

Revelation

Revelation is an exciting book filled with descriptions of angels blowing trumpets, monsters rising from the deep, lakes of fire, and rivers of blood. It is also one of the most challenging books in the Bible to understand. After a lifetime of study, we still won't be able to understand everything. However, the more we study, the more we will know about God and what it means to be a faithful follower of Him.

Writer: John, the disciple of Jesus. Also called John the Apostle. Some people who study the Bible say the author of Revelation was a different man named John. There is evidence to support the Apostle John as the author, and evidence to support it was another man named John. The name "John" was very common during that time.

Date of writing: Written sometime between 55-96 AD.

Original Audience: Churches in seven cities in the region of Asia Minor.

The Reason for the Letter: The region of Asia Minor was under the control of the Roman Empire. The Romans created a religion to worship the emperor. They called the emperor "lord" and "savior," and the people who lived in Asia Minor closely followed this state religion closely. The seven cities mentioned in Revelation all had religious sites for emperor worship. Six cities had temples, and five had altars and priesthoods devoted to the emperor. The Romans also had many other gods and goddesses in their official state religion. There was pressure to follow the state religion and show honor to the emperor by worshipping him. In this environment, the church of the one true God was growing and spreading from place to place. The churches in the seven cities mentioned in Revelation faced pressures from different sides. Some of the churches were being persecuted harshly, some had false teachers trying to pull them away, and some were tempted to go along with cultural norms against the Lord's ways. John is writing this letter as a warning to the churches. He also writes to encourage them to remain faithful and true to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Main Message of the Letter: The letter opens with an introduction telling the readers or hearers what kind of message it is (1:1-3). Then John gives his greetings similar to a standard letter (1:4-5), followed by praise, prayer, and an initial vision of Jesus' second coming (1:5-8). Next, John tells of the start of his vision and how he was instructed to "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches" (1:11). Then, John writes the seven messages to the seven churches (chapters 2-3). Each message is specific to the church and usually contains praise and correction. After recording these letters, John sees a door open in heaven, and he is taken up into the heavenly realm itself. He sees the throne of God, angels, and other wondrous creatures (4:1-11). The One seated on the throne holds a scroll with seven seals, and there is a search to find someone worthy to open this scroll. The only one worthy is the Lion of Judah, who looks not like a lion but like a lamb that has been slaughtered (5:1-14). One by one, the Lamb opens the scroll's seals, and catastrophes strike the earth (6:1-17). Then angels intervene to save God's faithful ones: 144,000 people of Israel, and John sees an innumerable multitude of people, robed in white, from all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages being brought before the Lamb (7:1-17). Next, seven angels with seven trumpets appear, and they sound their trumpets one by one. More disasters strike the earth as each trumpet is blown (chapters 8-11). Then great signs

appear in heaven: a pregnant woman and a red dragon, who is Satan. War breaks out as the angel Michael leads the heavenly army to defeat Satan (12:1-17). On earth, beasts blaspheme God, oppress the saints, and force idolatry (13:1-18). The angels encourage the saints to endure this hardship, and John beholds a vision of the Son of Man reaping the earth with a massive sickle. The wrath of God comes upon the earth and results in a river of blood (14:1-20). Seven angels with seven bowls appear, and each bowl brings a terrible plague upon the earth (chapters 15–16).

John is invited to witness the judgment of the city of Babylon (chapters 17–18). Next, John then sees heaven opened, and a rider called “Faithful and True” comes on a white horse to wage a final victorious war against all the kings of the earth (19:1-21). Satan is put in prison, and the faithful ones are allowed to reign with Christ on earth for one thousand years. After that time, Satan is released for a final battle and then thrown into the fiery lake to be tormented forever (20:1-15).

Then John sees a new heaven, earth, and Jerusalem coming down from heaven. He concludes with a compelling vision of paradise: gates of pearl and streets of gold, and a city in which there is no fear or pain or trouble of any kind (chapters. 21–22).

Outline of Revelation:

1. Introduction, opening greetings, praise, and prophetic message (1:1–8)
2. John’s vision of the Son of Man (1:9–20)
3. Letters to the seven churches (2:1–3:22)
4. John’s visions of the heavenly thrones (4:1–5:14)
5. The seven seals (6:1–8:5)
6. The seven trumpets (8:6–11:19)
7. The dragon, the beast, and the church (12:1–15:4)
8. The seven bowls (15:5–16:21)
9. Babylon the prostitute (17:1–19:10)
10. Heaven opened, and the new Jerusalem (19:11–21:8)
11. The bride of the lamb (21:9–22:9)
12. Closing encouragements (22:10–21)



Understanding Revelation can be very difficult.

As you study there might be large sections that don’t make sense. We don’t have to understand what every symbol means or if these events have already happened, are now happening, or will happen in the future. Focus on what we can learn about God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Focus on what you and your group can do to be obedient to Jesus. At the end of the Letter Jesus gives a final message and says, “Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (22:12–13). Read each section two or three times and discuss the following questions together:

1. What do we learn about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?
 2. What do we learn about people?
 3. What do we need to obey?
 4. Who else needs to hear the Good News about Jesus?
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