



Intro to the New Testament:

Revelation

Session Five

Genre: Apocalypse

- An established genre called apokalyptō meaning “to uncover,” “to reveal,” or “to disclose” what is hidden
- Motive to maintain faith during difficult times and to maintain hope for God’s rescue and establishment of his kingdom
- Most notable OT apocalypse is book of Daniel which became model for other apocalyptic writings
- Just as Jesus used parables to teach in his earthly ministry, Revelation uses parabolic symbols to represent past, present, and future
- Key difference of Revelation with other apocalypses: written to present generation within that generation about the future vs. Rooting in the past

Genre: Prophecy

- Second sentence, “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”
- John aware he is commissioned by Lord to write prophecy and that he is a prophet
- So, Revelation is work of the HS who enables Christians to bear prophetic witness to the word of God and the witness of Jesus

Genre: Letter

- Rev. 1:4–5, John greets readers in convention of a letter writer
- His also concludes with a benediction that is normal of NT letters
- John was ordered to write what he saw in order to send it to the 7 churches in Roman province of Asia
- John is writing to the situations of this readers as much as Paul or Peter
- so, knowing context is as important in Revelation as other NT letters—key: perceive situation addressed in book and its message for those living in it and for subsequent generations

Authorship

- Rev. 1:1 says that the writer is named John (also 1:4; 21:2; 22:8)
- If Revelation written by apostle inclusion in the canon of Scripture should be universally recognized
- From late 2nd C. It was assumed that the Gospel of John, letters of John, and Revelation were all written by John son of Zebedee (apostle of Jesus)

Date

- Two main possibilities due to reference of imperial persecution, suffering, and death
- 10 emperors believed to have persecuted Christians only 2 in John's lifetime: 1) period shortly after Nero's (54–68 C.E.) death (68–69 C.E.) or 2) toward end of Domitian's reign (81–96 C.E.) about 95 C.E.
- *Early Date:* Assumed the temple is still standing (fell in 70 C.E.) and persecution still seems to come from the Jews which it is assumed would stop if centre of Judaism was destroyed.
- *Later Date:* Belief that the reference in Revelation 13 to a mortal head wound that healed is alluding to a well-known superstition that arose after Nero's death that he would return at the head of the Parthian armies to conquer Rome.

Destination

- Ephesus
- Smyrna
- Pergamum
- Thyatira
- Sardis
- Philadelphia
- Laodicea

Purpose

- These Christians are living in a region where there was high emperor worship. Christians were undergoing sporadic persecution for their faith. It was becoming clear that Christian faith (Jesus is Lord) was on a collision course with the empire (Caesar is Lord). So, Revelation is an encouragement to Christians that God was still on his throne, that Jesus will complete the project of bringing the kingdom to triumph over evil, and that Christians should remain faithful to Jesus even to death.

Introduction (Chapter 1)

- The opening chapter is an introduction to the book which includes a prologue and a vision of the risen Christ to the prophet John
- Christ makes known the origin and nature of the book, pronounces the first of 7 beatitudes in the book on those who read it and those who hear it, gives a greeting from the triune God, a doxology to Christ, and 2 prophetic sayings

Letters to the Seven Churches (Chapter 2-3)

- Seven letters are given to the seven named churches
- They are brief like the 8 short oracles of Amos 1–2
- They have an identical structure:
 - Introductory statement from risen Christ drawn from the opening vision, usually pertaining to the content of the letter
 - Either praise for the good qualities of the church and/or criticism of its faults
 - A promise to the victor related to blessings to be received with the kingdom of Christ
 - Exhortation to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches

Visions of the Heavenly Throne Room (Chapter 4-5)

- The vision of these two chapters leads into the main body of the book
- It initiates events which lead to the unveiling of the final kingdom of God
- At the same time it determines the symbolism of the first series of messianic judgments

Seals, Trumpets & Bowls (Chapter 6-16)

- These have been interpreted as following a chronological order, however each series of judgments concludes with a description of the Day of the Lord which leads to a revelation of the final kingdom of God
 - *Seals*: This series of judgments parallels the eschatological discourse in Mark 13, but it uses imagery of four riders on horses adapted from Zechariah 1 and 6
 - *Trumpets*: This series of judgments are described in similar fashion: the first four trumpets are adaptations of the judgments on Egypt at the Exodus
 - *Bowls*: The same goal is reached upon the completion of the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath by a voice calling from the temple and the throne proclaiming it is done

Interludes of the Church and It's Conflicts (Chapters 7; 10:1–11:13; 12–14)

- Interspersed between the descriptions of messianic judgments are episodes that reveal what happens to the church during the period of tribulation and reveals the nature of the church's task

City of the Antichrist and the City of God (Chapters 17:1–22:5)

- Rather than moving straight from judgment to the arrive of Christ and his kingdom, John reveals the doom of the antichristian empire as it crumbles under its own forces of destruction and the praise of the people of God on earth and in heaven over it
- Then John describes the coming of Jesus to defeat the enemies of God by his all-powerful word, the kingdom of Christ in the world, the last vain attempt of Satan to overthrow that kingdom, the last judgment of the human race, the new heaven and earth, and the city of God the New Jerusalem
- The book climaxes as a story of the harlot and the bride; truly a tale of two cities

Epilogue (Chapter 22:6–21)

- The final paragraphs sum up and press home to the readers/hearers the lessons of the book
- It emphasizes the authenticity of the book as a true revelation from God and the nearness of the fulfillment of its message