

## Why We Study Revelation

by Nathan Tyler

### I. A WARNING MESSAGE

It was April 14, 1912, in the middle of the North Atlantic ocean. Aboard the *RMS Titanic*, Jack Phillips, radio operator, was busy relaying messages via wireless telegraph. As the ship traveled full steam toward New York, wealthy passengers were drafting countless messages to be relayed. The wireless had broken down earlier in the day, and there was a large backlog of passenger mail that had to be sent out. It was now around 10:50 p.m., and the radio operator, very annoyed at the delay, was now sending them as fast as they would go.

Less than an hour's sailing ahead sat the *SS Californian*. It had been sending out reports of icebergs since early that evening, had finally run in among a dangerous ice floe, and was forced to stop for the night. Now, it began to send out its last report to the *Titanic*. This would be the last warning, before the *Californian's* radio operator went off duty. As he began to relay his message, he was suddenly interrupted by *Titanic*. "Shut up, Shut Up," said the other operator, "You're jamming me."

The busy radioman on *Titanic* had no time to listen to any danger messages. He was too busy transmitting greetings and stock market inquiries. So the operator on the *Californian* laid down his headset, and retired for the night.

An hour later, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg, ripping a gash in its side. A few hours after that, the great ship, which many said was "unsinkable," sank to the sea floor. That night, more than 1,500 people perished in the cold North Atlantic waters—two thirds of the passengers on board.

This tragic event has gone down in history as one of the greatest of maritime disasters. The most unfortunate fact about it was that it could have easily been avoided. But the passengers and crew on that fateful voyage rested in confidence that *their* ship would never meet with calamity. Warning messages were ignored. Carelessness was indulged. And the impossible happened anyway.

Today, the Lord is sending a warning to us. He does not want us to be taken unawares by the tide of future events. The dramatic unfolding of these events was known by Omniscience since eternity. God has seen fit to grant us mortals a view of the future, so that we may be able to avoid the impending disaster that is coming upon the earth.

### II. THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

1. How do we know that God really inspired the writing of the Scripture? The Bible itself, when we study and understand it, inspires faith within us.
  - a. Faith comes by hearing the Word. "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." ***Romans 10:17.***
  - b. We know the story of Jesus, as told in the gospels. We can have faith that it is true, because these are eyewitness accounts. "For *we have not followed cunningly devised fables*, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, *but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*" ***2 Peter 1:16.***
2. Is there anything more certain than the testimony of the apostles? What more can the Lord give to us that establishes our faith? "**We have also a *more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place*, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.**" ***2 Peter 1:19.***
  - a. To know that the Bible predicted events in history long before they happened, and did so with unerring accuracy, is a *more sure* affirmation of its divine origin.
    - (1) Not only that, but it gives us confidence that the things it predicts in the future will indeed happen.

3. To believe the prophets is to prosper. “And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; **Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.**” *2 Chronicles 20:20.*
  - a. “**Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy,** and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand.” *Revelation 1:3.*

### III. INTERPRETATION

1. How does prophecy come? Is it made up by men? “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but **holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**” *2 Peter 1:21.*
  - a. Therefore, can it be interpreted by our own understanding? “Knowing this first, that **no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.**” *2 Peter 1:20.*
2. What is to be our method of interpretation? “**For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little**” *Isaiah 28:10.*
  - a. The prophetic Scripture is to interpret itself. “The Lord Jesus sent a mighty angel to make plain to John by the use of symbols the things that were to transpire until the coming of Christ. He was bidden to write the instruction in a book for the benefit of the seven churches. This writing we now have preserved in the book of Revelation, but this book is understood by only a very few. It contains the message for the last days, and we are to dwell much upon these prophecies. **The work of explaining the Bible by the Bible itself is the work that should be done by all our ministers who are fully awake to the times in which we live.**” *Manuscript Releases Volume Thirteen, p. 304.*
3. What should be the source of our wisdom? “**If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God,** that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” *James 1:5.*
  - a. “**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:** a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.” *Psalms 111:10.*
4. If we follow these guidelines, who will be with us to guide our study? “**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and *he will show you things to come.*” *John 16:13.*
  - a. “The book of Revelation, in connection with the book of Daniel, demands close study. **Let every God-fearing teacher consider how most clearly to comprehend and present the Gospel that our Saviour came in person to make known to His servant John,**—‘The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass.’ None should become discouraged in their study of Revelation because of its apparently mystical symbols. ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.’ ‘Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.’ We are to proclaim to the world the great and solemn truths contained in the book of Revelation. Into the very designs and principles of the church of God these truths are to enter. **There should be a closer and more diligent study of this book, a more earnest presentation of the truths it contains, truths which concern all who are living in these last days. All who are preparing to meet their Lord should make this book the subject of earnest study and prayer.** It is just what its name signifies,—a revelation of the most important events that are to take place in the last days of this earth’s history. John, because of his faithful trust in the word of God, and the testimony of Christ, was banished to the Isle of Patmos. But his banishment did not separate him from Christ. The Lord visited His faithful servant in his banishment, and gave him instruction regarding what was to come upon the world.” *The Signs of the Times, 07-04-06:2.*

#### IV. THE “REVEALING”

1. The *Apocalypse*—“manifestation”—was given to enlighten us. **“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7.**
  - a. What is the reason it was given? “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: **but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.**” Deuteronomy 29:29.
2. What is this a revelation of? “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, **to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass;** and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John.” Revelation 1:1.
  - a. Events of the future.

#### V. SEALED UP?

1. Many would say that this is a sealed book. But what was John told? “And he saith unto me, **Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand**” Revelation 22:10.
  - a. What about the book of Daniel? “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, **and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.**” Daniel 12:4.
    - (1) Was the entire book of Daniel sealed?
      - (a) Gabriel explained portions of it to Daniel himself. “And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, **make this man to understand the vision.**” Daniel 8:16.
      - (b) Christ both understood it and told the people to read and understand a part of it. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, **spoken of by Daniel the prophet,** stand in the holy place, (**whoso readeth, let him understand:**).” Matthew 24:15.
      - (c) Only the part relating to the last days was sealed till the time of the end. “**The book that was sealed was not the book of Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel which related to the last days.** The Scripture says, ‘But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased’ (Dan. 12:4). When the book was opened, the proclamation was made, ‘Time shall be no longer.’ (See Revelation 10:6.) *The book of Daniel is now unsealed, and the revelation made by Christ to John is to come to all the inhabitants of the earth. By the increase of knowledge a people is to be prepared to stand in the latter days.*” Selected Messages Book 2, p. 105:1.
  - b. “In view of the testimony of Inspiration, **how dare men teach that the Revelation is a mystery beyond the reach of human understanding? It is a mystery revealed, a book opened. The study of the Revelation directs the mind to the prophecies of Daniel, and both present most important instruction, given of God to men, concerning events to take place at the close of this world’s history.**” The Great Controversy, p. 341:3.
  - c. “To John were opened scenes of deep and thrilling interest in the experience of the church. He saw the position, dangers, conflicts, and final deliverance of the people of God. He records the closing messages which are to ripen the harvest of the earth, either as sheaves for the heavenly garner or as fagots for the fires of destruction. **Subjects of vast importance were revealed to him, especially for the last church, that those who should turn from error to truth might be instructed concerning the perils and conflicts before them. None need be in darkness in regard to what is coming upon the earth.**” The Great Controversy, p. 341:4.
2. Yet many people are ignorant of the things that are revealed. For this reason, what comes upon them? “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee,** that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also

forget thy children.” *Hosea 4:6*.

a. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” *Proverbs 29:18*.

3. What is the reason for this great ignorance? “Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for **the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.**” *Revelation 12:12*.

a. What is one of the things that Satan does in his wrath? “Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and *taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*” *Luke 8:12*.

(1) “**Why, then, this widespread ignorance concerning an important part of Holy Writ? Why this general reluctance to investigate its teachings? It is the result of a studied effort of the prince of darkness to conceal from men that which reveals his deceptions.** For this reason, Christ the Revelator, foreseeing the warfare that would be waged against the study of the Revelation, pronounced a blessing upon all who should read, hear, and observe the words of the prophecy.” *The Great Controversy, p. 342:1*.

b. What attitude will prevent us from understanding this book? “And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” *2 Thessalonians 2:10-12*.

(1) It will only be a mystery to us if we reject the truth. “The book of Revelation must be opened to the people. **Many have been taught that it is a sealed book; but it is sealed to those only who reject light and truth.** The truth that it contains must be proclaimed, that people may have an opportunity to prepare for the events which are so soon to take place. The third angel’s message must be presented as the only hope for salvation of a perishing world.” *Pacific Union Recorder, 01-14-04:5*.

## VI. A REVELATION OF DIVINITY

1. Revelation not only reveals future events, but what else? “The *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified *it* by his angel unto his servant John.” *Revelation 1:1*.

a. What is revealed in Jesus? “1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 **Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,** and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” *Hebrews 1:1-3*.

(1) He reveals all the fulness of the Godhead. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” *Colossians 2:9*.

(a) “**The Bible is the guidebook** that is to decide the many difficult problems that rise in minds that are selfishly inclined. **It is a reflection of the wisdom of God,** and not only furnishes great and important principles, but supplies practical lessons for the life and conduct of man toward his fellow man. It gives minute particulars that decide our relation to God and to each other. **It is a complete revelation of the attributes and will of God in the person of Jesus Christ,** and in it is set forth the obligation of the human agent to render wholehearted service to God, and to inquire at every step of the way, ‘Is this the way of the Lord?’” *The Upward Look, p. 187:3*.

(2) In Him is the knowledge of God’s glory. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of

- darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Corinthians 4:6.
- b. As we behold this revelation, what should be our experience? **“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”** 2 Corinthians 3:18.
- (1) **“The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.”** The Ministry of Healing, p. 143:2.

## VII. GIVING THE MESSAGE

1. What is our duty when we hear the invitation of the Spirit? **“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”** Revelation 22:17.
  - a. Our task as Christians is to preach the gospel to the entire world. **“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”** Mark 16:15.
2. This gospel is borne in the message of the first angel: **“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”** Revelation 14:6.
  - a. **“In the revelation that Christ gave are linked together in a chain of truth the important messages of warning that are to be given to the world before Christ’s second coming. The last message of mercy is to be proclaimed where it has never yet been heard.** The workers are to labor with such self-denial, such self-sacrifice, that the message will be borne to those who have not heard it. Letter 110, 1902, p. 4.” Manuscript Releases Vol. 1, 372:4.
3. What is the significance of the way in which these angels speak? **“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”** Revelation 14:7.
  - a. *Given with force.* **“Our warfare is aggressive. Tremendous issues are before us, yea, and right upon us. Let our prayers ascend to God that the four angels may still hold the four winds, that they may not blow to injure or destroy until the last warning has been given to the world. Then let us work in harmony with our prayers. Let nothing lessen the force of the truth for this time. The present truth is to be our burden. The third angel’s message must do its work of separating from the churches a people who will take their stand on the platform of eternal truth.”** Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 61:2.
  - b. *In a definite manner.* **“But we should be careful not to lessen the force of the warning which God has given for this time. We are in danger of giving the message in so indefinite a manner that it does not impress the people.** So many other interests are brought in, that the very message which should be proclaimed with power becomes tame and voiceless. While the churches profess to believe in Christ, they are violating the law which Christ Himself proclaimed from Sinai. The Lord bids us, ‘Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.’ **The trumpet is to give a certain sound. Lift up the standard, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Make this the important theme. Then by your strong arguments wall it in, and make it of still greater force. Dwell more on the Revelation. Read, explain, and enforce its teaching.”** (Australasian) Union Conference Record, 06-01-00:20.
  - c. *Clearly and distinctly.* **“Our lesson for the present time is, How may we most clearly comprehend and present the gospel that Christ came in person to present to John on the isle of Patmos—the gospel that is termed ‘the Revelation of Jesus Christ’? We are to present to our people a clear explana-**

**tion of Revelation. We are to give them the Word of God just as it is, with as few of our own explanations as possible.** No one mind can do this work alone. Although we have in trust the grandest and most important truth ever presented to the world, we are only babes, as far as understanding truth in all its bearings is concerned. Christ is the great Teacher, and that which He revealed to John, we are to tax our minds to understand and clearly to define. We are facing the most important issues that men have ever been called upon to meet. The theme of greatest importance is the third angel's message, embracing the messages of the first and second angels. All should understand the truths contained in these messages and demonstrate them in daily life, for this is essential to salvation. We shall have to study earnestly, prayerfully, in order to understand these grand truths; and our power to learn and comprehend will be taxed to the utmost." *Manuscript Releases Volume Twelve, p. 212:3.*

## VIII. THE FOCUS OF OUR STUDY

1. The book of Revelation contains many things written for us. In the scope of these chapters, we will not be looking at all of those things. Our focus will be on the messages of the three angels, and the fourth angel who joins in with them.
  - a. We will only be studying those things that relate directly to the messages of these angels. At first it may seem that this would not be much to study, but these messages are in fact the central point of the Apocalypse, as we will discover. That is why this book has been entitled "*The Heartbeat of Revelation.*"
2. Who are these three angels—three "messengers"—that bring the final warning to this earth? **"God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself.** He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world. ***The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth.*** Christ declares to His followers: 'Ye are the light of the world.' To every soul that accepts Jesus the cross of Calvary speaks: 'Behold the worth of the soul: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.'" ***Nothing is to be permitted to hinder this work. It is the all-important work for time; it is to be far-reaching as eternity. The love that Jesus manifested for the souls of men in the sacrifice which He made for their redemption, will actuate all His followers.***" *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5, 455:2.*

As we study this wonderful book of Revelation, may the Holy Spirit guide us to a fuller understanding of the character and glory of God. May we be faithful to our calling, to be the people who carry the message to the end.

*"Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Revelation 22:7.*