

Revelation Seminar - Session 1 @ Tenth

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[0 : 00] Well, thank you all for coming. Little did we know when we would announce this seminar that we have this many people. This is indication of how many people want to learn how to read this last book of the Bible.

Initially, it's a very obscure and bewildering document. Initially. Because the more time you spend in it, the less obscure and bewildering it becomes.

It's a document full of weird, even frightening imagery. It's a document filled with seemingly esoteric symbolism. We meet a man dressed in a long robe.

His eyes have a flame of fire. His face is shining like the sun and a sword comes out of his mouth.

We meet a great red dragon with ten horns and seven heads.

A beast that comes out of the sea with ten horns and seven heads. A beast that comes out of the earth with two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon.

[1 : 10] We meet creatures who are full of eyes in front and in back, who never cease saying, holy, holy, holy, holy. We meet four horsemen, three of whom bring disaster on the earth.

We have massive earthquakes. The sun becomes black as sackcloth. The moon becomes like blood. There are locusts as big as horses who are following human beings.

And on it goes. And we meet the central figure of the whole book, a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns. A little weird and strange.

So we have gathered here to understand how to read this document better. I'm going to read the first chapter. Some of you were here last Sunday when we preached on it, but I'd like to read it again.

Hopefully you brought Bibles or you have an app that you can access it. I'm going to be reading from the New American Standard version. I think most of you probably have the NIV.

[2 : 10] I'm going to read from the New American Standard simply because I know it best. Okay, so I'm going to be reading from that document, but I think you can follow along. I'll read it slow enough that all the versions come together.

And I want to read this chapter again because I think if we can understand this chapter, if we can come to appreciate what's going on in the first chapter, then the rest of the book is not as strange and bewildering.

After I preached last Sunday, I said to my wife Sharon, I really should do six sermons on Revelation 1. It is so full. And if we understood all the imagery and all the symbols of that one chapter alone, we would have a real good grasp on the rest of the book.

Okay, so even after the seminar today, if you're still really, really confused or just go back and read Revelation 1 over and over and over again until you really feel comfortable and then go on to the next ones.

So, Revelation 1. Hear the word of God. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his bondservants the things which must shortly take place.

[3 : 18] He sent and communicated by his angel to his bondservant John. I think John is the beloved disciple, one of the 12 disciples of Jesus who wrote the Gospel of John and the other three letters attributed to him.

To his bondservant John, who bore witness to the word of God, to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all that he saw. Blessed is the one 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. Why seven churches? I think these seven churches embody the issues that the church faces in every age.

And so if Jesus can address these seven churches, they're very different, they're struggling with different issues. If he can address each of them, in a way he's addressed the church in all the ages on the different issues and in different cities.

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. When you're reading the book of Revelation, keep those phrases in mind because there's at one point in the book when it's simply who is and who was.

[4 : 41] And no longer is to come. And from the seven spirits that are before his throne, does John believe there are seven holy spirits?

I don't think so. He's using this symbolically. Seven is the number of perfection. In Isaiah 11, it speaks of the spirit who comes upon Messiah.

And there you see sevenfold ministry of the spirit. I think this is John's way of saying, the Holy Spirit in all of his fullness and all of his completeness. So already now, we're introduced to the whole realm of symbolism and numbers.

Who is, from the seven spirits who are before his throne and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, that's important because the book is going to call us to be a faithful witness.

The firstborn of the dead, that's important because we are also then following from that, we are also born of the dead. And the ruler of the kings of the earth.

[5 : 47] Many times when we read past this, and even I did this last week when we were preaching on it, we go too fast. That's a huge statement. I think we tend to read that.

The firstborn of the dead, who one day will be ruler of the kings of the earth. Huh? No. In the moment that John wrote this, Jesus Christ is ruler of the kings of the earth.

And the rest of the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ is showing how Jesus Christ is ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us, and released us from our sins by his blood, praise be to his name, and has made us to be a kingdom, priest to his God and Father.

He's now given us our identity in the world. In relationship with Jesus Christ, we now constitute a new kingdom amidst all the kingdoms of the world. And our role is to be a priest in this kingdom, priest for the church and priest for the world.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold. Behold. Some of your versions don't have that in verse seven. How do some of the versions read in verse seven?

[7 : 02] Oh, good. Look. Was that NIV? Ah, good. Because this is one of the great commands of the book of Revelation. Look. And every time, by the way, this word behold occurs in the New Testament, it's always a surprise.

Behold. I didn't think about that. I never anticipated that. Behold. He is coming. Not, he will come. But he is coming. Even now.

He's in process of coming. With the clouds. And every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. Even so. Amen. I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty, the Pantocrator. I, John, your brother and fellow partaker of 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. That's an important verse to note because it says to me, anyway, that the experience John has on the island of Patmos is outside of himself.

[8 : 15] I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. If this was something that was going on just inside of his head, he wouldn't turn to see a voice.

So I'm going to suggest later, I'll explain what I think happened on the island of Patmos, but it was something outside of himself. It wasn't something he was just thinking and then writing about. Something objective actually happened outside of himself. I turned to see this voice that was speaking to me. No, that comes later.

Sorry. The voice then, like the sound of a trumpet, saying, write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches. And now, the order of the churches is the order the mailman would take around Asia Minor.

Literally, this is the way that you would follow on the map to take this letter to these seven churches. Go to Ephesus, then to Smyrna, then to Pergamum, then to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

[9 : 14] Laodicea is near Colossae. That's why at the end of Colossians, Paul says, have the letter that I've written to Colossae read in Laodicea and the letter I wrote to Laodicea read in Colossae. We don't have Paul's letter to the Laodiceans.

I wish we did. I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me and having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands. Again, not inside his head, but somehow this is out in front of him. In the middle of the lampstands, one like a son of man. As you might know, this word son of man is Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself in the Gospels. The word occurs 77 times in the New Testament.

Only twice, not on the lips of Jesus. The other two times are speaking about Jesus, the son of man, his favorite way of referring to himself. Son of man clothed in a robe reaching to his feet.

It's a priest robe girded across his breast with a golden girdle. His head means that he's at work. When you're working, you can take the belt off and just let the clothes hang loose.

[10 : 19] It's up here so that the robe is tucked in. He's ready to go to work. His head and hair were white like wool, like snow. His eyes like a flame of fire.

His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been caused to glow in a furnace. His voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars. Out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.

His face was like the sun shining in its strength. There's sometimes I go for a walk in early morning and look at the sun or late night and look at the sun when it's on the horizon. I go, how did John endure this?

To look at the face of Jesus shining so brightly. When I saw him I fell at his feet as a dead man. Duh. To have that kind of encounter with Jesus would be overwhelming but he laid his right hand on me.

That's a great picture of the fact. When Jesus Christ confronts us in all of his glory he does so out of his mercy because he wants to have this engagement with us. And so he puts his hand on John his right hand the one that holds the seven stars and says do not be afraid.

[11 : 24] That's the other great command of the book. This book the last book of the Bible is written to take away our fears. The goal of the book is by the time you get to the end of chapter 21 you are no longer afraid of anything.

I'm the first and the last until you stop reading the book and get afraid and have to read the book again. I am the first and the last and the living one I was dead but behold the other versions have look right?

Is there a look or behold in there? Yes? Yeah good good because see I'm doing that because some versions are now leaving those out. No don't you'll get there before me was no it's a command look I was dead look I'm alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades.

all week long I've been tempted to walk around like this you know Jesus has got the keys write therefore the things which you have seen the things which are I think he's referring to the things which are that he saw the things which shall take place after these things as for the mystery of the seven stars which 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.

Okay so we have gathered here then to try to understand how to read this. By the way I'm going to take a break about 10-20 or so and so we'll go for an hour and 20 and an hour and 20 something like that.

[13 : 02] So what I'd like to do is do our session in two parts. I'm going to give you ten principles that I think can guide our reading our interpreting our teaching of the last book of the Bible.

I'm going to give you ten principles and they're on that sheet of paper. There are probably more but these are the ones that I want to work on and then I want to have a time for question and answer around these principles or any other issues that you have about the last book of the Bible.

I have written a book on the Revelation. I'm not trying to sell the book and bringing it up. That's not my motive but I want to let you know that I do have a book. It's entitled Discipleship on the Edge. I had wanted to entitle it Things Are Not As They Seem but the publisher thought that was a little too new agey.

So I said well how about if it's Things Are Not Just As They Seem and have the word just sideways and it's still a little too agey. So I had to come up with a new title. I wish that I kept that title. More people would have picked it off the shelf.

Discipleship on the Edge oh what's that about? So what I want to do the material I'm giving you I had one I put in the book but it was thought it was too technical and I wished I had put it in the book because I get letters emails from all over the world people wanting to know a little more about this technical stuff.

[14 : 23] So Discipleship on the Edge why did I give it that title? Now I'm going to step away from the notes and I'm going to walk through what's on the board so even if you can't see it I'll explain it to you.

This is very important not only for understanding this title of the book but for understanding the whole of the New Testament. Okay? I should have put this on the notes for you I'd only decided yesterday that I would do this.

Okay, let me walk this through and then when I finish putting this diagram if you can't see something we'll take a moment and I'll fill it in for you. If you want this in more detail I'm not selling another book but I have a book on the Beatitudes and in the first chapter actually I try to walk this through.

Okay, this is really critical not only for understanding the last book of the Bible but the whole New Testament. So what you see in the straight lines the black straight lines is a history.

A history line starts with creation in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth. Okay? Made the heavens and the earth. These words always go together in the Bible which means you can't understand the earth unless you understand heaven.

[15 : 37] Eliminate the heavenly dimension of understanding we don't understand what's going on earth. In the beginning God creates the heavens and the earth and it's good. Tov meod it's very good, right? Then there is this fall.

I should have drawn a sad face there. We disobey God and the whole thing collapses and we know what the fall is all about. We're living that fall, right? Things just don't work the way they were put together originally.

So I drew this down there's this fall. It's a big collapse. So now we're living on a line that we weren't intended to live on. We're living at a lower level of existence. But God doesn't leave us there.

There's grace. Right from the beginning God begins the whole salvation history project. He begins to save the world right from the beginning. Genesis 3.15 is called the proto-gospel when God says to Eve that a seed of hers will one day come and crush the head of the serpent.

And the implication being things will get put back together again. So salvation history begins to unfold. You have Abraham and Sarah God's call on this couple through whom he will bless the whole world.

[16 : 43] You have Joseph. You have the Exodus when God brings the people of Israel out of Egypt. You have all of these things. You have King David, Solomon, all the kings. And then you have the prophets who long for the great and terrible day of the Lord.

So in the Old Testament mind history is going to move is moving directly to this great day of the Lord. On the day of the Lord we will move into back up to where we were intended to be.

Actually if you have eyes you can see I drew it higher because the new heavens and the new earth actually turns out to be better than the old heaven and the old earth even before sin. So after the day of the Lord on the day of the Lord God will intervene radically in human history and three great things will happen.

The new creation will come, a new heaven and a new earth. The kingdom of God will come now in all of its fullness and the Holy Spirit will come and dwell in and among human beings.

So when you read the prophets they're all looking for that great and terrible day of the Lord. That make sense? That's the basic scheme of a biblical understanding of history.

[17 : 53] Now, here's the radical thing. Jesus of Nazareth comes along and Jesus' gospel is in Mark 1 15. Jesus' very first sermon takes about eight seconds to preach.

The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has come near. There it is. Jesus says that in him and because of him now the things which were thought to only take place after the day of the Lord are now beginning to happen in him.

That's why there's forgiveness of sins. That's why there's healing. That's why there's the Holy Spirit. That's why he talks about the kingdom of God all the time. And that's why Paul says when anyone then comes to know Jesus Christ there is a new creation.

So, biblical scholars then, using this diagram will say that the gospel of Jesus Christ is twofold. It is temporal in that what was thought to only be in the future is now spilling over into the present. The cross here refers to everything about Jesus, his birth, death, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension. In Jesus Christ what was thought to only be future is now spilling into the present and the life of heaven spatially now is breaking into earth.

[19 : 23] So, at the heart of Jesus' prayer the Lord's prayer that he teaches us to pray is on earth as it is in heaven. The time is fulfilled the kingdom of God has come near.

On the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit comes Peter stands up and says this is that what the prophet Joel talked about. So, the New Testament writers see this great moment that in Christ all of this is happening.

Does this make sense? This was worth the price of admission. If you keep this diagram in mind then you'll understand all the documents of the New Testament.

This is where the writers are coming from. There is still the day of the Lord. There is still that day when God intervenes radically so. But now we are in fact beginning to taste the future and taste heaven on earth right now.

Okay? Now people will then say I'm going to get another color if you don't mind here. Let's see. That looks like a nice color for Saturday. You've got this age and the age to come so between the coming of Jesus and the first coming of Jesus and his second coming we are now living in the last days.

[20 : 40] or the overlap of the ages as they put it. We're still in this age we're beginning to experience we're beginning to experience if you know the book of Hebrews this is really important for the Hebrews writer those who taste the age to come we're tasting it now right?

You've tasted it right? It's good isn't it? That's why you want Jesus to come you can bring more of it. So from that time until he comes we're living in the last days.

Over my years of ministry people say to me pastor do you think we're living in the last days? Yes I do and we have been for a long time. That's what it means to be a disciple of Jesus you're living in those last days.

Okay now all of that was on to explain the title of the book discipleship on the edge. On the edge of what?

Three things. on the edge of this final in breaking John believes that he is living in a time when that final day could come any day.

[21 : 51] I believe that too. Jesus Christ could finish. We may not have worship service here tomorrow morning. He can come anytime.

So the book of Revelation is written to help us understand what does it mean to live on this edge? If you're alive in the anticipation that Jesus Christ is going to come what does that look like?

And the book is intended to give us a picture. Second nuance is throughout these last days this kingdom is breaking into our lives in all kinds of different ways and coming up against things that are not of the kingdom of God.

You've experienced that many times. As you begin to walk with Jesus Christ now there's values there's priorities there's issues at work there's issues in your family that you can no longer abide and now you're in a tension and now you are on an edge.

So what does discipleship look like when you're in tension in a tension with non kingdom reality? Does that make sense? That's where we live. And then the third nuance I can't draw is that the book of Revelation in chapter one we read it already out of his mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword.

[23 : 10] In chapter 19 which is the closing picture of him he is on a horse and he has a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth which is to say the book is bracketed by Jesus Christ with this sword in his mouth.

Not a very appealing image. The sword is not a long fencer sword you know those long pointed swords that fencers use when they're fencing.

The sword is a short sword it's very sharp it's used for close battle. So the picture here is that through this book Jesus Christ is coming up right in our face with this sword and he's going to start digging in us.

He's going to start changing our thinking he's going to change our values he's going to change the way we understand ourselves he's going to change the way we understand history he's going to

change the way we understand him it's a wonderful sword it's very sharp which means it doesn't hurt that bad when it goes in it's not serrated it's not like that doctors you can tell us nurses right there's those those those scapples they're so pick and sharp they just and it doesn't hurt until a little bit later so that's the picture all right of discipleship on the edge now one more thing before we start the principles revelation one nine if you can understand that you can understand a lot of the book I John your brother then fellow partaker of three things tribulation kingdom perseverance that are in Jesus right there John is giving the pastoral reason for this book he's telling us that to be in Jesus is to be in Jesus kingdom that makes sense right but to be in Jesus kingdom is to be in tribulation don't worry it also means to be in perseverance so to be in Jesus is to now be in his kingdom would you agree with that beginning to participate in his kingdom his kingdom is now going to press up against everything that is not of his kingdom that means you're going to be in tribulation the word tribulation is the word flips I'll show it to you later in the notes flips flips refers to when you take your hands and you rub them together if you do that even now you notice how hot it's getting that's flips another analogy for flips is tectonic plates beneath the earth's surface they're always moving ever so slightly once in a while they butt up against each other and you've got an earthquake sometimes they part from each other and you've got a volcano so when those tectonic plates come up against each other that's a flips to be in

[26 : 30] Jesus is to be in tribulation so people will ask me are we in the last days yes when will we experience tribulation now you're experiencing it and some parts of the church of Jesus Christ now are experiencing it in horrific ways the Christians in Pakistan that's tribulation it's happening all over the world all the time and it's been happening all the time that's what John's telling us right from the beginning to be in Jesus is to be in his kingdom it means you're going to be in trouble don't worry to be in Jesus is to have perseverance you're going to make it he's going to bring you through okay well that's it that's all you need to know no no okay so that that's a setup of of how the thing works and why

I picked the title I did all right I'm going to keep going just to keep us alive on this morning why don't you turn to somebody and just tell them the best thing you've heard in the last few minutes what's the best thing you've heard okay cover hey Okay, thank you.

All right. Now you can take out that stack of papers and we'll start making our way through. A couple of quotes to get us started.

You might know the name G.K. Chesterton, contemporary C.S. Lewis, really funny guy. In his book on orthodoxy, he wrote, and though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his commentators.

Some people do some strange things with the last book of the Bible. And I think John would go, Oy vey, I never meant that. Then Richard Baucum, who is a great New Testament scholar, those of you who want to study this in greater depth would want to buy his book, The Theology of Revelations, about 98 pages, writes this.

[29 : 17] The Apocalypse of John is a work of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry, remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique, and profound theology.

I did type that out for you, didn't I? Yeah, it's right there. It's amazing. That's what you read. It's an amazing document. Okay, here are the ten principles.

Number one, we must honor the genre, or genres, that's the plural, in which the book is written. Genre.

It means literary type. There are many different types of literature, right? You've got newspaper, you've got novels, you have poetry, you have chemistry text, you have theological tomes, you've got all these different genres, right?

And you read each of these genres differently. You don't read poetry the way you read a newspaper. You don't read a newspaper the way you would read the Bible.

[30 : 31] Each of those genres are read in different ways. And a lot of the confusion in many books of the Bible is we don't honor the genre in which it's written.

Each genre has ways of reading. Does that make sense? You could have the newspaper describe the horror of soldiers in Syria going into Palamira, that city that ISIS tried to destroy.

And you could have the newspaper writer write that story. And as we were going in the jeeps, the soldiers were just increasingly dismayed as they saw the destruction that was brought to all of this city.

That would be a newspaper way of saying it. Or you could write it in a more of a metaphorical way. How would I do it? As we were moving along the dark road and into the land of death, we were overcome by the echoes of the demons that had wrecked their havoc.

Not bad. I mean, that, right? I mean, I mean... And then you could do it in poetry form, right?

[32 : 00] Ah, cursed day. Anyway. But you have to then read... You have to interpret those each on their terms. Now, this is where the word reading the Bible literally comes into play.

There's a way of reading literally for each of those genre. I think much of the confusion about the book of Revelation is people are reading it as though it were a newspaper. It's not a newspaper. It's not a history text. It's something else. And you have to read it on its own terms. That's what I mean by then. Honoring the genre. Or plural genres.

The book is written in three genres. That's what makes it a little more challenging. It is a letter. It's the longest letter in the New Testament. It's a pastoral letter.

We refer to Paul's letters. Well, at least to Timothy and Titus as pastoral letters. Well, all the letters are pastoral, but so is the last book of the Bible.

[33 : 04] It's a letter. There are many implications of that. The biggest one being, see if you would agree with this, is because this is a letter from a pastor to his people, this document will have implications for them when they receive it.

What good would it be for John to send a letter that's all about 2017? People would go read it and go, oh, that's a lot of help.

They didn't even think we'd get to 2017 for one thing. It speaks to their time. So, any interpretation of this document will have made sense to people in the first century.

It would have spoken to their context. Now, it turns out it also speaks to the second century and the third and the fourth and the fifth and the 20th and the 21st because, secondly, it's a prophecy.

Six times he'll refer to it as a prophecy. Now, prophecy has a double nature to it. Prophecy is, first of all, forth telling.

[34 : 16] F-O-R-T-H, forth telling and then foretelling, F-O-R-E, telling. It's both of those. When the prophets of the Old Testament spoke, they believed they were speaking to their own time.

Thus says the Lord about today. It turns out they were also speaking beyond their time. Sometimes they're aware of that. Sometimes they're aware that there's a coming king and it's future.

So the message of prophecy is going to be both to that time and in the province of the Holy Spirit it's going to be beyond that time. And then it's apocalypse.

That's the major genre of the apocalypse. If you were here last Sunday, I tried to describe what apocalypse is. I mean, apocalypse is simply unveiling, opening up.

And people of the first century would be glad to have an apocalypse. In our century, you know, it's all this stuff. The apocalypse, all this fire on Time Magazine.

[35 : 18] Or in the Vancouver Sun a couple of years ago, this is the volcano that goes off in the Philippines and it's called Apocalypse Now. Wrong use of the word.

It is. I don't mean to be critical. I know why they're doing that. But the first century would have never used the word when they saw this. They wouldn't say apocalypse about this volcano. They'd say, oh, that's awful.

Or that's cataclysmic. Or this is really catastrophic but not apocalyptic. Because apocalyptic is about opening up a reality that we ordinarily don't see.

So you take a box, lift up the cover, and you see what you couldn't see if the cover hadn't been lifted. You open a door to see what's inside that door, inside that room when the door's closed.

The best analogy is the pulling back of a curtain. And the whole idea then of the book of Revelation is that reality is bigger than we know. That there is, if you will, a curtain around us that separates the reality that we can measure and see and touch and feel and drink from this other reality that is bigger than this.

[36 : 32] There is this veil of hiddenness, as I call it. It's very thin. It's very permeable. But once in a while, God in his goodness will pull back that curtain and allow us to see what is actually going on around us.

The best analogy of that, you might remember, is the prophet Elisha. He's out in that city, his servant in here and there, and they see all these horses and soldiers and chariots of the enemy coming against them.

Things they could see with their glasses. And Elisha says, don't be afraid. There's more going on than you know. And then he asks the Lord to open up the servant's eyes and that's when he sees all these chariots of fire on the mountains.

That's an apocalypse. And so that's what this document is doing. Helping us see what is really going on. And this is how to pray for our leaders in the world today.

To help them see what is really going on. It can't be measured only in economic and political terms. There is something bigger going on. Alright?

[37 : 40] So, the purpose of apocalyptic literature is, now twofold, to set the present moment with all of its ambiguity in light of the unseen realities of the future.

Jesus is coming, bringing all this with him, and if you can just get a picture of that future for just a moment, it will change the way you see the world today. So, Revelation is going to give us that, the last two chapters.

We're going to see this great new heaven and new earth, this amazing city that we city builders have always wanted to build. And if you can just get a glimpse of what God's city looks like, it changes the way you see the city of man.

And it gives you hope. So, set the present moment in light of the unseen realities of the future, but set the present moment in all of its ambiguity in light of the unseen realities of the present.

Things are not just as they seem. There's more going on and the book is doing that. That's the purpose of Apocalyptic. Does that make sense? Okay. So, the genres of the book, that's what it's doing.

[38 : 46] Okay. Second, we must honor the title of the book. The title is The Revelation of Jesus Christ, because those are the first three words. In Greek, it's Apocalypse of Jesus Christ.

The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. And we need to regularly say that whole title. If you were here last week, you saw I emphasized that. I think that keeps you going.

So, when you're stuck or there's this conflict about interpretation of a passage, just go back to the title. Somehow, this part of the book is telling me something about Jesus Christ.

Stay with it until you see what it's saying about Jesus Christ. And all the other pieces will fall into place. So, the title is The Revelation of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ.

It's the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ, about Jesus Christ. Which says to me that any interpretation and teaching on this book that makes me preoccupied with something other than Jesus Christ is off the mark.

[39 : 48] If at the end of the book I'm preoccupied with the movements of troops in the Middle East or I'm preoccupied with something else, I've missed the whole point of the book. By the end of the book I am so preoccupied with Jesus Christ it changes everything.

That's the implication of the title. All right. Now we're going to dig deeper. And I've tried to word these as carefully as I can. Are you okay to keep going for a little while?

Right? I've still got time, but... All right. Number three. This was... I'm going to give you a couple of revolutionary things that helped me. Number one.

Three. In the book, in the book we are not given any new truth. That might be a startling statement. What we are given is the truth already revealed in a new way.

Eugene Peterson, you know that name, he's the author of the message. He wrote a book on Revelation called Reverse Thunder. And he says in that book, I do not read the Revelation to get additional information about the life of faith in Christ.

[40 : 54] I have read it all before. In law and prophet, in gospel and epistle. Everything in the Revelation can be found in the previous 65 books of the Bible.

Hmm. Really? The Revelation adds nothing of substance to what we already know. The truth of the gospel is already complete, revealed in Jesus Christ.

There's nothing new to say on the subject, but there is a new way to say it. I read the Revelation not to get more information, but to revive my imagination.

St. John uses words the way poets do, recombining them in fresh ways so that old truth is freshly perceived. He takes the truth that has been eroded to platitude by endless usage and sets it in motion before an animated, impassioned dance of ideas.

So I'm not going to learn anything that I haven't learned in the rest of the Bible, but I'm going to learn it in a new way so that it has deeper impact on me.

[41 : 59] So, the implications of this, a rule of thumb. Any truth discovered in the last book of the Bible will have already been revealed elsewhere in Scripture.

If not, somewhere else, it's likely not the truth. Jesus says in Matthew 24, 25, his great discourse on his last coming, behold, I have told you everything in advance.

I've told you all you need to know. So, if I discover something really new, I've got to make sure that new is somewhere else in the Bible.

The new way, 3.2, is the way of imagery. Now, why imagery? Because imagery goes beyond the intellect, through the emotions, and into the imagination.

That's where we live. Am I right? We live in our imaginations. Some of us are more intellectually oriented, some of us are more emotionally oriented, some of us are more imaginary oriented, but all of us live in our imaginations.

[43 : 23] That's why the advertising industry does what it does. Those of you in the advertising industry, can tell us you know that. An ad is going beyond the intellect, clearly a lot of the ads are just ignoring the intellect, through the emotions, to the imagination, because then the imagination will go back the other way.

The imagination will now inform the emotions, and inform the intellect. So, if you can get to the imagination, you're going to get to the emotions and the intellect.

And that's what all this imagery is about. It's getting us past just thinking and feeling to the imagination, so our feeling and thinking is changed. A way of looking at this imagery is with a political cartoon.

In the book, I have a bunch of cartoons. I thought I brought one along with me today. I'll find it later. The biggest one that I liked, it was in the Los Angeles Times.

It's a picture of this great city with its apartment towers, and there's a body of water in front of it, and then there's this huge dragon, and its mouth is open.

[44 : 47] The city is halfway into the dragon's mouth. the dragon's forked tongue is coming out, and it's like this. What is this cartoon saying? There's some city in the world on that day that is being threatened and going to be swallowed up.

What if I told you that day was July 1st, 1997? Is it 8, 7? What day is that?

What year is it? 97, yeah. That was in the Los Angeles Times on July 1st, 1997. What was the Los Angeles Times saying? Hong Kong, that's the day the British Empire hands Hong Kong over to the People's Republic of China.

Now, had you flown into Hong Kong that day, that was when the old airport was there, before the new airport? Any of you flown into the old airport? That was frightening. You come right into Hong Kong, you see all those buildings and you wonder if the plane is going to get to the landing.

If you'd flown in that day and then come across that water, would you have seen a dragon? No. When you got in the airport, would you have seen a dragon?

[46 : 06] No. No. No. But you would have felt one. So that's the power of a political cartoon. It's the power then of apocalyptic literature.

The imagery is communicating in the imagery something that you already know to be true, but now you're going to feel it and now it's going to get your imagination and you're going to now feel it differently and think it differently.

Does that make sense? Okay. What's the source of John's imagery? Where did he get these cartoons, if you will? Well, partly from Roman propaganda.

In Revelation 4, for instance, you have these great hymns that are sung to Jesus Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory, dominion forever and ever.

Worthy is the Lamb to receive power because he was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing. All those phrases. Has that ever troubled you why he's heaping up those phrases there?

[47 : 10] What he's doing there is he's stealing that from the political world. When the Roman Caesar went into the Roman Senate, everyone was to stand up and they were to say to him, worthy are you to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

John takes that and steals it or actually Jesus does. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Caesar is not worthy. There's no Caesar alive.

Worthy of all that. There's only one who's worthy. So political propaganda, folk religion, works a lot with the folk religion. The seven stars in his hand, Hecata in the mythology holds the seven stars

and the seven stars are the planets.

And so Jesus through John is then using that, stealing the mythology of the time and showing how Jesus Christ actually fulfills the myths. But most of the imagery comes from the Bible.

I'm quoting here G.K. Beale. Are you following me okay on the notes? There is general acknowledgement that the apocalypse contains more Old Testament references than any New Testament book.

[48 : 24] Although past attempts to tally the total amount have varied, 394, 653, 493, 455, etc. Because of the different criteria employed to determine the validity of an Old Testament reference and the inclusion of some authors of echoes and parallels of very general nature.

I think the 394 references as I've looked at it. Point being that John is describing what was given to him now because he's been steeped in the Old Testament.

And all this imagery, most of this imagery is shaped by all of that. This would say to me actually that I really can't understand the last book of the Bible until I've been soaked in the other 65 books of the Bible.

That will help me understand. And I've listed there a number of places that are quoted. Look at them all. From the Pentateuch, especially Exodus, Judges 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Psalms, especially Psalm 2, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Job, Hosea, Joel, on and on it goes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, especially Ezekiel and especially Daniel.

So there are many times you're looking and you're trying, what does this mean? What is John trying to get me to see? And you stay there and you think about it. Now you can do this with your Google search.

[49 : 49] Google the words, Google the phrases John's using and it'll take you to some Old Testament reference that will help you understand what he's talking about. All right?

So I'm gonna keep going and I could show you lots on there. So a principle, which I just said, look for an Old Testament reference first. John is describing his Patmos experience through the lenses of the great story.

we will better understand what John is trying to get at when we try to understand it then through the lens of the gospel. Let me read this from Richard Baucom.

We have already noticed the unusual profusion of visual imagery in Revelation and its capacity to create a symbolic world which its readers can enter and thereby have their perception of the world in which they live transformed.

To appreciate the importance of this, we should remember that Revelation's readers in the great cities of the province of Asia were constantly confronted with powerful images of the Roman vision of the world.

[50 : 54] Civic and religious architecture, iconography, statues, rituals and festivals, even visual wonder of cleverly engineered miracles in the temples all provided visual impressions of Roman imperial power and the splendor of pagan religion.

In this context, Revelation provides a set of Christian prophetic counter images which impress on its readers, impress is the key word. This literature is used to get you to feel it, impress on its readers a different vision of the world, how it looks from heaven to which John is caught up in chapter 4.

The visual power of the book affects a kind of purging of the Christian imagination, refurbishing it with alternative visions of how the world is and will be.

John's images echo and play on the facts and fears, the hopes and imaginings, the myths of his contemporaries in order to transmute them into elements of his own Christian prophetic meaning. Now, if you want to get a better sense of that, I think I bolded. In the great cities of the province of Asia, constantly confronted with powerful images. Did I bold that in your notes?

[52 : 05] Right in the middle. Okay, here's how you can get what he's saying. Readers in the great cities of the provinces of Canada were constantly confronted with powerful images of the American vision of the world.

Now you know what he's saying. You can't go anywhere in the world without being impressed on by an American vision of the world. I'm not putting American vision down. Just saying.

Right? It's everywhere. Well, that's where the first disciples lived. Everywhere there's, Rome's vision of how we're supposed to be human. Rome's telling you your identity.

Rome's telling you how you're supposed to live. And this book then is coming in and taking those images of the Roman vision and transmuting them, changing them, refurbishing them, and giving

you a vision of how the world is in relationship to Jesus Christ.

It's very powerful. All right. Keep going? All right? Four. This is harder for me to say, to articulate.

[53 : 10] Let me try. This is where it gets tricky. John is describing the symbols of the revelation or apocalypse, not the reality the symbols symbolize.

I get that from a man named Bruce Metzger, a fine New Testament scholar in a really good book called Breaking the Code. If you want another small book, this is really, really good.

Breaking the Code, Bruce Metzger of Princeton University and Seminary. John is describing the symbols, not the reality symbolized.

The descriptions are descriptions of the symbols, not the reality conveyed by the symbols. Okay. See if I can help you understand that.

What happened on Patmos? I'm going to venture out after all these years of wrestling with this, and I'm still trying to find a way to articulate that. He was in on Patmos, a prison island, on the Lord's Day.

[54 : 17] I heard a voice behind me. I turned to see the voice. Something happens outside of him. I think what it is, is Jesus puts on a play, a drama.

Later on, I'll show you. It's in five acts. How he did that, I don't know. Now, given technology in our time, we know that it's possible for someone to have a device to project right here in space some images.

Holographic technology, whatever. We can do that. Right? I'm going to suggest Jesus, who is pretty good at things, was able to do that for John.

And Jesus puts on this drama with these cartoons. I can't come up with a better word. These images. Puts it on for John.

John, very faithfully, tells us what he saw. But he's not telling us what it means. Just what he saw. Now, to illustrate that, in Revelation chapter 5, verse 6, we discover the lamb who's on the throne.

[55 : 43] I think that's the central affirmation of the whole book. The lamb is on the throne. Who is this lamb? Jesus. He has seven eyes and seven horns.

I mean, think of that. Seven eyes. Yuck. And seven horns. Yuck. Now, Jesus Christ is presently hidden from us behind the curtain.

Right? If he were to poke his head out to us right now, would you see a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns? I hope not.

No, we would not. When Jesus Christ steps behind that curtain, we are going to see this glorified human being. What John saw is the way Jesus chose to present himself that day.

As a lamb with seven eyes and seven horns. And John has faithfully recorded this, not this. So he's describing the symbols, not the reality symbolized.

[56 : 54] What do the symbols mean? Well, a lamb, as it's slain, he's the sacrificial savior of the world. Seven eyes. Eyes are the picture of wisdom.

He's got seven of them. He's immensely wise. Horns are the image of strength. He's got seven of them. He's immensely strong. This little lamb, it's a little lamb, John says.

Mary's little lamb. You're listening. You're good. You're good. He's a, this little lamb is immensely wise and immensely strong.

He beats the lion. Okay. So let's get some examples. That's one example. Another example is in chapter 12, verse 14.

John speaks of an eagle with two wings. And this eagle with two wings is carrying this woman and her child. I'll come back to that later about who the woman and child is.

[58 : 03] I think it's a picture of Israel, picture of the church under persecution, going into the wilderness for safety. And this eagle is carrying the people of God into this place in the wilderness.

That's the picture. John says he saw an eagle with two wings. That's what he saw. That's what he saw. And that's all he's telling us.

Now, this is where some people make the mistake. There's one commentator who then says, well, what John saw, he didn't quite understand at the time.

What he saw was a United States Air Force B-52 bomber. But he didn't know how to describe it, so he said it was an eagle with two wings.

No. No. No. No. What he saw was an eagle with two wings. Now, if we go back to our rule of interpreting this in light of the Old Testament, does anybody know where we have a picture of an eagle with two wings and people being carried by it?

[59 : 11] In the book of Exodus, God says, I carried you on eagle's wings. Literally so?

No. But he carried them. And the picture then of this woman going into the wilderness is a picture out of Exodus. As God took his people safely through the desert into the promised land, so he's going to take the disciples of Jesus safely through this tribulation into the new heavens and the new earth.

Are you seeing? So John is describing the symbolism, not the reality. The reality you get from the other 65 books of the Bible.

Okay. Number five, and I think I'll lead up to that and we'll take a break.

Number five, the word open is the key to the structure of the book. I mean, that makes sense. If apocalypse means to lift the cover, open the curtain, open the door, then open would be key to the book.

[60 : 21] We find the word open four times and I think those four times divide the book into five sections. 4.1, after these things I looked and behold, look, a door open in heaven.

1911, and the temple of God which is in heaven was opened. Going deeper. 15.5, after these things I looked and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, going even deeper. And then 1911, I saw heaven opened. Now all of these are the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to his first disciples.

Nathaniel comes to Jesus and Jesus says to Nathaniel, behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile. Nathaniel says, how did you know me? Jesus says, well I saw you under the fig tree.

And Nathaniel says, you are the king of Israel. You're the one. And Jesus says to him, because I said I saw you under the fig tree, you believe me? You will see greater things than this.

[61 : 33] You will see the heavens opened. And I think Jesus is now fulfilling that promise to John, to us, to Nathaniel, to all of his disciples by opening it up.

And so, that gives us then five great sections. I think on the back, I have for you a chiastic structure. I'll come back to that in a moment. It's on the last sheet.

You can see there, I think there are seven sections to the book. So, you have 1-9, 4-1, 11-19, 15-5, 19-11, you see that?

So, these here, these are the five sections. I'm going to show you something else. And I'll show you that right now, actually. You have those other two pieces of paper.

They're intended to be taped together like this. Oops. We just didn't have time to do that. I didn't want to put Ryan to that kind of work.

[62 : 33] So, here you have then, the whole of the book of Revelation, built around this word, open. See, that's how you put it together. I call it Windows 96.

Because I think it was given in 96 AD. So, Windows 96, and there are five windows.

You put your mouse on 1-9, and it opens up the scene of the Son of Man standing among the seven golden lamp stands, and then he dictates seven messages.

It closes. I think what happened there was, screen's gone. Whoop. Put the mouse on 4-1, and a whole new section opens up.

We're brought into the heavenly worship. Discover that Jesus Christ sits on the throne. He has the scroll of history, and he begins to open the scroll. That's all that's going on.

[63 : 40] He's opening the scroll of history. Closes. Third window. Put your icon on 11-19. And now, there's a very different section of the book, bracketed by the word sign.

I saw these signs. Then that closes. And then you put your mouse on 15-5, and that opens up a whole new section.

And now you've got the bulls, and you've got the judgment, leading up to the judgment of Babylon. And then you put your cursor on 1911, and it opens up the final window when Jesus Christ rides that horse as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and you see the descent of the new heaven and the new earth.

That's how the book's put together. Pretty cool. Now, when you're reading it, you want to know what window you're in. Now, there are many, I'm not good at this.

I was going to say mini windows. I guess it's apps. So, you know, there's seven messages. There are seven seals. There are seven trumpets, seven bowls. There's one, by the way.

[64 : 54] It's on, where is it? If you put your cursor at 10-4, there were seven peals of thunder. And it does not matter how long you keep putting your mouse on that, it won't open.

There were seven seals. There were seven trumpets. And then there's seven peals of thunder. John is anticipating to hear that. And Jesus says, nope, nobody gets to know those. Now, what's interesting is the number of commentaries that will try to figure out what was there. Jesus said nobody's going to know. So just quit it. It doesn't matter how much you put your mouse on that icon. It is not going to open. That window is stuck. Okay? Is that helpful? So that I saw just as a function of paying attention to the word open. Something now new is open. Then this is open. Then this is open. Then this is open. So when you're reading, just know where you are, which window you're in. And it'll help not be so confused. All right. I think we'll take a break here. [65 : 59] I see 10-15. What if we took a 15-minute break? Is that long enough to get a coffee? Everybody? Help each other get coffee. And until 10-30, we'll start back in.