

# The Apocalypse of Revelation

## Defining the Book

The Apocalypse of Revelation is a book of **visions, symbols, metaphor, cosmology and hyperbole**. It is the only book in the New testament of this nature or format. It concentrates upon prophetic announcements based on Hebrew prophetic text and traditions. It is said to complete the Biblical story that begins in Genesis with the Creation of the universe and the cosmic battle between **good and evil** that has been waged on earth and ends with Revelation as an image of the struggle that leads to a **new heaven and a new earth** based upon the timely return of Jesus with the message of **salvation renewed** for the future.

This book is a unique book in style and in message like no other book of the Bible. Some passages of the Old Testament hint at the message of the apocalypse as in Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah and even Genesis as related to the Epic Noah Flood story.

A source for this book may also have been writings known as those of Enoch the Forefather of the seventh generation before the flood who did not die, but was taken up into heaven to God by angels. These writings will on occasion be cited in this study, but do not rush out looking to purchase the Book of Enoch. It is available at very high cost and usually is found by persons to be totally confusing and to quote one person worthless in helping to understand Revelation. I too feel like my friend another Christian pastor.

## Starting Historical Notes

Traditional Judaism changed at about the time following Jesus. In 70 CE. Jerusalem was destroyed including the Second Temple and thus, there was no need for a formal priesthood that acted as the government of the Jewish people. This was the time when Rabbinic Judaism began as a response to the historical times.

The upstart Christians too found it a time to expand its influence throughout the Roman Empire by creating churches in the most populated cities in the Roman Empire including Rome. Rome assumed that traditional Judaism had been destroyed by their defeat of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple. Christianity however, was a different matter. Christianity soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus in ca. 35 CE. began to expand rapidly throughout the Roman Empire as a new sect of religion attracting both Jews and Romans to its proclaimed message. Most notable churches were located in Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus,

Philippi, Thessalonica and the churches of Asia Minor who appear in Revelation as the seven churches of Asia that are focal in Revelation.

The Romans though began to be less open to Christianity as some of the traditions of traditional Roman gods of the traditional Roman religion were adapted to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Such things included what today we know as the Christmas tree, holy wreaths, giving of gifts and feasting which was celebrated on or about the 25<sup>th</sup> of December by the modern calendar. The issue was that Christmas clashed with celebration of the Roman High God, Saturn in the week of Saturnalia. The Christians seem to have won this one, but it also cost Christian in social and cultural ways.

Roman traditional religious practices invade Christian Churches and changed the focus of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Thus, in the letters to the Seven Church of Asia. In Revelation 2:4 we find the problem clearly stated. *"Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken the love you had at first."* This was their love for Jesus Christ!

In short, what takes place in Revelation is not without context. The context is in fact that of the historical significance of Rome's influence of Christianity. Losing the love for Jesus Christ led to immoral behavior among those who claimed the name of Christ - Christian.

## Map of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Asia Minor

