

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Introduction

- 1) **The Book of REVELATION** is the last book of the New Testament canon (collection of sacred writings inspired of God)
- 2) As the final book, it brings to a fitting conclusion the many spiritual themes of the plan of God for man's redemption and eternal destiny

I) AUTHOR

- A) **John** (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8); most likely the apostle, though does not refer to himself as such
 - 1) Located "on the island that is called Patmos" (1:9)
 - a) Used by the Romans as a place of exile for convicts
 - b) John exiled there for preaching the gospel of Christ ("For the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ")
- B) John received this revelation from God
 - 1) Divine inspiration (1:1, 4-5)
 - 2) Witness to things seen and heard (22:8)

II) RECIPIENTS

- A) The **seven churches** which are in Asia (1:9)
 - 1) Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea
- B) John identifies with them as their "brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (1:9)
 - 1) **Common spiritual bond in Christ** – brother, in the kingdom of Christ
 - 2) **Common bond in affliction** – companion in tribulation

III) STYLE OF WRITING

- A) Written in the style of **apocalyptic** literature (*apokalupsis* = revelation, uncovering, unveiling)
 - 1) Contains symbols and visions; highly symbolic and figurative language (1:1)
 - 2) Also found in Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel 7-12
- B) Why written in this style?
 - 1) Christians familiar with OT apocalyptic literature
 - a) Nearly 300 [of 404] verses reference OT; more than half from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalms
 - 2) Hide message from the enemies of God and the saints

IV) METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

- A) **Futurist**
 - 1) Written about events not yet fulfilled until the time just preceding the end of time
- B) **Continuous Historical**
 - 1) Written about the continuous passing of history until the end of time
- C) **Preterist ("past")**
 - 1) Written and largely fulfilled in John's day; some say completely fulfilled by AD 70
- D) **Historical Background**
 - 1) Historical setting of book is key to its interpretation; written for circumstances of the saints of John's day and shortly thereafter; overall message continues to be applicable to the church of today

V) PURPOSE OF BOOK

- A) Reveal things "which much shortly take place" (1:1; 22:6; "the time is near" 1:3; 22:10)

- B) Encourage obedience to the revealed word (1:3; 22:7, 14, 18-19)
- C) Give hope to saints facing persecution and execution (2:10; 17:14)
 - 1) Seven beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:14; 22:7)
 - 2) They can overcome the forces of evil with Christ (12:11)
- D) Key verse – 17:14 – war between evil and the Lamb, and those with Lamb will overcome

VI) DATE OF WRITING

- A) Two major dates suggested for when the book of Revelation was written
 - 1) Early date – **AD 64-68** (reign of Nero; prior to destruction of Jerusalem [AD 70])
 - 2) Late date – **AD 95-96** (reign of Domitian [AD 81-96])
- C) Significant evidence exists on both sides (I believe the weight of evidence favors late date)
 - 1) Regardless of what one believes about the date of writing, the true central issue is what the book is all about – the theme of the book of Revelation

VII) THEME OF BOOK

- A) Two major views
 - 1) **Church vs Judaism**, spiritual Jerusalem vs earthly Jerusalem
 - 2) **Church vs Rome**, kingdom of heaven vs kingdoms of earth
- B) The text indicates that the beast is the Roman empire and the harlot is the city of Rome
 - 1) 4th beast of Daniel 7 is the same as the beast of Rev. 13:1-8 symbolizing the Roman empire
 - 2) The harlot that rides the beast is the city of Rome (17:9, 18)

VIII) TIMELESSNESS OF MESSAGE

- A) Like every other New Testament book, Revelation was written initially for a specific audience, but preserved by the Holy Spirit for succeeding generations until the end of time
- B) Principles and truths within the book continue to be relevant and needed
 - 1) Sovereignty of God and exultation of Christ
 - 2) Faithfulness of local congregations of God's people
 - 3) Reality and danger of evil and overcoming by faith
 - 4) The glory and power of the kingdom of Christ and the blessings of its citizens
 - 5) Being prepared for the judgment of God and eternal life
- C) The message of Revelation speaks to Christians of the 21st century – all who read are blessed!
 - 1) 1:3; 2:7; 5:9-10; 12:17; 14:1, 13; 17:14; 19:9; 20:7 – 22:5; 22:14, 17, 18-19

IX) BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- A) Introduction (ch. 1)
- B) Letters to the Seven Churches (ch. 2-3)
- C) Heaven Scene – God in Control (ch. 4-5)
- D) **Seven Seals**: The Problem of Persecution (ch. 6-8a)
- E) **Seven Trumpets**: Warnings to the Wicked (ch. 8b-11)
- F) Satan, Evil on Earth, 144,000 (ch. 12-14)
- G) **Seven Bowls**: Judgment on the Wicked (ch. 15-16)
- H) War and Defeat of Evil: Victory! (ch. 17-19)
- I) Judgment and Final Home of the Righteous (ch. 20-22)

Conclusion

Our Bibles would be incomplete without the book of Revelation – in it is the culmination of Biblical themes that began in Genesis:

- 1) Creation of heavens and earth → New heavens and earth
- 2) All is good and righteous until evil introduced → Evil cast out and all is good and righteous
- 3) Tree of life lost as paradise lost → tree of life regained as paradise regained
- 4) Promises of God needed for salvation → Promises of God fulfilled providing eternal salvation