

The Book of Revelation Introduction to Revelation

Revelation 1:1-8

1The 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, 2who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3Blessed 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.

4John 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, 5and 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 6and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7Behold, 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.”

ἀποκάλυψις = apokalypsis = an unveiling, uncovering, revealing, disclosure.

The Greek word used here is apokalypsis, which refers to a type of literature found in the Hebrew Scriptures and in other popular Jewish texts. Jewish apocalypses recounted a prophet’s symbolic visions that revealed God’s heavenly perspective on history so that the present could be viewed in light of history’s final outcome. These texts use symbolic imagery and numbers not to confuse but to communicate. Almost all the imagery is drawn from the Old Testament, and John expects his readers to interpret by looking up the texts to which he alludes.

—The Bible Project

The word apocalypse does not mean the end of the world. Therefore the word revelation does not mean the end of the world. It is clear that God is unveiling or revealing something to John through a vision, but exactly what God is unveiling or revealing is very important.

Reading Revelation Responsibly

Option #1

As if God gave John a vision of a divine code to be used to decipher exactly when and how the end of all things will come about.

Option #2

As if God, through John, gave the Church past (Church’s of Asia Minor), present, and future (worldwide Church throughout history) a vision for how God plans to use the Church’s faithfulness to the blood of the lamb, and the word of his testimony (Rev 12:11) as a catalyst for his kingdom now and in the future.

Know that as we study the book of Revelation we will be trying to understand it using exegesis. What impact did this letter from John have on the first century Church’s of Asia Minor? How did they read the letter juxtaposed to how they read other letters from Apostles? How did they read the letter juxtaposed to the rest of the scriptures, particularly the Old Testament prophetic scriptures? Did it scare them? Did it encourage them? How did they respond to the letter? We then can decide what becomes applicable to us, the church in America today. Reading the book of Revelation any other way is guesswork at best, and folly at it’s worst. Jesus himself proclaims that no one knows the day or the hour at which he will return. (Matt 24:36) Trying to decipher current events as a “sign of the times” should be very last on the list of important things that the church is interested in, let alone worried about.

Remember that this book functions as a witness or testimony to the saving work of Jesus Christ. These words witness and testimony are used throughout the book often interchangeably the same greek term carries two similar meanings. The word witness alludes to the role the church will play in God’s great heavenly law court. The word testimony carries the sense of the word martyr, those who bear witness will be called to suffer, or even to die.

Staying Cool When Dealing With Hot Topics

1. Rapture
2. Millennium
3. Anti-Christ
4. Israel
5. 144,000
6. Armageddon
7. A.D. 70 Destruction of Jerusalem
8. Rome as Babylon

Common Misunderstandings about Revelation

- “Apocalypse” means end of the world destruction.
- Revelation gives us an outline of history and/or the future; we can find current events predicted in Revelation.
- Revelation is full of puzzle pieces to be assembled.
- Revelation predicts the rapture.
- Revelation predicts a/the coming of the/a antichrist.
- Wars and rumors of wars are good things because they may signal the imminent end of all things.
- Revelation says God will destroy the earth, possibly by nuclear war, so don’t be concerned about nuclear arms or the environment.
- The mission of the church is to get people ready for the rapture.
- When Jesus returns, he will destroy all his enemies (non-believers).

7 Ways to Read Revelation

1. The Predictive Futurist: This view sees the text as a code that represents future events. The original meaning wasn’t fully understood by its original audience and will only be revealed when the events happen.
2. The Pretorist: This view sees the text as a code, but the events represented by the code already happened in the 1st century.
3. Historicist: This view sees the text as a symbolic representation of historical events that took place from the time of its writing until the second coming of Christ.
4. Idealist: This view sees the text as a portrayal of the church’s recurring struggle throughout the entire period between the first and second comings of Christ.
5. Poetic or Theopoetic: This view sees the text as poetic language used to express ultimate truths about God, evil, and history.
6. Theopolitical: This view sees the text as a form of political protest and dissent against the Roman empire that emerged out of a time of persecution in the 1st century. In this view, an emphasis is placed on the Kingdom of God as the antithesis to the kingdoms of this world.
7. Pastoral/Prophetic: This view sees the text as anchored in the past but meant to speak to every generation of readers. The imagery is seen as a challenge and comfort by showing us a heavenly perspective on the events of our world throughout time.

A Short Outline of Revelation

Revelation 1-3 Opening Vision of the Risen Lord and His Seven Pastoral-Prophetic Messages

Revelation 4-5 Central and Centering Vision of God and the Lamb

Revelation 6-20 Visions of the Judgment of God, with Interludes (7:1-17,10:1-11:13, 12:1-14:20)

Revelation 21-22 Final Vision of the New Creation