

Is the End Near?

Finding Hope in Dark Times



Ukraine, Kyiv.
By Dmytro Tolokonov



A building in Irpin, Ukraine
by Andrew Petrishev



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novorossiysk, russia,
apocalyptic, and ruins
by Pavel Neznanov



Suq al-Na hhasin (al-Mahmas)
in Old city in Aleppo, Syria. By
Ahmad Sof

Introduction

- Looking around the world today, there doesn't seem to be much hope
- Yet many Christians around the world do live in hope
- Why? Are they delusional?
- Maybe there is some other reality than what is in the headlines
- The book of Revelation is an answer that there are two realities—a visible and a **spiritual**
- Revelation provides a glimpse to see things from heaven's perspective that engenders hope
- The spiritual world challenges our reading of the visible world for the better

The Purpose for Writing

- The key to understanding the book is in 1:5-6—Jesus died for our sins, was raised from the dead, and he is to receive glory, power for forever and ever
- And he will return, and every eye will see him (1:7)
- The **gospel** is theme of the book—Jesus who suffered will eventually return in victory
- The book challenges Christians to resist worldly compromise, spiritual complacency, and false teaching
- It also encourages us to be faithful, endure trials, and live in God's sovereign rule and Jesus' second coming

The Message of Revelation

- Writing to the readers of his time, John focuses on the **message of salvation** that Jesus offers forgiveness of sin to those who believe through his death and resurrection
- John says to readers that they, too, are in a great conflict between God and forces of evil
- However, just as Christ has conquered, they too have conquered and will ultimately conquer
- God rules history and will complete his plans to judge and save through Jesus, the slain Lamb and coming King

The Genre of the book of Revelation

- John, as the last living disciple of Jesus, wrote this from Patmos
- He receives a vision from God—a revelation of the end times
- Revelation is apocalyptic prophecy like many OT writings that use symbolic language to talk about God's plan for the future
- The symbolic language and images draw at a deeper meaning
- Readers are to use Scripture to interpret these symbolisms
- We are in the last days (2 Tim 3:1)
- But the book is **not a secret predictive code** about timing of the end of the world

The Symbolism of Seven

- The number **seven** occurs 54 times—symbolic language for completeness or wholeness
- The **seven** letters to the **seven** churches is a way of saying the book was written to all churches at all times (1:9-3:22)
- John receives a vision of heaven (4:1-5:14), where he sees God seated on the throne and receiving worship
- “And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation’” (5:9)

The Symbolism of Seven

- John sees a sealed scroll in God's hand, and only a slain Lamb is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll
- The four sets of **seven** include:
 - Seven seals (6:1-8:5)
 - Seven trumpets (8:6-11:19)
 - Seven signs (12:1-14:20)
 - Seven bowels (15:1-16:21)

God's Judgement

- From God's heavenly perspective, each set of **seven** builds more and more hope for Christians, as God judges and triumphs over the world and evil
- They are not a long linear progression of historical or future events
- But they are four angles of seeing the same event—things happening on earth between Christ's first and second coming

The End

- The entire letter climaxes in the last few chapters, regarding final judgment, victory, and a new city (Rev 17-22)
- We are to look back to the past (cross) and also to the future (return) for the source of our hope
- Revelation is a **hopeful** book, and Christians are reminded to live in light of Jesus' second coming to transform our present reality

Hope Challenges Our View of Present Realities

1 Peter 1:1-5

1 Peter 1:1-5

- “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God’s elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time”

1 Peter 1:1-5

- What is Christian hope? What does it look like?
- ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pt 1:3)
- ¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the **grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming** (1:13)
- Hope is to live in view of Christ's second coming
- If it is strong enough, hope challenges our reading of present realities

Hope challenges our ethics

- ¹³ Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, **do not conform to the evil desires** you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; ¹⁶ for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy” (1:13-16)
- There is a sense of right and wrong

Hope challenges our view of religions

- ⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices **acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame” (2:4-6)
- We approach God, not through the temple (religions), but through Jesus (Jn 14:6)

Hope challenges our view on politics

- ¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as God's slaves. ¹⁷ Show proper respect (**honor**) to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor (2:13-17)
- We respect or honor those in authority but we fear God

Hope challenges our relationships

- Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. ³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. ⁵ For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their **hope in God used to adorn themselves**. They submitted themselves to their own husbands," (3:1-5)
- Hope challenges attitudes, dispositions, and relationships

Discussion Question

- How can the church in Singapore challenge our reading of present realities, such that believers will overcome worldly forces and persevere to the end?