
Revelation

Reason for the Book of Revelation

Revelation is God's final inspired Scripture. It reveals the last days in three sections: what John saw of Christ (**Rev 1**), Christ's churches (**Rev 2-3**), and Christ's end times revealing (**Rev 4-22**).

Core Message

There are four common interpretations of Revelation.

1. It was all fulfilled during John's days.
2. It was fulfilled since John's day.
3. Much of it is yet to be fulfilled.
4. It is purely symbolic language.

Though Revelation can be difficult to interpret, John's core message is clear: Jesus Christ will return to this world according to His Word (**Rev 1:7**; **Rev 3:11**; **Rev 16:15**; **Rev 22:7**; **Rev 22:20**).

Overall Flow of Thought

Notice the flow of thought in the book of Revelation.

01. John sees the risen Christ (Rev 1) and seven of Christ's churches (Rev 2-3)
02. John is caught up to Heaven into God's presence (Rev 4-5)
03. God pours out His wrath on a sinful earth (Rev 6-19)
04. Christ returns (Rev 19:11) and reigns 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-10)
05. There is a Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15)
06. Finally, Christ reigns over a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21-22)

Key Points

Christ completes his evaluation of the churches providing both correction and encouragement (**Rev 3**).

John is **caught up** to Heaven into God's presence. He sees the place of supreme authority and majesty, the heavenly Throne and the constant worship of God and the Lamb (holy, holy, holy). Note: John's experience pictures what we call the "rapture" of the Church (**1The 4:16-17**).

The first six seals bring God's wrath in the form of conquest, war, famine, death, and earthquakes.

The only ones who can withstand the wrath of God are those whom He has sealed.

John uses the word "like" several times to describe the events that he sees. Remember, he is a first century man trying to describe present day / future warfare technology.

In John's vision, he sees the seventh seal of judgment being broken and the beginning of the trumpets being blown – i.e. things are getting bad on planet earth!

Trumpets: In Revelation, trumpets primarily announce impending judgment. Although they are of greater intensity than the seals, they are not as destructive as the final bowl judgments. The first four trumpets announce the divine destruction of the earth's ecosystem (1/3 of most living things are destroyed) and the final three involve demonic devastation among people.

Revelation 13 starts at the mid-point during the 7-year Tribulation period. After the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation, the earth is in total chaos due to God's judgments. The world is prepped for a leader to step in and give hope. The Antichrist comes in with his charm, charisma and deceptive leadership to woo scores of people to his side. He blasphemes the person of God and (for 42 months / 3 ½ years) claims to be God.

The false prophet enters as a religious leader counterpart to the Antichrist. Where the Antichrist operates in the political landscape, the false prophet woos people into developing a one-world religion – worshipping the Antichrist.

Revelation 19 portrays Christ as who He really is - the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

The last chapters (**Rev 19-22**) tell of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the return of Christ (**Rev 19:11**), the reign of Christ on earth for 1,000 years (**Rev 20:1-10**), the rerun of earth's final battle (**Rev 20:7-10**), the Great White Throne judgment (**Rev 20:11-15**), and finally, the new heaven and earth (**Rev 21-22**).

The end times drama hits a crescendo in the final chapters of Revelation as we see two realities: Jesus is coming and we win!

Personal Reflection and Application

Notice in **Revelation 3** the repeating phrase, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Having ears and actually using them to listen are not the same thing. How well do you listen to others? How well do you listen to God? What interferes with your ability to listen? Pray for God to help you become a better listener. This week strive to listen to and obey all the promptings of the Spirit. Listen. Do. Repeat.

Christ called the church of Laodicea (**Rev 3:14-22**) the lukewarm church. They were neither hot nor cold. Christ was compelled to spit (vomit) them out of His mouth if they did not repent. Are you lukewarm in your faith? Does your apathy towards Christ make Him want to vomit you out of His mouth? What are the things that you can do to bring back your fire for Christ? **Revelation 2-3** gives Christ's recommendations to other churches: remember your walk, repent of your actions, and restore the love that you had. Until he learned that the Lamb was worthy, John wept because no one could open the

book with seven seals. Consider how this parallels the Bible. No one is worthy to understand it; however, there is Someone who can open it for us.

Luke 24:45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (NKJV)

Men saw horrendous acts that could only be explained as supernatural acts of God pouring out His divine wrath on humanity for their stubbornness and rebellion (**Rev 9:20-21**). Even after seeing everything take place, they "did not repent of the works of their hands." Let's get honest, do you need to repent of anything in your life? What is holding you back from having a close relationship with God? The Greek word for repent is a combination of the words "change" and "mind." Pray asking God to change your mind regarding the sin in your life and to restore you wholly!

Revelation 12:9 makes it very clear that Satan is real. He is not figurative or illustrative. **He is God's enemy and wants to destroy everything on God's agenda.** The name "Satan" means "accuser" (**Rev 12:10**). Interestingly, Satan is

also the “**deceiver**” (**Rev 20:7-8**). How can he be both? He **deceives** you into sinning by saying things like “you won’t get caught...no one will ever find out...you deserve this.” Once you sin, he transitions into the **accuser** and says “how could you?...you are worthless...shame on you!” See the cycle? Does this resemble your life? If so, turn to God for help. Memorize 1 Corinthians 10:13, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”* (NKJV)

In **Revelation 13:16-18**, notice the location of the mark of the beast. Consider that the Jews wore phylacteries (small boxes with parchment containing Scripture) either between their eyes or on their hand (**Exo 13:9, Deu 11:18**). The intent was to remind them of God’s Word. What do you allow to motivate your thoughts (head) and work (hands)? Would it help to have some type of reminders? Try putting reminders of God’s Word wherever you go – sticky notes on your mirror, screen savers on your computer, note cards on your dashboard – whatever works!

Revelation 15:3, says that those who had victory over the beast sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. In the song, they say “all nations shall come and

worship before You.” Immediately after this (**Rev 15:7**), seven angels carry seven bowls full of the wrath of God. Reflect on why God eventually releases His wrath.

Notice how those that mourn Babylon’s destruction do so, not because they care about Babylon, and not because they regret the sin of Babylon or their own sin (**Rev 18:9-18**). They mourn because of loss of wealth. Take an honest look at how money affects you. **Are you using it as a servant or have you become its slave?** Reflect on what is important to you. Are your **spoken** priorities your **actual** priorities?

The theme of Revelation is that Jesus is coming back; therefore, we must be ready for that day! He is coming back for His bride. It says in **Revelation 19:7** that His bride “has made herself ready.” Are YOU making yourself ready for Christ’s coming? If Jesus came back for you today, would you be ashamed of anything? If so, take note of that, confess, repent, and start the journey of getting right before God.

After the millennium, God will **wipe away the tears of believers** (**Rev 21:4**). Though we suffer pain and sorrow now, think about what it will be like as we spend eternity with Christ.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Revelation 1:4 and **Revelation 1:8** say that Jesus IS, WAS, and IS to COME! This is an amazing promise of God’s presence. How does this encourage you? How can you encourage others with this truth?

If Jesus wrote a letter of recommendation for your church or small group, what would it say? In what areas are you doing well? Poorly? In **Revelation 2:3**, we see an

example of seven actual churches who Jesus specifically addressed: the good, the bad, and the ugly. Read these, looking for common themes. How can we apply those to our lives today? What does Jesus want YOU to do? What are the good characteristics He would see in you? What are the bad? What would He say to encourage you and challenge you?

Revelation 4 describes God's throne room. If you saw it as John did, you would be overwhelmed. Try to imagine the impact it would have on you. Focus on the atmosphere of pure and continual worship. Discuss how your approach to worship would change after that experience. How do you worship best: songs, quiet meditation, journaling, or serving?

We know that God does not always answer our prayers in the way we expect (different answer, different timing). Do you ever wonder if your prayers get lost? Consider **Revelation 5:8**. The 24 elders in Revelation hold golden containers of incense which are the prayers of saints. Discuss your reaction to knowing that there is a provision in heaven for collecting prayers. Knowing this, do you see your prayers in a different way? What other Scriptures about prayer have been meaningful and encouraging to you?

Everyone goes through trials in life. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (**John 16:33**). One way to conquer the trials in your life is to have a vision of your future. When you catch a glimpse of your preferred future, it puts your current situation in perspective. That's what **Revelation 7:9-17** is for the believer. It is a snapshot into the future glory of heaven. Read this passage of scripture and discuss what it means to you and your group.

Revelation 19:1-12 is deep. In it we see the reality of spiritual warfare among us. Our enemy, Satan, wants to "steal, kill and destroy" us (**John 10:10**). Despite the fact that Satan sends the locusts (demonically influenced swarms of pests) to torment, we see God's redemptive power at work. Notice that the locusts are only able to torment those who "do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (non-believers). Do you have the seal of God on your forehead? In other words, how do you know that Christ lives inside of you? See **1John 5:13**.

Read **Revelation 10:8-11**. The book that John eats tastes sweet in his mouth, but makes his belly bitter. The identity of the book is not clear; however, consider Psalm 119:103.

Psalm 119:103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth! (NKJV)

This is a great picture of how we are to read / digest God's Word. As we "eat" it, we will find it very sweet to the taste; however, the things that we read will also convict us of our sin and make our belly bitter. It is **bittersweet**. Receiving **TRUTH in love** can be **bitter at first**, but once it changes us to become more like Christ, it is **sweet!** When and how do you "eat" God's Word? What are some practical tools and tips you can give to someone who is just starting out? Make a commitment to hold each other accountable for your Bible reading. Determine to read for **transformation** and not just information. It will make a huge difference in your life!

In **Revelation 11:10** we see that the world rejoiced at the death of the two witnesses who were God's spokesmen. The world did not like hearing about God's holiness and their need to repent (**1John 3:13**). **Have you ever faced persecution for your faith?** How did it make you feel? Did it make you want to be silent? Did it discourage you? This is a reminder that regardless of how much persecution we get, we are in good company! **1Peter 4:14** says if others reproach us for the name of Christ, we are blessed because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on us. Persecution takes various forms in our culture. What are they? What does persecution do to us? In us? For us?

Revelation 14:9 says that men "receive" the mark of the beast. This suggests that it will be their choice whether or not to take the mark. Though there will be much pressure to accept the mark, the choice will be theirs. All of us face trials and temptations. How we respond to them is our choice. What we endure is far less than what John describes,

yet we struggle. How do you respond to trials? Do you give in to Satan's ways or do you turn to God and His Word? Interestingly, **1Corinthians 10:13** says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (NKJV). Although we are presently not tempted to take the "mark of the beast," what are some other temptations you face that you could use **1Corinthians 10:13** to combat?

The first wrath of God is grievous sores (**Rev 16:1-2**). Sinners had taken the mark of the beast. They now receive the mark of God's judgment. The second wrath of God is the sea becoming blood (**Rev 16:3**). Those who had not received the living waters of Christ (**John 7:38**), now receive waters of death. This points to the fact that sin brings punishment and that punishment is often fit to the sin. Punishment might come today or years from now. We might not realize the full magnitude of our decisions until decades later. Consequently, we perceive the period between our sin and the consequences as pleasure. **Hebrews 11:25** mentions the "passing pleasures of sin." What can we do to remember that there are consequences?

During the end times, Satan and his cronies will greatly deceive people. Actually, it's like that today! The apostle Paul encourages us to know and be aware of our enemy's tactics and schemes (**2Cor 2:11**). Let's get candid. How does the enemy strive to deceive YOU? Are his tactics with you mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual? He is well aware of where you are most weak. What works for you to defeat his attacks and temptations? What are the dangers of being deceived? Read **Genesis 3:1-13** looking for parallels between what Satan did then, what he does now, and what he will do in the future.

As you read **Revelation 19:11-16**, notice the description of Christ. Is this the kind of picture that we usually see of Jesus? Take some time to circle the adjectives that describe Christ. From this passage, notice what Christ uses to defeat His enemies. Also see **Hebrews 4:12** and **Ephesians 6:17**.

After Christ comes back with His church to defeat the Antichrist and his minions, Christ sets up His earthly Kingdom for 1,000 years. We call this the Millennial Reign of Christ. During this period, it will be like heaven on earth. Ideal weather and crop conditions, long life spans, domesticated animals, and the absence of Satan are just a few of the amazing characteristics associated with this time period. After the 1,000 years, God releases Satan from the bottomless pit to deceive the nations once more. Discuss why you think God would allow Satan back on earth again (**Rev 20:7-10**). From this, what can we apply to our lives today?

During the Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan is bound for 1,000 years. Imagine that! No Satanic influence for 1,000 years! What kind of influence does Satan have over your life today? What are his weapons to divide your family? What are his tools to defeat you? It is key to know what his tactics are so we can recognize and combat them! List some of the enemy's tactics. Then, take some time praying for protection and deliverance!

The church (all those who have accepted Christ as Savior) becomes His army (**Rev 19:7-8, Rev 19:14**). Though the beast and his army make war with Christ and His army, the battle is short. Discuss the reassurance of knowing the outcome of this battle in advance. For details about that confrontation, read **Joel 2:1-11**. If you've ever wanted "super powers," this will be your opportunity.

Leadership Principles from Revelation

Refresh Your Mind

To be an effective leader, you must keep your mind refreshed and renewed. Renewal of the mind is a supernatural work of the Spirit. For this to take place, the leader must regularly read God's Word. Read [Revelation 1:3](#). What does John give as a benefit of reading, hearing, and applying God's Word?

Check Your Motives

[Revelation 2-3](#) gives insight into how Jesus sees the motives behind our actions. He pierces through the activity and sees the **why** behind the what. If Jesus were to assess your leadership, what would He say? What are your motives? Are they for self-promotion or God's glory? Do you serve an audience of ONE or of many?

Hear the Truth from Others

As a leader, it is vital that you surround yourself with people who are not simply "Yes" men or women. You need people who will speak truth into your life and you must be willing to receive that truth. Jesus gave an example of this truth giving in what He said to the Laodicean church in [Revelation 3:14-22](#). Although they "thought" they were doing well because they were financially stable, Jesus exposed their true state of hypocrisy.

- Do you have people in your life who are willing to stand up and speak the truth to you in love?
- Are you that kind of friend to other leaders?
- When people do share information with you that might be difficult to hear, how do you respond? Do you deny it? Do you blame others? Do you accept it and determine to get better?

Lead Out of the Overflow

As a spiritual leader, the temptation is to focus on everyone else's needs at the expense of your personal growth. God wants you to lead out of the overflow of what He is doing in your life ([Rev 10:8-11](#)). You can't lead where you haven't first been. People may do what you tell them to do, though over time, your followers will become who you are. Determine today to feed yourself daily on God's Word and lead out of the overflow of what He is speaking to you!

Dress for Success

Notice in [Revelation 15:6](#) how the angels are clothed. They wear pure white linen and golden bands. White linen is a symbol of holiness and purity ([Psa 51:7](#), [Isa 1:18](#), [Luke 9:29](#)). Gold purged of impurities is a symbol of righteousness ([Mal 3:3](#)).

How do you dress as a leader, spiritually? In your daily living, in what ways can you wrap yourself in white linen and gold? Are you hiding some area on your spiritual clothing that might be soiled or tattered? Make sure that you are dressed for success according to God's standard.

Instantly Obedient

Notice in [Revelation 16:1](#) that the angels wait for God's command before they proceed. Once God says, "Go," they obey immediately without objection. If this sounds easy, remember the hesitation of Moses and Jonah.

As a leader, do you respect God's timing by waiting for His command? Once you hear His command, do you obey without hesitation? Remember, delayed obedience is disobedience. Strive to develop an "**instantly obedient**" heart to God's promptings. Is

there something that God has placed on your heart that you know He wants you to do now? Why are you waiting?

Redirect the Praise

How do you react when someone praises you? Consider how the angel reacted when John fell down to worship him in [Revelation 19:7-9](#). As a leader, take care to redirect all praises coming in your direction to the One who deserves them.

Godly Courage

Fear is a natural part of life; however, as leaders, we are commanded to possess the courage necessary to fulfill the mission and vision of God in our lives ([2Tim 1:7](#)). That is why [Revelation 21:8](#) is so convicting. The first type of people who experience the “second death” in the “lake of fire” are the cowardly.

God wants to replace our fears with godly courage – thus practicing the ultimate kind of faith! In what ways are you making yourself available to God so He can give you the godly courage you need as a leader?

Heed the Warnings

Revelation ends with a series of warnings ([Rev 22:12-21](#)). They remind us that:

- The words are true.
- There will be punishment for removing any of the words or adding to them.
- Judgment is coming.
- We should only worship God.

As a leader, it is an huge responsibility to present God’s Word as He has written it. Your diligence in studying God’s Word is important to your own well-being and the well-being of those under your care.

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.
Try these:

01. What John said Jesus did for us	12. What John said the dragon represents
02. What the church of Ephesus had to fix	13. How the beast motivates people to receive his mark
03. What the church of Laodicea thought they were	14. What characteristics the 144,000 witnesses share
04. Why the 24 elders claimed God was worthy of praise	15. What question the song asks
05. Why the Lamb was worthy to open the scroll's seals	16. What the Lord says His coming to earth will be like
06. Why the martyrs under the throne were slain	17. What the angel says the many waters represent
07. What the people did day and night in God's temple	18. Why God's people were supposed to leave Babylon
08. What rose up to God with the incense smoke	19. The names of the white horse rider (i.e. Jesus' names)
09. What the people who survived the plagues did not do	20. How many years Christ is to reign on earth
10. What John was forbidden to write	21. What there will be no more of someday
11. How people respond to the two witnesses' deaths	22. The last prayer in the Bible