

How To Read The Apocalypse Of Jesus Christ

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[0 : 00] Well, today, on this Lord's Day, we begin a new series of Sunday sermons in the last book of the Bible, in the revelation of Jesus Christ, in what is more precisely called the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.

Now, why would we do that? Given all that is going on in the world, all of the upheaval and uncertainty, given all that is going on in our own lives, why would we take time, valuable time, to read and study and pray through a book that is initially so obscure and bewildering?

It's a document full of weird and even frightening imagery, a document full of seemingly esoteric symbolism. We meet a man who's clothed in a robe, his eyes are a flame of fire, his face shines like the sun.

We meet a great red dragon who has ten horns and seven heads, and a beast from the sea that has ten horns and seven heads, and a beast from the earth that has two horns like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon.

We meet creatures who have eyes in the front and the back and who never cease singing, holy, holy, holy. We meet four horsemen, three of whom who bring devastation upon the earth.

[1 : 18] We hear of this massive earthquake. The sun becomes so black it looks like sackcloth. The moon looks like blood. There are locusts as big as horses with faces like men, and on it goes.

And then the chief figure in the whole book is a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes. I mean, why, given all that is going on in the world today, and all that is going on in our lives, would we want to spend time in such a strange book?

Well, I can think this morning of four reasons. The first is, many of you asked me to lead a study in this book.

You know that I've spent decades trying to understand it. I've been drawn to it since I was a little boy. It came alive for me in a very powerful way on an airplane flight from Los Angeles, California, to Seoul, South Korea in 1984.

All the lights were dim in the plane that night, and I was reading from Revelation 4 and 5. And it seemed, underlying the word seemed, it seemed that for a second the plane filled with light.

[2 : 37] And it seemed that for a second I was hearing the worship of heaven. And I had this great impression that I was supposed to wake everybody up, and we were supposed to start singing hymns. Since that time, I've tried to read as much as I can.

I haven't read everything because there's books coming out all the time, to read as much as I can to understand this document. Some of you might know that I have a pastoral commentary on this book called Discipleship on the Edge.

Since I wrote that, I've learned a lot more. And now, I hope in this series, I'm going to give you the more that's built on that book. So that's the first reason you asked me.

I should say, some people ask me because the possibility that there's going to be a lot of hype in the next few weeks about the Mayan calendar predicting the end of the world on December 21st.

On December 23rd, by the way, we gather for worship. And we're going to be doing Galatians 4.4, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son. At any rate, you asked me. The second good reason for us to do this is that the last book of the Bible is written to people who are under pressure.

[3 : 50] As we are. And in particular, under the pressure to compromise. The pressure to compromise allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord.

Some of the people to whom John wrote understood this pressure and they were resisting it. Some of them were not aware of the pressure because they were just going with the flow of the culture and they were losing out spiritually.

And John writes to both types of people. He writes to encourage those who are resisting. And he writes to wake up those who have gone to sleep as they flow with the culture.

And all the imagery and all the symbolism is geared to do both of these things. To make the issues clear. A third reason is no other book I know explains what is going on in the world as well as this book does.

In particular, it explains why what is going on in the world is going on. And then shows us where it is all going.

[4 : 59] On September the 26th, a few Wednesdays ago, Globe and Mail, in the editorial section, had a political cartoon. Is it up there behind me?

There it is. It's a picture of the United Nations General Assembly open. This is where the President of Iran, the President of Egypt, the President of the United States spoke during those few days.

And on the white screen there, it says, General Assembly, September 2012, PowerPoint presentation. And then they put on the stage there the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

I thought two things. One is, somebody in the Globe and Mail has read their Bible. And two, I wonder how many people in Canada understood this imagery. Because they haven't read their Bible.

But nevertheless, it was there. I saw this at a coffee shop, so I was walking home. And when I got home, one of my neighbors was out trimming some of the plants. And I showed her this picture.

[6 : 01] And she said to me, Boy, that's our world, isn't it? This book explains why what is going on is going on and does so in such a way so that we can keep our balance.

And then the fourth reason for bothering with this book is that this book, more than any other book I know, gives us the most comprehensive portrait of Jesus Christ ever.

And when we read this book the way it is intended to be read, we encounter Jesus in such a way that he overcomes our fears and ignites fresh passion and courage.

So, let's launch in. If you have your Bibles, open them up to Revelation chapter 1, we'll read verses 1 through 12. And if you are able, would you please stand for the reading of good news.

the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his bondservants the things which must shortly take place.

[7 : 21] And he sent and communicated it by his angel to his bondservant, John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

If you were underlining your Bible, you'd underline that word saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and heed the things which are written in it, for the time is near.

John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and is to come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and released us from our sins by his blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father. To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen. Behold, look, he's coming with the clouds of heaven and every eye will see him even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him even so.

[8 : 31] Amen. I'm the Alpha and the Omega says the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty. I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet saying, write in a book what you see. Send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me and having turned I saw. Living God, you saw fit to inspire this document and include it in Holy Scripture.

And we pray now in your mercy and grace you would help us understand why and more importantly experience the truth of it as never before. For we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Strange and weird and bizarre as it may be, just take a moment and listen to what Richard Balcom of St. Andrew's University in Scotland says about this book.

[10 : 03] The Apocalypse of John is a work of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry, remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique and profound theology.

Isn't that good? The Apocalypse is a work of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry.

Here's where I need a whiteboard. Remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique and profound theology.

And I hope that when we're through these weeks of this series, you'll be able to echo those words. Now, in this introductory sermon to the series, all I want to do is talk about how to read the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.

You would agree with me that John has written this for a purpose. He has a purpose in mind. He has a goal in mind. How do we read this document in such a way that we read in sync with his purposes?

[11 : 14] I think we read in five ways. First, we honor the title. We honor the title.

The title of the last book of the Bible is The Revelation of Jesus Christ. The title is not Revelations. The title is not Revelation. And certainly, the title is not the Revelation of John.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Which tells me that the book is fundamentally about a person.

Of Jesus Christ. How is this of Jesus Christ being used? Of as in by Jesus Christ? The Revelation of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ?

Or of in the sense of about Jesus Christ? The Revelation of Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ? Answer? Yes. The Revelation of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ.

[12 : 20] Keep that title before us and we will not go astray as we read this book. Now, literally, the title is The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.

When you hear this word Apocalypse, what do you think or hear or see or feel? As you know, most people in our culture today hear the word apocalypse and they go, oh no, something bad is about to happen.

And that's how the media use the word. So they speak of riots or earthquakes or weird weather patterns as apocalyptic. In yesterday's Globe and Mail, on the back side of the opinions or the focus section is this big ad for Canada Museum of Nature.

It's opening up. It's called Nature Unleashed Inside Natural Disasters and the word is apocalypse now. This is, I think, Mount Pinatubo going off in Manila and there's a jeep here where these Filipinos trying to outrun this dust coming from this volcano.

Apocalypse now. Wrong use of the word apocalypse. I know how it's gotten into our culture but it's a wrong word.

[13 : 33] I want to train you when you're watching the news and someone uses the word apocalypse this is the wrong word, wrong word. The word they want to use is cataclysm now or catastrophe now but not apocalypse now because in the first century when someone heard there was going to be an apocalypse the response was oh good finally an apocalypse bring it on because apocalypse simply means taking the cover off of a box opening a door or a window or pulling back of a curtain.

You take the cover off the box you open the door you pull back the curtain so that what is always there can now be visible. If you're visiting Vancouver today and this is your first day I have good news for you behind those great clouds out there is this wonderful big round ball it brings life to the world it just gives such warmth it's there it's really there and if you go out our church and you turn down go down Nelson and turn left onto Berardi you look down that cabin the canyon of all those great buildings you'll see this big cloud there behind those clouds is a wonderful set of mountains they're gorgeous mountains they're really there all you need is an apocalypse just for the clouds to part and you'll see the sun just for the clouds to part and you'll see the mountains by the way I think we've had about 72 days of apocalyptic weather that's a good use of the word all of the barriers have been removed and we've seen what a beautiful place we live in so the title of the book is the apocalypse of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ the pulling back of the curtain by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ the breaking through from hiddenness of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ it's all about a person now apocalyptic literature like the one we're dealing with in the last book of the Bible has two pastoral purposes

I think apocalyptic literature in the Bible is the most pastoral of them all two pastoral purposes one is to set the present moment and all of its fear and all of its uncertainty to set the present moment in light of the unseen realities of the future Jesus is coming and he's bringing with him a new heaven and new earth chapters 21 and 22 and if we can just see that future for just a moment it will shape the way we understand the present and live in it so set the present moment in light of the unseen realities of the future but the most important pastoral role of apocalyptic is to set the present moment in light of the unseen realities of the present there's more to this present moment than we can know with our unaided intellect and emotions and imagination and the role of apocalyptic literature is to open of that more so we know where we are actually living we could use a little apocalyptic moment right now can I have the screen up please you're experiencing an apocalypse ah and like the last book of the bible when one curtain is lifted you find that another curtain is there too

I think it's time for the curtain to be opened you just experienced the apocalypse of Bob Swan Bob how long have you been back there 20 minutes the whole time I'm preaching and you're back there and I didn't even know it that's the purpose of this book set the present moment in light of the unseen reality of the future and set the present moment in light of the unseen reality of the present and it turns out that the greatest unseen reality of the present is the crucified risen reigning and coming Jesus of Nazareth do you believe this John says that unless we believe this we do not understand this historical moment correctly so honor the title the revelation of Jesus

Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ the apocalypse of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ about Jesus Christ all right second way to for us oh wait a minute before I go to that I forgot I want to say something about that this tells me that if we read this book rightly we will end up at the feet of Jesus if we don't if we end up anywhere else but at the feet of Jesus we've read the book wrongly if after reading this book I am preoccupied with knowing who 666 is that's a good thing to know but if I'm preoccupied with that I didn't read the book right if at the end of the book I'm preoccupied with the battle of Armageddon I've not read the book right my father was part of building weapons of mass destruction the hydrogen and atomic bombs and I can remember him and some of his friends I could overhear their conversation they were talking about all this and they would say but there's this battle of Armageddon that's got to be fought we've got to be ready for it wrong reading of the book the title is not the revelation of the war of the worlds and besides

[19:15] I've got good news for you in the book the battle of Armageddon is never fought it's never fought the kings keep gathering and then all of a sudden Jesus Christ shows up and it's over that battle's never fought think of all the geopolitical machinations that have gone on thinking there's the battle to be fought Jesus Christ wins keep the title clear okay second is to appreciate the nature of John's experience he's on the prison island of Patmos why is he there I'll tell you more next week but it's the Lord's day and he says he's in the spirit he's worshiping he hears a voice it's a loud voice the voice of a trumpet chapter 1 verse 12 and I turn to see the voice I love that expression I turn to see the voice I take that to mean that John is experiencing something outside himself

I take it to mean that he hears a voice behind him not his own voice somebody else's voice he's not just having this inner mystical experience he hears this voice outside his head and he turns to see this voice he turns his body to something outside himself this is not just something played on the screen of his imagination and he says that when he turned he saw something and then he's going to say I saw I saw I saw he's going to say that 24 more times through the rest of the book I saw chapter 1 verse 2 he bore witness to all that he saw now what did he see what was the nature of his experience on Patmos I think that Jesus gives him that John I'm sorry I think that John witnesses and experiences a living drama I think that what happened that day is that

Jesus put on a play for him this play has many acts each of the acts has scenes there are supporting actors there are light and sound effects there are all kinds of things that are involved in a play there are characters in this play and the interesting thing about the characters is they changed costume a lot now exactly how Jesus put on this play I don't know but that he could do it I have no trouble believing or better yet think of it this way that as John turned around what he saw before him was an animated film which Jesus had created like Toy Story or Car where the actors have all these roles in them how I don't know how he did it but the imagery that Jesus used he uses imagery from the political realm of the

Roman Empire but then he mostly uses imagery from the Old Testament in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ he quotes the Old Testament 150 times there are 250 allusions to the Old Testament which would say to me that I'm going to most accurately understand this book if I'm steeped in the Old Testament so I think that what Jesus does that day is he puts on this play or he shows John an animated film now here's what I want you to grasp from this in his letter this is a letter that he's written it's the longest pastoral letter in his letter John is not interpreting what he saw he's not going to tell us the meaning of what he saw he's simply describing what he saw he's describing the imagery and the symbols that Jesus employs he's not describing what the imagery imagines and he's not describing what the symbols symbolize

Bruce Metzger in his book Breaking the Code that I recommended to you last week the descriptions are descriptions of the symbols not the reality conveyed by the symbols now let me illustrate where this is important in chapter five we meet Jesus Christ as the lamb with seven horns and seven eyes gross out is that how Jesus Christ looks right now if he pulled back the curtain or we went to heaven and saw him would we see a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes I hope not what John saw was the symbol that Jesus chose to present himself in another example we're going to meet some locusts as I mentioned they're strong as horses they have the face of a man and I remember in Sunday school years ago the Sunday school teacher saying well what it is is that John saw way into the future and what he saw was a helicopter a Sikorsky helicopter he did not know how to describe it so he said it's a locust that's big as a horse with the face of a man no no no no no

[24 : 36] Jesus put locusts in front of John and that's what he saw another example is in chapter 12 the woman who's a figure for the church and all of her believers are rescued on the wings of a big eagle and I remember another teacher saying well what John saw was this huge United States Air Force jet taking redeemed Jews into the wilderness no no no Jesus didn't show John an Air Force jet he showed him an eagle with big wings because in the book of Exodus it says that God redeemed his people on the wings of an eagle now in this drama in this animated film scenes change a lot and some of the scenes change very very quickly and you have to watch that when you're reading and as I said the characters change especially Jesus he changes costumes a lot that's the analogy

I gave to lose to work with the Sunday school kids to understand revelation is that Jesus is constantly changing costumes and that's what Alexandre on the front of your bulletin today has to pull back the curtain and you see this rack of costumes because Jesus keeps changing costumes he first appears as a man in a robe and then the next we meet as a lamb with seven heads and seven horns and then we meet him as a shepherd and then on and on and on it goes okay or better yet I'm seeing the youth here in the front I should have asked you for one of these think transformer right think these toys they're the same entity but if you move them in different ways they appear in different ways and that's what's going on in revelation Jesus Christ keeps presenting himself one way move it again move it again move it again move it again now how John kept up with this I don't know and how John was able to remember it all afterwards I don't know

I trust it was the spirit of God who enabled him to do that but what he's doing in this letter he's telling us what he saw I saw I saw something outside of his own head and mind something Jesus is showing him okay so honor the title try to appreciate the nature of the experience and third keep the larger structure of the book in mind as you read the basic structure of the book is very simple there's a prologue there's an epilogue and in between there is the big vision the prologue is 1 1 to 8 the epilogue is 22 10 to 21 and then the vision starts at 19 and goes through 22 9 now some have suggested that the vision is broken down into 7 acts and each of the acts has 7 scenes that's very inviting because of the number 7 in the book there are 7 churches there are 7 messages there are 7 seals there are 7 trumpets there are 7 bulls so it would be cool if the book were broken down into nice neat 7 and for a while

I bought into that but the more I've gotten into it I feel like it's forced it that's just too tidy so I'm going to propose that a better way to think of this vision is that it's built around the word open makes sense given that apocalypse means door 1 a door open in heaven in 11 19 the temple of God which is in heaven was opened in 15 5 the temple of the tabernacle of testimony was open John's going deeper in and then 19 11 I saw heaven opened all of that I submit to you a fulfillment of a promise Jesus made to his first disciples in John 151 you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man now these four uses of the word open then create five major sections in the vision the first section begins with 19 the second 41 the third 11 19 the fourth 15 5 and the fifth 19 11

I think that's how the book goes together and in each of those acts if you will the props are different the setting is different in the first act Jesus is standing among the seven churches giving his seven authoritative messages in the second act we're taken into a throne room and then we see Jesus the lamb sitting in the center of the throne and he's breaking the seals on the scroll of history and then there are seven angels in the third act it's bracketed by the word sign I saw a sign I saw a sign it ends with I saw a sign we have this great cosmic battle that is worked out before us in the fourth section we then come back to the throne area and we have the seven bulls of judgment leading up to John having a vision of the destruction of Babylon the harlot and then the final section Jesus emerges on a horse his name is word of God his robe is dipped in blood his own blood the blood he shed for the world and soon as he shows up the end starts happening so

[30 : 20] I would suggest to you that that's the basic way to look at that now in each of these sections as I've already illustrated Jesus changes costumes he presents himself in a different as the temple and then as a lamp in the midst of the new heaven and new earth and the last thing he says he says he's the bright morning star now here's the critical thing to keep in mind about this whole order it does not unfold chronologically it does not unfold chronologically this drama this movie does not move in a straight line for beginning to end Paul Spillsbury of Ambrose University and Seminary over in Calgary writes this the book does not unfold in a straight sequential way many times the action of the visions takes us back over territory we've already covered introducing new information changing perspective and having surprising twists of plot

Michael Wilcock of England says it best he says the question you ask when reading this book what happens next but what did John see next that's because what John sees next might not happen next in fact what John sees may have happened a long time ago when you ask what happens next you're not reading it correctly you can only ask what did John see next and this is illustrated in two ways one of them is that one of the one of the puzzling things or problematic things about reading this book is you come to a place where you think you've come to the end and only for the whole thing to start over again and then you come to an end again and the whole thing starts over again you come to what you think is the end it starts all over again after the seven seals for instance in the seventh seal there's silence in heaven and all the prayers of the saints are gathered up certainly this is the great moment of the end no gotta start all over again and after the seven trumpets you have this scene where everybody is gathered and you hear the great line the kingdom of our

Lord and of his Christ the kingdoms of the world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of Christ where have you heard that before the hallelujah chorus and then it goes on to say because you are worthy because you are you were and you are but know he is to come and you say certainly this is the end no you gotta go around again and so people have said that an analogy for this you're distracted by that so we're and we ask for peace in this person's soul right now in Jesus name so you come up to the end what you think is the end you gotta go around again there's another end another you are following that so some people suggest that one of the ways to think about the book is a spiral staircase you go around it from one angle then you go around it from another angle you go around it for another angle all the way making your way up or further in however you want to use that okay here's the other illustration of why you don't ask what happens next but what does

John see next chapter 12 chapter 12 is I think the theological center of the book most commentators think that and in chapter 12 you have this sign of a woman she's going to give birth to a child do you throw something against the wall I'm going to just wait here a second because I know you're all looking there and I can get some water all the guys who work out who went out there we're okay all right chapter 12 he's a sign of a woman who's going to give birth to a child this woman I think turns out to be Israel focused in Mary who gives birth to a child he sees the sign of a great red dragon who wants to kill the child when he's born and so the scene is the red dragon coming upon the woman as she's giving birth to the child here's the question when did the red dragon who is the devil try to kill

Jesus the person born of this woman when when was the first time he tried to kill him when Christmas Christmas chapter 12 is a Christmas Eve text Andrea's brother had the boldness to preach that last year that event the center of the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ takes place on Christmas so you can't ask what happens next you have to ask what did John see next keep this larger structure in mind be aware where you are what act you're in and then ask what did John see all right fast or faster fourth put on prologue glasses there's a prologue to this document one one to eight and just as John has a prologue to his gospel so he has a prologue to this apocalypse the prologue the gospel of

[36 : 17] John you probably know well in the beginning was the word the word was with God and the word was God and the word became flesh and dwelt among you read them correctly this is God the word now in our flesh and so also there's this prologue to the apocalypse and so what we want to do is keep those glasses on and read the book through the prologue now in the prologue John makes some amazing claims huge claims huge claims and as I've been working through this in the last few weeks I have just felt how audacious these claims feel in the postmodern world as you know I read the magazines and the newspapers every day the Bible and the newspaper all the day and so I keep up on how people put things can you imagine making the kinds of claims John does in the prologue in the back of the Globe and Mailer of Vancouver Sun we'd be in big trouble but these claims

John puts those claims out so just a couple of them that are in there coming he is coming it's going to be repeated in the epilogue most of the epilogue most of what's in the prologue is repeated in the epilogue he is coming I'm coming I'm coming I'm coming notice coming not I will come means he's in process of coming all the time and it turns out when to read this book rightly that the second coming of Jesus Christ is only the end of a series of his comings to the church and to the world he's coming all the time the time is near says John that's repeated in the epilogue also the time is near it's the same word used in Mark 1 15 when Mark says Jesus says the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God the

Jesus is always near as the kingdom is always near pressing in on the world things start to happen things get upset the status quo gets turned around it's because of the nearness of the Lord these things must happen John refers to Jesus as the faithful witness that's because he wants us to be a faithful witness and he's holding up Jesus as the faithful witness who bore witness to his father and to the word under great pressure from the dragon who came to him through the beast from the sea who is dragon manipulated political power Herod and Pilate and through the beast from the earth which is dragon manipulated religious power Caiaphas and Annas and Jesus stood under that great pressure and when we can see him standing under the pressure and being a faithful witness he and help us be faithful he is the first born from the dead he is the first one the only one the only one who would possibly be leader of the world who triumphed over death and he brings in his train all those who belong to him he is the ruler of the kings of the earth notice that in verse 5 ruler of the kings of the earth already first century 21st century you see this book is not about how

Jesus might become ruler of the earth he is the ruler of the earth right now and the book is about how he does that I know I know it doesn't always appear sometimes it appears that nobody is ruling the earth but appearances aren't all the reality I know you can't see the sun but it's there just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there and just because you don't believe in a sun doesn't mean it's not there the mountains are there I know you can't see them but they're there and you may not even believe in mountains it doesn't change the fact that mountains are there and I know we can't he deals with the root problem of the human predicament he deals with sin and delivers us from its bondage and its shame and guilt to help us live a new way he made us to be a kingdom priest to his

God he's a king has a kingdom he's a priest he's the great high priest and now he invites us to be included in his kingly and priestly work in fact the word that John uses that literally means he installed us into office we have been installed as a priestly kingdom in the world and this book is going to show us what that means how to be priests in the world just as we did as we blessed that guy that is you intercede and you bless bless bless bless bless and the book will work that out and then I am the alpha and the omega verse eight it's the Lord God who says that I'm the alpha and the omega but now watch this watch this stay with me on this one and there's I wish I had a black board white board the epilogue in the epilogue the almighty the father says I'm the alpha and the omega at the beginning of the vision Jesus says I'm the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end and then in the epilogue

[42 : 22] Jesus says I'm the alpha the omega the first and the last the beginning and the end all three of those phrases are in the mouth of Jesus it's the highest Christology you can imagine I am alpha and omega first and last beginning and end now the question is is he just saying those three things as parallel just repeating the same truth in the same way I'm alpha omega first and last beginning and end no he's not in each phrase he's expanding it I am the alpha and the omega the first and last of the Hebrew alphabet I and then he says oh wait a minute more than that I'm the first and the last of any sequence you can think of and more than that I'm the beginning of any sequence you can think of and I am the end of any sequence you can think of this word beginning is the word RK it means source it's the word architect or archetype he's the source of all things and this word end is telos which means goal or inherent destiny

Jesus Christ right there in this book claims to be the source the archetype of all of creation and he is the inherent destiny of everything in creation wow Jesus Christ is inescapable Henry Blasher says this delivers us from the horrible burden of having final responsibility for the world the final responsibility belongs to him who is the beginning and the end keep that in mind as you read and one more thing from the prologue verse five he loves us I've skipped over that over the years but boy has it come alive to me now he loves us and when you trace the word love through the rest of the apocalypse of Jesus Christ you discover that the last book of the

Bible is one long love anyone ever told you that the last book of the Bible is a love letter the dominant image of the church in this book is bride and the bridegroom puts on this play shows us this animated film to help us see where we are not loving him and to bring us back into this intimacy and passion and so that we will remain loyal to him under the pressure to compromise one more way to read the apocalypse of Jesus Christ you have to adopt an appropriate posture there's a posture for reading this book and it is worship John says I was in the spirit on the Lord's day on Sunday caught up in the spirit he was worshipping it's while he's worshipping that he experiences this apocalypse this breakthrough of

Jesus Christ to him and that tells me that that's the only way we can read this book in worship stories told of a sculptor who made a statue of Jesus Christ he tried to capture all the different dimensions of Jesus character his splendor his compassion his justice his mercy put this all together and people would come from far and wide and they would look at the statue from this angle and that angle and they consulted the man who sculpted it and he said there's only one angle from which to view this statue you must kneel it's the only way to read the last book of the Bible you must kneel before the person who's revealed in it