

clude that the Revelation of Jesus Christ was meant for a certain date of first century Christians to show them things, directly about or affecting them, that would happen within the next few years of their lives. Someone might object, as I've heard it before, that "shortly" in Revelation is not with reference to the life and times of the first century Christian but in reference to God. Therefore, these recorded events could take place anywhere, anytime, because a short time to God is like thousands of years to mankind. The problem with that is that it's not in context with Revelation 1:1. God wasn't talking to Himself in the first verse; If He had, it is doubtful that He would use words relating to a span of time, like "shortly," seeing how God is everlasting and not restrained by time. However, God wrote to an audience that is very much restrained by time, short and long. God wrote to men on earth, telling them that these things will shortly come to pass. I think it can be identified that the above argument exists today, not because it makes sense, but only because it is in line with someone's desire to make Revelation something that it is not.

### 3. These things were signified before they reached the eyes and ears of John.

Lastly, the inspired word tells us that the things that will shortly happen have also been "signified." It is so important for us to not progress any further into Revelation before we get a handle on this word. The original Greek word, translated as "signified," is "sēmainō" and it means "to give a sign, to signify, indicate, to make known" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament Words). Observing the definition, it is clear that the context where this word is used will be the deciding factor on whether it means to "give a sign" or "to make known." I believe the context should lead us all to the conclusion that the word was meant to convey the idea that the events described in Revelation will be in signs, and are therefore, not the reality, but an illustration of the reality. Think about it, skip through the book and you'll see a dragon, a beast, a harlot on the back of the beast, etc. All of which show the necessity of understanding "sēmainō" as its primary definition: "to give a sign." The English translators of the bible were right to translate the Greek word into "signified," because the context of the

book is about events soon to take place that are portrayed by figures. The conclusion is that Revelation is a figurative (not literal) book.

I've yet to see anyone who considers the book of Revelation as a literal book. But I have seen people who take some of it as figurative and some of it as literal. To that, I say, who gave them the authority to pick and choose? If God said that it is figurative, then it is figurative. Very few have been able to be consistent with this. Some will take the beast as figurative, but the 144,000 as literal, or the dragon as figurative, but the Armageddon as literal, or the number 666 as figurative, but the 1,000-year reign of Christ as literal. There are plenty of examples of this out there in nearly every commentary. This is not right. We do not have that authority. Only God holds the right to stop us within the reading of Revelation and say "okay, now this is literal," which God does on very rare occasions within the book, but for now, let's establish in our minds that what we are about to see in the book are events that would shortly take place in the lives of a certain date of Christians living in the first century, and that these events have been illustrated in signs that represent the coming realities.

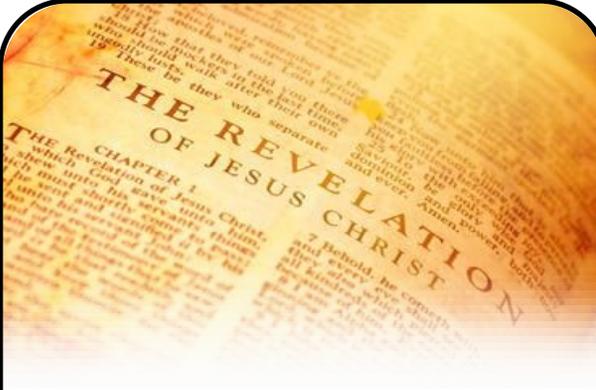
Someone might say, "why is this book in signs." To this, many have suggested different reasons, but I would suggest to you that God never gave us His reason. So with respect to that, all that I can say with confidence is that a simple reading through the book of Revelation will prove that these signs are a very powerful way to get the point of the book across.

May we take the words of Revelation 1:1 and use them as authorized and inspired guidelines for a successful, truthful understanding of the book of Revelation.

Friend, I thought you'd like to read this.  
Contact me if you have any questions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



# The Apocalypse

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## A No-Nonsense Guide to the Book of Revelation

“Are you ready for it? For the big reveal?” Someone might say those words for a grand opening, but to say that as you’re about to turn the page over to the book of Revelation is not the usual thought; but I believe that’s the outlook we could have when we approach Revelation. After all, the book must be named “Revelation” for a reason. It isn’t called the “Book of Conceal-ation.” The book, therefore, should not be considered a mystery to us, but a book that clearly exposes the knowledge that God desires to share with the church.

While Revelation is revealing in its purpose, that does not necessarily mean that it is not a challenging book to properly understand. Because of the difficulty that Revelation poses, men can twist it easily without getting caught (sometimes). This is a major problem, a problem that we can remedy by paying close attention to the book’s keys, details, and context. No one rejects that Revelation is a hard book, so logic would suggest that many will accept a false truth about the book because someone told it to them and they’ve determined that they cannot understand the book for themselves, so they accept certain views about the book that they have not verified. Now that may sound like the easiest way to handle Revelation, but we’d be hard pressed to say that that is “handling aright the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

There is a reason Revelation is at the end of the bible, many reasons I’m sure, but one would be because it is meant to be understood in light of the vast amount of inspired words that came before it. If we look at the bible as one book, instead of sixty-six, and one theme, instead of over sixty themes, then we won’t fall into the conflict of trying to understand, for example, Revelation 20:4 by itself, but by the harmonious context of the entire Bible. Think of it this way, we wouldn’t have confidence in our understanding of a single sentence within chapter twenty-nine of a thirty chapter novel, so what confidence can we have in our understanding of chapter 1,187:4 (i.e. Revelation 20:4) of the 1,189-chapter book that is the Bible. What honor do we hold for God and His word if we do not take the time to understand His word the way that He wants us to understand it, within the context that He provided for us. Some show honor to the details of every

page of a fictional novel, plowing through it with earnest, but when it comes to the word of God, they see a passage deep within Revelation and confidently say “I think it means this....” Again, this is not “handling aright the word of truth.”

So then, amazing things are about to be revealed from the mind of God. We should be excited, ready to see the big reveal, but mindful that we have a responsibility before God to handle the content honorably, and to not allow our imaginations and fantasies get the better of us.

Do you believe that God wants us to understand His word? Or has God set us up for failure, that we should be carried away with our own private interpretations so that everyone believes, practices, and teaches something completely different out of the same books of the Bible? I believe that God would have us all to properly understand His words. He has told us that that’s His desire (Ephesians 5:17; 1 Timothy 2:4). In every inspired word, God has set us up for success toward a proper understanding. The book of Revelation is certainly not excluded from that. In fact, I cannot read Revelation 1:1 without seeing that God has truly set us up for success. Everything we need for the process of moving forward and accurately understanding Revelation was simply handed to us in the first sentence of the book of Revelation. And so we hold the responsibility to take what we learn from the first verse and understand the rest of Revelation in harmony with what God tell us in verse one. Now let’s consider the verse:

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John”* Revelation 1:1.

In this verse, we learn:

1. The book will reveal things to the servants of Jesus.
2. These things will shortly come to pass.
3. These things were signified before they reached the eyes and ears of John.

Let’s consider these points further:

## **1. The book will reveal things to the servants of Jesus.**

Understanding the original audience of the book of Revelation is essential to a proper understanding of the book. This book was originally for the eyes of the Christians that were living and serving Christ at the date that the book was written (within the first century, A.D.). This means, first of all, that we are reading someone else’s mail! Many miss that point and immediately walk over verse one and start reading the book as if it was written for them and their own generation. That’s a big mistake. Contrary to the media today, not everything is centered around us; and I believe it would be beneficial for anyone who wants to learn about Revelation to put their own world aside and consider the world of the first century.

## **2. These things will shortly come to pass.**

How do we accurately understand when the events of the book will happen? God just told us. “Shortly.” The things recorded in this book will happen shortly. Shortly for who? For the original recipients of the book. Understanding this will solve the vast majority of problems that people face during interpretation; for many have struggled to make things within the book appear as something that is either happening within their time, or within a future time. Because of this, people have seen the Catholic Church, Russia, the United States, Hitler, and even former President Obama (I heard that one on the radio many years ago) in the book of Revelation. However, are any of these things contemporary with the first century Christian? Certainly not. So then, our understanding of the book needs to be completely dependent on the fact that these things “God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.”

How short is “shortly?” Well, God had told normal folks that the events contained in the book would take place shortly. So I would ask normal folks today what “shortly” means to them. It appears that most people view important events that will come to pass shortly in their life as things that will happen within the next 1-5 years. Maybe some would push it to be within the next 10 years (but again, that’s pushing it). So, I would con-