

Understanding Revelation Part 1

Revelation 1:1-20

Unlocking The Mysteries Of Revelation #1 – An Introduction:

The Book of Revelation is one of the most mysterious & confusing books of the Bible.

When turning to the book of Revelation from the rest of the New Testament, you feel as if you are entering a foreign country.

Instead of narratives and letters containing plain statements of fact, you find a book full of angels, trumpets, earthquakes, beasts, dragons, and bottomless pits.

(1 Corinthians 2:9-10) “...as it is written, *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him... BUT God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.*”

Revelation is a pastoral letter to the church, encouraging believers to stand fast in the face of persecution in the assurance of God’s final victory.

It is also a prophetic document, in the line of Old Testament prophecy.

John identifies himself as a prophet (1:3), and the book (in its 404 verses) contains over five hundred allusions to the Old Testament – more than in all the other books of the New Testament combined.

Old Testament prophecy called God’s people to obedience to His law.

Revelation speaks pastorally and prophetically to a people walking through a desert pilgrimage on their way to the new Jerusalem.

The revelation John received shows believers of every age how to conduct themselves in the midst of an ungodly world.

Not only the letters of chapter 1-3, but also the visions of chapter 4-21, convey truth and direction from God on how believers are to conduct themselves in this battle.

Revelation is not a book about the last years before Jesus returns.

It is a book addressing the situation of believers in every age, with only a small portion reserved for the events of the very end.

It is a tragedy that the book is so greatly misunderstood as of interest only to the last generation, and its meaning and message are thus lost for those of us who read it today.

It is God’s desire for us to read and understand the Book of Revelation.

Note: It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not the riddle of Jesus Christ or the revelation of end times.

If we make it about any other thing than the revelation of Jesus we make it about us because we want it to give us worth

Listen our worth and meaning in life come from God’s decision about us, not the dangers we face or the times of our history

We should live our lives as if each day were our last and as if each was a great future because of Jesus Christ

I can live with confidence today because Jesus is the Lord of history

The circumstances in my life affect me but they don’t define me

Background Info:

1. Author: Revelation was written by the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos
2. Background: Written during a period of extreme persecution of Christians
3. Date: Written before the destruction of Jerusalem in September of AD 70 and is an authentic prophecy concerning the continuing suffering and persecution of Christians.
4. The Purpose (Theme) of Revelation:
 - a. To encourage believers to be faithful to Jesus (even in the midst of suffering), and to give them hope that they will ultimately be victorious.
 - b. God is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe (in control of everything)

Tips To Help You Understand Revelation:

1. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ, not the devil, beast or antichrist or end times
2. Revelation contains a lot of Biblical symbolism – it cannot all be taken literally. It contains three distinct types of literature: apocalypse, prophecy, and letter.
3. “Revelation” = the Greek word apokalypsis = an uncovering of a truth
4. Read through the entire book of Revelation in one sitting to get the big picture. Do not try to figure out everything, at least until you have a feel for the book.

Four Different Interpretative Views To Revelation:

1. Preterist: The Past

Took place in first century A.D. during Roman persecution.

Prophecy concerned with the persecutions of Christians instituted by the “beast” - Nero or Domitian, continued under Roman empire, called “Babylon”.
Specifically deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
So that would mean after that the book would be completely irrelevant anymore

2. Historical: Past-Future

From the time of the Roman Empire until the end of the age.
Seen in the symbolism are such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, Islam, etc. Some see the Pope as being the “beast” or “antichrist”
But nowhere in Revelation does it suggest that it was written for a different age in the past

3. Futurist: Future

The future end times. The Modern “Left Behind” Type Interpretation
Chapters 6-22 are yet future, and describe literally and symbolically actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene.

4. Spiritual Or Idealist

Timeless. Revelation is a description of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil.
There are certain portions which do specifically address the end times.

Which Do We Accept?

Remember this book is written from the perspective of the Lord, not from the human viewpoint
You don't have to adopt one particular view to benefit from studying Revelation.
A blessing is available to anyone who will read it for its message of victory

The Blessing In Revelation: (vs. 3)

When you read Revelation, and obey the things written in it, you will be blessed!
There are several points though that would favour the preterist or historicist interpretation, placing its primary significance on the first-century church persecuted by Rome:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ...which must shortly take place.” (1:1)

“...the time is near...” (1:3)

“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia...” (1:4)

What Is The Book Of Revelation About?

“The revelation of Jesus Christ...”

The first verse of Revelation clearly identifies Jesus as the central figure in the book.
He is the Lamb of God who has provided salvation, and will execute judgment and ultimately overcome all enemies.

Revelation Chapter One:

Who Is The Revelation About? Jesus Christ (vs. 1-2) *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*

Who Is The Blessing Of Revelation For? (vs. 3) *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

Those who READ, HEAR, and OBEY the words of this prophecy.

Only this book in the bible pronounces a blessing on the reader

Listen the scripture in only effective when we apply it to our lives

When we understand the word “blessed” in the biblical context we wont be so likely to use the word as casually as we do

The word is a tough word in the Bible

It does not express superficial sentiment, instead it expresses a rugged and tested assurance that it is a good thing to be walking in the pathway of God's will

So on the Sermon on the Mount there is a new understanding when Jesus says “blessed are the poor in spirit”

A Picture Of The Trinity: (vs. 4-6a) *John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father...*

The ETERNAL Father

The PERFECT Holy Spirit (seven = symbolic number for PERFECTION)

The FAITHFUL Son

A Revelation Of Who Jesus Is:

- The FAITHFUL witness
- The FIRSTBORN from the dead
- The RULER over the kings of the earth
- The one who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood

A Revelation Of Who We Are:

- LOVED by God
- WASHED from our sins in His own blood
- KINGS AND PRIESTS to God the Father

One Of The Themes Of Revelation: Worship (vs. 6b) *to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Another Theme Of Revelation: The SECOND COMING (vs. 7-8) *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. 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."*

Background Info: (vs. 9) *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 the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Author: John

Location: Island Of Patmos

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, 11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "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." 12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet:

Symbolic Picture Of Jesus:

and girded about the chest with a golden band. ROYALTY
14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, AUTHORITY
and His eyes like a flame of fire; WISDOM
15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, JUDGMENT
and His voice as the sound of many waters; POWER
16 He had in His right hand seven stars, (see v. 20)
out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, THE WORD
and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. GLORY

Revelation About Jesus: (vs. 17-18) *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

DIED ON THE CROSS, RAISED FROM THE DEAD
 Has power over DEATH!

Symbols: (vs. 19-20) *19 Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. 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.*

vs. 19 is key to understanding the whole book
it indicates the three fold plan of the prophecy
what is seen, what is now, and what will come

The Seven Stars: The Angels Of The Seven Churches

The Seven Lampstands: The Seven Churches

