

WHY WE STUDY THE BOOK OF REVELATION

by the Rev. Fredrick L. Schnarr

The Book of Revelation, otherwise known as “The Apocalypse,” was the last book of the New Testament to be written. The Writings of the Lord’s Second Coming tell us it was written by the disciple John sometime during the first century, while he was a prisoner of the Romans on the island of Patmos.

Although the Christian Church accepted this work as part of the Lord’s Word, there was never any clear idea of why it was given, or what was meant by the strange visions it described. Because of this it had not received a great deal of attention. What efforts have been made to unveil its meaning have been merely natural and often silly.

Swedenborg wrote down from the Lord the meaning of the visions John saw. The first work explaining these visions fills almost six books. It is called the *Apocalypse Explained* (1757–59). In 1765 Swedenborg wrote still another work from the Lord in two volumes, called the *Apocalypse Revealed*. This is the work we use to assist us in our study of the Book of Revelation. You have learned of the rise and fall of the Most Ancient Church, and Ancient Church, and the Israelitish or Jewish Church. In studying the Lord’s life on earth you have seen how the Lord’s new teachings provided for the beginning of the Christian Church. The Lord’s life and teachings on earth provided the means for a great and strong spiritual church that began with His disciples. The Lord gave the means whereby the people of this world could again see the pathway that leads to heaven.

For a time, using these new truths and goods from the New Testament, Christians began to live like the angels in heaven. They could do this, even though wars, diseases, crime, poverty, and many other unpleasant and ugly things, still continued to exist in the world around them.

You will remember from your studies of the Lord’s teachings, that He told His disciples that He would have to come again. This Christian Church, although spiritual in the beginning, would not endure. Through loves of selfish power and greed this church too would fall into externalism, falsity, evil, and ignorance. In the spiritual world its fallen, terrible states, would endanger again the salvation and very life of the human race, and even the very heavens.

The visions that John on the island of Patmos received from the Lord were prophecies of what the Christian Church would be in its last times. They told of its death in the spiritual world, of the great last judgment that would order that world, and of the birth in the heavens, and then in the world of spirits, of a wonderful New Church. The Lord promised to bring into existence a New Christian Church, a true Christian Church that would last forever. It would make possible

the salvation of all people who truly looked to the Lord, no matter what their religion or what their condition of natural life.

This New Church would be strong, intelligent, and wise, and able to love the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Why? Because the Lord would give it a new Word, a Word revealing all the spiritual knowledges about the Lord, heaven, the church, and the human race.

For you to see and be affected by the power and beauty of the new teachings, you must first understand why they had to be given; you must understand what happened to the truths the Lord gave in His First Coming, and why these truths were no longer sufficient to save the human race. In studying the visions of the Apocalypse you will sense the Lord's great mercy, love, and forgiveness, and yet the need for Him to judge and protect so that He can keep man in freedom, and by preserving the human quality, keep alive His supreme purpose for mankind of providing a heaven from the human race.