

Making Sense of Revelation – Ps Mike de Vetter

Of all the books in the Bible, Revelation has by far the greatest intrigue factor and I would also say a fear and confusion factor. Revelation is a type of Apocalyptic writing which by definition means to 'Forecast the ultimate destiny of the world' Hence the fear to read it because it's all too much to take in. Don't worry, I've been there, but in recent years I have had a revelation of revelation that has allowed me to read it with fresh eyes and understanding as I look for the main character.

In this room there are different groups of people who interpret Revelation differently. Up North I've had a conversation with someone from every category.

- Some believe all that was spoken of in Revelation was completed in the first century.
- Others believe that the symbolic pictures speak of the timeless truth of the battle between Good and Evil.
- Others feel the Book of revelation contains historical events from the first century as well as a forewarning of days still to come.
- The final group find it too hard so they just don't care and stick to the other 65 books.

Fortunately, the fundamental truths of Revelation do not depend on us taking on a particular point of view. So in all our research and study, let's not get caught up in the finer details to the point where we miss the main character Jesus. So let's go.

Revelation 1:1 The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.

Revelation is written by John, one of Jesus' Disciples while in exile on the isle of Patmos due to persecution by the Emperor Domitian and King Nero. John has a vision, a revelation. A revelation simply means to 'reveal' something.

Have you ever been to the unveiling of a statue where the object is covered by a cloth and it's unclear as to what's under there. There's a basic shape but you don't really know. When the cloth is lifted the object is revealed. That is John's task, to lift the veil and reveal the final truth, about the Bible's main character. Jesus.

Revelation is Jesus' highlights package of his ultimate victory, which also means for those who choose to follow him, our victory. Let me encourage you also right from the start, because a promise is given unlike any other intro to a book in the Bible.

Listen to John's declaration in the 1st Chapter ***Revelation 1:3 (NIV) Blessed is the one who reads aloud 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.***

Any movie fans in the house? I love a good movie, especially with Amy, but one of the problems with watching movies with Amy is that Amy normally makes it to the last scene and then she's gone burger, fast asleep. Amy fell asleep in the movies watching Guardians of the Galaxy, through the latest Bourne Movie. That shouldn't really happen right?

I have no problem with her falling asleep, she is a mum of 3 children after all and if you heard her story last week and her battle through insomnia and depression, any sleep is good sleep.

The problem I have is that halfway through the credits she wakes up and asks 'What happened?' My response is normally 'Babe, You need to just watch it, you need to experience, be in the middle of it.'

You know what I'm talking about, that final scene where the hero fights the last battle, the guy wins the girl, knocks out the bully, lifts the trophy. You don't want to miss the last scene. Why? Because in the last scene, the answers to all the questions that have been asked of the main character throughout the movie are answered.

Will they hold to their conviction? Will they count any cost to get the girl? Do they have the courage to go the 12 rounds?

Reading and experiencing Revelation is essential for all followers of Jesus. Don't miss the last scene, because if you do, you miss where Jesus fulfills every prophecy, wins the battle, establishes for all time that he is the undisputed, current and reigning, undefeated, heavyweight champion of the universe.

So let's set the scene, with 65 books in 65 seconds.

1. God created mankind to walk in relationship with him, In order to make that relationship real he gave them choice. With the power of choice they chose to sin. Their sin affected us all.
2. God loved the people of Israel and continued to forgive and receive them back even though they continued to be unfaithful.
3. Through centuries of slavery, captivity, judges, good and evil kings Israel found themselves looking for a Messiah, one that would save them.
4. Jesus came as God's rescue plan as the unlikely hero, not much to look at we're told in Isaiah, not the powerful warrior they expected, but an administrator of Justice, mercy and Grace like they had never experienced before.
5. The Jews couldn't handle Jesus and crucified him. The Devil thought he'd won but 3 days later Jesus arose from the dead, after plundering Hell's keys and access codes to demonstrate not only God's power but to offer humanity Salvation, not through human works but the work of the cross. He appeared to hundreds of people before ascending to heaven with the original classic movie line 'I'll be back, get yourself ready.'
6. His disciples now filled with the Power of the Holy Spirit fearlessly preach the Gospel, planting gatherings of Jesus Followers, Churches across the globe. Many of them giving their lives for the sake of the Gospel. A few letters to encourage and challenge the Church and we find ourselves at Revelation.

So for 65 books and multiple millenniums God has been setting up Humanity's finale, one last book to read. The book of Revelation is the final scene of the greatest story that will ever told about the greatest man that ever has and will ever live, JESUS.

So this morning through the book of Revelation I want to reveal Jesus as John sees him 8 specific times.

Chapters 1-3 It begins with John having a vision of 7 lampstands, each representing a local church within Asia Minor, similar Whangarei or Auckland. The first three chapters Jesus writes letters to each of the Churches praising them for their good works and influence but also challenging them in the areas they were failing.

Chapters 4-5 After this in the 4th Chapter John enters the throne room of heaven where amongst thunder and lightning, he encounters four living creatures the lion representing leadership, the Ox represents hard work, our mandate given by God, the human face represents the struggle and reality of mankind and the eagle represents our ability to see with vision like God.

These creatures along with the 24 elders fall to the ground in worship declaring to God 'You are Worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power.'

Then in Revelation 5, John sees a scroll in God's right hand and a mighty angel proclaims in verse 2. Revelation 5:2-4 (NIV) *"Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.*

John begins to weep. We're not talking a single tear down the cheek cry, he wept and wept. No one on heaven or earth could be found worthy enough to open the scroll. And all the angels began singing.... We need a hero. Enter Jesus.

5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.

John would have been looking for a lion, the greatest of all creatures in the animal kingdom, a symbol of strength and yet what John sees is the very opposite. John looks up and sees the LAMB as his Saviour, as your saviour, as mine. And yet, For Jesus to present himself as the Lamb make sense now if we read it in the context of the rest of the Bible.

The Lamb was God's Plan A, not Plan B or the last ditch effort cause everything else has planned. Written into the fabric of the greatest story ever told is Jesus the Lamb, the Saviour of the World. Revelation 13:8 *The lamb who was slain from the beginning of the world.*

When we go back to Genesis, Abraham and his son Isaac climbed the mountain to bring a sacrifice to God. Isaac as a 12 year old boy was a willing, living sacrifice yet as he like all of humanity he was sinful, his life couldn't measure up as a sacrifice, God had a lamb prepared in advance.

Abram trusted God and was prepared to give his everything for God and God says, I see your heart, your faith, you don't need to sacrifice your son. I'll give you mine. And so for centuries the people of Israel were looking for a lamb to be the sacrifice in their place. So we look and we see Jesus revealed to us first in Revelation

1. The Lamb as our Sacrifice

Revelation 6-14 Chapter 6 the lamb begins to open the seals, one at a time, the first four released 4 horses to the corners of the earth, sent out to begin the judgment of the earth. Seal 5 revealed those that had been martyred for the sake of the gospel, each of these are given a white robe as they waited for the deaths of the rest of the saints.

The 6th seal is then opened and there is a great earthquake. Now remember Jesus said there would be earthquakes and famines in Matthew 24. At this point, we read the kings of the earth, in our terms today, the Prime Ministers, Presidents hide in the mountains and the rocks crying out for the mountains to fall on them to hide them from the Judgment and the wrath of the Lamb.

At this point 144000 are shown who will be sealed, each representing the tribes of Israel. And then a multitude too numerous to count, representing every tribe and language cry out in a loud voice, to who? As we look again we see the lamb.

Revelation 7:10-17 *"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

2. The Lamb as our Saviour

There is only way way to God and one way to be saved, that is in and through Jesus, the Lamb. That's why when John the Baptist was in the Wilderness telling people to repent and turn to God Jesus walked towards him and said **John 1:29 (NIV) "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

At this point the 24 elders fall at his feet and worship him.

13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?"

14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night, in his temple, and he who sits on the throne will shelter them in his presence.

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; 'he will lead them to springs of living water.' 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'"

3. The lamb as our Shepherd

The lamb is our Shepherd who will cover and protect those that are called by him by his very presence. Even though we may be persecuted, though we may experience death in this lifetime. And this makes sense as you read the 23rd Psalm of David. *The Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need. Though I walk through the valley, difficult, end times, you are with me, your rod and staff protect and guide me.*

When we read what happens next this promise is so important. Because at the start of the 8th chapter the Lamb opens the 7th seal and with that 7 angels with seven trumpets offer the prayers and worship of the saints to God as incense.

What is then released on earth is the beginning of God's Judgment. Ahaaa. This is where many say "This just proves God is an angry God' but remember, Salvation has been offered to all mankind and there will be a point of judgment from which every person must give an account of what they did with the lamb.

Those that do not repent and accept his forgiveness, end up facing God in battle, a battle I would not want to fight.

Chapters 8-10 Chapter 8-9, the first six trumpets sound and result in various plagues and chastisements on the wicked. In chapter 10, the seven thunders sound to announce the seventh trumpet (the Second Coming of Jesus and the Rapture).

In chapter 11 we are told that two Endtime prophets stand as God's witnesses in the Tribulation, and that three and a half days after they are killed, the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. In chapter 12 we read of the battle between the dragon and Michael the Arch angel along with other angels. Sounds terrifying, too much but behold the Lamb, slain yet standing.

Then a voice declares an assurance of victory to the end time church in Revelation 12:11 *(TNIV) They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their own lives so much as to shrink from death.*

4. The Lamb as our Victory friends, our victory comes by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony, a testimony that if lived out is not fearful of death.

Chapter 13 we read of the Beast, that comes out of the sea and is given authority by Satan. A fatal wound is healed and the world is captured by the beast and worships the beast. Revelation 13:8 *All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.*

5. The Lamb is the Author of our Story

Jesus, the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world is writing your story, my story, in his Book of Life. My friend, is your name written in that book? Do you know the lamb today?

Then a beast appears from the earth forcing those on earth to worship the first beast. Then each person is forced to carry the mark which is the number and name of the beast. Anyone not carrying the mark of the beast will not be able to buy and sell. Was the original fruit and apple? Does that make the mark Apple Pay?

Books have been written, people have been putting fear into generation after generation. When will this happen? Has it already happened? Don't get caught up in that. Many people stop there and try to build a theory, try to work out what it actually means. Jesus himself says in Matthew 24, the angels, even me, the Son of God doesn't know when, only the Father knows, so don't worry, be ready.

Instead, can I suggest instead we do what John does in ***Revelation 14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.***

6. The Lamb is our Identity.

When fear grips us, when rumours of end times engulf us, look for the lamb, because he stands and fights the battle for those who are marked by the father. I love Toy Story and how

Buzz and Woody longed to have Andy, their Kid owner scrawl his mark, his name on the bottom of their feet.

Revelation 15-18 In these chapters we are taken through the events that occur at the very end of this world's history. In chapters 15 and 16 the Plagues of the Wrath of God are poured out. In chapters 17 and 18 we read of the judgment and destruction of Babylon which describes the spirit of our age.

Babylon described as a woman rides a beast that represents the kings and kingdoms of the earth in that time and a final war is waged against the lamb. But, again, as fear would try to grip us with war and terrorism, social agendas, we look to the lamb.

Revelation 17:14 They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

7. The Lamb is our Lord and King.

The lamb, the lion that roars, the one that fights our battles for us. Whatever you are facing, let the Lamb fight your battle for you. Trust him and follow him.

In chapter 18 God calls his people out one more time, to remove themselves from her influence, before she is destroyed.

Then in chapter 19 a shout roars from heaven 'Hallelujah, salvation, glory and power belong to our God. Another praise party erupts in heaven as the Wedding Supper of the Lamb is announced.

Throughout Scripture we read of the Church being the bride of Christ and Jesus as the bridegroom. Revelation 19:9 *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"*

8. The Lamb is our Bridegroom.

Then a white horse with his rider called Justice and True, makes war against the beast and the kings and rulers of the earth. His name is the word of God and he battles and captures the beast along with the false prophet.

Chapter 20 is action packed as we read of the Battle of the Great Day of the Lord, commonly known as Armageddon. Chapter 20 covers the imprisonment of Satan, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus and His saints on Earth, the Battle of Gog and Magog that occurs at the end of the Millennium when Satan is loosed for a short time, and then the final destruction of the surface of the earth as we now know it. Finally, we are told of the Great White Throne Judgment when all the unsaved are judged.

Final Scene – Revelation 21-22 (A new heaven and Earth)

As the first heaven and earth pass away, out of heaven comes a 'new Jerusalem' prepared as a beautiful bride. That's those who have their names written in the book of the Lamb. Those sealed with the mark of the Father. Then the promise that should make our hearts leap for

joy. God says in verse 3 God will now dwell amongst his people. When relationship was lost in the garden of Eden in Genesis, it is restored in a new heaven and earth in Revelation.

There will be no more pain, death, mourning or crying because the old has passed away. So then John finally sees a vision of the new Jerusalem, laden with precious jewels and the names of those who faithfully served the Lamb and so one more time we look and we see the Lamb. But again, not as we would expect.

Let's look to the Lamb one last time, ***Revelation 21:22-23 (NIV) ²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.***

When John looks again he now sees the lamb as the Temple of God which as we read in the epistles we are the living stones that God will build that temple with.

9. The Lamb is our temple

²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

Lastly we see the Lamb as the Lamp through which the glory of God gives heaven it's light.

10. The Lamb is our Light

Jesus is revealed a final time as the Lamb who is our light. Throughout Scripture one of the greatest allegories we see is Darkness and Light. In the Beginning God said Let there be light, in the end God declares again. Your light is the Lamb. We will never walk in darkness again. There will be no sorrow, no sickness, no disease, no pain, no broken relationships, no addictions, no more painful secrets, hidden in darkness. The Lamb is our Light, and we will be with him forever and ever and ever.

From this moment, None of us should live in fear of the future, instead, look for the Lamb. Let's stand together and worship the Lamb, slain from the creation of the World,

1. The Lamb Our Sacrifice,
2. The Lamb our Saviour,
3. The Lamb Our Shepherd who protects and Guides us,
4. The Lamb our Victory
5. The Lamb the Author of our Story
6. The Lamb is our Identity
7. The Lamb our Lord and King
8. The Lamb our Bridegroom
9. The Lamb our Temple
10. The Lamb, our Light