

THE SECRET OF THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

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*PATMOS - a volcanic, rocky island, about 50km southwest of Samos,
in the Aegean / Mediterranean Seas*

AN OUTLINE OF WORLD EVENTS
REVEALED BY JESUS CHRIST

THE *Book of Revelation* concludes the divine writings known as *The Holy Bible*. It has a special message from the Lord Jesus Christ for those who desire to believe his teachings and follow his way of life. Yet the book is considered too difficult, too obscure, to be understood. This is not so, for God has never sought to confuse sincere men and women, who desire to honor Him. Many people do not give enough time and effort to understand *The Revelation*. Yet if the key to its secrets is obtained, the book becomes an amazing explanation of world history and future destiny. This booklet, in the hands of the reader, will help unlock the key. We hope the matter presented herein will be enjoyed, and invite questions to the editor, as listed below.

HERALD OF THE COMING AGE

A Christadelphian Publication

DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF THOSE WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD; AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.

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The Secret of the Book of Revelation Explained

Perhaps no other book of the Bible is as misunderstood, distorted, ridiculed or ignored than its last book: The Revelation. It has been derided by church leaders, banned by religious organizations, distorted by some who have been unable to find the key to its understanding. Yet it becomes a book of great excitement and interest when its secret is discovered, and its message revealed. It holds seven special blessings for those prepared to take the time to unravel its significance.

The Book of Revelation was written by the apostle John under divine inspiration, especially for the christian community at the end of the first century. It was given in a time of great stress and difficulty, to help believers understand the meaning of the circumstances that would develop in the centuries to follow. It was also provided to warn disciples against the times of apathy and opposition to the teachings of the Scriptures, that would challenge their faith. The book is still as relevant today as it was then.

We desire to introduce the reader to the key that will unlock the secrets (mysteries) to some of the fascinating characteristics and important teachings of this book.

A Book of Dramatic Variety

The Book of Revelation contains helpful exhortation, startling prophecies, appealing poetry, and wonderful symbolism. It warns against foolish actions and wilful disobedience to the clear instructions of Almighty God. In fact, He makes this purpose clear in the opening verse: "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John*" (Revelation 1:1).

The Revelation Given by God to His Son

This introductory verse teaches that "God gave" this additional revelation to Jesus Christ; that there was certain knowledge of which the Son was previously unaware. This shows that the current doctrine of the Trinity, which affirms the absolute equality of Father and Son in every respect, is unscriptural and unreasonable. Mark 13:32 clearly confirms this, for, speaking of the date of his second coming, Jesus stated: "*of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.*" Clearly it was not until the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven, that he received this information from his Father — thus showing that Almighty God is superior even to His illustrious Son, and that therefore any teaching that endorses the Trinity or pre-existence of Christ, is false.

The Revelation is Given for Believers to Understand

The opening verse of Revelation, quoted above, emphasizes that it is given to "*his servants.*" Certainly most people can understand the basic message of this book, but only those who believe and obey the gospel message really perceive its importance, and find great pleasure in searching out its symbols. For that reason, we urge readers to peruse this booklet in conjunction with its companion: "*Key to the Understanding of the Bible*" which will be forwarded, on request to the address on the back cover. A correct appreciation of the fundamental message of the Bible itself is really essential to the full enjoyment of its last book.

The word "servant" occurs nine times in the book of Revelation, emphasizing the importance of this status. Christ's servants are those who read his program for the future (ch. 1:1), who are attacked by religious seducers (ch. 2:20), who are nevertheless protected by the angels (ch. 7:3), who will yet receive a divine reward at the time of future world judgment (ch. 11:18), and be vindicated by God's judgments against a worldwide, evil religious system (ch. 19:2). They will exalt the Name of God and rejoice in the blessings of life (ch. 19:5), being associated with rulership in the Age to come (ch. 22:3), and understand God's purpose with the world (ch. 22:6).

The repetition of the term "servant" in the Book of Revelation shows the importance of submitting to the will of God. Yet, a servant is not at liberty to make his own decisions

about his master's affairs; he should not question the wisdom of his superior. Similarly, Almighty God sees the end from the beginning (see Isaiah 46:10), and invites humble and sincere men and women to willingly enter into His service.

The Revelation Reveals Future Events

The book was given to show Christ's "servants" *"things which must shortly come to pass."* Therefore the prophecies it contains relate to events which would occur after the book was written about AD96. This is an important fact, for some religious communities teach that sections of the book describe events which precede its writing. For example, some affirm that the curious description of Revelation 12, which speaks of a "war in heaven" (verse 7) actually records a supposed literal battle in God's heaven which occurred before the dawn of history, when some evil angels were excommunicated from His presence, to form the army of Satan, and continue an unequal battle against the righteous.

But such a blasphemous theory is opposed to the purpose of the book as stated in its first verse, concerning *"things which must shortly come to pass."* Therefore, all the symbols of this book must relate to a continuing development in history from the days of John until Christ returns as Lord and King to establish a divine kingdom — when the redeemed will declare of the saving work of the Lord Jesus, that he *"hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."*

Others suggest that the book is only concerned with events still future. This is also false. History clearly confirms and accurately fits the symbols employed in the Revelation.

Thus the book comprises an outline of world events that spans the centuries between the times of John until the concluding visions of universal glory that is to cover the earth when the kingdom of God is established, as is clearly taught throughout the Scriptures.

It is a Book of Symbols

The method that the Lord Jesus selected to convey his special message in the Book of Revelation was in the form of symbols — word pictures to illustrate certain events that were to occur. This is explained in its opening verse: *"he sent and signified it."* This means that it is put into symbolic pictures, in order to be intelligible to readers in every age and generation throughout the

centuries, and also to preserve its special character so that only those who understand the basic meaning and symbology of the Scriptures could properly appreciate it. For example, the book speaks of gunfire in ch. 9:10 by a symbol that could be understood by those who lived before the invention of gunpowder in the 10th century. That verse describes "*stings in their tails,*" "*like unto scorpions,*" in anticipation of the invention of gunpowder and the use of cannons 1000 years after the book was written.

The true meaning of the Book of Revelation is destroyed by forcing a literal interpretation to what is obviously intended to be understood symbolically, by illustrating in picture-form what God intends to bring to pass.

When the Book of Revelation Was Written

The commencing date for the book is at the end of the first century. The apostle John records that he "*was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (ch. 1:9). Patmos is a volcanic, bare, rocky island, about 50km southwest of Samos, in the Aegean/Mediterranean Seas. It was used by the Romans as a place of exile, and also in the persecution of the christians by the emperor Domitian in about AD95. For that reason John found himself banished — and it was at that time he recorded this Book of Revelation. Therefore its message begins at that time. It has continued through the centuries to our present day, and portions of it are still to be fulfilled.

The Purpose of the Book

The actual name of the Book is *Apocalypse* (the Greek word for "Revelation" in ch. 1:1). It is a word which means "*The Unveiling*", because it uncovers that which had previously been concealed. The book is a sequel to the prophecy of Daniel, covering in more detail part of its prophecies, particularly the development of the Roman Catholic Apostasy. Both books of Daniel and Revelation portray continuous historical developments up to the "*time of the end.*"

The Book is divided into three sections, as indicated in ch. 1:19, "*Write the ⁽¹⁾things which thou hast seen, and the ⁽²⁾things which are, and the ⁽³⁾things which shall be hereafter.*"

The first phrase "*Things seen*", refers to the opening section of the book (chs. 1-3) which contains seven personal letters from Jesus Christ to the communities of believers which were estab-

lished in Asia after his ascension to heaven in AD33. As you read those chapters, you will notice that John records a sad decline in faithfulness, as observed by the Lord Jesus Christ. This has greatly increased since that time, so that most religious communities today do not represent first century christianity. Bible Truth has been corrupted, as many other prophecies of the Bible similarly testify (see 2Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-4; Acts 20:29-30; 2Peter 3:3-4).

The second section is about "**Things which are**", and describes historical events then unfolding. Thus from chs. 4 to 11, the record traces the circumstances of the pagan Roman empire, until its decline in about AD320.

The final section comprising the remainder of the book (chs. 12-22), outlines "**Things which shall be.**" In a series of prophetic word-pictures (symbols) it continues the historical account of world history as it relates to the purpose of God, tracing the rise of the Papal religion of Catholicism, its eventual deterioration and destruction at the

D ID YOU KNOW that **seven special "blessings"** are offered to those who understand *The Revelation*? Such blessings are worth the time and effort required to gain them, for they lead to immortality —

[1] On those who read and study: "**Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein**" (ch. 1:3).

[2] On those who remain faithful: "**Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them**" (ch. 14:13)

[3] On those who are vigilant: "**Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments**" (ch. 16:15).

[4] On those invited to participate in eternal union with Christ: "**Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb**" (ch. 19:9).

[5] On those who attain to the glory of the future: "**Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years**" (ch. 20:6).

[6] On those who comprehend and apply the vision: "**Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book**" (ch. 22:7).

[7] On those who obey the commands of Christ: "**Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life**" (ch. 22:14).

coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and its replacement by the glorious worldwide kingdom of God which will last for a millennium — one thousand years of blessing and peace upon earth.

How to Read the Book Correctly

An important principle to remember when reading *The Apocalypse* is the style of writing employed. To many the Book of Revelation remains closed because they fail to understand this unique feature. The Book is not in the form of a normal history book, nor is it merely a collection of prophecies. Since it is written for "servants" (ch. 1:1), the ultimate intention of God must be kept in mind. As each vision unfolds, there is also introduced a description of the future kingdom God intends to establish on earth.

For example, after the *Letters* written to the first century community (Revelation 2-3), ch. 4 presents in symbols a picture of the future kingdom of God.

Ch. 5 speaks of the work of the angels in the affairs of the nations down the centuries, and concludes with a portrayal of Jesus Christ as king (v. 13).

Ch. 6 outlines political events of the early centuries in an age that brought persecution and affliction to believers, and that is followed in ch. 7 with a picture of glory and blessing when all difficulties are overcome, and all oppression is removed, by the powerful influence of the Lord Jesus (see vv. 16-17).

So the whole book is set out in a series of portrayals, with each section concluding with a glimpse of the future, so as to encourage the disciples in every age with the glory and joy that will ultimately be brought upon the earth. The earnest student could well take colored pencils, mark portions of the book relating to the outworking of history, and in a different color, those that are like a telescope penetrating the future. We will be happy to assist in such a project, and to provide a chart that sets these divisions out clearly.

The Revelation is a Book for Today

The reader will doubtless be interested in how the book of Revelation depicts our present times. This word-picture commences in chapter 16, and shows how these events will develop into a period of unparalleled trouble, a picture confirmed by many other prophecies of the Scriptures. With all its advanced technology, its higher forms of education, its schemes and

achievements, this world is far from being the happy and secure home that was originally intended in its creation. Instead there is a continuous chain of strikes, civil disturbances, religious antagonism, frightening wars, and unsolvable problems. Famines, disasters, violence are familiar headlines. Much of this has been brought about by man's inhumanity to his fellows, and by his wayward path that sets God's righteousness to one side. Of mankind's natural attitude, God has declared: "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*". Man is essentially wicked, having a bias for sin, and self-assertiveness. This is evident in the way he attempts to solve the problems of life. But God declares that He will "*search the heart, and try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*" (Jeremiah 17:9-10). He has determined that a time of judgment will be necessary when humanity has reached the zenith of its iniquity, and that day is imminent. The apostle Paul explained that God "*hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised him from the dead*" (Acts 17:31). This moment of destiny will arrive at a "*set time*" (Psalm 102:13), for God sees into the future and can foresee the events yet to occur.

The Book of Revelation is consistent with this pattern. Of our epoch it declares: "*the nations were angry, and thy [God's] wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth*" (ch. 11:18). This is a significant description. It describes a time when "*nations are angry.*" The Greek word translated "angry" means "to provoke or antagonize." This has never been more evident than at the present. This century has witnessed an unprecedented era of unsettled conditions, bitterness, political strife. A brief review will recall the continuing drama of world wars, international confrontation, fierce antagonism in Ireland, the terrible Gulf War in Iraq, racial hatred in many areas, and violence throughout the Middle East. The whole earth is affected by this sad story of deep-seated conflict between nations.

This characteristic is followed by the words in Revelation

11:18, *"Thy wrath is come."* It is at such a time as the present that God will introduce divine judgment. We have such warnings as increasing epidemics (such as the AIDS problem), floods, droughts, famines and earthquakes of increasing intensity. In mankind's refusal to accept the divine teachings of the Bible, and to live in a society based upon the principles of righteousness, such catastrophes, to some extent, are inevitable.

The third point in the reference takes us to the next significant moment in destiny: *"the time of the dead, that they should be judged."* The resurrection from the dead is clearly taught in the Bible. Paul says: *"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable"* (1Corinthians 15:15-19). The resurrection will occur after the physical, literal and visible return of Jesus Christ to this earth. The disciples were told of his coming, as they watched him ascend into heaven two thousand years ago: *"this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11).

Furthermore, the hope of all the apostles rested in the return of Christ to establish the kingdom of God upon the earth. Peter taught that God would: *"send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began"* (Acts 3:20-21). This will bring to a conclusion the era of man's rule in which wickedness and evil have predominated. Instead, the return of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of the dead are the only solutions to a troubled world. A new age of "restitution" (the word means "restoration") will be introduced, in which all nations will be blessed (see Genesis 12:3).

At that time God will *"give reward"* unto those who believe and follow His ways. Accepting the teachings of the Bible brings its own benefit. Paul explains it: *"godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"* (1Timothy 4:8). He affirms that there are present benefits as well as future rewards. A correct knowledge of the Scriptures provides an insight into the reasons for life, the com-

fort of understanding the circumstances of existence, and the joy of knowing what is to come. God promises to remedy the ills we experience today. By accepting His terms of faithful service, we stand in hope of immortality. By understanding certain "*exceeding great and precious promises*" we can anticipate becoming "*partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*" (2Peter 1:4). Those unconditional "promises" are found in the Scriptures, and describe the process of salvation offered to corrupting man.

God will also reward those who today suffer from the ridicule and rejection of family, friends or society. Paul says that "*if we suffer [as did Jesus Christ], we shall also reign with him*" (2Timothy 2:12). The Book of Revelation describes the time, following the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the dead, when the rewards will be dispensed, and speaks of those immortal and glorified disciples as proclaiming that the Lord "*hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*" (ch. 5:10). Such will experience a remarkable transformation. Immortality means that present weaknesses, frailties, or illnesses will be no more; instead the saints will possess a glorious nature of strength and ability: "*they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint*" (Isaiah 40:31).

When Evil will be Suppressed

The final phrase in Revelation 11:18 speaks of divine judgment against those who oppose righteousness and truth. It declares that God "*shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.*" This is an accurate description of the present age, when many activities of man are bringing the beauty and character of the earth into a state of environmental chaos. The word "destroy" (Gr. *diaphtheiro*) means "to rot thoroughly," by implication "to ruin," "to decay utterly," and figuratively "to pervert." Such a condition is evident on all sides. Ecologically, environmentally, medically, such a deterioration has received increasing public attention in recent years. Rainforests are being destroyed; previously unknown sexual diseases are developing; the atmosphere is being polluted; the seas becoming contaminated. Scientists estimate that within a very short time these, and other, influences will render the earth uninhabitable. Two thousand years ago the

Bible predicted that the "time of the end" would witness a "corrupting" of society, and we witness its fulfilment today.

History Confirms the Symbols

The Book of Revelation accurately portrays the circumstances which have set the stage for current international events. Take, for example, the prophecy contained in ch. 16.

In an amazing series of word-pictures, there is provided the unfolding of events in Europe over recent centuries, as a series of "vials" are poured out. John reports: "I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" (ch. 16:1). Since this is a book of symbolic pictures (see ch. 1:1), a "voice out of the temple" indicates the instruction of Jesus Christ given to the angels from the place of righteous authority (the "temple"). The Bible shows that God controls the affairs of the nations in accordance with His declared Word. The prophet Daniel stated that God "rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He wills" (Daniel 4:17). Therefore, God's angels superintend the affairs of mankind and, whenever necessary, carefully guide the circumstances to suit His purpose.

In this prophecy the angels are sent forth with seven vials. A "vial" is a vessel from which liquid is poured, and symbolically represents the dispensing of a number of specific and subsequent divine judgments upon the nations.

The events described in this chapter have great relevance to our day. They commence with the change of society that occurred with the advent of Napoleon Bonaparte whose lust for power thrust Europe into one of its greatest bloodbaths, and, through the French Revolution, changed the course of history. Significantly the "judgment vials" poured out by seven appointed angels, correspond exactly to the events which developed from the Napoleonic era of the 18th century.

The French Revolution: 1789 — Rev. 16:2

The first vial was poured upon "the earth" (v. 2), a symbol that represents Europe. The amazing exploits of Napoleon swept across Europe attacking the power of Papal religious oppression ("the mark of the beast"), and bringing the armies of France into worldwide prominence.

Naval Warfare Brought Britain into Glory: 1793 — Rev. 16:3

The second vial was dispensed upon "the sea" (v. 3), and in

subsequent years, Britain answered the challenge of France. The French were no match for the British on the seas, and Europe was blockaded by the fleets under the control of such leaders as Hood, Howe, Bridport and Nelson. British victories from 1793 onwards established its navy as supreme on the seas, and Napoleon found himself confined to Europe.

Napoleon Succeeds Against the Alpine Districts: 1796 — Rev. 16:4-7

The third vial was poured upon "*the rivers and fountains of waters*" (v. 4). This describes the mountainous areas of Northern Italy and Switzerland which are interspersed with springs, rivers, lakes and waterways. By this time Napoleon was acknowledged as Master of France, wielding tremendous influence, and although opposed by the Austrian army in the alpine districts, he decisively defeated it and pressed on. The Papal States trembled before his power and sued for peace, which was granted on ignominious terms. Austria (then the most powerful nation of central Europe) and Russia combined against Napoleon, but their joint army was soundly beaten. Thus, the alpine district "*became as blood*" (v. 4).

The Holy Roman Empire in Eclipse: 1804 — Rev. 16:8-9

The fourth vial was poured out "*upon the sun*" (v. 8). This is a Bible symbol to describe an outstanding political luminary. In this case it refers to the ruling power of the Roman Empire of the time: the Emperor of Austria. He viewed the developing influence of Napoleon with great concern.

Eventually war engulfed Europe. On 18th May 1804, Napoleon was proclaimed emperor of France. In the following year Austria, Russia and England declared war against the French. Taking the initiative, Napoleon marched against Austria and on the 2nd December 1805 at Austerlitz, he decisively defeated the Austrians and Russians. In 1806 the Holy Roman Empire (over which the Emperor of Austria exercised civil authority), was dissolved and replaced by the German Federation, comprising the powers of Central Europe.

During these traumatic events which swept through Europe, the common people suffered greatly. In the terms of the Book of Revelation, society was "*scorched with great heat*" (ch. 16:9) as warfare drew the people into fearsome destruction.

Rome Afflicted: 1809 — Rev. 16:10-11

The fifth vial was poured out "*upon the seat of the beast.*"

The word "seat" is better translated "throne." The "beast" is a symbol for the ruling authority that was previously vested in the Emperor of Austria, as the civil and political authority of Europe, and in the Pope of Rome in his ecclesiastical influence. This concluded when Napoleon's activities brought about the ultimate dissolving of the Holy Roman Empire.

On May 10, 1809, having brought the Austrian Army almost to ruin, a triumphant Napoleon again entered Vienna, and Pope Pius VII submitted to his control, crowning Napoleon as King of Italy — although afterwards he excommunicated him! However, Napoleon retaliated, and imprisoned the Pope at Savonna in 1809. Thus, the temporal power of the Papacy was dissolved.

The Middle East Aflame: 1820 — Rev. 16:12-16

Whilst the previous five vials described events that had erupted in Europe since the French Revolution, and which entirely changed the character of society and the direction of mankind, this sixth vial is the most significant, representing our present age. It reveals the meaning of events that are occurring in Europe today, and which will lead to the most dramatic incident in all history — the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven to assume his rightful position as king over all the earth, and to bring this world to the control of Almighty God.

Notice that this prophecy concerns "*the great river Euphrates*" — a symbol of the power of Turkey, in which country the river commences. In symbolic language the "river" describes the nation. In previous centuries the great Turkish (Ottoman) Empire controlled great areas of the Middle East, and was one of the most powerful empires in history. The work of the angels pouring out the "sixth vial" (or judgment) was to change all that. The Bible describes the event as a "drying up" (v. 12): thus an evaporating, little by little. The Euphratean power of the Turkish Empire was to gradually disappear. This occurred over the long period 1820-1917, and the power of Turkey was finally broken when defeated by the British forces stationed in the Middle East in 1917.

The reason for these outstanding events, is twofold. The Book of Revelation explains it as (1) preparing the "way of the kings of the east," and (2) allowing "three unclean spirits" to influence the "kings of the earth and of the whole world," so that the battle of the "great day of God Almighty" could inevitably

occur (ch. 16:12-14).

The phrase "*kings of the east*" (v. 12) describes the development of a group of people, who will have been given immortality at Christ's coming, but as yet are unknown to the world. They will ultimately represent the power and authority of Jesus Christ throughout the earth. Another translation has "*kings out of a sun's rising*," more accurately describing their position. They represent the "*Sun of righteousness*" (the Lord Jesus Christ: see Malachi 4:2), and are destined to take over control of the world in the "*new day*" of peace and goodwill that will usher in the promised kingdom of God. The phrase, therefore, represents the preparing of world events for the advent of the Saints of God, gathered from every age and generation, then to be made immortal and elevated in authority by God himself. In Revelation 5:9-10, they are represented as acknowledging the saving work of Jesus Christ that has given them such a glorious destiny: "*they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.*"

In contrast, v. 13 presents an unusual picture of "*three unclean spirits like frogs*." These identify with the "spirit," or teaching, emanating from the French Revolution, and reflected in the noisy philosophy of the masses: "*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*" — a threefold revolutionary principle which agitates the nations, causes strikes, political upheavals and general dissatisfaction that constitutes the character of today's society.

This is all leading to "*the great day of God Almighty*" (ch. 16:14) — a time when the nations will challenge the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in which the armies of both East and West will be involved in the battle of Armageddon. The Bible accurately describes the importance of this time. It states that the nations will be "*gathered together*" (ch. 16:16). The same description is given in Zechariah 14:2, where God declares that He "*will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle.*" Although this universal war will inflict its terror upon all nations, the mighty power of Jesus Christ and his disciples will be revealed, and the nations ultimately will realise the wisdom of submitting to his authority.

This great conflict will give way to a new age of grandeur, beauty, peace and security, when Jesus Christ sets up his kingdom, and reigns from Jerusalem, as many prophecies of the Bible declare (see Isaiah 2:2-4).

What Jesus Christ will Accomplish at his Return

It is essential for the peace and harmony of humanity that the Lord Jesus Christ returns. In the concluding chapter of the Book of Revelation he warned: "*behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be*" (v. 12).

His coming will see the dissolution of the Papal system of false religion, for the prophecy also states: "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies*" (ch. 18:2-3). Being a book of symbol, the title "Babylon" relates to a religious system that rules over humanity, and a further clue of identification is given in ch. 17:18, that the "great city" is one which "reigneth over the kings of the earth." When John was writing this book, that city was undoubtedly Rome, and its Catholic religion has greatly extended its influence in the centuries that have followed.

A further purpose of the return of Jesus Christ, as taught in the Book of Revelation, is to bring judgment against universal wickedness. Chapter 6:17 states: "*the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*" and this principle is constantly repeated in the Revelation. Chapter 19:15 continues: "*he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*"

The overthrow of Roman Catholicism and the subduing of the nations by Christ will be followed by a universal education of mankind in principles of righteousness. The apostle John was told: "*Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings*" (ch. 10:11). He had another vision of an angel (the word means "a messenger" and can relate to an immortal follower of the Lord Jesus Christ) who was seen in "*the midst of heaven*" (a symbol describing the ruling areas of

government) declaring "the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (ch. 14:6).

A Significant and Personal Conclusion

The Book of Revelation closes with an important message that none should ignore. In ch. 22:10-12 it states: "*Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*"

When John declared that "the time is at hand" he indicated that the prophecy, which commenced approximately AD96, would continue to unfold until completed. Nothing would hinder its progress — and so it is accurately coming to pass.

Those mentioned as "**unjust**" describe people who, whilst knowing the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, neglect to fulfil its requirement in baptism, and remain outside the covenant of salvation it offers.

Those described as "**filthy**" relate to people who have been baptised, accepting the covering of Jesus Christ ("*as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,*" Galatians 3:27), as is commanded (Mark 16:16), but who have acted inconsistently with the standards of Truth believed, and have "defiled" the garments of salvation.

But there will be those who are "**righteous**," having sought justification (a covering for sin) and salvation in Christ, accepted a relationship with God, and have understood his Will. They are also described as "**holy**," a word which means "separated" ones, because they have followed the precepts of the Bible in a way of life, separating from the ungodliness manifested by the great majority of mankind.

Those four groups will be brought before the Judgment Seat of Christ, when their future destiny will be revealed. Those who have honored the precepts of Truth, and have followed the way of God to the best of their ability, will be granted immortality and honor in the kingdom that Christ will establish. Those who have neglected the way of salvation will be given over to destruction.

The Importance of Obedience

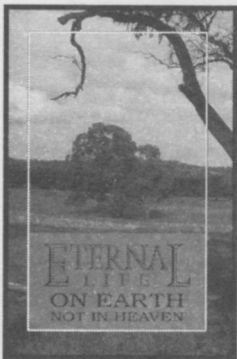
The Book of Revelation concludes with a warning against tampering with the divine revelation: "*If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*" (ch. 22:18-19). This does not mean so much the literal adding or removing of its words, but in the understanding and application of what God's Word teaches. Some "*take away,*" by neglecting its important instruction. They prefer to please themselves; to indulge in their own comforts and pleasures. Others "*add to,*" by creating doctrines from the figment of their own imagination, or from traditions that they have received from others.

The Final Word

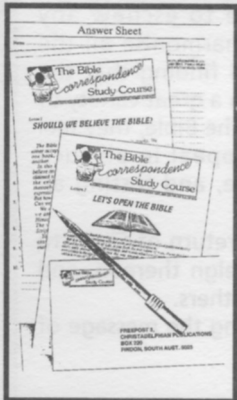
The Book of Revelation declares that we live on the eve of the manifestation of Christ in glory. Little time remains for personal commitment and preparation. Jesus declared: "*Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame*" (ch. 16:15). He warns that we must seek the covering of our sins provided by his atoning work, or we will be spiritually uncovered at his return, thus remaining unforgiven.

Therefore we need to take the whole Bible in hand, to examine its pages and apply ourselves to its instructions. We will then be able to live in hope of the time of joy, happiness and security that will come with the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember that the Book of Revelation is for the "*servants*" of Jesus Christ (ch. 1:2), for only they will live to see the final glory. Make your personal decision to become familiar, not only with this last book of the Bible, but with the fundamental message of the Scriptures themselves. Then you will obtain great benefit from a deeper understanding of God's way, confidently awaiting the coming of His Son from heaven, whose reward will be given for a sincere faith shown by those who truly "*love his appearing*" (2Timothy 4:8).



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THE CHRISTADELPHIANS

...or, as the name implies, the **Brethren of Christ** (Heb. 2:11), are a body of people associated together by a belief in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12); and by immersion into Christ (Gal. 3:27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and identification with his resurrection (Rom. 6:5).

They do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17). Believing in the Divine Authorship of the Bible, they think it only reasonable to eschew any interpretation thereof which fails to harmonise all the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures; and finding that the creeds of the various existing sects are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, they feel compelled to stand apart, making appeal in all such matters to the statements of Scripture, and testing all teachings thereby.

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