

BIBLE DAY CONFERENCE

REVELATION

THE BOOK OF

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Hello & Welcome

REVELATION
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GETTING STARTED

The book of Revelation:

- An unveiling
- No code to decipher
- No SECRET key
- There *is* a key, but it's not secret! His name is JESUS.



Two common attitudes to this book:

- Either totally neglected, or elevated to primary prominence
- Both positions are unfortunate
- No better time to listen to its message than 2020!



OVERVIEWS:

1. An Epic Story

The book of Revelation has main characters:

- John the narrator (1:1-11)
- Jesus the hero, the central character (1:12-20)
- The church, weak and overwhelmed (2:1-3:22)

The story of God's mission.

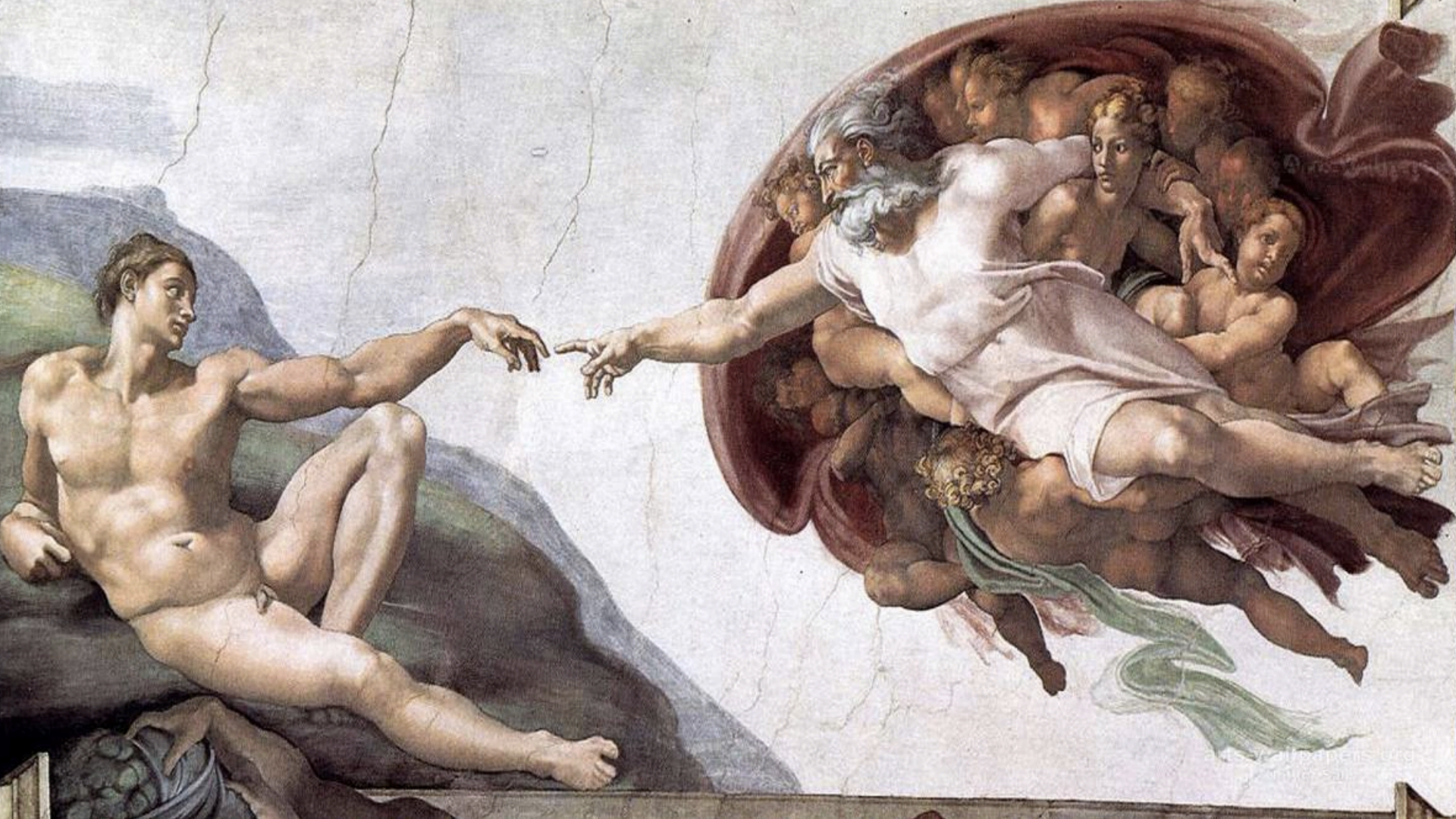


2. A Painting and its Details

The Sistene Chapel







Revelation viewed in two parts:

Part 1 - Chapters 1-11

The whole picture

Part 2 - Chapters 12-22

Details of the picture



3. The Key for the Lock

The key is Jesus (the Gospel)

The Gospel Key in Revelation

NB: Look out for the *interludes*, which speak of Jesus (chapter numbers in brackets)



GOSPEL KEY

Prologue (1)

Interlude (4-5)

Interlude (7)

Interlude (11)

Interlude (15)

Interlude (19)

No Interlude
(complete)

SEVEN ACTS OF ONE DRAMA

First: 7 Letters (2-3)

Second: 7 Seals (6)

Third: 7 Trumpets (8-11)

Fourth: Signs & Beasts (12-14)

Fifth: 7 Bowls (16-18)

Sixth: Last Battle (19-20)

Seventh: New Creation (21-22)



TIPS FOR STUDYING REVELATION

1. Read it through in one sitting.
2. Look for the different literary forms: apocalyptic, prophecy, letters and hymns of praise.



3. Apocalyptic:

- Embedded in prophetic books, especially Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah
- Images are often fantasy, rather than reality
- The meaning of images can change from vision to vision
- Look out for those times when John himself interprets the image



4. Be curious, and ask questions e.g. Why in apocalyptic form?
5. Allow this book to be interpreted in the light of the rest of Scripture.
6. What did it mean for the first readers?
7. What is its message for us?



1:1-3 ¹The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it know by sending his angel to his servant John, ²who testifies to everything he saw - that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.



THE FIRST THING TO GET CLEAR 1:1-3

- This is not John's revelation! (v.1)
- God sent the revelation (v.1-2)
- We are "blessed" as we hear and understand (v.3 cf. Mt.13:19)
- What time is "near"? (v.3)



1:4-8

⁴John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.



To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.⁷ ‘Look, he is coming with the clouds,’ and ‘every eye will see him, even those who pierced him’; and all peoples on earth ‘will mourn because of him.’ So shall it be! Amen.



⁸ 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'



KEY: THE GOSPEL FRAMEWORK 1:4-8

1. The past – Jesus' death and resurrection (v.5-6)
2. The present – Jesus rules (v.5)
3. The future – Jesus will return (v.7 cf. Mk. 13:26)



VISION OF JESUS PRECEEDS VISION FROM JESUS

1:10-20

- A vision of Jesus (v.10-20)
- Write and send (v.11)
- The vision portrays Jesus:
 - As one “like a son of man” (v.13 cf. Dan.7:13; Mk.13:26)
 - Notice what John observes (v.14-16)
 - clothes, hair, eyes, feet, voice, face
 - The experience is physical (v.17)
 - A summary of the gospel (v.18 cf. Is.44:6)



The Seven Churches of Revelation



THE MESSAGE OF THE LETTERS Ch.2-3

These 7 letters:

- Are written to real people
- Are not an unrelated introduction to the book



A PATTERN TO THE LETTERS: E.g. 2:1-7

Ephesus

1. A greeting (v.1)
2. A section headed "I know" – praise (v.2-3)
3. A correction (v.4)
4. A warning with consequences (v.5-6)
5. An exhortation ("Those who have an ear...") followed by a promise ("to those who 'overcome'") (v.7)



HOW DO WE DAILY OVERCOME?

1. Look until you see (1:10)
2. Keep love on fire (2:4-5)
3. Remind yourself daily of the mission (2:19)
4. Put on God's armour (2:12-13)
5. Acknowledge your weakness (3:8 cf. 1:9)
6. Gather manna daily (2:17)



Note: The book's summary of how we overcome (12:11)

- The blood of the Lamb (e.g. 3:4-5)
- The word of their testimony (e.g. 3:8)
- They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (e.g. 2:10)



4:1-2. After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' ² At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.



THE INVITATION

- “Come up here...” (v.1)
- Get God’s perspective (v.2)
- This is what theology is all about
- Who can help us with this way of looking?
Jesus (Jn.3:31-32)



WHAT DID THE INVITATION UNVEIL FOR JOHN?

1. **God's Throne Room** (v:2-8)

- A vision of God (v.2-3)



- Note how the images concretely depict the invisible:
 - precious stones (v.3 see Ez. 1:26-28; 1 Tim. 6:16)
 - 24 elders (v.4)
 - the 7 spirits of God (v.5)
 - a sea of glass (v.6)
 - 4 living creatures (v.7-8 see Ez. 1:5-6,10)



2. Heaven's Worship (4:8-11 cf. 5:8-14)

- John is at worship (1:10)
- Worship shapes churches
- Satan hates worship
- Seeing what John sees can only deepen worship (v.10-11)
- Hymns of praise (4:11, 5:9-12)



5:1-5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.



⁴ I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. ⁵ Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'



3. The Scroll (5:1-5)

Why is John so distraught that no-one can open it? (v.4)

- Has Jesus' mission failed? What's the future hold?
- The scroll contains the answer
- Someone is needed, who sees the end from the beginning!
- The messianic Lion of Judah can do it (v.5)
- The future is revealed. (Ch.6-22)



5: 6-14 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.



⁸ And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying:



'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.'



4. The Lion who is the Lamb (5:6-14)

- The Lion is seen as a slain Lamb (v.6)
- God's unlikely victor (horns, eyes, spirits)
- The Lamb takes the scroll (v.7-8)
- The worship of heaven centres around this wonder (v.9-10)
- The mystery is revealed (see Rom.16:25-27; Eph.3:3-12; Col.1:24-29)

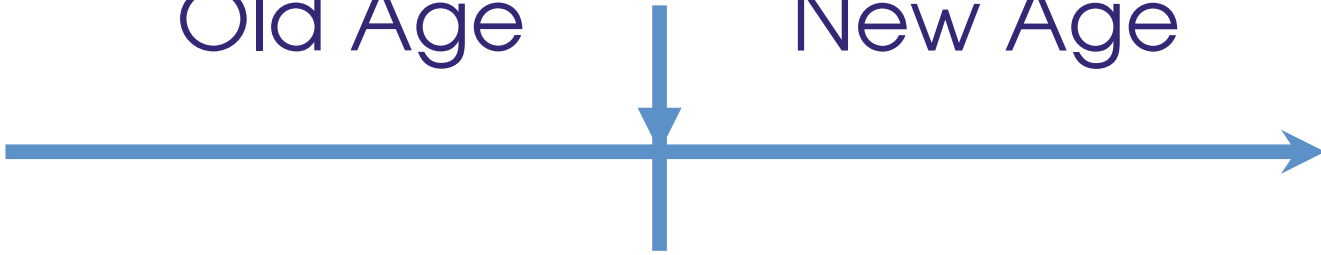


Old Testament Perspective

Messiah

Old Age

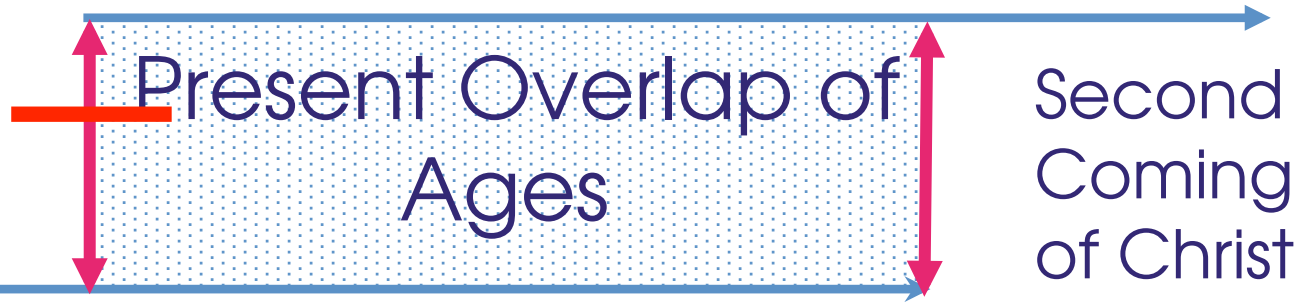
New Age



New Testament Perspective

New Age

First
Coming
of Christ



Second
Coming
of Christ

Old Age

THE NEW TESTAMENT TIME FRAME

- Mercy is the bible's explanation for the overlap (2 Pet.3:8-9)
- The in-between period is the experience of present and future
- The victory, already won, will soon be here



GROWING IN LOOKING FROM ABOVE

- Desire relationship with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.2:9-12)
- Seek to bring your thinking into agreement with - heaven (Gen.28)
- Learn from above, where real power lies (Rev.5:6)
- Recognise the life-giving freshness of 'revelation' (1Thess.5:19-21)



6:1-8 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!' ²I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.



³ When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, 'Come!' ⁴ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make people kill each other. To him was given a large sword.



⁵ When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come!' I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, 'A kilogram of wheat for a day's wages, and three kilograms of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!'



⁷ When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, 'Come!' ⁸ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a quarter of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.



THE SEALS OPENED: WHAT DOES HISTORY HOLD?

CH.6-7

Opening the Seals Reveal:

1. White horse = conquest (v.1-2)
2. Red horse = war (v.3-4)
3. Black horse = famine (v.5-6)
4. Pale horse = death (v.8 cf. Mt. 16:18)
5. Martyrs = killed for faithful testimony to the word of God (v.9)



QUESTION 1: HOW LONG? (v.10)

Answer (v.11):

- Receive God's gift of white robes
- Be patient and wait a little longer

6. Cataclysmic disarray in the creation (v. 12-17 cf. Mt.24, Mk.13, Lk.21)



QUESTION 2: WHO CAN STAND? (v.17)

Answer comes in the form of two visions:

- The 144,000 (7:1-8)
- The Innumerable Multitude (7:9-14)

7. A dramatic silence in heaven (8:1)

- A glimpse of the completed picture:
God's new creation (v.15-17)



THE TRUMPETS ANNOUNCE A SECOND VIEW OF HISTORY CH. 8-11

What is revealed with each trumpet blast?:

1. Hail, fire and blood (v.6-7 cf. plague of hail Ex.9:23)
2. Sea with blood (v.8-9 cf. Nile turning to blood Ex.7:20)



THE TRUMPETS ANNOUNCE A SECOND VIEW OF HISTORY CH. 8-11

3. What is revealed with Contaminated water causing death (v.10-11)
4. Darkness on the earth increased (v.12 cf. darkness in Egypt Ex. 10:22)



9:1-6 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. ² When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. ³ And out of the smoke locusts came down on the earth and were given



power like that of scorpions of the earth.

⁴ They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ They were not allowed to kill them but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes.



6 During those days people will seek death but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.



5. Destroying locusts (9:1-11 cf. Joel 1-2)
6. A demonic multitude of horsemen
(9:13-21)



QUESTION: What are the people of God to do?

Answer given to John comes in the form of two visions:

a. The Little Scroll (10:5-11)

- A scroll to be eaten (v.9-11 cf. Ez.2:9-3:4)



b. The Two Witnesses (11:1-14)

- Described as the “two olive trees and two lampstands” (v.4 cf. Zech.4)
- Cannot be harmed until their work is done (v.5-6 cf. Elijah 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:10)
- They are killed, resurrected and ascended (v.7-12 cf. Jesus the Lamb)



11:15-19 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.’

¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, ¹⁷ saying:



‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.¹⁸ The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name,



both great and small – and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’¹⁹ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.



7. A dramatic loud song in heaven (v. 15-19)

- Heaven's rule has come to earth (v.15)
- Christ has returned (v.17 cf. 4:8)
- The final judgment has come (v.18)
- The Holy of Holies seen (v.19)



CONCLUSION: HOW THEN ARE WE TO LIVE?

1. Don't be surprised by tribulation; be surprised by joy (Rom.5:3-5)
2. Remember – you are called to bear lots of fruit (Jn.15:5)
3. Do what Jesus has given you to do (Mt. 24:45-47)
4. Get on with living life
5. More than ever, keep in step with the Spirit (Gal.5:25;16)



