

# **Read the Bible in a Year**

Week 52 – May 29-June 4

**Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 150*

*John 17-21*

**Readings in Class:**

Revelation 1-22

## **Introduction to Revelation**

Images, beasts, marks, heaven, hell, devil, God, and Jesus Christ. The final book of the Bible draws from almost every other place in the Scriptures and makes a final revelation (revealing): Jesus Christ is Lord and has triumphed. This book, while perhaps filled with many confusing, misinterpreted and oftentimes terrifying imagery, is yet the most hopeful and reassuring book in the Scriptures. To read this book, it is first more important to understand the clearer passages in Scripture which can help interpret this one.

Written by St. John while he is in exile on the Island of Patmos, a small island off the coast of Turkey, perhaps around 95 AD, this book is written to give Christians confidence and certainty of their Lord's victory in the midst of much suffering and pain in their lives.

Revelation is written to give us a bird's eye view of behind the curtain. It is not a book that is about the future, though the future is in it, it is a book that gives us what God sees and how God is at work through his people, the Church. The Church is assured of a final victory over the forces of Satan, by being faithful to their Lord, which Jesus emphasizes to the Churches in the first few chapters.

## **A Brief Summary of Revelation**

1. Prologue: The Revealing of Jesus Christ 1:1-8
2. The Visions Given to John
  - a. Jesus Christ's Message to the Seven Churches 1:9-2:25
    - i. Jesus comes to John 1:9-20
    - ii. Ephesus 2:1-7
    - iii. Smyrna 2:8-11
    - iv. Pergamum 2:12-17
    - v. Thyatira 2:18-29
    - vi. Sardis 3:1-6
    - vii. Philadelphia 3:7-13
    - viii. Laodicea 3:14-22

- b. The Divine Throne & Worship 4-5
- c. The First Scene: The Seven Seals 6:1-8:5
- d. The Second Scene: The Seven Trumpets 8:6-11:19
- e. The Interlude: Warfare between God and the enemy 12:1-14:20
- f. The Third Scene: The Seven Incense Bowls 15-16
- g. The Conclusion: Evil Destroyed, Judgment Rendered 17:1-21:8
- h. The Age of the Ages Commences: The Church Victorious 21:9-22:5
- i. Final Exhortation: Come Lord Jesus! 22:6-21

## **How to Read**

We walk by faith and not by sight. In this book, a helpful way to read it is to interpret what you see by first what is heard. For example, John weeps in chapter 5 that no one is worthy to open God's seals. But then the angel tells him to fear not because the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has conquered. After hearing this, John turns to look and sees, not a Lion, but a lamb that looks like it had been slain. The images seem to conflict but are used to interpret this once slain Lamb of God (Jesus) to be the exact way that the Lion (the king) has conquered.

This brings up another helpful note. Much of the language is figurative to describe places, events and more. What we are seeing is not a literal description of things, but biblical imagery is employed from other spots in the Bible to be shown how things in the world truly are. The book's first image of Jesus in the midst of the lampstands invites us to read the book this way as Jesus interprets what the lampstands are (the church). Numbers, such as 1, 3, 12, 40, 144,000 and more are important numbers that happen in the Scripture to give weight and meaning to the events in Revelation.

## **Book of Worship**

What is perhaps the most striking part of the book is the worship that is happening and the words that are spoken to God by creation and by the Church. We get a glimpse of the worship in heaven, and the songs and words that are used are most likely also connected to how the Church was already engaged in worship. In other words, John is showing his readers that the words and worship that they employ on earth are also how it is taking place in Heaven. We get a taste of the heavenly worship that is now also taking place on earth. Many of these images of worship also have a home all the way back in the Old Testament when others saw a vision of heaven. (Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc.)

## **Book of Fulfillment**

This book at the end of the day is a book of hope and certainty for Christians. We are shown things for as they truly are. That all that evil can do will pass away like a morning mist. We are exhorted to keep holding on to the faith that has been delivered. And the book ends with the prayer that every Christian has longed hoped for and long to see: The return of Jesus Christ our Lord, which the book ends with just that prayer and a blessing, capping off the fact that revelation is a book of worship: "Amen. Come Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."