

“Though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creature so wild as one of his own commentators.” GK Chesterton

One of the greatest challenges to reading, interpreting and understanding Revelation is that we far too often come to it with a bad mindset.

- **The Problem:** Many people misread Revelation, turning it into either a **horror story**, a **newspaper oracle**, or a **coded puzzle**—and they miss the **real message**.
- **SO, what is Revelation?** The book of Revelation is a pastoral, prophetic, and apocalyptic vision that reveals the spiritual realities behind the Church’s tribulations—primarily those caused by the Roman Empire’s political and religious oppression in the first century. Through vivid imagery deeply rooted in Old Testament language and symbols, Revelation calls the Church to resist compromise and endure faithfully, trusting that the Lamb who was slain now reigns. It unveils not a road map for escaping tribulation, but a vision of God’s victory through Jesus, who is making all things new.
- **The Goal Today:** Develop a **game plan** for reading Revelation **faithfully**, without fear or confusion.

1. Don’t Read Revelation as a Puzzle to Crack—Read it as a Call to Worship

- **Bad Game Plan #1: The Newspaper Oracle/Secret Code/Puzzle**
 - Seeing Revelation as a secret prediction for today’s headlines (e.g., "This leader is the Antichrist," "This war is the End").
- **Better Game Plan:** Read Revelation as an invitation to **worship**.
 - **Example:** In Revelation 4-5, **before** any of the dramatic visions, John sees a **throne room** filled with worship.
 - **Big Takeaway:** The heart of Revelation is not wild, sensational **speculation** about the future but uncompromising, faithful, enduring **devotion** to the King.

2. Don’t Treat Revelation as a Horror Movie—See it as Resistance Literature

- **Bad Game Plan #2: The Cosmic Slasher Film**
 - Focusing only on beasts, plagues, and destruction instead of seeing the **hope and justice** Revelation reveals.
- **Better Game Plan:** Read Revelation as a **critique of empire**—both Rome’s and any oppressive system today.
 - **Example:** Babylon in Revelation represents **any empire** that sets itself up against God (Rev. 18). Instead of asking, “*Who is the fulfillment of the Babylon prophecy?*” we should recognize that any nation can become Babylon and ask, “*How does the beastly system show up in our world?*”
 - **Big Takeaway:** Revelation is not about **fear** but about **resisting false allegiances** and staying faithful to Christ.

3. Don't Read Revelation as an Escape Plan—Read it as the Biblical Conclusion

- **Bad Game Plan #3: The Rapture Rescue Plan**
 - Seeing Revelation as a divine **exit strategy** instead of a call to faithful endurance.
 - If Revelation were only about escaping, it wouldn't include so many calls for the Church to endure and bear witness.
 - Revelation 2-3: The letters to the seven churches challenge believers to stay faithful in the face of persecution, to resist compromise, and to overcome.
 - Revelation 12:11: "They triumphed over [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."
- **Better Game Plan:** Read Revelation as the **conclusion of the whole Bible**—from Eden to New Jerusalem.
 - **Example:** Revelation 21-22 echoes **Genesis 1-3**. The Bible ends **not** with souls escaping to heaven but **heaven coming to earth**.
 - **Big Takeaway:** The goal of Revelation is not to **escape the earth**, but to **participate with God in bringing His kingdom now**.

4. Don't Obsess Over Timelines—Focus on Faithfulness

- **Bad Game Plan #4: The Timetable Obsession**
 - Treating Revelation like a **rigid, chronological timeline** instead of seeing its **overlapping visions**.
 - *Matthew Bates:* "John's visions are like echoes and recapitulations, not a straightforward chronological play-by-play."
- **Better Game Plan:** Read Revelation as a **call to faithful endurance** (Rev. 2-3).
 - **Example:** The **seven churches** were real churches facing persecution. Revelation challenged them to stay **faithful**, not to predict the exact timing of the end.
 - **Big Takeaway:** Revelation is about staying **faithful today**, not just trying to figure out **tomorrow**.

5. Don't Ignore the Old Testament—Read Revelation with an OT Lens

- **Bad Game Plan #5: Ignoring the Old Testament**
 - Many people miss the **symbolic connections** to Daniel, Exodus, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, trying to read Revelation with modern eyes alone!
 - **Scholar Insight:** *N.T. Wright:* "If you don't know the Old Testament, you won't understand Revelation."
- **Better Game Plan:** Recognize that **John is using familiar biblical imagery** to communicate deep truths.
 - **Example:**
 - The **Beast** (Rev. 13) echoes Daniel's **monsters**—representing oppressive kingdoms.

- The **plagues** echo the **Exodus**, showing God's justice over corrupt rulers.
- The **New Jerusalem** fulfills **Isaiah's prophecy** of a renewed creation.
- **Big Takeaway:** Revelation is not **creating** new ideas—it is **fulfilling** old promises.

Encouragement: Instead of getting **lost in fear and speculation**, let Revelation **inspire hope and endurance**.

Call to Action:

- This week, read **Revelation 4-5** and focus on the **throne room of worship**.
 - Instead of looking for **hidden messages in the images**, look for **how Revelation calls you to worship and endure today**.