

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Date: January 13, 2021

Series: Revelation, Part 1

Text: Revelation 1:1-3

Main Idea: Blessed are all who read, hear and obey the book of Revelation.

1. _____ study the book of Revelation?

- It reveals God's plan for the _____.
- This book completes the circle of Bible truths.
- This book is full of incredible _____:
Doctrine of God, Christology, depravity of man, angels & demons, redemption.
- Because all who study & obey it will be _____. (1:3, 22:7)

2. **Who is the** _____: John the Apostle. (1:4, 4, 9, 22:8)

3. _____ **was it written:** 96 AD following the death of Domitian (other option is 68 AD).

4. _____ **was it written:** The island of Patmos, about 40 miles off the coast of Ephesus where John was banished for his witness for Christ. (1:9)

5. _____ **were the recipients:** The 7 churches of Asia Minor. (1:4)

6. _____ **is Revelation about:** The account of how Jesus Christ will someday become King by means of judgment and establish this Kingdom on the earth and then on into eternity.

7. _____ **do we interpret it:** Typically 4 approaches.

- **The preterist approach (Past):** Revelation was a prophecy written in 65 AD that predicted the historical events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD which makes it descriptive rather than prophetic for the majority of the Church.

- **The historical approach (Present):** Revelation is a record of the sweep of church history from the apostolic ties until the present.
- **The Idealist approach (Timeless):** An allegorical approach viewing the timeless struggle between good and evil that is played out in every age (neither prophetic nor historical).
- **The futuristic approach (Future):** Interprets the text literally resulting in understanding revelation as a prophecy of events yet to come just as the text says. **(BEST)**

8. **What is an** _____: **Key Verse is Revelation 1:19.**

1. The Christ: The Things Which You Have Seen. (1:1-20)

- The Prologue. (1:1-8)
- The Vision of the Glorified Christ. (1:9-18)
- John's Commission to Write. (1:19-20)

2. The Churches: The Things Which Are. (2:1-3:22)

- The Letter to the Church at Ephesus. (2:1-7)
- The Letter to the Church at Smyrna. (2:8-11)
- The Letter to the Church at Pergamum. (2:12-17)
- The Letter to the Church at Thyatira. (2:18-29)
- The Letter to the Church at Sardis. (3:1-6)
- The Letter to the Church at Philadelphia. (3:7-13)
- The Letter to the Church at Laodicea. (3:14-22)

3. The Consummation: The Things Which Will Take Place After This. (4-22)

- Worship before God's Heavenly Throne. (4-5)
- The Tribulation. (6-18)
- The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. (19)
- The Millennium & the Great White Throne Judgment. (20)
- The Eternal State. (21-22)

Highly Recommended is ONE sermon by John MacArthur: www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1290/a-jet-tour-through-revelation

How are Symbols Interpreted in the Book of Revelation?

Symbols must be interpreted correctly in the book of Revelation. When you read the book, there are all kinds of imagery: horns, beasts, stars, varied colored horses, and so much more. There are basically two extremes that we must avoid when we interpret these symbols. The first extreme is believing that the symbols are impossible to interpret and therefore the book of Revelation cannot be understood at all. The other extreme is unchecked speculation and sensationalism that manipulates all the symbols so they represent certain people or events of our time, to make the text mean whatever the reader wants it to mean.

The proper method to interpret symbols in the book of Revelation involves two steps. **First**, we must remember that symbols simply represent things that are literal. Symbols never represent another symbol which would render them meaningless. Symbols are always employed to refer to something else that is in actuality, or literal to convey truth concisely. The second step is to recognize that symbols are most likely explained in the immediate context or elsewhere in other parts of the Bible. We cannot make symbols mean whatever we want them to mean. Scripture sets the parameters for our interpretation of symbols.

Following are examples:

Symbol	Meaning
The seven stars (1:16)	Seven angels (1:20)
The seven lampstands (1:13)	Seven churches (1:20)
The morning star (2:28)	Christ (22:16)
The seven lamps of fire (4:5)	The sevenfold Spirit of God (4:5)
The seven eyes (5:6)	The sevenfold Spirit of God (5:6)
The incense (5:8)	The prayers of God's people (5:8)
The fallen star (9:1)	The angel of the abyss (9:11)
The great city, Sodom & Egypt (11:8)	Jerusalem (11:8)
The stars in the sky (12:4)	Fallen angels (12:9)
The woman and the child (12:1-2)	Israel and Christ (12:5-6)
The large, red great dragon (12:3)	Satan (12:9)
The ancient serpent (12:9)	Satan (12:9)
The times, time, and half a time (12:14)	1260 days (12:6)
The beast out of the sea (13:1-10)	Future world ruler & his empire (13:1-10)
The beast out of the earth (13:11-17)	The false prophet (19:20)
The great prostitute (17:1)	The great city, Babylon (17:18)
The waters on which the woman sits (17:1)	The peoples of the world (17:15)
The ten horns (17:12)	Ten kings associated with the beast (13:1, 17:3, 7-8, 11-13, 16-17)
The fine linen (19:8)	The righteous deeds of the saints (19:8)
The rider on the white horse (19:11-16, 19)	Jesus Christ, the King of kings (19:16)
The bride (21:9)	The Lamb's wife (21:9)
The bride (21:9)	The holy city, New Jerusalem (21:9-10)

Reference: Mark Hitchcock, 101 Answers to Questions About the Book of Revelation

When was the Book of Revelation Written?

(Discrediting the Preterist Option of Interpretation for the book of Revelation)

Why would the date of a particular book be important? Well in this case it is very important for interpretative reasons. There are two dates typically held by scholars, an early date (AD 65) during the reign of Nero, and a later date (AD 95) during the reign of Domitian. The interpretative hermeneutic known as preterism is **very dependent** upon the early date. Preterism teaches that the book of Revelation prophesied about the fall of Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70, and that the events of Revelation are not about the future, but events that have already taken place in the past. If the later date can be proved and the early date dismissed, then the erroneous teaching of preterism can be easily debunked. Kenneth Gentry in his book, *The Days of Vengeance* appropriately states, "If it could be demonstrated that Revelation were written 25 years after the Fall of Jerusalem, [preterism] would go up in smoke." The date of Revelation then becomes the Achille's heel for the preterist view.

A Look at the Evidence:

External evidence: Information that is primarily outside the Bible.

- Irenaeus' testimony (AD 180). Irenaeus is important because he spent his youth in Smyrna, where one of the seven churches existed, and he claims to have been a pupil of Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna who in turn was a student of the Apostle John. Here is what Irenaeus stated: "For if it were necessary that the name of him [Antichrist] should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been told by him who saw the apocalyptic vision. For it was seen no long time ago, but almost in our generation toward the end of Domitian's reign." Irenaeus places the John's vision toward the end of Domitian's reign which ended in AD 96.
- 10 other writers attribute this letter to a later date: Hegesippus (AD 150), Victorinus (300), Eusebius (300), Jerome (400), Sulpicius Severus (400), Acts of John (650), Primasius (540), Orosius (600), Andreas (600), Venerable Bede (700)
- The earliest record for an early date doesn't show up until the Syriac Version of the NT (550), Arethas (900), Thophylact (1107)

Internal evidence: Information gathered from inside the book.

- The condition of the seven churches:
 - Church at Ephesus (2:1-7). It is interesting that the Church has several problems namely the loss of first love and the Nicolaitans. But we must note that the Apostle Paul had written the book of Ephesians in 62 AD just 3 years prior to the supposed early date of Revelation. Why were these issues not brought up by

Paul? This indicates that the Church of Ephesus may have been a second-generation church by the time Revelation was written substantiating a later date.

- Church at Smyrna (2:8-11). Polycarp who was the bishop at Smyrna in his letter to the Philippians written about AD110 says that there was no church during the time of Paul's ministry in the 60s. His comments imply that the Smyrnaeans did not know the Lord during the time that Paul was ministering.
- Church of Laodicea (3:14-22). The Apostle Paul never spoke negatively about this church in his letter to the Colossians (2:2, 4:13, 16). If John had written Revelation in AD 64-67 as preterists claim, that would have been immediately after Paul's comments. It is strange that Paul did not speak harshly about the church since John did not have one good thing to praise them in the book of Revelation. John's entire comments about the Laodiceans was completely negative.
- The banishment of John to Patmos: John wrote the letter from an island called Patmos to which he was exiled (Rev 1:9). Church history consistently testifies that both Peter and Paul were executed in Rome near the end of Nero's reign. If indeed John wrote during the reign of Nero (late 60s), it is inconsistently strange that Nero did not execute him. Furthermore, Domitian who was Nero's successor who also persecuted Christians (late 90s) was known for banishment of Christians rather than execution.

Summary: The external and internal evidence both give strong evidence that the book of Revelation was written during the later date of 95 AD rather than the earlier date. If this is true, the preterist interpretation of the book of Revelation is no longer valid.

References:

Mark Hitchcock, 101 Answers to Questions about the Book of Revelation
John MacArthur, Commentary on the book of Revelation