

MESSAGE NOTES
Revelation Unveiled-- Part 1 of 26
“Millennial Madness”
Revelation 1:1-8

Introduction: The *Book of Revelation* was written by Jesus’ disciple John to seven churches in Asia Minor (an area we now know as Turkey). They were churches he loved, as he was the Bishop of the Christian churches in that region. John has a vision given to him by God when he was imprisoned or in exile on an island called Patmos – an island about 40 miles out to sea off the coast of Turkey. He writes the vision down, and it is words and images meant to give them encouragement and hope in the midst of the persecution they are currently facing, and what they will face in the future. We start our study of this book with the first eight verses:

Read Revelation 1:1-8 (NIV) ...

Two Responses to Revelation

1. Get obsessed with it.

Some people approach Revelation like it is a prophetic jigsaw puzzle that is going to give them insider information, and they are absolutely certain they have cracked the code about the last days. They have all these timelines outlining the last days, timelines that can get incredibly complicated, and they get all caught up in all kinds of speculation about it. Examples ----

Christian thinker and writer G.K. Chesterton said: *“Though Saint John saw many strange monsters in his vision he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.”*

When non-Christians see all kinds of speculations and predictions that are not firmly rooted in a correct understanding of the Scripture and then see those speculations and predictions go unfulfilled; how responsive are they going to be when others talk to them about Jesus and the good news of the gospel? Jesus said to his disciples:
He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
Acts 1:7-8 (NIV)

What is important is not speculation and prediction and getting wrapped up in all kinds of details but rather being his witnesses by telling others about Jesus and about our Christian hope because he is coming back.

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. [33] Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.”
Mark 13:32-33 (NIV)

2. Avoid it.

Many believers just give up on the whole book because they can hardly understand it or make any sense of it. But we are going to take Revelation back! We are not going to shy away from it as we are going to learn about it and study it together; and we are going to do that in a spirit of openness and humility.

Four Reasons to Study Revelation

1. Because it’s in the Bible. – Revelation 1:1-2...

One of the marks of growth in those who are fully devoted followers of Jesus is that we study what is called *“The whole counsel of God”*.

*“**All Scripture** is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. [17] It is God’s way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.”*
2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

This is a very rich and practical book when we understand what it is saying to us; especially as we live in the kind of world that you and I are living in today with all its uncertainty and problems. If you will sign on for this series and make

being here on Sunday morning a priority, you will be gripped by this book and its message for us which is to stand firm in our faith no matter what happens in this life, because in the end -- GOD WINS!

2. It has a significant message from God for us today. – Revelation 1:4-8...

These verses are the prologue to the Book of Revelation, and a theological greeting from the Triune God. – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They have a significant message from God to us today as they encourage and reassure early, persecuted Christians that God is eternal, sovereign over history, and that Jesus Christ will triumphantly return one day and make all things right.

Just as this encouraged and reassured John's readers in his day to stand firm in their faith no matter what happened to them in this life because in the end GOD WINS, the truths of these verses encourage and reassure us as followers of Jesus today to do the same as we experience more and more opposition to the Christian faith and to us.

Along with living with genuine hope and joy in this life, the ministry of B.L.E.S.S.ing the people we know is more urgent in the light of Revelation.

3. It carries a promise of blessing. – Revelation 1:3...

Blessed are those who hear it AND also keep it – meaning to respond in obedience and do what it says. Being blessed does not mean that our circumstances are all going to turn out the way we want them to. It means that as you and I live in the difficulties of life, we are going to learn to live in the presence of Almighty God. We are going to be faithful to Jesus and not give up on the faith. We will live our life in such a way that at the literal, visible, and personal return of God's son, we are going to hear him say "Well Done!" That's his promise, and it's the only book in the New Testament that carries a promise like that.

4. It will sharpen our ability to study scripture.

When we look at Revelation from the basic foundational principles of how to interpret the Bible, we ask:

1. What did John, the writer, intend to convey?
2. What did his original readers hear and understand it to say?
3. What does it mean for us today? -- How do we apply to our life? ---Then Revelation makes a lot more sense.

John wrote Revelation to the seven churches in Asia minor in the 90's A.D. and he deals with issues in his time, along with prophetically speaking to both his audience and to later readers. What does it mean that he is speaking prophetically?

Most of Biblical prophecy is not so much about future-telling, but more about forth-telling. It is about telling people a word from God – not so much about telling them the future.

It is God through the prophet speaking into people's lives about what is going on with them, and a lot of times encouraging them to straighten some things out and return to living as wholehearted and fully devoted followers of God because if they don't, they will face some significant consequences.

This is what is primarily happening in Revelation. Yes, the last couple of chapters are about the future, but MOST of the book of Revelation is speaking to the people in the churches to whom John is writing.

In doing so he uses images which are hard for us to understand, but that's not because it's all about future events at the end of time. It is because if John came right out and wrote the word Rome, or the Evil Empire that is ruling now, he would have been accused of treason and executed immediately. Also, the people he wrote to would be in trouble for reading seditious material.

So instead, he uses the Old Testament image of Babylon to talk about Rome in his day, or any evil ruling nation in the future. There are other examples of this as well which we will see in our study of the book. Many of the images connect back to the Old Testament.

John is writing within the Jewish prophetic tradition and bringing to the churches over which he is Bishop, a word from God. Jesus is saying through the Apostle John, I WANT MY CHURCH BACK. BE ALL IN ON ME and make me your first love and priority. And in a world of opposition to me and my people, love those who hate us and pray for and do good to those who persecute us for our faith.

Because then we will make a difference in the lives of people around us and in our community, just like the people to whom John is writing in Asia Minor made a difference in the lives of people in their community and throughout Asia Minor.

Taking It Home

We encourage you to take a few minutes today and this week to process this morning's message. These questions are designed for discussion with your family, a friend, mentor, spouse, and small group. They are also useful for self-reflection.

1. What stands out to you in these passages from the Bible? From the message?
2. What is difficult for you to understand or accept in these passages from the Bible? From the message?
3. What is God saying in these passages and through what we heard in the message about Himself? About people? About you?
4. What examples are there to follow, commands to obey, or promises to stand on from these passages in the Bible, and from what we heard in the message?