

“Satan’s Successful Lies that Keep us from Studying Revelation”

Revelation Overview

The Book of Revelation is one of the most important books in the Bible, which is why Satan doesn’t want us to read it. It’s the final book in the bible that tells us about the end of this world as we know it. It tells us about our blessed future. It wraps up everything God has been saying from Genesis to Jude. It’s a crucial book for the believer. Even a casual understanding of it gives us great confidence in God because we understand He’s in control and He’s working His plan to bring us to an amazing climax in the future where believers in Jesus Christ will truly live ‘happily ever after.’ Satan doesn’t want us to focus on our future hope. Because if we are we just might tell other people what really is going to today and what the future holds – for those who reject Jesus and those who accept Him. Satan has been working hard since the Garden of Eden spreading his lies about God and the future.

Before we can show you how the tribulation fits into the context of Revelation, we need to get a little more familiar with Revelation. My prayer this morning is to make Revelation approachable for you. To help you realize it is far more understandable than we think. But even more important is that we are motivated to be expecting the return of Jesus Christ to this earth one day soon and live now with the end in sight.

We are going to examine four common lies Satan uses to keep us from studying the book of Revelation. The first lie from Satan regarding Revelation is something we have probably all heard and maybe even said ourselves. What’s that?

Lie # 1 “Revelation is Too Complicated!”

Satan is extremely encouraged when he hears us say that. If we think it’s too complicated we won’t study it. We tend to avoid things we find complicating or even arrogantly snicker ‘Yeah, I can’t be bothered with that’ as if we’re more mature and don’t need it. Yet when we do attempt things we thought were complicated we find out its usually not as hard as we thought. In time we get pretty good at it and then we show others how to do it. If believers reject the lie that Revelation is too complicated and read it, we will see that it makes more sense than we thought.

Remember, Satan’s purpose in life is to deceive. When he appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in the opening pages of the Bible, he deceived Eve into eating the fruit from the tree God said not to eat from it. How did he deceive her? He lied to her. What are the very first words spoken by Satan that are recorded in the Bible? “*Did God really say . . .*” Satan’s goal is to cast doubt on God’s Word. If you read and listen to God’s Word you’re going to know the truth and he will be exposed for the liar that he is.

So when we hear one of Satan’s lies we must counter it with truth. Satan says Revelation is too complicated so you better not study it. But what does God say?

God says – ‘Revelation Unveils the Details Around Jesus’ Return’ (1:1; 22:12)

The root word revelation means “reveal”. God wants to reveal or unveil the truth concerning the coming of Jesus Christ. Notice how the very first verse in Revelation tells us that God wants to reveal something important to us:

*¹The **Revelation** [unveil, reveal] of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him [Jesus who doesn't lie] to **show** [cause to see'; explain] to His bond-servants, the things which must [not might or could] soon take place; and He sent and **communicated** it by His angel to His bond-servant John,*

If God wants to “reveal” and “show” us “His servants” what must soon take place I don't believe He's going to make it complicated. He wants us to know. Revelation means “unveil”, “uncover” not hide or make hard. God wants us to know about how the world will end and especially about Jesus' return.

*"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."
(22:7)*

A few verses later the angel speaks to John and says,

"Do not seal up the words of the prophecy in this book because the time is near." (22:10)

‘Do not seal up’ means don't put this away for some future day Why would God and Jesus and an angel command us to keep something we can't understand? God wants to show us what must take place in the future. ‘But I have read it’, you say ‘and I struggle to understand it’. Two simple reasons. First, there some symbols used to describe things that John saw. And some people take those symbols and make them say things God never meant to say. Remember, Scripture always interprets Scripture and as we'll see many of those symbols are explained either in Revelation or in other parts of the Bible.

Another reason we struggle to understand Revelation is that it takes many prophecies from the Old Testament and puts them together. If we don't know the Old Testament very well we're going to have trouble getting a handle on Revelation. Revelation is at the end of our Bibles and so we need the rest of Scripture to understand it.

Daniel 9 (as we've been studying) gives us the framework of the last seven years in God's prophetic calendar. If you don't believe that the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy refers to the last 7 years (which we call the Tribulation), then we will not understand what is going on from Rev. 6-19. We'll show you in a few weeks how the last 7 years in Daniel 9 fits right into Rev. 6-19.

Without a proper understanding of Old Testament prophecy some get to Revelation and come up with all kinds of strange interpretations. And when you have all these different interpretations you get controversy and controversy causes division and we certainly don't want that. However, there is an easy and correct interpretation of Revelation that Satan doesn't want us to see. So he plays on our fears and uses this lie:

Lie # 2 "Revelation is Too Controversial!"

‘So let's not cause division. We should just avoid studying it – and we better avoid studying the prophets too – and maybe some sections of the gospels when Jesus talks about prophecy – oh, and I guess we must avoid certain passages in Paul's epistles too!!’ Where does it end? Just because something causes controversy doesn't mean we should avoid it especially when it concerns truth. Truth always causes controversy because many don't want the truth. Does discussing creation and

evolution cause controversy? Yes. Then we should avoid discussing these things, right? No. Comparing Jesus with Muhammed or Buddha or discussing biblical faith vs. religions brings about controversy? Should we stop? Only if they are all true, but they are not.

Is Jesus coming back to earth in the flesh? Yes. Should we not try to understand as much as we can that God reveals to us in the Bible? Isn't the Bible the inspired, inerrant word of God? Or does that not apply to prophecy? Sometimes believers say we shouldn't argue about non-essentials, and I agree. However, is the return of Jesus Christ a non-essential? Was His first coming essential? And if His second coming results in the end of the world as we know it – and it will – then it's essential. So yes, we need to study it and be prepared for controversy with the understanding that we don't have all the details too.

God must know we'll struggle with Revelation, so He does something here that I'm not aware He does anywhere else in any other book of the Bible. What does God say to help us clear up the controversy about interpreting Revelation?

God Puts a Simple Outline in Revelation (1:19)

When Jesus told John to write down these things in the book He gave him an outline of Revelation which helps us get a big picture of the book. I need a big picture. I need to break things down so I can understand them better – most of us do. So Jesus gives us the outline of the book in 1:19.

“Write therefore, what you have seen”. Ch. 1 records this vision of the resurrected and glorified Jesus.

“Write down . . . what is now”. John wrote letters to the churches who were there at that time. There were more than 7 churches in that region and Jesus' call for 'whoever has ears to hear' is always a call to all believers of all churches.

“Write down what will take place later” refers to everything that happens from ch. 4 to 22.

Let's break down Revelation starting with what we know for sure. Ch. 1 is an introduction. John was on the Island of Patmos, sentenced by Emperor Domitian in the early 90's AD. John has a vision of Jesus who then says write down ... the things which you've seen, the things which are now and the things to take place later.

I believe the things which are' refer to the letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3. Messages that have some specific historical details yet have a universal application to any church at any time. I strongly disagree with the fanciful interpretation that says these 7 churches describe the church ages since the days of the early church. And that now we are in the Laodicean age. The text gives us no indication whatsoever of that interpretation. And what if the church age continues for 500 more years? Then what age are we in.

What about Ch. 4-22, 'the things which will take place'? In Ch. 4-5 John is taken up into the presence of God's throne where he sees Jesus who alone can open up the scroll of God's wrath coming on the earth. Ch's 6-19 are the unravelling of that wrath taking place on the earth, concluding with Jesus' return in Ch. 19. Ch. 20 talks about a 1000-year period where Satan is locked up and Jesus rules on earth. That ends with Satan's release, his final attempt to overthrow Jesus once more

only to be thrown into the lake of fire once for all. The great white throne judgment then happens when all unbelievers will be sentenced to eternity in the lake of fire. Ch. 21-22 is the eternal age.

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So if Ch.'s 6-19 deal with the last seven years where God pours out His judgment wrath to cause Israel to turn to Him, help a lot of people turn to Him in repentance through the gospel instead of the anti-messiah and the rest being judged for rejecting God, then Revelation is not that hard to grasp. If we take it simply the way we read it, understand it as it is presented in chronological order (with occasional explanation) we will not be confused.

But it can't be that simple can it? If Satan can't keep us from reading it he will try his best to confuse us. So instead of taking Revelation literally, Satan spreads another lie:

Lie # 3 "It's Just a Spiritual Allegory Depicting the Battle Between Good and Evil!"

Perhaps you've heard Revelation explained that way. 'We can't really understand it with all those symbols and angels and supposed anti-Christ. They're not real it's just an illustration of the eternal battle between good and evil and thankfully good wins!

Satan doesn't mind that interpretation because it downplays his part. It deflects attention away from a real anti-Christ who will seek to deceive the world into believing he is the Messiah himself and force everyone to worship him or die (ch. 13). If there's no real anti-Christ then it also downplays and even hides the reality of Satan himself. *"Satan masquerades himself as an angel of light. It is not surprising then that his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve"* (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

When we take Revelation literally (understanding how God interprets symbols in the Scriptures) we know that

God says – 'Satan and the Anti-Christ are But They Lose! (12:9; 20:10)

The book of Revelation tells us a lot about Satan. Ch. 12:9 tells us clearly that the serpent in Gen. 3 was *"that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray"*. John sees a dragon which we are clearly told is Satan. Satan stands at the shore of the sea of humanity (13:1) and hand-picks his Messianic impersonator whose plan is to deceive the world into thinking he's the Messiah and can bring peace to the world. Paul tells us this quite clearly in 2 Thes. 2:9.

"The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing."

If Satan can deflect any attention away from his reality he will. But Revelation quite clearly shows us Satan is real, he's here to deceive the world into thinking Jesus is not the only way. Also that he will be thrown into the lake of fire (20:10).

There is one more lie that Satan has successfully convinced many Christians to believe and this is the most damaging so far. Several Christians falsely believe Satan's lie that . . .

Lie # 4 "Revelation is already Fulfilled"

That Revelation is not prophecy but history. That John is describing in symbolic language the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. That Nero was the anti-Christ and Titus the general who led the army to destroy the temple was the false prophet. That we are in the millennial kingdom now – since 1000 years is not to be taken literally. That the literal promises to Israel are all now spiritually fulfilled in us the church. That Jesus' returned in the clouds in 70 A.D., witnessed the destruction and returned to rule from His throne in heaven. That we are to bring in the eternal age by preaching the gospel to all the ends of the earth.

This is such a sad understanding of Revelation and does so much damage. If Revelation is history why bother studying it? What ramifications are there for us. The most obvious argument against the historical view is that we know historically John was put on the island of Patmos near the end of his life under the rule of Emperor Domitian between 90-94 AD. Why would Jesus and God tell John to write about "things to come" if they already came? Why would Jesus Himself tell John numerous times "*I am coming soon*" when He was not? Wouldn't that make Jesus a liar? When you read Revelation as you read any other book of the Bible, in the most natural sense in which it is written,

God says – 'The Worst and Best is Yet to Come' (12:9; 20:10)

Here are some counterarguments that show that Revelation is in the future not history:

God's wrath has clearly not come yet (Ch's 6-19:3)

The bulk of Revelation concerns the coming judgment of God's wrath poured out on the whole world, not one city. When this begins in Ch. 6 we clearly read 1/3 of the earth and trees will be burned up, 1/3 of sea creatures die, 1/3 of the world's ships will be destroyed because 1/3 of the world's water turns to blood, and 1/4 of the world's population will die. This is just the beginning of the 7-year tribulation. There are 3 series of judgments poured on the entire earth. The 7 seal judgments, then 7 trumpet judgments, and then the 7 bowl judgments.

We have yet to see the anti-Christ, a dictator who will rule the entire world and force all religions to melt into one, ultimately even removing them to make himself the only object of worship. If you just read the book normally, taking these statements literally as you would any other book in the Bible, a historical interpretation makes no sense.

What else hasn't happened?

Jesus has not come yet to earth (19:4-21)

When we read Rev. 19 about Jesus' return, Jesus comes back to the earth. He doesn't remain in the clouds. I am going to comment more on this singular point next week when we observe communion and show you how taking communion is an act of faith believing that He has not yet come.

God's promises to Israel have not yet come (20:1-6)

In Rev. 20 we read that when Jesus comes back He will establish His rule on this earth for 1000 years. Six times we read it will be 1000 years. All the promises God made about land and blessings and peace to Israel find their fulfillment here. This has not happened. The church does not

replace Israel. The promises God gave to Abraham are unconditional. The prophets reaffirmed this. Israel's rejection of Jesus resulted in the gospel going to the Gentiles, not the promised land of Israel. Paul argues quite persuasively in Rom. 9-11 that God did not renege on His promises to Israel. Jeremiah said only if the sun, stars, moon, day and night stop will God's promises to Israel die.

Those who hold that Revelation is history say that Satan is locked up now. That his presence is not here and he has not been exercising his power since 70 AD. So then why does Paul teach so strongly in Eph. 6 about spiritual warfare and our battle with Satan? Why does Peter say the devil prowls around like a roaring lion waiting to devour us? Satan's power was defeated at the cross according to Heb. 2, but he's still allowed to do his dirty work until he is locked up for 1000 years.

A casual reading of Revelation simply indicates that these things have not happened as God said they would happen. If all the detailed prophecies about Jesus' birth came true; if all the detailed prophecies about Jesus' death and resurrection came true; then all the detailed, literal prophecies about the last 7 years leading up to and including Jesus' return and God's promises to Israel will literally come true. God is consistent.

Perhaps there's another reason – and we can't blame Satan for tis one – why we don't read or study Revelation. We're too lazy to read it and study it. Our own apathy is perhaps the greatest reason why we don't study God's Word. We're too 'busy' living for our self than we are concerned about what concerns God. If we don't know what the future holds for our unbelieving friends and family members regarding the last 7 years on this earth, how can we warn them? How will they know why believers will disappear? How will they know this nice sounding world leader is Satan's right-hand man? We need to live for eternal purposes not our own. Nothing on earth lasts. Our possessions, awards, promotions, and status will all disappear one day. All that matters is living for God.

The book of Revelation is the only book in the Bible that tells you, you will be blessed if you just read the words. *"Blessed is the one who reads the word of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."*

The solution to battling lies is truth. The Bible is God's truth revealed to us so we can know not only what Jesus did for us in the past but also what He's going to do in the future so we can live confidently in the present. Satan doesn't want us to know about God's future promises because he doesn't want us to live victorious, confident lives of faith in Christ. Does the truth that Jesus will come back one day, defeat His enemies, and establish his rule on earth change how we live today?

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us at olivet@rideau.net