

Preparation for the End Time

Jesus and the Book of Revelation

Lesson #3 for April 21, 2018

Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; Ephesians 1:20; Revelation 1:10-18; 3:21; 11:19; 12:1-17; 19:11-15.

1. The book of Revelation is a book full of symbolism, mysterious creatures, and many references tied to the Old Testament. Many other books in the New Testament also show a clear dependence upon the Old Testament. Jesus Himself frequently quoted the Scriptures—which, of course, in His day included only the Old Testament—saying they needed to be fulfilled. (See Matthew 26:54,56; Mark 14:49; John 13:18; 17:12. Compare Psalm 41:9.)
2. It is virtually impossible to read the book of Revelation and understand it without a fairly good knowledge of Old Testament symbolism. It is particularly closely related to the book of Daniel. That is why we often study those two books together.
3. In Revelation 1:1, we read that this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. That could mean either that it is a revelation from Jesus Christ; or, it could mean that it is a revelation about Jesus Christ. Or, would it be more correct to say that it is both?
4. Much of the book of Revelation has to do with events scattered in the future from Jesus's day all the way to the end of this world—even to the third coming and the new heavens and the new earth.
5. Critical scholars have done terrible things with the book of Revelation. Look at some of their comments. First of all, because *a priori* they believe that not even God can predict the future, they try to make the book of Revelation all about a pagan resurgence or resurrection of the worship of Nero as a god! They do not believe in the existence of a personal Devil; and, therefore, they do not admit anything like a cosmic conflict or great controversy.
6. With that background, they see the book of Revelation as a book about God's retributive revenge against His enemies. Some regard the Holocaust against the Jews at the time of World War II as proof that God no longer cares about what happens on planet earth.
7. Martin Luther (1522) is famous for his statements about the book of Revelation. He said:
I miss more than one thing in this book,... and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic.... My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. For me this is reason enough not to think highly of it: Christ is neither taught nor known in it.

Notice these comments from other so-called biblical scholars:

"Revelation is a 'hideous' version of Christianity; It is 'a repulsive work.'"

"Resentment and not love is the teaching of the Revelation of St. John the Divine."

Revelation is a book "without wisdom, goodness, kindness, or affection of any kind."

"What we find in Revelation... is a projection into the future of what was unfulfilled in the past. Jesus did not destroy the wicked in His earthly life, but He would return with supernatural power to complete the task."

"We are bound to judge that in his conception of the character of God and his attitude to man, the book falls below the level not only of the teaching of Jesus but of the best parts of the Old Testament."

“In the popular view, Apocalypse is about cataclysm, death, and destruction. . . .”

“God’s covenant curses on His enemies.”

“The primary focus is on punitive judgment.”

“Righteous judgments and vengeance upon those who viciously harassed and oppressed the faithful.”

8. I have chosen not to mention the names of the scholars who are quoted above. However, these are actual quotes, and some of them are from Adventist scholars. The exception, of course, is the name of Luther since his quotation is so widely known.
9. How incredibly different are these views from the views of those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation! Aren’t you glad that we have a nicer picture of a God of love, a picture based on reading all 66 books of the Bible?
10. Ellen White painted a very different picture than do the above “scholars.”

The whole Bible is a revelation; for all revelation to men comes through Christ, and all centers in Him. God has spoken unto us by His Son, whose we are by creation and by redemption. Christ came to John exiled on the Isle of Patmos to give him the truth for these last days, to show him that which must shortly come to pass. Jesus Christ is the great trustee of divine revelation. It is through Him that we have a knowledge of what we are to look for in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. God gave this revelation to Christ, and Christ communicated the same to John.

John, the beloved disciple, was the one chosen to receive this revelation. He was the last survivor of the first chosen disciples. Under the New Testament dispensation he was honored as the prophet Daniel was honored under the Old Testament dispensation.

The instruction to be communicated to John was so important that Christ came from heaven to give it to His servant, telling [954] him to send it to the churches. This instruction is to be the object of our careful and prayerful study; for we are living in a time when men who are not under the teaching of the Holy Spirit will bring in false theories. These men have been standing in high places, and they have ambitious projects to carry out. They seek to exalt themselves, and to revolutionize the whole showing of things. God has given us special instruction to guard us against such ones. He bade John write in a book that which should take place in the closing scenes of this earth’s history (Manuscript 129, 1905).—Ellen G. White, *7SDABC** 953.7-9.

11. Both the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation are divided into two basic sections: 1) A historical section, and 2) An eschatological section dealing with end-time events. But, even the historical sections give us hints about things that will likely happen at the end of this world’s history. Thus, Old Testament history gives us some hints about what is coming in the future.
12. There are many passages in the New Testament suggesting that we should learn from the Old Testament. For example, see 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. Last week we discussed how the stories of Daniel 3 and Daniel 6 might have parallels at the end of time. Will the lives of the righteous be threatened in the end times? (Revelation 13) Remember that Revelation teaches that what is coming in the future will be worse than anything that has happened in the past. Fortunately, we are assured that, ultimately, God’s cause will be victorious.
13. Revelation is divided between the historical portion in Revelation 1-11 and the end-time

portion in Revelation 13-22. So, what about Revelation 12 in the middle? Revelation 12 is a brief panoramic view of the history of the great controversy from its start in heaven beside the throne of God to nearly its end as the dragon fights to destroy God's church. Once again, we are reminded of the incredible battles which are key events in the great controversy. How could Lucifer the highest of the created angels standing next to the throne of God even think about rebelling against God? And then, after 4000 years of human history, God sent His Son as a helpless baby Boy into the heart of the Devil's territory here on planet earth to win the great controversy! Could there be any greater contrast between good and evil than that?

14. So, what have we learned by studying the history of the great controversy? Let it never be said that Adventists are no better than others in the world; we must learn from history and not be like those who never learn from history!
15. If you scan through the book of Revelation, you will discover that Jesus is given many different names and descriptions. For example, see Revelation 1:5,18; 5:8; 19:11-16; and 21:6 in the *Good News Bible*.* He is called "the faithful witness," (Revelation 1:5) "the first to be raised from death and who is also the ruler of the kings of the world." (Revelation 1:5) He is "the living one" (Revelation 1:18) who has "authority over death and the world of the dead." (Revelation 1:18) He is "the Lamb," (Revelation 5:8) the "Faithful and True," (Revelation 19:11) the One who "judges and fights his battles." (Revelation 19:11) "His eyes were like a flame of fire." (Revelation 19:12) "He wore many crowns on his head." (Revelation 19:12) "He had a name written on him, but no one except himself knows what it is"! (Revelation 19:12) That name includes "The Word of God." (Revelation 19:13) He is followed by "the armies of heaven." (Revelation 19:14) "Out of his mouth came a sharp sword." (Revelation 19:15) "He will defeat the nations" (Revelation 19:15) and "rule over them with a rod of iron." (Revelation 19:15) "He will trample out the wine in the wine press of the furious anger of the Almighty God." (Revelation 19:15) And finally, He will be "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16) When the real Jesus returns, the entire sky will be full of bright, shining angels.

These are only a few of the many texts in Revelation that depict Jesus in various roles and functions. He is the Lamb, which points to His first coming, in which He offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (*1 Cor. 5:7*). He was also the One who "was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (*Rev. 1:18*), a clear reference to His death and resurrection from the dead. "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day" (*Luke 24:46, ASV*). Finally, in Revelation 19:11-15, He is depicted in His role at the Second Coming, when He will return to the earth in power and glory and judgment. " 'For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works' " (*Matt. 16:27, NKJV*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, April 16.

16. **Is the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus a central focus in your life?**
17. One of the other interesting aspects of the book of Revelation is the focus on the sanctuary motif. When we see Jesus walking among the lampstands, (Revelation 1:13) we are reminded of the holy place in the sanctuary of old.
18. Read Revelation 4:1-2. What is being pictured in these verses? It is the throne room of God in heaven. Where is this open door located? See also Acts 2:33; 5:31; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 10:12-13; Psalm 110:1; and Revelation 12:5. In these verses, we see pictured Jesus, sitting at the right hand of God, carrying out His ministry in the first compartment of the

temple. We need to recognize, of course, that this is not about location. Wherever God—either the Father, the Holy Spirit, or the Son—is, is a most holy place. The first compartment of the temple represents a certain aspect or function of His ministry.

19. Now read Revelation 11:19. What is pictured? John saw the covenant box located in the most holy place. Could this be a reference to the fact that at the death of Jesus, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, opening the way into the most holy place? No one disputes the fact that this is a reference to the most holy place in the sanctuary in heaven.
20. These references suggest to us that there are two different aspects to the ministry of Jesus Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Ellen White reminded us that:

All heaven is engaged in the work of preparing a people to stand in the day of the Lord's preparation. The connection of heaven with earth seems very close.—Ellen G. White, *Letter 45*,* 1892; *My Life Today** 307.2.

21. Is it fair, then, to say that every aspect of the book of Revelation is intended to be a revelation of Jesus Christ? Surely, God would not call it a revelation of Jesus Christ if it is a sealed or shut book—as many claim.
22. Read again Revelation 1:1-8. Jesus made it very clear in these verses that He is revealing the truth to us through John, and He is coming back. The fact that Jesus Himself came to reveal this information to John while he was in exile on the Isle of Patmos makes it very clear to us that God is intimately involved in everything that happens on this earth.
23. Read Revelation 1:7. This is one of the most precious promises in Scripture. Jesus is coming back, and everyone will see Him. The manner of His coming cannot be duplicated because when He comes, the entire sky will be filled with bright, shining angels. (GC 640.3)
24. Read **Revelation 1:12-18**:

¹² I turned round to see who was talking to me, and I saw seven gold lamp-stands, and among them there was what **looked like a human being, wearing a robe that reached to his feet, and a gold belt round his chest. His hair was white as wool, or as snow, and his eyes blazed like fire; his feet shone like brass that has been refined and polished, and his voice sounded like a roaring waterfall.** ¹⁶He held **seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came out of his mouth. His face was as bright as the midday sun.** When I saw him, I fell down at his feet like a dead man. He placed his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! **I am the first and the last.** ¹⁸I am the living one! **I was dead, but now I am alive for ever and ever. I have authority over death and the world of the dead.**"—*Good News Bible** (Revelation 1:12-18). [Bold type is added.]

Compare the sword described in Hebrews 4:12.

25. Why do you think John fell on his face when he heard those words and saw Jesus? We have seen that response from various people in the Old Testament—see, for example, Joshua, (Joshua 5:14) Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 1:28) and Daniel. (Daniel 10:9) Jesus made it very clear that He has always existed. He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.
26. Jesus delayed His arrival at Bethany until Lazarus had been dead for four days. He did that on purpose because in those days many believed that the spirit somehow hovered over the body for three days just in case the person came back to life. But, after four days, no one questioned whether or not Lazarus was dead.

27. Read **John 11:25-26**:

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and all those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?"—*Good News Bible** (John 11:25-26).

28. In the book of Revelation, Jesus repeated that wonderful promise. Read Revelation 22:7, 12-13. Once again, at the end of the book, He revealed to us that He is the First and the Last; but then, He repeated the promise, "I am coming soon."

Christ Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the Genesis of the Old Testament, and the Revelation of the New. Both meet together in Christ. Adam and God are reconciled by the obedience of the second Adam, who accomplished the work of overcoming the temptations of Satan and redeeming Adam's disgraceful failure and fall.—Ellen G. White, *Ellen G. White Comments in The SDA Bible Commentary,** vol. 6, 1092.8-1093.0.

29. The wonderful love of Jesus is seen in every step of the great controversy. The fact that He allowed that rebellion to develop in heaven without cutting short anyone's freedom, and then, was willing to come Himself to this earth—to the center of Satan's rebellion—and appear as a helpless baby Boy all the way through to the time when He died a criminal's death reveals a God who will go to any length to demonstrate the truth. But, that is not the end of the story. He promised in Revelation that He will come again and take the righteous with Him to heaven; and after the thousand years of the millennium, He will come down with the city of God and make this earth the headquarters for God and the universe. What an incredible story.

In the Revelation are portrayed the deep things of God. The very name given to its inspired pages, "the Revelation," contradicts the statement that this is a sealed book. A revelation is something revealed. The Lord Himself revealed to His servant the mysteries contained in this book, and He designs that they shall be open to the study of all. Its truths are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth's history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in this prophecy are in the past, some are now taking place; some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 584.1.

30. We have already seen a number of passages in the book of Revelation referring to Jesus and telling us different aspects of His ministry. For more references about Jesus, read Revelation 3:4; 5:5-6; 7:14; and 19:11-16.
31. Why do you think there are so many references in the New Testament to passages and stories and ideas from the Old Testament? In the early centuries after Jesus returned to heaven and Jerusalem was destroyed, there was a great conflict between Jews and Christians. The Jews wanted the Greek version of the Old Testament to reflect only the fact that it was a history of the Jews. Very few of them could still read the ancient Hebrew. The Christians said: "No, the Old Testament is half of the revelation of God and must be matched with the New Testament which is the other half of the revelation of God."
32. Which version of those ideas do you find most convincing?
33. Do you see clear connections between the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation? How many different connections can you easily think of? Is it possible for us to understand the book of Revelation without the background in the Old Testament clearly in mind? Is that

perhaps why some New Testament scholars have so much trouble with the book of Revelation?

34. It is interesting to note a few important points that pop up when you understand something of the Greek and Hebrew behind the book of Revelation. Almost immediately in chapter 1, we are urged to “read,” “hear,” and “keep.” The Hebrew word for *hear* has a double meaning. Remember that Revelation was written in Greek, but it is likely that John was thinking in Hebrew. The Hebrew verb *hear* means to understand. (See 1 Kings 3:9; Nehemiah 8:3; Revelation 2:7.) This is not just a casual reading. It means we are to search until we understand; but, the Hebrew word goes deeper; it also means to *obey*. Are we willing to follow our understanding with our obedience?
35. It is interesting to notice also that the verb *read* is in the singular in the Greek while the other two verbs that follow it are in the plural. Why would that be? Copies were very expensive. This is because only a few people in John’s day were able to read. So, Revelation 1 talks about someone who would stand up and read the book out loud. All the other church members would be listeners. What should that imply for us? If reading the book of Revelation alone, it is very easy to come up with some wild ideas about its interpretation. Reading it and studying along with others may warn us when we are making such a mistake.
36. So, in this lesson we have suggested several important principles: 1) There is an important connection between the book of Revelation and the Old Testament—especially the book of Daniel. (2) The general structure of the book reminds us of Daniel and helps us to understand how to read it. (3) The entire book focuses on the person of Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation could be considered the book of the New Testament closest to the Old Testament. We may count 2,000 allusions to the Old Testament, including 400 explicit references and 90 quotations of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. This book is so anchored in Hebrew that it has been said that it can “barely be understood by anyone who isn’t proficient in Hebrew.” John opens his message to the seven churches with a greeting originating in the God of the Old Testament. The *shalom* comes from “Him who is,” a phrase that defines the God Yahweh, who reveals Himself to Moses at the burning bush (*Exod. 3:14, NKJV*).—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 41.

37. As we continue to study the time of the end, we will see many relationships between the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation. John clearly had in mind also the sanctuary as presented in the Old Testament. God apparently revealed to him these aspects of the sanctuary to do two things: (1) Remind us that God is talking to us about our worship; and (2) Remind John and us that there are two aspects to Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.
38. So, after taking this brief look at the book of Revelation, what would you say is the most important symbol used in the book of Revelation to represent Jesus Christ? Would it be Priest? Lamb? Savior? Conqueror over death and sin? King?
39. As mentioned earlier, the book of Revelation is full of blood. It seems to present God as a vengeful God. We know that that is not a correct picture. That was almost certainly part of the reason why Luther rejected the book of Revelation. So, how do you see the book of Revelation? Do you see it as a revelation of Jesus Christ? Or, a terrible picture of God’s plan of retribution against sinners?

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Last Modified: February 17, 2018

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