

Session 1 Introduction and Overview of the Book of Revelation

For *additional study material pertaining to this session see MikeBickle.org

I. THE BOOK OF REVELATION: JESUS' END-TIME BATTLE PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

- A. The book of Revelation reveals the glory of Jesus (Rev. 1:1) and His plan to transition the earth to the age-to-come. The book is called the *revelation of Jesus* because it reveals His heart, power, and leadership in preparing the nations for God's glory. One of the Father's purposes in giving this book to the Church is to reveal the beauty of Jesus. It is secondarily a book about "events" in the end times. The main theme is not God's plan, but the glory of the Man behind the plan.

¹The 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.... (Rev. 1:1)

- B. The main theme in God's plan in the book of Revelation is Jesus' return to earth as king to rule all the nations (Rev. 1:7). His "royal procession" back to the earth will be seen by every person.

⁷Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him... (Rev. 1:7)

- C. If we read Revelation correctly, it causes us to love Jesus and trust His leadership, as we see His dramatic plans in the end times. His wise and loving plans combine God's sovereignty (in manifesting love and righteousness), human free will, and satanic rage, resulting in the end-time harvest of souls and a victorious Church, without violating justice or man's free will. The Lord's plan is for an environment to exist to allow both love and wickedness to come to full expression.

- D. The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if the things that Paul said were true (Acts 17:10-11). I do not ask anyone to accept my views; rather, I urge you to think for yourself. Truth is never hurt by scrutiny, but rather it is confirmed. You must boldly challenge all ideas that you hear. I urge you to refuse any teaching that you do not clearly see with your eyes in your Bible.

¹¹These were more fair-minded...in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

- E. When speaking about Scripture, people may speak from one of three positions. It is important to make clear which position we are speaking from. We are to boldly proclaim biblical convictions, carefully qualify our informed opinions, and rarely speak about our personal theories.

- F. The most controversial point in this study is found in my belief that the Church will go through the Tribulation (in great victory and power). This differs from the popular pretribulation rapture view that teaches that the Church will be raptured at any minute and miss the end-time revival and crisis. Yes, the Bible teaches that the Church will be raptured. The issue is one of timing.

- G. I believe that the Church will be raptured at the end of the Tribulation, not at its beginning. I greatly honor the godliness and wisdom of many who hold the pretribulation rapture view, but I see it as a mistake that will leave many unprepared. We can disagree in a spirit of meekness without a spirit of debate. The reality of the Tribulation is too weighty to reduce it to arguments.

- H. Revelation gives us more information on the end times than any other book in Scripture. It was written to help God's people participate in the end-time drama that shifts history to the age-to-come and endure persecution and temptation so as to overcome in victory (Rev. 12:11; 15:2).
- I. Revelation is the only book in the Bible in which God promises a special blessing to anyone who reads or hears it (Rev. 1:3), but issues a grave warning to any who add to or take from it (Rev. 22:18-19).
³*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy... (Rev. 1:3)*
- J. Revelation was written to be understood by God's people, even the poor and uneducated. There is a common lie must be exposed—that this book cannot be understood except by scholars.
- K. *Unique dynamics* will exist in the generation Jesus returns including the greatest measure of unity, purity and power in the Church, in contrast to the greatest measure of sin and oppression in the nations, which will be confronted by the greatest measure of God's judgment to remove all that hinders love. Jesus desires deep partnership with the Body of Christ in His work.
- L. Jesus will judge wickedness and oppression to remove all that hinders love (Rev. 19:2). The Antichrist and the kings of the earth will declare war against Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19; cf. Ps. 2:2). Jesus will war against them (Rev. 19:11). This will be the most violent time in history.
¹¹*...in righteousness He [Jesus] judges and makes war...*¹⁵*He should strike the nations...*
¹⁹*I saw the beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev. 19:11–19)*
- M. Jesus' judgments in the Great Tribulation do not happen *to* God's people as helpless victims of Satan, but are released *through* them as they partner with His sovereign leadership.
- N. As the book of Acts describes the power of the Spirit released through the early church, so the book of Revelation describes the power of the Spirit to be released through the end-time church. I refer to Revelation as the “*end-time book of Acts*” and a “*canonized prayer manual*” that informs the Church of various ways in which Jesus will manifest His power in relationship to the prayers of the whole Body of Christ during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 8:1-6).
- O. As Moses participated in prayer under the Lord's leadership in releasing His judgments on Pharaoh (Ex. 7-12), so the end-time church will participate in prayer under Jesus' leadership as He releases the Great Tribulation judgments on the Antichrist (Rev. 6-19).
- P. The type of miracles and judgments seen in the books of Exodus and Acts will be multiplied and released worldwide through prayer in the Tribulation. The greatest demonstrations of power in history will be released by the praying Church operating in unity under Jesus' leadership.
¹⁸*I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades [authority of hell] shall not prevail against it.* ¹⁹*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt. 16:18-19)*
¹²*“...the works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do...” (Jn. 14:12)*

II. THE SYMBOLS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A. There are seven main symbols in the book of Revelation. The events and numbers in Revelation are to be taken in their plain meaning (literal) unless the passage clearly indicates that it is symbolic (Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9, 15-18, etc.).
- B. **Dragon:** symbolic of Satan (Rev. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4; 16:13; 20:2)
- C. **First Beast:** symbolic of the Antichrist (Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10)
- D. **Another Beast:** symbolic of the False Prophet called “another Beast” just once (Rev. 13:11)
- E. **Seven heads:** seven empires from history that persecuted Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, revived Roman Empire of Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16)
- F. **Ten Horns:** represent a ten-nation confederation that serves the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13)
- G. **Harlot Babylon:** points to a demonically inspired religious and economic system (Rev. 17-18)
- H. **Woman with a Male-child (Jesus):** the faithful remnant of Israel through history (Rev. 12)

III. STRUCTURE OF REVELATION: 4 PARTS

- A. There are 4 parts in the structure of the book of Revelation with the fourth part being the largest consisting of 5 chronological sections in which the events occur in sequential order.
- B. **Part 1: John’s calling to prophesy about the end times (Rev. 1).** John gave truths about Jesus’ majesty that formed the way he prophesied about the end times. These truths are also to equip us.
- C. **Part 2: Jesus gave 7 letters to the churches (Rev. 2-3).** The instructions Jesus gave to these churches about overcoming sin also give insight into what the end-time church must overcome.
- D. **Part 3: Jesus takes the scroll (Rev. 4-5).** Contains the earth’s title deed and His plan to cleanse it. Jesus takes a 7-sealed scroll from the Father. The scroll represents the **title deed** of the earth and the **battle plan** to judge, cleanse, and prepare the nations for Jesus’ rule over all the earth, while bringing the Church to a mature Bride who partners with Him in the plan (Rev 6-22).
- E. **Part 4: Jesus’ battle plan (Rev. 6-22).** Includes Great Tribulation judgments against the Antichrist. Jesus reveals His main storyline of love to cleanse the earth of evil. His battle plan is seen in **5 chronological sections** describing the main storyline of the 21 judgment events (7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls) that are released on the Antichrist’s empire in sequential order.
- F. After each chronological section, an angel explains to John why the events just described are necessary. The angelic explanations function as a parenthesis that puts the storyline on “pause.” They answer questions arising from the chronological sections: Why is God’s wrath so severe? What will happen to the saints? Angels explain to John *what happens to God’s people* including what Jesus will do to *help them*, and what the Antichrist will do to *persecute them*.

IV. FIVE CHRONOLOGICAL SECTIONS (REV. 6-22)

- A. **Chronological Section #1 (Rev. 6).** The seal judgments against the kingdom of darkness. Angelic Explanation #1 (Rev. 7). We receive **protection** from judgments and falling away.
- B. **Chronological Section #2 (Rev. 8-9).** The **trumpet judgments** against the Antichrist's empire. Angelic Explanation #2 (Rev. 10-11). We receive **direction** by increased prophetic ministry.
- C. **Chronological Section #3 (Rev. 11:15-19).** Jesus' **second coming** royal procession and the rapture leading to Jesus replacing all the kings and top governmental leaders on earth. Angelic Explanation #3 (Rev. 12-14)—the Antichrist's violent **confrontation** with the saints deserves Jesus' judgment and the replacement of all his evil governments.
1. At the 7th and last trumpet (1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7), Jesus will rapture the Church and travel across the sky in a royal procession so that every eye will see Him (Rev. 1:7).
⁷Behold, 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. (Rev. 1:7)
 2. After this, Jesus will enter Jerusalem and stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4).
- D. **Chronological Section #4 (Rev. 15-16).** **Bowl judgments** destroy evil infrastructures in society. Angelic Explanation #4 (Rev. 17-18). The **seduction** of Babylon's evil religion will permeate and infiltrate all the structures of society, requiring that Babylon be totally destroyed.
- E. **Chronological Section #5 (Rev. 19-20).** Jesus' **triumphal entry** into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21:8). Angelic Explanation #5 (Rev. 21-22). The **restoration** of all things, Acts 3:21, (Rev. 21:9-22:5).
¹¹I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns... ¹⁵Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them... ¹⁶And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS... ¹⁹I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him... ²⁰Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet...these two were cast alive into the lake of fire... ²¹The rest were killed with the sword... ^{20:1}Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of...Satan, and bound him for a thousand years³...so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished...⁴I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev. 19:11-20:4)

V. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (E.G., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you? Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer? Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of? How will you seek to gain it?
4. Identify one point in this session that needs to be emphasized to the larger Body of Christ? Why?