

DAY
4

Reading Revelation Responsibly Skim/Scan Revelation 10-12

How do we read, study, interpret, and apply Revelation? It is the most challenging and difficult book of the Bible and it requires careful and prayerful engagement.

In our study of Revelation and the “End Times” we will help you EXPAND your understanding.

What it meant to John and his original audience is crucial to faithful interpretation. The original audience would have understood what John wrote. It was not, first of all, a far future mystery incapable of being understood or applied.

What it has meant to the church through the centuries. The original meaning and response has had an ongoing meaning and response. The Church through the centuries has understood and applied the lessons of Revelation to their own time and needs.

What it means to the Church today (2021). Revelation speaks just as powerfully to our immediate time, context, and need. We need the same insights of faith and obedience the original audience needed.

What it means for the future and the “end of history.” There are certainly things to come and things to be fulfilled. But these are the hardest to discern and about them there is a long line of misinterpretation. We will be very careful about the “yet to come” aspects of the end times.

Reading Revelation responsibly requires us to understand the original meaning and then PRIORITIZE that original meaning in our own time.

Reading Revelation responsibly requires us to understand the original meaning and then **PRIORITIZE** that original meaning in our own time. In every chapter, understand what it meant then so you can understand what it means now.

Finally, be alert to mistakes that link Revelation verses to current events. The last 40 years has seen a legion of mistakes, some of them comical, some of them serious.

Every day as you read, pray Paul's prayer in Ephesians 2:17-23. It is an eschatological prayer about Jesus and his Kingdom and living in the Kingdom of Christ.

DAY
5

A God-Centered Revelation Read Revelation 1:1-20

You have skimmed this chapter. You have looked more carefully at several verses. For today, read it carefully to get the full imprint. As you do, notice these important insights.

Above all, you want to see the many words and phrases used to describe God. From beginning to end, Revelation is about God the Father and God the Son. There are also significant words about God the Spirit.

How is God the Father described in 1:4, 8?

How is God the Son described in 1:5-7, 13-16 (a magnificent and highly symbolic description), and in verse 17?

What similar descriptions are used for both Father and Son? Read Revelation 21:6; 22:13 for a hint.

Which descriptions most capture your attention? Why are they speaking to you?

What does it mean that Jesus is: 1) the faithful witness, 2) the firstborn from the dead, 3) the ruler of the kings of the earth, and 4) the one who is returning? Think about this, because EACH description will have central importance in the entire book.

It is highly significant that John begins his Revelation with a strong statement of the SOURCE of Revelation. It is from God the Father, through an angel, to John, to the Church.

The Church will occupy center stage in chapters two and three. But notice this is a LETTER to the seven churches (1:4, 11, 12, 20). The seven lampstands symbolize the seven churches. Also, as you will learn, numbers are extremely important in Revelation. The number SEVEN is the number of completeness.

Use the language that describes the Father and the Son to shape your prayers and your worship.



WEEK OF FEBRUARY 7

I SAW
HEAVEN
OPENED

Reading Revelation



**DAY
1****What is Revelation?
Skim/Scan Revelation 1-3**

This week and next week you will do an overview by reading through three chapters each day. Skim read, scan through. I want you to get the big picture of Revelation. There are 22 chapters in Revelation. As the 8 weeks of our series continue, you will study every chapter. To read Revelation right there are introductory themes that will help. In the first few devotionals, you will pay attention to these themes, and then increasingly explore the 22 chapters of the book.

Read Revelation 1:1-3. The second word is revelation. The Greek word is *apokalupsis*, from which we get the word apocalypse. Apocalypse is defined as a catastrophic destruction associated with the end of the world. But that is NOT what the Greek word means. *Apokalupsis* means opening, uncovering, or revealing. John says, “I saw heaven standing open” (19:11), which is why the last book of the Bible is called Revelation. It is God revealing to John profound mysteries about eternal matters. And it is Revelation (singular) not Revelations (plural).

Apocalyptic literature is some of the most complex of the ancient writings. It has several features, including:

- Cosmic level themes and events that connect heaven, earth, and eternity.
- The use of dreams and visions to communicate secret knowledge.
- A contest of good and evil and the overthrow of evil.
- Heavenly intermediaries (angels) who speak for God.
- A context of suffering and oppression for the readers who need a vision of victory.
- Dramatic symbolism that is sometimes intentionally mysterious and other times more obvious about its point of reference.
- The use of numbers in symbolic ways.
- For John, a total immersion in all the Old Testament, especially the prophets and their apocalyptic writings.
- For John, a powerful, creative, and inspired culmination of the Old Testament through the person and ministry of Jesus.

We will help you learn how to study the Apocalypse of John.

**DAY
2****Why We Need Revelation
Skim/Scan Revelation 4-6**

Here are the reasons we need the Book of Revelation:

1. Revelation 1:3 tells us the first and comprehensive reason is that you will be blessed if you hear and take to heart what is said (see James 1:21-25). We are blessed when we hear and “do” the Word. Faithful response to what God has revealed is what brings blessing.
2. It teaches us how to worship Jesus. Read Revelation 5:9-15.
3. It warns us of the danger of spiritual compromise with the world. This is the theme of chapters 2 and 3.
4. It encourages us to be overcomers or victorious in our faith. The word *victorious* occurs ten times in Revelation (eight times in chapters 2 and 3).
5. It clarifies the way Jesus works in the world through his people as witnesses. Jesus is the faithful witness who sends us to witness for him and like him (1:5; 11:1-14).
6. It is one of the most missional books in the Bible that reveals God’s heart for the nations. The fourfold phrase “tribe, people, tongue, and nation” appears seven times in Revelation (with slight variations of the phrase: 5:9, 7:9, 10:11, 11:9, 13:7, 14:6, 17:15). You will learn the significance of the numbers four and seven, which John uses many times.
7. It tackles the very painful reality of suffering for our faith and shows how God will judge evil and bring justice. Most of the book deals with judgment and salvation.
8. Revelation confronts the “brutal facts” but is relentless in providing hope anchored in the presence, the power, and the purposes of God, culminating in the new heavens and earth of chapters 21 and 22.
9. We need Revelation because in it heaven is opened to us. The original need of their time, the saving work of God through 2,000 years, as well as the mysteries of God’s future plan, are revealed. Encouragement is given, promises are made, hope is enhanced, spiritual strength is provided.

Pray that in the weeks ahead, you too will see heaven opened to you.

**DAY
3****John the “Revelator”
Skim/Scan Revelation 7-9**

John provides several words to describe who he is in the first chapter of Revelation. He is a servant (1:1), a brother in the faith (1:9), a companion in suffering (1:9), a Christian leader in exile on the island of Patmos due to his faithfulness to Jesus (1:9), and a Spirit-filled follower of Jesus (1:10). He is also:

John the Pastor who writes a pastoral letter. Revelation 1-3 and 22 have the standard greetings and farewells, but with apocalyptic importance. Chapters 2 and 3 are written to seven of the many churches for which John has pastoral authority and care. He speaks to encourage and comfort them.

John the Prophet who speaks a word his churches need to hear right away. The church is in trouble on two fronts. First, is their compromise with the ways of the world. Second, is the world that is steadily increasing pressure on Christians to conform. They need to hear the seriousness of their spiritual condition and be strengthened to stand firm.

John the Prophet who sees a future reality we all need to see as well. The dangers of compromise with the world and the deadly opposition from the powers of evil will continue and grow strong through the centuries. But evil, while strong, loses. Jesus wins. In Jesus, the people of God win as well.

John the Theologian who provides us with the highest images of Jesus Christ, who is Savior, returning King, and God equal to God the Father. Look for descriptions of Jesus throughout the book (like 5:5-6; 15:3-4; 19:11-16).

John the Mystic Poet who has crafted a literary masterpiece of complexity and subtlety. You will be amazed at what John has crafted, inspired by the Spirit of God, and filled with a vision of heaven opened.

John the Exile who shares in the suffering of faith, since he was a faithful witness for Jesus. He speaks out of his own Christian faith and experience. He is brother, companion, and fellow worshipper of the Lamb.

Be alert to all the experiences John has through the book.