

SERIES OVERVIEW: REVELATION - UNTIL HE COMES

INTRODUCTION

"I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown." - Revelation 3:11 ESV

To begin this year in 2024 we are preaching through the book of Revelation. "Revelation" is the title of the last book in our Bibles which comes from a translation of the Greek word "*apokalupsis*" (to make known, disclose, or unveil) in Revelation 1:1.

John's work of the "apocalypse" is the revealing of reality and the end of reality. This book helps us better frame what is really going on in the world we live in, and where the world is really headed in the future. The Book of Revelation is God saying, "There is more going on than meets the eye. I AM the authoritative interpreter and evaluator of history. This is what is really happening and what will really happen all the way up to the end."

That unveiling of reality comes to us from two perspectives: from the perspective of heaven and the perspective of the future. The Spirit gives John "Heaven's perspective on earth and the future's perspective on the present."

Below you'll find a sermon calendar and roadmap, key questions for interpretation/application, songs to sing, prayers to pray, and recommended resources for additional study as we journey together through this study of Revelation.

SERMON SERIES CALENDAR

Jan 14	Rev. 1:1-3: The Revelation of Jesus Christ
Jan 21	Rev. 1:4-8: The Seven Churches & John
Jan 28	Rev. 1:9-20: The Alpha and the Omega: Jesus Christ
Feb 4	Rev. 2:1-7: The Church at Ephesus
Feb 11	Rev. 2:8-11: The Church at Smyrna
Feb 18	Rev. 2:12-17: The Church at Pergamum

Feb 25	Rev. 2:18-28: The Church at Thyatira
March 3	Rev. 3:1-6: The Church at Sardis
March 10	Rev. 3:7-13: The Church at Philadelphia
March 17	Rev. 3:14-22: The Church at Laodicea
March 24	Rev. 4: The Heavenly Vision
March 31	Rev. 5: The Slain Lamb
April 7	Rev. 6: The Seals
April 14	Rev. 7: The Multitude in Heaven
April 21	Rev. 8:1-5: The Prayers of the Saints
April 28	Rev. 8:6-9: The Trumpets
May 5	Rev. 10-11: The Witnesses & The Temple
May 12	Rev. 12: The Cosmic Battle: Heaven and Earth
May 19	Rev. 13: The Beasts
May 26	Rev. 14-15: The Lamb and His Army
June 2	Rev. 16: The Bowls
June 9	Rev. 17-18: The Fall of Great Babylon
June 16	Rev. 19: The Return & Triumph of Christ
June 23	Rev. 20: The Reign of Christ & Final Judgement
June 30	Rev. 21: The New Heavens and Earth
July 7	Rev. 22: The Heartbeat of Heaven

REVELATION'S MAJOR THEMES

1. Don't be seduced and compromised by the world.

There is a celebratory climax in the book "Babylon the Great is Fallen" which we find in Revelation 18:2. Babylon is described as a high-end prostitute, a courtesan; all nations and kings have committed sexual immorality with her (18:3). She is a metaphor for the pull that the world has on our hearts and loyalties; Babylon will seduce you and offer you false companionship. Christians must resist this temptation and work to overcome the path of least resistance: being assimilated into the dominant, anti-Jesus culture of the day.

2. Be encouraged by the certainty that God is ruling over all of history.

We are living in a story in which we already know the ending. Like an excellent movie you've already seen, the sad parts are still sad, and the scary parts are still scary, but knowledge of how the plot will certainly resolve protects us from despair and nihilism. This is keenly revealed in Revelation 17, as it says, "*They will make war on the Lamb but the Lamb will conquer them*" (Revelation 17:14).

3. Bear witness to Christ while time still allows.

Richard Bauckham argues that Revelation 11:1-10 is the centerpiece of the book, which makes the witness of the church in the midst of opposition the core message of Revelation. The book is meant to encourage us to be faithful to our mission to bear witness to Jesus in word and deed. The whole book is Christ is telling us, "*Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore!*" (Rev 1:17-18).

KEY FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERPRETATION

It will be helpful to be aware of the overall schemes of interpretation that have been adopted throughout church history in regard to interpreting Revelation. This is critical, for the meaning of the book slightly changes with each interpretation. There are four main options (these are attributed to Grant Osborne's helpful book, "Revelation: Verse by Verse"):

1. The ***historicist*** approach understands the sections of the book as prophesying the successive periods of world history. For example, many think the seven letters prophesy seven periods of the church age.
2. The ***preterist*** view believes the book describes the "present" age in which John lived, either the first-century situation of Roman oppression and Christian marginalization or the fall of Jerusalem as divine judgment for Israel's apostasy and rejection of their Messiah, Jesus. This view requires a dating of the writing of the book to the early 60's, before the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 AD.
3. The ***idealist*** school argues that the symbols of the book do not describe historical events but timeless spiritual truths, thereby presenting a general description of the church age between Jesus' first and second comings rather than a specific prediction of future events at the end of days.

4. The **futurist** understanding sees the visions as detailing the events that will take place at the end of history when Christ returns and God ushers in the end of the present age.

Grant continues, "These views at first seem incompatible, but many scholars in recent years have taken an eclectic approach that combines the latter three. Few today take the historicist approach because the details of the book have to be forced to fit the shifting sands of world history. However, the other three can be combined by saying that the book addressed the church of John's day (the preterist) and the church in every period of church history (the idealist) by linking them to the church at the end of history (the futurist). For example, the beast of Revelation 13 may refer to false teachers, as well as to the nations and rulers who have opposed God's people throughout history, and also to the final antichrist at the end of history. This interpretation is supported by 1 John 2:18, "*As you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.*"

KEY QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

The book of Revelation is a challenging read, and it's not usually clear to us at first as readers how to apply it. Interpreting and submitting ourselves to the book requires patience and prayerfulness. Here are some key questions to regularly ask as we read and study it.

1. Where else in the Scriptures have we seen this image?

For example, the number 7 appears all over the place in the book of Revelation. In fact, the entire structure of the book could be seen as seven sevens! Why all the sevens? While each time the usage is slightly different, we shouldn't interpret that number without looking for the places in Scripture where the number 7 is highlighted or used. The first two key uses are Creation - God makes the world in seven days and it is very good. Seven is the number of perfection, of creation. Likewise, God has his people march around Jericho 7 times before he pours out his wrath on the anti-God establishment. Seven is the number of wrath. So, we see the number seven and think about Creation and Judgement at the same time; God is establishing His new creation which includes the destruction of those opposed to him. The seven churches are real churches but represent all churches; God's new creation people and those with whom judgment begins (1 Peter 4:17). Tracking down these images can be a lot of work; cross reference bibles or study bibles will be a helpful tool in going back and reading where Revelation is building on images from the Old Testament. When you go back to the Old Testament, don't just read the single

verse references, but read the whole section or chapter so you can begin to grasp the context and effect the original picture might have had.

2. How is this section of Revelation reinforcing one of the major themes of the book?

If the major themes are: don't be seduced by the world, be encouraged in knowing that God is ruling over history, and bear witness to the risen Christ while time still allows, then how is this image or story doing one of those three things? Remember, the book is not written merely to inform us so that we can have accurate information in our head, but to form us as faithful followers of Jesus.

3. How was the Spirit confronting or encouraging the church through this, as we read?

We read God's word personally, not merely academically. It is not only that the Spirit has spoken to the churches, but that he is presently speaking to the churches. *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"* (Revelation 3:22). This process begins by exploring how the original hearers of the text would have experienced it, but culminates in a desire to personally and communally submit to the work of God in our midst in the here and now.

4. Which of the seven churches do I relate to most?

Maybe it's Thyatira (sexual immorality), or Laodecia (lukewarm, lulled to sleep by comfort and wealth)? How do we identify with our brothers and sisters in the first century? How does the Spirit correct them? Be mindful of the specific ways you identify with the seven churches at the opening of the book as you read the rest of the book as themes of encouragement and conviction will present themselves.

5. How are we functionally living secular lives?

The book of Revelation presents with a world that looks like it's in chaos, when in reality it is charged with God's personal, active, and controlling presence. Contrary to this assertion, secular humanism argues that we are the controllers and creators of our lives, both present and future. Revelation confronts this functional atheism and the false allegiances we offer to worldly institutions and governments, giving them far too much trust and treating them as saviors. We are warned of the easy danger of becoming accidentally intoxicated by the

status quo and losing sight of the reality of God. In this way, Revelation serves as a sobering force in our lives.

6. How will I worship the LORD God Almighty all the way home?

Affection for our Triune God is the antidote for over-affection towards Babylon (the spirit of the age). As long as our hearts cry out “amazing are your deeds!” (Rev 15:3) to worldly institutions instead of to God Almighty we’ll continue to be seduced by the idolatry that is all around us. Our battle to be faithful witnesses is not merely fought at cognitive level, but an actions and heart level; it is a spiritual battle, a battle for the loyalty of our hearts. Our primary work as disciples and witnesses is to worship the living God... all the way home.

SONGS TO SING - SPOTIFY LIST

1. Getting Ready - Maverick City
 2. Revelation Song - Kari Jobe
 3. Holy Forever - Christ Tomlin
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KEY VERSES TO PRAY/SING THROUGHOUT THE SERIES

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”
-Revelation 4:8, 11

“By your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! and honor and glory and blessing!
-Revelation 5:9–10, 12

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants,

the prophets, and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”
-Revelation 11:17–18

“Amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”
-Revelation 15:3–4

“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve! Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”
-Revelation 16:5–7

“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”
-Revelation 19:1–5

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

1. *Blessed: Experiencing the Promise of Revelation* by Nancy Guthrie
2. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* by Richard Bauckham
3. *The Joy of Hearing* by Thomas Shreiner
4. *Revelation: Verse by Verse* by Grant Osborne

RECOMMENDED PODCASTS

1. Revelation Companion Podcast with Pastor Ryan Oletzke
(Found on True Hope YouTube, Apple, Spotify, Google Play)
2. Blessed: Conversations on the Book of Revelation with Nancy Guthrie
3. The Bible Project: Revelation