

Steve Whitacre

SESSION 4 | A Peek Behind the Curtain

INTRODUCTION

Revelation rouses the imagination to inform Christians about ultimate reality and to strengthen Christians in worship, obedience, and hope.

1. Revelation 1: The Big Picture
2. Revelation 2–3: Dear Church...
3. Revelation 4–8: The Lion Who is the Lamb Who is the Lord of History
- 4. Revelation 8–18: A Peek Behind the Curtain**
5. Revelation 19–22: The End and Everything After

“The record of John’s experience introduces two images that dominate the rest of the book: the throne of God and the Lamb of God. The word “throne” appears 43 times from chapter 4 until the end of the book (19 time in chapters 4 and 5 alone), and the word “Lamb” (referring to Christ) 28—7x4—times. Together these images constitute the hermeneutical, or interpretive, key to the entire book. They reveal in pictures the essential theology of the book of Revelation: God the creator reigns and is worthy of our complete devotion, and Jesus the faithful, slaughtered Lamb of God reigns with God, equally worthy of our complete devotion.” Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 103.

I. Reading Revelation

“The point is not to predict a sequence of events. The point is to evoke and to explore the meaning of the divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world.” Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 20.

Different ways to interpret Revelation:

- Preterist: the vision of 4–20:6 describe events in the past, mostly fulfilled during the time of the early church
 - Historicist: the visions of 4–20:6 describe chronological order of actual historical events between the death of Jesus and his eventual return
 - Futurist: the visions of 4–20 describe events yet to be fulfilled in the future
 - Idealist: the visions of 4–20 describe events between the death of Jesus and his eventual return, in ways that are cyclical (recapitulation) and symbolic
 - Eclectic (modified idealist): some combination of the above.
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Cyclical descriptions of a linear history

- Highly symbolic
- Increasing intensity

Cosmic conflict enacted on the world stage

- The reality and power of evil
- The sovereignty of God

Triumph of the Lamb: Salvation and Judgment

II. Considering History Through John's Eyes

10:1–11 The Sweet-Bitter Scroll: The Salvation of God and the Judgment of God

11:1–19 The Two Witnesses: The People of God Preserved

12:1–13:18 The Unholy Trinity

“A generic symbol for a humanistic and indeed idolatrous trinity... John is not referring here in the first place to individual and historical tyrants; he is speaking of varied types of authority which use power wrongly, ask as to induce doctrinal error and ethical compromise... Rev. 12 and 13 together had set before John's audience the ultimate conflict between good and evil, which is highlight in the symbolism of the cryptogram 666. Now the stage is set for the final encounter between the forces of right and wrong.” (Stephen Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 353).

“The sovereignty of God and Christ in redeeming and judging brings them glory, which is intended to motivate saints to worship God and reflect his glorious attributes through obedience to his word.” G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 151.

AN OUTLINE OF REVELATION

Adapted from various sources

- 1:1–20 Prologue
 - 2:1–3:22 Seven Letters to the Churches
 - 4:1–5:14 The Lion Who Is The Lamb Who Is The Lord of History
 - 6:1–8:5 Seven Seals: A Description of History
 - 8:6–11:19 Seven Trumpets
 - 12:1–13:18 The Unholy Trinity
 - 14:1–14:20 Salvation and Judgment
 - 15:1–16:21 Seven Bowls of Judgment
 - 17:1–18:24 Babylon and its Fall
 - 19:1–20:15 Final Victory
 - 21:1–22:5 New Heavens and New Earth
 - 22:6–21 Epilogue
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