

# **SIMPLIFYING REVELATION**

**A FACTUAL OVERVIEW OF  
SCRIPTURE'S FINAL BOOK**



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# **SIMPLIFYING REVELATION**

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**CHAWNA SCHROEDER**

## Lesson One: **INTRODUCTION**

### **W**elcome to *Simplifying Revelation!*

Revelation is a wonderful and somewhat terrifying book to study. It is filled with strange images and bizarre creatures. It speaks of unimaginable destruction and indescribable beauty. It is no wonder that few other books of Scripture spark as much conversation and controversy as this one.

As the result, this study takes an unusual approach to Revelation. Instead of focusing on timelines and symbolism and speculation, this study focuses on the facts of the book. The purpose is to understand what *Revelation* says, not what people say it says. The goal is to determine, as best as we are able, what we can know for *certain* from this book. It is so easy to get bogged down in nuances and speculations, and while there is a place for such a study, this isn't that study. Rather, my hope is that you can gain a clearer picture of the facts of Revelation and glean practical applications from this book that you can apply now, no matter what those days hold.

### **MY APPROACH**

All that said, even these facts will look slightly different depending on the basic assumptions you start the book with. Your starting point will affect the ending point. Therefore, here are some of the foundational assumptions from which I derived this study:

**1. I treat Revelation as understandable.** That is, I believe that you don't need to be a Bible scholar, pastor, or historian to understand the overall scope of Revelation. After all, the book was sent to average churches with the expectation that everyday Christians could read and understand it without requiring interpretation by someone "in the know." Indeed, the very title of this book, the Revelation of Jesus Christ, means to "uncover/disclose/reveal Jesus the Messiah." So unlike the parables Jesus taught, which were intended to hide the meanings from the crowds, Revelation is the opposite. It was meant to make clear and plain

So if you need complicated interpretative gymnastics to explain something, it's probably not the right answer. God wrote His word to reveal

Himself, not to mystify us. Indeed, the more I study Scripture, the more I find the simpler answer is usually the right one. And if this applies to other Scriptures, why shouldn't it apply here, especially considering the name of the book?

Finally, God knew how much time would pass between the writing of each part of Scripture, and I believe that He influenced Scripture's writing with that in mind. Thus Christ and the writers of the New Testament still expected the Old Testament be understandable to their listeners even 2,000 years after it was written. If that applied to the Old Testament in the first century, why shouldn't Revelation be equally understandable for us 2,000 years after its writing?

**2. I treat Revelation as literal.** While similes and metaphors are frequently employed in this book, they are used primarily to describe that which John had no other words for. They aren't used to allegorize the images. Rather, the few sections that are allegory are clearly denoted as such, so I see no reason to take the sections not marked as allegory as anything but literal.

Moreover, despite all the weirdness in this book, it reads more like a historical account than the symbolic visions of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. John frequently employs words of eyewitness observation like "I saw" and "I heard" to refer to real places and people.

That said, just because these things are literal and real, that doesn't mean they are visible from the earthly, physical realm. Indeed, that is one of the challenges of Revelation. We must be careful to track what occurs in the spiritual realm, what occurs in the physical realm, and how each affects the other. However, invisibility does not make what is described any less real or literal.

**3. I treat Revelation as chronological.** There are some views that give Revelation a complicated timeline so that different parts overlap with other parts. But again, this book reads like history, not a series of visions.

Moreover, this book is called *Revelation*—in the singular. This is *one* cohesive revelation, *one* continuous vision. And even in the Old Testament, chronology is kept in order within a single vision, unless clearly indicated otherwise.

John also uses words of sequential time throughout the book—*then*, *next*, *after these things*. So unless there is a clear reason from the text to do otherwise (and there is at least one such possible place in this book), I take the events of Revelation in sequential order.

**4. Finally, I treat Revelation as mostly futuristic.** Again some believe the events of Revelation are mostly over, with the church age equaling the millennial reign of Christ. However, those views require complex interpretations and much allegorizing to make the events of the book fit history. As I have already stated, Revelation seems simpler and more literal than that. Therefore, I see the events of Revelation as largely yet future.

## **STRUCTURE OF STUDY**

Now the remaining lessons will build upon that foundation, with each one following the same basic structure. This is what you can expect to encounter throughout this study of Revelation:

*An introduction:* This contains a few brief thoughts introducing the chapter of Revelation you are about to read.

*Reading and questions:* Each day you will have one chapter of Revelation to read. That is then followed by a series of questions intended to help you clearly see the facts and details of what you're reading. The answers will come straight out of the text, no interpretation needed.

*Signs:* While no one can predict the precise timing of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36), God has provided in Revelation some specific details we are to watch for so that we might know when the time is getting closer, just as changing leaves portend the coming of winter. While many chapters lack those kinds of details, many others include these warning signs. So this section provides you a specific space to create a list of things to watch for.

*What we know:* The things we can know for sure from Revelation is not limited to warning signs. Revelation has a lot to say about worship, God's work behind scenes, and supernatural happenings, among other things. Therefore, you can record under this heading the other things you observe from the text that we can know for sure.

*Truth for today:* While Revelation is meant to help us understand a few things about the future, it also has much to say to us today, no matter where we are in the prophetic time line. So here I provide a few thoughts of what each chapter teaches us about how we live now.

*Application:* Truth is meant to be lived, not just heard or known. So working from the truth of the previous section, I offer a few thoughts of how that truth can be practically applied to our lives.

*Additional thoughts:* This section is just for you. Often the Bible will trigger thoughts that may not be directly related to anything a writer of a study said. So this gives you space jot down any personal reflections, unexpected connections to other Scriptures, or even prayers in response to something you read.

## YOUR PREPARATION

Finally, in order for you to get the most out of this study, you will need to do two things:

**1. You will need to shelve preconceived notions.** Revelation has had two thousand years to collect a whole series of ideas, assumptions, speculations, interpretations, and generally develop its own mythos. However, it was exactly this approach that caused so many Jews to miss Christ's first coming and to reject Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus didn't fit those Jews' interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies.

Revelation has had even longer for us to do the same, and like those first-century Jews, I think many Christians are in danger of missing the signs of Revelation, becoming disillusioned and falling away because events didn't look or happen the way they assumed they would.

So, while I enjoy speculation, and such can be good or fun, we must handle it carefully and leave it in the domain of speculation. Otherwise we are in danger of insisting our ideas are equal to God's word, and Revelation makes it very clear that adding or subtracting words from its prophecy is *very* dangerous.

Therefore, as much as possible, please shelve what you *think* you know and focus on the facts of what this book actually says, even if it seems to contradict your beliefs at first.

**2. You will need a literal translation.** There are many excellent translations out there, each of which can serve a useful purpose. But because we are trying to avoid human-made interpretations of Revelation, I recommend using a literal/word by word translation for this study.

Why do I ask for this? Because words cannot be directly translated from one language to another. The result would be nonsense if you did. Therefore, every translator must apply a certain amount of interpretation to the text, an interpretation which can be colored by the translator's personal views of what is being translated. The more fluid and flexible the translation, the more interpreting the translator does.

So, in order to keep human interpretation to a minimum and stay as close as possible to what God *actually* said, a literal or word-by-word translation like the English Standard (ESV), New American Standard (NASB), or the New King James (NKJ) is recommended. (The NASB was the primary translation I used in putting together this study.)

**A POSTSCRIPT ON RAPTURE AND REVELATION**

One final note: Perhaps the most controversial subjects surrounding Revelation is the topic of rapture. However, rapture is never directly referenced in this book. There are some events that people have seen as possible allusion to rapture, but that event is never clearly portrayed in the book of Revelation.

That's probably why there's so much controversy surrounding this topic and so much interpretation applied to this book: Everyone wants to know when and how rapture will happen so they know how long they have before it happens. And that's probably why God left it murky. Because He wants us to trust Him, not our intellect or our perceptions. Therefore, we must be ready to go today, if Christ should call, and we must be prepared to endure through everything described in Revelation, to the very end.

So, if you expect this study to reveal that mystery, you are likely to be disappointed. Rather, the point is to keep your eyes open and your mind alert at all times!



Lesson Two:  
**REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**  
(Revelation 1)

**INTRODUCTION:**

Chapter 1 is the prologue of Revelation. As such, it provides us with extensive introductory material that provides us the context of everything that follows. We learn from this first chapter who wrote the book and why, as well as provides us with a detailed picture of the central figure of Revelation: Jesus Christ. In short, Chapter 1 sets the foundation upon which everything following rests.

**Read Revelation 1 & answer the following questions from the text:**

v. 1 What is this book about?

How did we come to receive this? (4 transitions)

v. 3 Who will be blessed?

Why?

v. 4 Who is writing this book?

To whom?

v. 4-6 From whom is the grace and peace? (3 answers)

How is Christ described? (3 answers)

What has He done? (3 answers)

What is to Him?

v. 7 How is He coming?

Who will see Him?

Who will mourn?

v. 8 Who is God?

v. 9 How does John describe himself? (4 answers)

Where were the latter three found?

Where was John?

Why was he there? (2 answers)

v. 10 When did this occur?

What did John hear?

v. 11 What was John instructed to write?

To whom was he to send this writing?

v. 12 What did John do?

What did John see?

v. 13 Who stood in the midst of the lampstands?

What was He wearing?

v. 14 What was His head and hair like?

What were His eyes like?

v. 15 What were His feet like?

What was His voice like?

v. 16 What did He hold?

What came out of His mouth?

What was His face like?

v. 17-18 What was John's reaction?

What did the One "like a Son of Man" do?

What did He tell John not to do?

How does He describe Himself?

What does He hold?

v. 19 What is John to write? (3 answers)

v. 20 What are the seven stars?

What are the seven lampstands?

### **CLEAR & CERTAIN SIGNS:**

### **WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE OR CAN REASONABLY ASSUME:**

#### **TRUTH FOR TODAY:**

*The primary purpose of Revelation is not to reveal the events of the future.* Rather the primary purpose of this book is to reveal Jesus Christ. It helps us know Him better, to see Him with fuller understanding, and to respond appropriately to Him. If the events of the end are included, it is because the revealing of Christ to the world at His second coming provides us dimensions of Him that can be best seen in the context of these final events. That is why you'll discover as you read that worship plays a dominant role in this book, with a substantial amount of time spent describing, not the events of the end, but scenes of worship. So if we don't walk away knowing Jesus better, then we've probably studied the book wrong.

*Christ is coming back.* The specifics may be unclear, but the event itself is never in question. He *will* return as He left, with the clouds, just as the beginning of Acts also declares (Acts 1:10-11). Moreover, this event will not happen in secret. It will not occur in a manner easily overlooked. It won't be hidden from all but a watchful few. No, there will be no missing this event. Every eye will see Him. All the tribes of the earth. This time, when Jesus comes, He will make a grand entrance that will turn every head in the world.

*God is fully in control.* He holds all time. He has been there from the beginning. He is the source, the originator, the instigator of all. He will be there at the end. He is the fulfillment, the purpose, the final point of everything. All power belongs to Him. No matter how much authority or strength those described in this book seem to possess, God possesses more, because He has *all* power. Therefore, Christ's power is supreme; He

is greater than any earthly ruler, past, present or future. All things are in His hand. For Christ is the Living One, who holds the keys of both death and Hades. He holds His messengers in His hand of power. He walks among His churches. Yes, even the things written in this book, as terrible as they are, are in His hand, from His hand. Therefore, no matter what we have faced, are facing, or will face, we serve a living, powerful, and active Lord, who knows us, holds us, dwells among us. Forever.

**APPLICATION:**

*Knowing the One who holds the future is more important than knowing what the future holds.* Eschatology (the study of final things) can be interesting, challenging, and even fun, but in the end, where we place rapture in the timeline matters less than whom we place our trust in. The identities of the beasts are less important than the identity of the Lamb. Our time is better spent on cultivating a relationship with our Creator than calculating a calendar. For if we *know* Jesus and are walking *obediently* with Him, then we don't need to be anxious about whether a political leader is the Antichrist or if some new tech is the mark of the Beast. Christ will make known what we need to know when we need to know it, making it clear what we need to do and how, *if* we're staying alert and in relationship with Him. So when it comes to end things, let's keep our priorities straight and our eyes on Christ—and not on the hype and hysteria.

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:**