

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDYING REVELATION

Revelation is the crowning touch of symbolism used throughout the Scriptures. It brings together many symbols, both in the Old Testament and New Testament, and develops a tremendous cohesiveness of all symbolic language throughout the Bible. Before beginning our verse by verse study of the text, a discussion of how to study and determine the meanings of these symbols is in order. Let us begin by examining how many of the events of the Old Testament symbolize events to come during the Christian dispensation. Heb. 10:1a states, "For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." We have long studied and understood how many people and events of Old Testament times were likenesses of people and events to come during the Christian dispensation. For example, Moses was a likeness of Christ; David also symbolized Christ as king of God's people; the tabernacle symbolized the church; and the rainbow represented a covenant God made with Noah.

The Israelites under the law of Moses lived in a physical, earthly kingdom. Many of the events in this physical kingdom were likenesses of spiritual events, which were later to take place in the spiritual kingdom of God. Today Christians (spiritual Israel) live in that spiritual kingdom, the church. This symbolic connection between the physical kingdom of old Israel and the spiritual kingdom of the church is of utmost importance in understanding Revelation. This concept must be kept clearly in mind at all times. We offer the following diagram and explanation as a means of understanding this concept.

The book of Revelation deals with the spiritual kingdom of God. (church), which is a likeness of the Old Testament physical kingdom of Israel.

1. The Israelites were slaves under Egyptian bondage. Today, mankind is in the spiritual bondage of sin. (Heb. 2:14-15, Rom. 8:13-15).
2. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea to escape physical bondage. Today, man kind crosses the Red Sea oft he blood of Christ to escape spiritual bondage (Rom. 6:1-4. (Ever wonder why the Red Sea was so named?)
- 3 The law of Moses was given on Mt. Sinai to govern the physical kingdom of Israel. The law of Christ was given on Mt. Zion (Micah 4:14) to govern the spiritual kingdom of the church (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 14:1; Micah 4.7).
- 4a. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness forty years awaiting their promised land called Canaan. Today, the church is wandering in the wilderness of this world awaiting its promised land called heaven (Rev. 12:6, 14)
- 4b. The Israelites were nourished physically by bread from heaven called manna. Today, the church is nourished by spiritual bread from heaven —Jesus and his Word (Jn. 6:31-35).
5. The Israelites crossed the Jordan River into their promised land. When Christ comes again the church will cross over into its spiritual promised land.
6. The Israelites were given an earthly, physical promised land. The church will inherit a heavenly, spiritual promised land.