

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Prologue & Exodus 1:1-8; 22:8-22

March 2023

Learning objectives

- Review the manuscript evidence of Revelation.
- Identify the author and the date of Revelation.
- Analyze the structure of Revelation.
- Exegete the prologue of Revelation.

Earliest copies of Revelation

- Greek: The main language in the Roman empire from 300 BCE till .
- 10 manuscripts: Hand copied in Greek from the 2nd to the 5th centuries CE.
- P98, 150-250 CE: Rev 1:13–2:1. One misspelled word, two missing words.
- Reliability: NT books remain amongst the best attested ancient documents.
- Our Bible: Scholars compare all the copies, then translate the 'original'.



Greek Papyrus P98, from c. 200 CE, Apocalypse 1.13-2:1

Theories of who John was

1:4 John ... 1:9 I, John, your brother who share with you the persecution...

22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw...

- Elder John: Papias, in the 2nd century.
- John Mark: Dionysius, in the 4th century.
- Unknown: A Jewish document with Christian additions, 20th century speculation.

Case for the Apostle John

External evidence:

Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Internal evidence:

- John was known and trusted by Asian churches.
- Not ascribed to an ancient prophet or saint.
- John makes no attempt to bolster his authority.
- The language is similar to that of John's Gospel and epistles.

Date: during which persecution?

References: John in exile (1:9); prison and death (2:10); Antipas slain (2:13); others to be slain (6:9); 'blood of saints' (16:6; 17:6; 18:24).

Presupposition: Persecution must have begun.

Emperor worship:

- Julius Caesar (100-44) claimed deity.
- Augustus (27-14) allowed worship.
- Caligula (37-41) demanded it.
- Nero (54-68) persecuted Christians.
- Domitian (81-96) allowed exile but later recalled the exiled.

However!

Roman sources: "No knowledge of any rescript or edict has survived from the first century which enforced emperor worship" (Metzger, 270).

Biblical sources: Persecutions sometimes resulted from charges brought by local opposition.

Alternative views:

- Local persecutions were real but unusual.
- Occasional persecutions were not forgotten.
- Most conflict occurred between traditional Jews and Christian Jews.
- Revelation is a prophecy of future troubles.

Book of Revelation

Purpose: To strengthen Christians to maintain their loyalty to Jesus, even when insulted, scoffed at, threatened, opposed, abused, or murdered.

Central message: Jesus Christ will one day return visibly, will raise the dead, will reward the faithful, will destroy godless nations, will rule over the earth, will judge the wicked, and will create new heavens and a new earth.

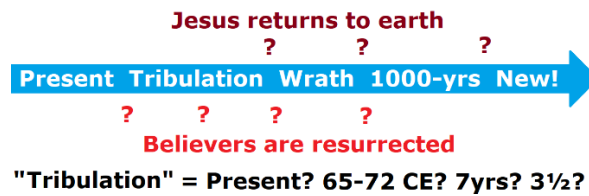
Philosophy of history: God uses good and bad events of the present time to prepare us for a glorious future.

Four Western views of end-times

- Historical Premillennialism: Jesus will return before a future millennium.
- Dispensational Premillennialism: Jesus will return near a seven-year 'tribulation'.
- Amillennialism: Jesus may return at any time. No millennium.
- Postmillennialism: Jesus will not return until after a millennium.

NOTE: We shall not advocate for any one of these views in this course.

Different theories and theologies



Literary Structure

A tentative analysis based on the Greek tragedy, a popular medium in the Greco-Roman world.

Literary Structure of the Book of Revelation						
Prologue	1:1-8					
Parodos	1:9 - 3:22					
Episode 1	4:1 – 7:17					
Episode 2				8:1–11:18		
Episode 3	11:19 – 15:4					
Episode 4				15:5 – 19:10		
Episode 5					19:11 – 22:7	
Exodos	22:8-21					
	Present	Time	Times	½ Time	1000 years	Forever

Prologue 1:1-8

Verses 1-3

Revelation: apokalypsis = uncovering, revealing.

Of Jesus: to show, to make known.

Gave: God → Jesus Christ → angel → John → churches → readers → hearers.

Blessed: 'happy, privileged' BDAG. Thus, approved by the Lord.

Hearing and keeping: 'to persist in obedience' BDAG

Near: may mean (1) in space, (2) in time, or (3) in sequence.

Verses 4-6

Churches: Believe in God, remaining loyal to Jesus.

Grace & peace: Cause-to-effect. He loves us we live.

God: Always was, still is, always will exist.

Seven spirits: become seven angels when sent out.

Jesus: Taught, died, rose to life, reigns over all.

His blood: Faith in Jesus' death brings us freedom from our own evil, and authority over spirits by our access to God.

Priests: Privilege of access to God.

Verses 7 & 8

Look: Keep watch.

Coming: Daniel 7:13; Matthew 24:30.

Every ... see ... all: Nothing secret or invisible.

Pierced him: Israel? Rome?

Alpha & Omega: Starter and finisher.

Is ... was ... to come: Greater than time.

Lord God: Hebrew, 'Yahweh Elohim'.

Almighty: Hebrew, 'El Šaddai', 't^eba'ôť'.

Exodos 22:8-21

Verses 8 & 9

The angel: John had help to perceive his visions.

Fellow servants: angels, apostles, brethren, prophets, and we Bible keepers.

Worship: 'to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure' BDAG

Worship God: The 'everlasting gospel' (14:6-8).

Verses 10-12

Seal up: Daniel 8:26; 12:4.

Prophecy: 'the gift of interpreting divine will or purpose' BDAG

Book: A written document. Read, interpret, obey.

Still: Each one's spiritual state remains permanent (following death of the body.)

Reward ... repay: Each one's behavior matters, forever. Do lots of good works, every day that you can.

Verses 14-17

Morning star: Brightest 'star' in sky = symbol of Jesus, the highest authority in heaven.

Verses 18-21

Prophecy: This book came directly to John through visions revealed by Jesus Christ. We must be careful not to add to it, not to away from it, which all fake religions do with their fake prophecies and fake books come from fake angels.