

T3 REVELATION: THE LION AND THE LAMB

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1. The author of Revelation is traditionally considered to be St. John, one of the original twelve apostles and author of the gospel bearing his name (as well as a three New Testament letter). He is the one who took care of the Blessed Virgin Mary (see John 19:26-27) following Christ's death and resurrection. Tradition tells us that he was the last apostle to die and the only one not to die a martyr's death. He was an early bishop of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

which literally meant “pull back the veil”, it is wedding imagery. Marriage is used as a symbolic element throughout Scripture. The final chapters of Revelation depict a wedding liturgy, which you'll learn more about in the study. In fact, Revelation can be looked at as a book of liturgy. The Holy Mass is the way we participate in the heavenly liturgy and there are many parallels between them that give exciting insights into the mysterious final book of the Bible.

4. The book of Revelation is written in a specific type of biblical literature: namely, apocalyptic.

SESSION 1

Christianity is filled with apparent paradoxes. If you don't understand this, then you probably won't understand the Bible. As you may know already, a paradox is a statement that appears self-contradictory, like "jumbo shrimp."

In Scripture, we read many things that are seemingly paradoxical:

- "He who believes in me, though he die ... shall live." (John 11:25)
- "Whoever loses their life will find it." (Matthew 16:25)
- "If you wish to be the greatest, you must become the least." (Luke 9:48)
- "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." (Mark 10:31)

You get the idea.

People think that the book of Revelation is a prophecy about the "end times," a book brimming with fearful imagery and life-or-death consequences (literally). Many see it as a "dark book" filled only with angst, fear, wrath, and death.

Christians, however, who see with the eyes of faith, should not view Revelation this way. We know our God is a loving God. We know that He is merciful. So we know it is not God's plan to scare us. It is also not God's plan for us to die but to live. Now, you might be saying, "Then why will I die?" God wants you to live, eternally; God wants you to live forever, with Him, in heaven. The devil wants no such thing. The devil wants you in hell, where there is no God, no love, and, therefore, no true "life" within you. Make no mistake—there is a battle being waged for your soul. The devil's plan is to keep you from life, from God. God's plan is to save you from eternal death.

In the coming lessons you will hear a lot about judgment and punishment, heaven and hell, good and evil, etc. What you will be challenged to do is to choose between believing the lie or believing the truth ... just like Adam and Eve had to choose. God wants you to live, so first you must die.

If you want to learn the "truth" about Revelation, first you must forget everything you think you know.

The paradox is that this book is not about fear at all; it is about hope. The question is whether you are willing to let God increase your vision, as He did St. John's vision. Before you embark on this journey, as God to give you "eyes to see" (Psalm 119:18).

THE CHAPTERS COVERED IN THIS LESSON

OPENING QUESTION

VERSE TO REMEMBER

BREAKING IT DOWN

1. What five persons or groups are involved in communicating Revelation's message?

2. What is the significance of there being seven Churches?

3. What three things must we do to inherit God's special blessing (1:3)?

4. What does the title "Alpha and Omega" mean (1:8)?

5. On what day did this vision given to St. John occur (Rev 1:9-10)?

6. What does the figure in the first vision tell John?

7. What do the seven lampstands represent in 1:20?

8. What does John witness in God's throne room (Rev. 4)?

9. What do the twenty-four elders represent in the throne room?

10. How does the Lion appear in Revelation 5:6?

NOTES

KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NUMBERS, COLORS, AND ANIMALS IN REVELATION

The book of Revelation is full of fantastical images and a rich symbolism unfamiliar to most readers today. As you read, use this key to help unlock the meaning and find its relevance.

NUMBERS

One (Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13)	Primacy, greatness, God himself
Two (Revelation 11:3; 2 Corinthians 13:1)	Two witnesses needed to judge a crime
Half; three-and-a-half (Revelation 8:7, 9:15, 12:4)	Limited or restricted time frame
Four (Revelation 4:6, 7:1, 9:14, 20:8)	Cosmos, creation, creatures: four animals, four winds, four corners
Six (Revelation 13:18)	Imperfection
Seven (Revelation 1:4, 1:12, 2:1, 3:1, 4:5; 5:1; 8:2; etc.)	Completeness, covenant
Ten (Revelation 2:10; 9:16; 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16)	Shortness, incompleteness, limitation
1,000 (Revelation 5:11; 9:16; 11:13; 20:2-3)	As the product of 10x10x10, 1,000 represents a long time, but still a finite time
Twelve (Revelation 7:5-8; 12:1; New Israel) 21:12, 14, 16; 21:21; 22:2)	Continuity with the twelve tribes of Israel (for example, the twelve apostles in the New Israel)
144,000 (Revelation 7:4, 11:2, 13:5, 14:1, 21:17)	As the product of 12x12x1,000, the number 144,000 represents all of God's people in union with him

COLORS (CHROMATIC SYMBOLISM)

White (Revelation 1:14, 2:17, 3:4-5, 6:11, 7:9, 7:13, 14:14, 19:14)	Victory, purity, dignity
Black (Revelation 6:5, 12)	Death, disaster, distress

Red (Revelation 6:4, 9:17, 12:3)	Bloodshed, violence
Green (lit. "pale") (Revelation 6:8)	Impending death
Purple/scarlet (Revelation 17:4, 18:16, 18:12)	Immortality

OTHER SYMBOLS

Babylon (Revelation 14:8)	Place of exile; the greatest threat to Israel and her freedom to worship
Beasts (Revelation 11:7, 11:13, 14:9; 14:11)	Foreign nations opposed to God's people
Crowns (Revelation 4:4, 4:10, 6:2, 9:7)	Authority
Dragon, Serpent (Revelation 12, 13)	Satan
Eyes, full of (Revelation 4)	All-seeing, all-knowing power
Egypt (Revelation 11)	Oppressor of God's people
Eagle, Ox, Lion, Man (Revelation 4:7, 8:13, 9:17)	The four mightiest creatures
Horns (Revelation 5:6; 12:3; 13:1,11)	Power
Jewels (Revelation 4, 21)	Unique, rare, and precious
Key of David (Revelation 3:7)	Power to open or shut God's kingdom
Palm branches (Revelation 7:9)	Joy, victory
Right hand (Revelation 1:16-20, 5:1, 5:7)	Power, authority
Seals, trumpets, bowls (Revelation 1:10; 4:1; 5-6; 8; 16)	Liturgical images used in Revelation to call for repentance, to announce and dispense judgment
Sodom (Revelation 11:8)	Immortality
Spirits (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6)	Angels
Thunder (Revelation 4:5, 6:1, 8:5, 10:3-4, 14:2)	God's voice

SHARED ELEMENTS IN THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

(From The Lamb's Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth by Scott Hahn, pp. 119-120)

Sunday Worship	1:10
High Priest	1:13
An altar	8:3-4, 11:1, 14:18
Priests	4:4, 11:15, 14:3, 19:4
Vestments	1:13, 4:4, 6:11, 7:9, 15:6, 19:13-14
Consecrated celibacy	14:4
Lampstands (Menorah)	1:12, 2:5
Penitence	chapters 2-3
Incense	5:8, 8:3-5
The Book, or Scroll	5:1
The Eucharistic Host	2:17
Chalices	15:7, ch.16, 21:9
The Sign of the Cross (The Tau)	7:3, 14:1, 22:4
The Gloria	15:3-4
The Alleluia	19:1, 19:3, 19:4, 19:6
Lift up your hearts	11:12
The "Holy, Holy, Holy"	4:8
The Amen	19:4, 22:21
The Lamb of God	5:6 and throughout
The Prominence of the Virgin Mary	12:1-6, 12:13-17
Intercession of angels and saints	5:8, 6:9-10, 8:3-4
Devotion to St. Michael the Archangel	12:7
Antiphonal chant	4:8-11, 5:9-14, 7:10-12, 18:1-8
Reading from Scripture	chapters 2-3, 5, 8, 12-11
The priesthood of the faithful	1:6, 20:6
Catholicity (or universality)	7:9
Silent contemplation	8:1
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb	19:9, 19:17

FINDING THE MASS (PRAYERS) IN SCRIPTURE

Did you know that the entire Mass from start to finish is *completely* based on and founded in Scripture? Virtually every prayer and response we say during the celebration of Mass is based on the Word of God.

Here are just a few examples:

- In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
- Amen (1 Chronicles 16:36).
- The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you (see 2 Corinthians 13:13-14).
- The Lord be with you (Ruth 2:4).
- Lord have mercy (Tobit 8:4).
- Christ have mercy (1 Timothy 1:2).
- Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth (Luke 2:14).
- Lord, I am not worthy to receive you (Matthew 8:8).
- Blessed be God forever (Psalm 68:36).
- May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands (Psalm 50:23).
- Lift up your hearts; we lift them up to the Lord (Lamentations 3:41).
- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God (Colossians 3:17).
- Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might (Isaiah 6:3).
- Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (Mark 11:9-10).
- Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith (1 Timothy 3:16).
- Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again (1 Corinthians 15:3-5; Revelation 22:12).
- Lord, you are holy indeed, the fountain of all holiness (2 Maccabees 14:36).
- From age to age ... from east to west (Psalms 103:17, 113:3).
- Take this and eat it, this is my body (Matthew 26:26).
- This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).
- Through Him, with Him, in Him (Romans 11:36).
- This is the lamb of God; happy are we who are called to His table (Revelation 19:9).
- Go in peace to love and serve the Lord (Luke 7:50; 2 Chronicles 35:5).

Our Church, the *Catholic* (i.e., "universal") faith, was founded by Christ, entrusted to Peter, and led by the Holy Spirit. It is the *only* Church that Jesus Himself founded. Our Mass, celebrated in hundreds of languages throughout the world, thousands of times every day, is totally, absolutely, unequivocally, 100 percent founded in Scripture.

Take pride in the fact that you are part of a long and glorious tradition. Be proud to be Catholic!

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

HEAVEN, HELL, AND PURGATORY

You are familiar with the Creed. Every time you pray the Rosary, you pray the Apostles' Creed. During Sunday Mass, we recite the Nicene Creed. Both begin with the words, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty ..."

Try reciting it under your breath now. Keep going.

What is the last line before you say, "Amen"?

That's right ... "I believe in life everlasting."

Do you? Do you believe that we are designed and invited to live forever with God, in perfect joy? Do you believe that if Jesus came back today (or if He came for you personally), you would be headed to heaven, no questions asked?

What does the Catholic Church teach about the final judgment? What do you know about heaven, hell, and purgatory? Revelation often makes people think, talk, and debate about the end of time, but rarely do people know the "other places" in Scripture that talk about the "last" things.

We are going to take a brief look at heaven, hell, and purgatory and some of the verses and *Catechism* references that refer to each.

HEAVEN: OUR HOME

Heaven is eternal joy—our natural selves, the way that we were intended by God to be. If we die with our wills turned toward God and His grace in our souls, then we will be united with Him for all eternity. We call this "heaven." Heaven is not as much a "where" as a "Who" and a "what." In heaven, our heart's deepest longing is satisfied in God. According to St. Paul, we will be joined with the saints and angels and see God "face to face" (see 1 Corinthians 13:12).

We do not become angels in heaven because we are not angels. We are human beings. God, as the perfect good, the perfect knowledge, and the perfect love, gives us our fill of each. Read and re-read 1 Corinthians 2:9. Pray it. Commit it to memory.

God wants everyone to be in heaven. He wants it so much that He died on the Cross in order that we may be with Him. The only thing keeping us from heaven would be us. We can change that any time we want by giving ourselves completely to the Lord of heaven and earth.

Check out these verses and *Catechism* references:

Genesis 6:2-4; 1 Kings 8:22-23; Isaiah 61-8, 24:4; Psalms 2:4, 11:4, 14:2; Revelation 21:10; CCC 32, 1821, 2053, 2796.

PURGATORY: A REALITY

Many non-Catholics do not believe in purgatory because they believe it has no basis in Scripture. In fact, there are several biblical passages that support the doctrine of purgatory.

It is true that the word "purgatory" is not mentioned in Scripture. (Many theological terms that all Christians accept are not found in the Bible, either: "Trinity," for example.) The verb *purge* comes from a Latin term meaning "to purify." So purgatory is a state of cleansing in which our souls are purified from sin.

As Revelation 21:27 clearly teaches that "nothing unclean will enter heaven." Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 3:15, St. Paul states that "if someone's work is burned up, that one will suffer loss; the person will be saved, but only as through fire." Clearly, the "fire" mentioned here by Paul cannot refer to hell because he says that the "person will be saved." There is no salvation for those in hell.

Jesus Himself teaches us that some sins can be forgiven in the "next world," as we hear in Matthew 12:32 and elsewhere (1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:6). St. Paul prayed for the dead, too (2 Timothy 1:16-18). In addition, there is a passage in 2 Maccabees 12:44-46

which clearly speaks of the existence of purgatory. The real question, then, isn't "Where is purgatory found in the Bible?" but "Why does there need to be a purgatory at all?"

God is perfect holiness (Isaiah 6:3). We are called to be perfectly holy (Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Without perfect holiness, we cannot see God in heaven (Hebrews 12:14). Purgatory is meant for our cleansing and sanctification (Hebrews 12:11). All discipline and affliction leads us closer to God, if we let it (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2).

Christ accomplished our *justification* by dying on the Cross. But the Bible teaches us that we are made holy over time (the process of *sanctification*), and this process involves suffering. Purgatory is just the final stage of sanctification for those in need of purification prior to entering the perfect and eternal banquet of heaven.

Check out these verses and *Catechism* references:

2 Samuel 12:13-14; 2 Maccabees 12:44-46; Matthew 12:32; 1 Corinthians 3:15; 2 Timothy 1:16-18; Revelation 21:27; CCC 1030-32, 1472

WHY THE HELL?

As much as heaven is the fulfillment of all goodness, knowledge, and love, hell is the opposite. When we die, our wills are set. We have freely chosen in this life whether we want to be with God for all eternity.

We may think during this life that we don't need God, that we have the ability to be happy on our own, know things on our own, or be good to others on our own. When confronted by God, those who are destined for hell cannot accept that all of those abilities come from God.

hell is the absence of God and His love. Hell is a choice on our part. If we choose to live without Him in this life on earth (showing Him that we want nothing to do with His mercy or His life), He will not force us to live with Him for eternal life in heaven. Again, hell is our choice.

Those souls in hell are eternally removed from God. There is no way for them to know His love or anything about His plan. They are eternally frustrated. There is no goodness, no sacrifice, no beauty, no joy. There is only selfishness, ignorance and hatred. The absence of God is so horrific we cannot even fathom it. We call it hell, but a simple word or mental picture cannot begin to do justice to this reality.

Check out these verses and *Catechism* references:

Isaiah 33:11; Job 1:6-9; 2 Kings 1:2-6, 1:16; Matthew 22:12-14, 25:41-46; Luke 3:9, 16-17; John 15:6; CCC 1033-36, 1861

NOTES

