

# 65. Jesus in Revelation

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American humorist Josh Billings said, "Don't ever prophesy, for if you prophesy wrong, nobody will forget it; and if you prophesy right, nobody will remember it."

The Book of Revelation is known as a difficult prophetic Book to understand, thus many people, including pastors and Bible teachers avoid to teach or study. At the same time, there are many people who want to study it for the sake of curiosity about the future. The Book of Revelation is not here to satisfy our curiosity, but to reveal the supremacy of Jesus Christ. If we miss that, we will not get anything out of the Book of Revelation.

One very important thing that I must remind you is that the Book of Revelation is a "Revealed Book" by the definition of the Book's name. Those who tend to study this Book without cross referencing other Books of the Bible would experience difficulties in understanding this Book.

## A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In A.D. 95, Roman emperor Domitian who was an egomaniac like his predecessor, Nero thought he was a god and demanded worship from his subjects. Each year, festivals were held throughout the empire in which the citizens were required to offer incense to Caesar and proclaim him as lord god.

This practice puts Christians in a desperate dilemma. Recognizing Caesar as lord meant denying their true King, Jesus Christ. Yet refusing Caesar was considered an act of treason to Rome, and the consequences were persecution and even death.

One of the millions of people who were persecuted was the apostle John. Following a failed attempt to boil him alive in the pot of oil, Domitian banished John to the rocky, barren, seemingly God-forsaken island of Patmos. And it is there on Patmos where John was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

That's the way it always is. Truly, the things I know about the Lord weren't learned in Bible commentaries, nor teaching CDs. The things I know about the Lord were learned on my own "Patmoses," my own Tribulations, my own difficulties. And the same is true for you. When you are given a medical report that doesn't look good, when the divorce papers are sent your way, your business goes belly-up, when the relationship doesn't work out, when the child runs away – you will have a choice on that seemingly forgotten and forsaken spiritual island whether to launch out in spiritual rebellion, or await the fresh personal revelation of Jesus our Savior.

## B. THE OUTLINE

This is the only Book in the whole Bible that comes with its own outline: In Chapter 1, verse 19 where Jesus tells John to "Write the things which you have seen (Chapter 1 The supremacy of Jesus); and the things which are (Chapter 2-3 The letters to the seven churches); and the things which will take place after this (Chapter 4-22 God's judgment and His kingdom).

There is another way to outline this Book:

- 1) What You Have Seen: 1
- 2) The Seven Churches: 2-3

- 3) **The Seven Seals:** 4:1-8:1
- 4) **The Seven Trumpets:** 8:2-11:19
- 5) **The Seven Signs in Heaven:** 12:1-15:8
- 6) **The Seven Bowls of Wrath:** 16:1-16:21
- 7) **The Seven Final Visions:** 17:1-22:21

### **C. THE WAYS OF THE UNFOLDING TRUTH**

#### **1) Remember how the Scripture began in Genesis?**

Remember how the Scripture began in Genesis? The promise of a Deliverer was first given as the “Seed” of the woman who will crush the serpent’s head in Genesis 3:15. The hope was passed on to Abraham, who passed it on to his son Isaac, who passed it on to his son Jacob, who passed it on to his 12 sons. Then it was beautifully illustrated in the first Passover, as well as building of the Tabernacle in the Exodus. It was longed for by the judges, amplified in the kings, and predicted by the prophets throughout the OT. Finally, it was fulfilled in the Gospels. But not until the Book of Revelation does it come to its fullest climax. Christ rides out of heaven to destroy sin and satan and to restore creation to its original glory for our good and His good pleasure forever.

Hardly a Book of fantasies, Revelation cuts to the heart of our deepest yearnings and questions about life in Christ Jesus.

#### **2) Four approaches to unlock the Book of Revelation**

Of all the Books in Scripture, Revelation is the most glorious, yet perplexing. Through the centuries, Bible scholars have taken four approaches to unlock the Revelation mysteries:

- a. **Idealists** – They view the images non-literally, as spiritualized symbols that represent timeless truth.
- b. **Preterists** – They limit the meaning of the Book to its original readers, saying the images represent only first-century subjects, such as Caesar, Rome, and the persecution. They believe that the events have already taken place.
- c. **Historicists** – They see the Book as a historical timeline from the first century on. The churches in chapter 2-3.
- d. **Futurists** – They view the Book, primarily chapters 4-22, as a window to the end of time. The images symbolize the people and events that will play key roles in the final drama of world history.

We find that the futurists’ path is the best approach with the historicists way for the first 3 chapters.

#### **3) Three study guidelines**

To study the Book of Revelation, it will be helpful to us to follow a few guidelines:

##### **a. Don’t overanalyze the details.**

It’s easy to lose the central message by wandering into speculations about what the mark of the beast will be or whose name totals 666. The apostle John interprets many of the symbols for us in the Book, and we should stay focused on what he says.

The late pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa taught us that when we don’t know, we should fall back to what we know. And as I taught you guys during the study of the Inductive Bible Study, don’t interpret prophecy symbolically when a literal interpretation makes sense.

##### **b. Be careful not to read too much of our world into the text.**

The apostle John was not a time traveler, but he was beamed into the future by God. The locusts and hail probably aren’t John’s attempts to describe fighter jets and

nuclear fallout in first century terms. Try to avoid the temptation of correlating every image to a modern equivalent. Instead, look for connections in other parts of Scripture.

**c. Don't emphasize the message behind the image.**

For example, the apostle John describes Christ as having "a sharp two-edged sword" coming out of His mouth in Revelation 1:16 and 19:15. We are not to take this literally. The important thing for us is the meaning that the image communicates – that is, Christ is coming with the word of judgment.

**D. THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF THE BOOK**

As I said, so many people would like to study this Book out of mere curiosity of the future events. That is a very wrong approach. Yes, there are so many future events recorded in this Book without a doubt. But if the seekers of this Book miss Jesus, they completely miss the central figure of the Book, He is Jesus Christ in all of His glory. He is the Savior to whom all the symbols point.

Unfortunately, many immature Christians try to solve the unknown identity of the antichrist. If you've ever thought about studying that, please use that time to know more about your Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, not the fake one.

**E. THE STRUCTURE**

**1) The things which you have seen – chapter 1**

*Revelation 1:1-3 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, 2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

These 3 verses summarize what to expect in the next 22 chapters. Then, it moves to the theme of the Book in v7-8.

*Revelation 1:7-8 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

In v9-20, the apostle John's vision of 7 golden lampstands represents the 7 churches. In the middle of them stands the Light of the church, Jesus Christ, arrayed in splendor and strength.

**2) The things which are – chapter 2-3**

It is like reading job appraisals of 7 people, in this case, 7 churches. 2 of the churches, Sardis and Laodicea, are given no affirmation; and 2 others, Smyrna and Philadelphia, received no discipline. Generally, the Lord Jesus confronts indifference, toleration of sin, apathy, and self-sufficiency. His words are hard to hear, but after them, like a refreshing cool water, come words of hope. Jesus promises the rewards of eternal life if they endure to the end.

That is the essence of Jesus' message – "Endure to the end."

### **3) The things which will take place – chapter 4-22**

#### **a. The Worthy Lamb – chapter 4-5**

The vision continues in heaven as the Lord Jesus takes John into the throne room of God. It is the place where the command of all creation started and the Lord our God reigns in absolute authority and power. The sounds and colors that pass human vocabularies saturate John's comprehension.

There is a Book of God's plan of the ages couldn't be opened because there is no one who is worthy. Only one Person is worthy, Jesus Christ, who is pictured as a slain Lamb.

#### **b. The Great Tribulations – chapter 6-19:5**

Before the ultimate worship throughout the universe in eternity, there has to be the purification by God which is the main objective of the Great Tribulation period. The judgment of 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls. One earth shaking and universe spinning disaster after another. As the judgments progress, they grow in intensity and frequency. Sadly, even these terrible displays of God's power do not break the people's hardened hearts, and like Pharaoh, they refuse to repent.

*Revelation 9:20-21 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

Is there any godly thing that will happen on earth while all these disasters occur? Yes, 144,000 male Jews will be sealed in chapter 7. Then, we see the powerful 2 witnesses who made the lives of the ungodly absolutely miserable for 1,260 days (3 and a half years). They get killed, but the Lord raises them up and take them to heaven in chapter 11.

In chapter 12, the apostle John sees the visions, the birth of Israel and the revolt by satan and his demons in heaven, that break the sequential order of the future events and take him and us back to the beginning of the nation of Israel and further back sometime after the creation. To the analytical western minds, this is absolutely confusing, but generally non-analytical eastern minds, like the apostle John as well as the original first century readers, they could follow John's writing without any problem.

Another feature of the Great Tribulation period is a mighty religious/political system referred to as "great harlot" and "Babylon the great". This is perhaps a revived Roman empire with a worldwide religion, like its ancient ancestor, rules over many nations and violently persecutes Christians. Her influence and wealth flourish in just about every aspect of the people on earth during the first half of the 7 year Tribulation. But when the antichrist rises to power, he destroys her and takes command of the earth for the second half of the Tribulation.

In chapter 18, we see the fall of Babylon, heaven erupts in praise of God in chapter 19. This signals the marriage supper of the Lamb. Christ has received His "bride," the church, at the Rapture. Now the wedding banquet is about to commence, but first the Bridegroom must destroy the destroyer.

#### **C. The Second Coming of Christ and the Millennial Kingdom – chapter 19:6-20:15**

At His first coming, Jesus slipped into the world as a tiny baby born in Bethlehem. But at His second coming, He rides out of heaven as a Mighty Warrior, the King of

kings and the Lord of lords and wielding a sword of judgment. Christ unleashes God's wrath upon the forces of the earth that have gathered against Him at Armageddon. It will be a one sided battle that gets over quickly. Then He casts the antichrist and the false prophet into the lake of fire.

For satan, the Lord Jesus has him to be bound for 1000 years while He fulfills the kingdom promises to Israel and reigns on the earth over the surviving Tribulation Christians.

As children are born during the Millennium, though, not everyone submits to Christ. And at the end of the Millenniums Age, satan is released to deceive those who fall for his deception and to lead them for one last challenge against the city of God. At their attack, fire bursts out of heaven to consume satan's army and, finally, satan is thrown into the lake of fire once for all.

In the next scene, God is sitting upon the Great White Throne to judge all the dead unbelievers throughout history who have been resurrected to face their final judgment.

#### **d. The Eternal State - chapter 21-22**

With sin and satan destroyed, God recreates the heavens and the earth, and the story of Scripture comes full circle. Paradise lost is now paradise restored.

*Revelation 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

This is eternal reward that God freely offers those who overcome the world through faith in Christ.

The Book of Revelation offers a hope to hold onto for those who are going through the misery of life on earth.

Come, Lord Jesus.