

End Times Bible Study

Overview of Revelation:

1:1 – Revelation = Apocalypse

- Apocalypse is a type of literature that is based upon Hebrew Scriptures
- It uses previously mentioned dreams or visions as clues to current/future events
- Reveals God's heavenly perspective on history in light of its final outcome

1:3 – Prophecy = A Word of God through a Prophet

- By calling it a prophecy, John is linking it to Old Testament prophets, bringing their previous messages/prophecies to their climax

1:4 – Encyclical = a circular letter addressed to 7 Churches in Asia Minor (Turkey)

- The number 7 is very important to the understanding of this book!

Revelation is not a book to be used to try and predict the end of times but rather it is an apocalypse, designed to be used by readers who will understand the symbolic references derived from Old Testament prophecy. It is a book/letter dealing largely with situations being dealt with in the 1st century churches.

Chapters 1-3: Introduction and Messages to the 7 Churches

- The 7 Churches are told of areas where they are missing the mark as well as reassuring them that in spite of upcoming persecution, all will end well. The rest of the book is a symbolic description of what to expect as well as a glimpse of how it will all get settled (Chapters 21-22)

Chapters 4-5: Visions of the Throne Room of God

- 7 Scrolls are mentioned (these refer to the scroll referred to in the book of Daniel)
- No one is able to open the scrolls and then John hears and then is shown one who can open the scrolls (Hears of a Lion but Sees a Lamb, as having been slain)
- This Lamb is able to open the scrolls and takes His place beside the Father on the Throne
- Important point: The Lamb, Jesus, is presented to them as already having had lived, died, resurrected and ascended. This is not a reference to future events!
- The Scrolls have already been opened!!!

Chapters 6-14: 3 Sets of 7 (Seals, Trumpets and Signs/Symbols)

- John uses 3 sets of 7 to tell repeatedly the same story only from different angles.

The 7 Seals (Ch. 6-7)

- Seals 1-4 War, Conquest, Famine and Death
- Seal 5 = the Martyring of Christians
- Seal 6 = the Day of the Lord
- Seal 7 = John "hears" 144,000/12,000 from each tribe of Israel but what John "sees" is a massive throng of people from every tribe and nation.

The 7 Trumpets (8-11)

- Trumpets 1-5: Hail, Blood, Poison Water, Darkness, Locusts John is retelling the Exodus story recounting the first 5 plagues
- Trumpet 6: Is the releasing of the 4 Horsemen referred to in the first 4 Seals
- Just as in the days of the Exodus when Pharaoh refused to repent based upon God's judgment alone, so it goes there as well.

- The 7th Scroll is now to be “eaten” by John and proclaim its message, just as was done in in Ezekiel.
- The 7 Scroll reveals 2 images: The Temple and the introduction of the 2 Witnesses (Lampstands)
- The Temple image represents the Church, described in the NT as Living stones built upon the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus Christ.
- The 2 Witnesses represent the Prophetic message of the Church, who will suffer persecution and even martyrdom but will also be vindicated and many come to the Lamb through their suffering.
- The Mission of the Church is affirmed: to imitate the loving sacrifice of the Lamb and it is through mercy shown through the followers of Jesus that will bring the nations to repentance.

The 7 Sign/Symbols (12-14)

- Cosmic Spiritual Battle between the Dragon (think serpent/evil in the Garden of Eden) and Woman and her Seed (think Jesus/Messiah and His followers)
- Dragon is defeated and cast to the earth, inspires hatred
- The Dragon is conquered by resistance, even if it kills them, they are vindicated
- Once the Dragon is cast to earth, 2 beasts immerge: from the Sea and from the Earth
- The 2 beasts represent Military Power that seeks to conquer by Violence and Economic Power that exalts itself as Divine.
- The “Mark of the Beast” has to do with one’s allegiance
- A “Mark” refers to Deuteronomy 6:4-8 or Shema. This was an oath of allegiance to be marked on their hands and foreheads. This is not literally a mark but rather symbolically to represent their Actions/Hands and Thoughts/Forehead.
- The “Mark of the Beast” is choosing to place one’s Allegiance in something other than God.
- In this specific instance, 666, refers to Nero Caesar and Beast which precisely corresponds to the alphabetically and numerically. This isn’t thinking exclusively of Nero but rather any ruler or nation that exalts their Military Power or Economic Security as a false god and demand Allegiance.
- In John day he would have been thinking historically of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.
- Chapter 14: the Lamb’s Army and Final Justice...this refers to the clear choice that is being presented by the people of God into all the world.

The 7 Bowls (15-16)

- The 7 Bowls represent 7 Judgments
- Bowls 1-5 correspond to the plagues visited on Egypt before the Exodus
- Bowl 6 is the Battle of Armageddon
- The 7th Bowl is the 4th depiction of the Day of the Lord

The Fall of Babylon (17-18)

- Harlot, riding a Dragon, Babylon
- Babylon rejects God and clings to Military & Economic Power
- This pattern is repeated throughout history: Babylon, Tyre, Edom, Greece, Rome
- This a portrait of history again and again until the Day of the Lord

The Final Battle I (19-20)

- John takes us back to the 6th Bowl, Armageddon
- Jesus appears covered with blood, brings justice
- Armageddon will not be a blood bath

The Martyrs are Vindicated (20:1-7)

- Martyrs come back to life and reign with Christ for 1000 years
- This could be Christ Return, then 1000 year Reign, then Final Judgment OR
- 1000 year Reign is present day time when Christ-followers Reign and the Battles are 2 different ways of viewing Jesus' return

The Final Battle II (20:8-15)

- The Beast is cast out along with all who belong to him.

The Marriage of Heaven and Earth (21-22)

- Different Pictures of the reality:
- Bride and Bridegroom
- A New Heavens and Earth
- A New Garden of Eden
- A New Jerusalem
- Humans are restored to their original position of Rulers/Priests
- No Temple is needed by the Father & Lamb are through the entire new creation
- All is restored, no sin, no death, no tears
- The original story from Genesis finds its ending!

Resources for Further Study:

- Bibleproject.com This is a website that features videos and simple explanations for the Books of the Bible as well as other biblical subjects.
- The Faith Once For All, Dr. Jack Cottrell, pg. 459-503
- The New Testament In Its World, An Introduction To The History, Literature, And Theology Of The First Century Christians, N.T Wright and Michael F. Bird, pgs. 808-847