

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JULY 20TH–21ST, 2024 // REVELATION

## WHAT IS THE BOOK OF REVELATION ABOUT?

The word revelation (or “apokálypsis”) simply means an unveiling.

- The letter records four spectacular visions that Christ instructed the author (John) to record and send to the persecuted churches in the Roman province of Asia (modern Turkey).
- The theme of this book is that Jesus, the Lord of history, will return to earth to bring history to its proper conclusion (Rev. 1:7).

The purpose of this letter was (and still is) to encourage and challenge Christians.

- This book of the Bible places strong emphasis on Christian endurance and challenges us to stand strong in Christ in the face of persecution, doctrinal error, and compromise.
- Revelation reminds us that someday soon Christ is returning and He will triumph over evil!
- Therefore, we are to remain faithful.

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT OF REVELATION

Revelation was probably written around A.D. 95, near the end of the rule of the emperor Domitian, who viciously persecuted Christians.

- The letter was written to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, which are listed in chapters 2 and 3.
- Each city mentioned was about 30–50 miles apart from each other, all on a circular road.

The text mentions the churches in the sequence a letter carrier would travel to deliver this writing to make sure it circulated to all churches.

- The Apostle John was the author of Revelation and four other books of the Bible.
- John was one of the few biblical writers who were allowed to see Heaven and God's throne room.
- This was an unexpected revelation that we presume John never intended to write.

As John saw and heard things, God (the actual author) instructed John to write them down.

- But was it the same John who wrote John's Gospel?
- This book was written very differently compared to his other works.
- Revelation is written in “inferior” Greek.
- Imagine the way this book was recorded: rapidly seeing future events that may have been hard to interpret.

John wrote the book of Revelation while he was exiled on the Island of Patmos—a small (10 x 6 mile) island 37 miles off the coast of Greece.

- Early Christian tradition says that he was banished to the island by Roman authorities as punishment for practicing Christianity.
- Tertullian stated that John was banished after being plunged into boiling oil in Rome and suffering nothing from it.

## INTERPRETING REVELATION

The book of Revelation has been the subject of much controversy, and misinterpretation over the centuries in Christianity.

- Because of this, many Christians see Revelation as too controversial, too complicated, too scary, and too confusing.
- Satan HATES the book of Revelation! If he can convince us that we don't need to read it, he can silence the truth about his future.
- 1/3 of Revelation contains predictions and there are 56 events that are prophesied.
- There are different interpretations of these prophecies.

## FOUR SCHOOLS OF INTERPRETATION:

- **1) Preterist View:** The fulfillment of Revelation came to pass when Jerusalem was destroyed around 70 A.D. In this view, Revelation was specifically for the 1st Century Church.
- **2) Historicist View:** Revelation speaks of things that happened in the recent past and applies to every generation. The predictions cover the entire period between John's day and Christ's return. Works in a cyclical time (every generation has an antichrist, mark of the beast, etc.).
- **3) Futurist View:** Revelation speaks of things that will happen in the future that lead up to and accompany the end of the world. This view holds that the main purpose of this book is to describe the “end of the age” and the things that are to come.
- **4) Idealist View:** Revelation isn't really about any specific historical event that happened or anything that will happen in the future. In this view, it's simply a symbolic portrayal of the spiritual conflict between the Kingdom of God and the powers of satanic evil.

## WHICH ONE IS CORRECT?

The best way to interpret Scripture is...using Scripture. Revelation is prophecy (1:3).

- In the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the prophets spoke not only of contemporary events; they constantly related things that were happening in their time to the last great event at the end of history—“The Day of the Lord” (Isaiah, Joel, Amos).

Our understanding of Revelation has to be properly informed by the rest of the Bible.

- We can conclude that the correct method of interpreting Revelation is a blend between the “preterist” and the “futurist” methods.
- For example, the “beast” (Rev. 13:1) is both Rome (what was happening then) and the Antichrist who will come at the end of time (which will happen later).

## USE OF SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

When we talk about interpreting the Bible “literally,” it means that we interpret God's Word just as we interpret other forms of communication—in the most obvious and natural sense.

- When the Bible uses a metaphor or a figure of speech, we should interpret it accordingly.
- Revelation also uses numbers, colors, and sound to symbolize many things about God and these events.

## THEMES OF REVELATION

- The 2nd coming of Christ
- The sovereignty of God in history
- The wrath of God against evil
- The holiness and justice of God
- The limited but horrible power of evil
- The person of Christ: slaughtered Lamb and conquering King!

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU AND ME?

- Jesus is returning someday soon—and we're called to be ready!
- No matter how bad it gets, God still wins.
- Persecution is a reality for all Christians, but God promises protection for His people.
- There will be a final judgment and we will spend eternity either with God or in hell (Rev. 20–21).

## HOW NOT TO STUDY THE BOOK OF REVELATION

We don't read Revelation as a mysterious code that we're in a better position to unlock than anyone else.

- It's spiritual pride to think that we're in a better position to understand this Word than other faithful Believers who have gone before us.
- We don't guess the date when Jesus is returning (Matt. 24:36) or match unclear things in the text to current headlines.
- Matthew 24:27

We don't study Revelation without considering the original audience and we don't study it assuming that it's somehow all about us in this generation in America.

- We don't study Revelation to create fear, paranoia, suspicion, and further conspiracy theories.
- Ultimately, Revelation is a glorious vision of CHRIST, not a topic of debate for us to argue about so we can flex our spiritual muscles.

## THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1–3)

These first few verses are the “title page” for Revelation.

- What's unusual for any book, both ancient or modern, is the promise of blessing for those who read and obey its words.
- In v. 1, “The revelation of Jesus Christ” could also be translated as the revelation “from Jesus Christ” (source), “about Jesus Christ” (content), and “belonging to Jesus Christ” (possession).

The text says that this prophecy is about “what must soon take place” (v. 1).

- We must understand this phrase from the perspective of heaven rather than earth.
- With God, 1,000 years is only a day (2 Pet. 3:8), so these events described in Revelation were written down less than two days ago!
- Even if another 2–3 “days” pass before they come to pass, it'll still be “soon!”

Jesus used a revealing angel to communicate part of the revelation to His servant John, who was then instructed to share this with us.

- The language John uses to describe his role as a witness is like that of a courtroom witness—he was to simply testify reliably to everything he saw.
- Revelation promises divine blessings to those who read, hear, and obey its words (v. 3!)

Revelation serves as a reminder that “the time is near” for the return of Christ and we must be ready (v. 3).

- God has given us a glimpse of the future reality that the forces of evil will come against God's people and things will get bad, but ultimately God will prevail and Jesus will reign for all eternity with His Church.
- The question is—are YOU ready?

## “THE TIME IS NEAR...”

- It doesn't take a theologian or a cultural/political expert to see that our world is becoming increasingly unstable and volatile.
- There's religious deception, wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilence (disease epidemics), earthquakes, signs in the heavens, persecution of Christians, lawlessness, and the love of many is growing cold (Matt. 24).
- Romans 13:11
- Matthew 24:42

## IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP AND STAY AWAKE

- We don't know the date or the hour, but we know that Jesus is coming soon and that it could be anytime—so we must be ready.
- Now isn't the time for complacency, compromise, and seeking comfort/convenience.
- Now isn't the time to retreat and isolate. Jesus also prophesied that the gospel would be preached to all nations in the last days (Matt. 24:14)!
- Jesus is visibly returning, the living and dead will be resurrected, there will be judgment for the righteous and unrighteous, and there will be a consummation of the final state (new heaven/new earth, hell and the lake of fire).
- Are we living each day as if this is true? How then should we relate to God? How then should we relate to others?