

Revelation

By Gary May
Pastor, First Baptist Church of Diana, Texas
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Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Outline from Carson, Moo, and Morris, An Introduction to the New Testament

Prologue – 1:1-20

Messages to the seven churches — 2:1-3:22

A vision of heaven – 4:1-5:14

The seven seals – 6:1-8:5

The seven trumpets — 8:6-11:19

Seven significant signs — 12:1-14:20

The seven bowls — 15:1-16:21

The triumph of Almighty God — 17:1-20:15

A new heaven and new earth — 21:1-22:5

Epilogue — 22:6-21

Outline from Wiersbe, Be Victorious

- I. The things which thou has seen — 1
- II. The things which are — 2-3
- III. The Things which shall be hereafter – 4-22
 - a. The throne of heaven – 4-5
 - b. The Tribulation on earth – 6-19
 - i. The first half – 6-9
 - ii. The middle – 10-14
 - iii. The last half — 15-19
 - c. The Kingdom of Christ – 20
 - d. The new heavens and earth – 21-22

Approaches to study and interpretation:

The preterist approach – This approach, also called the “contemporary-historical”, is the most common today. It insists that the visions of John grow out of and describe events in John’s own day. The symbols in the visions all refer to people, countries, and events in the world of that day, and John’s purpose is to show readers how God is about to bring judgment on that world that is oppressing them, and so deliver them into his eternal kingdom.

The historical approach— Several movements in the Middle Ages grew up in the conviction that the millennium was about to dawn. To buttress their beliefs, they found in the Revelation a sketch of history from the time of Christ to their own day. This approach was popular with the Reformers also enabling them to identify the beast in the Revelation with the papacy.

The futuristic approach — A consistently futurist approach holds that everything in the Revelation from chapter 4 to the end finds its fulfillment in the very last days of human history. The view is also held in a more moderate form, according to which some of the events in these chapters – particularly the earlier ones – take place in history before the end.

The idealist approach—. Some scholars are convinced that we are on the wrong track all together in trying to identify the events portrayed in John’s visions. The symbolism is designed, they argue to help us understand God’s person and ways with the world in a general way, not to enable us to map out a course of events. Revelation, then teaches us the action of great principles and not special incidents.

Taken from Carson, Moo, and Morris, pages 482-483

The Prologue or the things which thou hast seen Chapter 1

Verses 1-8

Genre of Writing

From verse 1 – Revelation or Apocalyptic

A form of writing popular from 200 BC to 100 AD. Portions of Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and Isaiah are considered apocalyptic.

Theological Elements of Apocalyptic Literature

- a. Future orientation
- b. Dualism – Two opposing supernatural powers – God and Satan. Two distinct ages. The present age under control of Satan. The future age under the control of God.
- c. Determinism or pessimism. The evil age is predetermined.
- d. Ethical passivity – Instead of the righteous remnant being rebuked for their failure, they were consoled in their underserved suffering and told that they were living in the last days.

Basic literary characteristics of apocalyptic literature

- a. Content normally comes by means of dreams or visions or heavenly journeys with angelic guidelines.
- b. Dramatic and even bizarre symbolism and fantasy are used extensively.
- c. Apocalyptic writings were placed in a particular written structure and formed carefully from the beginning.
- d. Pseudonymity – A name is given as author other than the one who actually wrote the material. Often the name of a previous prophet was used to lend credibility.

Similarities between Revelation and nonbiblical apocalyptic writings

- a. John used symbolism, mystical images, and symbolic numbers.
- b. God's communication came through visions and auditions.
- c. There is a cosmological stage setting for the book.
- d. Hope is engendered by the promise of the second coming of Christ in glory.

Basic differences between Revelation and nonbiblical apocalyptic writings

- a. John clearly placed himself in the contemporary world of the first century and spoke of the last days at the end of history in much the same way as did Ezekiel and Jeremiah. (He was not seeking to fit into a category of nonbiblical writing.)
- b. Revelation is not pseudonymous.
- c. John did not share the pessimism of other apocalyptic writings of his day.
- d. Revelation is not ethically passive.

From John Newport's *The Lion and the Lamb* pages 52-55.

From Verse 3 – Prophetic

To prophesy does not primarily mean to tell the future but to speak forth God's word into the present.

From Verse 4 – An Epistle

Date and place of Writing

From Patmos – Tradition holds the John was exiled to Patmos during the reign of Domitian in the years 95-96. During this time, history records severe persecution of Christians.

Author

Verse 1 — The revelation is of Jesus Christ

Verse 4 — From Jesus Christ

Verses 10-11 — A voice speaking to John – sometimes angels -- sometimes it is possible Jesus delivered the message.

As with all Scripture, we recognize, God is the author.

Destination

Verse 4 – The seven churches of Asia

Verse 3 – Anyone who hears the words of the prophecy