

VICTORY IS HIS

REVELATION 4-22



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LETTER

Dear Church,

This term, we turn to Revelation chapters 4-22, having completed chapters 1-3 in 2024. Revelation can feel like an unfamiliar or difficult book to read, filled with vivid imagery, strange scenes, and descriptions of events that seem challenging to understand. A common perception of Revelation is that it's all a coded message about the last days. Yet, while it does have things to say about God's plan and purpose for the end of history, at its heart, Revelation is a wonderful unveiling of the complete victory of Jesus Christ, the astounding glory of God, and the certain hope that belongs to all who trust in him. It pulls back the cosmic curtain on the spiritual realities of creation and reminds us that history is not unfolding aimlessly, but is sovereignly being moved by God's hand towards the day when he will make all things new.

As we journey through these chapters, we'll repeatedly hear the urgent call to remain faithful to Jesus in a world that often demands our allegiance elsewhere. But through it all, we'll be reminded that as uncertain as it all seems, victory is his!

Our hope for this series is that we would grow in our understanding and confidence of Jesus' victory, our endurance in the face of adversity, and our resolve to resist the false promises of our world. As we look towards the perfection of the new heavens and new earth, we pray that these chapters would lift our eyes beyond the troubles of the present, deepen our love for Christ, and strengthen us to stand firm until he returns. May we be a people who live with eternity in view, holding firmly to the hope of the gospel and eagerly awaiting Jesus, who promises, "Surely I am coming soon."

Grace and peace in Christ,
Michael Parker

BACKGROUND TO REVELATION

The letter of Revelation was written by John, a servant of Jesus who was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, when he received an otherworldly vision in the Spirit (1:9-12). Through John, Jesus has a message for seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day western Turkey) who faced a range of challenges, including persecution, compromise with the surrounding culture, false teaching and spiritual complacency. These Christians lived under Roman imperial rule, where loyalty to the emperor conflicted with their faith in Jesus Christ. This letter encourages them to remain faithful, offering hope that God would ultimately defeat his enemies and establish his kingdom.

Revelation also utilises a lot of Old Testament references that its original readers would have recognised, which makes our understanding of the Old Testament critical as we approach the book. Although it contains no direct quotations from the Old Testament, it is saturated with its language, imagery and themes. It draws especially on Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Exodus and the Psalms. The beasts, the throne room, the plagues, the Lamb, Babylon and the New Jerusalem all evoke earlier biblical passages and events. Its visions draw together the themes of creation, exodus, exile, kingdom, judgment and restoration. As such, as we read, it's helpful to have the Old Testament in mind and be asking what each particular allusion is communicating. Overall, they help us to see that the God who rescued Israel from slavery, judged powerful empires and promised a coming king is still at work in the world today, and has ordained a sure future in line with his promises.

While it was written to particular Christians in a particular context, it's clear to see that Revelation's message of persevering in the faith, in the face of adversity and compromise, is deeply relevant to all Christians throughout history.

APOCALYPTIC GENRE AND SYMBOLISM

Revelation belongs to a literary genre known as *apocalyptic*. The word apocalypse means “unveiling” or “revelation”, the pulling back of the curtain to reveal a deeper spiritual reality. It’s quite different to other genres we find in the Bible, such as prophecy, where God gives words to prophets like Moses or Jeremiah to speak directly into the context of God’s people at a particular place and time. In the apocalyptic literature of Revelation, God draws John up to show him the whole scope of creation from his viewpoint, in order to comfort and exhort his people to stand firm in their faith. More than simply speaking about the end times, apocalyptic literature uses imagery, visions, heavenly scenes and symbolic language to help God’s people understand creation and history from heaven’s perspective.

Symbolism is a key component of the way apocalyptic literature communicates meaning, and Revelation is no exception. Numbers, colours, creatures, objects and dramatic events - many of these symbolic descriptions are difficult to hold in our minds as the images shift multiple times a scene. Since no one writes this genre anymore, it feels very strange to us, but it is by design. It prompts us to see the text as “unveiling” spiritual truths rather than describing literal realities. In this way, it carried a critical message to the believers of its time who were facing persecution, uncertainty and pressure to compromise their faith.

As we begin our series in Revelation 4-22, it is important to approach the book not with fear, speculation or a desire to decode every detail, but with worship, reassurance, and a desire to let the reality of Jesus’ victory shape our lives. Revelation was written to strengthen faithful discipleship by revealing that in spite of how it might seem, Jesus reigns! And by his blood and our steadfast faith, we too share in that victory. God’s enemies can thrash and flail against him and his

people all they like, but even though they bring turmoil and suffering, God will ultimately bring justice and make all things new.

With all this in mind it's important that we take care to understand and apply the message of Revelation to our own context. To help with this, here are just some of the symbols found in Revelation and their commonly accepted meanings. As you come across others, discern their meanings together too, by using your understanding of the rest of Scripture, the context of Revelation, and perhaps some commentaries as well.

White: forgiven, cleansed, righteous

Throne/crown: authority, rule

Lamb: the slain, living, and reigning King Jesus

Horn: power

Eye: knowledge, perception

Dragon/Serpent: Satan

Babylon: Human society against God

Jerusalem: Where God dwells with his people

Sea: place of chaos and danger

3: used as a threefold pattern to create emphasis

3 ½ : half the complete number (7)

4: all of the created world (4 corners of the Earth)

6: incomplete (not 7), Satan's deception

7: complete, perfect, represents God's full purpose

10: total, magnitude

12: represents God's people (tribes of Israel, the apostles)

144,000: 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10, all of God's redeemed people

HOW SHOULD WE READ REVELATION?

Christians throughout the ages have understood Revelation through four main approaches.

The preterist approach understands Revelation primarily in relation to the pressures faced by Christians living under Roman rule, offering encouragement to remain faithful in the face of persecution and compromise.

The historicist approach sees Revelation as a symbolic account of the unfolding of church history, from the apostolic age through successive periods to the end of the world. Different visions are associated with particular historical events, movements or institutions.

The futurist approach understands much of Revelation as describing events that are still to come. This approach encourages readers to take seriously the Bible's teaching about the future fulfilment of God's purposes, although Christians differ considerably over the details and sequence of these events.

The idealist approach sees Revelation as a symbolic portrayal of the enduring conflict between God and the forces of evil, the pressures faced by faithful believers, the dangers of idolatry and the ultimate victory of God and the Lamb. Its message therefore speaks not only to the first-century churches or to a future generation, but also to Christians living in every age.

While some elements of these approaches clearly cannot go together, it is also possible to see that others can. By recognising the historical origin of Revelation, its continuing relevance to the church through history and today, and its promise for the future, our aim shouldn't be to settle every interpretive debate, but to approach Revelation prayerfully and carefully, and treat each other with charity and grace.



Check out the Deeper Podcast! Each week we dive deeper into the Bible as our pastors are interviewed about the Bible passage preached on Sunday. Deeper gives us space for follow-up questions and further insights and applications.

Some Christians find the concept of studying Revelation overwhelming, and some read in ideas that aren't actually there. And so it's well worth it to spend *more* time in the passage than you usually might. Whether you listen while you travel, do jobs around the house, or while you exercise, tune in to delve further into God's wisdom for us!

Listen on the church website or
also available at:



Have a question to ask the
podcast? Ask it here:



SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 4-5

18th OF OCTOBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 4-5

1. If you asked a non-believing friend what they think heaven is like, what might they say?

Read Revelation 4

2. What parts of this vision most grab your attention?
3. Why do you think John is being shown these things?
4. The Bible speaks about God in a lot of ways (creator, Father, judge, etc.) When you think of God, how often do you consider him as he's depicted in these verses? Why?

Read Revelation 5

5. What do you think is the significance of the scroll and the one who opens it?

6. If you were asked to explain what John saw in these chapters to a friend, how would you go about it?
7. John's vision has a number of Old Testament allusions (Ezekiel 1:4-14; 2:9-10; Isaiah 6:1-3; 11:1-2; 29:11-12; Daniel 7:1-14; Zechariah 4:10), a practice which continues throughout the rest of the book. Why do you think Revelation refers to the Old Testament so much and what does it mean for us as we approach the book?
8. What images/moments from these chapters inspire awe for you? Why?
9. Living in our physical reality can make it hard to remember the heavenly reality these chapters show. Which of your attitudes, affections and behaviours need re-forming in light of this vision? What's one step you could take this week to begin that journey?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 6-8:5

25th OF OCTOBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 6-8:5

1. Share your understanding of God's sovereignty over world events. Is he hands on or hands off? Or maybe something else?

Read Revelation 6 and 8:1-5

2. Take a look over the seals that the Lamb breaks and note down below what they each depict and might represent.

Seal	What Happens	What it Might Represent
Seal 1 (6:1-2)		
Seal 2 (6:3-4)		
Seal 3 (6:5-6)		
Seal 4 (6:7-8)		
Seal 5 (6:9-11)		
Seal 6 (6:12-17)		
Seal 7 (8:1-5)		

3. What does it suggest that only the Lamb can open these seals?

4. How do you think the seventh seal relates to the others? What do you think 8:1-5 is getting at?
5. What warning is there for those who are not yet followers of Jesus? How does this make you feel? What should we do in response to this?

Read Revelation 7

6. What's happening in these verses? Who are the people and how do they relate to God and to the Lamb?
7. Compare this chapter to chapter 5. What do you notice?
8. This chapter is an interlude between first six seals and the final seal. Why do you think John saw it in this order? How does what these verses depict relate to the opening of the seals?
9. What comfort and hope are there for us as Christians in this passage? How might that future soothe you on hard days now?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 8:6-11:19

1st OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 8:6-11:19

1. Who are you most afraid to talk to about Jesus? What kind of reaction do you fear?

Read Revelation 8:6-13

2. These verses describe the devastation that follows the blowing of the first four trumpets. For each, what do you notice about the nature and scale of the calamity, and the part of creation it affects?
3. What do you feel when you read verse 13? What does it add to the experience of these trumpets?

Chapter 9 describes the 5th and 6th trumpets (the first and second woes). Here, horrific creatures are released from the Abyss to torture those who do not have the seal of God. Additionally four angels are released to kill a third of mankind with an army of strange riders. Despite the devastation of the six trumpets, the final two verses of the chapter describe how the rest of humanity refuse to repent. John's vision then shifts again in chapter 10. Similar to chapter 7 with the seals, chapters 10 and 11:1-14 form an interlude between the 6th and seventh trumpets to convey simultaneous events from a different perspective, that of the people of God.

Read Chapter 10

4. Why do you think John is told to eat the scroll? (See Ezekiel 3:1-3)

5. What do you think the sweetness/sourness of the scroll is meant to communicate?

Read Chapter 11

6. Who do you think the two witnesses represent? What do you think the details here tell us about God and the world?
7. In what ways are you tempted to stay silent rather than bear witness to Christ? How does this chapter address this tendency in us?
8. What do you notice about the sounding of the seventh trumpet in 11:15-19 that seems similar to what we've already read in Revelation? What do you think this means?
9. What aspects of these few chapters do you find frightening or alarming? How do we reconcile this depiction of God's judgement with the more comforting ways we tend to think about him?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 12-14

8th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 12-14

1. What tends to have the most influence over how people live?
Convictions, fears, desires, other people? Or maybe something else?

Read Revelation 12

2. What images do you find most striking in these verses? Why?
3. Who do you think the woman, her son and the dragon represent?
What, then, do you think the purpose of this scene is?

Read Revelation 13

4. What are your thoughts on the two beasts and the power they have over the inhabitants of the earth? Where do we see demands to offer false worship in the world today?
5. Given the use of symbolism within Revelation, what do you think the warning about the mark of the beast communicates? (vv. 16-18).

Read Chapter 14

6. How does the picture of the Lamb and his people differ from the descriptions of the beasts and the people of the earth in chapter 13?
7. Consider all three chapters together. Why is the angel's proclamation in 14:6-7 important?
8. The beasts have power in our world to mislead. In what ways do you feel the pull to compromise your allegiance to Jesus? Look again at 12:10-11, 13:8-10, and 14:12-13. What is the clear message for Christians to combat the pull of the beasts?
9. How should we as Christians approach the reality of this spiritual warfare? (see Eph 6:10-20).
10. The imagery of punishment in chapter 14 is vivid and horrific. As well as keeping us following Jesus, it ought to drive us to warn those who do not. Who in your life are you praying would come to Jesus?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 15-16

15th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 15-16

1. What are some examples of injustice that we see? How do these make you feel?

Read Revelation 15

2. What kind of scene is set by verses 1 to 4? What emotions do you feel reading verses 5 to 8?
3. How do you think this chapter connects with the wider story of Revelation?

Read Revelation 16

4. Take a look over the bowls of God's wrath that the angels pour out and note down below what they each depict and how they're similar to the plagues in the exodus from Egypt.

Bowl	What Happens	Similarity to Exodus Story
Bowl 1 (16:2)		Ex 9:8-12
Bowl 2 (16:3)		Ex 7:14-25
Bowl 3 (16:4)		Ex 7:14-25
Bowl 4 (16:8-9)		Ex 10:21-29
Bowl 5 (16:8-9)		Ex 10:21-29

Bowl 6 (16:12-16)		Ex 14
Bowl 7 (16:17-21)		Ex 9:13-35, hail

5. Once all the bowls are poured out, what is the result?

6. What effect do verses 5-7 have in the middle of all this judgement?

7. Who is coming like a thief in verse 15? What do you think it means to stay awake and remain clothed in the context of these chapters?

8. In 15:3-4, John says those who were victorious over the beast sang the song of Moses (see Ex 15:1-18) and of the Lamb. What do you think the connection to the Exodus story in these chapters communicates?

9. These chapters demonstrate a hardness of heart of those in opposition to the Lord. Read two or more of the following passages, Ezekiel 36:25-27; Eph 2:1-10; Phil 2:12-13; Titus 3:3-7. How have you seen God's work in your own life and heart?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 17-20

22nd OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 17-20

1. What are some examples of people or groups that have seemed so powerful and yet had a total collapse?

Read Revelation 17

2. What do you make of the description of “Babylon” in verses 1-6? How does she compare to the woman in chapter 12?
3. What do you think the angel is talking about in the rest of the chapter? How might it relate to what else we’ve read in Revelation?

Chapter 18 describes the fall of Babylon from the perspective of heaven (vv. 1-8 and 20-24) and from the perspective of the earth (vv. 9-19). The former is her divine condemnation and the call of God’s people to come out of her and rejoice at her destruction, and the latter is a lament from those infatuated with her. With that, John’s vision turns back to the heavenly throne room in chapter 19, where he hears a multitude praise God for his judgements and rejoice at the wedding of the Lamb.

4. Babylon is portrayed as attractive, and yet she is corrupt and ultimately doomed. Where are you tempted to give in to the seductions of Babylon, forgetting that this world will pass away? Or where is Babylon still influencing your life?

Read Chapter 19:11-21

5. What strikes you about the image of Jesus in verses 11-16? Taking in the wider context of Revelation, what is happening in this scene? (See 12:5, 14:20, and 17:14)

6. Jesus defeats the beast and the kings of the earth. What is the relationship between his victory and God's justice?

Read Chapter 20

7. There are different conclusions Christians come to about what this chapter says concerning Jesus' second coming. Have a discussion about the various interpretations if you like, but regardless of differing particularities, what can we be certain about from these verses?

8. What feelings does reading about God's justice stir up for you? (Discomfort? Joy? Anger? Sadness? Relief? Something else?)

9. How does knowing that Jesus is victorious give you strength today? What are the parts of your life where you particularly need to remember this truth, and what would doing so change?

SERMON NOTES - REVELATION 21-22

29th OF NOVEMBER

HOME GROUP STUDY - REVELATION 21-22

1. When you think about the new creation, what do you picture?

Read Revelation 21:1-8

2. What stands out to you about the new creation in these verses? How is it similar or different to other common world views about the next life?
3. There's a sharp contrast within verses 6-8. Why do you think this is included? What effect does it have?

Read Revelation 21:9-14 and 21:22-22:5

4. What do you find interesting about the description of the new Jerusalem?
5. Think about the significance of the temple in the Old Testament. What does verse 22 communicate about God's presence in light of this?

Read Revelation 22:6-18

6. Jesus repeatedly says, “I am coming soon!” (vv7, 12, 22). How should this promise shape the way we live today?
7. Revelation has a lot to say about matters of right judgement, but what does verse 17 reveal about the heart of God?
8. What encouragement or inspiration is there for us in these final chapters to persevere until the end? What are you most excited for in the new creation?
9. What might it look like to live as followers of Jesus now, in the time and place he has appointed us, whilst also praying for Christ’s return? (See 2 Peter 3:9-15). What practices/habits could you develop to help fix your heart and mind on these future realities?
10. What have been the key takeaways for you as we come to a close in this series? What’s your big prayer in response to all we’ve seen in this part of God’s word?

¹⁵ The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

REVELATION 11:15

