

Be an Overcomer! - Introduction

Revelation 1:1-8

We are going to start a series looking at the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, focusing on the seven letters to the seven churches.

You can faithfully summarize the entire book of Revelation in one word, *nike or victory*.

The verb form *nicarico* means *to conquer; to triumph; to overcome*. This occurs 28 times in the New Testament, 17 of those occurrences are in the book of Revelation.

Revelation is the story of the devil trying to conquer the church, but the church overcomes the devil along with the world and our sin and temptation, because the church belongs to the Lord, who has won for us the victory. Revelation 5:5; Revelation 17:14

The book of Revelation, gives instruction for how the believer and the church is to conquer instead of being conquered. Each of the seven letters concludes with these words: *to him who overcomes or triumphs*. If we cave into persecution; if we give into worldliness; if we give into the devil's temptation—we lose. If we conquer, however, through trial and suffering, and sometimes through seeming irrelevance, we win.

The bookends of Revelation are Ch. 1:8 and Ch. 21:6-7

In the first three verses, notice that Revelation is three things. It is an *apocalypse, a prophecy, and a letter*.

Apocalypse

First, the book of Revelation is an *apocalypse*. *Revelation* is the English translation of the Greek word, *apocalypse*. These words mean *showing or revealing*. The message in this book is from Jesus. He is revealing.

The Bible is literature which speaks truth in different ways by using different genres. It's perfectly fine for truth to be conveyed in stories, poetry, propositions, and so on. Revelation is not giving us precise legal codes, it is giving us *verbal pictures*.

Some Christians reject the validity of verbal pictures. They don't believe that truth can be conveyed this way. Therefore, they try to interpret Revelation literally, that is at face value.

For example, in chapter 7, 144,000 people have been sealed or preserved for eternity. This is another way of saying what Jesus said in John 10:27-31.

That's why verse 1 says *the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to show his servants*.

Prophecy

Revelation is an apocalypse, and it is a prophecy. A prophecy is nothing more than the word of God coming to His people usually through a prophet. Simply put, it is a communique from God.

If you are going to understand this prophecy of Revelation, you need to be familiar with the Old Testament, for Revelation is rooted in Old Testament imagery. Revelation makes mention of or allusion to or referencing the Old Testament more than 500 times.

Even though Revelation is a book about the future, yet, when you read or study it, you need to look backward, that is with the eyes of the Old Testament. Revelation is a prophecy, both the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and imagery and a prophetic word about things, some of which happened in their lifetime, and others, which are unfolding or have yet to be realized.

Letter

Revelation was first and foremost a letter that was circulated.

This was a letter to real churches, real Christians, in real time and space.

So before we think about what this might mean for us or how the symbolism might be interpreted, we have to remember, it must have made sense to them. These were churches under spiritual, physical, and material attack. Some of them were deep into compromise and worldliness. The message conveyed over and over is: *Don't give in. Don't give up. Don't give in. Don't give up.*

Jesus has won the victory. So, live like him, die like him, but do not succumb to the devil and the world.