

**A SHORT STUDY ON
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
BASED ON EXTENSIVE CITATIONS FROM
CLASSIC COMMENTARIES**

by
Carol Morgan

**"LOOKING FOR THE BLESSED HOPE AND GLORIOUS APPEARING
OF OUR GREAT GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST"**

Titus 2:13

INTRODUCTION

In the opening chapter of the Book of Revelation, John writes, "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near*" (v. 3). Then in the last chapter of the book, Jesus speaks: "*Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*" (v. 7).¹ Yet this book is perhaps the most neglected book in the church today. Many pastors have little interest in it or in eschatology itself, the doctrine of last things; and God will, I believe, require an accounting for this neglect to preach the whole counsel of God.

Why is it that, in what are called Christian churches, every other part of the Bible is read, while the book of Revelation is scarcely looked at? . . . The reason is because there is no book in the Bible that Satan fears more, and justly too. It announces first his sure humiliation by angelic power, and then his destruction afterwards. Other books show his partial temporary successes; this dwells on his overthrow, and therefore must he dread it. Again, if you have here the account of God's putting down Satan, you have also very fully brought out the awful height of power to which he rises before the end. For the divine principle is never to judge evil until it has rejected all the patience of God, abused His goodness, and become thoroughly unbearable. Had Christians felt that Satan's object was to conceal his own wiles, and power, and ruin, by leading them to neglect this book, they might have been more on their guard.²

I hope this study will pique your interest in this fascinating book.

The purpose of this study is to compile for the reader quotations from well-known scholars on the premillennial approach to the Book of Revelation. This premillennial approach, we believe, is the only one that does justice to the historical-grammatical basis of interpreting Scripture. However, not all of these scholars take the same position on every issue. For example, some would find a pre-trib rapture at the beginning of chapter 4, while others with equal fervency would deny one; some would find the identification of the 24 elders to be saints, while others maintain they are heavenly creatures. Nevertheless, on the fundamental issue as to who is represented by the

1 I have used throughout this paper the New King James Version when not quoting the commentators.

2 William Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, pp. 412-413.

144,000 sealed from the twelve tribes of Israel, all (with very few exceptions) are in agreement that they are Jews, that is, physical descendants of Jacob. And as to that most critical battleground issue--the millennium--all premillenarians contend, in no uncertain terms, that it consists of 1,000 literal years.³

Now, although the premillennial view predominates throughout, some pertinent excerpts from scholars of other persuasions will appear from time to time. Also, because premillennial scholars do have different interpretations on issues in the Book of Revelation, the reader will be confronted with conflicting interpretations. And so with the above in mind, I offer this paper with the hope that you, the reader, will engage in a study of the Book of Revelation yourself. Perhaps this paper and the sources cited will give you some foundation on which to build.

To begin, then, it is important to note that one's eschatology must be based first on the Old Testament, and, then, the Epistles of Paul and Peter together with the Olivet Discourse and the parables of Jesus will add many details to it. Theodor Zahn writes,

The Revelation of John consequently takes its place as a part of Christian prophecy, which, as a source of knowledge, edification, and action, was such a powerful and highly esteemed manifestation of the Spirit in the time of the apostles. Revelation is distinguished from the other products of this Christian prophecy merely in the fact that it is a *written* record of revelation received; whereas the prophets, so far as we know, had up to this time contented themselves with *oral* utterance. In this, Revelation becomes a continuation of the writing of the O.T. prophets.⁴

Merrill Tenney states, "Without a knowledge of the Old Testament one cannot interpret Revelation successfully. The book is a mosaic of allusions, quotations, and images taken from the Jewish Scriptures, and it interprets these in terms of the person of Christ."⁵

Erich Sauer writes,

The record of salvation in the Bible knows two long periods without revelation: the time between Malachi and John the Baptist and the time between Christ and the coming of the kingdom of God. The first lasted 400 years; the second has lasted already almost 2,000 years. Both belong to the "time of the nations" (Luke 21:24).

The lamp of the first is the prophet of the nations, Daniel; the guiding star of the last is the *Revelation* of John. The book of *Daniel* was given to the saints of the Old Covenant on entering the night between the first destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) and the first appearing of the Lord. The *Revelation* of John was given to the

3 We have a paper on our [Historic Premillennialism Page](#) that defines and explains the three major millennial views: premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism. It also explains the difference between the two major forms of premillennialism: historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. Here is the direct link to this paper: [A Comparison of the Three Millennial Views](#).

4 Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. III, pg. 385.

5 Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, pg. 25.

saints of the New Covenant on entering the night between the second destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and the second appearing of the Lord. Thus they both belong together: the one is the counterpart of the other and the second is the completion of the first.⁶

The Book of Revelation is the only book in the New Testament devoted completely to prophecy. Much of its imagery is related to figures and symbols in the Old Testament prophets. Alva McClain writes:

The revelation of the Kingdom and its glorious King in the Apocalypse can only be apprehended in close connection with the Old Testament, especially its prophetic literature, and particularly the Book of Daniel. Although the Apocalypse contains no direct citation from the Old Testament, it is saturated with Old Testament phraseology. In the total of 404 verses, Westcott and Hort list about 265 which contain Old Testament language; and also about 550 references to Old Testament passages. "Nothing is more important for the understanding of our author's mental and literary processes than a close study of his use of Old Testament language" [Frank C. Porter, "Book of Revelation," *Dictionary of the Bible*]. An exposition which leans heavily upon the Old Testament, and especially its prophetic writing, according to Hengstenberg, "is absolutely indispensable to a proper understanding of the Revelation" [*Revelation of St. John*]. And James Orr says, "Its precursor in the Old Testament is the Book of Daniel, with the symbolic visions and mystical numbers of which it stands in close affinity" ["Book of Revelation," *ISBE*]. It may be laid down as a first principle, therefore, that no interpretation of the Revelation can be accepted which breaks with the thought of the Old Testament prophets.⁷

Therefore, a thorough knowledge of these Old Testament books is necessary to interpret Revelation. To give just one example, Isaiah chapter 24 implies a gap between the two resurrections; Revelation chapter 20 reveals that gap to be 1000 years.

It is not true, as both Amillennialists and Postmillennialists are wont to affirm, that a period of time between the resurrection of the just and of the unjust is affirmed by Scripture in this passage [Rev. 20:1-10] alone. There is at least one Old Testament passage which mentions a long period at the time of the consummation during which certain "high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth" shall "be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited" (Isa. 24:22, 23). No satisfactory explanation of this strange passage was afforded until Revelation 20:1-10 was written, and even then only as the literal Premillennial interpretation was adopted. Dr. Nathaniel West possibly went too far in asserting dogmatically that several other Old Testament passages refer to the Millennium. He asserted this of Ezekiel 38:8; 37:25, 26, 28; Hosea 3:4, 5; Psalm 72:7. Some of these *may* refer to the Millennium. Only Isaiah 24:22, 23 *must* refer to it, in my opinion.⁸

6 Erich Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, pp. 163-164.

7 Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp. 443-444.

8 Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, pp. 31-32.

The eschatological position taken in this paper includes several important points. They may seem obvious, but they are necessary in order to distinguish this position from the view of a pretribulational rapture, which we do not hold.

- There is only one Second Coming of Christ, which is and has always been the hope of the church.
- There is only one First Resurrection.
- There is only one Last Trumpet.⁹
- Jesus comes only once "in the clouds," this being at his Second Coming.¹⁰

In regard to the amillennial position, it will not be addressed in the sense of offering a suitable interpretation of the Book of Revelation as a whole. It is the premillennial position that will take precedence in this short study, since anything other than a literal interpretation results in endless speculations or strange conclusions. Consider two examples, the first being the 144,000 of chapter 14. Who are they? According to Joseph Seiss,

Some answer, they represent the true people of God of all ages--the symbol of the whole body of the sanctified and saved. Others say, they are the choice spirits of the congregation of the glorified, selected and honored above all common Christians because of their preeminent qualities and abstinences on earth. Others tell us, they are the company of those who have remained true in faith under the errors and falsities of the Papacy. And still others say, they are none else than the assembly of the noble spirits who achieved the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and that their harp-notes and new song is "the harmony of the Reformed Confessions!" I see not how it is possible for any of these interpretations to stand. Without entering upon the many points in which they severally fail to conform to the record, I may say they all do violence to the consecutiveness and self-consistency of this Book, and defy all legitimate dealing with the particulars of the sacred description. We must find a better meaning, or give in that it is impossible to do anything more than *guess* at what the Lord intended to show us, whilst one guess is just as good and reliable as another. But God's Word is truth; and therefore there must be truth in this presentation--truth which will hold together

9 Edmund Shackleton, *Will the Church Escape the Great Tribulation*, pp. 26-27, makes the following observation: "In 1 Cor. xv. we are also told that the resurrection takes place at the last trump. Now as there are seven trumpets mentioned in the Apocalypse, the most natural meaning of this statement is that this resurrection trump is either the seventh, or, as I am inclined to believe, one subsequent to it. It is called the trump of God in 1 Thess. iv., and is therefore identical with the trump of Zech. ix. 14--"And the Lord shall be seen over them, and His arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with the whirlwinds of the south." From Isaiah xxvii. 13 we also learn that this trumpet will be recognized by the refugees from the Antichrist's oppression, who are hiding in the neighbouring land of Assyria, and that they will know the joyful sound as the signal of their deliverance."

10 Alexander Reese, in his book *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, has done an exhaustive study on the pre-trib rapture. He concludes "that the Coming, the Appearing, the Revelation, and the Day of the Lord *all occur simultaneously*." Each constitutes "the blessed hope" of New Testament believers and is the blessed hope of Christians today. See page 267.

with the rest of the Book, with the dignity of a divine prophecy so solemnly given, and with the grammatical sense of the words in which the account is presented. Nor do I know why candid and earnest men, but for their arbitrary and stilted theories, should be at a loss for an interpretation answering to the requirements.¹¹

Nonetheless, taking a literal interpretation does not disavow the use of figurative language. Figurative language represents one thing by another, things less known by things better known. This kind of language had its origin in very early times. Figures known in the sacred writings are derived from the following sources: the visible heavens, the region of the air, the earth with its water, fires, earthquakes, etc., the sea, rivers, and the animal creation. This is a short sample. For an instance of a Bible figure, a "beast" is a figure of an empire that is hostile to the church.¹²

Second, consider the subject of Christ reigning on a literal throne during the millennium. Amillennialists like to disparage this view, taking Christ's reigning on the throne of David to be spiritual. Referring now to Luke 1:31-33, we find recorded,

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

I found this excerpt from J. Harkness enlightening:

But if, after all, it should be asserted and maintained, as perhaps it may be, that Christ is now spiritually occupying David's spiritual throne, and spiritually reigning over the spiritual house of Jacob; and that this reign is destined to increase till it is exercised everywhere, and over every inhabitant of the earth, then we confess our ignorance, and declare that we do not know what the spiritual throne of David means, and humbly ask information. If it should be replied, by way of instruction, "David's spiritual throne is the throne of the believer's heart," we would then ask the wise teacher, Where is this instruction to be obtained? Is it to be found in the Bible? If so, designate the place, that all may read, learn, and understand. So far as we understand the Bible, the throne of the believer's heart is not the throne of David, but the throne of the Majesty on high--God's throne. . . . but if it be a fair and right interpretation thus to spiritualize the first part of the prophecy, so must it, by parity of reasoning and all sound principles of philology, to interpret every other part of the prophecy. No man who is not under some peculiar bias will deny this. If then spiritualists will have the first part of the prophecy thus interpreted, surely they cannot object, and they have no right to complain, if we interpret what remains according to the same rule. If Christ's sitting upon David's throne, and ruling his people Israel, be spiritual and invisible, then his being born of the Virgin is also spiritual and invisible. . . .

But it is also taught in Scripture, that the saints are to sit with Christ upon his

11 Joseph. A. Seiss, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, vol. III, pp. 16-17.

12 See the Introduction in Ethan Smith's, *Key to the Revelation*.

throne, and reign with Him in His Kingdom. This is the privilege of all them, who overcome, or are victorious over their foes. Now if the spiritual interpretation be correct, namely, that by sitting upon the throne of His father David, is meant, that He shall sit upon the throne of the heart of His people, then all the victorious multitude who, by his blood and abounding grace, have overcome their enemies, shall sit with Him upon that same throne; that is to say, multitudes of saints shall sit upon the throne of the heart of saints, upon the throne of their own hearts! . . . It is difficult to understand and believe this. Nay, its palpable absurdity is sufficient to secure its rejection.¹³

Neither is the post-millennial position to be addressed except, perhaps, in passing. There are many problems associated with it, of which I shall give one.

If we look to *the destruction of Antichrist*, it is to be by *the brightness of the Lord's coming*; (2 Thess. ii. 8,) in regard to which, be it observed, the expression made use of in the original for *brightness* (επιφανεια,) always has a reference, when applied to Christ, to his *glorious* appearing; and the word translated *coming* (παρουσια) means always a *personal* advent. This being the case, either the Lord appears at the beginning of the Millennium, or Antichrist continues to reign throughout the Millennium. The same thing is shown in Daniel vii. 20-22; the Little Horn (which is admitted by all to be Antichrist) prevails against the saints "until the Ancient of days comes and judgment is given to the saints of the Most High, and the time comes that the saints possess the kingdom."¹⁴

It will also be assumed in this study that the revelation given to John is, *in its essence*, chronological; otherwise it would simply be impossible for any reader, now or then, to adequately prepare for the "things which are to come after." But often, as with the writings of the Old Testament, we are given the final outcome first in a summary statement, and then the details which lead up to it are given directly following. As Cecil Biss¹⁵ states, "Revelation, like other books of prophecy, is composed of a series of visions which present, in different aspects and with varying details, the events of the same, or parts of the same period of history, the rule being that the earlier visions give outlines, the later ones details, of the same events."

Benjamin W. Newton agrees, and writes as follows:

Nothing can be more important in interpreting the Scriptures than carefully to observe this habit of *recurrence*. It is found throughout the whole of the Sacred Writings. Indeed in all narration, whenever the subject treated of has various branches, it is necessary, after we have brought one part of our narrative to its conclusion, to return again and pursue the subject through another of its divisions; for, in no other way, can all the various features of a complex subject be fully and

13 Rev. J. Harkness, *Messiah's Throne and Kingdom*, pp. 20-21, 25.

14 J. W. Brooks, *Essays on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ*, pg. 108.

15 From appendix G, p. 101, at the end of Samuel P. Tregelles' book, *The Hope of Christ's Second Coming*. These appendices were written by Cecil Yates Biss (who prepared the second edition of the book for printing).

distinctly given. The same period therefore may thus be many times retraced; and the successive divisions of our narrative become, as to time, concurrent, and not chronologically subsequent to each other. . . . The Revelation is written on the same principle. The chapter before us, [ch. 6] which is the first in the series of prophetic visions, brings us to that final hour, when men shall call "upon the rocks to hide them and on the mountains to cover them," because the great day of the Lamb's wrath will have come. The subsequent visions, on to the nineteenth chapter, do but retrace; until, in the end of that chapter, we find the manifestation of the Lord in glory and the actual inflictions of His wrath described. . . .

Another rule carefully to be remembered is, that in every vision, the consummation, which is one of blessing, is recorded *first*, prior to the events of evil and of judgment by which it is preceded and introduced. This arrangement could not have been adopted, if the Revelation were a history of events in the order of fulfilment; but it is an order which the considerateness of love would suggest to any one who desired to relieve the anxiety of another to whom he was about to tell a tale of sorrow. He would speak of the end *first*, silencing the awakened apprehension by the assurance that however great the preceding sorrow, the conclusion would be one of certain joy. . . .

The practice of noticing the closing event of blessing *first*, is common throughout the whole of Scripture.¹⁶

As to the structure of Revelation, Zahn writes:

The division of the account into the two unequal parts, 1:10-3:22 and 4:1-22:9, corresponds to the division of the subject matter of all the visions into that which already existed at the time of the revelation, and that which is to come to pass in the future (1:19). The first part is a single vision. . . . According to 4:2, John falls again into a trance, which presupposes that he had returned to consciousness; and the fact that the voice of the angel who shows him what he sees is said to be the same as that which spoke to him in 1:10, enables us to recognize the beginning of another revelation. No feature of the picture which John had before him during the first vision passes over into the new one.¹⁷

The phrase "in the Spirit" is used repeatedly by John. It does not mean "indwelt by the Spirit" as in the Pauline use of the phrase (cf. Rom. 8:9). John seems to use it to mean the beginning of a new vision. Thus we have the following general outline, according to Tenney:¹⁸

Prologue	- 1:1-8	Christ Communicating
Vision I	- 1:9-3:22	Christ in the Church
Vision II	- 4:1-16:21	Christ in the Cosmos
Vision III	- 17:1-21:8	Christ in Conquest
Vision IV	- 21:9-22:5	Christ in Consummation

16 Benjamin Wills Newton, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse*, pp. 83-86.

17 Zahn, *Introduction*, vol. III, pp. 392-393.

18 Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, pg. 33.

The prologue and Vision I constitute Zahn's first division. Visions II, III, IV, and the Epilogue form his second division.

McClain's general outline is somewhat different, as follows:¹⁹

- Introduction: The Revelation of Future Things and Its Present Blessing (1:1-3)
- I. The Churches to Which the Revelation Was Addressed (1:4-3:22)
- II. The Revelation of the Period of Pre-Kingdom Judgments (4:1-18:24)
- III. The Revelation of the Period of the Messianic Kingdom (19:1-20:15)
- IV. The Revelation of the Final Universal Kingdom of God (21:1-22:5)
- Conclusion: Exhortations to the Churches in View of the Lord's Coming (22:6-21)

Much of the Book of Revelation deals with the judgments of the Great Tribulation. Concerning this period, we read in Daniel 12:1, "*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered.*" Quoting now from Arnold Fruchtenbaum,

The uniqueness of the Tribulation's relationship to Israel is especially brought out in Jeremiah 30:4-7. While the Scriptures have many names for the Great Tribulation, in this passage a name is given that directly relates the Tribulation to the Jewish nation: *the time of Jacob's trouble*. While it is true that all will suffer during that time, Israel will suffer more so. The basic reason for this lies in Israel's relationship to God as God's first born (Exod. 4:22) and, therefore, receives double both in blessing and cursing. The principle that Israel receives double for all her sins is stated in Isaiah 40:1-2 and Jeremiah 16:16-18. This is the reason the Tribulation is uniquely the Time of Jacob's Trouble.²⁰

We read also, in Daniel 12:7: *Then I heard the man clothed in linen . . . swear by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and a half-time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people has come to an end, then should all these things cease.*" Leon Wood has the following comment:

The length of time during which the Antichrist will pursue his anti-Jewish activities, then, will be three and one-half years, the last half of the Tribulation week. *When the shattering of the power of the holy people has come to an end:* This clause reads, literally, "as completing shattering of hand of people of holiness." . . . "People of holiness" designates the Jews as God's people, chosen to be holy, who will truly achieve this condition in the Millennium. With this element, the angel gave the other part of his answer to the question, the rational part. The force of the answer is to say that the duration of the "end of the wonders" will last as long as it takes for the power of the Jews to be broken. The angel thus revealed the reason for God's permitting the Antichrist to bring his persecution, namely, to break the power of the Jews. As parallel passages indicate, this power and

19 McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pg. 445.

20 Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, pg. 770.

resulting sense of self-sufficiency will need to be broken so that the Jews will be willing to accept Christ as their rightful King. The two parts of the total answer are to say, then, that it will take the Antichrist exactly three and one-half years to bring the Jews to the state of humiliation where this willingness will be evidenced.²¹

In the New Testament St. Paul writes to Timothy, "*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come*" (2 Tim. 3:1). Our Lord himself warns his disciples that in the last days "*there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be*" (Matt. 24:21). John records here in Revelation, "*It was granted to him [the beast from the sea] to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation*" (13:7). Also in 12:12 John records, "*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.*" These words in Revelation are all addressed to God's people, Christian and Jew; they are not words of warning to unbelievers, although unbelievers are necessarily encompassed in the judgments to come. Therefore, it will be worthwhile to remember that the period of time known as the Great Tribulation is a period of time in which Satan's wrath against the seed of the woman is unleashed in all its fullness. In particular "it is the *Devil's* wrath against the saints for their rejection of *Antichrist*, and adherence to Christ."²²

Our Lord Himself made reference to the cause and motive of the Great Tribulation. After speaking of the signs of the End-time, He says: "*And you shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake*" Yes, the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the devotion of Christians to it, are what bring on the last great trial; and we know that this has been the cause of tribulation all down the centuries To be sure, there will be desolating judgments upon the Jews for their acceptance of Antichrist, but they are distinct from the wrath of Antichrist against the saints.²³

We are part of that seed and therefore must expect persecution. Let us give praise to God who honors us by reckoning us worthy to suffer for Christ. And not only does he honor us, he also sustains us with His grace to suffer courageously and with a willing heart. Consider these words of William Milligan:

Thus we are taught what to expect in the book of Revelation. It will record the conflict of Christ and His people with the evil that is in the world, and their victory over it. It will tell of struggle with sin and Satan, but of sin vanquished and Satan bruised beneath their feet. It will be the story of the Church as she journeys through the wilderness to the land of promise, encountering many foes, but more than conqueror through Him that loved her, and often raising to heaven her song of praise, "*Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider He hath cast into the sea.*"²⁴

Thankfully, Satan's wrath does not continue indefinitely. For the sake of the elect the time is

21 Leon Wood, *A Commentary On Daniel*, pg. 324.

22 Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, pg. 284.

23 *Ibid.*, pg. 288.

24 William Milligan, *The Book of Revelation*, pg. 19.

shortened,²⁵ and the wrath of the Lamb of God is quickly executed on Satan and those who refuse to repent. Then Christ shall come in all his glory to receive the kingdom promised to him by the Father.

The time is short; Christ's return is very near. We see Jewish people returning to Israel in great numbers. The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews frequently has flights coming into Israel bringing God's chosen people back to their beloved homeland: "*Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations . . . They shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders*" (Isa. 49:22). We also see the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image coming into focus with the resultant instability in Europe due to the influx of Muslims: "*And as you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay*" (2:43).

Now is not the time to sleep, but to watch: "*Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that **he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them***" (Luke 23:49). How can any believer remain indifferent when such a greeting awaits him?

This is a short study and not meant to answer every question nor address every issue. My main purpose in writing was to gather together insights from renowned theologians, past and present, for your study. Perhaps you would like to consider some of the books I have footnoted. They are all well written and would prove valuable additions to your own library.

Now, before moving on to the first chapter of John's Revelation, I would encourage you to take time to read the following excerpt from Gerard Noel.

CHAPTER XV

by
Gerard T. Noel

"The Insensibility of the World to the Warning Voice of Christ"

If the prospect of the future be bright and consolatory to the true Christian, so ought it to be dark and oppressive to the unbelieving and the impenitent. The glory of God will receive its twofold manifestation in the awards of justice and in the gifts of mercy. The time of VINDICATION will realize its prophetic existence.

During many a long year the name of Christ has afforded occasion to the exercise of mockery, contempt, and superstition. Recognized in the theory of human societies, whether political or ecclesiastical, He is practically despised, and the principles of worldly policy supersede his councils and nullify his decisions. The majority of nominal Christians are utterly careless of their responsibility to his tribunal and expect the course of the world still to proceed in the same manner as it has done from age to age. In vain the scriptures announce a limited period to the

25 Matt. 24:22; Mark 13:20.

forbearance of God, in vain they call for repentance and faith and godliness, in vain they proclaim *"a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness"* by that august Ruler *"whose goings forth are from everlasting,"* "whereof God has given the assurance unto all men in that he has raised him from the dead."

A deathlike torpor and incredulity rests upon the human soul, and all the judgments and mercies of the Almighty make no impression. In private life, tear chases tear and death succeeds to death. But no man learns wisdom save the despised saint whom God deigns to enlighten and to heal. In public life, wars and commotion, pestilence and earthquake, anarchy and blood attest during successive centuries the controversy which God has with national impiety. But national reform, humiliation, and godliness are conditions of public life unfelt, unseen, contemned! If there be a zeal for social rights, for mental freedom, for commercial greatness, for intellectual progress, it pauses short of the claims of God. Secularity pollutes the church; and while civil policy expands the enactments of legislation to the *multiplied* interests of the citizen, it contracts their influence over the acknowledged rights of God.

On this theatre of human action man is everything, God is nothing. His name indeed is upon the tongue and his authority is registered upon the page of the public liturgy, but his will, his decisions, his warnings and his promises are matters of cold speculation or of occasional excitement. In the day of sorrow, sickness, or death there may be a transient reference to his mercy, but it is the refuse offering which the world will no longer ask for nor receive.

The approaching day of account, the government of the world in the hands of Christ, the results of his incarnation, his connection with mankind, the responsibility to Him incurred by talent, wealth, influence, rank and power, these ideas are rejected as illiberal, onerous, and enthusiastic. The secondary interests of man chase away his primary necessities from his sight, and three score years of life are preferred to eternity. The care of the body is preferred to that of the soul, and the applause of man is deemed a brighter heritage than the enduring approbation of God.

It appalls the thoughtful mind to contemplate the fearful upshot of this state of human things. The day of God approaches, but where is the preparation for his advent?

When our Almighty Redeemer foretold his return in glory to the world in which previously he had been rejected, he announced the very manifestation which we witness of this incredulity and contempt: *"As the days of Noah were, so shall also the COMING of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered in the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the COMING of the Son of Man be."*

The flood came upon the world unexpected, though the theme of incessant prediction. During one hundred and twenty years did the warning voice of God utter its mournful accents and entreat a cessation in the work of ungodliness and sin. The accents were scattered to the desert air; they reached no rebel heart of man. The shortness of time, the approach of death, the brooding darkness of the gathering storm interrupted not the career of sensuality, the progress of licentiousness, or the noise of mirth. *They ate, they drank; "the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and melody were in their feasts."* They formed alliances, they built up many a domestic dwelling place, they coveted individual and national renown. But *"they regarded not the work of*

the Lord" nor knew *"the operation of his hands."* They ridiculed the prophetic record. They smiled in idle scorn while the Prophet built and surveyed his ark, the appointed refuge from the approaching wrath!

But the insensibility of man delayed not the purpose of God. The neglected warning canceled not the recorded verdict. The mirth of the criminal arrested not the hand of the judge. The horizon blackened, the tempest burst, and the human population lay buried beneath the waves!

And so shall it be, we are told by infallible authority, in the last judgments of the great day. The same insensibility, the same licentiousness, the same preference of sensual to spiritual joy, the same complacency in ungodly gratifications, the same oblivion of justice and mercy, the same contempt of divine law and attachment to human schemes will characterize the period of time proximate to the second advent of Christ, as characterized the period antecedent to the terrific flood of Noah.

It would be an awful employment to portray to the mind with anything like historical accuracy the tremendous alarm which must at length have seized upon the world when the threatened judgment actually commenced, when the torrents of the skies and the tides of the ocean united their fearful strength and by successive ravages marked out a storm unlike the wintry desolations of other years; a storm directed by the same Almighty hand which hitherto had restrained the furious elements and made them subservient to human welfare.

Creative power was now charged with retributive indignation, and the arm of God had shattered the schemes of man! The business of earth at length paused, the din of pleasure ceased, the strife of individuals was suspended, the politics of nations were arrested. All classes of society mingled together appalled by a common ruin. The landmarks of property were annihilated, armies were useless, wealth was a name, and science a delusion. The avenging scourge of Omnipotence passed over the whole earth, and no criminal remained behind to tell the tale. Conviction came too late. Remorse could be no substitute for repentance. The hour for contrition was forever elapsed.

And to this scene of utter disaster the Redeemer refers in order to illustrate the consternation which will arrest an impenitent world, when he shall RETURN TO THE EARTH on which he has been so long despised.

Whether, therefore, the prophetic *interpretations* which we have attempted to give be *correct* or *incorrect*, the day of his advent *will* arrive; and who may abide his anger? Insensibility and scorn will characterize human society. The voice which warns will excite contempt. The hand which points not in anger but in love to predicted judgment will be met by no friendly eye. The business, pleasure, gains, and philosophy of life will occupy the world until the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the heavens and the authority of Christ allow of scorn no more. It were fearful to portray that final alarm which will overwhelm a guilty world when, too late for refusal, the cup of trembling is held to its lips!

The destruction and calamities of the last says "of the times of the Gentiles" are delineated on the page of scripture with a force and energy calculated to shake to the foundation the strongest confidence of the world. But the men of this world will not read, they will not listen. They

pursue the fame of life, and sport upon the precipice of perdition!

True religion is despised and the authority of the son of God is forgotten. But the obduracy of man cannot invalidate the claims of God. The records of the Omniscient no human hands can erase. Resisted or received, they hasten to their accomplishment. Would to God that the great and rich of the earth, the wise and the intelligent, the princes and the prelates, the nobles and the clergy of every land--would that all to whom God has entrusted the use of power and influence and eloquence and wealth might remember the condition of man and the tribunal before which he must stand. And would that the mingled multitudes doomed to toil and obscurity and penury might alike receive the message of the eternal word. Would that if any human being hitherto occupied but with the details of earth should scan these feeble lines that he might hear the warning voice and remember the Saviour of whom it speaks! Painful is it to think of a ruin which no human skill can avert, of a degradation which no art of man can reclaim, of "a waste" for which no "afterthrift" can atone!

"Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken ye people! Let the earth hear, and all that is therein, the world and all things that come forth from it. For the indignation of Yahweh is upon ALL NATIONS, and his fury upon all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out; the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls off from the vine. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven. . . . For it is the day of Yahweh's vengeance, and the year of recompence for the cause of Zion. Its streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone; and the land thereof shall be burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; its smoke thereof shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it, the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it. And he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof. . . . There shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. Seek ye out of the book of Yahweh, and READ: not one of these shall fail; none shall lack her mate. For my mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them." (Isaiah 34)

"WHOSO IS WISE WILL PONDER THESE THINGS, AND HE SHALL UNDERSTAND THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF THE LORD."

Chapter 15 from *A Brief Enquiry into the Prospects of the Church of Christ, in Connexion with the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ*, by Gerard T. Noel (London: John Hatchard and Son, 1828). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that long paragraphs have been divided, and KJV-era verbs as well as some spelling has been updated.