

THE NON-PROPHET'S GUIDE™ TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Written & Illustrated by
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INTRODUCTION

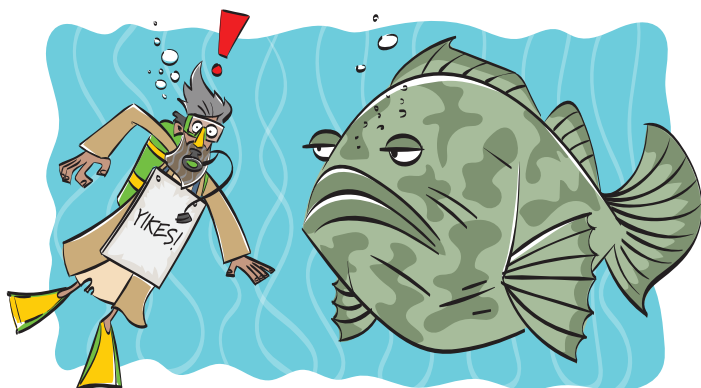
An Unexpected Adventure

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

REVELATION 1:3

As you sit on the edge of the boat with one hand on your mask and regulator and the other on the back of your head, thoughts race through your mind. You consider how far from land you are, and you wonder if the handful of sharks you just watched eating their chum a few feet away from the small charter boat are still hungry. Fear and excitement swell as you cross your legs and lean back to let gravity do the rest. Three, two, one, drop!

Splash! The cool Caribbean water engulfs you as the noise of seagulls suddenly changes to the sound of bubbles and Darth Vader-like breathing as you force air through the regulator into your lungs. You are now in the Atlantic Ocean—an hour away from land and surrounded by otherworldly sea life. Recalling your recent training, you stabilize your ears and slowly descend the diving reel to the sunken ship on the ocean floor 50 feet below.



As you descend, you take note of the cloudy spot of leftover chum above and the silhouettes of a few Caribbean reef shark hoping for more. About 20 feet further down, you come face to face with a large, ugly fish—a giant grouper—hovering in place and unintimidated by your presence. Off in the distance you

spot the complete darkness of the 6,000-foot underwater cliff known as the Tongue of the Ocean—a branch of the Great Bahama Canyon. A healthy fear is present, along with a rush of adrenaline, as your thoughts turn to the amazing beauty of the coral reefs and schools of bright-colored fish below. Words can't adequately describe the scene. Heightening the experience is the realization that just four hours ago, this adventure of a lifetime was not even on the agenda.

TONGUE OF THE OCEAN AKA TOTO

DEEP-OCEAN U-SHAPED TRENCH

NEAR THE BAHAMAS

20 MILES WIDE, 150 MILES LONG

DROPS FROM 70 FEET TO 6000+ FEET

PART OF THE GREAT BAHAMA CANYON

That was the experience my wife and I had on the last full day of our honeymoon in the Bahamas. We traveled to an all-inclusive resort featuring great dining and various activities you could enjoy without ever leaving the resort. We took a kayak to an island one day, went water skiing another, and enjoyed relaxing on the beach on yet another. Toward the end of our stay we met with the concierge to inquire about other activities, and they called our attention to the daily scuba diving excursions.

QUICK FACT: DID YOU KNOW...

that SCUBA stands for Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus?

We were surprised to learn we could take a two-hour class on site, then pass a quick scuba and swimming test to be dive-certified in the Bahamas. The timing was perfect—a class was just about to start, and we discovered that there

was still room on a scuba excursion that was set to leave soon after the training. Within a short period of time our day transitioned from a fairly routine vacation morning to one of the most memorable adventures of our lives.

Your Next Adventure Revealed

Think about an unexpected adventure you have had. Some of the best experiences in life come when we don't expect them. Many Christians in our day don't realize that studying the book of Revelation is just such an adventure! Though the last book of the Bible is often seen as scary, complicated, irrelevant, divisive, confusing, or boring, the truth is that studying Revelation with the right perspective is one of the most practical, relevant, and exciting things you can do as a believer in Christ! Unfortunately, the enemy has convinced many that reading Revelation isn't worth the time—because he knows that his destruction, our ultimate redemption, and the Lord's glorification are all detailed in this breathtaking capstone of the Bible!



You are about to embark on a thrilling trek that will cause your faith in the Bible, and your excitement about the nearness of the Lord's return, to bloom with new meaning. If you long for hope, joy, clarity, and a majestic sense of your calling, you need to study the phenomenal truths awaiting you in the book of Revelation.

When it comes to everything that is happening in today's world, God's hand is still on the steering wheel. Nothing is random or accidental. Everything is falling into place exactly as God foretold. Christ's return has been nearly 2,000 years in the making, and we are on the cusp of the most astounding supernatural events of Scripture—a season that prophecy experts such as the late Chuck Missler have said the Bible talks more about than any other period of history. If you want a clear picture about what is soon to take place, get ready for your adventure!

What We'll Discover

Together on this journey, we'll see a full picture of Jesus reigning in power and glory. We'll learn what the often-overlooked letters to the churches (Revelation chapters 2–3) mean for us today. We'll uncover the fascinating details about the rapture. We'll understand—perhaps for the first time—that the book of Revelation is to be taken literally and that the symbols are meant to be understood. We'll study the various judgments, as well as the technology, culture, and current events that demonstrate we are rapidly approaching the last days—and that we are nearer than ever to the rapture of the church!

We'll discover the long-suffering patience of God as he delays his judgment as far as his holiness will allow. We'll learn how even God's wrath is designed to bring the maximum number of people into heaven. We'll see how Revelation

ties up every major theme introduced in Genesis. We'll come to understand God's purpose and plan for Israel and the Jewish people. And we'll unpack key details about the glorious future that awaits us in the millennial kingdom and the eternal state!

Revelation is the climax of God's Word, the crescendo of his redemptive plan, the magnum opus of his message. It unveils the ultimate resolution of all things. So buckle up and get ready to study one of the most thrilling—and most overlooked—books of the Bible. This is one unexpected adventure you don't want to miss. Let's dive in!



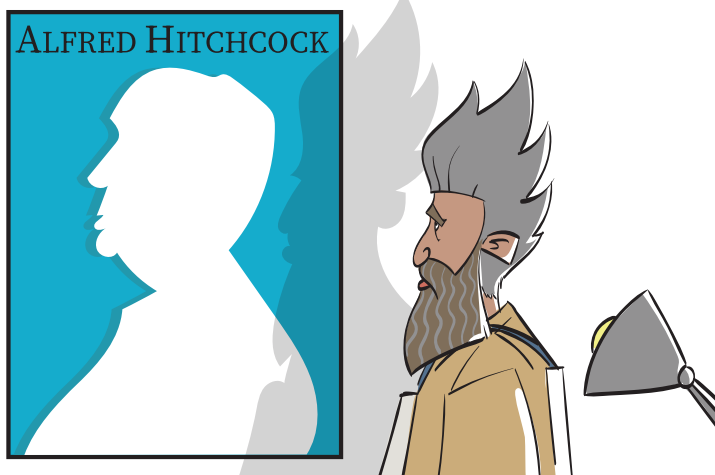
CHAPTER 1

One Mega-Story

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

MATTHEW 5:17-18

One of my favorite college courses was a radio, television, and film class called “The Analysis and Structure of Film.” Throughout the course we would watch and analyze classic films, then write a detailed report about a particular shot or sequence. One point our professor made abundantly clear was this: Nothing that appears on the screen is there by accident. Not a single detail in a shot or sequence is random. Every nuance has a purpose and was intentionally placed there by the director to achieve his overall vision for the film. Our instructor demonstrated how the shot sequences, camera angles, lighting, colors, composition, movement, patterns, editing rhythm, and every other controllable detail in a good film serves to support the story and the director’s vision.



On a much deeper level, I believe the same is true when it comes to Scripture. If we zoom in to a specific story in Scripture, it holds up on its own as a complete story. When we pull back to view the broader context—like a chapter or a complete book—we see it fits into a larger story. If we pull back to reveal the full context, we see that the entire Bible is cohesively designed into one grand mega-story. Nowhere is this more evident than in Scripture’s final book, which brings resolution to every key theme of the Bible.

39 WRITERS
3 CONTINENTS
1500 YEARS
1 STORY

God is the author who inspired the Bible’s writers, and every minute detail is intentional—without an inkling of randomness. The very structure of Scripture, the nuances of the Hebrew and Greek and Aramaic languages, the typology, the numerology, the specific details of prophecies and their fulfillments—and so many other details—demonstrate God’s clear handiwork. It’s as if the Bible itself has a divine DNA that runs through it from Genesis to Revelation. The more you study the Scriptures, the more evident this truth becomes.

2 Peter 1:20–21—Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

The Critical Link: Origins and Last Things

Each divine DNA strand begins its journey in Genesis and finds its ultimate resolution in Revelation. No two books have been attacked or neglected more than these two bookends of Scripture. Naturalists and liberal theologians have sought to undermine the authenticity and reliability of Genesis for the past 250 years. The enemy would like nothing more than to divert our attention away from the essential truths found there. If this critical foundation is cracked (at

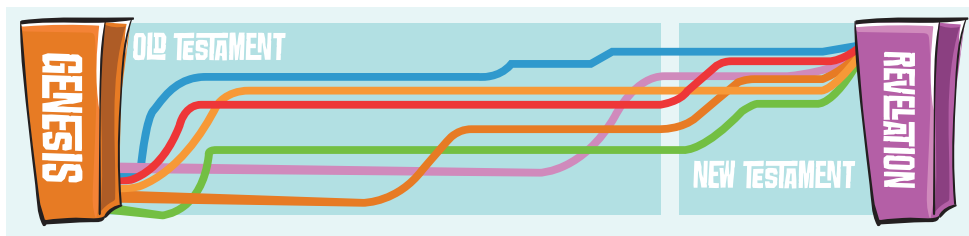
least in the hearts and minds of people), the rest of the structure is likely to be misunderstood or even ignored.



On the other end of the biblical spectrum, the book of Revelation is often seen as confusing at best and utterly unknowable or irrelevant at worst. We shouldn't be surprised that both Genesis and Revelation are under attack these days—just as we are nearing the end of the age.

John 10:10—The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

There is a critical link between these two key books, and the enemy has done his best to keep us disinterested or preoccupied so we miss the all-important truths found within them. In Genesis we discover our roots, and in Revelation we learn about our eternal future. Every key theme and theological truth finds its origin in Genesis and its ultimate culmination in Revelation. The Bible is a “book of books” that begins with eternity past and ends with eternity future. The core questions that people have about their origins and their future are answered by these two critical books—meticulously woven together by the other 64 books between them.



Rediscovering the Old Testament

John assumed his readers would be familiar with the Old Testament. In fact, Revelation is a distinctly Jewish book. In it we find all kinds of Jewish symbolism, two Jewish witnesses, 144,000 Jewish evangelists, and the world's attention centered on Israel and Jerusalem during the end times. In Revelation's 404 verses there are more than 800 references or allusions to the Old Testament!¹

The symbolism in Revelation is solved either by reading the immediate context in which it appears or by cross-referencing passages from the Old Testament. Many Bible expositors teach what is known as “the law of first mention.” To understand the doctrines or symbols used in Revelation, you must find the first place in Scripture that doctrine or symbol is mentioned. The first instance of a teaching or symbol in Scripture often provides tremendous insight into how it is to be understood later. Cross-referencing all the uses of a key word or term will help you to build upon the doctrine or symbol's first mention.

This approach helps us interpret Scripture with Scripture, instead of interpreting Scripture based on outside sources or our own thoughts and ideas. If God is the author of the Bible, we should expect to find a cohesiveness in this regard—and we do. The law of first mention, and the principle of interpreting scripture with scripture, both bear out a divine unity in God's Word as it relates to numbers, symbols, doctrines, names, places, and many other details. Using the law of first mention—and interpreting scripture with scripture—when studying Revelation helps to bring great clarity to most of the symbolism found in the book.

QUICK FACT: DID YOU KNOW...

the number 7 is a big deal in Revelation? The first mention of 7 is in the creation account in Genesis. This number speaks of completeness, fullness, or rest.

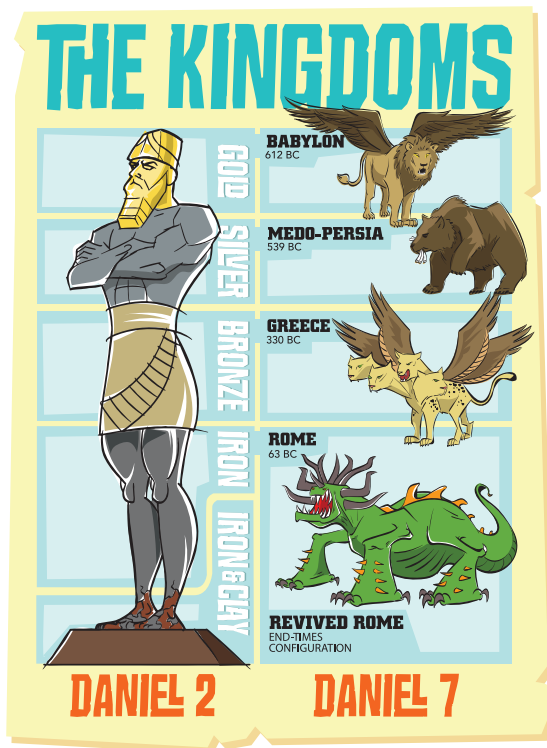
Daniel: The Revelation of the Old Testament

While all the Old Testament prophets provide important details about end-time events, the book that provides the most sweeping view—and that, in some ways, serves as a foundation for Revelation—is Daniel. Sometimes

Daniel is referred to as the “Revelation of the Old Testament,” which is why seminary level-courses designed to study Revelation often look at the book of Daniel as well.

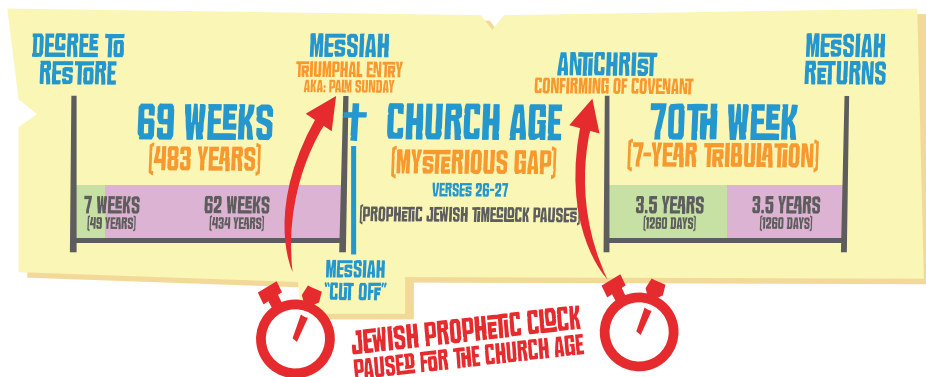
Eight of the twelve chapters in Daniel center on prophecy. Having a basic understanding of this prophetic two-thirds of Daniel sheds much light on world history and the end times. In Daniel 2, we read a sweeping (and amazingly accurate) prophecy about a statue that represents four successive world kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome) that would precede a loosely united end-time kingdom in the last days. In Daniel 7, we see these same kingdoms depicted as four beasts, followed by an end-time revived kingdom out of which will emerge an end-time evil ruler (seen as a little horn).

In Daniel 8, we see a more detailed view of Medo-Persia and Greece—particularly the conquests of Alexander the Great and the dividing of the Greek Empire (prophe-sied more than two centuries before the events took place). Chapter 8 ends with some key details about the evil end-times ruler.



In chapter 9 we learn about a 490-year period that provides the timing of the first coming of Christ, a mysterious gap period (that we now know as the church age—the period we currently find ourselves in), and a final seven-year period during which an evil ruler will come to power. The last four verses of Daniel 9 are arguably the most important verses of the entire book. These four short verses contain an incredible prophecy that covers all of Jewish history from Daniel’s time to the end.

THE 70 WEEKS OF DANIEL CHAPTER 9



This final seven-year span mentioned in the Daniel 9 prophecy is known to us as the tribulation. This seven-year period is detailed in the book of Revelation and makes up most of its content (Revelation 6:1–19:21).

VARIOUS NAMES USED FOR THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Jacob's trouble	(Jeremiah 30:7)
Daniel's 70th week	(Daniel 9:24-27)
A time of distress	(Daniel 12:1)
The great day	(Revelation 6:17)
The hour of testing	(Revelation 3:10)
The indignation	(Isaiah 26:20)
Tribulation/Great Tribulation	(Matthew 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Rev. 7:14)
The Day of the Lord	(Joel 1:15; 2:1; 1 Thess. 5:2)

In Daniel 11 we find further details about the future (from Daniels' perspective) Greek Empire; then beginning in verse 36 the prophecy shifts to the evil end-time ruler. Daniel 11:36-45 provides several facts about this ruler and the events that will take place during his reign. Chapter 12 continues this description and

gives us information about the last three-and-a-half years of the seven-year tribulation period.

A careful study of the visions of Daniel (particularly chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12) lays the foundation for studying Revelation. Daniel serves as a sort of blueprint or grid through which we can better understand Revelation. As you read through the prophetic passages in Daniel, much light will be shed on the events, timing, and symbolism of Revelation.

Is Revelation Practical?

This is a relevant question. With all the struggles people go through in life, and with all the significant physical needs and global crises present in our world today, why should we take the time to study Revelation with all of its symbolism, mysteries, apocalyptic language, and scary scenarios?

Because it's the capstone of Scripture, the climax of the story, the resolution of the biblical narrative. Ignoring Revelation would be like going to a movie and walking out before the best part!

In practical terms, understanding Revelation gives us a deeper confidence in Scripture, anchors our focus on a promised future and eternal hope, purifies our Christian life, pushes us to share our faith, and helps us make sense of the way the world is today.

As we embark on this incredibly practical overview of the most amazing—yet most avoided—book of the Bible, keep your knowledge of the Old Testament running in the background. I'll include relevant cross-references when needed to help clarify various passages of Revelation. You're in for a treat as we jump into Revelation 1, where you will see a new and radical picture of the risen and reigning Jesus.