

# Sermon Notes

**Series:** Revelation – *The Future That Shapes Today*

**Text:** Revelation 1:1–8 (NKJV)

**Title:** *Christ Rules Now*

## Introduction: Checking Our Bias

- We all carry biases into how we read Scripture.
  - Example: At a rodeo, everyone was doing YMCA. For me, with dyslexia, remembering four letters in order was hard — so I couldn't do it. My past shaped my reaction.
  - In the same way, many of us approach Revelation with inherited views without ever checking them against Scripture.
- **Illustration:** NASA lost a \$125 million Mars probe because Americans used *inches/feet* while Europeans used *metric*. Both assumed their way was the only way. Result: disaster.
  - Point: If we assume our “measuring system” (our tradition) is the only way, we can miss what Scripture is really saying.

## Open-Handed vs Closed-Handed Issues

- **Closed-Handed Issues:** Non-negotiable truths of the gospel.
  - Jesus died and rose again.
  - There is a real heaven and hell.
- **Open-Handed Issues:** Disputable matters Christians may differ on.
  - Women in leadership.
  - Eschatological frameworks (how we read Revelation).

We must extend **charity** in open-handed areas.

# Revelation: A Book to Celebrate

- Revelation isn't meant to scare us — it's meant to *encourage and strengthen us*.
- It's not a secret code for end-times charts; it's a **curtain-pulling moment** revealing Jesus enthroned.
- Key image: It unmask the powers of evil and shows Christ victorious.
- Evil looks strong — Rome, the Third Reich, Big Tech, or our own little empires — but behind every empire is the dragon.
- **Good news:** The Lamb has conquered the dragon at the cross and resurrection.

## Four Main Interpretive Views of Revelation

### 1. Preterist (Past View):

- Mostly about first-century Christians under Rome.

### 2. Historicist (Timeline View):

- Revelation as a timeline of church history (Islam, Reformation, French Revolution, etc.).

### 3. Futurist (Dispensationalist View):

- After chapter 4, everything is still future: tribulation, rapture, Christ's return.

### 4. Idealist (Timeless Symbols):

- Revelation as symbolic truths that apply in every age.
- Example: Babylon = any culture drunk on wealth/power; Beast = any empire demanding worship.



➡ Each has strengths and weaknesses. Many in East Tennessee lean toward futurist/dispensationalist views — but we must examine Scripture carefully, not just inherit tradition.

## The Origins of Dispensationalism

- Not from apostles, early church fathers, or reformers.
- **1828:** J.N. Darby introduces the system.
  - Divides history into separate dispensations (law for Jews, grace for church, never overlapping).
  - Believed Israel's rejection of Christ forced God into a "Plan B" — the church — until He could return to "Plan A" with Israel.
- **1830:** Darby adds Margaret MacDonald's vision → "secret rapture."
- Spread through Scofield Reference Bible (1909) → mainstreamed in America.
- Grew through books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *Left Behind*.

➡ Lesson: Be aware of **bias**. Don't just accept what was taught first. Test everything by Scripture.

## Context of Revelation

- Written to **seven churches in Asia Minor** under Roman oppression.
- Meeting in homes, risking persecution, imprisonment, and death.
- John writes to strengthen them, not confuse them.
- He shares in their suffering and reminds them: **Christ reigns now.**

## How to Read Revelation

- It's a **letter** → pastoral encouragement.
- It's **prophecy** → like OT prophets: exposing sin, comforting the oppressed, declaring God's salvation.
- It's **apocalyptic** → communicated through symbols and signs, not literal codes.

Examples of symbolism:

- **7 spirits** = fullness of the Spirit.
- **144,000** = God's complete people (12 tribes × 12 apostles × 1000).
- **666** = imperfection, counterfeit trinity, not a barcode.



Numbers are signs to make us think, not calculators to decode headlines.

## Exposition of Revelation 1:1–8

- “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**” (v.1) – not “Revelations.” Singular.
- God gave it to show His servants what must “shortly take place.” John tells us upfront: it is **signified** — communicated through **symbols**.
- John pulls from **Daniel 2**: kingdoms crushed by the stone (Christ's kingdom). Daniel said “later days.” John says: **it's happening now**.
- **Blessing (v.3)**: “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words... and keep them.”
  - Revelation isn't for chart junkies. It's for obedience.
- **Christ is at the center (vv.4–6)**:
  - Eternal Father (“who is and who was and who is to come”).
  - Spirit in fullness (seven spirits).

- Jesus, faithful witness, firstborn from the dead, ruler of kings of the earth.
- Already reigning now.
- His people made kings and priests *now*.
- **Future Hope (vv.7–8):**
  - “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him...”
  - Not a secret coming, but a universal revelation.
  - He is the Alpha and Omega — beginning and end — the Almighty.

## Key Takeaways

1. **Revelation is about Christ revealed, not confusion.**
2. **Christ reigns now.** Evil has been unmasked and defeated.
3. **Numbers and symbols point to deeper truths.** Don't get lost in sensationalism.
4. **We must read Revelation as a letter, prophecy, and apocalyptic vision** — not just as a timeline.
5. **The call is obedience, hope, and worship.** Revelation strengthens persecuted believers to see Jesus enthroned.

## Conclusion

- Revelation pulls back the curtain so we see the Lamb victorious.
- For suffering believers then and now: Christ rules today.
- This is not a book of fear, but a book of hope.
- Let it fill you with joy, confidence, and worship.







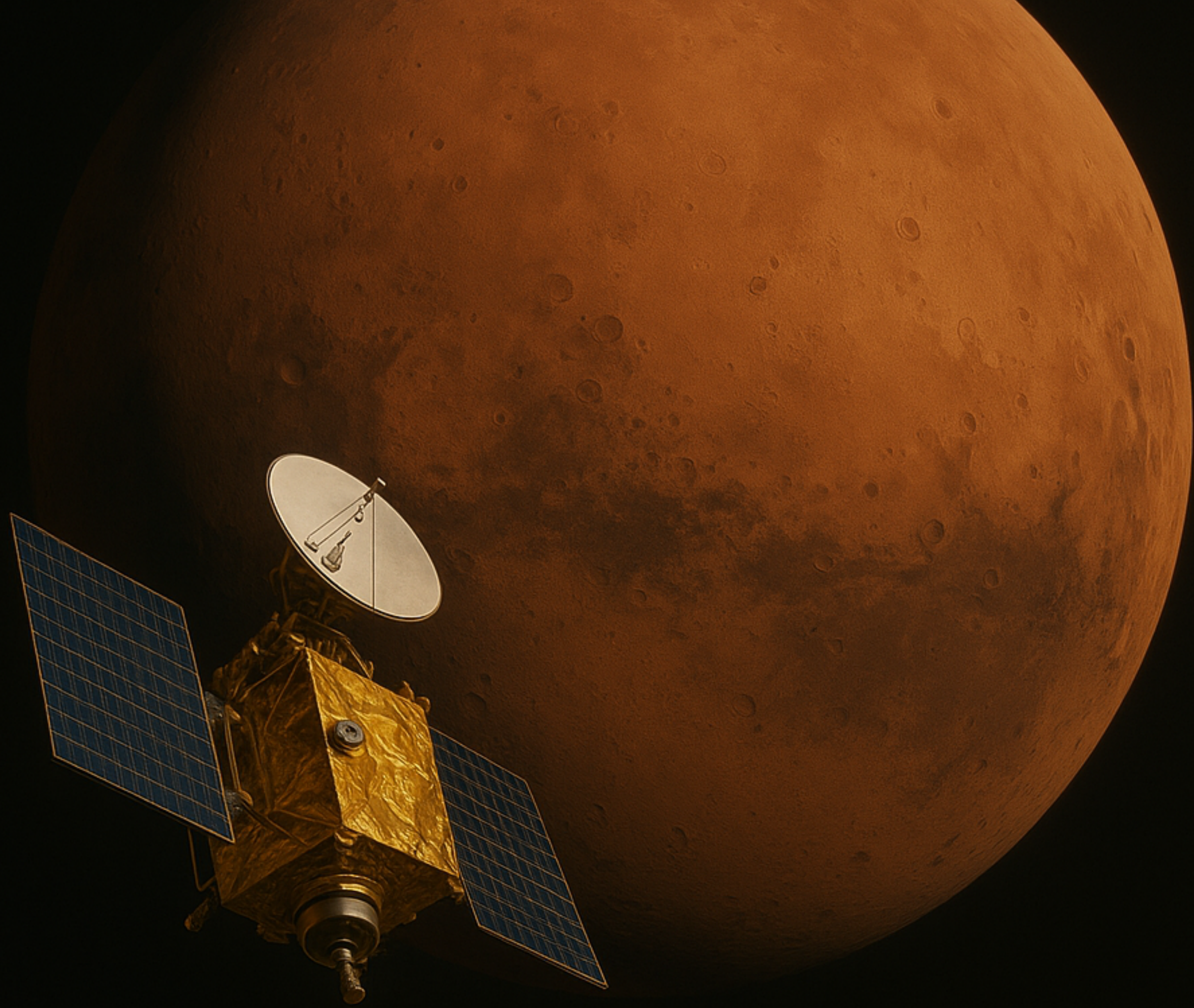
# REVELATION: THE FUTURE THAT SHAPES TODAY

A PANORAMIC WINDOW INTO  
GOD'S ENDGAME











And the smoke of their  
torment goes up  
forever and ever; they  
have no rest day  
and night...









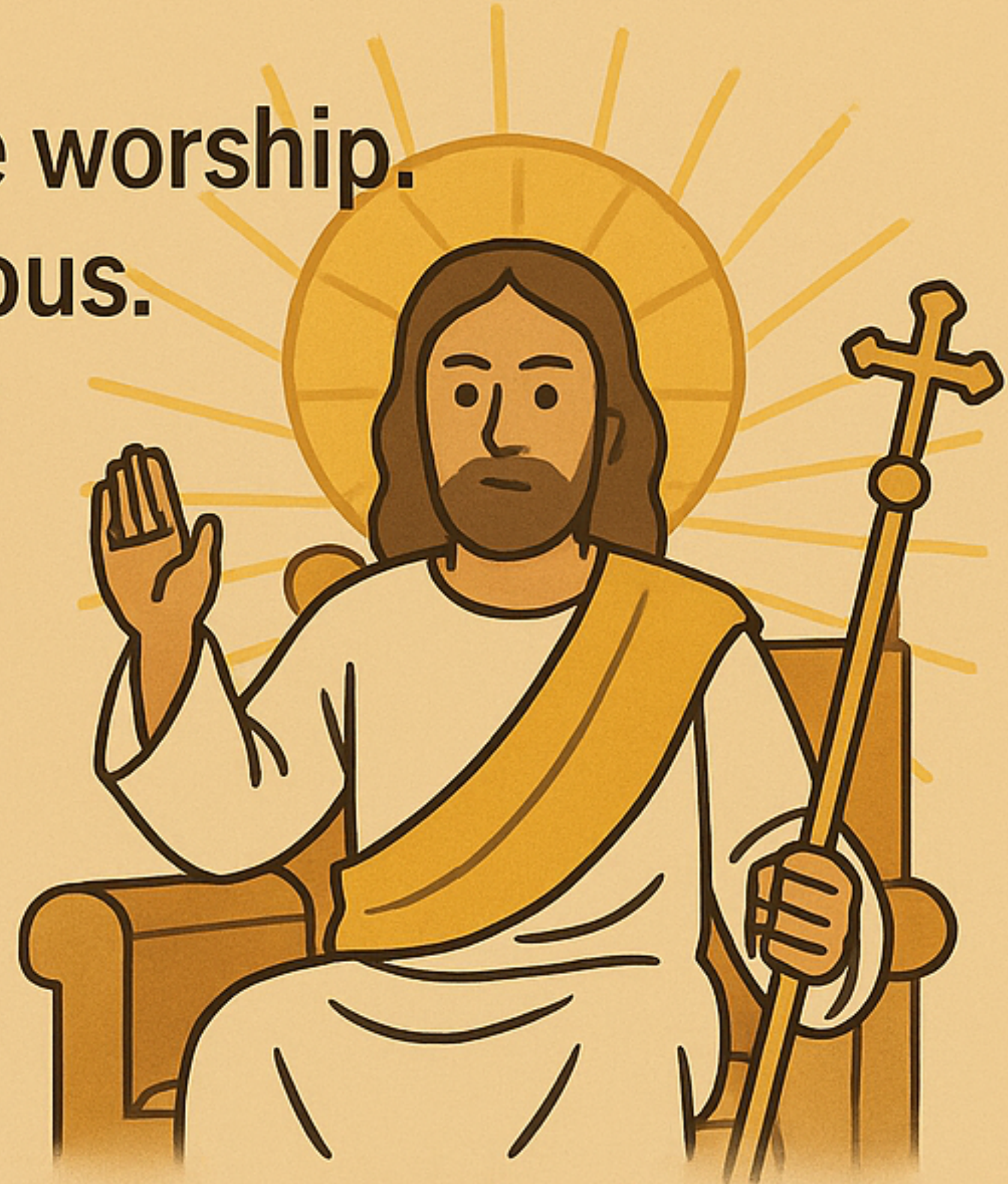
**THIS BOOK MATTERS**  
**NOT** A “**BONUS TRACK**” OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. IT’S  
THE CLIMAX.

REVELATION = **APOCALYPSE** → “**UNVEILING**.” IT  
TEARS BACK THE CURTAIN ON WHAT’S REALLY GOING  
ON.

SHOWS **EVIL EXPOSED**: EMPIRES, IDOLS, FALSE WORSHIP.  
BUT ALSO **SHOWS JESUS ENTHRONED**, VICTORIOUS.  
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.”



- Not a “bonus track” of the New Testament. It’s the climax.
- Revelation = *apocalypse* → “unveiling.” It tears back the curtain on whst’s really going on.
- Shows evil exposed: empires, idols, false worship.  
But also shows Jesus enthroned, victorious.



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.”



# PRETERIST (PAST)

Revelation was mostly fulfilled in the 1st century with Rome/Jerusalem, Nero, and persecution



strong for original context, but  
struggles with the still-future new creation



# HISTORICIST (HISTORY):

Revelation maps church history from the apostles to today –  
gave Reformers courage, but forces Western timelines onto  
a global church





# Futurist/Dispensationalist (Future)

Revelation points mainly to end-time events – affirms Christ's return, often literalises symbols and divides God's people into two programs.







**POLL**





# Idealist

(Timeless Symbols):  
Revelation shows  
recurring patterns of  
Christ versus evil in  
every age – rich in  
present application,  
but risks spiritualising  
away the future hope.



# WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

- Not from the apostles, early church, or Reformers — invented in 1828 by J.N. Darby
- Darby divided history into “dispensations”: Israel under law, church under grace, never to mix
- Claimed the church was a temporary “Plan B” after Israel rejected Christ
- In 1830, fused Margaret MacDonald’s vision into the idea of a *secret* rapture
- Scofield’s 1909 Reference Bible spread it as *the* way to read prophecy Later popularized by Hal Lindsey (*Late Great Planet Earth*) and Tim LaHaye (*Left Behind*)





**The Context - Culture and to who**





**The Context - Culture and to who**



**LETTERS**

**PARABLES**

**PARABLES**

**GOSPELS**

**APCALYPTIC**

**PROPHECY**

**WISDOM**

**POETRY**

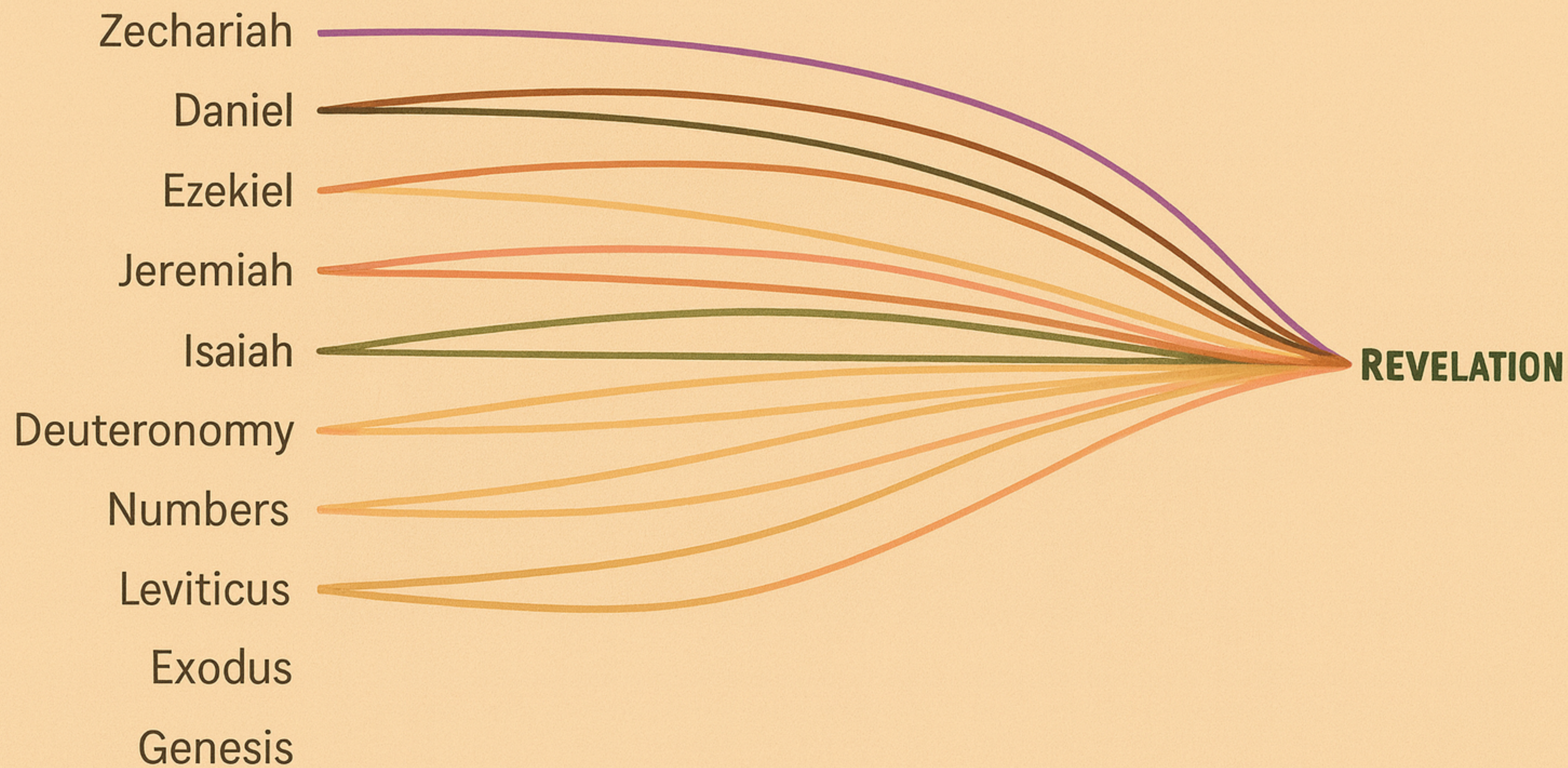
**LAW**

**NARRATIVE**











1. 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.

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.

4. 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, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

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.

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.”



Questions