

# Don't Mess with the Book of Revelation

August 31, 2022, Jonathan Brentner,

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The last book in the Bible begins with these words: “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” From beginning to end, the prophetic account magnifies the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It’s all about His glory, sovereignty, and power. Revelation is all the more relevant as we watch many of its prophecies come into sharper focus. Conditions are set for the four “horsemen of the apocalypse” to begin their trek through the world; it’s just a matter of time.

Unfortunately, the numbers of those disputing the message of the book of Revelation continues to grow, even in churches that claim to believe in the inerrancy and inspiration of Scripture. Those willing to mess with its message seemingly increase by the day. Many appear content to ignore the fact that no other book comes with both a promised blessing for those who read it (1:3) as well as a severe warning for those who mess with it by adding to or subtracting from its words (22:18-19).

## THE BLESSING: JESUS’ EXALTATION IS ALSO OUR VICTORY.

Revelation magnifies Christ from beginning to end. Here’s a sampling of how it glorifies the Lamb upon the throne.

### ***1. JESUS AS THE HEAD OF HIS CHURCH***

Chapters 1-3 display Jesus as the Head over His church. These chapters show the Lord in charge of His people just as Paul described in Ephesians 1:22-23. Revelation 3:10-11a contains a promise of the Rapture through which Jesus will take us out of the world before the wrath of the day of the Lord descends upon “those that dwell on the earth.” Chapters 4 and 5 exalt the Lamb as the only One worthy to open the seals binding the title deed to this world. The ensuing seal judgments begin the process of the coming King wresting the kingdoms of this world out of Satan’s grasp.

### ***2. THE LORD JUDGES THE EARTH IN PREPARATION FOR HIS KINGDOM.***

Chapter 6-18 proclaim the Lord’s supreme power and sovereignty over the kings of the earth, history, nature, and all the forces that now rebel against Him. They depict the testing that Jesus said would come upon “the whole world” (Revelation 3:10). Jesus will prove the righteousness of His Name as He destroys the kingdom of the antichrist along with its lawlessness, deception, and exceedingly great wickedness. Heaven will roar with praise for Him (Revelation 19:1-5) in anticipation of His return with us to the earth and thousand-year rule over the earth seated on the throne of David.

***3. JESUS WILL REIGN FOR A THOUSAND YEARS AND THEN FOREVER.*** Jesus’ ultimate display of glory to the earth happens at His Second Coming. He will then destroy the armies of the world gathered against Jerusalem, lock up Satan, and establish His rule upon the earth (19:11-20:6). After putting down a final rebellion, He will judge the world and forever eliminate death and sin (20:7-15). Revelation 21-22 describes the glorious eternal state of the new earth and the New Jerusalem. Jesus last words to us, His church, are these, “Surely I am coming quickly!” The exaltation of Jesus finds its fullest expression in all of the events recorded in the book of Revelation. And His victory will be ours someday.

## THE WARNING: DON’T MESS WITH THE MESSAGE!

You’ve likely heard the phrase, “Don’t mess with Texas!” The consequences of doing that might be dire, but they are nothing compared to messing with the book of Revelation. Consider the warning that occurs in its last chapter: *I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy,*

*God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Rev. 22:18-19).* I believe these strong words occur here because Revelation . . .

- exalts the Person of Jesus.
- describes the Lord's final victory over sin and death.
- provides immeasurable comfort to believers with its description of how God will deal with this wicked world and bring in a joyous eternal state including a New Jerusalem.
- promises a glorious eternity free of death, pain, tears, and suffering (21:4).

Those who scoff at the book's message of hope do so to their own peril. Teachers, pastors, and scholars mess with the message of Revelation in the following ways:

**1. ALLEGORY.** Many regard the book of the Revelation as allegory, or just symbolism, rather than an eyewitness account of what John actually saw and heard. This is the most popular way that the scoffers take away from its message of victory and hope.

Allegory began long ago as a way to combine pagan Greek philosophy with Christianity, especially that of the pagan philosopher Plato who believed that only the spiritual realm was good. He believed the material world was inherently evil. Augustine, the one who firmly established allegory as the way to approach biblical prophecy, said the idea of a millennium "would not be objectionable" if somehow "the nature of the millennial kingdom was a 'spiritual one' rather than a physical one."<sup>[i]</sup> Augustine modified his beliefs regarding Jesus' future thousand-year reign on the earth in order to make them comply with the teachings of Plato.

Augustine's hatred of the Jewish people also factored into his theology of dismissing the biblical promises regarding the future restoration of Israel. There are many reasons to reject the allegorical approach to the book of Revelation...

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