



received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. "So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' "Then he who had

received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' "But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. 'For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

The Parable of the Talents complements the Parable of the Sower. Both urge us to share the blessings God gave us for His glory and to direct people to Him, rather than hoarding them for ourselves in pursuit of our own gain.

What are the talents and spiritual gifts that God has entrusted to you? If you are unsure, you can read about them in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and 1 Peter 4:10-11. There are also websites that provide surveys and assessments to assist in the discovery of your spiritual gift. We should not totally rely upon those tests, but they can be helpful. You can also ask someone who knows you very well – they can often recognize your abilities more objectively. Whatever your talents and spiritual gifts might be, are you using them to further God's Kingdom? Or are you keeping them to yourself as a private matter? We can all strive to make better use of our unique God-given talents and gifts, and to spread the Good News to a dark and hurting world that is desperately in need of light. God designed our specific talents and gifts to perfectly match the unique purpose He created for each of us. It is by using our talents and gifts in pursuit of that purpose – and being empowered by the Holy Spirit – that we are able to shine for God's glory. In this regard, we can all benefit from the simple lessons in those two children's stories: Johnny Appleseed and Alvin the Chipmunk. Let's make it our business to spread seeds of faith by using our spiritual gifts and talents – not hoarding them – so that Jesus may say the words we all long to hear: *Well done, good and faithful servant.*

Why Study the Book of Revelation?

By Nena Lindrose and Daniel Spadaro

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.³ Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." (Revelation 1:1-3, NKJV)

Have you wondered what is going on in our world today? Have world events

caused you to ask, *God where are You in all this?* Do you question how anything good can come from what is happening? If so, have you considered that the book of Revelation provides answers to these questions?

Recently, I began to wonder if I'm alone in my resistance to read and study the book of Revelation. In exploring this question, I concluded there are other Christians who also feel the book of Revelation is mostly symbolic, difficult to understand and unnecessary for ordinary people

to read. However, God says in Revelation 1:3, *"Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."* This is the only book in the Bible where God says He will bless you if you read it and take it to heart.

Last fall I began a weekly Bible study at Calvary Church in Jupiter, Florida. Each Sunday, the teaching covered one chapter in the book of Revelation. Prior to this study, I had never taken

time to try to understand this book. However, in the midst of a global pandemic and disturbing world events, I developed an interest in Revelation, and was convicted that I should study it in depth. I contacted Dr. Daniel Spadaro and asked him to join me in co-authoring an article on Revelation for this publication.

The purpose of this paper is to encourage you to examine this exciting book for yourself. To accomplish this goal, we will explore objections to studying the book of Revelation, provide reasons why it is beneficial to study this book, offer suggestions on how to approach your study, and furnish some resources to assist you.

STUDY SUGGESTIONS

We agree with (and recommend) Tim LaHaye's 4 suggestions for studying Revelation:

- “1) Follow the golden rule of interpretation: When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate text, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.
- 2) Locate the scene of activity. Keep in mind whether the scene takes place in heaven or on earth.
- 3) Except for chapters 12 and 17, most of Revelation unfolds chronologically.
- 4) The overall interpretation one gives the book of Revelation will obviously determine its message.”¹

Of the 4 interpretations (futurist, historical, spiritualizing, and preterist), we recommend the futurist interpretation.

ANSWERING THE COMMON OBJECTIONS TO STUDYING REVELATION

Todd Hampson summarizes well the general objections to Revelation: “Though the last book of the Bible is

often seen as scary, complicated, irrelevant, divisive, confusing, or boring, the truth is that studying Revelation with the right perspective is one of the most practical, relevant, and exciting things you can do as a believer in Christ!”² Many believers object to Revelation for one or more of these reasons. Let us look at some of the answers to these common objections.

The book of Revelation is too frightening. The word “revelation” is the English translation of the Greek word *apokalypsis*. It is from this word we get the word “apocalypse.” The history of the use of this word in society helps explain why some are hesitant to read the book of Revelation. Notice the progression of the meaning over time, as stated on the dictionary.com website: *The earliest recorded meaning of apocalypse (in Old English) was in reference to the name of the last book in the New Testament, also called Revelation. It recounts several prophetic visions of upheaval and destruction culminating in the Second Coming of Christ. In Middle English, apocalypse was extended to mean “any revelation or disclosure.” However, the meaning “any disaster or cataclysm” was not recorded until the late 19th century.*³

Our modern culture defines apocalypse as disaster, but the original and Biblical meaning simply is “an unveiling.” This book, then, is an unveiling of “Jesus Christ to show His servants things which must shortly take place.” (Revelation 1:1) The Book of Revelation is a source of hope, not fear, when believers begin their study with the Biblical definition rather than society's perception. As stated by many prophecy writers, “prophecy is not written to scare us, prophecy is written to prepare us.”⁴

Focusing on Jesus's unveiling rather than the devastating events is the key to overcoming this objection. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17, NIV). The Old

Testament pointed to Jesus like a pencil sketch to a rare painting, while Jesus completes the masterpiece. The book of Revelation is the climax to that fulfillment revealed in Scripture. It is like removing the cover from the painting for all to see. Notice also that “Revelation” is singular, not plural. This is another indication that the primary focus is Jesus, not the events. God provided the events because He desires us to recognize what is going to take place.

The book of Revelation is too complicated and confusing to understand. The root of this complaint about the book of Revelation stems from its use of symbols. We are told in chapter 1 verse 1 that Jesus “signified it by His angel.” This is the Greek word *semaino* which means “to be made known by a sign.”⁵ God gave this message to Jesus, who sent it by His Angel to John using signs and symbols. In verse 3, God tells us there is a blessing for those who read, hear, and keep the words of this book. Why would God promise us this blessing if the signs and symbols were not understandable? Theologians such as John Calvin and Martin Luther taught that the book of Revelation was not meant for man to understand. “About this book of the Revelation of John, I leave everyone free to hold his own ideas, and would bind no man to my opinion or judgment; I say what I feel. I miss more than one thing in this book, and this makes me hold it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic.” –Martin Luther⁶ The belief that Revelation is too hard to understand led to spiritualizing the symbols and unnecessarily complicating and confusing matters. God not only provides to us the book of Revelation using symbols, but He also provides the Scripture needed to interpret them. Andy Woods teaches this concept in detail in his Revelation series. He states, “As we learn the rules of interpretation we will learn to identify what the symbols are, and as you'll discover, by learning a few rules you can know what every single symbol in the book represents.”⁷

It is equally critical to identify Revelation 1:19 as the key verse for the entire book, as it provides its outline: “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things” (Rev 1:19, NASB1995). John is to write what he has seen, which he did by describing his encounter with the glorified Jesus on Patmos (chapter 1). Next, he was to record Jesus’ letters to the seven churches pertaining to the Church Age (chapters 2-3). Finally, he was to write of future events following the Church Age (chapters 4-22). We know these chapters are future because the Greek word for “after these things” is *meta tauta*, which means afterward or following.⁸

Many argue that Revelation is too divisive. The many conflicting interpretations of Revelation not only complicate and confuse, but also can cause division among believers. The 4 main interpretations are futurist, historical, spiritualizing, and preterist. Depending on one’s interpretation, different and conflicting views on major issues such as the Tribulation, Millennium, Rapture, role of the church, and view of current events can occur. Each of these constitutes a potential source of contention among believers. A comprehensive account of these interpretations is beyond the scope of this article. We suggest reviewing them before your study of Revelation and select the one that best matches Scripture. In our opinion, the futurist view accomplishes this best.

Revelation 1:4-5 tells us these words are given to John by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God gave them to us for our understanding. Unlike any other book in the Bible, He even promises us a blessing (Revelation 1:3, 22:18-19) for reading, hearing, and heeding its message. Our Triune God would not make such promises and then provide multiple conflicting interpretations. However, our adversary Satan would. He does not want us to know how the story ends: God wins and Satan loses! Satan also utilizes different interpretations to set believers against

each other. Believers should be extremely cautious about deception and should have a deep hunger and thirst for the true message of Revelation.

Many conclude that Revelation is irrelevant or boring. They say that since their church does not preach or teach from it, then it must be unimportant. Regrettably, many churches avoid Revelation, prompting their members to follow suit. One author lists the top 3 reasons for why we avoid reading Revelation: 1) it is confusing and frightening, 2) it is not taught in churches, and 3) there are too many interpretations.⁹ When Christian preachers and teachers succumb to these obstacles and avoid teaching Revelation, we should not be surprised when their members follow their lead. It is critical that Christian leaders overcome their fears and preach and teach Revelation. Fortunately, several high-profile Christian preachers have begun to preach and teach Revelation, and their material is available on the internet (see “Resources for Further Study” section). Todd Hampson explains the practicality of understanding Revelation, saying it “*gives us a deeper confidence in Scripture, anchors our focus on a promised future and eternal hope, purifies our Christian life, pushes us to share our faith, and helps us make sense of the way the world is today.*”

Some people question whether Revelation is practical because it says the events will take place shortly or soon, but 2000 years have passed and nothing has happened. The Greek word for “shortly” or “soon” is *en tachos*. This forms the base of the English words tachometer and tachycardia. It refers to the speed of events once they begin, rather than closeness or nearness to an event. It means that the events in Revelation will occur rapidly once they start.²

Those who say Revelation is irrelevant may also believe it is boring. When viewed from the futuristic interpretation, it is anything but boring. Larry Ollison uses Scripture to

identify the chronological order of events making up the future timeline of believers. Revelation contributes details about the events on the timeline. These events include the rapture of the church, the judgment seat of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb, our return with Jesus at the Second Coming, ruling and reigning with Christ in the millennium, judging angels at the end of the millennium, and moving into New Jerusalem...our eternal home.¹⁰ Understanding more about our future is exciting, and it should be a source of hope and comfort.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

The following is a list of sermon series and books we recommend to assist you with your study of the book of Revelation. Each offers a varying amount of detail. In our opinion, the first four are excellent sources for those unfamiliar with Revelation. The last two offer much more detail for those wanting to go deeper.

1. Plourde, D. **Calvary Church Revelation Sermon Series.** <https://www.calvarychurchfl.com/book-of-revelation>. Jupiter, FL. October 2020 – May 2021.
2. LaHaye, T. **Revelation Unveiled (Book).** Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1999.
3. Hampson, T. **The Non-Prophets Guide to the Book of Revelation (Book).** Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR; 2019.
3. LaHaye, T and Ice, T. **Charting the End Times (Book).** Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR. 2001.
4. Woods, A. **Sugar Land Bible Church Revelation Sermon Series.** https://slbc.org/media/sermon-archives/?wpv_view_count=323-TC-PID180&wpv-book=0&wpv-speaker=0&wpv-series-event=revelation&type-of-sermon-service=&wpv-wpcf-sermon-year=&wpv-wpcf-sermon-month=&wpv_filter_submit=Search. Houston, TX. May 2018 – March 2020.
5. Larkin, C. **The Book of Revelation (Book).** Holy Bible Institute website. https://www.holybibleinstitute.com/files/Larkin_Clarence_-_Book_of_Revelation

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CONCLUSION

Many of the objections to studying Revelation are resolved when properly addressed. Revelation completes the story of Jesus that began in Genesis and continues throughout all of Scripture. That is why there are over 800 references to the Old Testament in the 404 verses of Revelation.² It is indeed an unveiling of the glorified Jesus, while providing multiple details concerning our future timeline. The result of God's provision of Revelation for the believer is comfort, hope and blessing while living in a dark and difficult world. It is our hope and prayer that you will study the book of Revelation, experience its blessing, and be energized to share Jesus to a lost and dying world.

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5. *Blue Letter Bible website*. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g4591/nkjv/tr/0-1/>. Accessed July 13, 2021.
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8. *Blue Letter Bible website*. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g5023/nkjv/tr/0-1/>. Accessed July 15, 2021.
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10. Ollison, L. *The Timeline of Your Future*. *The Prophecy Watcher* June 2021:22-24, 28-29, 34-35.



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