Session 1 Introduction and Overview of the Book of Revelation

For \*additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org

1. the Book of Revelation: Jesus’ End-Time Battle plan for the Church
	1. The book of Revelation reveals the glory of Jesus (Rev. 1:1) and His plan to transition the earth to the age to come. The book is called ***The*** ***Revelation of Jesus*** because it reveals His heart, power, and leadership in preparing the nations for God’s glory. One of the Father’s purposes in giving this book to the Church is to reveal the beauty of Jesus. It is secondarily a book about “events” in the end times. The main theme is not God’s plan, but the glory of the Man behind the plan.

1The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.
(Rev. 1:1)

*Revelation 1:1, “The revelation of Jesus which God gave Him to show His servants, the things”— or the events; things are events. You could put the word* ***events*** *there—“which must shortly take place. He sent and signified these by His angel to His servant John.” When we see the events, we are to understand there is a Man who is engineering the events. We are to see the glory of the Man behind the events. That is the idea.*

*The book of Revelation reveals the glory of Jesus. We say, “Well, that is obvious.” It is not obvious. You ask a guy on the street what the book of Revelation is about, and they will say events. It is about the glory of Jesus. If you do not understand that, the events become an end in themselves, and they are not. They are an expression of a Man. The book is called the revelation of Jesus. He named it that because it reveals His heart. It reveals His power. It reveals His leadership. He is preparing the earth for the Millennial Kingdom, for the glory of God to fill the earth. Jesus is saying in essence, “Father, I will prepare the earth for Your glory to fill it. I will take matters into My own hands.”*

*The Father’s main purpose in the book of Revelation is to reveal the glory of Jesus. The secondary purpose is to reveal the events. The main theme is not the plan, but it is the* ***Man*** *behind the plan. It is the heart of the Shulamite that we talked about in the last session [about Song of Solomon] that sees the Man in the plans. That is not offended by the Man, but is fascinated by Him and wants to partner with Him.*

* 1. The main theme in God’s plan in the book of Revelation is Jesus’ return to earth as king to rule all the nations (Rev. 1:7). His “royal procession” back to earth will be seen by every person.

7Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him. (Rev. 1:7)

*Related to the plan itself—though we know the Man behind the plan is the point of the book—the main theme in the plan is Jesus returning to the earth. He is coming back to the earth. It says in verse 7, “Every eye will see Him.” He is coming. He is coming. Everybody knows it, but He really is coming. A Jewish Man with a physical human body is coming in the clouds to rule the earth, to take over the leadership of the earth. This point here: as I have taught this over the years, I find many people struggle with this. They think they believe it, but they have never really thought about it. It is a very important point. Every single eye will see Him when He returns. The people in Europe, the islands of the earth, every eye. I ask people, “How is that going to happen?”*

*I get the strangest answer. I get it all the time. “Through TV.”*

*“You think through media? The God of Genesis 1 needs Bill Gates and Steve Jobs to pull this thing off, right? Their technology? I do not think so.”*

*I believe what is going to happen is that He is going to make a royal Kingly procession around the earth before He enters Jerusalem. Every eye will truly see Him. The remote islands of the earth. Not by a TV screen. They will see Him with their eyes. Every eye. Think about how far you have to go for the people up north, down south, east and west, for every human to see Him. He has to be close enough and traveling slowly enough where someone the size of a Man can be seen by people on the earth. I do not fully get that. How they are going to see Him everywhere? I don’t believe it is by technology. That is not what it is about. Every eye is going to see Him. That is part of the Second Coming. I call it the Second Coming Procession.*

*The Church in the earth will be saying, “Come, Lord Jesus.” They will be beckoning the King. Every single tribe and tongue will have a company of people with a revival spirit beckoning the King to their country. He will come in a royal procession across the earth before He enters Jerusalem to sit upon His throne in a final way.*

* 1. If we read Revelation correctly, it causes us to love Jesus and trust His leadership, as we see His dramatic plans for the end times. His wise and loving plans combine God’s sovereignty (in manifesting love and righteousness), human free will, and satanic rage resulting in the end-time harvest of souls and a victorious Church, without violating justice or man’s free will. The Lord’s plan is for an environment that allows both love and wickedness to come to full expression.

*If we read the book of Revelation correctly, it makes us love Jesus. It makes us trust His leadership. If you read the book of Revelation, and you do not love Him and trust Him, you just get captured by what might happen and what might not happen. This is really about a* ***Man****. I want to keep the center focus about that. His wise and loving plans. They combine number one, the sovereignty of God, with number two, human free will—the free will of man. Human free will—and with number three, Satan’s rage.*

*Here we have God’s sovereignty, human free will, and Satan’s rage resulting in the great harvest of the nations and a victorious church. Jesus will do this without violating justice at all, that is, without violating man’s free will at all. He will uphold the free will of the wicked and those of His own people. He will do everything in perfect justice. He will have the great harvest of the nations. He will cleanse the earth. Satan will rage, man will sin, God’s sovereignty will be exerted, and the beauty of Jesus will be seen. That is what the book of Revelation is about.*

*Jesus will allow an environment on the earth that allows both wickedness and love to be expressed at the deepest level ever in history. Love will be at the deepest measure of maturity all over the earth, and wickedness will be as well, simultaneously. Jesus will allow an environment where people get to do fully what they want. In terms of they can be as evil as they want. Evil will go beyond any time in history. Righteousness and love worked in the human heart will also go beyond any time in history.*

* 1. The Bereans searched the Scriptures to see if the things that Paul said were true (Acts 17:10-11). I do not ask anyone to accept my views; rather, I urge you to think for yourself. Truth is never hurt by scrutiny, but rather it is confirmed. You must boldly challenge all ideas that you hear.
	I urge you to refuse any teaching that you do not clearly see with your eyes in your Bible.

11These were more fair-minded…in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11)

*Before we embark on this study, I always like to say this verse, Acts 17:11. The Bereans were more fair-minded or noble-minded as one translation says. Acts 17:11. They searched the Scriptures to see if the things that Paul said were so. I do not ask anyone to accept my views or those of any teacher here or any teacher anywhere. I urge you to think for yourself. Boldly challenge every idea. I only ask that you challenge it in humility with tenderness, the right process in the right way. Challenge, but not with an arrogant spirit in a wrong way. There is a spirit of lawlessness that is out in the earth today. It is escalating. Challenge in tenderness and humility, but challenge everything. Refuse any teaching you cannot see with your own eyes in your own Bible. Whether you hear it from me, one of the teachers here, or anywhere in the earth. You must do that. You must think for yourself with an open Bible.*

* 1. When speaking about Scripture, people may speak from one of three positions. It is important to make clear which position we are speaking from. We are to boldly proclaim ***biblical convictions***, carefully qualify our ***informed opinions***, and rarely speak about our ***personal theories***.
	2. The most controversial point in this study is found in my belief that the Church will go through the Tribulation (in great victory and power). This differs from the popular pretribulation rapture view that teaches that the Church will be raptured at any minute and miss the end-time revival and crisis. Yes, the Bible teaches that the Church will be raptured. The issue is one of timing.

*The most controversial point in this study is my belief that the church will go through the Tribulation. I believe this very, very strongly. The Bible is clear. The church will go through the Tribulation in great power and great victory.*

*By the way, and we will look at this later on in the book, the Tribulation is mostly, in the book of Revelation, tribulation against the Antichrist. People think of it as tribulation mostly against the church. There are 403 verses in the book of Revelation. Only twelve verses out of 403 are persecution of the church. Three percent of the book of revelation is persecution. The majority of the book is tribulation on the Antichrist. The judgment of God destroying oppression. That is what the book of Revelation is. The saints partnering with the Lord in prayer, and in other ways as well, but that is the primary way.*

* 1. I believe that the Church will be raptured at the end of the tribulation, not the beginning. I greatly honor the godliness and wisdom of many who hold the pre-tribulation rapture view, but I see it as a mistake that will leave many spiritually unprepared . We can disagree in a spirit of meekness, without a spirit of debate. The reality of the Tribulation is too weighty to reduce it to arguments.

*I believe that the church will be raptured. I do believe in the rapture, but it is at the end of the Tribulation, not at the beginning. I honor, I genuinely, deeply honor the godliness and the insight of many men and women of God who have the opposite view. Some of my best friends have the opposite view of the Millennium, opposite view of the Tribulation, but we have great fellowship because I honor who they are in God, their love for Jesus, and their insight in the Word, even though I disagree on this point. We can disagree with tenderness and meekness. The point that I am making here is that the reality of the Great Tribulation is so weighty. We cannot reduce it to theological sparring. This is the most intense time in human history. It cannot be reduced to theological sparring and theological one-upmanship. Like, “I have this point you did not get.” It is not about winning an argument. It is about preparing a people spiritually not to be offended or be deceived or yield to fear, but actually to grasp what is going on.*

* 1. Revelation gives us more information on the end times than any other book in Scripture. It was written to help God’s people participate in the end-time drama that shifts history to the age to come and endure persecution and temptation so as to overcome in victory (Rev. 12:11; 15:2).

*Again, the preparation is spiritual. God may tell some group to prepare in practical, physical ways, but our burden is spiritual preparation so that we are not offended, we are not afraid, and we are not deceived. We are not stumbling; we are not seduced by lies. We get what is going on. We are not passive either, drawing back in passivity. We get the drama and significance of what God from heaven has put in the book that is going to happen.*

*The book of Revelation gives us more information on the end times than any other book of the Bible. There is more information on the end times. Isaiah has a lot. Revelation has a lot of unique information. It was written to help God’s people to participate in the drama. That is a new idea for some people. I do not know why it is a new idea. Some people are going, “Really?” Absolutely. It is not just a poetry book. It is a book written so the people of God can participate with the Head of the church in the most glorious hour in history.*

*In this generation, when all these things happen, history is going to shift. The earth is going to shift to the age to come in one generation. There is one time frame where the planet will shift to the age to come. That is a remarkable time frame. You might be in it. Your children might be in it. Their children might be in it. I do not know, but you might be. It is not too early to start understanding the drama and passing that understanding on to your children. It may be sooner than we think. It may stretch out quite a bit longer. We do not know. I believe it is time to start understanding what the Book says, instead of relegating it to, “Well, nobody gets it. I do not have time. It is kind of crazy anyway. Who really knows anyway?” That is a horrible response to this glorious information. Not just the book of Revelation. I am talking about all the prophets. The 150 chapters. We have to start understanding it.*

*When I was twenty years old, the fathers before me handed me the baton with almost no clarity on these chapters, these 150 chapters. Most of the fathers told me, “We do not really get it. It does not really matter. Do not worry about it. Just go win your neighbor to the Lord.” Yes, we want to win our neighbor to the Lord, but I want to hand to the next generation understanding of those 150 chapters. There are 150 chapters in the Bible of which the primary theme is the end times. One hundred and fifty. When I was handed the baton in my twenties by the fathers, almost none of them talked about it or understood those chapters. I do not want to do that to my children and grandchildren. I want to give them clarity. I want them to take it up to the next degree and hand it to their children with clarity. So there is a generation that is prepared, and we do our little part, and a thousand other ministries in the earth will do their part. A thousand more will do their part. God will have a prepared church.*

*I am calling you to start studying this now so that you can understand it and pass it on if it does not happen in your day. Then you will have handed more than confusion to the next generation. If you are true shepherds, you care about that. It just might be on your watch that these things happen. It just might be. Things are escalating so rapidly from the biblical point of view.*

* 1. Revelation is the only book of the Bible in which God promises a special blessing to anyone who reads or hears it (Rev. 1:3), but issues a grave warning to any who add to or take from it (Rev. 22:18-19).

3Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy. (Rev. 1:3)

*It is the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing. The only book. There is no book that the book itself a blessing. It says here if you read it, you are blessed,* ***and*** *if you hear it. “If you hear it.” Hear it does not just mean audibly. I have read commentaries, and they say, “Well, they read it openly in the congregation.” That is not exactly what it is talking about. The number one teaching of Jesus that came off His lips is this phrase in the Gospels and in the book of Revelation, “He that has ears, let him hear.” That is the truth Jesus said more than any other truth. When it says, he that hears, it is not talking about the person who puts on a CD at night so they hear it when they sleep. I think that is pretty cool. People do that. I have never done it, but I know people that listen to the Bible that way. I think that is a really good idea. He is not talking about only hearing it. He is talking about “he that has ears let him hear.” Grasping it is what it is talking about. That is the number one teaching of Jesus. He that has ears, let him hear. That is repeated more than any other teaching He gave.*

* 1. Revelation was written to be understood by God’s people, even the poor and uneducated. A common lie must be exposed—that this book cannot be understood except by scholars.

*The book of Revelation is to be understood by God’s people. You know the majority of the body of Christ these 2000 years have been poor and illiterate people? There was a percentage of rich and educated, and much more in the last century. I am talking about all the way through history. Most were poor, mostly illiterate, and this glorious revelation of Jesus was not relegated to rich, educated PhDs. This book is about Jesus. It is for everybody. I want to expose this common lie—many are exposing it, not only myself—this common lie that this book cannot be grasped. It is an absolute lie from hell to keep that book shut.*

*Satan does not want this book to be grasped. I tell you the people of history could understand it if they read it. It means what it says and says what it means. If we relegate it to the endless kind of layers of symbolism that nobody gets until you have at least your second PhD, then you might as well throw the book away because then it does not matter to anybody but a thousandth of one percent of the body of Christ who have a couple PhD’s.*

*Beloved, it is meant for everybody. This book means what it says, says what it means. It actually means just what it says. One forth of the earth dies. Someone says, “What does that mean?”*

*I said, “One fourth of the earth dies. That is exactly what it means.”*

*“Wow, well that cannot be real. That has to be symbolic.”*

*“No, it means what it says.”*

* 1. *Unique dynamics* will exist in the generation in which Jesus returns, including the greatest measure of unity, purity, and power in the Church, in contrast to the greatest measure of sin and oppression in the nations, which will be confronted by the greatest measure of God’s judgment to remove all that hinders love. Jesus desires deep partnership with the Body of Christ in His work.

*You hear this phrase from us all the time: the unique dynamics of the generation the Lord returns. It* ***will be******unique****. It will be the generation of the greatest power, purity, and unity. It will be the generation of the greatest sin. Sin will reach levels of perversion and levels of oppression never seen in history. It will be the generation of the greatest measure of judgment where the Lord will intervene to confront the oppression of the earth, and His judgments are released to remove everything that hinders love. The accusing spirit from hell actually is voiced through the church saying that Jesus is somehow deficient because He judges. But judgment is removing everything that hinders love. Judgment is no contradiction to love. It is in fact an expression of love.*

*I remember I was talking to a famous preacher once who did not like the judgment stuff at all. I have used this analogy a number of times. I said, “What if your family was in the park, and a gang of evil men came and were abusing them in the most severe way and killing them? I mean abusing them in these ways and killing them. And a policemen walked by and said, ‘I want to give the guys their liberty. I do not want to stop anything.’ What would you think about that police officer?”*

*He said, “I would be pretty upset.”*

*I said, “That is Jesus the Judge I am talking about. He is not going to walk by passively and let oppression destroy the nations of the earth. He is going to confront it because of love.” Not because of the opposite of love. Because of love.*

* 1. Jesus will judge wickedness and oppression to remove all that hinders love (Rev. 19:2). The Antichrist and the kings of the earth will declare war against Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:19; cf. Ps. 2:2). Jesus will war against them (Rev. 19:11). This will be the most violent time in history.

11In righteousness He [Jesus] judges and makes war…15…He should strike the nations…
19I saw the beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev. 19:11-19)

*It says in Revelation 19:11 that Jesus makes war. I wanted to highlight the word* ***war****. Verse 19, “And the Antichrist and the kings of the earth will gather to* ***make war*** *against Him.” The kings of the earth are going to make war against Jesus. Not just against the church. Some people say, “Well, the Antichrist and the nations are going to be against Israel” Yes. “They will be against the church.” Yes, there will be element of that.*

*Beloved, they are warring against Jesus the Messiah. That is who they are against. They hate Him. That is why they will hate you. The reason I want you to catch the word* ***war*** *is because we do not have that really in our paradigm. We are thinking of the Jesus of Christmas. We are not thinking of the Jesus of Armageddon. It is the same Jesus. We like the goodwill to all men, peace and goodwill to all men. We do not like the fact that He is going to confront oppression in the earth in a direct way so there will be peace and goodwill to all men. There is war. It is the most intense, violent war in history that is down the road. The most intense, violent war will touch the globe down the road. The saints under Jesus’ leadership and under a spirit of prayer and prophecy will be participating with the Head of the church with prophecy, prayer, and good works. Those are the weapons of our warfare. Not guns. By speaking the Word. By doing good works. Walking in love. Living in intercession. Crying out to God. We will participate with Him.*

*Do not be confused. It is a war. Violent. It will be violent. We do not want violent. We just want people happy. Jesus says, “That is why it is going to get violent. I am going to get rid of the people who oppress, and then there will be peace on the earth forever, and the people will be happy. I promise you.”*

*“Can we not skip the violence and go straight to happy?”*

*The Lord says, “No, I am going to allow the free will of man to be exercised, and the evil men will exercise it to the optimum degree beyond what you are thinking, and then I will confront it. Then the nations will be happy forever and ever and ever.”*

* 1. Jesus’ judgments in the Great Tribulation do not happen ***to*** God’s people as helpless victims of Satan, but they are released ***through*** them as they partner with His sovereign leadership.

*Jesus’ judgments in the Great Tribulation do not happen to God’s people. They do not happen to God’s people. My point is some people read Revelation and say, “Oh man, that is so scary, the judgment of God.”*

*I say, “No, it does not happen to you. You are not a helpless victim of Satan under the judgment of God. No. Wrong concept. The judgments are actually released through the praying church. They are not on the praying church. They are released through the praying church. Jesus releases the judgment, but He does it actually in partnership with His bride on the earth.”*

* 1. As the book of Acts describes the power of the Spirit released through the early church, so the book of Revelation describes the power of the Spirit to be released through the end-time church. I refer to Revelation as the **“*end-time book of Acts*”** and a **“*canonized prayer manual*”** that informs the Church of various ways in which Jesus will manifest His power in relationship to the prayers of the whole Body of Christ during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 8:1-6).

*As the book of Acts describes the power of God in the early church, the book of Revelation describes the power of the Holy Spirit in the end-time church. Let me say that again. As the book of Acts describes the power of the Holy Spirit through the early church, the book of Revelation describes the power of the Holy Spirit released in the end-time church. I refer to the book of Revelation as the end-time book of Acts. It is the book of Acts written in advance for the church. Why am I telling you this? Because you do not want to relegate this book to irrelevant. I call it a canonized prayer manual. By* ***canonized*** *I mean it is inspired in the Bible. It is biblical. It is canonized. There are a lot of prayer manuals out there. There is only one of them that is canonized, the Word of God.*

*Thanks to the book of Revelation, when it comes time for the fourth trumpet, the praying church in every nation of the earth will say, “We know what is next. The fifth trumpet.” Everybody will be praying for the fifth one. After that is over, because all the nations can count, “We know what is next. The sixth trumpet.” The church across the earth will be in concerts of prayer against the oppression of the Antichrist, praying and asking God to break in and to release justice in the earth. The prayers are numbered. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. There will be no mistake. The believers in the islands, in the north, in the south, in Europe, in Asia, “Number four is followed by number five. Number five is followed by number six.” There you have it. It will be the most unified global prayer time in history.*

*Right now it is kind of theoretical and does not really make any sense, but one day these things will really, really matter. I want to encourage people not to relegate this book just to fantasy or poetry. This is a very important book about Jesus.*

* 1. As Moses participated in prayer under the Lord’s leadership in releasing His judgments on Pharaoh (Ex. 7-12), so the end-time Church will participate in prayer under Jesus’ leadership as He releases the Great Tribulation judgments on the Antichrist (Rev. 6-19).

*Remember the ten plagues of Egypt? Moses goes into Egypt. There is an oppressor called Pharaoh. Moses prays. The first plague. Moses prays. It stops. Then he prays. The next plague. Then he prays again. The next one stops. He prays. The third one is released. He prays. The third one stops. It ebbs and flows. Moses stops them. Moses starts them. Obviously the Lord does, but He whispers to Moses, “I want you to say it.”*

*Moses could have said, “Lord, You say it. You talk louder than I do.”*

*“No, I want you to say it because I want partnership with My people.” Moses released the plagues of Egypt on Pharaoh. Beloved, there is an end-time Pharaoh called the Antichrist and there is a corporate end-time Moses, the prayer movement under the greater Moses, the Lord Jesus. When you study the book of Revelation judgments, they are very similar to the plagues of Egypt, because they are meant to be understood as that. The book of Revelation is a replay on a global level of which Moses and Pharaoh was a dress rehearsal. The end-time Pharaoh is coming down. When he rises up, and the nations are terrified, we can say, “He is coming down. We have the prayer manual. It is absolutely set already.” The end-time church will participate in prayer under Jesus’ leadership. The end-time church, just like Moses, will participate.*

* 1. The type of miracles and judgments seen in the books of Exodus and Acts will be multiplied and released worldwide through prayer in the Tribulation. The greatest demonstrations of power in history will be released by the praying Church operating in unity under Jesus’ leadership.

18I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades [authority of hell] shall not prevail against it. 19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt. 16:18-19)

12“The works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do.” (Jn. 14:12)

*The type of miracles and the judgments seen in the book of Exodus and seen in the book of Acts will be multiplied and released on a global level. Can you imagine the miracles of Exodus? I mean where the water turns to blood. That is going to happen. You read Rev. 8-9. The water turns to blood. It is the Moses thing again. It will be on a far greater level. It is not just the miracles of Exodus. It is going to be also the miracles of Acts. The dead will be raised. I mean in a minute at the end of that period, the dead are going to be raised on a grand scale. When that Jewish Man comes on the clouds, the graves are opening, and the dead will be raised. There will be a whole lot of that happening before that too. This is the most exciting moment.*

*I love what Asher Intrater preach once. It tickled me, but he meant it. He said, “If I am wrong, and we go up in the rapture before all this, I am not going up. I am staying down.”*

*I said, “Asher, I am not really sure you get to do that.”*

*He said, “I am staying down. I am going to be a part of this. I have been waiting my whole life to see this happen.” He was having fun. I chuckled. I think he meant it or something.*

*Jesus talked about the church where the gates of hell will not prevail. This was not just in theory, by faith, kind of in a spiritual way. There is a time on the earth where Satan will not prevail over the church globally. Matthew 16:19 also relates to the prayer movement. Verse 19 is the famous prayer verse. I believe the binding and loosing, although it is a true principle through history, will come to its fulfillment when the plagues of Moses in Egypt are enacted by the global praying church under the greater Moses, Jesus, upon the end-time Pharaoh called the Antichrist.*

*Jesus said in John 14:12, “They will do greater works than these.” Greater works. For years I have read commentaries concerning John 14:12. People say that it is just more evangelism. Others say that it is television. Others say that it is the printing press. No, it is greater miracles. It is the book of Revelation, miracles literally happening. Jesus never turned the water into blood. He turned it into wine, but never to blood. He never brought down the Roman Empire, the evil leaders of the Roman Empire, but He will bring down the evil leaders of the earth and bring them all down. He will do it in concert with His people.*

*The saints will be praying in heaven, the saints will be praying on the earth, the angels will be involved, and the Father will be commissioning Jesus to go forth in full, absolute manifestation of His glory. This is the greatest time you can imagine. Someone says, “People will die.”*

*I say, “Well the goal of life is* ***not*** *to not die. That is not the goal of life.” I do not want to keep doing this forever. The goal of life is to be faithful, not to make sure you never die. You just want to live forever in a broken body? The goal is to be faithful. We are not afraid of death. If we die, we die. Then we live forever. You die right now, within five seconds you will be fully conscious. Less than five seconds. I have told that to people contemplating suicide. They really think about suicide. I say, “You really realize you pull the trigger and you will be fully conscious in two or three seconds. It is not going away. It is not like you go into oblivion. You are fully conscious.”*

*They say, “Oh my goodness! I thought I was just going to go into nothingness for a while.”*

*“No, it does not work that way.”*

*The same with anybody who dies, but I am talking about the end-time martyrs. We are not afraid of martyrdom. You die, and you step across the line, and you are fully alive. The goal is not to make sure we do not die physically. I want to die quickly. Anyway... That just kind of slipped out there!*

1. The symbols in the book of Revelation
	1. There are seven main symbols in the book of Revelation. The events and numbers in Revelation are to be taken in their plain meaning (literal) unless the passage clearly indicates that they are symbolic (Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9, 15-18, etc.).

*There are seven main symbols in the book of Revelation. Seven main symbols. Here is an important point. Many agree with this, and many disagree with this.*

*The events and the numbers in the book of Revelation, however, are to be taken in their plain meaning. Many Bible teachers say, “No, they are symbolic.”*

*Many others say, “No, they are absolutely taken in their plain meaning.”*

*Seven means seven. Twelve means twelve. Four means four. That is really what it means. Twelve hundred and sixty days means twelve hundred and sixty days. Forty-two month is forty-two months. It really is. That is why it is not confusing. If you assume it is all symbolic, and you read all the books that give just endless meanings for any of these things, then they do not mean anything at the end of the day. It could mean ten things and you are never sure what it means. No, it means what it says. One hundred and forty-four thousand is one hundred and forty-four thousand.*

*Someone says, “It could not be that.”*

*“God is really good at math. He is really good at precision. What do you mean He cannot do that?”*

*“Well, we lost the records.”*

*“He did not lose the birth records.”*

*Anyway, just having fun with that. There are the seven symbols. You can read those are your own. Those are not the only ones. Those are the main ones. Unless the passage in the book of Revelation indicates it is symbolic, it is literal. Sometimes it indicates it is symbolic. Therefore you know it is symbolic. I have a number of them listed. We will look at them as we go through the book. Some of them say or indicate, “This is symbolic.” Guess what? That means it is symbolic. It is really just that simple. If it does not say it, it is not symbolic. If it does not indicate it, I mean.*

*The problem is with so much of it being real. I have talked to leaders and friends. They say, “If that is real, then everything is going to be really intense.”*

*I say, “That is the point.” If it is all symbolic, we just keep going, just trying to build a little bigger business, a little bigger church, a little nicer this, get our retirement plan all in shape. There is something bigger going on in the planet than that.*

* 1. ***Dragon***: symbolic of Satan (Rev. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4; 16:13; 20:2)
	2. ***First beast***: symbolic of the Antichrist (Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10)
	3. ***Another beast***: symbolic of the False Prophet called “another beast” just once (Rev. 13:11)
	4. ***Seven heads***:seven empires from history that persecuted Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, revived Roman Empire of Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16)
	5. ***Ten horns***:represent a ten-nation confederation that serves the Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13)
	6. ***Harlot Babylon***: points to a demonically-inspired religious and economic system (Rev. 17-18)
	7. ***Woman with a male-child*** *(Jesus)*: the faithful remnant of Israel through history (Rev. 12)
1. Structure Of Revelation: 4 Parts
	1. There are *4 parts* in the structure of the book of Revelation, the fourth part being the largest and consisting of *5 chronological sections* in which the events occur in sequential order.

*There are four parts in the structure in the book of Revelation, at least the way our leadership team and I understand it. We are in agreement with many, many teachers through history. I have had people say, “You have your own version.”*

*I respond, “No, no, no. Not at all.” Many of the main and plain points we have learned through leaders in history. Other really godly men and women, really smart ones, have a different structure. Their structure might be right. This is the structure we are comfortable with, that the book is sequential. It is unfolding one series after the other. Others do not think it is that way. They think it is a snapshot of the same events told over and over again from different perspectives. Again, maybe they are right, but I believe it means that it literally just unfolds like it says. I really believe that. We want to hold that understanding with humility and be teachable. We might be wrong on that. It might be different.*

*You do not want to be intense about the structure. But the reason I care about the structure is because if you have a sense of the structure, then the components within it make sense. If you just take a passage right out of the middle of it, and you do not know how it fits in the storyline, it is a bit like, “How does this fit?” It is a piece of the puzzle, but you do not see the picture on the box. We get our grandkids together, and we do a puzzle. You put the box up there, and then you get the piece, and you say, “Oh, that is how it fits.” There is a picture; there is a story line, and the pieces fit. It is not a great analogy, but my point being if it has no structure and you do not get it, then the whole thing seems arbitrary, and they are just floating pieces, and it does not make any sense. Or it does not make as much sense. I will put it that way.*

*I believe it is sequential. Here is the structure with which we are most comfortable, but we are always learning. We want to receive from other people and from teachers through history, etc. Many people have a structure that is sequential for the book of Revelation. It is not a new thing. It is not something that we got by revelation. It is nothing like that. We learned it through studying teachers through history and asking the Lord to confirm it to us. There are three or four different versions. This is the one with which we are most comfortable. We are learning. The closer we get [to that time frame], the more we will adjust things.*

*There are four parts in the structure. The fourth part is the largest part. Part one, two, three are a certain size. The fourth part is really large. Within that fourth part, there are what I call five chronological sections. We will look at that in a moment.*

* 1. ***Part 1: John’s calling to prophesy about the end times (Rev. 1)***.John gave truths about Jesus’ majesty that formed the way he prophesied about the end times. These truths are also to equip us.

*Part one: John’s calling to prophesy about the end times. Revelation chapter one is his commission to prophesy. His calling. Seeing John’s commission is powerful, but there are truths that are being conveyed about how God is commissioning people with a prophetic-messenger calling. The reason this is important for you is that Revelation 1 is a key chapter for the spiritual preparation of people that are called to be prophetic messengers. I do not mean just having words of knowledge about people, though we really value that. I am talking about messengers speaking the message of the book like John did. We will study chapter 1 and break that down, some of it.*

* 1. ***Part 2: Jesus gave 7 letters to the churches (Rev. 2-3)***. The instructions Jesus gave to these churches about overcoming sin give insight into what the end-time church must overcome.

*The second part is the letters to the seven churches. Those really matter. They matter throughout church history, but these are not just issues. Jesus spoke prophetically. He could have said this, “Seven churches, I am speaking prophetically. These are the key issues for you to overcome. End-time church, pay attention. It will be the same issues for you.” These are not just historical records. These are prophetic messages that Jesus, the ultimate Prophet, laid out in the first century. They will have a very relevant application to the end-time church standing true to the Lord in the face of persecution and the temptations of a sensualized culture. Revelation 2-3 are a critical part of the end-time message.*

* 1. ***Part 3: Jesus takes the scroll (Rev. 4-5)****.* This contains the earth’s title deed and Jesus’ plan to cleanse the earth. Jesus takes a 7-sealed scroll from the Father, representing the ***title deed*** of the earth and the ***battle plan***to judge, cleanse, and prepare the nations for Jesus’ rule over the earth, while bringing the Church to maturity, a Bride to partner with Him in His plan (Rev. 6-22).

*Jesus takes the scroll. He takes the scroll from the Father’s hand. This is a Jewish man, a human being, taking the scroll. The scroll represents the title deed of the earth, but more than that the scroll represents the battle plan to cleanse the earth, to judge it, and to prepare it for Jesus to have an empire on the earth. I want to say that again. The scroll is not only the title deed; it is the battle plan. The reason I use the word* ***battle*** *is some people over the years go, “Battle plan? That sounds so negative.” I respond that it is really intense. The nations are declaring war on Him, and it is military, not just a spirit of disagreement with Jesus. It will be the most violent time of all of human history, and the most powerful on the demonic side, and the most powerful on the “Jesus” side. It is really a violent hour that is coming. It is a battle plan. He is going to confront them and destroy their armies, like literally destroy their armies, not figuratively.*

*His plan is this: He is going to judge, cleanse, and prepare the nations for a glorious, righteous empire to replace all the evil governmental leaders on the earth. Can you imagine? There is one day in history, in Revelation 19—Catch this. I am getting way ahead of myself—there is one day in history when all the kings of the earth will gather to one city. Never in history have all the kings of the earth gathered to one city. Never in history have all the kings of the earth gathered to one city ever. It has never happened. They are all gathered to one city. That is a strange, one-time event in history. Jesus—I am talking about in His human body—shows up. He walks into Jerusalem where they are surrounded by the kings of the earth. He kills every one of them. I have stopped and thought, “Okay. Every king and their cabinets are all killed on the same day in the same city. That is intense. No wonder people say, ‘Uh.’ This is the most politically incorrect book I can imagine.”*

*Can you imagine going on CNN or FOX and announcing, “Well, one hundred kings of the earth are all going to be killed on the same day by God”?*

*“Oh, that is an interesting concept.”*

*It is not one hundred; it is* ***every*** *king of the earth on the same day in the same city killed by the same Man. Because He is going to replace all the governments of the earth on the same day. He is really smart. Do you know how much trouble there is when a nation replaces its government? We think of all the civil unrest in the military overthrows that we have seen over the last few decades. When a nation, like what has happen in Iraq, has a government change, many systems stop functioning. The water systems do not work that well. This does not work; that does not work. One Man is going to change all the governments on the same day. The infrastructures of the governments are broken. He is going to do it with brilliance and wisdom and pull it off in the whole earth. “Who are You? You are super smart and really powerful.” He is going to grasp it all, and He is going to have it done in the earth. Wow. Intense.*

* 1. ***Part 4: Jesus’ battle plan (Rev. 6-22)***. This includes the Great Tribulation judgments against the Antichrist. Jesus reveals His main storyline of love to cleanse the earth of evil. His battle plan is seen in ***5 chronological sections*** describing the main storyline of the 21 judgment events
	(7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls) that are released on the Antichrist’s empire in sequential order.

*The battle plan has five chronological sections. By the way, His battle plan is against the Antichrist and His armies. Remember, the book of Revelation is not mostly about the saints being troubled. It is mostly about the judgment on the Antichrist. Somebody said, “Well, when do we pray this?” The saints do not pray this until the last three and a half years. It will be super clear. The Antichrist will be in world power. There will be no mistake about it.*

*I have had guys get excited. They say, “Should we be praying this now?”*

*I say, “No, no, no, no, no.”*

*They say, “Should we pray for His return?”*

*No, you do not pray for His return until after the Tribulation starts, and you cry for justice and for Him to return in order for Him to destroy oppression. Before the last three and a half years, we do not pray for His return. We pray for His return from then on; the body of Christ worldwide does. They all will. We are talking about a man so much more evil than Adolf Hitler and so much more powerful. All the saints will be praying for the oppression to come to an end.*

*I have hear people on the microphone, “Come back, Jesus.”*

*I say, “Well, there are a whole bunch of things that need to happen.” We cannot speed those things up. That is not what we are talking about.*

*The body of Christ is saying, “Come, Lord Jesus.” The Spirit and the bride in those final three and a half years is when that prayer is being offered. They understand there is a time frame.*

*Right now we are saying, “Come in power and break in, in our midst, before You come in the sky.” Just to get a right perspective on that.*

*So Jesus’ battle plan has five chronological sections. In this plan there are five different sections. They are describing the main story line of the Great Tribulation. In these five main sections in the battle plan, from chapter 6 all the way to chapter 22, there are twenty-one judgment events. I believe they are sequential. They go one after the other. Some think they are simultaneous. They happen together. I think they are sequential. Again, I could be wrong, but I think that is the clear indication of the book. That is just the position we take.*

* 1. After each chronological section, an angel explains to John why the events just described are necessary. The angelic explanations function as parentheses that put the storyline on “pause.” They answer questions arising from the chronological sections: Why is God’s wrath so severe? What will happen to the saints? Angels explain to John *what happens to God’s people*, including what Jesus will do to *help them*, and what the Antichrist will do to *persecute them*.

*This is very important. After each of the chronological sections—like the seals unfolding. There are the seven seals—after the seals unfold, there is a pause on the storyline. After the seals are released in chapter 6, in chapter 7, it is like the angel pulls John aside and says, “Hey, John, what do you think about those seals? One fourth of the earth is killed.”*

*I am making up this conversation. I just imagine John asking, “Well, why is that happening? That is so intense. Why do we need those seals? Is that not a little bit overdoing it? What about us and are we going to be protected? What about the church?”*

*The angel says, “John, just sit down here.” He puts the story line on hold, the sequential storyline. I call it a parenthesis. An angel is explaining. He says, “Sit down. Let me tell you in chapter 7 what is going on in behind the scenes, why chapter 6 was so necessary, and what is going to happen to the saints during that time.” He explains it to John.*

*John says, “Oh, okay. I feel better.”*

*He says, “Okay, you feel better now? Good.” I am making that up of course. The angel says, “Let’s take the story line off pause. Let’s go to the next sequential set of events. The seven trumpets are unfolding.”*

*“Oh, they are more severe than the six seals. Oh my gosh! This is intense. Why? Why?”*

*“Okay John. You are losing it. You are losing it. Sit down in the chair. Pause. Let me tell you why that was so intense. Let me tell you what is going to happen to the saints.” The angel explains. It is a parenthesis. He comes along and says, “These things are happening. That is going to happen to the church. This is going to happen in the nations. Da-da-da-da.”*

*John says, “Oh that makes more sense.”*

*The angel says, “You got it?”*

*“Got it.”*

*“Okay good.” He takes the pause off. Now the seventh trumpet blasts. The Lord comes as the trumpet blasts. The saints all get a reward, and the governments of all the nations of the earth are replaced. The governmental overthrow begins then.*

*John is thinking, “Oh my goodness. This is so intense. What is going to happen?”*

*He says, “John,” pauses it, “Sit down again.” Every single one of the five chronological sections that happen one after the other, when the thing comes to an intensity, the angel pauses the story line and gives him a parenthetical explanation, in a parenthesis, of what is happening behind the scenes, explaining why that was so intense and what is going to happen to the saints during that time.*

*That is a bit of the structure. You can read that on your own. We will break this down as we go. That is just giving you a little bit ahead of time.*

1. Five Chronological Sections (Rev. 6-22)
	1. ***Chronological Section #1 (Rev. 6)***. The seal judgments against the kingdom of darkness.
	Angelic Explanation #1 (Rev. 7). We receive ***protection*** from judgments and falling away.
	2. ***Chronological Section #2 (Rev. 8-9)***. The ***trumpet judgments*** against the Antichrist’s empire. Angelic Explanation #2 (Rev. 10-11). We receive ***direction*** by increased prophetic ministry.
	3. ***Chronological Section #3 (Rev. 11:15-19)***. Jesus’ ***second coming*** *royal procession*and the rapture leading to Jesus replacing all the kings and top governmental leaders on earth.
	Angelic Explanation #3 (Rev. 12-14). The Antichrist’s violent ***confrontation*** with the saints deserves Jesus’ judgment and the replacement of all his evil governments.
		1. At the 7th and last trumpet (1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52; Rev. 10:7), Jesus will rapture the Church and travel across the sky in a royal procession, so that every eye will see Him
		(Rev. 1:7).

7Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)

* + 1. After this, Jesus will enter Jerusalem and stand on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4).
	1. ***Chronological Section #4 (Rev. 15-16)***. ***Bowl judgments*** destroy evil infrastructures in society.
	Angelic Explanation #4 (Rev. 17-18). The ***seduction*** of Babylon’s evil religion will permeate and infiltrate all the structures of society, requiring that Babylon be totally destroyed.
	2. ***Chronological Section #5 (Rev. 19-20)***. Jesus’ ***triumphal entry*** into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21:8).Angelic Explanation #5 (Rev. 21-22). The ***restoration*** of all things, Acts 3:21, (Rev. 21:9-22:5).

15Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them…16And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS…19And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him… 20Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet…These two were cast alive into the lake of fire…21The rest were killed with the sword… 20:1Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2He laid hold of…Satan, and bound him for a thousand years…3…so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished…4And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them…they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (Rev. 19:15-20:4)

*The fifth chronological section is Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem in Revelation 19. He is not just coming to the earth. He is marching into Jerusalem, killing all the kings of the earth who have been gathered around the city of Jerusalem to destroy the Jewish people and take it over. Jesus comes as the greater Moses, the greater David, the greater Joshua, the greater Elijah. He comes as all of those in fulfillment and delivers the Jewish people in Jerusalem. He sets up His kingdom, drives evil off the earth, and establishes the saints in government. We have a great story line in the book of Revelation. Amen and amen.*