

AUSTELL GRANDVIEW SDA CHURCH PRESENTS



THE
APOCALYPSE
SERIES

SHOWCASING JESUS CHRIST IN PROPHECY

INTRODUCTION

Many Christians and non-Christians alike ignore the book of Revelation because it seems so strange, others spend all their time arguing about its various interpretations. Both of these approaches are unfortunate, because in the last book of the Bible God gives us a captivating picture of Jesus Christ's love and His ultimate victorious rule at the end of Earth's history. Revelation warns of eternal judgment for those who side with Satan and pursue the false system of the world. The church, on the other hand, is encouraged to persevere and remain faithful in the midst of trials understanding that Jesus himself is faithful to us, He has promised to give protection, He is in control and He will bring the reward of true Justice, peace, a new heaven and a new earth where we will live with Jesus Christ in person forever.

This study guide is part of an interactive 4-week prophecy series that will showcase Jesus Christ like never before. The writer John often writes and uses a contrast between light and darkness; good and evil but often the evil gets the focus in Revelation. This series will do the opposite, it will highlight Jesus Christ, the Lamb and do exactly what the book's introduction claims, an APOCALYPSE, a Revelation of Jesus Christ. Revelation can be very frightening for people but that was never the intention. The focus was not to make us worried about conspiracies, governments, monsters, plagues, violence or wars. Revelation is intended to showcase Jesus Christ, and to show us that He stands by His people who are living in evil situations. He is the God who holds all of His people in His hands.

Each episode of this series will be a biblical presentation given in a creative and understandable way, from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. Featuring various Seventh-day Adventist pastors who will help you think critically about the book of Revelation and understand it for what the text says and not what you have always been told that it says. Prophecy and the end times are subjects that are both mysterious and intriguing to most Christians. And while these subjects may seem complicated or detached from everyday life, the goal is to show that the prophecies of the book of Revelation point to Jesus Christ, His coming in the near future...and how His arrival really should give us hope now.

We hope to clarify the message of the book of Revelation as it points to Jesus Christ and point the reader to the true APOCALYPSE.

HOW TO USE

THE WATCH PARTY

The best way to be involved in “The Apocalypse Series” is through a Watch Party. Each group will watch the live presentation, connect through social media, and discuss in their local group the topics presented. A Watch Party will consist of up to 3 leaders: a Host, a Prayer Coordinator, and a Group Leader. Each of these roles should be filled, however the Host and Group Leader may be the same person.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Following the live program, “Watch Party” hosts will guide a conversation with the local Watch Party group to make the teaching of the night practical for daily life. The Interactive questions are given to facilitate conversation. Using the provided study, they will be able to break down the bible passages and facilitate discussion.

PERSONAL STUDY

The following study guide is for your personal study throughout the week. Each night as a new episode is shared a new study guide will be available for download. You can complete one section each day or spread them out over multiple days. This study will require you to dive deep into Scripture—take your time! This study will also ask questions that are meant to provoke critical thinking and personal worship. You may not have the answer to every question and that’s OK. The goal is to develop the skills to study God’s Word and apply the truth found in Scripture to our everyday lives.

BACKGROUND

APOCALYPSE (ἀποκάλυψις) is a Greek word meaning "revelation", "an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling".

The book of Revelation is introduced with three types of literature blended into one: an apocalypse (or revelation; Rev 1:1), a prophecy (v. 3), and a letter (vv. 4-5). The author identifies his audience, introduces himself as John, and highlights the one who receives glory and dominion—Jesus Christ. Revelation was written around AD 95, while the apostle John (Rev. 1:1-4, 9; 22:8) was on a small rocky island called Patmos (Rev. 1:9). This John is one of the twelve disciples, the son of Zebedee (Matt. 10:2) and author of the fourth Gospel of John and three epistles in the New Testament.

INTERPRETATION

How do we interpret the book of Revelation and its message? There are four distinctive interpretative approaches to the book.

Preterist. Preterism (from Latin preter, meaning "past") is a method of interpretation that places the whole significance of Revelation in the past. The book, from this perspective, deals exclusively with the Christian church in Asia Minor and its struggle with Rome at the time it was written. In this view, Revelation does not predict the future. John the Revelator only wrote about events that took place in his time or in the immediate future. The purpose of the book was to encourage the Christians of John's day to persevere in their faithfulness to God.

Futurist. In contrast to preterism, the futurist method interprets the prophecies of Revelation exclusively from the end-time perspective. Futurist interpreters hold that chapters 4–22 will be fulfilled shortly before the Second Coming. In other words, the prophecies of Revelation will be fulfilled during the last generation of Christians. Futurism interprets the symbols of Revelation as literally as possible. Today, this is the preferred method of most Protestant Evangelicals.

Idealist. The idealist approach is based on preterist ideas. It recognizes that Revelation describes what was happening to the Christians in the first century. However, idealist interpreters contend that the book describes, in vivid symbolism, the ongoing struggle between good and evil that will result in God's ultimate triumph over evil. The book does not speak about literal events fulfilled in the past or to be fulfilled in the future, from our temporal perspective. The messages of Revelation generally provide guidance to every generation of Christians. Idealism is the successor of the allegorical interpretation of the Bible, which characterized the medieval interpretation of the Bible.

Historicist. The historicist approach of prophetic interpretation holds that Revelation portrays, in symbolic presentations, the course of history unfolding from the first century until the end time. Some prophecies of the book were fulfilled in the past, some are yet to be fulfilled, and some refer to the present time. Historicism recognizes that the events predicted in the book are pictured in symbolic language. The events themselves are real; however, they are portrayed in symbolic language. Historicism was the method of prophetic interpretation by Protestants until the nineteenth century, when many Protestants turned to other interpretative approaches.

In evaluating these approaches, one notices that preterism limits the relevance of Revelation's messages to the first-century Christians. Similarly, futurism limits the prophecies of Revelation exclusively to the last generation of Christians. These two methods seem deficient, because they imply that Revelation has nothing to offer to the generations between John's time and the time of the end. Revelation plainly shows that the first three chapters concern John's time (see Rev. 1:11). However, **Revelation 4:1 states that chapters 4–22 deal with events that will take place beyond John's time and continue until the time of the end.** Careful analysis shows that the focus of chapters 4–11 is on the movements and events in Christian history from the first century until the time of the end, while the second half of the book deals primarily with the events to take place at the end time.

A major problem with preterism and idealism is their denial of the book's predictive prophecies. Revelation claims to be a book of prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10). Any interpretative method that denies the predictive nature of Revelation does not do justice to the obvious claims of the book. Both preterism and idealism fail on this ground.

One thus can see the inadequacies of preterism, futurism, and idealism for interpreting the prophecies of Revelation. **This sets historicism as the only adequate approach for prophetic interpretation.** Historicism sees the events predicted in Revelation as taking place both in the past and the future as well as in the centuries that lie between. This method also recognizes the spiritual applications of the book's messages. It, thus, becomes evident that the historicist interpretation does the best job of discovering the relevance of Revelation's messages for all generations, even until the end of the age.

Source: Plain Revelation by Ranko Stefanivic

HOW TO READ REVELATION

Read it prayerfully. Read it asking God for understanding. Jesus Christ alone can give you spiritual eyes and hearts to understand it. Pray to the Lord that He would interpret this book to your mind.

Focus on the central theme. Read Revelation to see what it says about God ruling history and bringing it to consummation in Christ. Read for the big picture. Don't be discouraged when you do not understand some details. Most people who get into difficulty fail right here. They want to understand the details and to predict future historical pinpricks before they have even begun to absorb the central message. They are doing things the wrong way around. Nobody can properly understand the details of a book without first understanding the main points.

Be Christ-centered. Otherwise, you will be distracted by all the beasts that come against God and His people and miss the fact that Christ and His followers win. Focus on the hope of the coming of Christ. Watch how the whole book points forward to Christ's return.

Get involved in the Book. Don't try to puzzle it out. Enjoy it. Sing about it. Hate the beast, the dragon, Satan, yes! Rejoice in God's power and glory. Praise the Lamb. Learn about Jesus. The book of Revelation has many allusions to Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the breadth of the Old Testament. Becoming familiar with the Old Testament will help you deepen your appreciation of Revelation. Prophetic visions are full of symbols. They are symbolic representations of spiritual truth, not photographic copies of events.

Use this book in times of distress, persecution, and death. Christians of all ages testify that it speaks powerfully to people in deep trouble.