

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Part 1

I. Why We Are Studying Revelation

A. Revelation is not written to _____ believers, but to _____ believers in cultural chaos and extreme _____.

1. Revelation is given to churches living under _____, not people living in _____ (Revelation 1:9).
2. Jesus directly addresses real _____ with real _____ (Revelation 2:1 to 3:22).

B. When life feels _____, Revelation reminds the church that God is not _____. God is _____.

1. Heaven is not _____. God is _____ (Revelation 4:2).
2. _____ in heaven frames the _____ on earth (Revelation 4:8 to 5:14).
3. Even when nations rage, God remains _____ (Psalm 2:1–6; Psalm 46:8–10).

C. Revelation gives two things at the same time:

1. _____ for the faithful who feel pressured, overlooked, or attacked
 - a) Jesus knows suffering and calls His people _____ when they endure (Revelation 1:9; Revelation 2:9–10).
 - b) God gathers, guards, and ultimately wipes every tear (Revelation 7:13–17; Revelation 21:3–4).
2. _____ for believers and churches tempted to compromise, blend in, or drift
 - a) Jesus confronts loss of _____ love, _____ teaching, and _____ compromise (Revelation 2:4–5; Revelation 2:14–16; Revelation 2:20–23).
 - b) Jesus warns against lukewarm faith and _____ (Revelation 3:15–19).

D. Because Revelation is full of symbols, many people avoid it. Proper study will remove intimidation and replace it with clarity.

1. Revelation itself explains that some images are _____ and _____ (Revelation 1:20).
2. The goal is not speculative _____, but faithful _____ (Revelation 1:3; Revelation 14:12).

II. What Revelation Is

A. The word “revelation” means an unveiling or uncovering. The book is meant to expose what had been formerly hidden about God’s intended redemptive end.

1. It is “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1).
2. It reveals what is happening behind what we see, and where history is going (Revelation 17:14; Revelation 19:11–16; Revelation 21:1–5).

B. Revelation is not primarily a codebook for predicting tomorrow’s headlines. It is a book that trains the church to worship, endure, and remain loyal to Jesus.

1. It repeatedly calls believers to _____ and _____ (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 13:10; Revelation 14:12).
2. It repeatedly calls believers to worship God alone and reject _____ (Revelation 4:11; Revelation 5:12–14; Revelation 14:7).

C. Revelation is presented as a message from God, given through _____, delivered by an _____, and written down by _____ (Revelation 1:1).

1. The message has divine origin and apostolic witness (Revelation 1:1–2).

D. Revelation combines three kinds of biblical writing:

1. _____ or Letter: it is sent to real churches with real problems and real spiritual conditions (Revelation 1–3).
2. _____: it speaks God’s truth to the present and calls people to repent, endure, and obey (Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:7).
3. _____: it uses symbolic visions to reveal spiritual realities and God’s plan to judge evil and save His people (Revelation 1:1; Revelation 12:1–12).

E. Because Revelation is heavily symbolic, the best way to read it is to:

1. Look for the main point of each vision before debating _____ (Revelation 14:6–7; Revelation 19:1–2).

2. Pay attention to Old Testament imagery, since Revelation constantly echoes earlier Scripture (examples: Daniel 7 with Revelation 13; Ezekiel 1 with Revelation 4).
3. Remember that symbols are not meant to _____ truth from believers but to _____ truth in vivid and memorable ways (Revelation 1:20 shows symbols can be explained).

III. Authorship

A. The author identifies himself simply as “John”

(Revelation 1:1; Revelation 1:4; Revelation 1:9; Revelation 22:8).

B. John describes himself as:

1. A _____ of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1)
2. A _____ to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 1:2)
3. A “_____” and “_____” in tribulation with the believers he addresses (Revelation 1:9)

C. Early, reliable Christians through history have identified this John with the apostle John, one of Jesus’ closest disciples.

D. Some scholars argue that the writing style is different from the Gospel of John, and therefore identify him as “_____,” a prophetic leader known to the churches of Asia. This is a much later view and less likely.

E. Revelation claims _____ authority in this sense: it is given by Christ, and John functions as a faithful witness who records what he sees and hears (Revelation 1:1–2).

IV. Date

A. There are two major views:

1. _____ date (often AD 95–96): connected with the reign of Domitian, a period when emperor worship and pressure on Christians was strong.
 - a) Irenaeus refers to the Apocalypse as seen “towards the end of Domitian’s reign.”
2. _____ date (often AD 60s): connected with the period leading up to the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem.

B. Why the date matters:

1. It affects how people interpret “_____,” “_____,” and the historical references in the book (Revelation 1:1–3; Revelation 22:6; Revelation 22:10).
2. Revelation 22:10).
3. It affects whether people connect certain visions primarily to first-century events or _____ events.

C. What does not change regardless of date:

1. The first readers lived under real _____ and _____ pressure (Revelation 1:9; Revelation 2:9–10).
2. They needed _____ to remain faithful (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:11).
3. They needed _____ that God’s justice would prevail (Revelation 6:9–11; Revelation 19:1–2).

V. Setting and Audience

A. Setting:

1. John is on the island of Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 1:9).
2. Patmos represents _____, _____, and _____. John is not writing from comfort. He is writing from pressure (Revelation 1:9).
3. Early church history associates John’s exile with Domitian and his return after Domitian’s death.

B. Audience:

1. Revelation is addressed to seven churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (Revelation 1:11).
2. These are real churches in real cities, and each city carries its own _____ and _____ (Revelation 2:1 to 3:22).

C. Common pressures facing these churches:

1. _____ and _____ for refusing to worship the emperor or participate in idolatry (Revelation 2:9–10; Revelation 13:15–17).
2. _____ pressure, especially when social and commercial life was tied to idolatry (Revelation 13:16–17).
3. _____ teaching, _____ compromise, _____ laziness, and loss of first love (Revelation 2:4; Revelation 2:14–16; Revelation 3:1–2; Revelation 3:15–17).

4. The constant temptation to blend into the culture instead of standing out as loyal to Christ (Revelation 2:13–14; Revelation 17:1–6).

D. Revelation is given so that churches can learn how to live as a faithful people when they do not control _____, when they are _____, and when loyalty to Jesus carries a _____ (Revelation 12:11; Revelation 14:12).

VI. Key Message of Revelation

A. The main message is not primarily a _____. The main message is the _____ and _____ of Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus is introduced as “the ruler of the _____ of the earth” (Revelation 1:5).
2. Jesus is the _____ and the slain _____ who is worthy to open history’s scroll (Revelation 5:5–10).
3. Jesus returns as conquering King (Revelation 19:11–16).

B. Revelation answers several questions the suffering church naturally asks:

1. Who is really in charge when evil seems to _____ (Revelation 4:2; Revelation 11:15).
2. Does faithfulness matter if the world _____ it (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 12:11).
3. Will God judge injustice and _____ His people (Revelation 6:9–11; Revelation 19:1–2).
4. What is the end of the story for those who endure (Revelation 21:1–5; Revelation 22:1–5).

C. Core truths Revelation repeatedly emphasizes:

1. God is on the throne, _____ history rather than _____ to history (Revelation 4:2; Revelation 4:11).
2. Jesus is the slain Lamb and reigning King, and His victory came through _____ (Revelation 5:6–10; Revelation 12:11).
3. The powers of this world are _____, even when they feel _____ (Revelation 18:1–8; Revelation 18:21–24).
4. The church’s calling is faithful witness, not _____ assimilation (Revelation 1:2; Revelation 2:10; Revelation 14:12).
5. Judgment is real, and justice will not be _____ forever (Revelation 6:10–11; Revelation 20:11–15).
6. The end is not _____ from creation but _____ of creation: God makes all things new (Revelation 21:1–5).

D. A one-sentence summary that can guide the whole study:

Revelation unveils Jesus Christ as the reigning Lord who calls His church to faithful endurance and worship, promising that evil will be judged and God will renew all things (Revelation 1:5–6; Revelation 5:9–10; Revelation 21:5).

VII. A Guiding Principle for Prophecy

A. Prophecy is not written mainly to satisfy _____ about the future, but to shape _____ obedience in the present.

1. Blessing is connected to _____ and _____, not merely analyzing (Revelation 1:3).
2. Prophecy aims at _____, _____, and _____ (Revelation 14:7; Revelation 16:9; Revelation 22:7).

B. Prophecy often becomes clearer after fulfillment, which is why people frequently recognize God’s hand more clearly in hindsight than in the moment.

1. The disciples understood certain prophecies only _____ Jesus was glorified (John 12:16).
2. After the resurrection, Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:44–45).
3. Daniel receives visions he does not fully understand in the moment (Daniel 12:8–9).

C. Even in Scripture, God’s people regularly misunderstood prophecy before fulfillment:

1. Many did not understand the _____ until after the cross and resurrection (Luke 24:25–27).
2. The disciples expected immediate earthly restoration and were corrected about _____ (Acts 1:6–7).
3. Peter teaches that the prophets themselves searched and inquired about what they foretold (1 Peter 1:10–12).

D. Historical cautions against prophecy speculation (use these to set tone for the whole series):

1. Irenaeus refused to guess the Antichrist’s name: “We will not... incur the risk of pronouncing positively.”
2. Isaac Newton warned that attempting to predict details often backfires: “The folly of Interpreters has been, to foretell times and things by this Prophecy.”
3. Newton also argued prophecy is best read after fulfillment: God gave prophecy so that “after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event.”

E. Therefore, as we study Revelation:

1. We will avoid _____ about details that Scripture does not make plain (Deuteronomy 29:29; Acts 1:7).
2. We will be _____ about what Revelation clearly emphasizes: loyalty, holiness, worship, and endurance (Revelation 2:10; Revelation 14:12; Revelation 19:10).
3. We will let Revelation shape our _____ posture rather than feed _____ timelines (Revelation 1:3; Revelation 22:7).