

## #274 “Why the Book of Revelation Matters”

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The trend among churches for quite some time has been to ignore the more challenging or controversial parts of the Scripture, and Revelation is often neglected as a result. But John by inspiration of the Holy Spirit says in Revelation 1:3 that those who read, hear, and heed the words of the prophecy will be blessed. Furthermore, in Revelation 22:18-19, he says that any who add to or subtract from the words of the prophecy can expect to be accursed rather than blessed. Revelation has significant relevance to the whole counsel of God, and that is why God included it in the first place. The God Who was, Who is, and Who is to come (Revelation 1:8) has given us the beginning of things in Genesis, the crux of the matter in the cross and the resurrection, and the future of things in regard to how God closes the age. Just as the past informs the present (Romans 15:4), understanding the future impacts our present behavior also (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

Here are some of the high water marks from Revelation in terms of significance and relevance and why the final book of the Bible must not be ignored, minimized, brushed aside, or watered down.

**First, Revelation proves that God is victorious and the true sovereign.** Someone once said that to sum up the Bible in two words, one would be left with “God wins.” While this reality is foretold in Genesis 3:15 concerning Jesus crushing Satan’s head and while Satan was dealt a death blow on the cross, the ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy happens in Revelation when Satan is finally bound and then subsequently cast into the lake of fire. Satan is the prince of the power of the air, roaming the earth and seeking to devour believers. But his time is short, his pseudo-reign is temporary, and he will lose the war. God is always on the throne, and this should give the believer great hope in the present in battles against sin and in trials that require endurance.

**Second, Revelation proves that the world is terminally broken and must be recreated in the end.**

Some people see the world through blinded eyes, believing that people are mostly good and that the world can work out its ills eventually. They don’t see that the creation is cursed, that death is a given, that sickness is the norm, that sin is rampant, and that suffering and injustice are everywhere. Even under the future rule of the antichrist, it is not just the great tribulation period that is full of tribulation. Even the first three and a half years of his worldwide empire include the buying and selling of children as slaves and as a currency for prostitution and drink (Joel 3:3, Revelation 18:13). This harsh reality is what the world must look in the mirror and see so that they might come to Jesus Who alone can fix individual hearts and Who alone can create a world of peace.

**Third, Revelation proves that man left to his own devices will reject God even to the bitter end.** Even as God executes His judgments upon the earth to get man’s attention in the last days, rather than crying out to God for mercy, mankind will hate God even more. Though they will recognize that the judgments are from Him and wish to hide from Him, still they will despise Him, preferring their own sinful desires, decisions, and lusts (Revelation 6:6-7, 11:10; 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Jesus said during His first

coming that He knew that there was something desperately wicked and wrong in man (John 2:25), and the account of the hard hearts of man in Revelation verify that to the ultimate extent. This is why grace is such a miracle and why God had to demonstrate His love to sinners first (Romans 5:8).

**Fourth, Revelation proves that God is merciful to keep calling out to people to repent even to the final hour.** While Revelation is brutally clear about the coming Great White Throne judgment and the casting of the wicked into the lake of fire along with Satan and the antichrist and the false prophet, it is also clear that God doesn't want anybody to go there. As He puts the world in a vise grip, He continues to try to get man's attention and to get them to repent. The judgments ramp up gradually and then exponentially, and there are opportunities to repent along the way. First, there is the legacy of the church's testimony (Revelation 2-3). Then there are the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (Revelation 7:4-8) which are followed by two specific witnesses which testify for three and a half years (Revelation 11:1-13). Lastly, even an angel from heaven shouts the gospel from heaven so that the entire world can hear (Revelation 14:6-7). God doesn't override man's ability to choose to love Him, but He does everything He can to extend His grace to them even to the end. Sadly, only a few repent (Revelation 11:13), but for God that is worth the wait.

**Fifth, Revelation proves that the weight of glory awaiting believers in the coming kingdom and new creation is indeed worth enduring for.** As our outer bodies decay on this earth and as the world slowly passes away (1 Corinthians 2:6), something better awaits. Revelation ends on a glorious note as believers get a glimpse into the coming kingdom of Jesus on earth followed by the eternal age in which a new heaven and a new earth are created and a dwelling place for God's own descends down from out of heaven, made just for them. It is glorious with streets of transparent gold, jeweled walls, and Jesus as the light, He being there personally to fellowship with those purchased by His blood. What awaits believers is a new world to explore, a new Eden to enjoy, a Creator to love, a King to reign with, and relationships with other believers to be enjoyed forever in a state of perfection. Paradise to the max is a very heavy weight (2 Corinthians 4:17) and a worthwhile wait.

**Sixth, Revelation proves that Jesus is a God of justice and will right all wrongs and reward all right.** Many will be martyred during the tribulation period, and Jesus will avenge their blood. During the church age many Christians have suffered greatly as well. Even John as he wrote Revelation was sentenced to isolation on the island of Patmos, and he said that he could relate to the tribulation of the church of Jesus Christ in his day (Revelation 1:9). Even today, many around the world are killed and suffer because of their testimony. But it is a great encouragement to know that in the end believers overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11). Jesus will punish the wicked and reward the righteous, and all will be made right, fair, new, and good.

**Seventh, Revelation proves that God is the preeminent character in the history of the world, and, therefore, He has the ultimate relevance.** After Malachi was written, four hundred "silent years" ensued before Christ came and revealed Himself to the world personally. Since Revelation was finished, nearly two thousand years have passed, but John is clear that Jesus' coming is soon. Just as Israel had to wonder if their Messiah would ever come after generations of waiting, people today, even believers at times, may wonder if the second coming of Jesus is really a myth after all. But God is the ultimate

relevant character in world history, and His Son Who came once before will come again. Being ready for His coming is the ultimate practical exhortation to the world and to the church, for it is appointed unto every man once to die and after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

**Eighth, Revelation proves that Satan is the ultimate in cheap counterfeits.** Sin never satisfies, but only God gives pleasures that are forever (Psalm 16:11). Satan works in the world feverishly to sell his wares as being better than God's plans and purposes. Even in the last days, he will raise up a false trinity including himself, the antichrist, and the false prophet, and he will conduct a worldwide worship service, so to speak, in which all are required to bow before him via the statue of the antichrist (Revelation 13:15). Satan will even use a pseudo-resurrection to launch the antichrist into worldwide fame, celebrity, power, and prominence (Revelation 13:14). But unlike Jesus Who really did rise from the dead, the antichrist's reign will be shortlived, and those who take his mark in a choice of worship will be doomed. It is those who chose life in this world by knowing Christ and bowing before Him who win out in the end. Counterfeits are never as good as the real deal, namely, Jesus Christ.

**Ninth, Revelation proves that hell is real and eternal.** The antichrist and the false prophet are pictured as still suffering in hell even after the thousand year reign of Christ is complete. They are cast into hell in Revelation 19:20, and then they are still there when Satan is added to the mix in Revelation 20:10. It is a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 13:42), an eternal and conscious torment (Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 14:11), and a punishment appropriate for those who will never willingly bow the knee before God or delightfully declare that He is Lord.

**Tenth, Revelation proves that Jesus is the name above every name, the coming King, and the One worth enjoying and worshipping forever.** He will rule on the earth for a thousand years and then forever after that. He will finally totally fulfill His own prayer that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. Sin will be eradicated, Satan will be cast into hell, and all that is broken will be made whole. He has authority over all things, and nothing sick, maimed, or broken will be in heaven, for He will make all things new and wipe away every tear from the eyes of His own. There will no longer be any death, pain, or sorrow, but heaven will be pure bliss (Revelation 21:4). On earth as it is now, Satan sells himself as the god of bliss, but the reality is that blessing, joy, honor, power, and the ability to offer satisfaction and pleasure belong to Jesus Christ forever and ever (Revelation 4:11, 5:12-13, 19:7).

**Eleventh, Revelation proves that storing up treasure in heaven is the only sure investment.** Those who get rich by making alliances and allegiances with the antichrist will see their entire business operations get destroyed in short order as the antichrist's empire begins to burn and evaporate (Revelation 18:19). Those who sell their souls to evil for short term worldly gain will suffer the wrath of God. Those who focus on what endures, Jesus, His Word, and the coming age, will find it to be the best investment they will have ever made.

**Twelve, Revelation proves that the church matters.** God has much to say to the churches of John's day and to the churches in the present day even before the unfolding of the final seven year period. Revelation 2 and 3 are full of practical exhortations to seven very real churches which struggled with the same things that the church of today struggles with. Some churches had the doctrine right, while others

stopped confronting false teaching. Some believers forgot how to love God with all of their hearts, and others needed to be encouraged given the tribulation that they were about to face. God had a personal message for each church, and His Word is equally relevant to His people today. The church is the central character in the present chapter of God's plan for human history, and it needs to heed the exhortations to the church in the Book of Revelation by holding to the truth, loving Christ, and enduring to the end.

To sum up, Revelation is supremely relevant, and God gives us enough understanding concerning the future to not be confused and deceived in the present age. Believers should long for His coming, and they should do all that they can by faith now to prepare others for it as well. Jesus will be back- and soon.