

Introduction

Welcome to the study of the Book of Revelation from the mindset of a Hebrew. I have already written this entire introduction, but I didn't save it, and do you know what? Microsoft Word Document just unexpectedly closed my document file. Microsoft "hopes that My Word Document mishap does not cause me any trouble." Hah! You know what I'm thinking, don't you? Not that I think there is a demon behind every bush, but I know the dark forces on this planet do not want me to write this study. However, I am going to persevere anyway; I will just expect spiritual warfare along the way. I also will "save" more often from now on.

When I began my research for this study, I was overwhelmed by the amount of material there is for the study of the Book of Revelation in magazines, books, the Internet, commentaries (not all of it true – surprise, surprise!). I have taught this book twice before. The first time I took part in the teaching of a two-year Precept Upon Precept study and the second time was an 11-week Living Proof Ministries' study. For this study, I plan to use all the many ways I've learned to study and teach the Bible and the information I have gleaned along the way. This is not an inductive study, but I may from time to time use these methods to teach you something I want you to know, and the inductive method of learning is the best way to learn it. It is not a topical study, but we will study many topics along the way. It is not a study of history, but there is much history in it. This study will be primarily designed around seeing the Book of Revelation through the eyes of someone with a Hebrew mindset. However, I also intend to use everything I have learned along the way that does not necessarily have a Hebrew bias. Why in the world, if I've taught this book twice already, and there is already so much information circulating out there concerning this book, would I want to teach it again? And why, for heaven's sake would I write another study?

I'm so glad you asked that question. Last Fall 2015, I joined a group of Believing Christians who were studying the Hebrew language with the intent to read the original text in the Hebrew, without the bias of the Greek language, culture, and the Greek Hermeneutics method of study, that is and was used in its' translations. The Old Testament was translated into Koine (common) Greek from the Hebrew, approximately 200 years before Christ and was available for those who spoke or read Greek at the time of Christ. Since the time of Christ, the archeological world has not found original New Testament manuscripts in the Hebrew language. The original manuscripts are written in Greek. They are probably biased by the Greek language, culture, and method of interpretation. The book of Revelation came to us in the Greek language, not the Hebrew. I am making progress toward my goal of being able to read the Hebrew, and at this point, I can certainly sound out the Hebrew words, but I cannot read the Hebrew text and decipher anything that I am attempting to read; I just don't have the vocabulary. Here's the cool part of this problem for us studying the Book of Revelation: much of the book is referenced back to the Old Testament and most of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. Revelation has 404 verses and within those 404 verses, there are over 800 cross references to the Old Testament. So, by studying the Old

Testament references, we can have access to, at least, the original Hebrew text, once removed, translated into the English. We live in such a wonderful age. The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament is now available online for anyone to study on their own. I am hoping all of you have access to the Internet because I have a website for you to access and use throughout the study:

<http://www.sarshalom.us/resources/scripture/asv/bible.html>

Put the website in your favorites or your bookmarks so that you can click on it at any time. From this website, you will have access to the English translation from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Tanakh, AND also the English translation from the redacted Hebrew text of the New Testament called the Bri't Chadasah. Basically, what this means concerning the New Testament: the Greek/Hebrew scholars took the New Testament Koine Greek manuscripts and translated them into Hebrew. Then they took the Hebrew translation called the Bri't Chadasah and translated the Hebrew into the other languages of the world. Both the English and the Hebrew are side by side on this website for both the Tanakh and the Bri't Chadasah.

Not only will we be able to reference the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, but we will also look at the differences between modern western world-views, and ancient near-eastern (and current) thoughts. If you've ever traveled to the Middle East or if you have read about the current mindset of those who are from the Middle East, you will know that their way of thinking and looking at the world is very different from ours. Here in the US and in Western Europe, we have more of an egocentric identity (focus on the individual) whereas the Middle Eastern countries identity is more group-centric (focus on the group). There are many more of these differences we will explore in the coming weeks.

Many of you, who have studied with me before, have had detailed learning on the Hebrew tabernacle, outlined for us in Leviticus. You have also studied the concept of Covenant and how God always works with His own through Covenant. We will be referencing both of these topics many times throughout our study.

Ketubah is the Hebrew word for the marriage contract or the betrothal covenant. One set of books I read, authored by two Messianic Rabbis and one Christian pastor, believe that all four kinds of covenant (men covenanting with other men as different from God covenanting with men) present in the Scripture, blood, salt, sandal, and betrothal, are representative of a continuous love story in which God redeems His own for intimacy with Him¹. With this in mind, we will attempt to understand the four cups of the Betrothal Covenant and how this fits into our study of Revelation. It is amazing to me, how we so often fail to see, that the first two chapters of Genesis are about Creation and the Fall of Man, but the remaining chapters (Genesis 3 – Revelation 22) of the book, are about God securing Man's redemption. Finally, and appropriately, both the Bible and the book of Revelation end with the marriage supper of the Lamb. Just a little incentive for you who like unlocking a good romantic mystery: the Ketubah document had 7 seals.

¹ John Klein, Adam Spears, Michael Christopher, *Lost in Translation*, Volumes 1-3, (Covenant Research Institute, 2009).

Only a select group was able to break each of the seals and the last seal was to be broken only by the married couple when the marriage was consummated. In the Scripture, the Church is considered the Bride of Christ and Israel the adulterous wife. Most of the material we will use for the Ketubah will be the most helpful when we get beyond the seven letters to the seven churches.

Another thread that is woven all the way through the Scripture and also through the Book of Revelation is the tabernacle's lampstand with seven lamps, often referred to as the menorah. "Menorah" is the actual Hebrew Word for this lampstand with seven lamps, not seven candlesticks as in the KJV. The menorah is pictured on the Israeli flag today. In Leviticus, the menorah is in front of the Holy of Holies' wall of separation between God and Man. In Hebrews, after the death of Christ, the wall has been split open, signifying that Man now has access to God directly. The menorah is still in front of the Holy of Holies, but there is no longer a wall of separation. All of what happened daily and yearly in the tabernacle was a foreshadowing or patterning of what was actually happening in the throne room of God in heaven. On earth, God's Shekinah Glory dwelt between the cherubim on top of the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest had access to God, and only one time a year, and only after the proper cleansings, sacrifices, and wardrobe changes had been completed. We will see the menorah in Revelation 2 and 3 in the seven lampstands for the seven churches. Revelation 4-5 shows us the throne room of God with the actual seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (thus the cover for this study) that are the seven Spirits of God. We will even see the clear use of "sevens" as a symbol of completion throughout the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.

You will find reference to Satan in the Old Testament in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. In Isaiah, he is called "star of the morning, son of the dawn," and is the one who said in his heart, he wanted to be like the Most High. In Ezekiel, he is called the King of Tyre, and you will discover from this chapter that he was formally one of the angels that covered God's Throne until iniquity was found in him. For his pride, God kicked him and one-third of the heavenly host who sided with him, out of heaven. Satan and his devils (fallen angels) show up big time in the book of Revelation. Satan shows himself to be the ultimate counterfeiter. In Revelation, we see him mimic the Trinity with his unholy trinity. While investigating other books of the Bible, we will see him counterfeiting God throughout the whole of Scripture. As an example of this, in I John, Jesus is Light and in Him is no darkness, and in the Gospel of John, He is the "Light of the World." Satan mimics Him by coming as an angel of light, but he actually only brings darkness. Satan is sneaky. He is angry because he knows his time is short. He will do anything he can to turn the world away from the worship of the One True God (YHWH) and toward the worship of himself. Why? I want you to think about this. As we study the book of Revelation, I want each one of you to get your minds wrapped around this thought: we are in a spiritual war and sometimes it's hard to tell right from wrong, good from evil. Take John's advice in the book of 1 John 4 where he says: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit

that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist...

We hear all the time in our churches that God loves us and Jesus loves us. We are taught that from a young age, in every Sunday school class. What about the Holy Spirit? If I were a gambling person, I would bet that not a single one of you has heard that the Holy Spirit loves you. Why is He left out of our understanding of God's love for us? Is He not part of the Godhead too? In Ephesians 4:30, Paul commands us "not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." So if you can grieve the Holy Spirit, and the word 'grieve' means distress or make sorrowful, is this not evidence that He cares for you, too, and does indeed love you. So I say to you, my Friends, "God the Father loves you. God the Son loves you. God the Holy Spirit loves you."

Much of Jewish writing goes like this: there is a summary of the whole paragraph or the whole subject in the first sentence or the first paragraph of the body of material presented. After this, comes the explanation of everything that is in that first paragraph. For example, Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now in Genesis 1:2, the writer begins to explain the rest of the story, "The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep..." In Revelation, the first sentence is this, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw." Beginning with the next sentence, he tells the rest of the story, the unveiling of Jesus Christ. We are going to see Christ, His appearance, His character, and His will unveiled in the rest of the book. All of the subsequent verses in Revelation can reference back to the initial sentence. We will see this type of writing all the way through Revelation. Another example for this type of writing is modeled for us starting in Revelation 1:12-13 when John first sees "one like the son of man." These verses can certainly be seen connected to Revelation 1:1-2, but now Revelation 1:12-13 has its own summary sentence and the explanation is in the following verses, Revelation 1: 14-16. Verses 1:13-16 reveal how Jesus appeared to John: "Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me and having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength." The book of Revelation is written very much like paragraphs with initial topic sentences all fanning out from an initial topic paragraph. Clues for the paragraphs are already numbered in bold type in many of the versions available of the Bible.

The book of Revelation is also structured uniquely. First off, it is the only book of the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read or hear the words of this prophecy and

also heed the things that are written in it. Secondly, we are given a clue in Revelation 1:19 as to the structure of the entire work. Revelation 1:19, says this to John: Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and things which will take place after these things.” Revelation 1 speaks of “the things which John sees.” Revelation 2-3 refer to “the things which are,” and Revelation 4-22, speak of “the things which will take place after these things.” After Revelation 4:1, we are given another six “after these things” in Revelation 7:9, 9:12, 15:5, 18:1, 19:1, and 20:3 that shows us that for the most part the book is in chronological order (with a few flashbacks in time). This is remarkable. We are given the outline for the interpretation of time or order of all things in this book.

We find very early in this book that there are a lot of metaphors and similes used. We should be looking for these words: “like” and “as.” For example, Revelation 1:10, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice **“like”** the sound of a trumpet.” Was it a trumpet sound that John heard? It could have been, but it also could have been something else making that sound and it was the only way John knew how to describe it. Or, perhaps he was exposed to this symbol reference somewhere else in the Old Testament at an earlier time.

There is much symbolism used in Revelation as well as the similes and metaphors described above. The word for “a sign,” or “to signify” is “semaino,” and means “to make known by some kind of sign.” In the NASB the word ‘signified’ is replaced with the word “communicated.” At least two of the commentators I read used these two words, “sign” and symbol,” interchangeably. An example of a sign or a symbol is the seven-tiered lampstand used in the seven letters to the seven churches. God was going to take away their church’s lampstand (menorah) if they didn’t do what He asked. Yet, in Revelation 4:5, we see that the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne (the menorah) were symbolic of the seven Spirits of God. Could the first reference to the lampstands of the seven churches, be real lampstands or were they symbolic of the Spirit of the Lord’s presence in those particular churches?

We will see many names Christ is called throughout the Book of Revelation and many titles to which He is referred. The titles used in Revelation 1 are used again in chapters 2 and 3 when he is communicating to His “called out ones.” We will see Him as the Lamb of God who was slain in chapters 4 and 5, and the only One Who is worthy to break the seals. The Lamb breaks the 7 seals in chapters 6 revealing God’s wrath against Mankind’s sin. Christ is then seen as the Lamb all the way through to chapter 19, when He is also revealed as the One Who comes riding on a white horse and He is called “Faithful and True.” Here He is also called the Word of God, KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS. Finally, in chapters 19 through 22, we will see Him as the Judge of all the earth and the Bridegroom who comes to claim His Bride, the Church.

Before we end with this introduction, I want to make a few statements that I want you to think about long and hard. First off, God is not done with the Jewish people. The church has not replaced Israel. On the contrary, after the seven letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, there is no mention of the church until we get to chapter

19 and the Bride of Christ. What we see instead are the 12 tribes of Israel taking center position on the world's stage. If this is the case and it is, and when God specifically says in Revelation 7:4, 144,000 from the tribes of Israel, 12,000 from each of the tribes, to whom is He referring? He is referring to the 12 tribes of Israel. Don't make it difficult. There are no similes or metaphors here. Could it be symbolic of the Church or a specific cult of today? Not likely. Secondly, the written Word of God is the Holy Scripture. The person called the "Word of God" is our Savior, the LORD Jesus Christ. He is God. He is part of the Trinity, but He is still God. Let me preface this: I do believe the written word of God is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness – 2 Timothy 3:16. Our Pastor at Crossroads Community Church in Parker made a remarkable statement one Sunday during his sermon. I'm paraphrasing, but it went something like this: We are to worship only the person of Jesus as the Word of God. We are not to worship the book, the Word of God. The written Word of God was written and given to us for our understanding so that we might know how to be in relationship with the Word of God, the Son. This Book, this study, is being written with the ultimate goal for you to have intimacy with Christ. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation is a love story of redemption and the Bride readying herself for her wedding day, so that she might have intimacy with her husband. For the Jews, depicted as the wife of Jehovah throughout the Old Testament, of whom He divorced because of her deeds: He will redeem (as many as will believe His provision for them) as He has redeemed you and me and He will graft them back into Vine (Romans 9,10,11).

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