

**First Things To Know:**

- *Audience:* John wrote to persecuted believers living in AD 95-96
- *Purpose:* to comfort the Church in its struggle to be faithful against the forces of evil
- *Main theme:* the victory of Christ and His Church over Satan and his helpers (Rv. 1:18; 2:8; 5:9; 6:2; 11:15; 12:9; 14:1, 14; 15:2; 20:4; 22:3)
- *Structure:* [1:1-8]: opening, [1:9-3:22]: Jesus' presence with his people, [4:1-22:5]: Jesus' defense of his people and the destruction of their enemies, [22:6-21]: ending

**Reading Strategy:**

1. Read Revelation For What It Is
  - o What we believe something is guides us in what we do with it (See Rv. 1:1)
2. Read Revelation As Connected To The Old Testament
  - o We must know the OT in order to know what references mean
- *Putting it into Practice:*
  - o Rv. 10:9-11 like Ezekiel 2:9-3:4
  - o Rv. 8-16 like Exodus 5-11
3. Read Revelation In Its Genre
  - o **As Jewish Apocalyptic literature, it's full of symbols**
    - *Apocalypse* (Rv. 1:1) ≠ "end of the world," but rather = "unveiling" or "revelation"
    - Gives us a heavenly perspective on our earthly circumstances
  - o Images are used to represent other things (Rv. 1:20; 5:8; 12:9; 17:12)
  - o Goal of Apocalyptic literature: not speculative foresight, but theological insight
  - o To follow its rules, we should: (1) study each scene with whole book in mind, (2) look for OT backgrounds, (3) with that, expect symbols and think through what message is communicated, (4) remember John's historical setting
  - o **As Prophecy, it's comforting & challenging** (like Ezekiel 24:15-21)
  - o **As a Pastoral Letter, it's written to real living people**
- *Putting it into Practice:*
  - o #1: Revelation 7:1-8 - Number of believers in heaven
  - o #2: Revelation 20:4-5 - 1,000 years / The Millennium
    - Psalm 90:4, 2 Peter 3:8 - thousand years = long period of time
    - Satan's binding - dealt the decisive blow (Luke 10:18; Col 2:15)
    - Jesus-followers resurrected as priests - spiritual reign given to them at salvation in Jesus
    - Other numbers are used as analogies in Revelation, so 1,000 should be taken figuratively = a long time between Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming
    - Two ages in the NT (Matthew 12:32; Luke 18:29-30; Ephesians 1:21), not *three*
4. Read Revelation In Its Structure
  - o Pattern seen = definitive final judgement gives way to salvation (Rv. 6:12-17 & 7:9-17 // Rv. 14:14-20 & 15:2-4 // Rv. 16:17-18:24 & 19:1-10)
  - o John's visions "double back" to present distinct complementary perspectives on the same timeframe (Jesus' 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming) - not linear chronologically
5. Read Revelation For Its Message
  - o Jesus is still present and reigning, we should be faithful
  - o We shouldn't bow our knee to any other authorities (fight complacency and compromise)
- *Putting it into Practice:* Revelation 21: The Hope of Heaven

## Understanding Colors and Numbers in the Apocalyptic Literature of Revelation:

Color / Number:	Reality Being Communicated:	Examples in Revelation:
White	Victory, purity, divinity	1:14; 3:4-5, 18; 6:2, 11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:11, 14; 20:11
Red	Blood, violent power	6:4; 9:17; 12:3
Purple / Scarlet	Imperial evil	17:3-4; 18:12, 16
Black / Green	Death, disaster	6:5, 8, 12
Gold	Wealth, royalty, real (or false) divinity	1:12-13, 20; 2:1; 3:18; 4:4; 5:8; 8:3; 9:7, 13, 20; 14:14; 15:7; 18:16; 21:15, 18, 21
$\frac{1}{3}$ / $\frac{1}{2}$	Limited amount of time	8:1, 7-12; 9:15, 18; 12:4
3	Distinct group / Real (or false) divinity	1:4-5; 8:13; 9:18; 12-13; 16:13, 19
3 $\frac{1}{2}$	Limited time (half of fullness)	11:2-3, 9, 11; 12:6, 14; 13:5
4	Universal scope	4:6-8; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1-8; 7:1-2, 11; 9:15; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4; 20:8
6	Imperfection (lack of fullness)	13:18
7	Fullness, perfection	1:4, 16; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1, 5, 11-12, 20; 5:6; 6:1; 8:2, 6; 13:1; 15:1, 6-8; 16:1; 17:1, 3, 7, 9; 21:9
12 (and multiples: 24, 144)	God's people, presence, fullness	4:4, 10; 5:8; 7:14; 11:16; 12:1; 14:1, 3; 19:4; 21:12, 14, 21; 22:2
1,000 (and multiples)	A vast amount	5:11, 7:4-8; 11:13; 14:1, 3; 20:2-7

### Some good books:

- William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*
- G. K. Beale, *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*
- Michael Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*