

Why Read Revelation?

by
Ryan Cummings

We are about a month away from our meeting together, and we will spend the time in sermons meditating through the book of Revelation. I chose the last book of the Bible as the focus of the meeting for a variety of reasons, and I would like to provide seven below.

1. Revelation offers a blessing to the one who reads it. After his initial introductory comments, John said, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near" (Rev. 1:3). Few books of the Bible offer their reader an explicit blessing, so God is urging us to consider the blessings and gifts that come through reading Revelation.
2. Revelation reveals Jesus with glory and radiance. Indeed, the book itself is the "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1). Whether that means it is the revelation about Jesus or the revelation belonging to Jesus matters little; what matters is that the book reveals Jesus. Many today want to see God in visions and dreams, yet all they need to do is to read the book of Revelation. God has left descriptions of His Son to all of His children if we will simply read Revelation.
3. Revelation gives us endurance in our walk with God. John exhorts, "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus" (Rev. 14:12; cf. 13:10). It is ironic that a book that is meant to give endurance is often approached with intimidation--or more tragically, never approached at all. However, if we read Revelation right, we should receive endurance. Revelation is a book filled with conflict, and each of these battles demonstrate the victory of the saints.
4. Revelation teaches us how to worship God. After writing to the seven churches in chapters 2-3, John looks up to Heaven and is taken up to the throne of God in chapter 4. What follows is an otherworldly description of God, the Spirit, and the Lamb. Each time we are introduced to a non-divine heavenly inhabitant (e.g. the elders, the angels, the living creatures, etc.), they are worshipping God. It is as though the only response that one can have before God is reverence and worship. We even see earthly worship combined with heavenly worship in Rev. 5:8 when the twenty-four elders combine the incense of earthly prayers with their heavenly harps.
5. Revelation makes us realize that there are realities beyond this life. Too often we become so caught up in the business of life that we forget that we are mere pilgrims

in this life. On every page, Revelation reminds us that there are things beyond this life by making us look above. Even in the letters to the seven churches, which some consider the most approachable part of the book, John reminds us in each letter that there are things above. It is in this context that Jesus Himself exhorts, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

6. Revelation is the pinnacle of the Bible. From a literary perspective, Revelation integrates the entire Old Testament in the light of Jesus' victory over death, showing us God's eternal victory over sin and death. What makes Revelation so rewarding yet challenging to digest is its continual use of the Old Testament in every verse. If you know Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, and Zechariah, then Revelation makes great sense. Yet these books are often ignored by Christians, so Revelation seems insurmountable. So throughout our studies, we will continually be looking back to the Old Testament, seeking to see how this book--inspired by the Spirit and written by John--uses earlier texts to reveal heavenly realities.
7. Revelation is meant to give us hope. The part of the book that most Christians are probably most familiar with is Revelation 21-22, which offers a beautiful scene of fellowship with God in peace after the bloody conflicts of the book. We will work through at least a part of these chapters in our time together, seeking to understand how an Old Testament foundation makes these texts even more rewarding. Yet Revelation is meant to give us endurance and hope through the trials of life.

So over the next month, I urge you to read through Revelation at least once with these motivations in mind, seeking to know God better through this marvelous book.