EXPLAINING ALL THE SCARY STUFF IN REVELATION

featuring the Rev. Ken Klaus
For the Study Leader:

Group Discussion:

- Please feel free to move at your own pace through this study and take as much time as you need for each lesson.
- You are welcome to dig in as deep as you want for your personal study, or you might use just the Bible passages and questions included in the discussion guide.
- If you have a limited time for this study, have participants take a few minutes to look through the sessions and choose as a group those questions they would most like to discuss.
- We have designed our questions to be open-ended, thus allowing those in your group to share their experiences and unique perspectives.

A downloadable PDF for this study can be found at lhm.org/revelation.

Using Our Digging Deeper Icons

This is an interactive study guide. We designed it to be flexible, so it will fit both group and personal use. It includes icons that link the user to internet sites where he or she can browse and explore a subject more thoroughly.

We encourage you to look through the Digging Deeper icons to see which ones your group might want to discuss. While you may use the paper discussion guide during your group study, you may want to assign homework for those in the group to check out the various internet sites on their own time. Doing so makes the study much more interactive. Once you have downloaded the electronic PDF copy of the discussion guide, click on the icons in the text or at the end of the session. When you click on an icon, it will take you to that specific link, which will then open up the corresponding website.

There are only two steps you need to find the Digging Deeper links for this study:

1) Visit lhm.org/revelation.
2) On the bottom of this page, click “Additional Resources.”

Now you can click the links that interest you and start digging.

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In 96 A.D. a miraculous thing happened on a rocky, desolate, six-by-ten mile island in the Aegean.

The apostle John was walking alongside the ocean when the majestic voice of God spoke from heaven bringing a message of cheer to believers who had been struggling with the harsh burden of persecution from the Roman Emperor Domitian.

The old disciple looked heavenward to see the clouds part and God revealing an amazing vision of His plan for the church through the ages.

Unfortunately, when it comes to studying the book of Revelation, many folks grimace and say, “Revelation is too frightening for me!”

or they react by saying, “How irrelevant can you get?”

or they conclude, “Now we’re finally going to do some serious Bible study.”

These reactions should be corrected. God didn’t give us a book that was frightening, irrelevant, or impossible to understand.

As you study Revelation, you will discover the following things:

- God has a plan for and is in control of His creation.
- He knows His people will suffer.
- He encourages us to focus on Jesus.
- He assures us of a final victory over evil.
- He says the faithful already share victory in Jesus.
- He says death in Jesus is not disgrace, but victory!
Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for speaking to us through the Bible. Teach us how to read and understand Revelation that we may know what You have to say about the issues we face in our lives, and be confident that You will guide all the things that happen in our lives and in our world for our salvation. We pray this in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Why Read Revelation?

• How much of Revelation have you read?

• What do you think it is all about?

Watch the Video: Lesson 1

• What are some of the scary things you’ve heard about Revelation?

• What have you heard other people say about them?

There is some scary stuff in Revelation, especially if the things it describes take place during our lifetimes. Let’s take a few minutes to read and think about some of this scary stuff.

Read Revelation 6:1-17 - The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

1 Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!”

2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.
3 When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!”
4 And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.
5 When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand.
6 And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!”
7 When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!”
8 And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.
9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.
10 They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.
12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,
13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.
14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.
15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,
16 calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,
17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

• Which of these events do you find particularly scary? Why?

• How could you discuss these things with your unchurched friends?

Return to video and finish watching Lesson 1.

Speaking in Code

• As a child, what sorts of things did you or your friends hide from your parents using code language?
• As an adult, what codes do you use in front of your children, pets, or neighbors?

• What *code words* do we Christians use in our conversations that keep unchurched people in the dark and hamper our witness?

Revelation: a Father’s Warning to His Children

We might wonder why God would write a scary letter filled with code words to His children. Actually, the letter itself wasn’t as scary as the world in which God’s children were living, suffering, and dying. God wanted His letter of Revelation to prepare all of us for the suffering we might see and experience and, more importantly, to show us how Jesus already won the victory and that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18b).

• What worldly dangers should we warn our children about as they approach adulthood?

• How can you talk about these same dangers with your friends or coworkers?

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, open our minds to understand Your Word so that we may have confidence in Your great power, put our trust in Your gracious plan for our lives, and share that plan with those who don’t know You. Amen.

THE REVELATION CODE (so far …)

- Dragon = Devil
- Lampstands = Churches
- Incense = Prayers
- White = Victory
- Black = Famine/starvation
- Pale grey = Death
- Sword/ Jesus’ mouth = Word of God
Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, You have been involved in our lives and our world from the beginning. Guide us as we consider what life was like for those suffering under Roman persecution. Reassure us that You will continue to be with us no matter what we experience and will make everything work together for our salvation. We pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Revelation Is God’s Message to His Suffering People

• Where have you seen people suffer for their Christian faith?

• How have you suffered for your faith?

Watch the Video: Lesson 2

In the video we saw what life was like for those Christians to whom Revelation was written.

• What are some similarities and differences between our world and the world in which they lived?

Christians on a Collision Course

At the beginning, Christianity was tolerated within the Roman Empire and the apostles were free to share their faith from place to place. To be sure, persecution flared up in spots, but generally there was peace. But over the years the Roman emperors came to see Christian values and beliefs as a threat to their goals and purposes. Read what Revelation has to say about the Roman Empire’s efforts to stamp out Christianity.

Read Revelation 17:1-18 - The Great Prostitute

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters,

2 with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”

3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.
The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality.

And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.”

And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her, I marveled greatly.

But the angel said to me, “Why do you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.

As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.

And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

These are of one mind, and they hand over their power and authority to the beast.

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful.”

And the angel said to me, “The waters that you saw, where the prostitute is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and languages.

And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

for God has put it into their hearts to carry out His purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

And the woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

Notice the bold parts of this passage show it is speaking about the Roman Empire:

-- **Babylon** - the name of this capital of the mighty Babylonian Empire, which fell to the Persian Empire, was frequently substituted for Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. This was a reminder that Rome would fall just as surely as Babylon had.

-- **Drunk with the blood of the saints** - Several Roman emperors held great public spectacles in which they shed the blood of a great number of Christians.

-- **Seven mountains on which the woman is seated** - the city of Rome was spread over seven hills.

-- **The great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth** - throughout the writing of the New Testament, Rome ruled the numerous kingdoms it had conquered around the Mediterranean Sea.

Pastor Klaus demonstrated that Rome and Christianity were headed on a collision course.

- How are we on a collision course in this country?
• How far should we go to avoid the collision or soften the blow?

• In what ways do you think we have yielded to our society too much already?

• How can we reach out to those who embrace the ungodly values of our society and yet remain true to our faith?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, it is not easy to face persecution and suffering for our faith. Remind us of the price our Savior Jesus Christ willingly paid to save us from our sins and Your wrath. Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to boldly confess our faith in words and actions that those caught in error might learn the truth. We ask these things in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

History of Revelation

The most likely date for the writing of Revelation is the last years of the first Christian century. The setting is Asia Minor (Western Turkey).

We have a good idea of the situation.

• Jews and pagans thought Jesus’ followers who were living a Christian life were saying, “We’re better than you are!”
• The emperor of Rome was trying to enforce the worship of the emperor, something Jesus’ saints could not participate in.
• Both of these issues led to God’s people being killed, exiled, and robbed
• The persecution fell on Asia Minor because Christianity was strongest there.
• With nasty stuff happening, believers began to ask, “Has God lost His power?”
• Revelation is God unveiling His answer to this question. Read Revelation 1:1, 4, 9 and 22:8.
• John was a Jewish Christian who had lived in Galilee.
• It was the unanimous opinion of the early church the author was John, the apostle.

Digging Deeper: Additional links and resources available at lhm.org/revelation.

Learn about the accomplishments of Alexander the Great.
Read about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
The Ancient Roman Censor
Did Roman Emperor Claudius hear news of the resurrection of Christ?
Read about several important Roman emperors.
LESSON 3:
PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Opening Prayer: Holy Father, sometimes our world seems to be spinning out of control, especially when we see the bad guys winning. Open our eyes to see You in complete control and work through us to open the eyes of our friends and neighbors to put their trust and confidence in Your ultimate victory through Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name. Amen.

Old Western movies are great. The settlers have circled their wagons; their guns are a-blazing against countless Indians surrounding them on every side. They’re running low on ammunition and have to make every shot count. All hope seems lost—until they hear that bugle call that means the U. S. Cavalry is riding in to the rescue.

But for the Christians living under Roman persecution, life was more like the Alamo. No cavalry was riding in to the rescue. They were losing their homes, losing their families, losing their lives. For all they could tell, God had lost and Satan was the victor.

Digging Deeper: Learn about martyrs and persecution.

• Think about a situation that looked hopeless to you but God turned it out for your benefit.

Watch the Video: Lesson 3

God gave the message of Revelation particularly for Christians who were wondering where God was and why wasn’t He protecting His children from those who were persecuting them? In the following passage He reminded them the day of their vindication was drawing near. Indeed, the cavalry was coming!


11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.
12 His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself.
13 He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.
14 And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.
15 From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.
16 On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.
17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, **“Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”**

19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

20 And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

21 And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

- Persecution displays itself in a variety of forms. How have you experienced it?

- How did Jesus work for you or through you in that situation?

- How can you encourage someone who wants to deny the faith to avoid persecution?

- How can you give a good witness to those who are persecuting you (and those who are standing on the sidelines watching)?

**Read Hebrews 12:2-3.**

2 looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Remembering Jesus’ death for us, we are reassured our sins are forgiven and God is at peace with us through our Lord and Savior.

**Closing Prayer:** Holy Lord, You already won our victory over Satan on the cross when You crushed his head. Remind us of the price You paid that we may be confident in our daily life. Give us boldness and confidence to share Your Name whatever the risk and whatever the cost. Amen.
Precautions:
Anyone who reads the Bible and, especially, wishes to study Revelation, should be aware of some precautions:

- Keep Revelation consistent with other inspired writings. In interpreting Scripture, the clear passages always illuminate the unclear.
- Interpret Scripture literally unless you are told not to do so. Revelation is obviously symbolic, not literal. You can't take things literally (e.g., 1,000 years) in one spot and then figuratively in another.
- Avoid the idea that Revelation is chronological, i.e., first this will happen, then that, and then something else.
- Remember, much of what John describes cannot be accurately pictured because of the limitations of human language.
- Do not try to find the meaning of each tiny detail.
- As you study, try to read and understand the message like a first-century believer might have looked at the information.

Apocalyptic Writing Versus Prophetic Writing
In the Bible, when God wants to tell us about future events, He chooses one of two styles of writing: apocalyptic or prophetic. Prophetic writing reflects the role humans play in the way God’s plans unfold. God chooses apocalyptic writing when He wants to show He is in complete control, and no one can stop Him from accomplishing His purposes for His people. We find apocalyptic writing in Revelation as well as parts of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah in the Old Testament. In fact, the English word “revelation” is a translation of the Greek word “apocalypse.” Apocalyptic writing reveals or uncovers what God is going to do in the future.

- In prophetic writing, God talks to the whole world.
  *In apocalyptic writing, He is talking to a select group.*

- In prophetic writing, people of the world have hope for repentance.
  *In apocalyptic writing, good and evil are unalterably opposed.*

- In prophetic writing, the world’s history has multiple paths.
  *In apocalyptic writing, the Lord has one, straight path.*

- In prophetic writing, we help in the outcome of things.
  *In apocalyptic writing, God and Satan are often the only players.*

- In prophetic writing, evil can sometimes win.
  *In apocalyptic writing, God is always and ultimately victorious.*

If you understand apocalyptic writing, you can avoid some of the pitfalls that easily lead to misunderstanding.
Time in Revelation

Was Revelation written for the past or the future? How do we see time? A number of interpretations have been suggested:

FUTURIST INTERPRETATION
- Futurists say Revelation only speaks to the end of time.
- They basically ignore the first-century church.
- They pay little attention to the principals of biblical interpretation.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION
- Historicists say Revelation is a direct line of church history stretching from the first century to the present.
- Historicists usually only work with Western European history.

PRETERIST INTERPRETATION
- Preterists say Revelation almost always deals with the first century alone.
- Preterists say Revelation has little to say about the parousia (Second Coming of Christ), the end of the world, and final judgment.

IDEALIST INTERPRETATION
- Idealists feel Revelation is not fixed in an historical context but is relevant to all periods.
- Idealists say the seven churches are symbolic of churches in all time.
- Idealists say Revelation talks of problems faced by churches in all ages.

DRAMATIC INTERPRETATION
- This view holds that Revelation is a cosmic drama that describes eternal principles.

So what’s right? Consider these points:

- Revelation was written to help God’s people find courage in a sinful world.
- Revelation was especially applicable to the first-century churches, as it will be to those at the end of time.
- Revelation is pertinent to all of Christians as it explains and gives assurance of God’s ultimate victory in the lives of His people and the world.

Understand Revelation best by thinking of it as a tire that revolves, but still moves forward.

MILLENNIUM and LEFT BEHIND

Millennial theories fall into three main categories:

PREMILLENNIALISM

Eternity Creation Jesus’ death and resurrection Church Age Second Coming Christ Reigns on Earth Visibly General resurrection and judgment Eternity

1,000 years
• It interprets the Bible, even symbolic writing, literally.
• It expects God’s kingdom to be restored in Israel.
• It has Jesus reigning from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.
• Then will come the judgment.

There are problems with premillennialism:
• Apocryphal language can’t be consistently literal.
• For example, does heaven really have gold streets? Is the devil really a dragon?
• With Jesus reigning in Jerusalem, wouldn’t everyone convert?
• Scripture consistently reports Jesus will return for the purpose of judgment. (Read Matthew 24.)

There are problems with postmillennialism.
• Apocryphal language can’t be consistently literal.
• God alone knows when the end is coming. In the end times, the world will be on a downhill skid—not enjoying a 1,000-year period of peace.

Read Matthew 24:21-23.

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.
22 And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
23 Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There He is!’ do not believe it.
This approach interprets literal passages literally and apocalyptic passages symbolically. It maintains the 1,000 years can be interpreted properly using appropriate definitions of symbols.

- Most conservative theologians view the “thousand years” of Revelation as a symbolic number. Here is an example:
  - John’s numbers usually have a symbolic meaning.
  - “Ten” was the number that meant a round number or a complete number.
  - “A thousand” is the cube of 10. This intensifies the meaning of the original number. Therefore, “a thousand” is the roundest number or understood as the rest of time.

For those who are not yet convinced, remember this:

- The “thousand years” is mentioned nowhere else in the Bible.
- The concept is almost unknown in apocalyptic literature.
- It does not fit with the rest of Scripture.
LESSON 4:
CRACKING REVELATION’S CODE

Opening Prayer: Holy Father, thank You for providing a book of comfort to Your persecuted children. Remind us that You will never leave or forsake us. This we ask in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Many of us enjoyed working with codes when we were kids. But a code is worthless without the key to interpret it. Today, we learn the key to understanding the code in Revelation.

Watch the Video: Session 4

Now that you know the code, read these great passages to practice using it.

Read Revelation 21:1-10; 22-27.

1    Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.
2    And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3    And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God.
4    He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.
5    And He who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also He said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”
6    And He said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.
7    The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be My son.
8    But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”
9    Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.”
10   And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

22   And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.
23   And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.
24   By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,
25   and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.
26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.
27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

This chapter magnificently describes the new heaven and new earth that Jesus will establish on Judgment Day for us to live together with Him in glory forever.

• How did the codes you learned in the video help you unfold this passage?

• What descriptions do you find most inspiring?

• How could you use this message to comfort and strengthen someone who is going through a crisis?

• How can your knowledge of the end of the story help you witness to your friends, neighbors, and coworkers who don’t know Jesus Christ?

Closing Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You for the victory and eternal life You have given us through Your Son Jesus Christ. Keep us in this true faith unto life everlasting. Guard us in times of temptation and trial that, comforted by Your promises, we may always be prepared to give a reason for this hope You have given us. We pray in Jesus’ Name. Amen.
Revelation Symbols and Their Meanings

Numbers:
- 3½ (half of 7), a definitely limited period of time
- 4 means the created world
- 6 means imperfection—i.e. wanting to be like 7—God's number—but not able to
- 666 is an intensification of 6 equaling the worst evil there can be (In Revelation 12-13, John portrays an evil anti-Trinity trio who work against the people of God. This threesome is made up of “the dragon” (i.e. Satan) the “first beast rising out of the sea” (i.e. broad political power like that of the Roman emperors who persecuted the church) and the “second beast rising out of the land” (i.e. false prophets arising from within the church). The three-fold number—666—may represent the members of this anti-Trinity trio, each of whom seeks to be like the Holy Trinity.
- 7 means the works God alone can do and either does or has done
- 10 means all of
- 1,000 means really, absolutely all of…
- 12 is used for the people of God—12 tribes in Old Testament, 12 apostles in New Testament
- 144,000 is a combination of 12s (12 x 12) and 10s (10 x 10 x 10) meaning really, absolutely, totally all of God's people in the Old and New Testament times
- addition of two numbers together means both numbers are assumed as the result
- squaring or cubing a number intensifies its meaning (i.e. if 10 means all of, then 1,000 means really, absolutely all of)

Colors:
- black is famine or starvation
- pale gray is death
- white is victory

Objects:
- Armageddon literally means the mountain of Megiddo in Revelation, symbolic for the final battleground between God and the forces of evil
- Babylon stands for Rome and its emperors who persecuted Christians
- book or scroll is the heavenly record
- bowls carry things from heaven to earth or vice versa
- dragon represents the devil
- eye is symbolic of knowledge
- Gog and Magog represent the entire anti-Christian world
- harlot, prostitute, or fornicators represent people from within the church who should be faithful to the Lord and His Word but are not—they’re “false prophets”
- virgin faithful believers who refuse to worship anything but the Trinity
- horns represent power, like the horns of an animal
- incense is prayer
- jewels represent glory
- lampstands are churches
- land represents organized non-Christian religions
- living water equals life and truth
- **sea** represents evil human government
- **seals** designate something as private property. In antiquity, lumps of clay impressed with a signet ring or cylinder seal were used to indicate ownership. To seal a scroll, a lump of clay was placed over the strings that tied up the roll and then stamped.
- **stagnant water** represents death
- **trumpets** announce an event
- **winepress** portrays God’s judgment and hell. In a winepress the juice or blood of grapes was crushed underfoot to make wine. In God’s judgment, the blood of sinners is poured out in eternal death under the crushing burden of His wrath.

**LEFT BEHIND**

*Left Behind* claims it is based on John’s revelation. As such, the authors have concocted a best-selling story line of
- vanishing believers,
- pilotless airplanes,
- spouses waking next to empty pajamas.

It’s a story so convincing that uninformed Christians point to uninformed friends who are now saved because of *Left Behind*.

Of course, we know God can bring good out of anything, including this series. But we also know the end doesn’t justify the means.

The authors of *Left Behind* claim their books are truthful. The most they can claim is that they are truthful from a millennialistic, literalistic, non-symbolic position.

The truth is this:
- Revelation was inspired to give courage to Christ’s people during difficult times. *Left Behind* is written from a legalistic and defeatist point of view.

- Revelation stresses the joy and ultimate victory of those who know Jesus as Savior. *Left Behind* overlooks these themes and zeroes in on that which is frightening and sensational.

- Revelation says the ultimate victory is to be given to the millions who have Jesus as their Lord and Savior. *Left Behind* implies joy is reserved for those relative few that understand the end times.

*Left Behind* contradicts Scripture.
- *Left Behind* says there is a second chance for salvation; the Bible says that now, today, is the time of salvation.
- *Left Behind* encourages people to wait and see if the stories come true and, if they do, then, they will believe.
- *Left Behind* indicates that when Jesus comes back on Judgment Day, there will be extra time to believe. The Scriptures, however, maintain there will be no second chances.
- Lastly, Revelation should inspire gladness for the Savior’s return, not despair. Jesus’ last words in the Bible are these: “Yes, I am coming soon.” Our reply should be, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (See Revelation 22:20.)
Digging Deeper: Additional links and resources available at lh.org/revelation.

Why does Revelation speak of 1,000 years?
Learn how Lutherans respond to the Left Behind Series.
Find out more about the Lutheran view of the end times.

For Further Study

- Revelation by Dr. Louis A. Brighton (theologian version)
- Revelation by Dr. Louis A. Brighton (popular version)
- Revelation - People’s Bible Commentary by Wayne Mueller
- Revelation: Worthy Is the Lamb by Rodney L. Rathmann, Julene Dumit, and Dale E. Griffin. God’s Word for Today series (Bible study)
- The Lutheran Study Bible (The notes accompanying the book of Revelation are tremendously helpful.)

Author Dedication

“This Bible study is dedicated to the host of Christian brothers and sisters who do not just study the book of Revelation—they also live it. By God’s grace may they hold fast to God’s revealed truth, which says that through the Savior’s victory they are more than conquerors. Indeed, nothing in all creation can separate them—and us—from the love of God given to us through the merit of the crucified and risen Lord.”

—Rev. Ken Klaus