

APOCALYPSE

The Unveiling of Jesus The King

Sermon Series by:
Dr. Randy Harper

The following excerpts are from Dr. Fred Lowery's Book, Making the Bible Clear, pages 289-302.

Revelation **(Jesus, the Gloriously Triumphant One)**

I. Introductory Considerations

- A. Author:** Written by somebody named John. It is not an anonymous book (1:1; 4, 19, 22:8). You get the impression that he was a rather well-known person because John was a common name, just as it is today. And he just said John, as if everyone would know who wrote the words.
- Tradition has been almost unanimous that John the Apostle wrote the gospel which bears his name and also Revelation. John the Apostle and beloved disciple, a fisherman, son of Zebedee, brother of James, and a convert of John the Baptist. However, this has not been universally accepted. Some say the style and character is different and that another John wrote Revelation.

John wrote all books which bear his name (John, I, II, III, and Revelation). They were written under different circumstances which would account for difference in style and tone. The gospel was written in calm times when he could take his time and meditate. Revelation was written during unusual circumstances. He was in exile on Patmos and under persecution, away from his fellow workers and friends.

- B. Date:** AD 85-95, probably 95 AD
Obviously written in time of severe persecution. Some indication that the persecution may become heavier, more furious. Indication that Rome is determined to eradicate Christianity. All interpreters agree that this was a time of severe persecution.

This problem is that two great periods of persecution swept over Christianity during the first century.

1. Persecution by Nero: 64-68
2. Domitian: 81-96 - Persecution in early 90's.

Traditionally, the book has been assigned to persecution under Domitian. Dated 85-95, with most interpreters putting it closer to 95 than to 85.

- C. **Title:** The Greek name for Revelation is **Apocalypse**, which means "unveiling." It is the revelation of Jesus Christ as the risen priest-king.
- D. **Recipients:** The seven churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the first three chapters: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Also the servants of Christ (1:1; 22:6) and any person who will read and heed its teaching (1:3; 3:20; 22:7, 17-19).
- E. **Key Words:**
 - I saw (beheld, looked) - 49 times.
 - Lamb (Christ) - 26 times
 - War - 9 times
 - Throne - 44 times
 - Kingdom or rule - 37 times
 - Power and authority - 40 times
- F. **Key Verse:** 1:19

- G. Purpose:** "The Revelation of Jesus Christ": (1:1a). John seeks to reveal Jesus as Redeemer, conqueror of all evil, and the only hope for the future. He accomplishes this in a threefold emphasis:
1. To reveal Jesus Christ
 2. To encourage Christians in the midst of severe persecution
 3. To give a glimpse of God's windup of history.
- H. Theme:** The unveiling of Jesus Christ as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. It has been called the "Hallelujah Chorus" of the New Testament and shows the eternal blessedness of those who put their eternal trust in Him.
- I. Systems of Interpretation**
1. **The Preterist School** - A preterist is a person concerned chiefly with the **past**. The preterists say that the prophecies in the book of the Revelation have all been fulfilled in the past. They do not see any prophecies in the book having to do

with the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Chief weakness: Literary interest only. No message for us today. Generally advocated today by Roman Catholic scholars and many rationalistic interpreters.

2. **The Futurist School** - (exact opposite of Preterist). Project everything to the future. Book is prediction of events in the last days. Everything from chapter 4 on is yet to be fulfilled. Even chapters 2 and 3 may refer to the seven periods of Christianity. Most futurists are pre-millennialist.

Chief weakness: Tend to lost sight of the people to whom the book was written.

3. **The continuous Historical Approach** - (bridges gap between Preterist and Futurist). Book reveals in advance the outstanding events of human history. Continuous history from days of Roman Empire to the second coming of Christ. Inspired

forecast of the whole human history.
Emphasis on specific dates.

Chief weakness: Early Christians couldn't have gotten much out of a book basically for later periods. Also, it's curious that an outline of human history would largely ignore the world outside Western Europe.

4. Philosophy of History Approach -

(Spiritual or Idealist Approach).
Symbolic picture of the struggle between good and evil. Does not give accounts of events (historical) as such, but it does give principles and forces which underlie these events. Sets out the principle on which God acts throughout human history.

Chief weakness: Its refusal to see a firm historical anchorage.

It seems that elements from more than one of these views are required for a satisfactory understanding of Revelation. Probably most interpretations of Revelation are too exacting (e.g. this color means this

and that number means that), and could have been a product of some man's imagination long ago, and since then, commentaries have been foot-noting error. It seems that we are to get a general picture from reading the book, not an exact picture with every detail dated and pinpointed. In the overall picture, one will see the glory of Christ, unparalleled in all of literature, and the complete and final victory to be found in Him.

J. Further Suggestions Regarding the Interpretation:

1. The starting point must always be that John did write for real flesh and blood people, with real problems in the first century. These people were undergoing tremendous persecution for the Gospel's sake, and John wrote to encourage them and to give them a solid basis of assurance. It is God's answer. We must not separate the book from their needs

and situation, because He wrote primarily for their sake and to meet their needs.

2. As we look at the book, we must bear in mind that it belongs to a certain kind of literature and must be interpreted in light of its character. We do not interpret Psalms the same way we interpret the Gospels, because Psalms is poetry and so we interpret according to rules and principles of poetry. Apocalyptic literature made use of symbolic language presenting its message through pictures. However, those symbols and pictures **cannot** be interpreted with rigid literalness. If we are too literal in Revelation, we come out with some grotesque ideas (e.g. Christ with a two-edge sword sticking out of His mouth).
3. The symbols, signs, and visions are intended to make an impression on the readers. A sign, or symbol, can be far more accurate than another type of language. Words tend to

change in meaning with the passing of time, while symbols and numbers remain virtually timeless. Since much of Revelation deals with future events, it was necessary to make use of numerous symbols. About half the symbols are explained in the book itself:

Lamps - assemblies of God's people
Stars - angels

Incense odors - prayers of saints

Where the symbols are not explained, other parts of the Bible must be searched for clues. It is an axiom of hermeneutics that God is His own interpreter. Of the 404 verses in the book, 278 contain a reference, or allusion, to the Old Testament. This is more than any other New Testament book. (Note: Some differences in meaning, e.g. Babylon - Rome of John's day and not to the Old Testament City of Babylon.)

4. It is important for you and me to realize that the book does not deal

with just the past, or the future, but speaks to present needs today. All those who read and study this book in any age are called **blessed** (1:3). At the beginning and close of the book, John addresses himself not merely to one group of people, but to "every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:18). The book abounds with principles, happenings, and truths so broad in their scope that they cannot be confined to one century, but must span all the centuries reaching out to the great **consummation**. Likewise, the addresses to the seven churches clearly indicate admonitions and consolations meant for the church throughout the centuries.

K. Reasons why Satan does not want Revelation Read or Understood.

1. Revelation tells about the reign of Christ on this earth which Satan wants to control.
2. It tells of Christ's complete and final victory over Satan.

3. It describes the defeat and punishment of Satan.
4. It shows that God has a plan and that He is in control.
5. It shows that no power in heaven, earth, or hell can frustrate the fulfillment of that plan.
6. God's kingdom will come, whether men like it or not, and on God's schedule.
7. No wonder the devil doesn't want men to read it.

II. Its Structure

A. Introduction (Chapter 1:1-8)

1. The Revealer (1:1)
2. The human author (1:2)
3. The blessing (1:3)
4. The greetings (1:4-8)
 - a. From John
 - b. From Christ in heaven

B. A Vision of the Glorified Christ

(Chapters 1:9-20)

1. The occasion (1:9-10)
2. The command (1:11)
3. The vision (1:12-16)
 - a. The characteristics of Christ (1:12-16)
 - (1) "garment down to the foot"
(importance and rank)
 - (2) "with a golden girdle"
(strength & authority)
 - (3) "hair white like wool"
(purity & wisdom of age)
 - (4) "eyes were like a flame of fire"
(indignation & penetration)
 - (5) "his feet like fine bronze"
(judgement, trample enemies)
 - (6) "voice like sound of many waters"
(overpowering voice of God)
 - (7) "in the right hand seven stars"
(messengers of the seven churches)

- (8) "out of mouth...a two-edged sword
(the word of God)
- (9) "his countenance was as the sun shineth"
- b. The comfort of Christ (1:17-18)
 - (1) Stop being afraid, "fear not"
 - (2) Death, hell, and the grave have been conquered.
- c. The command of Christ (1:19-20)
 - (1) Write what you see
(vision of Christ)
 - (2) Write what is
(conditions prevailing in the churches)
 - (3) Write what is to take place
(the future of the world)

C. A Message to the Seven Churches,
Chapters 2:1-3:22

- 1. Ephesus: loyal, but lacking in love (2:1-7)
- 2. Smyrna: suffering saints (2:8-11)
- 3. Pergamos: hell's headquarters (2:12-17)

4. Thyatira: unfaithfulness (2:18-29)
5. Sardis: dead while living (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia: church of the open door (3:7-13)
7. Laodicea: lukewarm (3:14-22)

D. An Unveiling of the Future, Chapters 4:1 - 22:21

1. A heavenly scene
 - a. The throne in heaven (4:1-11)
 - b. The sealed book (5:1-1)
 - c. The lamb in the midst (5:6-7)
 - d. Worthy is the lamb (5:8-14)
2. The opening of the seven seals (6:1 - 8:5)
 - a. The first seal: rider on white horse (6:1-2)
 - b. The second seal: rider on red horse (6:3-4)
 - c. The third seal: rider on black horse (6:5-6)
 - d. The fourth seal: rider on pale horse (6:7-8)
 - e. The fifth seal: the martyred remnant (6:9-11)
 - f. The sixth seal: the day of wrath has come (6:12-17)

- g. The interlude (7:1-7)
 - (1) The sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-8)
 - (2) The redeemed multitude of Gentiles (7:9-17)
 - h. The seventh seal (8:1-5)
3. The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:6 - 11:19)
- a. The first trumpet: plagues on earth (8:6-7)
 - b. The second trumpet: plagues on the sea (8:8-9)
 - c. The third trumpet: plagues on rivers and streams (8:10-11)
 - d. The fourth trumpet: plagues on the skies (8:12-13)
 - e. The fifth trumpet: fallen stars and locusts (9:1-12)
 - f. The sixth trumpet: army loosed at Euphrates (9:13-21)
 - g. Interlude between 6th and 7th trumpets (10:1 - 11:14)
 - h. The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)

4. The great conflict (12:1 - 14:20)
 - a. A woman, a child, and a dragon (12:1-17)
 - b. The beast from the sea (13:1-10)
 - c. The beast from the earth (13:11-18)
 - d. The followers of the lamb (14:6-20)
 - e. The heavenly proclamations (14:6-20)
5. The pouring of the seven bowls (15:1 - 20:10)
 - a. The preparation for the pouring (15:1-8)
 - b. The first bowl: plague on land (16:1-2)
 - c. The second bowl: plague on sea (16:3)
 - d. The third bowl: plague on fresh waters (16:4-7)
 - e. The fourth bowl: plague on the sun (16:8-10)
 - f. The fifth bowl: judgment on the empire (16:10-11)
 - g. The sixth bowl: Euphrates dried up and battlefield prepared (16:12-16)
 - h. The seventh bowl: plague on the air; Satan's realm (16:17-21)

6. The mystery of Babylon (17:1-18)
7. The fall of Babylon (18:1-24)
8. The marriage of the lamb and return of Christ (19:1-21)
 - a. A fourfold hallelujah (19:1-5)
 - b. Marriage supper of the lamb (19:6-10)
 - c. Return of Christ as Lord and King (19:11-16)
 - d. Battle of Armageddon (19:17-18)
 - e. Hell opened for the beast and false prophet (19:19-21)
9. The millennium (20:1-15)
 - a. Satan bound for 1000 years (20:1-3)
 - b. The reigning of believers with Christ (20:4-6)
 - c. Satan is loosed; Gog and Magog (20:7-9)
 - d. Satan cast in hell (20:10)
 - e. Great white throne judgment (20:11-15)
10. The new heaven and new earth (21:1-22:21)

III. The Book Itself

A. Revelation Issues a Threefold Blessing

1. Blessed is the one who reads these words.
2. Blessed is the one who hears these words.
3. Blessed is the one who keeps these words.

B. The Literal Fulfillment of Prophecy

(Read Isaiah 40:9-11; 41:21-23)

One of the unique characteristics of the living God is His capacity to announce the future beforehand. It is the prerogative of God to know what tomorrow will bring and to bring tomorrow. Already over 3,000 prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled.

C. The Literal Return of Christ

1. Personal: "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven" (1 Thess. 4:16)
2. Bodily: "this same Jesus...shall so come in like manner" (Acts 1:11)
3. Visible: "...He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7)
4. Unexpected: "as a thief in the night" (II Peter 3:10)

5. Sudden: "as the lightening cometh out of the east" (Matt. 24:27)

D. The Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18; II Cor. 5:6-8; Phil 1.21-23)

We must get our word rapture from the Greek word "harpazo" which means to be caught up, to seize hastily, to snatch oneself from impending danger. It carries with it the idea of joy, ecstasy, and delight. So, the rapture, for the Christian, is the actual transformation when Jesus comes that allows every believer to "fly up" and meet Jesus in the air. Rapture signifies both a carrying away and a blissful experience. (e.g. Enoch, Elijah)

E. The Two Comings of our Lord (Pre-tribulation view)

First Time:	Second Time:
The Rapture (1 Thess. 5:1-7)	The Revelation (Rev. 1:7)
Coming for His saints	Coming with His saints
In the air	On the earth
A catching away	An Unveiling
At any moment	Seven years later

F. The Rapture Could Occur at any Moment

1. There is nothing in scripture that requires the rapture to be delayed beyond today. It could happen at any moment.
2. The rapture will be secret: "as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. 5:1-2)
3. Only the true Christians will see it (1 Thess. 4:16-17) and only true Christians will hear the trumpet.

It will be a glorious day for believers and a terrible day for non-believers.

G. A Possible "After the Rapture" Countdown

1. With the church out of the way, the "mystery of iniquity" (II Thess. 2) will increase rapidly.
2. The "man of sin," or antichrist, is already on the scene, but is hiding his satanic nature. He is working feverishly to establish himself as a world leader of peace. He helps set up a United States of Europe which is the revived Roman Empire of Daniel's image. (Dan. 2)
3. The antichrist will promise:

Peace for panicked people
Protection for the lawless
Plenty of food for the starving
multitudes.

Out of desperation, the people will accept this new leader, only to discover too late his deception.

4. Israel, in her own land, is being threatened by Egypt (king of the south) and Russia (king of the north). The antichrist makes a covenant with Israel to protect her land for seven years (Dan. 9:26-27)
5. The world will experience a "mock peace" for about 3 1/2 years.
6. God sends judgment (seals and trumpets of Rev. 6-9) upon the world to punish the Gentiles and purge the Jews.
7. Two witnesses appear on the scene (possibly Moses and Elijah; 11:1-7) to deliver God's message to the Jews. These messengers will be divinely protected for 3 1/2 years, but at the middle of the tribulation will be killed by the antichrist. Their dead bodies will be

viewed by the world over television. Their ministry will result in thousands of Jews coming to Christ (144,000 sealed and protected). Three days after their death, they will be resurrected and taken to heaven.

8. Egypt and Russia invade Palestine (Dan. 11:40) and the antichrist goes to fight for Palestine, but God intervenes and personally defeats Russia on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 39:1-4; 12)
9. At this time, (middle of the seven year period) the antichrist will reveal his true character and demand total submission and worship. He will break his covenant with Israel and set himself up as god in the temple of Jerusalem (Rev. 10-14). Those who refuse to worship will be slain.
10. Worldwide idolatry will trigger God's wrath and calamities will envelop the earth; but men will still not repent.
11. During the last half of the tribulation, an eastern coalition of kings (Dan. 11:44; Rev. 16:12) will challenge the rule of the antichrist and march toward

Palestine with an army of 200 million men (Rev. 9:16). This battle of powers will take place on the plain of Maggedo (Joel 3; Rev. 16:13-16).

12. Then came the Revelation (Jude 14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:29-30; II Thess. 1:7). The Lord is revealed with His mighty angels and defeats the beast (antichrist) and his armies and will judge them (Dan. 11:45). The saints will accompany Christ back to earth, but it will be the powerful angels who fight the enemies of earth.

13. The Saviour, who came to die for His enemies, has now returned to judge the unrepentant.

14. The beast and the false prophet will be cast into hell (Rev. 19:20), and Satan will be bound for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-3).

15. Christ will set up His earthly kingdom with Jerusalem as the center, and will reign for 1000 years over all the earth.

16. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be loosed for a brief time and will lead

one final rebellion against Christ. He will be defeated and cast into hell.

17. Next comes the great white throne judgment where all unbelievers will be judged, found guilty, and cast into hell (Rev. 20:11-15).

18. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.

H. A Book of Promise and Judgment

The promise is for those who are **sealed**, and the judgment is for Satan and those who are allied with him. No matter what happens, the true Christians are **sealed forever** as His own. The satanic power must work itself out toward consummation at the last day, but its defeat and ultimate doom are absolutely certain. The living Christ, who triumphed over death, will win the last battle and issue the final judgment which ends the conflict forever. Christ is victorious, and we **have won!** Praise His Holy Name!

I. A Threefold Division Based on Revelation (Chapter 1:19)

1. The things which thou has seen (Ch.

1) The recording of John's vision of the glorified Christ.

2. The things which are (Ch. 2-3)

Written to seven literal churches of John's day, but containing a timeless message exposing spiritual and destitute condition of churches today, as well as describing the prophetic history of the church from apostolic times to the rapture.

3. The things which shall be hereafter (Ch. 4-22)

a. The rapture of the church (4-5)

b. The seven year tribulation (6-19)

(1) First half of the tribulation (6-9)

(2) Middle of the tribulation (10-14)

(3) Last half of the tribulation (15-19)

c. The millennial reign of Christ (20)

d. The new heaven and earth (21-22)

J. Characteristics

1. A book of symbols and imagery

2. A book of excitement and wonder

3. A book of optimism as Christ conquers sin and Satan.
4. A book containing some 500 references to the Old Testament
5. A book of numbers (7, 12, 3 1/2, 144, 100)
6. A book of prophecy

K. Key to Understanding

The person who does not find Revelation to be a difficult book does not realize the depth of his own ignorance. After all these years, there are so many things that we still do not understand, and so much is given in symbols and imagery. Therefore, I differ with those who take a dogmatic approach to Revelation and have it all worked out and charted. I have discovered that a much more honest approach is to admit "I don't know" what certain things mean. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but one day we shall see Him face to face," and then we will know all things. May I suggest that instead of getting bogged down in all the minute details of Revelation and what every sign and symbol means - just read

the book entirely through by faith and look for a glorious picture of Jesus Christ as triumphant Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Herein lies the greatest blessing.

L. A Fantastic Finish to the Bible

Genesis

Earth created

Sun and moon created

A garden

Marriage of first Adam

Appearance of Satan

Beginning of sorrow &
Suffering

The curse pronounced

Revelation

Earth passing away

No need for sun & moon

A holy city

Marriage of second
Adam

Doom of Satan

No more sorrow or pain

No more curse

