

BLESSED ENDURANCE

THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

LESSON TWO: WHAT MUST SOON TAKE PLACE

The Purpose of Revelation and its symbols

INTRODUCTION

“George is a wolf...”

Once we enter into the realm of symbolic language, we have to take care to understand the way language is being used and seek to identify the comparisons being made.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF REVELATION?

Revelation 1.1-3 describes both the purpose and the path of the book's contents.

The purpose of the book of Revelation is to give God's people the hope they need to endure the tribulation that must come before the culmination of God's plan.

It does this through symbolic visions that reframe the way we think about the word.

SYMBOLISM AND THE FUTURE

σημαίνω- “to show by a sign; communicate by symbols”.

δείκνυμι- “show”.

Revelation is a visual/symbolic depiction of the trajectory of the final stages of God's plan.

→ This means that passages can refer to multiple historical events in an emblematic way.

Types of Symbolism:

Type	definition	Example
Metaphor	“A transgression of the meanings of word” to communicate something symbolically	“George is a Wolf” “The Lord is my Shepherd” 1:20
Simile	A softer form of metaphor, linking two words with the phrase “like”	“George is like a wolf” “The Lord is like a shepherd” 1:13
Hypocatastasis	Identifying something by use of another word, where the subject is not stated	“That wolf” “the Shepherd loves me.” 5:6

“The visual power of the book of Revelation effects a kind of purging of the Christian imagination, refurbishing it with alternate visions of how the world is and will be.” –Richard Bauckham

DISCUSSION

Q: How does understanding that Revelation is intended to give Christians the hope to endure tribulation change how we read it?

Q: Why is it important to remember that Revelation is a symbolic vision and not a literal roadmap?

Q: In what ways is our imagination about the future in need of “purging” and “refurbishing”? How could Revelation help us?