

Revelation- Class 1 (Intro- Revelation 1)

Intro: Avoiding Revelation

I remember when I started to read the Bible, I wanted to avoid the book of Revelation. I grew up in the time when Left Behind was a popular series and I feared that I would be left behind. I was intimidated to read the book on my own because of all the confusing imagery. So I avoided it for five years. Once I did read and dig deeper into it, I kicked myself because I was able to understand more about who Jesus is.

- Even though this book will talk about what will happen in the future.
- Even though this book includes a picture of what Heaven will look like.
- Even though this book will give you hope of where you'll be...
- This book is about Jesus...

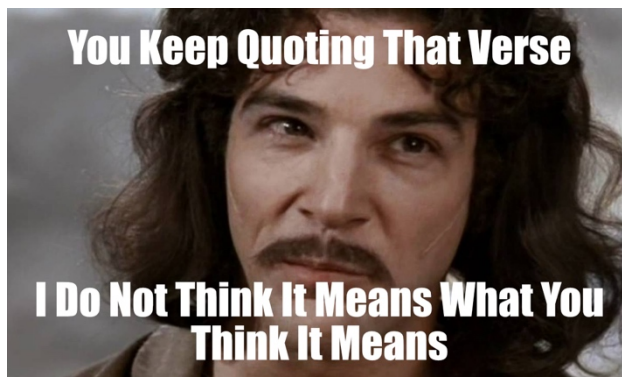
“By the time you finish, you will know that Jesus is risen as promised, Jesus will return to take us home as promised, Jesus will return to Jerusalem with us accompanying Him as promised, Jesus will reign over the world as promised, and Jesus will judge unbelievers just as He promised.”¹

How to we'll engage...

Like in every class, here's the challenge and warning we need to be careful about how we read Scripture.

It's very easy to read into the text.... And twist it to make it say anything we want

Example: A rapper who just won a music award for a song where he talked about sleeping with other women, smoking drugs, and endorsing violence will hold their new trophy and say, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength!”



¹ Dr. Rick Yohn. *Revealing Revelation: How God's Plans for The Future Can Change Your Life Right Now*. Pg. 11

We can shake our heads in disappointment,
But we can fall into the same trap, especially as we read the book of Revelation.
So how do we avoid that trap? **CONTEXT!**
We need to constantly think: what did the original audience hear?
And what timeless truth can we take away?

Who wrote the book?

It is believed that John the son of Zebedee



- Known as a son of thunder > the apostle of Love
 - “The one whom Jesus loved”
 - “children, love one another”
- Wrote John, John 1,2,3
 - Acts 4:13 (ESV), “¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were **UNEDUCATED, COMMON MEN**, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.
- Traditionally view of John²
 - Thrown into a huge basin of boiling oil
 - Sent to the mines in Patmos
 - Ultimately died in peace at approx. A.D. 98
 -

Encouragement: We look at the testimony of John and can thank God, that he was a work in progress. Jesus didn’t choose him because of his own merits... Jesus didn’t say, “man, I need this guy in my camp or else my ministry is doomed!” No, he chose him regardless. Through His grace and unending in John’s life, He was known and lived out to be an apostle (sent out one) of love.

- Uneducated, unlearned man... who had been with Jesus.
- Angry, wrathful... To exhorting people to love one another
 - 1 John 3:18 (NIV), “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”
- He witnessed Jesus’ growth in popularity, miracles, prayer life, betrayal, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection... and now in a few moments the glorified Christ.
 - – *John Never Stopped Being With Jesus...*

God is still in the business of transformation for uneducated, common people.
God is still in the business of transforming you from your worst characteristic
To something that may seem impossible, but can only be explained...
“it’s because they had been with Jesus...”
And you have the opportunity to never stop being with Jesus too.

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/apostle-John-die.html>

When Did He Write It?

Scholars argue of the exact date this letter was written but there were two possible times.



#1. During the reign of Nero *Approx. A.D.66*

- Mass persecution of the church
- Nero wanted to be bigger and better than those of his past.
 - July 19 A.D 64, Caesar Nero set the imperial city ablaze he had hired arsonists to set the whole city on fire. as he watched the city burned he played the fiddle.
- **He wanted to put a new face on Rome, that would echo of Caesar Nero.** and one of the places that was burned was the Circus Maximus. it sat over 100,000, but he would rebuild it to seat over 300,000.
- **Due to suspicion, he quickly placed the blame on the Christians....** “It’s not I who set fire to this city, it was those who speak of unquenchable flames of hell!”
- This would be a huge target to be painted on the heads of all believers. **Only months after Peter would write this Epistle...**over 6 Million Christians, were fed to the lions in the new arena. mocked as they were lit on fire in Nero’s garden.
- Revelation 1:9a (ESV), “⁹I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation”
- When they needed to hear a word of hope

#2. During the reign of Domitian *A.D. 96³*

- Historians argue whether Domitian continued the persecution.
- Apathy... laziness... comfort... crept into the Church
- We’ll visit where these churches are corrected for being domineering, losing passion, and swaying.

³ <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-topics/post-biblical-period/domitian-persecution-of-christians/>

Why Did He Write It?

Whether it was because of persecution or because the Church had lost its vision, hope, and call
It was the only letter, we see in Scripture, that is dictated by Jesus, Himself.
Jesus will communicate correction, encouragement, and promises
To a Church that desperately needed to hear from Him.

How Was It Written?

It is written as a prophetic letter, not only for the original audience to hear
But for future believers, to hold on to the promise that God wins...
He knows that the world will get worse, but hold on He is on the way.

John uses a lot of imagery that makes commentators argue about the meaning
John does his best to explain heavenly images for finite minds to understand
Here's a challenge
How would you describe a sunset to a blind person?
How would you describe a symphony to a deaf person?
How would your favorite hobby to a toddler?

Some of you could meet the challenge,
But I think we'd still struggle and wrestle to find the right words and ways

So if you scratch your head at some of the descriptions that John writes
It's ok, we can trust and rely on the Holy Spirit to reveal to us

Special Note Before We Dive In.

We only have a limited time, remember I will give a 10,000-foot view of the chapters.
There are many opinions about the book of Revelation...
I will do my best to present some of those views in time.
And it's ok to disagree, to study, to own it for yourself.
My theology is continually growing, and I am approaching this study with fresh eyes.

Some of you may have questions...
some of you may want to play "stump the teacher" and with this book you may win
Because some questions may not be answerable until we get into Heaven.

I will be approaching our study with a **FUTURIST PERSPECTIVE**.
Meaning that the events we are about to read about will happen...
They aren't all events that have already occurred entirely.
They aren't good ideas
But a reality that we may all witness in the coming years.

Lastly, I want to stay primarily in Scripture to comment on the Scripture.

I will do my best to stay away from explaining the Scriptures using news headlines.
Because the book of Revelation does include catastrophic imagery...

"There is one central theme that carries through this wonderful letter of pain and hope, wrath and love, and judgement and grace, and it is not what but a who. The book of Revelation is all about Jesus Christ... So as you read, remember that the ultimate focus of this letter is not the rapture, nor the tribulation, nor Israel, nor the church, nor the new heaven or the new earth. It is about the King of Kings the Lord of lords, the powerful Lion of Judah, and the spotless sacrificial Lamb."⁴

Now remember, I avoided Revelation from fear... intimidation...
But now with the original audience in mind... step inside their sandals
Whether they are facing massive persecution and martyrdom
Or whether they are simmering in their passion and witness to the world
They read the first four words of this book...

Revelation 1:1a (ESV), "1 The revelation of Jesus Christ,"

The Revelation, the apocalypses... also known as the unveiling.
This word is not only reserved about events will occur in the future
But it is used 18-times throughout Scripture speaking of God's
Desire to unveil the his power, heart, and desire for all humankind.

Special note: This isn't an unveiling that leaked out...
But it was an unveiling of Jesus Christ.

"The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality." (Spurgeon)

Revelation 1:1b-2 (ESV), "which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw."

Why did God give John this letter?
To show his servants...
Jesus is not wanting to withhold anything... no secret information here.

What soon will take place...

Even though this was true 2,000 years ago
It's all the truer today...

⁴ Tsarfati, Pg. 13

Example of seeing a sign on the highway....



Take place shortly, when it starts to unfold it will all unfold quickly.

Revelation 1:3, “³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”

You’ll hear that Revelation is the only book with a blessing
You will be blessed when this is read aloud, when it’s heard,
And for those who hold on and keep what is written in it.

Picture: Early Christians opening the scroll of Revelation and reading aloud to people who may not be able to read. But they can listen and still be part of the blessing.

Revelation 1:4-5a, “⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.”

John addresses the specific audience in modern day Turkey

Greetings from him, as the author, and also greeting from the Trinitarian God

- From him who is, who was, and who is to come= The Father.
 - A way to understand God is that He is timeless, eternal.
- The Seven Spirits= The Holy Spirit
 - The number 7 speaks of his fulness
 - Refers to Isaiah 11:2, The spirit is known for wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.
 - Not 7 entities, 7 characteristics in fullness and perfection
- Jesus... the faithful witness.... The preeminence of being the firstborn of the dead. The ruler of kings.

Revelation 5b-6, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Loved Us- Title given for the Cross...

The 7 Wounds of Christ

Leviticus 17:1 (ESV), "11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

Christ bled from 7 different places

He bled from the face as they tore out His beard,
for every single word you said that you shouldn't had said.

He bled from the from the skull
for every thought you thought that didn't glorify God.
and as the blood would run down to His eyes,
for everything that you looked at that you shouldn't had looked at.

He bled from the back
as they tore His back up so much that it looked like hamburger meat
for every single time that you turned your back on God.

He bled from the hands
His left and His right for every single time that you touched
something that you shouldn't had touched.

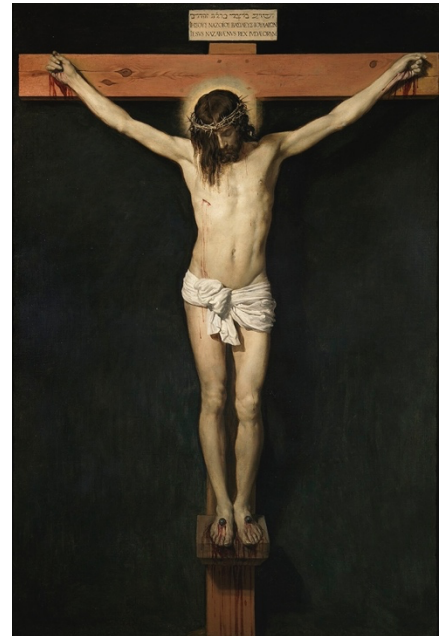
He bled from the feet
for every single time that you walked away from Him and His calling

But you may be sitting in your seat and think,
Epi you don't know me! You don't know what hurt I've been through
You don't know the abuse, rejection, or hell that I've been through
You don't know this anger that is inside of me.

He bled there too as they pierced His side, allowing the blood to flow out.
The blood of Christ covers us from head to toe.
from the inside out!
so that You and I may have new life!

Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen."

The clouds- Just as Jesus ascended into Heaven
He'll return back with the clouds...



It could also be that He'll return with the cloud of witnesses
Clouds being symbolic of God's presence.

His second return won't be a secret but the whole world will know.
But let's end our time and focus on Jesus' reintroduction
Not only to the first century believer...
But also to you... incase you need a reminder.

Revelation 1:8 (ESV), "8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Greek alphabet...
He is before all things and beyond all things
Being the beginning and the end, he is in control of everything in-between

What does this title mean for you?
Your life is not tossed into a random cycle of meaninglessness
He is the one who is directing your paths... directing your steps...
He is the one who knows what is coming... and will be with you in the valley
He will walk with you, never abandon and give up.

Revelation 1:9-11 (ESV), "9 I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 11 saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Can we pause for a moment and imagine this moment
Here John, who knew Jesus during his earthly ministry
Knew the sound of his voice, his style, his smell, etc...
Hears this voice identify himself as the alpha and omega
Commands him to write what he see's

Can you imagine the feeling of... It's Jesus! I get to see Jesus, my friend, my master!
And as he turns around what does he see?

Revelation 1:12-13 (ESV), "12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest."

Lampstands... 10,000 foot explanation...
Lampstands represent the church as they hold the light that is given
It displays it, doesn't produce it, shines.

And in the midst of the church is Jesus...

His original listeners would know that the robe communicates authority.

usually worn by people who didn't do work

The sash representing His office as High Priest.

Old Testament Priests

Wouldn't have gold sashes... but threads.

If they tended to the lampstands they would refill the oil

Jesus our high priest

Has a sash of complete Gold.

He cares and tends to the Church.

Revelation 1:14-16 (ESV), "14 The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, 15 his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength."

- White wool: Speaks of Jesus being the ancient of days
- White: also speaks of purity
- His eyes were like fire: Speaks of Judgement (refiners fire) sinner and saint
- His feet of bronze: Stability and prominence
- His voice: Power and Majesty (not a leaky faucet)
- Seven stars: speak of the seven churches
- Two-edged sword: The word of God.



Revelation 1:17-20 (ESV), "17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. 19 Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

Questions:

Warm up: Have you read the Book of Revelation before? If so, what was your experience? If not, why?

#1. Group Discussion: Before considering the strong message of this book share your experiences of receiving a comforting letter in a time of crises. In what ways were you challenged as well as comforted by a friend's words or visit?

#2. John was transformed from a Son of Thunder to an Apostle of Love. Share what you or someone you know has been transformed for the better because of Jesus?

#3. Imagine that you are a member of one of the seven churches in Asia (modern Turkey). What would you find comforting about the various descriptions of Jesus in this chapter? What would you find challenging?

#4. What description of Jesus in Revelation 1:14-16 (hair, eyes, mouth, feet, etc.) spoke to you the most? Why?

#5. In what ways has a knowledge of Christ's coming encouraged you in the midst of the challenges in our current times?

#6. What is a key takeaway for you from chapter one?

Questions to Ask Epi: