



FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVELATION - INTRODUCTION

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026

DEAR FAMILY OF FAITH,

As we prepare to jump into our study of Revelation, I want to ask that each of you take some time to read through the whole book in one sitting. Before you begin, pray that the Lord will show you what He wants you to know. Depending on how fast you read, it should take you between one to three hours. Once you've read it all the way through, write down three or four thoughts or themes that the Holy Spirit impresses upon you from the Revelation. When you have done that, send them to me by email at stanfike@gmail.com so that I can see what messages God is sending to our church through His Word. After all, we are not studying men's interpretations or theories on the meanings of the symbolism of the prophetic messages of Revelation; we are studying God's Word, given by Revelation of Jesus Christ to John in visions and divine messages.

This year we will be utilizing David Guzik's Enduring Word commentary on *Revelation* as a resource for study, because he presents a fairly impartial but conservative interpretation to the biblical material.¹ He also utilizes quotes from Bible scholars and well-respected preachers. But before reading His commentary, always read the Scripture for yourself and let the Holy Spirit speak it into your life. There will be no formal lesson outlined, but your Sunday School classes will be a time for your teacher to lead all of us in an open discussion about what the Bible says in Revelation.

REMINDER...

The next three Sundays will be spent together in the Worship Center as Bro Stan and Brandon Whitaker lead us in an Introduction to Revelation. We will discuss the background and context of discussions surrounding the study of Revelation. We will also discuss some of the landmines and controversies concerning the book, so that when you begin the study in your classes, you can go straight to dealing with the text itself.

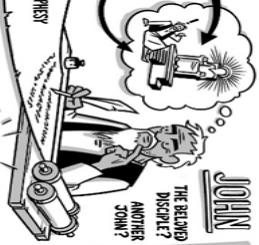
SOME ONLINE RESOURCES:

- A good two-part video introduction of Revelation that goes with the chart on the back of this page can be found at <https://bibleproject.com/videos/collections/new-testament/>
- A verse by verse commentary on the book of Revelation by Dr. Anthony Garland along with many older, yet conservative commentaries and sermon series can be found at https://www.preceptaustin.org/revelation_commentaries#preceptministries
- A good resource for original language tools and various study resources is at <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

¹ Guzik, David. *Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation*, accessed and used according to online permission.



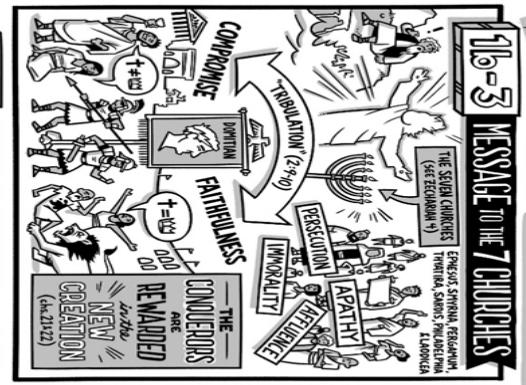
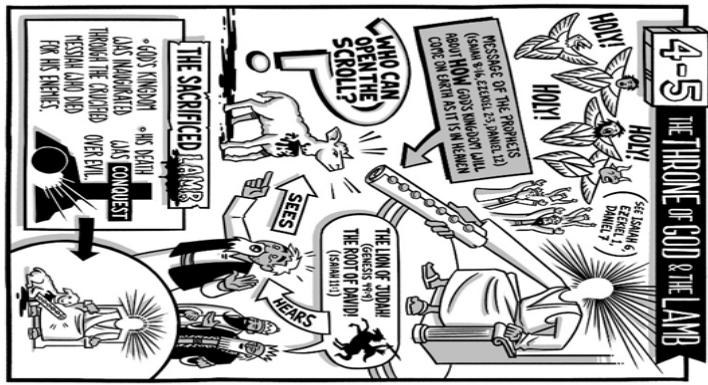
APOCALYSE(s) GREEK: CATASTROPHIC
* TYPE OF SYMBOLIC VISIONS
EZEKIEL, DANIEL, EZRA, JEREMIAH, JOHN
THAT REVEAL HARMFUL LITERATURE (EZEKIEL, JEREMIAH)
THAT HAS BEEN PREDICTED ON HISTORY IN LIGHT OF ITS FINAL OUTCOME



REVELATION OF JESUS
* SYMBOLIC COMPARISON WITH THE TESTAMENT, PROPHECY WITH THE STAR, THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE RESURRECTION & RETURN OF JESUS
* ALSO SEE CONCLUDING FINAL JUDGMENT FROM THREE PERSPECTIVES



A SYMBOLIC VISION FOR EVERY GENERATION OF THE CHURCH
HISTORY'S PATTERN: THAT REVEALS GOD'S PROMISE
ALL HUMAN KINGDOMS BECOME BABYLON & MUST BE RESISTED
JESUS WILL RETURN TO REMOVE EVIL FROM THIS WORLD



A. The introduction and prologue to the Book of Revelation.

1. (1-2) The writer of the Book of Revelation.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

a. **The Revelation of Jesus Christ:** The ancient Greek word translated **Revelation** is *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). The word simply means “a revealing, an unveiling.” The Book of Revelation is the **Revelation of Jesus Christ** in the sense that *it belongs to Him*, He is the one doing the revealing. It is also Jesus’ **Revelation** in the sense that *He is the object* revealed; Jesus is the person revealed by the book.

i. From the outset, we are given the most important truth about the Book of Revelation. This book shows us the Antichrist, it shows us God’s judgment, it shows us calamity on the earth, and it shows us Mystery Babylon in vivid detail. Most of all, it is the **Revelation of Jesus Christ** to us. If we catch everything else, but miss Jesus in the book, we miss the Book of Revelation.

ii. How we *need* a revelation of Jesus! “The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Which God gave Him to show His servants:** This is an important reason *why* God gave this **Revelation of Jesus Christ**. He gave it **to show His servants**. God gave this revelation that it might be shown, not hidden. This is an *apocalypse* – a revelation, not *apocrypha* (something hidden).

c. **Things which must shortly take place:** This describes *when* the events of this book will **take place** – they will happen **shortly**, and they **must** happen **shortly**. This means that the Book of Revelation is a book of *predictive* prophecy. It speaks of things that will happen in the future – at least future from the time of its writing.

i. Not all prophecy is predictive, but this prophetic book clearly is predictive. It describes things that **must shortly take place**. *The time is near* ([Revelation 1:3](#)) for the fulfillment of these things, but the time was not present at the time of writing.

ii. Some would say that we should not be concerned with prophecy, that it is a frivolous exercise – but if God was concerned enough to talk about it, we should be concerned enough to listen. “Some tell us that what is yet future ought not to be examined into till after it has come to pass. I can hardly realize that this is seriously meant.” (Seiss)

d. **Shortly take place:** **Short** and **near** are relative terms, and this is God’s timetable, not man’s. Yet for 2000 years, history has been *on the brink* of the consummation of all things, running parallel to the edge, *not* running towards a distant brink.

David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 1*

i. **Shortly** is the ancient Greek phrase *en tachei*, which means “quickly or suddenly coming to pass,’ indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden.” (Walvoord)

e. **He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John:** This describes *how* the message is delivered in the Book of Revelation. It is a book of signs: the angel **sign-ified** this message to John. It is a book that communicates in signs.

i. It is true that the signs used in Revelation have been a source of confusion or controversy for some readers. Yet the signs are necessary because John expresses things of heaven, which Paul said he heard with *inexpressible words* ([2 Corinthians 12:4](#)). John described things he saw, so he could only use symbolic images to explain it. To us, this book is prophecy, but John simply recorded history unfolding before him, as he saw it. “John had visions from heaven; but he described them in his own language and manner.” (Clarke)

ii. The signs are also necessary because there is tremendous power in symbolic language. It is one thing to call someone or something evil or bad, but it is far more vivid to describe the image of a woman *drunk with the blood of the saints* ([Revelation 17:6](#)).

iii. Though it is filled with signs, the Book of Revelation *is* accessible to those who have an understanding of the first 65 books of the Bible, and especially an understanding of the first 39 books of the Bible, the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament. It contains more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament, and 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation (that is almost 70%) make some reference to the Old Testament.

f. **By His angel to His servant John:** This tells us *who* wrote the Book of Revelation. It was **His servant John**, and the best evidence points to this being the Apostle John, the same writer of the Gospel of John and the books of 1, 2, and 3 John.

i. **By His angel:** Many of the signs and visions of the Book of Revelation came to John through the supervision of an angel ([Revelation 5:2, 7:2, 10:8-11:1, 17:7](#) are some examples).

g. **Who bore witness to the word of God:** In this prologue, we see John knew this book was Holy Scripture, **the word of God**. We sometimes wonder if the apostolic authors of the New Testament knew they wrote Holy Scripture. At least in this case, John knew.

i. He knew it was Holy Scripture because he called it a **revelation** from God. He knew it came from the Father through Jesus, and not from any mere human.

ii. He knew it was the Holy Scripture because he called it the **word of God**, as an Old Testament prophet would say. He also called it the **testimony of Jesus Christ**.

2. (3) A blessing to the reader and keeper of this book.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

a. **Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it:** The Book of Revelation offers a particular and unique blessing to those who *read* and *keep* the message of

David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 1*

this book. This is the first of seven beatitudes of Revelation ([Revelation 1:3](#), [14:13](#), [16:15](#), [19:9](#), [20:6](#), [22:7](#), and [22:14](#)).

i. Because they neglect the book Revelation, many people miss this blessing. For example, the Anglican Church virtually omits Revelation in its regular schedule of readings for both public worship and private devotions. This is a typical attitude towards the Book of Revelation. Many people believe that only fanatics want to dig deep into this book, but really, it is a book for anyone who wants to be **blessed**.

ii. Fortunately, John didn't say that we had to *understand* everything in the Book of Revelation to be **blessed**. There are some difficult things in this book that may only be understood as we look back at fulfilled prophecy; but we can be blessed by *reading* and *hearing* even when we don't understand.

b. **Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it:** This promise gives more reasons to know John believed this book was Holy Scripture. First, the words **he who reads and those who hear** show that this book was intended to be read publicly, just as other books of accepted Scripture. Second, the promise of *blessing* itself shows that John regarded this book as Holy Scripture. In the Jewish world, such a blessing could never be pronounced on a merely human book.

i. All of these things together show that beyond doubt, the Book of Revelation *claims* to be Holy Scripture. A critic can agree or disagree with that claim, but it can't be denied that Revelation makes the claim.

c. **Keep those things which are written in it:** The Book of Revelation gives us much more than information for prophetic speculation. It gives us **things to keep**. If we understand the Book of Revelation, it will *change the way we live*.

d. **He who reads:** This is in the *singular*. It speaks of one person who reads. "**Those who hear**" is in the *plural*. It speaks of many people hearing. The idea is probably from custom of the early church, where attention was given to the public reading of Scripture, which was often then explained. In our modern way of speaking John might say, "Blessed is the pastor who teaches Revelation, and blessed is the congregation who hears it." Most of all, pastor or congregation, **blessed** are those who **keep those things which are written in it**.

i. "Neither must we only live up to the words of this prophecy, but die for it also, and be content to be burned with it, if called thereto; as that holy martyr, who when he saw the Revelation cast into the fire with him, cried out 'O blessed Revelation, how happy am I to be burned in thy company!'" (Trapp)

3. Since so much controversy has risen over the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, it is helpful to know the four basic approaches people have used through the centuries to understand Revelation.

a. **The Preterist View:** This approach believes that Revelation dealt only with the church in John's day. In the *Preterist* approach, Revelation doesn't predict anything. John simply described events of his current day, but he put them in symbolic code so those outside the

David Guzik, *Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 1*

Christian family couldn't understand his criticism of the Roman government. In the *Preterist* view, the Book of Revelation was for *then*.

b. **The Historicist View:** This approach believes that Revelation is a sweeping, disordered panorama of all church history. In the *Historicist* approach, Revelation predicts the future, but the future of the “church age” – not the future of end-time events. In the *Historicist* view, Revelation is full of symbols that describe *now*.

i. For example, many of the Reformers called the Pope the beast of Revelation chapter 13, but they didn't necessarily want to believe that the end was very near. So they believed that Revelation spoke of *their* time, without necessarily speaking to the *end* times.

c. **The Poetic View:** This approach believes that Revelation is a book full of pictures and symbols intended to encourage and comfort persecuted Christians in John's day. In the *Poetic* or *allegorical* view, the Book of Revelation isn't literal or historic. Revelation is a book of *personal* meaning.

d. **The Futurist View:** This approach believes that beginning with chapter four, Revelation deals with the end times, the period directly preceding Jesus' return. In the *Futurist* view, Revelation is a book that mainly describes the *end* times.

e. Which approach is correct? *Each one* is true in some regard. The Book of Revelation did speak to John's day. It speaks to church history. And it does have meaning for our personal life. So while elements of the first three approaches have their place, we can't deny the place of the **futurist** view. We can know the Book of Revelation speaks with clarity about the end times because of two central principles drawn from [Revelation 1:1-3](#).

i. First, we believe that the Book of Revelation *must mean something*. This is a book that Jesus gave to *show His servants* something. It isn't a book of meaningless nonsense. It has a promise of blessing, not a promise of confusion.

ii. Secondly, we believe that Revelation definitely claims to contain *predictive prophecy*. John made it clear: *things which must shortly take place... the time is near*. John wrote about events that were still future to him.

B. Greeting.

1. (4-5a) A greeting of grace and peace.

John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

a. **To the seven churches which are in Asia:** This letter was originally addressed to these **seven** selected **churches of Asia**. This was the Roman province of **Asia**, which is the western part of modern day Turkey.

b. **From Him who is and who was and who is to come:** John brought a greeting from *God the Father*, who is described with this title. **Him who is and who was and who is to come** speaks

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to the eternal nature of God. It has the idea of a timeless Being, and is connected with the name *Yahweh* found in the Old Testament ([Exodus 6:3](#), [Exodus 17:15](#)).

i. The construction of **who is, who was and who is to come** is intentionally awkward in the ancient Greek. It seems that John searched for a phrase to communicate the Old Testament idea of *Yahweh*.

ii. It is never enough to just say that God **is**, or to just say that He **was**, or to just say that He **is to come**. As Lord over eternity, He rules the past, the present, and the future.

iii. The description **Him who is and who was and who is to come** applies to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as much as it does to God the Father. In fact, the title *Yahweh* describes the Triune God, the One God in Three Persons. Yet it seems that John focused on God the Father with this title because he specifically mentioned God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the following words of this verse.

c. **From the seven Spirits who are before His throne:** John brought a greeting from *God the Holy Spirit*, who is described with this title. **The seven Spirits who are before His throne** speaks to the *perfection* and *completion* of the Holy Spirit. John used an Old Testament description of the Holy Spirit.

i. The idea of the **seven Spirits** quotes from the Old Testament. [Isaiah 11:2](#) describes seven aspects of the Holy Spirit: *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord*. It isn't that there are seven different spirits of God, rather the Spirit of the Lord has these characteristics, and He has them all in fullness and perfection.

d. **From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth:** John brought a greeting from *God the Son*, who is described by *who He is* and by *what He has done*.

i. Jesus is the **faithful witness:** This speaks to Jesus' utter reliability and faithfulness to His Father and to His people, even unto death. The ancient Greek word translated **witness** is also the word for a *martyr*.

ii. **Firstborn from the dead:** This speaks to Jesus' standing as *pre-eminent* among all beings, that He is first in priority. **Firstborn from the dead** means much more than that Jesus was the first person resurrected. It also means that He is pre-eminent among all those who are or will be resurrected. Jesus is *the firstborn among many brethren* ([Romans 8:29](#)).

iii. The use of **firstborn** does not mean that Jesus had a birth date and is therefore a created being, and not God. The ancient Rabbis called Yahweh Himself "Firstborn of the World" (Rabbi Bechai cited in Lightfoot's commentary on Colossians). Rabbis also used **firstborn** as a Messianic title. "God said, 'As I made Jacob a first-born ([Exodus 4:22](#)), so also will I make king Messiah a first-born' ([Psalm 89:27](#)).” (R. Nathan in *Shemoth Rabba*, cited by Lightfoot in his commentary on Colossians)

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iv. Jesus is the **ruler over the kings**. Before the Book of Revelation is over, Jesus will take dominion over every earthly king. At the present time, Jesus rules a kingdom, but it is a kingdom that is not yet of this world.

e. In this greeting, with its systematic mention of each Person of the Trinity, we see how the New Testament presents the doctrine of the Trinity. It doesn't present it in a carefully defined, "systematic theology" kind of way. It simply weaves the truth of the Trinity – that there is One God in Three Persons – throughout the fabric of the New Testament.