

# REVELATION

## AN INTENSIVE STUDY

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### Revelation: Lamb and Lion Participants' Outline #1

Revelation is **God's last Word to us in Scripture**. God knew what He was doing! **God knew what we needed**. And God's stated goal is to **clarify** the meaning of Jesus at work in history for us, **not confuse** us; to encourage us to deeper faith in Christ, not terrify us, nor to distract us into endless cycles of Christian crystal-ball gazing speculations. This book declares itself to be a **revelation**, *not* an **obscuration**, nor an invitation to endless and embarrassing **speculation**.

All the promises and prophecies of the entire Bible converge in this final unveiling of the crucified and risen Christ as both Lamb and Lion. In Revelation, we will see **human history from God's perspective**. The veil is pulled back.

So, open your Bible; and let's PRAY, as **together** we "*hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches,*" that we might "*follow the Lamb wherever He goes.*"

**Revelation 1:3** [No other book of the Bible, such a specific blessing:]  
"**Blessed** is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and **blessed** are those who hear it, and take to heart what is written in it..."

But equally, with this special blessing, no other book of the Bible has such a serious warning placed on those who seek to teach and interpret its content:

### **Revelation 22:18-19**

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City which are described in this book."

Clearly, understanding and embracing the genuine message of Revelation means a great deal to God. Therefore, it should to us. So, we have much to do tonight and in our next 9. But a quick word to two groups:

1. To those who are thoroughly confused by Revelation or who are fearful of its often bizarre symbols and creatures—and its commentators [Chesterton].

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2. To those who have been taught that most of this book occurs after we are “raptured”—so why care anyway; just spot the antichrist, then get ready to be zapped up...

Consider: This is the final chapter of God’s redemptive history recorded in Scripture. Like every great conclusion, in Revelation God wraps up everything: He brings together into a coherent whole all the seemingly disconnected pieces, He reinforces the greatest truths, answers all our remaining questions, finishes His judgments on evil and fulfills to His faithful people all His covenant promises.

True to this purpose, Revelation is **not** a sudden and jarring *theological ‘right turn’* at the very end of Scripture from what came before it, **nor** a terrifying or bizarre riddle meant for only a final generation to decipher. This is crucial, because **bad eschatology** will distort even the healthiest Christology, soteriology and ecclesiology.

Rather, Revelation is God’s final inspired Word which harmonizes and concludes all Scripture. It is for guiding His people in every age of history since the Cross, and John’s writing on Patmos; it has been a blessing for Christians in every age, living in every place on earth, wherever the Gospel has reached.

Revelation was written as **encouragement**. It has *more songs of joy and victory* than the rest of the New Testament combined. And along with its opening blessing, God adds six more—seven blessings (*the fullness of blessings*):

### **Seven blessings (beatitudes) in Revelation:**

1. Rev 1:3 “Blessed are those who read, hear, heed...”
2. Rev 14:13 “Blessed are those who die in the Lord...”
3. Rev 16:15 “Blessed is the one who stays awake...”
4. Rev 19:9 “Bless are all those invited...”
5. Rev 20:6 “Blessed and holy...”
6. Rev 22:7 “Blessed are those who keep the words...”
7. Rev 22:14 “Blessed are those who wash their robes...”

### **Authorship: John, the beloved Apostle of Jesus/Gospel writer.**

- Understanding of early Christians: **Iraeneus (185) /Justin Martyr (135):**

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“John received the Revelation in our own time, toward the end of Domitian”  
(Against Hereies 5.30.3)

- Historical account of the Apostle John’s later life in Ephesus/Patmos
- Theological and structural similarities to John’s Gospel [focus of both on Lamb, Constant use of sevens, themes: Rev 12:9-10 cf. John 12:30-32]

### Four interpretive views of Revelation

- **Preterist:** written to/for early Christians facing Roman persecution
- **Historicist:** predicts events that will occur from Pentecost to 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
- **Futurist:** primarily predicts the post-rapture, final great tribulation preceding 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
- **Idealist:** shows the enduring and intensifying issues at play throughout Christian history in light of Christ’s decisive victory and the church’s mission

Yes! Each of the first three is right in what it affirms but wrong in what it denies. **The fourth honors the strength of each.** Clearly, Revelation was written to strengthen the early Christians and all Christians since, as they face in common seductions from Christ and suffering for Christ.

### Revelation 1:1-2

**The revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave Him to show to His servants what must soon take place. He made it known [semion] by sending His angel to His servant John, who **testifies** [witnesses – same word in Greek] to everything he saw—that is *the Word of God* and *the testimony of Jesus*.

### Interpretive Principle #1:

*In harmony with the entire New Testament, Revelation presents Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Savior and LORD over all history. Revelation is both from Him and it is about Him—He is Revelation’s focus and its goal as it presents us the meaning of all history in the light of His victory, righteous judgments, His work through His Church, and His eternal reign. It is all about Jesus!*

Along with the entire New Testament, its primary goal is to use “*the Word of God*” (OT) to point us to and to proclaim “*the testimony of Jesus*.”

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### **SLIDE #10: Luke 24:25-27**

Jesus said to them: “How foolish and how slow to believe **ALL** that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? And beginning with Moses and **ALL** the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in **ALL** the Scriptures concerning Himself.” (see also 24:44-46)

A true understanding of ALL Scripture does not allow even a good thing to push the best thing to the periphery. Jesus is the true Center; and **ALL** of Scripture finds its center in Him and what He has done. So too Revelation:

Jesus is identified by **25 different names or titles** in Revelation.

He speaks or is referenced **137 times** in the *first 3 chapters alone*.

In the first and final chapters of Revelation, Jesus describes Himself as:

***“The Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega.”***

The first verse of Revelation and the last verse hold up Jesus as the true Center.

Revelation 1:17; 22:13. Jesus describes Himself as the risen LORD and Judge over all of human destiny:

### **Revelation 1:17-18:**

“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now LOOK! I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.”

### **The Lamb dominates Revelation**

In the great throne-room scene of Revelation 5 the Lamb is introduced.

This is Christ’s primary title throughout the rest of the book. It keeps constantly before us His work of atonement for sin. **Twenty-eight times**, at every climatic juncture of the book, we are reminded that it is **Jesus as the Lamb** who unfolds **God’s judgments** upon an unrepentant world; the same Jesus who, as the Lamb, bore **God’s judgment** of all sins on the Cross.

### **Revelation 1:3**

**Blessed** is the one who reads aloud the words of **this prophecy** and **blessed** are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the **time** is near.

### **Revelation 1:4**

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**John**, to the seven churches *in the province of Asia*: **Grace and peace** to you from Him who **is** and who was, and who is to come, and from the **seven-fold Spirit** before His throne...

### **Revelation 1:5a**

...and from Jesus Christ, who is

1. the faithful **Witness**,
2. the **Firstborn** from the dead, and
3. the **Ruler** of the kings of the earth.

### **Revelation 1:5b-6**

To Him who

1. **loves us**, and
2. **has freed us** from our sins **by** His blood, and
3. **has made us** to be *a Kingdom of priests* to serve His God and Father—to Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen!

### **Exodus 19:16 [God's new identity for redeemed Israel]**

“Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me *a Kingdom of priests* and a **holy nation**.”

### **Interpretive Principle #2:**

*In harmony with the entire New Testament*, all the imagery and promises of Revelation are drawn from the Old Testament, but reinterpreted in the light of the life, death and resurrection of Christ and now find their fulfillment in His new Covenant community, His new holy nation, His inaugurated Kingdom: the Church.

Jesus Christ, in His incarnation and atonement, is the dividing point between the dispensation of national Israel under the Old Covenant; and the emergence of the Church under the New Covenant.

### **Ephesians 3:6**

“This mystery is that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs **TOGETHER** with Israel, members **TOGETHER** of one Body, and sharers **TOGETHER** in the promise of Christ Jesus.” (see also **2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Matt 21:42-44**).

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There are more than 500 allusions to Old Testament names, places, events, objects, prophecies, promises and judgments in Revelation's 404 verses. The five most quoted OT books in Revelation are Isaiah (79), Daniel (53—from just 8 chapters), Ezekiel (43) and Jeremiah (22), plus 43 references to the Psalms.

The two main reoccurring motifs are **the Exodus** and **the Sanctuary**. Revelation's symbols are all based on names and places or prophecies of the OT.

John adapts and modifies these ancient scriptures to his unique purpose: to show that ALL the Old Testament prophecies made to national Israel now find their fulfillment in Christ and His Church. In Jesus of Nazareth, Israel's long-awaited Messiah has come, the power of darkness have been defeated and **the blessings of the eternal covenant now belong to His Church**—to all those who are “**in Christ**” (see **Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 9:6-8; 11:5; see esp. Eph 2:14-18**)

### **Interpretive Principle #3**

All those things which were *applied to Israel* in a geographically local and visibly literal way in the Old Testament era are now fulfilled in a worldwide way through the *multi-national and Spirit-filled Church* as Christ's new Kingdom people.

By His death on the Cross, Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant with literal Israel and inaugurated His New Covenant with His world-wide people (Jew and Gentile), the Church. The physical representations of God's presence and covenant in the Old Covenant are now discerned through the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

**USE Dissertation, pages 92-94.** This applies to both all the things pertaining to literal Israel as a nation; and equally to the literal and visible enemies of Israel, such as Babylon.

### **Revelation 1:7**

“Look:

1. He is coming with the clouds [see Dan 7:13], and
2. every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and
3. **ALL the inhabitants on earth** will mourn because of Him.  
So shall it be! Amen.

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### **SLIDE #22: Revelation 1:8**

“I AM the Alpha and the Omega,” says the LORD God, “who **IS**, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty!”

First of only **two direct quotes from God the Father** in Revelation (see 21:5-8).

**Almighty = Panto-Krator**: the ultimate in power and majesty, before whose unlimited might all the might of kings and nations are as nothing.

Yet to us, He first emphasizes that ***He is the God who IS*** (present tense) ***with us right now***, that same redeeming God who *was* and who *is to come*. The same all-powerful, redeeming God who rescued His chosen people from cruel bondage in the Exodus; and who rescued all people, everywhere, who will turn to Him, from the cruel bondage to small, selfish lives, is the God who IS with us now—and will be with us in the end (**Romans 8:30-31, 32-39**).

**Q&A: What? And so what?**

**Pre-sent questions and those posted on-line.**