

### C. The heavenly throne room

- i. The various descriptions of this throne room of God are drawn from Biblical texts: Exodus, Isaiah, Ezekiel top the list.
- ii. The images chosen also make a statement about Roman Imperial worship.
- iii. Jesus wants us to know that in a world where violence seems to reign, God reigns and those of us who appear to be losing are going to be dressed in white robes of victory.



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#### LIVE THE STORY

*The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- What has been your experience with *Revelation*? Has it been seen more as a futuristic time-line of end time events, or a symbolic representation of heavenly realities that will exist until the return of Christ?
- How does Christ call His followers to respond to the events in Israel right now? Explain.
- What do you think of the statement: “There is no timeline by which we can know when Jesus is coming back.”
- Do you think the long history of predictions by “the Church” about when Jesus is coming back has harmed the Church’s witness? Explain.
- What are the important contexts to remember when interpreting Revelation?
- Why might it matter that the whole book is one letter to the 7 churches rather than a prophecy with 7 cover letters? (1:4, 11)
- Why might it be important to get a basic understanding of Revelation right? What is the consequence of not doing so?

## The Revelation of Jesus Christ: *The Strange Monsters of Revelation*

Jerry Cisar — October 15, 2023

Text: Revelation 1:11-19; 4:1-11

### Introduction

*There is no timeline by which we can know when Jesus is coming back.*

G.K. Chesterton: “Though John... saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.”

### I. Revelation: The Basics

- A. It is a letter to 7 churches.
  - i. The whole thing is a prophetic message written as one letter to the 7 churches of Asia Minor, who are representative of all churches.
  - ii. It is *apocalyptic* in its genre/style.
- B. What is Revelation about?
  - i. To understand it, we need to know more about the world into which it was written than the world in which we live.

ii. Why is the imagery of Revelation difficult to understand?

Tremper Longman: “The difficulty... is not because of the complexity of the book of Revelation, but rather because we modern readers are unfamiliar with imagery that would have been known to its first readers. *These images, for the most part, were not created out of thin air, but have a background not only in first-century-AD Greco-Roman culture but also in the Old Testament*, which itself has its background in ancient Near Eastern literature.” (Revelation Through Old Testament Eyes)

Wes Howard-Brook & Anthony Gwyther: “Apocalyptic literature has always been an effort to respond to very basic human questions that transcend time and place: *How do we live in a world rife with evil? Does God care about our predicament? Will justice finally be found on earth? What happens when we die? These and other questions live in the heart of humanity.* The book of Revelation offers powerful, poetic answers to them.”

“...we are trying in our own ways from different outposts of empire to live lives faithful to the Crucified and Risen One. This is not now, and has never been, an easy thing to do. We believe that Revelation offers great insight as to how this is both necessary and possible.” (*Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*)

iii. Revelation was written to churches which were *predominantly unhealthy in their worship and witness* (5 of 7).

*Revelation is not relevant because of what's happening in the world today; it's relevant because of the condition of the church today.*

iv. Things are not as they appear to be.

**II. Revelation: The Problem (Rev. 2:7,11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).**

- A. An exhortation used by Jesus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.
  - i. Matthew 13
  - ii. Isaiah 6:9-10
  - iii. Jeremiah 5:21ff
  - iv. Ezekiel 3, 12

Beale goes on to explain that when people did not respond well to their preaching “the prophets resorted to more dramatic means.” They began speaking in parables and symbols which only those who were responding well to their message could understand. Everyone else would only “misunderstand further.”

B. Do we interpret the book of Revelation *literally* or *symbolically*?

**III. Revelation: The Throne (Rev. 4:1-11)**

- A. Moving from an earthly to a heavenly perspective
  - i. Where Satan has his throne (2:13) vs. where God has His throne.
  - ii. This *door* or *gate* is a passageway from one realm to another.
- B. “After this” When is “after this”?
  - i. Rev. 1:19

“Write therefore the things you saw, the things that are, and the things that are about to become after these things.” (1:19 lit.)

- ii. Apocalyptic writings use symbolic visions “that reveal a heavenly perspective on history in light of its final outcome.”

<https://youtu.be/5nvVVcYD-0w?si=k1>

 Bible Project Video  
Revelation