

We're going to read the Book of Revelation. Revelation is the only book in the Bible that directly attaches a specific blessing to reading it. Not just to owning it, not just to talking about it, but to reading, hearing, and keeping what it says:

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 1:3)

God is faithful—He doesn't promise blessings as a gimmick. He promises them because He intends to meet His people through His Word.

And it's strange, isn't it, that this is also one of the most avoided books—even by people who have spent years in the Bible. Some avoid it because there are different viewpoints; others avoid it because the imagery feels intimidating. But here's something worth saying plainly: Revelation is not just for experts—it's actually a tremendous book for all believers. Why? Because it puts Jesus at the center, it shows God reigning over history, and it makes clear that evil has an expiration date.

Key Verse

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. (Revelation 22:3)

Key Truth

God's sovereign plan spans the future and stretches into eternity. Regardless of how dark or troubling life's headlines may seem, those whose names are inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life possess the absolute assurance of ultimate victory and everlasting joy in Christ.

Overview

Written during his exile on the Roman prison island of Patmos, Revelation captures a profound vision given to the Apostle John. It unveils the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ, the final judgment of evil, and the eternal glory of God's kingdom. Originally written to encourage persecuted believers, the book reassures the church that Christ will return, defeat Satan, eradicate evil, and establish a new heaven and earth.

Jesus Himself provides the clear, three-part structural outline for the entire book in Revelation 1:19: *"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."* To follow any other interpretative approach is to presume we know more about this book's structure than Christ does. This divine blueprint unfolds across the chapters as follows:

1. *"The things which you have seen"* (Revelation 1:1–20) — The initial, awe-inspiring vision of the glorified and resurrected Christ standing among the lampstands.
2. *"The things which are"* (Revelation 2:1–3:22) — The personal, direct letters addressing the spiritual realities of the seven actual historical churches in Asia Minor.
3. *"The things which will take place after this"* (Revelation 4:1–22:21) — The prophetic future visions detailing cosmic judgment, Christ's return, and the eternal state.

The narrative details of this outline unfold through three major thematic movements:

- Pastoral Warnings (Chapters 2–3): Letters to seven actual churches, warning them of spiritual compromise, preparing them for upcoming tribulation, and calling them to remain steadfast.
- Cosmic Warfare (Chapters 4–20): Vivid, imagery¹ depicting the climactic battle between God's kingdom and the forces of darkness, culminating in the final defeat of Satan and evil. This pivotal section prophetically documents the ultimate fulfillment of Daniel's seventieth week.
- Glorious Restoration (Chapters 21–22): The breathtaking final chapters detailing Christ's triumphant return, the permanent defeat of death, and the descent of the New Jerusalem to a renewed creation.

Ultimately, Revelation teaches that God is absolutely sovereign over human history. Those who remain faithful through trials are promised a glorious, eternal inheritance: to reign with Christ forever.

Background

One small but important point right up front: the title is singular—Revelation, not Revelations. It's one unveiling: the unveiling of Jesus Christ. The Greek word behind it carries the idea of an unveiling—pulling back the curtain so you can see what is real, what is coming, and Who is Lord over it all.

Revelation isn't just a collection of strange visions. It's also a "cover letter" to seven real churches in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. And what's remarkable is that these include seven messages from Jesus Himself—direct words to His churches.

That should make us stop and ask: Why these seven? Why not Jerusalem? Why not Rome? Why not Corinth? That question is worth wrestling with, because the answer opens up some deep and fascinating discoveries about how Jesus evaluates His church—then and now.

Think of it like this:

- The Old Testament points forward: Behold, He is coming.
- The Gospels declare: Behold, He died and rose again.
- Acts demonstrates: Behold, He lives and works through His church.
- The Epistles teach: Behold, He saves and sanctifies.
- Revelation reveals: Behold, He reigns.

This book is not meant to distract you from Jesus—it is meant to fix your eyes on Him.

¹ While the imagery in Revelation can often seem fantastical, it is helpful to remember that John was a first-century man attempting to describe both spiritual and physical events of a far-future era. For example, the fastest vehicle John had ever witnessed was likely a Roman chariot. When Christ revealed visions of modern-era warfare, John had to describe highly advanced technology—such as jet fighter aircraft and other military equipment—using only the limited vocabulary and experience of his first-century world.

The first sentence is astonishing

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him...” (Revelation 1:1)

Did you catch that? The Father gives this unveiling to the Son to show His servants what must take place. That reality alone should cause us to pause. It reminds us that this book is not human speculation—it is a divine disclosure from an eternal God who has already witnessed these events unfold.

To those of us living within the limits of linear time, these events lie in the future. But to eternal God, who dwells outside the dimensions of space and time, these events are "future history." They are already fully realized because He is already there.

And it’s “signified”—communicated through signs. The book is loaded with symbols, but here’s the key: the Bible explains the Bible. Many of Revelation’s symbols are defined elsewhere in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. The reason Revelation can feel “strange” is often because we haven’t spent enough time absorbing the language and imagery God has already used.

If you take nothing else from this introduction, take this: be a Berean.

Acts says the Bereans were “*more fair-minded*” because they received the Word with readiness and then searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so (Acts 17:11). In other words: don’t anchor yourself to a teacher’s or author’s opinion—anchor yourself to the Word of God. Do your homework. Wrestle with the text. Ask the Lord for understanding. Let Scripture interpret Scripture.

This book will stretch you. It will confront assumptions. It will force you to read carefully. But it will also strengthen your faith, because it keeps pulling you back to the same blazing center: Jesus Christ is alive, reigning, and returning.

And if you’re a believer, here’s the challenge: don’t approach Revelation like a puzzle to win—approach it like a call to worship and obedience. The blessing in Revelation 1:3 is connected not only to reading and hearing, but also to keeping—living in readiness, holiness, and courage.

And if you’re not a believer, or if you know you’re living at a distance from Christ, the invitation is simple and urgent: the Jesus revealed here is the One who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood (Revelation 1:5). He died for you, and He rose again—His resurrection declares that He is Savior and Lord. You don’t have to clean yourself up before you come; you come to Him to be cleansed, forgiven, and made new.