

Overview of The Book of Revelation

I. Why Study The Book of Revelation

*(Revelation 1:1-3 NASB) “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, **the things which must soon take place**; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, everything that he saw. 3 **Blessed is the one who reads**, and those who **hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.**”*

- a. The title of this book is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ”. The main theme and purpose of this book is to unveil the glory of Jesus. The book of Revelation reveals the infinite power of Jesus through His leadership at the end of the age, and how He will fulfill the desires of His heart by preparing the nations for His glory to cover the whole earth. Revelation also displays the infinite wisdom and brilliance of Jesus as His “end-time battle plan” is carried out during the final years of this age.
- b. The Revelation of Jesus is precious to the Father’s heart, and a primary function of the Holy Spirit. The revelation of Jesus will prepare The Church to walk victoriously through the challenges of Great Tribulation.

*(Matthew 17:5 NASB), “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said, “**This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!**”*

(Ephesians 1:17-18 NASB) “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling...”

- c. The secondary theme of this book is related to “the things which must soon take place”. The book of Revelation details the means Jesus will use to shift humanity and transition the earth to the millennial kingdom (age to come). At the end of this age, Jesus will prepare His bride for glory, bring in a Great Harvest including the salvation of Israel, openly defeat Satan and the Antichrist empire, purge the earth of sin, and overthrow every evil governmental leader on earth through the Great Tribulation.
 - i. One of those “things which must soon take place” is the increase of persecution of Israel and the saints by the Antichrist Empire. Though many will be persecuted and killed for holding fast to the purposes of God, this is only a secondary theme of this book. Out 404 verses, only 12 verses (less than 3%) speak directly about persecution (*Revelation 6:9-11; 11:7; 12:17; 13:7,15; 16:6; 17:6 18:24; 19:2; 20:4*) the other 392 (97%) describe our victory in Christ over Satan.

(Daniel 11:33-35 NASB) “And those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days. 34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 And some of those who have insight will fall, to refine, purge, and cleanse them until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.”

- d. Revelation gives us more specific insight on Jesus’ end-time battle plan than any other book in the Bible. **Its purpose is to strengthen us to stand, encourage us to endure, and prepare us to prevail through the worldwide shaking.** God shared this prophetic revelation with John so that the Church would be like an “end-time Moses” willing to partner with Jesus to establish His purpose on the earth.
- e. Revelation is the only book God promises a special blessing to anyone who reads, hears, and keeps the prophecy, as well as a destructive curse for anyone who adds to or subtracts from it.

(Revelation 1:3 NASB) “Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

(Revelation 22:7 NASB) “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

(Revelation 22:18 NASB), “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

- i. Read – Read it, study it, meditate on it, immerse yourself in the verses.
- ii. Hear – When you hear it being declared
- iii. Keep It – 5 ways to “keep the prophecy”
 1. Take it seriously
 2. Treasure the faces of Jesus that read in it – Even the confronting and challenging faces
 3. Declare the message of it (even unto death)
 4. Resisting cultural temptation to explain away the realities of the book – remove doubt, cynicism, and skepticism, and deconstruction
 5. Creating a corporate culture where the book is cherished

II. The Book of Revelation is Easy for Anyone to Understand

- a. The book of Revelation is not reserved for super saints or theologians only. Revelation was written in a manner to be easily understood by common men and women. The simplicity of this book (it’s directness and imagery) summons humility in order to lay hold of it. I’m convinced that anyone can learn the main storyline of the book in less than one hour and be able to explain it to someone else in less than one day.
- b. Though we might feel intimidated by the book of Revelation or in our “inability to comprehend” it’s truths, Our confidence comes not because we are “great learners”, but because **the Holy Spirit is The Best Teacher**. The Holy Spirit is our guide who reveals and glorifies Jesus, teaches us all things, guides us into all truth, tells us things to come, and reveals the deep things of God.
- c. Do not accept anyone’s views on The Book of Revelation (or any other scripture) without thinking for yourself. If you want to grow in understanding related to end time scriptures, you must be willing to search the scriptures for yourself and have an open dialogue with The Holy Spirit; be a Berean. **Truth is never weakened by scrutiny; rather it is confirmed.** As you challenge these teachings, *do so with an abundance of tenderness and humility.*

(Acts 17:11 NASB) “Now these people [Bereans] were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

- d. My goal with this study is not cover every line in the Book of Revelation, but to bring excitement and accessibility to it, while providing resources that give you the courage to dive in to it. Here are some simple biblical prayers to pray before diving into the Book of Revelation.
 - i. David’s prayer for God to open his eyes:

(Psalm 119:17-24 NASB) “Deal generously with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your Law. 19 I am a stranger on the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. 20 My soul is crushed with longing For Your ordinances at all times. 21 You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments. 22 Take disgrace and contempt away from me, for I comply with Your testimonies. 23 Even though rulers sit and speak against me, Your servant meditates on Your statutes. 24 Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my advisers.”

ii. Paul’s prayer for wisdom and revelation through interaction with the Holy Spirit:

(Ephesians 1:17-19 NASB) “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might”

iii. Jesus’ exhortation for the Laodicea church to anoint their eyes with eye salve to see:

(Revelation 3:18 NASB) “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to apply to your eyes so that you may see.”

III. The Roadmap of Revelation – Parts, Sections, & Symbols

- a. People are often intimidated to read The Book of Revelation because they are often confused by the structure the book (it’s parts and sections) or it’s main symbols. Understanding a basic overview of The Book of Revelation is helpful to bring clarity and courage related to approaching this book. Without clarity and courage to study His end-time plans, we make ourselves susceptible to F-O-L-D when the pressures of this book arrive.
 - i. Jesus highlighted four issues that will challenge many people’s faith at the end of the age. Fear, Offense, Lust, & Deception (F-O-L-D)

(Luke 21:26, 34 NASB), “People fainting from fear and the expectation of the things that are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken... 34 But be on your guard, so that your hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation (over indulgence in sensual pleasures - Lust) and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that this day will not come on you suddenly, like a trap”

(Matthew 24:10-11 NASB), “And at that time many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another (Offense). 11 And many false prophets will rise up and mislead (deceive) many people.

- b. There are four main parts in the basic structure of The Book of Revelation. The “fourth part” has five chronological sections which detail events that occur in sequential order, followed by an angelic explanation of each. This gives us a simple and clear roadmap to know the basic structure of the book and “where we are” as these events unfold.

IV. The Basic Structure – Four Parts

- a. **Part One - John’s Calling to Prophecy About The End-Times (Revelation 1)**
- b. **Part Two – Jesus Gave 7 letters to 7 Churches (Revelation 2-3)**
- c. **Part Three – Jesus Takes The Scroll (Revelation 4-5)**
- d. **Part Four – Jesus’ Battle Plan (Revelation 6-22)**

V. The Fourth Part: 5 sections of Jesus' Battle Plan

- a. The fourth part of the book of Revelation has 5 chronological sections that describe the events unfolding on earth during the Great Tribulation (final 3 ½ years) and into the millennial reign in sequential order. Each Chronological section is followed by an angelic explanation or parenthetical section to help us understand the “why’s” behind the “what’s”.
 - i. The five chronological sections describe what happens to the Antichrist’s empire and his followers throughout the twenty-one judgment series (7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls).
 - ii. The five angelic explanations that follow each chronological section function as a “parenthesis” and put the main storyline on pause, while an angel gives John a “pastoral explanation” of the severity of God’s judgments and what will happen to God’s people in the midst of those judgments.

Section One

- ❖ **CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION #1 Revelation 6**: The seal judgments prepare the nations for God’s glory.
- ❖ **ANGELIC EXPLANATION # 1 Revelation 7**: God gives divine protection to the saints from judgments.

Section Two

- ❖ **CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION #2 Revelation 8-9**: The trumpet judgments against the Antichrist empire.
- ❖ **ANGELIC EXPLANATION # 2 Revelation 10-11**: God gives direction by increased prophetic ministry.

Section Three

- ❖ **CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION #3 Revelation 11:15-19**: Jesus’ 2nd Coming & Rapture of the saints.
- ❖ **ANGELIC EXPLANATION # 3 Revelation 12-14**: God reveals Satan’s confrontation against the saints.

Section Four

- ❖ **CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION #4 Revelation 15-16**: The bowl judgments destroy evil infrastructures.
- ❖ **ANGELIC EXPLANATION # 4 Revelation 17-18**: God reveals the seduction of Harlot Babylon.

Section Five

- ❖ **CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION #5 Revelation 19-20**: Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
- ❖ **ANGELIC EXPLANATION # 5 Revelation 21-22**: God reveals the restoration of all things.

VI. The Seven Main Symbols of Revelation

- a. Most of the symbolism in the book of Revelation is found in the “five angelic explanations”. **All of the events and numbers in Revelation are to be understood literally**, in their plain or “common sense” meaning, unless the Scripture specifically says that they are symbolic (*Revelation 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3,9;17:7,915-18, etc.*). The words of Revelation mean what they say & say what they mean. To call something symbolic that isn’t intended to be symbolic is not only deceptive but brings confusion and division.

- i. Here's a simple example of how the book of revelation defines it's own symbols. Jesus defines the "mystery" of the seven stars as the angles of the seven churches and the "mystery" of the seven golden lampstands as the seven churches.

(Revelation 1:20 NASB) "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

- b. Jesus intends the book of Revelation to be simple so that all can understand it. Simple is not the opposite of symbolic. Symbols can be simple (consider how children's books have more pictures than words). A symbol can say much more in fewer words. For instance, Satan is referred to as the Dragon; based on that picture alone, no one would assume Satan is intimate and friendly.
- c. The symbols in this book demand humility in order to fully grasp it. The symbols are like parables that hide truth from those who are prideful and approach revelation with intellectualism to deconstruct it (explain it away). The symbols simultaneously give deep insight to the humble and hungry.

Seven main symbols in the book of Revelation:

1. **Dragon** – Always symbolic of Satan (*Revelation 12:3;4,7,9,13,16,17;13:2,4;16:3;20:2*).
2. **Beast** – Symbolic of the Antichrist, who is called the "Beast" 36 times in Revelation (*Revelation 13;14:9-11; 17:3-17;19:19-21;20:4,10*).
3. **Another Beast** – Symbolic of the "False Prophet" who is called "another beast" just one time (*Revelation 13:11*). Every other time he is called the False Prophet (*Revelation 13:11-17;16:13;19:20;20:10*).
4. **Seven Heads** – Symbolic of "7 historical world empires" that persecuted Israel – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the future Antichrist Empire (*Daniel 2:41-42; 7:7; Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16*). The combined strengths of their wickedness will increase and emerge again under the reign of the Antichrist.
5. **Ten Horns** – Symbolic of a future "10 nation confederation" that will rule simultaneously over their own nation, while coming into partnership to serve under the Antichrist (*Daniel 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; 11:36-45; Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,7,12,16*).
6. **Harlot Babylon** – Symbolic of a "global religious and economic system" that is demonically inspired and empowered from the center of the rebuilt city of Babylon (modern day Iraq). The Harlot Babylon system will partner with the Antichrist to seduce many to sin while persecuting the saints (*Isaiah 13-14; Jeremiah 50-51; Revelation 17-18*).
7. **Woman with Male-Child** – Symbolic of the "faithful remnant of ethnic Israel" throughout history that "gave birth" to Jesus, the "male child" who will rule the nations with a rod of iron (*Matthew 1:1-17; Revelation 12:1-5*). Satan makes war with the "rest of her offspring" who are gentile believers (*Revelation 12:17*).

Questions For Discussions

1. What was something that stuck out to you in this teaching?
2. How does this teaching mobilize you to pray? (*1 Peter 4:7 NASB*) "*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer*"
3. Did this teaching bring clarity to a thought or question you had related to the end times?