

Revelation: How to Live through the End of the World.

Part 1: Revelation isn't about what you think it is.

Revelation 1:1-8

**Summary:** In a world full of chaos, corruption, and uncertainty, the Book of Revelation is a call to resist the powers of the world, follow the way of the Lamb, and live for the true King.

**Main Ideas:**

It seems like an unseen force is creating chaos in our lives and world.

Revelation pulls back the curtain to show us what's really going on in our world.

Revelation is the rebels' handbook for the revolution of Jesus.

The focus of Revelation is not the end of the world... it's Jesus.

Revelation isn't a mystery to solve—it's a mission to live out right now.

Jesus is the faithful witness in a world of deception, lies, and corruption.

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

Jesus is the true King over all rulers.

Following Jesus is an act of rebellion against corrupt, godless powers.

The revolution of Jesus has already begun... will you take your place in it?

**Invitation:**

Read Revelation 1:4-8

Ask:

- What empires are pulling for my allegiance?
- Who or what is demanding my loyalty?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. When you look at the world today—wars, division, corruption—how does it make you feel? How do you typically respond to the chaos around you?
2. The first-century Christians faced pressure to pledge allegiance to Rome. What are some modern “empires” that pull for our allegiance today?
3. Re-read Revelation 1:5-8. How do you think this passage should shape how we view political leaders and global powers?
4. Jon said, “Following Jesus is an act of rebellion against corrupt, godless powers.” What are some practical ways we can resist these powers while still being a light to those around us?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

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**Transcript:**

**IN:** the world is going crazy...

- Wars... Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, Israel/Palestine
- Xians being hunted and killed in Syria
- Political division here

- Economic uncertainty
- And that's only the stuff we know about

Every time we check the news it feels like the world is on fire.

And the explanations? The same ones we've heard for centuries...

- It's this leader's fault/ it's this group's fault

And we keep getting the same solutions...

- Change the leaders, defeat the enemy, and give power to someone new and this time everything will work out

But it never works...

- Power changes hands, Corruption returns, and oppression continues.
- History keeps repeating itself

At some point, we have to ask: Why does this keep happening?

- Why does every solution just lead to another problem?
- **It seems like an unseen force is creating chaos in our lives and world.**

But what is it and what can we do about it?

What's interesting is that these aren't new problems/questions

In late 1st cent. , Xians were being targeted by Roman Emperors

- Saw selves as ultimate authority politically, culturally, morally, and religiously.
- Xians refused to worship him and the rest of the roman gods.

For 1st JF's, following Jesus wasn't just unpopular. It was deadly.

- They weren't just losing arguments—they were losing their homes, their jobs, their families. Some were even losing their lives.
- Rome had the power. Caesar had the throne.

In the middle of it, they asked the same questions we ask today...

- What is God doing? Isn't Jesus supposed to be in charge?
- Should we resist? Or compromise in order to survive?

God didn't stay silent.

- He gave a vision to a man named John, who many believe to be John the disciple of Jesus
- Not just any vision—a behind-the-scenes look at reality.
- A message to show them...and us... what's really going on in the world.

John shared this vision in a letter to 7 JF communities in modern-day Turkey.

We still have this letter... It's the last "book" in the NT... The book of Revelation.

For centuries people have either become obsessed with trying to “decode” revelation

- or they have completely ignored it.
- Churches have split over how they interpret it.
- I’ve only taught one passage out of it in my career.

But ignoring it is a huge mistake... B/c no matter what you might have heard/read/watched about this letter...

Revelation pulls back the curtain to show us what’s really going on in our world.

**NT Wright:** *This book in fact offers one of the clearest and sharpest visions of God’s ultimate purpose for the whole creation, and of the way in which the powerful forces of evil, at work in a thousand ways but not least in idolatrous and tyrannous political systems, can be and are being overthrown through the victory of Jesus the Messiah and the consequent costly victory of his followers.*

As I’ve studied revelation more deeply preparing for this series... I’ve discovered it is one of the most amazing and relevant books in the bible... in all of ancient literature.

B/c even though it was written to JF’s 2000 yrs ago... it still speaks to exactly where we are today.

It answers 2 key questions... question of what is happening and what do we do about it.

- What is happening behind the scenes of history?
- How do we live faithfully through “unprecedented” times? It encourages

My goal for the next 5 weeks isn’t to debate every detail or argue about timelines...

- But to give us the tools to use it for what it was originally designed for...
- to show us who Jesus is, what he is doing, and how we join him.

We are going to unpack the themes and main ideas of what Jesus is saying in this book...

- How it reveals who Jesus really is, exposes the powers of this world, and shows us how to be faithful and effective JF’s no matter what.

Whether JF or not this will give you the Xian answer for what is actually going on in the world.

Before we take our first step in this journey... want to let you know there are 4 basic ways people interpret Revelation...

- Preterist: It’s all about what was happening in the 1st century
- Historicist: it tells the story of the church from the beginning to now.
- Futurist: it’s all about the future. (most popular... left behind)
- Idealist: Has timeless images and truths about God, the church, the state, and God’s plan for the world.

I’m not going to spend months explaining and debating these views...

- One b/c I think it’s boring
- Debating all that can distract us from actually interacting with the book itself.

Bc Revelation isn’t about WHEN Jesus is coming back... it’s about how we follow him now.

- We won't be guessing who the anti-christ is
- We'll be seeing Jesus defeating the corrupt powers of this world.

Revelation is the rebels' handbook for the revolution of Jesus.

And the big question is... who will you follow?

I know for some of you, the idea of diving into Revelation might sound... ridiculous.

Maybe you've seen the wild predictions, the end-times charts, the horrible movies and thought, 'This is why I don't take Christianity seriously.'

But what if we've misunderstood Revelation?

What if it's not about fear or cryptic codes... but about hope, resistance, and ultimate justice?

If you've ever felt like the way this world runs is rigged, corrupt, and broken beyond repair...

- This book might have more to say to you than you expect.

So let's look at how John introduces this revelation (Singular btw)

**GOD: 1:1-2** *This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John says this is a revelation from Jesus Christ... a better translation would be a revelation OF Jesus Christ.

Revelation from Greek word meaning unveiling/revealing... what is it revealing?

Hint not the end of the world... it is a revealing of Jesus.

The focus of Revelation is not the end of the world... it's Jesus.

The true center of history is not war, evil, empires, or rulers... it's Jesus.

- For early Christians... even though it looked like the empire and emperor seemed to be all-powerful... there was a true King of the universe and he isn't Roman.
- Jesus reigns not Caesar.

**1:3** *God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.*

Listen to its message and obey it...

God wouldn't give us a vision that made no sense and that he didn't expect us to act on.

The world we live in today is as complex and dangerous as the world of the 1st church.

- We have the same challenge to faithfully follow Jesus in a world of violence, hatred, and suspicion.

Rev. did not just float down from heaven out of nowhere to tell us about the future.

Revelation was written at a specific time to a specific set of people for a specific purpose...

- but its message is timeless and for everyone everywhere and everywhen.

**Revelation isn't a mystery to solve—it's a mission to live out right now.**

Scholar/Historian/theologian Scot McKnight gives 3 guidelines to read Revelation well.

Paraphrased...

- It is not written to be a crystal ball helping us interpret news headlines
- It is written for followers of Jesus who are ready to challenge the powers of the world and empire.
- It requires imagination.

John was given a vision behind the curtain of our dimension and he did his best to take what he saw, understand its meaning, and then write it in a way that people would be able to understand and use it.

It quickly takes a turn into very confusing images...

- Imagery that seems to come from a drug-fueled hallucination.
- It's full of amazing images of monsters and cosmic battles.
- Sky battles between angels and beasts
- Dragons and warriors

The best way to read it is not as you would read a newspaper... but how you would read a great fantasy book.

- Lord of the Rings (especially w/ all the songs), The Chronicles of Narnia, Harry Potter.

You have to engage your imagination to understand it.

- The images convey truth

There is a battle between what John calls

- The Way of the Dragon... a world built on violence, power, and control.
- And the Way of the Lamb... Jesus' Kingdom built on sacrifice, faithfulness, and love.

**Greg Stevenson- Revelation symbolically transforms the world into a battlefield in which the forces of the dragon are arrayed against the forces of God**

And what John is trying to tell us is to follow the way of the Lamb in our lives now b/c he is the ultimate King

**1:4-6 This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.**

**Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; and from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his**

*blood for us. He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

The first hearers of this would be cheering right now!

YES! That is our King! Jesus is the true King over every other king.

Jesus is the faithful witness in a world of deception, lies, and corruption

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead

- The King who conquers all not for his own fame/wealth/power but for his people.
- A king who can never be defeated b/c he has already defeated death. A victory he has promised to those who follow him.

Jesus is the true King over all rulers

- Even though the empires of the world demand our allegiance...
- Jesus the true King is the one who has freed us by dying for us and rising again to eternal glory and authority.

And his people are not just passive victims of the whims of empires and rulers... Waiting for God to magically pluck us out of this world.

- No, we are called to follow him in the fight as his royal priests, carrying out God's mission in the world.

Following Jesus is an act of rebellion against corrupt, godless powers

We declare Jesus is Lord... no matter what Caesar and his cronies try to say.

This is the ultimate rebellion against the systems of injustice and power that the empires of the world rely on.

- "You might think you have power but in the face of the true king, you have nothing. And you have no power over us."

**1:7-8** *Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven.*

*And everyone will see him—*

*even those who pierced him.*

*And all the nations of the world*

*will mourn for him.*

*Yes! Amen!*

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."*

Jesus isn't bringing escape.

He is bringing true justice and peace to the world.

History is moving toward his final kingdom not the empire's.

I am the Alpha and Omega- A to Z

All of history is in his control... from beginning to end.

Revelation isn't a mystery to decode it's an invitation to join Jesus' revolution as he ushers in his kingdom.

- It's a call to resist corrupt powers by pledging our full allegiance to Jesus and being his witnesses here and now.

Whatever your political leanings... Jesus is calling you not to a middle way but to a higher/completely different way.

But to follow that way we have to be able to see this world and its powers for what they really are...

**YOU:** Revelation is showing us the truth about the world and we are being called to follow the Way of the Lamb...

So this week... **Read Revelation 1:4-8**

**Ask:**

- What empires are pulling for my allegiance?
- Who or what is demanding my loyalty?
  - What enemies does it promise to save you from?

Don't have to do anything yet... but it's time to start looking.

**WE:** As we close remember... Revelation wasn't written to scare us.

- It was written to wake us up.

The world may feel like it's spinning out of control, but history is not in the hands of corrupt empires, failing systems, or unseen forces of evil

It is in the hands of Jesus, the true King.

Right now, the Dragon—the forces of corruption, fear, greed, and control—are fighting for our loyalty.

And Jesus, the true King, is whispering, "Follow me. Resist the dragon and join my revolution."

What are you going to choose?

**The revolution of Jesus has already begun... will you take your place in it?**