

Two Year Bible Trek
Week 104
Revelation

Key Concepts: The key concept in Revelation is that God wins.

Background: Revelation is apocalyptic literature. This is a particular genre of literature which became popular in the Jewish period which preceded the birth of Christ (Daniel is an example). Apocalyptic literature takes Old Testament images and uses them as part of a story in which the realms of heaven and earth collide. Thus the struggle between God and the powers of evil is waged as much in heaven as on earth. The title of the book, Revelation, is in the Greek, Apocalypso, meaning to be revealed. And what it reveals is a future in which God is victorious and renews creation...bringing about a new Eden. To read Revelation correctly one needs to also understand the use of numbers, colors and objects. There is a list of these included with this study.

Brief Summary: The Fellowship of the King (chapters 1-7) The book opens with the notation that this book, which is to be read aloud, is intended to show what must soon take place. The writer, John, then launches into letters to the seven churches in Asia (chapters 1-3). Each of the letters is addressed to seven actual churches in Asia-minor. If you were to draw them on a map they would form a circle, thus standing for completeness, meaning they represent all churches. Each church is either complimented on its strengths and faithfulness, or critiqued for its lack of faithfulness. Each letter closes with the statement "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

In chapters 4 and 5 we see heaven opened and God on the throne. We also meet 24 elders who worship God, witness a scroll sealed with seven seals which no one can open, meet the Spirit, and see the Lamb who was slain who can open the scroll and unleash the future. In chapter 6 the destruction of the old creation begins as the scroll is unwrapped. In chapter 7 we witness the sealing (as in marking for ownership) of the people of God, who are so numerous that they cannot be counted.

The Two Powers (chapters 8 - 13) These chapters show the rise of evil in the world; evil that opposes God, the Lamb, and the Spirit. We read of terror on the earth and the falling to earth of an angel, who will be king over the forces of evil. This king is given various names (Wormwood, Abaddon, Destroyer, dragon, Devil). As evil grows God sends two witnesses to preach to the people of earth. These witnesses are murdered, but then resurrected and taken to heaven. We next meet a woman (who represents Israel) who is about to give birth. The dragon tries to destroy her, but fails when creation itself rises up to protect her and the child. Finally we meet two other beasts. The first, receives the power of the dragon and appears to have died and been made alive. The second is the one that speaks for the other two beasts and causes people to blaspheme. The dragon and the two beasts are the unholy Trinity.

The Return of the King (chapters 14-22) The final portion of Revelation begins with the appearance of the Lamb on Mt. Zion. This is the sign that God has begun the restoration of creation through the defeat of the powers of evil. The story continues with plagues (recall Exodus), the defeat of earthly kings, the fall of Babylon (representing all ungodly nations who have oppressed God's people), the mourning of those who became wealthy through Babylon, the fall of the two beasts and the imprisonment of the dragon for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years he is released, raises an army, but is utterly destroyed by the Lamb. The story concludes with the restoration of creation including the tree of life. This is the new Eden, thus bringing the Biblical story back to its beginning.

1. What is your first response to the story?
2. Where do you see evil at work in the world?
3. Where do you see God's restorative work taking place in the world?