

Jude and the Book of Revelation  
ReCatechism 7  
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## INTRODUCTION

Today more than ever, the word “Truth” has become a subjective term, based on everyone’s particular whims. People are afraid (for various reasons) to use the word when discussing topics such as dogma, social issues or history. Truth, however, is not relative – there is only *one* Truth: **Jesus Christ**.

*Truth vs. Falsehood* is a duel that has been fought by people of the Church throughout the ages: from the persecutions to Imperial Christianity, or from times of the Ottoman Empire to the days of Communist Russia and their persecution of Orthodox Christians, this struggle will consume the world until the Last Days, the Second Coming of Christ.

Truth will always be persecuted by falsehood. The good news is that Truth will ultimately triumph over all falsehood.

Since September, *Re-Catechism*’s Lecture Series has been outlining the books that contain the Truth of Jesus Christ – the New Testament. Tonight, we conclude these sessions by discussing two books that highlight this fight of Truth vs. Falsehood in the light of the *Eschaton* (the Final Days): one that most have probably never heard of (or don’t pay any attention to) and one that *too many people* pay attention to – at times, for all the wrong reasons.

**The Epistle of Jude** is a short-but-pastorally-minded book of the New Testament, while **the Book of Revelation** is not filled with “raptures, doom and gloom”, as some televangelists like to speak about. Both books bring hope to Christians for eternal life, with Truth conquering falsehood.

## The Epistle of St. Jude

### **JUDGING THE SURROUNDINGS: Background Information**

At first, reading this epistle gives little information about who it was addressed to and when it was written. However, there are some small clues to help us.

Epistles usually have in the beginning *where* they were being sent. This one merely says, “to those who are called, sanctified by God the Father and preserved in Jesus Christ.” (v. 1) Although we can never know exactly where this epistle was directed to, we know that the problem of Gnosticism existed in the local church. The receivers were “dear friends” to Jude: they were known to him, rather than being ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’ whom he had never met. He uses nonbiblical sources (such as a story about the death of Moses the Prophet, called “the Assumption of Moses”), which would suggest that he was writing to Christians from a Hellenistic Jewish background.

The epistle describes people who “have crept in [the Church] unnoticed... ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (v. 4) This verse shows the presence of *heretics*, people that corrupt the teaching of the Church from the inside. This trend of heresy began towards the end of the first century with **Gnosticism**. People that followed this heresy – known as **Gnostics** – believed they had a “special knowledge” about God, one that was given to certain people and not everyone. Along with many other false teachings, these people tried to corrupt other Christians, making their false teachings attractive. This fact - along with scholars’ opinions as to the style of writing and the date of St. Jude’s martyrdom – suggest this epistle was written from 60 to 80 AD.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE AUTHOR: About St. Jude the Apostle**

**St. Jude the Apostle** is a member of the original Twelve Apostles of the Lord. He is the brother of James, Joses and Simon (sons of Joseph the Betrothed, the protector of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary). Church tradition tells us St. Jude was married to a woman named Mary. We know through the *Synaxarion* that his two grandsons were greatly respected in the Church.

St. Jude followed Christ and was blessed by receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As the Apostles went throughout the world, he was sent to preach in Mesopotamia, Arabia, Syria and Armenia, reaching Mount Ararat. After healing various people and bringing many to Christ, he suffered martyrdom at the hands of the pagans, who pierced him with arrows in approximately the year 80 A.D. His feast is celebrated every year on June 19<sup>th</sup>.

### **DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHERS: A pastoral “map” for Christians**

Throughout the epistle, one can see that St. Jude tells Christians how to identify these heretical teachers, how they should deal with them and, ultimately, what these people have to look forward to in eternity.

By the end of the first century A.D., the threat of Gnosticism was rampant, with their leaders having set up “pseudo-churches” and bringing people from the Truth to

falsehood. Just like the Orthodox Church today, all local churches at the time were in communion with one another through their bishops. Those who chose to “reject [the] authority [of the Church] and speak evil of dignitaries,” excommunicated themselves from the Church.

Some of these Gnostic “churches” engaged in *debauchery* during their “worship services”, the leaders acting promiscuously with the entire congregation. When one hears of “worship services” characterized this way, we can tell something is wrong...and completely missing the mark of why we worship.

Because of these reasons, St. Jude calls them “ungodly” and “self-serving” (as they broke away from the community of Faith). He compares them to the sinful Old Testament characters of Cain (murderer of his brother Abel in *Genesis*), Balaam (a greedy man in *Numbers* whose donkey actually spoke to him) and Korah (a power-hungry man who wanted to lead Israel instead of Moses and Aaron, with the end result being the ground opening up and swallowing him).

The only way for people to resist these teachings was to “pray in the Holy Spirit, keeping [themselves] in the love of God and wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (v. 20-21) Instead of spewing hatred towards the people who followed them, St. Jude encouraged Christians to show compassion on some of these heretics. In a time that apostasy was seen as a capital crime (one that would sometimes excommunicate a Christian until their death bed), he pleads with his brothers and sisters in Christ to “snatch them out of the fire,” (v. 23) lest they be lost for all eternity to the evil one.

People who stay on the road to apostasy, never returning to Christ through repentance, will be just as those who dwelled in Sodom and Gomorrah, or as the Jews of Moses’ time who were unbelieving: they will be “destroyed” (v. 5). They will not only suffer judgment in this life, but also *eternal damnation*, the same fate that awaits the devil and his angels.

This serious tone of Jude shows that all things in the Church point to the Last Day. Christians, therefore, are called to think *eschatologically*, having faith in Jesus Christ to deliver them from these torments and to *never apostasize*. Apostasy is not simple to deal with – it is a spiritual disease that destroys one’s communion with Christ. *May we never fall into apostasy in our lives.*

## **ENTRANCE INTO THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE: Bible-worthy**

A way for us to verify the epistle was seen as “canonical” by the Church is if it as quoted by Church Fathers. According to scholars, traces of this letter in are found in Sts. Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Barnabas and the *Didache*. The epistle is also mentioned in the Muratorian Canon (an ancient list of canonical books drawn up around the late-2<sup>nd</sup> century, possibly the oldest known list of the New Testament). The letter is also cited by ecclesiastical authors such as Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria. Therefore, “with Rome, Africa, and Egypt using the book, it apparently had wide acceptance around A.D. 200.” (*An Introduction to the new Testament*, Carson, Moo and Morris, page 461)

The epistle of St. Jude was accepted as part of the Biblical canon by St. Athanasios the Great and by the Local Synods (or Councils) of Laodicea (around 363 AD) and Carthage (in 397 AD).

Since it is such a small book, along with the fact that so many other epistles exist, the Letter of Jude is not read very often in the liturgical life of the Church. Having said that, it is still a part of Scripture that shows us *falsehood can never triumph over Truth* – and that false teachers need to be silenced from spreading their lies. Its doxology in the end speaks volumes, as it points to who will finally save us from all falsehood:

*“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.”*

With this small doxology, probably a prayer from an early Christian liturgy, let us enter into the last book of the New Testament.

## Revelation of Jesus Christ (St. John the Theologian)

**The Revelation of Jesus Christ** is the last book of the New Testament – a book that clearly has eschatological overtones. Written in a different way than all other New Testament books, it was revealed to St. John the Theologian “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10).

There are a few caveats when examining this book:

1. Firstly, this book is **very difficult to understand**. One gets this impression from the fact that it is the only book not to be read in the Orthodox Church during worship services. This rule was put in place in order to not scandalize and put false ideas in the minds of the faithful with messages that will definitely be misinterpreted.
2. Secondly, the book’s title of **Revelation** (in Greek, Αποκάλυψις) reveals to its readers that things are to be “unveiled” or “revealed” – and only God has answers to all the questions of the book. Otherwise, there would be no “revelation” later on, but all facts would be presented. This is why the book is properly titled “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”, since *Christ* revealed these things to St. John the Evangelist.
3. As apocalyptic literature, many people have **falsely predicted people and events**, which ultimately lead to confusion, heresy and schism in the Church. Certain groups have predicted “the end of the world” from events they believed were outlined in this book. They include: Gnostic groups that maintained the end of the world would occur during the Persecutions; the Donatists (another heretical group) predicted the world would end in 365; Martin Luther, who said the world would end no later than 1600; various clergy and lay groups of the Roman Catholic church, along with Anabaptists and other Reformers, who predicted the Second Coming throughout the second millennium; Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon ‘church’, who said that the ‘New Jerusalem’ would be built in Missouri; and, of course, one can’t forget the Arian heretics reborn, the so-called *Jehovah’s Witnesses*, with their founder Charles Taze Russell predicting the Last Days had begun in 1874, later to be revised for 1914, 1925, 1936, 1953, 1973, etc.

To read the Book of Revelation, one must be spiritually prepared for such a task. Furthermore, they must have an understanding of **when** St. John was writing, **to whom** the letter was addressed to, **what events** were going on and realize that **only God** knows the day and hour of His return.

## THE CHARACTERS OF REVELATION: Divine, Good and Evil

Although there are many characters in the Book of Revelation, let’s just review the most important:

1. **Saint John the Theologian**: The author of **Revelation**, he was brother of St. James and son of Salome the Myrrh-bearer and Zebedee (a fisherman). He is the author of four other New Testament books: *The Gospel of John*, along with the three *Epistles of John*. Although the youngest of the 12 Apostles, he was present at many great moments in the life of Christ. He was at the Transfiguration (along with Sts. Peter and James), sat next to Christ during the Last Supper and was the only one to not desert Christ at His arrest and

followed Him all the way to Golgotha. For this, Jesus entrusted him to care for His Mother, the Theotokos, and is known as the *beloved disciple*.

After Pentecost, he was sent to preach throughout Asia Minor. During the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, he was taken to Rome and tortured. The Emperor then exiled him to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation (around 95-96 AD). He was 95 years of age when he fell asleep in the Lord in AD 100, the only disciple of Christ not to die a martyr's death. He is celebrated in the Orthodox Church on both May 8<sup>th</sup> and September 26<sup>th</sup>.

2. **The One who sits on the [Throne](#), later as [The Lion of Judah](#) who is the seven horned Lamb with seven eyes:** This is none other than Jesus Christ. He initially asks St. John to write to the “angels” (or bishops) of various local churches. He is said to be a Lamb, slain yet living, since Jesus Christ was crucified in the flesh, suffered death and rose from the dead by His resurrection.
3. **Twenty-four crowned elders, the Four living creatures & the saints:**
  - The 24 cr/owned elders represent the Church of the Old and New Testament and the world. Also, twelve of the 24 elders have been said to represent the 12 Tribes of Israel, while the other twelve are said to be the 12 Apostles.
  - In iconography, the four evangelists are paired up with the four living creatures (Matthew as a winged man, Mark as a winged lion, Luke as a winged ox or bull and John as an eagle).
  - The “saints” are the Christians who have suffered martyrdom for the Gospel, along with those who consecrated themselves to God – the virgins.
4. **The [Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse](#)**
  - The **First Horseman** is seen on a white horse. Second-century St. Irenaeus of Lyons was amongst the first to say that this horseman is *Jesus Christ*, His white horse representing the successful spread of the gospel.
  - The **Second Horseman** rides on a red horse, in hand with a large sword. He represents war and mass slaughter. Some say that he represents civil war, while others have associated this with the persecution of the Early Church and the martyrdom they had to endure.
  - The **Third Horseman**, who rides on a black horse and carries scales, is generally understood as famine.
  - The **Fourth Horseman** is *Death* or *Hades*, who has the power to kill by sword, famine, plague and by the wild beasts of the earth (Rev. 6:7-8).

Others have said that the Four Horsemen symbolize the history of humanity. In the words of Bishop Alexander (Mileant) of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad: *“The four horsemen of the Apocalypse depict in the simplest way the history of mankind. At first, the blessed life in Eden of our forefathers, called upon to “rule” over nature (the white horse); then their fall from grace (the fiery red horse); after which the lives of their descendants were filled with various sorrows and mutual annihilation (the black and the pale horses)... Here also is the path of the life of each man: his childhood purity and innocence, his big potential possibilities, which are obscured by a tempestuous youthfulness in which a man dissipates his vigor and health, and in the end he dies. Here is the history of the Church: the spiritual persecution of Christians during the Apostolic times and the efforts of the Church to renew human society. However, in the Church itself there arise heresies and schisms, and the pagan community forces upon it its*

*persecutions. The Church weakens and retreats into the catacombs, and some of the local churches totally disappear. Thus, the vision of the four horsemen sums up the factors which characterize the life of sinning mankind.”*(from [www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/revelat.htm](http://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/revelat.htm))

5. **The children of the New Israel:** “The New Israel” is the people of God, the members of the Church. They are said to be 144,000; this, however, is not meant to be understood literally. Dealing with numbers in Revelation is not easy and is never meant to be taken literally. It merely means “many, many people”. According to the text, they are “sealed”. This reminds us of our chrismation, when the priest blessed us with the holy myrrh and said “the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit”.
6. **The Two witnesses:** There is debate as to who these two witnesses are who will come to preach in the Final Days. Some say that they are Elijah and Enoch, as they have both *not died* and will be brought back to suffer martyrdom. Others maintain that they are Elijah and Moses. Prototypes of these two witnesses are Sts. Peter and Paul, who suffered martyrdom under Nero while preaching to most of the Christian world. The text suggests that they will be in Jerusalem to preach at the time of their martyrdom.
7. **Beast of the Sea having seven heads and ten horns and the Lamb-horned Beast of the Earth:** Together, they symbolize all that hate Christianity.
  - The Beast of the Sea is understood by many Holy Fathers as the Antichrist. The heads and horns of the beast symbolize the godless states that follow the Antichrist, together with their rulers. At the time of its writing, however, the Beast of the Sea could have been connected with the pagan Emperor Nero.
  - The Beast of the Earth is generally understood to be the False prophet, a religious-type leader to bring people to spiritual debauchery, as he or she will lead them to the Antichrist. The text describes him as having “two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon” (Rev. 13:11). At the time of the persecutions, however, this could have been all the leaders of Gnostic heresies. “Like a lamb” they seem to be routed in Christ; yet, they spread heresies and “speak like a dragon”.
8. **The woman and her child:** Some theologians have said this woman to be the Theotokos and the Child to be Jesus Christ. The text says that the dragon wanted to kill the Child, emulating Christ’s flee from Bethlehem to Egypt as an infant with His Mother, the Theotokos, and St. Joseph the Betrothed. Others say this “woman and child” is the Church that was, is and will be persecuted, fleeing from the evil one.
9. **The Dragon, fiery red with seven heads:** There is no doubt that this figure is the devil.
10. **The Whore of Babylon:**
  - As any person, a prostitute was a virgin at one time. Therefore, St. John could be referring to the Gnostic heresies (and other sects, for that matter) that broke off from the Church and joined the ranks of other worldly religions. Using the word “Babylon”, which refers to ‘confusion’ (since its name comes from Babel – and its connection with the events of the confusion of languages at the Tower), St. John shows her as a “mother of harlots”: she teaches this ‘confusion’ (or heresy) to citizens of many cities and countries, giving birth to many who will loathe God. (Constantinou, 175)
  - St. Gregory the Great says that *Babylon* signifies “the glory of the world”, as things of this world are the ones to engulf the souls of the people, pushing things of God to the sidelines.

- According to Andrew of Caesaria, “Babylon” cannot signify the ancient Persian capital, nor Rome, nor Constantinople (as “New Rome”), but various kingdoms throughout the ages that have “worldly prominence and power.” (Constantinou, 211)

## **EVENTS OF REVELATION: Past, Present and Future**

No matter what the event described in Revelation, everything is directly connected with *Jesus Christ*.

After St. John’s introduction, Christ Himself speaks to St. John, with a loud voice “as of a trumpet” (1:10). Jesus calls Himself “the Alpha and the Omega”, the First and Last, affirming that He has “the keys of Hades and of Death...[so,] do not be afraid.” (1:18b, 17b). He commands St. John to write the things he will see and send the epistle/letter to the Seven Churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyateira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. These churches were founded by St. Paul and, after his martyrdom, were cared for by St. John the Theologian. Each church community had their positive and negative attributes, and St. John reminds them of certain things, so they do not fall into apostasy. Ephesus was recognized for their spiritual labour, but needed to repent. Smyrna was persecuted, but was spiritually rich. Pergamos held fast to the Name of Christ, but was eating food sacrificed to idols and was taking part in immoral acts (probably a sign of Gnostics in their midst). Thyatira showed love and works, but they allowed a spiritual “Jezebel” amongst them, teaching them incorrect doctrine and leading them into sexual immorality. Sardis was called “dead” by the Lord, so they had definitely fallen into deep sin and needed to repent, with the Lord reminding them there were some that had not sinned and they should serve as an example of faith. Philadelphia was a Church that did not apostasize, kept the Faith and were being rewarded by Christ for their faithfulness. The Church of Laodicea has one of the most famous verses of Revelation. Jesus stated that it would have been better for them to be either cold or hot in their faith, because bringing them to the Truth would have been easier. However, because their church was “neither cold nor hot”, Jesus said, “I will vomit you out of My mouth.” (3:16b)

After the letters, St. John sees the 24 Elders surrounding the Throne of God singing day and night: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” This scene is reminiscent of a liturgy (especially the moment before the bread and wine become Body and Blood of Christ). The Lamb (Jesus Christ) then appears, worthy to open the scrolls and loose its seals. The Lamb is seen “as though it had been slain” (5:6), reminding the reader that the Lord suffered death and resurrected from the dead, thereby crushing the power of the devil forevermore.

The seals are then opened, with the Four Horsemen appearing. The events that are described during this part of the book can be seen as happening only at the Eschaton, *or* as a continual process from the time of Christ’s Resurrection to the end of time. For example, the Fiery Red horse of the Four Horsemen that exits takes away peace from the earth. This can be said during the time of the First Christians, to whom the book was being written to (remember, they were going through a persecution that would end in the 300s!), or this instability is a general comment about the world’s various wars throughout history.

In Revelation 7, we hear about the 144,000 people being sealed. It is interesting to note that all tribes of Israel are mentioned *except one: the Tribe of Dan*. This tribe was conquered by the pagan Assyrians and exiled. Because of this, they adopted pagan practices and fell away from worshipping the true God. For this reason, and remembering the prophecy of the Patriarch Jacob (“Dan shall be a serpent in the way”, Gen. 49:17, cf. Jer. 8:16), some Church fathers (like St. Hippolytus of Rome) and contemporary Orthodox figures have stated that the Antichrist will come from this tribe.

We then read about a great multitude, “who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb... [and He] will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (7:14, 17-18) The “white robes” are a clear reference to the baptismal robes worn by Christians. When we are washed in the blessed waters of baptism, we leave sin and put on Christ. This passage shows that Christians, when true to the Gospel, have nothing to fear when tribulations come. No Antichrist can stand in the way of the Lord, for the Lord is God Almighty, the King of the Universe.

The seven trumpets then sound, with various cosmic disturbances that are allowed by God. Again, Christians of sound faith have nothing to fear because they are with Christ. Although they will live these events through their neighbours, God will care for them until the Last Day. Vegetation will be struck, fish will die, water will be undrinkable, the sun will be darkened.

[As an aside, some monks told us on our trip to Jerusalem that there were sounds like trumpets recently, even captured on YouTube. They were heard in various places throughout the world and, while the scientific community usually has answers for many things...there was no answer for why this happened.]

I have to be honest: I have no idea when it comes to the Locusts, the Angels from the Euphrates, nor about St. John eating the book. If I knew, I would definitely write a book and warn the world. But here we are.

The banishment of the devil by God and His angels (with leader the Archangel Michael) is something that happened from the beginning of time. Therefore, this is an event that has occurred in the past.

The beast from the sea, or the Antichrist, and the beast from the earth, a religious-type leader to support the beast from the sea, is next in the Book of Revelation. There has been so much speculation as to who is mentioned in this part of the Bible. Adding to the speculation is the verse that says no one will be able to buy or sell anything without the mark of the beast. St. John is cautious when he speaks of this: **“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”** (13:18) The Greek text gives us the letters  $\chi\xi\xi'$ , while some ancient fragments give the number 616. Scholars are obviously divided as to whom the Evangelist is referring to literally. Some have said it refers to Emperor Nero

of Rome, the great persecutor of Christians. Since Domitian (the ruler at the time) was seen as Nero reincarnate, this would be a logical explanation. The name had been 'decoded' as "Titan", «κακός οδηγός», «αμνός άδικος» (unjust lamb)...even "Islam" and "the Pope". This is conjecture at best, "playing God" at the worst. Taking a sober second look at this passage, one should remember the words of St. Andrew of Caesaria: "if it were needed for us to know the name, the seer of mysteries St. John [the Theologian] would have revealed it. But the grace of God did not will that this ruinous [or, harmful] name should be written in the divine book."

A divine choir begins to sing praise to God, the Church. The angel then proclaims, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen that great city because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication!" (14:8) This 'drinking of wine' points to an unholy-type of eucharist, that the people who have believed in this false religion will answer for their choice. They will be judged, while those who have done good will rejoice in the Lord eternally.

The bowls are poured out in chapter 16. Those who did not follow the Lord will suffer with loathsome sores, the sea turning to blood, fresh waters turning to blood, men being scorched, darkness and pain over the earth, and so on. These "bowls" can be understood literally or can be understood figuratively (e.g. the sores could be how the hearts of sinners will feel when they are separated from God, etc.).

Armageddon is "the hill of Megiddo". I passed by it during our tour to the Holy Land this past summer – it is a desert, to say the least. Yet, this place has a spiritual significance. It is by Mount Carmel – the mountain where the Prophet Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal. This 'battle of Armageddon' is God confronting the evil one for one final time.

Finally, the question of "the rapture" – see how I didn't mention it? That's because it's nowhere to be found in the book of Revelation. People who follow this teaching (i.e. Protestants) began this teaching in about 1830, by a former Anglican priest and founder of a sect called the Plymouth Brethren, John Nelson Darby. No Apostle, Church Father – not even the heretics! – said anything about this teaching pre-1830. Therefore, Christians will go through tribulations by standing up to the Antichrist – they don't get a "get out of jail free" card because of some "rapture". Jesus tells us that, "they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by nations for My Name's sake." (Matthew 24:9) Yet, we should be comforted by the fact we will enjoy eternal salvation in Paradise – and I'll take that, thank you very much ☺

### **LANGUAGE: How the author speaks**

According to ecclesiastical author Eusebius of Caesaria's, *Ecclesiastical History*, a certain Bishop of Alexandria, Dionysios, maintained that the Gospel of St. John was "beautiful and grammatically correct", but the dialect and language used in of Revelation are not accurate Greek, the author using sayings of "barbarians" (even misspelling words and utilizing bad grammar).

As for the use of symbolism in the text, it is modeled after similar works, particularly the Book of Daniel, which seems to portray concrete events with highly-developed symbols.

It may be that Revelation's author both adopted his symbolic style and utilized a tightly-knit parallel structure to obscure the Christian story enough to save it from destruction yet still communicate its central message. Only those already familiar with the Jewish symbolism from which he borrows so heavily will understand the original meanings of those symbols and comprehend the new message which he is trying to communicate.

## **OUTCOMES & EXHORTATIONS:**

### **'What happens in the end' & 'How to prep for the Last Day'**

At the end of the book of Revelation, we see how Truth – Jesus Christ – conquers falsehood – the devil and all those with him. Satan will be cast into the lake of fire, together with the beast and the false prophet. “They will be tormented day and night, forever and ever.” (Rev. 20:10b) Once this happens, Judgment Day has arrived. All will be judged before God, “[each] according to their works.... And anyone not found in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:13b, 15) These people not found include, “the cowardly (i.e. those who have apostasized), unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.” (Rev. 21:8) These sinners who are condemned are those who have not *repented* of their sins – not simply those who have sinned, since we are *all sinners*.

This is why it is **very important** for us to pray for these people that engage in these activities in this life – for them to repent! Who wants to see *anyone* to suffer “the Second Death” and be away from God eternally? Yet, this is the love that God shows us: those who wish to be away from Him in this life, He allows them to be away from Him in the next life, as well. Hell is a state of being: away from God, disconnected from Him eternally – all because they chose this path. There is **no predestination** – it is our own will and actions that will lead us to Christ or away from Him.

The questions remains: Have we been faithful Christians? Has each one of us followed the commandments of God to love Him with our whole heart, mind and soul – and to love our neighbour as ourselves? If so, we are a faithful part of the bride of Christ. We will enjoy the New Heaven and Earth, where there is no Temple – no Church – “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” (Rev. 21:22b) This is why it is important to have a living, thriving relationship with Jesus Christ – both personally (at home/school/work/etc.) and communally as a Church. We hear of the “elect” going to Heaven, the angels and others rejoicing *together*. We cannot “pray in our own way” and “worship at home” and think that’s okay. We are to be in communion with one another and with God (as Fr. Konstantinos likes to remind us so many times – and he should, because it is a cornerstone of our faith).

## **SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY: Bible-worthy**

One final note on the author of **Revelation**: from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, many fathers of the Church have said that St. John the Theologian is the author. They include Saints such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyons, Theophilus of Antioch (2<sup>nd</sup> century) and

Clement of Alexandria, along with Tertullian and Origen (ecclesiastical authors). Some people, like Sts. Jerome and Gregory of Nazianzus, had doubts about the book, saying it shouldn't be included in the canon of Scripture. Yet, its inclusion in various ancient Church codices and early church father quotations all helped its case to be finally accepted in the canon of Scripture by the Church. The reason for the "doubt factor" by some members of the Church was many other heretics were writing in the style that Revelation was written in – that is, very cryptic and symbolic, and they did not know if this was written by St. John the Theologian or a pseudo-author passing it off for "scripture".

According to Presbytera Eugenia Constantinou, an Orthodox scholar on the subject, "Revelation's shaky canonical status and association with heresy caused the East to lag behind the west three hundred years before producing a commentary on Revelation. Not until the end of the sixth century did the first Greek commentary [on the book] appear... Not long afterward, a second Greek commentary appeared... composed by Andrew, Archbishop of Caesaria... His thoughtful, balanced and well written commentary was quickly embraced and became extremely important." (Eugenia Constantinou, *Andrew of Caesaria and the Apocalypse in the Ancient Church of the East: Studies and Translation*, 5)

Andrew of Caesaria was trying to deflate any type of apocalyptic fears people had in the 6<sup>th</sup> century; however, some people *read what they want to read* and didn't pay attention to what the text was saying. It is for these reason that, although divinely-inspired, **Revelation** is the only book to not be read in Orthodox Churches today as part of the lectionary.

## **Conclusion**

In the end, Jesus reminds St. John – and all of us – that "*I am coming quickly!*" It is the prayer of the Church that Christ comes quickly, even praying this in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come". That is why St. John replies to His statement with, "Amen! Even so, come Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20) Yet, so many of us want to become saints and yet fear death. Death is the entrance into eternal life for those who are prepared and know that Christ has conquered death with His resurrection. This Truth has been clouded by the falsehood that "everything ends here" or certain 'traditions' associated with death that push us away from it. These 'traditions' should be shunned and discontinued, for they are not in the spirit of the Orthodox faith. Every person should weep and lament at the loss of one that leaves this earth; at the same time, they should rejoice in the fact that this person, having lived a godly life, will rejoice with the saints as promised to us by Christ Himself.

So, as we leave Re-Catechism 7 and will begin again in January of next year, we should remember that Truth has conquered falsehood – "unto the ages of ages". Let's pray St. John's prayer every day with hope: "**Come, Lord Jesus!**" Amen.