

# Revelation - Introduction & Background

## Authorship

External evidence indicates that the Apostle John wrote Revelation. Such external pieces of evidence include Justin Martyr, Shepherd of Hermas, Melito, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and the Muratorian Canon. There is a virtual unanimous early witness that John authored the Apocalypse. Internal evidence also indicates that John wrote the book. John is named five times in the book (1:1,4,9; 21:2; 22:8). The book refers to its writer as Christ's servant (1:1), a brother and companion in tribulation (1:9), and on the Island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Christ (1:9). The writer also had credibility with the churches of Asia Minor (1:11). Such a description fits John since tradition indicates that he was bishop over Asia Minor toward the end of his life and ministry. Because of the book's dependence upon the OT, its writer obviously had great familiarity with it. Again, this characterization fits John given his Jewish heritage.

Despite the persuasiveness of these arguments, many postulate that John was not the author of the book on the grounds that Revelation's style, grammar, vocabulary, expressions, theology, emphasis, and presentation are so different in comparison to John's other writings. For example, while "believe" is featured heavily in John's gospel, the word is absent in Revelation. Moreover, while John does not include his name in his gospel, he includes it several times in Revelation. However, there are similarities between Revelation and John's other writings. Both make use of the terms "true," "lamb," and "logos" (John 1:1; Rev 19:13). Both also allude to Zech 12:10 (John 19:37; Rev 1:7). The Book of Revelation also makes use of the notions of "water of life," "overcomers," and "commandment keepers" as do John's other writings. Both Revelation and John's other writings also focus upon the conflicting themes of light and darkness, love and hatred, and good and evil. Perhaps the differences between John's other writings and Revelation are explainable due to the unusual circumstances surrounding the composition of the Apocalypse. While John's other writings were the product of careful reflection, Revelation came about because of a sudden reception of a vision. Moreover, while his other writings may have been completed through the assistance of an amanuensis, no amanuensis was available to John on Patmos. Also, the differences in theology could be due to the fact that the subject matter of the visions was so different in comparison to what John had written before. In addition, differences in presentation are attributable to the fact that the vision relayed information to John in a specific genre while John's other writings are recorded in an

entirely different genre. Interestingly, one notices similar differences in grammar and vocabulary when comparing the writings of some first century Greek authors. Others question Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse on the ground that the writer distinguishes himself from the other apostles in 21:14. However, Paul follows this same practice. While identifying himself as the author of the letter to the Eph (1:1), he goes on to seemingly distinguish himself from the apostles in Eph 2:20 and 3:5. Others contend that if the Apostle John had penned the book he would have attached the word "apostle" to his name somewhere in the letter and yet the writer fails to do so. However, it would have been redundant for John to follow such a practice since he was already well respected by the churches of Asia Minor (1:11).

Johannine authorship of Revelation was not questioned until Dionysius first raised the issue in the third century. While Calvin, Erasmus, and Zwingli rejected Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse, virtually all other orthodox scholars have accepted the apostle John as the book's writer. The suggestion that some other John rather than the apostle John wrote the book, such as John the elder, a prophet named John, or John Mark, creates more problems than it solves. Similarity of style found throughout the book indicates that John is the book's single author.

### **Place of Writing**

The vision was addressed to John (1:1) who was exiled on the Island of Patmos at the time (1:9). Patmos is an island located off the west coast of Asia Minor 60 miles south west of Ephesus. It was a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea. It was an island that abounded with volcanic rock and a place where the Roman Empire exiled people. Numerous church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Victorinus) indicated that John was released from Patmos at the conclusion of Domitian's reign (96 AD) and then returned to Ephesus. The exact date of John's release from Patmos is unknown. However, most assume that the book was completed on Patmos before John's release and return to Ephesus (1:11; 22:7,9,10,18,19).

### **Destination**

The letter was addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4,11). It was intended as a circular letter (1 Peter 1:1). In other words, it was read first by Ephesus and then passed on to Smyrna. After Smyrna read the letter, it was then passed on to Pergamum, etc.

According to tradition, John had already been the bishop over Asia Minor for some time before the book was written. Because he was already well known in this area, the churches of Asia Minor would have readily accepted his writings. Because his audience consisted of churches, it seems he was addressing those who were already believers who needed to progress further in the area of practical sanctification.

### **Canonicity**

Some objected to the inclusion of Revelation in the canon on the grounds that its style was so different in comparison to other NT writings. Others opposed canonicity because the book taught a future earthly reign of Christ, which contradicted prevailing amillennial theological presuppositions. Yet Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Eusebius, Apollonius, and Theophilus saw the book as divinely authored Scripture. Most have concluded that the book deserves canonical status because it complimented prior revelation (Dan; Matt 24-25).

### **Title**

The title of the book is derived from the opening verse, which says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." Interestingly, the book is not about or from John. Thus, John's name should not be included in the book's title. The noun "Revelation" (*apokalupsis*) is singular. Thus, the book records a singular revelation from God to John. Therefore, the proper title of the book is "Revelation" rather than "Revelations." *Apokalupsis* means unveiling. Thus, the purpose of the book is to unveil Christ and the final phase of His plan of redemption.

### **Date**

Many today propose a date of composition of the book prior to 70 AD during the Neronic reign. Preterism, which sees most or all of the book's contents as being fulfilled in the events of 70 AD, has a vested interest in promoting this early date. How can Revelation be a prophecy about 70 AD if the book were written 25 years after the fact? The notions that the letters in Nero's full name add up to 666 (13:18), that the Nero Redivivus myth is spoken of in 13:3,12,14, that the temple (11:1-2) refers to the first century Jerusalem temple before it fell, that Revelation makes no mention of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and that the king reigning at the time John (17:10) wrote was Nero are all used to support the idea that John wrote prior to 70 AD. However, most of this evidence is rather weak and has been successfully rebutted.

It seems better to adhere to a date of 95 AD for the composition of the book toward the end of Domitian's reign. External evidence for this late date includes a rather clear statement by Irenaeus that Revelation was written by John toward the end of Domitian's reign. Irenaeus' statement is important since he was discipled by Polycarp who in turn was discipled by John, the author of the Apocalypse. Though many have argued that Irenaeus statement is ambiguous, it was interpreted as favoring a Domitianic date for the first several centuries of church history. In fact, there is no clear statement from a church father indicating that John wrote the Apocalypse during the reign of Nero until the sixth century. Internal evidence for a Domitianic date can be found in the condition of the churches described in Rev 2-3. Paul addressed some of these same churches in the 60's. Yet the churches depicted in Revelation seem very different from how Paul initially described them. Examples of such differences include Ephesus' loss of first love (2:4) and the presence of the Nicolaitans (2:6). Such a spiritual change would presumably take several decades.

Moreover, Laodicea is depicted as prosperous (3:17) and yet an earthquake destroyed that city in the 60's. Presumably, it would have taken several decades for that city to return to the level of prosperity depicted in Revelation. Also, John did not move from Jerusalem to Ephesus until 67 AD. Thus, a pre-70 AD date for Revelation would not have allowed him enough time to establish a respected ministry in Asia Minor. Furthermore, the Neronic persecution could not be the persecution mentioned in Rev 2-3 since it was a local persecution confined to Rome and never extended into Asia Minor.

### **Structure**

Several items must be kept in mind when contemplating the structure of Revelation. First, the key structural verse is found in 1:19. There, John is told to write "the things that he has seen, the things that are, and the things that will take place later." This verse furnishes the three-fold division of the book. "The things that you have seen" represent the theophanic appearance of Christ that John recorded in Rev 1. "The things that are" represent the letters to the seven churches that are recorded in Rev 2-3. "The things that will be" represent the events of the future that are recorded in Rev 4-22. This third section can be divided further between the events of the tribulation (4:1--19:10), the second coming and subsequent events (19:11--20:15), and the eternal state (21-22).

Some object to this threefold division on the grounds that it is unbalanced since the third section encompasses most of the book. However, such an imbalance is justified upon recalling that Revelation is a prophetic book. Others object to this threefold division on the grounds that Rev 4-22 do not affect the seven churches. However, this objection vanishes upon remembering that knowledge of the future influences one's present behavior (2 Peter 3:11).

Second, the three series of judgments found in the book take place in chronological order. Some have posited a recapitulation scheme with the judgments running concurrently and ending with the Second Coming. Such a view is defended on the grounds that the seventh trumpet (11:16-18) is described similarly to the seventh bowl (16:17) since both judgments seem to terminate with Christ's' return. However, just because these judgments end the same way does not mean that they end at the same time or begin at the same time. The recapitulation view is also defended by arguing that it is impossible for the fourth trumpet, which darkens a third of the luminaries (8:12), to follow the sixth seal, which darkens all of the luminaries (6:12). However, the darkening of the luminaries in 6:12 could be a temporary rather than a permanent reality.

Therefore, it seems more reasonable to see the judgments progressing in a chronological fashion. They appear to increase in intensity. For example, after . of humanity is destroyed (6:8), then 1/3 of humanity is destroyed (9:15,18). Moreover, while the early judgments are fractional (8:8), the latter judgments are non fractional (16:3). Previous judgments seem to reach completion before the next judgments are introduced (11:14). For example, peace

under the antichrist is introduced under the first seal (6:1-2) and then this peace is taken from the earth with the opening of the second seal (6:3-4). Similarly, the eternal state (21-22) chronologically follows the millennium (20:1-10) rather than being a mere recapitulation of it. This point becomes obvious by observing the numerous characteristics present in the millennium that will be absent in the eternal state. Some of the prophesied millennial activity will include time (20:4), a temple (Ezek 40-48), death (Is 65:20), satanic activity (Rev 20:7), and human rebellion (Rev 20:8-9). Yet time (22:5), a temple (Rev 21:22), death (Rev 21:4), Satan (Rev 20:10), and sin (Rev 21:27) will be totally absent from the Eternal State.

Third, the judgments progress in a telescoping manner. In other words, the seventh seal introduces the trumpet judgments. These trumpet judgments explain the seventh seal. Similarly, the seventh trumpet introduces the bowl judgments. These bowl judgments explain the seventh trumpet. Several textual clues make this telescoping arrangement self-evident. When the seventh seal is opened, no immediate judgment takes place. Yet John calls attention to the angel that will sound the trumpets (8:1-2).

Also, when the 4th Trumpet is sounded, the announcement of three remaining woes is given (8:13). While the 5th and 6th Trumpets bring forth horrific judgment (9:1-12,13-21), no immediate judgment is introduced with the 7th Trumpet (11:15-19). Thus, in what sense is the 7th Trumpet a third woe? The 7th Trumpet is a third woe because it triggers the Bowls that will bring forth the final woe. Along these same lines, the 5th Trumpet announces the coming of the remaining two woes (9:12) because the 7th Trumpet will have the function of introducing the bowls. Similarly, the 6th Trumpet indicates that a final woe remains (11:14) because the 7th Trumpet will have the function of introducing the bowls. Also, according to 10:7, the 7th Trumpet will complete God's judgment. How can this be if the God's judgment will not be completed until the pouring forth of the Bowls (15:1)? This connection is made because the 7th Trumpet will trigger the Bowl judgments.

Seals: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Trumpets: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Bowls: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Fourth, the three series of judgments are interrupted by five non-chronological, parenthetical insertions that offer further information on what has immediately transpired. The first insertion (7:1-17) occurs in between the 6th and 7th Bowl. The second insertion (10:1--11:14) occurs in between the 6th and 7th Trumpet. The third insertion (12:1--14:20) occurs in between the 7th Trumpet and the first Bowl. The fourth insertion (16:13-16) occurs in between the 6th and 7th Bowl. The fifth insertion (17:1--19:6) occurs in between the 7th Bowl and the Second Advent.

### **Method of Communication**

John's function in the communication of the vision seems to have been that of a stenographer. He was an observer of the vision who was told to write down what he saw and heard (1:11). In fact, John is given the command to write twelve times throughout the

book. John's role becomes apparent by noting the repetition of the phrase "I saw" and "I heard" dispersed throughout the book. The first chapter of the book records the intricate communication process regarding how the vision was to be conveyed from God to John's audience (1:1-4). The Revelation was conveyed from God the Father to Jesus Christ to an angel to John to a book to a reader (presumably the messenger of a given church) to the listener (presumably a church congregation).

### **Methods of Interpretation**

Not all scholars agree upon how to interpret Rev 6–19 or how to handle the character of the millennium. There are four basic methods for interpreting Revelation. Preterism sees most or all of the book's contents fulfilled in the past. Historicism sees most or all of the book's contents as finding a fulfillment in church history. Idealism divorces the book's contents from history instead opting to see them as recurring throughout every generation. Futurism believes that most of the book's contents await a future fulfillment. This approach is the product of a consistent literal, grammatical, historical approach. This latter approach is the one followed in this argument.

Amillennialism believes that because the millennium is a present reality, there will be no future kingdom on earth. Postmillennialism believes that the church will make progress in Christianizing the world and thus ushering in the kingdom and then Christ will return. These two approaches hold to replacement theology, which teaches that the promises to Israel have been transferred to the church or the "new Israel" and are now being fulfilled in a spiritual sense. Premillennialism believes that the kingdom age will only begin after Christ's return. This latter approach adheres to a consistent hermeneutic and is the one followed in this argument. Preterists, historicists, and idealists are either amillennial or postmillennial while futurists are premillennial.

Some premillennialists are covenant premillennialists. They reject the notion that God has separate programs for Israel and the church (and therefore are replacement theologians), the notion that the 1000-year duration of the kingdom is a literal time period (although they do not deny a future, earthly kingdom), and pre-tribulationalism. Instead they embrace post-tribulationalism (see below definitions). Another premillennial approach is that of dispensational premillennialism. They interpret the number 1000, which occurs six times in Revelation 20:1–10, literally. They also believe that God has separate programs for Israel and the church. They see Rev 6–19 as an expansion of the missing week in Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan 9:24–27). They also embrace pre-tribulationalism. This latter approach is the product of a consistent hermeneutical approach and is the one followed in this argument.

Premillennialists are also divided as to the timing of the rapture. There are five rapture views. The first view is partial rapturism, which teaches that only the "spiritual" Christians will be raptured. However, this view unnecessarily divides Christ's body. The second view

is pre wrath rapturism, which teaches that the church will be raptured after three quarters of the tribulation has transpired. This view believes that God's wrath or the Day of the Lord will only encompass the final quarter of the tribulation. The third view is mid-tribulationalism, which teaches that the church will be removed mid way through the tribulation. The fourth view is post-tribulationalism, which teaches that the church will be removed at the end of the tribulation. The fifth view is pre-tribulationalism, which teaches that the church will be removed before the tribulation begins.

Pre-tribulationalism has better arguments in its favor. First, although the church is mentioned 19x in Rev 1-3, both the word and the concept disappear and do not reappear until 22:16. Second, only pre-tribulationalism handles fairly the NT emphasis upon imminency (Phil 3:20; 4:5). All the other views teach that Christ cannot return any time because some prophetic scheme must first transpire before the rapture can occur. Third, the tribulation period represents a time when God completes His unfinished work with national Israel (Dan 9:24). Thus, the church cannot be present since He deals with Israel and the church on a mutually exclusive basis. Fourth, because the church has been promised an exemption from divine wrath (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rom 5:9) and the tribulation represents a time of divine wrath (6:17), the church cannot be present during this time period.

### **Genre and Hermeneutics**

Revelation exhibits multiple genres. The first genre represented is that of prophecy. The book claims to be prophecy on several occasions (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19). The second genre represented is epistolary. The salutation (1:4-6) and benediction (22:21) are similar to what one would find in an epistle. The letters to the seven churches (2-3) seem to be written in an epistolary format. The third genre represented is biblical apocalyptic. Some have noticed a common cluster of attributes in certain prophetic sections of Scripture. They include intense symbolism and an interpreting angel (Is 24-27; Ezek; Dan; Zech). Because Revelation shares these same attributes, some also refer to it as biblical apocalyptic.

### **Revelation is Apocalyptic?**

However, recent evangelical interpreters have begun to vest the term "apocalyptic" with a new meaning. When they use the term "apocalyptic literature" they are equating the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation with a host of non-canonical, extra biblical writings that flourished from the inter-testamental period and into the 2nd century AD. Examples include Enoch, Apocalypse of Baruch, Jubilees, Assumption of Moses, Psalms of Solomon, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, and Sibylline Oracles. These writings possess a common cluster of attributes. Such attributes include the following: extensive use of symbolism, vision as the major means of revelation, angelic guides, activity of angels and demons, focus on the end of the current age and the inauguration of the age to come, urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future, the end as a

cosmic catastrophe, new salvation that is paradisal in character, manifestation of the kingdom of God, a mediator with royal functions, dualism with God and Satan as the leaders, spiritual order determining the flow of history, pessimism about man's ability to change the course of events, periodization and determinism of human history, other worldly journeys, the catchword glory, and a final showdown between good and evil. It is argued that Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation share many of these characteristics. On this basis, these canonical books are also categorized as apocalyptic literature. The Book of Revelation in particular is categorized with the apocalyptic writings. Not only does the Revelation share many features with these extra biblical books, but it also was composed during the same general time period when the apocalyptic writings were composed. There is no doubt that Revelation is similar to the apocalyptic writings in several respects.

#### *Hermeneutical Changes Resulting From Viewing Revelation's Character as Apocalyptic*

However, categorizing Revelation with the apocalyptic writings significantly challenges the traditional, dispensational interpretation of Revelation. The decision to classify Revelation with the apocalyptic genre alters the hermeneutical principles that one uses in interpreting the book. Consequently, four hermeneutical doors seem to open to the extent that Revelation's character is viewed as apocalyptic. First, it becomes difficult to approach the text with a straightforward literalism. Kenneth Gentry observes:

Before beginning my survey, I must note what most Christians suspect and what virtually all evangelical scholars (excluding classic dispensationalists) recognize regarding the book: Revelation is a highly figurative book that we cannot approach with a simple straightforward literalism.

Elsewhere Gentry observes that consistent literalism "is an impossible ideal." Gregg contends that many interpreters fail to take into account Revelation's apocalyptic character. According to Steve Gregg:

*A failure to take into account this feature has led some to the most outlandish teachings on this book by some whose rule of interpretation is 'literal unless absurd.' Though this is good rule when dealing with literature written in a literal genre, it is the exact opposite in the case of apocalyptic literature, where symbolism is the rule and literalism is the exception.*

What Gregg has done here is argue that the ordinary hermeneutical standard that is used in interpreting other sections of Scripture is no longer applicable to biblical eschatology. In ordinary hermeneutics, the assumption is the author wanted to be understood in literal terms unless something compelling from the text informs the interpreter otherwise. Gregg is arguing that this rule no longer holds true in interpreting Revelation and that the inverse is true. The assumption of literalism, unless a textual clue informs the interpreter otherwise, becomes substituted for an assumption of symbolism unless the interpreter is alerted otherwise. Gregg has used the apocalyptic genre categorization to stand ordinary

hermeneutical principles on their head. Hamstra does the same thing when he begins with the presupposition that because Revelation is apocalyptic, he views all of Revelation's episodes and visions as symbolic until proven otherwise.

The reason for this presupposition that apocalyptic literature cannot be approached literally is because such writings can be described as crisis literature. In other words, the writing was produced as a result of some impending crisis. In order to highlight the severity of the crisis, the apocalyptic spoke in exaggerated terms. Take by way of analogy the statement, "my world has come to an end because I lost my job." This statement obviously does not communicate a literal end of the world. Rather, it is using heightened language in order to communicate the significance of a personal event.

Similarly, an apocalyptic understanding of Revelation views John as vesting earthly events with heightened eschatological language in order to communicate the gravity of the immediate crisis. Understanding Revelation in such hyperbolic terms opens the possibility that the global language of Revelation may in actuality be descriptive of a localized phenomenon that John has invested with global language. Caird best summarizes the matter when he says, "What seems to have escaped notice at the time is that Eschatology is a metaphor, the application of end of the world language to that which is not literally the end of the world." Thus, when John speaks of a great city reigning over the kings of the earth (17:18), he is speaking in heightened language of an immediate oppressive force in his own day, such as Jerusalem or Rome. If John used the same hyperbolic methodology common in apocalyptic writings in Revelation, then statements such as half of the world's population being destroyed (6:8; 9:15) and the greatest earthquake in human history (16:18) cannot be construed literally. Rather, they similarly represent heightened language communicating a past event that the people of God experienced, such as oppression by Jerusalem or Rome. Understanding Revelation in such hyperbolic terms opens the possibility that the global language may in actuality be descriptive of a localized historical phenomenon that John has invested with global language.

This mindset represents a marked departure from literal, grammatical, historical methodology and opens the door to historicism and preterism. For example, whenever the global nature of Revelation's prophecies do not line up with the local scenario of an 70 AD fulfillment, preterist Kenneth Gentry dismisses the global nature of the text as mere hyperbole. He notes, "...the preterist view does understand Revelation's prophecies as strongly reflecting actual historical events in John's near future, though they are set in apocalyptic drama and clothed in poetic hyperbole." Preterist Don Preston also relies upon Revelation belonging to the apocalyptic category in order to find support for his view that Revelation's global language was fulfilled in the local events of 70 AD. He observes that apocalyptic literature hyperbolizes the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Sibylline

Oracle 5:153, "the whole creation was shaken" when war began on Jerusalem. If Revelation is also apocalyptic literature, then Revelation must be similarly using hyperbolic language. A similar approach is seen in OT studies. Many view Is 13–14 and Jer 50–51 as describing Babylon's past fall in 539 BC rather than her future fall. The interpretation is held in spite of the fact that the details of these texts go far beyond the historic fall of Babylon. This interpretation is justified on the grounds that ancient Near Eastern extra biblical writings often describe the destruction of foes in hyperbolic terms. Because Isaiah and Jeremiah incorporated a similar "destruction genre" in their description of Babylon's fall, the language of Babylon's destruction in Is 13–14 and Jer 50–51 can be applied to her historic fall rather than her future fall. Second, apocalyptic multivalence is another hermeneutical door that opens when Revelation is classified as belonging to the apocalyptic category. Collins offers the following explanation of apocalyptic multivalence:

*In other Jewish apocalypses the Babylonian crisis of the sixth century often provides the filter through which later crises are viewed. The emphasis is not on the uniqueness of the historical events but on recurring patterns, which assimilate the particular crisis to some event of the past whether historical or mythical.*

If John also employs apocalyptic multivalence, it is possible that the events of Revelation cannot be anchored to one event but rather can recur repeatedly throughout history. This perspective allows Pate to employ a multi layered hermeneutic in identifying Babylon of Rev 17–18. Pate concludes that Babylon in these chapters not only refers to a future Babylon but to ancient Jerusalem as well. Elsewhere, he argues that the beast of Rev 13 refers simultaneously to both Nero as well as a future antichrist. However, nowhere in the context is it even implied that these texts have more than one meaning. Pate brings an a priori presupposition of multiple meanings to the text solely on the basis of Revelation's alleged apocalyptic content. Such a layered hermeneutic again represents a significant departure from the literal, grammatical, historical method where texts were presumed to have a single meaning. Milton Terry explains: "A fundamental principle in grammatico-historical exposition is that the words and sentences can have but one significance in one and the same connection. The moment we neglect this principle we drift upon a sea of uncertainty and conjecture."

Third, the notion that John used secret codes to disguise the enemies of God's people mentioned in the book also becomes viable if Revelation is apocalyptic. At times, the apocalypticists disguised through symbolic language the entity that was oppressing them. The apocalyptic writer sought to give hope to the oppressed people of God by predicting the cataclysmic destruction of the enemy that was persecuting them. However, because of fear of retaliation, the apocalypticist was not free to identify the oppressor. Thus, the message had to be disguised in symbolic dress. For example, apocalyptic writings sometimes used Babylon as a code for Rome (Sibylline Oracles 5:143, 159–60, 434). If

John was following this pattern, he also does not mean Babylon when he says Babylon. Instead, he is using the word Babylon as a symbolic disguise to identify an oppressor. Thus, when John mentioned Babylon, he might have had in mind Jerusalem or Rome. Thomas notes that such code theories are a far cry from literal, grammatical, historical interpretation when he says, "Another clear distinctive of literal interpretation is its avoidance of assumptions not justified in the text. Theories that 'Babylon' in Revelation chapters 14 and 16–18 is a code for Rome have been widespread."

Fourth, categorizing Revelation as apocalyptic also influences how one interprets Revelation's numbers. According to Gregg, other apocalypses typically use numbers to convey concepts rather than count units. Thus, categorizing Revelation as apocalyptic literature moves the interpreter away from a literal understanding of Revelation's numbers and more toward a symbolic interpretation. Some seem to rely upon such an apocalyptic framework by remaining open to the possibility that the number 1000 mentioned six times in Rev 20 refers to an extended period of time rather than a literal 1000-year time period. Others show a similar reluctance of taking the number 144,000 (Rev 7) literally. Still others have questioned a literal interpretation of the numerical measurements of the eternal city described in Rev 21–22.

However, to argue that the number 1000 in Rev 20 represents just an extended period of time rather than a literal number is to suspend ordinary hermeneutical rules. Deere points out that when "year" is used with a number, the reference is always to a literal calendar year. Moreover, Hoehner observes when John writes that Satan will be released from the abyss for "a short time" (Rev 20:3), an indefinite period of time is already indicated. How easy it would have been for John to write that the kingdom would last "a long time" had this been his intention. Interestingly, the phrase "a long time" occurs in Matthew 25:19 to depict the duration of the Lord's absence prior to His Second Advent. Yet John does not employ such a phrase and instead furnishes a specific number. Zuck notes that if 1000 is not meant to be interpreted literally, then the door suddenly opens for every other number in the Book of Revelation to be construed non-literally as well, such as 2 witnesses (11:3), 7000 people (11:13), 4 angels (7:1), 7 angels (8:6), and 144,000 Jews (7:4). Thomas observes that, "no number in Revelation is verifiably a symbolic number." In sum, if Revelation is no different than inter-testamental apocalyptic writings then various hermeneutical doors open that would otherwise remain closed. These include an aversion to literal interpretation, a layered hermeneutic, code theories, and a symbolic use of numbers.

#### *Revelation is Prophecy*

However, opening these hermeneutical doors on the basis of categorizing Revelation with the apocalyptic books is unjustified. A closer scrutiny demonstrates that the differences between Revelation and the apocalyptic works outweigh any similarities between the two.

For example, although apocalyptic literature was typically pseudonymous, Revelation bears the name of its author (1:1,4,9; 22:8). Moreover, Revelation fails to share the pessimism of the apocalypticists who despaired of all human history. Rather, Revelation reflects the optimism of God working redemptively through the lamb presently as well as in the future. Furthermore, apocalyptic literature contains no epistolary material. By contrast, seven ecclesiastical epistles are found in Rev 2–3.

In addition, non-canonical apocalyptic literature did not emphasize moral imperatives. Although there are occasional exceptions to this rule (1 Enoch 91:19), the apocalypticists are not generally motivated by a strong sense of moral urgency. The reason for this is the apocalypticists' conviction that they were part of the righteous remnant. They saw their role as one of encouraging the remnant to endure, remain faithful, and have hope rather than persuade people to turn from known sin. By contrast, Revelation utilizes moral imperatives. Humanity's need for repentance is not only found in Christ's exhortations to the seven churches (2:5,16,21,22; 3:3,19), but the exhortation to repent is found throughout the book as a whole (9:20–21; 16:9,11). Moreover, the coming of messiah in apocalyptic literature is something that takes place exclusively in the future. By contrast Revelation portrays Christ as having already come and laid the groundwork for His future coming through His redemptive death (5:6). Finally, Revelation makes numerous self-claims to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19). In fact, Revelation employs the term *prophētēs* or its cognates 18x. These differences between Revelation and apocalyptic literature are summarized in the following chart:

<b><u>Apocalyptic Genre</u></b>	<b><u>Revelation</u></b>
Pseudonymous	Not pseudonymous
Pessimistic about the present	Not pessimistic about the present
No epistolary framework	Epistolary frame work
Limited admonitions for moral compliance	Repeated admonitions for moral compliance
Messiah's coming exclusively future	Basis for Messiah's future coming is past
Does not call itself a prophecy	Calls itself a prophecy

Additional dissimilarities can be observed. For example, apocalyptic literature has a different view of suffering than that portrayed in Revelation. In apocalyptic writings, suffering is something that emanates from God opposing forces rather than from God Himself. The apocalypticists did not see suffering as something good that is to be submitted to. By contrast, in Revelation, suffering comes from the hand of God (5:5). Therefore, at

times, suffering is something good and must be submitted to. Moreover, apocalyptic literature is pseudo-prophecy or *vaticinia ex eventu*, which means “prophecies after the fact.” In other words, apocalypticists typically portray a historical event as future prophecy. However, this is not so in Revelation where John looks from his own day into the future. In addition, Revelation is dominated by an already not yet tension as John looked to the needs of his own day as well as the distant future. Yet, this same tension is not evident in other apocalypses.

Furthermore, other apocalypses typically use numbers to convey concepts rather than count units. By contrast, Revelation appears to use many numbers to indicate specific count units. For example, many futurist scholars believe that various numbers found in Revelation, such as 1260 days (12:6) or 42 months (11:2; 13:5), are direct references to the unfulfilled aspects of Daniel’s 70 weeks prophecy (Dan 9:24-27). Hoehner’s calculations indicate that the fulfilled aspects of this prophecy had the potential of being accurate to the exact day. Therefore, it stands to reason that the prophecy’s unfulfilled aspects will also be fulfilled to the minutest detail. Thus, the numbers 1260 days and 42 months should not be taken as merely communicating concepts but rather should be interpreted as specific count units. According to Thomas, Revelation contains no verifiably symbolic numbers. Rather, non-symbolic utilization of numbers is the norm.

Moreover, Revelation’s heavy dependence upon Ezekiel and Daniel also raises questions as to whether the book should be categorized as apocalyptic. Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied 400 years before apocalyptic literature became dominant in the inter-testamental period. Also, 12:1 borrows imagery from Gen 37:9-10, which took place in the patriarchal era nearly 1800 years before apocalypticism began to flourish. Finally, some apocalyptic writings fail to present a precise eschatological scheme. Yet, many have argued that Rev 6-19, with its telescoping and fixed seven-year duration, does communicate a fixed eschatological scheme. A chronology of events also seems to be employed in Rev 20-22.

In sum, although Revelation has many affinities with apocalyptic literature, it is difficult to classify the book as apocalyptic because these similarities seem outweighed by the differences between the two. A better classification for the book is prophecy rather than apocalyptic. This classification best takes into account Revelation’s numerous self claims to be prophecy. It also takes into account Revelation’s similarity to the pattern exhibited by the OT prophets who not only called God’s people to repentance but also comforted them through visions of victory to take place in the distant future (Is 40-66; Ezek 36-48; Amos 9:11-15). Revelation fits this identical pattern by not only repeatedly calling the seven churches to repentance but also providing these oppressed churches with a prophecy to be fulfilled in the distant future regarding the believer’s ultimate triumph (Rev 4-22). Categorizing Revelation as prophetic is also substantiated upon observing that Revelation alludes to the Book of Daniel more than any other OT book. Moreover, Jesus specifically

referred to Daniel as a prophet (Matt 24:15). Because Revelation's content relies so heavily upon Daniel, it stands to reason that the material found in Revelation should also be categorized as prophetic. The existence of the Greek word *apokalypsis* that appears in the opening verse of the book does not disqualify Revelation from being categorized as prophecy. This word simply means unveiling and does not have the meaning that modern scholars attach to the term "apocalyptic."

#### Literalism and Revelation

The decision to categorize Revelation as of the prophetic genre rather than the apocalyptic genre significantly changes the hermeneutical landscape. If Revelation is prophecy, then one interprets Revelation just as he would interpret any other section of prophetic material. The same literal, grammatical, historical method that is used to understand other sections of prophetic material is also what is needed in order to understand Revelation. Therefore, a new set of hermeneutical principles is not needed to properly interpret Revelation. The previously described hermeneutical doors associated with apocalypticism close to the extent that the genre of the book is prophetic rather than apocalyptic. Instead, the interpreter is confined to literalism, which can be defined as attaching to every word the same meaning that it would have in normal usage.

A consistent application of a literal approach to Revelation logically leads the interpreter away from viewing the book's contents as being fulfilled in the past and instead leads to the futurist interpretation. A relationship exists between literalism and futurism because the ordinary import of Revelation's words and phrases makes it impossible to argue that Revelation's contents have already been fulfilled. The destruction of half of the world's population (6:8; 9:15), and the greatest earthquake in human history (16:18) obviously has never taken place.

By using the literal approach, the interpreter takes Revelation's content in its ordinary sense until he encounters some obvious clue in the text alerting him to the fact that figurative or symbolic language is being employed. How does the interpreter recognize when figurative or symbolic language is being used? One clue involves looking for overt textual indicators alerting the interpreter to the use of figurative language. One such situation is found in 11:8, which notes that Jerusalem "is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt." Here, the use of the adverb "spiritually" is designed to alert the reader to the fact that an allegorical or spiritual application is being made.

Another clue involves the use of the word sign (*sēmeion*). When John uses this word, it alerts the interpreter to the fact that he is speaking figuratively or symbolically rather than literally. For example, because John uses *sēmeion* to describe the woman in 12:1, it is obvious that the woman is symbolic or representative of something. Another clue involves the words "like" (*homoios*) or "as" (*hōs*). When John employs such language, he is indicating a correspondence between what he saw in the vision and what he was trying to

describe. For example, 8:8 says, "...And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea..." The word "like" alerts the interpreter to the fact that John is simply using comparative language to describe what he saw and the mountain is not to be interpreted literally.

Another clue involves an identical correspondence in the OT. Because the leopard, lion, and bear in 13:2 are also used in Dan 7 to depict nations, the interpreter is alerted to the fact that John is employing symbolic language. Thus, the leopard, lion, and bear also represent nations in Rev 13 just as they did in Dan 7. Yet another clue involves an interpretation in the immediate context. If something is interpreted for the reader, then the thing interpreted is obviously a symbol. The woman in Rev 17 is obviously a symbol because the immediate context interprets her to be a city (17:18). A final clue involves looking for absurdity. For example, if the woman in 12:1 were literally clothed with the sun the heat would destroy her. Because a literal interpretation yields an absurd result, symbolic language must be in use.

After identifying figurative or symbolic language, how is such language to be understood? Sometimes the immediate context interprets the symbol. For example, the dragon of 12:3 is interpreted as Satan in 12:9. Walvoord identifies 26x in which a symbol is interpreted in the immediate context. Another method is to see if the same symbol is employed elsewhere in the OT. For example, the same symbol of the woman used in 12:1 is also used in Gen 37:9-11 to depict Israel. Thus, the woman of Rev 12 is symbolic of Israel. This strategy is useful because 278 of Revelation's 404 verses allude to the OT. Fruchtenbaum's work is helpful to the interpreter in this regard because it contains a lengthy appendix listing all of the OT allusions found in Revelation. A final method for understanding Revelation's symbolic language is to note that John through his use of "like" or "as" is attempting to describe futuristic events that are beyond his linguistic ability. Thus, he communicates through language of correspondence. In other words, in order to communicate the contents of his vision, he uses similes or language of comparison by equating things from his own world to the futuristic events that he sees in his vision.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, probably the most significant decision that the interpreter can make regarding what hermeneutic he will use in interpreting the Book of Revelation is determining if Revelation's character has more in common with the prophetic or apocalyptic genre. Viewing Revelation as apocalyptic opens numerous hermeneutical doors such as viewing Revelation's global language as local language, multivalence, code theories, and symbolic numbers. Conversely, those who see Revelation as belonging to the prophetic genre are bound by the literal, grammatical, historical method of interpretation, which takes Revelation's words or phrases in their ordinary sense unless a convincing textual clue informs the reader to do otherwise. While Revelation has some affinities with

apocalypticism, these similarities are overshadowed by vast differences between the two. The book has far more in common with prophecy. Thus, the similarities between Revelation and apocalypticism are not sufficient to cause the interpreter to dispense with a consistent application of literalism when deciphering the book.

### **Unique Characteristics**

The Book of Revelation boasts many outstanding characteristics. First, it is the only canonical book that promises a blessing for hearing and heeding its contents (1:3; 22:7). Second, the book is unique in that it promises a curse upon those who add or subtract from its contents (22:18-19). Third, although the book contains no direct OT quotes, it contains more OT references than any other NT book. 278 of Revelation's 404 verses allude to the OT. This number is almost triple that found in other heavily Jewish NT books. Matthew contains only 92 OT references. Hebrews contains 102 OT references. Fourth, the book features recurring numbers. The numbers 7, 4, 12 are used frequently throughout the book.

Fifth, the book is interconnected with other canonical material. Revelation builds upon a prophetic foundation already laid in earlier biblical material (Dan 9:27; Matt 24-25, etc...). For example, just as Genesis describes sin's entrance into the world, Revelation describes sin's final exit. Moreover, in His upper room discourse, Christ described how the Spirit would come and bring things to the apostle's remembrance (John 14:26b), teach the apostles all things (John 14:26a), and teach them about things to come (John 16:13). The first promise was fulfilled in the writing of the gospels. The second promise was fulfilled in the writing of the epistles. The third promise was fulfilled in the writing of the Apocalypse. Sixth, Revelation explains how God is ultimately vindicated and how his plan of redemption is brought to completion. Seventh, Revelation is unique in its emphasis on portraying Christ not just as suffering servant but also as the reigning king. Eighth, the book routinely praises God on account of His character and works (4:2--5:14; 7:9-12; 15:2-8; 19:1-7). Ninth, more than any other NT book, Revelation makes extensive use of symbols, visions, and imagery. Tenth, other than the last two chapters of the book, Revelation does not provide a great deal of completely new prophetic truth but rather organizes existing prophetic information into a coherent chronology.

### **Purpose and Message**

The purpose of Revelation is to comfort the oppressed churches of Asia Minor as well as stimulate to practical holiness those churches of Asia Minor that were carnal. The book accomplishes this purpose by revealing God's program for the consummation of history. In the future, God will conquer evil. Thus, the oppressed churches can take comfort in the fact that their association with Christ will give them final victory. Similarly, in the future, God will punish evil. Thus, the carnal churches of Asia Minor should pursue holiness in the present. The message of the book is that Christians of all ages should be comforted in the

midst of oppression and repentant in the midst of carnality because when God fulfills Israel's covenants in the future He will gain victory over evil as well as punish it.

## **Outline**

### I. Prologue (Rev 1:1-8)

- (1) Title (1:1a)
- (2) Chain of custody (1:1b-2)
- (3) Blessing (1:3)
- (4) Author (1:4a)
- (5) Audience (1:4b)
- (6) Greeting (1:4c)
- (7) Source (1:4d-5a)
- (8) Subject (1:5b-8)

### II. Things Which You Have Seen (Rev 1:9-20)

- (1) Circumstances of the vision (1:9-11)
  - (A) Place: Patmos (1:9)
  - (B) Content: Day of the Lord (1:10)
  - (C) Purpose: Communicate to the Churches (1:11)
- (2) Content of the vision (1:12-16)
  - (A) His appearance among the churches (1:12-13a)
  - (B) His clothing (1:13b-c)
    - (a) His robe (1:13b)
    - (b) His sash (1:13c)
  - (C) His body (1:14-16)
    - (a) His hair (1:14a)
    - (b) His eyes (1:14b)
    - (c) His feet (1:15a)
    - (d) His voice (1:15b)
    - (e) His right hand (1:16a)
    - (f) His mouth (1:16b)
    - (g) His face (1:16c)
- (3) Communication from Christ to John (1:17-20)
  - (A) John's reaction to Jesus (1:17a)
  - (B) Jesus' comfort of John (1:17b-18)
  - (C) Jesus' command to John (1:19-20)

### III. Things Which Are (Rev 2:1—3:22)

- (1) Letter to the Church at Ephesus (2:1-7)
  - (A) Destination (2:1a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (2:1b)

- (C) Commendation (2:2-3,6)
- (D) Rebuke (2:4)
- (E) Exhortation to change (2:5a)
- (F) Consequence (2:5b)
- (G) Exhortation to listen (2:7a)
- (H) Promise to overcomers (2:7b)
- (2) Letter to the Church at Smyrna (2:8-11)
  - (A) Destination (2:8a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (2:8b)
  - (C) Commendation (2:9)
    - (a) Tribulation (*thlipsis*) (2:9a)
    - (b) Poverty (*ptōcheia*) (2:9b)
    - (c) Persecution (2:9c)
  - (D) Rebuke
  - (E) Exhortation to change (2:10a-c)
  - (F) Consequence (2:10d)
  - (G) Exhortation to listen (2:11a)
  - (H) Promise to overcomers (2:11b)
- (3) Letter to the Church at Pergamum (2:12-17)
  - (A) Destination (2:12a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (2:12b)
  - (C) Commendation (2:13)
    - (a) Held fast to His name (2:13a)
    - (b) Did not deny His faith (2:13b)
    - (c) Positive example of Antipas (2:13c)
  - (D) Rebuke (2:14-15)
    - (a) Teachings of Balaam (2:14)
    - (b) Teachings of the Nicolaitans (2:15)
  - (E) Exhortation to change (2:16a)
  - (F) Consequence (2:16b)
  - (G) Exhortation to listen (2:17a)
  - (H) Promise to overcomers (2:17b)
    - (a) Hidden manna (2:17b)
    - (b) White stone (2:17c)
    - (c) New name (2:17d)
- (4) Letter to the Church at Thyatira (2:12-17)
  - (A) Destination (2:18a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (2:18b)

- (C) Commendation (2:19)
  - (a) Deeds (*ergon*) (2:19a)
  - (b) Love (2:19b)
  - (c) Faith (2:19c)
  - (d) Service (2:19d)
  - (e) Perseverance (*hypomonē*) (2:19e)
  - (f) Your latter deeds are greater (2:19f)
- (D) Rebuke (2:20)
- (E) Exhortation to change (2:21)
- (F) Consequence (2:22-25)
- (G) Promise to overcomers (2:26-28)
  - (a) Authority over the nations (2:26-27)
  - (b) The morning star (2:28)
- (H) Exhortation to listen (2:29)
- (5) Letter to the Church at Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)
  - (A) Destination (3:1a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (3:1b)
    - (a) Has the seven spirits of God
    - (b) Has the seven stars
  - (C) Commendation (3:1c)
  - (D) Rebuke (3:1d)
  - (E) Exhortation to change (3:2a-3c)
  - (F) Consequence (3:3d-4)
  - (G) Promise to overcomers (3:5)
    - (a) Clothed in white (3:5a)
    - (b) Name not erased from the Book of Life (3:5b)
    - (c) Confession of name before Father and angels (3:5c)
  - (H) Exhortation to listen (3:6)
- (6) Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13)
  - (1) Destination (3:7a)
  - (2) Description of Christ (3:7b)
    - (a) Holy
    - (b) True
    - (c) Holds the Key of David
    - (d) Authoritatively opens and closes doors
  - (3) Commendation (3:8-9)
  - (4) Rebuke
  - (5) Consequence

- (6) Exhortation to change (3:10-11)
- (7) Promise to overcomers (3:12)
- (8) Exhortation to listen (3:13)
- (7) Letter to the Church at Laodicea (Rev 3:7-13)
  - (1) Destination (3:14a)
  - (2) Description of Christ (3:14b)
    - (a) Amen
    - (b) Faithful
    - (c) True witness
    - (d) The Originator or Source of Creation
  - (3) Commendation
  - (4) Rebuke (3:15-17)
  - (5) Exhortation to change (3:18-20)
    - (a) Buy from Me (3:18a):
      - (i) Gold (3:18b) - trials
      - (ii) White garments (3:18c) - the righteousness of Christ
      - (iii) Eye salve (3:18d) - the ministry of the Holy Spirit
    - (6) Consequence (3:19a)
    - (7) Promise to overcomers (3:21)
    - (8) Exhortation to listen (3:22)

#### IV. After These Things (Rev 4:1—22:21)

- (1) Before the Tribulation (Rev 4:1—5:14)
  - (A) Summons to Heaven (4:1)
    - (a) Vision (4:1a)
    - (b) Voice (4:1b)
  - (B) Sights in Heaven (4:2-8)
    - (a) Heavenly Throne (4:2-3,5a,6a)
      - (i) On the Throne (4:2-3a)
      - (ii) Above the Throne (4:3b)
      - (iii) Out of the Throne (4:5a)
      - (iv) Before the Throne (4:6a)
    - (b) Items Around the Throne (4:4,5b,6b-8)
      - (i) 24 Elders (4:4)
      - (ii) 7 Lamps (4:5b)
      - (iii) 4 Living Creatures (4:6b-8)
        - (a) Description (4:6b-8)
          - (1) Identification (4:6b)
          - (2) Eyes (4:6b)

- (3) Faces (4:7)
- (4) Wings (4:8a)
- (b) Duty (4:8b)
- (C) Song of Heaven (4:9-11)
  - (a) Singers (4:9-10)
    - (i) 4 Living Creatures (4:9)
    - (ii) 24 Elders (4:10)
  - (b) Song (4:11)
- (D) The Scroll (5:1-14)
  - (a) An observation (5:1)
  - (b) A question (5:2)
  - (c) An investigation (5:3)
  - (d) A lamentation (5:4)
  - (e) A consolation (5:5a)
  - (f) A manifestation (5:5b-6)
  - (g) A reception (5:7)
  - (h) A reaction (5:8-14)
    - (i) 4 Living Creatures & 24 Elders (5:8-10)
      - (a) Worshippers (5:8)
      - (b) Worship (5:9-10)
        - (1) Redemption (5:9)
        - (2) The Coming Kingdom (5:10)
    - (ii) Angels & 24 Elders (5:11-12)
      - (a) Worshippers (5:11)
      - (b) Worship (5:12)
    - (iii) Every created thing (5:13)
      - (a) Worshippers (5:13a)
      - (b) Worship (5:13b)
    - (iv) 4 Living Creatures & 24 Elders (5:14)
      - (a) 4 Living Creatures (5:14a)
      - (b) 24 Elders (5:14b)
- (2) During the Tribulation (Rev 6:1—19:21)
  - (A) The Six Seal Judgments (6:1-17)
    - (a) 1st Seal: Advent of the Antichrist (6:1-2)
    - (b) 2nd Seal: War (6:3-4)
    - (c) 3rd Seal: Famine (6:5-6)
    - (d) 4th Seal: Death (6:7-8)
    - (e) 5th Seal: Martyrdoms (6:9-11)

- (f) 6th Seal: Cosmic Disturbances (6:12-17)
- (B) The Coming Spiritual Awakening (7:1-17)
  - (a) The Instruments (7:1-8)
    - (i) Their sealing (7:1-3)
    - (ii) Their number (7:4)
    - (iii) Their lineage (7:5-8)
  - (b) The Awakening (7:9-17)
    - (i) Salvation's quantity (7:9)
    - (ii) Salvation's praises (7:10-12)
      - (a) By Gentiles (7:10)
      - (b) By angels, elders, four living creatures (7:11-12)
    - (iii) Salvation's timing (7:13-14)
      - (a) Question (7:13)
      - (b) Answer (7:14)
    - (iv) Salvation's provision (7:15-17)
      - (a) Their service (7:15)
      - (b) Their satisfaction (7:16)
      - (c) Their shepherd (7:17)
- (C) 7th Seal & 1st Six Trumpet Judgments (Rev 8:1—9:21)
  - (a) 7th Seal - Trumpet preparation (8:1-6)
  - (b) 1st Trumpet - one-third of vegetation destroyed (8:7)
  - (c) 2nd Trumpet - one-third of ocean destroyed (8:8-9)
  - (d) 3rd Trumpet - one-third of water destroyed (8:10-11)
  - (e) 4th Trumpet - one-third of luminaries darkened (8:12-13)
  - (f) 5th Trumpet - Demons released (9:1-12)
    - (i) Discharging angel (9:1)
    - (ii) Angel opens the abyss (9:2)
    - (iii) Demons emerge from the abyss (9:3)
    - (iv) Demonic activity (9:4-6)
    - (v) Demonic description (9:7-10)
    - (vi) Demonic leader (9:11)
    - (vii) Remaining trumpets (9:12)
  - (g) 6th Trumpet - one-third of humanity killed (9:13-21)
    - (i) Army released (9:13-15)
    - (ii) Army's number (9:16)
    - (iii) Army's description (9:17)
    - (iv) Army's destruction (9:18-19)
    - (v) Humanity's non-repentance (9:20-21)

(D) Announcement of no more delay (Rev 10:1-11)

- (a) The Angel's Appearance (10:1)
  - (i) Another Angel (10:1a)
  - (ii) The Angel's Clothes (10:1b)
  - (iii) The Angel's Head (10:1c)
  - (iv) The Angel's Face (10:1d)
  - (v) The Angel's Legs (10:1e)
- (b) The Angel's Actions (10:2-7)
  - (i) What the Angel Holds (10:2a)
  - (ii) What the Angel Does (10:2b)
  - (iii) What the Angel Says (10:3-7)
    - (a) Concerning the seven Thunders (10:3-4)
    - (b) Concerning the 7th Trumpet (10:5-7)

(c) The Angel's Commission (10:8-11)

- (i) Partake (10:8-10)
  - (a) Take the book (10:8)
  - (b) John's obedience (10:9a)
  - (c) Eat the book (10:9b)
  - (d) John's obedience (10:10)
- (ii) Prophesy (10:11)

(E) End of the Times of the Gentiles (Rev 11:1-2)

- (a) The Command (11:1)
- (b) The Court (11:2a)
- (c) The Contempt (11:2b)

(F) Ministry of the Two Witnesses (Rev 11:3-14)

- (a) Their Ministry (11:3-6)
  - (i) Its Duration (11:3)
  - (ii) Its Empowerment (11:4)
  - (iii) Its Activity (11:5-6)
    - (a) Fire (11:5)
    - (b) Drought (11:6a)
    - (c) Waters (11:6b)
    - (d) Plagues (11:6c)
- (b) Their Martyrdom (11:7-10)
  - (i) Its Cause (11:7)
  - (ii) Its Place (11:8)
  - (iii) Its Contempt (11:9)
  - (iv) Its Celebration (11:10)

- (c) Their Revival (11:11-13)
  - (i) Their Resuscitation (11:11)
  - (ii) Their Rapture (11:12)
  - (iii) Revival's Result (11:13)
    - (a) Earthquake (11:13a)
    - (b) City's One-Tenth (11:13b)
    - (c) 7000 killed (11:13c)
    - (d) Holy Fear (11:13d)
- (G) The Seventh Trumpet (11:14-19)
  - (a) The Transference (11:14-15)
  - (b) The Praise (11:16-18)
    - (i) The worshippers (11:16)
    - (ii) The worship's content (11:17-18)
      - (a) The Coming Reign (11:17)
      - (b) The Coming Justice (11:18)
        - (1) Nations rage (11:18a)
        - (2) Divine wrath (11:18b)
        - (3) Dead will be judged (11:18c)
        - (4) Saints will be rewarded (11:18d)
        - (5) Destroyer will be destroyed (11:18e)
  - (c) The Anticipation (11:19)
- (H) Israel's Flight (12:1-17)
  - (a) Satan's Two Strategies
    - (i) Past, Failed Strategy (12:1-5)
    - (ii) Present & Future Strategy (12:6-17)
- (I) Two Beasts (Rev 13:1-18)
  - (a) The first beast (13:1-10)
    - (i) His sudden appearance in John's vision (13:1a)
    - (ii) His Gentile ethnicity (13:1b)
    - (iii) His fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies (13:1c-2a)
      - (a) Ten horns and seven heads (13:1c)
      - (b) Four animals (13:2a)
    - (iv) His Satanic empowerment (13:2b)
    - (v) His resurrection (13:3)
      - (a) A national or individual resurrection?
      - (b) An authentic resurrection?
    - (vi) His power-based adoration (13:4)
    - (vii) His oratory (13:5a)

- (viii) His time of authority (13:5b)
- (ix) His blasphemies (13:6)
- (x) His persecution of God's people (13:7a)
- (xi) His global jurisdiction (13:7b)
- (xii) His unregenerate audience (13:8)
- (xiii) His oppressive influence (13:9-10)
- (b) The second beast (13:11-18)
  - (i) His ethnic identity (13:11a)
  - (ii) His character (13:11b)
  - (iii) His purpose (13:12)
  - (iv) His miracles (13:13)
  - (v) His deception (13:14a)
  - (vi) His image-statue (13:14b-15)
  - (vii) His economic system (13:16-18)
    - (a) Global economy (13:16a)
    - (b) Global numbering (13:16b-17)
    - (c) The Beast's number (13:18)
- (J) Six Scenes of Hope (14:1-20)
  - (a) Destiny of the 144,000 (14:1-5)
    - (i) Their Appearance (14:1)
    - (ii) Their Song (14:2-3)
    - (iii) Their Sanctification (14:4-5)
      - (a) Their virginity (14:4a)
      - (b) Their loyalty (14:4b)
      - (c) Their redemption (14:4c)
      - (d) Their integrity (14:5a)
      - (e) Their innocence (14:5b)
  - (b) The Proclamation of the Eternal Gospel (14:6-7)
    - (i) Its Proclamation (14:6)
      - (a) Its Eternality (14:6a)
      - (b) Its Proclaimer and Audience (14:6b)
      - (c) Its Universality (14:6c)
    - (ii) Its Emphasis (14:7)
  - (c) The Prediction of the Destruction of Babylon (14:8)
  - (d) The Doom of the Beast's Worshippers (14:9-12)
    - (i) The Plea (14:9)
    - (ii) The Punishment (14:10-11)
    - (iii) The Perseverance (14:12)

- (e) The Blessing Upon the Tribulation's Martyrs (14:13)
  - (i) Their Beatitude (14:13a)
  - (ii) Their Rest (14:13b)
  - (iii) Their Reward (14:13c)
- (f) The Judgment Harvest of Armageddon (14:14-20)
  - (i) The Judge (14:14-18a)
    - (a) The Son of Man (14:14)
    - (b) The First Angel (14:15-16)
    - (c) The Second Angel (14:17)
    - (d) The Third Angel (14:18a)
  - (ii) The Judged (14:18b)
  - (iii) The Judgment (14:19-20)
- (K) The Bowl Judgments (15:1—16:21)
  - (a) Bowl Judgment Preparation (15:1-8)
    - (i) The Manifestation of the Seven Plagues (15:1)
    - (ii) The Martyrs (15:2-4)
      - (a) Their identity (15:2)
      - (b) Their Praise (15:3-4)
        - (1) Song of Moses (15:3a)
        - (2) Song of the Lamb (15:3b)
        - (3) Doxology (15:3c)
    - (iii) The Heavenly Tabernacle (15:5-8)
      - (a) Tabernacle opened (15:5)
      - (b) Angels emerge (15:6)
      - (c) Angels given the bowls (15:7)
      - (d) Tabernacle filled with God's glory (15:8a)
      - (e) Barred entrance into Tabernacle (15:8b)
  - (b) Bowl Judgment Manifestation (16:1-21)
    - (i) 1st Bowl Judgment (16:1-2) - Sores
    - (ii) 2nd Bowl Judgment (16:3) - Sea turned to blood
    - (iii) 3rd Bowl Judgment (16:4-7) - Freshwater destroyed
    - (iv) 4th Bowl Judgment (16:8-9) - Sun scorches man
    - (v) 5th Bowl Judgment (16:10-11) - Darkness
    - (vi) 6th Bowl Judgment (16:12) - Euphrates dried up
    - (vii) Gathering of nations to Armageddon (16:13-16)
    - (viii) 7th Bowl Judgment (16:17-21) - Huge earthquake, 100-pound hailstones
      - (a) 7th angel pour out the bowl (16:17)

- (b) Lightning and thunder (16:18a)
- (c) Greatest earthquake (16:18b)
- (d) Jerusalem destroyed (16:19a)
- (e) Babylon destroyed (16:19b)
- (f) Every mountain and Island moved (16:20)
- (g) 100-pound hailstones (16:21a)
- (h) Man's sinful reaction (16:21b)

(L) The Woman Rides the Beast (17:1-18)

- (a) The Vision Concerning Babylon (17:1-6a)
  - (i) Her introduction (17:1a)
  - (ii) Her judgment (17:1b)
  - (iii) Her immorality (17:2)
  - (iv) Her influence (17:3)
  - (v) Her appearance (17:4)
  - (vi) Her title (17:5)
  - (vii) Her persecution (17:6a)
- (b) The Interpretation Concerning Babylon (17:6b-18)
  - (i) The Interpretation Promised (17:6b-7)
  - (ii) The Beast & His System (17:8-14)
    - (a) The Beast (17:8)
    - (b) The Seven Heads (17:9-11)
    - (c) The Ten Horns (17:12-14)
  - (iii) Babylon (17:15-18)
    - (a) Her Influence (17:15)
    - (b) Her Destruction (17:16-17)
    - (c) Her identification (17:18)

(M) The Great City of Babylon (18:1-24)

- (a) The Prediction of Babylon's Fall (18:1-3)
  - (i) Prediction (18:1-2a)
  - (ii) Reasons (18:2b-3)
    - (1) Demonic involvement (18:2b)
    - (2) Corruption of nations (18:3a)
    - (3) Corruption of kings (18:3b)
    - (4) Corruption of merchants (18:3c)
- (b) The Appeal to Separate from Babylon (18:4-8)
  - (i) Appeal (18:4)
  - (ii) Reasons (18:5-8)
    - (1) Her sins (18:5)

- (2) Her retribution (18:6)
- (3) Her arrogance (18:7)
- (4) Her destruction (18:8)
- (c) The Reactions to Babylon's Fall (18:9-20)
  - (i) The Kings (18:9-10)
  - (ii) The Merchants (18:11-16)
  - (iii) The Sea Merchants (18:17-19)
  - (iv) Those in Heaven (18:20)
- (d) The Description of Babylon's Fall (18:21-24)
  - (i) Description (18:21)
  - (ii) Nine Affected Groups (18:22-23a)
  - (iii) Cause (18:23b-24)
    - (1) Sorcery (18:23b)
    - (2) Martyrdoms (18:24)
- (N) Four Groups in Heaven Celebrate Babylon's Fall (19:1-6)
  - (a) The Great Multitude (19:1-3)
    - (i) Introduction (19:1)
    - (ii) First Hallelujah (19:1b-2)
    - (iii) Second Hallelujah (19:3)
  - (b) The 24 Elders & the Four Living Creatures (19:4)
  - (c) The Voice from the Throne (19:5)
  - (d) The Great Multitude (19:6)
- (O) End of the Tribulation (19:7-21)
  - (a) The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:7-9)
    - (i) The Bema Seat Judgment of Christ (19:8)
    - (ii) The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:9)
  - (b) John Responds to the Revelation (19:10)
  - (c) The Second Advent (19:11-16)
    - (i) His Qualities (19:11-14)
      - (a) His celestial origin (19:11a)
      - (b) His white horse (19:11b)
      - (c) His fidelity to His promises (19:11c)
      - (d) His righteous judgment (19:11d)
      - (e) His fiery eyes (19:12a)
      - (f) His many crowns (19:12b)
      - (g) His unknown name (19:12c)
      - (h) His blood-soaked vesture (19:13a)
      - (i) His identification as the Word of God (19:13b)

- (j) His following armies (19:14)
- (ii) His Activities (19:15-16)
  - (a) His spoken word (19:15a)
  - (b) His smiting of the nations (19:15b)
  - (c) His ruling of the nations (19:15c)
  - (d) His treading of the winepress (19:15d)
  - (e) His rulership as King (19:16)
- (d) The Supper of God (19:17-18)
- (e) Christ Defeats the Beast's Armies & False Prophet (19:19-21)

(3) After the Tribulation (20:1—22:21)

- (a) Kingdom (20:1-10)
  - (i) Satan: The Great Chain (20:1-3)
    - (a) The Prisoner (20:1-2)
    - (b) The Prison (20:3)
  - (ii) Saints: The Great Reign (20:4-6)
    - (a) The Resurrection of the Just (20:4a)
    - (b) The Resurrection of the Unjust (20:4b-6)
  - (iii) Sinners: The Great Revolt (20:7-10)
    - (a) The Adversary (20:7)
    - (b) The Apostasy (20:8)
    - (c) The Attack (20:9a)
    - (d) The Annihilation (20:9b-10)
      - (1) Satan's henchmen are consumed by fire from heaven (20:9b)
      - (2) Satan himself is consumed by the fire of hell (20:10)
- (b) Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)
  - (i) The Judge (20:11)
  - (ii) The Judged (20:12-13)
    - (a) The Subjects of the Judgment (20:12a)
    - (b) The Books of the Judgment (20:12b-c)
      - (1) The Books (20:12b)
      - (2) The Book of Life (20:12c)
    - (c) The Basis of the Judgment (20:12d-13)
  - (iii) The Judgment (20:14-15)
- (c) The Eternal State (Rev 21:1—22:21)
  - (i) The New Heavens & New Earth (21:1-8)
    - (a) A New Creation (21:1)
    - (b) A New City (21:2)
    - (c) A New Fellowship (21:3)

- (d) A New Order (21:4-5)
  - (1) The Old Order Passes (21:4)
  - (2) The New Order Comes (21:5)
- (e) A New Satisfaction (21:6)
- (f) A New Realization (21:7)
- (g) A New Holiness (21:8)

- (ii) The New Jerusalem (21:9—22:5)
  - (a) Four Titles (21:9-10)
  - (b) Glory (21:11)
  - (c) Construction (21:12-14)
  - (d) Measurements (21:15-17)
  - (e) Materials (21:18-21)
    - (1) Its Wall (21:18)
    - (2) Its Foundations (21:19-20)
    - (3) Its Gate (21:21a)
    - (4) Its Street (21:21b)
  - (f) Relationship to God (21:22-23)
    - (1) No Temple (21:22)
    - (2) No Luminaries (21:23)
  - (g) Relationship to the Nations (21:24-26)
  - (h) Holiness (21:27)
  - (a) Contents (22:1-5)
    - (1) Its River (22:1)
    - (2) Its Trees (22:2)
    - (3) No Curse (22:3a)
    - (4) God's Presence (22:3b-5)
      - a. God's throne (22:3b)
      - b. God's Lamb (22:3c)
      - c. God's bondservants (22:3d)
      - d. God's face (22:4a)
      - e. God's name (22:4b)
      - f. God's illumination (22:5a)
      - g. God's servant-kings (22:5b)

- (d) Epilogue (22:6-21)
- (i) Words of Comfort (22:6-17)
  - (a) Faithful Words (22:6a)
  - (b) Christ's Soon Coming (22:6b-7a)
  - (c) Blessing for Obedience (22:7b)

- (d) God Deserves Worship (22:8-9)
- (e) Prophecy Unsealed (22:10)
- (f) Destinies Fixed (22:11)
- (g) Rewards Given (22:12-13)
- (h) Redeemed Blessed (22:14-15)
- (i) God is Gracious (22:16-17)
  - (1) Revealer (22:16a)
  - (2) Covenant Keeper (22:16b)
  - (3) Morning Star (22:16c)
  - (4) Offers the Water of Life (22:17)
- (ii) Words of Warning (22:18-19)
- (iii) Words of Benediction (22:20-21)

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## **The Book of Revelation**

What is really new in the Revelation? And how much of it is really old, that is, already found in the OT? The Book of Revelation has no direct quotations from the OT, but it has about 550 references to it. The majority of the things found in the first 20 chapters are found elsewhere in the OT. Only the last two chapters deal with things totally new.

If this is true, what is the importance and contribution of the Book of Revelation? The OT prophecies are scattered throughout the Books of Moses and the various Prophets and Writings. It would have been impossible to put these prophecies into any chronological sequence of events. The value of the Book of Revelation is not that it provides a lot of new information, but rather that it takes the scattered OT prophecies and puts them in chronological order so that the sequence of events may be determined.

The material found in the last two chapters describes the Eternal State (heaven). The OT prophets never foresaw anything beyond the Messianic Kingdom. Indeed, the Kingdom was the high point of OT prophecy and no prophet ever saw anything beyond that. But the Eternal State is the high point of NT prophecy, and Rev 21-22 provide brand new information, as they describe the Eternal State.

When you study Revelation, the Holy Spirit expects that you have already studied and understand the Book of Daniel. Daniel is the foundation, Revelation is the building structure and the roof. If you come to Revelation without understanding Daniel, you're building a house on a foundation that doesn't exist. Because the chronology has already been laid down in Daniel, John does not repeat it again in Revelation...he assumes that we already know the basic chronology and builds on top of it. Daniel and Revelation are like watching the same movie, Daniel in B&W and Revelation in 4K.

## The Hermeneutics of Revelation

Amillennialist Merrill C. Tenney admits: "A consistent application of a literal approach to Revelation logically leads to a futurist interpretation." [Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 139,142.]. A direct relationship exists between a literal interpretation and a futuristic interpretation because the ordinary import of the text of Revelation makes it impossible to argue that its contents have already been fulfilled. Events such as the sea turning to blood (16:3) or half of the world's population being destroyed (6:4; 9:15) obviously have never taken place.

There are two types of communication: Denotative (plain literal) and Connotative (figurative). If my wife asks me how I slept last night and I say, Great, I slept in until 7am, she doesn't think, Hmm, what does he mean by 7am? She understands that to mean literally 7am. If my wife asks me how I slept last night and I say, Great, I slept like a log, she doesn't panic, thinking that I turned into a piece of wood. She understands that I'm using a figure of speech (simile) to describe my quality of sleep. This is how language works...it's usually obvious to the hearer when the speaker is speaking denotatively or connotatively. Once in a while the hearer can get the denotative/connotative interpretation flipped; this is when communication breaks down.

God has chosen to reveal Himself through His Word (also His Son, but that's not our topic now), which is made up of language (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic). When God is speaking, He will either use denotative language or connotative language...it's our job to figure out which is which.

One of grammatical clues we have in the Bible, especially Revelation, to alert us to figurative speech is the use of similes ('like' or 'as'). Another one is when it states specifically that someone saw a "sign."

## Two Rules of Interpretation

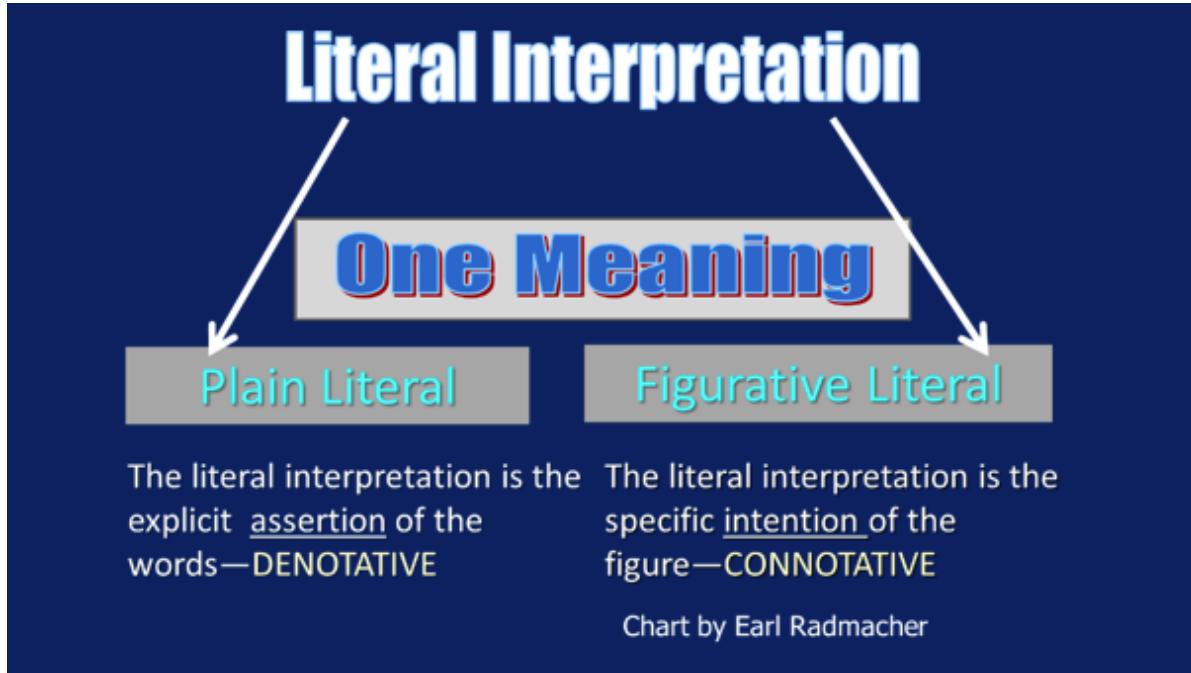
(1) Search the immediate context (26x in Revelation, the symbols are interpreted for us in the text)

- Either the same paragraph or the same chapter, then the rest of the same book
- God interprets these symbols for us so that we don't rely on our sanctified imaginations to come up with our own interpretations

(2) Search the remote context (elsewhere in Scripture, especially the OT; of Revelation's 404 verses, 278 of them contain allusions to the OT)

If the Bible talks about Jesus being born in Bethlehem...that is denotative. If the Bible talks about Jesus being the Bread of Life...that is connotative. This is our starting point for how we interpret the entire Bible. However in the Book of Revelation, it's a bit more difficult because it employs more symbols. However, we use the same method of interpretation

because God wants us to understand the Book of Revelation. Revelation actually means "unveiling" not "veiling."



### Revelation's Symbols & Figures of Speech

- (1) "spiritually" - Rev 11:8
- (2) "sign" - Rev 12:1
- (3) "like" or "as" - Rev 8:8
- (4) OT correspondence (Rev 13:2; Dan 7)
- (5) Contextual interpretations (Rev 17:18)
- (6) Absurdity (Rev 12:1)

So how do we approach and recognize when figurative or symbolic language is being used in Revelation?

- (1) "spiritually" (Rev 11:8) - the word "spiritually" is given to us directly in the text, giving us "permission" to spiritualize the interpretation (Cf. "allegorically, Gal 4:24). We don't have permission to move into allegorizing any part of Scripture unless the Holy Spirit gives us permission to do so.
- (2) The use of the word "sign" (*sēmeion*) - when John uses this word, it alerts the reader that he is speaking figuratively or symbolically rather than literally (12:1).
- (3) The use of similes ("like" or "as") - when John employs simile, he is indicating a correspondence between what he saw in the vision and what he was trying to describe (8:8).
- (4) Identical correspondence with the OT - when John uses symbols that identically correspond to symbols used in the OT, we should interpret those symbols in the same

manner. For example, the leopard, lion and bear in 13:2 are also used in Dan 7 to depict nations. These symbols should also be interpreted as nations in Revelation, just as they are in Daniel.

(5) Interpretation in the immediate context - if something is interpreted for the reader in the immediate context, the thing interpreted is obviously a symbol. For example, the woman in Rev 17 is symbolic, not an actual woman, because the immediate context interprets her to be a city (17:18).

(6) Looking for absurdity - if a text taken literally leads to absurdity, it should be interpreted symbolically. For example, in 12:1 the woman was "clothed with the sun." If this were literally true, she would be destroyed by the heat. If a literal interpretation yields an absurd result, it is a clue that symbolic language must be in use.

Once we identify what the symbols are in Revelation, how do we assign the right meaning to the symbol? Above are the rules to identify the symbol, here is how to understand what the symbol means/refers to.

### **Assigning Meaning to Revelation's Symbols & Figures of Speech**

After identifying figurative or symbolic language, how should it be understood?

(1) Immediate context - for example, the dragon in 12:3 is interpreted as Satan in 12:9. There are at least 26 other instances in which a symbol is interpreted in the immediate context.

(2) Allusion to the OT - see if the same symbol is employed elsewhere in the OT. For example, the same symbol of the woman used in 12:1 is also used in Gen 37:9-11 to depict Israel. Thus the woman of Rev 12 is symbolic of Israel.

(3) Use of simile - understand that John, through his use of "like" or "as," is attempting to describe futuristic events that are beyond his comprehension and linguistic abilities. Thus, he communicates through language of correspondence. In other words, in order to communicate the contents of his vision, he uses similes (comparison) by equating things from his own world to the futuristic events that he sees in his vision.

See the following for additional details:

- Apocalyptic vs Prophetic interpretation: [Woods-What is the Identity of Babylon - Rev 17-18](#)
- [The Identity of Babylon in Rev 17-18 \(2\)](#)
- [Introductory Thoughts on Allegorical Interpretation of Revelation](#)
- [Woods-Apocalypticism](#)
- [Woods-Dispensational Hermeneutics: The Matter of Genre](#)
- [Woods-Dispensational Hermeneutics: The Grammatico-Historical Method](#)
- [Clough-Interpreting Texts on End Times](#)

## 5 Non-Chronological Parenthetical Insertions

When you get to Revelation 6-19, the narrative moves chronologically, but there are five "non-chronological insertions" in the narrative that John (Holy Spirit) includes in order to provide more detail on the storyline.

- (1) Rev 7 - 144,000 Jewish evangelists
- (2) Rev 10:1--11:13 - announcement of no more delay; Two Witnesses
- (3) Rev 12-14 - Israel's flight; two beasts; six scenes of hope
- (4) Rev 16:13-16 - gathering of the nations to Armageddon
- (5) Rev 17:1--19:6 - Babylon's fall

## Use of Symbolism in Revelation

Another important area is the matter of symbols. The Book of Revelation uses many symbols. The existence of these symbols has led to two extremes. One extreme states that the existence of these symbols shows that this book cannot be understood and must simply be interpreted in terms of a general conflict between good and evil, or God and Satan, with the good or God winning out in the end. Beyond this, they say the book is not to be understood in any great detail. This is how the book has suffered from its enemies. In the second extreme, the symbols are used for unchecked speculation, sensationalism, and all kinds of guesswork in trying to interpret these symbols in terms of current events. Such speculation has resulted in farfetched interpretations, and changes are made as current events change. It has also led to date setting. In this area, the Book of Revelation has suffered at the hands of its friends.

There is a balance between the two extremes. While the Bible does use many symbols, it is consistent in its usage of symbols. A specific symbol will mean the same thing throughout the OT and NT in the vast majority of cases (though not all). For this study, the symbols will be examined in accordance with *The Golden Rule of Interpretation* (Dr. David L. Cooper). While recognizing the existence of the symbols, there will be no resorting to guesswork. Rather, this study will proceed on the premise that all the symbols in the Book of Revelation are explained elsewhere: either in a different part of the Book of Revelation or in some other part of the Bible. There are symbols, but the Bible itself will explain what these symbols mean either by direct statement or through a comparison of the usage of the symbol elsewhere in the Scriptures. The meaning of the symbols will not be determined by speculation or fanciful allegories.

Signs, symbols, and figures of speech have literal concepts behind them. Because Revelation is very symbolic (though not totally), there are still literal events embedded behind the figure. To interpret Revelation properly, one must reason forward to the fact that the symbols are struggling to explain something difficult to comprehend in normal language. Revelation is interpreted from a literal base but with comparative

language wording that points ultimately to a literal meaning. This approach gives consistent patterns for understanding Revelation.

David Jeremiah offered three reasons why there is so much symbolism in Revelation:

- (1) Symbolism is not weakened by time
- (2) Symbols impart values and arouse emotions
- (3) Symbols can be used as a secret code

There are remarkable parallels between this revelation and the Lord Jesus' teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21). The Book of Revelation clearly builds on that foundation and expounds it. The apocalyptic sections of certain books of the OT—particularly Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Psalms—contain former revelation that God gave His prophets about the end times.

John also alluded often to Exodus, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. One scholar claimed that 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation contain references to the OT. William Barclay claimed that John quoted or alluded to the OT 245x, citing about 20 OT books—his favorites being: Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Psalms, Exodus, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. The United Bible Society's Greek New Testament lists over 500 OT passages. Despite all these allusions, however, there are no formal quotations from the OT in Revelation. The revelation that Jesus gave in the Olivet Discourse and later to John on Patmos supplements that earlier revelation.

## **Interpretations**

### **Preterist Preterism**

- Deals only with events in the early history of the church
- Deals with the conflicts between Judaism and paganism in the 1st century
- Identifies the Antichrist as a past Roman emperor (although people differ about which one)
- Advocates aren't united on the identifications of the various people and symbols
- Advocates are post-Millennial or Amillennial
- Requires an "early" writing date (65-66 AD); see [Hitchcock-A Defense of the Domitianic Date of Revelation](#) for a refutation of this interpretation
- The primary (only?) defense of this view is Kenneth Gentry's *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*

### **Historical (Historicist)**

- Deals with events in the total history of the church, not just the church until John's day
- Antichrist is one of the medieval popes, but there isn't agreement on which one
- Inability to identify everything predicted in Revelation with past events and people
- Advocates are mainly post-Millennial or Amillennial

### **Idealist**

- Allegorical—teaching the ideal of triumph of good over evil

- Antichrist is not a real person, but the personification of evil
- No historical basis for the story; fiction
- Doesn't not appeal to interpreters who have a high view of inspiration; most advocates are liberal in their theology
- Most advocates are post-Millennial or Amillennial

Futurist/Prophetic

- Describes events in the future, specifically the events described in Rev 4-22
- Antichrist is a real person, who will appear sometime in the future
- Most advocates are conservative theologically, with a "high view" of Scripture
- The only resulting view that comes from a literal interpretation of Scripture; all other views require various levels of allegorization
- Advocates are premillennial

The Book of Revelation *claims the latter* (Rev 1:3; 22:7,10,18-19; Cf. 10:11).

See [Revelation 01\\_ It's All About Jesus \(Rev 1:1\)](#) for a complete introduction to the Book of Revelation.

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## Intro

- One of the most incredible books of the Bible
- Only book of the Bible that says "read me, I'm special"
- No other book calls for us to read it specifically, then promises a special blessing for doing so
- Revelation is often avoided - pastors don't teach on it, they're uncomfortable or use the excuse that there are numerous different interpretations; also highlights lack of knowledge or understanding of the OT
- Perfect book for a new believer - that shocks many people, but it ties the Bible and all of history together; makes it easier to understand much of the Bible
- Once you go through this study, encourage other believers to study the book as well
- It's really a shame that this book isn't taught as much or more than other books of the Bible

*The Revelation:* singular, not plural; it's a single revelation, not multiple revelations

- "Revelation" - *apokalypsis*
- Used as a noun (19x): "revelation" - to unveil or uncover; the unveiling
- Used as a verb (26x): "to reveal"

## New Testament Structure

# New Testament

Gospels & Acts - 5

Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John  
Acts

Paul's Epistles - 13

Romans  
1, 2 Corinthians  
Galatians  
Ephesians  
Philippians  
Colossians  
1, 2 Thessalonians  
1, 2 Timothy  
Titus  
Philemon  
Hebrew Epistles - 8  
Hebrews  
James  
1, 2 Peter  
1, 2, 3, John  
Jude

Prophetic - 1

Revelation  
Ephesus  
Smyrna  
Pergamos  
Thyatira  
Sardis  
Philadelphia  
Laodicea

Pauline Epistles - written to 7 churches

- But many forget about the 7 epistles to 7 churches given directly to John by Jesus Christ Himself

## "He Shall Glorify Me" (John 16:14)

- Old Testament – Christ in Prophecy — "Behold, He Comes!"
- Gospels – Christ in History — "Behold, He Dies!"
- Acts – Christ in the Church — "Behold, He Lives!"
- Epistles – Christ in Experience — "Behold, He Saves!"
- **Revelation – Christ in coming Glory — "Behold, He Reigns!"**

## Apocalyptic Literature

Bible scholars often categorize various prophetic books of the Bible, such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, as "apocalyptic literature." By using this category, they simply mean these books unveil or disclose God's future prophetic program. Defining apocalyptic literature as biblical material that unveils is in harmony with the meaning of the Greek word

from which "apocalyptic" is derived. The Greek word *apokalypsis* simply means to unveil or disclose.

However, recent evangelical interpreters have begun to vest this term with a new meaning. When they use the term "apocalyptic literature" they are equating the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation with a host of non-canonical, extra-biblical writings that flourished from the inter-testamental period into the second century AD. Examples include *Enoch*, *Apocalypse of Baruch*, *Jubilees*, *Assumption of Moses*, *Psalm of Solomon*, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and *Sibylline Oracles*. These writings possess a common cluster of attributes. Such attributes include: extensive use of symbolism, vision as the major means of revelation, angelic guides, activity of angels and demons, focus on the end of the current age and the inauguration of the age to come, urgent expectation of the end of earthly conditions in the immediate future, the end as a cosmic catastrophe, new salvation that is paradisal in character, manifestation of the kingdom of God, a mediator with royal functions, dualism with God and Satan as the leaders, spiritual order determining the flow of history, pessimism about man's ability to change the course of events, periodization and determinism of human history, other worldly journeys, the catchword "glory" and a final showdown between good and evil.

Since Daniel, Ezekiel and (especially) Revelation share many of these characteristics, their decision to classify Revelation with the apocalyptic genre alters the hermeneutical principles that one uses in interpreting the book. They argue that taking the text literally is a good rule of thumb when dealing with other types of Biblical literature, this does not work for "apocalyptic literature" where literalism is the exception and symbolism is the norm. This opens the door, interpretatively, to all sorts of non-biblical theories such as preterism and historicism.

See the following for more on interpreting Revelation:

[Woods-Apocalypticism](#)

[Woods-Dispensational Hermeneutics: The Matter of Genre](#)

[Woods-A Case for the Futurist Interpretation of Revelation](#)

### **To Whom Given?**

Rev 1:1-2:

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto **Him [Jesus]**, to show unto His [Jesus'] servants things which must **shortly** come to pass; and He [God] sent and **signified** it by his [God's] angel unto His [God's] servant John:

- God revealing Jesus Christ to us
- Why did God give us Revelation? - 'to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass'

- "...shortly" - *en tachos*, doesn't mean a short period of time from the time of writing; it means that once the events start, they will come about very quickly (in a short time)
- "...signified" - rendered into "signs" (sememes)

2 who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

- John wrote down what he was told and what he actually saw
- He sees these things from an astonishing point of view

### **Why do we have the Book of Revelation?**

There are several good reasons for including the Book of Revelation in the Bible:

- (1) It has given hope to believers of all time in the eternity that awaits us
- (2) It gives believers in our time a way to understand what's really going on in the world today
- (3) It will help those who come to faith after the Church is gone make their way through the End Times
- (4) It fulfills God's promise that He would never do anything without first revealing it through the prophets (Amos 3:7)

### **The Apocalypse**

Where to begin a serious study? Revelation is excellent...everything begun in Genesis is consummated in Revelation: *integrated design...*

- Catastrophic end-crisis of the present age
- Spectacular reappearance of the King of Kings in His global empire
- Internment of Satan in the Abousso
- Millennial earth-reign of Christ
- Final insurrection and the abolition of sin
- New Heaven and New Earth

### **A Unique Promise**

Rev 1:3: Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this **prophecy**, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

- "...prophecy" - Revelation claims to be prophecy, end to end; in the beginning (v3) and in the end (22:7,18,19; also 10:11)
- Rev 19:10: The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
- Some don't believe Revelation is prophecy, but it's clear that Revelation claims to be prophecy

### **Two Basic Discoveries**

- (1) The Bible consists of 66 separate books penned by over 40 authors over a period of almost two thousand years that are an integrated message system.
- (2) It can be demonstrated that the origin of this message is from outside of our dimensions of space and time, in both structure and content.
- Once you discover these two things for yourself, it will lead you to an unsurpassed awe of this book

### **The Central Theme of Scripture**

- The OT is an account of a Nation
- The NT is the account of a Man
- The Creator became a Man; His appearance is the Central Event of all history
- He died to purchase us and is alive now
- The most exalted privilege is to know Him. That's what the Bible is all about.

### **Our Presuppositions**

- God means what He says and says what He means
- The Bible is an integrated whole: Every detail is there by design (Matt 5:17-18)
- Nothing is trivial: all things are there for our learning (Rom 15:4)
- God is His own interpreter
- Acts 17:11 - These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

### **Revelation: "The Unveiling"**

- The consummation of all things
- The only book promising a special blessing to the reader
- 404 verses containing over 800 allusions from the OT
- It presents the climax of God's Plan for Man
- John was born at Bethsaida to Zebedee and Salome (major supporters of Christ's ministry) and was a Galilean fisherman; partner with Peter and Andrew
- He was an early disciple of John the Baptist and seemed to be politically well connected
- High Priest, Nicodemus (John 18:15)
- Intensely devoted to Christ
- John was one of the inner circle:
- The Transfiguration (Matt 17)
- Raising of Jairus' daughter (Matt 9:18)
- Olivet Discourse (Matt 24)

- Gethsemane (Matt 26:37)
- Assigned care of Mary (John 19:26)
- Ultimately retires to Ephesus after his exile

### **The Patmos Exile**

- Patmos is a small island, 6 miles by 10 miles, 40 miles from Miletus and 24 miles from the coast of Turkey
- John was exiled by Domitian (81-96 AD), the brother of Titus who destroyed Jerusalem

### **Church Traditions: True?**

- Hippolytus - John was first plunged into boiling oil, then sent to Patmos for exile
- Victorinus - John was forced to work in the mines on Patmos
- Irenaeus, Clement, Eusebius - After Domitian dies, John returned to Ephesus, went to the churches, appointed leaders and set things in order
- Irenaeus (2nd century AD), Revelation was written by John during the reign of Domitian.







## Eschatology

Amillennial or Premillennial - will Christ *literally* reign on earth for 1000 years?

# Eschatology



## Hermeneutics

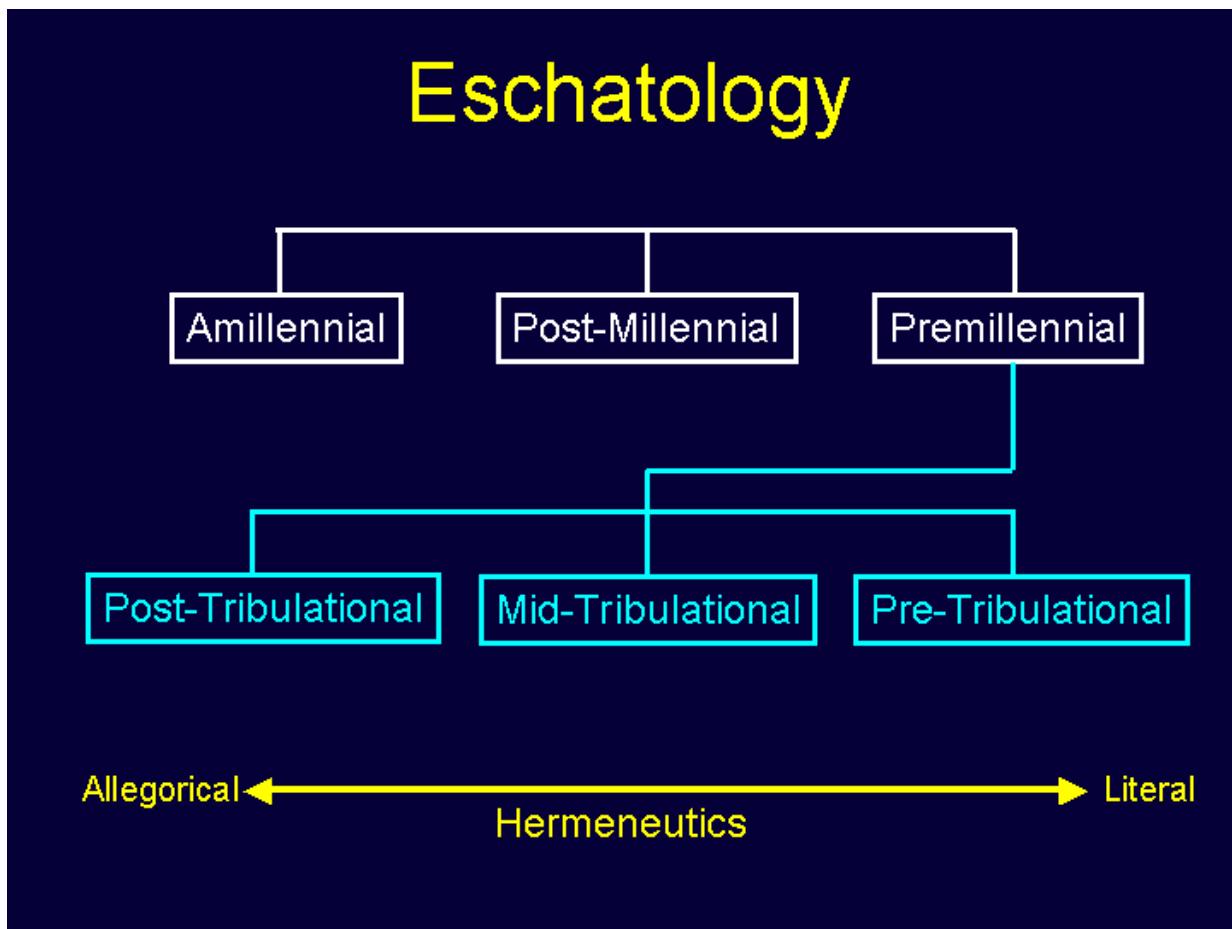
- Theory of interpretation of Scripture
- Use of figures of speech in Scripture
- Over 200 types of rhetorical devices in Scripture
- Most conspicuous are allegories - similes or metaphors
- Similes = *like* or *as*
- Metaphors = expression to make a point; similar to similes, except you don't get the 'like' or 'as' clue
- Just because you take the Bible literally doesn't mean you don't recognize rhetorical devices or figures of speech
- "Law of First Mention" - usually, the first time a word is used in Scripture has some importance as to its meaning

## Amillennial Problems

- Messianic Promises throughout the OT
- Hundreds of explicit references in the OT
- Destiny of Israel in God's Covenants

- Abrahamic Covenant
- Davidic Covenant
- Romans 9-11
- Promise given to Mary by Gabriel
- The Annunciation - Jesus to sit on throne of David
- Numerous reconfirmations in the NT
- Many references in the book of Hebrews and elsewhere

Under Premillennial, when will Rapture take place?



### The Heptadic Structure: The Sevens

Throughout Revelation, it's obvious the number 7 has a significant role

- Seven Churches (Rev 1:4,11,20; 2: 3)
- Seven Seals (Rev 5-6)
- Seven Trumpets (Rev 8-9)
- Seven Bowls (Rev 15-16; 17:1; 21:9)
- Seven Lampstands (Rev 1:12-13,20; 2:1)
- Seven Spirits (Rev 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)

- Seven Stars (Rev 1:16,20; 2:1; 3:1)
- Seven Lamps (Rev 4-5)
- Seven "Title-pairs" (Rev 2-3)
- Seven Promises to the Overcomer (Rev 2-3)
- Seven Horns (Rev 5:6)
- Seven Eyes (Rev 5:6)
- Seven Angels (Rev 8:2,6; 15:1,6-8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)
- Seven Thunders (Rev 10:3-4)
- Seven Thousand (Rev 11:13)
- Seven Heads (Rev 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,7,9)
- Seven Crowns (Rev 12:3)
- Seven Plagues (Rev 15:1,6,8; 21:9)
- Seven Mountains (Rev 17:9)
- Seven Kings (Rev 17:10-11)

### **Seven Beatitudes**

- Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear and keep those things... (Rev 1:3)
- Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (Rev 14:13)
- Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments (Rev 16:15)
- Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9)
- Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6)
- Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22:7)
- Blessed are they that wash their robes (Rev 22:14)

### **(More Subtle) Sevens**

- Seven Features (Rev 1)
- Seven Letter Divisions (Rev 2-3)
- Seven Personages (Rev 12-13)
  - Woman, Man-Child, Red Dragon, 7-headed Beast, False Prophet, Michael the Archangel, Lamb of God
- Seven "I AMs" of Christ (Rev 1:8,11,17-18; 21:6; 22:13,16)
- Seven Doxologies in heaven (Rev 4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2-3; 15:2-4 ; 19:1-6)
- Seven New Things (Rev 20-21)

*...and many, many more*

**Write**  
Shall

The Things Which

The Things Which

The Things Which

Rev 1:19	Thou Hast Seen	Are	Be
Hereafter			
	Rev 1:12-18	Rev 2-3	Rev
4-22			

- "More sure word of prophecy" (2 Peter 1:19)

### Things Out of Place

- Israel > Land
- Church > Heaven
- Lamb > Own throne
- Satan > Bound

### Creation vs Redemption

Redemption: restoration of that which was lost to the original owner (Luke 21:28; Rom 8:23; Gal 3:13; Eph 1:14; Dan 8:26; Dan 12:4,9)

- The Space
- Creation: Two chapters in Genesis, few Psalms, few chapters in Job, Isaiah...
- Redemption: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, Ruth, the Prophets, the Gospels...the Epistles...the Revelation!
- The Price
- Creation: "Breathed from His nostrils..."
- Redemption: Cost God His Son!

### Genesis vs. Revelation

Genesis = Beginning; Creation

Revelation = Redemption; Completion

#### Genesis

- Earth Created - 1:1
- Earth's government (through Israel) - 37:8
- Sun to govern Day - 1:16
- Darkness called night - 1:5
- Waters He called seas - 1:10
- A river for earth's blessing - 2:10-14
- Man in God's Image - 1:26
- 13
- Entrance of sin - 3

#### Revelation

- Earth Passed away - 21:1
- Earth's judgment (through Israel) -
- No need of sun - 21:23
- No night there - 22:5
- No more sea - 21:1
- A river for New Earth - 22:1,2
- Man Headed by Satan's Image -
- End of sin - 21, 22

- Curse pronounced - 3:14-17
- Death entered - 3:19
- Cherubim first mentioned - 3:24
- Man driven out of Eden - 3:24
- Tree of life guarded - 3:24
- Sorrow & suffering enter - 3:17
- Nimrod founds Babylon - 10:8-10
- God's Flood to destroy evil - 6 - 9  
generation - 12
- A bow: God's promise - 9:13  
10:1
- Sodom & Egypt:Corruption, judgement - 13,19
- A confederation vs Abraham's people - 14  
- 12
- A bride for Abraham's son - 24
- Marriage of 1st Adam - 2:18-23
- Man's dominion ceased and Satan's begun - 3:24  
restored - 22
- No more curse - 22:3
- No more death - 21:4
- Cherubim final mention - 19:4
- Man restored - 22
- Access to Tree of life - 22:14
- No more sorrow - 22:4
- Babylon falls - 17, 18
- Satan's flood to destroy elect
- A bow for remembrance - 4:3;
- "Sodom & Egypt" (Jerusalem) - 11:8
- A confederation vs Abraham's Seed
- A bride for Abraham's Seed - 19
- Marriage of Last Adam - 19
- Satan's domain ended and man's