

REVELATION PART ONE - Introduction to Book of Revelation

This is considered the most difficult book to read and many fear reading it. Yet, it is the most important book of the Bible because it shows how the Love Story in the Bible ends.

1. The word “Revelation” means Apocalypse. It means to unveil or to reveal.
 - a) This means that unless God takes away the veil of a picture, no one would know how the picture looks like; just as no one would know what was behind a veiled picture hanging on the wall unless it was revealed.
 - b) In this book, God unveils the future, revealing how the world would end and what the new eternal world would look like.
 - c) Without God’s unveiling, we may have bits and pieces of information from the Old Testament and the New Testament that speak of the future. BUT, we cannot piece them all together unless the full picture is revealed.
2. Most people consider this book of Revelation a mystery. Two books in the Bible are the least understood, yet they are the most important.
 - a) Book of Genesis – Satan causes most people to consider this simple book a myth. Satan says Genesis is “too simple”, and how could God have created the world in 6 days? He says that they were not 6 literal days but epochs or eras instead. Similarly, the Gospel is very simple too, but Satan convolutes its simplicity. One should then question – “How could an era or epoch possibly have both evening and morning?” Satan wants us to cast doubts on the first few lines of the Bible so that we would think that all the other Bible stories are not real too! Sunday school teachings on biblical truths would then become lessons on moral values, similar to fables told in story books for character building.
 - b) Book of Revelation – Satan attacks this book by making it such a mystery, so that many often question – “Why bother studying it since it is so difficult to understand?” He convinces many to think that we should leave it to the scholars to debate over it and to just let them present their findings to us. Or else one may read it out of curiosity and/or regard it as a fortune-telling book. BUT Revelation is not written for scholars. It was written to 7 real churches as recorded in the opening chapter of the book. Christians in those 7 churches had much lesser education than us today and yet they could understand it. Thus, this book is not a mysterious book for scholars to resolve, but written for all of us to read.
3. Why is Satan attacking these two important books - Genesis and Revelation?
 - a) Genesis describes how Satan gained control of the world.
 - b) Revelation reveals how Satan would lose control of the world.
 - c) As a deceiver, Satan does not want himself to be identified nor being attributed as the source causing the problems that we face. We often blame the political system, leaders, bosses etc. but not the source - Satan! Satan was mentioned a lot in these two books and was clearly identified.
 - d) Christians tend to have a weak view of the Bible, and often regard it as a story book teaching merely moral values. The worst part is that many think

that there is no ending to the story. That is because they do not read the book of Revelation. They think that the Bible is all about Christians suffering on Earth, and then one day, all will go to heaven and sit on a cloud and sing with a harp through eternity. If that was so, will that not be absolutely boring and torturous? ,

4. Revelation 1:3 says, “Blessed are those who read aloud or listen to the Revelation and keep these things”. It is the only book that records such blessings promised by God to those who read or listen to the book of Revelation. Since it is not just to be read, but also to be kept, one should definitely not read the book of Revelation out of curiosity only.

What are the benefits of reading the Book of Revelation?

1. It gives us the right view of history.
 - a) Presently, it looks like an immoral world where it pays to commit evil. Even Job began to doubt when he was suffering immensely in the book of Job. It seems that Satan and the evil ones keep winning all the time.
 - b) However, the correct view of history should be seen in totality, encompassing ‘eternity’ timeframe or timespan in mind. When we read this book of Revelation, we will see that in the end, God and Jesus win.
 - c) While events in the Garden of Eden seemed to have been messed up during Adam’s time, the book of Revelation shows that the new Garden will be many times better than Adam’s Eden. This book proves that “God wins BIG TIME!” We have to take a helicopter view of eternity.
2. It helps us to get the right view of Jesus.
 - a) Many people only see Jesus either as a baby in a manger or a dead man on the Cross. This means that they either see Him as a helpless babe or a hopelessly dead man. They may also view Him as a poor carpenter, despised and rejected, who is somewhat a weakling associated to that of a lamb, an animal often regarded by man as meek and helpless.
 - b) The book of Revelation helps us to see beyond the short 33 years of Jesus’ life on Earth, such that we might fully and clearly see and know who Jesus really is.
3. It completes the Bible.
 - a) The Bible is the love story of God’s redeeming love. It is about God choosing a Bride for His precious Son.
 - b) In the book of Revelation, we read about the Marriage taking place, and about the Groom and Bride truly living happily ever after; which is unlike any other earthly marriage or fable ever seen or recorded. We will then see it as a beautiful book with a beautiful ending.
4. It prepares us for persecution.

The fastest growing churches in China and in Middle East Muslim countries are facing a lot of persecution now, so reading this book is critical to help give hope and confidence to persecuted Christians through the knowledge of the triumphant

ending. It will also prepare Christians to face future persecutions expected in the last days.

5. It gives us incentive to live well now and to prepare us for the New Heaven and New Earth.
 - a) If we know that going to heaven is not just about sitting on a cloud and singing forever, but that there is a real New Heaven and New Earth; and that we will be given the potential to maximise the place just as Adam and Eve were to do so in the Garden of Eden, we will surely choose to live differently.
 - b) The question is – “Are you ready for the New Heaven and New Earth where things happen and your brain needs to work?” You will realise from this book that your new body in the New Heaven and New Earth will still be you but will be an improved version, yet still recognisable by friends. If so, would not you want to take care of your body on this Earth with this new knowledge?

Who was John mentioned in this Book of Revelation?

1. It was the Apostle John in his old age. He was the only apostle left as all the others had been martyred. He was the only one who subsequently died a natural death.
2. John was imprisoned on Patmos Island for not denying Christ.
 - a) During that time, the Roman emperors (in particular, Julius Caesar) proclaimed themselves as a god of their ‘multi-idol’ concept. If it is a ‘monolithic-God’ concept, it would be hard for Caesar to claim that he was God but in a ‘multi-idol’ concept, he could claim that he was one of the many gods.
 - b) Emperor Domitian reigned in AD90 to AD95 period, and he instituted “emperor worship” called the Lord’s Day. It was a day where everyone had to bow to the idol of the emperor with incense and shout “Caesar is Lord”. Many Christians refused, and hence they were either jailed or crucified, etc. These persecutions continued until Emperor Constantine declared the Roman Empire as a Christian nation in AD 212 to AD 213.
3. John, while in prison, wrote this circular letter to the 7 churches which were under his supervision. He wanted to prepare them for the persecution in two ways:
 - a) To get the churches into the right shape, and to get rid of the sins of immorality, etc. present within the churches so that they could withstand persecution.
 - b) To help the members stand strong by focusing on the eternal hope, and by reminding them not to worry because Jesus will ultimately win in the end, and they will all get to the New Heaven and New Earth. His message to them was basically to urge them to hang in there; and to continue to be steadfast in confessing Jesus and not to deny Him. See Matt 10:32-33.
 - c) In this circular letter, the individual church problems were identified in order to help them to repent and to get right with God. It was written to specific people and for a needful purpose, which all of us could understand

too. We should never assume that we would not face persecution with our current government now, as the modern government has full access to our data, and they could easily gain control of buying and selling of goods via the huge database. Presently, only people with criminal records need to fear as they are being considered bad; but a day may come, that anyone who refuses to deny Christ, may be considered bad and be persecuted!

Why do people struggle with the Book of Revelation?

1. There are a lot of apocalyptic images in this book that sounds bizarre to us. Images or symbols such as dragon, beast, etc. freak us out. BUT these symbols are meant to help us better understand the things in the future which are hard to describe. For example, if we were to try to explain to Adam what an aeroplane is, we can only describe it as a “flying cheetah”.
2. Some of these symbols were, however, already used in the Old Testament e.g. Babylon, beast etc. They are not randomly plugged out from the air. This is somewhat similar to Jesus’ teaching, e.g. “The Kingdom of God is *like*...”, or Him using parables or stories. Likewise, the book of Revelation uses symbols to help us understand things of the future as there is no exact vocabulary available yet to describe these future things.
3. The first 3 chapters of the book of Revelation is simple to understand as there are no symbols unlike subsequent chapters.
4. There are 56 predictions but half of these are recorded in plain language with no symbols at all, so we can at least understand half of these 56 easily.
5. Do note that there are significant numbers in this book:
 - a) The number 7 appears a lot of times in this book. The number 7 conveys “completion”.
 - b) The number 12 relates to God’s people.
 - c) The number “thousand” is the biggest number in Jewish language just as 10,000 is the largest number in the Chinese language; whilst in English, we have even larger numbers like trillions or zillions.
 - d) There are other numbers, such as 666 which refers to the mark of the beast.

What do you learn in the Book of Revelation?

1. That Jesus is King, and not a helpless babe or dead man on the Cross, nor just a mere carpenter’s son.
2. Jesus rules an eternal kingdom. The readers of John’s letter in the 7 churches thought that Caesar was king and John’s letter blew their mind. The eternal kingdom is far more glorious than any city in Babylon and we will be citizens there.
3. Most Christians do not understand the book of Revelation and they just hope to be saved by the skin of their teeth and to escape the fire of hell. They think that they will just float on a cloud for eternity, idling away; therefore to them, there is no necessity to prepare for eternity or for the New Heaven and the New Earth.

4. How about your body? What skills do you bring in there? We will do work that is satisfying, and without corruption, betrayal or pain in the New Heaven and New Earth. Therefore, as preparation, we should maximise our potential towards serving one another now.