

Revelation: Hope Revealed

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MAIN VERSES

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Opening and Welcome

Never gets old every week when we release the children. Vacuum and then poof, empty. It's great. I mean, look at this. This is incredible. Just this big tunnel of emptiness. Love it. So Shabbat Shalom, everyone.

If you're visiting us for the first time today or watching online for the first time, my name is Matthew Vandrells. I'm one of the pastors here at Founded in Truth Fellowship, and we are a Bible-loving, Sabbath-celebrating, He Break-emphasizing, eclectic community whose only desire is truly to orbit the person of Jesus that we call Yeshua. So welcome to Founded in Truth, everybody. It's so good to be back together this week.

Today we're starting something really big. I want you guys to fall in love with this letter that Paul crafted. My agenda for this series is mainly the same agenda I believe John had for the seven churches that he wrote this letter to, along with many of the churches that received the letter after that. And that is the main consistent theme throughout the entire scroll of Revelation: Yeshua is king.

Yeshua Is King

Don't forget Yeshua is king. And everything that comes with acknowledging that with all of your heart and soul and believing that in your everyday life—the impact that makes and how it transforms the way you think about the world, how it transforms the way you interact with the world, the way you deal with chaos or tribulation experienced in the world. The lamb is on the throne. Amen. Like the lamb has overcome. The lamb is the only one with the authority to break the seals and open the scroll. The lamb.

And this book should become a reminder of the true reality of what is happening now as well as what has happened and what will happen despite what we think we see going on outside these doors.

This is Revelation—or the revealing of Jesus Christ given to John. That's verse 1. It is not a revelation of the end times. It is not the revelation of the Antichrist. It's not a revelation of Satan. It's not a revelation of fear and anxiety and uncertainty. This is, per verse 1, the revelation of Yeshua the Messiah, Yeshua the King. And I'm glad you guys are enthusiastic because I'm about to assign you all some homework.

Mandatory Homework

Some of you haven't done homework in a long time. And I'm going to make this homework mandatory. Oh, I feel some rebellious spirits already. This is great. Mandatory. Will you guys go ahead and raise your hand if you'll commit to doing this homework assignment? Okay. It's a good ratio. It's good enough.

My history growing up was in evangelical circles, and I never read the book of Revelation from front to back when I was a kid or teenager. It just didn't happen. I thought I was familiar with it, but it wasn't the fault of my pastors or teachers. I was simply never encouraged to read it through, or I just never did. I was spoon-fed, in a good way, bits and pieces of Revelation at church, and I thought I had a familiar enough understanding of it that I just never really desired to dive into it.

My pastor or teacher would randomly do a message on the seven churches of Revelation or at some point maybe a sermon on the mark of the beast or a sermon on the Antichrist. And although some of these ideas are based on a collection of verses in the book, none of these are major themes in the book of Revelation in and of themselves.

And so your mandatory homework this week is to read the book of Revelation from front to back in one sitting. You will not interrupt the symphony that has been orchestrated for you. And I know I heard some huffs, guys.

Read It in One Sitting

It will take you anywhere from 35 to 45 minutes, depending on how fast you process what is going on. It's not going to take that long. It's not burdensome. It's not. Some of you binge watch Netflix and binge watch Jof Goldblum on Disney Plus all the time. You can skip one episode to

encounter this ancient scroll penned by a believer that was exiled. That alone is something to behold—that we have access to this. It's like a time machine that you get to take back to the first century. So appreciate that.

There's a reason why I want you to read it in one sitting. And when you sit down to read it, I would like to encourage you not to wear any lenses that you may already have. Even if you're convinced nothing will change your mind and your view of Revelation, that's fine. Can you take them off for 40 minutes and go on this journey?

When you sit down and read it, I don't want you to think that you know what's going to happen next or be looking for things. Hollywood has tainted this inspired word of God. They've tainted it with reinventions. And then we have fictionalized books that have been released, especially in the 90s, all Hall Collections, including the children's version. And in my opinion, they've hurt both our witness and hurt the understanding of how we can actually be edified and grow in our relationship with God because of the contents of this book.

Read It Fresh

And when you read it, I don't want you to assume it's about the end of the world or about calculating a great tribulation. And I don't want you to view it as a crystal ball that you can divine the future with or trying to tie it to current events. This is going to be hard for a lot of us. I don't want you to read it in attempting to tie parts of it into current events or politics in 2021. None of that. You can do all of that after you read it this one time, but this one time I want you to walk into it fresh. And I want you to sit down and read this book and enjoy the journey that John is taking you on. Make yourself vulnerable to the things in it. Enjoy the explosive imagery found in this apocalyptic and liturgical letter of resistance.

There's a reason why I want you to read it in one sitting. And I would love for you to read it out loud. I'll explain why I feel that's the most authentic way to experience it in just a moment.

Follow the Story

When you read this ancient scroll, I want you to notice the story that John is leading you on through these visions that he's having from God. And you may feel the need to stop and analyze this. "What is that Greek word? Let me look it up in the lexicon and concordance. Where else does it appear?" No, stop it. If you see something interesting, just make a note. And after you're done with this one sitting, go back, study, take it apart. Great, stay focused this one time. If you see something that's interesting, mark it and come back to it.

But do not disrupt the flow of this symphony that the orchestra is playing. Stay in it. Experience the beauty of the journey John crafted from the visions that he had.

Notice the Patterns

And a few things I want you to look out for because you will notice some things along this journey. And sometimes people think they're crazy because they start to see these little patterns popping up. And I want to go ahead and validate a few things. And I want you to notice the parts of the symphony that are going to be beautiful so that when you see them, you can be like, "Oh, wow, yeah, that's what it is. Yeah."

You'll notice right off the bat that it was written to seven specific churches in the Roman province. And we're about to go over a little bit of history of the book as well. I'm trying to kind of pave the way. And the reason why I want to go over the background and the history of the book is so you can understand more of the perspective of the primary audience it was written to.

Again, you'll notice in the first chapter that John is writing this to seven real churches in the first century. John was an overseer of these churches. He was kind of an authority figure, and that's where the visions were going through. And when he had these visions, he articulated the visions in a way that he felt they would understand on paper. You had to take the visions and write them on paper. And so knowing the history kind of gets us closer to their mindset when reading it, if you can appreciate that.

Beauty in the Details

So some things of beauty that you will notice—and I don't want you to disregard them if you notice them throughout the scroll. The patterns of numbers. You're going to see a lot of numbers popping up. Just appreciate them. Go back later and study them. It'll be great. Specifically the number seven. Just recognize that. The effort put into that and the visions of what these things are coming to be.

You'll also notice, and maybe keep track if you want, how many times Yeshua is referred to as a king or reigning or ruling or made synonymous with God, either directly or indirectly. The usage of the word blood. You'll see that word pop up a lot. Maybe you'll see some patterns. Don't stop, but if you do see them, keep track of them.

Also, you'll notice that John hears a lot of things and John sees a lot of things. And many times he does not see the same things he hears. And it's beautiful—it's just beautiful. Also keep an eye out for contrasting parallels. If you're on the journey, you may be able to follow the journey better. An example of that would be like the beast in contrast to Christ or Babylon in contrast to the new Jerusalem or the prostitute in contrast to maybe the woman who gives birth to the child or the bride, right?

Lots of really neat stuff. So you guys good? Fantastic. So I do have some resources that I recommend. If you guys read the book of Revelation and meditate on it and feel you want to go deeper, the Holy Spirit has enabled many men and women to devote their lives to studying this book and write books offering help about the Greek and the history and the context and commentaries and so on. On the YouTube description, I have a list of the resources I found most helpful. You guys can check them out there.

The book of Revelation was most likely written near the end of the first century, maybe around 90 or 95 AD or CE, during the reign of Emperor Domitian, as stated by the early church father Arrhenius of Leon in the second century. Some theories suggest the book may have been written during the time of Nero. Others say it was written right after the time of Domitian, around that time. But whenever it was written, this just gives you an idea: late first century, most likely.

When Revelation Was Written

This was a time of oppression for Christians in Rome. It was also a time when Rome was flexing its muscles the most, expanding its empire, this imperial war machine that no one could match. Some persecution of Christians took place, absolutely. But it was also a time when being a Christian was looked down upon in a very severe way, not simply from the government, but from the other citizens of Rome.

Christians during this time were following a new Lord, a new King, a new kurios—a title meaning "lord," which was attributed to Caesar—but the Christians were attributing it to Yeshua. Yeshua. And this was troubling to the loyal and patriotic Roman citizens at the time.

The Christians would not fight in the wars of Rome. They would not use violence against their enemies nor the enemies of Rome during this time. And this was the staple that Yeshua taught, right? No, you don't stab your enemy in the face. You pray for your enemy. You don't try to poison your enemy. You bless them by giving them food and water and aid. And this was seen

as an absolute subversion of Roman rule and domination, as you would expect. This was antithetical to everything Rome stood for.

Christians would not show worship to the deified Caesar. They wouldn't acknowledge and honor the gods of Rome or Rome's might and power, Rome itself. Because if you acknowledge the might and power of Rome, indirectly you're acknowledging and honoring the gods that allegedly gave them the power.

Christians were annoying to the Roman citizens in all of Rome. They absolutely were. They seemed almost like insurgents in this nation, but they weren't trying to overthrow it in a typical violent manner. And so Romans didn't know what to do. They thought they were crazy and mocked them. And as a result, as you can imagine, that came along with a lot of pressure.

Under Pressure

You ever been the odd one out? Maybe back in school, maybe at work. And it gets burdensome when everyone around you is like, "Well, why don't you just get with the program? Why don't you just act like everyone else? Why don't you just do the thing that everyone else is doing?" Do you feel a little bit of pressure? We call it pure pressure to just kind of cave, to just kind of accommodate whatever it is that everyone around you is doing and that you feel convicted not to do. Anybody? No one? Okay, nevermind, we'll move on.

There was a pressure to cave into compromise of putting your allegiance, faith, and energy into the politics of government, giving your loyalties and tribute to a Caesar who in the name of God was deemed selected by the gods and therefore was a divine presence of the gods of Rome. There was constant pressure for the Christian communities to accommodate the political loyalty that Rome demanded instead of the true loyalty found in Christ. The temptation to make life easier was to yield to honoring the Roman Empire, one of the beasts of the world, according to the prophets.

Rome as Babylon

Now, during this time, Rome had already destroyed the temple and ransacked Jerusalem. That was a big deal, right? Big deal. The temple was only destroyed how many times? Two. Who destroyed it the first time? Babylon. And the Romans came in and destroyed it the second. And so during this time, both Christians and Jews referred to Rome as Babylon. Even in the New Testament, we see this in [1 Peter 5:13](#). It's referred to as Babylon. The reference, of course,

comes from the Old Testament record of when Babylon came in and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. It seems fitting, 600 years earlier.

But Babylon was also a slur, not just of the main city of Rome, but everywhere—of the entire Roman imperial machine, an empire, a kingdom that was built off violence, exploitation, greed, and self-interest, not off of actual justice to all, not off of actual mercy, actual peace, like Jesus said the kingdom of God would emit and radiate. The Roman machine was a product of being seduced by Satan himself. That's what was believed. Another name for this type of kingdom is the beast or a beast, according to Daniel chapter seven.

Persecution and Torment

And so you have a situation where Christians are being persecuted. Remember, the persecution of Christians really found its birth under Nero, right before the temple was destroyed. They were blamed for setting fire to Rome. And Nero brutally tortured Christians. We even have records that say when Christians were caught, they were crucified to mock their faith in the crucified King. They were dressed up with animal skins and thrown to wild beasts. Dogs would tear them apart thinking they're a weak animal. Or they were set ablaze to, and I quote, "provide light for the evening skies." Nero, it's said, had a lavish garden that he would love to use for parties as a venue. And we have records that suggest or say he would round up the Christians, put them on stakes and light them ablaze as torches to light the venue.

Yeah. Yeah. And this was in the 60s AD. Now, later emperors weren't as crazy as Nero. They were pretty crazy, but they weren't as interested in pursuing Christians with such brutality. Still happened. Persecution still happened, but most emperors were trying to remain diplomatic and not so savage.

Christianity also had a very critical view in the eyes of the Romans as being, and I quote, "pernicious superstition," "harmful fables," according to Tacitus, a Roman historian at the time. Pliny the Elder, the governor of Bithynia in the Roman Empire, reported that residents of the provinces had been reporting the names of suspected Christians to him, anonymously even. And the emperor Trajan, the emperor put in power just a few years after Revelation was most likely written, even says that, yeah, we'll search for them, but if they're brought to us, we have to punish them. That's like the law. He kind of had a don't ask, don't tell policy for Christians. But if they were outed, the government had to respond.

Neighbors and Coworkers

And so we tend to think that the government was the only ones going after the Christian communities during this time. And it seems, what we can gather, it was also very much so the neighbors. It was also very much so the family members. It was also very much so the close coworkers who would be reporting the believers in their own communities.

Pliny goes on to record that if an accused Christian was brought forward, they could get off the hook. First, they deny they were ever a Christian. Second, they had to say a prayer to the gods that he specifically wrote. Third, they then had to offer sacrifice—offering incense and wine—to statues of the emperor and the Roman gods. And fourth, curse their king, curse Yeshua. And if they did all four of these things, free to go home, no big deal.

The Propaganda Machine

Again, during this time, it was not necessarily always the state level yearning to persecute Christians, but the entirety of the empire, the entirety of the beast made up of all kinds of people. Rome had a lot of propaganda for its expanding to overtake the world and dominate. Everybody knows propaganda works, right? Yeah, yes it does.

One of such pillars in their propaganda machine was something called Pax Romana. It's translated "the Roman peace." And this is what they called the ideology of keeping peace at all costs. It was actually a 200-year stretch when their power and growth was not thwarted internally. You know, if you know anything about Roman history, the thing that kept Rome from growing rapidly was civil war, internal battles and warfare. And so they were very proud when they created a structure that was solid, that prevented such things from happening. And it was a big thing that was promoted: Pax, Pax Romana. They would promote peace and safety and security to all who would submit and yield to the power of Rome. And if you did not yield, they would make sure that—

It was also personified as a female deity named Pax. And so the idea is that this united government empire that would absorb other peoples and nations, feeding itself as well as growing itself through the acts of violent domination, would be disguised as a pursuit of peace to the world. Everybody still with me? This is what Christians, believers like you and I, were expected to contribute to and support. And this was so genius when you think about it. Government that also intentionally infused the common religious beliefs of the people in it. So you had a government that intentionally threaded the praise to the common gods and tribute to the gods in the government establishments, in the government buildings, on its coins, which was a form of propaganda.

Man. And the people coming in would feel a sense of honoring their god if they yielded to Rome. Genius. Absolutely genius.

Coins as Propaganda

How do you get a message throughout the Roman Empire? How do you get your propaganda to cycle, circulate throughout the entirety of the Roman Empire the fastest way? What do you think? Money, coins. So guys, I wanna show you guys some coins here. And there are literally thousands of different mints that were sent out to different parts of the empire, okay?

So you could print something on the coin that had propaganda on it that you could send over to Ephesus, or you could send a coin down to Judea. You have those, right? A piece of coin to Corinth that has a little bit different depending on what the political atmosphere is. And so I think we have some coins. Literally, there are thousands. I randomly picked some coins that were printed around the 80s and 90s, but literally they go back to the same type of thing. You have the head of Caesar typically on the front of the coin with something praising him or praising the gods. And then at the back of the coin, I want to show you something. You see over there to the side, that is a woman. You see what it says in the top left-hand corner of those coins? Paxi, Pax. That's Pax. It's on both of those coins. And here she is seen lighting fire to the arms, right? No more fighting, no more war. And if you want to go to war, we'll bring peace quickly and swiftly. No more civil war. No more breaking up our peace, right? It's just genius, right?

Pax: The Roman Peace Propaganda

You can go to the next slide. Here we go. During the rule of Domitian, there's his face. And over to the right, the same thing. You have a different representation of Pax, the woman. She's carrying a cornucopia up top, and on the bottom, she's sitting on a throne, orchestrating the peace of Rome. You see different Caesars, different imperial leaders on the left, but on the right, it's the same woman. Peace, peace, peace, peace, peace. This is how you have security through us.

This is a neat coin because it was printed right after the temple was destroyed in Jerusalem. On the other side, it has Vespasian's face, but it says, if you can make it out to the left, "Judea Devicta" or "Capta," and some coins say "Judea Defeated." Judea has been captured. They defeated and ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, killed and slaughtered the Judeans, all the Jews there, ransacked the city. And you know who's standing in the middle? We keep peace

here in Rome. We will not allow anything to threaten your way of life here. I thought this was neat because it's Judea, right?

Using coins for national propaganda actually hasn't stopped. Many nations still use that today. You'll find it awkward the next time you look at a quarter, by the way.

Civil Religion in the Empire

You would conflate honor to the gods in your government. That's how Rome was set up. And whenever you had presentations or songs of tribute, Rome rewrote religious history to make itself appear like the gods contributed to its founding as well as its current state. Even Caesar became pseudo-deified. He represented the image of the will of the gods. He was seen as divine. In other words, by supporting Caesar, you are also worshiping and giving honor to your gods, right? So it's almost subliminal. Of course I support Caesar because I support the gods. I praise the gods. I worship the gods. And the way I shall worship is by supporting Caesar that they put in place. The same for supporting the government, flying the icons and banners and statues of Rome, saluting the statues of emperors. They used to do that with the right hand, and it was pretty neat. This was something called civil religion. It's a neat thing to study.

The Believers as Odd Ones Out

And who were the odd ones out in all of this? The believers. They were the odd ones out. Because they understood that Rome was not the kingdom of God, nor would it ever be, nor could it ever coexist with the kingdom of God. And Revelation is a call to action to prepare yourself to live out your faith and worship the true Christ in a way that is apart from the civil standard of the oppressive regime government. Nonviolent subversion to the evil that truly attempts to rule through the political leaders and powers over the empire. That's what Paul says: "For the struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world."

This is what Christians were up against during the time when John had these visions and wrote down what he saw to send out to the congregations. And as we'll see in chapter two of Revelation, it was becoming harder and harder for these assemblies across the empire to remain diligent against such threats. They began accommodating aspects of the culture of empire in their assemblies as a whole, as we'll see in the next chapter.

Revelation's Challenge and Comfort

But Revelation also speaks to a segment of fellowships that were persecuted during this time. You'll see it having a challenge and a comfort aspect. He's reaching out and Yeshua is speaking to these congregations. He's saying, "Hey, you guys over here, you are compromising and you're accommodating the ways of the world that are against the ethic of my teaching and my kingdom and my rule. Stop it. Get back in line. Repent." There's a challenge there. Don't forget and lose sight of who your loyalty is to. Don't forget and lose sight of who you are as a son and daughter of the king. Do not accommodate the ways of the world, no matter how much they will make your life easier.

And then over here, Yeshua's reaching out. John's recording it. "You over here who are being persecuted, who are being martyred, who are being killed, don't forget who your king is. I have not abandoned you. I will keep my promises to you. And my promise says that one day justice will be served. Do not lose your hope. Come back in line."

This scroll provides us with an inspiring vision of the present and future reign of God and the slaughtered lamb king, which is Yeshua, the Christ. With such images, it critiques the empire and the civil religion that has spread like a plague among it, even into the churches where allegiance to the politics of Rome became incorporated into their own faith.

Two Opposing Kingdoms

Can you tell the emphasis of what John is portraying yet? Revelation is about two opposing forces, two opposing kingdoms. And the message is for you to stay loyal to the one that matters despite the consequences. Stay loyal. This is a theopolitical book. Which God-infused politics will you embrace—that's kind of the message theme that you'll see when you read through it. It also challenges believers to become a community of faithful resistance. Everybody likes to be a resistant fighter, right? Yeah, I know y'all. I love that movie Defiance, don't you? Resistance.

And the call that you'll see in this scroll is to remind believers, you too, resist the beast, living out a daily life of active worship and allegiance to the lamb with an emphasis on the missional hope given to us that one day the deception of the enemy will be wiped away. Revelation was written to enable those who would hear its words to control and restrain their fear, their anxiety, to stay focused in the present—not the fear of the future, not meditating on the past, but the present opportunity to be a witness.

The Greek word for witness is martyr, and it doesn't mean to die. It just means to be an absolute witness of Yeshua. Later, it became infused with death, dying for Christ. Being a

martyr is being the fullness of the witness of Christ in the world. And it's meant to invoke a newness of commitment to that king and sustain the vision that Yeshua has already enabled.

Guys, Christ means anointed. Messiah, Mashiach, means anointed. I've said this before, I just wanna remind you—whenever you say Christ or see Christ, it means king, king. Jesus Christ—not his last name—Jesus the king. That title is already embedded in there.

So how does the scroll of Revelation do this to believers throughout the ages? It does this through fantastic images and symbols that provoke the imagination as well as the emotions that will propel a community living in a world of compromise to reestablish who they will serve. Will they serve the beast or will they serve the Christ? Will they follow the prostitute that represents Babylon or will they embrace the bride of Christ, which is the new city, the new Jerusalem? Which city will you be a citizen of? Will they become the overcomers as witnesses of Yeshua and receive his name written on them? Or will they yield to the beast and have his name written on them?

What Is the Apocalypse?

So with that said, as an introduction and historical background from what we know about the climate when the book of Revelation was written, let's dive in. So turn with me to Revelation chapter 1, verse 1. And guys, I want you guys to take the journey of the visions of John before we dive in and start to dissect them. So we're just going to hang out here today. Is that okay? It's good. Everybody still awake? It's good. History class, I know.

Revelation 1, verse 1. Everybody say blessed. They are delayed there. Do what with what is written in it? Keep it. That's an interesting word. Keep what is written in it.

Beginning of verse 4: John to the seven churches in Asia, Asia Minor, the province in Rome. The first word in the first verse there is apocalypsis. That's it. It's apocalypse. It's a fun word. Wouldn't that have been cooler if they just translated that? The apocalypse of Jesus Christ. I just find this neat, all right?

It's translated as revelation. Literally, this is the apocalypse of Yeshua the Messiah. Why is it translated as revelation? Because the Greek word apocalypse, apocalypses, means to reveal. Revelation. Or the unveiling, or the pulling back of a veil. In our culture, apocalypse is associated with what? End of the world. And not just the end of the world—like climate change or something.

I mean, explosions, like the planet explodes. Apocalypse, boom, right? We also use it to describe a monumental battle or disaster, right?

That battle that took place was on an apocalyptic level. It's how we use the word. In Hollywood, we've been trained on this definition of the word. If you search online for movies about the apocalypse, you will find such titles as Deep Impact. I forgot how old that movie is. Who in here doesn't know what Deep Impact is, the movie? A couple people. Yeah, younger people. This is a movie about a meteor that came and hit the world and was going to destroy it.

You'll find titles like 28 Days Later about zombies who come into the world to destroy it. You'll find a title Independence Day where the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air fights the aliens who are trying to destroy the world. Apocalypse.

This is how we define apocalypse. There's even a genre of film known as post-apocalyptic, which means after the end of the world. And you'll find titles like a Kevin Costner movie, Waterworld, had so much potential. Or Mad Max. Post-apocalyptic, right? Yeah. But this is not at all what the original Greek meaning was. At all. I'm going to say at all. At all. It simply means to reveal. A revelation.

What We Think Apocalypse Means

In Luke chapter two, there's a man by the name of Simeon led by the Holy Spirit and he held baby Yeshua in the temple. You guys remember the story? And he held it in the temple courts and he proclaimed this to God right here. Luke chapter two, verse 28. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying, Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. I can die in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation. Can you imagine? Which you have prepared in the sight of all the nations, the light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.

The light for the dramatic explosive destruction to the Gentiles. No, it's the revealing. It's the word, it's the same word, apocalypse. In light for the apocalypse of the Gentiles. This is the revealing that will bring in the nations. Isn't that beautiful?

In the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, the Hebrew word that's translated to reveal is translated in Greek as apocalypse, reveal. You'll see how the story of Revelation is told through the vision of John. And it's pretty neat because you'll understand how this works. When you go through Revelation, if you start thinking that there's something wrong with the TV and it's changing channels really fast, it is. It shifts scenes. It shifts scenes. And in one scene, there will be what's going on outside our doors on the earth. And you'll see big explosions and scary stuff

and monsters walking around and lots of blood and locusts and beasts and so on. And then the channel will change. It's like John had ADHD, just whoop. And the scene will be in the spiritual realm or in heaven. And heaven here would be like the realm of God or the throne of God where God's reign is seen with clarity without the influence of sin and evil. And it's going back and forth all through the chapter.

Again, here's what you see going on outside and it's big and scary, but here's what's actually happening. Here's the reality. Have hope. Chapter 5 has an amazing scene. We see the throne room of God, and in the middle of it, we see a lamb standing with its throat cut. And this is the image of victory. I love it. [Revelation 12](#), we see what I call John's apocalyptic nativity, where Yeshua is born, and as a result, Satan falls.

And so when we embrace the journey of the story of Revelation, we see scenes where the world is in chaos and tribulation and turmoil, persecution and death, and there seems to be no hope. But then the curtain is pulled back. It is revealed. The revelation of Yeshua the King occurs, and the reader gets to see what's actually going on.

It Simply Means to Reveal

Wizard of Oz. Everybody loves some Wizard of Oz, right? Has everyone seen the Wizard of Oz? It's just the same young group over here. I'm sorry.

So the end of The Wizard of Oz, they get to go to Oz and they go into this room and they meet the wizard. And I cried. I was like, my mom let me watch this movie when I was five or six years old. I'm crying, sobbing because this is big. I'm the Wizard of Oz. There's smoke and there's fire and it's scary, right? Big, bad, horrible wizard screaming in smoke and he's going to kill us in fear.

And oh, wait. Little dog, Toto. He goes up and he starts tugging on a curtain and Dorothy pulls back the curtain. I love that. The curtain is drawn back and it's, oh, the reality is it's just some guy pulling a bunch of levers attempting to deceive the land of Oz, right? It's just a guy who's pulling levers attempting to deceive the land of Oz. That is the apocalypse of the Wizard of Oz.

The Curtain Pulled Back

I believe this book was never meant to be a book that caused confusion, anxiety, or fear. It was put forth. I believe that it was always meant to encourage, strengthen, disciple, challenge, call to

repentance, and reinforce the hope that we have in the reign of Yeshua and the justice in his return. And that's its purpose.

It was not written to be a crystal ball for the 21st century because it was written to the seven real churches in the first century. And even in the first verse there, we see that there's a sense of urgency for them. The time is near, guys. The message and the point was written for you to be and become a bold, radical soldier of Yeshua that subverts the kingdom of the beast and that stands boldly against the wiles of the deceptions of the evil one.

Now, you can have lots of opinions and views in Revelation. I have several on the same topic. I do. And that's okay. And we'll definitely run into that. That's totally totes kosher. And I'm not saying I'm right about everything. But I want to make an effort to lay a foundation where this scroll exalts Yeshua and not you. That this scroll can actually have a deep impact on your life today and the circumstances that you are going through today and your perception of what is going on in the world today, the same way that it did for the churches that unraveled the scroll and read it aloud in their assemblies in the first century, 2,000 years ago and every generation after.

Written for a First-Century Church

It's also important that we realize what type of literature this is. We mentioned this a few weeks back with the message in [Matthew 24](#), wars and rumors of wars. But understanding the type of literature you're reading is important. Everybody understand that? It's a big deal. And sometimes we forget that. There are genres of literature. There are certain ways to understand certain types of literature.

I had a person a few years back who had never considered Revelation as anything but literal historical text. She was reading it as if she was reading Chronicles. And she was very scared because they legitimately believed that the beasts in Revelation with all the heads were going to be like Godzilla monsters and happen, and so on and so forth. And they were scared, absolutely terrified by this. And so I need to make sure everyone understands literature types.

Revelation definitely contains symbolism, right? That does not mean it is divorced from historical events or prophetic messages. You could even call it historical symbolism. Can I repeat that? Because someone didn't hear that or heard something else. Just because something is symbolic does not mean it is divorced from historical events or the prophetic message. It's symbolic commentary on the system of the world that Christians are facing and tempted to pledge allegiance and loyalty to. It is a book of God acting in and through history, not about

God ending the world with big Godzilla monsters. It is a book that proclaims God will rid his creation of evil once and for all, and he's going to do it through his faithful witnesses who do not conquer the way the world does. But understanding literature types is important.

Imagine if you were watching that movie, *The Notebook*, and you thought you were watching a sci-fi movie. I saw a couple guys just nod when I said *The Notebook*. Were you guys trapped in watching that too? Yeah. I asked my wife, I'm like, she's like, what's a notebook? And I'm like, any action in it? People dying, some action. She's like, yes, people died. I'd never felt so betrayed in my life. The credits were rolling and she went to go turn on the lights and I dropped the pillow that I was muffling. It was horrible. Gosh. Right.

If you thought you were watching a sci-fi thriller, it would be a very confusing movie. Right. Look *Who's Talking* is not a documentary on babies that communicate using telepathy, right? Genre matters, you understand? Revelation is a literary type known as apocalyptic literature, and it's also prophecy. And this type of literary genre consists of very explosive and shocking imagery—not literal depictions, but symbolic portrayals—of historical and prophetic events, right? And this type of literature was extremely popular from around 200 years BC through the first century. It was during this time that we got extra-biblical books like the Book of Enoch—big, explosive apocalyptic texts. These images and this type of literature are meant to be violent, excessively violent and disturbing and emotionally threatening. And they're meant to be so big and explosive that you can't just shake them out of your mind. They're meant to make an impact on your soul and on your heart. Why? So that they'll change you.

Understanding Apocalyptic Literature

A great illustration comes from a Picasso painting called *Guernica*. It was painted in the late 1930s, and it depicts the aftermath of German aerial bombing of a Spanish town during the Spanish Civil War, right after it happened. And this town sat between the nationalistic army and a stronghold where the Republican resistance had taken control. And this was the one thing, if they took that city, that was it.

And so the Germans, being allies to the nationalistic army, bombed the city in five waves in one day. And here's the painting of Picasso's portrayal of *Guernica*. Take it in. This image is portraying an actual historical event. Picasso was so disturbed by this event, he painted this to make an anti-war statement. And just like apocalyptic literature, this painting is portraying a historical event, but not in a literal way.

If you stop and sit there and try to figure out, hey, what's that guy's name up in the top right-hand corner? Hey, who did that dead baby belong to? What kind of breed is that horse that's gored? If you're going to approach a painting like this looking for those types of answers, is this really what people in Guernica looked like? You're going to completely miss the point of this painting.

Guernica's Portrayal: Art Over Literal Fact

The images, the colors, all of it is meant to be taken for what it is in this painting. And what it's meant to do is make an impact on your soul in a way that an actual photograph could never do. This message of communication was intentional. Picasso here is capturing the horror and tragedy, the political essence of evil and the price that it would gladly pay to get what it wants. And you can't find that in a photograph or a newsreel.

Apocalyptic literature expresses dimensions and aspects of historical and prophetic events that a literal documentation could never do. So what is Revelation about? What we see in verse one and two, he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw. What's the book about? Here we are, just in this verse, we're getting an introduction to what the rest of the book is gonna orbit around. The word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Whatever he saw circled back to being about Yeshua. That's what it says. Whatever he saw circles back to being about Yeshua.

Revelation's Focus: Yeshua

And I know I'm being redundant. Absolutely. I know it's a little annoying. Good. I don't care if you get annoyed during this message. I care that you remember what this verse in Revelation says Revelation is about.

And this is going to sound strange, but this is where you should start the book of Revelation in verses 1, 2, and 3. This is where you should make the beginning. And the reason why I say that is because some people read Revelation as if the first and most important words of the book are found in verse 19. And that's the verse that tells John to begin writing down what he sees. And thus, Revelation will tell us what you, John, have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. Write it all down.

And some interpreters have found that in this text, the context and the structure of the rest of the book. And if we use this text to start what the book is about, we lose the focus on Yeshua

and we make it about gaining information. What did he see? What did he see? This is the function. And this is the wrong starting place.

Reading Revelation as Art

Revelation 1 going to verse 3 there. What's it say? Verse 3. If you read this book, it will bring forth—if you hear the words in this book, it will bring forth.

So look how John says to present it. He's setting up an orchestra to play a symphony that he's received from God and has now figured out a way to take from his visions and articulate on paper. And this is why I encourage you to read it out loud because that was the expectation that John had with the messengers. The messengers were going to take this scroll, as was common in the first century, just like they did with Paul's letters.

And they would go to a church, an assembly of believers, and they wouldn't pass everybody a hyperlink to pull it up on their phone so everyone could read it. They didn't throw it up on a PowerPoint presentation on the wall. There would be a reader who would unroll the scroll and read it out loud to the entire assembly, nonstop.

How Revelation Was First Heard

The first fellowships to ever encounter this scroll—imagine being there. There was no, hey, hey, hey, I have a question. What is that creature with all the eyes in it? Because that's freaky. Can you? None of that. No. It was meant to be heard and the images within it were meant to flicker inside of your imagination as you view what John saw. And those images were meant to make an impact in your heart, not just give you information in your mind.

It was all about Yeshua and who you are in him and where you are at in a relationship with him, despite the scene of what's going on outside.

So we saw in the opening verses, verse three says, blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy in the assemblies and blessed is the one who hears what is written in it. And I love that because—go back one slide or maybe it's the next slide. We have the text, verses one through three. Go back, forward one. Yeah, there we go.

Formed and Transformed

Blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is in it. How many of you guys knew that Revelation had a call to action? Again, it's not about information. There's a call

to action here for those who read and hear what's in it. The emphasis here is keeping the words of this prophecy. And it's a reminder, again, that our hearts should be transformed when reading it. It's not just to satisfy our curiosity. It is a call to conversion, to discipleship, and to allegiance to God in light of the past and present and future realities.

Everything after verse 3 is written for the reader and the hearer, you, to be formed and transformed, not just informed. Everything from this moment forward, including verse 19, acts as this almost pastoral promise and challenge of what it means to be a faithful overcomer and witness of the King that we call Yeshua. And as I said, this book switches from showing us hurt and pain and stress and the uncertainty in the world to showing us that God is still on the throne. And God has promises that he will keep and he will not abandon you. And he is in this moment with you.

Be Here Now

How many of you guys know that? Oh, we're gonna sit on this for a minute. God is in this moment with you. Do not catch yourself meditating so much on the past and being stuck in the past. You can't change that.

The real temptation for us many times is being stuck where? In the future. Worrying. Anxiety. What are we going to do next? What am I going to do? How am I going to respond if, that, this, when, how? Y'all know what Yeshua says about that, right? Matt, why you got to be annoying today? Why are you worried about tomorrow? Why don't you think God is still on the throne and he's here and he's taking care of the birds, the flowers, the grass, and you're worried about something that may or may not happen tomorrow or what the outcome is going to be.

And I believe the message of Revelation, as we'll see, is a call. It's the same thing that Yeshua said. Be here in the moment now because this is where God is working. He's working in the now. And if you're too busy, stuck in the past or the future, you're gonna miss the opportunity to be a witness of Christ now in this world. And that's a big deal. It's a huge deal.

Prepared and Present

Yeshua tells us you need to be focused and present in this moment or else we'll completely miss a moment in the now where God placed you to show forth his kingdom. People talk about being prepared. I get it. But you're supposed to be prepared already. That's the thing. That's the thing. You're supposed to be prepared already. If you're looking for an alarm to go off to get you to

become prepared, that's not the thing. It's not the thing. You're supposed to be prepared already. So you won't be overwhelmed or distracted from this moment that God has you in.

Many people are so worried about government overreach. And what are they going to do next that they haven't even noticed the people around them that need the love and mercy of Yeshua? There are many people who are mourning, even in this community right now, suffering a level of grief that is unexplainable right now, oppressed in many other ways right now.

The Real Opportunity

And we sometimes, me, this is a doubt, we tend to be so worried about stuff out there that we're clueless about the opportunity that God has placed before us to show his comfort and peace here and now.

Maybe we're so worried about our jobs and what is going to happen, and how will I? Yeshua said God is going to take care of that. You need to be in the here and the now. Maybe you're so focused and worried about what's going to happen in the future that you miss the opportunity even to forgive somebody? How many of you guys are so bitter with someone and you forget to forgive them? And that bitterness takes root in a way that you didn't know it could. And it grows into something all because you were too distracted to address it and to stop the progression of bitterness in the world.

Guess what, guys? There's a pandemic still going on. It stinks. But what are we going to do and how are we going to manage it? The things that need to be managed in the here and the now. We're so worried about what the pandemic might bring next. Of course we are. It's very easy. Very easy to be worried about what's going on. But guys, the children that were just placed into foster care because they've been living in hell and need nothing more than someone to tell them they are safe now and to show them what security actually looks like, they don't care about the pandemic.

They don't care what happens next. There are hurting people right now that we are called to be witnesses, martyrs before, that don't care about the things that we're worried about because they're suffering and they need comfort now. Many people think the pandemic is from the devil. It's all part of the devil's plan. And if they really believe that, they wouldn't let it stop them from being the faithful witnesses of Yeshua in this present.

Revelation is the Christian War Scroll

Revelation is the Christian war scroll. It's the Christian war scroll of Yeshua calling his soldiers back to the front, his followers to actually follow him despite what is going on out there, despite how loud the wizard is because God keeps his promises. Guys, I'm gonna show you the trajectory here and then we'll conclude.

Where Everything Is Heading

Revelation 21:3, we're gonna jump to the end. The end, this is the trajectory. This is the climactic moment when heaven collides with earth and the fullness of everything it's ever going to be. And here's what it says. It says in verse three, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne. Look, God's dwelling place is now among his people and he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them and be their God." Verse four: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away."

I don't know what you guys are going through in your life today. I know the things that I'm going through in my life today. And sometimes life gets so painful and so hurtful that we're tempted to maybe lose a little bit of hope. Maybe. We'd never do that. And here's the promise. Here's the promise. He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new." And then he said, write this down. Verse five: "For these words are trustworthy and true." Guys, we know where everything is heading right there. That's where we're going. That's the trajectory. Nothing's going to stop us. That's where we're going. That's where the world and all of creation is going right there.

It's not going to land us at the bottom of the hill. It's not going there. There might be a bump. Ever been in an airplane when you get the turbulence and just drop it? There might be a little bump.

Birth Pains

The prophets talk about these things and they call them birth pains. A little birth pain. Man, birth pains are awful, aren't they? I don't know. I can only imagine. But I love that metaphor that the prophets use because the birth pain does not disqualify what is going to be born and the beauty of what that is. We know what's coming despite the little ripples of pain that we encounter. And when we encounter those ripples of pain, we are supposed to already be prepared for to not be distracted, to remain focused on what the point is and what is coming.

Yeshua is still on the throne. Stand up and be witnesses of that. Do not lose hope. Embrace it because the promises of our God are true and trustworthy.

A Community of Hope

So guys, I don't know what you're going through today, but I can tell you with assurance, God has not forgotten you. God will keep his promises. God still wants to use you. And sometimes it's hard to have hope. Sometimes it's easy to think. It's just easier to give up. But he says, "I'm making all things new." Write this down so everyone knows that I keep my promises.

God is calling us to be a community of hope. And I believe Revelation is not about the antichrist. I believe it's about the living Christ who is on the throne. Be in the present and experience God with you. No matter what you are going through, embrace it and embrace that hope lived out to the world.

Prayer and Worship

So please stand as we conclude with a time of prayer and a time of worship. And guys, during this time, I'd ask that you would meditate on where you are in your relationship with God, where you are in your allegiance. Have you lost hope? And if you need prayer, we have a prayer team on either side of the stage here. And you guys know in Yom Kippur, we set up a symbolic altar here. And if you have something that you would like to lay before God, maybe you don't need prayer, you can symbolically bring it and set it down on the altar. That's what this is here for.

Our Father, our King. Father God, we are so grateful that you would invite us into your city, into your kingdom today, that you would show us your grace and your mercy and your forgiveness. Call us to repentance, but also trust us to be the witnesses of your reign and your kingdom in the world, that you would give us the honor to represent you into a world that is filled with the fires of hell to proclaim the hope of heaven. God, we thank you for this opportunity to be reminded that your word stands true and your promises are always kept true. And as we go through your word this week, from front to back, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to work through the words in this book, to not just give us information, although that's great, but to transform our hearts, to convict us, to call us to repentance, and to allow us to meditate on the fact that the Lamb sits on the throne.

We thank you, Father, for this time together. And we ask in the name of Yeshua, our King, that you would continue to give us your spirit of joy and hope, despite the uncertainty in the future,

that we would have your peace now. In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen.

Continuing the Message

If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we invite you to take part in making sure the message of Yeshua and the truth of God's word continues to reach others. To make sure this happens, you can donate through our online giving portal at [foundedintruth.com slash give](https://foundedintruth.com/give) or by texting any amount to 704-275-0752. Don't forget to like and subscribe for new content every single week. And we thank you for your continued support. And we look forward to seeing you next time. Shalom.

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