

Summary: What if the end of the world isn't about fear, but about hope, healing, and God making everything right?

Main Ideas:

Revelation is not mainly about the end of the world. It's about Jesus.

If your reading of Revelation makes you afraid of the future but not faithful to Jesus, something has gone wrong.

The Preterist View asks: What DID this mean THEN?

The Futurist View asks: Where is history going?

The Idealist View asks: What pattern is always true?

Revelation shows suffering people that Jesus is not absent, evil is not ultimate, and the future is not out of control.

Revelation is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of the world we were made for.

Revelation was not written to create smarter spectators. It was written to form faithful witnesses.

Revelation isn't a mystery to solve. It's a mission to live.

Invitation:

Become a preview of New Jerusalem somewhere specific this week.

- Ask: Where is fear, outrage, greed, or resentment forming me?
- Choose one act that looks like the world Jesus is bringing.

Transcript:

IN: What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "The End Times?"

- Fear? Confusion? Curiosity?
- Maybe you think of the Antichrist, the rapture, wars, prophecy updates, blood moons, or some prophecy "teacher" with a whiteboard and way too much confidence.

WE: For a lot of people, that fear and confusion comes from the last book of the Bible: Revelation.

- Some of us were scared into obedience with it.
- Some of us avoided it.
- Some of us turned it into a puzzle to solve instead of a vision to live.

Some Christians have even treated your view of Revelation like a test of what kind of Christian you are.

Whole ministries, books, movies, conferences, and church movements have been built around end-times speculation.

- "This happened in Israel..."
- "This war fulfills that prophecy..."
- "This leader might be the Antichrist..."
- "Here's where we are on the timeline..."

And after a while, Revelation starts to feel like a secret code only certain people know how to crack.

But what if all of that hysteria, speculation, and fear is missing the point?

- What if Revelation was never meant to make us afraid?
- What if it was meant to wake us up and encourage us?

So today, instead of trying to force today's headlines into an end-times timeline, let's ask a better question:

- What was Revelation actually written to do in us?

Because... Revelation is not mainly about the end of the world. It's about Jesus.

GOD: We see this in the way John begins Revelation...

Revelation 1:1-2 *This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place.*

That word "revelation" means an unveiling. A pulling back of the curtain.

So yes, Revelation does show us something about where history is going.

- But before it gives us a timeline, it gives us a Person.

It is a revelation from Jesus, and it is a revelation of Jesus.

John is saying, "You think Rome is in control. You think Caesar is on the throne. You think violence, corruption, fear, and death are running the world. But let me pull back the curtain and show you what is actually true."

Then he describes Jesus like this...

Revelation 1:5b-6 *He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.*

In a world full of deception, Jesus is the faithful witness.

In a world ruled by death, Jesus is the firstborn from the dead.

And in a world obsessed with power, Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Before Revelation tells us what will happen, it shows us who is already reigning.

Before Revelation gives us beasts, bowls, dragons, Babylon, judgment, or New Jerusalem, it gives us Jesus.

Revelation pulls back the curtain and says: Here is what is really true, even when the world looks out of control.

So if our reading of Revelation makes us more obsessed with the Antichrist than Jesus, we may be reading it wrong.

- If it makes us more fearful than faithful, we may be reading it wrong.
- If it makes us more speculative than loving, we may be reading it wrong.

And if your reading of Revelation makes you afraid of the future but not faithful to Jesus, something has gone wrong.

TRANSITION TO 3 VIEWS: Christians have often divided over how to read Revelation.

And to be fair, Revelation is not easy.

- It is full of symbols, images, beasts, numbers, judgments, and visions that are strange to us.

But what if the different views don't have to become camps we fight from?

- What if they can become questions that help us read Revelation more faithfully?

There are three main views of how to read Revelation: preterist, futurist, and idealist.

Before we dive in... Most Christians who hold these views still affirm the central Christian hope: Jesus will return, evil will be judged, death will be defeated, and God will make all things new.

- But what happens before that and how are the differences.

The Preterist View asks: What DID this mean THEN?

The preterist view says much, or sometimes most, of Revelation was speaking directly to first-century Christians under Roman oppression.

The preterist view reminds us that Revelation was not first written to modern Americans trying to decode the news.

- It was written to real first-century Jesus-followers under real pressure from Rome.
- Rome had the power. Caesar was worshipped as a god.
- And Christians were being pressured to compromise, pledge allegiance, and survive.

For them, Revelation was not a weird book about "someday."

- It was a message of hope, courage, warning, and direction in the middle of their actual world.

So, before Revelation says something to us, we have to remember it meant something to them.

And that matters because if we skip the first readers, we will almost always misread the message.

It reminds us that Revelation was written to real people, in real pressure, calling them to real faithfulness.

Now **The Futurist View asks: Where is history going?**

The futurist view holds that Revelation points to future events connected to the return of Jesus, the final judgment, the resurrection, and the renewal of all things.

This view protects us from reducing Revelation to only the first century or to timeless symbols.

It reminds us that history is going somewhere.

- Evil does not get the last word.
- Injustice is not permanent.

- Death does not win.
- Jesus will finish what he started.

Now, this is also probably the view many of us have heard the most... through prophecy charts, rapture teaching, the Left Behind books and movies, or sermons connecting Revelation to current events.

And that's where we have to be careful.

The modern version many American Christians inherited often includes a pre-tribulation rapture, a seven-year tribulation, a rebuilt temple, and detailed end-times timelines.

- But that is not the only way Christians have read Revelation for the last 2000 years.

This view has been around for about 200 years, and within that time people have often tried to use current events to predict when Jesus is coming back.

- So far, that has not gone well.

But that does not mean the futurist view is useless or wrong.

- It means we need to be careful not to turn Revelation into a code to crack.

This view reminds us that Christian hope is not vague optimism.

It is confidence that Jesus will return, evil will be judged, death will be defeated, and the kingdom of God will come fully and forever.

History is not random. Evil is not permanent. Jesus will finish what he started.

The Idealist View asks: What pattern is always true?

The idealist view reads Revelation as symbolic pictures of realities that repeat throughout history: empire, idolatry, compromise, persecution, faithful witness, spiritual battle, and the victory of Jesus.

In other words, Revelation is not only about what happened then.

- And it is not only about what will happen someday.
- It is showing us what is always happening whenever the kingdoms of this world collide with the kingdom of Jesus.

This makes Revelation uncomfortably relevant.

Because it shows us there is always a battle between the Way of the Dragon and the Way of the Lamb.

- The Way of the Dragon is violence, control, deception, greed, domination, and fear.
- And the Way of the Lamb is sacrifice, faithfulness, truth, love, worship, endurance, and enemy-love

And the unnerving thing is, the Way of the Dragon does not usually look scary at first.

- It usually looks practical. Necessary. Like "this is just how the world works."

It says: Protect yourself, Crush your enemies, Stay afraid, Buy more, Trust power, Hate the right people, Win at all costs.

And Revelation pulls back the curtain and says, “No. That is not just normal life. That’s the way of the Dragon and beast.”

The uncomfortable part of Revelation is not just that it exposes evil “out there.”

- It exposes the places where Babylon (This way of thinking/living) has gotten into us.

So the idealist view protects us from reducing Revelation to only Rome in the past or only to a timeline in the future.

- It forces us to ask: How is this happening right now?
- Where is empire demanding my allegiance?
- Where is fear shaping my imagination?
- Where is greed disciplining my desires?
- Where is outrage forming my heart?
- Where am I being taught to see people as enemies instead of neighbors?

So the question becomes not only, “Who is the beast?”

- But, “Where am I being shaped by beastly systems right now?”

And the call of Revelation isn’t just to understand those systems.

- It’s to resist them by following the Lamb.

So let’s come back to the three questions we’ve been asking:

- The preterist view asks: What did this mean to them?
- The futurist view asks: Where is history headed?
- The idealist view asks: How is this still happening now?

And here’s the danger: we misread Revelation when we reduce it to only one of those questions.

- If we only read it through a preterist lens, we may lose hope for the future.
- If we read it only through a futurist lens, we may ignore what it meant to its first readers and turn it into newspaper prophecy.
- If we read it only through an idealist lens, we may flatten the promise that Jesus will really return and make all things new.

But with all three questions together, we begin to see things more clearly.

- Revelation had meaning then.
- Revelation gives hope for the future.
- Revelation speaks to us right now.

And all of it is meant to form hope in people who are trying to follow Jesus in a world that often feels chaotic, violent, and unstable.

Revelation shows suffering people that Jesus is not absent, evil is not ultimate, and the future is not out of control.

- And it shows us how to live now in light of that hope.

The dragon does not win.

Babylon does not last.

Death does not get the final word... Jesus does.

And that's where Revelation ends.

- Not with fear or speculation. And not with God throwing creation away.

It ends with renewal.

Revelation. 21:1-5a *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.*

I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"

Do you see the direction?

John doesn't see God's people escaping the earth and floating away forever.

- He sees God's renewed world coming down.
- God's home is now among his people.

That means our hope isn't that God gives up on creation and evacuates a few people to heaven.

No, the true story is... God judges evil, defeats death, heals creation, and comes to dwell with his people forever.

- No more death, sorrow, crying, pain.

Not because God ignored evil.

Not because injustice didn't matter.

But because Jesus finally and fully makes all things new.

So Revelation is not the story of God abandoning the world. It is the story of God renewing the world.

Revelation is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of the world we were made for.

YOU: So after all of that, I think we need to ask...

- If Jesus is the center of history...
- if evil does not get the last word...
- if New Jerusalem is where everything is headed...
- How do we live this week?

Because **Revelation was not written to create smarter spectators. It was written to form faithful witnesses.**

Here's my invitation: Become a preview of New Jerusalem somewhere specific this week.

Don't just believe New Jerusalem is coming. Let someone experience a glimpse of it through you.

Ask: Where is fear, outrage, greed, or resentment forming me?

Then choose one act that looks like the world Jesus is bringing.

- Send the apology.
- Make the call.
- Bring the meal.
- Invite the lonely person.
- Stop escalating the conflict.
- Give to someone under pressure.
- Serve somewhere quietly.

This week, don't just believe New Jerusalem is coming. Become a preview of it.

WE: So what about the end times?

Maybe the most important question isn't, "Do I have the correct chart?"

- But, "Am I becoming the kind of person Revelation was written to form?"
- Am I faithful when the world feels chaotic?
- Am I hopeful when evil feels powerful?
- Am I loyal to the Lamb when Babylon demands my allegiance?

Revelation doesn't give us a timeline so we can feel in control.

- It gives us a vision of Jesus so we can stay faithful.

Imagine if we became that kind of community.

People who can read the news without being ruled by fear.

People who can face chaos without becoming chaotic.

People who can tell the truth without losing love.

People who can resist Babylon without hating our neighbors.

People who can live now as a preview of what Jesus will one day make fully true.

Faithful witnesses. People of courage. People of hope. People of love.

- People who follow the Lamb wherever he leads.

Because the final word over history is not fear.

- It is not empire.
- It is not violence.
- It is not death.

The final word belongs to Jesus: "Look, I am making everything new."

So until that day, we follow the Lamb.

We resist the Dragon.

And we become a preview of New Jerusalem right here, right now.

Because... Revelation isn't a mystery to solve. It's a mission to live.