

THE WHOLE STORY

From Genesis to Revelation

Revelation 1

Introduction:

A Gallup poll in 2011 found that people's hope for the future in America had reached an all-time low. For the first time since Gallup began asking this question, more than half of people polled (55%) said that it is unlikely that the future will be better than the past. The striking thing about this poll is that it was asked of America's youth - typically, the most optimistic group polled.

But the book of Revelation, both for its original audience and Christians today, is meant to lead believers to eagerly await and long for the future. The complete reign of Christ on earth is a certain reality, and the seeming victory over evil gives hope, not dread, for those who confess Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

This Week's Main Focus:

God triumphs for his people through Jesus' redemption and return.

We often miss the richness of Revelation because of two misunderstandings about the intended purpose of the book. First, Revelation is not difficult to understand. It is highly symbolic in the way that it speaks, and it brings together a large amount of Old Testament scripture. Since we have been reading through *The Whole Story* Bible reading plan this year, hopefully you have found that many of the previously difficult images and symbols in Revelation are now more familiar to you. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 allude to the Old Testament. Revelation is intended to bring clarity and fulfillment to many other Bible passages.

Second, Revelation is not a book of predictions, per se. It is a book of the current spiritual realities already in place that are eagerly waiting to be brought to fruition on earth.

Let's not beat around the bush - Revelation is not the easiest book to pick up, read, understand, and tell your coworker about. But it is also not meant to be a mysterious prophecy that no one is meant to read or understand, and as it says itself, produces blessing in the church.

Sermon Response Questions:

1) What thoughts, feelings and questions do you have when you approach the book of Revelation?

2) What did Pastor J.D. say is the definition of "revelation?"

Bible Study Questions:

3) To whom and for what purpose was this revelation given?

4) What does John say about Jesus in the greeting (vs. 5-6)? How does he describe Jesus' appearance later (vs. 13-16)?

5) Focus on three characteristics of Jesus in verses 5 & 6. What gift for us is promised through each one? How are we blessed by them as said in verse 3?

6) What stands out to you most from the description of the glorified Christ in verses 11-18?

Group Application Questions:

7) How have you experienced Jesus' love for you and the freedom from sin that comes through faith in Him?

8) What makes you afraid (in life, circumstances, relationships, and the future), and how do you find comfort in the truth of God found in the book of Revelation?

Prayer: Read Psalm 84

- As you reflect on Psalm 84 pray:
 - That our souls would long to be with the Lord daily.
 - That many would be brought into God's kingdom through faith in Jesus.
 - That we would be strengthened by the living word of God, the Bible, daily.
 - That our future reality with God would be of more worth than the circumstances of the present.