

Introduction to Revelation

The book of revelation is “**revelation from Jesus Christ**” (Rev 1:1).

The **purpose** of revelation is spelled out in Rev 1:3: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”

Two reasons why people are often afraid of studying/teaching Revelation:

- It is scary as it deals with judgments of God. (However, the judgment is for non-believers. We don't have to be afraid!)
- It is full of images that are hard to interpret. What if we are wrong with our interpretations? (There are clear patterns of the images we can identify and they are often based on the images in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel)
- We should not be bogged down with all kinds of claims and interpretations, but hear the word of God as he speaks to us.

Six Major Parts of Revelation

1. **Introduction** (1:1-8; this is identical to conclusion in 22:6-21)

- 1) Revelation from Jesus Christ to John through his angel to testify to the seven churches
- 2) Blessed is the one who reads, hears, and takes to heart what is written in it
- 3) Jesus is coming soon



2. **Conclusion** (22:6-21; this is identical to introduction)

3. The middle four parts are comprised with **four visions** (1:9-22:5):

- 1) **Seven churches** on earth (1:9-3:22) [These churches are linked to the church in heaven (Holy City, the new Jerusalem described in the 4th vision (21:1-22:5; notice the linking words such as eternal life, white robes, ...)].
 - * Jesus is mentioned at the beginning of each church, teaching us that Jesus is the founder and mover of the churches.
 - * While Jesus commends, encourages, and rebukes the believers in each church with different circumstances, the problems faced by the churches are beyond time, politics, culture, and environments. Thus, his words are relevant to us today.
- 2) **God's judgment on the unbelieving world** (4:1-16:21). The judgment is progressive: In the judgment of the 7 seals, 1/4 of world population is wiped out. In the seven trumpet judgment, 1/3 will perish. All unbelievers will be judged in the 7 bowl judgment. The one who carries out the judgment is Jesus.

- 3) **The final war at Armageddon** (17:1-20:15). This is a close-up description of the 1-hour battle mentioned in 16:16 (“Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”)
- 4) **The vision of the heavenly church in New Jerusalem** (21:1-22:5).

Key images and concepts that can help us to understand Revelation

- Revelation describes the spiritual war between **Babylon** (the unbelieving world) and **Jerusalem** (the church of God.)
- There are **two women** in Revelation: the first woman (Jesus’ bride) represents God’s covenant people, the church of God. The second woman (harlot) represents unbelievers.
- Images (based on Daniel and Ezekiel):
 - Sea** = world
 - Beasts from sea** = kings (kingdoms or political leaders)
 - Horn** = king
 - Beasts from land** = Two horns (economic power and religious power (false prophets))
- White horse = false Christ?
- Red horse = symbol of warfare
- Black horse = symbol of famine
- Pale horse = death
- **144000** = 12 tribes of Israel (OT) x 12 disciples (NT) x 1000 (meaning “many”)