

What does the book of Revelation add to our knowledge of the Messiah? What revelations does it show us? As you will see below, the Revelation to John shows us that Jesus is the Son of Man in fulfillment of the Hebrew prophecies, Jesus will finally defeat Satan and the beast, and there will be a period of trouble leading up to the Eternal Messianic Kingdom.

THE SON OF MAN

The opening of the book of Revelation makes direct references to Hebrew Bible prophecies. Understanding the context of these prophecies and how they were understood at the time of Jesus is key to understanding the book of Revelation. Taking things out of context can lead to many wrong conclusions. If you have not yet read the earlier part of this book regarding the Hebrew prophets like Daniel, Zechariah, Ezekiel, or Joel then I encourage you to read them before continuing here. This is because the first thing we see in the book of Revelation is that John directly quotes from Daniel and Zechariah.

“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.” (Rev 1:7, NASB)

John opens his letter to the seven churches in verse 4 and says grace and peace to them from God. He then speaks of Jesus and quotes from the Hebrew Bible prophecies about the return of the Messiah. The first quote, from Dan 7:13, is from a vision Daniel has about the Day of Judgment. You’ll recall from the earlier part of this book that in this vision Daniel sees the throne of God, and one like a Son of Man comes on the clouds and approaches the Ancient of Days. He is given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All nations and peoples of every language will worship him and his dominion, his kingdom, will never be destroyed.

These promises had been unfulfilled at the time John wrote the letter we know as the book of Revelation. The Messiah had not yet appeared on the clouds at the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment had not yet occurred. And all nations and people of every language around the world had not yet worshiped him. As Christians we look for this event to occur in the future. We believe that Jesus will return a Second time, and at his coming he will appear on the clouds in glory. He will return the same way he left on Ascension Sunday. And every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is a generally accepted literal interpretation of the vision in Daniel. Jesus is the one, the Messiah, that Daniel saw. Jesus will literally return on the clouds as he literally left while the disciples stood and looked up at his ascension into Heaven.

“9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing

intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:9-11, NASB)

What else happens in that same vision of Daniel we just took literally? You'll recall from our earlier look that the vision had four great beasts that came up out of the sea. Each beast comes in succession, and Daniel gets more detail about the fourth one, specifically its horns. Daniel is then given the interpretation, so we don't have to decide if it's allegorical, literal, or otherwise. Daniel is told directly what the vision means. The beasts represent kings and their kingdoms which will rise up over time. And Daniel sees a final worldwide kingdom that wages war against the Holy people of God until God pronounces judgment. And it is at this judgment that the Son of Man appears on the clouds in glory and all nations and peoples then will worship him.

"21 I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. 23 'Thus he said: "The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. 27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'" (Dan 7:21-27, NASB)

What we learn from Daniel is that there is a progression of kingdoms up until a final worldwide kingdom. This final worldwide kingdom will set itself against the people of God and oppress them until God steps in and pronounces judgment. And then the Messiah will appear on the clouds in glory and his everlasting kingdom will be established. This is what John wants us to remember. This is what John is pointing at when he quotes Dan 7:13 in the opening of the book of Revelation. For those who know the Hebrew Bible well, John is setting the context for the book of Revelation based on the as-yet unfulfilled prophecies in Daniel. These are prophecies of a progression of powerful kingdoms leading up to a final battle, in which God will defeat all evil and establish his Everlasting Messianic Kingdom.

THE SOLA SCRIPTURA CHALLENGE

For those who know the Hebrew Bible well, John is setting the context for the book of Revelation based on the as-yet unfulfilled prophecies in Daniel. These are prophecies of a progression of powerful kingdoms leading up to a final battle, in which God will defeat all evil and establish his Everlasting Messianic Kingdom.

We cannot say Jesus will literally return on the clouds in glory, but there are no literal kingdoms leading up to a final worldwide kingdom that wages war against the people of God. To do so would be to interpret some verses literally and others allegorically in the very same passage. The passage of Daniel is a narrative of events and Daniel is even given the interpretation. Daniel is not told that the beasts represent all kingdoms opposed to Christ throughout history, one of the Christian allegorical views. Daniel is not told that the beasts represent an internal struggle in your heart between choosing good or evil, one of the Jewish allegorical views. No, Daniel is told the beasts represent specific kingdoms. And Daniel is told of the final battle where God decisively wins, and the Messiah appears on the clouds in glory. This Son of Man is the Son of Promise. He is the one who is promised to come, the one who will be the Eternal King and Priest reigning from Zion.

To hold that Christ reigns now and his Eternal Kingdom is already fully established is to both ignore what Daniel tells us the vision means (as told to him when he received the vision), as well as to ignore reality. One need look no further than the headlines of today's newspaper to see that Jesus is not worshiped by every nation and people. We are not living in the Eternal Messianic Kingdom which destroys all other kingdoms. Other kingdoms rule for now, and you are currently living in one of them. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father while his enemies are being made a footstool. He will come again on the clouds in glory to judge the living and the dead. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne upholding it with justice and righteousness forever and ever. But we are clearly not there yet.

THE ONE WHO WAS PIERCED

We also see a quote from Zechariah in the opening of Revelation.

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." (Rev 1:7, NASB)

"10 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.'" (Zech 12:10, NASB)