

Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass



Studies in

John's Epistles

and

Revelation

New Testament Study Commentary - Part 8

Study Series prepared by Graeme Offer

Our Window into Heaven



Studies in

Revelation

Study Series prepared by Graeme Offer

Love One Another ...

Studies in the epistles of

1st 2nd and 3rd

John

Study Series prepared by Graeme Offer

Foreword

John's letters are short but are full of encouragement to us in the trials of our faith amidst a barrage of false teachers. Like the fourth gospel, their style is different to the other NT letters.

Throughout the studies, I have mostly quoted from the New International Version (NIV) and the New King James Version (NKJV), and have attributed the quotations accordingly. Occasionally, I have used a word or two from the King James Version (KJV) or other translations where those versions (in my opinion) better describe the point the author is trying to get across. On occasions where quotations appear that are not referenced, they are my paraphrase of what the verse says, and may or may not bear similarity to recognized translations.

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My usual teaching style is to hand out the outline for each lesson at the start of the lesson. I will often discuss last week's homework, or the background / introduction section as a way of getting the class "into gear" whilst I am handing out the outline at the start. The questions on the outline are designed to help us come to a grasp of the main issues that John wants the readers to understand, and to form an outline of the class. They are not designed to identify the micro-issues, although the class discussion may get into some of these. I hand out the notes at the end of the class. They are designed to answer all of the questions that were raised in the outline sheet – often in more detail than what was covered in the class. I almost never hand out the notes at the start of the class, and I have found that where I have done that it always results in people reading what is on the page and feeding that back during the class without really thinking about or sometimes even comprehending what is there. The notes also serve the very useful purposes of allowing those who may miss one of the classes to *catch up*, as well as providing a review of the material covered for those who were present.

I **always** set homework, and that includes a few thought-provoking questions that go beyond the things that we have covered in the class.

A note on "convention": Because the three letters of John form a part of a study series, I have referenced the text with *Book:Chapter:Verse* description (eg 1:2:4), even though books 2 and 3 only have one chapter. Where a verse is within John's letters, I have just quoted book chapter and verse without further reference.

My prayer is that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we consider some of the practicalities of the gospel and the implications and relevance of God's grace to our walk with God and our daily struggles to live the christian life.

Graeme Offer

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This study series was initially prepared for the Cairns church of Christ, beginning in September 2008.

Introduction to the Series

This series of Bible Studies is the result of a merger of a number of factors. I have long believed that there is a great need to study the New Testament books in their original context. I had observed that when I had undertaken exegetical studies of some New Testament books that the things that they taught, often did not match some of the points that people would extract from them when undertaking subjective studies.

I had taught the book of Acts (my favourite book of the Bible) on several occasions, and had developed outline notes to go with the studies. The thought occurred to me that I should develop some "proper" notes to go with the studies the next time that I taught the book.

As the final speaker at a lectureship dealing with the book of Ephesians, I was surprised to find that none of the speakers before me dealt with the context of the book – what was Paul trying to say to them, and why? When was the book written, and why did Paul write it? Whilst the studies were good, I observed that what we were doing was like "looking at the leaves on the tree" but we had not stepped back to observe the big picture – the structure of the tree and how it contributed to the whole effect of the garden – or even why someone planted it there in the first place.

Shortly afterwards, circumstances (which I believe was God's providence) resulted in my relocation to a different city, with a different job. I had been given the skills, the background, and now the opportunity, and importantly, the time to prepare for and to teach classes on the books of the New Testament, and to write study notes to go with them. The first set of notes written was for Ephesians, and was followed shortly after by Acts and Hebrews. My intention was to write the notes to go with the studies, and then the next time that I taught the class, to re-write and improve the notes. [So far (October 2009) the only revised notes are Ephesians, Acts, and Romans. There is much work still to do, although I have completed the notes in first draft form from Acts through Revelation].

My purpose is to equip people to be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2) as well as to provide a "commentary" on the New Testament that will help us to better understand God's word. Commentaries usually tend to be either very basic, which help the "ordinary bible reader" but provide little depth to the material, or, they are scholarly works which provide great depth but are not written to allow the "ordinary bible reader" to understand them. Also, there are a lot of good study guides around that ask probing questions on bible chapters, but then provide little information to help us understand the point that the writer was addressing in the first place. My aim is to have easily readable notes that help us to understand the letter in its broader context and each chapter in particular, be challenged by the material, and use it to teach others.

I have tried to draw all of these things together – a background study on the book that helps us to understand the context, the history, and the culture – as well as easy-to-read notes that can be understood by those who are new in the faith, whilst at the same time providing challenging thoughts to those mature in the faith. A revision study for each of the books (or in some cases, groups of books) is designed to refresh our memories, and to provide a succinct overview of the whole of the book. It is an excellent place to start when approaching the book, together with the background study.

The homework is designed to include a few thought-provoking questions that go beyond the things that we have covered in the class.

We must never think that we can improve God's word! The word stands alone, and we can only stand in awe of it! My sole aim is to help people to understand it better.

My prayer is that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we consider some of the practicalities of the gospel and the implications and relevance of God's grace to our walk with God and our daily struggles to live the christian life.

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Foreword (2009)

Revelation is a difficult and often neglected book of the New Testament. I approach the book with a degree of trepidation, as this is the first time that I have studied through the book in detail. The style is different to the other NT books. In this study I have followed an essentially historical view of the book – how would the recipients of the first century have understood the book in the light of the things happening in their world at the time. I have followed bro. Homer Hailey’s commentary (probably too closely) and have quoted from it extensively. Next time I study the book, I intend to look at it from a different perspective, and place these views in juxtaposition as I work through the chapters – but that will have to wait for another time.

Throughout the studies, I have mostly quoted from the New International Version (NIV) and the New King James Version (NKJV), and have attributed the quotations accordingly. Occasionally, I have used a word or two from the King James Version (KJV) or other translations where those versions (in my opinion) better describe the point the author is trying to get across. On occasions where quotations appear that are not referenced, they are my paraphrase of what the verse says, and may or may not bear similarity to recognized translations.

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I **always** set homework, and that includes a few thought-provoking questions that go beyond the things that we have covered in the class.

Revelation gives us an insight into the things that happen to christians from God’s perspective, and enables us (through John’s visions) to peer through a window into heaven and see what is happening. My prayer is that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we consider some of the practicalities of the gospel and the implications and relevance of God’s grace to our walk with God and our daily struggles to live the christian life.

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This study series was initially prepared for the Cairns church of Christ, beginning in February 2009.

Foreword (2010 Revision)

One could describe the previous study of the book of Revelation as a bit like walking through a forest without a map. You have a rough idea of the size and layout of the forest, but it is hard to know where you are or to see where you are going. However, we walk by faith! We can be assured of the trustworthiness of the scriptures, and can confidently follow them wherever they lead us. That said, the previous study of Revelation was extremely fulfilling in giving insight into the battle of sin, and windows into what God has prepared for us in heaven.

I have followed an essentially historical view of the book – how would the recipients of the first century have understood the book in the light of the things happening in their world at the time. Where previously I followed bro. Homer Hailey’s commentary, this time I look the book from a different perspective, and place these views in juxtaposition as I work through the chapters.

These have been included as a “text box” that consider an alternate view of the text. It must be remembered that there are four main views (and a myriad of sub views within these) of the book of Revelation, and it is not possible to consider all of them (or even all of the main views). The different views of the book are discussed in the introductory study.

Alternate Views of the Text

A text box like this one will contain a discussion of how other perspectives on Revelation might interpret the text. The discussion is not intended to be complete nor comprehensive.

However, such a discussion should provide some insight into what others think that the visions mean.

Initially (and probably predominantly) this will reference the “Preterist” view of the book and will draw from material by bro. Foy Wallace.

My prayer is always that those who use this material will find it exciting, edifying, encouraging, and relevant to our present situation as together we consider some of the practicalities of the gospel and the implications and relevance of God’s grace to our walk with God and our daily struggles to live the christian life.

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This study series was initially prepared for the Bairnsdale church of Christ, beginning in September 2010.