

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor

Church-Wide Prayer: 1. Life on Mission: Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"

- Praise God! CRI Africa – Myanmar – Latin America – Set Free! Opportunity for Each 1, reach 1
- Pray, by name, for those you know who need to know Jesus! Each 1, reach 1!
- Pray for schools – trustees, principles, teachers, students – to know Jesus, stand firm in and advocate for truth, opportunities to share Jesus
- Pray for Christian business leaders & employees – to shine brightly for Jesus – for people to know them for their love, integrity, and hard work. For opportunities to share their faith
- Pray for our church to be missionally minded for the Glory of God! to use hobbies, homes, relationships, abilities, resources, and lives to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven

Intro: Apocalypse? What comes to mind when you think of the apocalypse? Movies like “I am Legend” “World War Z” “the Hunger Games” or “the Road” and more... (show pictures) or maybe End Times and the Book of Revelation in the Bible!

Oxford Languages defines APOCALYPSE: the complete final destruction of the world, as described in the biblical book of Revelation. “the bell’s ringing is supposed to usher in the Apocalypse”

Today we are starting a NEW series called: Letters to the Church – the Book of Revelation

- End times – tribulation – anti-Christ – beast empire – scary images!
- Though it does contain ALL of the above – that is NOT it’s primary focus!
- **Revelations PRIMARY focus is to give us HOPE. HOPE that endures through evil, suffering, culture and complacency.**
- **How does a book about the Apocalypse do that????**

A. The Purpose of Apocalyptic Literature

Greek word: *apokálypsis* "uncovering, disclosure, revelation," you suddenly see the true nature of something that you could not see before.

Biblical apocalyptic literature: Uses symbols, visions, poetic style to reveal the world as it really is.

Pictures: We say, “a picture is worth a thousand words” apocalyptic literature does just this. It paints pictures for us that engage our imaginations & spirits to see what is, otherwise, covered.

Free book or Free WiFi, good deeds to promote ourselves, we are closer to our phones. Pictures take from Facebook. The Moon Quotes page, Dec 5, 2024.

In apocalyptic literature God pulls back the curtain and gives Divine perspective to what is happening.

- **Examples:** OT – Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, and Daniel.
- E.g. Daniel is in EXILE, God pulls back the curtain and shows him what is about to take place – Neb – Cyrus AND ENCOURAGES HIM & us with a “revelation” of the End of the Age and the ushering in of the Eternal Kingdom!

PERSONAL: Often when suffering... we see no END in sight! This is the HARDEST part of suffering!

- E.g. Chinese believers have disciplined believers to resist torture by reminding them of the limited time it last. They don't have to hold out forever.

When God pulls back the curtain – He REVEALS THE LIGHT AT THE END!

Revelation 1:1 (ESV) The revelation (*revealing, uncovering*) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

Purposes of Apocalyptic Literature:

1. To reveal Jesus! (all apocalyptic literature does this!)
2. To reveal the world as it really is
3. To show us what must take place before Jesus returns
4. To give us hope, to endure evil, and remain faithful!

What is our HOPE? JESUS IS COMING BACK. EVIL HAS AN EXPIRY DATE!

The Book of Revelation is the 66th book of the Library we call the Bible. It is apocalyptic in its entirety!

B. The Book of Revelation –Author, Date, & Historical setting

Author: The Apostle John. Some people try to dispute this, however the authorship was confirmed by the early church fathers: Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (c. 180), Clement of Alexandria (d. 215), Tertullian (d. 220) – ALL unanimously identified John, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles, and the “beloved disciple” of Christ, to whom the writing of the fourth Gospel and three epistles is also attributed. (*Revelation Four Views by Steven Craig, pg. 24*)

- John, brother of James, son of Zebedee, was often referred to as the “disciple whom Jesus loved”.
- He was a fisherman by trade and became one of Jesus’ closest friends during his earthly ministry.
- John would be one of three disciples who Jesus invited to join him in Gethsemane
- He was the only disciple that stayed with Jesus at his crucifixion! **John 19:26–27 (ESV)** ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.
- History tells us John did exactly that!
- John lived in Ephesus with Mary and was a pastor there.

Date: somewhere between 91-96 AD. Most likely 96 AD. Some scholars try to argue that it was written prior to 70 AD because they are Preterists and the date needs to be moved BACK to fit their narrative. The strongest evidence supports dating in the 90’s. **EQUIPPING CONFERENCE!!! SIGN UP!!**

Historical setting: (dates taken from <https://studythechurch.com/church-history/timelines/first-century>)

- **44 AD:** John’s brother James was martyred (Acts 12:1-2)
- **64 AD** a fire swept through Rome and burned 70% of the city! People blamed Emperor Nero for starting it – but he was quick to place the blame on CHRISTIANS.
 - According to Tacitus, Nero had so many Christians horribly tortured that some Romans began to feel sorry for them. (Tacitus, *The Annals*, 44.2-44.5)

- **66 AD** there was a Jewish rebellion that ended in them regaining some of their kingdom
- **67 AD** Nero has Peter crucified upside down and Paul beheaded
- **68 AD**, Emperor Vespasian took over and quickly died and his son, Titus assumed the role of Emperor in 69 AD.
- **70 AD** Titus led Rome in ending the Jewish rebellion. He sacked Jerusalem. He murdered 1,000,000 Jews and destroyed the Temple. **1st Holocaust!**
 - *“There was no pity for age, no regard for rank; little children and old men, laymen and priests alike were butchered,” wrote Josephus. (<https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/the-fall-of-jerusalem-in-70-ce-a-story-of-roman-revenge/>)*
- **81AD** Domitian takes over as Emperor
 - Darrell Johnson writes, “But in a.d. 92 things got worse. Domitian was the Emperor. He was a profoundly insecure man (as most tyrants are). To compensate for his insecurity, **he ordered all citizens and subjects of the Roman Empire to worship him as Lord and God, Dominus et Deus. He changed the name of the Roman Empire to “Eternal Empire” and called himself “Everlasting King.”**
 - All citizens and subjects were to go to a temple built in his honor, take a pinch of incense, throw it on the fire of the altar and say Caesar Kurios, “Caesar is Lord.”
 - **YOU COULD NOT BUY & SELL WITHOUT DOING THIS. It was a death sentence to refuse.**
 - Domitian did not care what else people believed as long as they did this “little act of worship,” an act of worship which was the glue that held his empire together.
 - *Johnson, Darrell W.. Discipleship On The Edge: An Expository Journey Through the Book of Revelation (pp. 23-24). Canadian Church Leaders Network. Kindle Edition.*
 - For many Christians – offering a small act of Emperor worship was no big deal. Most people were polytheists anyways. They were used to worshipping more than one god.
- **NOT John! He refused to worship the Emperor! For John there is ONLY ONE LORD.**
 - Tertullian who wrote in 200 AD said that he was plunged in oil, yet remained unharmed *.(the prescription against heresies ch 36)*
- **92-98 AD** John ends up on Patmos... an island prison... it is here that he has an incredible vision and writes the letter, or Book, Revelation.

Revelation 1:10 (ESV) I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

- John is “in the Spirit” He is fellowshiping with GOD on a Sunday! The Lord’s day!
- It is HERE → that God gives him a revelation!

REFLECT: this same pattern was true of Daniel! I wonder, how many believers live without HOPE, completely overwhelmed by their lives, BUT aren’t spending time “in the Spirit”?

C. The Revelation (*apocalypse* - *revealing*) of Jesus

PROLOGUE Revelation 1:1–20 (ESV) ¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- Blessed for READING!
- Blessed for HEARING – that’s YOU!?!? Are you listening?
- Blessed for KEEPING – OBEYING

Addressed to: ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace

- **Ephesus** – John home church! Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia!
- **MAP** – John is looking across the sea towards what made up of most of the Church at that time.

Signed by Jesus: from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. ⁷ Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

- **JESUS IS COMING BACK! EVIL HAS AN EXPIRY DATE! Who is Jesus?**

1. Him who IS, who WAS, and IS to COME!

- **John 1:1–5 (ESV)** 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

2. The Seven Spirits we find in in **Revelation 5:6 (ESV)** ... I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

- The Lamb – though slain – JESUS’ 1st coming!
- “Seven” represent perfection – the perfection of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost!

3. Faithful Witness!

- **2 Timothy 2:11–13 (ESV)** 11 The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.
- **DO you feel like you never get anything right? JESUS INTRODUCES HIMSELF AS THE ONE WHO REMAINS FAITHFUL – EVEN IF YOU ARE FAITHLESS!**

4. Firstborn of the dead! Firstborn – reminding John and the Church – IF He rose from the dead we can be CERTAIN THAT WE WILL TOO!

- Sickness? Disability? Struggle? Hardship? ALL OF THESE ARE TEMPORARY!
- **1 Corinthians 15:20–24 (ESV)** 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 24 Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

5. **Ruler of kings on earth** – Domitian? Nero? Hitler? Stalin? JESUS RULES THEM ALL. KING OF KINGS.
 - This is a declaration over Jesus' absolute SOVEREIGNTY over ALL THINGS.
 - **Philippians 2:9–11 (ESV)** 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
6. **The ONE WHO LOVES US & FREED US FROM OUR SINS WITH HIS BLOOD! (KEYS START PLAYING! WORSHIP TEAM GET READY 😊)**
 - He suffered for US – will we remain FAITHFUL TO HIM THROUGH SUFFERING?
 - **THIS IS WHERE WE DRAW HOPE FROM! It is the ONLY WELL THAT WON'T DRY UP!**
7. **Made us a KINGDOM OF PRIESTS to God the Father!**
 - **YOU HAVE A PURPOSE! Regardless of what trial you are facing!**
 - Priest live sacrificially for others
 - Priests offer intercession on behalf of others
 - We live set apart – we live HOLY LIVES –
 - 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"

⁶ ..., to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Are you ready?

WE ARE TO LIVE IN LIGHT OF THE REALITY OF JESUS' RETURN!

NEED HOPE?

1. Spend DAILY time with Jesus – commit to reading through the entire Bible
2. Sign up for the Equipping Conference: "Things to Come"
3. Read & meditate on Rev 1:1-6 this week!
4. Take time to reflect on who Jesus is, His return, and ask yourself, "am I ready?"

SPECIAL: Revelation Song

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission:** Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"
2. **Heart of Southland:** 500 people - Prayer Summit, Set Free! & Bible in a year
3. **Next Gen:** 🍷 Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
4. **Church Renewal:** Double funding, mentors & CRI Churches in Canada
5. **Persecuted Church & Israel:** Salvation, hope & perseverance - MARANATHA