

THE REVELATION

Introduction

LOOK UP! CHRIST IS COMING SOON! HALLELUJAH!

Today's lesson is an introduction to our study of the last book of the Bible, **Revelation** which is the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament. Apocalypsis is the title of this book in the original Greek which means an uncovering, a removal of the veil, a disclosure of what was previously unknown. There are apocalyptic portions of God's Word found in the Old Testament including parts of Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. This is the book that Satan hates. He does NOT want us to read the book. It tells of his defeat and Jesus' victory.

Is Christ Jesus really coming back? The answer is an emphatic, "Yes!" God keeps His Word. The very first Words sent back from heaven after our Lord's ascension were this: **Acts 1:11 (ESV)**¹¹ ... "*Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.*" And, the very last Words of the Bible also promise Christ's return. **Revelation 22:20 (ESV)**²⁰ *He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* An even more important question is this: Are you ready for Christ's return?

As a teenager, I had a desire to understand what was going to happen at the end of time. I researched the information as best as I could as a young person in the 1960s and came to the same understanding of end time events that I believe today. My opinion regarding the order of end time events is as follows:

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| 1. The Rapture of the Church | 6. The Binding of Satan |
| 2. The Revelation of the Antichrist | 7. The Millennial Kingdom |
| 3. The Great Tribulation | 8. The Final Rebellion of Satan |
| 4. The Battle of Armageddon | 9. The Last Judgment |
| 5. The Glorious Return of Christ | 10. The New Heaven and the New Earth |

The view that I have chosen to believe is known as the pre-tribulation view. Although there may be others, the following lists the four chief viewpoints.

1. **The pre-tribulation view** places the rapture before The Great Tribulation begins.
2. **The mid-tribulation view** places the rapture halfway through the seven-year tribulation period. This is based on Daniel's prophecies of the Seventy Weeks (Daniel 9:27).
3. **The post tribulation view** places the rapture as occurring after the Great Tribulation.
4. **The amillennialist view** sees the 1,000 years as spiritual and non-literal. In amillennialism, the "1,000 years" is happening right now.

Not every believer will agree with me regarding the exact timetable of end time events. However, all believers do agree that Jesus has promised to return for His children!

Read John 14:3 (ESV) ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*

Believers also agree that Christ's return is our Blessed Hope.

Read Titus 2:13 (ESV) ¹³ *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.*

And, believers also agree that His return though long-expected will be instantaneous when He does return.

Read Matthew 24:27 (ESV) ²⁷ *For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

As we study **Revelation**, expect to encounter a great deal of symbolism, much of it related to the Old Testament. Why did John use symbolism? For one thing, this kind of 'spiritual code' is understood only by those who know Christ personally. If any Roman officers had tried to use **Revelation** as evidence against Christians, the book would have been a puzzle and an enigma to them. But an even greater reason is that symbolism is not weakened by time. John was able to draw on the great 'images' in God's revelation and assemble them into an exciting drama that has encouraged persecuted and suffering saints for centuries. However, you must not conclude that John's use of symbolism indicates that the events described are not real. They are real!

There is a third reason why John used symbolism: symbols not only convey information, but also impart values and arouse emotions. John could have written, 'A dictator will rule the world,' but instead he described *a beast*. The symbol says much more than the mere title of 'dictator.' Instead of explaining a world system, John simply introduced 'Babylon the Great' and contrasted the 'harlot' with the 'bride.' The very name 'Babylon' would convey deep spiritual truth to readers who knew the Old Testament.

In understanding John's symbolism, however, we must be careful not to allow our imaginations to run wild. Biblical symbols are consistent with the whole of biblical revelation. Some symbols are explained; others are understood from Old Testament symbolism; and some symbols are not explained at all. Nearly 300 references to the Old Testament are found in **Revelation**! This means that we must anchor our interpretations to what God has already revealed, lest we misinterpret this important prophetic book. – Warren Wiersbe

Keep in mind that in the **Revelation** symbols function as a spiritual code. John had been banished by the Roman Emperor Domitian to Patmos, a small rocky island about ten miles long and six miles wide. The emperor had demanded to be worshiped as 'Lord and God,' and the refusal of the Christians to obey his edict led to severe persecution.

Numbers are also prominent in the **Revelation**. However, the chief number used is the number seven – the number symbolic of completion! Think back over the sevens in the Bible. There are seven days of the week. There are seven feasts of Jehovah, seven secrets of the kingdom parables and seven sayings from the cross. As we move through the **Revelation** we will see that seven churches, seven spirits, seven lampstands, seven stars,

seven lamps of fire, seven seals, seven horns and more are mentioned. Why is seven so important? It symbolizes the completeness of the revelation of Almighty God in this great book.

As recently mentioned by our pastor, the name of the book - **Revelation** is not plural. There is no 's' on the end. It is not the book of Revelations. It is the book of **Revelation**.

Read Revelation 1:1-3 (ESV) ¹ *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,* ² *who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.* ³ *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*

Many Bibles, especially older versions, entitle the book, The Revelation of St. John the Divine. Verse 1 makes it clear that it is – *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.* John recorded the book. But, it is Revelation of Jesus Christ!

How did the Lord convey the contents of this book to His servant? According to verses 1-2 the Father gave the revelation to the Son, and the Son shared it with the apostle, using 'His angel' as a go-between. Sometimes Christ Himself conveyed information to John; sometimes it was an elder; sometimes a *voice from heaven* who told John what to say and do. The book came from God to John, no matter what the various means of communication were; and it was all inspired by the Spirit. **Revelation** is a pictorial book. We are to be shown. *God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.*

Would you like to be blessed? This is the book in the Bible that promises a blessing. **Revelation** is probably the most misunderstood book of the entire Bible. Since it is full of symbolic language, many Christians tend to avoid it thereby missing blessings! As already mentioned, there are many different interpretations of the book of **Revelation**. We will approach our studies from the standpoint that the **Revelation** was not written to satisfy the curiosity of natural man concerning future events. Instead its words are for believers to live by. God blesses those **who read the book**. He blesses those who **hear the words and take them to heart**. And finally, He blesses those who **keep** the words of the prophecy. **Revelation 22:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”* So prepare to be blessed! God's Word promises it!

Read Revelation 1:4-6 (ESV) ⁴ *John to the seven churches that 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 of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood* ⁶ *and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

The Apostle Paul sent seven individual letters to Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. Paul wrote seven letters to seven churches. However, John wrote one letter to seven churches. Sometimes as we consider the seven churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia

and Laodicea) we seen each church as receiving only their individual letter. That is not correct. All churches received their letter and everyone else's along with the remainder of the book.

Here, notice the prominence of the number seven. As you read your Bible you might look for the sevens and underline them! These seven churches are representative of all the churches and represent the fullness of the message both in that time and our time. If you look on the map, you will see that the churches are in a circle and later John will picture Jesus standing in the midst of the circle of the seven churches.

The book is from God the Father meaning *him who is and who was and who is to come* – the Great I Am! The book is from God the Holy Spirit – *from the seven spirits who are before his throne*. It has to do with the fullness of the Spirit. **Isaiah 11:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.* ² *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* The book is from God the Son – *faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth*. Jesus witnessed faithfully and it cost Him His life but He is the first to come back from the dead and guarantees that we are going to be resurrected too! Jesus is *the ruler of kings on earth*. Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

John is telling the churches that things are not like they seem. We tend to think we have to influence the kings of the earth. David Jeremiah says, “That crew does not hold the reins of history. Jesus has established His control.”

But of the three Persons of the Trinity, it is to Jesus Christ alone that this book is dedicated. The reason? Because of what He has done for His people. To begin with, *He loves us*. Loves us is in present tense. It is not past! God's love is in the present. He also *freed us from our sins*. As a grand climax, Christ has *made us a kingdom of priests*, and this is the emphasis of **Revelation**. Let's now go to the purpose of the book.

Read Revelation 1:7-8 (ESV) ⁷ *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.* ⁸ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

Verse 7 begins with the coming again of the King. This is a book of victory. The statement: *Behold, he is coming with the clouds*, describes our Lord's return to the earth. This is not the same as His return *in the air* to catch away His people. When He comes to catch away (rapture) His church, He will come as a thief. **Revelation 16:15 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *(“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)* Only those who are born again will see Him the first time. The event described in **Revelation 1:7** will be witnessed by the whole world, and especially by a repentant nation of Israel. It will be public, not secret. (**Matt. 24:30-31**), and will climax the Tribulation period. It is not a satellite or closed circuit television – *every eye will see him*.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. He is everything we need from beginning to end. He is the El Shaddai – God Almighty. The message of the book is Jesus is coming! *Even so. Amen.*