

# Revelation

*A Study of the End Times*

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# Revelation

## **Objective:**

To comprehend the book of Revelation and relevant eschatological texts.

## **Goals:**

To grasp the basic outline of the book of Revelation.

To become familiar with various terms used in the doctrine of Eschatology.

To identify key interpretations of the end times.

To clarify a personal position.

## **Key Questions for Understanding:**

When will Christ return?

When will Christ establish his Kingdom?

What will Christ do with the Jewish people?

When will Christ judge sin?

How will Christ judge?

When will Christ judge Satan?

What happens to the dead?

What is Heaven like?

## **Terms:**

Eschatology –

Revelation –  
Apocalypse –  
Historists –  
Preterists –  
Futurist –  
Millennium –  
Post-Millenniumism –  
A-Millenniumism –  
Pre-Millenniumism –  
Great Tribulation –  
Day of the Lord –  
Time of Jacob's Trouble –  
Wrath of God –  
Post-Tribulationalism –  
Mid-Tribulationalism –  
Pre-wrathism –  
Pre-Tribulationalism –  
Dispensationalism -

## **Outline:**

Week 1 – Terms and Perspective Rev. 1

Week 2 – What Is – the 7 churches Rev. 2-3

Week 3 – Prophetic Vision and the Rapture of the church.

Week 4 - Prophetic Vision and the Rapture of the church (cont.)

Week 5 – Daniel, Israel and the kingdoms of this world.

Week 6 – Revelation 4 the believer and judgment.

Week 7 – The Great Tribulation Rev 6-12

Week 8 – The Great Tribulation and the Spirit of God.

Week 9 – The Beast Rev 13

Week 10 – The final Assault – Armageddon Rev. 14-18

Week 11 – The final judgment Rev 19-20

Week 12 – Heaven Rev. 21-22

Week 13 – Q&A

## **Week 1 – Terms and Perspective Rev. 1**

What is Eschatology? The word comes from two Greek words *eskatov* which means “last” and *logos* which means “word” or “study” so the doctrine of Eschatology is a study of last things and includes the following issues

The return of Christ

Final Judgment of sin

The disposition of death

Heaven and Hell

Since this is a study of last things other issues impact Eschatology including:

What will happen to Israel?

How does the church factor into this?

When will these all happen?

These questions combined with the factors of eschatology spiced with prophetic perspective create various interpretations – all of which have biblical support –for the return of Christ, the judgment of the world and the meaning of the book of Revelation. Before we may develop a personal

understanding of the book let's identify the concepts that shape the interpretations.

### **Prophetic Perspective.**

Prophecy is a matter of forth telling and fore telling. The former is the proclamation of God's desire for men's living the latter is the expression of what God will do beyond the Prophet's immediate future. Sometimes prophecy is immediate and sometimes the horizon for fulfillment is far away. It is that horizon that affects Prophetic Perspective. What a Prophet sees is often a "mountain peak" in time. The base of the mountain is unseen and, while another mountain may be visible beyond the first, the terrain between the mountains is obscured.

*Isaiah 61:1-3 (NIV)*

*<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, <sup>2</sup> to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, <sup>3</sup> and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.<sup>1</sup>*

**Hermeneutics** - The doctrine of interpretive standards. Hermeneutics answers the question how do I know what this means? Here are some typical approaches to Scripture:

Typological – Every reference of scripture has some meaning in the life of Christ. While types exist the Typological view goes out of the way of truth

Allegorical – The bible is a story in which the hidden meanings are the key. That Jonah tried to flee to Tarsus through Joppa actually means "the road to Hell is always beautiful."

Experiential – The Bible means whatever your present circumstance dictates.

Literal – The plain and simple sense is the key to understanding Scripture. In other words the Bible means what it says. But does that demand a wooden

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984. Zondervan: Grand Rapids

understanding of Scripture? No because when we say literal we include these measurements of literal meaning

Grammatical – The writers of Scripture used grammatical tools to write and speak. Jesus, for example, used parables as a means of explaining heaven. Other grammatical tools include metaphor, idiom, and even fable.

Historical – While Scripture is timeless, its primary meaning is for the original hearers of the Scripture. So, when Jesus says “take up your cross and follow me” he is not saying engage in struggle, but come with me and die.

Contextual – To find true meaning of a text one must read the verses around the verse. “A verse without a context is a pretext”

## Interpreting The Revelation of John

Even using a Literal hermeneutic is not a guarantee that a single interpretation will emerge. Among those who embrace a literal hermeneutic three predominate interpretations of Revelation exist.

Historists – The book is a historical document of what has already happened and the only matter ahead is the return of Jesus Christ.

Preterists – The book reports what is currently happening and the return of Christ is immanent.

Futurists–The book reports only what will happen and nothing is contemporary.

Each of these interpretations has its support within the context of Revelation. The difficulty in interpreting the book of Revelation is the diversity of grammatical figures used by John to convey his message. Some of these figures have few contextual comparisons while others have many throughout Scripture and others are proximately defined. With so many matters undefined how are we to know the meaning and significance of what we read? John gives these standards for understanding what is written when he is told by Jesus: *“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,*

*and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.* " (Revelation 1:19-20, NIV) <sup>2</sup>  
These verses provide us with

**Structure** – *what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.* Jesus plainly states that John's vision embraces the past – seeing Jesus, the present – the needs of the current church in Asia, and the future the balance of the book.

**A Starting Point** – *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.* The interpretive matter of the seven churches as *current* ministries with *current* problems enables us to know what is past and what is future. Without this definition we could speculate on even these and their occurrence – and many have!

**A Grammatical Understanding** – *the seven lampstands are the seven churches.* By defining the symbols of the lampstands and the stars Jesus identifies that symbol, simile and metaphor will play strongly in the revelation to follow.

## Historical Context

Two factors play into the determination of the date of the writing of Revelation and its subsequent historical context

**Persecution sponsored by Monarch worship** – The model for the beast is a monarch who envisions himself as god and requires all to worship him. That he has not been worshipped by some brings about persecution as seen in John's exile to Patmos (*"I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus."*)<sup>3</sup> Two Roman emperor's in John's day envisioned themselves as god and demanded worship with the cost of persecution – Nero in a.d.56-65 and Domitian a.d. 85-95.

**Development** - Churches go through cycles of development that take time. Among the time sensitive matters in Revelation that point to the Domitian period are the existence of spiritual malaise and heresy among the churches. If the book had been written in the time of Nero, the churches would have been less than 10 years old. Certain heresies might have appeared by that time including the influence of the Judaizers, but the heresies and lukewarm-ness of the churches portrayed in Rev 2-3 are more consistent with more established churches.

## Purpose

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984. Zondervan: Grand Rapids

<sup>3</sup>*The Holy Bible : New International Version.* 1996, c1984 . Zondervan: Grand Rapids

The original recipients of the book were seven churches in the Roman province of Asia – present day Turkey. Most of those churches date to Paul’s third missionary journey and were well established churches. John had become the Pastor of the church in Ephesus and had oversight ministry over the other six churches of the province. Given the late date of the book we would assume that we have a growing body of believers who were not among those originally saved during Paul’s ministry and the number of believers who remember the ministry of Jesus are even fewer. At this key moment when the church is making its first generational transition, John must assure the church that God is not finished with her nor should she become lax in her standards and beliefs for there is much yet that God will do.

## *Revelation 1*

### *What Was*

**I** *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup> who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.*

<sup>4</sup> *John,*

*To the seven churches in the province of Asia:*

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits<sup>a</sup> before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

<sup>7</sup> *Look, he is coming with the clouds,*

*and every eye will see him,*

*even those who pierced him;*

*and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

<sup>8</sup> *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

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a Or *the sevenfold Spirit*

## God's Blessing 1-8

- a. As a Revealer, 1
- b. As a Rewarder, 3
- c. As Eternal, 4
- d. As a Testifier, 4
- e. As the King of Kings, 4
- f. As a Redeemer, 5
- g. As a Sanctifier, 5
- h. As a Returning Vindicator, 7
- i. As the all encompassing God, 8

<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

<sup>12</sup> I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man,"<sup>a</sup> dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. <sup>15</sup> His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. <sup>18</sup> I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

## **II. God's Working 9-18**

### **a. The event 9-11**

### **b. The appearance of Justice 12-18**

- i. Truth, 12**
- ii. God-ness, 13**
- iii. Perfection, 13**
- iv. Purity, 14**
- v. Wisdom, 14**
- vi. Justice, 15**
- vii. Power, 15**
- viii. Preservation, 16**
- ix. Judgment, 16**
- x. Holiness, 16**
- xi. Compassion, 17**
- xii. Eternality, 17**
- xiii. Personality, 18**
- xiv. Victory, 18**
- xv. Authority, 18**

<sup>19</sup> "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. <sup>20</sup> The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels<sup>b</sup> of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

## **III. God's Purpose 19-20**

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b Or *messengers*

- i. To Contextualize the Church**
- ii. To Clarify God's future work**