

## **“REVELATION: WRITTEN FOR OUR DAY?” SERIES**

### **#5: “The Progressive Parallelism of Revelation”**

#### **INTRO:**

For whom was the book of Revelation intended? In other words, to whom was it written? Let’s look at the beginning verses of the book:

***<sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.***

Fill in the blank: “. . . ***show to his servants the thing that must \_\_\_\_\_ take place. . . Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and blessed are \_\_\_\_\_ . . . for the time is \_\_\_\_\_.***”

**So, this writing is for the reading and heeding of any who will hear, from those who read it the moment John laid down his pen to any who will read and hear it today.**

In other words, John is writing about the era of the church, the dispensation we call “The Church Age.” There are three eras or ages when God dispensed His will: Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian or Church Age. Needless to say, we are in the Church Age.

A number that appears time after time in the Revelation is the number seven:

- The seven lampstands;
- The seven churches;
- The seven seals of the scroll;
- The seven trumpets;
- The seven angels; and
- The seven bowls of wrath.

Most Bible scholars agree that the biblical number seven symbolizes completeness. So, we take the sevens of completeness to mean the complete age of the church, from its beginning on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 until Christ comes for it sometime yet in the future.

**SO, IN EACH OF THE SEVEN SECTIONS JOHN IS DESCRIBING WHAT THE CHURCH AGE WOULD BE LIKE.**

In each of the seven sections of Revelation, we are looking at a description of the entire age of the church, so, the entire age of the church is seen, over and over again, but from seven different angles.

Each of the seven churches represents what the church in general would be like during “the church age.” That is, until Christ comes for it, the church will at times be like the church at Ephesus – strong against false doctrine but having failed to make the main thing the main thing. At other times, the church will be persecuted like the Smyrna church. At yet other times, the church will be like the Pergamum church – strong in the faith, but weak on false doctrine. At still other times, the church will be like Thyatira – known for her good works, but slow to discipline troublemakers in the church. Sometimes the church will be like the church at Sardis, with all kinds of activity going on, but spiritually dead. Then, at times, the church will be like the church at Philadelphia – very faithful. Finally, sometimes the church will be like Laodicea – lukewarm spiritually.

These conditions of the church may be repeated through the church era, and at any given time, these seven conditions may be seen in the worldwide church.

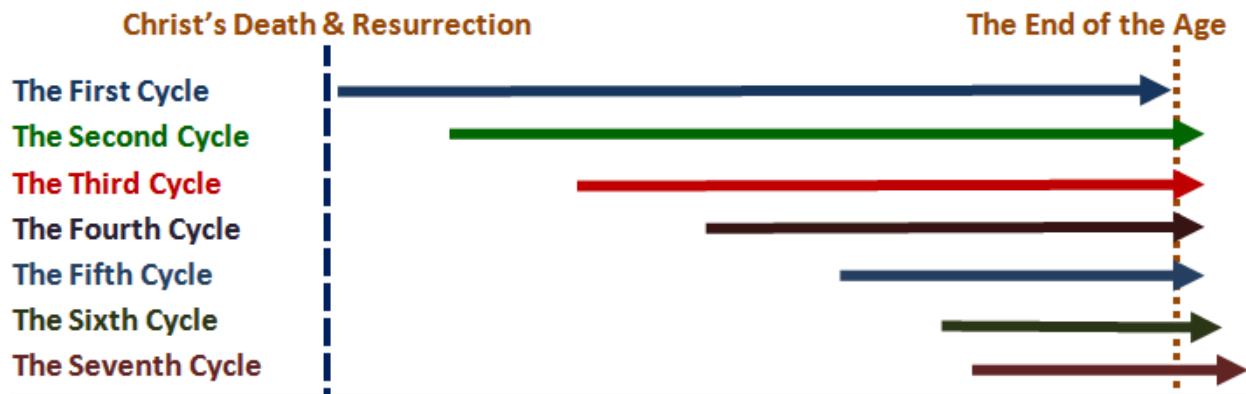
There are some who believe the seven churches represent the seven stages the church will go through before Christ returns, and that we are in the Laodicean or last stage, but there are many who don't share this view.

***AS I HAVE ALREADY SAID, THE SEVEN SECTIONS RUN PARALLEL TO ONE ANOTHER, EACH COVERING THE SAME DISPENSATIONAL PERIOD WE CALL THE CHURCH AGE.***

That is, an aspect of the complete Church Age is described in each of the seven sections. Let me review those seven sections at this point:

1. The Christ-indwelt church in the world (chapters 1-3);
2. The church suffering trial and persecution (chapters 4-7);
3. The church avenged, protected, victorious (chapters 8-11);
4. Christ opposed by the dragon and his helpers (chapters 12-14);
5. Final wrath upon the impenitent (chapters 15-16);
6. The fall of Babylon and the beasts (chapters 17-19);
7. The dragon's doom and church victors (chapters 20-22).

Charted, it looks like this:



With each cycle, the intensity of spiritual conflict grows stronger.

**THE DURATION OF THIS "CHURCH AGE" IS REPRESENTED BY 1,260 DAYS IN CHAPTERS 11, 12, AND 13.**

In Revelation 11, John wrote:

***<sup>1</sup>Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, <sup>2</sup>but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. <sup>3</sup>And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth."***

In Revelation 12, he wrote:

***<sup>1</sup>And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup>She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup>And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. <sup>4</sup>His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child, he might devour it. <sup>5</sup>She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, <sup>6</sup>and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.***

In Revelation 13:1-5, John wrote:

***<sup>1</sup>And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup>And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup>One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the***

**beast. <sup>4</sup> And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?”**

**<sup>5</sup> And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.**

Hendriksen’s comment on this is:

*“We immediately see that the three ways of designating this period which we find in chapters 11, 12 and 13 differ but slightly. In fact, forty-two months is equal to 1,260 days; both are equal to ‘a time, times, and half a time’, if the term ‘time’ be interpreted as meaning one year, and ‘times’ as indicating two years. In all cases we are dealing with a period which is designated as three years and a half.*

*“It is in order to ask why the term ‘three years and a half’ is used to characterize this long period. To answer this question, we must remember that during the old dispensation there was a period of three years and a half which God’s people could never forget. It was a period of affliction, yet also a period during which the power of God’s Word was exhibited (1 Ki. 17; Jas. 5:17). When you compare James 5:17 with Revelation 11:6, you immediately see that the apostle was thinking of the days of Ahab and Elijah. During that period of three and a half years God’s Church was persecuted (1 Kings 18:10,13) yet not destroyed (1 Kings 18:4,39; 19:18). God’s Word showed its great power (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah and others were nourished by Jehovah in a miraculous manner (1 Kings 17:4,9 ff.). Similarly, throughout the present long period of gospel activity, beginning with Christ’s first coming and extending nearly to the second coming, the Church is persecuted but not destroyed, God’s Word exerts a powerful influence, and God’s people receive spiritual nourishment.*

*“The expression ‘a time, and times, and half a time’ occurs first in the book of Daniel 7:25; 12:7. It is the period of the antichrist. John emphasizes the fact that the spirit of the antichrist is in the world already (1 John 4:3). In the Apocalypse this period of three years and a half refers to the entire gospel age. It is followed by the ‘three days and a half’ during which ‘the beast that comes up out of the abyss’—the antichristian world in its final phase—will kill the witnesses and will silence the voice of the gospel (cf. Rev 11:7 ff.). (pp 173-174)*

So, the church age is not a time of bliss, in that **“the spirit of the antichrist”** is constantly making war against the church, and as the end of it draws closer, the world becomes more antichristian than ever.

## **CLOSING:**

You’re asking, “Where are we, as far as the end of the church age is concerned? Are we in the last days?” My answer is, “If you’re asking if the appearance of **‘the beast of the abyss’** is near, I don’t think so..., but I could be wrong.”

Yet, we need to be ready. Death comes unannounced to all of us. Death seals destinies. We need to be ready to face Christ when it comes.

A gardener was complimented on his magnificent horticultural work. He was asked, "Does your employer find your work worthy?"

He answered, "Well, he is away, but he plans to return soon."

"Then," replied the observer, "I suppose you work as if he were returning tomorrow."

"Oh, no," answered the gardener. "As if he were returning today!"