

Revelation

The whole Bible is about Jesus. The Old Testament pointed to Him, the New Testament reveals Him, and the Revelation tells us what He will do next

I. INTRODUCTION

Revelation is the 66th book of the Bible, the 27th book of the New Testament and the fourth and final book authored by the apostle John.

A. Revelation is the most fascinating book ever written, yet is also one of the most neglected and misunderstood.

1. The first 8 verses serve as an introduction to the book. In them we find:

- a. the author
- b. the recipients
- c. the title
- d. the purpose

2. Later, we find an outline for the book.

Revelation 1:19

'Write the things, which you have seen, and the things, which are, and the things, which will take place after this.'

3. And we are even given a key to help unlock some of the symbolism within the book.

Revelation 1:20

"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 which you saw are the seven churches."

B. It is from what we find here in the opening chapter that we will use as the keys to help us navigate our way through the book this evening.

II. AUTHOR

Revelation 1:1 - John the servant of Christ

A. The book claims to have been written by John, who calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. More than sufficient evidence exists for believing that the Apostle John wrote this book.

1. Internal evidence.

a. Author named himself four times as John (cf. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8)

b. He also called himself

- A bond servant (cf. 1:1; 22:6)
- A brother and partaker in tribulation (cf. 1:9)
- A prophet (cf. 22:9), and called his book a prophecy (cf. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)

2. External evidence

a. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen all refer to John the Apostles as the author.

b. John was one of the earliest followers of Christ. He was later chosen, gifted and trained as an apostle, and served as one of the key players in the early chapters of Acts.

c. The final mention of John in the biblical narrative is found in **Acts 12:2** "Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword."

i. We do not hear from John again until much later when he began his writing campaign, which includes his gospel, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and Revelation.

d. It is generally accepted that John received the Revelation circa 95AD when he was nearly 90 years old.

i. He explains that he was undergoing tribulation on the island of Patmos when he encountered The Lord.

Revelation 1:9-10

"I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for

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the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet..”

- ii. This tribulation was caused by the heated persecution under Domitian the Roman emperor.
 - Domitian - was the third and last emperor of the Flavian dynasty. He ruled from A.D. 81 to A.D. 96 after the death of his older brother Titus. Domitian was known chiefly for the reign of terror under which prominent members of the Senate lived during his last years, and he resurrected the persecution against believers. He was hated by the Senate and He was ultimately executed.
 - Domitian revived the practice of the imperial cult, which had fallen somewhat out of use under Vespasian. Domitian officially gave himself the title of Dominus et Deus - master and god. The imperial cult required the people to worship the Emperor as a god. This is what led too much of the persecution of believers.
 - Eusebius, the Roman historian, writes extensively of Domitian's persecution of believers.
 - It was during his reign that Timothy was killed and John was exiled to Patmos. Banishment was a common punishment for a number of offenses during the Imperial period.
- iii. Patmos, where John was exiled, is an island situated off the west coast of Turkey, and served as a penal colony during the first century.
 - Today it is possible to visit the island and the cave of the apocalypse where tradition says John received the Revelation. Whether that is the actual cave is unknown, but John was certainly imprisoned there.

- iv. It was in the state of persecution, as an elderly man, that John had an encounter with The Lord.
 - By way of application, it is worth noting that in our times of greatest trial, we will see the Lord most clearly, if we look to Him. Like Shadrach in the fire, or John on the island, we should expect to encounter Christ in times of trouble.

III. RECIPIENTS

Revelation 1:4 "John to the seven churches which are in Asia"

- A. These seven churches are listed in **Revelation 1:11** "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."
 - 1. Each of the churches received a personal letter from Jesus recorded in Chapters 2-3.
 - 2. The cities where the churches were located were on a postal route starting from Ephesus.
 - 3. The churches started as a result of Paul's missionary endeavors and six of the seven started out of the church in Ephesus.
 - 4. The church in Ephesian is one of three New Testament churches that serve as a pattern for the modern church. The three churches are:
 - a. **Jerusalem** - whose early years should be followed, but was ultimately weakened by legalism.
 - b. **Ephesus** - who serves as an example of systematic teaching of the Scriptures and church planting, but later failed by leaving their first love.
 - c. **Antioch** - a church that serves as an example for modern missions.

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IV. TITLE

- A. This is one of the few New Testament books that is self-titled.
Revelation 1:1 "The Revelation of Jesus Christ..."
 - 1. The word 'revelation' is a translation of the Greek word *apokalypsis* from which we get the English word "*apocalypse*."
 - a. Webster defines apocalypse - the expectation of an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of Evil, OR - a great disaster.
 - i. The synonyms used are - disaster, calamity, cataclysm, catastrophe, and tragedy.
 - b. The problem is that is not the meaning of the Greek word.
 - i. *Apokalypsis* means - to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up. To disclose what before was unknown.
 - 2. That is why the translators chose the word *revelation* –
 - c. Webster defines *revelation* - something that is revealed by God to humans OR an act of making something known.
 - 3. This brings us to the purpose of the book

V. PURPOSE

- A. John explains there are two things in particular that are revealed in the book of Revelation.
 - 1. Jesus Christ
 - 2. Things, which must shortly take place
- B. To Reveal Jesus Christ
 - 1. The whole Bible is about Jesus. The Old Testament pointed to Him, the New Testament reveals Him, and the Revelation tells us what He will do next.
 - a. The gospel narratives give us a limited picture of Christ.

- i. We see Him as the Son of God, who clothed Himself in human skin, walked among us, died for our sins, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven.

- The writer of Hebrews put it this way:

Hebrews 2:9

”But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

- ii. The book of Revelation gives us a completed picture of Christ after His ascension.

- In fact it is impossible to have a complete understanding of who Jesus is apart from the book revelation.

2. Jesus introduces himself in the first chapter.

Revelation 1:8

”I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

a. As the book unfolds we will see Jesus as:

- i. 1:5 - Faithful witness, firstborn from dead, ruler of the kings of the earth, the One who washed us in His blood.
- ii. 1:7- who is coming back.
- iii. 1:8- alpha and omega, beginning and end, who was, is and is coming.
- iv. 1:12- standing in the midst of the church clothed as its high priest, with eyes like fire, feet like brass, hair like wool, who holds the stars in His hands and the keys of death and hell

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3. Chapters 2-3

We see Him as the high priest who ministers to His church.

This is the current ministry of Jesus and the subject of the book of Hebrews.

4. Chapter 4 -5

John is caught up into heaven where he sees Jesus once again, this time as a slain Lamb who alone can redeem all things back to God.

5. Chapter 6-19

- a. We see him as the judge who pours His judgment upon a Christ rejecting world.
- b. Things to note about His judgment.
 - i. It is mixed with mercy as it is meted out over a 7 year time period.
 - ii. It is coupled with multiple and elaborate attempts of rescuing men and women through the preaching of the Gospel.
 - iii. We see the Gospel preached through:
 - The witness of those left behind
 - The 144,000
 - The angels
 - The 2 witnesses
 - iv. And we find that countless numbers of people respond to Christ.
 - This should encourage us to be bold and creative in expressing the Gospel.
 - It should encourage us that no matter how dark things become, people can and will come to Christ when they hear the true gospel. If people get saved, then we should expect them, to get saved now.

- c. This judgment is righteous retribution and an answer to the prayers of mankind.
- **Revelation 8:3-5** “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thundering, lightning, and an earthquake.”
 - **Revelation 19:2** “For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”
- d. FINALLY in the final chapters of the book, from 19-22, we see Jesus as:
- The one who will return as king and set up His kingdom.
 - The one who reigns over the great white throne judgment.
 - The one who is the focal point of the new heaven and earth.

C. REVELATION is designed To Reveal The Future

Revelation 1:7

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.”

1. We also read...
 - a. 1:1 – Things that must shortly take place

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- b. 1:3 – The time is near
- c. 1:8 - I AM... the one who is to come
- d. 3:11 – I am coming quickly
- e. 16:15 – Behold, I am coming as a thief
- f. 22:7 – Behold, I am coming quickly
- g. 22:12 – Behold, I am coming quickly
- h. 22:20 – Surely, I am coming quickly
- i. 22:20 – John pleads: Even so, come Lord Jesus!

2. Clearly this book is also the revelation of the future.

a. Man is always attempting to predict the future:

- i. In 1962 Hannah and Barbera created the Jetson's; a futuristic family living Orbit City in in the year 2062.

A place where all homes and businesses are raised high above the ground on adjustable columns. Housekeeping is taken care of by a robot maid, who handles the few chores left to do since the house is run by push-button Space Age conveniences, and the people travel by aerocars that resemble flying saucers.

- ii. Bob Gale, writer of Back to the Future, describes the future as a time of wild outfits, and hover cars and hover boards. His future will be our present in 2015

b. People have come up with crazy ways of trying to see into the future.

The tabloids are filled with wild predictions from those who read palms, cards or Chrystal balls.

- c. The reality is, there is only one way to see the future, and that is to listen to the One who lives outside of time and reveals it to us.
- d. The book of Revelation is not a prediction, but a description of what is in the future for mankind.
 - i. This description is filled with symbolism, which at times makes it difficult to discern. The secret is to use the Bible, not the newspaper, as our key.

VI. OUTLINE

- A. Revelation is the only New Testament book that comes with its own outline.

Revelation 1:19

"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."

The book is best studied in light of the outline Jesus provided.

1. "Things you have seen" - 'Seen' is past tense and takes us back to chapter 1. Chapter 1 is primarily introduction and a picture of Christ.
2. "Things which are" - 'Are' is present tense and would be difficult to understand if not qualified by the next phrase - "after this" - used again in 4:1
 - a. The things 'which are' take place in Chapters 2-3, where the main subject is the church.
 - The word church is used 7 times
 - Churches is used 11 times
 - But, never used between Chapters 4-19
 - b. Chapters 2-3 record seven letters to seven churches, addressing problems they face.
 - c. These messages serve three primary purposes
 - To fix the problem in the local church

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- To address problems every church faces
 - To address the individual Christian
 - d. It is important to note, the church is not mentioned after chapter 3, so this does give a picture of the church age.
 - e. Some go so far as to see the churches as a timeline of church history.
3. "Things which take place after this"
- a. This brings us to Chapter 4 which begins with the same Greek phrase - *After this - meta tauta*
 - b. Revelation 4:1**
"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this"

VII. THE RAPTURE

- A. The first event after the Church Age comes to a close; John is removed from earth and transported to heaven.
 - 1. Many see this as a picture of the rapture of the church.
- B. Rapture is a term used to describe a generation of believers who will enter heaven without going through the doorway of death.
 - 1. My youngest son, at age four, answered the question "How do you get to heaven?" by saying, "Duh, you die."
 - a. He was correct for all, except that generation who will be 'raptured;' they will not enter heaven through death's Doorway.
- C. The doctrine of the rapture is clearly presented in:
 - 1. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**
"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

2. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

D. When will the rapture take place?

1. There is much controversy surrounding the rapture and when it will take place. While we cannot know the day or hour, we are given insights as to when it will happen in relation to other predicted Biblical events.
 - a. Our view (CCVB) is that the rapture will precede the tribulation period.
 - i. Those who reject this view do so partly because of the fanciful descriptions that have been painted in fictional literature, and partly because they claim this is a modern doctrine, and the historical position of the church is that the church will experience the Tribulation, or that the tribulation is figurative.
 - ii. However a more honest approach to history will reveal that the early church immediately following the apostles held to a premillennial view of Christ's coming to earth. These theologians embraced two key truths concerning Christ's return to earth:
 - The idea of at any moment the return and a coming of Christ
 - Christ will rule as the political and spiritual king over the world.
 - b. A list of rapture views include:
 - Pre-Tribulation Rapture - Christ will rapture the church before the Tribulation begins.
 - Mid-Tribulation Rapture - Christ will rapture the church at the mid-point of The Tribulation.

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- Post Tribulation Rapture - Christ will rapture the church at the end of the Tribulation.
 - Pre-Wrath Rapture - Christ will rapture the church just before the Battle of Armageddon.
 - Partial Rapture - Christ will rapture those who are ready and leave the rest to go through the Tribulation.
 - Multiple Rapture -There is more than one rapture.
- c. The timing of the rapture is not a cardinal doctrine, and should not divide God's people; but those who “interpret the Bible literally” will find many strong reasons to believe the pre-tribulation viewpoint.
- d. That being said, I believe the weight of evidence supports a Pre-Tribulation view; we should live expecting Christ to return.
- i. The event is portrayed as coming quickly
 - ii. The idea is that it will come without delay, according to the predetermined counsel of God.
- Matthew 24:36**
“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.”
- iii. A healthy church has a real awareness of the eminence of Christ's return and is busy about the work of the church while we await His coming.

VIII. The GREAT TRIBULATION

A. The next major future event recoded in Revelation is the Tribulation.

1. Recorded in Chapters 6 – 19.
2. According to Daniel this period will last seven years.

a. **Daniel 9:27**

“Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end

to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

3. According to Jesus it will be a time of unprecedented suffering.
 - a. **Matthew 24:21**

“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be:
4. The tribulation is seen as a series of judgments poured out upon the earth. These judgments are both punitive and rehabilitative.
 - a. Punitive in that they are the divine response to the rejection of God.
 - b. Rehabilitative in that there remains an offer to come to Christ and be forgiven.
 - c. Countless thousands accept this offer and we see them worshipping before the throne of God in heaven.
 - i. **Revelation 7:9-10**

”After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”
 - ii. **Revelation 7:13-14**

“Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”

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d. This judgment is described as the wrath of the Lamb

i. **Revelation 6:16**

“ . . . and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’”

e. These judgments are in the form of seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls.

i. Each one intensifies the judgment on the earth:

- The 7 seals are interrupted when God sends witnesses into the world to lead countless thousands to Christ.
- The 7 trumpets are preceded by explaining they are a response to the prayers of the saints through the ages.

-Revelation 8:3

“Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.”

-Revelation 8:4

“And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.”

-Revelation 8:5

“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thundering's, lightning's, and an earthquake.”

- The 7 bowls-These seven last plagues are God's judgment on a disobedient and contrary world.

-Revelation 15:1

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last

plagues, for in them the wrath of God was complete.”

-Revelation 16:1

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’”

- f. Sadly, the response of many to the judgment of God is a refusal to repent.

Revelation 9:20

“But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.”

- g. Those who refuse Christ face unparalleled tribulation on earth and ultimately stand before God for judgment.

IX. The Return of Christ

A. Revelation 19:11-16

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND
LORD OF LORDS

B. Mark 13:26

“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.”

- 1. Revelation 19 declares that He will not come alone

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a. **Revelation 19:14**

“And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

i. The angels will come with Him.

ii. And the saints clothed in white.

b. And that He will come to judge.

i. **Jude 14b-15a**

“. . . Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all. . .”

c. He will judge with the sword in His mouth, or the word of God.

i. **Revelation 19:15**

“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. “

d. He is like a teacher giving the test questions in advance. He does not want any to face this judgment

X. NEXT MAIN EVENT – THE MILLENNIUM

A. **Revelation 20:4**

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

1. Christ will set up His kingdom on earth for 1000 years.

2. Four things will mark this era:

- Earth will be restored
- Christ will reign

- Saints will rule
- Devil will be restrained

B. FINALLY, CHRIST WILL CREATE A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

C. THE BOOK ENDS WITH A REMINDER AND AN INVITATION

Revelation 22:17

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, “‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires let him take the water of life freely.”