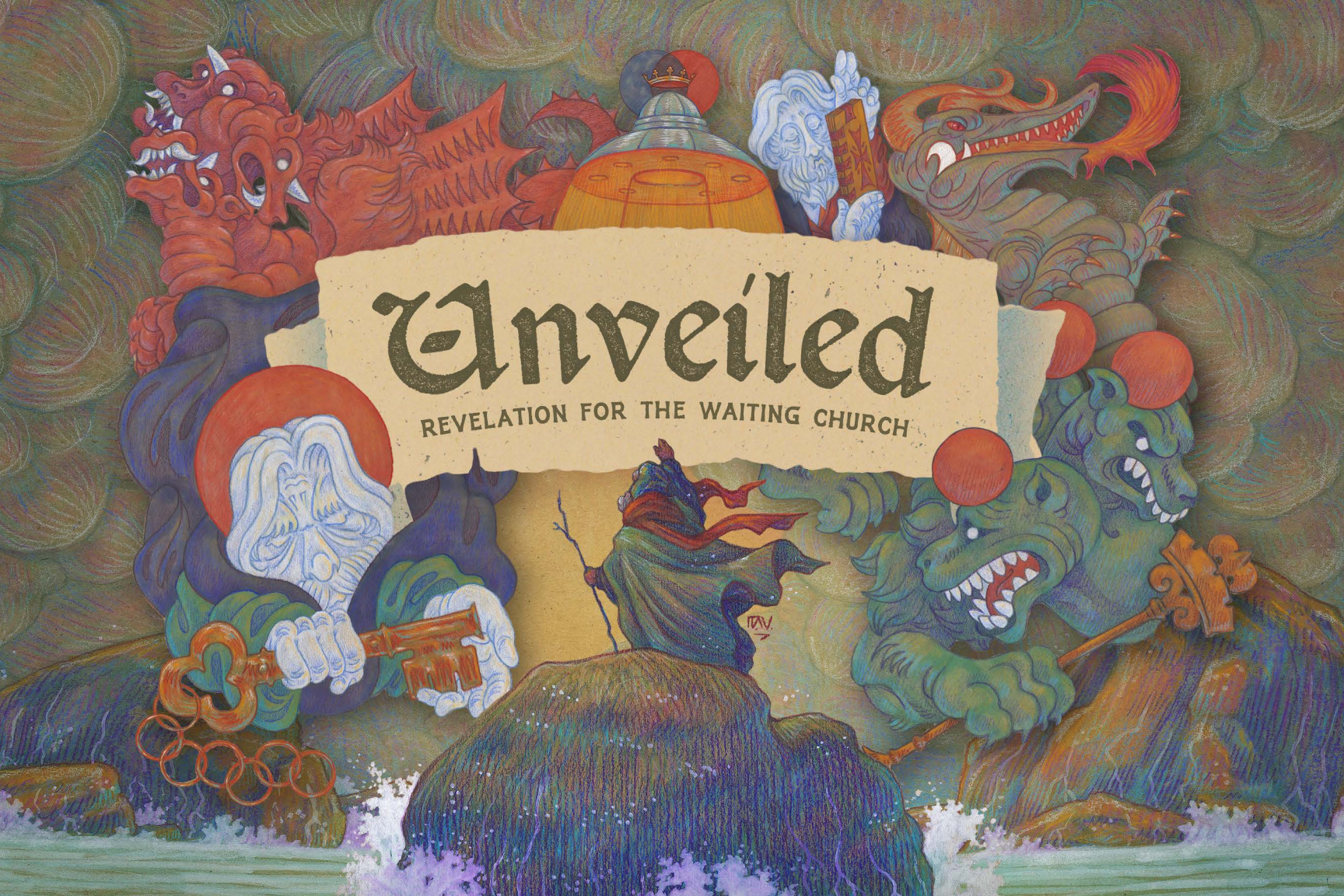




Unveiled

REVELATION FOR THE WAITING CHURCH

WELCOME

Revelation is a book many Christians avoid. Some are confused by it. Some are scared. Some only associate it with charts and arguments. So why are we spending 18 weeks on it?



ere's the truth: Revelation was never supposed to make the church afraid. It was given to help us see Jesus and live faithfully. *Revelation* means *unveiling*—uncovering what's most true. It pulls back the curtain so we can glimpse reality from heaven's perspective: Jesus reigns. He sees us. Evil won't last. And the future is God with his people forever.

This series isn't about becoming timeline experts. It's about staying faithful while we wait for Jesus to return. We want to be the kind of church that can stand in worship, sit at tables, and scatter on

mission with our eyes fixed on the Lamb.

And Revelation shouldn't pull us out of the world or make us passive in our circles of influence. It should make us hopeful: steady in suffering, resistant to compromise, and present in the city God has called us to love. So there are several things this series *won't* do:

- Use fear to manipulate people
- Match every image to a modern headline
- Debate over timelines
- Attack faithful Christians with different views
- Focus more on the beast than the Lamb
- Elevate speculation over faithfulness
- Avoid hard passages

Instead, we'll address each chapter with humility and sobriety. My prayer is that you enter this series with less fear and more hope. And the prayer underneath this whole series is the final prayer of the Bible: *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.*

JAMAAL WILLIAMS

LEAD PASTOR, SOJOURN CHURCH MIDTOWN

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS SERIES

READ THE PASSAGE BEFORE

SUNDAY. Even if you don't get it all, read the text. Let the images sit with you. Notice what stands out. Pay attention to what the passage shows you about Jesus.

BRING YOUR QUESTIONS WITH HUMILITY. Revelation raises good questions, so ask them. Talk about them in Community Group. But be humble—some things are clear; others require patience.

WORSHIP MORE THAN YOU SPECULATE. Revelation is full of songs because the book is meant to lead us to worship. If you leave Revelation with only theories, you may have missed the point. If you leave with more hope, you've truly understood.

WATCH FOR BABYLON IN YOUR OWN HEART. It's easy to use Revelation to critique the world. It's more faithful to let Revelation critique us. Where are we tempted by comfort, image, power, money, and control? Where is Jesus calling us to repent?

PRACTICE HOPE. Hope is trusting that Jesus still reigns even while things around us are chaotic. Practice hope in prayer, in worship, at your table, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, and in suffering.

LIVE SENT WHILE YOU WAIT. Waiting for Jesus should send us deeper into mission. We wait well by worshiping, loving, witnessing, serving, forgiving, repenting, giving, and telling a better story with our lives.



HOW TO READ REVELATION



Revelation was written to real first-century churches—churches under pressure. Some were afraid, some suffering, some compromised. What they needed wasn't a timeline of the future, but the strength to stay faithful in the present.

They needed to see Jesus. That's what Revelation is for.

Revelation unveils Jesus as the risen, reigning King who calls his waiting church to worship, discernment, repentance, and hope until he comes again. Babylon won't last. God is making all things new.

Simple enough—yet all the visions, numbers, and symbols can make Revelation feel strange. Here are five tips for reading Revelation well.

KEEP JESUS AT THE CENTER.

Don't hyperfocus on the antichrist or the millenium. Jesus is the star of the show here. Every passage shows us something about who he is, what he sees and promises, how he judges, how he comforts his people, and how he'll make all things new.

LOOK BACK BEFORE YOU

LOOK FORWARD. Many images in

THE SIX PRIMARY SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

Jesus Among His Churches *Rev 1-3*

Jesus is the risen, glorious Lord who knows his churches. He corrects them, comforts them, and calls them to overcome.

The Throne & the Lamb *Rev 4-5*

Before we see the shaking of the world, we see the stability of heaven. God is on the throne, and the slain Lamb is worthy.

Suffering, Judgment, & Witness *Rev 6-16*

Conflict and judgment are revealed. But God is not absent in chaos—he is warning the world and keeping his people.

Revelation come from the Old Testament. So when Revelation feels strange, don't immediately jump to modern headlines. The Bible itself helps us interpret Revelation. Ask *have I seen this image before in the Bible?*

READ IT AS SYMBOLIC, NOT UNREAL. Revelation uses symbols designed to reveal reality more deeply than plain language could. Calling Jesus *the Lamb*, for example, reveals that he reigns through his death and resurrection.

LOOK FOR PATTERNS, NOT JUST PREDICTIONS. Revelation does speak

about the future. But it also speaks about the cycles of human history up until that point: the church will face pressure. The world will shake. Babylon will seduce. Beastly power will demand allegiance. God's people will suffer and witness. Jesus will keep his church. These patterns repeat across history.

ASK WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU. The point of Revelation isn't solving puzzles but staying faithful. Ask *how does this passage teach me to worship, endure, repent, discern, hope, or live sent?*

Revelation unveils Jesus as the risen, reigning King who calls his waiting church to worship, discernment, repentance, and hope until he comes again.

Babylon Falls

Rev 17-18

The world's false glory is seductive and looks powerful, but it falls before the kingdom of Christ.

The King Is Coming

Rev 19-20

Jesus comes as King, Judge, Bridegroom, and Victor. Evil is loud, but it has an expiration date.

All Things New

Rev 21-22

The story ends with heaven and earth renewed, the nations healed, and God dwelling with his people forever.



MAJOR THEMES

JESUS IS LORD. Revelation opens with Jesus and ends with Jesus. He is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. He is the Alpha and the Omega—the Lion who conquers as the Lamb who was slain. The church can endure because Jesus reigns.

WORSHIP IS WARFARE. Revelation shows us that worship is more than singing. Worship is allegiance, and everyone worships something. Everyone is being formed by something. Everyone is giving their attention, affection, trust, and

obedience somewhere. Revelation asks: *who has your worship?*

JESUS SEES HIS CHURCH. In Revelation 2–3, Jesus speaks directly to his churches. He sees their love, suffering, faithfulness, drift, compromise, weakness, and pride. That is both comforting and sobering. Jesus sees what no one else sees.

EVIL IS REAL, BUT LIMITED. Revelation is very frank about evil. It names dragons, beasts, Babylon, deception, persecution, and judgment. But Revelation never presents evil as ultimate. As catastrophically powerful as it seems, evil won't last.

BABYLON IS SEDUCTIVE. Babylon is a symbol of rebellion against God, but Babylon isn't always obvious. Babylon can look beautiful, wealthy, impressive, successful,

and safe. That's why Babylon is dangerous. It doesn't always persecute the church—sometimes it tries to disciple the church.

BECAUSE OUR WORLD IS BROKEN, JUDGMENT IS ACTUALLY GOOD NEWS. God's judgment can feel hard to talk about, but Revelation reminds us that it isn't petty or cruel. God's justice is holy, complete, and motivated by his goodness. A world full of violence, abuse, greed, oppression, and death needs more than sympathy—it needs a Protector to take action and provide a rescue.

THE CHURCH WAITS WITH HOPE. If we're sitting around doing nothing, we've missed the point. Waiting with hope means worshiping faithfully, resisting compromise, bearing witness, loving our neighbors, enduring suffering, and living sent until Jesus returns.

GOD WILL DWELL WITH HIS PEOPLE. Sometimes Christians can talk like heaven is our ultimate goal. But Revelation explains the only reason heaven matters: Our God is there. He comes to dwell with his people forever (in a new heaven and a new earth!). No more death. No more grief. No more crying. No more pain.

THE LAMB WINS

KEY IMAGES

+ MEANINGS & REFERENCES

LAMPSTANDS

the churches
Rev 1

Jesus walks among the lampstands, meaning that he's not distant from his churches. He is present with his people, seeing them, speaking to them, correcting them, and keeping them.

THE THRONE

God's
sovereign rule
Rev 4

Before Revelation shows us the chaos of earth, it shows us the throne of heaven. The throne reminds us that no matter what is shaking below, God reigns above. **ISAIAH 6, EZEKIEL 1**

THE SCROLL

God's purposes for
history
Rev 5

Only the Lamb is worthy to open the scroll. History is not random. History belongs to Jesus. **EZEKIEL 2 & 3, DANIEL 12**

THE LAMB

Jesus as the
crucified, risen
King
Rev 5

John hears about a Lion, but he sees a Lamb who was slain. This is one of the most important images in Revelation. Jesus conquers, but he conquers through sacrificial love, death, resurrection, and faithful witness. **EXODUS 12, ISAIAH 53**

SEALS, BOWLS, & TRUMPETS

God's judgments &
warnings
Rev 6-16

These scenes show that evil has consequences, the world is unstable—even shaking—and God is warning the world while keeping his people. **ZECHARIAH 1 & 6, JOSHUA 6, THE 10 PLAGUES**

THE 144,000

The complete
people of God
(most likely)
Rev 7

This number is symbolic; it reflects completeness. Revelation often works by hearing one thing and seeing another—John hears the number, then sees a multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language. **THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL**

THE MULTITUDE

God's redeemed
people from
every nation

Rev 7

This is one of the clearest pictures
of God's multiethnic kingdom. The
nations are not erased. They are
redeemed and gathered around the

Lamb. **GENESIS 17, ISAIAH'S "NATIONS"**

THE DRAGON

Satan & spiritual
opposition

Rev 12

The dragon reminds us that the
church's struggle is not merely
political, cultural, emotional, or
personal. There is a spiritual
enemy who opposes Christ and his
people. **GENESIS 3, ISAIAH 27**



COME, LORD JESUS

THE BEAST

Evil power
that demands
allegiance
Rev 13

The beast draws from Old Testament imagery in Daniel. It represents human power that becomes idolatrous, violent, and opposed to the Lamb. **DANIEL 7**

THE MARK OF THE BEAST

Allegiance &
identity shaped by
the beastly system
Rev 13

Revelation contrasts those marked by the beast with those sealed by God. The deeper issue is not merely technology or fear. The deeper issue is worship, loyalty, and formation. **DEUTERONOMY 6, EZEKIEL 9**

666

Counterfeit
humanity and
evil power
(most likely)
Rev 13

Seven often symbolizes completeness. Six falls short. Repeated three times, 666 can represent humanity in rebellion against God—appearing powerful but never becoming ultimate. Some faithful interpreters also see a connection to Nero.

BABYLON

Idolatrous culture,
wealth, violence,
exploitation, and
false security
Rev 17-18

Babylon, a real Old-Testament empire, becomes a picture of the world organized against God. Babylon seduces, deceives, buys, sells, consumes, and destroys—and is not only “out there.” Babylon can shape our loves too. **ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, DANIEL**

THE BRIDE
God's people
Rev 19, 21

The church is not only a witness under pressure. The church is a bride being prepared for union with Christ, the Bridegroom. **ISAIAH 62, HOSEA**

**THE RIDER
ON A WHITE
HORSE**
The returning
Jesus
Rev 19

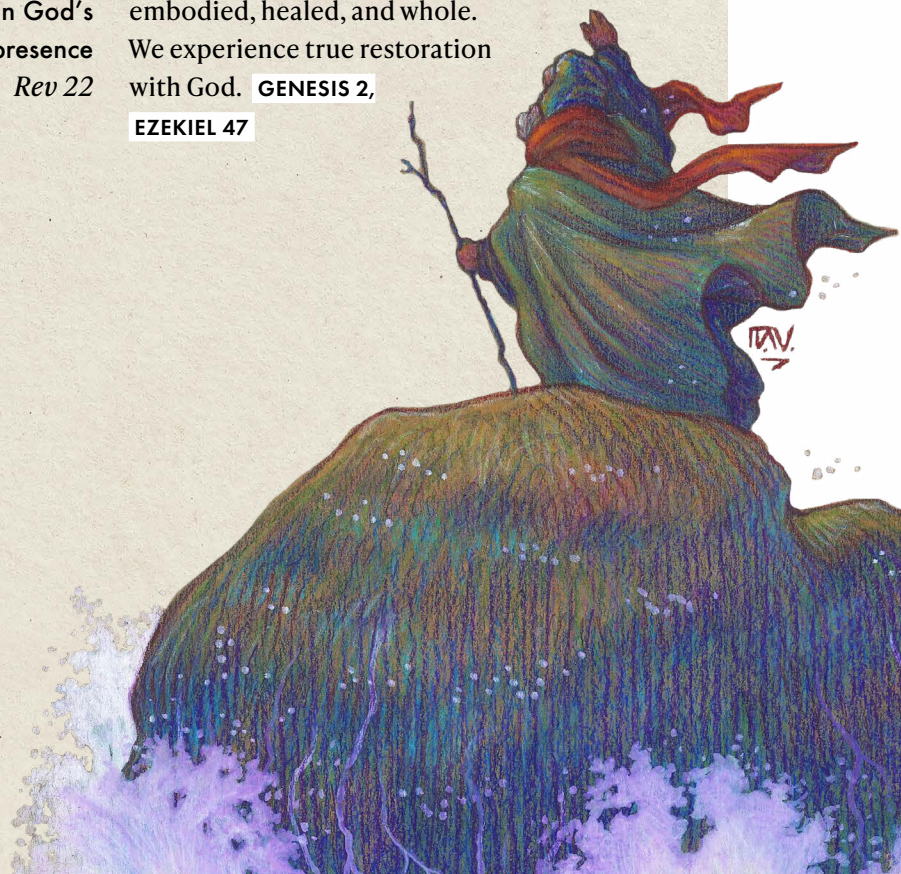
Jesus comes as King, Judge, and Victor to finally defeat evil and establish justice. The Lamb who was slain is also the King who comes in glory. **ISAIAH, PSALM 2**

**THE NEW
JERUSALEM**
God's home
with his people
Rev 21-22

The story ends with a city, a garden, a temple, a bride, and a home. God's redeemed humanity see his face and live with him in a new creation. The nations are healed. The curse is gone. **EZEKIEL 40-48, ISAIAH 60**

**THE RIVER &
TREE OF LIFE**
New life
in God's
presence
Rev 22

What was lost in Eden is restored in the new creation. God's future is not thin or ghostly. It is full, embodied, healed, and whole. We experience true restoration with God. **GENESIS 2, EZEKIEL 47**





COMMON QUESTIONS

IS REVELATION ABOUT THE

FUTURE? Revelation does tell us where history is going—Jesus will return, evil will be judged, God will make all things new. But it was written to help the church live faithfully in the present. We should read Revelation as a book about the future that forms faithfulness now.

IS REVELATION CHRONOLOGICAL? Not always. Some parts move forward, but much of the book works in cycles, revisiting the same period of history from different angles. Think of it less like a straight timeline

and more like a series of visions that show the same reality with increasing depth and intensity.

WHAT IS THE MILLENNIUM?

The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Jesus mentioned in Revelation 20. Faithful Christians have understood this in different ways—some see a future earthly reign of Christ (“premillennialism”), some a symbolic picture of Christ’s present reign (“amillennialism”), some the kingdom advancing in history before Christ returns (“post-millennialism”). Our goal is not to enter into this debate, but to hold tightly to what is clearest and most important: Jesus reigns, evil will be defeated, the dead will be raised, God will judge justly, and Christ will make all things new.

**WHAT DOES SOJOURN
MIDTOWN BELIEVE ABOUT THE
END TIMES?**

We believe Jesus will personally, visibly return and judge evil. God will raise the dead, renew creation, and dwell with his people forever. We also recognize that faithful Christians differ on some details of the timeline—so we want to be clear where Scripture is clear and humble where faithful Christians disagree.

WHAT IS THE MARK OF THE BEAST? The mark of the beast is a symbol of allegiance to evil powers. Revelation often contrasts those who belong to the beast with those who belong to God. The mark shows identity, worship, loyalty, and participation in a system opposed to God. Some interpreters seek to link the mark to some specific kind

of technology, power, or cultural pressure. Those things can have spiritual significance, but the most important question is not *what object should I fear* but *who has my loyalty*?

WHO IS THE ANTICHRIST?

The New Testament speaks of the antichrist both as a *spirit* already at work and as *opposition* that intensifies against Christ. Revelation helps us recognize “beastly power” whenever it demands worship, distorts truth, opposes Christ, exploits people, or pressures the church to compromise. Rather than associating the antichrist with one person, Revelation trains us to discern counterfeit worship and remain faithful to Jesus.

WHAT IS BABYLON TODAY?

Babylon is the world organized around life without God—the culture

of self-worship, greed, violence, luxury, exploitation, image, power, and false security. Babylon can show up in empires, economies, cities, institutions, entertainment, politics, and even in our own desires. Revelation calls the church to see Babylon, resist its seduction, and live as a people who belong to the Lamb.

WHY ALL THE SYMBOLS?

Revelation is trying to awaken our imagination. Symbols help us see reality more deeply, holding together things that ordinary language often separates: beauty and terror, judgment and mercy, suffering and victory, weakness and power.

WHAT IF REVELATION MAKES ME FEARFUL? Revelation can be weighty and sobering—it tells the truth about evil, judgment, suffering, and spiritual conflict. But it was

*Revelation
was written to
strengthen us,
not stress us.*

written to strengthen us, not stress us. Remember that the message is not *be afraid, because the world is out of control*. The message is *do not be afraid, because Jesus is in charge!*

HOW SHOULD I READ REVELATION WITH MY KIDS? Keep it simple and start with Jesus. Tell them Revelation teaches us that Jesus is King, evil will not last forever, and God will make everything sad come untrue. You don't need to explain every image—help them see that the Lamb wins and God will dwell with his people forever.

HOW SHOULD REVELATION CHANGE US? Revelation should lead us to worship, endurance, discernment, repentance, courage, and hope. If our study makes us more fearful, more speculative, more arrogant, or more distracted from mission, we're probably reading it the wrong way. If it helps us see Jesus more clearly, resist compromise, endure suffering, worship deeply, and live faithfully in the city, then the book is doing what God designed it to do.





SERIES CALENDAR

The Unveiling

Aug 9 • *Rev 1:1-8*

Among the Lampstands

Aug 16 • *Rev 1:9-20*

What Jesus Sees, Part 1

Aug 23 • *Rev 2:1-17*

What Jesus Sees, Part 2

Aug 30 • *Rev 2:18-3:22*

The Throne

Sep 6 • *Rev 4*

Worthy Is the Lamb

Sep 13 • *Rev 5*

Sealed in the Storm

Sep 20 • *Rev 6-7*

When God Warns the World

Sep 27 • *Rev 8-11*

The Dragon

Oct 4 • *Rev 12*

The Beast & the Lamb

Oct 11 • *Rev 13-14*

True & Just Are Your Ways

Oct 18 • *Rev 15-16*

BREAK

Babylon Will Fall

Nov 22 • *Rev 17-18*

The King Is Coming

Nov 29 • *Rev 19*

Evil Has an Expiration Date

Dec 6 • *Rev 20*

All Things New

Dec 13 • *Rev 21:1-8*

The Home We Were Made For

Dec 20 • *Rev 21:9-22:5*

Come, Lord Jesus

Dec 24 • *Christmas Eve*

Until He Comes

Dec 27 • *Rev 22:6-21*

ABOUT THE ART

Growing up in the church, I was always worried about the end of the world: between Judgment Houses and the Left Behind books, there was a sense of doom in the pews every Sunday. As an already high-strung kid, that intense worry slowly became the defining aspect of my faith. As I cultivate my faith I've been trying

to disentangle this sense of anxiety from how I see God, remembering that we have a Father who loves us and wants good things for us, who we can trust and rest in. In developing the artwork for this series on Revelation, I not only wanted to redeem my own expectations when discussing the end times, but create something to

reassure any struggling high-strung kids that we can approach the strangeness, the beauty, the poetry, and the challenging parts of Scripture with not just fear and trembling, but confidence grounded in peace.

Daniel Vance

Series illustrator & Midtown member

