

Revelation: The End or a New Beginning?

Week 1

Quick Review of Core Concepts:

We live today in an era of uncertainty, as crisis after crisis comes and goes. Because the world is moving very fast, we can no longer expect that our life today will be the same as it was yesterday. All the uncertainty and pressure we suffer are symptomatic of the times in which we live. That is why stress and related illnesses are the biggest causes of chronic death and malaise.

The good news is that we don't have to live like this because of uncertainty. God has a message for us today, for all of us who live in the perplexities of modern life.

Let's start by opening our Bible in its latest book, the Book of Revelation, and reading its first 3 verses that are part of the book's prologue:

The revelation **of Jesus Christ**, which God gave him to show his servants[a] what must soon take place; he made[b] it known by sending his angel to his servant[c] John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it; for the time is near. (Rev. 1:1-3, NRSV)

The first key point on the verse 1 is that God is the source of the revelation and Jesus is the “prophet”, the author of the Book. Revelation is a gospel (lit. good news) from Jesus, not only about Him. John was just the amanuensis, the person who was hired as the literary secretary and scribe, a practice attested both in the New and Old Testament times. On the old Testament, one good example was the Book of Jeremiah, whose author is the prophet identified on the book but the person who actually wrote is Baruch, his amanuensis (Jeremiah 36:4). On the New Testament, a good example of the same practice is the book of Roman, whose author is universally recognized as Paul but he person who actually penned it was Tertius. If you want to know a bit more about this process, please watch this short (5 minutes) [Bible Project video](#) which talks about how to read the New Testament letters. The video is specially appropriate to our context since Revelation is also a letter written from Jesus to us, His servants.

Let's quickly breakdown verse 1-3, shall we?

I. THE REVELATION — Rev 1:1; 1:3c

(a) From who is the revelation? — 1: 1a

A: Revelation is from God

(b) How the revelation is done? — 1: 1b

A: The revelation is made by Jesus.

(c) For Whom? — 1:1c

A: For Your Servants

(d) Why? 1:1c-1:1d

A: So that His servants (us, His church) knows what happened and what will happen soon.

(d) For when? 1:3c

A: So that His church knows of His imminent return

God once again reveals his love through Jesus Christ, giving us the certainty that He is in control of the story and that he accompanies us step by step until His soon return.

HOW SURE IS THE RELATION? — Rev 1:2

(a) He Gave His Word — 1:2a

A: God is faithful and He guarantees with His Word.

(b) The Testimony of Jesus — 1:2b

A: He gave Jesus (His Word from him, cf. with the prologue of John and Gen. 1: 1-3)¹, who died on the Cross for us as confirmation.

God not only wants us to know that He controls history, but He wants us to be sure that He is faithful, since the price of our rescue has been already paid by His own son who died for us. And through Jesus, God shows is incommensurable love for us.

III. OUR ANSWER — Rev 1:3

(a) We Must Study His Word — Rev 1:3a

A: His revelation, together with the whole of the word of God, must be studied. But the verse here puts a special emphasis in who reads it. We have to remember that, in ancient times, when the Apostles sent a letter for a church, that letter needed to be read aloud for the group. So, in a sense, we can seize this promises as ours when we “read” (i.e., share) the word of God to others in our circle.

(b) We are to keep His Word — Rev 1: 3b

A: Hear here carries the sense of the verb as it would commonly used by Hebrew and other Semitic people from the Middle East: hear means to more than allow the sound waves to go in your additive systems; it means to follow, to obey. His words, in addition to being understood, must be kept (put into practice). In addition to that, Jesus

¹ The prologue of the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18) starts with a paraphrase of Genesis 1:1-3, where Jesus is pictured as the “Word”, the agent by who God acts and creates in the human realm of time and space.

associates the hear metaphor with a second metaphor to reinforce it: “and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it”. It also means literally means “to obey as means of fulfilling the purpose” taking it to heart.

(c) Why? — Ap1: 3c

A: Jesus gives us the certainty of His soon return. This is the reason why we should be “Always Alerts”. That is why we should be always active reading the Word (disseminating it by “reading” it for those around us) and living the Word in our lives as we obey/put in practice its principles as means to fulfill our purpose in life.

Far beyond mere intellectual assent, it is God's intention that revelation from Him, made through Christ, be imprinted into our hearts. He expects us to keep His words, His advice, because He wants us to be happy (rich, blessed).

Learning More:

Parallels with the book of Daniel:

If you read the book of Revelation and are familiar with the OT, make an immediate connection with the Book of Daniel, which is the only book in the Bible that presents a secret, a sealed book, that should only be understood at the end time. Let us read what Daniel 12:4: “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

The word reveal (Heb. *glh*) occurs 7 times in the book of Daniel, introducing the 7 visions of the book, just as here in the book of Revelation. The words derived from the Hebrew root which means “reveal” where translated on the Septuagint² to the Greek expression “Apocalipto” (to uncover, to reveal, to take out of hiding), from where the book get its Greek name (Apocalupsis).

This is an echo of Daniel's book that tells us that The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Apocalypse of John, refers to Daniel's Secret. Therefore, throughout this series, we will alternate between one book and another, as the two books are related and complement each other.

An interesting thing is that the Book of Daniel ends with a blessing and the Book of Revelation begins with a blessing that echoes this blessing from Daniel. In Affirming “Blessed are those who read and those who hear the words of prophecy and keep the things written on it, for the time is at hand. ”

The Author of Revelation puts his readers in the same perspective as the readers of Daniel. The book calls us to read. Blessed are those who read. This bliss (blessing), the first of 7 that appears in the book, suggests that our happiness implies our need for revelation. The Apocalypse suggests that it is a book to be read in a liturgical way, in a sacred and corporate worship context, as we are doing here in our class.

² The oldest known Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the “standard” translation for Greek speaking Jews at the time of Jesus – pretty much like the King James in Today’s English speaking world.

But the book is much more than a liturgical exercise. The Bible calls its words Prophecy. The book is not just for mystics and poets. It is a book for rational people, a book that needs to be understood. For this reason, in the blessing, it is not necessary only to read, but to listen. Listening in the Hebrew mentality means more than using the ear, but using understanding, analyzing and understanding. We have to try to "hear" what the prophecy means in its original Hebrew context, and only then will God give us understanding.

But in addition to reading and understanding, we need to keep the words taught here, we need to put them into practice. The book challenges us to study these prophecies, understand them and keep them in our hearts, putting into practice the principles illustrated here.

Another one of the many links with Daniel is found in Revelation 1:5. In Verse 5 Jesus presents Himself as the Faithful and true Witness (or martyr), as the one who give His life for us, to free us from our sins when we accepted His grace by faith, but was resurrected, being the Firstborn of the dead and now he is the sovereign of the kings of the earth. The Lord of History! That is exactly how He is portrait through the book of Daniel, specially on chapter 12, where Michael is standing from His throne to save His servants at the end-time because of His immense love for us.

And verse 6 show what is His goal is for us “kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (Rev. 1:6), which is the same He wishes for us in the last chapter of Daniel: for us to live and reign with Him for ever (Dan. 12:3, cf. 7:27). Revelations 1 starts with the same key themes as Daniel 12, but in a slightly different order since that was the ancient way to one author to the other.

Extras

a) Here is a 6 minute video from the Bible Project that offers one perspective about apocalyptic literature in general and the book of revelation in particular: [Apocalyptic Literature \(How to Read the Bible series\)](#).

b) Structure of the Book:

| A1 | | Pessah B1 | | Shavout C1 | | Hosh HaShanah D1 | | Yom Kippur (beginning) D1 | | E Final Eschatological Summary | | Yom Kippur (end) D2 | | Pre-Sukkot C2 | | Sukkot B2 | | A2 | |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------|-----|---------------------------------|-------|--|--|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-----------|---|-------|---------------------------|--|------------------|--|
| Prologue 1:1-10 ^a | | Militant Church 1:10b-3:22 | | Ongoing Divine Action | | Warning to the wicked 8:2-11:18 | | Powers Opposed to God and His People 11:19-14:20 | | 14:6 a 15:4 | | Punishment Of the Wicked 15:1-16:17 | | Powers Opposed to God Judged by Him 16:18-18:24 | | Divine Judgment Completed | | Church 21:5-22:5 | |
| 1:1 | | 2:7 | 4:2,4,6 | 8:7 | 8:8 | 8:10 | 8:12 | 11:19 | | | | 15:1-16:17 | 16:18, 21 | 19:4 | 22:2 | | | | |
| 1:3 | | 3:5 | 5:13 | 8:8 | | | 9:2 | 12:1 | | | | 16:2 | 16:18, 21 | 19:1,6 | 21:27 | | | | |
| 1:7, 8 | | 3:12 | 5:6 | 8:10 | | | 9:14 | 12:3; 13:1 | | | | 16:3 | | 19:7,9 | 21:10 | | | | |
| | | 3:12 | 6:2 | | | | 11:15 | | | | | 16:4 | | 19:8 | 22:4 | | | | |
| | | 3:14 | 6:15 | | | | | | | | | 16:8 | | 19:11 | 22:6 | | | | |
| | | 2:7,11 | 6:11,7:9 | | | | | | | | | 16:10 | | 19:18 | 22:7 | | | | |
| | | | 7:1-3 | | | | | | | | | 16:12 | | 21:3 | - | | | | |
| | | | 7:15 | | | | | | | | | 16:17 | | 21:4 | - | | | | |
| | | | 7:17 | | | | | | | | | | | 19:2 | 21:5 | | | | |
| | | | 6:10 | | | | | | | | | | | | 21:7 | 22:12,13 | | | |
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