

## REVELATION

### Main Idea of Revelation

There is an unseen spiritual war in which the church is engaged which exists between Jesus and Satan. However, Jesus the Lamb has already won the victory through His sacrificial death.

### Title

The last book of the Bible contains its own title in 1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." It is also known simply as "Revelation," which means "an uncovering" in Greek (*apokalupsis*). Note it is an uncovering about Jesus Christ and it is one continuous revealing.

### Background and Setting

The Apostle John identified himself four times in the book of Revelation (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). There are similarities between the Gospel of John and Revelation which underscores John being the human author. Only John's gospel and Revelation refer to Jesus as the Word (19:13; John 1:1). Revelation 1:7 and John 19:37 both translate Zechariah 12:10 in a similar fashion that is very different than the Septuagint. Revelation and the gospel of John are the only New Testament books that describe Jesus as the Lamb (5:6, 8; John 1:29). Lastly, both books describe Jesus as a witness (1:5; John 5:31-32).

Revelation was written from the island of Patmos (1:9; an island in the Aegean Sea about 70 miles SW of Ephesus) where John had been exiled during the latter part of the reign of Emperor Domitian, who ruled from A.D. 81-96.

John states in 1:4 that he is writing "to the seven churches which are in Asia." The representative character of the seven churches (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) and eschatological content indicate it was for the Church at large and Christians throughout all the ages.

## Key Themes

There are eight key themes in Revelation:

1. The centerpiece of the book of Revelation is Jesus Christ. The book describes him as the risen, glorified Son of God who ministers among the churches (1:10ff). He is faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth (1:5). He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (1:8), who is and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty (1:8). The book of Revelation is full of descriptive phrases about Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus Christ is present among churches on earth through the Holy Spirit, and He knows their trials, triumphs, and failures (1:12-3:22).
3. World history is fully in control of Jesus, the Lamb who is worthy of worship (5:1-8:1).
4. God is currently holding back His own wrath as His enemies try to destroy the Church. He is patiently gathering His people through the testimony that His suffering people share about Jesus (6:5-11; 7:1-3; 8:6-12; 9:4-6, 18; 11:3-7; 12:6, 13-17).
5. Present disasters (war, drought, famine, etc. . .), though limited in scope by God's restraint, are foreshadows and warnings of escalating judgments to come (6:3-16; 8:6-13; 11:13; 16:1-21; 20:11-15).
6. Believers in Jesus will conquer Satan and the beast by remaining faithful to Jesus Christ. The martyrs' victory, now hidden, will be manifest in their vindication at Christ's return (2:10-11, 26-29; 3:11-13; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:7-12, 17-18; 12:10-11; 14:1-5; 15:2-4; 20:4-6).
7. Satan attacks the church through persecution, false teaching, affluence and sensual pleasure (2:1-3:22; 13:1-18; 17:1-18:24).
8. Revelation most importantly is a book about eschatology. It describes the final political climate in the world, the last battle of human history, the career and ultimate defeat of the Antichrist; Christ's 1,000-year

earthly reign, the glories of heaven, and the final state of the wicked and the righteous (16:12-16; 19:11-21; 20:7-22:5).

## **Jesus in Revelation**

In the last book of the Bible, Jesus triumphantly reveals Himself as the Almighty One (1:8), the Alpha and Omega (1:8; 21:6); the Beginning and the End (1:8; 21:6). Other voices in the Book of Revelation proclaim Jesus Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5); Heir to David's throne (5:5); the Lamb of God (5:6-22:3); the Word of God (19:13); King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16).

## **Key Verse(s)**

Revelation 1:19: Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

## **Key People in Revelation**

There are two key people in Revelation:

1. John-Apostle of Jesus Christ who received the revelation of Jesus Christ from an angel (1:1-22:21).
2. Jesus-the revealed Son of God who will come again to claim His people (1:1-22:21).

## **Unique Characteristics**

There are two unique characteristics in Revelation:

- A. Revelation is the only book in the New Testament that is mainly apocalyptic literature. There are apocalyptic passages in other books of the New Testament but none are almost all apocalyptic as the book of Revelation.
- B. In addition to apocalyptic characteristics, the book is also epistolary in form. It contains an opening address and salutation (1:4-5, 9-11) as an epistle, and the content of chapters 2 and 3 are similar to Pauline epistles.

## **Simple Outline**

- I. The things which you saw (1:9-20) (past).
- II. The things which are (2:1 – 3:22) (present).

III. The things which shall come to pass  
(4:1-22:21) (future)

**Special Challenges**

There are seven special challenges in Revelation:

1. Revelation is full of unique symbols and images. Some of the symbols are explained in other passages of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and some are left unexplained presumably because (1) the author expected his readers to understand them (cf. 13:18; 17:9), and (2) the mystery of the events described was intentional.
2. Revelation does not contain any quotes from the Old Testament. Every other New Testament book contains direct quotes or allusions to verses from the Old Testament. Such quotations and allusions would greatly aid the interpretation of the symbols and images. Many of the symbols and images are found in the Old Testament and John appears to be fond of the books of Daniel and Zechariah.
3. Revelation has a “one-world” outlook. It is a world united in rebellion against God over which He will triumph and establish His sovereign rule on earth.
4. Revelation is a book of the intermittent wrath of God described as seals, trumpets, and bowls. How are these seals, trumpets, and bowls related to one another? Views on this relationship are known as concurrent fulfillment view, partially concurrent fulfillment view, and the consecutive fulfillment view (see chart).
5. Revelation can be interpreted from one of four major views. Debate largely centers around chapters 4-20. Chapter 20 and the issue of the millennium is especially debated. These views include: preterist, historicist, idealist and futurist.
6. Revelation 20 describes a time when Satan is bound, and the saints will reign with Christ for 1,000 years. How should these 1,000 years be interpreted? Literally or

figuratively? The views on this time period of 1,000 years are known as premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism.

7. Revelation contains numbers that carry significance. The numbers are like numbers found elsewhere in the Bible. They oftentimes contain symbolic and literal connotations. The numbers which most commonly contain symbolic value in Scripture, and their representative references are:
  - a. One-unity, primacy, independent existence. One who sat on the throne (4:2), the One who is and who was and who is to come (11:17), her plagues will come in one day (18:8).
  - b. Two-an addition; hence, strength, help confirmation. Two-edged sword (1:16), two witnesses (11:13), the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth (11:14).
  - c. Three-the simplest compound unity; the number for God. The remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels (8:13), by these three plagues a third of mankind was killed (9:18), the great city was divided into three parts (16:19).
  - d. Four-the world with its four seasons and four corners (7:1), four living creatures (6:6), four angels (7:1).
  - e. Five-the number of man, as portrayed by the various five-membered parts of the body (Leviticus 14:14-16). Five months (9:5, 10), five kings that have fallen (17:10).
  - f. Six-evil and wickedness because it falls short of perfection, which is represented by the number seven. The number of the beast will be 666 (13:18).

- g. Seven-the number of completion, represents the earth crowned with heaven. Seven churches (1:4), seven stars and seven gold lampstands (2:1), seven seals (5:1), seven angels and seven trumpets (8:2), seven plagues (15:1) and seven kings (17:11).
- h. Ten-it is five doubled; hence human completeness. Ten days (2:10), ten thousand times ten thousand (5:11), ten horns (12:3).
- i. Twelve-God's perfect manifestation of Himself to the created order. Twelve thousand from each tribe (7:5ff), twelve stars (12:1), twelve gates (21:12), twelve foundations (21:14), twelve gates (21:21), twelve fruits (22:2).

**CONTENT AND CORRELATION OF THE JUDGMENTS OF SEALS, TRUMPETS,  
AND BOWLS**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Seals</b> Opened by the Lamb	<b>Trumpets</b> Blown by seven angels	<b>Bowls</b> Poured by seven angels
1	White horse: conqueror	Hail and fire; 1/3 of vegetation burnt	Sores
2	Red horse: war	Mountain of fire; 1/3 of creatures in sea destroyed	Sea becomes blood; all marine life dies
3	Black horse: famine	Star called wormwood falls; 1/3 of fresh water poisoned	Fresh water turned to blood
4	Pale horse: death	Partial darkness; 1/3 of sun, moon, and stars	Scorching sun burns men
HIATUS: Last three trumpets announced as woes			
5	Martyrs reassured	Woe #1: Angel releases locusts from abyss	Darkness of beast's kingdom
6	Great day of wrath; Earthquake, signs in heaven	Woe #2: Four angels loosed at Euphrates; they slay 1/3 of earth's population	Euphrates dries up; kings assemble for war at Armageddon
HIATUS: Sealing of 144,000		HIATUS: Mystery of God to be concluded with seventh trumpet	
7	½ hour of silence: introduction of trumpets	Announcement of the Lord's victory	Severe earthquake and great hail

# REVELATION

	<b>“The things which you have seen . . .”</b>	<b>“The things which are . . .”</b>	<b>“The things which will take place.” (Revelation 1:19)</b>
	Personal and biographical	Christ’s letters to the seven churches	Christ as Judge (chapters 4–5) The tribulation (chapters 6–18) The coming of Christ (chapter 19) The millennium (chapter 20) The eternal state (chapters 21–22)
	<i>CHAPTER</i> 1	<i>CHAPTERS</i> 2–3	<i>CHAPTERS</i> 4–22
<b>Scope</b>	History: looking back		Prophecy: looking ahead
<b>Style</b>	Dialogue		Observations and questions
<b>Scene</b>	On earth		Shifts between earth and heaven
<b>Theme</b>	Christ’s future triumph over the forces of evil and His re-creation of the world for the redeemed		
<b>Key Verses</b>	1:7, 19; 22:12–13		
<b>Christ in Revelation</b>	Jesus is the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will return as Judge and King to usher in the kingdom of God on earth (19:11–20:6).		

“I am the Alpha . . .” (1:8)

“. . . and the Omega” (22:13)