

# The Book of Revelation - Notes

## Introduction

### Goals

- Perform an inductive study of Revelation
- Learn proper methods of interpretation
- Consider valid applications for today

### Introduction

- Author: John, the apostle
- Audience: The bond-servants of Jesus Christ
- Date: c.a. 95 A.D.
- Genre: apocalyptic prophecy, letter/narrative
- Outline
- Major Themes
- Principles of Interpretation

### Genre

- Apocalyptic literature reveals hidden secrets through heavenly beings using esoteric symbols (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel)
- The focus of prophecy is revealing God's will for people rather than revealing the future
- Revelation is a prophetic letter and a story of the battle between good and evil

### Outline

- Introduction (1:1-20)
- The Seven Churches (2:1-3:22)
- The Seven Seals (4:1-8:5)
- The Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:19)
- The Woman & Dragon (12:1-17)
- The Two Beasts (13:1-18)
- The Great Harvest (14:1-20)
- The Seven Bowls (15:1-16:21)
- Babylon & The Beast (17:1-19:5)
- The Millennium (19:6-20:15)
- The New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)
- Conclusion (22:6-22:21)

### Major Themes

- The sovereignty of God Almighty
  - The futility of Satan's rebellion
  - The need to repent and obey God
- Dr. Grant R. Osborne, Revelation Verse by Verse

### Four methods of interpretation

- Historicist: Covers the first century to the 2nd Coming
- Preterist: Fulfilled during the Roman Empire
- Idealist: Symbolic depiction of spiritual warfare, not literal
- Futurist: Mainly describes future events, the 2nd Coming

- Historicist: Covers the first century to the 2nd Coming

Pros: Revelation begins with a letter to first century churches and ends with the Second Coming

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Cons: There is no way to connect the letter to the seven churches with Church history

- Preterist: Fulfilled during the Roman Empire

Pros: Revelation begins with a letter specifically addressed to seven churches in the first century

Cons: Revelation ends with the Second Coming, which has not yet happened

- Idealist: Symbolic depiction of spiritual warfare, not literal

Pros: This approach is more devotional & practical, rather than wasting time on wild speculation

Cons: The letter to the seven churches deals with real people, practical matters & historical events; Jesus told John about “the things which must soon take place” (Rev 1:1 NASB)

- Futurist: Mainly describes future events, the 2nd Coming

Pros: Revelation predicts global catastrophes and the Second Coming, which have not yet happened

Cons: The letter to seven churches appears to be symbolic; there were more than seven churches at the time, the number seven is highly symbolic, and the letter appears to progress to the end time

### Conclusion

Each method is useful, but Futurist seems best. The letter to the seven churches has timeless truths for all ages, but it may also be sequential eras of Church history

### Principles of Interpretation

Prediction addiction is a spiritual pathology where people set specific dates for certain events based on questionable interpretations of prophecy

The purpose of Revelation is to encourage Christians to remain faithful, not to give us a specific a time table for end time events

### Principles of Interpretation

God gives understanding to those who obey Him

Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Dan 12:10 Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

### Principles of Interpretation

Commentaries are a blessing and a curse; carefully separate the wheat from the chaff  
Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture, so let the Bible interpret the Bible whenever possible

Revelation contains up to 700 allusions to the Old Testament; understanding the Old Testament is the key to interpreting Revelation correctly

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### Principles of Interpretation

The Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha are not inspired, and they should not be used to interpret inspired Scripture

They only provide Jewish speculation from the intertestamental period about Old Testament prophecies and end time events

### Principles of Interpretation

Daniel provides the five key time periods:

Dan 9:24 - 70 heptads to finish God's plan, one left

Dan 9:27 - 7 year covenant, broken in the middle

Dan 12:7 - 1260 days of Beast authority, tribulation

Dan 12:11 - 1290 days abomination of desolation

Dan 12:12 - 1335 days consummation blessing

### Principles of Interpretation

Revelation uses literal & figurative language; visions are not always accurate descriptions of reality

Literal (adj) adhering to fact or the primary meaning of a term or expression ([www.Merriam-Webster.com](http://www.Merriam-Webster.com))

Figurative (adj) something that is not interpreted literally, but instead uses a symbol or a likeness ([www.yourdictionary.com](http://www.yourdictionary.com))

### The Book of Revelation

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

—Dr. David L. Cooper (1886-1965),  
founder of The Biblical Research Society

The shorter and more famous version of this saying is: "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense."

### Principles of Interpretation

There are several detours in narrative of Revelation, visions that do not follow the sequential, chronological order of the rest of the book:

- Rev 7:1-17
- Rev 10:1 - 11:14
- Rev 12:1 - 14:20
- Rev 17-18

## Chapter 1

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 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.

### 1. This is the revelation (singular) of Jesus Christ

It is the Book of Revelation, not Revelations. It is a unified message from the Father, through Jesus Christ, to an angelic messenger, to the apostle John, and finally to God's servants (all Christians in all ages)

Amos 3:7 Surely the Lord GOD does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel To His servants the prophets.

### 2. This concerned "things which must soon take place" (1:1)

The letter to the seven congregations (in Rev 2-3) addressed current problems and warned about impending judgment and tribulation; the other events were going to take much longer... This delay in fulfillment is typical of many Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Mal 3:1)

2Pet 3:8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

### 3. The Book of Revelation is Scripture

Rev 1:1-2 says "all that John saw" = the word of God = the testimony of Jesus Christ  
God inspired the apostles to write and canonize the New Testament; they knew that they were writing authoritative Scripture (cf. Luke 10:7, 1Tim 5:18, 1Th 2:13, 2Pet 3:15-16). By 100 AD, most church leaders generally knew which books were genuine and authoritative, and they quoted from them extensively; they had an early canon by ~180 AD.

### 4. There is a blessing for those who read and heed (1:3)

This is the first of seven blessings within the Book of Revelation (14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6-7, 22:14). God will judge everyone according to their deeds (Rev 20:12) because faith without works is dead (James 2:17). John urges his readers to act "for the time is near" (1:3). Life is unpredictable and short compared to eternity; everyone will eventually face Judgment Day, so now is the time to act.

Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

## The Book of Revelation - Notes

### 1. God is eternal

The greeting “from Him who is and who was and who is to come” describes God’s eternity – present, past and future. The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders this more literally as “the One who is, who was, and who is coming.” Revelation 21-22 ends with the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and a voice saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them...”

### 2. Jesus is “the firstborn of the dead” (1:5)

God raised a few people back to mortal, physical life prior to the resurrection of Jesus; they grew old and eventually died again, but Jesus is the first human being to be raised from the dead with an eternal, spiritual body making Him the firstborn of many brethren who will also become like Him (cf. Rom 8:29, 1Cor 15). A firstborn son was the head of the clan under a patriarch; Jesus is our elder brother, the clan leader of God’s people

### 3. Christians will be “a kingdom, priests to His God”

Christians will inherit an eternal kingdom (1Cor 15:50-53)

Dan 7:17 ‘These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. 18 ‘But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

The job of a priest is to represent God to the people; the resurrected saints will rule over physical people during the Millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ (20:4)

Rev 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

### 1. His “coming with the clouds” is an OT allusion

Dan 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Acts 1:9 And after He [Jesus] had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. 11 They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

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### 2. The Second Coming will be personal, visible

Some claim that Jesus came secretly, invisibly in 1914, but John said that every eye will see Him

Luke 17:22 Then He said to the disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. 23 People will tell you, 'Look, there He is!' or 'Look, here He is!' Do not go out or chase after them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so will be the Son of Man in His day.

### 3. The Lord God is Alpha and the Omega

These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet

This means there is only one God, no other

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'

This connection is important later...

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

#### 1. John also suffered persecution

According to early church history, Emperor Domitian exiled John to the island of Patmos near the end of his reign. All Christians, even apostles, will suffer persecution

Jesus had said, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

#### 2. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day"

There are two possible interpretations:

- He saw the Day of the Lord by the Holy Spirit (16:14)
- He fell into a trance on the Sabbath day

The first option is grammatically possible, however, the opening chapters of Revelation dealt with the current state of the seven congregations in Asia Minor, not the Day of the Lord

Prophets would often fall into a trace when the Holy Spirit gave them a vision (cf. Num 24:4, Dan 8:18, Act 11:4-5)

The Sabbath is the only day that Scripture identifies as God's special day (e.g., Lev 23:1-3)

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Apostate Christians in Rome changed the Sabbath to Sunday around 135 AD and started calling Sunday “the Lord’s Day” after John wrote Revelation. It isn’t valid to use later sources to define John’s meaning.

### 3. John is told to write a “book” (papyrus scroll)

He is to send this message to seven specific congregations in Asia Minor, modern Turkey. The order of the seven congregations matches the route that a messenger would deliver the message; this is sequential, not random. Patmos is close to Ephesus, the first city on the list; tradition says John ministered in Ephesus after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Rev 1:12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

### 1. John saw a heavenly being with a human form

Dan 10:5 I lifted up my eyes, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. 6 His body was like beryl, his face like the brilliance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of polished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude.

Ezekiel saw a similar vision of God (cf. Ezek 1:26-28)

### 2. John also saw several symbols

- Seven golden lampstands
- Seven stars in His right hand
- A sword came out of His mouth

Rev 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

### 1. This heavenly being is the Lord God

He said, “I am the first and the last” (1:17)

Isa 44:6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.'

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Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God...

2. This heavenly being is also the glorified Jesus  
He said, "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (1:18)

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament, not the Father

John 6:46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Rev 1:12-18 confirms the doctrine of the Trinity

3. The seven stars are seven "angels"  
Rev 1:20 "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches"

Angel (Greek, *angelos*) = messenger, human or spirit.

In Revelation, a star usually symbolizes a spirit, but not always (cf. 12:1, Gen 37:9)

Gen 37:9 Now he [Joseph] had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.

4. The seven lampstands are the seven congregations  
Rev 1:20 "the seven lampstands are the seven churches"

Church (Greek, *ekklesia*) = an assembly, congregation.

The seven lampstands may or may not be part of a menorah; the term is not specific, so no one should be dogmatic, but it is a legitimate possibility

4. The seven lampstands are the seven congregations  
Matt 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.