

Summary of the Book of Revelation
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A Hindu visited many worship services at Grace Presbyterian Church during the time he lived in the Jackson area. He once asked Pastor Grover to explain to him the meaning of the book of Revelation. The following is the explanation Pastor Grover sent to him.

The book of Revelation is in some ways the hardest to understand book in the Bible. This was probably intentional. The book was written after the Roman Empire began persecuting the church. The message of this book is that Jesus, not the Roman Caesar, is in control of history. That message could anger the Roman authorities. The book is written with symbols that only someone who already knows a lot about the Bible could understand. The first Caesar to persecute the church was Nero. He killed multitudes of Christians, including the apostles Peter and Paul, from A.D. 64 until his suicide in A.D. 68. Other Roman Caesars after Nero would also persecute the Christians.

The book of Revelation was written by John, one of the twelve apostles who were witnesses of Jesus' earthly ministry and His resurrection from the dead. John is an old man when he wrote this book. The time of persecution had begun and John had been exiled to the island of Patmos. There John saw a vision of the glorified Jesus walking among seven golden candlesticks. The candlesticks represent the seven churches in Asia Minor where the persecution was most severe. Jesus gave John an

evaluation of each of the seven churches. What matters is not what Caesar thinks of the churches. What matters is what Jesus thinks of them. Jesus revealed which churches were serving Him well and which were not. One church already had some members in prison, and Jesus spoke of the suffering yet to come (2:10). One of the churches already had a martyr, someone killed because he was a Christian (2:13). Jesus criticized some false teachers in some of the churches. He compared them to Balaam and to Jezebel, figures from the Old Testament who tried to make God's people worship other gods. The faithful are those who refuse to worship the Caesar or any other gods even when threatened by persecution and martyrdom. God's people must worship only the one living and true God.

After Jesus evaluated the churches on earth, John was caught up to heaven in a vision (chapter 4). There John is reminded that God, not the Roman Caesar, is the Creator who is to be worshiped. John saw that God had in His hand a sealed scroll, which represents history (chapter 5). There was a search for someone to open the seals, which is symbolic for administering history. The only one able to do this was the Lion who appears as a Lamb. This refers to Jesus who has earned the right to be the Lord of history through His sacrificial death upon the cross. Jesus took the scroll and began opening its seals. Each time Jesus opened a seal, there was a vision about His control of history. Many will be killed as martyrs for their faith in Jesus, but Jesus will soon come and judge the earth for their deaths (chapter 6). Jesus put a seal on His people to protect them from His judgments. Jesus' people who are murdered by Jesus' enemies because of their faith in Jesus will be blessed in heaven (chapter 7).

The seven seals were opened, and seven trumpets were then blown announcing the beginning of God's judgments. When each trumpet was blown, there was a vision representing God's judgment. Some think these visions have a special reference to Jesus' bringing the armies of Rome in A.D. 70 to destroy the city of Jerusalem where Jesus was murdered. Chapter 10 makes clear that Jesus will judge not only Jerusalem but all nations that persecute His people.

Between trumpets six and seven, there was a vision about two powerful witnesses to God's truth who were killed. The message is that God's witness will prevail even if the messengers are killed, and those who oppose God's witness will be judged.

After the seventh trumpet, there were some visions about spiritual conflict on earth. In chapter 12, the devil is pictured as a great dragon who tries to devour Jesus at His birth. The devil failed to destroy the infant Jesus, and Jesus ended up seated in the place of all authority at the right hand of God in heaven. The devil was cast out of heaven, and came to earth with the fury of a fatally wounded beast. In his anger, the devil made war against God's people. God's people will suffer, but they will prevail through Jesus.

In chapter 13, we learn that the devil raised up an evil world ruler to persecute God's people. This evil ruler made people worship him, and killed those who refused. In chapter 14, we learn that God's true people refuse to worship the evil ruler. God will judge with eternal torment those who worship this evil ruler. It is better to suffer the wrath of the evil ruler for a short time on earth than to suffer the wrath of God for eternity. Some think this evil ruler represented especially the Roman Caesars who demanded to be worshiped and who persecuted Christians who wouldn't worship them.

In chapter 16, God began to pour out His seven bowls of wrath on the earth. These are visions of God's judgments upon earth. In chapter 17, there was a great whore riding a great beast. The great whore is the earthly city of Jerusalem, and the great beast is the Roman government. It was the religious leaders of Jerusalem who asked the Roman government to crucify Jesus. These same two groups became the persecutors of Jesus' followers. Jesus, however, will overcome all His enemies, and the great beast (Rome) will turn on the great whore (Jerusalem) and destroy her.

In chapter 18, we read about the destruction of a great city. Some think this refers especially to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem by the armies of Rome in A.D. 70. Jesus had prophesied that this would happen as an act of God's judgment. See Matthew chapter 24.

Then follow visions about Jesus' rule of history. In chapter 19, Jesus is described as a mighty Warrior who conquers with a sword coming from His mouth. Jesus fights a spiritual warfare, and His weapon is His message of truth found in the Bible. With this spiritual weapon, Jesus will conquer all the world.

In chapter 20, we learn that Jesus has restrained the devil to prevent him from deceiving the nations when they hear Jesus' message. Jesus rules history from heaven, and Jesus' followers, especially the martyrs in heaven, rule with Him. At the end of this age, the devil will lead a final short rebellion on earth against Jesus. Jesus will then return to earth in His glorified body to put down this rebellion. This will be the end of history. All the dead will be resurrected, and Jesus will judge them. The wicked will be thrown for eternity into a lake of fire. The earth will be purified and glorified. The followers of Jesus will live for eternity on this new earth in glorified bodies. Jesus' glorified

people are compared both to a beautiful bride (in contrast to the great whore who was judged) and to a heavenly Jerusalem which comes to earth (in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem which was destroyed).

I know that is complicated, but I hope that helps. If you have any questions about any verses in the book of Revelation, I will answer you as best as I can.