



Deciphering the Messages of the Apocalypse

Understanding the Revelation to John

Session III

A glossary of unfamiliar, mystical, symbolic, or meta-textual words and phrases found in the Revelation to John:

Numbers

- 7:** Fullness, completion, all of, totality; perfection, divinity. Related to the fullness of creation that God provided in seven days. The number seven is used quite frequently in this book. It is used in parallel between specific and general things. For example, the seven churches that have been written to mean both those seven specific churches, and all of the churches of the world, the seven signs refer both to those seven specific signs mentioned, and all of the signs that God gives us.
- 6:** Less than perfection, un-divinity. Tripling a number, suggests ‘most’ or greatest’, so **666** can be interpreted as ‘greatest imperfection’ or ‘greatest un-divinity’ or ‘anti-Christ.’
- 10:** more than seven, it suggests something that does not belong to the current ‘fullness’ but the next. A short time; coming, but not yet here.
- 3 ½:** Half of seven. In the middle of the current age/regime/fullness. Also represented by Daniel’s “time, two times, and half a time”.
- 1260:** given as the period (in days) of the persecution of God’s people, 3 ½ years, also ‘a year, two years, and half a year’, which is given to mean in the here and now.

1000 : a large amount, a myriad, more than could be counted.

7000: seven, representing totality, times an uncountable number

12: The number of tribes of Israel, and the number of Israel's patriarchs (1 per tribe); also the number of Apostles. Twelve is a sort of perfection and completion of itself, it is the natural number of divisions of the people who have entered into God's covenant, whether it be tribes or churches.

12,000: given only as a distance, it suggests an uncountable span of space for each of the categories of God's people.

144,000: the square of the 12 tribes of Israel multiplied by a thousand or a large amount, meaning specially in this book, the New Israel, which includes people from every nation and tongue.

Places

ABADDON: Aramaic for destruction or ruin

ABYSS : Void and emptiness, perhaps a Christian view of the older (pre-resurrectionite) Jewish belief in *Sheol*. In the Revelation, it is the holding tank for the fallen angels and the forces of wickedness which rebel against God, before they are ultimately destroyed.

ARMAGEDDON : Lit, "the mountain of Meggiddo, possibly the location of some of Israel's historic battles. Largely an enigma.

BABYLON: Rome, the source of persecution; but also any earthly (not divine) empire; an allusion to the captivity of God's people

EGYPT: an image of oppression of God's people, and slavery; yet one that was conquered and no longer represents a big threat

GOG AND MAGOG: Mysterious men, referred to both as people and as the nations they spawned throughout the Bible, in this book, likely referring to all pagan nations.

Dramatis personae

ACCUSER: Satan, literally

ALPHA & OMEGA: the 1st and last letters of the Greek alphabet, a Name for Jesus, in the preliminary vision.

AMEN, THE: Another name for Jesus, that is, the affirmation and acceptance, the "Yes, this is true" to God's Word.

ANGEL: a supernatural messenger of God, but also, probably, the leader, elder, or overseer (priest or bishop) of a Christian community

APOLLYON: Greek for "the Destroyer"

BALAAM & BALAK : OT Characters, who allegorically represent the infidelity of contemporary people who eat food sacrificed to idols

BEAST: the forces of evil; the antichrist The Roman empire, worshiped by all the world; the antichrist, who leads people to worship first beast

BRIDE: the Church in covenant relationship with Christ

DRAGON: the serpent, magnified; power of evil; Satan

ELDERS: the patriarchs plus the apostles, the leaders of all God's people throughout all of time.

FOUR CREATURES: An Eagle, an Ox, a Man, and a Lion. Respectively, the swiftest and best-sighted; the strongest; the smartest and craftiest; and the most fierce of all God's creatures. The pinnacles of creation.

FAITHFUL WITNESS: another codeword for Jesus

FIRST-BORN: another word for Jesus, stressing His primacy and lordship

JEZEBEL: a queen of Judah who introduced pagan worship to the Temple; in this book, someone who brings pagan customs into Christianity

KEY OF DAVID: A name of Jesus, Who has the final determination of who enters the heavenly kingdom and who doesn't

MORNING STAR: The first point of light on the horizon, the herald of the Dawn. A name of Jesus, particularly referring to His resurrection victory over death

VIRGINS: probably not literal, but people who never indulged in any idolatrous practice

Miscellaneous

AMULET/WHITE STONE: A token of admission to a feast.

BOOK OF LIFE: The 'Register' of God's kingdom, where the names of the redeemed are kept

BURNING SULFUR : A particularly nasty product, acrid smelling, with a fire that water won't quench; associated with the underworld, and supernatural evil

COLORS: Black=death, darkness, despair, night; White=purity, baptism, salvation; Red=blood, sacrifice, war; Pale='sickly green', disease, death, plague; Green/Emerald=new life, rich and abundant life, growth, health

CROWN/DIADEM: Royal authority, but also the prize for winning an athletic competition or race.

EAST: source of light, the place of paradise, resurrection; also the only known boundary to the Roman Empire

EYES: symbolic of vision, wisdom, and insight.

HORNS: power; rulers; authority

LAMPSTANDS: reservoirs of oil (sacramental grace and healing) which shed light (the Gospel)—a symbol of the church.

LIGHTNING & THUNDER: the brightest and loudest phenomena of the ordinary natural world, used as descriptions for the activity of God

PALM BRANCHES: tokens of athletic achievement and victory; also an allusion to the Triumphal Entry.

WATER: symbolic of baptism, this speaks mostly of the abundance of grace and health and life that spring from God, as opposed to the world of the Middle East, which is arid

WINGS: images of the speed and freedom of movement that angels have

WORMWOOD: a plant which embitters water; full of both OT and NT references, like Lamentations, the Exodus story, and the Crucifixion.