

Bible Reading Notes
Revelation

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Revelation 1

This book was written by the apostle John around 95 AD during Domitian's reign. It was the final book of the New Testament to be written.

1:4 – seven churches – These were churches in the area of Asia that John was familiar with through his years of living in Ephesus. They represent the church universal in this book.

1:4 – seven spirits – In Revelation this is a designation for the Holy Spirit.

1:9-20 – John begins with a vision of Christ in the midst of his church. Each lampstand represents one of the churches and Christ in all of his glory is in the midst of them. This is meant to comfort the persecuted congregations.

Revelation 2

2:1 – angel – Commentators are divided over whether the “angels” refers to the pastors of the churches or a literal angel of each church.

2:4 – There is much to commend the Ephesians, but they have abandoned the love they had at first. They were theologically correct but lacking in their first love. John does not define what this meant, but it may have been a theological formality without a deep love for God and each other.

2:6 – Nicolaitans – We are uncertain as to the particular heresies this group held.

2:10 – ten days – There is a limit to the time of persecution that is to come.

2:13 – Satan's throne – The city had multiple temples to false gods, all of which were in opposition to the worship of the true God.

2:20 – Jezebel – It seems most likely that the woman being described was not named Jezebel, but her actions were similar to the Jezebel of 1 Kings.

Revelation 3

3:1 – Sardis had a reputation that was belied by their actual condition.

3:3 – Without changes they will experience the judgment of God.

3:5 – conquers – John uses language like “conquer” and “persevere” to communicate that this is required of those who profess faith if they are to receive the blessings of eternity.

3:14-22 – Laodicea is the one church that Christ has nothing to commend.

Revelation 4

Chapters 4-7 is a second major section of the book focused on seven seals, which covers the period between Christ’s first and second comings.

4 – We are introduced to the throne room of God. God is enthroned in glory with his church present with him (v. 4).

4:6 – four living creatures – These creatures are very similar to the cherubim in Isaiah’s vision of God’s throne room (Isaiah 6). They are used by God to do his bidding.

Revelation 5-6

5 – This chapter focuses on the exaltation of Christ who is worthy to open the scroll because of his work of dying and ransoming his people (v. 9).

6:1-8 – The first four seals unleash ever growing destruction on the enemies of God.

6:2ff – The four horses come from Zechariah 6:1-2 where they are attached to chariots.

6:9-11 – The fifth seal reveals the saints in their soul existence waiting for the final day and the resurrection.

6:12-17 – This is a picture of the final day of judgment as Christ returns.

6:16 – fall on us – The same language is voiced by unbelievers in Luke 23:30.

Revelation 7

7 – This chapter gives a picture of the church. They have been set aside by God and sealed by him. Note that the church is pictured as a great number of people (v. 9) gathered in glory giving praise to God.

7:4 – 144,000 – This is a symbolic number of fullness. The universal church is pictured by this number.

7:9 – from every nation – This is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 and 17:5.

Revelation 8-9

Revelation 8-11 is the next major section of revelation focusing on the seven trumpets.

8:1-5 – Once again we are taken into heaven and see the prayers of the suffering saints ascending to the Father. He will respond to those prayers with the seven trumpets.

8:1-13 – The first four trumpets announce limited judgment from God in response to his suffering people. The judgments are very similar to those given to Egypt in the plagues.

Revelation 9

9:1 – star fallen from heaven – This is a reference to Satan. His fall from heaven is referenced later in Revelation 12:7-9.

9:3 – locusts – John is probably not referring to literal locusts but referencing demons that accompany Satan and do his work.

9:15 – third of mankind – This is a great destruction but still limited by God, giving the unbelievers an opportunity to repent, which they will refuse (v. 20).

Revelation 10

10:1-11:14 – This section is an interlude anticipating the seventh trumpet which will announce the end and God's terrible judgment.

10:9 – take and eat it – This is similar to the command given to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3). The word of God is sweet to the believer, but it turns bitter when the message of judgment is to be proclaimed.

Revelation 11

11:2 – temple – This is not a reference to a rebuilt temple as dispensationalists believe, but a picture of the church.

11:3 – two witnesses – These witnesses represent the church who has been called by God to witness to the gospel until the time of the end.

11:7ff – At the end there will be a time of suffering for the church, but it will be short lived, and Satan will not be victorious.

11:7 – beast – The beast represents demonized state power determined to overcome the church. This is referred to as the fourth beast in Daniel 7.

11:15-18 – The seventh trumpet announces the end and the judgment of God. The saints rejoice that finally justice will come as the Lord finally answers their cry of “How long, O Lord?” (6:10).

Revelation 12

The next section of Revelation (12-14) focuses on the church and her battle with Satan.

12:1-6 – This is a graphic account of Satan’s attempts to destroy Christ. The Old Testament church (woman) gives birth to Christ, whom Satan (dragon) seeks to destroy. He is unsuccessful.

12:7-12 – This is the account of Michael’s stand against Satan. Michael and the army of God defeat Satan and thrust him out of heaven, so Satan is no longer able to accuse the saints (v. 10). This was the result of Christ’s victory on the cross (v. 11).

12:13-17 – Satan then turns his attention to the church and seeks to overcome the church using falsehood and persecution. This reflects our day.

Revelation 13

13:1-10 – This vision is of Satan seeking to take God’s place as he blasphemes God and seeks the worship of fallen man. It points to a time of great deception that will fall on the earth.

13:1 – This is Satan – the same beast as 12:3.

13:11-18 – This second beast is the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3ff) who is empowered by Satan to help deceive the nations by using false signs and false teaching.

13:18 – 666 – Number of fallen man. It is not meant for us to try to assign numeric values to letters to specify a particular person in the future.

Revelation 14

Chapter 14 is the conclusion of the section which started in Revelation 12. Chapter 13 ended with the church being persecuted and the world being deceived. But that is not the end of the story. Chapter 14 shows the triumph of the church and judgment on the world.

14:1 – 144,000 – Same number as used in Revelation 7 to symbolize the totality of believers throughout history.

14:14-20 – The section ends with the picture of God’s final judgment on Satan, demons, and unbelievers. Satan will not triumph but will be eternally defeated.

Revelation 15

Revelation 15-16 form the next main section of the book which focuses on the seven bowls.

15:1-8 – Before judgment is poured out on the world, we are given a vision of the church in heaven praising the Lord for the great victory he has won.

15:6 – out of the sanctuary – the bowls of wrath are coming from God upon his rebellious creation.

Revelation 16

Revelation 16 concludes the section started in chapter 15. The seven bowls are the picture of God’s judgment on his enemies.

The imagery of chapter 16 is taken from the plagues on Egypt for refusing to submit to the Lord.

16:7 – altar – In 6:9 the altar was where the souls of martyrs were crying out for justice. Here their prayers are answered as God brings his righteous judgment on those who persecuted them.

Revelation 17

Revelation 17-19 is the sixth cycle of the book which focuses on the fall of Babylon and of the beasts.

17:1 – great prostitute – Stands in contrast to the bride of the Lamb (19:6-8). She is identified with Babylon (17:5) and stands for those in opposition to the church.

17:12-14 – horns – These refer to kings or kingdoms who are opposed to the kingdom of God but are yet future from John’s perspective. They will not be successful in their war against Christ and his people.

17:14 – This verse can be looked at as the summary of the entire book.

Revelation 18

18:2 – Babylon – In Revelation, Babylon serves as the center of opposition against Christ and his kingdom.

18:5 – has remembered her iniquities – This is the opposite of Jeremiah 31:34 and is the most horrible thing possible because it will result in eternal judgment.

18:21 – great millstone – This is reminiscent of Jeremiah 51:63-64 and God’s announcement that Babylon will rise no more. Now not only will the literal city be judged but all who stand opposed to God will be as well.

Revelation 19

19:1-5 looks at the judgment on Babylon from the perspective of heaven.

19:6-10 – The final day not only means judgment on the enemies of God but the start of glory in heaven for God’s people. The bride of Christ (the church) is joined with her bridegroom for eternity.

19:11-21 – This section ends with the Lord revealed in his glory consummating his great victory over Satan and his hosts, who are thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20

20:1-6 – Postmillennialists understand the thousand years to be a period just prior to the return of Christ, while Amillennialists understand the thousand years to refer to the entire period between Christ's first and second coming. These notes will reflect an Amillennial understanding.

20:2 – bound – According to Matthew 12:29, Satan was bound by Christ during his earthly ministry so that Satan is no longer able to keep whole nations in spiritual darkness (v. 3).

20:5 – first resurrection – At death the believer enters into the presence of Christ.

20:6 – second death – Unbelievers at the resurrection are cast into hell.

20:7-10 – Just prior to Christ's return Satan will be loosed for a short time to continue his rebellion. He will be fully defeated by Christ and thrown into hell. The language of these verses comes from Ezekiel 38-39, where Israel's enemies are destroyed by God.

20:11-15 – At the time of Christ's return the last judgment will take place.

Revelation 21

21:1-8 – We are given a picture of heaven and its blessings where believers will live and serve the Lord for eternity.

21:1 – new – This refers to new in quality, not new in time. The new quality is because creation has been cleansed of sin and the effects of sin.

21:9-27 – The new Jerusalem is not a literal city but a picture of the church in its glorified state as is clear from vv. 2 & 9.

Revelation 22

22:1-5 – The greatest glory of heaven will be the presence of God with his people and all the blessings he has for them.

22:18-19 – This language comes from Deuteronomy 4:2 where the covenant word of God is not to be changed in any way.