



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS for the week of August 9, 2020

“First Things About Last Days”

Rev. Dr. Doug Rumford

Theme/concept

This first message lays the foundation for the fruitful study of The Revelation. This message defines the nature, purpose, and principles for interpreting apocalyptic literature. Two key principles are that numbers are symbolic, not literal, and that the scenes are not chronological. This book is not a timeline; it is a lifeline for disciples. The Revelation was written to equip God’s people with perspective, to awaken their love for God, to empower their hope in God, and to inspire their faith to endure the trials and persecutions of life. It is not a futuristic timeline for speculation. It is a revelation for immediate application by disciples who seek to be faithful.

Application

God reveals his eternal purposes to inspire our worship, empower our faithfulness, and embolden our trust in the Lord at all times.

Charge

Trust the Lord at all times.

Icebreaker (for groups)

What was your reaction when you read The Revelation for the first time—positive or negative? If you have not read it yet, what has kept you from reading it?

Reflections on the sermon

Pastor Doug offered three principles for studying The Revelation:

- There is more going on in life than what meets the eye.
- The Revelation gives us a lifeline, not a timeline.
- Numbers and images are for spiritual impact, not literal calculations.

How might these principles help you get the most out of the text?

Background/context:

The early church was persecuted for refusing to worship the Roman emperor as a divine king. The practice of emperor worship began with Augustus and continued into the second century. John, the author of The Revelation, was oppressed and exiled to the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea about 90 A.D. There, he experienced God’s messages and visions through an angel sent by the risen Jesus. John

records what God revealed to him in this last book of the New Testament. As mysterious as this book may be, it gives us powerful pictures of God working out his purposes that inspire us to worship him, that empower our faithfulness, and that bolster our witness to the world wherever God calls us to action.

Scripture

Revelation 1:1–9 (New International Version)

¹ The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. ³ 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.

⁴ John,

To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ “Look, he is coming with the clouds,”

and “every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him”;

and all peoples on earth “will mourn because of him.”

So shall it be! Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

⁹ I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Note: Additional Scripture references from the sermon appear at the end of this document.

Breaking down the Scripture

1. What is the stated purpose of the book of Revelation?
2. In Revelation 1:1-2, who is involved in giving and receiving the messages in this book?
3. What is promised in verse 3 to those who read this book aloud and to those who hear it?

4. In verses 4-5, The Revelation includes an introductory greeting similar to other New Testament letters. By whom and to whom is it written?

5. In verse 5a, what are three ways that John identifies Jesus?

6. Who is John talking about in verses 5b-7?

7. In verse 9, how does John describe himself and why was he on Patmos?

Going deeper

1. What does the fact that God wanted “to show His servants what must soon take place” (Revelation 1:1) tell you about God’s closeness to and care for his people?

2. From Revelation 1:1-9, why do you think God chose John to receive these messages and visions?

3. What does the fact that God communicated to John through an angel to John tell you about the importance of the message?

4. In verse 8, what is the significance of “the Alpha and Omega”? What does this tell you about God?

5. What warning(s) do you see in Revelation 1:1-9?

Reflection questions

1. How do you think this series on Revelation could bless you? How might you bless others through it?

2. What words in Revelation 1:1-9 give you hope?

3. In what ways does this passage inspire an enduring faith in the Lord? What do you see in this passage that awakens your love for the Lord?

4. As we begin this sermon series, what eternal purposes can you imagine God might reveal to us?

Closing prayer

Please pray:

- That the vivid imagery of this book would cause group members to better appreciate God's majesty and power as our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer
- That members would remember that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways as they may try to make finite human sense out of God's infinite wisdom and power.
- That group members' faith would increase as they read about God's plan to make all things right according to his eternal purposes.
- That group members would place their hope in the Lord rather than themselves and this world
- That members will be eager to go through The Revelation, committing to persevere through the difficult passages, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Additional Scripture references

Acts 1:7

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Matthew 24:36

"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

1 Thessalonians 5:1–2

Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

Revelation 22:12–13

"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

2 Timothy 2:14–16

Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶ Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.