

Revelation Overview Part 2

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[0:00] We should love all of God's Word, right? But look, we are doing things a little bit differently! than we would normally do things. Like, we would normally go through, we'd open a book of the Bible and we would start in the beginning of the book, work our way through to the end of the book.

Because, like, that's just how letters are normally read, right? And we are going to do that when we do Revelation, but not for at least two or three weeks, okay? And so what I don't want to do is turn this morning into a lecture, just really conscious of that. You're going to need your Bibles and you're going to need to start bringing your Bibles. Like, you need to check out what I'm saying is true. And the way to do that is to look into the Bible, all right? So that's my apology.

It's just, you know, we're not doing verse by verse. We're going to be jumping around a little bit. There are Bibles on the back table. If you would like one, someone's coming around with them. I'm looking at Steve anxiously. He's got it. He's on it. So if you'd like a Bible, just raise your hand where you are. We'll make sure we get you one. I am incredibly excited to be in this book and I feel excited and nervous in equal measure. And some people have asked, you know, if we're doing Revelation because of all the stuff that's going on in the world, the short answer is no. All right.

The longer answer is that we're going to look at it, the answer to that question probably over the next three weeks. And I hope some of it today. So what we're going to do is this morning, we're going to look at part one overview. In two weeks time, we're going to look at part two overview.

And then just depending on how we go, we may have a part three overview. All right. If not, we'll then be in in Revelation chapter one. Does that make sense? So I want to just start off with an introduction into this book. And if you've been in church any amount of time, you will have, you will recognize some of the approaches to studying this book that I'm about to outline for us.

[2:15] All right. So there's, there's, there's generally ways to respond to this, this book. And one of the ways is just apathy. Like some Christians simply just have no interest in it. They're like, you know, God wins. I know that much. And that should be an amen. And so then what's the point?

That probably shouldn't be an amen, but you know, God wins, right? So God wins. What's the point? Like I need help just getting through this week. Right. Have you been there? So, um, some people are just kind of apathetic to it for whatever, uh, reason. Some people are actually afraid of it.

Some people have fear approaching this book. It's a little bit like walking into places where angels fear to tread. Right. And so, you know, if, um, I don't know whether you've gone through Revelation, but you're kind of like, you know, you look at it and you go, okay, it starts off fairly easy.

And then you get to like chapter six and you're like, oh my days. And you never come back to it. Cause you're like, that just sounds, uh, scary. Uh, we are afraid that we don't understand it. We're afraid of some of the language. We're afraid of some of the symbols. We're afraid of some of the pictures, afraid of some of the monsters. There's monsters in this book. Are afraid of some of the judgments. And then, so what do we do? Well, I'll tell you what we do. Um, because we're, uh, tech savvy and we want to know the answer. We go onto Google and we see if Google has the answers. And then all of a sudden that justifies our fears because then we meet lizard overlords and discover that the moon landings were fake and the earth is flat. And then we close the book as quick as we can. Right. So we've, there, there is, there is fear approaching this book. Also, sometimes we marginalize this book and this has been, um, a fairly true thing to say about, uh, a lot of church history. Um, that, um, the, the, the, the, one of the main views actually of the church for many years. So for example, you know, um, a guy called Martin Luther, who some of you will recognize that name, not Martin Luther King. It's a different Martin Luther, uh, Martin Luther, who, you know, pretty much started the, the reformation. Um, he claimed that the book was unedifying for the ordinary believer. Right. Um, and of course, you know, um, churches like the Eastern Orthodox church will never read is this part of their thing. They will never read from the book of revelation in public. Um, and so it's kind of marginalized to the kind of degree of like, you know, the, the apocryphal books, like, you know, the book of Barnabas or the letter of

Jeremiah, which none of you would have heard of, I suspect, but, um, you know, it's one of those books. Um, then there's others of course, who avoid the book just completely, uh, make no apology for avoiding it. Um, and, uh, uh, mainly because look, uh, it's hard work and I want to be the first to say that, uh, we're going to go to school during this book. All right. Um, some of it's going to be hard, but that's not a reason to avoid it. All right. Um, it's, it's hard, it's hard work actually for people who don't know their Bible, right? What do I, what do I mean? Well, this is what I mean.

[5 : 25] Think of it in this way, the ESV version Bible, which is the version that we, you know, we kind of, we use at this church, um, there's some other, um, translations around too. There's, there's, um, 404 verses in revelation and 500 stories or allusions or quotes from the old Testament.

Like that's a lot, isn't it? You've got to know your old Testament for this to make sense. You've also got to know the most difficult books in the old Testament because most of those quotations, symbols, pictures, allusions come from Psalms, Isaiah, our favorite book, Ezekiel and Daniel, right? So if we don't know those four books, we're gonna have a hard time understanding this book. The most quoted, um, book, uh, is Daniel and Daniel chapter seven, arguably, can I say this? The strangest book in the whole Bible. Okay. So it is, it is hard work. In addition to that, you, you don't get very far in, and I'm going to demonstrate this for you now. We don't get very far in this book without encountering numbers. I don't mean the book of numbers. I mean, just numbers in general, right? So sometimes we get these numbers just appear. And if you're reading through and you're, you're reading through it, you know, fairly regularly, you're going to see this just, um, show,

I'll show you that like we, sometimes we see an actual number, like the number seven, the number seven is a really important number. All right. So, um, look at, look at chapter one with me for the number seven. All the times we see the number seven just in chapter one. So verse four, John to the seven churches that are in Asia, uh, grace to you and peace from him who is and is, uh, was and is to come from the seven spirits who are before the throne. So seven appears. Look at verse 11, um, saying, write what you see in the book and send it to the seven churches. Then he lists the seven churches.

Revelation verse 12. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me on, on turning. I saw seven golden lampstands. Verse 16 in his right hand, he had seven stars. Verse 20, as for the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand, the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Like tap out right now, right? Like what?

So we come away, we go, well, I think the number seven is important, but I have no idea why. Because it just appears all over the place. And that's just chapter one. So in this book, you have the seven churches, seven spirits, seven golden lampstands, seven stars, seven seals, seven horns, seven eyes, seven angels, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven crowns, seven heads, seven plagues, seven bowls, seven hills, seven kings, 7,000 killed and seven beatitudes.

[8:23] So seven is pretty important, right? Seven is the number of completeness. And it is, I would argue, one of the most important numbers in the book of Revelation. The other numbers are three, four and 12. You also get 10 and a couple of others just chucked in there for good measure, right?

Sometimes to confuse things even further, the numbers aren't even mentioned at all. Like, what do you mean? Well, what I mean is this. Sometimes they're just things that are repeated a number of times. All right? So take, for example, the number three, which is probably the most important number in the book of Revelation. It represents the Trinity. All right? So look at verse three of chapter one. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy. Blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written for the time is near. The number of three appears as a list. Blessed are those who read. Blessed are those who hear. Blessed are those who keep what is written. That's number three.

So sometimes it's not just as easy as going, oh, there are three or something. Sometimes they repeat it three times. I mean, you've got to be on the ball for this to make sense. Sometimes even the numbers don't appear. Sometimes they're hidden. So occasionally you get other numbers that appear as multiples of important numbers. Right? You're tracking with me now? Right? So sometimes you get like the number 12. The number 12 represents the complete people of God. All right?

So you see 12 tribes. Easy. 12 apostles. Easy. We've got that. Right? You see the new Jerusalem in in 21, 22. Um, new as 12 foundations. Right? But then you see the tree of life. And this is where you, you got to, you get your old Testament hat out. Sometimes then you see the tree of life at the end of the letter, which is a restoration of the tree of life at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis.

That, that tree of life just had one fruit. This one has 12. 12 is important. But then you see 24 elders, which is 12 and 12. And then you see 144,000, which is 12 times 12 times a thousand thousand, meaning the number of infinity. So, um, like we could just keep going. Right? So some people look at that and go, I'm done. Like I've got enough to figure out in my life the numbers.

[10:50] Right? And I'd be like, amen. Right? There's a lot going on right now, isn't there? So it's pretty hard going. Sometimes the book for that reason is avoided. Look, another way people respond to this book, and it's sad to say, but I think this is true. And, um, this, this isn't aimed at anyone. Maybe I'll just aim it myself. Maybe, maybe, but another way to approach this book, sad to say, is that, uh, we approach it with pride. This can, this book can, uh, and this book can lead to pride.

Some Christians have sensationalized this book, um, and have an unhealthy obsession with this book. This obsession inspires a drive to kind of, um, figure it out. They, they have to know everything.

They have to be an expert on what's going to happen. And, uh, they're, they're constantly, uh, looking at the news, constantly looking at, at Google and trying to find out, okay, well, here's this star. And if I can line this star with this verse, then wow, look at, look, look at, look at that. And, um, these people come across actually quite often as Bible people, but sadly in my experience, what my experience has shown me is that these same people are the most undiscerning and easiest to lead astray. Because if you stick a couple of verses from Revelation in there, they don't believe anything. Stick, stick, stick a, stick a latest news article in there and go, well, check that out and check this verse out. And, oh, this is happening too.

And all of a sudden, um, there's this new kind of, um, denomination formed and they eagerly believe the latest bizarre end times news story just so they can make it fit. Often repeating some of the fake news just because it tickles their ears. And we've been warned about ears being tickled.

And so sadly that feeds off pride. So there's some of the, there's some of the ways that often we will respond to this book. Now, um, let me just address the way that we're going to approach this book, not respond to this book, but approach this book. And, um, there are several different ways or methods we could, um, choose, but let me just give you, um, I don't know how many I've got, four or five.

[13:17] Uh, the first, the first approach is coming on the screen. It's called the preterist view, which is, or the, you know, partial preterist or full preterist. Let me just explain what that means. The word preterism comes from or derived from the Latin, uh, meaning past, right? And so the view sees everything recorded here in this book as being fulfilled in the first century.

So as you're reading through, especially from, uh, chapter four, uh, probably chapter six afterwards, it's all been fulfilled in the first century. And there's two forms you probably should be aware of, partial and full. Um, the, the first, um, there is partial and, um, the second is full, but the, the latter one, the full, it actually goes way beyond probably what we would, most of us would have a hard time defending full preterism. Full preterism says that the resurrection, and I don't mean the resurrection of Jesus, our resurrection at the end of the age, when we go to heaven and the second coming of Jesus has already taken place, happened in the first century. So full preterism, that's what that leans towards. And a partial, partial preterism still believes that, um, all of these have been fulfilled before the end of the first century, at least mostly before 70 AD. Um, uh, but believes that the resurrection and the second coming are still yet future. So partial. All right. Um, the two big problems, I'm just going to kind of give you what I, I understand those approaches to be, and then I'll give you a couple of problems with those.

The two big problems for preterism is that it makes the book irrelevant to most of us. Um, and it makes the book irrelevant to most of Christianity throughout time. Uh, turning it into a collection of parables about what happened in the first century. Uh, but that's not the biggest issue. The biggest issue with the preterist view, both the full, and I haven't got any time for the full preterism by the way, but partial preterism is that a big issue, the biggest issue is that preterism has to date the book, um, under the, the, the persecution of Emperor Nero rather than on, on, on, on, on the Emperor, uh, dominion, which is about 30 years difference, 40 years difference.

Um, and so the problem with that is you might say, well, I don't, I don't care about that. What's the difference? Well, the difference is that both the manuscript evidence and the writings of the early church fathers like Arrhenius, for example, date this out in the reign of diminution and actually at the end of his reign towards 96, um, AD. And so, um, that's a big problem for that view.

The second approach to, um, looking at this book is, uh, the historic view, which sees the book as a concise outline of the church's development from the day of Pentecost all the way to the second coming.

[16:12] So this isn't a literal view by any stretch of the imagination, but it takes, um, the book and it says what, right from pretty much, um, chapter two and three. If you look at chapter two and three, you can glance at it. Now you've got seven letters to seven different churches. They would say that the seven letters to the seven churches outline the, um, the outline of the history of the church from Pentecost right through to the second coming of Jesus. And then everything that comes after that from chapter four all the way through to the end of the book is a retelling of that.

So, um, that's, um, fairly, uh, easy kind of to deal with, easy to understand. Then there's, um, the futurist approach, which is probably the most common approach. And, uh, the futurist approach sees most of the book, certainly from chapter four onwards, as still yet future, i.e. futurist, right?

So, um, now look, with that view, there's several difficulties and not least that it often leads to the sensationalization that I just mentioned, most commonly. Um, but it also suffers actually from the same problem that, that praetorism does in, in that it makes everything after chapter three irrelevant to all but one generation of believers. Normally the people who are now, right? Um, and so that's a big problem. Uh, another approach is the idealist approach or sometimes called the allegorical approach. But most people, most scholars are like in the last 10 years have moved away from calling it the allegorical approach because of all of the problems with the allegorical approach. So they call it the idealist approach. We all want to be ideal. Yes, we do. Let's call it that. Let's believe that. So, um, that's kind of like a subtle thing, but actually it's pretty much the same as the allegorical approach. And it sees the whole book as a set of parables or a set of principles. Uh, probably best, um, to say that it's a collection of lessons, right? So the really good thing about the idealist, the idealist view is that it's relevant to everyone.

Like you can be reading this in the first century and you can go, this is a lesson for my life. You can be reading it now or should the Lord tarry in a hundred years time and go, this is a lesson for my life. Does that make sense? That's a really strong, um, part of this view.

Also look, Timothy said in second Timothy chapter three, that all scripture is breathed out by God and it's profitable for teaching. Right? So the problem with the preterist view is that it's really only relevant for the first century. The problem with the futurist view is really only relevant for those people living right, right in what trying to find themselves in here. The idealist view actually looks at two Timothy three 16 and goes, well, it's profitable for me and it's profitable for every Christian under every age in every generation. Um, now of course, um, there are some, um, problems with that. And, and a lot of people talk about that. The allegorical view is not a good approach to take when translating the old Testament and it isn't. Um, however, Paul does it. So just to highlight that.

[19:26] So the apostle Paul on occasion will take the old Testament and allegorize it. And there's one specific place, which is like one place he does it is, is Galatians chapter four. Do you remember Galatians chapter four? Galatians is trying to make, Paul is trying to make this argument to the church of Galatia that we're not under the law, but we're under grace that, you know, it's, it's the spirit's work and create, it's a new creation. And he's going against all of these, um, these, uh, these Jews and, um, you know, Christians who are trying to keep the law. And he's saying, look, this is, um, this is, this is the way of the spirit. This is the way of the, you know, the, the, uh, of the, the new Testament, the new covenant. And he uses in Galatians four, Sarah and Haggai as, as allegories of the two covenants, right? So Galatians four, um, and he clearly states as if we didn't like, as if we're going, Paul, what are you talking about? He goes, you should take this as an allegory, right? So he clearly tells us that. So Paul does that, but listen, here's the issue.

The issue with the idealist view and actually with the allegorical view, rather than some of the new kind of views that have come about in the last probably decade or 20 years, is that Paul never turned around and said that Sarah and Haggai didn't exist. So a true allegorical view would say that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, didn't really exist. It's a, it's a parable. So, so sometimes, um, we, we get this, uh, allegorical view with the, um, with the creation story, Genesis one to three, all right? And the allegorical view would say that Adam didn't exist, Eve didn't exist, they weren't real people, Garden of Eden wasn't a real place, um, and they're all pictures, they're all lessons for today, all right? The true allegorical view gets rid of the actual kind of thing that the lesson is built on, right? Uh, and so that's, that's a big problem. Why? Because Paul never does that. Paul never turns around and says Sarah and Haggai didn't exist. He says they did exist, but they're teaching us a lesson. So, um, the final way to look at this book, and if you know me, you'll know this is the view that I prefer, is a nuanced view, which basically means I don't really agree with any of those, and I agree with some parts of all of those, and this is kind of where I'm, this is where I've fallen, right? And so it's for me to look at this as seeing the events as real, real events that are still yet mostly future, but there are valid lessons for every age. So take that as you will, and I think we'll, we'll look at that, but, um, it's kind of taking the, an idealist view with a futurist view.

We'll certainly look at, uh, the first century. Some of these things were fulfilled in the first century and heuristic, uh, uh, um, historical view, certainly chapters two and three, uh, lead us there. Okay. So here's the big question though. How does revelation help us? Isn't that what we want to know? It's like, why on earth are we studying revelation? So how does revelation help us? How does it help you? How does it help me as, as, as, as I'm opening revelation and I would encourage you to do this daily, just to start reading through revelation as a habit. We're going to be in revelation until March next year. You'll know it well by then, but just, you know, start reading through, uh, or, you know, get the dwell app. If you're on a phone, get the dwell app, just start reading through, um, listening to Felix, who's the guy, the DJ, uh, on the dwell app and just, just let, let that just listen to that being read, uh, to you. The big question is why is revelation good for us? How does it help us? And I've got nine reasons, but don't panic because we're not going to look at all nine this morning. So we're going to look at three today in two weeks time. We're going to look, maybe we'll get as many as five others done. And then the following, we'll look at one.

All right. So I'm going to give them to you all now though. Um, so that you can write them down, um, because we're not back in revelation for another couple of weeks. So nine ways revelation helps us.

How's the study of this book going to help us? So revelation helps us number one, by reminding us that God is sovereign. Okay. So easy. Although extremely difficult. We'll look at it this morning.

[24:31] So revelation helps us by reminding us that God is sovereign. Secondly, revelation helps us by showing us what proper worship is. All right. Um, thirdly, uh, revelation helps us by exhorting us to live like the people of God. It also helps us to gain perspective of who our real enemy is, right?

Like your real enemy. Your enemy is not your boss at work or your wife or your husband or your kids or the traffic or the people who close the roads today, right? They're not your enemy. All right. This, this gives us the perspective of who our real enemy is. Um, revelation also helps us by kindling our love for the nations.

This is a massive, massively missional book. So we're going to look at that. Um, it also helps us by seeing a fresh, our risen Lord Jesus. This is the revelation singular of Jesus. And if we don't leave going, I've seen him again, a fresh, something's wrong, right? So it's going to help us see a fresh, the Lord, the risen Lord Jesus. Um, what are we on? Seven. Um, revelation also helps us by believing again that wrong never wins. Like, I don't know about you, but you know, you turn on the news and it just seems like wrong, like evil is winning, doesn't it? Like all over the place. Like I even feel it just in my own heart sometimes, you know, it's just like, I just can't get a break. But revelation is going to help us by believing again, helping us to believe again, that wrong never wins. And you never get to right by doing wrong. Eighthly is also helps us to hope. I don't know about you, but I could deal with a little bit of hope. Like sometimes I just kind of like, you know, you get up in the morning, it's like, I just need some hope. And not, not fairytale, fanciful hope. Like, I hope that's going to happen. But like, but real true biblical hope. And then lastly, um, it helps us by giving us the strength to keep going. I don't know about you, but as I, as I penned those nine things this week, I was like, I need that. I need that one too. Oh, and I need that one too. And I need that one.

I just got through the list. I'm like, that's why I'm so excited because I just think as we go through, these things are going to come out in the text. And I'm hoping that as we look at these in our daily devotions, um, these are going to come out. So look, let's go back to the beginning. Let's tackle the first three. We've got a little time. Revelation helps us by reminding us that God is sovereign.

Like from the very start, look at verse four, chapter one, John shows us the almighty God. John, to the seven churches that are in Asia, grace to you and peace from him who is, who was, who, who, who, and who is to come from the seven spirits over before the throne. Check out verse eight.

[27:57] I am the alpha and omega says the Lord God. Only one of two times in the book that God speaks directly. Both times he identifies himself as the only, the alpha and omega.

who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty. What's God doing? Well, of course he is recalling the expression that God uses of himself in Exodus three verse 14, where God spoke to Moses in the burning bush.

to describe his own eternity, his own self-existence. In other words, God has always been God.

He is God. And no one's going to rob him from being God. And look, what is actually fascinating, just check this out. What's fascinating about the was and is and is to come statement is that the is to come part doesn't, doesn't appear whenever the picture is in heaven.

Like that should fill us with some encouragement. So chapter 11, verse 17, we read, we, we give thanks to you, Lord God almighty who is and who was for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. No mention of the is to come part.

[29:16] Same again in chapter 16, verse five, I heard the angel in charge of the water say, just as you, O holy one who is and who was for you brought these judgments.

And the reason for that is that these scenes are set in heaven and in heaven, God is already reigning. There is no is to come. There's, there's no, there's no things that are yet to be developed in heaven.

That's why he taught us to pray while he was on earth. Your will be done on earth where as it is in heaven, because in heaven, there is no is to come.

One of the reasons we've entitled the series, the war of the world is because you're going to see as we go through that the outcomes for each of these themes is that right now, you might have trials and you might have tribulations.

And sometimes it feels like we're in the middle of a war, doesn't it? But that's not the final reality. The final reality isn't that this stuff wins.

[30:17] It's that God wins. Why? Because God is sovereign. Revelation affirms God's sovereignty all the way through. You'll see, you'll see the term subtly, that the term was given.

Right? So we'll see that chapter six. Whenever you see the term was given, you have to draw the conclusion that God is sovereignly reigning over those events.

Right? So, so Revelation six, verse two, I looked, behold, a white horse and its rider had a bow and a crown was given. Like who, who, who's, who's doing the giving?

There's someone else not in that picture doing the giving, right? Who is that? It's God. Why? Because God is sovereign. Check it out. Verse nine, chapter nine, verse one, the fifth angel blew his trumpet.

This is the midst of the tribulation. And I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth and he was given. Chapter 12, verse 14, the woman was given.

[31:20] And look, here's the wonderful thing. After each scene on earth, and note this, because as you're going through, you're going to, you will want to note this.

After each scene on earth, where do we keep coming back to? The throne of God. It's like, you know, chapters two and three are all about the churches that this letter is being written to.

And there's some difficulties in those churches. There's problems in those churches. And look, there's some problems in this church. And there's problems in every church I've ever been in. Every pastor I've ever spoken to have said there's problems in this church.

Every church member I've ever spoken, there's problems in this church. Can we just own that? So what is, what does God do? He says, well, just in case you lose heart, what do you need reminding of?

Chapter four and five, he reminds us that God is king, he's on the throne. Right? Chapter six, pictures of judgment. What do we need reminding of? Chapter seven, God is the king and he's on the throne.

[32:25] Chapters eight to 13, pictures of judgment. What do we need reminding of? Chapter 14, God is the king and he's on the throne. Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, pictures of judgment as world kingdoms fall.

What do we need reminding of when kingdoms fall? Chapter 19, that kingdoms come and go, but God is on the throne. And so look, God is not just sitting on a throne doing nothing.

Revelation teaches us that God is sovereign and he's doing something. He is active. He is alive and well active in this world.

Even today. And actually, you know, you see, we've read it already. We see the Holy Spirit taking a central role in the events of this book. The phrase seven spirits occurs four times in the first five chapters and all in reference to the complete, full and active work of God carried out by the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament background, of course, is the book of Zechariah, where we are told, chapter four, verse 10, about the seven eyes of the Lord that reign, that reigns throughout the whole earth.

[33:38] And most importantly, what we learn from Zechariah four is how God works in this world. How is God working in this world? How is he active in this world? Zechariah chapter four, verse six, that he works not by might and it's not by power, but it's by my spirit.

That's how God is working. John is said to be in the spirit four times in the book of Revelation. And on each occasion, John receives a heavenly vision.

Seven times in chapter two and three, Jesus says, he who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit is saying to the church.

How does God work today? God works by his spirit. So, let him who has an ear hear what the spirit says.

I find that incredibly encouraging. Because look, what does it mean? It means this. It means that God has something to say and he is already saying it.

[34 : 46] It's not like, I don't know, if you do this, I've done this, sometimes I still do this. I'd be like, oh God, God say something, God speak to me. I've been, you know, in the word, I'd be like, I just need to hear from you.

As if God's silent. Listen, God isn't silent. God is speaking. Our problem is that we don't listen. We don't hear. That's the instruction that Jesus said.

Let him who has an ear, hear what the spirit is saying. So our job is to listen and then of course obey. There's no other way.

You know the song. Remove all the distractions, the distracting voices that are hindered our ability to hear his voice. And so look, God is sovereign. He's at work today.

The only proper response is then found in the second theme that we see in the book. How the book of Revelation helps us is that it helps us with proper worship.

[35 : 46] It helps us with proper worship. What you have in the book is two objects of worship contrasted.

Two objects of worship contrasted. So check out Revelation 15 verse 4. The song is And it seems that worship is whenever we see heaven, whenever we see the throne of God, worship is the heartbeat of heaven.

Look, if you don't like worship, you can have a problem in heaven, I think. And numerous scenes in heaven, so chapter 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 16, 19, shows God's people and God's creation responding to God in worship.

Like we even see these four living creatures and 24 elders, whatever they are, leading heaven to praise and glorify God.

and these creatures never stop saying holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty who was and is and is to come. Like that's their job from all eternity past to eternity future is just to cry that in front of God.

[37 : 17] And we're like, we're singing that song again? How many times are we going to do that chorus? That song's too high. He plays that guitar too loud.

And I know. Like, do you know what I'm saying? This book is going to help us, it's going to prepare us not only for that, but it's going to help us in our worship today.

I'm thankful for that. Because sometimes I struggle to worship. Right? Because I just make life about me. And if life is about me, why would I worship? So, you get these four living creatures.

Check out chapter four, verse nine, says that they give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne who lives forever and ever. Verse 11, the elders fall down before God and cry out, worthy are you, oh Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power for you created all things by your will to exist and were created.

And right at the beginning, John says, verse 10, chapter one, I was in the spirit on the Lord's day. I don't think that's insignificant.

[38 : 27] Like the Lord's day, early Christians designated Sunday as the Lord's day, a day of worship to honor God who was, who rose Jesus from the dead on the Lord's day, on a Sunday. Okay. Let me just say this.

Gathering with other believers to worship remains one of the most significant things we can do as Christians. One of the most significant things we can do.

Because it's our way of imitating heaven. worship is the, the, the business, the lifeblood, the heartbeat of heaven.

And revelation tells us that God alone is worthy of our worship. And the big question is whether all people or whether people will worship God or whether they will worship something else.

That's the big question in revelation when it comes to this theme. Because the contrast is made to the worship of God to the worship of the world.

[39 : 34] The worship of something else. And we'll always worship something. Like we're, we're created to worship and we either we're going to create, we're going to worship God or we're going to worship something else that isn't God.

So for example, in chapter two, Jesus writes to the church of Pergamos and he says, I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

Isn't that an interesting contrast? On earth, there is no throne for Jesus. On earth, that's where Satan's throne is.

And Jesus writes to them and says, look, I know that there is a struggle with worship where you are. I know that in the midst of where you've been planted as a church, there is the worship of Satan.

John writes in chapter 13 that they worshipped the dragon for he had given his authority to the beast and they worshipped the beast saying, who is like the beast? And who can fight against it?

[40 : 40] Almost echoing the words about Jesus earlier. And so the issue of worship stands right in the middle of this conflict between God and the forces of evil.

War of the worlds. Worship wars. We know that, right? If you've been in church at any length of time, worship wars are very real. And the book asks us to re-examine the direction of our worship and our allegiance.

And maybe that's a question for us to ask ourselves this morning. What is the direction of our worship? Who do we really worship?

Who are we really aligned to today? Now thirdly, to close out, which you know means absolutely nothing. Thirdly, revelation helps us by exhorting us to live like the people of God.

To remember that we're not alone. There is not another book in the Bible that has so much to say about the people of God. And if there is one thing it reminds us is that every Christian, every Christian throughout the ages has suffered in one way or another.

[41 : 54] Every single one. But suffering is not the final chapter in God's great story. Did you get that? Suffering is not the end.

Revelation agrees with Paul when he wrote to the church in Rome that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. And so revelation helps us.

Helps us with this perspective when we are struggling, when there are trials, when there's tribulation, when there is persecution, to understand to understand that we're not alone.

We don't stand like Elijah was standing. Oh, I am the last one. You may as well just kill me, God. So Revelation 7 shows a great multitude standing before God in heaven following their tribulation on earth.

And every, listen, every church is imperfect in one way or another. I've said it before. I have no problem with saying it about our own church. But imperfection is not our final destiny.

[43 : 01] Do you know that? Like you don't have to just like suck it up. It's okay to admit imperfection. Imperfection's not okay but it's okay.

Why? Because that's not our final destiny. And again in Revelation 7 we see God's people celebrating what? Celebrating victory.

Not celebrating man, now it was a clothes shave. They're like, oh, I escaped that. Skin of my teeth. No, no, no. They're celebrating victory.

And listen, every Christian at one time or another has a moment of struggle, has a moment of isolation, loneliness. And so what do we see in Revelation 5?

We see this phrase that appears seven times in the book. They sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals for you were slain by your blood. You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[44 : 03] Isn't that cool? Like, does it surprise you to learn that our cultural distinctives are not destroyed in heaven? They're still there. Like, but instead, rather than just make everybody the same, we're turned into this like orchestra of praise.

Praise. So this book, look, is tremendously comforting regarding walking the Christian life in the footsteps of others. To know that one day that we will be seated, standing amongst a multitude of other Christians from past ages and future ages, should the Lord tarry, who have walked in our footsteps and we have walked in theirs.

that helps us today. But listen, it's also fairly confrontational, this idea. For example, Revelation 18, verse 4, echoes the words of Jeremiah 51.

Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues. Showing us that the same sins that affected God's people in 650 BC in Jeremiah's day, guess what?

Well, they're going to affect you and they're going to affect me too. Same sins. The same struggles that they had were struggling with. It shows that when it comes to living holy lives, we are all struggling people.

[45 : 38] like there is none of us like that should be put on a platform and be like, that's the holy person. Because that platform belongs to Jesus and Jesus only, right?

We all struggle with holiness. we struggle to separate from worshipping false gods like sport, entertainment, money.

We struggle to avoid sexual sin. We struggle to live in community with other Christians without damaging them in some way. Like, God's people in Babylon were a mess in Jeremiah's day and guess what?

the first Christian churches were a mess and guess what? We're a mess too. But would you also notice that God has a lot of great things to say about his people?

So he doesn't just exhort us to say, get out and stay out. He also has some really, really good things to say. Some really affirming things to say. Don't miss how much Jesus praises the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3.

[46 : 57] He's like, I know your works. Good job. Oh, there's some things we need to deal with. Yes, but good job. There's like maybe one church where Jesus says, no, you're just ratbags. Sort it out.

Right? Just one out of the seven. Everyone else is like, I'm going to find, I'm just going to find one thing, good thing to say about you. And some of it's like, that's a good thing? I don't think it's Jesus' heart.

Yeah, it's a good thing. Jesus has we shouldn't be all negative. We should see the positive.

We should affirm each other as much as we can. Why? Jesus does that. He doesn't paint over the cracks. He doesn't say, well, those other things don't matter.

He addresses those other things. But listen, he does say, hey, good job. Well done. Keep going. He commends them for their hard work.

[47 : 53] He commends them for their endurance. He commends them for their faithfulness. He commends them for their witness. He commends them for their growth in service.

And what Jesus began, or what God began in Genesis 1 and 2, that got so messed up by Satan in Genesis 3, is now made complete in Genesis 22.

the thing that's made complete is you and me. So God has some great things to say about us. Some exhortation to say to us, but also some great things to say about us.

You're not alone, but part of God's people through the ages and throughout the world. So I'm excited to study this book. book. And next week, we're not in the book of Revelation.

We're actually in the Gospel of John. It's a different story, but we're in the Gospel of John. And the week after, we'll come back and we'll look at another five great reasons why the book of Revelation helps us.

[49 : 05] Let's pray together. Father, we have opened your word. We want to thank you for it. We want to confess that Revelation is a difficult book.

And yet, Lord, we know that there are riches here for us because this is your word spoken to us. And so again, Lord, we don't want to say, Lord, speak to us.

Lord, we want to say, Lord, give us ears to hear. Lord, we want to listen and then we want to obey. Lord, help us to love your commands.

Help us to love being obedient. Lord, thank you, Lord, that we can say, and we understand because of this book, Lord, no matter what happens to us, you're still sovereign, you're still on the throne.

Thank you, Lord, that through this book, we get a glimpse of what heaven is going to be like and how we can prepare ourselves for heaven, not only just in worship, Lord, but even in the work and growth of holiness in our own lives.

[50 : 18] Lord, we want that to be true so badly. Lord, help us to put energy towards that. Lord, help us not just to leave this place and go, well, that was an interesting study on the book of Revelation. Lord, we want to have these words be like food in our mouths, sweetness, but then when we swallow, they become bitter to us, Lord, because we know the reality of them.

Lord, would you change us by your spirit, Lord? As you are at work in this world, would you be at work continually in our own lives? We thank you for that. Lord, we submit again to it.

Have your way with us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.