

REVELATION

THE COMFORT AND HOPE JESUS BRINGS

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

2026-2027 CHURCH VERSE

**WORTHY IS THE LAMB WHO
WAS SLAUGHTERED
TO RECEIVE POWER AND RICHES
AND WISDOM AND STRENGTH
AND HONOR AND GLORY AND BLESSING!**

Revelation 5:12

**BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO READS
ALOUD THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY,
AND BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HEAR
THE WORDS OF THIS PROPHECY AND
KEEP WHAT IS WRITTEN IN IT,
BECAUSE THE TIME IS NEAR.**

Revelation 1:3

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FROM THE SENIOR PASTOR

The book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible, has both fascinated and driven fear in people for centuries. The early hearers received the visions in the book of Revelation not with fear but with comfort and hope. John, one of Jesus' closest friends, wrote the prophecy down to be read aloud to people in seven churches during an intense time of persecution. He wrote not so his hearers would create charts, but so they would be comforted by visions of Jesus, His character, and what He accomplishes for His people. He is the One who is with His people, keeps His promises, is worthy of our worship, will keep His own, will bring sin to its end, and is better than this world. He is the One who was, is, and is to come!

This series guide was made to help you engage deeply with the Scripture and each message. Inside, you'll find in-depth sermon notes along with additional teaching content and resources for you to go deeper in your personal study of God's Word. I encourage you to bring it with you each weekend to take notes, use it in your Life Group gatherings to grow together in community, and reflect on what you're learning.

As we study Revelation, I hope you receive it as Jesus' earliest followers did, with joy and gratitude for who Jesus is and His victory over sin and death.

In Christ,

Eric Geiger
Senior Pastor

How we will study Revelation

As we study the book, we will...

1. LOOK BACKWARD TO WHAT WE KNOW MORE THAN WE LOOK FORWARD WITH SPECULATION.

Scholars estimate that as many as 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation contain references to the Old Testament¹. Much more than we will speculate about the future, we will look at the Old Testament passages John is drawing from.

2. REMEMBER THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE.

Revelation was written to seven real churches in Asia Minor. They were facing intense persecution and looking for comfort. The book can't mean something different to us than it meant for them.

3. FOCUS ON JESUS.

J.I. Packer famously said, "Whatever else in the Bible catches your eye, do not let it distract you from Him." There is a lot that can catch our eye in the book of Revelation, so we will continually come back to what each passage shows us about Jesus, His character, and His mission. As you can see in the message titles, each message is about Jesus.

4. TEACH THE TEXT, NOT A SPECIFIC VIEW OF THE END TIMES.

Rather than trying to force every passage into a particular timeline or view of the end times, our goal will be to carefully teach what the text says.

5. BE UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENT VIEWS.

Throughout church history, thoughtful and faithful Christians have understood parts of Revelation differently. If you want to understand more of different views, the podcast and seminars we offer can help. But in our weekend services and Life Groups, we will focus on the good news that transcends every view: Jesus reigns, evil will not win, and those who remain faithful to Him will share in His victory. At the back of this magazine, we provide a brief overview of the different views for each passage we are studying.

6. MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE.

Our weekend worship services will focus on seeing the character of Jesus in the text we study each week. Our *If I Had More Time* podcast will help you understand a bit more about each text. If you want to dive into the different theological views, we have a course for you. The "iceberg" on the next page will help you see what we have and where you want to participate.

¹ G.K. Beale., *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 1.

REVELATION SERIES ICEBERG

Engage the
Scripture

Weekend Message

Explore in
Community

Life Group Content

If I Had More Time Podcast

Examine
Different
Viewpoints

Course



Scan the QR code for resources
and more information.

HOW TO USE THIS SERIES GUIDE

This series guide was created for you. It's filled with resources to enhance your own personal study of Revelation throughout our teaching series. It's a resource meant to travel. Bring it with you to weekend services to take notes and follow along with messages. Take it to your Life Group gathering to go deeper into God's Word with others. Use it in your own time with the Lord as you process the wisdom and teaching of each message and passage of Scripture. We pray it inspires and encourages you in your own walk with the Lord every day.

HERE IS A BREAKDOWN OF THE DIFFERENT ELEMENTS TO GUIDE YOU:

SERMON NOTES

Each week, there is an outline for the weekend message and space for you to take notes. It's a great way for you to follow along each week of the series and record how God is speaking to you through His Word.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

These lessons are meant to be explored in the context of a Life Group. In Life Groups, we grow in our faith together and experience life as God intended—in community. We encourage you to join a Life Group and dive into each message with others during the week. Visit marinerschurch.org/joinagroup to learn more.

DEEPER STUDY

Each week, you will find teaching resources designed to help you go deeper into Revelation and see how everything in it points to Jesus.

THE IF I HAD MORE TIME PODCAST

Join Eric and Teaching Pastor Steve Bang Lee as they unpack each week's sermon and share insights from the enormous amount of research and preparation that went into each message. It's a great opportunity to learn more about Revelation and how it connects to all of Scripture.



INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

The resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ revealed himself to the apostle John, who had been imprisoned “on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Christ’s twofold purpose was: (1) to “unveil” a spiritual diagnosis for seven of the churches in Asia Minor with which John was familiar, and (2) to reveal to John a series of visions setting forth events and factors related to the end times.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF WRITING

Author: The traditional view holds that the author of Revelation is the apostle John, who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the three letters of John. Evidences for this view include the following. (1) The writer referred to himself as “John” (1:4,9; 22:8). (2) He had personal relationships with the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4,11; 2–3). (3) His circumstances at the time of writing (1:9) matched those of John the apostle (who was placed in Asia Minor from about AD 70 to 100 by reliable historical sources from the second century AD). (4) The saturation of the book with Old Testament imagery and echoes implies a Jewish writer, like John, operating in overwhelmingly Gentile Asia Minor.

Background: The initial audience that received the book of Revelation was a group of seven local churches in southwest Asia Minor (1:11; 2–3). Some of these congregations were experiencing persecution (2:9-10,13), probably under the Roman emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96). Others had doctrinal and practical problems (2:6,13-15,20-23). Also behind these surface problems was the backdrop of unseen but powerful spiritual warfare (2:10,14,24; 3:9).

Though some scholars have dated the book later and a few have dated it earlier, commonly held dates of Revelation among evangelical scholars are the mid-90s and the late 60s of the first century AD. The mid-90s view is the stronger view, and it is held by the majority of scholars. Each view gives a different account of the persecution portrayed in the letters to the churches (2:9-10,13). Substantial historical evidence shows that some of the churches were persecuted intensely by Nero in the late 60s. But the reference in 17:10 to seven kings, five of whom have fallen, supports a date in the mid-90s, during the reign of Domitian.

While a case can be made for a late-60s date based on the Nero-related inferences and a possible reference to the Jerusalem temple in 11:1-2 (which may imply that the temple had not yet been destroyed, as it was by the Romans in AD 70), all other factors favor a date of about AD 95. Most notable among these factors is the tradition that John the apostle was exiled to Patmos during a period of intensifying local persecution of Christians by the Emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96).

CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE

The book of Revelation provides an almost complete overview of theology. There is much in this book about Christ, mankind and sin, the people of God, holy angels, and Satan and the demons. There is important material on God’s power and tri-unity (i.e., Trinity), plus aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit and the nature of Scripture.

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The self-sufficient and eternal God lovingly creates a perfect creation with humanity as His crowning work. Falling for Satan’s temptation, humanity rebels and sin enters the world bringing death, pain, and strife. Instead of giving up on humanity, God promises that from the womb of a woman will come the One who will crush Satan’s head.

**CREATION
AND FALL**

God pursues Abram (who is renamed Abraham), a man from an idol-worshipping family who has no children with his wife, and promises that he will be the father of many nations. God promises land to Abraham and assures him that all nations will be blessed through his offspring. God continues to be faithful to this family. He restates the promise to Abraham’s son Isaac and grandson Jacob (who is renamed Israel). A famine strikes the Promised Land, so Jacob and the family move to Egypt where one of his sons, Joseph, is already there to provide for them.

**PROMISE AND
A PEOPLE**

2000 BC

The family becomes a nation while living in Egypt, but also becomes enslaved to the Egyptians. God raises up Moses to lead His people to freedom. During a tenth plague, God strikes dead the firstborn son of everyone living in Egypt, but “passes over” Israel as they put the blood of lambs on their doorposts. After miraculously rescuing His people, God gives His people the law. He also instructs them to build a tabernacle and offer sacrifices so He may dwell among them.

**RESCUE
AND LAW**

1400 BC

God brings His people, through their leader Joshua, into the Promised Land. When God’s people worship the gods of the nations surrounding them, God disciplines them through the attacks of surrounding nations. God raises up judges (or rulers) to rescue His people and call them to repentance. They beg for a king to be like other nations, and God gives them Saul. God then raises up a new king, David, and promises that his kingdom will never end. The family that turned into a nation is now a kingdom. David’s son, Solomon, builds a temple to replace the tabernacle.

**LAND AND
KINGDOM**

1000 BC

Solomon takes foreign wives and allows their foreign gods to clutter the land. His son continues the line of rulers and the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Prophets confront the people but they persist in their idolatry. The Northern Kingdom falls to Assyria and the Southern Kingdom is carried away into Babylonian captivity. When they are freed, they return to a nation and kingdom far less glorious than before and are still unable to keep their promises.

**EXILE AND
RETURN**

600 BC

A descendant of Adam, Abraham, and David, Jesus is the One who crushes the head of Satan, will bless all nations, and reigns forever. Jesus, the God-Man, enters humanity through the womb of a virgin, perfectly obeys the law that we could never obey, dies as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and rises from the dead, conquering Satan, sin, and death. He inaugurates His eternal Kingdom and secures salvation for His people.

JESUS

AD

After His ascension to Heaven, Jesus sends the promised Holy Spirit and His disciples turn the world upside down preaching the good news of Jesus. This good news is known as the gospel. In the midst of intense persecution, the gospel spreads, and Gentiles and Jews form a new people. Churches are planted in cities, and apostles write letters encouraging and instructing the people in the grace of Christ and their response to His grace.

**A NEW
PEOPLE**

AD 30

A time is coming when God’s people—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who have been rescued by Christ—will enjoy Him and His rule forever in perfect harmony. Satan will be crushed, the effects of sin will be reversed, and all things will be made new.

**A BETTER
BEGINNING**

**JOHN WRITES REVELATION WHILE
IN EXILE ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS**

Saints and Earth Dwellers

Noticing the difference will help you study Revelation. Earth dwellers belong to the Earth, and not God. Saints belong to God and are citizens of Heaven. Sometimes, the unfounded fear that Christians have toward the book is that they wrongly think that what happens to “earth dwellers” is what will happen to them. But the book is good news for the Christian.

THE SAINTS

- Revelation 5:8** Prayers of the saints
- Revelation 8:3-4** Incense with prayers of the saints
- Revelation 11:18** Reward for the saints
- Revelation 13:7** Beast allowed to make war on the saints
- Revelation 13:10** Call for endurance of the saints
- Revelation 14:12** Saints keep God’s commands and faith in Jesus
- Revelation 16:6** Saints’ blood shed by persecutors
- Revelation 17:6** Babylon drunk with the blood of the saints
- Revelation 18:20** Heaven rejoices over vindication of the saints
- Revelation 19:8** Fine linen = righteous deeds of the saints
- Revelation 20:9** Camp of the saints surrounded

THE EARTH DWELLERS

- Revelation 3:10** Trial coming on “those who dwell on the earth”
- Revelation 6:10** Martyrs ask God to judge the Earth dwellers
- Revelation 8:13** Eagle warns of woes coming upon them
- Revelation 11:10** Earth dwellers celebrate the death of the two witnesses
- Revelation 13:8** Earth dwellers worship the beast
- Revelation 13:12** Beast causes them to worship the first beast
- Revelation 13:14** They are deceived by signs
- Revelation 14:6** Angel proclaims the gospel to them
- Revelation 17:2** Earth dwellers intoxicated by Babylon
- Revelation 17:8** They marvel at the beast

The Use of Seven by John in Revelation

The number seven is often used in Scripture for completion, such as seven days of creation. John wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation, among other biblical letters too. In his Gospel, John recorded seven “I AM” statements from Jesus and seven signs pointing to Jesus being the Christ. In Revelation, seven is prominently used.

- Seven churches** (Chapters 2-3)
- Seven spirits symbolic of the fullness of the Spirit** (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
- Seven golden lampstands/churches** (1:12, 1:20)
- Seven stars/messengers of the churches** (1:16, 1:20)
- Seven promises to those who conquer** (2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26; 3:5, 3:12, 3:21)
- Seven horns on the Lamb** (5:6)
- Seven eyes on the Lamb** (5:6)
- Sevenfold blessing to God** (5:12)
- Seven seals** (Chapters 6-8)
- Seven groups judged** (6:15)
- Sevenfold praise** (7:12)
- Sevenfold blessing from God** (7:16-17)
- Seven angels before God** (8:2)
- Seven trumpets** (Chapters 8-11)
- Seven thunders** (10:3-4)
- Seven heads of the dragon and beast** (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 17:9)
- Seven crowns on the dragon** (12:3)
- Seven bowls** (Chapters 15-16)
- Seven plagues** (15:1, 15:6, 15:8; 16:1; 21:9)
- Seven mountains** (17:9)
- Seven kings** (17:10)
- Seven blessings** (1:3, 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 22:14)

5 Ways to Read Revelation

The Book of Revelation has inspired and puzzled followers of Jesus for the past 2,000 years. While all have agreed on the content ("the what") of the book, there have been different perspectives on the method ("the how") of reading. Much like how one could see and read through a different set of glasses, Revelation has been read throughout the history of the Church through five particular lenses. Each lens, as we'll discover, will bring distinct parts of the book into clear focus while leaving other aspects of the book with a slight blur. This should not be confused with the intended clarity of the message of the book of Revelation. All of God's Word is clear as it pertains to enabling the follower of Jesus to grow and flourish in relationship with God and His people. Revelation is no exception. The intended message of the book is clearly and dramatically showcased: Jesus wins. God's plans will not be thwarted. God's people will be rescued, and Jesus will be made much of. The methodology of reading, on the other hand, invites the reader to explore Revelation as if looking through the lens of a kaleidoscope, which offers a different perspective on how Jesus will win.

The following gives an overview of the five ways to read Revelation with a core idea and its strengths and limitations.

1. THE PRETERIST APPROACH

Core Idea: Most of Revelation's prophecies were fulfilled shortly after Revelation was written, either in the fall of Jerusalem in the first century (AD 70) or in the fall of Rome in AD 476.

How a Preterist Reads Revelation: When a Preterist (Latin for *preter*, which means "gone by" or "past") opens Revelation, the key question that's asked is, *"How would the original audience in the first century have read and understood Revelation?"*

Preterism holds that the book of Revelation would have been highly relevant and culturally clear to first-century Christians. "The beast" would have been understood by the original audience as Nero or Rome. "Babylon" would have been understood as Jerusalem or the Roman Empire. "The Great Tribulation" would have been viewed as the Jewish War of AD 67-70. A Preterist views Revelation as a prophetic and apocalyptic word of comfort to first-century Christians enduring persecution who were being reminded that God would bring about victory.

"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near." (Revelation 1:3)

2. THE HISTORICIST APPROACH

Core Idea: Revelation is an unfolding symbolic prophecy of the whole of church history, spanning the first century to the second coming of Jesus, with specific events (seals, trumpets, and bowls) in the book corresponding to successive historical eras.

How a Historicist Reads Revelation: When a Historicist opens Revelation, the driving question that's asked is, *"How does Revelation square with past historical events and where might I presently be in the timeline?"*

Historicism may understand the first four seal judgments as representing the first four hundred years of church history. One of the seals (Revelation 6-7) may represent the barbarian invasion of the Western Roman Empire during 375-568 AD. The reader may also associate the trumpet judgments with a different set of historical events by connecting the locusts that come up from the bottomless pit (Revelation 9) as the 1453 AD conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks. Another Historicist reading is to read the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 as representing seven different successive eras of the Church. The Historicist lays the unfolding chapters of Revelation alongside the unfolding chronology of history to see where God's sovereignty has been and where it is presently at work.

3. THE FUTURIST APPROACH

Core Idea: Everything after Chapter 3 awaits a future fulfillment, including a coming tribulation, the rise of the Antichrist, and the visible return of Jesus.

How a Futurist Reads Revelation: When a Futurist opens Revelation, the driving question that's asked is, *"When will these things in Revelation take place, what will it look like, and what current events serve as indicators?"*

Though Futurism varies, a popular Futurist reading would take the three-fold phrase **"what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this"** in Revelation 1:19 and understand it to mean the vision of Jesus **"seen"** by John in the past in Revelation 1, the church age of the present or **"what is"** in Revelation 2-3, and **"what will take place after this"** as the future chronological events to unfold sequentially beginning in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 is viewed by many Futurists as the rapture (**"Come up here"**), followed by a time period of the Great Tribulation (3.5 or 7-year period), which is described sequentially throughout Chapters 6-19, which is then followed by the 1,000-year earthly Millennial reign of Jesus occurring in Chapter 20, in which its conclusion ushers in the eternal state described in Chapters 21-22. The vast majority of Revelation is future-oriented, and the Futurist awaits the next great event to trigger the awaited "end times."

4. THE IDEALIST APPROACH

Core Idea: Revelation is communicating timeless truth, not a timeline, of the ongoing battle between good and evil, God and Satan, and the Church and the present world during the interadvent age.

How an Idealist Reads Revelation: When an Idealist opens Revelation, the driving question asked is, *"What is the spiritual lesson and principles for encouragement and hope being communicated to a Christian through this passage?"*

Idealism is not concerned with individual or specific fulfillments of the prophecies of Revelation. The reader is not trying to resolve any specific periods, events, or series of events by anchoring the text to history. Idealism pulls the reader above the details to see the principles and theological guidelines that govern the history of humanity and the Church. Idealism, therefore, reads Revelation symbolically and recurrently by holding the details loosely. Idealism's understanding of the seal, trumpets, and bowls, for example, would be that this describes the recurring, just judgment of God on sinful humanity throughout the church age. This lens invites the reader towards transcendent principles for edification instead of literal, sequential interpretation.

5. THE ECLECTIC APPROACH

Core Idea: Revelation is best read through multiple lenses: recognizing that the book contains past, present, and future realities—written to real first-century readers (Preterism), reveals timeless truths and principles about God and the world (Idealism), and awaits the final fulfillment of redemptive-historical prophecies (Futurism & Historicism).

How An Eclecticist Reads Revelation: When an Eclecticist opens Revelation, the driving questions asked are, *"What did this passage mean back then? What is the timeless principle that is communicated? How does it await future fulfillment?"*

This means Eclecticism reads Revelation holding the other lenses and approaches for understanding, though not every lens will be applicable for every passage. Some texts, such as the letter to the seven churches (Revelation 2-3) and the throne room scene (Revelation 4-5), will be read through the lens of the first century with application throughout the church age. *"What was happening in the churches back then, and what would the vision of Christ have meant to them?" "What meaning and significance, therefore, does it have for followers of Jesus in any era and situation?"* Other passages, such as the tribulation account (Revelation 6-19), may be read through every lens,

believing the tribulation that spans the entire church age had a specific application for the first-century audience, with its own application for every subsequent and future generation. Then, there will be passages, such as Revelation 21-22, which will be read with only the future lens. Rather than imposing a uniform approach, eclecticism seeks the text to drive the approach. You will see throughout this magazine and our series that Mariners Church takes the Eclectic approach to understanding and teaching the book of Revelation.

To go deeper into the ways to read Revelation
and different viewpoints of the book, register for

**Revelation:
What Christians
Believe About the End,**

a midweek course taught by Scholar-in-Residence,
Ed Stetzer, and Teaching Pastor, Steve Bang Lee.
Visit marinerschurch.org/joinacourse to learn more.

4 Viewpoints of the Millennium

"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time. Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years." (Revelation 20:1-6)

WHAT IS THE MILLENNIUM?

The "Millennium" is a 1,000-year reign of Christ described in Revelation 20:1-6 in which Satan is bound and God's people reign with Christ for "a thousand years."

While every follower of Jesus is united in the belief that the Millennium is a biblical reality, Christians have differed in their interpretations of its nature. Here are the four major views:

Amillennialism: The Millennium is not a literal future period (prefix "a") but a symbolic period of the church age. The Amillennialist view holds that Christ is ruling and reigning now in Heaven, and that followers of Jesus are presently experiencing a realized spiritual Millennium. Amillennialists read Revelation primarily through the Idealist approach.

Postmillennialism: Christ will return after the Millennium ("post"). The Millennium is not necessarily a literal 1,000-year period, but an extended golden age of gospel triumph on the Earth following the church age. Postmillennialism holds that the Great Commission will succeed and that the world will be progressively Christianized through the successful preaching of the gospel, with Jesus returning to a largely converted world. Postmillennialists read Revelation through the Preterist approach.

Historic Premillennialism: Christ will return before ("pre") a literal Millennial reign on the Earth. Unlike Dispensational Premillennialism, this view does not sharply distinguish between the Church and Israel, does not require a pretribulational rapture, and holds that followers of Jesus will go through the tribulation before Christ returns to establish His Kingdom on Earth for a period of time, before the final judgment. Historic Premillennialists read Revelation through an Eclectic approach.

Dispensational Premillennialism: Christ will return in two distinct stages for two distinct people before ("pre") a literal, 1,000-year Millennial reign on the Earth. Unlike Historic Premillennialism, this view sharply distinguishes between God's plan for the Church and God's plan for Israel, holds to a pretribulational (secret) rapture, which will occur before (or in the middle of) a 7-year tribulation period, after which Christ will return to establish His Millennial Kingdom, fulfilling His Old Testament promises to ethnic Israel, before the final judgment and the eternal state. This view reads Revelation predominantly through a Futurist approach.

For more details on how the four viewpoints see each chapter of Revelation, see the appendices starting on page 162.

