**Revelation Part One**

*Background, 4 Views of the Book, Letter to the 7 Churches, and Scenes in Heaven (Chapters 1 -5)*

11/28/23

There are so many questions and misconceptions about this mysterious book, yet

Revelation is a translation of the Greek word apokalypsis, which means the removal of a veil so that something can be seen.

Revelation is a continuation of the story of God’s redemption that we have been reading since Genesis—the repeated story of us turning away from God and Him redeeming and restoring us. Revelation is the ultimate redemption, the climax of His beautiful and victorious end.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it because the time is near.

(Revelation 1:3)

The Purpose of the book:

To reveal the complete identity of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to give \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to believers.

It is not a secret prophecy to decode but a symbolic vision for every generation of the Church to be full of hope, knowing that God is in control and Jesus’ victory is assured. It reveals God’s Promise that Jesus will return to remove evil and pain from His World. Revelation is meant to bring you closer to Jesus, show a fuller picture of Him, and not scare you away or bring division.

It is the only book in the Bible that contains three different genres of literature.

1. Apocalypse (To uncover or reveal). A type of Jewish literature that uses vivid imagery, symbolism, and prophetic visions to reveal hidden truths about God's sovereignty, the future, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. This book uses visions and word pictures to expand our understanding by engaging different areas of the mind and emotions. Daniel and Ezekiel also use this literary style with their symbolic visions.
2. Prophecy is more than telling the future. It is a proclamation about who God is and what He calls us to be and do. There are 17 prophecy books in the Old Testament, but this is the only one in the New.
3. Epistle (letter) to the Seven Churches. Epistles comprise most of the Bible's New Testament; of the 27 books, 21 are epistles. Key Christian teachers wrote these letters infused with the power of the Holy Spirit and inspired to tell people how they, too, can live, think, and behave as Christians.

#### **Four General Views of Revelation**

#### **Over the centuries, four main approaches to interpreting this book have emerged. When reading Revelation, ask yourself, **Will this help me become a better follower of Jesus Christ?****

#### **The Idealist View**

In Christian eschatology, idealism (also called the spiritual, allegorical, or nonliteral approach) involves an interpretation of the Book of Revelation that sees the book's imagery as symbolic. It is a symbolic representation of the continual struggle of good and evil in every age. It does not refer to any particular historical or future events. The idealist interpretation sees Revelation as being fulfilled all the time throughout the history of the Church.

#### **The Historicist View**

Historicism is a method of interpretation in Christian eschatology that associates biblical prophecies with actual historical events and identifies symbolic beings with historical persons or societies; it has been applied to the Book of Revelation by many writers. The Historicist view follows a straight line of continuous fulfillment of prophecy, which starts in [Daniel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_(biblical_figure))'s time and goes through [John of Patmos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_Patmos)' writing of  Revelation to the [Second Coming of Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Coming).

**The Preterist View**

The preterist (preter Latin word meaning past) holds that the prophecies in the Bible about the End Times have already been fulfilled or mostly fulfilled. Full preterists believe all Revelation was fulfilled with the temple's destruction in 66 - 70 AD. This is considered by many as preposterous and heresy as the resurrection, Rapture, and second coming have not happened yet. Partial preterists regarding Revelation believe some of it has been fulfilled.

#### **The Futurist View**

The futurist view sees almost everything, beginning with chapter four and onward, to be fulfilled in the future. Thus, the majority of Revelation has not been fulfilled yet.

This view is the reigning paradigm.

This view has much to say about the seven-year tribulation and what fallen humanity and creation must go through an awful ordeal to get there. Most of the book concerns judgments from God that will come upon the earth in the last seven years of history, just before the Second coming of Christ. Within this view, scholars disagree on many things, including the time of the Rapture—pre, mid, and post-tribulation, the millennium, and the symbolism used in this book.

**Letters to the Seven Churches**

**Historical Context** must be an anchor for understanding this book. These letters were written to persecuted churches in modern Turkey (Asia Minor then) to give hope, encouragement, and warnings. We may think our world is at its worst, but for Christians, these times were much more difficult than they are today. This letter was written in 95AD under the reign of Domitian by the Apostle John, who was exiled to the small island of Patmos for His Christianity to work the mines. Domitian was known for being ruthless, violent, persecuted Christians, and very paranoid. He was the last of the Vespasian dynasty, ruled for 15 years, and was known for his brutality, including boiling Christians alive.

The messages to the churches were for their day and bear weight on the current condition of churches and our devotion to Jesus today.

**The significance of 7 —**The number seven is well attested in the Bible, being used in some form more than 800 times. It’s often viewed as the number of completion or perfection, most notably when seven is associated with the completion of God’s “very good” creation ([Gen. 1](https://www.esv.org/verses/Gen.%201/)). Throughout Revelation, John uses the number often—seven spirits, seven churches, seven stars, seven lamps, seven angels, seven scenes in Heaven, seven cycles of judgment.

**Ephesus** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ church).

Revelation 2: 2-5

God starts with the most essential Love, and obedience flows through Love. Our service for God must be motivated by our Love for Him, or it will not last. Love is the greatest application of scripture. A changed heart is more important than a mind full of knowledge. No matter how gifted we are or how much we do, we are clanging bells, worthless without Love.

**Smyrna** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 2:9-10

Not many of us have been persecuted, but many have suffered. Long suffering can make a heart sick and pull us toward God or from Him. We, like Smyrna, need to keep a long-term perspective, or we can become discouraged and fall away. “We rejoice in our suffering, knowing that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character, and character hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God’s Love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” Romans 5: 3-5.

**Pergamum** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 2:13 -16

They faced internal and external pressures to compromise or leave the faith.

**Thyatira** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 2:19-20, 24-25

Let’s hold tightly to the basics of our Christian faith and view with extreme caution any new teaching that turns us away from the Bible, the fellowship of the Church, or our essential confession of faith.

**Sardis** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 3:2-4

**Philadelphia** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 3:8-11

**Laodicea** (the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church)

Revelation 3:15-20

What takes us away from God?

Both in the churches we attend and our lives, we constantly fight against the temptation to become loveless, immoral, lenient, compromising, lifeless, and casual about our faith. Christ encourages us to hold on to faithfulness, repentance, perseverance, and return to a deep and passionate love for Christ amidst our various challenges and temptations.

**Seven Scenes in Heaven** (won’t cover them all)

Record glimpses into Christ’s glory. God sits on the throne and orchestrates all the events that John will record. Descriptions of the throne room are in other parts of the Bible: Ezekiel 1:22-28, Daniel 7:9-14. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out His plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. John shows us Heaven before showing us Earth so we will not be frightened by future earthly events.

**Throne Room (Ultimate Reality) (Chpt 4)**

Read 4: 1- 8

John sees a vision of an open door in Heaven and is transported into the throne room of God. He witnesses the majestic throne surrounded by twenty-four elders and four living creatures who continuously praise and worship God for His holiness and creative power.

**The Scroll and the Lamb**

Read Revelation 5: 9 – 10

In this vision, John sees a scroll sealed with seven seals, which no one in Heaven or Earth can open. Only the Lion of Judah Jesus can open the scroll. Jesus is worthy because He was the slain Lamb who is victorious. The Lamb takes the scroll, initiating a series of events related to God's judgment and the culmination of history.

Questions:

1. What new thing did you learn today? Did you learn something new about Jesus? How can you put this new knowledge into practice?
2. How was Jesus’s power unexpected, and how can we follow His ways when we face adversity?
3. Like the seven churches, we fight against the temptation to become loveless, immoral, lenient, compromising, lifeless, and casual about our faith—which church or area of temptation do you most relate to? How can you overcome it?
4. How does Revelation bring you hope and encouragement?
5. What blessing do you think we receive from reading this book?
6. What about this book scares you? And what can you do about it?
7. What stops you from spending time with God? And what can you do about it?