

How to Study
and Understand

Revelation

Prologue

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Greetings and Doxology

John,
To the seven churches in the province of Asia:

was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun, shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he touched my right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid; I am the Spirit and the Bride, and the voice of many waters. Whoever hears me, let him say, 'Come.' Whoever is thirsty, let him come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. I am the Spirit and the Bride, and the voice of many waters. Whoever hears me, let him say, 'Come.' Whoever is thirsty, let him come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

in your favor: You hate the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, what the Spirit says to the church. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

To the Church in Smyrna

To the angel of the church write:

These are the words of the First and the Last, who came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty, but you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, a synagogue of Satan. I tell you, the devil will put you in prison to test you, and you will endure persecution for ten days. I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.

A Study of the Book of Revelation

Introduction / Study Helps

Apocalyptic Literature opoco-colypsus (to uncover, disclose). A literary and verbal style first developed in post-exilic Hebrew culture. Heavily influenced by Persian culture and in response to Babylonian captivity.

During the Greek persecution, the popularity of apocalyptic literature exploded. This is understandable as the genre teaches God will deliver believers from the direst straits, and these persecutions were harsh. The genre remained popular for so long because of the intense persecution. It was a favorite of certain Jewish sects, such as the Essenes. Apocalyptic literature developed as a distinctly Jewish genre. It began with them and developed with them. The Christians continued to use it as they faced the intense persecution under Roman rule. The best known Christian example of apocalyptic literature is the Book of Revelation.

Persian Influence

What did the Persians believe?

There is a cosmic war between Good and Evil.

Everyone must choose sides.

Many battles will be fought until a “final” battle.

Good wins, goes on to an eternal reward.

Dualism – the struggle between Good and Evil

The Persians concentrated on “the End”

The Hebrews concentrated on the ongoing history; developed the two-ages theory.

1. Current age- evil in charge, good suffers.
2. New age – God intervenes, saves good people.
3. Cycle continues (still no life after death)

The development of Apocalyptic Thought – there must be a judgment for persecutors and a reward for the persecuted.

One important feature of apocalyptic literature is the use of symbolic language. The symbols found in the genre can also be found in earlier, non-apocalyptic Hebrew writings.

Symbolism or Code? Symbolic **YES** - Code **NO**

Symbols developed by Hebrew leaders and literary community:

Animals / Beast = Nations
 Heads or Horns on Heads = Kings, Rulers

Color Symbols

White = victory (NOT PURITY); bad sometimes wins and wears white.
 Red = War, Persecution
 Black = the lack of(fill in blank)
 Green or Pale = Death or dying

Number Symbols

3	=	connection to spirit world
4	=	created order
7	=	come to maturity/completeness
10	=	inclusiveness – totality (also multiples of 10 for emphasis)
12	=	people of God – people of Faith 144,000 = multiple of 12 combined with a multiple of 10 (All/Completeness of people of God)
3 1/2	=	denote length of time God allows evil to be in control until God or God's agent intervenes. Temporary. Incomplete.

A non-apocalyptic example is found in Matthews genealogy: divided into 3 sections of 14.

Gematria – numbers represented by letters (as in Roman Numerals)

Daniel is combination of Misrashic Wisdom stories and Apocalyptic Literature.

(Midrash means exposition. A generic term, usually denoting the non-legalistic teachings of the rabbis of the Talmudic era. In the centuries following the final redaction of the Talmud (around 505 CE), much of this material was gathered into collections known as Midrashim.)

Daniel 1-6 Misrashic 7-12 Apocalyptic

Book of Revelations – entirely Apocalyptic

Probable Original Date and Audience: 90 to 95 AD to the churches of Roman Province of Asia.

Domitian (Dominate) – Roman sources say that Domitian wanted to be called Lord and God.

- word went out that the Emperor demanded all to go to the temple and acknowledge Domitian as God.
- Christians would not go – persecution pursued
- (primarily economic – ch 6); aimed at families.
- Must go to Roman shrine and receive the “mark” in order to buy or sell. (go to shrine, worship Domitian, receive mark, only then allowed to buy or sell in market)

John - is a prophet – speaking Gods word to the people.

- Exiled by Romans due to popularity.
- Exiled communities were not “slavery”, so he had the freedom to write.
- The first word in Revelations is “Apocolyptus”
This tells the reader how to read the book. (Once upon a time)

The message for the reader:

- Stay faithful – do not give up and turn away from God's will.
Judgment brings accountability.
- Revelation is a book of Hope for those in need of encouragement amidst persecution.

Chapter One

Ch 1

V1-3 apocalyptic intro

V4-8 epistle intro – v7-8 Thesis Statement

V12 1st vision (stand alone)

V19 SOON!

V20 Jesus is with you during persecution.

Chapter Two – Three

Letter Pattern Ch 2-3

1. uses common symbolism
2. encouragement – obedience / witness
3. Chastisement – disobedience / fear of following faith
4. Challenge and promise – challenge to keep faith; promise of reward

Important Terms or Concepts*DARBYISM – Fundamentals of the Christian Faith**Plymouth Brethren - Dispensational Premillennialism**Self-Contained Visionary Units***Chapter Four**

Ch 4 (a self-contained visionary unit)

24 = 12 old, 12 new = all faithful to God.

4 = created order – wild, domestic, human, birds (Ezekiel referenced)

Chapter Five

Ch 5

Jesus

Lamb =	7 horns	-	complete power
	7 eyes	-	sees completely
	7 spirits	-	Holy Spirit

vs14 4 living creatures – all creation

Domitian is NOT in control – Jesus IS!

Chapter Six – Seven (6:1 – 8:1) (a self-contained visionary unit)

Opening of the Seven Seals

First -Fourth Seal	-	Appearance of four horseman
Fifth	-	Martyrs under altar
Sixth	-	Disasters and signs
Interlude	-	Sealing of 144,000 (Chapter 7)
Seventh	-	Silence in Heaven (8:1)

Chapter Eight and Eleven (8:2 – 11:15)

Sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:2-9:13)

Chapter Ten is a self-contained visionary unit

Chapter 11:1-14 is a self-contained visionary unit

11:15 is seventh trumpet.

Chapters Twelve - Thirteen

Important Term or Concept

Parousia = ([/pəˈruːziə/](#); Greek: παρουσία) is an ancient Greek word meaning presence, arrival, or official visit.

Ch 12 – 13 Self contained visionary units

Ch 12 stars = Israel
child = MSH (Messiah)

vs5 cross – resurrection

vs7 War is Won (battles continue)

vs9 Devil / Satan evolved into leader of EVIL – not so in the Old Testament.

Ch 13

Vs1 beast = Nation

Vs3 heads = King

Vs5 3 ½ = Incompleteness, Temporary

Vs7 Roman persecution (in THAT day, THAT time, THAT place.)

Vs11-18 Antithetical figures (looks like a lamb – acts like a dragon)

Rome – pagan worship in the Temple

Dragon - Rome

Lamb - agents of Rome – army – governors

Mark - given at the temple, by Rome, authorizes buying and selling.

Vs15 hidden speaker – Roman/Pagan priest would literally talk through the idols in the temple to worshipers. (crane esophagus)

666 NERON Caesar wounded head = Nero

616 NERO Caesar healed head = Domitian (Nero Resurrected)

gematria N = 50 = 666 NERO NERON (paragoric noun –an apple vs a apple)
- 50 NERO
616

Chapters Fourteen - Fifteen

Chapter 14:1-5 (continues Historical Survey in Apocalyptic tradition)

144,000

- faithful
- blameless
- first fruits

vs 6-11

First Angel – announcement of Gospel

- still time to repent, but not for long!

Second Angel – Fall of Babylon

- Babylon represents the current persecuting power/nation/ruler/king

Third Angel

- wine of God's wrath
- mark of his name = those who bow to temple worship of pagan god's and Roman authority (secular authority)

vs 12-13

- tough times will continue

vs 14-20

Two Messages

- apocalyptic – God will intervene to judge Evil Age
- intense/increased persecution by evil toward people of God

1600 stadia = 4 X 4 (X) 10 X 10 = about 200 miles (184)

Chapter 15

Vs. 1-8

- Gold bowls of wrath are prepared. Judgement of God.

Chapters Sixteen – Twenty-two

Chapter 16:1-9

- 4 Angels / Bowls of Wrath (1-4)
- Exodus Symbolism is strong
- Even at the 4th bowl, repentance is available.

vs 10-16

- focused on primary source of evil (Rome?)
- 5th bowl aimed at throne of evil
- 6th bowl clears way for advancing armies
 - o Armageddon = Mount of Megiddo = site of many historic battles
 - Solomon stationed a large army there.

vs 17-21 (7th bowl)

- Still cursing God – even in face of ultimate destruction.

Chapters Seventeen – Nineteen

Chapter 17

Vs. 1-18 – Self contained visionary unit. A vision of Rome as the “Great Whore/Prostitute/Harlot”

- v. 9-11 provide good example of symbolic language: seven hills=Rome; seven kings=series of Roman emperors; the eighth=Nero

Chapter 18

v. 2 - Angel calls, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"

- Continues with description of dwellers of city and willing accomplices to wantonness of Babylon. God's people are called out of the city for protection; God has remembered her iniquities, will repay her double for the ill deeds.

- In Old Testament: Lex talionis, law of eye-for-an-eye, was created to curb legitimate exercise of justice. The Go'el, avenger of wrong-doing, had to mete out vengeance equal to original offense.

v. 8 - Babylon persecuted people of God. As penalty, her arrogance will be taken away and a fitting punishment rendered. It is God who is judging.

v. 9 - Willing accomplices weep and wail for lost riches; they "stand far off" to distance themselves from Rome while they mourn!

Chapter 19

v. 1 - True and just judgment of God is celebrated. God is given glory for avenging people of God.

- Twenty-four elders and four living creatures fall down and worship God, celebrate marriage of Lamb and Bride, who is clothed in fine linen.

- Fine linen is the righteous deeds of the Saints.

- Righteous deeds mean staying the course, not succumbing to apostasy.

- Bride is the church.

v. 11 - John witnesses white horse with rider called Faithful and True.

- White horse symbol of victory. In Rev 6: white horse and rider were not agents of good; inflicted pain on God's people. Went out to make the people of God go to shrine to worship.

In Chapter 19, white horse and rider are on side of good.

v. 12 - Rider has eyes of flame and name inscribed that no one knows. In ancient world, knowing person's name gave power over them. No one knows rider's name, no one has power over him.

v. 13 - Rider wears robe dipped in blood. Continued Blood from Jesus, the martyrs, or the persecutors? Source of blood is not point of the passage.

v. 14 - Rider is on white horse, there are followers who are the people of God clothed in white linen and riding on white horses.

- These are the victors, they are the people of God: The rider is called The Word of God.

v. 15 - Also images of a sharp sword (also in Ch. 1), a rod of iron (also in Ch. 12), and a wine press (also in Ch. 14) to reinforce the image.

v. 16 - On his robe and thigh is inscribed "King of kings and Lord of lords".

v. 17-19

- Angel calls birds to eat the flesh of horses, riders, kings, free men and slaves.

v. 20-21

- Beast and earthly kings gather to make war on rider of the white horse; beast and false prophet captured and thrown alive into lake of fire. The “rest” slain by sword of rider of the white horse and birds feasted on their flesh.

End of visionary unit. Scene is destruction of the persecutors.

Harlot is slain, but beast is not (thrown live into the fire): Not a prediction of fall of Rome, rather taking away of the part of Rome persecuting people of God.

The people of God needed encouragement to stay the course and remain faithful.

Hearing over and over that persecutor will be judged and God's people will prevail would be an important encouragement for people being persecuted.

Chapter 20

Vs. 1-6

- Most misunderstood of any scriptural passage.
- Symbolic of special reward for martyrs
- Remember! John used the familiar apocalyptic symbolism, however, he did not feel bound to currently held traditions. John used known symbols & styles to communicate “GOD’s” message to all people of all times.
- 1000 years = Satan completely bound. People are free to witness for God without persecution.
- The faithful who died as martyrs will, will not only, receive a special reward, they will participate in the binding.

Vs 7-10

- Greek = “wherever the thousand years may (should) be completed.
(maturity = purposeful conclusion)
- Read this in terms of status vs. chronology.
- Persecution = Satan free
- No Persecution = Satan bound
- Not a great battle of men, but God defeating the forces of evil/enemy.

Vs 11-15

- All persons stand under the Judgment of God.
- First Death vs. Second Death
 - o First death should not be feared; natural part of created order (at least since the fall)
 - o Second death is death apart from God. Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid!

Eschatology vs. Teleology

- Eschatology = Study of “End Times”
- Teleology = Study of the maturity or completion of a goal.

- Choose God Now ! Not Later!

Chapter 21:1-22:5

Vs 1-8

- All this can be yours IF . . .

Vs 9-21

- Description of an Eternity with God.
- 12 = People of God / People of Faith
- Perfect Cube = as was the Holy of Holies, where God's presence was especially felt and experienced by the Priest in Temple. HERE, God's presence is felt and experience by All for All !

Vs 21:22-22:5

- No Temple Required. God is the Temple.
- Only through claiming God's Authority over our lives will we experience this Glorious, Future.

Chapter 22:6-21

- Four times we are reminded that the "time is soon". Vs. 10-11 suggest almost no time to change.
- Blessings.
- "Surely I am coming soon!"

HANDOUT 1

Dispensationalism and John Nelson Darby (18 November 1800 – 29 April 1882)

The twentieth century has seen a dramatic paradigm shift in prophetic perspectives, first away from and now back toward its historic roots. This shift away from historic Christianity stemmed from a novel approach to Bible interpretation called dispensationalism which was developed in the 1830s and popularized with the 1909 publication of the Scofield Reference Bible.

Dispensationalism, with its unique brand of premillennialism, has been thoroughly pervasive, being prominent in many churches, in bookstores, and among radio Bible teachers.

The distinguishing features of dispensationalism are a rigidly applied literalism in the interpretation of Scripture, a compartmentalization of Scripture into "dispensations," and a dichotomy between Israel and the Church. Dispensationalists believe "this present world system . . . is now controlled by Satan" (not by God) and will end in failure and apostasy.

Dispensational premillennialists claim that their unique doctrines have been held since the early church, but these claims have been soundly refuted. Far from being the historic position of the church, premillennialism was described in 1813 by David Bogue as an oddity of Church history. Postmillennialism was the dominant eschatology from the Reformation until at least 1859.

The doctrine of a secret rapture was first conceived by John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren in 1827. Darby, known as the father of dispensationalism, invented the doctrine claiming there were not one, but two "second comings." This teaching was immediately challenged as unbiblical by other members of the Brethren. Samuel P. Tregelles, a noted biblical scholar, rejected Darby's new interpretation as the "height of speculative nonsense."

HANDOUT 2

Gog and Magog

Names, respectively, of a king and of his supposed kingdom, mentioned several times in chapters 38 and 39 of the Book of Ezechiel, and once in the Apocalypse (20:7).

In the first passage of Ezekiel we read the command of Yahweh to the prophet: "[Son of man](#), set thy face against Gog the land of Magog...and prophesy of him...Behold, I come against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Mosoch and Thubal" (38:2-3).

A similar command is found also at the beginning of chapter 39.

These two chapters contain repeated reference to Gog and Magog, but they furnish only vague and uncertain indications as to the identity of the ruler or the location of the country.

In chapter 39 Gog is represented (verses 5 and 6) as being accompanied in his invasion of the land of [Israel](#) by the Persians, Ethiopians, and Libyans, Gomer, and...the house of Thogorma; and in verse 15 we read: "And thou shalt come out of thy place from the northern parts."

From the number and variety of the peoples mentioned in this connection some writers have inferred that the name Gog may be only a generic appellation, or figure, used in Ezechiel to designate the host of the enemies of [Israel](#), and in the Apocalypse to denote the multitude of the foes of the Church. Others conjecture that it may be a local title expressing the royal dignity, such as the name *Pharaoh* in Egypt.

But it seems more probable that both names are historical; and by some scholars Gog is identified with the Lydian king called by the Greeks Gyges, who appears as Gu-gu on the Assyrian inscriptions.

If this be true, Magog should be identified with Lydia. On the other hand, as Mosoch and Thubal were nations belonging to Asia Minor, it would seem from the text of Ézéchiél that Magog must be in that part of the world.

Finally, [Josephus](#) and others identify Magog with Scythia, but in antiquity this name was used to designate vaguely any northern population.

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