

Revelation/ Apocalypse



Revelation/ Apocalypse



- Foreign country?
- No longer narratives, letters, or...
- Angels, beast, earthquakes, dragons, pits
- God's word, inspired by the Holy Spirit

Revelation/ Apocalypse



- Author at time plain– I, John; 7 churches, recognized
- But also with mind-bending symbolism worthy of 21C
- Problems– symbols, future events, set with recognizable 1C context
- John uses the OT extensively– we often do not have that depth. John cites OT 250 times!!!!

Revelation/ Apocalypse



- I will not pretend to have all the answers
- **Nor do I intend to give you answers which I do possess**
- Approach Revelation with a degree of respect and humility
- **Revelation is not easy; but neither is studying, correct studying**
- 5 major thoughts/ schools of interpretations
- **Few if any of the popular pamphlets, books, internet, do an exegesis on this text– but you can!!!**
- These made for popularity texts jump immediately into a hermeneutic thought– “here & now” rather than “then & there”
- **John would have never understood their assessments!!!!!!!!!!**

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- Reference material– Dr. Merrill Tenney, *Wheaton College-7 Churches; Interpreting Revelation; as an aside New Testament Survey;*

The best introduction on Revelation

- *The Theology of the Book of Revelation– R Bauckham*

Revelation/ Apocalypse



- Genre--??

Revelation– apocalypse, prophecy, & letter

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- Apocalypse– not existing 21C
- Attributes of Apocalyptic literature
200 BC (BCE)– 200 AD (CE)
OT root—Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah
Persecution, oppression, wars, judgment, salvation
Forward in time God apply violent, radical, end
Triumph of good over evil, final judgment of evil

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More attributes of Apocalyptic literature

- 1) Apocalyptic texts were works from beginning-Jn write
- 2) Form of visions, dreams, cryptic language, symbolic
- 3) Pseudonymity- ancient but not-Enoch, Baruch
- 4) Forms of fantasy not reality- symbolic lang by Jesus
but real— salt Mtt 5:13, vultures Lk 17:37, cakes
Hos 7:8, senseless doves Hos 7:11
- 5) Formalized style—time/events neat pkgs; symbolic
numbers, number sets
- 6) ***** Sets made a point but as a whole, rarely separately

Revelation fits all except one--- ????????????????

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- Revelation is not pseudonymous
- Revealed readers
- 7 letters Rev 2-3
- Known churches
- Contemporaries, suffering companions
- *****Not told to seal up info, time near (22:10) *****

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- Revelation as Prophecy

1) Not sealed– already but not yet (realized eschatology)

2) Other Jewish/apocalyptic writers anticipated end

John knew !!!!!!!!!!!!!

3) Others wrote in the name of honored past; John

Holy Spirit—Rev 1:10-11, 1:3, 22:18-19; 20:4; 19:10

4) Different– combination apocalyptic and prophetic

cast in apocalyptic lang/literary attributes + born in persecution (Domitian); triumph of Christ

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- Prophecy— value?

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- Prophecy– value??????????????

Primarily did not foretell future but rather proclaim God's word in the present, normally coming judgment if life changes were not implemented!!

Look at 7 letters-- most must change

Then this is God's prophetic word to some churches in the latter part of the 1st C who are facing persecution externally, failure internally!!!!!!!!!!!!

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- Revelation as an epistle

1) Apocalyptic / prophetic form of a letter—1:4-7;
22:21

characteristics of a letter present

2) John— readers in 1st/ 2nd person (I/ you)

3) ***Final form- Revelation by John as a letter to the 7 Churches***

Significance— occasional requirement needs of the 7 churches— need Historical context

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- Exegetical principles are the only way for any Biblical study; absolutely mandated for Revelation
- Author's intent

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Primary meaning is what John and the Holy Spirit desired for it to mean

Also, something the readers must have understood

Readers advantage --historical context, find it

Plus, they would have grasped the apocalyptic images

Acquaintance with OT sources, problem for 21st C Christians

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- Prophetic; therefore open to additional possibilities/ secondary meanings offered by the Holy Spirit
- But we must 1st attempt to understand what John wanted his readers to grasp.
- Analogy of scripture—scripture interpreted in light of scripture- walk carefully while doing an exegesis of Revelation.
- Don't force other scriptures to have the hermeneutic key to other scriptures, especially susceptible with Revelation

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- Recognize John's use of Daniel/Ezekiel or ...their apocalyptic images but don't assume readers had Mtt or 2nd Thessalonians knowledge!!!!
- Keys for Revelation must be internal!!!! In the readers own historical context

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Images– issues

Aware of vast imagery available– especially OT; others

Apocalyptic imagery several kinds-constant, not others

Beast of Sea std world empire; images fluid- Lion

from Judah is a Lamb (Rev 5: 5-6). Only lion in Rev

Woman in chpt 12 positive; woman in chpt 17 evil

Images specific items—lampstands in 1:12-20

identified churches; Dragon chpt 12 Satan; other

hand images can be general

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- Imagery

4 horsemen chpt 6:9-11 not necessarily specific expressions but general humanity failure as source of churches sufferings; forcing God's judgment 6:12-17

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- Imagery

John interprets, stay with his interpretations! Six:

son of man-Christ 1:13, 18

Lampstands—7 churches 1:20

7 stars, 7 angels or messengers (?) 1:20

Dragon –Satan 12:9

7 heads, 7 hills woman sits/7 kings 17:9 fluid
prostitute city of Rome, 17:18

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- Imagery

View images as whole, not allegorically pressing each detail– similar to parables; retrieve the over all thought– whole vision is giving us insight

Details are for dramatic effect (6:12-14) or additions to the picture to avoid reader missing the points of reference– 9:7-11 Sun/moon/ etc. not specific meanings just more effect for the earthquake

Descriptive nature of Locusts 9:7-11 original reader not miss as barbaric hordes at the edges of Roman empire

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- OT

OT continues, consummated thru-out- 1:5-6 uses sacrificial system; Ex 19:6 refer to church as new people of God, redeemed by Christ

Followed by Christ coming using Dan 7:13; Zech 12:13;

Picture of Christ—Dan 10:6, but an additional collage Dan 7:9, 13; Isa 49:2; Ezek 1:24

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- OT- continued

Rev 5 climax w/ presentation of Christ as Lion of Judah
–Gen 49:9 & Root of David- Isa 11:1=Slain Lamb (Passover/sacrificial system)

Preliminary, temporal judgment from 1st seven trumpets-chpts 8-9 echo several plagues in Egypt Ex 7-10; but final judgment of Rome chpts 17-18 from prophetic judgments on Babylon, Tyre in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel– Rome is called Babylon

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Good exegesis of Revelation demands constant awareness of the OT because these OT references in their context provide clues to how John intends for his images/pictures to be understood.

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- Apocalypses generally and Revelation in particular are not meant to provide a detailed chronological account of the future----**read again**
- *Apocalypses generally and Revelation in particular are not meant to provide a detailed chronological account of the future*
- *Message transcends history– bigger picture- God is going to Win. All visions must be seen within the larger overview*

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- Historical context
 - 1) Read thru book, one/ two settings
 - 2) Look for “big idea”- allow reading be the happening
 - 3) Allow visions roll, get feel for the book/ message
 - 4) Notes– author/ reader– what were they “hearing”
 - 5) 2nd time– refer to Johns readers—1:9,etc.
 - 6) 7 letter notes—2:3; 2:8-9; 2:13; 3:10; repeat victorious
 - 7) 5th seal 6:9-11- 4 horsemen-martyrs- slain because of word; John exiled 1:9

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- Historical context

8) Multitude 7:14, not suffer again 7:16 from tribulation-

9) Suffering/death delivering Jesus testimony 12:11,17;

10) chpt's 13-20 saints suffering death due to not worshipping

the "beast" 13:7; 14:9-13; 16:5-6; 18:20

********This Motif–Key to understanding the Historical context as well as explaining occasion/purpose********

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- Historical context

11) John exiled; others suffering (2:13) for testimony of Jesus in the spirit suffering only beginning for refusing to worship the Beast; Jn not certain Church ready; hence the prophetic book– ***God is going to win!***

12) Themes obvious: ***state and church on collision course; initial victory to the state; suffering death ahead; worse before better*** 6:9-11

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- Historical context

13) Themes obvious: ***Don't falter***– 14:11-12; 21:7-8

Prophetic word encouragement-Christ keys to history; Churches in his hands 1:17-20

14)***** ***tribulation & wrath********-not one and same;
confusing the terms will lead into a quagmire as to
what is being said

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Historical context

***** ***tribulation & wrath********

- Tribulation (suffering/death)- church enduring, will endure;
- God's wrath— divine judgment poured onto those afflicting God's people. ***Context all thru Revelation God's people will not! will not! will not!*** endure God's wrath!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

But church will suffer from enemies— NT: 2 Thess 1:3-10 (original lang— *persecutions/trials*— tribulation!!!)

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- Historical context
- Opening seals– 5/6- 6:9-17 ***raises 2 questions***
- How long, Lord?...answer
wait, more martyrs & but judgment absolute!!!

Seal 6 God's judgment comes

Judged cry out who can with stand the Lamb?

Chpt 7 answer ***those to whom God has sealed***

7:14

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- Literary context
 - 1) Vision functions for the book as a whole; like Epistles think paragraphs, so visions are building blocks
 - 2) Book unfolds as a drama
 - 3) **Chpts 1-3** set stage w/ characters- John 1:1-11 as seer; narrator; Christ 1:12-20 images from Daniel 10; ***important- not just a borrowed image but is a God of History***

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Literary context

3) Characters continued– church 2:1-3:22; 7 letters to ***real churches; real churches; real churches!!!!!!!*** John is encouraging, warning church

4) ***Chpts 4-5*** more stage setting- breath taking visions to worship and praise; God reigns ch 4; believers wondering John--***God’s “Lion” is a “Lamb”; redeemed humanity thru His/Lamb’s suffering ch 5***

All Heaven praises this Lamb and the one on the throne

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- Literary context
 - Drama
- 1) **Chpts 6-7**— actual drama 3 times visions presented **structured sets of 7's**. ch 6-7; 8-11; 15-16
 - 2) In each case 4 items one picture; 6-7 & 8-11 next two items go together to present 2 sides of another reality; ***interrupted w/ an interlude of 2 visions before 7th item introduced;***
 - 3) Chpts 15-16 final 3rd grp w/o interlude because it leads to final visions of chpts 17-22
- Example-----

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- Literary

Example: 6-7

- 1) White horseman= conquest
- 2) Red horseman=War
- 3) Black horseman= famine
- 4) Pale horseman= Death
- 5) Martyrs question “How Long?”
- 6) earthquake, (God’s judgment) Who can stand (Wrath)?
144k/
multitude
- 7) God’s wrath– 7 trumpets of 8-11

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- Literary

Chpts 8-11 God's temporal judgment on Rome

- 1) 1st 4 trumpets, reflects plagues of Egypt Ex 7-10—disorders of nature
- 2) 5th/6th trumpet come from barbarian hordes w/ great war
- 3) Interlude- God's exaltations by witnesses—dead witnesses!
- 4) 7th trumpet conclusion Kingdom world now the Lord's/Messiah 11:15

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- Literary
 - 1) Thru the suffering of the church and judgment by God on Church's enemies to final triumph of God
 - 2) Visions not finished— chpts 8-11 big picture; **chpts 12-22** offers details of judgment and triumph
 - 3) Overview then detailed as to what happens—
 - 4) **Chpt 12 Theological key to the entire book**

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- Literary

Chpt 12 Theological key to the entire book

1) 2 visions Satan's attempt to destroy Christ & Satan's defeat

2) NT: ***Already/ not yet (realized eschatology)***
Satan revealed as defeated (***already***) but final end is to come—but ***“not yet”***; rejoicing salvation but ***woe*** because Satan takes vengeance while time permits

Chpts 13-14– S's vengeance– form of Roman empire, demanding religious allegiance

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Literary

Empire doomed—**chs 15-16**

Tale of two cities—17-22

city of earth-Rome condemned for

persecution / city of God-God's people eternal

For other visions some issues-meaning & content; use a good commentary

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- Hermeneutical questions --- ???????

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Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

- Revelation like Prophetic texts– God’s word 1st to those it was written. However Prophets/Rev- is yet to be
- Generally immediate—Judah captivity/Roman Emp fell to hordes
- Rome , yes in chpt 18 but how about *here & now*
- ***Slain Lamb triumphs over dragon 12:7-12; God is in control***
- ***Must be heard-word-over & over again; every age***

Can not miss this message– essence of the Book!!!!

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Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

Guide

1. Pictures in future, are pictures; expression of reality not reality; nor (***enormously important***) that the details of the pictures to be specifically “fulfilled”!!!!!!!
4 trumpets proclaim disasters don’t expect literal; these were plagues against Pharaoh– plagues are going fall on Rome, not exact detail!!!
2. Pictures express absolute judgment by God

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- Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

Guide

2) continued— God’s judgment; his timetable—
soonness—God’s; 12 chpt Satan time short God’s time

3) Pictures eschatological, not yet, no fixed rules do not
dwell on details, do not speculate— now get this:

***Revelation not intended to prophesy the existence
of Communist China, literal details end of time
or.....***

What is the message of Revelation??

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- Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

Guide

4) Yes, there most probably are additional applications but no keys to open it up!!!!!!!!!!!!!! For example NT-- Anti-Christ 2 Thess 2:3-4? Rev 13-14 Emperor both eschatological- future/end of times same? Doubtful!!!
1 John refer false prophets 1 John 2:20-23

5) Anti-Christ? Figure in our time—here and now? History has provided several Hitler, Idi Amin for Ugandans, Stalin, others keep coming- 1 Jn 2:18

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- Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

Guide

6) Caution looking for the “world-wide” figure

7) Pictures completely eschatological leave as such—
11:15-19/ 19:1; 22:21 Yet to be fulfilled, yes!

***But these are pictures, dramatizations! God's
time, God's way***

Revelation/ Apocalypse



- Hermeneutical questions (*here & now*)

Guide

Genesis– God’s creation; Revelation is God’s to consummate– finitely ambiguous, yes; but not for our infinite God

Our only real in-depth study of Revelation for 21st C same for the 1st C

God is going to win; therefore follow him regardless of what Satan or his urchins do, amen