

A photograph of a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a mossy forest floor. The text "Revelation means seeing what others cannot see" is overlaid in a stylized, glowing font.

**Revelation means seeing
what others cannot see**

Revelation means seeing

Do we see the forest or the trees? If we are to understand the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ we need to keep sight of the big picture.

Because we are focused mostly on our humanity, our comfort, and our pleasure, we tend to see the created things as being all important and fail to see the big picture of the Creator. We see the trees and we are blind to God who made all things and is over all things. In effect we worship the material created things of the world and deny the Creator who is Spirit.

With our focus on the world, when we ponder about life we do so from a material worldly perspective that has no room for our Creator God's perspective. Our concerns are about us and what is in the world we think will make us happy. We are blind to the truth that only a life centred on worshipping the Creator can bring happiness.

Even when we begin to read the revelation of His revealed will for mankind, we often do so from a worldly perspective. Then we keep getting stuck on minor particular things as being all important and never see the big picture that only God gives us peace. We get lost in the darkness of the world and fail to see the light of God. We end up worshipping the world and what's in it and fail to worship God who made all things for His purposes. We think life is all about us when it is in fact all about God.

As a result we make God our servant who is supposed to keep us happy when we are supposed to be His servants who make Him happy. We don't see that friendship with the world makes us enemies of God. (James 4:4) We fail to see the prince of the world who is God's arch enemy has blinded us to the truth of God. (Rev 12:9) We fail to see the great spiritual battle going on between the forces of darkness and light that is taking place between the devil and God. We are blind to the truth

that if we make our stand with the world we live in opposition to God. We then are servants of the dark prince and resist the will of God who is over all things. Rom 6:16

When we read God's word from a worldly perspective, we join the thousands of false teachers of the blind who are leading the blind to destruction. We distort some of the truth for a lie to suit our worldly desires; with the result that while we keep some things the way God has written, we change enough to infect the whole with a deadly disease so the whole of what we have becomes rotten to the core.

We cannot see God's point of view if we insist the trees are more important than the Forest. We cannot understand the major idea of God's plan if we get hung up on the minors. When we make the particular parts more important than the whole we are blind to the truth of the whole. This has been a major weakness in understanding God's word for thousands of years.

It doesn't matter if we are like the Pharisees of old, or offer a life of worldly prosperity; we don't see the whole truth so we offer a distorted view of the world and assist the enemy of God. We can distort the truth to justify a worldly perspective that supports the view we should be comfortable while we live on earth. The deception of the world denies the truth of God, so we draw people into the bondage of the devil that has darkened our understanding.

The more earthly minded we are the easier it is to keep us in the dark to the truth of God; this is the tactic of the prince of darkness. God's word is meant to feed us, to give us light, but we end up straining at little tiny bugs and swallow a camel because we missed the point. Or to put it another way, we filter out the tadpoles and end up swallowing a hippopotamus that shouldn't be on the menu.

If by some chance we can see this nonsense, we can be equally deceived by throwing the

baby out with the bath water. We are encouraged to overreact to what we don't like and throw the whole word of God out in the rubbish.

Instead of God using our life on earth to prepare us for holiness in heaven, we want to live as if we have it all now because we believe God loves us as we are.

However, God is at the centre of all things, He is first in all things, He is second, and third, and fourth. It is God alone who is to be considered if we are to see at all and avoid His judgment. He wants us to have Christ likeness.

Rom 8:29

Without getting lost by looking at the trees, let us look at the big picture of the book of revelation. This is the history of the world from God's point of view. He sees the beginning from the end, so He sees the past, the present, and the future, and He wants us to know what is going on.

The big picture of Revelation

Letters to the Churches (Rev 1-3)

'From Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.' (Rev 1:5) Who is present amongst His churches by His Spirit symbolised by the lampstands. (Rev 1:9-20) He knows their every situation and their deeds as they are attacked by religious deception, persecution, and the seduction of worldly pleasure of affluence and comfort, and the pressure to conform. He knows their strengths and their weaknesses. He rebukes the unfaithful for their willingness to compromise their faith in Him, and He encourages those who make a stand to witness to Him in the face of persecution.

Rev 2-3

The Seals (Rev 4:1-8:1)

John was called to heaven and beheld the one sitting on the throne and those around the throne worshipped Him. *“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS*

AND WHO IS TO COME.” (Rev 4:1-8) And the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honour and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Rev 4:10-11

Jesus is victorious because He died as the sacrificial Lamb. (Rev 5:5) He is the only One who has the authority to reveal the meaning of what will happen in history. (Rev 4-5) On the Lamb's instructions there will be military conquest, (white horse) war and bloodshed, (red horse) and food scarcity, (black horse) leading to death through violence, famine, and disease, (pale horse) will punish the church's enemies until the end, (Rev 6:1-8) during this time the Lamb's martyrs must wait until their enemies are destroyed. (Rev 6:9-11) God's justice will come.

Rev 6:12-17

In this period of tribulation Jesus protects His covenant people, which is symbolised as a full army of twelve tribes, (Rev 7:1-8) drawn from all the world's peoples, so that nothing will separate us from His love. (Rev 7:9-17) When Jesus brings sorrow and distress on earth's evil powers, it is in answer to His people's prayers for relief from the evil deeds of the enemies of God.

Rev 8:1-5

The Trumpets: Warning Signals of Coming Judgment

(Rev 8:2-11:18)

Jesus will bring limited appropriate judgment on the earth as signal blasts, indicating the great judgment to come, calling on earth's inhabitants to repent. The trumpet blasts include the effects of war, the burning of land, bloodying of sea, defiling of fresh water, darkened of sky by smoke. (Rev 8:6-12) Even worse, the rebellious will be tormented by demonically induced despair and death. (Rev 8:9) Jesus also gives the assurance that His patient waiting will not continue forever.

(Rev 8:10) During this time His witnessing church cannot be prevented from its work until its task is done; even its defeat in a martyrs' death will be its victory. (Rev 11:1-14) As a result of the work of God and the Lamb the kingdom of the world will belong to the Lord and His Christ. Rev 11:15-18

The Dragon and the Lamb: The heart of the conflict. (Rev 11:19-15:4)

The central issue of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is the conflict between Christ and the dragon. The battle begins with the birth of a male child. This child came to rule all the nations of the earth. (Rev 12:5) The death and enthronement of the child of Eve who is true Israel, (Rev 15:3-4) has now abolished Satan's authority to accuse believers before God. Satan is *thrown down to the earth. Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come.* Rev 12:1-12

In his final efforts to strike back at God, Satan attacks believers on earth who are the bride of the Lamb. (Rev 12:12-13-1) Satan wars through persecution with the sea beast and unbelieving humanity. (Rev 13:1-10) And through the deception of the land beast and world rulers, (Rev 13:11-18) and through encouraging sensual pleasure by the harlot Babylon.

Rev 14:8; 16: 9; 17-18

According to this prophecy the beast makes war with the saints for a very long period of time. (Rev 13:5-7) During this time the “holy city” the people of God will be trampled upon. (Rev 11:2) The beasts are symbols for Satan's inspired evil in opposition to the kingdom of God throughout history revealed in political, economic, military, social, philosophical, or religious rebellion. The beast challenges God by denying the first commandment: *"You shall have no other gods before me."* (Exod. 20:3) The description John gives of the beast from the sea does not describe a human political entity. It describes

the hideous; Satan backed system of deception and idolatry that may at any time express itself in human worldly society.

All the while, the Lamb and His army who have washed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb are enthroned in victory on the heavenly Zion. (Rev 14:1-5; 15:1-4) The Lamb will return and bring His enemies to judgment for the death of His martyrs. Rev 14:6-20

“If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Rev 14:10-11

The Bowls: God's Wrath Completed

(Rev 15:5-16:21)

The complete judgment that was previously indicated by the limited disasters of history as a result of the trumpets will now come on those who have served the dragon through the beasts and the harlot Babylon; as a result, neither the earth, or sea, or water springs, nor sunlight will sustain life. There will be no place to hide from the judgment of God. (Rev 16:1-9) The dragon's final conspiracy to gather the world's powers and peoples against Christ's Church will result in the rebel's destruction. Rev 16:10-21

The Harlot Babylon

(Rev 17:1-19-10)

The world and all man's seductive power is in the harlot Babylon, and has been supported by the power of the beast (Rev 17:17) who came out of the abyss. (Rev 17:8) The source of her intoxication has been the death of Jesus' faithful witnesses. (Rev 17:6; 18:6; 19:2) But the glamour of the beast's harlot woman Babylon

is all pretence and her luxurious wealth will be stripped from her in full view of those who have loved the comforts she has offered. (Rev 18:1-19:5) Jesus' bride will be fully and finally vindicated. Rev 19:6-10

Thousand Years, Last Battle, and Last Judgment (Rev 19:11-21:8)

When the dragon, the beast, and false prophets have gathered the world's powers to destroy the Church, (Rev 16:13-16) Jesus will defeat His enemies even before the battle begins; and cast them into the lake of fire forever. (Rev 19:11-21; 20:7-10) Until that time, Satan has been bound and prevented from assembling this worldwide conspiracy against the Church for one thousand years, which is symbolic of a very long time, while the martyrs who have died on earth live and rule with Christ in heaven. Rev 20:1-6

The ultimate point of Jesus' victory is the judgment of all people, in which rebels are condemned for the deeds written in their

record book, (Rev 20:11-15) and the saints who are written in the Lamb's book of life are welcomed into the new heaven and new earth as the bride city of God. Rev 21:1-9

The New Creation and the Bride Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-22:21)

With her enemies destroyed the Church will stand complete in flawless beauty as the bride of the Lamb, the temple of God, magnificent with His glory. (Rev 21:10-23) Overcomers will inherit the new heaven and new earth, (Rev 21:1-8) and will delight in God's presence forever. (Rev 21:23) Even as the Church cries out to her Husband, "*Come, Lord Jesus*" (Rev 22:20) His delay allows time for the thirsty still to come to Him for the water of Life.

Rev 22:17

Lessons from the big picture

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Revelation teaches us that there is no spiritual growth in kingdom life without ongoing struggle against sin. Our purification is achieved by overcoming the adversity we face daily in the world as we testify to Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God.

The world may be under the control of the dragon for a time but God uses the world as the training ground for perfecting our faith. We are supposed to face difficulty in the world. Growth in holiness demands perseverance in the face of spiritual struggle.

The Lord Jesus warns us that this life on earth is not meant to be a pleasurable experience. (Matt 10:34) The pleasure and the peace will come when we inherit the New Jerusalem; there Jesus has promised His overcomers heavenly rewards beyond our imagination. However, overcomers will have to face trials and tribulation and not compromise their faith regardless of the consequences or the cost.

The seals trumpets and bowls of Revelation include every possible difficult situation known to man, and they will be experienced by all people. For the children of God, struggle to live by faith regardless of the trial to be endured is for our greatest good. Tribulation will accompany all those who place their faith in Christ, but we know He has gained the victory and will carry us through.

Faith is not a belief that all things will be full of plenty and comfort, real faith is staring down the power of darkness that would have us surrender to the world to enjoy all it has to offer, with the result that we worship the creation and not the Creator. Real faith is trusting in God regardless of our circumstances. *'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He*

would be the firstborn among many brethren.'

Rom 8:28-29

In the mean time the world is repeating the pattern God condemned in the days of Noah.

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:26-27, 30

Will the Lord Jesus find people of faith on this earth when He returns? Luke 18:8

While we endure the trials of life we are to prey without ceasing. (1 Thess 5:17) Unceasing prayer is not praying for our own material benefit or creature comfort, but for strength, discernment, and perseverance for ourselves and for others in the ongoing battle with the evil powers of darkness. We also pray for opportunities to take the light of God into the

darkness that we might lead others to the light and life in Jesus Christ.

We are to rejoice always (1 Thess 5:16) because we know God Himself is our reward. (Rev 21:8) We give thanks in all things, (1 Thess 5:18) because we know God is working out all things, the good and the difficult and painful, for our benefit. Rom 8:28-29

Those who teach that God wants to see us well off and enjoying life on earth are setting God's people up for a fall because they are more concerned with the things of the world and not the battle of the world. They are preparing people for compromise, not for confronting the darkness; they are preparing them for the mark of the beast, not for life as a soldier in the kingdom of God. At best they have disarmed them so they can do nothing for the kingdom of God. They witness to worldliness and not to the eternal home in heaven. Our church attendance and living a Spirit directed life is supposed to validate our

message of the good news from God, it is not to stand alone; that would be like having a loaded gun but keeping it secured in a locker. Besides, if we really walked in the Spirit we wouldn't be hiding in a church locker.

A life of plenty and comfort is the enemies propaganda to disarm these so called combatants. A good soldier doesn't get caught up in the affairs of the world. *'No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.'* 2 Tim 2:4

When we are born again by the Spirit of God we no longer live for the world as before but Christ now lives in us. We no longer live for self but only to do the work of God, as God works in us; we are called to do greater works.

What did Jesus mean when He said we would do greater works?

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and

greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." John 14:12

Jesus has already told us what He meant. *"For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing. And greater works than these will He show Him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."*

John 5:20-21, 24-25

Jesus had miraculously healed a man at the pool by the power of God, but He went on to say the greater works was the giving of eternal life. Our witness to the Lord Jesus Christ is for doing the greater works of bringing people into the kingdom of God.

As was true of Christ, our only reason for living is to do the will of the Father and the Lamb.

John 4:34

Overcoming is not just sitting out the storm

In the face of all opposition, our perseverance in carrying out the command to go and make disciples, teaching them to obey all Jesus commanded, is what it is to overcome opposition from the enemy and receive the Lamb's reward.

When we are committed to Christ, He will open doors. The church at Philadelphia had not compromised their faith, and although they had little power, God had opened a door no one could close.

Rev 3:8

Teachers in the Church are to be an example of this kind of perseverance for those in their care, just as Paul asked the people to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ.

1 Cor 11:1

Now the Lamb of God speaks to us

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.’

Rev 22:16-20

Abide in Him

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Rev 22:12-13

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