



## RACING TOWARD THE MARK

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In my contact with people around the world I have discovered that there is a deep and sincere desire of many to better understand the Word of God. Yet, in contrast with this, there appears to be a rapid departure from the clear presentation of the Word to an abundance of man-made theories, traditions and sensational speculations. Many religious leaders have even gone so far as to tell people that portions of the Bible are "not trustworthy", are "sub-Christian", "not inspired", or "can not be understood". What a sad state of affairs this is for God has told us that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16) and that the Holy Spirit will lead us into an understanding of "all truth", or the Word of God (John 16:13; 17:17).

One of the books that has received the greatest attack is the last book of the Bible, Revelation. Many people, Christian and non-Christian alike, have a tremendous interest in the things contained in this book of the Bible. I personally believe that this interest is prompted by the Spirit of the living God, yet a great percentage of these people become confused by the many symbols contained in this book; and when they go to their pastor, priest, or friend for help they are often told that they should not "waste" their time trying to study Revelation. Often they are told that it is a "sealed book", that "it is not meant to be studied, or understood", that "it doesn't belong in the Bible", or some other such brazen falsehood.

God's promised blessing is: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein" (Revelation 1:3). Therefore the purpose of this *Amazing Discoveries Prophecy Seminar* is to help all, who so desire, receive this blessing and to better understand the beauty of this marvelous book of the Bible. To clearly see that the book of Revelation can be understood, that the meaning of the mysterious symbols are themselves interpreted in the Scriptures, and that none of these prophecies are of "any private interpretation" (2 Peter 1:20).

It is my earnest prayer that each of you, during this *Amazing Discoveries Prophecy Seminar*, might receive a greater "Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1).

Of all the books of the Holy Scriptures, one of the most controversial is the book of Revelation. Many in the world today claim this book cannot be understood nor was it ever intended to be. The very title of this book, however, refutes this claim, in that it is derived from the Greek word "Apocalypses" which means literally "unveiling". Hence revelation, or the revealing. It is the "revelation of Jesus", or the revelation *about* Jesus and *from* Jesus.

This book contains citations, or allusions to 28 of the 39 books of the Old Testament, and according to one authority there are as many as 505 such instances. It also contains at least 123 different Bible doctrines.

In the very first paragraph of this book we find four important details: (1) Where the Revelation came from, (God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ). (2) To whom it was to be given, (His servants). (3) Why it was given, (To reveal the things which must shortly come to pass). (4) How it was to be given to them, (Signified by signs or symbols). It is because of these many symbols found in the book of Revelation that so many people today claim it cannot be understood and that it shall always remain a mystery. It is sad indeed for one to believe that God would be content to have us remain in darkness and ignorance. In referring to this belief, Uriah Smith, in his book *Daniel and the Revelation*, states:

"God says that this prophecy was given to reveal coming events to His servants, yet many of the expositors of His word tell us that no man can understand it! This is as if God would undertake to make known to mankind important truths, yet fall into the worse than earthly folly of clothing them in language or in figures which human minds could not comprehend! It is as if He would command a person to behold some distant object, and then erect an impenetrable barrier between him and the object! Or as if He would give His servants a light to guide them through the gloom of night, yet throw over that light a pall so thick and heavy that not a ray of its brightness could penetrate the obscuring folds! How men dishonor God who thus trifle with His Word! No; the Revelation will accomplish the object for which it was given, and 'His servants' will learn from it the 'things which must shortly come to pass,' and which concern their eternal salvation." Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 340

The things recorded in this book are most pertinent to those of us living in these last days of the earth's history. Careful and prayerful study should be given this book in order that it not be interpreted according to the ideas and preconceived notions of men, and no false application given to the sacred Word of God. (See 2 Peter 1:20; Revelation 22:18-19). There is so much in this book that we must definitely come to understand in order that we might prepare ourselves and shape our course of action, so that we do not receive the plagues which are to shortly fall upon the world.

However, let the reader ever keep in mind that the book of Revelation is not merely a book of curses and plagues, but also a book of blessings, such as this: "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). Here we have even further evidence that this is not a mysterious book beyond human comprehension, for if it were how could the Lord expect anyone to "keep those things" if they cannot be understood? On the contrary, it is a book which is to be read and studied, in order that we might be prepared for the "things which must shortly come to pass."

Even those who are unable to read are included in this blessing if they will only listen as someone else presents it. It is essential, however, that we remember the fullness of the blessing comes, not from just the hearing, or the reading; but in the keeping of these things. A most relevant example of this can be found in the closing chapter of Revelation where the promise is given: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14). This is the same principle that Jesus was referring to when He declared, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

Of all the books of the Bible, this is certainly the one that should be given our special attention. And since it is a book which God has promised will bring a blessing to those who do hear, read, and keep the things which it contains, we shall endeavor in these meetings to obtain a deeper understanding of the things our Lord has revealed to us in this most magnificent book.

One of the topics mentioned in Revelation which many are very interested in (and rightly so) is the "Beast" and its "Mark". This great apostate power is mentioned in Revelation 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20. Nearly a third of the chapters of Revelation. Thus one can quickly see that this subject is one of great significance.

God warns His people that one day soon this power will cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16, 17).

Prophecy further informs us that this issue is to eventually carry with it a death decree for those who do not accept the mark and thereby pay homage to the beast. Yet those who do accept it willingly disobey our Creator (Revelation 13:15).

The establishment of the "Mark of the Beast is not just a vague possibility today. It has become an imminent reality. The stage has been set for the monitoring and control of buying and selling necessary for the world-wide enforcement of this "mark". Today we are recklessly "racing toward the mark" oblivious to the global catastrophe that lies just beyond the horizon.

When the Lord Jesus Christ returns in the near future He will find two classes of people. Those who have "the seal of God" and those who have "the mark of the beast." Those who have the seal of God are given eternal life and are permitted to spend eternity with their God.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:15-17).

Of those who have "the mark of the beast" we read: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:9-11).

As to which class an individual will belong at this time will be completely dependent upon the personal decision made by each person upon this earth and it must be made on an individual basis.

In the concluding chapter of Revelation the Lord once again makes a declaration that refutes the claim of many today that the book of Revelation is a mystery, a sealed book that is impossible for us to understand. In verse 10 John is told "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Then in verse 7 the promise is: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." If these prophecies are mysteries that cannot be understood, how can God expect anyone to keep them and why would He promise a blessing for doing something if it was impossible to do it? Indeed, anyone who makes such statements as these are but placing themselves at the very pinnacle of human folly and bordering on the very brink of blasphemy.

Revelation is not, as man has claimed, a mysterious book that cannot be understood and therefore one that we should not concern ourselves with; but rather it is what God has declared it to be, a REVELATION. It is a REVELATION of Jesus Christ. It is a REVELATION of Satan's master deception. It is a REVELATION of the reliability of the word of God and His prophetic timetable. It is a REVELATION of the apostasy that has crept into Christianity. It is a REVELATION of the love of God versus the hatred of Satan. It is the REVELATION of the reward of the righteous and the fate of the wicked. It is the REVELATION of the things which must shortly come to pass. It is the REVELATION of the "blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).