

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. John, the Apostle, the author of the Gospel of John and the 3 epistles, wrote the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Early church tradition unanimously identifies John the apostle as the author. He received the revelation at Patmos, a little Greek island in the Aegean Sea, off the southwest coast of current-day Turkey.
1. John was being held as a prisoner here. God sees you and His visitation is not limited by your circumstances.
 2. Revelation was probably written in the last decade of the first century (A.D. 94-96) during the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96)
 - (1) Some, mainly those who hold to the Preterist view, claim an earlier date, when Nero was Emperor (54-68 AD). They do this to accommodate their belief that the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled by 70 AD.
 - (2) The view of the early church favors the later date.
 - b. The immediate recipients of the revelation are the seven churches mentioned in Rev. 1-3. They are in the region known as Asia Minor (modern day Turkey).
 - (1) None of these cities exist now, except Smyrna, the ancient city, now known as Izmir, which is in Turkey.
- B. There are several keys to understanding this beautiful book. The Book of Revelation is...
1. The revealing of Jesus Christ.
 2. Not difficult to understand.
 3. Literal. It records actual facts and events that will take place.
 4. Mostly about future events.

II. KEY #1: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS THE REVEALING OF JESUS CHRIST

Rev 1:1-3 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. (NKJV)

- A. Keep the main thing the main thing. If we approach the book looking for something else, we will miss the main thing: The unveiling of the beauty of Jesus Christ.
- B. God's primary purpose in the book is to reveal the heart and beauty of Jesus Christ. It is secondarily a book about the brilliant leadership of Jesus in the End Times to purify the church, bring in the harvest, and to replace all the evil governments on the earth as He drives Satan off the planet.

- C. The Book of Revelation is called the “revelation of Jesus” because it reveals His heart, power and leadership in preparing the nations for God’s glory. The first word in the original Greek , *apokalupsis* means “an uncovering,” “an unveiling.” In the New Testament, it describes the unveiling of spiritual truth.
1. There are 30 distinct aspects of Jesus in Rev. 1-3. It is the most complete picture of Jesus in the Bible. Revelation reveals His glory in a way not yet previously revealed in Scripture. This book is a great gift from Him to us.
 2. All the Scriptures testify of Jesus, but Revelations brings all of these together (King, Lion, Lamb, Bridegroom). Moses: holiness of God, David/Solomon: beautiful/enjoyable God, Isaiah: the Suffering Servant, Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels: God/Man, Epistles: Shepherd)
And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:27)
 3. The main theme of Revelation is Jesus’ return to the earth to rule all the nations (Rev. 11:15; 19:15, 21).
Rev 1:7 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.
- D. If we do not understand the book of Revelation, then we do not have a complete understanding of who Jesus is and what He is really about.
1. There are over 150 chapters in the Bible about the subject of the End Times, of what Jesus will do in culminating natural history. There are 89 chapters in the four Gospels, but there are over 150 chapters about the ministry of Jesus in leading history. The Gospel is the story of Jesus accomplishing redemption and laying out the principles and teachings of the kingdom.
 2. It is the same Jesus leading in natural history in the End Times to bring the earth to the place where the great harvest comes forth and the Church is purified. We cannot take these 150 chapters and say that they are all symbolic. Nor can we say, “Praise God we’re gone anyway, so it doesn’t really matter.” It is critical that every believer understand and study Jesus’ leadership of global history coming to a culmination.
 3. The study of the book of Revelation is exciting and wonderful!
 4. The book must be read with an open mind. We can't approach it as a salad bar and just pick and choose which parts of God that we like. God is Father, Jesus is Bridegroom. He is also the Judge and King.

III. KEY #2: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS NOT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND

- A. The revelation is for anyone who desires to understand Jesus better. It has been opened, revealed to us. The book of Revelation is meant to be understood by ordinary people. It is meant to be understood plainly and simply.

1. The study of the End Times is not an optional subject just for the overly curious or the scholars, but it is for everyone. Because of the reputation that the book of Revelation has, some Christians are afraid to read it and do not expect to understand it for themselves.
 2. It's the opposite of how people sometimes approach the book: as a mysterious, unknowable book. The book is very clear if we will let it speak for itself.
 3. Most of the hearers of the book of Revelation through out history were uneducated. The basic truths of the Word of God are simple and can be understood by anyone. When something is deep, it does not mean that it needs to be confusing. There is often a profound simplicity to God's wisdom.
- B. There is a blessing that is promised to those who read, hear, and keep the words of the prophesy. If you will study it and live it out, you will find great blessing in the Lord.
- Rev 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.***

1. God wants us to keep the things that are written in it. If we don't understand the book, then we will not be able to obey it.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

IV. KEY #3: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS LITERAL

- A. It records actual facts and events that will take place in the near future.
1. Some believe that the book of Revelation, especially all the End Time prophecies are symbolic and you can't understand it anyways and everyone disagrees on what the symbols mean.
 2. Whenever something is meant to be interpreted symbolically, John clearly indicates it (Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9). Many of the symbols found in Revelation are interpreted in the context of the book itself or they are clearly interpreted in other parts of Scripture. E.g. Daniel used some of the same symbols as John (Dan. 7:3-7, 12, 17; 8:4).
 3. When you take the Word of God literally and not allegorically (symbolically, metaphorically), then there is a growing confidence in understanding God's Word. Diligence is rewarded with increased understanding and we are motivated to study this book more.
- Matthew 13:12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.***
4. Symbolic interpretation of Scripture was common for the last 2000 years because of uncertainty about the prophetic place of Israel in God's purpose. Replacement theology that denies Israel's place in God's purpose was common.
 - a. For 2000 years, the nation of Israel did not exist, so Bible Scholars had to explain what most of the Bible was about, especially some of the prophecies that were not fulfilled yet.

- b. One solution was to take many parts of the Bible symbolically. This view would say that God didn't really mean that He would give physical the land to Abraham and his descendants, the Jewish people, forever. God meant it symbolically as the Church living in heaven forever. Some people say wrongly that the Church replaces Israel (Matt. 25:31-32; Jer. 3:17; Rom. 11:1-2; 11:25-29; Gen. 17:7-8; Zech. 14:2; Joel 3:1).

Isaiah 11:11-12 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea. ¹² He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth (c.f. Isa. 43:5-7; 66:8; Jer. 16:14-15; 29:14; 30:3; 32:37; Eze. 11:16-17; 28:25-26; Amos 9:11-15)

- c. However, after Israel became a nation in 1948, people began to see the Scriptures differently. God brought them back into the land literally as He said He would. The stage is set for the other prophecies to be fulfilled.
5. Out of 404 verses in the book of Revelation, there are 3-400 allusions to the Old Testament. It is a treasure trove of revelation

V. KEY #4: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS MOSTLY ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS

Rev. 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

- A. The revelation is given to us to prepare us for the future. The Bible is a prophetic Word. Therefore, it is relevant for us today.
1. It is not just about the principles of good and evil in the world. It speaks of specific people, places, and events in the End Times.
 2. Some believe that the book of Revelation is not about the future, but mostly about events in the past that have already occurred. This view removes the prophetic element for the Church in the End Times.
- a. Some scholars believe that the book of Revelation is all about events in the first century AD, in the Roman Empire, during the time of the Emperor Nero, and nothing more (the Preterist view), so the book does not directly apply to the times in which we live.
- (1) Most of the prophecies were not fulfilled in the times of Nero. This view either stretches the prophecies to make it fit into Nero's time or deny the prophetic nature of the Word of God altogether. This view conflicts with the claims of the book to be prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19).
 - (2) The nature of prophetic revelation is that there are things that are relevant to the time of hearing even if the ultimate fulfillment is in the future. Nero was a foreshadowing of the future Antichrist.

3. Some believe that we are already gone anyways before these events (Pre-tribulation Rapture view), so it does not really matter. This view sees John having the spiritual experience (“Come up here”) in Rev. 4:1 as the rapture of the Church.
 - a. This view basically says that the events described in the book of Revelation are so horrible that some see the only solution is escaping this by leaving the planet in a rapture.
 - (1) There are no Scriptures that support this view directly. The Church is raptured, but it happens at Jesus’ Second Coming (1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Matt. 24:29-31). Every passage that talks about the rapture places it at the Second Coming, with the Last (7th) trumpet.
 - b. We must change our paradigm from seeing ourselves as victims who seek to escape the Great Tribulation to being significant participants with Jesus in releasing the Great Tribulation on the powers of darkness.
 - (1) Christianity is not about escaping the trouble, but God taking us through it victoriously. Jesus did not try to escape the cross, but went through it.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (trouble, affliction, anguish, distresses, persecution); but be of good cheer (be bold, take heart), I have overcome the world.
 - c. Just like Moses released the ten plagues on Pharaoh, so the book of Revelation depicts the praying Church releasing God’s judgments on the Antichrist as the end-time Pharaoh.

From a letter written by Corrie Ten Boom, a Nazi Concentration Camp survivor, and lifelong missionary, in 1974 (David Pawson, pg. 199, When Jesus Returns):

I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China, the Christians were told, "Don't worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated – raptured." Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, "We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes – to stand and not faint." I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation. Since I have already gone through prison for Jesus' sake, and since I met the Bishop in China, now every time I read a good Bible text I think, "Hey, I can use that in the time of tribulation." Then I write it down and learn it by heart.

- d. The book of Revelation is about Jesus returning to take leadership of the earth in deep partnership with the end-time praying Church. It is the End Time Book of Acts. This is God’s action plan and He wants us to be equipped for what lies just ahead of us in history.
 - (1) The prepared prophetic Church alone will have the answer to keep many from being offended at God in the End Times (Matt. 24:10). We must be able to answer why a God of love would allow and even orchestrate some of the events in the Great Tribulation. The purpose of God's judgments is to remove all that hinders love so that multitudes would be saved and grow mature in love.

Matt. 24:10-14 And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another.¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- B. The book of Revelation is a worship and prayer manual to prepare the church in the End Times. It is vital that we read, understand and obey (keep) the things written in this book. What is Jesus going to do and how do I get on His side so I can partner with Him?
1. We are not reading about things that are going to happen to us, these are things that are going to happen through us! This book is very relevant to us. The main point of the book of Revelation is that the church needs to partner with Jesus in releasing God's judgment on the Antichrist's evil empire.

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8)

2. Jesus will prepare His church to bring a Great Harvest of souls to God.
A great multitude...of all nations...and tongues standing before the Throne... (Rev. 7:9)
3. It is the events of the End Times that produces the praying Bride in complete agreement with the Holy Spirit. The book of Revelation and the End Time events is the story line of how the Bride enters into her destiny as the bride (Joel 2:13-14). Everything that hinders love will be removed.

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8; cf. 8:3-5)

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"... (Rev. 22:17)