

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION SERIES

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# THE LAMB AND THE SEVEN-SEALED SCROLL

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION BOOK 2

Dr. Richard Booker

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## Preface

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**W**HEN John was on the island of Patmos, the Lord gave him a revelation of Jesus, the exalted Son of Man, and of God's people overcoming satanic opposition before the throne of God. In spite of tremendous persecution, John saw "in the Spirit" that the faithful followers of the Lord were victorious. They overcame satan by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Furthermore, John was given revelation to see the spiritual warfare in Heaven that was being played out on the earth. He saw the outcome of this spiritual battle as well as prophetic events that would take place in the end times before the coming of the Lord.

John saw that God would totally and completely destroy His enemies and resurrect His own people to live with Him forever in a new Heaven, a new earth and a New Jerusalem. Regardless of the trials and tribulations God's people must endure, our destiny is certain and sure. Jesus is returning, and we will rule and reign with Him in a world free of satan, sin, and death. In the challenging days ahead, believers can joyfully commit their souls to God, who is faithful to keep His Word of promise.

As John wrote at the end of his vision:

*And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).*

So the book of Revelation is not a book of doom and gloom, but of the victory of the Lamb and those who follow Him. The purpose of the Lord's revelation to John was to unveil or disclose to him what John could not know without divine assistance. The Lord gave John his vision to encourage and comfort his immediate readers as well as believers throughout the ages. What eventually became the book of Revelation was clearly intended to be understood by John and his first century readers.

However, with the passage of time, this book that God intended for us to understand became, without a doubt, the most mysterious book in the Bible. For almost 2,000 years, Christian scholars and everyday believers have tried to understand its message. Because the book of Revelation is an apocalyptic vision filled with otherworldly symbols and descriptions of strange creatures, God's people have not always agreed on its meaning. This has led to a number of different interpretations of John's words.

Since there are so many books written on John's revelation, with so many different interpretations, why would I feel burdened to add to the confusion? It was certainly not my intention to write a book on the book of Revelation. With more than 30 other books in print, I was ready to take a break from book writing. I wrote this book because there is an urgent need to explain John's Revelation with the following four points of view that have not been adequately included in most commentaries on the book of Revelation.

First, almost all books written to explain the book of Revelation are written with a Western cultural worldview rather than a biblical worldview. There are some exceptions. What I mean by this is that the writer interprets the book of Revelation through Western eyes rather than through the Hebraic eyes of a Middle Eastern person. John was not a Western theologian. He was a Jewish seer. This means that he understood and wrote his revelation in terms of his own history and culture. His history and culture is the Hebrew Bible—what Christians have always called the Old Testament. In this book, I prefer to use the phrase *Hebrew Bible*.

In order to understand the book of Revelation, we must read it through the eyes of a Jewish man rather than through the eyes of a Western theologian. For example, when John sees Jesus in Heaven, he describes Him in Jewish terms, not Western Christian terms. To get the fullest meaning of John's vision of Jesus, we need to know Jesus, the Jewish "Son of Man." To John, Jesus is the "Cloud Man" of the Book of Daniel.

Second, since the book of Revelation is the last book in the Bible, we must have a good understanding of all the other books in the Bible. We cannot understand the book of Revelation if we do not have a good understanding of Genesis through Jude, as well as some basic knowledge of the literature written between the Testaments, and of Greek mythology. We must not read John's revelation as if it were written in modern times isolated from the rest of the Bible. The best way to understand the book of Revelation is to begin with Genesis. For instance, when John explains the eternal home of believers in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation, he assumes that the reader will be familiar with the first two chapters of the book of Genesis.

Third, in order to understand the book of Revelation, we must interpret it according to the type of literature John used in writing it. John wrote the Revelation in an apocalyptic literary style. Apocalyptic literature flourished in the period of time in which John was writing. It has

certain characteristics that John's readers readily understood. I explain these characteristics in Chapter 1. Because this is not a normal style of writing in our times, we have difficulty understanding and interpreting apocalyptic literature.

We have a tendency to interpret apocalyptic literature as if it were a literal story narrative, written chronologically like a Western textbook. Reading the book of Revelation as a Western textbook can clearly lead us to wrong conclusions regarding John's statements. For example, when John says that he saw an open door into Heaven and heard a voice calling him to Heaven, he did not mean that he saw a literal door and was literally taken to Heaven. He meant that God opened his spiritual eyes so that he could see realities in Heaven that he would not know otherwise. Physically, John never left Patmos.

Fourth, to properly understand the book of Revelation, we must know the historical context in which John wrote. Jesus gave John letters to write to seven literal congregations in the first century. Since the English word *church* means something different to modern readers than its biblical meaning, I use the word *congregation*, which is the more accurate meaning of the word. I could have used the words *assembly* or *community*. In a few instances, I use the word *Church* when referring to organized Christianity, such as the Roman Church or the Catholic Church. These congregations or communities were challenged every day to live out their new faith in a hostile environment in which their neighbors worshiped Greek gods and goddesses and Roman emperors, practiced gross immorality, and pressured them to compromise their faith and witness. They were faced with life and death decisions.

In addition, each of the cities where the seven congregations were located had their own unique physical circumstances that Jesus acknowledged in His letters. Without knowledge of their circumstances, spiritual and physical, it is impossible to understand why Jesus said what He said to the different congregations. For instance, if we do not know that

Laodicea had a drinking water problem, we cannot understand why Jesus preferred the believers to be cold or hot rather than lukewarm.

I have the greatest appreciation for scholars and ministers who have spent years studying the book of Revelation and have labored to help us understand its mysteries. While I present points of view in this book that most ministers and everyday believers might not be familiar with, I do not intend to be critical of what others have written or believe. We must all walk in love and humility and be gracious to one another, especially if we see things differently.

You may be challenged by some of my explanations that are contrary to your preconceived ideas and traditional teachings. You may not agree with everything I have written, and that is OK. What I desire to accomplish is to glorify our Lord, to encourage God's people to be steadfast and faithful as we face challenging days ahead, and to provide a fresh, exciting, and more balanced understanding of the book of Revelation. If I accomplish these goals, I would be most grateful to our Lord. May God's people be blessed and His name praised forever.

For ease of reading and understanding, the publisher has wisely organized my writing on the book of Revelation into a three-volume series entitled *Understanding the Book of Revelation*. Volume One is entitled *The Overcomers*. This volume begins with three chapters that are necessary for us to understand the historical events that prompted the Lord to send His letters to the seven congregations. In order to properly understand the Revelation, we must know the context in which it was written. I have also included a chapter on the literary style in which the book was written as well as a survey of the book of Revelation. I then explain the letters to the seven congregations within their historical, geographical, archeological and Hebraic context and perspective along with my view of their prophetic and personal significance. This background information is often missing or not adequately explained in most books on the Revelation, but is critical to understanding the Revelation. Volume One covers Revelation 1-3.

Volume Two is entitled *The Lamb and the Seven-Sealed Scroll*. This volume opens up with John's vision of Heaven and the throne room of God. John sees the greatest drama in human history when the Lamb of God takes the seven-sealed scroll and opens the seals. I then explain the events that follow, including the opening of the first six seals, God's seal of protection, Israelites and Jews, the multitude of the redeemed, the opening of the seventh seal, the mighty angel and the little book, the two witnesses, the proclamation of the Kingdom of God, and the war in Heaven and on earth. Volume Two covers Revelation 4-12. We will learn along the way that the book of Revelation actually ends with the close of Revelation 11. The rest of the information is an "instant replay" giving more details and different looks at the same information.

Volume Three is entitled *The Victorious Kingdom*. This volume includes an explanation of the two false messiahs, a preview of the end, preparing to blow the seventh trumpet-shofar, the blowing of the seventh trumpet-shofar, the destruction of the one-world religious and political systems, the second coming of Messiah, the Battle of Armageddon, the Messianic Kingdom, the New Heaven and New Earth and Paradise Restored. Volume Three covers Revelation 13-22.

These volumes are designed to be read along with the book of Revelation. Each discussion in the text is keyed to a specific chapter and verse in the book of Revelation. To get the most from the text, first read the information in the book of Revelation, and then read my explanations and comments in the books.

As I have already said, the Revelation is not a book about doom and gloom. While there are many hard things to read and much suffering in the book, Revelation is a book about God's faithfulness to Himself, His Word, and His people. It is about God defeating His enemies, and His people overcoming by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony. The outcome is certain and victory is sure. As you read the Revelation and this three-volume series, may the Lord encourage your heart that our God is sovereign over world conditions and is using them

*Preface*

to move forward His awesome plan of redemption for His people. Do not be fearful in the dark days ahead. We will live with our Lord forever in the full manifestation of His blazing glory and dazzling beauty. We will look upon Him as He is, for we shall be like Him.

Let us make the following prayer from Jude 24-25 our own personal praise and worship to our God:

*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling [falling], and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.*



## Chapter 1

# The Throne Room of God in Heaven Part 1

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### REVIEW OF BOOK 1, *THE OVERCOMERS*

**I**N Book 1, we learned that John wrote the Revelation as apocalyptic literature which was a recognized and acceptable form of literature in Bible times. Readers understood that writers of apocalyptic literature claim to have had a prophetic revelation from God that is supernatural. In this style of literature, the writer uses symbols and “otherworldly” visions and language to communicate heavenly realities to people living on the earth. This is not a common form of literature to modern readers. So we must keep this in mind as we continue our study of this mysterious and mystical book.

While most of the Book of Revelation is symbolic, it also contains literal messages to seven literal congregations in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) plus prophecy for our times. While first-century believers would have clearly understood John’s message, it is not as clear to us today. This has led to many different interpretations of the Book of Revelation.

The event that seems to have prompted John to write his Revelation was associated with emperor worship. Rome established the imperial cult of emperor worship as a test of one's loyalty to the empire. They built temples, altars, and statues to the emperors throughout the empire and required the people to make sacrifices to the emperor.

Because the believers would not worship the emperor, they were persecuted. The Emperor Domitian built an imperial cult center in Ephesus which included an altar and a statue of Domitian. The local residents were required to bow down and offer sacrifices to the image.

Domitian insisted on being called "the lord God" and issued coins bearing his image and this phrase. Naturally, this created a crisis for the believers in Ephesus. Could they fix their sandals in front of the statue as a way of bowing down to the image without actually worshipping Domitian?

Jewish and Christian leaders said "No, we cannot even pretend to worship the beast even though we don't really mean it." To refuse to bow down to the image meant persecution, death, or exile. People needed some assurance that God knew their situation and had not forsaken them.

In view of this, the Lord gave John a prophetic vision with prophetic messages to the seven congregations. Each message would be read to the other congregations to praise them, warn them, and encourage them. John would then explain in apocalyptic terms future events describing the battle between good and evil until the coming of the Son of Man to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth. This is the background we must know in order to understand the Book of Revelation. If you have not read *The Overcomers* (Book 1 of this series) I encourage you to do so as it gives the background for the Book of Revelation as well as the Lord's letters to the seven congregations.

## THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD IN HEAVEN (REVELATION 4:1-3)

In Revelation 4 John uses apocalyptic language to describe a spiritual experience in which he has a vision of Heaven. In his spiritual state, John sees the throne room of God in all its glory and beauty and all of Heaven worshipping God. In this chapter, we will study John's statement about an open door to Heaven and his first glimpse of the throne room of God. We will continue with this subject in the next chapter.

### The Open Door to Heaven (verse 1)

After receiving the prophetic messages to the seven congregations, the scene moves from Earth to Heaven, where John sees a door open. Speaking in apocalyptic language, this is not a literal door but a prophetic door of revelation. All of John's readers would have understood his statement in this way. (See Book 1 for an explanation of apocalyptic literature.)

John wants us to understand that he is going to receive a vision of Heaven that can only come by spiritual revelation from God Himself. He is going to be privileged to see what is happening in Heaven and then record that for the believers who are confronted with the throne of the imperial cult.

But the revelation is not only for believers in the seven congregations; it is for believers of all time who struggle with the challenge and heartache of seeing men and governments exalt themselves in the place of God. What we see on the earth is not the reality. The reality is what we see in Heaven. We just need the spiritual revelation to see it, and John gives it to us.

John hears a voice speaking to him and says it was like a trumpet-shofar. He uses the same phrase in Revelation 1:10. John was used to the voice of the Lord sounding like the sound of a trumpet-shofar. When the Lord brought the Hebrews out of Egypt, the Lord spoke to them

through the sound of the trumpet-shofar (see Exod. 19:13-19). The people were so frightened by the whole experience that they asked Moses for the Lord not to speak to them directly again (see Exod. 20:18-19).

So one way the Lord continued to speak to them was through the use of trumpets-shofars (see Num. 10:1-10). When John heard the voice of the Lord, he heard it as the sound of a trumpet-shofar. This was part of the history and heritage of his people in hearing the Word of the Lord. He knew what it meant, and it certainly got his attention.

The voice told John to come to Heaven to receive the spiritual revelation of the next things the Lord wanted to show him. There are two statements here to consider; the first is the statement commanding John to come to Heaven.

Ministers who believe and proclaim a pre-tribulation rapture interpret this verse and command to “*Come up here*” to mean that John is representing believers who are raptured or caught up to Heaven at this time before the beginning of the tribulation. Scholars and serious students of the Book of Revelation certainly have the right to their studied interpretation of the Book. We should bless, love, and respect those who have different views than ours and not be dogmatic where there is a difference of opinions.

Furthermore, believers who have only been taught the pre-tribulation rapture may be surprised to learn that not everyone shares this interpretation of this specific Scripture. We need to be humble and teachable. When we read or hear a teaching that is contrary to what we have always believed, we should be like the Bereans who searched the Scriptures daily to discover truth (see Acts 17:11).

As I stated in the first paragraph of this chapter, it is important to keep in mind that the Book of Revelation is written in an apocalyptic writing style. This means we should not interpret this book too literally. Now this may be a shock to some, but John was not literally raptured to Heaven. I know, this may really sound upsetting if this is the only

interpretation you have been taught and accepted. God bless all well-meaning godly ministers who teach this view.

It just didn't happen. John is using apocalyptic language to say that he is going to receive a prophetic word from God that is supernatural. He is using symbolic language to describe it. There was no literal door and no literal rapture of John's body to Heaven at this time.

John had a spiritual vision of Heaven but he was still on the earth at Patmos. Physically, he didn't go anywhere. Since he was not literally raptured, this verse cannot possibly suggest a literal rapture of believers to Heaven at this time in God's great end-time chronology of events. Those who do so are certainly making a good faith effort to understand and interpret this verse. I applaud them but this interpretation turns an apocalyptic statement into a literal event that simply cannot be supported by this verse. I pray that you will have "ears to hear."

For example, in Revelation 17:3, John says that the Spirit carried him into the wilderness. Should we interpret this to mean that believers are also raptured into the wilderness? In Revelation 21:10 John says that the Spirit carried him away to a great and high mountain. Should we interpret this to mean that believers are also raptured to a great and high mountain? I think you get the point.

I explained in Book 1 that in apocalyptic literature it was common for the author to put someone else's name on his writing. This was a famous deceased person to whom the writer wanted to attribute his ideas. This type of writing was referred to as *pseudepigrapha*. According to the dictionary this is a word meaning "falsely ascribed or attributed." It is a spurious work attributed to a biblical character. Today we would say that the author used a pen name. Except in this case, the pen name was the name of a real person.

There were numerous *pseudepigrapha* written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200. One of the most popular written between the testaments was the Book of Enoch, which I referred to in Book 1. Enoch did not write the book bearing his name, and we don't know who did write it. The

Book of Enoch was widely quoted by both Jews and early followers of Jesus. I have noted that Jude 14-15 quotes the Book of Enoch.

While the Book of Enoch was not included in the Bible, it provides a good example of how writers in the time of John expressed themselves in apocalyptic language. People who read the Book of Enoch in its time understood it for what it was—an apocalyptic vision. They did not take it literally. I have included a brief quotation from the Book of Enoch so we can read for ourselves this very unique style of writing and see how it is similar to John's words.

Here is how Enoch describes his “catching up” to Heaven:

And the vision was shown to me thus: Behold in the vision clouds invited me and a mist summoned me, and the course of the stars and the lightings sped and hastened me, and the wind in the vision caused me to fly and lifted me upward, and bore me into heaven....And the Lord called me with His own mouth, and said to me, “Come hither, Enoch, and hear My word.” And one of the holy ones came to me and waked me, and He made me rise up and approach the door: and I bowed my face downwards.<sup>1</sup>

We can see the similarity in language. Enoch did not literally go to Heaven and neither did John. John has a prophetic vision in which God opens a prophetic door to him and invites him to enter the door. Literally, John is in prison on the Isle of Patmos. Spiritually, he has a vision of the throne room of God, heavenly worship, and the war between good and evil down through the ages. John sees the final victory of God through the Son of Man, Jesus the Messiah who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God, who gave His life for our sins so that we can be reconciled to God and live as overcomers.

The second statement to consider is the one in which the Lord says He will show John *“things which must take place after this.”*

Scholars who interpret the Book of Revelation literally see chapters 4-22 as the chronological order of the Book of Revelation. There is certainly a chronological order to some events John describes. But when John says, “*things which must take place after this*” he is using apocalyptic language to refer to the next part of his prophetic vision. He does not necessarily mean the next events but the next part of his vision. The point is not to read in too literal an interpretation of spiritual language. There are successive chronological events in the Book of Revelation. We just need to be cautious and not dogmatic in interpreting “other-worldly” language and symbols too literally.

### The Throne Set in Heaven (verses 2-3)

To emphasize that he is having a prophetic vision, John once again says that he is “*in the Spirit.*” John uses this phrase four times (see Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The reader would understand John to be saying that the Holy Spirit was giving him additional spiritual revelation that he could not possibly know by his own human intellect or imagination. These “in the Spirit” statements are the order for understanding the Book of Revelation.

In his spiritual state, John sees a throne in Heaven and One sitting on the throne. This “One” is the Creator of all things (see Rev. 4:8). He is not the generic “god of the world” nor is He the god of any religion outside of the Bible. He is Yahveh, the Judeo-Christian God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He is the God of Israel. The Lord Himself makes this claim as we learn in Isaiah:

*Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer,  
the LORD of hosts: “I am the First and I am the Last;  
besides Me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6).*

Because God is so glorious in His appearance, no one can see Him in the fullness of His blazing glory and dazzling beauty. Surely we can

understand that the creature cannot see the Creator in all of His fullness. If we did, we would all die.

A natural example we can all understand is that no one can look directly into the sun without seeing spots or going blind. We have to turn our eyes away from the sun or look at it with special glasses or through dark clouds. This is what the Bible means when it says that God is invisible or cannot be seen (see 1 Tim. 1:17; John 1:18).

In the Hebrew Bible, we are told that God “*spoke to Moses face to face*” (Exod. 33:11). This is a Hebraic figure of speech. The writer wants us to understand that when Moses approached God, he was not in a spiritual trance or having a vision like John, but was fully conscious and aware that he was in God’s presence. It does not mean that Moses literally saw God’s face.

Later in the same chapter, Moses pleaded with God to show him His glory. The Lord then told Moses that no one could see His face, meaning the fullness of His glory, and live. (See Exodus 33:18-23.)

So when the Bible talks about someone seeing the Lord, it does not mean that the person sees Him in bodily form. It means that the person sees a manifestation of God which the person describes in heavenly terms of majestic divine glory and beauty.

For example, Exodus reads:

*Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity (Exodus 24:9-10).*

The prophet Micaiah described his vision of the Lord in this way:

*Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the*

*host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left” (1 Kings 22:19).*

Isaiah described a vision of the Lord similar to John’s. Isaiah said:

*In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train [glory] of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:1-3).*

The prophet Ezekiel said that the heavens were opened to him and that he “*saw visions of God*” (Ezek. 1:1). In the rest of the chapter, Ezekiel describes all he saw using language similar to Moses, Micaiah, Isaiah, and John (see Ezek. 1). In his vision of Heaven, Enoch said that he saw a throne with “the Great Glory” sitting on it.<sup>2</sup>

As with others who have had a true vision of Heaven, John does not describe God in a definable form but in terms humans can understand. John speaks of God’s blazing glory and dazzling beauty as brilliant gemstones of jasper and sardius (or carnelian).

Jasper was one of the stones in the high priest’s breastplate (see Exod. 28:20). Jasper is also mentioned later in Revelation to describe the brilliant, pure light of the glory of God; it is called a “*precious stone*” that is as “*clear as crystal*” (Rev. 21:11). From a spiritual standpoint, we can say that jasper symbolizes the pure holiness of God.

While we don’t know the exact color of the jasper that John sees, because it is crystal clear, we can think of it today as resembling a brilliant, sparkling diamond. Both the wall and the first foundation of the New Jerusalem are made of jasper (see Rev. 21:18-19). Because jasper is said to be crystal clear, the glory of God can be seen emanating

everywhere throughout the New Jerusalem, the city God has prepared as the eternal home of His people. Praise God!

Sardius (or carnelian) is a beautiful red like a ruby. Sardius was also one of the stones in the high priest's breastplate (see Exod. 28:17). It is listed as the sixth foundation of the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:20). Whereas the jasper symbolizes the holiness of God, we can understand that the deep blood-red sardius is a spiritual symbol of the necessity of redemption through the blood of an innocent substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

In addition to these gorgeous stones, John also sees an emerald or green-colored rainbow around God's throne. The way John describes it, the rainbow is a full circle around the throne. The full circle symbolizes eternity, much like the wedding ring symbolizes the sacredness of the marriage covenant between a man and a woman. Exodus 28:17 lists emerald as one of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest. It is also the fourth foundation of the wall of the New Jerusalem (see Rev. 21:19).

On several occasions, I have seen the full-circle rainbow from the air. It is a magnificent and truly spectacular sight. The rainbow is a sign of God's covenant of life, as we learn in Genesis 9:12-17. Through his vision of God's throne, John is given an apocalyptic message that a holy God has entered into an everlasting blood covenant with His people through the innocent substitutionary sacrifice of His Son who gave His life for the sins of mankind.

Furthermore, John's vision contrasts the heavenly throne of God to the earthly throne of the emperor and imperial cult worship. To the people living under Roman rule, the majesty and splendor of the throne of the emperor represented the most powerful ruler in the world. The emperor was a "god" to be feared and obeyed without question. You proved your loyalty to the emperor by sacrificing to him at his temple or statue and altar. The believers were faced with this challenge and crisis.

The Roman emperor controlled most of the world. His power was absolute and his riches immeasurable. He could do whatever he wanted.

He could kill your body but not your soul. Yet his power and majesty could not even compare to the sovereign rule of God over all of His creation. Caesar's power, wealth, and glory, as represented by his throne, were nothing compared to the blazing glory and dazzling beauty of the throne of God.

Furthermore, the emperor would have no power at all unless the Almighty allowed for it. We learn this in the Gospel records in the Bible. When Pilate threatened Jesus with crucifixion, Jesus said to him, "*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above...*" (John 19:11).

The vision of the throne room of God would certainly comfort the believers and assure them that God alone was the sovereign Lord and Master of the universe. He alone was to be feared and obeyed. He alone was to be worshiped. In time, He would judge the arrogance of the imperial cult and set His people in the place of honor. Therefore, the believers to whom John wrote learned not to fear those who ruled over them in this world. John's message applies to believers in the world today; we should pray for those in authority over us; but ultimately our lives are in God's hands, not those of evil rulers.

God alone is the supreme sovereign over His creation. And He has promised eternal rewards to His people who overcome the temptations of this world. While it is possible for evil rulers to kill our bodies, God will raise us up with new bodies to live with Him forever. As Paul writes:

*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ [Messiah] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you* (Romans 8:11).

All the Caesars are dead but Jesus, the Son of Man, lives! Earthly leaders only rule for a short time but God rules forever. He alone is to be feared, praised, and worshiped.

While God is going to pour out His wrath on the ungodly, He has an everlasting covenant of life for His people purchased for us through the substitutionary blood sacrifice of Jesus. As Paul wrote to the believers at Thessalonica:

*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ [Yeshua the Messiah], who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).*

Hallelujah!

### REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Write a summary of what you have learned in this lesson. Write the summary in clear, concise words as if you were going to present it to another person.
2. Write an explanation of how you can apply what you have learned in this lesson to your life.
3. Share what you have learned with your family, friends, and members of your study group.

### ENDNOTES

1. The Book of Enoch 14:8-9; 24-25; [www.sacredtexts.com](http://www.sacredtexts.com); accessed December 7, 2011.
2. The Book of Enoch 14:20; see 14:18-25; [www.sacredtexts.com](http://www.sacredtexts.com); accessed December 7, 2011.