

Discipleship Bible Study Revelation Studies

Lesson One:

As a new believer you may find yourself drawn to the book of Revelation. You will naturally want to know what God is going to do next. Just as when you read a book, sometimes you'll find the suspense too much to bear. What do you do? You skip to the closing chapter of the book to get a peek at how it all ends. Go ahead. Take a peek! Read Revelation 21 and 22. You'll find those chapters reassuring and exciting.

Often, the infant Christian becomes overwhelmed and confused by what he reads in Revelation. This need not be the case. The goal of these studies together will be to give you a foundation upon which to build your understanding of God's prophetic truths in Revelation.

A sizable portion of Scripture deals with the future. In reality it is pre-written history. We call it Bible prophecy. There are prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the Old Testament (i.e., Genesis 15:13). There are prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in the New Testament (i.e., Isaiah 7:14). There are prophecies in the New Testament that were fulfilled in the New Testament (i.e., John 2:18-22). But there are prophecies in the Old and New that must yet be fulfilled. Jesus had these in mind when He said, "These things must come to pass" (Matthew 24:6).¹

The word Revelation means "unveiling." God intended for John to communicate to us literal events long before we see the events occur. "It is a book of real history (real events with real people) written ahead of time by the One outside of time."² Someone has said, "The Book of Revelation isn't hard to understand – it's hard to believe!" For that reason many want to allegorize it and explain away the literal interpretations. You don't have to be confused by the study of Revelation. If fact, if you approach Revelation the same as you would study any period of history you will come away with a great appreciation for His story.

Approach Revelation as history? Why do that? Well, God revealed to John the apostle a prerecording of history. Prophecy in the Bible is simply prerecorded history. The key to understanding revelation is to apply the tools you would use in studying a history of civilization.

Apply these five tools to your study:

1. Gather accurate interpretive information.
2. Identify the main characters active in that history.
3. Develop an event time-line.
4. Assemble details of the critical events.
5. Determine answers to the important questions you find along the way.

¹Bob Shelton, *God's Prophetic Blueprint* (Bob Shelton, 1985), preface.

²Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1983), 20.

Lesson Two:

Interpretational guidelines:

1. Determine your mode of interpretation.

Various methods of interpreting Revelation have been used through the ages. Most of those methods are ineffective because they miss the point of John's revelation. If you choose the wrong mode of interpretation, you choose to miss the point of the book.

Wrong approaches to Revelation:

* Past Interpretation: This method assigns all the problems and events to the early church. It assumes that the readers were early church believers and that they simply needed encouragement to endure the persecutions of the Roman government. "The symbolic expressions in the book represent devices to encourage the church throughout its trials under the imperial Roman Empire, and were deliberately intended to prevent the book from being understood by any who were not believers."³

* Allegorical Interpretation: This approach views Revelation as a series of allegories which were merely meant to encourage persecuted believers in troubled times. It was viewed as a means of showing believers that good would eventually triumph over evil.

Right interpretive approach to Revelation:

* Grammatical, literary, historical interpretation: This approach takes the normal grammatical use of words, applies the literary elements of figurative and symbolic language, and accepts the chronological order given in the book.

³Ibid, 25.

2. Apply the rules of grammar and literature.

Review parts of speech.

What is a simile? How can you identify a simile? A simile is introduced by the word *like*. Read Revelation 1:13-16. How many similes can you locate?

Look up the definition of a hyperbole?
Can you locate a hyperbole in Revelation 18:5?

Look up the definition of a personification?
Can you locate personification in Revelation?

You can imagine the difficulty John must have faced attempting to explain to first century believers what he was observing in post twentieth century developments. Often he would have to resort to figures of speech to describe his point. Yet what he saw was very real, very literal. His allegories had literal meanings.

The heavy symbolic content of much of prophetic literature makes interpreting prophecy difficult. It also has caused many Bible students to assume that because some things in prophecy are symbolic, everything in prophetic passages is to be taken symbolically. This, however, is an error. If we follow the basic hermeneutical principle of normal, grammatical interpretation, then we should understand prophetic literature . . . in their normal, ordinary-literal sense, unless there is reason for taking the material figuratively or symbolically.⁴

3. Use the whole of Scripture to interpret the difficult. [Daniel, I Thessalonians, Matthew, etc.]

In order to understand Revelation you will need to refer often to other Bible passages such as Daniel, I Thessalonians, and Matthew 24 and 25. Often people take one passage out of context and then try to make the rest of the Bible fit that interpretation. The rule should be to use the rest of the Bible to limit and explain the interpretation of a difficult passage.

4. Study the context.

Who is speaking? Who is being addressed? What is the purpose?

5. Determine to distinguish between the Jews and the Church.

God loves both, but deals with each one distinctively according to His divine plan.

⁴Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991) 243.

Many pieces of the prophetic puzzle become misplaced and confused when this distinction is not made.

Lesson Three:

Revelation Study Main characters study

Look up the following passages and identify the key characters in Revelation.

1. Jesus Christ

Names: Alpha and Omega, Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Root of David, Lamb, Almighty, "Was, is, is to Come," Prince, Child, Son of God, Lord God, Lord, Faithful and Truth, the Word of God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords

	Description		Activities
1:5	Faithful witness	1:6	He hath made us kings and priests unto God...
1:14	Head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow His eyes were as a flame of fire	1:16	has the keys of hell and death
1:15	Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword countenance as the sun shineth	4:1	Showed John things to come
1:18	Alive for ever	5:2	Opens the book, opens the seals
4:8	Holy, Holy, Holy	3:21	Overcame
4:11	Worthy of worship		
22:5	The light in Heaven		

2 The Devil

Names: Apollyon, Old Serpent, Abaddon, The Angel of the Bottomless Pit, Great Red Dragon, Devil, Satan

	Description		Activities
9:11	King over the scorpions released	12:9	Deceiveth the whole world
13:4	World will worship the dragon	12:4	Ready to devour "Israel"-- the woman
12:9	Deceiver	12:7	Fought against angels
		12:9	Cast out
		12:13	Persecutes the woman
		20:2	Bound and cast into the bottomless pit

3. The Two Witnesses

(Quite possibly Moses and Elijah or Elijah and Enoch)

	Description		Activities
11:3	Power from God	11:3	prophesied 1260 days
	Clothed in sackcloth	11:4	Standing before the God of this earth
11:4	Two olive trees	11:5	Fire proceedeth out of their mouth...
11:4	Two candle sticks	11:7	Beast overcomes them, kills them
11:6	Power to stop rain	11:11	Raised from the dead... all shall see
11:6	Power to cause bloody water and plagues	11:12	Raptured

4. Beast out of the bottomless pit

(Be careful not to confuse the beast with the seven heads and ten horns beast in Revelation 17. The beast in Revelation 17 refers to an economic power.)

The Anti Christ

	Description		Activities
13:2	Like a leopard	11:7	Killed the two witnesses
13:3	wounded head... healed	13:2	Given power by the dragon for 42 months
13:5	mouth to speak great things, blasphemies	13:6	Opened his mouth in blasphemy
		13:7	War with the saints
		13:7	Power over all

5. The False Prophet

Names: Beast with two horns like a lamb

Beast out of the earth

	Description		Activities
13:11	Spake as a dragon	13:14	Causes all to worship the 1 st beast
13:12	exerciseth power	13:14	Makes an image of the 1 st beast
13:13	doeth great wonders	13:15	Kills any who don't worship the image.
13:14	deceiveth	13:18 16:2	Activates the 666 mark of the beast
		20:10	Ends up in the lake of fire and brimstone

6. The woman in chapter 12

	Description		Activities
12:1	Clothed with the sun	12:2,5	Delivered a son who would rule the nations
12:1	Crown of twelve stars	12:6	Fled into the wilderness

		12:13	Persecuted by the dragon
		12:14	Given two wings of a great eagle to fly into the wilderness [3/12 years]
		12:15	Serpent tries to flood her out

7. 144,000

	Description		Activities
14:1	In Zion	14:2	Have the Father's name written in their foreheads
14:3	Sang a new song	14:3	Sang
14:4	Have the Father's name		
14:4	Not defiled, virgins		
14:4	Follow the lamb		
14:4	Redeemed from among men		
14:5	No guile in their mouth, no fault		

8. Babylon

Names: Mystery, Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots

(Be careful to distinguish between the Mystery Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17 and literal Babylon mentioned in Revelation 18)

	Description		Activities
17:5	mother of harlots, abominations	17:7	Beast (economic) carries her
17:18	that great city	17:18	reigns over the kings of the earth
		17:16	Tens horns shall hate the whore

9. Four and Twenty Elders

	Description		Activities
4:4	Clothed in white raiment	4:4	sit on thrones
4:5	lightnings and thundering and voices	5:14 11:16 19:4	Fall down and worship
5:8	Had harps and gold vials full of ordours (worship)	5:9	They sang a new song

Lesson Four:
 Develop an event time-line.
 Revelation Time Line Overview

The two witnesses are murdered at the 3 ½ year mid point of the tribulation.
 The 144,000 apparently are saved and begin to witness near the beginning of the tribulation.
 The temple will be constructed during the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation.
 The Battle of Armageddon is at the end of the tribulation.
 The image of the beast in the temple occurs near the 3 ½ year point of the tribulation.
 1st Gap– The 70th week, or the Tribulation, begins when Anti-Christ signs his peace treaty with many nations guaranteeing Israel’s peace (Daniel 9:27). It does not begin at the rapture. Thus, there is a gap between the rapture and the beginning of the 70th week-Tribulation.
 2nd gap– Another gap of 75 days will take place between the close of the 70th week (Tribulation) and the beginning of the Kingdom reign (Daniel 12:11,12).

Lesson Five:

Read the following passages and assemble details of critical events.

Seven Churches

Church	Passage	Christ Revealed	Problem	Warning	Promise/Reward
Ephesus	2:1-7	The one who holds the Pastors in His hand and He walks in the midst of the churches	They left their first love	They would be removed	Abundant living "Eat of the Tree of Life"
Smyrna	2:8-11	The First and Last Eternal Understands all mystery			Not hurt by the second death; Crown of life
Pergamos	2:12-17	The Sword of Truth which will judge the church and its members	Balaam's attitude Compromise	God's quick wrath "I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth"	Satisfied— manna Cleansing--white stone
Thyatira	2:18-29	The Son of God who has knowledge and will judge their sin	Jezebel's attitude Church bosses	Consequences for sin.	Power over nations Given the Morning Star
Sardis	3:1-6	The One who has the 7 spirits of God and the seven stars. He controls the Holy Spirit and His Servants the pastors	Men pleasers The life was gone out, a dead church.	Quick judgement unexpectedly	Saved and Secure Clothed in White "I will confess his name before my Father"
Philadelphia	3:7-13	He is the Holy, True, and the Sovereign One who opens various opportunities for his Church	Hypocrisy "Say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie"	Humiliation	Strength and durability "Will I make a pillar in the temple of my God"
Laodicea	3:14-22	He is the Real and True One	Materialism, Conceit, Lukewarm	Spued out! Shame	Opportunity to participate in the victory

Seven Seals Opened

First 3 ½ years of the Seven Year Tribulation

Seal	Passage	Description
One	6:1,2	White Horse Anti-Christ provides peace
Two	6:3,4	Red Horse War
Three	6:5,6	Black Horse Famine
Four	6:7,8	Pale Horse Death
Five	6:9-11	666 Vision of Martyrs killed for their faith Persecution
Six	6:12-17	Catastrophic changes on earth Destruction
Seven	8:1-5	Silence in Heaven This fans out not to the seven trumpets which were to follow.

Seven Trumpets

Beginning of the second 3 ½ years of the seven year Tribulation

Trumpet	Passage	Description
One	8:2-7	Hail and Fire mingled with blood 1/3 of earth and trees and all grass burned (comet/ volcano?)
Two	8:8	1/3 of creatures in the sea destroyed/ sea became as blood (Meteorite?)
Three	8:10-13	Star, Wormwood, 1/3 of all fresh water destroyed (Chemical reaction?)
Four	8:12	Sun, Moon, Stars 1/3 darkened The day showed not for 1/3 of it "Woe, Woe, Woe"
Five	9:1-5	Bottomless pit opened/ smoke of a great furnace Locust 5 months of torture by scorpion stings
Six	9:13-21	Satan's Army 200 million 1/3 men slain by fire, smoke, brimstone
Seven	11:15-18	Earthquake 7000 die in Jerusalem War

Seven Bowls (Vials) Poured Out

End of the seven year Tribulation -- Unimaginable horrors

Bowl	Passage	Description
One	16:2	Grievous Sores
Two	16:3	Sea becomes like the blood of a dead man Everything in the sea dies
Three	16:4-7	Rivers turn to blood
Four	16:8,9	Sun's Scorching Heat Men blaspheme God/repented not
Five	16:10-11	Darkness The Beast's kingdom full of darkness Gnawed their tongues because of the pain.
Six	16:12-16	Euphrates dried up— parched land Armies of the Orient march toward Armageddon
Seven	16:17-21	

Lesson Six:

Determine answers to the important questions.

Andrew Blackwood said this about the study of prophecy, "In dealing with the future God's interpreter should pray for a sense of balance lest he strive to make clear what God has not yet revealed."⁵ There will be many questions in your study of Revelation that simply cannot be answered until you get to Heaven. However, a good student will seek to locate the answers to as many as possible while remaining true to a literal/grammatical/historical view of Revelation.

1. Who comes back with Christ in 19:14?

Who are the "Armies in Heaven"? Matthew 25:31 refers to all the holy angels returning with Christ. The Revelation 19:14 passage refers though to the righteous saints clothed in fine linen. Revelation 19:8 shows that the righteous saints will be the Armies of God!

2. What will be the responsibility of the church in the millennium?

The millennium is God's fulfilment of His promise to the nation of Israel. Christ will reign on David's throne. David will be a regent over Israel. The 12 apostles will rule over the 12 tribes. The church will be ruling over the affairs of men on earth just as they will rule over angels in eternity. Believers will probably have access (in their glorified bodies) to be present on the earth or in heaven. Saints will be on earth and have access to heaven.

3. Who will dwell in the New Jerusalem city in the eternal kingdom?

Hebrews 12:22-24 describes the church as being in the New Zion.

4. Who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11?

We do not know for sure, quite possibly Moses and Elijah because of their prayer to stop the rain and their ability to bring on plagues. These two were also the two Old Testament representatives at the Mount of Transfiguration. Others have suggested that Elijah and Enoch are the two witnesses because neither faced physical death. Still others believe the two witnesses may be two new ministers of God alive at that time.

5. Who are the 144,000?

The 144,000 are Jewish men who have not been married who are saved in the 70th week, or in the Tribulation. They are, according to Rev. 14:3, the firstfruits unto God during this tribulation. Apparently, there will be millions more, both Jews and Gentiles, saved during the tribulation. Many of those who are saved during the tribulation will be beheaded, they will be martyrs. However, the 144,000 will be sealed. Satan will not be able to touch them.

⁵From a conversation with Dr. Bob Shelton.

6. Who can be saved during the tribulation?

II Thessalonians 2:7-10 teaches that the Holy Spirit's convicting influence is removed at the rapture. Verse ten teaches that those who received not the love of the truth will be deceived by the Antichrist. Those who have had no intelligent opportunity to respond to the gospel apparently may still have opportunity to be saved during the tribulation.

7. Is the beast a computer?

The beast is definitely a man. However, the image of the beast could very well be a computer or some clone-computer combination.

8. Please, clarify whom the beasts are? Is there more than one?

zRevelation 13 reveals three beasts.

zRevelation 13:1-3 reveals the beast that came out of the sea having ten horns and ten crowns That beast is the same beast described the same way in the book of Daniel. The first beast mentioned in Revelation 13 refers to the Roman empire.

zRevelation 13:4-10 speaks of a beast who has been wounded to death and then healed. It was one of the heads from the beast out of the sea. This beast is the Antichrist. He quite possibly will come from Jewish decent; Orthodox Judaism will accept him as the Messiah.

zRevelation 13:11-18 refers to the false prophet beast. He is the beast that was beheld "coming up out of the earth." Some scholars indicate that "coming up out of the earth" refers to Israel and thus that the false prophet will have a Jewish background as well.

10. Is there a good way to gain a clear picture of whom Babylon is in Revelation?

zRevelation speaks of three Babylons.

zRevelation 16:12-21 describes the literal Babylon on the Euphrates.

zRevelation 17:4-12 describes a "Mystery" Babylon. This mystery Babylon refers to the Roman Catholic led ecumenicalism of the last days. The only city with seven mountains on which the Mystery Babylon sat is Rome.

zRevelation 18 describes the political Babylon. Apparently, the Anti-Christ and his ten other kings will turn against the Ecclesiastical Babylon at the midpoint of the tribulation and will hate her and make her desolate.

11. What is the battle of Gog and Magog? Is there a difference between the one mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and 39 and the one mentioned in Revelation 20?

Because of the reappearance at this point in Scripture of the striking names Gog and Magog, it is not surprising that many commentators interpret this section of Revelation 20 as the same event narrated in Ezekiel 38 and 39. However, the two have practically nothing in common except the names. In Ezekiel the armies attacking Israel are from several specifically named countries surrounding Israel; in Revelation, they come from all over the earth. In Ezekiel they are destroyed by a great earthquake and volcanic eruption; in Revelation by fire from God out of heaven. In Ezekiel, the destruction is followed by a seven-month burial and a seven-year bonfire of weapons. In Revelation, it is followed by the renovation of the earth and the last judgment.⁶

⁶Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, (El Cajon, CA: Institute for Creation Research, 1983), 422.

