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Lessons from Revelation

A BIBLICAL INTRODUCTION

By John H. Munro

THE VERDICT
WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO



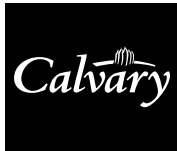
He who testifies to these things says,

“Surely I am coming soon.”

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

REVELATION 22:20





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*“I, Jesus, have sent my angel
to testify to you about these things
for the churches. I am the root
and the descendant of David,
the bright morning star.”*

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.”

*And let the one who hears say,
“Come.” And let the one who is
thirsty come; let the one who desires
take the water of life without price.*

REVELATION 22:16-17

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*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.*

REVELATION 1:3

Approaching Revelation

TODAY, I INVITE YOU TO EXPLORE ONE OF THE MOST fascinating books in the Bible: the book of Revelation. Have you ever read Revelation? What do you think about it?

Many ignore Revelation because they find it incomprehensible. Others are so captivated by it that they study it almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Bible. I realize sensational claims about future events are exciting. They also make fortunes for those who comment on world affairs. But my goal is to help you read and study the actual text of Scripture rather than speculating or fictionalizing.

Revelation deals not with myth, Hollywood, or fantasy. It is part of God's inspired and inerrant Word. God has graciously given us "the end of the story" for our encouragement and guidance. Our Lord Jesus Christ will return and be triumphant. Evil will be destroyed. God, not man, is in control—and only the Kingdom of God is from everlasting to everlasting.

In this booklet, rather than going verse by verse or chapter by chapter, we will be looking at key lessons and themes of Revelation, which I pray will equip you with the biblical "big picture" and support your ongoing exploration of the Word of God.

Prophecy in Scripture is given to keep our focus on Christ, to instruct us on how to live holy lives, and to bring comfort and encouragement. Our understanding of the future impacts our present understanding and our present conduct.

Fears about the future abound. Chaos and uncertainty seem to reign supreme. But for followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, there is nothing to fear. Discover true fulfillment, refuge, and peace in the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

A few notes as we begin...

The title of Revelation comes from its first word in Greek, which conveys an unveiling or uncovering. The future is being unfolded, not hidden! Isn't that exciting? It is a revelation given by Jesus Christ about "the things that must soon take place" (1:1).

The apostle John receives the vision and writes the book of Revelation as a man in his 80s or 90s, probably around AD 95. He writes from the tiny island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, west of present-day Turkey. John had been banished by the Romans "on account of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9).

In Revelation 1:19, John is commanded to write "the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this." As he obeys and writes what he sees, John draws heavily from the Old Testament and uses graphic imagery. Some of the symbols are explained, while others are not. So, we find ourselves in an unfamiliar but fascinating world!

Revelation is generally structured as "[The things] that are" and "and those that are to take place after this." Chapters one through three deal with John's initial vision of Christ and His letters to the seven churches. Chapters four through 22 deal with future events in heaven and on earth.

Chapter and verse notations within the text refer to Revelation unless another book of Scripture is specifically referenced.

All of Holy Scripture is the inerrant, infallible Word of God, and I seek to apply a clear and consistent literal interpretation. Groups of scholars may have different interpretations of various details, but these variations should not discourage you from reading and rereading this important book.

Confused or unclear? Be encouraged. Revelation begins with a special blessing. "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" (1:3).

Ultimately, the message of Revelation is that Jesus Christ is coming back. Some may doubt, some may mock, but He is coming, and He is coming soon. Are you ready?



*The revelation of Jesus Christ,
which God gave him to show
to his servants the things that
must soon take place.*

REVELATION I:1

1

LESSON ONE

The Centrality of Jesus Christ

NOTICE THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS NOT “REVELATIONS”

as if the apostle John is giving his individual revelations, but rather it is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). We must always keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus. All of Scripture points us to Jesus Christ, the perfect revelation of God and the one and only way of salvation.

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.”

REVELATION 1:4–7

It should come as no surprise that the identity, redemptive work, and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ are central themes in Revelation as our sovereign God orchestrates the culmination of history.

The Identity of Jesus Christ

Throughout Revelation, we are given many titles, descriptions, and images of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Each element, each facet, offers insight into the person and work of our matchless Savior, extending to each one of us the opportunity to know Him, trust Him, and worship Him forever. Consider some of these:

The Faithful Witness (1:5)

Jesus is the perfect prophet of whom Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 18. In the Gospels, the crowds recognized that He spoke with great authority, unlike the Pharisees. The Roman soldiers said, “No one ever spoke like this man!” (John 7:46). Jesus is absolutely reliable—the Faithful Witness reflecting God and His truth.

The Firstborn of the Dead (1:5)

Our Lord Jesus has conquered death, is risen from the dead, and is Lord of the universe. Because He rose from the dead, those who place their trust in Him will also be raised from the dead. He is the first and the living One. And He is alive forevermore (1:18). Jesus said to the disciples, “Because I live, you also will live” (John 14:19).

The Ruler of kings on earth (1:5)

We see the ugly face of naked evil in Revelation, but Jesus is King of kings and the Lord of lords (19:16). The kings of the earth and the Antichrist are against Jesus Christ, but we are reminded that the Lord Jesus is sovereign and triumphant. He is the Ruler of kings on earth.

In the midst of the lampstands (1:13)

Notice where Jesus is—in the midst of the lampstands, which He explains “are the seven churches” (1:20). Does this surprise you? The church, the universal community of believers, is very important to Jesus Christ. “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). “The church of God, which He obtained with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). These churches, like our churches today, are far from perfect. Each one is evaluated in chapters two and three. But in each case, Jesus promises specific and

eternal blessings “to the one who conquers,” those who heed His warnings, and are faithful and obedient to His Word.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (5:5)

Jesus is the long-prophesied Messiah, a descendant of King David from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:2). But not only is Jesus the offspring of David, He is the Root of David, David’s greater Son (Isaiah 11:1, Revelation 22:16). He is the eternal One who existed before David, who comes into time and space as the perfect God-Man (5:5).

A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain (5:6)

The Lion is also the Lamb! As the Lion, our Lord is the sovereign One, the conqueror who judges and rules. As the Lamb, He is the suffering Savior, the sacrificial Lamb of Isaiah 53, the perfect sacrifice for the sins of His people. But throughout Revelation, we see that the Lamb is risen and glorified with all authority to judge the world and rule the nations.

“They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings.”

REVELATION 17:14

The Redemptive & Finished Work of Jesus Christ

This unique and marvelous Jesus Christ “loves us [present tense!] and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” (1:5–6). This points to the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Sin separates us from God, who is holy. Sin keeps us in bondage and takes over our lives. But Christ loved us while we were yet sinners—and continues to love us to this day! He demonstrated His love by giving His life for us so we may be forgiven, freed from our sin, and experience peace with God.

And not only does He love us, not only has He freed us, but He has made us a kingdom, “priests” to His God and Father. Every follower of Jesus Christ is a priest (1 Peter 2:9), meaning that we have free access to God and are part of His everlasting kingdom! No wonder John writes, “to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1:7).

2

LESSON TWO

An Overview of God's Prophetic Calendar

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MANKIND HAS DREAMED of a golden age: a perfect society of peace, freedom, righteousness, and justice. We think of examples such as Plato and his Republic, Sir Thomas Moore and his Utopia, Karl Marx and his communist society.

But none of these utopias ever materialized. Leaders make grand plans. Politicians make high-sounding speeches. International peace summits are held, but our world is still full of suffering, violence, injustice, and war.

Will there ever be world peace? How will the world end? Is there life after death? Is there a heaven? Is there a hell? What's going to happen?

In the grace of God, these and many other questions are addressed in the book of Revelation, which unveils God's purposes. And if we understand the teaching of Scripture and the basic outline of Revelation, we can see the major events of God's prophetic calendar. This allows us to prepare for the glorious return of Jesus Christ. The consummation of history—the end of all of our stories—is in the hands of God.

The Rapture

Scripture teaches that the next event in God's prophetic calendar is the magnificent "rapture" of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). The Lord

A Broad Outline of Future Events

The Rapture of the Church	1 Thessalonians 4:13–18
The Tribulation	Revelation 6–18
The Second Coming of Jesus Christ	Revelation 19
The Millennial Kingdom	Revelation 20:1–10
The Great White Throne Judgment	Revelation 20:11–15
Eternity: New Heaven & New Earth	Revelation 21–22:5
The Epilogue	Revelation 22:6–21

Jesus will instantly collect all His followers (living and dead) into His presence in heaven before the events of the Tribulation.

“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

1 THESSALONIANS 4:16–17

So not all followers of Jesus will die. A whole generation will be “caught up to meet the Lord in the air” and so be forever with the Lord. Imagine going to heaven without dying! And all believers, whether dead or alive, will be supernaturally transformed (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

However, it is important to understand that there is a difference between the rapture and the second coming of Jesus Christ to earth. The return of Jesus for His followers will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Corinthians 15:52). So the rapture could take place at any moment.

The Tribulation

Following the rapture, the Tribulation (Revelation 6–18) will be a period of seven years when God’s wrath falls on the world in an unprecedented way

The Rapture of the Church

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Christ comes *in the air*

Christ comes *for* the church

May happen at any moment

Only believers see Him

After the rapture comes
the Tribulation

The Second Coming of Jesus

Revelation 19:11–21

Christ comes *to the earth*

Christ comes *with* the church

Follows other predicted events

Every eye shall see Him

After His return comes
the Millennial Kingdom

(Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24:21). God’s judgment is revealed and carried out through a scroll with seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

During the Tribulation, the Antichrist (a future world dictator) will come to power. The Antichrist is Satan’s attempt to preclude the return and reign of Jesus Christ. A chaotic world will look to him for answers and direction, and he will amass tremendous power and influence.

But in the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will openly persecute the people of God and all those who do not receive the mark of the beast—666. The Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and demand to be worshiped. Those who refuse to worship him will be killed. But when the Antichrist and his armies seek to destroy Israel, Jesus Christ will return and destroy the Antichrist and his followers. Israel will see the One they pierced and recognize Jesus as the true Messiah.

The church is not mentioned in Revelation 6–18 (the chapters on the Tribulation), because the church is raptured prior to the Tribulation. But during the Tribulation, we see how God graciously provides opportunities for the Gospel to be proclaimed—by the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (Revelation 7), the two witnesses at the temple (Revelation 11), and by angel proclamation (Revelation 14:6–7). So, many people will turn from their sin and be saved during the Tribulation, though they will be persecuted and some martyred.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

When we think of the first coming of Jesus Christ, we think of a lowly babe born in a manger. God chose to enter time and space in the humblest of circumstances. And despite Jesus' ministry, most people did not know His true identity. The crowd was looking for a Messiah warrior king to overthrow the Romans. Jesus was despised, rejected, mocked, and unjustly condemned to die by crucifixion. When He was nailed to a cross, it seemed that His kingdom was at an end.

But, of course, this was all part of God's plan. Jesus' death on the cross was the perfect sacrifice for our sin. And through the power of His resurrection, our Lord conquered sin and death and provided the way of salvation for all who believe.

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 19) will be very different from His first. He will come in power, majesty, and triumph, accompanied by the "armies of heaven" (19:14) which includes all His followers. It will be a brilliant display of the glory of God.

"Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

MATTHEW 24:30

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him."

REVELATION 1:7

It will be the most dramatic and most visible event in human history. The unbelieving world last saw Jesus on a cross; now He is seen as the conquering King who will judge all evil. He returns to the earth to set up His kingdom and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Throughout the book of Revelation, people have been given opportunities to repent and to place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now judgment comes

on those who refuse to trust in Christ and to submit to His sovereign power. A God who is good, a God who is just, must also be a God of judgment.

The Antichrist and the false prophet assemble their armies. But they are decisively defeated at the battle of Armageddon and subsequently thrown into the lake of fire (19:11–21). All of the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ are defeated in a spectacular display of God’s power, glory, majesty, and might.

The Millennial Kingdom

The second coming of Jesus Christ and His decisive victory are the signal for the beginning of Christ’s reign on earth—the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:1–10). This is also sometimes referred to as the Millennium. King Jesus will visibly reign for 1,000 years, and the earth will be transformed.

God’s covenantal promises to Israel will be fulfilled during the Millennium. When the Messiah returns, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26) and will be regathered as a nation (Isaiah 11:12). Israel will inhabit (and Christ will reign over) all of the Promised Land as outlined under the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants (Jeremiah 23:5–6).

Christ will reign as the Messiah King not only over Israel but over the whole world. “And the Lord will be king over all the earth” (Zechariah 14:9). “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). And the followers of Jesus Christ will reign with Him (1 Corinthians 6:2–3, 2 Timothy 2:12).

The Millennium will be a time when creation will be restored to what it was prior to the Fall. The earth will flourish (Amos 9:13), and the desert will blossom like a rose (Isaiah 35). Imagine how beautiful the world will be! Universal peace, joy, holiness, righteousness, and justice will prevail (Isaiah 2:1–4). The instruments of war become farm implements (Isaiah 2:4). Physical disease will be gone. Evil will be repressed as Christ will rule with “a rod of iron.” Even the animal kingdom will be brought under Christ’s control (Isaiah 11:5–9, Isaiah 65:25).

The devil will be bound for these 1,000 years (20:2–3), after which he will be released for a period (20:7–8). But during his thousand years of confinement, Satan does not change his nature. At the conclusion of the Millennium, the

dragon immediately tries to take over the throne of God and lead people astray, but he is thrown into the lake of fire to be “tormented day and night forever and ever” (20:10).

During the Millennium, many people will be born, but not all of them will come to saving faith in Christ. At the end of the Millennium, these unbelievers will join the devil in rebellion against God, demonstrating that even in the millennial reign of Christ, the human condition is unchanged. Despite living in an almost perfect environment where Satan is bound, where there is a knowledge of God, and where there is a revelation of the glory and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the innate wickedness of the human heart is apparent.

The Great White Throne Judgment

After the Millennial Kingdom and the final defeat of Satan, there comes the final irrevocable judgment of God (Revelation 20:11–15). Every person who has ever lived will be physically resurrected to stand judgment, regardless of the circumstances of their demise.

God’s throne is “great” because it is the highest place of authority. “White” emphasizes the holiness, purity, and righteousness of God’s judgment, unlike the judgment and courts of man.

“No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

HEBREWS 4:13

“Books were opened” (20:12). God knows everything and has kept a complete record. People are judged “according to what they had done” (20:12,13). Jesus said, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28–29).

But don’t be confused. This passage in Revelation 20 does not teach salvation by works. Instead, it points out that our lives, not our lips, reveal our true spiritual condition. Salvation is given as a free gift of God’s grace when

we turn from our sin and place our trust in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Those who have made this decision and are saved by God's grace live according to their faith and demonstrate their salvation by their works (James 2:14–26).

“Then another book was opened, which is the book of life.”

REVELATION 20:12

Those whose names are written in the book of life are eternally saved (20:15, 21:27). When God looks at the record, He sees no sin for followers of Christ because our sin has been blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. “And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life?

“If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (20:15). At the Great White Throne, everyone is on the same level. The powerful and the famous are all there, as are the masses of ordinary men and women known only in their small circles. Everyone who has lived for self now faces God. Those who have lived for their own world now face the world to come. This is the final judgment (20:6). Hell is real and so is heaven.

Eternity: A New Heaven & New Earth

John receives a vision of “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). Isaiah received a similar vision (Isaiah 65:17). Think of it—a fresh and beautiful new creation. What we could never achieve, God will do in the future (Revelation 21–22:5).

It will be a perfect environment, in contrast to this present world, which is groaning (Romans 8:21–23). The holy city, the new Jerusalem, the capital of the new earth, will come down out of heaven from God (21:2). Heaven comes to earth in all its beauty, “a bride adorned for her husband” (21:2). Heaven and earth will merge and be our eternal home.

But even in the midst of this magnificent description of the new heaven and earth, the apostle John gives a warning (21:8). He reiterates that there are two destinies. “The one who conquers will have this heritage” (21:7),

reminding us of the promises and warnings Jesus gives to the churches in Revelation, chapters 1–2. But those who do not know Christ personally as Savior and Lord, those whose sins have been laid bare and judged, will be cast into the lake of fire. Heaven is only for those who have “conquered” through salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Epilogue

As Revelation ends, the Lord Jesus attests to the accuracy of this prophecy (Revelation 22:6–21). What has been revealed will soon take place. John is also instructed for this prophecy to be made available to everyone because the time of its fulfillment is near (22:10).

Jesus repeats a final warning. Not everyone is going to enter the new Jerusalem (22:11–13). God, who is eternally holy, is coming quickly to reward everyone according to what they have done. Only those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ will enter the new Jerusalem (22:14–15). Those who have not trusted in Jesus Christ and been cleansed will be eternally excluded (22:15).

And a serious warning is given to those who will add or take away from this book (22:18–19). No further revelation is to be given! There are to be no private visions or communications coming direct from God to us about these prophecies. The canon of Scripture is closed. All we need to know is found in Holy Scripture. God is the God of eternity, and His Word is “trustworthy and true” (22:6). God’s grace is on those who know Christ. And He is coming soon.

Jesus Is Coming Soon

So ends this fascinating book of Revelation and God’s plan for history. Notice that Revelation begins and ends with grace (1:4, 22:21). No matter who you are, you can receive God’s gift of salvation, participate in this glorious future, and be part of this eternal family of God. Human history on this planet is drawing to a close. Soon, all those who love Christ will be caught up to be forever with Him. We who follow Jesus Christ don’t worry about a nuclear holocaust, an economic disaster, a famine, or any other disaster—*because Jesus is coming soon!*

3

LESSON THREE

The Reality of Judgment

WRITTEN IN THE FIRST CENTURY, REVELATION WAS

a significant and specific encouragement to the early churches who were experiencing trials and persecution. And Revelation continues to encourage all followers of Christ who can know with certainty that Jesus Christ is coming back.

But there is another refrain in Scripture, and specifically in Revelation, warning of the wrath of God and His coming judgment. Of course, this is a subject we'd rather not consider. It's not politically correct. It doesn't make us feel good about ourselves or promise that we can do whatever we please. The whole concept of judgment and the wrath of God is denied by many, ignored by some, and ridiculed by others. But God is not mocked—and what we sow, we reap.

Do You Understand Who God Is?

Every word of Scripture is God-breathed, inspired by God, without error, given by God for our profit, but also for our warning. And one of the great benefits of studying Scripture, including a book like Revelation, is that we gain a true understanding of who God is.

Our tendency is to create a God in our own image, a God who reflects our desires and our culture, a God we can control. But this is not the true and living God, the great I AM.

God is good, God is gracious, and God is loving. But God is also holy and just.

And because He is holy and just, God hates sin. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This death means eternal separation from God. Yet, out of His great love and boundless grace, God has made a way to deal with sin through His Son taking our place on the cross—God dying for man, the sinless dying for the sinful, the just for the unjust.

When we trust in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we come to God to acknowledge and repent of our sin, knowing that we can do nothing to save ourselves. Repentance is not just being sorry. It means taking responsibility for our sins with a genuine desire to turn away from sin, follow Christ, and live in obedience to God’s Word.

This is God’s plan for your salvation, which satisfies the penalty for sin. But those who reject God’s way of salvation will eventually experience the wrath and judgment of a holy God.

Judgment During the Tribulation

During the days of the Tribulation, the righteous wrath of God will be poured out on an evil world which has consistently and repeatedly rejected the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament prophets, the New Testament apostles, and our Lord Jesus Himself all prophesied of the coming judgment at the end of the world. As we read Revelation 6–18, that time of wrath has come.

Towards the beginning of the Tribulation, the seven seals will be opened, and the judgments of God will begin to fall on the earth. Seven trumpets will follow the seven seals. Contained in the seventh trumpet will be the seven bowls, and the seven bowls are the culmination of the wrath of God on a sinful world—a world which refuses to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

Yet, even in the midst of judgment, we are reminded of God's grace and mercy. Throughout the Tribulation, the Gospel will be preached, and people will be saved. There will be 144,000 Jewish evangelists (chapter 7). There will be two witnesses who perform miracles and preach the Gospel (chapter 11). And an angel proclaims the Gospel to every nation and tribe and language and people (14:6) before the final judgment falls. The church has been raptured prior to the Tribulation, but people will still be able to come to Christ. Many who believe will be martyred during those terrible days. But God will deal with their persecutors according to His timetable.

How Will People Respond?

You might think that when God's judgment begins to fall, people would surely realize the error of their ways. You would think they would repent, trust Christ, and worship God! But over and over again, the general response of mankind to the judgment of God is astonishing.

In spite of the horror, pain, devastation, and death, the apostle John records that those who were not killed "did not repent" (20). The judgment of God on the earth does not lead people to repentance. Instead of calling out to God for mercy when they see what is happening, they harden their hearts, continue in their evil, and make their choice.

The Promise of Perfect Justice

It may seem that God is not in charge of the world today. Looking around, we might doubt His existence or His power. But Scripture is clear that God's judgment against sin will come. A King is coming, and His Kingdom will totally crush all evil and rebellion against God, and His reign will never end (Isaiah 9:6–7, Daniel 2:44, Daniel 7:14, Zechariah 14:9). Why does God choose to wait? Why does He seem to allow evil to flourish?

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."

2 PETER 3:9

God is longsuffering and patient. But when people continue in their sin, He must act. No one will be in heaven who should be in hell. No one will be in hell who should be in heaven. The perfect Judge of all of the earth will do what is righteous and just. Eternal punishment is appropriate for those who have freely chosen to rebel against God, live their own life, and go their own way.

The wonder of the Gospel of the grace of God is that all of us have the opportunity to be delivered from this coming judgment.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on Him.”

JOHN 3:36

4

LESSON FOUR

Evil and Opposition

HAVE YOU NOTICED HOW MANY TELEVISION SERIES and movies involve angels, demons, ghosts, and the like? People seem fascinated by the supernatural. Yet it seems fashionable to laugh about Satan and demons and treat them as mere mythical figures.

Scripture, including Revelation, makes it clear that Satan and his demonic forces do exist and greatly impact this world. They are always against God, always against Israel, and always against those who follow Jesus Christ.

The Devil & the Demonic World

The devil is not a mere force or symbol or influence. He is a personal being with an intellect, emotions, and will. Evil has a name: Satan, the devil, the personification of evil.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

EPHESIANS 6:12

All of the angels, including Satan, were created by God. Satan was the most beautiful of the angels, but in pride, he rebelled against God and was cast down (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28). As the serpent in the Garden of Eden, Satan

successfully caused Eve to doubt the word of God and the goodness of God, thereby causing sin to enter the world.

The overarching story of the Bible is about the conflict between these two kingdoms: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness (Genesis 3:15). So don't allow the world to tell you that the devil doesn't exist. The Bible tells us otherwise.

Satan's Campaign Against God

In Revelation 12, we are given pictures of Satan's campaign against God. When Satan was cast out of heaven, a third of the angels fell with him (12:4). Some of the fallen angels (also referred to as demons or evil spirits) were confined to the pit (the abyss) until the final judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). But not all of the demons were so confined. Many of them exist on earth to do the bidding of their king. So Satan and these demons are our active enemies.

In Revelation 12:7–12, we read of a great battle which will take place in heaven. The archangel Michael and his army successfully defeat Satan. "And there was no longer any place for them in heaven" (8). After this battle, Satan will no longer be able to come into the presence of God in heaven to accuse the people of God as He did with Job (Job 1:6–12). But we must keep reading because the devil and his angels have not yet met their final end!

Satan's Persecution of the Nation of Israel

Do you ever wonder why there is such hatred and persecution of tiny Israel? Because Satan hates the people of God and the Savior who comes as the long-promised Messiah. Jesus Christ offers salvation to the whole world and will defeat Satan and his forces for all time.

"From their race according to the flesh is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever."

ROMANS 9:5

Throughout human history, Satan has tried to thwart God's plans and destroy Jesus Christ. This is symbolized by the great red dragon standing before the

pregnant woman (Israel), waiting to devour her child (12:4–5). Although Satan deceives evil men to crucify our Savior, Christ rises from the dead and ascends into heaven and to the throne of God. Our Savior is alive, now and forever!

Unable to exterminate the Messiah, Satan turns his attention to the woman (Israel) during the Tribulation. During that period, the persecution of Israel will be unprecedented (Matthew 24:15–22). But just as God supernaturally provided for His people in the Old Testament, He will provide for and protect them (12:14).

The Antichrist

In Scripture, the Antichrist has many names. This description of the Antichrist as a beast is given from God's perspective.

“And I saw a beast rising out of the sea.”

REVELATION 13:1

The world will see him as a brilliant statesman, a charismatic diplomat, a loquacious orator, an economic guru, and an amazing religious uniter.

Names of the Antichrist

The little horn	Daniel 7:8
The insolent king	Daniel 8:23
The prince who is to come	Daniel 9:26
The abomination of desolation	Matthew 24:15
The man of lawlessness	2 Thessalonians 2:3
The son of destruction	2 Thessalonians 2:3
Lawless one	2 Thessalonians 2:9
The beast	Revelation 11:7, 13:1

But God sees him for what he is: a violent, evil, ferocious, and destructive monster—an agent of the devil.

After the rapture of the church to heaven, the Antichrist will rule the world during the Tribulation. His identity and goals will not be immediately apparent. A chaotic world will look to him for answers and direction. He will gain power, make a treaty with Israel to secure its borders, and increasingly be seen as the global political world ruler. Israel will feel so secure it will rebuild its temple! But after promising to protect Israel, the Antichrist will invade, breaking his treaty, desecrating the temple, and declaring himself god.

The Antichrist is Satan's counterfeit for the King of kings and Lord of lords. Is the Antichrist alive today? He could be, but his identity will not be known until the Tribulation.

The Second Beast: The False Prophet

There is another beast in addition to the Antichrist. Although he may seem to be very meek and religious, he is a spokesman for the devil.

“Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.”

REVELATION 13:11–12

He is destructive, evil, and malicious. We have an unholy trinity! Satan the devil (as opposed to God the Father), the first beast, the Antichrist (as opposed to the Son of God), and the second beast (as opposed to the Holy Spirit), also called “the false prophet” (19:20). We shouldn't be surprised. Satan is never original; he always tries to copy God.

Just as the Holy Spirit shines the spotlight on Jesus Christ, the second beast (the false prophet) glorifies the Antichrist and imposes global worship. Everyone is to worship the Antichrist (13:12). The Antichrist and the false prophet perform great signs that will impress many, but they are similar to the counterfeit miracles performed by the magicians in Egypt at the time of Moses. Satan and his agents have great power, but only God is all powerful!

The Mark of the Beast

The mark of the beast is “the name of the beast or the number of its name” (13:16–18). It will be impossible to be neutral. No one can buy or sell without the mark of the beast (an outward demonstration of allegiance) (13:17). And those who do not worship the beast and take his mark will be killed (13:15, 20:4). Throughout the Bible, God’s number of perfection is seven. Man’s number is six. And the number of the Antichrist is 666.

We live in a world that continues to trend towards globalism. News and communication now take place on a global scale. An economic problem or banking crisis in one country impacts the rest of the world. And with technology, we can see how it will be feasible to develop a system whereby people cannot make any transaction without the mark.

The Spirit of Babylon

Other than Jerusalem, Babylon is the most mentioned city in the Bible. But Babylon refers not only to a specific city but has come to symbolize a system and a spirit that opposes God.

The first reference occurs in Genesis when the people of Babel (in the land of Shinar, which is Babylonia) tried to build a tower to reach God. “Let us make a name for ourselves” (Genesis 11:4). Later, we see Babylon the city become the center of a world-famous pagan empire led by King Nebuchadnezzar who conquers Jerusalem and destroys the temple. The term “Babylon” is still common and often refers to extravagance, lust, and immorality.

During the Tribulation, the spirit of Babylon will dominate the earth and become a worldwide religion—a false church that is man-made and man-centered—proud, corrupt, and defiant. In Revelation 17 and 18, this religion of Babylon is pictured as a rich, decadent, and powerful prostitute, “drunk with the blood of the saints” (17:6). Initially Babylon controls the Antichrist and the kings of the world, but the Antichrist ultimately uses the global religion for his own ends and then destroys it.

Today, the spirit of Babylon is all around us. We see it in the rejection of God and the substitution of man’s ideas, preferences, and accomplishments.

Babylon is the dethronement of God and the enthronement of self. Our truth replacing God's truth.

The Victorious Christ

One world government, one world ruler, and one world religion: this is Satan's attempt to usurp the true reign of Jesus Christ. But nothing can withstand the coming King and the Kingdom of God.

As the Antichrist and his armies seek to destroy Israel, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will return in power and glory and defeat His enemies. The Antichrist and the false prophet will be thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity.

The second coming of Jesus Christ begins His Millennial Kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. Satan will be bound during this time in the bottomless pit. At the end of this period, he is released and one last time seeks to deceive the nations and mount a rebellion but is defeated for the last time.

"And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

REVELATION 20:10

Although all of this is future, Satan and the forces of darkness are alive and active in our world today. Sometimes it may seem that evil is triumphing, but there is no doubt who wins! Satan is a defeated foe.

Have you made your choice? Neutrality is not an option. Soon all evil and sin will be judged. Even sooner, the Lord Jesus will come for His followers.

"Greater is He who is in us than He who is in the world."

1 JOHN 4:4

Jesus or the Antichrist? Your kingdom or the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived. Don't choose the darkness. Seek first the Kingdom of God. Choose Christ.



*“Behold, the dwelling place of God
is with man. He will dwell with them,
and they will be his people,
and God himself will be with them as
their God. He will wipe away
every tear from their eyes,
and death shall be no more, neither
shall there be mourning, nor crying,
nor pain anymore, for the former
things have passed away.”*

REVELATION 21:3-4

5

LESSON FIVE

A Biblical Look at Heaven

WE HAVE MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT heaven, but God has revealed all He wants us to know in His Word. The most important question about heaven is clearly answered: How can I get to heaven? The answer is placing your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and living by faith in obedience to God's Word. But in Revelation, we are given fascinating biblical truths about various aspects of heaven and our eternal future.

What Is Heaven Like?

Revelation 21–22:5 tells us in detail of “a new heaven and new earth.” This is where followers of Christ will be spending all eternity. What will it be like?

Heaven is God's new creation.

Jesus said, “I go and prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). There is considerable debate as to whether there is going to be a completely new heaven and earth or whether there is going to be a renovation of the present heaven and earth. But the end result is a perfect environment in contrast to this present world, which is groaning (Romans 8:21–23). The holy city, new Jerusalem, the capital of the new earth, will come down out of heaven from God. Heaven and earth will merge and be our eternal home (21:1–2).

God will dwell with us.

In the Old Testament, God dwelt in the midst of His people in a tabernacle (tent) and then in a temple. In the new heaven and the new earth, God will not dwell in a tabernacle or temple. God is the temple (21:22). Heaven is glorious precisely because God is there. Heaven is the presence of God—to see and know God. Can you imagine? Eternal union and eternal embrace, knowing the one true God.

“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:12

Heaven is the removal of all suffering and evil.

There will be no death, no mourning, no crying, and no pain (21:4). Think of it! No heartaches, sorrow, tragedies, wars, crime, violence, funerals, diseases, disappointments, or conflicts. In the new heaven, there also will be no more sea (21:1), often a symbol of conflict and separation.

The “dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52). Our bodies will never experience disease, weakness, or aging. We will have perfect resurrected bodies.

Joni Eareckson Tada, who has quadriplegia, writes: “I still can hardly believe it, I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness—powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal cord–injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain–injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.”

The effects of the Fall and curse are forever gone.

What was lost in Adam’s fall is more than regained in the victory of Jesus Christ. Paradise lost is now paradise regained. Bored in heaven? Emphatically not! Think of exploring this new Jerusalem—this new heaven and new earth!

So don't worry if you don't get to all your bucket list now! You have an eternal future in the new heaven and new earth.

There will be no more night.

We don't like the dark. Problems always seem much more vivid at night. But in heaven, there is no more night! Blackness, sorrow, fear, worry, anxiety, and sin are all gone.

"And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."

REVELATION 21:23

What Will We Do in Heaven?

We will be at home in heaven, enjoying perfect communion and fellowship with all the redeemed. With joy and gladness, we will worship God and the Lamb.

Heaven is our home.

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it, we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20). On this earth, we are strangers and pilgrims. But soon, the fight, the race, the journey, will be over, and we will be eternally at home. We will fit in perfectly.

Nowhere are we so loved and accepted as in our own home. A house is transformed into a home by the people who live there and the relationships they enjoy. In heaven, we shall be at home with our family. To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.

We will be united with all of the people of God forever.

In the Old Testament, when believers died, they were said to be "gathered to their people" (Genesis 25:17), joining those who had gone before them in death. This will happen at the rapture. "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). What a joyful reunion! We will be with all those who lived by faith. All of the redeemed will be there.

Will we know one another in heaven?

Of course! We will have new, changed, glorified spiritual bodies. But our glorified bodies will have a continuing identity with our present bodies. Our bodies will be like Christ's resurrected body (Philippians 3:21, 1 Corinthians 15:53–54).

We will not only see and recognize one another. We will know and commune with one another in much better ways than we ever experienced on earth. We definitely will be smarter in heaven than we are here! One of our great joys on earth is fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. That joy will be intensified in heaven.

In heaven, we will worship and serve God and the Lamb.

Just like the 24 elders and the four living creatures in the throne room of God, we will worship the Lamb with all of the redeemed (5:12–14).

"We shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

1 JOHN 3:2

"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

PSALM 16:11

Think of it! God not only saves us, He takes us into His own home—into the Father's house—into His presence, so that we may see His face (22:4). And we will serve and worship Him for all eternity (22:3), glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. Although it will be marvelous to fellowship with all the redeemed, our greatest joy will be to look on His face in worship, praise, and fellowship. What a glorious day!

Heaven Is Only for Believers

God Himself guarantees this certainty of the new heaven and the new earth. "These words are trustworthy and true" (21:5–6). This is not fiction; it is not the product of someone's imagination. But we must be clear and not be deceived. Not everyone will go to heaven.

“The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

REVELATION 21:7–8

There are two clear categories of people. The one who conquers, the overcomer (21:7), is the steadfast believer in Christ who has repented and trusted the promises of God. When God saves us, He adopts us into His family. Paul writes that we are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Those who do not know Christ personally as Savior and Lord have not been cleansed of their sin will instead be cast into the lake of fire (20:15). Make sure your trust is in the Lord Jesus.

A Heavenly Perspective

In life we often say, “All good things must come to an end.” We try to hold onto a brilliant memory, an exciting vacation, a tender moment with a friend, but all these experiences end. This life is fleeting. But through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have the opportunity to enjoy a glorious eternal life.

Do you want to go to heaven? Do you want eternal life? In Revelation 21:6, God extends a gracious invitation: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.” Jesus says, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:13–14).

All those in heaven have responded to the call of Jesus Christ. He is the fountain of living water. Drink and receive eternal life, forgiveness of sins, and peace with God. In the midst of today’s trials and difficulties, be like Abraham, who “was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10). Keep looking to Jesus, and live with an eternal perspective.



*Neither death nor life,
nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor things to come,
nor powers, nor height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us
from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

ROMANS 8:38–39

What is your

Response to Revelation?

THE FUTURE MAY SEEM DARK AND UNCERTAIN AS

we look out on our world today. You may be wondering what is going to happen. But therein lies the hope and encouragement of Revelation. There is no need to worry and no need to fear. The future events described in Revelation offer an overview of God's redemptive plans and purposes so that each one of us can prepare for the future.

There is a God. And He is holy, just, and sovereign. From the beginning of time, He loved you and prepared a way of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ so that you can know Him, trust Him, and enjoy a glorious future with Him for all eternity.

Do you know this incredibly gracious, unimaginably awesome, all powerful God? Have you trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? I invite you to trust Him today so that you can know your future with certainty.

Jesus Christ is coming back, and He's coming back soon. And His victory over the forces of sin and darkness is assured. What a future we have as followers of Christ! And how exciting it is to learn more about it!

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."

REVELATION 19:6



THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life." — John H. Munro

The Verdict is a radio and podcast ministry featuring the expository Bible teaching of Pastor John Munro.



Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

For more than 30 years, John has dedicated his life to pastoral ministry, preaching and teaching the Word of God. He presently serves as Senior Pastor of Calvary Church in Charlotte, North Carolina.

On The Verdict, listeners are challenged to turn to the Bible and render a "verdict" as they consider their personal response to the truth of God's Word. John Munro presents a clear examination of Scripture, offering insight and application for all backgrounds, from those unfamiliar with the Gospel to mature believers following Christ.

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