

Top 10: Revelation & the Tribulation - Revelation 1:1-20
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

The book of Revelation is not for the faint of heart. First, it genuinely is difficult to interpret, because it is so full of symbols, numbers, and images. And almost all scholars believe that the book in some and in at least some parts addresses our future, including the return of Christ and the eternal state. Therefore the book does address realities that we cannot understand. No wonder we have ended up so with many interpretations and approaches to this book. Yet, the text of chapter 1 is clear, those who read it, hear it, seek to understand it, and keep it are blessed.

Revelation was written by the Apostle John, the man who was probably Jesus' best friend in his earthly life. As one of the 12 Apostles, John had a front row seat to our Savior's earthly ministry, and then His death and resurrection. John was also present during Jesus's earthly teaching, and specifically His prophetic teaching about the fall of Jerusalem, the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, the last days, and the return of Jesus. In fact, the ideas and themes of Revelation are actually shaped by the Olivet Discourse (see Matthew 24-25), a teaching given by Jesus to His disciples near the end of His life where He gave prophetic predictions about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the signs of His Second Coming. John is writing near the end of his life. He is the last living Apostle and had been exiled on the island Patmos (1:9), an island between Greece and Turkey used by Rome as a prison camp. He is writing to seven specific churches in Asia Minor (the western side of modern day Turkey), where John spent much of His Apostolic ministry. Revelation is one of five books this Apostle authored, and all of them were for the people in these churches. He is probably writing during the 90's AD, a time of growing hostility and persecution for believers throughout the Roman empire and from the Roman Emperor Domitian.

Revelation, though, is a different form of prophetic literature. The first word in the text (translated "The revelation" and hence the name of the book) is the word "Apokalypsis". This word means to reveal, unveil, open to the eyes what could not be seen. We get the word apocalypse from this word, which in this case is a reference to a very specific form of literature written primarily among Jewish writers during the centuries before Jesus' coming and into the later 1st and 2nd Century AD. Apocalyptic literature was a common form of Jewish and early Christian literature that uses highly symbolic imagery to give courage in the present and hope for the future. The key to interpreting apocalyptic literature is to understand the symbols, most of which come from the Old Testament. Therefore, to misunderstand the symbols (including virtually all the numbers in Revelation which are symbolic) is to misunderstand the book itself. In our day, so many seek to understand Revelation with a newspaper in hand, trying to interpret the text in light of current events. But for 2,000 years Christians have believed they were in the "end times". Rather, we really should read the book with the Old Testament in hand, because the first key to unlocking the meaning of Revelation is to find the meaning of the symbols in the writings of the Torah and the prophets. The book is broken into four key sections. Chapter 1 is an introduction, as John addresses seven real churches and reveals that this vision came directly from Jesus. Chapters 2-3 are letters to the individual churches. Chapters 4-19 is a prophetic vision of events in the future (at least for them, maybe for us). And chapters 20-22 show us the final judgment and the eternal state.

Historically, there have been four primary approaches to interpreting Revelation. Each of these approaches deeply shape the understanding of Revelation, specifically chapters 4-19. The *Preterist* believes all these prophecies were fulfilled in the 1st Century during the lives of the hearers. The *Futurist* believes these chapters represent the end of history, and therefore are still in our future. The *Historist* sees revelation as a symbol laden story of the unfolding of church history. In their view the different judgments and periods of the books

coincide with eras of church history. And the *Idealist* believe that the judgments and images in the book are symbolic and cyclical, revealing that all human kingdoms are ultimately oppressive and evil, and showing that God will judge these kingdoms and vindicate His people in all ages.

Yet, while people may disagree on the secondary meaning, all believers understand the core truths that Revelation unveils. First, God is sovereign over all history and over all kingdoms. Second, God's people win, and that victory is never in doubt. They may suffer, and even die for their faith, but their faithfulness will be vindicated by Christ who will also judge astonishingly those who persecute. Third, kingdoms and rulers come and go, but God's Kingdom is ultimate and eternal. And fourth, Jesus will return one day, bodily, visibly, and as an act of final judgment. So no matter how you read the book, the message is a call for faithfulness and endurance with hope, especially for those who are suffering for their faith.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Samuel 1	1 Samuel 2	1 Samuel 3	1 Samuel 4	1 Samuel 5	1 Samuel 6	1 Samuel 7

Reading from this past week's sermon: Hebrews 13:20-25

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Ephesians 1:1-14

Family Worship

Song - *Man of Sorrows*

<https://youtu.be/4u7Ayhsj18c?si=yWD8GPpE00P-ulh>

Gospel Project

Unit: King Saul

Story: The Israelites Wanted a King

Big Picture Question: Who is our King?

Answer: Jesus is our King forever, and He rules over the world.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8-10

New City Catechism

Question 23: Why must the Redeemer be truly God?

Answer: That because of his divine nature his obedience and suffering would be perfect and effective.

Verse: Acts 2:24

Revelation 1:1-20

- If you grew up in church, do you have memories of how your church interacted with Revelation and end times prophecies?
- What are the various ways chapter 1 pictures Jesus, and what do you believe are the meanings of each description? How does this again remind us that all of Scripture is about Jesus?
- If you had to choose, which interpretation of Revelation would you hold? Why might it be a good idea for us to hold these interpretations loosely and with charity?
- Why would John tell us that we are blessed when we read, hear, and keep what is written in Revelation? What sort of blessing might we find in this book?

Prayer

*Pray that we would always remember that Jesus is better and live our lives fully for Him.

*Pray for Send Relief and their work serving those who have been affected by disasters, especially those in our city serving tornado victims.