

# Revelation 21 & 22

The numbers 3 and 12 will play a large part in these final chapters. 3 symbolizes divine fullness, completeness, or perfection, and is considered a number of holiness. In Jewish law, something done three times is considered permanent, signifying a connection or establishment. The pattern of "three-in-one" is seen throughout nature, reflecting the concept of the Trinity and the Creator's signature on the natural world. 12 is associated with governmental perfection, completeness, and the nation of Israel, as well as the completion of God's purpose.

Read Revelation 21:1-8; 22-27; 22:1-7

1. As you read, list everything God promises to do for us, or becomes for us, in these chapters.

2. Compare the concepts from 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Bible with the last book:

Genesis: The Heavens and the Earth (Gen 1:1)	Revelation: The Heavens and the Earth
Genesis: Luminaries (Gen 1:3, 14-19)	Revelation: Luminaries (Sun, Moon, etc.)
Genesis: Paradise (Gen 1:31)	Revelation: Paradise
Genesis: Satan's Power (Gen 3:1, 4-5; Luke 4:5-7)	Revelation: Satan's Power

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Genesis: Humankind's relationship with God (Gen 3:8b-10)	Revelation: Humankind's relationship with God
Genesis: The Tree of Life (Gen 2:8-9)	Revelation: The Tree of Life

### Read Revelation 21:9-21

3. What do all the references of the number 3 say to you about the New Jerusalem?
4. What do all the references of the number 12 say to you about the New Jerusalem?

Those who studied the Bethel Series will perhaps remember the theme picture of the Fall of Man in the Garden where the earth is destitute of vegetation, the clouds overhead are dark and menacing, there are huge cracks in the earth as if there had been serious earth-quakes and these paintings reminds us of how nature itself has suffered from our greedy husbandry. Let us remember, however,

that the sin was not according to nature's own defaults, but rather, the result of man's spiritual failure in the Garden of Eden. For that we indeed wait for new heavens and a new earth. Here in the Twenty-first chapter we are assured that God is among mortals, he will dwell with us as our God, we will be his people for he will be with us. he will dry away our tears, mourning and crying will be gone, pain and death will be no more, "for the first things will have passed away".

Revelation Lecture 8, p.5, Erling W. Hansen

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### Read REVELATION 22:8-21

What is Jesus' command to the church in verses 10-11?

What are the titles Jesus gives to himself?

Who may come into God's kingdom (vs 17)?

In your words, explain why Jesus wants his message delivered and intact (vs 18-19)?

Who is testifying to the words of this book (vs 20)?

"AN ANCIENT EXEGETE IS QUOTED BY WM. BARCLAY AS SAYING THIS: "LET EACH DO WHAT PLEASES THEM; I WILL NOT FORCE THEIR CHOICE." Perhaps the essence of hell is when one is writing their own destiny and is allowed to do so! Jesus again tells us, 'he is coming soon and he has his reward with him and will render unto all according to their work.'"

ERLING W. HANSEN, REVELATION LECTURE 8, p. 4

### How Then Shall We Live in Babylon?

"The following text is from "Revelation for the Rest of Us," by Scot McKnight, for reflection and discussion of our mission as dissidents living in Babylon:

This is a message of discipleship that turns hot lights on every Babylon in the world – including the USA and the complicity of American Christians in the ways of Babylon. <sup>[1]</sup>

So why do we include this analysis here? Because reading Revelation gives us clues to perceive Babylon today, and we believe Babylon has infiltrated American evangelicalism. <sup>[2]</sup>

The entire book of Revelation is about public discipleship. Revelation "reveals" God's perspective on God's world, and it does this by showing us how to discern the dragon, the dragon's wild things, and the dragon's Babylon.

[Christian citizens] are looking for a leader who will demonstrate a different Christian posture toward politics, asking for discipleship that challenges politicization in all its forms. They want pastors to preach a gospel that subverts Babylon. They ache for a clear courageous voice of conviction. They believe in a gospel that forms dissidents who follow the Lamb and who have the courage to speak up and out about partisanism as capitulation to Babylon.

Many have fallen for the dragon's ways and are party to the wild things as they seek to make Babylon a more Christian place. But the only way to make Babylon a Christian place is to do what John says – "Come out!" We must come out from Babylon and live in new Jerusalem by witnessing to the truth of the Lamb. [...] we do these things with our eyes open, discerning the ways of the dragon. Babylon will never be the new Jerusalem; it cannot be Christianized.

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Christian dissident discipleship begins right here: with a commitment to the Word of God in Scripture as the revelation of God for God's people. Take and read. Eat this scroll, John was told. That is, look at it, hold it in our hands, embrace it, listen to it, chew on it, digest it, and let it do the work it alone can do. Those who surrender to the Word of God become disciples who are dissidents in Babylon.

We are to walk in the light that liberates us from the way of the dragon and empowers us to be faithful witnesses to the Lamb. Too many settle for the way of the dragon, justifying it as the “way the world works,” and others hide behind the difference between our public and our spiritual/private life. There is no division for dissident disciples. Jesus–Lord, Lamb. Logos, and Light–is over all, all the time.

[Dissidents transcend] If one's allegiance is to a political party, if one thinks one's party is truly Christian, one has cut off one's sisters and brothers. [...] The church transcends party and politics because, as the book of Revelation says often, those who worship God and the Lamb are from every tribe, nation, and tongue. The church is universal – politics and parties are local and national. [...] The dragon loves division, and the church divided loses its witness. [...] Dissident disciples of the Lamb join hands with all followers of Jesus to embody the church transcendent.

Dissident disciples tell people about Jesus, about his life, about his death and resurrection and ascension, and the redemption he has accomplished.

This is not about speculation or winning but about the victory of God and the Lamb over the dragon so we can live in justice and peace in the new Jerusalem. That is our gospel message. Babylon despises the gospel. A dissident disciple discerns the dragon's gospel, which is 1. Worship the Wild Thing, and 2. Be loyal to Babylon.

“Power” in our culture exerts power OVER for the sake of power for one's agenda. Dissidents pause with these words as a motto: “Not so with you!” Power for Jesus was power FOR the other and not power OVER the other. The way of the dragon aches for power OVER, and the wild things wield the dragon's power over and climb their way into high places where they exert power over others. A dissident disciple does not grasp for power OVER others. Instead, the dissident disciple, following the way of the Lamb, serves the other. Their politics is a politics FOR OTHERS.

We are not only the church. We are also citizens in a country. Jesus, Peter, and Paul each recognized the government, and not always in affirming ways!

...so we are called to do our part, to be good citizens, and to become public Christians in a way that brings good reputation to our Lord – without fawning over the wild things or trying to make Babylon the Jerusalem.

Each act of worship, which leads as we have said to a whole life of allegiance, is an act of dissidence and subversion of the way of the dragon, who desires the worship of the wild things and loyalty to Babylon. Dissident disciples live with government but do not surrender the lordship of Jesus to any part of it. Disciples reject the lordship of the president and of Washington DC and call government to be a servant for the people in a way that mimics the service churches provide in their communities. Disciples reject the state's powers to control the church and dissident disciples shaped by Christ refuse to let the way of the dragon's power take hold in the churches. Disciples reject becoming an agent of government and discern when political leaders want to use the church as a tool for their own power.”

McKnight, Scott and Matchett, Cody (2023). Revelation for the Rest of Us. Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan, p.220-245

*A Final Note from me: Consider all the “meanwhiles” in Revelation, and what God is telling us about worship/prayer in each instance. Recall the prayers of the saints echoing throughout the halls of Heaven. Recall what the prayers were – in praise of our perfect God, who is Perfect Love, a love we cannot comprehend. We can give in to that kind of love. Can we drop all our insecurities and accept love from someone who knows our worst selves, and still adores us? Living in Babylon will require that. Let us seek that love, and that unconditional acceptance from the One who created you. Only then will we be overcomers.*