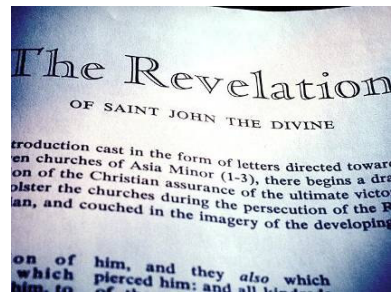


It's a Revelation. Victor Hulbert, BUC Communication Director

I guess I was about 17 when I first sat down and read the book of Revelation through in one go. My interests were already moving into audio-visuals and the idea of recording the whole book with sound effects and appropriate music appealed to me. I never did make the recording but the hour and a half I spent reading Phillips' translation of Revelation was, well, 'a revelation'.



Up until then I had studied the book in good old Adventist fashion. I'd sat in Bible class and identified the 7 churches, the seals, the trumpets, the little book and the little horn. I'd learnt the year-day principle and saw how it took us up to the last days of earth's history. I'd pondered on the millennium and the phases of judgement, and hoped I'd eventually make it through to the last two chapters to have the tears wiped from my eyes. I'd studied it, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. What I had never done was read it as a whole.

That is strange. The very purpose of a letter is generally to read it in one go. When John dispatched his missive across the sea from Patmos to the seven churches, his recipients, many of them illiterate, would have sat or stood around the walls of their house fellowships and listened carefully to this, the Revelation of Jesus Christ read out loud, in one go. And in listening, they would have gained the big picture – exactly the same as I did reading Phillips' translation the Friday night long ago.

And what is that big picture? It is one of triumph! John is sitting in lonely exile on a remote island but is whisked off in vision to something fantastic. The Church may be persecuted, things may not seem to be going too well with mission, the devil may seem to be winning – but that is superficial. That is the world's eye view. In vision John gets the 'God's eye view'. Things are very different from this new perspective and he realises that while he and his people may be struggling, God is in control. We can be encouraged and so stay faithful. The final showdown between God and Satan is imminent. Satan may increase his persecution, there may be perilous days ahead, but the victory is secure in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the one who counsels and guides the seven churches. Jesus is the only one who can open the seals on the scroll. Jesus is the one to be worshipped and adored by the elders, the angels, the 144,000 and the great multitude. He may have fought with the dragon. He and His Church may have had to run to the wilderness, but the promise is there, "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" [Rev 5:12 NIV]

There is a time to study the book of Revelation in detail. There is value in checking the Greek, studying the symbolism, analysing all the references to the Old Testament (and there are more of them than you think). Studying the book in detail will certainly be a mind expanding and positive exercise. However, as we climax this year of 'Follow the Bible' and reflect on the journey we have taken from Genesis, through the histories, the wisdom literature, the prophets, the Gospels and the letters, take time at the end of the year to read through Revelation with a sense of awe and wonder. Leave the commentaries and analysis to one side and simply rejoice in vision: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." [Rev 11:15 NIV]

I had revelation of this big picture while I was still young. I've studied the book much more since then – but I still rejoice in reading it as a piece of triumphant literature, and when I do I cannot help

but find myself joining in and agreeing with those closing words, "Yes, I am coming soon. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." [Rev 22:20 NIV]