

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE INTRODUCTION

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At WORD Center Ministries we do what we call “Read-Thru’s”. We take a book of the Bible and read through it while teaching expositively on each and every verse. The audio recordings of our Read-Thru’s are available on our website, WORDCenterMinistries.org. We are going to do that very same thing with Revelation in a series called **Revelation—The Letter** (only it won’t be in audio format, of course!). We are going to just walk through Revelation, verse by verse, and scene by scene, in an expository manner. This will not be an in-depth study, but rather, an observation of the book as a whole. You should have a great understanding of the book at-large when we are done.

Revelation is a pretty big book weighing in at 22 chapters. This is just an overview series so we can’t look at everything as deeply as I’d like to. (I will tell you that after I taught a two-year course I had just barely scratched the surface of what was there to be understood.) So, what I want for you in this series is to be able to take away a walking outline of the book of Revelation. You will understand the order that is given us in Revelation. Just as soon as you see the pattern you’ll find that the pattern stops or changes—but there are patterns, nevertheless—they’re just not perfect, nice, neat patterns. I want you to see and understand those patterns, the skeletal structure, if you will. If you don’t understand every last seal or every last bowl or every last thing about the beast, that’s okay. But if you remember when the beast appears, if God has given some sort of an outline, if He says something like, “The judgment is going to take place on a June and a July and an August,” and then He tells you that in August the beast is going to be revealed, already you know that things are going to happen *before* the beast comes. Right there you’ve learned something if you can just get the pattern. So, we are going to stay with the simple things as much as possible and when we get to some interesting things I will try to throw in a few tidbits, but I am going to try not to throw in too many, simply because this is a walloping book.

Yet God writes in Revelation 1:1, ***“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place...”*** Soooo, God *wants us to know this. He wants us to see this and understand it. That is His will.* So, at any time you can stop and pray and say, “God, lead me into understanding. You sent this so I would know. I’m your bondservant. You sent it to show me. Help me.” When you’re reading a book to a child, the child will stop you and ask questions. It is okay to ask God questions because He is really the One reading to you. Perhaps you will want to put a mark in your Bible and go back to Him later and let Him explain it more fully to you. Cry out to Him for understanding as you study His Word.

But first, before we start reading, I just want to give you some basic information about the book. The Revelation—do you know what Greek word it came from? *Apocalypsis*. It simply means to shed light on, a disclosure, a literal uncovering, a literal unveiling of something that has not been seen before. It includes not merely the thing that is shown and seen but also the interpretation. It is an anarthrous noun which means it is referring to the quality of the thing. For instance, in Revelation 1:1 when it says, “**The revelation of Jesus Christ**” it is not saying that Christ is being unveiled. Although there is a vision of Christ, and Christ is throughout the book, and we learn much about Him—it is the revelation, the unveiling, that *belongs* to Jesus. It is His. It is *from* Him. It is *of* Jesus in the fact that God gave the revelation, the unveiling of the things that shortly are going to take place *to* Jesus Christ. Christ was given the honor of the unveiling of the things which will shortly take place. God gave that honor to Jesus, Who then gave it to His angel, and His angel sent it to His bondservant John, who handed this unveiling down to us—we have it written down in whatever font we have in our Bible—we have the unveiling that God handed to Jesus. That is what we have here—that’s what the book of Revelation is; that’s what the revelation is.

The author who wrote the book of Revelation is John. Is this John different than other Johns in the Bible? Who is this John? Is he the same John who wrote First, Second, and Third John? Yes. Is he the same John who wrote the Gospel of John? Yes, He is. There's not a lot of disagreement among scholars that John wrote the book of Revelation. His letter travelled among the Asian churches and it was widely accepted then that he was the one that wrote it. He names himself in the first verse. Early church history shows that John’s authorship was just accepted.

Who was it written to? “**To the seven churches.**” John wrote it to the seven churches but ultimately we see that, of course, God wrote it, gave it to Jesus, Jesus gave it to His angel, His angel gave it to His bondservant John who then wrote it down and transferred it to the seven churches which are His bondservants, and then ultimately us. A lot of times in Epistles the letter is written to a specific group, i.e. to the Hebrew Christians or perhaps to Rome where there would be a Jewish or Gentile distinction, but not so in Revelation. It is mostly going to talk about what is going to happen to the Jews during the time of Tribulation, but as far as the message to the churches, that includes Jew and Gentile.

Historically, when John wrote Revelation there was a lot of persecution happening. What sort of persecution was going on? Rome had declared Christianity an illegal religion. It is said that John was taken to the isle of Patmos, which is where this was written, and that he was boiled, or dipped, in burning oil on the island of Patmos.

What is the book of Revelation about? Well, if you think about John writing this book during so much persecution and suffering in the church, what good would this book do me? What do you see in this book? You see the ultimate triumph of the God that people were being persecuted for. Can you see the excitement, the wonder of those people who are being persecuted who get a copy of this while they’re in prison or someone reads it to them through the window of their cell, and they hear of the ultimate

triumph of God and that everyone is going to be taken care of? Can you imagine what that news would do for their spirits?

A key word in Revelation is Jesus Christ.

A key verse in Revelation is Revelation 1:19. **“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”** Very simply, this is a divine outline of the entire book of Revelation. It says, **“Therefore write the things which you have seen...”** (We will see this in a little bit when we start working our way through the book, but what John has seen up to this point is a vision of Jesus.) Then it says, **“the things which are...”** (The things that exist are the churches. Chapters 2-3 are the letters to the churches that existed at that time.) and finally it says, “and the things which will take place after these things.” (The rest of Revelation is the things which will take place after *these* things, (these things being the vision of Jesus that John has seen, and the churches that exist, the things that are. Revelation 4:1 helps tremendously to confirm this when it says, **“After these things...”**). So, we have a wonderful, divine outline of Revelation. That is why we can use chapter 1, verse 19 as a key verse. There are other ones that we can use too but we will just use that for now because it’s simple.

What type of literature is this? I guess you could say it’s future historical. It is an epistle, really, it is simply a letter, but it is defined as being apocalyptic literature. The book of Revelation is really just a prophetic letter—that’s the easiest way to remember—it is a letter that tells about the future.

Many people look at Revelation and they think that it’s veiled or is closed to modern man, to any man, because it has to be revealed. It’s been almost twenty years since I taught Revelation for the first time. A gal came up to me then who was taking the course and told me she had to quit. I said, “Why are you quitting?” and she said, “Because you’re teaching wrong,” and I said, “What makes you say I am teaching wrong? What do you mean?” She answered, “Well, I am understanding it.” I was sort of tickled inside, but I asked her what she meant and why understanding the book would cause her to quit. She answered, “My husband says it is the book of revelation. It has to be revealed so, if I understand it then it is not being revealed so that cannot be what it means.” Wouldn’t that be a hard life to have to believe like that? So, she ended up quitting the class because of her husband. Her husband told her that it was not possible to understand the book of Revelation. That is not true. The very first verse in Revelation tells us that is not true *and* just to make it clear to us he says it again at the very end of the book. He starts and he closes with telling us, “This is so that you will know and God is showing you.” And I will tell you what—I am going to do my best to show you what John has written down—but if God sent it to show us, do you think we are going to understand it? Yes, absolutely.

Now, the opposite extreme of that are people who think you can just figure out every dot and tittle, and although I know it is possible for God to reveal every dot and tittle, I think that somewhere in between those two types of thinking is a more balanced approach.

Logically there are going to be things that I won't get the 1st time through. There are going to be things I won't get the 101st time through, but I'm going to get a whole lot more on the 101st time and every time in between 1 and 101. I can get most of it. I've never actually sat with my Bible and highlighted all the things that are clear and easy to understand but I know it must be in the upper nineties. The upper ninety percent of your Bible is clear and easy to understand and anybody reading would think the same thing. It is a lie from Satan that you can't understand the Bible, that most of it is obscure. And it is that sort of thinking that causes people consternation when they get to the book of Revelation and think, "We can't understand it." That is not true. Most of the Bible is very clear and easy to understand. Most of Revelation is very clear and easy to understand. Takes a little bit more effort in observing perhaps than some books, but so what? It is a fabulous book and you *can* understand it!

Here are just a few interesting facts; there are between 250 and 550 allusions to Hebrew scriptures. If you have the New American Standard by the Lockman Foundation (other Bibles have this too) there will be little, tiny all caps words in the New Testament. That means it is a direct quote from the Old Testament. But I am saying, that on top of those quotes, there are hundreds of allusions to the Old Testament, even though they are not technically quotes. An example would be the plagues that you see here and paralleling them back to the plagues of Egypt perhaps.

Side-note here, let's talk about the rapture. In which chapter of Revelation does God explain the rapture to us? Because, of course, the rapture's in Revelation, right? Wrong. The rapture is not taught in Revelation. So, if you were hoping to find out when the rapture was or more about it, it won't be in this series about the book of Revelation, because it's just not there.

One interesting pattern in Revelation is that there are usually songs that appear before judgments. Just an interesting thing. Not before every judgment, but before a lot of the judgments there will be a song that will appear. For instance, in chapters 4 and 5 you have two songs. Chapter 4 shows God in the throne room and then, in chapter 5, Jesus comes into the throne room and takes the book in order to break its seals. To break the seals is to unleash the judgments that are in that book. There are songs in both of those chapters. A song to God the Father and then the Lamb comes in and you have a new song that is sung unto Him. Then, in chapter 6, right after chapter 5, boom, boom, boom, the Lamb starts breaking the seals. The judgments start being released. This pattern is very interesting to me.

Another interesting thing is that the visions in Revelation are not in strict chronological order. That might be the hardest thing to understand in the book of Revelation. There are parenthetical inserts in between certain events and those parenthetical inserts, which can be as long as several chapters or as short as just a segment of the chapter, may call your attention to something that is further down the road in Revelation. In other words, the interludes might give you a preview or hint of something that will take place later on in Revelation. It doesn't necessarily mean the event is happening at the time of the parenthetical insert. We have to rely on context, immediate context to tell us

if it is happening then, or whether it is something that is going to happen later on in the book. The timing of the interludes can be fairly difficult to discern and it is something that I am not going to be dealing with much due to the scope of this series.

The number seven appears over fifty times. What does the number seven in Biblical literature symbolize? Completion. Revelation is the last book in the Bible and tells about the ultimate triumph of the Lamb and His God over the creation. The book of Revelation completes the Bible and it tells about the completion of the judgments and wrath of God. It is very interesting.

The principle of anticipation is found in Revelation. There are things in the first three chapters and things in the last three chapters, primarily the first chapter and the last chapter that correlate. For instance, one would be *witness*. Right off, in chapter 1 John is a witness and he is witnessing of the things that he saw but also he tells why he is on the isle of Patmos. Why is that? It is *because* of his witness that he is captive on the island. Then you see Jesus being the *faithful* witness in one of His descriptions of Himself in the churches which comes right after the information about John being a witness. The *end* of the book talks about the faithful witnesses. A lot of hints are dropped at the beginning of the book that are picked up and finished later on.

As we go through Revelation we are going to need to understand figures of speech, especially metaphors and similes, which show how one thing is “like” another thing. Similes are expressed comparisons and will include the words “like” or “as”. But when it is just *implied*, when it is *not* expressed, then it’s called a metaphor. This is how I remember the difference between the two. The word metaphor does not have an “L” in it while simile does have an “L”. Like starts with “L” so I remember that, because simile is an expressed comparison, it often uses the word like (Jesus’ hair was white *like* wool), which starts with “L”. Make sense?

Now, we also need to understand what information metaphors and similes are meant to convey. They tell us how one thing is like another in one attribute only. Jesus’ hair was white like wool—Jesus’ hair had no other characteristics of wool, only its whiteness. You cannot take the simile or the metaphor *further* than what it is intended for.

And finally, how many of you have in the past have called this book “Revelations”? There is not an “s” at the end of it. It is not plural. When I was growing up in church we just called it Revelations. Have you ever memorized the books of the Bible and said them fast? When you do, you often end up saying “First John, Second John, Third John, Jude, and Revelations”. Well, it is not plural because it is not about individual things; we can see that in the meaning of the Greek word itself, *apocalypsis*. It is the unveiling—singular. It is not a bunch of unveilings. It is *one* unveiling about a period of time. And a lot of things happen during that time period.

Ask God to open your eyes as Jesus unveils this before us, as He reveals these things that must shortly take place. Ask Him to open your eyes and unplug your ears. Ask Him to give your mind understanding, give you knowledge, because you need it. Tell

Him you want to hear what He has said, tell Him you want to know what He wants you to know...