

Endorsements for

Prophecies of Revelation for Teens

The book of Revelation is challenging and complex—not the most entertaining read for teens who are easily distracted by the latest technology or YouTube video. Seth Pierce lightens the complexity with hilarious anecdotes and analogies and provides just enough substance that many teens who read the book will be tempted to go deeper. This book is like none other on the subject.

Jon Paulien

Dean, School of Religion, Loma Linda University

The best thing about Seth Pierce's new book on Revelation isn't his side-splitting humor. (Only Seth could use a Whac-A-Mole diagram to explain the seven churches of Revelation!) The best thing about Seth's new book is his relentless pursuit of eternal truth. Teens are hungry for a book like this—a true-life journey into the Apocalypse.

Andy Nash

Author of *The Haystacks Church and Paper God*

Seth's latest book, *Prophecies of Revelation for Teens*, showcases his ability to win accessibility and substance. If you can't imagine your teen toiling through Uriah Smith's *Daniel and the Revelation*, try leaving Seth's book on the kitchen deck. Great stories. Solid truth. Readily available.

John McVay

President, Walla Walla University

If you pick this book up, find a hard chair or a noisy place, because you will need something to enable you to stop reading! Seth, in his unstoppable passion for making all complex matters simple, brings us home to Jesus through the pages of Revelation. I want to use this for our youth and young adult groups at Andrews University. For those cautious ones out there, just read Seth's approach to unfolding Revelation 14, and you will see why you need this in your library today.

Japhet J. De Oliveira

Chaplain, Andrews University

Seth Pierce brings to life the relevance of the book of Revelation, with a back-to-the-future type of flare. *Prophecies of Revelation for Teens* offers hope and grace in the midst of the down-to-earth and user-friendly views of eschatology. One can't help but sense the love and goodness of a soon-coming King, eager to assure and secure the hearts He seeks to rescue. Pierce's work here is bound to bless all ages, but especially young hearts eager for Christ Jesus to return.

A. Allan Martin

Teaching pastor, Younger Generation Church

Young people everywhere are knowingly or unknowingly looking for a revelation of Jesus Christ. In his book, Seth Pierce presents a refreshing, Christ-centered approach to Revelation that is heartwarming and faithful to Scripture. I wish it the widest circulation.

David Shin

Pastor, University and Williamston churches, Michigan;
Member, GYC Board of Directors

If you're an adult, don't be put off by Seth Pierce's teen speak. I have a hunch Pastor Seth's contemporary and conversational style will draw many teens into their first study of the book of Revelation. His lead-ins may be unconventional, but the core of his message is pure, time-tested gold. My prayer is that this book will lead youth to a deep, lifelong effort to discover Jesus throughout the Revelation. This is commentary on Revelation like you've never read before—startling, lucid, and peerless for teens.

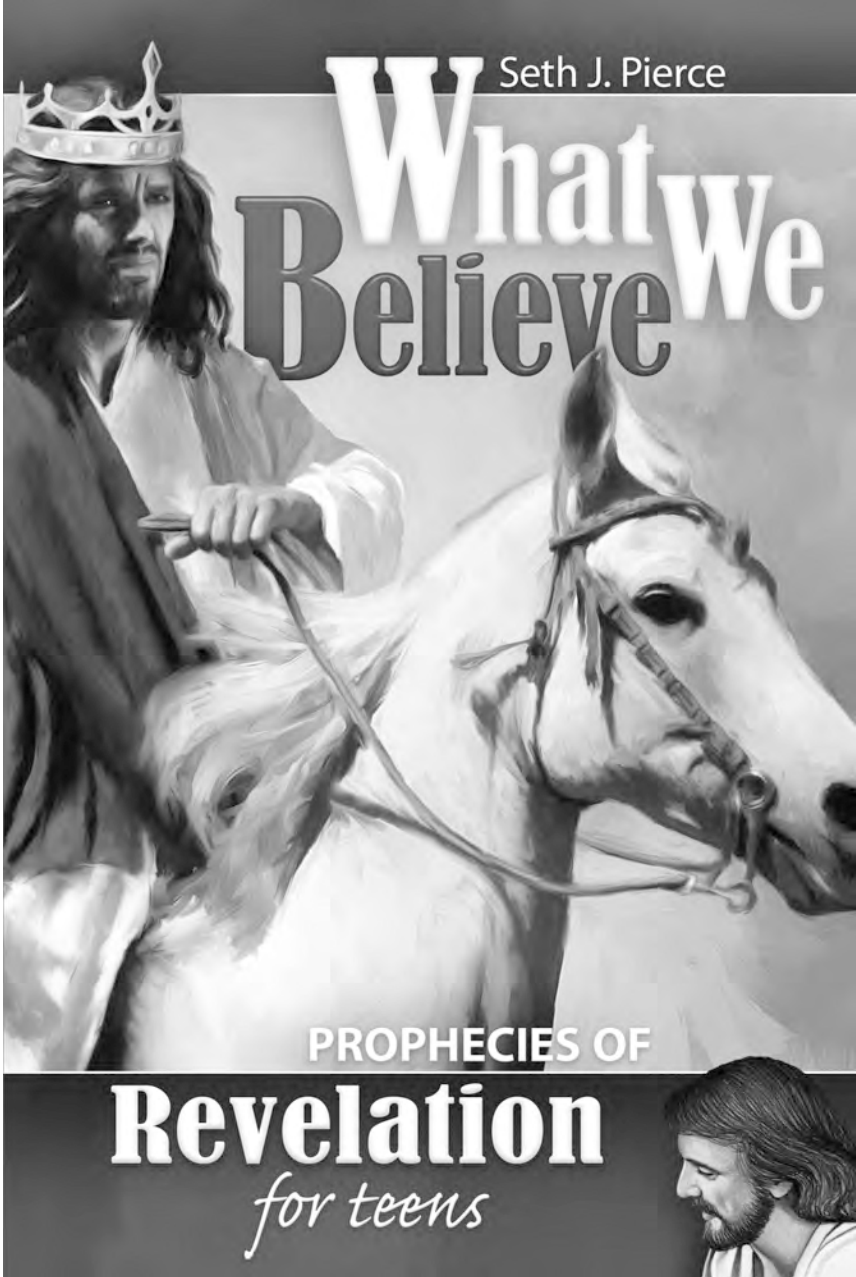
Cindy Tutsch

Associate director, Ellen G. White Estate;
editor, Visionary4Kids.org

This book takes current life and connects it with the messages given in symbolic format in the book of Revelation, which makes for a great read!

Steve Case

Author, *Revelation 101: Finding Jesus in the Book of Revelation*



 **Pacific Press**[®]
Publishing Association

Nampa, Idaho | Oshawa, Ontario, Canada
www.pacificpress.com

Cover design by Gerald Lee Monks
Cover design resources from SermonView.com
Inside illustrations by Marcus Mashburn
Inside design by Kristin Hansen-Mellish

Copyright © 2013 by Pacific Press® Publishing Association
Printed in the United States of America
All rights reserved

The author assumes full responsibility for the accuracy of all facts and quotations as cited in this book.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All right reserved.

Scripture quotations credited to KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations credited to NASB are taken from *The New American Standard Bible*®, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations credited to NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV®, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

You can obtain additional copies of this book by calling toll-free 1-800-765-6955 or by visiting <http://www.adventistbookcenter.com>.

ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-4520-5
ISBN 10: 0-8163-4520-1

13 14 15 16 17 • 5 4 3 2 1

Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those who have attended a seminar about, read a book about, or suffered through “beastly” preaching about Revelation and ended up more confused than they were when they began.

Acknowledgments

Thank You to Jesus—First and Last and Everything in between. Your strength and grace during the battles I fought in writing this book will not be forgotten.

Thank you to my loving and patient family. Thank you to my wife for bearing the stress of a husband glued to the computer for weeks and who developed some antisocial disorders due to the stress. I love you. Thank you to my Maddie and Chloe for interrupting my writing with their hugs and love. I can’t wait to play for hours and hours and not just a few minutes here and there. I love you too.

To my wonderful church family in Puyallup, Washington, thank you for your prayers and never-ending support during this project. Thank you to Mike for picking up preaching and other duties so I could slay this beast. Know that the whole Demma family is loved and appreciated.

Thank you to Mary Stevens for the care package full of goodies that kept me awake and fed so I could work into the wee hours of the morning. You are a huge blessing.

Much love to the Proctors and the Ritters for taking the girls that last Sabbath so I could finish the book.

Thank to Lori Cockerham and Mark Witas for the extended Facebook discussion on wrath that never turned wrathful despite some disagreements. I love you guys and hope you will find my treatment of the subject fair.

Thank You to Jesus—First and Last and Everything in between.

Thank you to Joyce Schilt and to my uncle Ken for giving me books to supplement my studies. They were very helpful, and I have promoted them in the recommended reading section.

To my writers group—now meeting at an even more secret location—thank you for your critiques and encouragement.

To all my seminary professors who let me bask in their wisdom, and to the editor and copy editors who get to clean this mess up, to Tiger Paulsen and his promotional work, and to scholars whose works I read and in which I found ideas—may God continue to bless your work.

Thank you to you, the consumer who has purchased this book. Don’t even think about returning it . . . I’ll find you.

Of course, thanks to everyone at TDKR, BTAS, and the Avengers Initiative for their help. Cheetos, YouTube, Netflix, chocolate, salsa, Sony PS3, Apple iPad, soap, Snuggie, and Charlie the Unicorn—where would I be without you?

Thank You to Jesus—First and Last and Everything in between.

Also by Seth J. Pierce

Camporee of Doom

The Day the School Blew Up

What We Believe for Teens

What We Believe: Prophecies of Daniel for Teens

You can also see/hear/read more of Seth's perspective on religion, God, and life in general on his Web site: www.sethpierce.com.

Contents

Preface		9
Chapter 1	The Interpreter	11
Chapter 2	Genre	15
Chapter 3	Past, Present, Future—and All of the Above	21
Chapter 4	Eye Exams	27
Chapter 5	What Do You See?	31
Chapter 6	The Significant Seven	35
Chapter 7	Running the Ball: The Structure of Revelation	39
Chapter 8	Ciphers	47
Chapter 9	Sync	51
The Battle Lines Form		
Chapter 10	Stranded <i>Revelation 1</i>	57
Chapter 11	What's in a Name? <i>Revelation 2</i>	63
Chapter 12	Dolphins, Whac-A-Mole, and Church History <i>Revelation 3</i>	75
Chapter 13	The Room <i>Revelation 4</i>	85
Chapter 14	Can Someone Open This Thing? <i>Revelation 5</i>	91
Chapter 15	History in the Hands of Jesus <i>Revelation 6; 8:1</i>	97
Chapter 16	Warriors <i>Revelation 7</i>	107
Chapter 17	Nature Goes Nuts <i>Revelation 8:1–8</i>	113
Chapter 18	Rise of the Locorpions <i>Revelation 8:9–9:12</i>	119
Chapter 19	The Return of the King <i>Revelation 9:13–15; 11:15–19</i>	127
Chapter 20	Prophetic Food Poisoning <i>Revelation 10</i>	133
Chapter 21	Strong Words <i>Revelation 11</i>	139
The Dragon's War		
Chapter 22	Cosmic Christmas Card <i>Revelation 12</i>	147
Chapter 23	The Making of 666 <i>Revelation 13a</i>	155
Intermission and Commercial: Sabbath Versus Sunday		
Chapter 24	Now Back to Your Regularly Scheduled Chapter <i>Revelation 13b</i>	167
Chapter 25	The Three Angels <i>Revelation 14</i>	175
The Wrath of God		
Chapter 26	Game Over <i>Revelation 15</i>	187
Chapter 27	Wrath Soup <i>Revelation 16</i>	193
Chapter 28	Beauty and the Beast <i>Revelation 17</i>	203
Chapter 29	We Better Get Outta Here! <i>Revelation 18</i>	211

The Final Exit of Evil

Chapter 30	Enter the Hero and Exit the Villains <i>Revelation 19</i>	221
Chapter 31	The Memorable Moment <i>Revelation 20</i>	229

The Reward of the Righteous

Chapter 32	Extreme World Makeover <i>Revelation 21</i>	241
Chapter 33	The Garden <i>Revelation 22</i>	247
Chapter 34	X <i>Final Thought</i>	253
Recommended Reading		255

Preface

Who Am I?

“I have a confession to make: I’m a Seventh-day Adventist.

“No—scratch that. I’m a Seventh-day Adventist pastor.”

These are the words I spoke to a couple hundred people gathered in a gymnasium to hear a seminar on Bible prophecy. They came because we had sent a colorful flyer to about fifty thousand of the people who live near our church. The people had gathered to hear the words of Scripture.

There are a lot of misunderstandings about who Seventh-day Adventists are and what we believe. We are Protestants in the grand tradition of the Reformation and even of the radical reformation. Lutherans, Anabaptists, Mennonites, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and even Pentecostals are our brothers and sisters. We believe in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, in believer’s baptism by immersion, that the Holy Spirit still empowers believers with special gifts to love and heal a world that suffers from chronic pain.

And we believe that Jesus is coming soon.

We believe that last item because we believe in God’s Word above everything else. That Word informs my faith tradition’s identity as an end-time movement that seeks to restore truths buried under the man-made traditions and other refuse piled up over the centuries by politically minded members of religious institutions. This means that while we share many things with our Christian brothers and sisters, we do see some things in God’s Word that others seem to miss. And it’s that Word that I am concerned with.

Revelation is about revealing—not hiding. It *is*, after all, a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Even the scary flyers with beasts tell us something about Jesus—and if Jesus is giving the vision, then who is responsible for those images?

A warning: no book is ever finished—it just runs into deadlines. That means the author is going to miss someone’s favorite part. The problem is if we “remembered” everything we read while writing our books, they would never end. Every author has to make choices and consequently runs the risk of missing someone’s favorite part. So, if you need more, go to the recommended reading section—that’s what it’s there for. Or you can chat with me on my Web site: www.sethjpirce.com. I’d love to hear from you.

PROPHECIES OF REVELATION FOR TEENS

Prophecies of Revelation for Teens is meant to begin dialogue, not to end it.

It's also meant for teens, so the language—not the material—is simple. And I have tried to use humor, something commentaries really struggle with.

Adventists have so much material on prophecy—we've been talking about it so long—that sometimes it's difficult to find a way into the conversation.

This book is an invitation for you to join the conversation.

It's a steppingstone to deeper study.

A steppingstone to help you stand on the Cornerstone.

May you see Truth.

May you see Jesus.

Seth J. Pierce

P.S. When you turn the page and start reading chapter 1, you may think you're experiencing a genuine case of *déjà vu*. Or that someone at Pacific Press® made a major mistake. At least you may think that if you've read my book *Prophecies of Daniel for Teens*. That's because the first four chapters of this book are identical—or nearly identical—to the first four chapters of my book on Daniel.

But you're still sane, and the duplication isn't the fault of Pacific Press®.

I *wanted* the first four chapters of this book to say the same thing as the first four chapters of my book on Daniel. These chapters contain important information about interpreting the kind of prophecy that both Daniel and Revelation contain. People who haven't read my book on Daniel need this information to understand Revelation, so I had to put it in this book too.

In other words, if you've read my book on Daniel, you can skip the first four chapters of this book—that is, if your memory is perfect. If not, you probably should at least skim through chapters 1 through 4 before you go to chapter 5.

Chapter 1

The Interpreter

One of the jobs I worked while attending college was covering the Prescott Hall front reception desk. It was a good job, as I'd usually get four short calls in a four-hour shift, and I could spend the rest of the time doing homework or chatting with friends who stopped by. However, one night I received a call that resulted in a crisis of international proportions. The phone rang, and I answered it: "Prescott Hall—how can I help you?"

A timid voice responded. "Jose?"

"I'm sorry," I said. "I didn't catch his last name. Is he a student here?"

"Jose?" asked the voice again.

OK, she doesn't speak English. That's easily fixed. There were only a few Joses in our dorms, and I knew most of them, so I knew I could find him by the process of elimination. Swiftly I punched the keys on the computer and located the mysterious Hispanic man known only as Jose.

"Here's your transfer, ma'am," I said while she asked again for what I presumed was her son. Then I transferred the call—only to be greeted by a busy signal.

"Uh, I'm sorry," I told the caller, "but his line is busy."

Now the timid voice transformed into something more irate. "JOSE!" the woman cried angrily.

She didn't understand what I was saying. The words I spoke bounced off her ears like bullets off Superman's chest. I had only one option left—I transferred her call to the women's dorm, muttering, "Let's see if they can get anywhere with this situation."

A few moments later, the phone rang again, and I answered dutifully. "Hello, Prescott desk. How may I—"

"JOSE!" the voice shrieked.

I was helpless. This caller wouldn't get off the line. I couldn't make the transfer, and apparently the only word in her vocabulary was "Jose," followed by what sounded like thirty or forty exclamation points. Panic ensued, and all was nearly lost—until my Spanish-speaking Hispanic friend Gil walked into the lobby.

"Gil," I cried, shoving the phone into his hand, "tell this woman what's going on!"

PROPHECIES OF REVELATION FOR TEENS

Her son's line is busy! She is screaming and probably thinks that we've done something to him or are hiding him somewhere, or worse!"

Gil grabbed the phone and in perfect Spanish translated what I had been trying to tell her. The crisis was defused, and eventually the anxious mother was reunited via telephone with Jose—whom I hope has acquired call-waiting since then.

Sometimes, in order to understand a message, we need the help of an interpreter.

The Bible's interpreter

In the book of Daniel, we see something that seems unlikely—a prophet confused by a message sent from God. The prophet says, "I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision *and did not understand it*" (Daniel 8:27; emphasis added).

Daniel was even more upset than Jose's mother was because he couldn't understand what God was telling him. It's just as easy for us to become frustrated when we're trying to understand what God wants to communicate to us today through His Word. Thankfully, there's a way that works.

The great Reformer Martin Luther once said, "Scripture . . . is its own light. It is a grand thing when Scripture interprets itself." This concept has been echoed throughout history by great Christian leaders. As a Seventh-day Adventist, I find this concept supported by a man named William Miller. One of his top three principles for interpreting the Bible states: "Scripture must be its own expositor [explainer], since it is a rule of itself. If I depend on a minister or teacher to explain it to me, and they should guess at its meaning, or desire to have it so on account of their creed, or thought to be wise, . . . then their guessing, desire, creed, or wisdom is my rule and not the Bible!"¹

In seminary I took an exam in Hebrew and had to dissect each verb to make sure my translation was correct. It would have been easier if I could have used a Hebrew dictionary because it would have helped me with the translation. Using a German dictionary would have done nothing except score me a big fat F—and possibly a psychological evaluation. To understand Hebrew, I need a Hebrew dictionary. So, if we want to understand Scripture, we need to look at Scripture.

Here's an example. Early on in the book of Revelation, when Jesus is having John write letters to seven churches, the text tells us that Jesus is the One who "walks among the seven golden lampstands" (Revelation 2:1). What does that mean? Does Jesus like lampstands? I don't see why He wouldn't—but there's a little more meaning here.

Golden lampstands were used in the Old Testament sanctuary (see Exodus 25:31). They symbolized light in darkness. (The sanctuary had no windows.) In describing the effect Jesus has on people, the Gospel of Matthew says, "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16).

THE INTERPRETER

Jesus also likens Himself to “light” (John 8:12), and He even tells His followers, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). In other words, God and His followers bring light to a dark world. So when we get back to Revelation 2:1, we can see that Jesus is likening His churches to lights in a dark world—meaning we are supposed to be sharing the hope and love we have instead of hiding ourselves away where people can’t find us.

Revelation pictures heavenly creatures around God’s throne as saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8). Their praise echoes a passage in Isaiah that pictures heavenly beings standing around the throne of God in heaven’s temple or sanctuary as saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). This reveals that like Isaiah, John—the person having the vision in Revelation—is looking directly into God’s heavenly sanctuary rather than just looking into heaven in general. By looking at other places in Scripture that have phrases, images, and objects like those in the passage we’re studying, we can get a clearer sense of where things are taking place and of what that passage or that prophecy is saying to us.

As we will discuss more in the next chapter, prophecy uses lots of symbols for its descriptions, and symbols aren’t to be taken literally. I mean, can you imagine reading Revelation 13, which describes a sea beast and an earth beast, and thinking that it means that at some point those monsters will run amok around the planet, ravaging everything in their path?

Maybe you can imagine that. But while I agree that it would be incredibly exciting to have a sort of prophetic *Jurassic Park*, I’m going to let you in on something. *Shhh*—hold this book up close to your face, and I’ll whisper it to you:

They aren’t literal beasts. They represent something else.

Oh, and one more thing—get in close again:

If you still think they are real, literal monsters, I want you to know that
I’m not responsible for the social isolation and ridicule you will receive.

In our study of Daniel, we found that it contains prophetic time periods. Revelation does too—for instance, the “forty-two months” that Revelation 13:5 speaks of. We interpret Revelation’s time periods using the same formula—the “day for a year”—as we did in Daniel. As you may remember, that principle is based on two texts: “According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, *a year for each day*, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure” (Numbers 14:34; emphasis added). And “I assign to you a number of *days, 390 days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment*. So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel” (Ezekiel 4:6; emphasis added).

By now the lightbulb in your brain should have a faint glow of understanding. By allowing Scripture to interpret itself and give us the clues for translating its prophetic messages, we avoid coming up with something crazy and making our faith and our

PROPHECIES OF REVELATION FOR TEENS

God look dumb, unreasonable, and unstable.

Because I am a pastor, I get a lot of weird phone calls, some of them about people's interpretation of the Bible's prophecies. People have called to tell me that the locusts in Revelation 9 are helicopters and that the mark of the beast in Revelation 13 referred to none other than President Franklin Delano Roosevelt—who died sixty years prior to that bizarre call.

The study of prophecy isn't a quest for some secretive, mystical meaning that God has hidden there and allows only a favored few to find. (This isn't to say that God doesn't know things we don't know or that He has no mystical qualities.) Rather, we study prophecy to understand what God has *revealed* to us in it. As a matter of fact, in Greek, the language in which John wrote, the word translated "Revelation" is *apokalupsis*, which means "disclosure," or "something revealed." In other words, prophecy isn't about God's *hiding* His message from us in Scripture. Instead, it's about His *revealing* it to us there.

CHAPTER 1 IN BRIEF

The study of prophecy is not a quest for some secret, mystical meaning—though this isn't to say that God doesn't know things we don't know or that He has no mystical qualities. Instead, God uses prophecy to reveal things to us. Matter of fact, in the Greek language in which the New Testament was first written, the word translated "Revelation" is *apokalupsis*, which means "disclosure" or "a revealing." In other words, prophecy is about God revealing His message to us in Scripture, not about His hiding it from us.

GOING DEEPER

1. Can you think of ways people interpret the Bible without using the Bible?
2. Why have people made so many different versions of the Bible?
3. What are the tools listed below, and how can they help you study Scripture?
 - a. Concordance
 - b. Parallel Bible
 - c. Bible dictionary
4. What is the "day for a year principle"?
5. How do you study the Bible? How does the way you study it help you to find the meaning of difficult Bible texts? What could you do to push yourself even deeper into the Bible?

ENDNOTE

1. William Miller, "Rules of Interpretation," *Midnight Cry*, November 17, 1842.