

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: Introduction | Session 1 | Notes

### 1. Is the Church in the Book of Revelation?

As we begin our study, I will make an assumption right out of the gate. I hope you will not turn me off but will test this assumption as we move through our study.

Assumption: I am not convinced that the Church is found in the Book of Revelation. Let me word it a bit differently. I am confident the Church is not found in the Book of Revelation.

I am going to contradict myself with this next statement. In reality, the English word church *is* in the book of Revelation. To be fair, the word church is mentioned 20 times in 19 verses in the book. But what we must ask is, “What church is it referring to? You might be thinking, “Pastor, what are you talking about? There is only one Church.” But that is not true. Even today, there are various uses of the word Church that we would not embrace as being a Gospel-centered Church, e.g., The Church of Scientology, The Mormon Church, and The Church of Satan.

Likewise, when we read or use the word church in Scripture, we must define what it means. The word church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which technically means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place—it means an assembly.

In several places in the New Testament, the apostle Paul assigns the *Church as we know it today* a specific name: **The Body of Christ** (e.g., 1 Corinthians 10:16; 12:27; Ephesians 4:12).

The **Body of Christ**, therefore, is the *ekklesia* (assembly), the plurality of believers in Jesus Christ, to which we belong and that which we are concerned. As individual members of that **body**, we have accepted the gift of everlasting life and are *saved by grace through faith* (Ephesians 2:8,9). *The Body of Christ is not Israel, spiritual or otherwise.*

### This Body of Christ which we are a part of, is distinct and different from all the other *ekklesia*/churches in Scripture.

#### WHAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?

**First**, It was called a *mystery* by the apostle Paul. It had not been revealed in other ages but has now been revealed. The mystery of the Body of Christ can be found in Romans 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 3:3-5; Colossians 1:26-27.

**Second**, in the Colossians passage, we discover that there would be a period when believing Jews and Gentiles would be united together as equals in one body, the dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:1; Colossians 1:25).

Ephesians 3:6 clearly defines what the Body of Christ is:

***“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”***

**Third**, Paul made it clear that this knowledge of the Body of Christ had been known by God from eternity past and that while hidden, the Body of Christ had been part of God’s eternal purpose. (1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:11).

**Fourth**, Paul declared that this knowledge concerning the Body of Christ had been kept hidden from man in past ages, but now, being revealed to him, his purpose was *“to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery...”* (1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:4-5,9).

**Fifth**, The existence of the Body of Christ was not revealed to man until Paul’s lifetime. It was revealed to Paul first and then to the New Testament apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3-5).<sup>1</sup>

WHAT ABOUT ALL THE TEACHERS WHO SAY THE BODY OF CHRIST IS IN REVELATION?

***Allow me to make a bold statement: Most of what you believe about the end times and the book of Revelation comes from what you have heard others say, not from studying the Scriptures.***

*As difficult as it might be because our biases are ingrained in us, let’s approach the book of Revelation with new eyes, from a literal look at the prophecies in this book.*

As noted above, the English word Church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means *an assembly of people*.

*There are 20 uses of the English word Church in Revelation.* Unfortunately, it has been programmed into us by well-meaning pastors, educators, theologians, books, commentaries, etc., that the word Church is always to be interpreted as The Body of Christ. That interpretation will lead to multiple problems in the Book of Revelation, and we should reject it.

Nonetheless, people fail to rightly divide the word Church, and they make it the Body of Christ when it isn’t.

Even when a passage doesn’t use the word church, many people insert it by implication. And by Church, they mean *the Body of Christ*. Here are a few examples you may not understand now but will later when we get to the appropriate passage:

- The **four and twenty elders** (24 elders) in chapters 4, 5, 11, and 19 are said to be *the Body of Christ*.

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<sup>1</sup> Showers, Renald E. *There Really Is A Difference*. 1990. Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc., Bellmawr, NJ.

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- The **144,000** in chapters 7 and 14 are said to be *the Body of Christ*.
- The **great multitude** in 7:9; 19:6 is stated to be *the Body of Christ*.
- The **woman clothed with the sun** in chapter 12:1 must be *the Body of Christ*.
- The **wife** is *the Body of Christ* in chapter 19:7.
- The **New Jerusalem** in chapter 21 is *the Body of Christ*.
- The **“seven churches”** are *the Body of Christ*.

These implied references to the Body of Christ are certainly well-meaning, but they are all pure speculation, made up, and, I believe, incorrect. For the sake of these study notes and to alleviate confusion, when I’m talking about *the church you and I belong to*, I will try to refer to it as the **BOC** (Body of Christ).

Because the BOC has been read into (eisegesis) the book of Revelation, the result is complete confusion, resulting in people giving up reading it, and the book is then neglected.

In the New Testament, the word Church rarely means Body of Christ. And it is not referring to “us,” you and me. The twenty times the word church is used in the book of Revelation, I will argue and try to prove through this study that it never means the BOC.

## **I propose that the church or churches in Revelation always refer to Jewish assemblies.**

The BOC is not the subject of Revelation. Why is that? The BOC will have been raptured during the events of the Revelation. Revelation is a prophetic book to guide God’s chosen Israel during the seven-year Tribulation. If we make that assumption from the beginning (that the BOC is not in Revelation) and test it all the way through, we will discover that the book will make much more sense.

### ASSUMPTIONS IN OUR STUDY

Here are two assumptions; the first I have already stated:

1. Because the Body of Christ will have been Raptured before the Tribulation, it will not be found in the book of Revelation.
2. The Rapture of the Body of Christ will occur before the Seven-Year Tribulation begins. This is known as a “Pre-Tribulation view.”

By *Rapture*, I mean the *catching up* (Greek: Harpazo means snatching away) of believers (dead and alive) in Christ to be with the Lord. A clear passage regarding the Rapture is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.

Today there is great debate over those two points. Fellowship in the body of Christ has been broken because of differing views. **The Rapture, in particular, should not be a fellowship breaker.** A local church should have a strong, confident stance on what they believe about the end times but should not be dogmatic. I remember the statement of a wise pastor when I was just a boy; *“It is okay if people believe the Rapture will not happen before the Tribulation. They’ll just be surprised”*. He meant that where you place the Rapture doesn’t determine your salvation.

Since the book of Revelation does not contain the Rapture, we will not spend much time trying to prove the assumption. For those who have a different view, it will be respected in this study. My rule is never to *throw out the baby with the bath water*. Though I may disagree on the point of theology, I try to maintain an open mind and make an attempt to see where a person on the opposite side of my argument may be coming from.

With that said, while I am a believer in the pre-tribulation Rapture, you might be surprised by a view that I have been developing, which I am going to present to you when we get to chapter 6. Stay tuned!

## 2. The Title of the Book.

There are at least sixteen different titles for the book in as many translations, but God inspires Scripture, and in the text itself, we see the actual God-given title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ. It is not The Revelation of St. John the Divine as the KJV entitles the book; that is man’s title. Some translations call it simply Revelation or The Revelation to John. The Greek word for revelation is *apokalupsis*, which is why the title of *The Apocalypse* is also sometimes given to the book. In its verb form, the word apocalypse means *to unveil* (*apo*=away from; *kalumma*=a veil). Apocalypse means *to take away the veil*. We might use the word *reveal*, like parents who often go to great extremes to reveal (unveil) if they are having a boy or a girl (By the way, those are the only two genders). In the case of this book, it is the unveiling or the visible manifestation of A Person, Jesus Christ. But unlike when Jesus manifested himself in the Gospels in His earthly ministry, in the Revelation, Jesus Christ will appear in *power and glory and for judgment of the earth*.

It is not a book of numerous Revelations, but one **Revelation**. Therefore, when we refer to the book, to be accurate and to keep it short, we can call it **The Revelation, or Revelation**.

## 3. Revelation is a Complement of the Book of Genesis.

Some say there are over 500 references back to the Old Testament, which gives the book a close connection with Israel. With so many OT references, it is undoubtedly written about the people of the Old Testament who are the subjects of its history. And with so many OT allusions and references, the Jewish mind may grasp it much easier than Gentile Christians who do not have an OT background. We must consider the book's Jewishness if we ever hope to understand it.

It complements the first book of the Bible, Genesis.

- Genesis is the book of the Beginning; Revelation is the book of the End.
- Genesis records the first Creation, Revelation, the New Creation.
- Genesis describes the curse which came upon the earth; Revelation tells how the curse will be removed.
- Genesis shows Satan's first revolt; Revelation documents his final revolt.

The parallels go on and on; The Earth was created, the Earth passed away; The Sun to govern the day, no need for the Sun; Entrance of sin, the end of sin; Man driven from the garden, man restored; Tree of life was guarded, right to the Tree of Life granted; Sorrow and suffering, no more sorrow; etc., etc.,

The Body of Christ is not in Genesis, and the Body of Christ is not in Revelation. To even look for the Body of Christ in Revelation is, in my opinion, to pervert the literal understanding of the book.

#### 4. A Simple Outline of The Revelation.

A primary reason people don't read or even try to understand Revelation is that it seems complicated. It's likely true that man has complicated the book by making things up and reading too much into it. The book, (inspired by the Holy Spirit) taken literally, may not be as difficult to grasp as one might think. Here is an outline in its simplest form:

Chapter 1 – Introduction.

Chapters 2 and 3 – The People on the Earth.

Chapters 4:1 – 20:15 – Visions (This contains seven parts).

Chapters 21:1 – 22:5 – The people on the New Earth.

Chapters 22:6-21 – Conclusion.

There are a lot of details between those lines, especially in the chapters on *Visions*, but if you think of the book like this, it will help you see that the plan of Revelation is straightforward!

#### Chapter 1

Verse 1—

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ** is the divine title of the book, as we have already seen. The Greek word is *apokalupsis*; unveiling, revelation, manifestation. When used of a person, it always denotes that he is visible (1 Corinthians 1:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ! It is taking the *veil* of the future and lifting it for us to see. In this study, we will read and interpret this book literally; why would God unveil something and then have us guess what it means? Whenever Jesus meant to hide something, He would speak in parables (See Matthew 13:10,11). This book is the opposite. It is an *unhiding*.

**Which God gave him**, God who is on His throne as King (1 Timothy 1:17), is revealing the future to us through Jesus Christ, and as we will see, judgment is about to be executed.

**To show His servants**, i.e., Jesus Christ's servants. These are not Christians in the Body of Christ but those of Israel. A Servant is not used as a title for those in the Body of Christ in Paul's epistles (letters). Paul says in Galatians 4:7, "*Wherefore thou (each individual in the Body of Christ) art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*"

While we can argue that Paul calls himself a servant and that Christians certainly serve Jesus Christ, it is not a title given to us in the body of Christ as our standing in Christ before God. We are not servants before Christ. Furthermore, we are in Christ and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17; Ephesians 3:6). Sons (or children) can be servants, but servants are not sons.

As noted above, in Scripture, we find the use of the word servant whenever Israel is the subject. In Revelation, the word servant is used fourteen times as a title for those who are the book's subject (Israel). **His servants** in verse one refer to Israel, not the body of Christ.

**Things which must shortly come to pass**. This was written over 1,900 years ago, yet the things in this book have not come to pass. The Greek word for **shortly** is *tachos*, a *speed* word, not a *time* word. We get our English word *tachometer*, which reveals the shaft or disk's RPM (*rotations per minute*) in a motor. This verse tells us that when these events of Revelation occur, they will occur with speed! Romans 9:28 says, "*For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the Earth.*" Business, as usual, will not continue forever; God will accomplish His plan and do it quickly.

**And sent and signified**, "Sent" is in the verb, *apostello*: *Having sent* (We are familiar with the noun form *apostle*: *One who is sent*). We shouldn't see Revelation as containing signs and symbols no one can understand. Most of the signs in the book are Divinely explained (e.g., 1:16, 20).

**By His angel unto His servant John**, Like Abraham, Moses, Paul, and others, God selected John for this special message to his fellow servants.