

AROUND THE BIBLE IN 12 WEEKS

Lesson 12 – Revelation

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Genesis and Revelation are the Biblical bookends of “what’s life all about?”
Just as Genesis gives us the answer to “what’s the beginning of it all?” -
So Revelation gives us the answer to “how does it all end?”

Granted, Revelation is not all that easy to understand – in fact, it’s downright hazy.
There is much symbolism (300+ symbols!) and “revelation” that don’t seem to be very revealing at all.

It is not to be avoided, for it is God’s Word; God’s revelation. It is not the revelation of John, but the revelation of Jesus Himself. (1:1 – “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...”). And note the challenge John gives at the outset to READ, HEAR and HEED:

1:3 *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

Imagine a 1st century man (John) trying to describe things 2000+ years in the future with his 1st century understanding and vocabulary. Here is an verse giving us a key theme of Revelation: the coming of Jesus; and we also see how this prophecy, though not understandable to a 1st century mind, could make sense today.

1:7 *Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him, even so. Amen.*

Later in chapter 1, John’s charge from Jesus is clear, and it also gives us a “3 point outline” of the book of Revelation:

1:19 *Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.*

The “things which you have seen” would be the image of the resurrected Jesus in heaven given in chapter 1:13-16. The “things which are” would be the state of the 7 churches in chapters 2 & 3 and the vision of the heavenly throne given in chapters 4 & 5. The “things...after” would be the rest of Revelation, chapters 6-22.

Due to its difficult imagery, and due to its claim that “the time is near” (1:3), there have been various interpretations of the meaning of Revelation “all over the map.”

The primary “minority” interpretations:

- “**Preterism**” = all has been fulfilled in the past (*Nero is the Beast*)
- “**Historism**” = a roadmap of the ages (*the Catholic church is the Beast*)
This was the belief of John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley +++
- “**Idealism**” = a symbolic morality play (*sin is the Beast*)

The primary “majority” interpretation:

- “**Futurism**” = a yet future prophecy (*the Beast is yet to be revealed*)
This view began with Jesuit priest Ribera in the 1500’s – then thought foolish

7 Basic Truths emerge, if we embrace the futurist interpretation:

- Churches matter
- Judgment is coming
- Jesus is returning
- Satan loses
- God wins
- Hell is real
- 7. Heaven is real

Revelation: a book of 7s (the number of perfection)

A partial list (there are 55 sevens in Revelation):

- 7 letters to 7 churches (*representing all churches?*)
- 7 promises to “he who overcomes”
- 7 spirits (*the Holy Spirit sent to the churches?*)
- 7 golden lampstands (*the individual churches*)
- 7 stars (*the leaders/pastors of the churches*)
- 7 seals on the scroll (*the beginning of tribulation*)
- 7 angels blowing 7 trumpets (*the continuation of tribulation*)
- 7 thunders (*kept from our understanding*)
- 7 plagues = 7 golden bowls of wrath (*ending in Armageddon*)

7 Main Sections

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|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Chap. 1-3 | Jesus & the 7 churches |
| Chap. 4-5 | God & the Lamb in heaven |
| Chap. 6-9 | Tribulation: 7 Seals & 7 Trumpets |
| Chap. 10-13 | Interlude: The main players |
| Chap. 14-16 | Tribulation: 7 Bowls of wrath |
| Chap. 17-20 | Culmination / Jesus returns |
| Chap. 21-22 | Heaven forever |

7 Mentions of the “Lamb” in the heavenly kingdom

- The bride, the wife of the Lamb (21:9)
- The 12 apostles of the Lamb (21:14)
- The Lamb (is the city's) temple (21:22)
- The lamp (of the city) is the Lamb (21:23)
- The Lamb's book of life (21:27)
- Water of life from the throne of the Lamb (22:1)
- No more curse (at) the throne of the Lamb (22:3)

A Few Observations

- √ There will be God's 2 witnesses (Moses & Elijah?)
- √ There will be an "unholy Trinity"
 - √ Tribulation believers will be martyred
- √ The "Great Tribulation" is Satan instigated
- √ The "wrath of God" is God instigated
 - √ Earthly perspective: chaos
 - √ Heavenly perspective: control

2 heavenly praises – before & after judgment

- "Worthy is the Lamb" before (5:11-14)
- "Hallelujah Chorus" after (19:1-6)

2 personal invitations

3:20 [Jesus:] Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

Appendix Questions

When does the "rapture" come?

Revelation doesn't give a clear answer. But we will be "caught up" ("rapturo") with Jesus (2 Thess. 4:16-17). And believers are not "destined for wrath" (1 Thess. 5:9) but that doesn't mean we are exempt from tribulation

So who is the beast?

He is yet to be revealed. Revelation does not give clear answer as to his lineage, either; the fact that he comes "out of the sea" may refer to the "sea" of humanity, meaning Gentile. To speculate at this point is futile.

What is the meaning of "666"?

We are not given enough information to know for sure. The number "6" is typically the number of humanity/sin in the Bible. So one thought is that Satan, the Antichrist/Beast and the False Prophet side by side are 6-6-6. However, I think when we see what the "mark of the beast" actually is, the number will make sense.

How do I best prepare?

To use phrases from Revelation: keep your "first love" of Jesus strong and don't be "lukewarm" but "hot" for Him. "He who OVERCOMES" will stand. Be ready!