - 1:3cf Mk. 1:15; 9:1
    1. Near, nigh
    2. 6:10-11 - How long will they wait? A little while  
cf 7 - Judgment beginning to take place
  - D. Blessed is he who reads, and keeps, and heeds  
This would mean nothing to first century saints if did not come to pass soon (and not a long time off) - cf 22:6-7
- III. THEME: Christ and His church are indestructible
- IV. PURPOSE
  - A. To give the Lord's people courage and motivation to be faithful unto death  
Smyrna - 2:10 - faithful unto death (in the face of death).  
Do not fear what you will suffer

- B. To present Christ as the conquering Christ (chps. 6, 12, 17)
  - 1. seen by ultimate defeat with His called, chosen, and faithful - 17:14
    - a. Chpt. 1-11 - external picture of things
    - b. chpt. 12-22 - shows spiritual host of wickedness battling Jesus and His forces (cf Eph. 6:12)
      - 1) Sea Beast - ch. 13 representative of a nation cf Is. 13-14  
(Domitian)
      - 2) Dragon - the Devil
      - 3) Jesus - Lord of lords, and King of kings  
Domitian was king of Rome; but Jesus was King over him  
Satan was using the nations to persecute the people of God
  - 2. See total defeat of Satan and His forces

## TO INTERPRET THE BOOK:

- I. The Bible is its own interpreter
- II. The Bible uses the HISTORICAL BACKGROUND PROPHETIC PRINCIPLE
  - A. Historical background of the book will be and must be considered
  - B. Prophetic principle is the language used by prophets in describing certain things

\*In order to understand the language of Revelation, one must understand the language of the prophets. If you haven't studied the prophets, you don't know how they spoke

1. 2 Pet. 1:19ff - no scripture is of private interpretation.  
Why? Prophecy is revealing, and revealing clears up what is being said  
Not just anyone can decide what it means. The Bible tells us how to understand the Bible
2. Jer. 1:11-12 - The almond tree symbolizes the God seeing to His world  
Jer. 1:13ff - cauldron is judgment  
His word is a message of judgment. In judgment God redeems His people, the faithful
3. John will see; Jesus will say. When we see, we should wait until we find out what He says.
4. Rev. 1:12-20 - Messengers of the churches and the churches themselves.  
Jesus is with a church and is concerned with them during persecution

## III. IN INTERPRETING SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

- A. ALWAYS ASK, "What does the whole picture mean?" Don't get bogged down in details. Symbolism presents a picture as a whole and the details are just to magnify or intensify and emphasize the whole picture
- B. Each vision is to be grasped as a whole, not only the details
  1. 4 living creatures - ch. 4 - find out who they are by what they're doing, and must go to OT. Even there you are not told until searching and study

2. 24 elders

3. 144,000

C. OT phrases are used with NT meaning.

There are 400 direct references and/or allusions in Revelation to OT.

Context always determines how a phrase or word is used

## THE NUMBERS OF THE BOOK

### I. THE MEANING OF THE NUMBERS

#### A. 1

1. Because of its solitary position it came to have the idea of independence or unity - cf Jn. 17:21
2. That which was all inclusive
3. Stood for that which was alone, absolute, or unique
4. The number itself does not occur in the book, but the number as a base does - cf 10, 1000

#### B. 2

1. Strength; redoubled energy and courage
2. Jesus sent out 2 by 2
3. Bear you one another's burdens - Gal. 6:1-4
4. 2 Beasts - earth and sea shows the foe is formidable

#### C. 3

1. Completeness, totality, perfection
2. In Hebrew mind, the greatest thing was father love, mother love and child love
3. Came to be known as a divine number - Father, Son, and Spirit
4. God's perfect number
5. Completeness
  - a. ch. 8 - 3 woes - with last woe it shows the utter finality and total completion of the judgment
  - b. 3 parts of the great city
  - c. 3 1/3's of bowls of wrath - affected the whole

D. 3-1/2

1. Time, Times, and half-time - used in Daniel and Revelation
2. Stands for that which is indefinity, the end of the beginning of something
3. Example: Time  
Times - doubled  
half-times - something ended abruptly
4. Incompleteness; dissatisfaction as it increases in intensity, but shows satisfaction as it ends something and begins something else
5. Shows imperfection
6. Context will always show if it is the end or the beginning of something
  - a. Used in relationship of the end of judgment
  - b. Used in relationship of the beginning of a better day, a new system, a new situation
  - c. End of a evil period or beginning of a period of Righteousness

E. 4

1. Symbolizes man's world
  - a. 4 boundaries - north, south, east, west
  - b. 4 winds
  - c. 4 sides of the earth
  - d. 4 walls of the city
  - e. 4 living creatures
  - f. 4 angels at the corners of the earth
  - g. 4 horsemen
2. Completeness of man's world as it relates to man

F. 5, 10

1. Perfect, and complete man
  - a. OT when warred, to make a man incomplete as a soldier cut off thumbs
  - b. Cut off toes - couldn't stand in battle position

2. Human number
3. In Revelation shows complete power in the physical world
  - a. Beasts have 10 horns - human completeness
  - b. cf Dan. 7, 8 - horns represent power
  - c. Rev. 8 - beast (Roman Empire) has 10 horns

G. 6

1. Has sinister meaning. It falls short of perfection
2. Reaches just short of the goal  
If not reach the goal, you have been defeated.  
Just as success is within the grasp of a man, it is snatched away
3. 666 - cf 13:18 - reduplication of failure - utter total undeniable failure
4. Falls short of the perfect 7
5. Number of defeat and destruction

H. 7

1. Most sacred number in Hebrew writing
2. Man's perfect number; God's perfect number
3. Prominent throughout scripture - Rev. uses 54 times
4. Expresses completeness
  - a. 70 x 7 - ultimate of forgiveness
  - b. Dan. 9 - 70 weeks or 70 7's
  - c. 70 members of Jewish court
  - d. 70 sent out by Jesus on limited commission
5. The number of the book of revelation
  - a. 7 churches
  - b. 7 angels and etc.

I. 12

1. Symbol of organized religion
  - a. 12 tribes of Israel
  - b. 12 apostles
  - c. 12 gates of the city - ch. 21
2. Reduplication to symbolize a perfect religious number
  - a. 144,000 -  $10 \times 10 \times 10$  - perfect cube - can't be improved upon
  - b. Deut. 7:9 - 1000th generation - forever
  - c. Ps. 50:10 - 1000 hills - all hills
  - d. Rev. 20 - 1000 yr. reign - always reigns
  - e. 144,000 - all organized religion in its totality

## BASIC DIVISION OF THE BOOK

- I. Chapters 1-11 Presents the struggle between the church and the world
  - In John's day it was a real struggle, real threats of persecution, even death
  - cf 2:13 Antipas, Jesus' faithful witness was killed among you
  - Dragon - tail sweeps the heaven - Devil
    - 10 horns
    - 7heads
    - 1/3 part of the stars drawn by tail
    - Does not have complete power over church
  - Sea Beast - ch. 13 cf Dan. 7; Is. 13-14
    - 10 horns
    - 10 diadems
    - Bad beast - words of blasphemy
  - See the formulation of the host of wickedness
    - Sea Beast got its power from the devil
    - Earth beast got its power from the Sea Beast
    - Chain of command - the structure of a false religious order
- II. Chapters 12-22 struggle between the forces of righteousness and the forces of evil
  - 1-3 - 7 churches
  - 4 - God on throne no matter what happens in the world
  - 5 - 7 seals scroll and John weeping because no one to open it
  - 6 - removal of seals off scroll
  - 7 - sealing of 144,000
  - 8-11 - the 7th seal opened, 7 trumpets follow, 3 woes mentioned
    - At the end of the 3rd woe, section closes (the fall of Rome)
    - Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
  - 12 - Great sign in heaven - Michel and His angels warring with the Dragon

7-FOLD DIVISION TO HELP IN STUDYING REVELATION

- I. THE PROLOGUE 1:1-8
- II. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCHES 1:9-3:22
- III. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST AND THE THRONE SCENE - 4:1-5:14
- IV. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST AND THE SEVEN-SEALED BOOK - 6:1-11:19
- V. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH IN CONFLICT AND CONQUEST - 12:1-20:15
- VI. THE VICTORIOUS CHRIST: A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH - 21:1-22:5
- VII. THE EPILOGUE - 22:6-21

SURFACE CONFLICT - 1-11

UNDERLYING CONFLICT - 12-22

## WHO ARE THE 144,000 IN REVELATION

7:4f; 14:1f

1. Revelation is an unfolding book, vision building on vision
2. Things which must shortly come to pass are under consideration - visions of judgment - cf 1:1-3; 22:6-8
3. Date: Post 70 A. D. after Destruction of Jerusalem
4. Things shown in symbols
  - a. Never intended to be literal
  - b. Never intended to represent itself but something other than itself
  - c. Can never know what any symbol means unless the Spirit tells us in the revealed word - Deut. 29:29

### Chapters:

1 - vision of the Lord

2-3 - messages of commendation and condemnation; hope is given to faithful of their overcoming

4 - Throne Scene

Ezek. 1, 10 - 4 living creatures are angels

24 elders - wise of organized religion

12 is the number of organized religion

Worshipping for God's great creative power. God is on the throne and He has the power to control the world he has created

5 - Book of 7 seals - none worthy to open the book. This makes John weep because the book contains message of comfort and assurance to those in his day that are being persecuted

6-11 - visions of opening of 7 seals

12f - underlying conflict between Satan and Jesus

6 - 1st white horse - Jesus

2nd red horse - persecution; slaughter; death

3rd Black horse - economic discrimination

4th pale horse - seige; death and Hades

5th martyrs

6th seal - judgment is certain

Why is this not the second coming?

1. OT prophecy applied to NT meaning
2. Who is able to stand (144,000)

Yet another seal indicating its not the end. 7th seal is just further warning from the trumpet. There are people on the earth even after this

THE 144,000 in Chapter 7

7:1 - 4 corners - number of the world

4 winds - Jeremiah and Daniel use as wind that blows on the earth. AS John writes on Isle of Patmos, he can feel the breeze of the Mediterranean blowing on his face

7:2 - when 4 angels let go 4 winds, it will hurt the earth and sea

7:3 - seal the faithful ones - DOULOS - bond-servants

7:4-8 - Tribe of DAN is missing

Ephraim is excluded although JOseph and Manasseh are included  
Levi is included even though they had no national inheritance  
John uses the number 12 and 1,000 to get the number he wants

12 - organized religion

1,000 - represent the total amount

144,000 - redeemed, Gods servants

John needed 12 for the symbol here to show all the redeemed of every group

7:9 - Multitude are before the throne and Lamb - cf 5:9-10

Throne - 4:1 - is in heaven

Arrayed in white robes - cf 6:11

Palms in their hands - symbolic of victory and overcoming

7:10 - Cry slavation because they have been delivered

7:12 - Amen - So be it. They are resolved to God's judgment, that God knows best

7:13 - 2 important questions: God gives the answer

7:14 - John doesn't dare a guess to the answer. God gives us the secret

They are the faithful, the overcomers

cf 1:9 - great tribulation

"come out" - present active indicative - coming out right now; literally  
dying every day - cf Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:5-8

7:16 - No more economic discrimination

cf I Pet. 4:16 - If suffer, do it as a christian

7:17 - Church on earth wailing and weeping because of stress every day

God shall wipe every tear from out of their eye - won't even be possible to cry

WHO ARE THE 144,000:

1. Symbolic of the sealed ones
2. The servants of the living God
3. The persecuted ones, the church of God
4. Multitude coming out of the tribulation which is on the earth where the 144,000 are, is marked

WHO ARE THE 144,000 in Chapter 14?

14:1 - Mt. Zion - stands for the church of God

1. 144,000 is the church on the earth - have the name of the Lamb and Father  
3:12 - 144,000 have very name promised to faithful at church at Philadelphia  
cf Acts 4:12
2. Those purchased out of the earth - 14:3 cf 2:17  
Those kingdom and priests to God - 5:9-10; 1:5  
John could not have been in the kingdom if it is not yet established -  
cf Col. 1:13-14; I Pet. 2:5-11; Acts 20:28
3. They are men virgins - 14:4  
cf 2 Cor. 11:2 - church presented as a pure virgin - cf 3:4  
cf Eph. 5:27 - christ is Saviour of the Body, a holy perfect body  
cf 2:18 - problems of defiled churches - 5 out of 7
4. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever it goes  
John 10:22f - Jesus as Great Shepherd - His sheep follow Him. They have  
double security in the Shepherd and Father  
John 21:19ff - Peter told he would die a violent death that would glorify  
God  
I Pet. 5:1 - Peter the elder  
2 Cor. 11:1  
I Pet. 2:19ff
5. They are the first-fruits of God and the Lamb  
Heb. 12:22-23 - Church is the first-born - first in rank and superiority  
James 1:18 - first fruits are brethren

6. They are without blemish - idea of undefiled

Eph. 5:27

Col. 1:21-23 - saints - set apart; consecrated; dedicated; cleansed

7. They are the sealed of God

Eph. 1:11-14; 4:30 - Holy Spirit is our seal

2 Cor. 1:21-22 - God does the sealing

Seal shows ownership

This is not a literal mark, but is an actual one - 2 Tim. 2:19