

BIBLE OUTLINE: REVELATION

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST JESUS

The *Revelation of Christ Jesus* is an apocalyptic, prophetic letter written to New Testament Churches in the area of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). The contents of this letter include symbolism, metaphor, analogy, and Scriptural references that invite the reader to be aware of their current situation. In response to these circumstances, they are given calls to repentance, resistance, and being faithful witnesses to the Lamb, worshippers of God, and those who wait in confidence for the promises of God to unfold.

THE AUTHOR

The author of Revelation was known as John the Revelator. He was on the island of Patmos, most likely because of persecution for proclaiming the Gospel of Christ Jesus. During his time there, he received a vision in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and was commanded to write and send this vision to seven churches in Asia Minor.

IS THIS BOOK ABOUT THE END TIMES?

The *Revelation of Christ Jesus* has been used in recent history to predict and speculate about the end times. There have been many fictional books written that reference *Revelation* in order to argue these points. Authors have claimed to predict the exact year Jesus would return (ex. *88 Reasons Jesus is Coming Back in 1988*) while speakers and pastors have speculated on what the mark of the beast is from Revelation 13 (credit cards, vaccines, etc.). In fact, many speakers even correlate the images of the creatures in *Revelation* to various leaders throughout history (presidents, popes, etc.). It is clear that, after many years of false predictions and fear-based speculations, a more faithful reading of *Revelation* is focused on Jesus. As we approach the text, we must put aside our pre-conceived predictions of the future, and replace them with eyes fixed on the Lamb of God who calls all to repent, to resist the beastly creatures and their marks, and to remain faithful to His ways, knowing that in the end: Jesus wins, the empire falls, and God will make all things new. We pray this outline helps provide you with the resources to live according to these truths.

THE GENRE

The Revelation of Christ Jesus is an **apocalyptic, prophetic letter** written to New Testament Churches in the area of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

Apocalyptic

Revelation 1:1 describes the writings as an “Ἀποκάλυψις” or “apocalypsis”. This word is used to describe divine revelation to humanity of things that were previously hidden or unknown. In the Bible, this type of writing is often found in the Old Testament prophets, and it's made up of certain characteristics:

- Eschatological: Apocalyptic literature is concerned with the end times and the final destiny of humanity.
- Pessimistic: Apocalyptic literature often expresses a pessimistic view of the present.
- Imminent: Apocalyptic literature treats the final events as imminent.
- Revelatory: Apocalyptic literature is a genre of revelatory literature, where a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being.
- Linear view of history: Apocalyptic literature emphasizes a linear view of history with a definitive endpoint.
- Divine intervention: Apocalyptic literature predicts divine intervention to establish a new world order.
- Resurrection and final judgment: Apocalyptic literature often includes concepts of resurrection and final judgment.

Examples of Apocalyptic literature in Scripture:

- Isaiah 24-27; 33-35
 - Judgment on Nations and Salvation for God's People
- Jeremiah 33:14-26
 - Restoration and Salvation of God's People
- Ezekiel 37-48
 - Restoration and Salvation of God's People
- Joel
 - Restoration and Salvation of God's People
- Zechariah 12-14
 - Judgment on Nations and Salvation for God's People
- Daniel 7-12
 - Four Beasts (Kingdoms: Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) that will oppress God's people, but there is hope of judgment on these nations and the restoration/salvation of God's people through the coming of the “Ancient of Days”.
- Matthew 24-25
 - Destruction of the Temple and Parables about Christ's Return
- Mark 13
 - Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the Times
- Revelation

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Prophetic

- Revelation 1:3 describes the writings as a prophecy. In the Bible, prophetic literature is a collection of messages from prophets that are believed to be communications from God to humans. These messages are often poetic and are characterized by a focus on God's interest in human affairs, specifically calling them out of their sinful ways into righteousness that comes through the promise of salvation. Prophetic literature is comprised of the following characteristics:
 - **Dramatic monologue:** Prophetic literature is a form of dramatic monologue, where the prophet addresses an audience.
 - **Oracles and prophetic speeches:** Prophetic literature includes oracles, which are direct speech from God, and prophetic speeches, where the prophet speaks on God's behalf.
 - **Focus on salvation:** Prophetic literature often includes announcements of salvation and a good future.
 - **Emphasis on God's interest in humans:** Prophetic literature demonstrates God's interest in human activities and endeavors.
 - **Messages of judgment and restoration:** Prophetic literature often includes messages of judgment and restoration, based on the Mosaic covenant.
 - **Messages of hope:** Prophetic literature can also include messages of hope, such as the promise of a future messianic king.

Repeated Themes from Prophetic Literature

- **Allusions to the Old Testament** - There are around 500 references to passages from the Old Testament used in the book of Revelation. Although not quoted directly, many of these passages are references from Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. These allusions are used to describe prophetic events in *Revelation*, and it is important to understand the passages used to interpret the symbols and visions. We **highly encourage** studying these passages for a more thorough understanding of *Revelation*.
- **The Day of the Lord** - This term is repeated throughout the Old Testament to represent God's judgment against evil and injustice. From the tower of Babel to Egypt to Israel and Judah to other nations, "the day" is a promised judgment from God toward those who rebel against Him. This also comes with the promise of restoration and salvation for His people through the work of His Spirit and His Messiah. The prophets used this term to point to the coming judgment on the nations that rebel against God and the promised salvation coming through the work of the Spirit. This happened for the people of the Old Testament, but it's also important to note that "the day" is fully seen through the work of Christ Jesus. He came to take "the day" upon Himself through His crucifixion and pour out salvation and His Spirit upon all who call on His name. This is seen in the Gospels and Acts, and continues to be witnessed today through God's ongoing saving grace at work in our world.

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Letter

- Revelation 1:1-6 explains that *Revelation* was a letter written from John to seven churches in Asia. The New Testament is made up of letters or epistles that were written by the eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and ministry to Christians. These letters were writings focused on answering questions, resolving issues, correcting doctrine, and exhorting/encouraging early Christ-followers to live and worship according to the Gospel of Jesus.
- New Testament letters were filled with important doctrinal statements and principles for the church to embrace and express. These letters were also written at certain times to specific people with very specific contexts and historical surroundings. We must read them with an understanding of this context in order to properly and faithfully interpret the Scripture's meaning.
- Revelation was written to the churches in Asia Minor (near modern-day Turkey). These churches included: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Please see the map below for a reference point of their historical locations.
- Each church was under Roman rule and was given specific instructions for its own context, as well as invited to understand and apply the message of the vision that Christ Jesus showed to John.



THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Revelation was written during a specific time in history. Understanding the historical context of this letter (and all Scriptural writings) is of the utmost importance to interpret its content faithfully.

Many scholars believe that Revelation was written sometime shortly before 70 AD, while some others believe it was written between 81 and 96 AD. This is important because of the Roman-Jewish war between 66 and 73 AD, during which the Romans attacked and conquered Jerusalem. The Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, killing and enslaving tens of thousands in the process. If the letter was written before or after these events, it would provide significant insights into its interpretation.

Whether it was before or after 70 AD, almost all scholars agree that it was written during the reign of the Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire was founded in 625 BC and fell in 476 AD. This vast empire spanned most of Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa. It was one of the most influential empires in history, achieving incredible wealth and power.

The Roman Empire was oppressive to any people who were not part of its empire. They offered benefits to those who lived under the “pax Romana,” or the peace of Rome. This “peace” largely unified the Mediterranean world, but if this “peace” was not received, it led to experiencing the massive might of the Roman military force.

The Roman military force led to incredible economic power and “dominion” over other nations. The Roman Empire was focused on accruing wealth by any means necessary, and one of the largest values of the empire was in its vast quantities of luxury goods. Ultimately, this led to devaluing people, resources, creation, and materials through the rapid building, consuming, and enslaving, partnered with their greed.

The Roman Empire was fixated on the Emperor, and many saw the Emperor as a deity (god). This was demonstrated most vividly through the cult of the Emperor that worshipped those in power as ‘lord of lords’ and ‘king of kings’. Such phrases as “god” and “son of god” were used to describe those in power and those next in line to the throne.

Emperors dressed extravagantly and luxuriously, demanded worship and adoration, and violently oppressed and opposed any groups that stood in the way of such acclaim. The affluent Romans also chose lifestyles of opulence as a way of celebrating their own image and being seen as elite.

Because of all these realities, Christians and Jews who claimed to worship One True God were hated and persecuted for their faith and claims in Yahweh being Lord and/or Jesus being Lord. This led directly to the martyrdom of those who remained “faithful witnesses” to proclaiming Jesus as Lord.

ROMAN CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTIONS

Because *Revelation* was written to the church during the reign of the Roman Empire, it would be helpful to ask, “How does one describe Rome to their readers with a biblical background and understanding?” Throughout *Revelation*, many biblical terms are used to describe those who are part of the Kingdom of God and those who are part of “Babylon”.

Babylon

Babylon was not just a way to describe the nation, but the idea of nations that rebelled against God and oppressed His people. Just like Egypt enslaving Israel, Assyria exiling God’s people, and then, Babylon exiling Judah, the idea of “Babylon” is seen through these oppressive nations and acts. In this same way, the readers of *Revelation* would understand Rome as Babylon in their context due to the oppressive acts towards God’s people and the marks they portrayed through their empire.

Scot McKnight defines Babylon in his book *Revelation for the Rest of Us*, writing, “Babylon means military might, exploiter of the economy, and oppressor of the people of God.”

He then goes on to give seven characteristics of Babylon and how Rome matches these marks. Babylon is characterized by being:

- **Anti-God** - Babylon is a description of nations and empires that have deified, worshipped, and made idols out of their kings/rulers.
- **Opulent** - Babylon is clothed in luxury, obsessed with consumerism and entertainment, and indulgent in only the finest of goods. These things are pursued no matter the cost or impact on those around them.
- **Murderous** - Babylon is marked by wars, terror, and murder. Specifically, Rome was known for the “Pax Romana” and would wage war on all those who would not receive its “peace”.
- **Image** - Babylon is desirous of the approval of others through the immense image that could be seen through their sciences, engineering, architecture, theaters, entertainment, victories, leaders, philosophers, etc.
- **Militaristic** - Babylon is known for its military power. Rome was renowned and feared for their military might. The victories of emperors and their gods were printed on their currency and declared across the “world” for others to hear and fear.
- **Economically Exploitative** - Babylon accumulated vast amounts of wealth through the injustices of exploitation. Although they opened large trade routes, they also destroyed traders' boats, enslaved incredible amounts of people, and utilized their military might to oppress others and steal their resources.
- **Arrogant** - Babylon is arrogant. The empire is marked by boasting in its power, wealth, image, and feats. Specifically, Rome was known for self-adulation from emperors, focus on human accomplishments, and false humility in themselves and what they “offered” to others.

It is clear that Babylon is used to describe Rome for the original readers of *Revelation*, and it would be important for us to consider how they were called to resist the ways of Babylon and instead, follow the ways of the Lamb.

HOW DO WE INTERPRET REVELATION?

Historically, there have been four major interpretations of the book of Revelation:

1. **Preterism** views the book as partially / fully fulfilled prophecies (i.e., Daniel refers to events during the 7th century). Most preterists believe Revelation is about events in the first century and is fulfilled except for chapters 21-22.
2. **Historicism** sees Biblical prophecies and Revelation as descriptive words about persons, nations, or events throughout history.
3. **Futurism** is a view that can draw parallels with historicism, but mainly looks to prophecy as unfulfilled and something that will happen in the future. The two largest viewpoints from futurism are described as dispensationalism and premillennialism.
 - **Dispensationalism** is a theological framework for interpreting the Bible that maintains that history is divided into multiple ages called "dispensations" in which God interacts with his chosen people in different ways. These dispensations are:
 - Genesis 1-3: Creation/Innocence
 - Genesis 3-8: Flood/Conscience
 - Genesis 9-11: Human Government
 - Genesis 12 - Exodus 19: Patriarchs
 - Exodus 20 - Acts: Law
 - Church Age - Rapture: Grace/Church
 - Revelation 20:4-6: Millennial Kingdom
 - Revelation 20-22: Eternal State

For dispensationalists, they view the "Millennial Kingdom" through these interpretations:

- **Premillennialism** is the belief that Christ's return will inaugurate a literal 1,000-year earthly kingdom. His return will coincide with a great tribulation, during which the resurrection of God's people who have died will happen, and the rapture of God's people still living will happen. Then there will be 1,000 years of peace and Christ's reign, then Satan will be thrown into the Abyss.
 - **Pre-tribulation Rapture** - two stages of Christ's return: a 7-year period of tribulation, at the beginning of this, true Christians will be raptured, 7 years of Antichrist ruling, then Christ returns to defeat the Antichrist and establish peace
 - **Mid-tribulation Rapture** - the belief that Christ will return 3.5 years into the 7 years of tribulation, Antichrist/abomination of desolation (Daniel language) puts an end to the temple and demands worship. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 used to see this (last trumpet).
 - **Post-tribulation Rapture** - Christ will not return until the end of the tribulation and rapture the true Christians upon His return and inauguration of the millennium.
 - **Post-millennialism** is the belief that Christ's return will be after 1,000 years. Christ has established His kingdom through His preaching and work, and the Church will advance the Gospel enough for His return.
 - **A-millennialism** is the rejection of the belief in a literal, 1,000-year-long reign on earth of Jesus. Amillennialists see the numbers of Revelation as symbols and believe that Christ's return will be permanent reigning in the new heaven and earth.
4. **Idealism** views the prophetic books as spiritual, allegorical, and symbolic. The idealist believes Revelation is a book of symbols (i.e., the beast is social injustices like materialism, imperialism, exploitation, etc.). This view doesn't see prophecies as things to be fulfilled but rather as symbols to be interpreted.

SO, HOW DO WE READ AND INTERPRET REVELATION?

READ IT

This letter was written to be read aloud to the original churches that received it. In fact, the author says, “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 (Rev. 1:3).” In order to interpret *The Revelation of Christ Jesus* must first be read in its entirety. We must read the book fully, and we must read the book with the people of God. Many people get lost by reading selected passages disconnected from the entirety of the letter, and many people get stuck trying to understand it by reading it alone. Let us read this letter together and be blessed as we hear it and take it to heart.

The Lens of Jesus

The Scriptures are a narrative that is fulfilled in Christ Jesus. This means that the Bible is a story, and it’s only understood through how it all points to Jesus. *Revelation* is included in this narrative, and we must bring this “lens of Jesus” to our reading, understanding, and application of the letter. After all, the letter is called *The Revelation of Christ Jesus*. He should be the lens through which we interpret its meaning.

Genre and Context

First, we must recognize that Revelation was written in the first century (AD/CE) to Christians in Rome. Second, we must recognize it was a letter, written by John to these Christians and churches. Thirdly, we must recognize it is both prophetic and apocalyptic in its genre, imitating and quoting from Old Testament prophets. Fourthly, we must recognize that *Revelation* is about Christ Jesus and His call to His Church then and now to repent of our sinful ways, to resist the markers of the beasts, dragons, and harlots representing evil and empire, and to remain faithful to God by following the Lamb always.

Application

The goal of Revelation is not to predict times or dates, which Jesus says nobody will know, but rather to examine our own lives, prophetically challenge the beastly markers of empire around and within us, and faithfully worship God alone, giving witness to our eternal hope in God and His promise of making all things new.

NEXT STEPS

1. Read Revelation in its entirety with a group of Christ followers.
2. Make observations about the themes, Scriptural references, symbols, and message of the letter.
3. Talk about these observations and study them with your community.
4. How would your group summarize the message of *Revelation*?
5. What does this message mean for Christ followers today?
6. Write down your main takeaways and commit to living them out in faithfulness to God.

READING REVELATION

Use the space below to write down your observations as you read the *Revelation of Christ Jesus* in its entirety.

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REVELATION OUTLINE AND OVERVIEW

Outline of Revelation

- Revelation 1 – Revelation of Christ Jesus
- Revelation 2-3 – Letters to the Churches
- Revelation 4-6 – Throne Room and the Lamb
- Revelation 6-11 – Seals, Trumpets, and the Temple and Covenant of God.
- Revelation 12-19 - Visions of Judgment
 - 12-13 - Woman, Dragon, and Beasts
 - 14 - Judgment and Salvation
 - 15-16 - Seven Bowls of God's Judgment
 - 17-19 - Judgment on Babylon
- Revelation 19-22 - God's Victory
 - 19 - Rider on White Horse
 - 20 - Judgment and Defeat of Enemy
 - 21-22 - New Creation

REVELATION 1 OVERVIEW

Revelation 1 – Revelation of Christ Jesus

- This is a prophetic letter written by John to seven churches in Asia Minor with a message from Christ Jesus that speaks to what has come, what is, and what will be.
- John is writing about a revelation made known to him about Christ Jesus, inviting the readers to interpret the message.
- The initial call in chapter 1 is to recognize Christ's power to bring all people into His redemptive work and empower them as faithful witnesses who carry His testimony, message, and word as He does.

Important Symbols: Please note the highly symbolic, metaphorical language used all throughout the first chapter.

- Seven Stars - 'angels'/messengers of the churches, Rev. 1:20
- Seven Lampstands - Churches and Universal Church, Zechariah 4:1-14, Rev. 1:20
- Son of Man and His Clothing - Symbols from Daniel 3, 7, 10

Important Scriptural References: Please also note how Revelation is full of Scriptural references.

- Zechariah 4:1-14 - Prophetic word to Israel that the rebuilding of their temple will come through the leadership of Joshua and Zerubbabel. But it will not come if this work is done purely through political maneuvering, but rather it will come only by dependence upon the Spirit of the Lord.
- Daniel 3, 7, & 10 and Zechariah 12 - Prophetic words about a coming Son of Man, referring to Christ Jesus, who offers salvation to all peoples.

Important Notes:

- Fulfilled in Jesus - Please note how the Scriptural references all point to and/or are fulfilled in Christ.

REVELATION 2-3

Revelation is written to the churches in Asia Minor (Turkey). These churches include:

- Ephesus: The first church, located along a trade route. One of the largest cities in the ancient world. Filled with temples for emperors and a temple to the goddess Artemis. They are commended for their hard work and perseverance, but also reprimanded for losing their first love. This points to either going back to loveless legalism and/or pagan worship practices. They are encouraged for not going along with the Nicolaitan belief (Gnostic). The call was for them to repent, and the promise was the tree of life.
- Smyrna: Now known as Izmir. A very large city just south of Ephesus. Much like Ephesus, there were many pagan worship temples for gods and emperors. The Church was also surrounded by Jewish people (synagogue of satan) slandering Christians, leading to great persecution from Rome. This led to their poverty, which is mentioned in the text. Mention of the devil putting them in prison is most likely attributed to the local magistrates who were responding to the claims about the Christian montheists worshipping another Lord. But the persecution is only brief, and the call is for them to be faithful, even unto death (martyrdom). The promise is for them not to be hurt by the second death and wear the crown of life.
- Pergamum: A great city filled with much pagan idolatry. These practices included disgusting and regular burning of sacrificial victims to various deities. This is a reference to satan's throne or where he lives, being a metaphor of these groups and connected persecutions. They have stayed faithful, like Antipas, but they have also given in to false teachings and compromise as part of the Church life here. This is seen through the mention of Balaam (an OT figure who tried to get others to turn from God). They have also given in to the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Gnostic belief - secret belief, namely that Jesus was not fully God and human). Their call is to repent, and their promise is to receive hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it.
- Thyatira: Similar to Pergamum, Thyatira was a tolerant church following false teachings and prophets. This location was known for its trade guilds and especially those who made luxury goods (remember Babylon markers). Christ knows their love, faith, service, and works; even works they are doing more than at first. But they have tolerated "Jezebel," which is a symbol for those advocating for compromise in the pagan practices of the first-century world. This "type" is used with allegory to Jezebel from the Old Testament, who was a seductive, manipulative, and idolatrous queen, pulling people away from Yahweh and pushing them into pagan worship. The practices are specifically mentioned as sexual immorality and participating in pagan worship traditions, such as sacrifice. The call was for them not to commit adultery with her and to repent. This is done by not giving in to the false teachings or satan's secrets, but through repentance and faithfulness to do God's will to the end. The promise is that the one with the iron scepter will give authority to rule over the nations with Him.

REVELATION 2-3

- Sardis: Sardis is near Ephesus and connected to many trade routes. It was very wealthy, well guarded as a citadel, very boastful (remember Babylon markers), and had a large Artemis temple (pagan idolatry). They have a “reputation” of being alive but are actually dead. The call is to wake up, repent, and not put on the soiled clothes (pagan practices, Babylon appearances), but rather to allow Christ to dress them in white (purity, victory, etc.). The promise as they turn is that they will be dressed in white and their names will never be blotted out of the book of life (not a mention of predestined names, but rather where our security is found in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection).
- Philadelphia: Positioned in a strategic location on trade routes. Agricultural economy that was impacted by earthquakes, emperors, and enemies (Rome, Jews – both Jews and Romans persecuted them). The church was mainly encouraged to stay faithful by the One who holds the key of David. This was a metaphor of God choosing a servant to take the place of a disgraced servant. In the same way, Jesus reveals Himself holding the key to salvation and opening the door to all through Himself. They were remaining faithful in not denying Christ’s name, and God will take care of those who persecute them. The promise is that they would become a pillar in God’s temple, and God’s name and city would be written upon them.
- Laodicea: A prosperous city on an important trade route. They were famous for their exports of black wool (luxurious garment, remember Babylon markers) and potable water. By the time the water would be transported to surrounding cities, it would be lukewarm (neither cool for drinking nor warm for healing). As a lukewarm church that was very wealthy but allowed its wealth to distract from its spiritual commitment and care for others, they were called to buy from Jesus the opposites of what they had. In other words, they are told their wealth is actual poverty, and they are in need of repentance. The promise is that the door would be opened to them and they would be welcomed to eat and sit with the one on the throne.

REVELATION 2-3 MAIN MESSAGE

Letters Summary and Message

- John wrote a series of seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor.
- Each letter is a message from Christ Jesus, revealing His supremacy and invitation to the churches to “endure” as a way of “conquering” the forces of sin and evil. Jesus shows them how to endure and conquer by repenting from sin, remaining faithful to God, and resisting the temptations of the empire around them. To those who “conquer”, they are given salvation. These blessings are described in Rev. 19-22 in the new heaven and new earth. Those not allowed in the holy city are described in Rev. 21 with the same sins that the churches are warned to turn from in Rev. 2-3.
- In other words, the letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3 call God’s people to repent of their sin, remain faithful to God, and to resist the ways of the world with the warning of death for those who fall away and the hope of God’s gift of salvation for those who endure.

The Throne Room

- The writing changes from letters to churches in Asia Minor to a vision of a throne room, the One at the center of the throne, and the Lamb of God.
- The vision is filled with imagery from many Old Testament books, including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.
- The symbols mentioned point to the centrality of God, His power, glory, and splendor, the everlasting nature of God, and the connected eternal worship of God by all created beings.
- This vision centers the rest of the letter of Revelation in the truth of who God is and invites the readers to see the message through His eternal glory.

The Scroll and the Lamb

- In chapter 5, the vision depicts God holding a scroll with seven wax seals, symbolizing the scrolls of the Old Testament, including visions from the prophet Daniel. Their message was about how God's Kingdom would come on earth. It is revealed through three interconnected sets of 7 (seals, trumpets, bowls). As these visions are revealed, they show that earth and the empires on earth cannot bring about redemption, salvation, hope, or life for all of creation. Only the Lamb can bring about these promises.
- This is revealed through the Lamb being the only one able to open the scroll and reveal its contents. John hears "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" but sees the Lamb who was slain. This is the message being revealed: Jesus is not the militant lion-king coming with violence, but the bloody Lamb who is alive again. He alone can open the scroll and reveal the promised redemption of all things through His sacrificial love and power.
- When the Lamb opens the scroll, all of heaven and earth respond with endless worship. The Lamb, the One on the throne, and the Spirit are all worshipped forever. Carol Rotz comments that, "The actuality of universal worship lies in the future when all rebellion has ended. This vision portrays a prophetic certainty and anticipation of what will be finally accomplished."

Message

- In other words, the throne room in chapter 4 depicts God's centrality, and the scroll, Lamb, and endless worship of the Lamb in chapter 5 reveal God's promised redemption that can only take place through the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus. It is through His death and resurrection that He has inaugurated God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven and invites all of creation to respond to His saving work in the world.
- This message is revealed more thoroughly as the three sets of 7 are unpacked and the people of God are invited to respond to the warnings, judgments, and assurance of life in the Lamb.

REVELATION 6-11

Three Sets of Seven

- The next section of Revelation contains three sets of seven: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. Each set of seven depicts God's Kingdom and justice on earth.
- Some have interpreted these events to be literal and linear in sequence. Others have believed these to be messages about the time period during which the letter of Revelation was written. Because the three sets of seven are woven together (each seventh comes from the previous seventh) and because each set points to the same conclusion (God's judgment on evil and provision of salvation to His people) it is more likely that the messages are about the time during which this letter was written.
- This means we are invited not to read these visions as messages to decode with news reports from today or end times predictions, but rather as warnings against the ways of evil in the world, invitations for God's people to repent and resist these ways, and remain faithful to the Lamb who will bring about God's justice and redemption to creation.

Seven Seals

- John writes about how the Lamb opens the seven seals. When each seal is opened, an event takes place.
 - First Seal - Rider on White Horse with Bow Going to Conquer
 - Second Seal - Rider on Red Horse with Sword Going to "Take Peace"/Start War
 - Third Seal - Rider on Black Horse with Scales in Hands Going to Bring Famine
 - Fourth Seal - Rider on Pale Horse, Riding with Death, Going to Bring Death
 - Fifth Seal - Martyrs before God's Throne asking, "How long will God refrain from judging the earth?"
- NOTE: Zechariah 1 contains a prophetic message that God gave through Zechariah about God bringing judgment on the nations oppressing God's people, offering them salvation and restoration. This word is depicted through a picture of four horsemen who ride red, white, brown, and black horses, going into the earth and reporting false security. The message then was about how God called Persia to deliver God's people from Babylon, but Persia became "Babylon" in their false security, and now God was going to bring judgment upon them and mercy upon Jerusalem (God's people). In the middle of this vision, an angel of the Lord asks God "How long?" before He brings mercy upon God's people, and God gives them the comforting word of judgment on their enemies and mercy on them.
 - Revelation Context - If God spoke this vision through Zechariah concerning Persia (oppressors) and God's people, what does this have to do with God's people and those oppressing them (Rome) in the first century?

REVELATION 6-11

Seven Seals Continued

- Sixth Seal - The “Day of the Lord”
 - In the Old Testament, “the day” is a metaphor for the judgment of other nations oppressing God’s people (and on God’s people if they are in sin) and the hope of the restoration/salvation of God’s people through a Messiah/Anointed One and the working of His Spirit. This is fulfilled in Christ Jesus: The Promised Messiah/Anointed One who comes and takes “the day” upon Himself (Passover Lamb). He conquers evil, Babylon, etc., through laying down His life and inviting all to receive His victory by resisting evil/empire/Babylon and living in the life of the Lamb who was slain.
 - Isaiah 2 (overthrowing of idolatry and oppression by God) and Joel 2 are highly referenced in this description of judgment on kings, nations, and people who oppose God and God’s people.
- Pause in the Vision: “Who is able to stand?” is answered with the next vision
 - Revelation 7 - The Angel of the Lord comes with the mark/seal of the Lord that will be given to God’s servants. John hears a military census (144,000), but when he looks, he SEES a group that cannot be numbered made up of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. Just like when he hears the Lion but sees the Lamb, in both cases, there is the surprising fulfillment through Jesus, the slain Lamb. It’s because of the redemption that this group of people receives that they are able to stand before God. And they are marked not as an army to fight in the way of the world that is receiving judgment, but as the people of God marked by the blood of the Lamb that overcomes by suffering and bearing witness to the way of the Lamb, Christ Jesus.
 - Who are these multitudes?
 - Those who come out of the “tribulation.”
 - Daniel 12 - speaks of a time of great distress, but God delivering those whose names are written in the book of life. This is a prophetic word about the Syrian King Antiochus, Rome, and the destruction of Jerusalem, and future empires at the time of Jesus’ return.
- Seventh Seal - Silence in Heaven, Golden Censer of Incense (Saint’s Prayers) cast on earth bringing “the day” to its completion.
- NOTE: The repetition of themes from the Old Testament depicts a day of judgment, warning God’s people and other nations. However, these warnings are immediately followed by another set of seven: the trumpets. It is extremely important to read how the rest of the vision unfolds before assigning interpretation to the text.

The Seven Trumpets

- The vision shifts to seven trumpets being sounded. At each blow of the trumpet, a judgment takes place, part of the “day” that is being revealed. The trumpets sounded are as follows:
 - First Trumpet - Hail and Fire fall on earth. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the earth, trees, and grass are burned up.
 - Second Trumpet - Blood - a mountain was thrown into the seas. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sea turns into blood, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sea creatures die, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ships on the waters are destroyed.
 - Third Trumpet - Poison Water - a great star called Wormwood fell into the rivers and springs, causing the waters to turn bitter and killing those who drank from the waters.
 - Fourth Trumpet - Darkness - $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sun, moon, and stars were struck and turned dark. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the day and night were without light.
 - Fifth Trumpet - Locusts - a star falls to earth and is given a key to unlock a pit filled with locusts. These locusts were given the power to sting people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.
 - Sixth Trumpet - Once again, a trumpet is sounded, and a depiction of four horsemen is described, repeating the imagery from the first four seals and from Zechariah 1.
- **NOTE: The first five trumpets bear a remarkable resemblance to the plagues sent onto Egypt in Exodus 7-11. These plagues were sent as judgments against Egypt for enslaving God’s people, and were interspersed with opportunities for repentance. Ultimately, Egypt did not repent.**
- John then reveals something significant in Revelation 9:20-21. He wrote, “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality, or their thefts.”
- In other words, even after the plagues, humanity did not repent—just like Pharaoh and Egypt did not repent after their plagues.
- What’s the message?
 - **Judgment alone will not bring humble repentance.**
- Pause in the Vision (10:1-11:13)
 - An angel (described with throne room descriptions) comes from heaven with a scroll and tells John to take and eat the scroll
 - Reference to Ezekiel 3 - angel tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll and proclaim God’s Word to rebellious Israel.

REVELATION 6-11

The Seven Trumpets Continued:

- John eats the scroll and is told to prophesy. He sees two things:
 - **First:** Measure the temple, but leave out the courtyard (outer courts) for they will be trampled by the nations.
 - Reference to Zechariah 2 - promise of protection for Israel. Protection not found in the walls, but in the fire of the Lord, who will bring judgment on those who have plundered the people of God.
 - Many believe this to be a symbol of Jerusalem's destruction by the hands of Rome.
 - Others see this as a depiction of the "new" temple, which is God's people (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:4-5), and the encouragement that even if they are persecuted and externally defeated, it cannot take away their victory through the blood of the Lamb.
 - **Second:** John sees two prophetic witnesses (described with features of Moses and Elijah) to the nations.
 - Viewpoints:
 - Some believe these to be literal prophets who will declare at the end of days.
 - Others believe these to be symbols of God's people because the prophetic witnesses are referred to as "Lampstands" (Rev. 1:20 - churches). The church's role, therefore, is to call idolatrous nations and rulers back to the One True God.
 - The prophets are then attacked and killed by the beast from the abyss (reference to Daniel 7 - beasts who represent rulers and nations that attack the people of God). All of the earth rejoices because these prophetic voices were 'tormenting' them.
 - Their bodies lie in the "spiritual" city Jerusalem until God raises them from the dead, brings vindication on the city, and then the people respond in repentance and worship.
- Seventh Trumpet - The earth is shaken as God's Kingdom comes, and we are reminded of the covenantal faithfulness, power, and glory of God bringing about all these things.
- Tim Mackie offers this brilliant conclusion: "Let's pause and think about the story so far. God's warning judgments through the seals and the trumpets did not generate repentance among the nations. Now the lamb's scroll reveals the strange mission of his army. God's Kingdom is revealed when the nations see the Church imitating the sacrifice of the lamb and loving their enemies instead of killing them. It's God's mercy, shown through the Church, that will move the nations to repentance."

REVELATION 12-16

The message of the Lamb's scroll is revealed further through a series of seven visions. John refers to these visions as "signs" or "symbols", with each sign revealing a deeper understanding of the Lamb's scroll.

Revelation 12

- Using imagery from Genesis 3:15, the first sign is a vision of a dragon that attacks a woman and her seed or child
 - The Dragon represents the serpent
 - The Woman and her seed represent the Messiah and His people
- The Child is caught up to the throne of God, and the dragon follows to start a war, but the dragon and its army are defeated and thrown to earth.
- At this, a voice in heaven declares a beautiful and worshipful proclamation of praise about salvation and authority coming from the Lamb to overcome the dragon/serpent.
- ***But it's not through the military might that one might imagine, it's through this: "They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death."***
Rev. 12:11

In other words, the dragon, who represents the serpent/enemy of old, is overcome by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and by the ones who remain faithful to the Lord in the midst of persecution, hatred, and other influences from the dragon and his empires.

- We see this as the dragon is described as pursuing the woman and her offspring and trying to overtake her, but the woman is protected while the dragon goes off to persecute others.

Because of this, we can see that the call for the early Church readers and listeners of this letter is simple: the enemy is Satan. Although it would be easy for the early Church to label Rome and other empires as the enemy, the message of Revelation reveals that Satan is the enemy, and that Satan has been overcome through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So, now the Church's call is to receive this truth and live faithfully by resisting the influences of the dragon and its empires, even if it means hatred, death, and persecution. Why? Because even in their death, they are joining in the victory of the Slain and Risen Lamb, overcoming the enemies of the flesh, devil, and world. In fact, this is the way the people of God overcome the enemy: through faithfulness to the Lamb and loving all, including our enemies.

Revelation 13

- John then sees two beasts, which is similar to the symbolism of Daniel's animal/beast visions from Daniel 7-12. Daniel's visions were about specific leaders and nations that would come into power with certain descriptions about their force, economics, etc. But, ultimately, they would all be overcome by the promised Son of Man (Messiah). We know this to be Jesus, and we know that He overcomes not by military force or the marks of Babylon, but through His death and resurrection.
 - First, John sees a Beast from the Sea -
 - This is a symbol of a nation that was empowered by the dragon to conquer through violence and military power. This nation blasphemes against God, and its power is worshipped by all nations other than God's people.
 - God calls people to remain faithful even in the midst of violence and idolatry.
 - Second, John sees the Beast from the Land -
 - This is a symbol of a nation that is empowered to exalt the power of the beast from the sea, forcing all people to worship the image of this beast, or else they would be killed. This is done through propaganda and economic exploitation that is described as the mark of the beast on one's forehead or hand, and its number is 666.

The Mark of the Beast -

- As an Old Testament reference, the mark of the beast stands opposite the mark of God's people through the "Shema". God's people were to center their entire being around loving and worshipping God alone in their thoughts (foreheads) and actions (hands). The nations described by the beasts demand their own mark of allegiance.
 - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."
Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The Symbol/Number of 666 -

- John was writing to an audience that would know that 666 is indeed the number of a man. John and his audience both knew Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew letters also functioned as numbers, so when you spell out the Greek words "Nero" and "beast" in Hebrew, they both amount to the number 666.
- This is both a statement about Nero and the Roman emperors being a fulfillment of this vision as well as being the most recent example (at their time) of what was prophesied in Daniel 7-12. Human rulers/empires become beastly when they take on the marks of Babylon and exalt in their own power, military might, and economic security by demanding that others worship and join them, or die. Daniel's vision was about Babylon, then Persia, and Greece. John speaks directly of Rome.
- This continues today as a sign or symbol of what constitutes a beastly nation, rule, empire, and/or emperor.

Revelation 14

- The next vision is of the Lamb who is standing with 144,000 (military census number) who are marked with the Lamb's Name and His Father's Name on their foreheads (unlike those marked by the beast).
- This group is singing a song with all of heaven's throne room, and they are described as those who faithfully and purely follow the Lamb wherever He goes.
- From this gathering, three angels make three declarations:
 - The first is the eternal Gospel, which was a call to glorify and worship God alone.
 - The second is that Babylon has fallen.
 - The third is that anyone who worships the beast is part of the judgment coming on Babylon.

The main idea from this "sign" is that the people of God are called to repent, worship God alone, and come out of Babylon. They are to resist the worship of the empire and emperors, and instead, stay faithful to the Lamb through perseverance, even if it means death (which is described as a blessing).

- Then John sees two images of harvest that symbolize God's justice. They are both references to Jeremiah 51 and Joel 3, in which God speaks to His people about bringing justice upon Babylon and deliverance and salvation to them.
- The first harvest is depicted as One like the Son of Man (Daniel language) comes to take the ripe grain harvest of the earth. Aka. Jesus will come to gather His faithful people.
- The second is depicted as a harvest of wine grapes that are harvested and trampled. These grapes represent the intoxication humanity has with evil and the trampling over evil God has/will bring.
- Viewpoints:
 - Certain scholars believe these signs to be prophetic warnings about the Jerusalem/Roman War in the first century. Others believe these words to be warnings about the fall of Rome or other empires.

What might be more helpful for us to see the BIG PICTURE and allow that revelation to guide us to a more faithful lifestyle to the Lamb. Both of these visions lay before the churches/readers a choice: will you resist the dragon, the beasts, and Babylon by following the Lamb and living in His ways, OR will you follow the beast and experience its same defeat?

Revelation 15-16 - The Seven Bowls

- John's next vision/sign is of seven angels with seven final plagues/divine judgments.
- He also sees those who overcame the beasts and the mark, and they were gathered much like Moses and the people of God from history, who worshipped God after God delivered them from the hands of those who oppressed them.
- The seven angels are given seven bowls of God's wrath that are to be poured out on the earth. They are plagues mentioned in Exodus repeated here again:
 - First Bowl - Sores
 - Second Bowl - Blood in the Sea
 - Third Bowl - Blood in the Rivers
 - Fourth Bowl - Fire
 - Fifth Bowl - Darkness
- After the five bowls of wrath, people still do not repent (just like Egypt, Pharaoh, and the previous seals and trumpets).
 - Sixth Bowl - Dragon and beasts gather the nations to make war against God's people at a place called "Armageddon".
 - Armageddon was the location in Israel where many battles had been fought against nations that attacked God's people (Judges 5; 2 Kings 23).
 - Some believe this to be the destination of a future battle. Others see this as a metaphor of final judgment and justice on evil.
 - This is also a reference to Ezekiel 38-39 and the Battle of Gog. Gog was a symbol of rebellious nations to which God brings justice.
 - Seventh Bowl - picture of the day of the Lord (once again) in which God's justice and judgment are brought through His covenantal faithfulness.

The message from the Lamb has been revealed through these three sets of sevens and corresponding visions. This message points the people of God to understand the calling to three R's:

- **Repentance** - of idolatry
- **Resistance** - to the anti-God way of the dragon, beasts, Babylon, etc.
- **Remaining Faithful** - to the way of the Lamb as the ONLY WAY in which the people of God will overcome. Rev. 12:11

Our calling, therefore, is not to read this letter with a hope of "decoding" its message with news reports today, but rather to see the direct warning against the ways of Babylon, to live repentant and resistant to these idolatrous ways as we commit ourselves to following the Lamb wherever He goes (14:6), even until death, because in this witness, we proclaim our trust in God's justice, our faithfulness to the Lamb, and our hope that God will make all things new (21:5).

Revelation 17-20

After the Lamb's message is revealed through the three sets of seals, trumpets, and bowls, the vision shifts to the fall of Babylon, the defeat of evil, and the promise of a new Jerusalem, heavens, and earth.

Revelation 17-18

- The vision continues with the fall of Babylon and is depicted through a woman called "Babylon the Great, mother of prostitutes."
- This woman is riding the beast/dragon, drunk on the blood of God's people, has committed adulteries with kings and nations, clothed in purple and scarlet and glittering jewels, and is drawing the nations to be drunk and astonished on her appearance and feats.
- This is a clear callback to the marks of Babylon from the Scriptures. The marks of Babylon are:
 - Anti-God, Opulent, Murderous, Image, Militaristic, Economically Exploitative, Arrogant
- Once again, John is told the mystery of what/who this woman represents (similar language to Revelation 13 and the beast). All of the symbols given to him describe and depict things that the first-century readers/hearers of this text would understand to be about Rome and its military and economic power.
 - Seven Hills - Rome is famously built on seven hills: Palatine, Capitoline, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Quirinal, and Viminal.
 - Seven Kings - Roman emperors, OR national powers such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece (5 that were), Rome (is), other empires in the future (is not yet).
 - Great City = Rome - She is the "great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:18).
- This vision includes references to Is. 13, Is. 23, Is. 34, Is. 47, Jer. 50-51, and Ez. 26-27, all of which depict the downfall of nations such as Babylon, Tyre, and Edom.

In other words, Rome is the current version (at that time) of "Babylon", or the symbol of humanity, nation, empire, ruler, etc., rebelling against God. These are nations that idolize their security in economy and military, and this has continued throughout all of history.

The promise is that although this woman and the beasts and dragon wage war against the Lamb, the Lamb will triumph over them because He alone is King of kings and Lord of lords.

- This is depicted through the great city coming to ruin while laments are spoken over the woman/city. The woes all feature her great amount of sins that are marks of Babylon, such as opulence, military violence, economic exploitation, and more.

Revelation 19

- Heaven erupts with worship to the One who is able to overcome the prostitute of Babylon and bring forth the marriage of the Lamb and His Bride, who is clothed in white linen/righteousness (Is. 61 language).
- The Spirit of Prophecy bears witness to Jesus. The prophecy being revealed in Revelation is pointing to the witness of Christ's conquering victory through His death and resurrection, and the ongoing triumph of God's people is welcomed into both the present and in hope of the future eternity.
- A Rider named Faithful, True, and Word of God, who is described with symbols from Revelation 1 (JESUS), rides a white horse to wage war and bring justice and judgment. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, a sword is in His mouth (Is. 11:4, 49:2 - both about God's promise to bring justice and restoration), and heaven's army is with Him (clothed in fine linen).

The promise is that Jesus is our great Savior who is able to bring about justice, righteousness, and victory over the world's evil. But He does not do it as the Day of the Lord has been depicted previously (fire, harvest, earthquake, lightning), or as Rome has done it (military might and violence). Rather, He comes in a robe dipped in His own blood, accompanied by His army (people from every nation) who are clothed in linen, with a sword in His mouth (not His hand), and brings about justice through His death and resurrection.

- **IMPORTANT NOTE:**
 - **THERE IS NO BATTLE** - THE beast, false prophet, and their armies of marked followers are thrown into the fires of injustice they have caused on earth, and their ruin is finalized by the sword of Jesus' mouth (His Word, His Witness, His Gospel).

Revelation 20

- Verses 1-7 - Revelation 20 shifts to Jesus' promise to those who remained faithful, even to the point of death (beheaded for the sake of Jesus' testimony). This vision shows the dragon being bound for one thousand years and the slain people of God raised to reign with Christ.
- Verses 7-15 - Then the dragon goes forth to the nations to attack God's people once again, but it is defeated before it can even attack.
- "The forces of spiritual evil and all those who do not want to participate in God's Kingdom are destroyed. They are given what they want, which is to exist by themselves and for themselves. The dragon, Babylon, and all those who choose them are eternally quarantined, unable to spoil God's new creation ever again." - Tim Mackie

Views of Revelation 20

- **Dispensationalism and Premillennialism** -the belief that Christ's return will inaugurate a literal 1,000-year earthly kingdom. His return will coincide with a great tribulation, during which the resurrection of God's people who have died will happen, and the rapture of God's people still living will happen. Then there will be 1,000 years of peace and Christ's reign, and then Satan will be thrown into the Abyss. There are various views of this rapture:
 - **Pre-tribulation Rapture** - two stages of Christ's return: a 7-year period of tribulation, at the beginning of this, true Christians will be raptured, 7 years of Antichrist ruling, then Christ returns to defeat the Antichrist and establish peace.
 - **Mid-tribulation Rapture** - the belief that Christ will return 3.5 years into the 7 years of tribulation, Antichrist/abomination of desolation (Daniel language) puts an end to the temple and demands worship. 1 Cor. 15:51-52 used to see this (last trumpet).
 - **Post-tribulation Rapture** - Christ will not return until the end of the tribulation and rapture the true Christians upon His return and inauguration of the millennium.
- **Post-millennialism** - the belief that Christ's return will be after 1,000 years. Christ has established His kingdom through His preaching and work, and the Church will advance the Gospel enough for His return.
- **A-millennialism** - the rejection of the belief of a literal, 1,000-year-long reign on earth of Jesus. Sees the numbers of Revelation as symbols and that Christ's return will be permanent reigning in the new heaven and earth.

NO MATTER WHAT: the promise is that Jesus will return, evil will be overcome, and the faithful followers of Jesus will be secured in Christ's victory.

Reflection Questions:

- What marks of Babylon do I have that I can repent of?
- What marks of Babylon (beast, prostitute, dragon) can I actively resist in my current context?
 - Marks: Anti-God, Opulent, Murderous, Image, Militaristic, Economically Exploitative, Arrogant
- How can I actively remain faithful to the way of the Lamb in my current context?
- What does it look like for me to lay my life down knowing that God's promise is justice and restoration of all things?

Revelation 21-22

- Revelation ends with a description of heaven and earth being married together in God. This is described as a new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem, all of which are depicted as a beautiful bride, adorned for her husband, the Lamb.
- This vision ties in prophetic promises from the Old Testament:
 - Isaiah 65:17 - God bringing a new heaven and a new earth
 - Isaiah prophesies of God's redemption for not just Israel, but all of creation
 - Genesis 2 - the description of a new Garden of Eden in Rev. 22
 - Isaiah 2 and Zephaniah 3 - New Jerusalem
 - Prophetic words about restoring Jerusalem
- Therefore, the vision shows a restored creation that God has healed and freed from evil. It is a creation in which God has made all things new (Rev. 21:5) and invites those who are "victorious" (similar language to those who have repented, resisted, and remained faithful) as they will receive His water of life (Rev. 21:6).
- In stark contrast to this perpetual and eternal life in connection with God are those who are described as experiencing the second death in the fiery lake. Those who join the dragon, beast, and harlot in this lake are those who have given themselves over to their ways rather than repenting and following the way of the Lamb.
- This new heaven, earth, and city are all described using words, metaphors, and symbols that point to the immensely overwhelming and perfect beauty found within God's eternal and intimate relationship with humanity. These symbols ultimately point to the awe-inspiring glory of God and call for humanity to be aware of this future promise, and an invitation for them to embody these things in their lives now.

Important Descriptions

- Twelve - symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles
- Measurements -
 - 144 - could point back to 144,000 (Lamb's people) or could point to the Messiah who restores God's people and not just Jerusalem, but all of creation
- Materials -
 - Gold, Precious Stones, Pearl - all point to the brilliance and purity of God's glory
 - Precious Stones are the same as described on the priestly garments from Ex. 28 and 39, pointing to the foundation of this new creation being built upon the High Priest who ushers in God's saving work to all.
- Temple and Light - The city and the garden are described without a temple, and without a lamp or the sun. Rather, God and the Lamb, who once were understood to be present in the temple, are now realized to be everywhere in this new world. ALL NATIONS will walk by this light.
- Gates - ALWAYS OPEN to those who are made pure by the Lamb; however, nothing impure will enter.

Revelation 21-22 Descriptions and Summary

Garden -

- River of Life flowing from throne (Ezekiel 47)
- Fruit bearing trees in every month - richness and blessing
- Leaves on trees are Healing for all nations
- The throne and city will be together. God and God's people are described as being together as humanity sees, serves, and worships God. They are marked with His name (in contrast to beastly marks) and reign with God forever and ever.
- This points back to Gen. 1:26-28 in which God makes humanity in His image and calls them to rule in that image as God. In Revelation 22, humanity partners together with God to reign forever in this new creation.

22:6-21

- Revelation ends with an epilogue that includes themes pointing to the authenticity of the prophecy/letter, a reassurance that salvation only comes through the Lamb, the promise of new life in God, and the call for the people of God to remain faithful and holy.
- Similarities between introduction and epilogue -
 - "The Apocalypse is genuine prophecy (1:3; 22:6) that comes from God (1:1; 22:6) by a true prophet (1:1; 11:8-10) through an angel (1:1; 22:6, 16). It is for God's slaves/servants (1:1; 22:6) to be read in the churches (1:3; 22:18) as a blessing to all who read and obey it (1:3; 22:7), with a curse for those who attempt to seal up or change its words (1:2; 22:10)." - Beale, New Beacon Bible Commentary
- The epilogue can be summarized with a reminder for God's people to repent, resist the empire, and remain faithful through the following verses:
 - "Let the one who does wrong continue to do wrong; let the vile person continue to be vile; let the one who does right continue to do right; and let the holy person continue to be holy." 22:11
 - "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood." 22:14-15

The letter is concluded with final affirmations about God, Jesus, and the Spirit, who, just as we read in Revelation 1, are able to bring about redemption to all of creation.

REVELATION

From *Revelation* New Beacon Bible Commentary:

“What is the Spirit saying to the churches today?”

1. The church's call to holiness must flow out of its vision of the holy God seated on the throne.
2. Revelation teaches us that it is in the community's worship of the Holy One that we affirm that God and the Lamb must be enthroned in every aspect of life.
3. Revelation's theology of holiness has a strong communal emphasis.
4. Revelation is unequivocal about the nature of the church's holiness.
5. Revelation's appeal to come out of Babylon is still a call to publicly oriented holiness.
 - a. Not just personal piety, but exposing, resisting, and actively pursuing change to anything that challenges God's rule in the world.
6. Revelation weds holiness to hope.
7. Revelation offers contemporary churches not only a theology of ecclesiological holiness but also a way of communicating that theology.

“So ends both John's apocalypse and the epic story of the Bible. John did not write this book as a secret code for deciphering the timetable of Jesus' return. It is a symbolic vision that brought challenge and hope to the seven first-century churches and every generation since. It reveals history's pattern and God's promise, showing how every human kingdom eventually becomes Babylon and must be resisted. But the Messiah, Jesus, who loved and died for our world, will not let Babylon go unchecked. He will return one day to remove evil from his good world and make all things new. This promise should motivate faithfulness in every generation of God's people until the King finally returns.” - Tim Mackie

Conclusion: The message from the Lamb has been revealed through these three sets of sevens and corresponding visions. This message points the people of God to understand the calling to three R's:

- **Repentance** - of idolatry
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Our calling, therefore, is not to read this letter with a hope of “decoding” its message with news reports today, but rather to see the direct warning against the ways of Babylon, to live repentant and resistant to these idolatrous ways as we commit ourselves to following the Lamb wherever He goes (14:6), even until death, because in this witness, we proclaim our trust in God's justice, our faithfulness to the Lamb, and our hope that God will make all things new (21:5).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Reflection Questions

- What themes do you notice throughout the letter?
- What things did you see that you never knew were in this letter?
- What things/people did you notice were not present that you initially thought were?
- What calls/invitations did you notice for the people of God?
- What Scriptural references did you observe?
- What are some symbols/analogies/metaphors that you observed?
- How would you summarize the book's message to the Church then and today?
- What are your main takeaways?
- What are your questions from reading the text?
- How does the genre of Revelation impact our reading of the text?
- What does the meaning, history, and Biblical usage of "apocalyptic literature" imply in our reading of Revelation (and other apocalyptic texts)?
- What does the meaning, history, and Biblical usage of "prophetic literature" imply in our reading of Revelation (and other prophetic texts)?
- How does the historical context help explain the writing/message of Revelation?
- What do the characteristics of Babylon imply about Rome?
 - About empires throughout history?
 - About us?
- What marks of Babylon do I have that I can repent of?
- What marks of Babylon (beast, prostitute, dragon) can I actively resist in my current context?
 - Marks: Anti-God, Opulent, Murderous, Image, Militaristic, Economically Exploitative, Arrogant
- How can I actively remain faithful to the way of the Lamb in my current context?
- What does it look like for me to lay my life down knowing that God's promise is justice and restoration of all things?

BIBLE RESOURCES

You will find that there are many challenging passages to understand and apply to your life in Christ. We suggest the following resources to aid your study and application of Scripture.

Scripture Reading Practices:

- SOAP
- Discovery Bible Study
- Lectio Divina
- Communal Reading of Scripture

Websites:

- The Bible Project
- Bible Gateway

Commentaries:

- New Beacon Bible Commentaries
- Word Biblical Commentaries
- Anchor Bible Commentaries

Books:

- *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* by Fee and Stuart
- *Seven Things I Wish Christians Knew About the Bible* by Bird
- *Bruce and Stan's Guide to the Bible* by Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz
- *Introducing the New Testament* by Joel Green
- *An Introduction to the New Testament* by Raymond Brown
- *Right of Malachi* by Norman Hubbard
- *Exploring the New Testament: A Guide to the Letters and Revelation* by Marshall, Travis & Paul
- *Revelation for the Rest of Us* - Scot McKnight
- *Reading Revelation Responsibly* - Michael J. Gorman
- *Revelation for Normal People* - Robyn Whitaker
- *Reading the Book of Revelation* - David Barr
- *The Book of Revelation* - Matt Dorff, Chris Koelle