

Resolve: Week 1

Takeaway: A diminished vision of Jesus leads to a diminished view of self.

Read: Revelation 1

What stood out to you from this passage?

Things You Need To Know:

- Revelation was written by the Apostle John around 90-95 AD on the Island of Patmos.
- Revelation has elements of three different literary types:
- **Letter** - This letter would have been circulated amongst the seven churches referenced in chapters 2-3 and includes the traditional opening and closing elements of a letter from that time.
- **Prophecy** - Revelation references more Old Testament passages and themes than any other book in the New Testament which gives this book its prophetic undertones. The majority of Old Testament references come from Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah along with Exodus.
- **Apocalypse** - The genre of apocalypse in John's day was not uncommon and the word apocalypse did not mean the same thing as what the word means today. In John's day, the definition of apocalypse was "to make known, make manifest or disclose what before was unknown." With that in mind, Revelation is an unveiling of what was previously unknown and this is accomplished through Jesus' revelation to John.
- In some cases, like in Revelation 1:19-20, the meaning of the imagery and/or symbols will be revealed. In this case, Jesus explicitly tells John what the seven stars and seven lampstands represent.
- When reading Revelation, we must look to the message that is trying to be conveyed more than the details, for many of the details are symbolic.
- Be careful to not read your modern agenda into this text.
- *Further Study:* Read Daniel 7:1-14 and then reread Revelation 1. Write



down the similarities you see between the two.

Questions:

1. What is your background with the book of Revelation? (What do you know about it? What have you heard about it? Have you read it before?)

2. What hesitations do you have about Revelation?

3. Take a look at the three titles given to Jesus in verse 5. These titles would have been a great comfort to John's first readers. How do they comfort and give confidence to you in your day-to-day life?

Faithful Witness:

First to rise from the dead:

Ruler of Kings on Earth:



4. When John says “I was in the Spirit” (v. 10), what do you think that meant? What immediately followed that?

5. What stands out to you most about the description of Jesus? (v. 10-15)

6. What encouragement do you find from Revelation 1?



Resolve: Week 2

Takeaway: The power of a pure church

Read: Revelation 2-3

What stood out to you from this passage?

Things You Need To Know

- **Ephesus:** A wealthy province where Paul spent considerable time as a church planter (Ephesians was written to the church at Ephesus). This city was a strategic stop for commercial enterprise, no doubt contributing to the wealth of the people of the city. When Emperor Domitian came to power in the 90's AD, he gave the city political and commercial benefits which led to an increase of Emperor worship in the city. It is believed that John settled down in Ephesus in his later years, likely having written his three letters in the New Testament to the church there.
- **Smyrna:** Smyrna was a harbor city, roughly 35 miles north of Ephesus and was referred to by people of the day as "the ornament of Asia." It is estimated that roughly 100,000 people lived in the city. Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, was said to have been martyred in the stadium that was built in Smyrna. As with Ephesus, there was an increase in Emperor worship in the city brought about by the increase in Roman control.
- **Pergamum:** The city was built on the side of a mountain and was known for its altar to Zeus. Scholars believe Pergamum dealt heavily with Greek and Roman mythology and their gods, along with the imperial cult. It also boasted one of the greatest libraries of the day, rivaling the legendary one found in Alexandria.
- **Sardis:** Sardis was one of the most important agricultural cities of the first century. Because of its location and generous funding from Emperors Tiberius and Claudius after an earthquake devastated the city, Sardis became one of the wealthiest cities in the area. It was also home to the



Ionic temple of Artemis where pagan rituals were performed as well as rituals for the imperial cult.

- **Thyatira:** In relation to the previously mentioned cities, Thyatira was on the more minor side of the scale. It was located 35 miles southeast of Pergamum and was known for its textile industry. Purple cloth was the main export from the city which greatly enhanced its economy.
- **Philadelphia:** Philadelphia was in constant threat of earthquakes and was consistently ravaged by the tremors. Not too much is known about this city except for the frequent earthquakes and the flourishing vineyards due to the volcanic soil that was found in the city.
- **Laodicea:** Laodicea was an extremely well-to-do city based off of their being a banking center as well as their robust textile industry. They also had a renowned medical school which brought fame and wealth to the city. John alludes to this wealth in the letter, telling the Laodiceans to strive for spiritual wealth instead of monetary wealth. Another note of emphasis: Laodicea lay in an area where water had to be delivered by aqueducts in the ground from the surrounding water sources (hot springs on one side and mountainous sources on the other.) When John says that they are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, he is not referring to their spiritual temperature but their usefulness. Hot and cold water both had significant uses but lukewarm water, much like today, is bland and boring and not of much use. John's encouragement to be hot or cold is a call to be useful for Jesus and the gospel.

Questions:

What is your takeaway or what did the Lord impress upon you as you read the words to each church? How does each encouragement or rebuke lead to a purer church?

Ephesus (2:1-7)





Smyrna (2:8-11)

Pergamum (2:12-17)

Thyatira (2:18-29)

Sardis (3:1-6)





Philadelphia (3:7-13)

Laodicea (3:14-22)



Resolve: Week 3

Takeaway: Worship God wholeheartedly.

Read: Revelation 4-5

What stood out to you from this passage?

Things You Need To Know

- This section is one of four “Throne Room” scenes in the scripture and the only one to appear in the New Testament. (See Isaiah 6:1-5, Ezekiel 1:4-28 and Daniel 7:9-14 for the other three)
- Much of John’s description of the one seated on the throne is symbolic, for it is near impossible to describe God in all his purity.
- The lightning and thunder in 4:5 hearken back to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai.
- Each of the beings in 4:6-7 represent the best and/or strongest of each category of living creatures: The Lion being the most imposing animal; the Ox the strongest of agricultural use; humans, created in God’s image; Eagle, king of the sky.
- The seven horns in 5:7 represent power and accompanied by the Sevenfold spirit, it shows that the power is not human power, but power through the Spirit. Seven represents perfection.
- Depending on what translation you read, the number of angels in 5:11 is in the millions.



Questions:

1. What aspects of God's character and splendor draw you to praise and worship Him? Where do you see these attributes in the Scriptures?

2. These chapters invite us to worship the One who is on the throne. How do you express your worship to the King of kings?

3. Why is it noteworthy that the elders cast their crowns, which the Lord gave them, before the throne? What has the Lord given you that you can use to worship Him?



4. What are you tempted to withhold from God that he is worthy of?

5. In Revelation 5, why is it significant that the slaughtered Lamb is now standing?

6. Why will worshiping God for eternity be a delight and not a chore?

7. There is a great deal of anticipation in these chapters. How can you keep His future unveiling as a present hope and expectation in your life?



Resolve: Week 4

Takeaway: Endure suffering patiently

Read: Revelation 6-8:5

What stood out to you in this passage?

Things You Need To Know

- The four horsemen are more angels of judgment than anything. The purpose of referring to them as “horsemen” serves as a symbolic literary function. The Old Testament allusion occurs in Zechariah 1:8-11.
- One scholar refers to the four horsemen as “the four chief components of history; history is characterized by their hideous imprint.” (War, Death, Famine and Disease).
- The sixth seal symbolizes God’s unfolding judgment. The question in 6:17 of “Who can stand?” will be answered: only the servants of God can stand in that day.
- The numbers in Chapter 7 (12,000 and 144) are symbolic, representing the holy community.
- The seal on the foreheads from 7:3 are an allusion to the seal of the High Priests in Exodus 28:36, which said “HOLY TO THE LORD”.
- “The probable identity of the 144,000 calls us as believers in Jesus to remember our heritage in God’s dealings with the patriarchs and prophets, our spiritual ancestors, and to recognize our destiny as heirs of the promises given through the prophets to God’s people” - Craig Keener (Revelation; NIV Application Commentary).
- There are a few views as to the silence at the opening of the seventh seal (8:1): The silence may come from awe (See Job 40:4). It may also be a signal of a return to the primeval creation, characterized by silence (See Genesis 1:2).
- The seventh seal is a precursor to the seven trumpets that will ensue.



Although the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls happen sequentially as it is written, it is likely that they occur all together and have been happening already. Take for instance the four horsemen: War, death, famine and disease have been present throughout history. There is a repetition of “what was, what is, and what is to come” that you will pick up on throughout Revelation.

Questions:

1. How have you seen the Lord work through evils like what the four horsemen represent for His purposes?

2. Why does faithfulness to the Word and to the testimony of Christ so often lead to suffering and persecution? How does God view this suffering?

3. Why will social and economic statuses not matter at the time of judgment?



4. If people know Christ is bringing judgement, why do they still flee rather than repent?

5. When has the Lord proved Himself faithful in your life despite your own unfaithfulness?

6. In 7:16, the Lord provides for His people's every need and counteracts their greatest threats. How have you seen the Lord provide for your needs, and what threats do you long to see Him address?



7. What role does silence play in your prayer life?



Resolve: Week 5

Takeaway: Bear witness boldly

Read: Revelation 8:6-11:19

What stood out to you in this passage?

Things You Need To Know

- As you are reading through this section, understand that John really ramps up the symbolism of what he is seeing. Most of what you will see here is not literal, but symbolic.
- The plagues that occur in 8:7-12 are echoes or closely resemble the plagues God sent upon Egypt in Exodus 7-11. Also echoing Exodus, God's people are protected when the plagues hit.
- Judgements are always used by God to get our attention.
- The fifth trumpet is symbolic of a number of angels' moral fall (could be a reference to Satan's fall. For more on that, see Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:11-19)
- The description of the Locusts comes from the book of Joel but the army it symbolizes is more likely of a demonic nature. Again, in 9:4, God's chosen people will be spared.
- From 9:17, when John refers to what he sees as "my vision," in regards to the sixth trumpet, we must be prepared for a more symbolic view of things rather than literal.
- Essentially, the sixth trumpet portrays an invasion of symbolically terrifying monsters.
- This judgment, as with others in Revelation and the Bible at large, strikes one-third of the population, leaving the possibility that the rest will repent. As we see in 9:20, those who remain still do not repent, echoing Pharaoh in Exodus.
- The angel in chapter 10 is more powerful than any we've encountered so



- far. The ensuing imagery speaks to that.
- In Daniel 12, he is told to seal up what is revealed to him for a later time. Most of what is revealed to John is not sealed up but chapter 10 is a rare instance in which what is revealed is kept hidden.
 - The contents of the little scroll are not told, but that it is bitter in John's stomach probably means it involved judgement. That it tasted like honey refers back to Ezekiel's message that he ate and tasted like honey (See Ezekiel 3:3).
 - In Chapter 11, the inner temple seems to be symbolic of those who faithfully follow Jesus while the outer court represents Christians who compromise with the world.
 - The olive trees and lamp stands in 11:3 are references to kings and priests from Zechariah 4:11-14 (Joshua and Zerubbabel).
 - The identity of the two witnesses in 11:3-13 has been highly debated. These are the most likely, though none are certain:
 - Moses and Elijah (The Law and the Prophets)
 - Elijah and Enoch (Both taken up to heaven instead of naturally passing)
 - Zerubbabel and Joshua (From the book of Zechariah)
 - Peter and Paul (who were executed under Nero, who we'll learn more about next week)
 - Israel and the Church
 - The Witnessing Church
 - Two people in the spirit of Moses and Elijah
 - It is difficult to say for certain, and scholars are divided, but it seems probable that the last option is most likely based on the description of what the witnesses will do and from patterns found throughout the Scripture.
 - The locations are symbolic; Sodom was destroyed way back in Genesis. Egypt was symbolic of oppression (going back to Exodus) and the "Great City" is used as a description of Babylon, a symbolic contrast to the "Holy City" which is Jerusalem.



Questions:

1. How should we pray for God’s judgment? Should we seek to carry out that judgment ourselves?

2. How do you see God’s authority over agents of evil in Revelation 9? What confidence does that give you in the present age?

3. What does it mean that “idolatry is at the core of an unrepentant heart?” How would you explain that to someone?



4. When have you experienced some bitter times in sharing the gospel? When have you experienced sweet times?

5. Should every Christian expect to be persecuted? Should every Christian expect to be martyred?

6. Why does the world rejoice at the death of the two witnesses? Do you see the same spirit today?



7. How does the certainty of the coming of God's kingdom shape the way we live now?



Resolve: Week 6

Takeaway: See evil clearly

Read: Revelation 12-14

What stood out to you from this passage?

Things You Need To Know

This section is some of the most difficult to understand and interpret, so we'll go section by section here.

Revelation 12:1-6:

- When John says “a great sign appeared,” that is a clue that what we are about to read is rooted in symbolism.
- The woman is a representation of Israel. The twelve stars symbolize the twelve tribes of Israel. Mary is nowhere mentioned or alluded to in Revelation so we should not associate the woman in Revelation 12 with Mary, the mother of Jesus.
- The Dragon is the “ancient serpent” of Genesis 3.
- The stars symbolize angels. What we are seeing here is the rebellion of Satan. When the tail swipes a third of the stars, or angels, that is Satan bringing his followers down with him. There were three archangels, Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer, each overseeing a third of the angels. When Lucifer fell, he took his third with him and they became demons.
- Satan’s ultimate goal was to oppose Jesus’ mission on earth, thus the reason he waited for the child.
- The child was brought up to God and the woman (Israel) went to the wilderness in preparation for the coming King.
- ***Remember, this is all symbolic.***

Revelation 12:7-17

- This section reveals the time and setting of Revelation 12. It seems odd to have a war in heaven but Paul alludes to what is happening in the spiritual



- realm in Ephesians 6:12.
- Michael and his angels defeat the dragon (Satan) and his angels in a heavenly battle, resulting in them being cast from heaven (See also Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28).
 - Michael and his angels symbolize the victory we have in Christ.
 - Revelation 12:13-16 is an echo of Pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites in Exodus and the parting of the Red Sea. The woman here continues to symbolize the faithful remnant of Israel.
 - The language of verse 17 parallels Genesis 3:15 (which is the first Gospel message recorded), alluding to that while we might suffer from Satan's influence, in the end we will be victorious.

Revelation 13:1-10

- This section has close relations with Daniel 7 and the four beasts from that vision.
- The beast stands in sharp contrast to the Lamb of God.
- The mortal wound that was healed (v. 3) is a parody of Jesus coming back from the dead. The phrase "who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" also parodies the phrase "who is like the Lord almighty?"
- Who does the beast symbolize?
 - At its core, it symbolizes a godless government.
- The duration of 42 months is symbolic; what John is alluding to is that evil has an expiration date.
- The dragon is the one who gives the beast authority and the people worship the dragon. Satan is behind all evil and uses others as his puppets.
- The call for endurance and faith is a call that transcends history.

Revelation 13:11-18

- This second beast symbolizes false religion
- That this new "lamb" speaks like the dragon mirrors Jesus' warning to his disciples when he says "be wary of the wolves in sheep's clothing."
- What gives away this "lamb's" identity is its motivation. The true Lamb Of God was rooted in humility. This "lamb" is rooted in pride and power.
- Keep in mind the audience of John's letter: most dealt with idol and



emperor worship so this section in particular would have resonated with those churches.

- The use of a mark to enforce national or empire-wide unity already had a long history that would have been known to John's audience.
- **Verse 18:** 666 should be read as "six hundred and sixty-six." In Hebrew, letters had numerical values and when you added up the numbers of the letters, it would give a value. In Hebrew, the numerical value of 666 spells out "Nero Caesar" referring to the Evil Emperor who set half of Rome on fire and blamed the Christians, leading to many people dying for their faith. Paul and Peter were believed to be among those who were martyred under Nero's reign. The mortal wound on the first beast (13:3) that is healed would have been seen by John's audience, who had first hand experience with the terror of Nero, as a resurrection of the Emperor. That is not to say Emperor Nero is going to be resurrected as the final antichrist. What this is saying is that the antichrist will come in the spirit of Nero. One can look throughout history and find them scattered throughout the ages (Hitler, Stalin, bin Laden, and al-Zarqawi would be the most recent that come to mind). The reality is that Satan does not know when Jesus will return so he always has antichrists at the ready. What will reveal the identity of the final antichrist is when Jesus returns to earth to defeat him.
- One more note on numerical values: as we've seen, 666 symbolizes evil. It can be seen as a parody of 777 which is perfection. Then you have the name Jesus Christ, whose numerical value is 888, a step above perfection.

Revelation 14:1-20

- **Verses 1-5:** This begins John's version of "a tale of two cities", between the Great City of Babylon and the Holy City of Jerusalem that will last through chapter 20.
- The people mentioned in 14:1-5 are symbolic of those who follow Christ. They are blameless and pure, having not been defiled by the evil ways of the Great City, Babylon.
- **Verses 6-13:** In books of prophecy, "good news" is not just about God's restoration of the faithful, but also of the judgment of their enemies.



- In Revelation, John’s audience would have understood Babylon as symbolizing Rome. For us today, Babylon could be any great city that has indulged in the immorality of the world (NYC, Los Angeles, etc.)
 - **See Jeremiah 51:6-7**
- *Verses 14-20*: The imagery is similar to Revelation 1, which was subsequently based off of Daniel 7.
- The first harvest (v. 14-16) is up for debate about the intent.
- The second harvest (v. 17-20) is clearly a harvest of judgment against those who oppose God.

Questions:

1. Satan was cast down because he coveted a place of authority and honor. How are you tempted to covet places of honor, and how can you work to humble yourself in those areas?

2. Consider each of the descriptors for Satan in 12:9. What do these tell us about his character and his goals for humanity? How can we keep an awareness of these things?





3. What does it mean to have victory as described in Revelation 12:11-12?
What does this show about the importance of our stories?

4. Why does the beast imitate Christ in Revelation 13:1-10? How is all sin ultimately a perversion of God's goodness?

5. The false prophet in Revelation 13:11-18 looks like a lamb but talks like a dragon. What role does speech play in revealing what's in our hearts?



6. What would you say to someone who believes that, in the end, everyone goes to heaven? How does Revelation 14 correct that belief?

7. What motivation is there to plead to God on behalf of those who are far from him? How do these chapters shape your view about telling others about Jesus?



Resolve: Week 7

Takeaway: Stay holy, prepared, and constantly expectant

Read: Revelation 15-16

What stood out to you from this passage?

Things You Need To Know

Revelation 15 - John begins this section saying “Then I saw another sign...” signaling to the fact that what is about to transpire is also a vision rooted in symbolism.

- When John says “last plagues”, he is implying that these bowls begin John’s final sequence of judgments. They are the last in terms of John’s narrative, not necessarily in the sequence of history.
- The song they sing in verses 3-4 is the song of Moses, which can be found in Exodus 15. Both songs are sung after God’s deliverance of his people.
 - **The song also has foundations found in Psalm 86:8-10**
- That the plagues are introduced as coming out of heaven reminds us that earthly disasters are not merely accidents; they are arranged by God’s sovereignty.
- The “smoke” of verse 8 symbolizes God’s glory filling his house in Old Testament appearances.

Revelation 16 - Again, with the seven bowls of judgment, there is a sharp similarity to the plagues of Egypt found in Exodus.

- As with the plagues of Egypt, believers will be spared by this round of judgements.
- Also like Exodus, there is a reluctance of those who are receiving the judgments to repent and come back to God.
- While there is a field called Armageddon in the region, the reference in Revelation allows for symbolic flexibility.
- That the islands and mountains move away in 16:20 speaks to the dramatic



and cosmic judgments that the seventh bowl brings.

Questions:

1. Have you ever felt like you were being treated unfairly by God? How does this feeling line up with the testimony of Scripture?

2. How do these chapters give hope and encouragement to God's people?

3. What does it mean to have a high view of God? How can you cultivate a high view of God? How can we communicate that view to others?





4. Why do people fail to repent even upon seeing God's judgement? How might this inform our evangelism and disciple making?

5. What does it mean to stay alert and remain clothed in preparation for Christ's return? What are some marks of being prepared? Unprepared?

6. Why do people continue to curse God, even to their dying breath? How were you changed from cursing to praising God?



Resolve: Week 8

Big Idea: Remain faithful until the end

Read: Revelation 17-20

What stood out to you in this passage?

Things You Need To Know

Revelation 17 - The judgments now move to a specific recipient: Babylon, the Great City, which in this instance is symbolized by a prostitute.

- The shocking imagery is meant to emphasize the true hideousness of evil and sin in the world.
- Jerusalem and Babylon are contrasted as a bride and a prostitute.
- Verse 4: The prostitute was literally “dressed to kill”.
- Rome was regularly portrayed as “seven mountains.” (Remember, John’s readers would have understood Babylon as representing Rome).
- Many commentators view the prostitute as the evil world system that continues beyond Rome’s fall.
- In verse 10, the king who “is” would be Domitian, who was the ruler at the time of the writing of Revelation. The “eighth” king (v.11) who comes back would have been seen as Emperor Nero.
- The phrase “(who) once was, now is not, and will come” is a parody of the Lord “who is, and who was, and who is to come.”
- The ten horns from verse 12 simply refer to the continuing imperial system.
- Verses 15-18 show one evil doing away with another evil. In God’s sovereignty, he uses evil empires as agents of punishment (See the book of Habakkuk), but that does not mean that those empires will not also be judged.

Revelation 18 - Chapter 18 takes on the appearance of a funeral dirge over the fallen Babylon.



- Verses 1-8 function more as a curse than a lament.
- That other nations will mourn her destruction speaks to the extent of which her seduction has reached.
- Note that there is still a chance for repentance (v. 4) for those who opposed God.
- Verses 9-24 is a lament from the rulers and merchants who benefited from the prostitutes rule.

Revelation 19 - If chapter 18 was a funeral dirge, chapter 19 is a celebration of victory in heaven.

Revelation 20 - There are many views concerning the thousand year reign of Christ and where it falls on the historical spectrum. Some believe (premillennialists) that Jesus will return to establish a specific thousand-year kingdom. Others (amillennialists) believe that the thousand-year kingdom is symbolic for the present age. Postmillennialists believe that Christians help establish the thousand-year kingdom on earth prior to Jesus' return. There is not enough time or space to go through each of these in depth. It is my personal opinion that the thousand year reign will follow the Tribulation. One reason for that determination is that the saints have already been martyred which suggests that the Tribulation period precedes the Millennium.

Questions:

1. When examining your own heart, what are some of the things of this world that tend to distract you from God and His good plan for you?



2. How can Christians pursue faithfulness to Christ when so much of our society seems caught up in “Babylonianism”? How can we protect against the prostitute's seduction?

3. Revelation 18 shows the inability of sin to provide lasting pleasure. How have you seen the deceptiveness of sin in its failure to provide lasting joy and security?

4. Judgement in Revelation 18 is all the more severe because of the prostitute's pride. Why is God so opposed to arrogance and pride?



5. How does Revelation 19 show us that Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:10 is being granted?

6. Why is it important to talk about hell?

7. How would your life look different if you lived in light of eventually giving an account to God for every thought, word, and deed?



Resolve: Week 9

Takeaway: Be ready! Jesus is coming soon!

Read: Revelation 21-22

What stood out to you in this passage?

Things You Need To Know

All you must know is that the perfection that was lost in Genesis 3 is restored in Revelation 21 and 22. Read these chapters in the confidence that evil has an expiration date and that God will bring all things back to their proper place of perfection in his presence.

Questions:

1. How do you practice communion with God now? How will communion with God in eternity be similar and different?

2. Which of the promises of God in Revelation 21-22 do you most long for? Why?



3. Why do you think John emphasizes “the nations” In Revelation 21-22?

4. How can you bring your life into greater alignment with God’s Word as you anticipate His second coming?

5. John is told to proclaim God’s truth because the end is near. With whom do you need to share the gospel with, since their acceptance or rejection of Christ in this life will determine their eternal destiny?

6. Look back to Week 1 of this study. What has changed in your heart? What has God shown or spoken to you about?

