

The Book of Revelation

Scripture's Letter of Hope and Restoration

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My humble thanks to them for allowing me to stand
on their shoulders*

+Soli Deo Gloria+



In 96 A.D. a miraculous thing happened on a rocky, desolate, six-by-ten-mile island in the Aegean.

The apostle John was walking alongside the ocean when the majestic voice of God spoke from heaven bringing a message of cheer to believers who had been struggling with the harsh burden of persecution from the Roman Emperor Domitian.

The old disciple looked heavenward to see the clouds part and God revealing an amazing vision of His plan for the Church through the ages.

Unfortunately, when it comes to studying the book of Revelation many folks grimace and say, "Revelation is too frightening for me!" or they react by saying, "How irrelevant can you get?" or they conclude, "Now we're finally going to do some *serious* Bible study."

As you study Revelation, you will discover the following things:

- God has a plan for and is in control of His creation.
- He knows His people will suffer.
- He encourages us to focus on Jesus.
- He assures us of a final victory over evil.
- He says the faithful already share victory in Jesus.
- He says death in Jesus is not disgrace, but victory.

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank You for speaking to us through the Bible. Teach us how to read and understand Revelation that we may know what You have to say about the issues we face in our lives, and be confident that You will guide all the things that happen in our lives and in our world for our salvation. We pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Why Read Revelation?

- How much of Revelation have you read?
- What do you think it is all about?

Watch The Video: Lesson 1

- What are some of the scary things you've heard about Revelation?
- What have you heard other people say about them?

Read Revelation 6:1-17

- Which of these events do you find particularly scary? Why?
- How could you discuss these things with your unchurched friends?

Return To Video And Finish Watching Lesson 1.

Speaking In Code

- As a child what sorts of things did you or your friends hide from your parents using code language?
 - As an adult what codes do you use in front of your children, pets, or neighbors?
 - What code words do we Christians use in our conversations that keep unchurched guys in the dark and hamper our witness?

Revelation - A Father's Warning To His Children

We might wonder why God would write a scary letter filled with code words to His children. Actually, the letter itself wasn't as scary as the world in which God's children were living, suffering, and dying. God wanted His letter of Revelation to prepare all of us for the suffering we might see and experience, but to show us Jesus already won the victory and that "our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18b).

- What worldly dangers should we warn our children about as they approach adulthood?
 - How can you talk about these same dangers with your friends or coworkers?

THE REVELATION CODE (so far...)

<u>Dragon</u>	=	<u>Devil</u>
<u>Lampstands</u>	=	<u>Churches</u>
<u>Incense</u>	=	<u>Prayers</u>
<u>White</u>	=	<u>Victory</u>
<u>Black</u>	=	<u>Famine/starvation</u>
<u>Pale grey</u>	=	<u>Death</u>
<u>Sword/ Jesus' mouth</u>	=	<u>Word of God</u>

Luther's View of the Book

Luther didn't care for Revelation. He once said, "A revelation ought to be revealing!" In the preface to his translation of the NT in 1522, he wrote, "My spirit cannot adapt itself to the book". He relegated it, along with Hebrews, James and Jude, to a kind of 'appendix'. He gives two reasons for doing so: 1) "I say what I feel. I have more than one reason for declining to consider this book either apostolic or prophetic. First and foremost, the apostles do not occupy themselves with visions, but prophesy with clear, crisp words, as Peter, Paul and Christ in the Gospels also do; for it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly, without image and without visions of Christ and His work." 2) "For me it is reason enough for not esteeming it highly, that in it Christ is neither taught nor recognized, which is,

above all, an apostle's business, as He says in Acts 1:8, 'You shall be my witnesses.' Therefore, I stay with the books with proffer Christ to me clearly and purely."

The Message of Revelation

The message of the Book of Revelation is one of comfort and encouragement

The Author and Date of Revelation

The author of the Book of Revelation tells us four times that his name is "John" (Revelation 1:1,4,9; 22:8).

[The Greek name "Ioannes" is a form of the Hebrew name "Yohanan" which means "Yahweh is gracious!" The name was relatively common among the Jews of the first century. The fact that John considered it unnecessary to further identify himself indicates that he was a well-known figure among the churches of Asia Minor who could safely assume that his audience would recognize him and acknowledge the authority of that which he wrote. It is the overwhelming testimony of the fathers of the early church that St. John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of James, was the author of the Book of Revelation.]

Tradition indicates that St. John spent the last years of his life in the Greek city of Ephesus, on the western coast of the Roman Province of Asia.

[It is conjectured that John arrived in the city in the year 69 or 70 A.D. The fathers further indicate that he was later banished from the city to the nearby island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, during the persecution of the Roman Emperor Domitian who reigned from 81-96 A.D.]

St. Jerome reports:

"In the fourteenth year then after Nero, Domitian having raised a second persecution, John was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse on which Justin Martyr and Irenaeus later wrote commentaries. But Domitian having been put to death, and his acts, on account of his excessive cruelty, having been annulled by the senate, he returned to Ephesus under Nerva Pertinax and continuing there until the time of the emperor Trajan, founded and built churches throughout all Asia, and, worn out by old age, died in the sixty-ninth year after our Lord's passion and was buried near the same city." (NPNF, 3, pp. 364-365)

This, of course, conforms with the testimony of the text itself, which indicates that at the time when the Revelation came to John he was **"on the island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus."** (Revelation 1:9) Thus, the date of the Book of Revelation would seem to be in the early to mid-nineties, during the last decade of the first century.

Apocalyptic Literature and Revelation

The Book of Revelation calls itself the "*Apocalypse*" (Revelation 1:1) from the Greek word "*apokalypsis*" which means "to remove the cover from" or 'to reveal.'" [It shares many basic characteristics with a unique form of literature which flourished among the Jews during the last two centuries B.C. and the first century A.D.]

Apocalyptic literature is the product of hard times. It was directed mainly to a people in trouble, as people who saw themselves as God's own, but who were puzzled by the plight in which they found themselves, dominated and oppressed by a succession of foreign conquerors.

[It is a uniquely Jewish form of literary expression which finds its way into both the Old and the New Testaments, although the great majority of apocalyptic writing is extra-biblical (i.e. The Book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Assumption of Moses, The Martyrdom of Isaiah, the Apocalypse of Moses, etc.)]

The basic characteristics of apocalyptic literature include the following:

1. Apocalyptic writing deals with secret or hidden information which can only be disclosed by supernatural means through dreams or visions from God or angelic intermediaries.
2. The message of apocalyptic literature is communicated in mysterious, enigmatical forms through the use of bizarre, oftentimes obscure symbolism and imagery. Its fantastic worlds of beasts, signs, colors, numbers, and angels seems to have functioned as a type of code which effectively communicated its message to a select group while concealing the message from the uninitiated.
3. Apocalyptic literature is basically pessimistic in its assessment of mankind's potential. [There is little possibility for progress or positive development within the normal framework of human endeavor. From the apocalypticist's point of view, things are bad and they are only going to get worse as far as men are concerned.]
4. Apocalyptic literature is written in times of catastrophic change as previously well-ordered world views collapse. Apocalyptic writers see themselves in the midst of the catastrophic destruction of a way of life, even of the entire universe.
5. Apocalyptic literature proceeds on the firm conviction that in his own good time, God will intervene to bring the evil of this world to an end and proclaim His ultimate victory.
6. Apocalyptic literature is rigidly deterministic. All of history is pre-ordained in the power and wisdom of God. Nothing can interrupt or frustrate His plans.

7. Apocalyptic literature is basically dualistic. History is perceived as an ongoing conflict between God and Satan, good and evil.

8. Extra-Biblical Apocalyptic literature is generally pseudonymous, that is to say, written under a false name, most commonly the name of one of the great heroes of the Old Testament.

9. A feature of many extra-Biblical apocalypses is that they take past or present events and rewrite them in the form of predictive prophecy.

10. Apocalyptic writing is produced to bring cheer and comfort to the righteous in the midst of their tribulations.

11. The assertion of the supernatural ability to predict future events is an important component of this type of literature.

Martin Franzmann offers this helpful summary of the differences between apocalyptic literature in general and the Book of Revelation:

"As the man of Jewish descent, language, and culture that he obviously was, John was acquainted with and influenced by a form of Judaic religious literature which modern scholars have classified as "apocalyptic." Apocalyptic literature elaborated certain elements or aspects of Old Testament prophecy, found in such passages and books as Isaiah 24-27, Zechariah 9-14, Ezekiel, Joel, and Daniel. It sought to interpret all history on the basis of purported visionary experiences of the author. It was especially interested in eschatology, that is, in the end of history and the ushering in of the world to come. It utilized pictures, allegories, and symbols (which soon became traditional); numbers, colors, and stars were in these images endowed with a profound significance....Formally, the Revelation to John belongs to this class; apocalyptic furnished the familiar vocabulary of its speech.

IN SHORT....

Jesus is the Lord of History.

He is FOR His Church.

Jesus Wins.

We win.

The End, WITHOUT END, AMEN!

Come, Lord, Jesus!

Closing Prayer: Lord Jesus, open our minds to understand Your Word so that we may have confidence in Your great power, put our trust in Your gracious plan for our lives, and share that plan with those who don't know You. Amen.

<u>Timeline</u>			
<u>Secular Timeline</u>		<u>Biblical Timeline</u>	
1BC-14AD	Augustus	6-3BC(?)	Birth of Christ
14-37AD	Tiberius	30AD	Death and Resurrection of Christ
37-41	Caligula	36-37(?)	Conversion of Paul
41-54	Claudius	45-49	1 st Missionary Journey of Paul
		50	Writing of Matthew and James
		50-52	2 nd Missionary Journey of Paul
		51	Writing of Thessalonians
54-68	Nero	56	Writing of Philippians(?)
		57	Writing of 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians
		58	Writing of Romans
		61-63	Paul in Rome, Writing of Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, Philippians(?)
		62	James is stoned to death
		64	Writing of 1 st Peter and Mark
		64 or 67	Peter martyred in Rome
		65	Writing of Timothy, Titus
		67	Writing of Hebrews, 2 nd Timothy
		67	Death of Paul (by beheading)
68-69	Galba		
69	Otho Vitellius		
69-79	Vespasian	70	Writing of Luke and Acts
		70	Burning of the Temple in Jerusalem
		70-80	Writing of Jude and 2 nd Peter
79-81	Titus		
81-96	Domitian	95(?)	Writing of Revelation
		95-100	Writing of John, 1 st John, (2 nd and 3 rd John?)
96-98	Nerva		
98-117	Trajan	100	Death of John at Ephesus