The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Many people mistakenly call it the book of revelations. Sure, many things are revealed in it, including persecutions and judgments, but the first verse tells us its primary focus is the revelation of Jesus Christ.
Jesus has many roles in history, the Book of Revelation gives us insights to many of them. What we believe about the first coming of Jesus is more crucial than what we believe about the second coming...but both are important. Most of the differences about the second coming are about timing. I think it is better for people to be ready for the worst scenario rather than giving them what may be false comfort and security. Also, to know 'what happens' when Jesus comes back to earth is more vital than the 'when' of his return.

Warren Wiersbe has titled each book of the New Testament starting with the word BE. I have included my own insights in the right column.

Acts...Be Witnesses	***Apostolic kingdom action adventures into all their world***
Romans...Be Right.	***God's righteousness for a world gone wrong***
1 Corinthians...Be Wise	***God's wisdom, love to address a chaotic, carnal church***
2 Corinthians...Be Encouraged	***God's power displayed through weak vessels***
Galatians...Be Free.	***Freedom from the curse of the law to live by the Spirit***
Ephesians...Be Rich.	***Our rich spiritual inheritance 'In Christ'***
Philippians...Be Joyful	***Joy from Jesus through our suffering***
Colossians...Be Complete	***Christ is supreme and our complete sufficiency***
1 & 2 Thessalonians...Be Ready	***Jesus is coming again. Be hopeful and holy.***
1&2 Timothy...Be Faithful	***Be a good soldier in difficult days***
Hebrews...Be Confident	***Our High Priest Jesus opens door to God***
James...Be Mature	***Wisdom, tamed tongue, patience in trials***
1 Peter...Be Hopeful	***God's glory is revealed through suffering***
2 Peter...Be Alert	***Be aware of false teachers and teachings***
1 John...Be Real	***God is Light, Love, Life - Walk in them***
Jude...Be Persistent	***Contend for the faith midst apostasy***
Revelation...Be Victorious	**Jesus and His bride are overcomers !**

Too often we focus on the horrible events in Revelation but it's main focus is on Jesus as the victorious King. Revelation is meant to encourage the saints of God to be faithful servants as they face times of pressure and persecution until Jesus returns to **judge the enemies** of His kingdom and **marry** His radiant, pure **bride.** After Jesus returned to heaven, he took on his role as intercessor, wedding planner, designer and builder of eternal homes for his bride. When we read a book of the Bible we should ask: To whom was it written and why? Many scriptures are not written to us but for us, so that we can learn the principles behind it.

When Jesus taught in parables, he wanted to emphasize a truth using symbols, hyperbole (exaggeration) and stories. However, people often get carried away as they

try to understand minute details while they miss the main point that Jesus sought to convey. Many of the people he taught were uneducated and illiterate, so he used everyday illustrations to get across one main point. For the book of Revelation...God wants us to get the main principles that will equip us for living in difficult times. Who really cares if we find out from some expert what is the color of the toenails on the foot of the beast. As a young man, John Calvin wrote the Institutes of Religion, but one book he failed to write a commentary on was the book of Revelation. Probably a wise decision! God put the book of Revelation last because it reveals the climax of His story, but also because he wanted us to read the other 65 books first. Without understanding symbols and examples from the rest of the Bible, one cannot fully comprehend what it is about. Contrary to many teachers, Revelation is not written in chronological order. It is more like a movie that has flashbacks and interludes. John was getting snapshots of scenes and just reporting them as they came to him. In the first chapter we see vivid descriptions of **Jesus as he is now.** In chapters 2 and 3 Jesus gives a spiritual diagnosis of each church with proper prescriptions for their maladies. He wants them to be a faithful bride, pure and strong so that they can resist and overcome the worldly spirit of greed, idolatry and immorality as portrayed in the harlot of Babylon. Contrary to popular teaching, the church will go through times of great persecution and trouble.

Several years ago I asked God what would Jesus say to us if he came back to earth with a message? Immediately he brought to my mind the letters to the seven churches. There is a message today for every church, as they resemble one or more of the churches in Revelation. Our main focus should be on these messages to the churches. Many like to quote the following verse to show that the church will escape trouble. First of all, this was written specifically to a church in Asia Minor (Turkey).

> **Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep (teleo) you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world, to test those who live on the earth. - Rev. 3:10 NIV**

Keep in Greek is tereo / denotes: to watch over, preserve - Vines Expository Dictionary The same word is used when Jesus prayed for his disciples and their spiritual descendants.

> **My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect (tereo) them from the evil one. - John 17:15 NIV**

Most of the media preachers say that the rapture of the church takes place at Rev. 4:1 where John is caught up to heaven. (Even though there is no mention of resurrection.) They say that after chapter 5 the church is not mentioned in the tribulation chapters of 6-19. However, even in some of Paul's letters he does not mention the word church either and yet he refers to them as saints, the elect or the Israel of God. We see the saints or believers in Jesus throughout Revelation. As Christians, we should be ready to meet Jesus at any time, whether it be in a rapture (catching away) or in death. We should also be ready to face persecution and even martyrdom.

There is a Jewish flavor to Revelation as it was written about what would take place, especially in the Middle East. Satan hates Christians, Israel and Jerusalem as they

remind him of his defeat by Jesus through the cross and resurrection and this is where the last great battle takes place.
All nations will be gathered against Jerusalem - Zechariah 12:3 (all nations likely means through the United Nations which is extremely anti-Israel even today)

I took a course on the end times many years ago and wrote a paper that contrasted the opposite positions between the pre-trib and post-trib rapture. The teacher chose to read mine in class. Matthew 24 is the teaching of Jesus on the subject of his return and also of the end of age. It includes much about the horrific years up to and including the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 A.D., which ended the age of Judaism and the Old Covenant. Note that Jesus returns after the tribulation (24: 29-31). Believers will not face the wrath of God - 1 Thess. 1:10, but scholars like Walter Martin say this refers to the wrath of eternal punishment. Revelation does indicate that Christians will face the wrath of Satan. (We will discuss much of this subject later in a message about End of Age Views)

When reading Revelation, it should be noted how many times throughout the book that the saints are encouraged to **persevere, endure, overcome, and remain faithful to Jesus until the end.** - Revelation 12:17; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15-16 (note that right after Jesus comes like a thief, the battle of Armageddon takes place) None of this should surprise a disciple of Jesus for he taught about persecution in his first teachings in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount.

From my understanding, there are not two second comings of Jesus, just one - Hebrews 9:26-27. When Jesus returns to earth, there will not be a second chance to repent. This is one of my chief concerns about the Left Behind prophecy books. They indicate that people who miss the rapture will have a second chance when Jesus comes back. However, Jesus warns us that judgment comes the **same day** just as in the days of Noah and Lot - Luke 17:26-30, Matthew 13:30. There is no silent or secret rapture...the return of Jesus is a **loud, visible** and **worldwide** event.
1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Revelation 1:7; 10:7

The end of chapter 5 shows the throne of God, the saints and angels praising Him. Have you ever seen a movie where they show the end of the film first and then backtrack to start from the beginning of the story? Revelation 5 shows us the end victory of Jesus over all creatures and creation.

> **Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:**
>
> **To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! - Rev. 5:13 NIV**

This brief scene portrays the fact that human history has come to its conclusion as we know it. The war is over and in the end, all of creation will have to acknowledge God and his Son Jesus!

(We have a separate teaching on what could be called **'Operation Footstool'**. Every knee will bow to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ! Philippians 2:8-11. Psalm 110 is the most quoted O.T. passage in the New New Testament- Matt.22:44, Mark 12: 36, Luke 20:42-43, Acts 2:34-35. See also Joshua 10:24, 1 Chronicles 29:20-25, 2 Chronicles 9:17-19. Psalm 2 was sung at the coronation of Israel's kings)

Before God reveals the terrible events that start in Revelation 6-18, He wants his saints to see the glorious ending to the whole story of history in Revelation 4 and 5, because they will encounter demonic antichrist forces in the first century and throughout history until his final return.

A key issue in Revelation is, who are we going to **worship,** follow and obey? The early Christians faced this issue with the Roman emperors. Julius Caesar was the first one to call himself 'divine'. Augustus Caesar established temples where he could be worshiped. Domitian demanded that he be called Lord and God. Once a year he required all who lived in the empire to offer incense to him and confess that 'Caesar is Lord' on what he called 'The Lord's Day'. True Christians refused to submit. We see this come to a head in chapters 13 and 14. Many prophecies in the Bible have more than one application. They can refer to events in their day and yet foreshadow later events to come. There are antichrist persons and false prophets in every generation, but Revelation seems to indicate there will be one final antichrist and one false prophet in the generation when Jesus returns. The word anti not only means 'against' but it can also mean 'in place of'. The apostle John warned us about a spirit of antichrist in 1 John 2:18-23. We see this spirit at work in our universities and culture today. Political correctness is actually cultural Marxism which began in the early 20th century in Frankfurt, Germany and came to this country at Columbia University. Its aim was to destroy the values of western civilization such as belief in God, the family etc. Columbia was a prime influence in teacher education at that time. We see the antichrist spirit also in the religion of Islam.

CONTRASTS IN REVELATION

A Tale of Two Leaders: The Beast and the Lamb
Revelation 13 Two demonic wicked beasts are revealed
Leopard-Beast 13:2 Lamb-Beast 13:11
God's Lamb / Jesus - Revelation 5, 14

A Tale of Two Women: The Whore and the Bride

A Tale of Two Cities: Babylon and Jerusalem

The book of Revelation is in the genre of apocalyptic literature which includes many symbols and figures of speech. If I say I have a frog in my throat...do I? If I say I will be back in minute...is it 60 seconds? If I say its raining cats and dogs...is it?
In Revelation; 3 of the 4 women mentioned are not women but symbols of something else. Jesus comes back with a sword in his mouth...ouch. (the sword is the Word)
There are varied opinions on the 144,000...which is a multiple of 12 x 12 = 144. 12 is a governmental number. eg. 12 tribes of Israel and 12 disciples. In that day the word

thousand was used to mean a very large number, which is why there are varied views on the thousand years mentioned in Rev. 20.
For example....the Bible says that God owns the cattle on a 1000 hills. (who owns the ones over that?) As you can see, thousand in that instance means a large number. I prefer to leave it as a literal 1000 years period to begin after Jesus comes back to earth to reign.

In looking at a book written in the Bible, we should ask - who was this written to and why? **The book of Revelation was not written to us but for us.** It was written directly to 7 churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today). In the first verses we see that it is about things that will **soon** take place and that **the time is at hand.** (to be fair...some translate the word soon as meaning....once this all begins to happen it will happen very quickly) The book of Revelation was relevant to the early church because they faced the antichrist forces of the Roman empire. Since then, every generation of believers has faced their own spiritual enemies and forces to contend with. These 7 churches would face persecution, idolatry, immorality etc. Jesus, the chief overcomer...wants to encourage his saints to be victorious in whatever situation they may face.

In Revelation... **We see Jesus as He is now.**

The gospel accounts revealed Jesus in his earthly roles as preacher, teacher, prophet, healer, friend of sinners, evangelist, disciple maker, Savior and Lord. In Revelation we see Jesus in more of his heavenly glory as judge, bridegroom and king over all. Let's look at a few descriptions of Jesus in the book. He is the main focus we should have as we read Revelation or any other book in the Bible. I laugh to myself when I hear preachers say...Let's turn to the book of Revelations. They are already off to a bad start, although the book has many things to reveal or unveil, it is the book of Revelation.....of Jesus Christ.

The faithful witness (1:5).
Jesus is a faithful witness to the world and now also for us before the Father's throne as he represents us to the Father. He expects no less from us. He calls us to represent him to the world as his witnesses. The word witness is 'martus' which can mean martyr. The early Christians knew what that meant. Read the book Foxes' Book of Martyrs to see how believers throughout history have been killed because they remained faithful witnesses for Jesus.

The firstborn from the dead (1:5) Jesus was the first man to conquer death.
His believers are now freed from the fear of death because he was willing to taste death for us and be the first fruits of resurrection. - Hebrews 2:9,14-15; 1 Corinth. 15. (Note: Jesus was not 'born again' as some teach from Colossians 1:15. The Greek word there for 'first born'/prototokos = preeminent in rank. The other Greek word for first born/ prototistos, which means first created, is not used for Jesus.) Paul the apostle knew the power of being free from the fear of death. He implores us **to stand firm and let nothing move you** for death has lost its sting. Paul laid down his life for Jesus...in his living and in his death. - 1 Corinth. 15:55-58; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure we will also reign with him. 2 Tim. 2:3,11-12

Revelation speaks of a time of great pressure or tribulation for 3 1/2 years. In light of eternity, this is a blip on the radar screen of time. (Just as Jesus had 3 1/2 years of ministry, the Antichrist will seek to rule the world for the same period of time.)

Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
- 2 Cor. 4:17-18

God gave us the book of Revelation to get our eyes on the invisible realm of His throne where he oversees all the activities in his creation. God is on the throne! He also reminds us that our prayers count for something. -Rev. 5:8 and 8:5.

The Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5)

Jesus has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him. - 1 Peter 3:22

We can be calm in the midst of world chaos because the Prince of peace is in charge. When Jesus gave his disciples the great commission in Matthew 28, he first reminded them that he had been given **all authority** in heaven and on earth. Why was that important? His disciples would encounter opposition from demonic forces which would often come through:

* religious leaders - Matthew 10:17
* government authorities - Matthew 10:18
* family members - Matthew 10:21

Jesus gives further encouragement to his disciples in the remaining of Matthew 10.

'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, Rather be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.'

Jesus as Judge (1:13-14)

The world and even many Christians will be shocked to see Jesus in this role. They have assumed that he would only show love, mercy and grace. That is presumption. God is also holy and grace was always undeserved favor. Throughout scripture he gives ample warning about judgment to come. God is full of mercy and grace, but in the book of Revelation we see that sin has come to its full maturity and will be judged. His fury and wrath is described as full strength undiluted wine - Rev. 14:10 (in Bible times wine was normally diluted with water at 2 to 1 or 3 to 1). Pastors and Christians do not like to speak or think about judgment although it is one of the elementary doctrines, and one that Jesus often referred to in his ministry. I have a full teaching on this based on Hebrews 6:1-3. The first step is repentance and

the final one is eternal judgment (which takes place right after the resurrection of people). This is why Jesus speaks strongly to the 7 churches about repentance. He is going to be the one to judge them at the end of the age, so he is graciously giving them forewarning. (Much like a professor will alert his students of what is coming on the test. Dr. Braude told us students what our final exam would be about, but some students did not listen or prepare accordingly. At the day of the final exam, Dr. Braude wrote these words on the blackboard: **Sociology of Religion.** He then said: 'Tell me what you know'. (Multi-choice exam questions are give one a chance to guess, where as essays clearly reveal your knowledge or your ignorance.) Dr. Braude was a hard grader, but thankfully I was prepared for the final exam and did fine.

Jesus wants us prepared for our final exam. We will cover that in another message about the judgments of God.

Jesus holds the keys of death (1:18)

Keys give a person access and authority over a place. (See our message about the Kings Ring in the Kingdom Principles section on our website.) Only Jesus has the keys of death and the grave. He is the resurrection and life. **Jesus opens the door to eternal life to those who give the keys of their life to him.** - Luke 11:52. Those who have been sealed, marked by him, will enter into his eternal presence forever. - Ephesians 1:13-14

Jesus with us (Rev. 2 and 3) He is aware of the condition of each church and wants the best for us. However, he wants to feel welcome in his church so his purity and power can be displayed to the world. He is also preparing a bride to reign with him. They must be tested and trained through resistance and fiery trials - Daniel 12:9-10. However, there are great rewards for those who are overcomers.

Jesus above us (Rev. 4 and 5)

Welcome to the headquarters of the universe, otherwise known as the throne of God. Life in this world would be transformed if every Christian in the world went to the throne of God each day and confessed the supremacy and majesty of God and Jesus Christ the Lamb of God.
Let us start now and speak it out....

> ***Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever! -Rev. 5:12-13 NIV***

Here we also see Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. This is a time for Jesus to roar but also to open the seals of what is to be poured out on the earth.

Jesus as Bridegroom Warrior (Rev. 19:11-16)

Many great stories have a hero who comes to rescue the woman he loves from enemies who have brought her harm or seek to do so. The story of the Bible is one big drama. While taking some courses for the ministry I took one about writing from Tom Noton. He told us to write about what you know best. He

wrote a book called Thieves, a fictional account about the two thieves who hung on crosses next to Jesus. Tom had once been a thief himself, so he wrote about what he knew. He shared with our class how a good story has several qualities based on the word DRAMA: Drama Romance Antagonist Mystery Action.

A couple of months ago I began thinking about this and realized that the whole **Bible** and the story of Jesus is filled with plenty of drama! There is also a great romance. The Father wanted a big family but an antagonist sought to stop this. However, God had a great plan in mind all along. He would send his Son to get a bride to bring home to Father's house. The mystery of the scarlet thread of redemption is woven into the story in the Bible. There was a lot of action too when Jesus came to earth as he shared life with mankind on earth and then purchased a bride. The battle was intense, but the enemy of his bride was defeated. There are still battles being fought but the victory is assured. Jesus is the ultimate Bridegroom Warrior. The book of Revelation concludes with the greatest wedding celebration of all. In this message we have not dealt much with the troubles of Rev. 6- 18, for most of what we really need to know is what I have shared in this message. As events transpire and more chaos fills the world, we can trust the grace of God will be sufficient to see us through. In closing...here are a few practical ideas.

1. Fix your eyes on Jesus...the author and finisher of our faith - Hebrews 12:1-2,11:6
2. Seek first the kingdom of God his righteousness. All your needs will be met - Matt.6:33
3. Be filled with the Holy Spirit...walk in the Spirit - Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:25
4. Maintain close fellowship with like minded other believers in Jesus - Acts 2:46
5. Walk in love - Ephesians 5:1-2,
6. Be filled with the Word of God. Discernment and wisdom will be needed in the last days
7. Encourage others often - Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25
8. Take care of your physical body.....exercise, eat real food, fast regularly
9. Have practical supplies on hand...including food - Proverbs 21:20, 27:12
   Jesus said there would be famine - lack of food in the last days
10. Remember that you are the bride of Christ...live with purity, faith and joyful expectation!
11. Ponder the fact that you have the privilege of living in the greatest story ever told.

As we have seen, the Book of Revelation gives many names and roles for the Lord Jesus Christ. At history's climax, Jesus will be revealed in all His awesome glory as:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS !!!