

In the study of end times (eschatology), evangelical Christians usually adhere to one of three positions. *Premillennialism* holds that Christ will return to earth before He reigns over an earthly kingdom for one thousand years. *Postmillennialism* says the kingdom of God will become realized on this earth through the church's influence, even before Christ's return. *Amillennialism* suggests the millennium is not a literal thousand-year reign, but that Christ's return will usher in eternity.

[10 Things Jesus Really Said About His Return | Cultivating Epiphanies](#)

1. No one knows the day or the hour of my return.

In Mark 13:32, Jesus had been teaching his disciples about his return and says, "But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Luke records it this way, "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Lk 12:40).

Jesus told his disciples even He didn't know exactly when He would return. At this point in history, God the Father knew the exact number of years, months, days and seconds until Christ would return and Jesus didn't. We need not speculate about future details Christ himself didn't know.

Also, Jesus applied this truth to their lives, "Be ready." Jesus didn't know if he would return in their lifetimes, but his command to them is his command to us almost 2,000 years later. Keep watch. Stay awake.

2. There will be several signs, increasing in intensity, as my return draws near.

Christ's followers should pay attention to the signs of his return. They should speculate about the exact day or hour but should pay attention to natural events and recognize the potential fulfillment of Christ's words as they happen.

Jesus promised there would be wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes in various places (Matt 24:6-7). And also, "signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk 21:25-27).

Additionally, Jesus used the term "birth pains" to describe these signs. Like the pain of childbirth, these signs will get more intense and frequent as the day draws close. When we see increasing numbers of earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, and other natural disasters, Jesus instructs, "straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk 21:28). Once again, Jesus instructs us to pay attention to the signs of His return in order to be ready when He comes.

3. Pray for the strength to escape the things that are going to take place.

In Luke 21:36, Jesus taught his followers, "But stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." From the context, the "escaping" Jesus refers to is escaping from the judgment and wrath God will bring upon those who have rejected Christ. Jesus teaches his disciples to pray for the strength to escape. Too many believe Christians will escape by default, but Jesus told his disciples to pray for strength to escape, and so we must.

4. It will seem like a normal day.

In Luke 17:26-30, Jesus compared the day the Son of Man will be revealed to God's judgment in the days of both Noah and Lot. In both these times, people were going about the normal business of life: eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, and building. In the midst of this apparent normalcy, God's judgment and wrath fell. Jesus said this is what it will be like when He comes. It will be a great cosmic interruption that will be like lightning which "lights up the sky from one side to the other" (Lk 17:24).

5. I will repay everyone for what he has done.

In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus told his followers He is coming and “bringing his recompense...to repay everyone for what he has done” (22:12). Matthew 25 describes the scene when Jesus will sit on his glorious throne and all nations will be gathered before him to be judged (31-33). All people will stand before Jesus and give account for what they did in life. How glorious it will be to stand confidently in the imputed righteousness of Christ in that day.

6. Not everyone who expects to make it into Christ’s kingdom will.

Some of the most sobering words of Jesus are about those who will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” What could be worse than hearing these words from Jesus?

At the end, there will be many people who will think they are in because of their ministry credentials. And Jesus will say, “I never knew you” and call them “workers of lawlessness.” Their repentance was in word only. They acted like followers but didn’t have a saving relationship with Christ based on faith and repentance as the foundation of their lives. Jesus said there will be many people in this terrifying condition, living their lives thinking they were in and finding out in the final analysis they weren’t.

7. There will be great persecution and many will fall away.

Jesus promised great persecution would break out against his followers and would cause many to fall away (Matt 24:9-10). It’s relatively easy to follow Christ when things are going well, but when times get tough we find out what we’re made of. Is our faith in Christ only as strong as the comfort we enjoy? If God’s enemies come and take everything will we cling to Christ or fall away? Jesus promised many would make the incomprehensible choice to fall away.

8. Because of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold.

Jesus promised that sin would lure many away from Him (Matt 24:12). These are people who once loved Christ warmly who have cooled in their affections for Him. They’ve traded in their desires for Christ for worthless idols. Sex, money, power and other false gods have replaced the love of Christ in their hearts. Their love grows cold as they lose the war against temptations to sin. Stoking the heart’s fiery love for Christ must include destroying the wet buckets of sin that can so quickly quench it. True Christ followers must repent often and much.

9. Be on your guard. Keep awake.

Jesus continually told his followers to stay awake, to watch their lives, and to be ready for his return. In Matthew, Jesus gave four parables to explain how and why his followers should be prepared for his coming: the homeowner and the thief (24:42-44); the good and wicked servants (24:45-51); the 10 virgins (25:1-13); and the talents (25:14-30). In each of these parables, Christ described readiness with working to complete the work Christ gave us, namely fulfilling the Great Commission. Every Christian is to diligently use the gifts and opportunities God provides to reach the world for Christ.

To be awake is to be ready and willing to do Christ’s will. In Gethsemane, Jesus’ disciples slept instead of joining Him in prayer. They weren’t doing what Christ asked but slept. In the same way, many Christians today are asleep to Christ’s will. They don’t seek him or ask for his direction. Instead, like the disciples in the garden, they sleep. Hear the words of the prophet Isaiah, “Awake, awake, put on strength” (51:9).

Peter says it well, “The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:7-8).

10. I am coming soon!

Four times in the book of Revelation, Jesus said to the churches, “I am coming soon!” (Rev 16:15; 22:7,12,20). It was originally meant as an encouraging word to 1st century Christians suffering by the hands of Rome and has continued to encourage Christ’s followers throughout the ages. Christians in every generation are to hold tightly to the promise that Christ will return soon.

As the writer of Hebrews reminds, “Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28). Like young children eagerly longing for Christmas morning, Christians eagerly wait for Christ to return. In doing so, we live out Paul’s wonderful promise to the church in Thessalonica, “Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). Nothing is greater than to be with Jesus Christ always and forever.

[Study Guide for Revelation 1 by David Guzik \(blueletterbible.org\)](http://blueletterbible.org)

INTRODUCTION; A VISION OF JESUS

A. The introduction and prologue to the Book of Revelation.

1. ([Revelation 1:1-2](#)) The writer of the Book of Revelation.

The 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, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

a. **The Revelation of Jesus Christ:** The ancient Greek word translated **Revelation** is *apokalupsis* (apocalypse). The word simply means “a revealing, an unveiling.” The Book of Revelation is the **Revelation of Jesus Christ** in the sense that *it belongs to Him*, He is the one doing the revealing. It is also Jesus’ **Revelation** in the sense that *He is the object* revealed; Jesus is the person revealed by the book.

i. From the outset, we are given the most important truth about the Book of Revelation. This book shows us the Antichrist, it shows us God’s judgment, it shows us calamity on the earth, and it shows us Mystery Babylon in vivid detail. Most of all, it is the **Revelation of Jesus Christ** to us. If we catch everything else, but miss Jesus in the book, we miss the Book of Revelation.

ii. How we *need* a revelation of Jesus! “The great fault of many professors is that Christ is to them a character upon paper; certainly more than a myth, but yet a person of the dim past, an historical personage who lived many years ago, and did most admirable deeds, by the which we are saved, but who is far from being a living, present, bright reality.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Which God gave Him to show His servants:** This is an important reason *why* God gave this **Revelation of Jesus Christ**. He gave it **to show His servants**. God gave this revelation that it might be shown, not hidden. This is an *apocalypse* — a revelation, not *apocrypha* (something hidden).

c. **Things which must shortly take place:** This describes *when* the events of this book will **take place** — they will happen **shortly**, and they **must** happen **shortly**. This means that the Book of Revelation is a book

of *predictive* prophecy. It speaks of things that will happen in the future — at least future from the time of its writing.

i. Not all prophecy is predictive, but this prophetic book clearly is predictive. It describes things that **must shortly take place**. *The time is near* ([Revelation 1:3](#)) for the fulfillment of these things, but the time was not present at the time of writing.

ii. Some would say that we should not be concerned with prophecy, that it is a frivolous exercise — but if God was concerned enough to talk about it, we should be concerned enough to listen. “Some tell us that what is yet future ought not to be examined into till after it has come to pass. I can hardly realize that this is seriously meant.” (Seiss)

d. **Shortly take place:** **Short** and *near* are relative terms, and this is God’s timetable, not man’s. Yet for 2000 years, history has been *on the brink* of the consummation of all things, running parallel to the edge, *not* running towards a distant brink.

i. **Shortly** is the ancient Greek phrase *en tachei*, which means “‘quickly or suddenly coming to pass,’ indicating rapidity of execution after the beginning takes place. The idea is not that the event may occur soon, but that when it does, it will be sudden.” (Walvoord)

e. **He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John:** This describes *how* the message is delivered in the Book of Revelation. It is a book of signs: the angel **sign-ified** this message to John. It is a book that communicates in signs.

i. It is true that the signs used in Revelation have been a source of confusion or controversy for some readers. Yet the signs are necessary because John expresses things of heaven, which Paul said he heard with *inexpressible words* ([2 Corinthians 12:4](#)). John described things he saw, so he could only use symbolic images to explain it. To us, this book is prophecy, but John simply recorded history unfolding before him, as he saw it. “John had visions from heaven; but he described them in his own language and manner.” (Clarke)

ii. The signs are also necessary because there is tremendous power in symbolic language. It is one thing to call someone or something evil or bad, but it is far more vivid to describe the image of a woman *drunk with the blood of the saints* ([Revelation 17:6](#)).

iii. Though it is filled with signs, the Book of Revelation *is* accessible to those who have an understanding of the first 65 books of the Bible, and especially an understanding of the first 39 books of the Bible, the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament. It contains more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament, and 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation (that is almost 70%) make some reference to the Old Testament.

f. **By His angel to His servant John:** This tells us *who* wrote the Book of Revelation. It was **His servant John**, and the best evidence points to this being the Apostle John, the same writer of the Gospel of John and the books of 1, 2, and 3 John.

i. **By His angel:** Many of the signs and visions of the Book of Revelation came to John through the supervision of an angel ([Revelation 5:2](#), [7:2](#), [10:8](#) to 11:1, and 17:7 are some examples).

g. **Who bore witness to the word of God:** In this prologue, we see John knew this book was Holy Scripture, **the word of God**. We sometimes wonder if the apostolic authors of the New Testament knew they wrote Holy Scripture. At least in this case, John knew.

i. He knew it was Holy Scripture because he called it a **revelation** from God. He knew it came from the Father through Jesus, and not from any mere human.

ii. He knew it was the Holy Scripture because he called it the **word of God**, as an Old Testament prophet would say. He also called it the **testimony of Jesus Christ**.

2. ([Revelation 1:3](#)) A blessing to the reader and keeper of this book.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

a. **Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it:** The Book of Revelation offers a particular and unique blessing to those who *read* and *keep* the message of this book. This is the first of seven beatitudes of Revelation ([Revelation 1:3](#), [14:13](#), [16:15](#), [19:9](#), [20:6](#), [22:7](#), and [22:14](#)).

i. Because they neglect the book Revelation, many people miss this blessing. For example, the Anglican Church virtually omits Revelation in its regular schedule of readings for both public worship and private devotions. This is a typical attitude towards the Book of Revelation. Many people believe that only fanatics want to dig deep into this book, but really, it is a book for anyone who wants to be **blessed**.

ii. Fortunately, John didn't say that we had to *understand* everything in the Book of Revelation to be **blessed**. There are some difficult things in this book that may only be understood as we look back at fulfilled prophecy; but we can be blessed by *reading* and *hearing* even when we don't understand.

b. **Blessed is he who reads... and keep those things which are written in it:** This promise gives more reasons to know John believed this book was Holy Scripture. First, the words **he who reads and those who hear** show that this book was intended to be read publicly, just as other books of accepted Scripture. Second, the promise of *blessing* itself shows that John regarded this book as Holy Scripture. In the Jewish world, such a blessing could never be pronounced on a merely human book.

i. All of these things together show that beyond doubt, the Book of Revelation *claims* to be Holy Scripture. A critic can agree or disagree with that claim, but it can't be denied that Revelation makes the claim.

c. **Keep those things which are written in it:** The Book of Revelation gives us much more than information for prophetic speculation. It gives us **things to keep**. If we understand the Book of Revelation, it will *change the way we live*.

d. **He who reads:** This is in the *singular*. It speaks of one person who reads. "**Those who hear**" is in the *plural*. It speaks of many people hearing. The idea is probably from custom of the early church, where attention was given to the public reading of Scripture, which was often then explained. In our modern way of speaking John might say, "Blessed is the pastor who teaches Revelation, and blessed is the congregation who hears it." Most of all, pastor or congregation, **blessed** are those who **keep those things which are written in it**.

i. "Neither must we only live up to the words of this prophecy, but die for it also, and be content to be burned with it, if called thereto; as that holy martyr, who when he saw the Revelation cast into the fire with him, cried out 'O blessed Revelation, how happy am I to be burned in thy company!'" (Trapp)

3. Since so much controversy has risen over the interpretation of the Book of Revelation, it is helpful to know the four basic approaches people have used through the centuries to understand Revelation.

a. **The Preterist View:** This approach believes that Revelation dealt only with the church in John's day. In the *Preterist* approach, Revelation doesn't predict anything. John simply described events of his current day, but he put them in symbolic code so those outside the Christian family couldn't understand his criticism of the Roman government. In the *Preterist* view, the Book of Revelation was for *then*.

b. **The Historicist View:** This approach believes that Revelation is a sweeping, disordered panorama of all church history. In the *Historicist* approach, Revelation predicts the future, but the future of the "church age" — not the future of end-time events. In the *Historicist* view, Revelation is full of symbols that describe *now*.

i. For example, many of the Reformers called the Pope the beast of Revelation [chapter 13](#), but they didn't necessarily want to believe that the end was very near. So they believed that Revelation spoke of *their* time, without necessarily speaking to the *end* times.

c. **The Poetic View:** This approach believes that Revelation is a book full of pictures and symbols intended to encourage and comfort persecuted Christians in John's day. In the *Poetic or allegorical* view, the Book of Revelation isn't literal or historic. Revelation is a book of *personal* meaning.

d. **The Futurist View:** This approach believes that beginning with [chapter four](#), Revelation deals with the end times, the period directly preceding Jesus' return. In the *Futurist* view, Revelation is a book that mainly describes the *end* times.

e. Which approach is correct? *Each one* is true in some regard. The Book of Revelation did speak to John's day. It speaks to church history. And it does have meaning for our personal life. So while elements of the first three approaches have their place, we can't deny the place of the **futurist** view. We can know the Book of Revelation speaks with clarity about the end times because of two central principles drawn from [Revelation 1:1-3](#).

i. First, we believe that the Book of Revelation *must mean something*. This is a book that Jesus gave *to show His servants* something. It isn't a book of meaningless nonsense. It has a promise of blessing, not a promise of confusion.

ii. Secondly, we believe that Revelation definitely claims to contain *predictive prophecy*. John made it clear: *things which must shortly take place... the time is near*. John wrote about events that were still future to him.