

Revelation

*Part Thirty-One
Revelation 1-11 Survey
(Revelation 1-11)*

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org
www.branchofhope.org
4/3/2022*

Revelation

*Part Thirty-One
Revelation 1-11 Survey
(Revelation 1-11)*

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, ² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. 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 (Revelation 1:1-3).

Introduction

As a ten-year-old, my parents decided it was time to take a cross-country trip from Los Angeles to New York. My two sisters and I in the back seat we left Southern California for the first time (at least for me). I was shocked at the amount of land that didn't have buildings and concrete on it. I guess I figured the whole country was urban.

Driving through one of the midwestern states, I noticed what appeared to be huge fields of weeds, just growing wild. I asked my dad what I was looking at. He said it was wheat, planted by farmers. But it all appeared so unstructured, as if the farmers had no rhyme or reason in their planting. But as our car pulled alongside of the fields, I began to see clearly planted rows.

From one perspective the fields appeared random and difficult to discern any order. But from another perspective the fields made all the sense in the world. I have found this principle true in the reading of Scripture. Seeking to properly read Scripture from a false perspective makes it appear random and, at times, senseless.

This is a very common problem the world has in its handling of Scripture. They'll grab a verse from here or there, wrench it out of its context, then critique it as if it were just a random field of senseless weeds.

Or perhaps the Scriptures are approached like the six blind men who encounter an elephant for the first time: one touches the elephant's side

and proclaims him to be a wall. The second touches his trunk and says he's a snake. The third touches his tusk and says it's a spear. The fourth touches it's long leg and says he's a tree. The fifth touches it's ear and says he's a fan. Finally, the sixth touches his tail and says he's a rope. At some point their eyes need to be opened (even metaphorically) that they might see the big picture, in order to properly assess the portion of the elephant that is before them.

We need this same approach as we read the Scriptures. In order to properly grasp smaller portions of the text, we need to back up and get a birds-eye-view. Sometimes we fly at 35,000 feet. Sometimes we fly at the altitude of a crop-duster. Sometimes we place our hands directly in the dirt.

There may not be a book in the Bible where this approach is more critical than Revelation. It was my personal experience that I had my hands deep in the weeds of Revelation, only to look up and realize I was in the wrong field entirely. In order to help us avoid such a pickle, I think it is important to fire up the jets to 35,000 feet, that we might keep things in perspective.

Having finished chapter eleven, we are halfway through Revelation. What has happened? What have we learned?

Chapter One

In chapter one the original readers are introduced to the startling prophecy that something very severe would **"soon take place"** (**Revelation 1:1**). A guiding principle (at least in terms of 'when will these things be') given at the onset of the book is that the **"time is near"** (**Revelation 1:3**). For many readers of this book, this is all but ignored or twisted beyond recognition. In order for us to remain in the correct field, we must allow **"soon"** to mean what it naturally means.

In the outline given in chapter one (Revelation 1:19), the first chapter amounts to the first third of the book. John, who at least in some sense, is their companion in **"the tribulation"** (**Revelation 1:9**) is instructed to write to seven churches in Asia Minor. As we'll see, these churches are in danger of corruption (either inward compromise or outward persecution) and things are going to get hotter.

Prior to instructions on how to engage in the difficulties which will beset them (here is a lesson for us all), they are apprised of some glorious

truths. Jesus Christ, **“the ruler over the kings of the earth”** loves them and has **“washed”** them **“in His own blood”** (Revelation 1:5).

And just in case the power of this Savior is underestimated, John is given a vision (the only description of Christ we find in the New Testament) which is so powerfully glorious that John falls at **“His feet as dead”** (Revelation 1:17). Of all the angelic beings and demonic monsters John encounters in Revelation, it is only the vision of Christ that has this effect. How wonderful it must have been for John to hear the sweet words of Christ, **“Do not be afraid”** (Revelation 1:18).

Chapters Two and Three

The second portion of the outline given speaks to the particular issues of the seven churches receiving the Revelation. Like all others books in the Bible, there is application to any church or Christian finding themselves in similar situations. Generally speaking, these seven churches are given counsel on how to conduct their lives and ministries. This is accompanied by commendation, a warning, a call to persevere or overcome, along with a promise given to those who remain faithful.

Ephesus was a hard-working church that had an eye out for bad teaching. But they had **“left [their] first love”** (Revelation 2:4).

Smyrna was a church in the midst difficulty and poverty. They would undergo more difficulty, but Jesus wanted them to know the temporary nature of it.

Pergamos was a church in danger of compromise. The sexual immorality of their culture was making headway into the church via the twisting of Scripture.

Thyatira, similar to Pergamos, was a church vulnerable to the sexual immorality of their culture. The church had become idolatrous to the point of boasting in the knowledge of the **“depths of Satan”** (Revelation 2:24).

Sardis was a church hanging on by a thread. They were apparently a very popular church, they had a reputation for being alive **“but [they were] dead”** (Revelation 3:1). A big building and a lot of hoopla, but no salt.

Philadelphia was a faithful church. They had **“a little strength”** (Revelation 3:8), but they kept the word of God and would not deny the name of Christ.

Laodicea was a tepid church. They grew comfortable walking the middle of the road. They had grown ignorant of their own sin and need for

Christ. The enemy didn't need to tempt nor persecute them, just let them remain in their indifferent slumber.

Chapters Four through Eleven

After a description of the glorified Christ and warnings for the churches to persevere and overcome amid soon-coming trials, the churches are given a prophecy of that which will soon take place. This prophecy contains the judgment of the church's detractors (Jerusalem and Rome), whereby God will keep His promise to **"bless those who bless...and curse those who curse"** (Genesis 12:3) His covenant people.

In 1866, S. J. Stone, in his great hymn, *The Church's One Foundation*, put it well:

**The Church shall never perish.
Her dear Lord to defend,
to guide, sustain, and cherish,
is with her to the end.
Tho' there be those that hate her
and strive to see her fail,
against both foe and traitor
she ever shall prevail.**

In chapter four, John is called to give this prophecy from the perspective of heaven. He, and he alone (not the rapture), hears the words, **"Come up here, and I will show you the things which must take place after this"** (Revelation 4:1). In order to buttress the confidence of mostly weak and smoldering churches, the throne room of heaven becomes the focus of our attention. This display of the heavenly host (twenty-four elders, lightnings and thunderings, sea of glass, daunting living creatures worshipping giving glory to the one upon the throne should make the threats of this world grow strangely dim.

Sixty-two times the word **"throne"** is used in the New Testament. Forty-seven of those are in Revelation. Seventeen of those are in chapters four and five. There is to be no ambivalence in the minds of Christians regarding who determines the course of history. John is seeing, and recording, **"what must take place."** The **"must"** *dei* in Greek is a strong

word. It means *necessary*. The world is not Satan's kingdom. It is not random.

The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand...²⁷ For the Lord of hosts has purposed, And who will annul *it*? His hand *is* stretched out, And who will turn it back" (Isaiah 14:24, 27).

Chapter four focuses on God, the Creator, chapter five on Christ the redeemer. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is able to open this introduced scroll. The scroll is revealing Christ's righteous, authoritative and active role in the course of history, especially as it pertains to judicial and redemptive events that will soon take place (Revelation 1:1, 3).

It is in chapter five that Jesus is referred to as the "**Lion of the tribe of Judah**" (Revelation 5:5) yet described as "**a Lamb as though it had been slain**" (Revelation 5:6). We should not lose sight of either of these images. There have been times in history where the image of the Lion so prevails that the church became a violent war-machine (think, Holy Roman Empire). Other times, the Lamb so prevails that the church becomes flimsy and dainty, marked by unbecoming delicacy and overrefinement.

With the powerful, heavenly symphony of worship still looming, chapters six and seven introduce the opening of the seven seals which held the scroll shut. Each seal is a preview of the judgment which would fall upon Jerusalem, thus ending the Old Covenant and beginning the New. B.C. Would now become A.D.

In all of this, God would seal His own from that which would befall the temple and all who chose the temple over Christ. After this, the final seal is opened, and the trumpets of judgment are sounded in chapters eight through eleven. It is here that we see the undeniable and unquenchable witness of the truth, which appears to die, revived.

Chapter eleven crescendos with the glorious words,

The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15)!

The King has come, and we are to make it known. It is the task of the church to have beautiful feet, preaching **“the gospel of peace” (Romans 10:15)**. We ought to handle such a sacred message with humble hearts. But there is also a confidence that we should have. We are to preach the Lion and the Lamb, for **“the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple.”** This type of language would convey to the Jewish reader the notion of sure victory (whether the ark in crossing the Jordan or defeating Jericho) due to the presence of God in their midst.

We are given that promise, in a deeper sense, in the New Covenant. The sure victory, the zeal of the Lord, accomplishes all of these great promises because the power of Christ is present (Matthew 28:18-20), the power of His Spirit is present (John 14:16-18), the power of the Gospel is present (Romans 1:16), as is the power of prayer (Matthew 21:21, 22).

The seven trumpets, now completed, may elicit the question: How can this be? How can there be such a glorious victory? John will parenthetically answer that question in chapter twelve. We engage that in our next meeting.

Questions for Study

1. How can a proper perspective or context alter our understanding of Scripture? Can you give examples (pages 2, 3)?
2. What appears to be the emphasis of the first chapter of Revelation? Why do you suppose that is (pages 3, 4)?
3. Review and discuss the trials, temptations and difficulties of the churches in chapters two and three. How do you see similar issues in today's churches (pages 4, 5)?
4. Where does Revelation bring us in chapters four and five, and why (pages 4-6)?
5. Discuss the scroll and its seals. What do these things mean? To whom do they apply and why (page 6)?
6. What are the implications of Revelation 11:15 and what should this spur us to do and be (pages 6, 7)?