



Session 2 ■ Special Interest Topic 1

Guide Post Passages in Revelation

Like travellers through space, we are about to begin our journey through time in the book called Revelation. At the end of the journey, we hope to reach our place of destination, a new heaven and a new earth revealed in Chapters 21 and 22. Inside the city called the New Jerusalem, we can experience fellowship with God and find our destiny for eternity.



As we move through Revelation, there are places where it is possible to take a wrong turn, as the book appears to have a complex pattern of interweaving visions and symbols. There does not appear to be a natural flow of thought throughout the book, yet it is possible to find our way if we understand how Revelation was “mapped” by its author.

Most books today have **unit sections** that begin with an **introduction** and end with a **conclusion**. This allows the reader to gain an idea of the intentions of the author. However, John does not appear to do this. Instead, he weaves introductory summaries into a previous part of the book at a climatic spot.

We are going to name those passages “Guide Posts.” If we follow them faithfully, we will find we will not lose our course to the New Jerusalem. Revelation’s message will become clearer and more meaningful to us. The history of the Christian church is full of illustrations of how people have misunderstood and misused Revelation to their detriment.

Detecting these key passages enables the reader to understand upcoming passages in Revelation correctly, since John the author has already signalled his intention. It should protect the reader from undertaking creative interpretations that were never in the mind of the original writer.

As we journey through this Seminar series, we will be calling on various Guide Posts to help us stay on track as we progress. For example:

Revelation 1:1

John sets the direction for the whole book as being a revelation of Jesus Christ. The central issues of this book will revolve around salvation as found in Jesus Christ, His followers and those who would oppose them.

Revelation is not *only* about end-time events, as many think (1:1 does allude to Daniel 2 as a model and refers to things that will shortly happen, so there is some end-time in the Guide Post) but it is end-time events in the light of the life, death, resurrection and the heavenly reign of Jesus.

If correctly understood, all that follows in this book should help the readers and hearers see Jesus since He left this earth unveiled and understood in a way that was not possible in the gospels. As such we find Jesus revealed in the first vision **Revelation 1:12–18**.

Revelation 1:19–20

The vision of Jesus Christ concludes with an invitation for John to write what he has seen, what now is, and what will take place later, which serves as an introduction to the messages to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 1:19 and 20 is actually an introductory summary of the whole book: the things “which are” (see 2 and 3) and future events (see 4–22).

Revelation 3:21

Jesus promises “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

Chapters 4 and 5 show how Jesus is given the right to rule because of His death. Chapter 5 pictures Jesus’ inauguration on the throne. It is not till Chapter 7 that we find His followers standing with Him before the throne.

In between, we find Chapter 6, where Jesus as the Lamb opens the sealed book; therefore, the opening of the seven seals are telling us how those who follow Jesus overcome and gain the right to rule with Jesus.

The opening of the seals to release the 4 horsemen is linked to how people react to the good news about Jesus and His offer.

Revelation 6:9–11

A cry is given for vengeance to be taken upon the inhabitants of the earth. The fifth seal is pivotal to all that comes later, by way of God stepping in and bringing judgment upon those who are against His people. The sounding of the seven trumpets gives a reason and purpose for the judgments of God.

Later in **Revelation 8:2–6 & 13**, we read how God is punishing those who have persecuted His people—the inhabitants of the earth—in answer to the prayers given by the people of God. Understanding this background helps keep us on course as we interpret the trumpets.

Revelation 6:16–17

Here we are shown how the physical upheavals of nature accompanying the second coming of Jesus Christ to this world have a fearful effect on people. It causes them to ask the question “who can stand?” Chapter 7 answers this question by showing how God will seal and protect His people.

Revelation 10:5–7

The time for the sounding of the seventh trumpet is given, as recorded in **Revelation 11:15**. It is at the time when God’s mystery [the gospel] is finally accomplished. That is, the gospel has been proclaimed to all the earth as promised by Jesus.

Revelation 11:18

This passage serves as a summary of the remaining book by announcing:

1. The nations were angry.

Revelation 13 and 14 talks of the final test of loyalty over worship. If the followers of Christ do not obey earthly powers, they will be put to death.

2. Your wrath has come.

Revelation 15 and 16 pictures the seven last plagues, which are portrayed as the wrath of God.

3. Time to judge the dead.

In Revelation 20:12, the dead stand before the great white throne and are judged.

4. Time for rewarding the saints.

Revelation 21 and 22 shows us the New Earth, which is the reward for God’s faithful people.

5. Destroy those who destroy the earth.

Revelation 19:2 describes how the great prostitute has corrupted (destroyed) the earth. Revelation 20 reports the destruction of the wicked.

Revelation 11:19

A closer focus on the final impending conflict over worship is introduced here, as found in Chapters 12–14. The temple of God can be seen and the Ark of the Covenant, in which was placed the Ten Commandments, now becomes the centre of attention. The keeping of the commandments of God as a loving response to accepting Jesus is to be featured as part of the end-time conflict over worship.

Revelation 12:17

This passage concludes with a statement about a war to be waged against the rest of the offspring of the woman, which is featured in Chapters 13 and 14. Therefore, it is a summary in advance of future events and helps to keep us clear on the central issues over worship in Chapter 13.

Revelation 15:1–4

The purpose of this passage is twofold: it serves as a conclusion of the war over worship as found in Chapters 12–14 and provides an introduction to the seven last plagues in Chapter 16.

It declares that we are now seeing the full wrath of God in action, to complete His outpouring of wrath, and explains that is why they are called the “last plagues.”

Revelation 16:15

As the gathering for the battle of Armageddon is taking place, Jesus is quoted as counselling His followers to make sure they remain spiritually alive and alert, so as to not lose their relationship with Him. This relationship is likened to a covering to hide our nakedness.

This Guide Post should help us keep this central issue of Armageddon in focus and not go off on tangents.

Revelation 17:1–6

By serving as a lead into the judgments to come upon Babylon in Chapters 17 and 18, this passage gives a reason for the coming judgments. Babylon has had an illicit relationship with political powers and worked with them to oppress the followers of Jesus.

Revelation 21:1

This Guide Post provides the final connection between the past and the future by pointing back to the first heaven and earth that has passed away and forward to the new heaven and new earth replacing it.

Revelation 21–22

Our journey is now complete. Along the way, we have met up with potential dangers and hazards. There have been some terrifying experiences as we have gone through some rough times. We may have been tempted to feel that God has forsaken us, however, the knowledge that Jesus has warned us ahead of these dangers and given us Guide Posts helps immensely.

Conclusion...

If we take the first verse in Chapter 1 and line it up with the last section in Chapters 21 and 22, we can see that all the way through there is a clear line of intent within the book. Like building a fence, if you put one post in and then mark a line to the last post, the ones in the middle will keep in position.

At the middle of the book, we find the central focus in chapter 14:7, which teaches us that Revelation is a call to worship the Creator, as expressed in the first angel’s message. So right from the start, through the middle and to the end, this book is a series of messages from Jesus to His people to help them remain faithful despite the difficulties they may meet ahead.

Revelation’s message starts with Jesus, and ends with Jesus and His people together in the New Jerusalem. They have truly followed in His footsteps. The Guide Posts He has left for them have allowed His people to follow Him home.