

An Introduction to the Book of
Revelation



A guide to understanding the
Bible's final book

1 in a series

Introduction

There are 66 books in the Bible containing inspiring information about history, God's promises, prophecy and vital details regarding the salvation of humanity. Among these sixty-six books Revelation is unique in its fascinating use of symbols to represent spiritual truths.

Revelation is essentially an account of how God's people can overcome the suffering and difficulties of this life, and through faith in the Creator we can have hope.

One comforting message of Revelation is that there is a wonderful future for the faithful people of God as well as an assurance that our life on Earth has genuine meaning and a positive purpose. The messages of this book have given encouragement to Christians for the last 2,000 years. Revelation promises that the goodness of God will ultimately triumph over evil.

Question 1: What inspiring information is found in the sixty-six books of the Bible?

Overview of this session (Revelation 1:1-11)

1. Setting the scene for a study of the book of Revelation
2. Finding a blessing in Revelation for our world today
3. Incredible prophecies from the Old Testament
4. The promised Second Coming of Jesus

1. Setting the Scene

Revelation 1:1 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."

Question 2: The book of Revelation is about whom? _____

The book of Revelation is not just a revelation of the resurrected Jesus Christ but it is also about Himself and from Him. As we study this book, we will discover that Revelation is a series of messages for us to apply to our lives and enable us to gain an insight into the very character of Jesus.

We will also see beasts, battles and blood which are symbols of some important spiritual realities. However, it is far more important to focus on the beautiful character of Jesus – the Saviour of the world.

Question 3: How can we tell that Revelation is a prophetic Book?

This verse speaks about things that will soon take place. Therefore Revelation is a book that claims to predict the future. This claim is repeated in 1:19 and throughout the book. Like a spiritual GPS, a picture is given as to where humankind is heading. Revelation also provides some personal assistance in navigating our own life's difficulties and struggles.

As we journey through Revelation we will also discover why there is pain and suffering in the world and how we can have a confident hope of receiving the eternal life that God gives to those who choose Him as their God and Saviour.

Revelation 1:4,9 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne. ... I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Question 4. Who is the writer of the book of Revelation?

The book of Revelation was written by John the Apostle who was the youngest of Jesus' disciples. He was a prisoner on the Island of Patmos because he preached the gospel of Jesus. At the end of the first century, he was given a series of symbolic visions which he was instructed to give to the seven churches located in modern-day Turkey. The messages were also for the encouragement of God's people through the succeeding centuries and are greatly beneficial to us today.



The Apostle John, one of the original Twelve Disciples wrote the book of Revelation towards the end of his life while he was a prisoner on an island just off the coast of modern-day Turkey.

Revelation 1:10,11 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet. Saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Question 5: How was the book of Revelation written?

The Apostle John was given a series of visions by Jesus and was then told to write down what he saw and send it to the nearby seven churches. This was beneficial to them and also to us today.

The visions of Revelation

So what are these visions in the Book of Revelation that have intrigued believers and sceptics for the last 2,000 years? Here is a brief overview of the visions found in Revelation (we'll examine these visions and prophecies in more detail in future lessons).

- * The opening vision shows Jesus identifying Himself as the God of the Old Testament.
- * Chapters 4 and 5 detail a great worship scene in Heaven revealing a crisis which is resolved only by the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- * Chapter 6 reveals the opening of the scroll with seven seals. The mysterious Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse has an interesting explanation in this vision.

*The vision of the four
Horsemen of the Apocalypse*

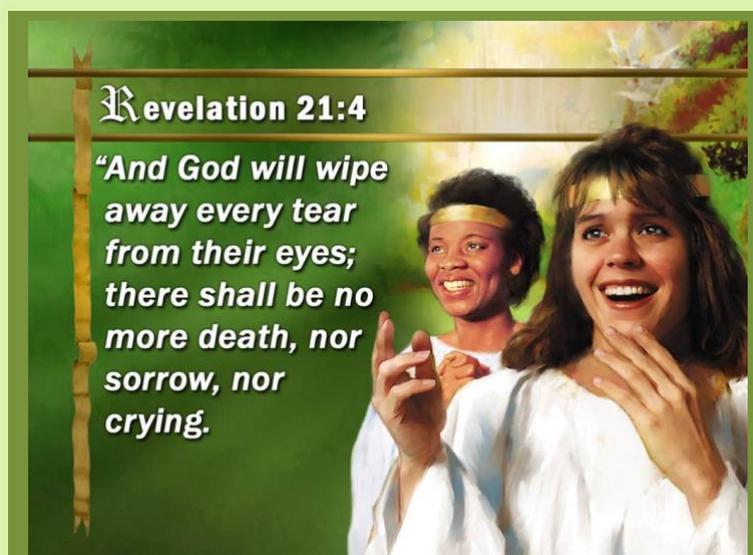


- * In chapter 12 we see war in heaven between Christ and Satan where Satan's earthly allies are identified. In *chapter 13*, we see a land beast and an earth beast. The well-known mark of the beast is shown along with the mysterious number of 666.
- * In chapter 16 we see a battle at a place called Armageddon.
- * And chapter 19 describes the magnificent and glorious Second Coming of Jesus. A promise that is repeatedly referred to throughout Revelation. This is indeed the blessed hope of all believers in Jesus. It is the completion of His work which He began at the cross by dying for the sins of lost humanity. Now at the Second Coming, He rewards His faithful people with the gift of everlasting life.



*The climactic prophecy
of the Second Coming of
Jesus Christ*

- * At the end of the book of Revelation, we see the establishment of the New Jerusalem on the new and re-created Earth. Christ is the eternal king and there is peace on earth forever.



2. Finding a blessing in Revelation for our world today

Revelation 1:3 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.

Question 6: What three activities are recommended to the reader of Revelation if we hope to be blessed by the book?

In these opening verses of Revelation, we see a significant spiritual application. Those who read the word hear its message and respond positively by taking it to heart will be significantly blessed. This blessing is not only for those who read it superficially but for those who listen to what it says and then apply the lessons to their lives.

On seven occasions in Revelation, it refers to a blessing being received by any who follow the instruction intended. This number 7 occurs regularly throughout this book and has a spiritual meaning and significance. We will be exploring this number's meaning in future lessons.

There is a reason given in this verse for accepting its message – *for the time of Jesus' Second Coming is near*. It was near for the seven churches and in a sense it is near for each one of us. We cannot be sure exactly when Jesus will return nor do we know the time of our death. We always need to be ready in the *now* time. To procrastinate may lead to an eternal spiritual loss.

We also see in this verse that Revelation claims to be able to foretell the future. As we continue our investigation, we will see that this is done in great detail on many occasions. The Old Testament is filled with future predictions about people, nations, the coming Messiah and the nation of Israel. It is interesting that much of the imagery of Revelation comes from the Old Testament writings.

3. An incredible prophecy from the Old Testament

We will see as we read through Revelation that the book of Daniel in the Old Testament is closely linked with the book of Revelation. Both books deal with end-time events in prophecy and the Second Coming of Jesus. In the second chapter of Daniel, king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a dream which he couldn't remember. Daniel, who was a war hostage from Judah was serving in the king's palace and was regarded as one of the wise men. As God's prophet, he was shown the king's dream and its significant meaning. It was a prophecy which outlined the rise and fall of nations from Daniel's time right down to the end of this present world and the setting up of God's eternal kingdom.

In the dream the king saw an awesome image made of different metals. It had a head of gold – a chest of silver – thighs of bronze – legs of iron and feet made of a mixture of iron and clay. Then the king saw a massive stone come flying through the air and crashing

into its feet causing the image to disintegrate. The great stone then filled the whole earth.

Question 7: What did the king see in his prophetic dream?

What is the meaning of the dream?

In *Daniel 2:38*, Daniel explained to the king – “*you are this head of gold*”.

Babylon was the world ruler at this time and identified with the head of gold.

In *Daniel 2:39* we read, “*But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours: then another, a third kingdom of bronze which shall rule over all the earth.*”

Here we see two more kingdoms in succession. These kingdoms in history were Medo-Persia, followed by Greece.

Daniel 2:40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron...

The fourth world empire was the kingdom of Rome. But notice that after this there would be no more world kingdoms.

Daniel 2:41 Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided...

Rome was divided into several kingdoms – some strong and some weak and it has continued to be this way up to our time. Europe has made many attempts to unite but has always met with failure.

Daniel 2:44,45 And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed ... the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain and its interpretation is sure.

The stone in the dream represents God's kingdom which will last forever

This is a remarkable example of Bible prophecy. Daniel was written around 600BC and predicts with detailed accuracy the rise and fall of world kingdoms - then shows how one nation would never rule this world again. This prediction has remained true right up to our day. With such accurate prediction, we can be certain that the conclusion of the prophecy which explains how the God of heaven will set up His kingdom will also be fulfilled.

We can see how the Bible is divinely inspired and that we can use it as a guide for our life. A wonderful eternal future awaits those who choose to be part of God's everlasting kingdom. Have you made that very important choice? Your secure eternity depends on it.

Question 8: What is the meaning of the stone in the vision?

The Second Coming of Jesus represents the stone in the vision and the setting up of His eternal kingdom



The accurately predicted prophecy of the rise and fall of nations in Daniel chapter 2.

4. The Second Coming of Jesus

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. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "He who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Question 9: How many will see Jesus return the second time?

The Second Coming is a major theme in Revelation. The great promise of the New Testament is that Jesus will one day return to earth in bodily form to be seen by the entire world. This mighty event brings to an end suffering, sickness and even death. No wonder the occasion is referred to as the “Blessed Hope.”

Those who approach the reading of Revelation with a humble and teachable spirit will be greatly rewarded in life with the assurance that the future of this planet is in the hands of a trustworthy, caring and loving God. Revelation will fill you with an assured, fulfilling future hope. You will be blessed as you continue studying the lessons to come.

SUMMARY

- *What did you enjoy most about this lesson?*
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- *Is there anything you didn't understand?* _____

- *Do you want to be ready for Jesus to come?* _____

