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2025 ANNUAL THEME: “HOPE IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTY”
November Theme: Revelation – The End Times

BIBLE STUDY
November 19, 2025

“The Book of Revelation: Introduction, Background, and Context”
(Revelation 1:1-11)

Topics

- Scripture Reference
- Reflection Questions
- Important Emphasis
- Key Terms
- Outline
- Introduction
- Background and Context
- Exploring The Text
- Check For Understanding
- Life Application

Scripture Reference: Revelation 1:1-11 (NKJV)

*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, ²who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. ³Blessed 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. ⁴John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 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. Even so, Amen. ⁸“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” ⁹I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹saying, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,” and, “What you see, write in a book and send it to **the seven churches** which are in Asia: **to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.**”*

Reflection Questions

A. Have you read the Book of Revelation? If so, what are the major themes?

B. If you have not read the Book of Revelation, what is your primary reason for not reading it?

IMPORTANT EMPHASIS

Understanding Revelation

There are so many questions that loom in the minds of believers concerning the correct interpretation of the book of Revelation. Revelation is saturated with signs, symbols, and scenes which are forms of communication for an intended audience in antiquity and ultimately to us. One of the best ways to engage this type of controversial biblical material is by prioritizing the authorial intent.

Who is the Author? The earliest witness is Justin Martyr in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew he says “More over a man among us named John one of Christ’s Apostles, received a revelation and foretold that the followers of Christ would dwell in Jerusalem for a thousand years.”

According to the Sacra Pagina “Revelation is an intertextual work- a network of references to other texts... The word apokalypsis “revelation,” the first word of the book of Revelation came in time to designate a type of Jewish literature which appeared about 200 B.C.E. to 100 C.E. Greek name the Apocalypse means “unveiling or revealing”

No other book of the New Testament makes such copious use of the Old Testament. Nearly three hundred references from the prophetic books of the Old Testament including nearly seventy from Daniel. This shows that the writer of Revelation was saturated with the Spirit and teachings of the Hebrew prophets

The genre of Revelation- What is the genre of Revelation? Is it an apocalypse , a prophesy or a combination of the two. Apocalypse is defines as a revelatory literature with a narrative framework. The revelation is mediated by an angel and its content concerns- eschatological salvation. In an apocalypse, the supernatural world is described with vivid symbols as the author show events in heaven impact our world.

Situation: The world is in crisis because of sin but God will break into history to make all things right in the new age.

Structure: In fact, contrast and repetition and climax are evident features in the literary structure of the book. There is symmetry throughout the book. Each of the letters to the seven churches following the same exact literary scheme

Purpose of Revelation

The primary purpose was to comfort and encourage the Christians in their present and coming persecutions by assuring them of the final triumph of Christ and His followers. Also, it was necessary to warn the churches against failure in either doctrine or experience.

Caution in Revelation:

- *Charles Spurgeon* warns “When so princely an expositor maunders in this fashion it should act as a caution to lessable men.
- *Ralph Earle* “The book of Revelation” it is at one and the same time the most revered, the most misunderstood and the most neglected New Testament writings.
- “(Revelation)The most abused writing in the Christina Scriptures.”
- *Barclay* “The Revelation is notoriously the most difficulty book in the New.”

Insights in Revelation

John’s exile was probably connected to his resistance to Domitian’s interest in promoting the imperial cult emperor worship. This practice began when the Roman senate deified Julius Caesar at his death. It initially flourished in the East, where worship of a living leader was already appropriate.

Emperor worship helped unify the empire and proud one’s loyalty to Rome. All who sacrificed to the emperor received a certificate verifying their fidelity.

John was banished to Patmos because of his faith. The small island was barren and used by Rome to exile criminals and political prisoners. The shame of this treatment was no less extreme than his probable loss of private property.

The author’s words inspire hope and exhort readers to remain faithful in the midst of suffering.

The author wants to reflect on God’s redemptive work in history, continuing the prophecy. He understands God’s acts as having significance outside of history in a cosmic struggle against Satan and evil.

Prophecy, where in God will work out his future will within history. Those who argue Revelation is of prophetic genre point to John’s claims in Rev. 1:3 and Rev. 22: 6-7 which identify the book as prophecy.

Views of Revelation

- The first called the preterist view, holds that all of Revelation refers to the period of the Roman Empire. Imperial persecution of the Christians would be followed by the final overthrow imperial power.
- The second, known as the historicist view sees the book as predicting the succession of significant events throughout the church age. This is more accurately labeled the continuous-historical method of interpretation.
- The third, the futurist view, holds that everything beginning with chapter four is yet to be fulfilled. At various points in the exposition we shall notice the application of these three views to the interpretations of specific passages.

Key Words and Terms

Angels
Antichrist
Apocalypse
Armageddon
Beast
Doctrine
Dragon
End Times
Eschatology
Four Horsemen
Future
God
Grace
Jesus Christ

John
Lamb
Last Days
Listening
New Jerusalem
Obedience
Prophecy
Revelation
Second Coming
Servants
Seven
Seven Churches
Symbolism
Testimony

OUTLINE

1. Introduction
2. Background and Context
3. Authorship
4. Date Written
5. Audience
6. Purpose
7. Understanding Apocalyptic Literature
8. Interpreting Revelation
9. Major Themes

INTRODUCTION

Just as lay people have differing views about the Book of Revelation, biblical scholars and theologians also have varying views. New Testament scholar, Leon Morris highlights the challenges and perceptions surrounding the Book of Revelation. He emphasizes the text's complex **symbolism** and **fantastical imagery**, which often confuse modern readers. As a result, Revelation is frequently overlooked in favor of more accessible biblical texts like John's Gospel or the Epistle to the Romans. This suggests that while Revelation is part of the biblical canon (official books of the bible), its abstract interpretations and complexity make it less appealing to many readers.

In contrast, New Testament scholar, Ian Paul, presents the Book of Revelation as an extraordinary literary work. He focuses on its complex structure, rich numerology, and powerful imagery, noting its deep engagement with Old Testament Scriptures and first-century culture. Ian Paul portrays Revelation as a unique and fascinating text that stands out in world literature, beyond its significance in the Christian canon.

Hollywood movies use advanced technology to create stunning, yet fictional, spectacles. In contrast, the Book of Revelation in the Bible offers a vivid, awe-inspiring vision of future events, filled with dramatic imagery and sounds, as experienced by John. This narrative, unlike movies, is presented as a true revelation of God's plan, featuring scenes of angels, battles, and divine interventions.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This lesson will provide an overview of the Book of Revelation, exploring its historical and cultural context. We'll discuss the authorship, traditionally attributed to John the Apostle, and the circumstances under which it was written. The session will cover the apocalyptic genre, symbolism, and themes such as prophecy, judgment, and hope. Understanding the context will help us better understand the book's message and its relevance to early first century Christians and contemporary readers today in the twenty-first century.

Authorship

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,...

John the Apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of James, is traditionally identified as the author of Revelation, a vision given to him by Jesus Christ. Early church fathers like Justin Martyr and Irenaeus supported this view, noting John's close relationship with Jesus, as seen in events like the Transfiguration and the Last Supper. John was present at the crucifixion, where Jesus entrusted him with the care of Mary, and he described himself as the disciple Jesus loved. Despite this, some, like the fourth-century bishop Dionysius, doubted his authorship. Nevertheless, John's vision was recorded for the benefit of the early churches and Christians throughout history.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ—The word Apocalypse, signifies literally, a **revelation**, or discovery of what was concealed or hidden. It is here said that this revelation, or discovery of hidden things, was given by God to Jesus Christ; that Christ gave it to his angel; that this angel showed it to John; and that John sent it to the Churches. Thus we find it came from God to Christ, from Christ to the angel, from the angel to John, and from John to the Church. It is properly, therefore, **the**

Revelation of God, sent by these various agents to his servants at large; and this is the proper title of the book.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Q – What is this writing called? (1:1a)

Q – What is the purpose of this writing? (1:1b)

Q - Who is the author of this writing? (1:1c)

Q - What sources did John say were the basis of his revelation? (1:1-2)

Date Written

The Book of Revelation was written by John around A.D. 90–95 while he was exiled on the island of Patmos, located off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. John was banished there by Roman authorities due to his influential Christian ministry. During his exile, he received a vision from the risen Jesus. Although the exact time of the vision is not specified, it likely occurred during Emperor Domitian's reign. After writing Revelation, John was released and returned to Ephesus, where he continued his ministry until his death around A.D. 100. This timeline aligns with historical evidence and John's connection to the Ephesian church.

Audience

*¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, ¹¹ saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to **the seven churches** which are in Asia: **to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.**"*

The Book of Revelation is addressed to seven churches in what is now southwestern Turkey: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The apostle John, familiar with these churches, ministered in Ephesus around a.d. 70–100. Before him, Paul had established the Ephesian church during his missionary journeys, making Ephesus a hub for evangelism due to its strategic location at major trade routes and its access to the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was also known for the temple of Artemis, attracting many visitors. Paul envisioned Ephesus

as a center for Christianity and organized an evangelism school there, likely leading to the founding of the churches mentioned in Revelation.

Purpose

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.*

⁸ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

The Book of Revelation aims to reveal Christ's full identity and offer **warning** and **hope** to believers. While some persecution occurred, such as John's exile to Patmos and Antipas's death in Pergamum, widespread persecution of Christians wasn't prevalent until Emperor Domitian's reign, when refusing to worship the emperor became punishable. Nero's earlier persecution was localized to Rome. Emperor worship was spreading but not enforced Empire-wide. Among the seven churches addressed in Revelation, only Smyrna, Pergamum, and Philadelphia were specifically encouraged to endure persecution.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Q – How was the Lord’s identity described in Revelation 1:7-8?

Q – Who will mourn because of the Lord’s appearance with the clouds? (1:7-8)

Understanding Apocalyptic Literature.

To understand Revelation, we must recognize that John, the author, wrote in a specific genre—apocalyptic literature. From 200 b.c. to a.d. 100, certain groups of Jews and Christians used this writing style to describe the end of the world and God’s judgment.

Apocalyptic literature uses vivid imagery to depict the hidden supernatural battles influencing human history. In the Bible, examples include Revelation, Daniel 10–12, and Mark 13. Outside the Bible, works like *The Assumption of Moses* and *The Apocalypses of Ezra* are notable. These texts often present visions of the future through figures like Moses or Ezra. Key features of this genre include symbolic imagery, visions of the future, and a focus on cosmic battles.

There are three key characteristics of apocalyptic literature.

1. **Apocalyptic literature uses mysterious imagery and symbols** to describe supernatural events in human terms. These symbols, like the sharp sword representing Christ's discerning words, were meant for first-century readers and should not be interpreted literally or with modern meanings.

2. **Apocalypses are symbolic.** To understand the symbols in Revelation, we should consider their meaning to first-century readers, not apply modern interpretations. The symbols were not meant as literal depictions of the future but as representations of supernatural events or traits. For instance, the sharp, double-edged sword in Christ's mouth symbolizes His words, which, like the Word of God in **Hebrews 4:12-13**, can discern truth and judge all people.
3. **Apocalyptic literature, like Revelation, depicts God's supernatural intervention to transform history**, emphasizing His decisive actions beyond natural laws. It portrays God ending evil and establishing eternal peace and justice, dramatically altering the natural world. Ultimately, God will replace the old world with a new one, where traditional elements like the sun and moon are unnecessary.

The book of Revelation combines **apocalyptic imagery** with **prophecy** and letters of admonition from Jesus to seven churches. It emphasizes believers' responsibilities and their eternal future with God. Unique among biblical texts, it promises **blessings** to those who heed its words. Despite its complex symbols, the core message is that God governs history, and Christ will return to judge and reward the faithful. The text encourages believers to overcome challenges by maintaining their faith.

Q – What are the three characteristics of apocalyptic literature?

Interpreting Revelation.

Revelation is a book of **symbols**. Every symbol in this book was understood by people in the first century. This was a first-century book, written to the believers of the first-century church; yet it also has significance for Christians two thousand years later. The questions to ask when reading the book are, What was God saying to John's original readers? What would they have understood from John's words? Why did God use a particular symbol to get across his message?

The book of Revelation provides hope for believers by affirming Christ's ultimate victory over evil and the promise of eternal life. It offers guidance on living for Jesus in the present, emphasizing his return, the judgment of evil, and the resurrection leading to eternal life or destruction.

Major Themes

The main themes of the book of Revelation are *God's Sovereignty, Christ's Return, God's Faithful People, Judgment, and Hope.*

God's sovereignty (5:1-14; 11:15-18; 20:1-22:21). The sovereignty of God means that God has complete control over everything in the universe and human life. Nothing happens without God's will. This concept is evident throughout Scripture, especially in Revelation, which depicts the end of history and God's ultimate judgment. God is supreme, surpassing all powers, religions, governments, and leaders, including Satan. God's control over history aims to unite true believers with Him.

Importance for today. Despite negative news and the seeming dominance of evil, Revelation assures us that God is all-powerful and in control. We should not be misled by temporary increases in Satan's power. Trust in God, who will guide his true family to eternal life.

Christ's return (19:11-16; 20:4-6; 21:1-7; 22:6-21). Christ first came as a perfect sacrifice, the "Lamb," and will return as the triumphant "Lion," defeating Satan and rewarding his followers. Though it seems delayed, his return is certain and could happen at any moment, marking a glorious day.

Importance for today. Christians have long found hope in the belief that Christ could return at any moment, as God's timing is perfect. Christ will come as King and Judge, but since the exact time is unknown, believers must remain prepared by maintaining strong faith and living according to God's will.

God's faithful people (14:1-5; 20:4-6; 21:3-4). Soon after Revelation was written, the church came under tremendous pressure from without and from within. Believers were pressured by the government, with threats of violent persecution, to renounce their faith in Christ and to worship the emperor. At the same time, a number of heresies threatened to negatively influence believers and divide the church. John wrote to encourage believers to resist the demands to worship the Roman emperor and to be devoted only to Christ. Revelation identifies the faithful people and explains how they should live until Christ returns.

Importance for today. Christians today face pressures to compromise their faith, from violent persecution in some countries to subtle pressures in more affluent areas. Despite these challenges, God's message in Revelation urges believers to stay focused on Christ and remain faithful. Victory is assured for those who prioritize loyalty to Christ and resist temptation.

Judgment (6:10-17; 11:15-19; 15:1-16:21; 18:1-20:15; 22:10-15). First-century believers faced persecution, corruption, and widespread paganism, leading them to question the triumph of evil. Revelation assures that God is just and will ultimately punish evildoers. In the end, Satan and false religion will be defeated, the faithful will receive eternal life, and non-believers will face eternal punishment.

Importance for today. Despite the prevalence of evil and injustice due to human sinfulness and Satan's influence, Christians may feel discouraged. However, Revelation assures that God's final judgment will ultimately end evil. This promise offers hope, and it's crucial to share that rejecting Christ leads to inevitable punishment.

Hope (1:3, 7-9; 2:7, 11, 17, 26-29; 3:8-13, 20-22; 4:1-11; 7:9-17; 14:13; 19:1-10; 20:4-6; 21:1-22:7, 22:17-21). Amidst adversity and suffering, maintaining hope can be challenging. First-century believers faced persecution and hardship, yet Revelation offers a promise of a new heaven and earth where believers will live in eternal peace with God. Despite current struggles, they can remain hopeful, trusting in God's love.

Importance for today. Today, many people face discouragement and depression, feeling trapped in hopeless situations. Even Christians can lose hope during trials. However, the message of Revelation offers hope, reminding us that God's promises will be fulfilled. With confidence in this truth and our

ultimate destination, we can follow Christ with unwavering dedication, regardless of the challenges we encounter.

Q – How does the Book of Revelation offer hope for the 1st Century and the 21st Century Christian? (Rev. 1:3, 7, 8)

Life Application Questions

- How can the promise of Christ's return and ultimate victory over evil influence your daily decisions and interactions with others?
- In what ways can you find hope and encouragement from the Book of Revelation during times of personal or global challenges?

Resources:

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