

The Book of Revelation (Part 1 – Introduction)

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1. Revelation: An Introduction

Before we can study Revelation in detail, we need to understand where it fits into the overall panorama of history. We also need to know something about its purpose in terms of God's great plan and how its information is hidden in the use of language and symbols.

The books of Jeremiah and Daniel heralded the end of the Old Covenant amid the wars which terminated the last Israelite kingdom, Judah, around 600 BC. Jeremiah prophesied that the seed of Israel would continue forever as a nation and monarchy ruled by David's seed (Jer 31, 33) and he prophesied the coming of the New Covenant.

Daniel was given visions of the political and spirit-related future of the civilised world and of his people. He foretold the coming of a new nation of Judea (erroneously called the Jews) in the Holy Land. God told him that the new nation would last for only 490 years. History has shown us that it was never an independent Kingdom and it never had a King of David's line ruling over it (Herod was an Edomite). History also tells us this nation was finally destroyed by Titus in 70 AD.

The destruction by Titus occurred at least 20 years before the events of Revelation were made known to John. Therefore, the things revealed to John (the history of the 2000 years since that Revelation) cannot be applied to the Jews or the Israeli state. For neither of them have existed as a nation during the bulk of the last 2000 years and neither of them exist as a monarchy today.

Until the coming of Jesus, no prophet had been sent to speak God's word to Israel for 400 years. When Jesus began His ministry, He made it clear that the only way an individual Israelite can be acceptable to God is to believe God and to recognise Himself as the promised Messiah. The Epistles to the Dispersion reinforced this message. Furthermore, using Israel's recorded history, the Epistles made the Dispersion recognise and understand their new national status now that **all** Israel (that is, both Houses) had been redeemed. But an individual could not partake of that redemption unless he proved that he believed Jesus.

Commentators such as Bullinger ^(A) and Knoch ^(B) (writing after Bullinger) agree that the Book of Revelation is for God's people (Israel) and no-one else. Bullinger goes so far as to give 100 pages of argument against Revelation having anything to do with "the Church". Despite such insights, both authors cling to their religious views of the role of "the Church" – having established that the resurrections described in Revelation are for Israel only, they invent an event called "the rapture" which they claim is a separate resurrection for the benefit of the Churches only! The problem with all such views is that Jesus did not found any church and the Bible is not a book of religion. (The translation of Matt 16:18 in our popular Bibles – *upon this rock I will build my church* – is quite wrong.)

Failure to recognise the distinction between the use and the meaning of words such as *Israel*, *Jew*, *church* and *assembly* will mean that much of Revelation will remain veiled. Those terms are at the very base of rightly dividing the word of God and without right division, the outcome of any study will be flawed and misleading.

Knoch states:

Jehovah is not the God of all the nations. He is confined to one nation – the sons of Jacob. Ever since they have been separated from the rest and made the appointed channel of blessing for the earth, Jehovah has been their God and the day of Jehovah is their day as well as His. That day holds little hope for any other nation, as such. But for Israel it has a thousand promises. It is the day of days for them, when, as the priest kingdom, they hold the highest place for a millennium. Let us never connect the title Jehovah with any other nation. ... This day is not for the nations. They had their opportunity in Man's Day. The day of Jehovah is for Israel and Israel's God (Knoch ^(B), page 47).

1.1. Scope

This paper is one of a series that attempts to open the way for understanding Revelation. A detailed study must include tasks such as the identification of all the symbols, an investigation of the Greek text of every verse and a study of British and European history. Each of those tasks could be a lifetime's work on its own, so this paper and the others in this series, are unlikely to contain all the answers. The important point is that co-operative study will do much to broaden our knowledge of this vital book.

These papers cannot include detailed, explanatory proof of every word of the Greek text. This is especially true of those terms and phrases that have been explained in other original-language research papers. If such papers are not available to you, Vine ^(C) is a good starting point for further reading.

1.2. The Purpose Of Revelation

The theme of Revelation is the Restoration of God's Sovereignty throughout the earth. It unveils that restoration process and Satan's opposition to that sovereignty. It foretells the last 2000 years of the 6000 year struggle between the *seed of the woman* and the *seed of the serpent* for control of God's People (Gen 3:15). The common mistake of all previous attempts to unravel Revelation has been the failure to recognise that Revelation is written in the symbolism of Israel's Old Covenant Scriptures and therefore is addressed to no-one else except Israel.

For the nation of Israel, the restoration presented in Revelation means:

- a. Political restoration to their former status
- b. Spirit-based reconciliation to God
- c. National separation from all other peoples
- d. Completion of their redemption by resurrection.

For Israel's enemies, Revelation reveals the fulfilment of prophecy and the vindication of God's word through:

- a. The servitude of those nations that persecuted Israel
- b. The destruction of those nations that attacked Israel
- c. The destruction of the Babylonian system that enslaved Israel
- d. The destruction of the religions that misled Israel.

Revelation reveals Satan's opposition to the restoration of Israel in the form of:

- a. Political warfare against them
- b. Spirit-based fragmentation and false teaching throughout their nations
- c. Economic enslavement.

Revelation presents the process of restoration in five distinct divisions, the Seven warning letters to the Assemblies, the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets, the Seven Thunders and the Seven Vials ¹. These divisions each have their own beginnings and do not represent the popular, sequential view of history of the last 2000 years. The last part of each division will come to a head in the Sunteleia, (the time of Jacob's Trouble) and will terminate in the Telos (the time of The End of God's Judgements on Man's Day) at the Second Advent. It is at this moment that the identity of true Israel will be revealed – not only to the world at large, but to the Israelites themselves (Isa 25:7).

The culmination of restoration is the Kingdom Age and the New Heavens and the New Earth, but these topics occupy only a small portion within the book.

1.3. God's Witnesses

The study of Revelation is, if nothing else, a study of the Old Covenant language and symbols. This is not a simple task because these days it is almost impossible to overcome the conditioning we have received from the Churches. To appreciate something of the magnitude of what we have lost in modern times, let us briefly check how much we know (or do not know) about the Three Witnesses.

One of the Laws of God states that *at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established* (Deut 19:15) and God always observes His own Laws. Therefore in order to establish the reality of His word, God has given us 3 Bibles as 3 independent witnesses.

The best known witness is the youngest. It is the written word. The story of the Bible is recorded precisely, accurately, but not always chronologically, in the original languages of the Old and New Covenants. It provides the original names of all the nations that Israel encountered up till John's time but none of the names by which they became known in subsequent history. Nor does it provide any of Israel's different names following the captivities and the destruction of Judea in 70 AD. These names can be found only in secular history.

The second witness is the Great Pyramid. The story of the Bible is built precisely, accurately and chronologically into the stone passage-ways of the Great Pyramid of Gizeh. The dates of major events can be accurately determined down to a fraction of a day. But it gives no names (they have to be obtained from the Bible). Isaiah makes specific reference to this Bible – *in that day shall there be an altar (monument) to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar (statue) at the border thereof to the Lord* (Isa 19:19). In Hebrew, the name, Egypt, is always in the plural form – the Pyramid stands in the midst of Egypt and at the border of Upper and Lower Egypt. The most significant date in the Pyramid in terms of recent history is midnight, in the northern hemisphere, ending the 25th January 1844 – this is the date of the Great Step. Briefly, the Great Step, at the top of the Grand Gallery, marks the structural end of that passage and the beginning of the period of the cleansing of Israel. The Great Step also marks the beginning of the final epoch of judgement on the Earth.

The least known witness is the oldest; it is the original Zodiac. There was no written Bible until 2500 years after Adam, but God had already set the whole story in the Zodiac (Ps 19:1-6); in the 12 signs and their 36 constellations, where man cannot interfere with it. Both Adam and Eve knew of it, because when Cain was born, Eve declared, *I have gotten a man, even the saviour* (the coming one), Gen 4:1. Abel knew about it because his use of a sacrifice revealed his belief of it (Gen 4:4). Paul referred to it (Rom 10:18), which means it was still valid in his day.

1 The Seven Thunders obviously belong in this sequence, but we know little about them; Psa 29 is clearly relevant. In this Psalm all seven occurrences of the word 'voice', should have been translated as 'thunder'. The seventh verse itself reads, literally, *Jehovah's thunder is cleaving bolts of fire* (lightning). Compare Psa 18: 13,14 .

The true knowledge of the Zodiac soon degenerated into the superstitions of today's astrology but, for those seeking the truth, God has provided an Age-long reminder of where to start reading the circle of constellations – the Sphinx. That is why the Sphinx was placed outside the Great Pyramid; in the same manner that the Bible referred to the Pyramid (Isa 19:19), so the Pyramid refers to the Zodiac. The Riddle of the Sphinx is quite simple – start at the Woman (Virgo) and end with the Lion (Leo) ^(D). In fact, that very statement even summarises the time period of the written Bible – it starts with the pronouncement concerning the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) and ends when the Lion of Judah hands all back to the Father (1 Cor 15:28). The theme of the whole Bible is summarised in one composite Zodiac picture which, like Gen 3:15, is a seed plot containing the whole. The picture is made up of four constellations. These depict the figure of a man, (the constellation of Ophiuchus), restraining the serpent, (the constellation of Serpens), from possession of the crown, (the constellation of Corona). At the feet of the man we find one foot about to crush the head of the Evil One (Scorpio) while the Evil One is about to sting the other heel. The ancient Hebrew and Aramaic names of the stars in these constellations leave no doubt as to who and what the figures represent – Ps 147:4 states that God both named and numbered **all** the stars.

1.3.1. Hidden Truth

Each of these witnesses has its message hidden beneath a surface layer of misconceptions, myths and intellectual noise. God has permitted the mis-information to arise so that it hides the truth from all except His people, to whom the truth is directed. The amount of nonsense published about the Zodiac and the Pyramid is well known to all. Few, however, realise that the Bible is subject to the same degree of misinformation (most of which has its origins in man's religious institutions). Because they are God's Witnesses, it is not surprising that the credibility of these three witnesses is so persistently denied, distorted and ignored.

God has hidden much of His truth in the Covenant languages in the following ways:

- a. It is disguised under the precision of the grammar and lost completely when loosely translated as we see in the modern versions.
- b. It is presented with symbols which are associated with events that are found only in Israel's history and cannot be explained properly in the terms of any other culture.
- c. It is preserved in the numeric constructions built into the Covenant languages. The numerics provide a method for checking the accuracy of a manuscript and they reveal meaning through use of the absolute numbers themselves.
- d. It is implicit in the metaphors and other figures of speech used in the Covenant languages. Bullinger ^(A) states that the Israel character of Revelation is highlighted by the numerous Hebrew idioms, expressions and terms which are peculiar to Israel and do not come naturally to the Greek language of Revelation. (Bullinger refused to accept that the phraseology of Revelation was largely symbolical which has led to some major errors in his books because he insisted on interpreting all the symbols literally.)

1.4. The Symbols Of Scripture

The study of Revelation is a concentrated study of the language and symbols. By way of illustration of how language and symbols work together, let us take a brief look at the word *holy*.

God said to Israel:

- a. *Ye shall be holy (set-apart) unto me: for I the Lord am holy (set-apart) and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine (Lev 20:26).*
- b. *Ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and an holy (set-apart) nation (Ex 19:6).*
- c. *But ye are a chosen generation (a chosen race) a royal priesthood, an holy (set-apart) nation, a peculiar people (1 Pet 2:9).*
- d. *Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep for it is a sign (of the covenant) between Me and you ... ye shall keep the sabbath thereof; for it is holy (set-apart) unto you ... (Ex 31:13,14).*

No-one would argue seriously that the term *holy* does not mean *set-apart* to God. Establishing the significance of being *set-apart* is a different matter altogether, but why was the Sabbath day to be held on the seventh day of the week? Why not on the first, third or fifth day?

1.4.1. Numbers as Symbols

At first glance, the connection between the word, *holy* and any kind of number is not at all obvious. But as we read more of the Bible, we often find other words and phrases which yield more information about this or that point. For example,

- a. The seventh year is to be a year of separation of the land from cultivation (for the replenishment of its soil and its productivity).
- b. A leper is to undergo a cleansing period of seven days separation from the community after being healed from his disease.

These and other instances show that the number, seven, is intimately associated with the concept of separation. Applying this new information to (d) in Section 1.4, we find that the Sabbath is established as a special day not only because God said it was holy (set-apart) but because He emphasised it by establishing it on the seventh day ^(F). In other words, the seventh day of the week was separated from our work of the other 6 days. It was set-apart (holy) as a sabbath to the Lord for us to work at the study of God's word and thereby replenish our spirit-derived strength. (The association of seven with *completion* is derived from the basic meaning of the Hebrew word for seven, *shevah*.)

If we take this concept further, we can conclude that because all the words of Scripture form complex numeric patterns that are divisible by seven, the Scriptures are the complete, separated message for God's separated people. A cursory glance at the Book of Revelation reveals a preponderance of the number, seven:

7 assemblies	7 lampstands
7 spirits of God	7 angels
7 stars	7 seals
7 trumpets	7 thunders
7 vials	7 heads
7 lamps	7 eyes
7 horns	7 mountains
7 crowns	7 kings

This reveals that Revelation is a book describing the completion of the separation of His people from the peoples of the earth.

From this small example we can see that a partial study of just one word, holy, has led to the study of the number, seven and that both are intimately associated with the concept of separation. Numbers are but one type of symbol used in the Bible.

1.4.2. Language Constructs

In addition to numbers, metaphors and other figures of speech often contain hidden information. These are what might be called *common* symbols because they form part of every day conversation and narrative text. These types of symbols are usually the easiest to understand, especially when we have a good working knowledge of the characters, events and conversations in the Bible.

1.4.3. Visions, Dreams and Parables

Visions, dreams and parables are the most well-known method of “hiding” information. Assuming we have been regularly reading the Scriptures, by the time we reach Revelation, we should know that dreams and visions contain two types of information – things that are seen and things that are heard. Sometimes, the things seen are explained and then they become part of what is heard. Thus, the rules for understanding dreams and visions are:

1. Things heard are expressed in normal language (including metaphors and other figures of speech) and are directly applicable to the subject in hand. The terms used in the explanations must not be taken as abstract symbols for other things.
2. The things seen in dreams and visions are not factual, concrete objects, but symbols that do represent something else. It is our task to find the meaning for these symbols elsewhere in Scripture because their use elsewhere will disclose the additional information necessary to understand the vision. (Incidentally, if we had lived 2000 years ago, the meaning of many of these symbols would have been immediately clear to us through more intimate knowledge of the Old Covenant Scriptures.)

Parables are a special case of a dream or vision, in that what we hear will cause images to be seen in our minds. Sometimes those images are explained and are subject to Rule 1, above. When the images are not explained, they are subject to Rule 2.

1.5. Revelation's Tutorial

With all the foregoing in mind, we can turn now to Revelation 1, for, among many other things, this chapter appears to have been expressly written to demonstrate those rules. It is an example provided by our Lord Himself to show us how to unravel the remaining chapters of Revelation. Even so, the pitfalls are many and there is no place for the careless, the impetuous or the self-opinionated.

Chapter 1:1 tells us that God gave the unveiling to Jesus Anointed so that Jesus could reveal to God's servants ² the events that were about to happen swiftly in the civilised world. Jesus immediately sent His angelic messenger to reveal those things to John, so that John could witness to God's servants (Israel) these warnings from God Himself.

2 The scriptural meaning of the word "servant(s)", which is used 14 times in this book alone, is "the Children of Israel".

Verse 2 states that John bears witness to the words (he heard) of God and the witness (he heard) of Jesus Anointed concerning those things which he saw. Verse 3 expresses a blessing, on those in Israel, who read (*anagnonai*; Luke 4:16-21), hear and keep this prophecy, for the time is near. However, the verse says much more than that in the Greek. The many “hearers” of what has been read and explained are to be blessed if they both understand and heed what they hear. The “keepers” are blessed if they preserve that knowledge within Israel because those things were given only to God’s servants (Israel). The “time” is the Age of their separation and restoration which had now begun to unfold.

In verses 4 and 5, John commences a letter and addresses himself to the 7 Assemblies in *The Asia* (Asia Minor in most maps). The term *assembly* (*ecclesia* in Greek and *qahal* in Hebrew) is applied throughout Scripture to Israelites only. John sends grace and peace to those 7 Assemblies from:

- a. The One (Who) is
The One (Who) was
The One (Who is) coming
- b. The 7 Spirits of God who are in the presence of His throne, and
- c. Jesus Anointed
The One (Who is) faithful
The One (Who is) witness
The One (Who is) the firstborn of the dead
The One (Who is) the ruler of the Kings of the Earth.

The three separate greetings can be seen as coming from Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first and third groups are 7 titles of Jesus which portray His fulfilment and vindication of God’s word in the unveiling that is about to be made.

In verses 5 and 6, John calls on the 7 Assemblies to give glory and dominion to Him (Jesus) who loves us and sets us free from the bondage of sin and is making us into a kingdom of priests to God. The creation of this kingdom of priests as a holy or separated (set-apart) nation is an integral part of the Covenant God made with Israel at Sinai and is now being fulfilled. This Covenant has no relevance to any other people or race except Israel and the children of Israel in their generations (Gen 17:7, Ex 19:6).

1.5.1. Rev 1:7-10

In verse 7 John declares that Jesus is coming with the clouds and that every eye would see Him and those that pierced Him and all the tribes of the Earth would wail over Him. This verse presents us with the first things for us to identify. The most important point to note is that the verse records something written, as distinct from something seen. The points made in this verse were known to John prior to Revelation – Jesus had explained them during His life on earth and He had revealed to them the Scriptures concerning Himself. Hence the phraseology in this verse does not consist of abstract symbols that stand for something else. The terms are “common language” and their normal use in Scripture is sufficient to identify them.

- a. Coming on the clouds

This phrase reminds us of Jesus’ ascent and His own statements concerning His return. Closer investigation of the New Covenant usage of cloud(s) ³ also points to the clouds at Mount Sinai

3 Where clouds are mentioned in association with Jesus' return, the AV has translated almost every preposition as "in" - in the clouds of heaven, for example. But there are several different prepositions used (*ek, en, epi* and *meta*) and these hold the key to what is meant by each verse.

– His return will be similar in majesty and power to His appearance on Sinai ⁴. In every case, the clouds are the normal clouds we see in our atmosphere.

b. Those who pierced Him

This phrase does not refer to the single Roman soldier who thrust a spear in Jesus side or to those who nailed Him to the stake. The Greek verb indicates that it refers to those who, through the past 2000 years, have continued to wound Him by rejecting His act of redemption; disbelieving what He said and refusing to accept Him and His promise of eternal life for them. (As Jesus is the Kinsman-Redeemer, this can only refer to Israelites.)

c. All the tribes of the Earth will wail over Him

The tribes are not the tribes of Israel. The Second Advent is a time for Israel's rejoicing and gladness – certainly not a time for wailing. The Greek verb *to wail* is in the form of the Middle Voice which means those tribes of the Earth will be wailing because of what they have brought upon themselves. As the truth of what is happening dawns on them, they will realise they are guilty of persecuting and attacking God's own, chosen people. Their acts will now bring the full wrath of God upon them.

In the Greek text of verse 8, John records the Lord God as saying *I am The Alpha and The Omega, The One (Who) is and The One (Who) was and The One (Who is) coming, The One (Who is) The Lord God Almighty* (to execute His judgements and punishment of the Earth). In verses 9 and 10, John states that while on the Island of Patmos, he *became* (because of his submission to God's will) as if in a spirit state of being in the Lord's ⁵ Own Day (of Judgement). Then John said that while in this spirit state, he heard behind him a great voice like a trumpet and from this point we pass from John's words to the words of the messenger.

1.5.2. Rev 1:11-16

In verse 11, the messenger tells John to *write what thou seest in a scroll and send it to the seven assemblies, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea*. In verses 12-16, John turns around to see the speaker and is stunned by a magnificent vision of a glorious being – **like** (the) Son of Man – who is standing in the midst of 7 lampstands, holding 7 stars in his right hand, a sharp two-edged sword issuing from his mouth and having eyes like a flame of fire, etc.

Most, if not all commentators, “interpret” verses 12-16 as meaning that John saw the risen Lord Jesus in all His Glory. But if we are to follow the rules for dreams and visions, then the things John saw in his vision could **not** be real but must be abstract symbols for other, real things. Parts of this vision are explained in verse 20 and the others are left for us to identify from our knowledge of Scripture. Some of the things for us to identify are:

a. One **like** (the) Son of Man

4 In Matt 26:64, Jesus will not be sitting or seated on the right *hand* of anyone or anything; He is seated out of, or by, His own right and authority as The Power - The Almighty. The Greek word *dunamis* means *might* or *power*; hence by metonymy the term *The Power* is used for the Almighty God. That is precisely what the risen Lord Jesus tells John (Rev 1:8) - He will be coming as "the One Who is coming, the Almighty (Greek: Pantokrator)". The word, Pantokrator, is used in the LXX of Jer 5:14 to translate the Hebrew title "the Lord Almighty" and in Am 4:13 for the title "the Lord God of Hosts". In Jesus' time, Hebrew was a language used mainly by scholars, Greek was the language of the Roman Empire and the Septuagint was the “Bible” familiar to most Israelites. Hence both Apostles and the priesthood immediately understood the terms that Jesus used.

5 The word "Lord's" is an adjective for which there is no precise English equivalent that can adequately or clearly reveal its exact meaning. The scope of the Lord's Day is specified in Jer 30:23,24 - the last sentence reads *In the latter days, ye shall understand it*.

The word *like* tells us immediately this is a simile and definitely not **The Son of Man, Himself**. In the absence of any explanation, we are left to determine who the being in the vision must be. It should be obvious that the Risen Lord would not send His Angel to do a job for Him and then rush down and do it all Himself. Therefore, the being is the Angel of the Lord of verse 1; the one sent by the risen Lord to reveal these things to John. In other words, the Angel is representing The Alpha and The Omega of verse 8 who is coming to execute His judgements in the Earth.

b. White **like** wool, as white as snow

The man's *head* and *hair* is described as being white – they were not described as being *like* something else. The expressions *white like wool* and *white like snow* are not abstract symbols. They are simple comparisons of the degree of whiteness. However, the specific reference to the colour, white, means that white is being used to represent something.

White is a symbol of righteousness. It is the state of a human who has been purified – Ps 51:7, Dan 11:35, Dan 12:10, Rev 7:13 – *they washed their robes* (clean from the stains of sin) *and whitened them through the blood of the Lamb*. We are told that the souls under the altar will receive white robes when they are resurrected. Jesus did not need to be purified because He did not sin. He was righteous all His life and hence is represented in the vision as a being with shining whiteness in every physical attribute, except the eyes.

A heavenly Being with His head and hair white as wool, dressed in a garment or linen robe as white as snow and with fire issuing before His face or with eyes like flame, is the symbol of the Heavenly Judge Himself. The vision portrays the coming Judge and indicates the righteousness (white) of His judgement and the searching severity (fire) by which His judgements will be carried out.

c. Eyes **like** a flame of fire

The word *like* tells us immediately this is a simile and that the eyes are definitely not made of fire. In the absence of an explanation, we are left to determine what *flame of fire* represents. The first point is that *flame* is singular which means this is not the cloven tongues *as of fire* at Pentecost and it is not the 7 lamps of Ezekiel or the 7 lamps of Revelation. Therefore we can start by looking for references to a *flame* (singular) *of fire* in the Old Covenant. Secondly, we can look at fire alone. Such a study reveals the following:

- i. Ex 3:2 states And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame (singular) of fire, out of the midst of a bush and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. The only other occurrence (Joel 2:5) is worded like a noise (or voice) of a flame (singular) of fire in association with the chariots.
- ii. The first occurrence of the word, fire, in the Old Covenant is hidden under the word burning in the description of the composite symbol of the oven, smoke and flame that represented God when confirming the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:17). In the Hebrew text, the phrase torch of fire can be translated flame of fire and it represents the presence of God or His Spirit.
- iii. In the Old Covenant, the presence of God was revealed through fire in:
 - - the sealing of Abraham's Covenant
 - - the burning bush
 - - the pillar of fire
 - - the devouring fire on top of Sinai (mentioned numerous times)
 - - the fire on the altar that never went out
 - - the fire that consumed the first sacrifice in the Temple

- - the fire from heaven that consumed Elijah's sacrifice.

From these references it becomes clear that fire, by itself, represents the power or presence of God or His Spirit. It is either a destroying fire or a protecting fire, according to the context in which it is used. John knew that fire represents the presence of God and therefore he knew that the angel with fire in his eyes ⁶ was indeed representing and speaking with the authority of God Himself. This confirms the statement of verse 1 that this revelation is the one given by God to Jesus.

There is also an important parallel here: in the Old Covenant we find Jehovah (Jesus) speaking to Moses at the commencement of the Old Covenant and in Deuteronomy we find broad prophecy for the next 4000 years. In Revelation we find Jesus (Jehovah) speaking to John at the commencement of the New Covenant, and unveiling detailed prophecy for the last half of that period.

d. A two-edged sword issuing from his mouth

In the absence of an explanation, we are left to determine what the two-edged sword represents. A search of Scripture reveals:

- In Isa 11:4, Isaiah says that the Lord shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
- In 2 Thess 2:8, we are told and then shall that Wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.
- In Eph 6:17, we are told that the sword of the Spirit is the word of God.
- In Heb 4:12, it says for the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

The full range of meaning of this symbol is quite extensive. The two-edged sword represents the sword of the Spirit and the Word of God which is sharper than any two-edged sword made by man. It can lay bare the innermost thoughts of the soul, even to dividing the red from the yellow marrow which merge imperceptibly together in the very bones of the body (Heb 4:12,13). The two edges of this sword represent the two "words" – the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. By both these Words, men will be destroyed for their failure to take heed of them.

e. 7 lampstands

In verse 20 we are told that the 7 lampstands are the 7 Assemblies. This is all that we need to know about the lampstands.

But what would happen if we ignored this explanation and looked for a meaning elsewhere in Scripture? It would not take very long to discover that Zechariah saw a lampstand and two olive trees, but only the olive trees were explained. It would not take long to discover also that John saw two lampstands and two olive trees in Revelation. In John's case we are told that these are the two witnesses. Would anyone care to explain what 7 lampstands, without olive trees might mean? It gets too complicated to be sensible!

God knew beforehand that what we would find in Scripture would be misleading. Therefore, we are told specifically in this first chapter what the 7 lampstands represent.

6 We should note that the Being seen by John is the same Being that Daniel saw (Dan 10). There is no difference between the "eyes" in the two visions - the Greek text can read "eyes (each) a flame of fire" which means two fires which corresponds with Daniel's "torches of fire".

f. 7 stars in his right hand

In verse 20 we are told that the 7 stars are the 7 messengers of the Assemblies. This is all that John needs to tell Israel about these stars (as opposed to any other stars that we may encounter in a different context).

By way of information, Bullinger ^(A) states that the Pauline Epistles make no mention of such a personage as a messenger in the assemblies Paul visited or established. However, in the Synagogues of that time we do find an officer called the Sheliach (angel or Legate) Tzibbur (assembly) whose duty was to offer up public prayer to God on behalf of the whole congregation. Hence he spoke to God for the people and was therefore the logical person to receive such a letter. If we remember that John's scroll was being sent to Dispersed Israelites in Asia Minor – many of whom were still attending synagogues – we can see why there was no need to explain the meaning of the stars in any more detail than given in verse 20.

g. Sound of many waters

The *sound of many waters* was something that John heard in the vision – therefore, the phrase does not have an abstract, symbolical meaning. If we go looking in the Old Covenant for verses that contain the words *waters*, *many/great* and *voice/sound/noise*, we find there are five altogether and only three that contain the phrase *noise of many waters* – Ps 93:4, Ezek 1:24 and Ezek 43:2. Of these three, the meaning of the first verse is not immediately obvious and the third verse uses the phrase to describe Jesus at His second Advent. But the second verse, Ezek 1:24, is so explicit in showing that this phrase has no symbolical meaning, that it is worth quoting in full:

And when they went,

<i>I heard the</i>	<i>noise (Hebrew: qol)</i>	<i>of their wings,</i>
<i>like the</i>	<i>noise (qol)</i>	<i>of great (many) waters</i>
<i>as the</i>	<i>voice (qol)</i>	<i>of the Almighty</i>
<i>the</i>	<i>voice (qol)</i>	<i>of speech</i>
<i>as the</i>	<i>noise (qol)</i>	<i>of the host: ...</i>

It would be difficult to make the point any more clearly – the phrase has no symbolic meaning; it simply describes the nature of the sound! Furthermore, it teaches us in one salutary lesson that things heard in visions are to be taken at face value. As a separate investigation, it is interesting to look at the use of the two words, *many waters* and at the terms *speech* and *host*, but that investigation is not relevant to the phrase 'sound/noise of many waters'.

On the other hand, it is relevant to find out why the AV has translated five occurrences of *qol* as *voice* or *noise* within the one verse. The Hebrew word *qol* is derived from an unused root meaning *calling* and is translated as *voice*, whether of animals, men, God or thunder and is used of *speech* or *words*. It is also translated as *sound* or *noise* when associated with inanimate things, such as water, rain or the tumult of masses of people, such as an army or a multitude. Even more interesting is the fact that, in phrases like *voice* of thunder, *roaring* of a lion, *thunder* and lightning, *noise* of a multitude, *voice* of the Almighty, *crashing* of great waters and the like, the underlying Hebrew word is *qol* in every case.

The equivalent Greek word is *phone*; the primary meaning of the verb is *to utter a sound* and hence is translated *voice* when associated with human beings. The noun is more restrictive than the Hebrew, *qol* – the Greek noun is limited primarily to an articulate sound, that is, made with the vocal chords. On closer examination of Rev 1:15 we find that *phone* has been used twice – *His voice* (phone) *was like the sound* (phone) *of many waters* and it should be translated *His voice was like the voice of many waters*. The reason the proper translation seems awkward is because, the Greek is translating the Hebrew *qol* literally.

A good example of the rigidity of the Greek text with respect to *phone* can be seen in Rev 14:2. It reads (in the AV) *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many (great) waters, and*

as the **voice** of a great (loud) thunder: and I heard the **voice** of harpers harping with their harps. If this verse were to be translated from Greek into Hebrew and then into English, it would be quite correct to render it *And I heard a voice from Heaven like the roar of great waters, and like a peal of thunder: and I heard the singing of harpers harping with their harps.*

Incidentally, the expression, *the voice of many waters* should be equated with the awesome thunder of a mighty waterfall in full flood rather than to rambling streams in hilly dales! That is why John has already stated in Rev 1:10 that this voice sounded like a great (war) trumpet. Finally, with the aid of a comment from Ellicott ^(E) on Rev 1:15, we can perhaps begin to understand Ps 93:4, which was not so obvious earlier:

The Lord on high is mightier than the noise (qol, plural: noises) of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

By the simple command, “*Peace, be still.*”, Jesus quelled the waves and winds of a storm on the Sea of Galilee and the terror of His disciples (Mat 8:24-27 and Mark 4:37-41). He also walked upon storm-driven waves and the winds ceased, Matt 14:24-32.

In Hebrew, the translated word must harmonise with its own context without contradicting its primary meaning (a voice or sound, for example) in any other context. The same rule applies to Greek, but the meaning of a Greek word is often more limited –*voice* being limited to articulated sounds, for example. This should also teach us that the usage of a Greek word in Revelation is not necessarily a good guide to its normal meaning elsewhere in the Scripture.

1.6. Conclusion

The first chapter of *The Unveiling* has given us an introductory lesson, *par excellence*, of what *unveiling* is about and how we are to proceed to unravel the remaining visions and symbols in this book.

This vision is based on the Old Covenant Scriptures and to cover the information hidden in the vision, even in moderate detail, would require a much longer paper. (A number of points arising from this vision that will be raised in later papers in this series.) No detail of this (or any other) vision should be dismissed as “irrelevant”. Every detail is important or God would not have put it there. For example, the beings seen by John in Rev 1 and 10 are closely related, if not identical, with the beings seen by Daniel in Dan 10 and 12.

We should now be able to see that the process of Unraveling (versus Unveiling!) requires much work on our part and we have been warned that this is so in the parable of the 10 Virgins. In that parable, the lamps represent the Scriptures and the amount of light given by the lamps depends upon the oil (the knowledge) gained from the continual study of God’s word. The oil is a consumable item that can only be bought at the price of our own labour. The dimming of the light from the lamps belonging to the foolish virgins was caused by them having insufficient oil (knowledge) to see them through the last hours (the Sunteleia and Telos) as the bridegroom tarried. This is why God separated one day in seven for the specific purpose of studying His Word (purchasing oil) – not for sport and self-indulgence.



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* Papers are available by request or via some British-Israel World Federation bookshops.

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Presentation on theme: "The Book of Revelation Part 1. Introduction: Understanding Apocalyptic Literature by Mark Roberts." Presentation transcript: 1 The Book of Revelation Part 1. 2 Introduction: Understanding Apocalyptic Literature by Mark Roberts. 8 Revelation 1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 9 Revelation 2:9-10 I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. These judgments are part of the historical development of the book being themselves telescopic wherein the seventh seal introduces the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls which conclude the tribulation. c. Then in chapter 20 the millennium is described culminating in the eternal state (21--22). 1 Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 1, 5. 2 There are those such as Thiessen who understand the genitive to be objective referring to a revelation about Christ (Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 316 cited by Harold W. Hoehner, *Analysis of Bible Books: The New Testament*, DTS, 249) but it is more probably a subjective genitive referring to a revelation by Christ. Book of revelation. Lesson 1 - Introduction. John, the writer of the Book of Revelation, sets out to tell his readers something vital about the paradox of the days and years ahead: they will be the best of times, and they will be the worst of times. Some fellow named Dickens seems to have borrowed that theme several centuries later. The question we must attempt to answer (one of many we will explore) is this: was John thinking in terms of what was immediately ahead, possibly during his lifetime? Or what was far ahead...well into an indefinite future? The answer determines if Revelation will be The Book of Revelation (also called the Apocalypse of John, Revelation to John or Revelation from Jesus Christ) is the final book of the New Testament, and consequently is also the final book of the Christian Bible. Its title is derived from the first word of the Koine Greek text: apokalypsis, meaning "unveiling" or "revelation." The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament canon. Thus, it occupies a central place in Christian eschatology.