

INTRODUCTION TO THE REVELATION TO JOHN

- I. The Book and its title.
 - A. The book takes its title from the first three words of the Greek text *avpoka,luyij Ivhsou/ Cristou/* (apokalupsis Iesou Christou—The revelation of Jesus Christ), and is often called the Book of Revelation.
 - B. It is the concluding book of the New Testament, and its very title indicates that it is a disclosure of that which was previously hidden or unknown.
 - 1. The Greek term *avpoka,luyij* (apokalupsis—revelation; used 18x) means an uncovering, a laying bare, a revealing, and is used figuratively in the New Testament for the divine things or truths that God reveals or makes known. Cp.Rom.16:25; Eph.3:1-12 cf.vs.3
 - 2. The various revelations in the book are viewed as the constituent elements that are necessary for Jesus Christ to be visibly revealed at the Second Advent.
 - 3. However, it is absolutely incorrect to refer to this work as the Book of Revelations, since Jesus Christ is the singular person being revealed.
 - C. The title clearly points to the Person of Jesus Christ as the premier agent in the revelation of God’s plan.
 - D. Furthermore, it places His unique Person as the only tangible revelation given by God to His creation as the embodied fulfillment of His plan.
 - E. Vs.1 delegates His Person second only to the Father in authority over creation and demonstrates the spiritual chain of command. Rev.1:1 *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bondservants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John”*.
 - F. In turn, the Apostle John has communicated the Revelation as recorded in this book under apostolic authority to be properly exegeted and communicated to others in compliance to the remainder of the royal chain of command.
 - G. The book itself occupies a unique place as the sole totally prophetic work in the New Testament, claiming the highest level of divine inspiration of any book in the Bible. Rev. 1:1, 22:18-19
 - H. It is the only book in the entire Bible that promises specific blessing to the one that teaches it and to those that understand and appropriately apply the things contained therein. Rev. 1:3
 - I. The figuratively visual language of the book strongly resembles the Old Testament books including Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.
 - J. In fact, the book could not be effectively interpreted apart from certain background that the Old Testament prophetic writers provide.
 - K. The highlight of prophecy in the book particularly emphasizes the repeated and increasingly violent world-wide attempts, led by Satan, to oppose and prevent the execution of the declared intention of Christ to establish His kingly rule on earth via the 2nd advent.
 - L. It emphasizes tribulation as experienced by creation and man climaxing in history in a relative short period ushering in the 2nd advent commonly called *the* tribulation. Mat.24:21; Mar.13:19
 - M. The term tribulation (*qli/yij* – *thlipsis*; used 45x in the NT Greek) has a root meaning “to exert pressure” and is commonly used for discomfort, extreme difficulty and in general physical and emotional pressures of every sort.

- N. While it is not restricted in the NT to being a technical term for the final seven years before Christ's return, its main reference and force of meaning "extreme pressure" makes it a most apt and descriptive designation to denote that final and intense trial brought upon the world.
- O. Further Biblical phrases and terminology supporting a great tribulational view to this period of history include:
 1. "*Time of distress*". Dan.12:1b
 2. "*The time of Jacob's trouble*". Jer.30:7
 3. Daniel's 70th Week: "*the abomination of desolation*". Dan.9:26-27 cf. Mat.24:15; Mar.13:14
 4. "*The hour of testing*". Rev.3:10
 5. "*The day of judgment*". 2Pet.3:7
- P. While the book is filled with obvious predictions of cataclysmic judgment, it is clear that it was not written to overwhelm or frighten believers, but to aid them in understanding the larger picture of the eschatological events that conclude the plan of God.
- Q. Though rich with images, symbols, and fantastic events, it is clear that these things were meant to be understood and to deliver a very definite and important message. Rev. 1:3
- R. We will approach this book just as we approach any biblical writing, employing the literal, historical method of interpretation.
- S. However, this does not mean that everything will be taken in a "wooden-headed" literal approach, since proper hermeneutics in the literal school of interpretation allows for symbols, allegories, figures of speech, etc.
- T. The book itself declares that the things written were things that John "*has seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things*". Rev.1:19
- U. Therefore, the interpreter must assume that the author generally wrote in chronological order, yet allow for parenthetical explanations of a particular topic.
- V. Though the book is saturated with representative imagery and symbols, they may be grouped into those explained in the book itself, those explained in other parts of Scripture, and those we are forced to interpret under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- W. The reader should understand that John was communicating events that would not come to pass for some 2000 years, and he could only communicate the 21st century realities he observed in the language of his day.

II. Canonicity.

- A. While the two questions of canonicity and authorship are intimately connected, we will devote different points to the two issues, recognizing the obvious overlap.
- B. According to early patristic testimony (the patristics were recognized church leaders that followed the apostles) the Church did not universally accept Revelation as authoritative.
- C. However, there were those that recognized it as scripture, and Justin Martyr (c. 135 AD) stated categorically that it was written by John, one of the original apostles.
- D. Melito of Sardis composed a commentary on it between 160-190 AD.
- E. Clement of Alexandria, who died around 215 BC, was familiar with the book, and regarded it as scripture.
- F. Dionysius of Alexandria, who led the church after the death of Clement, rejected

the book as non-Johannine, but he was aware of the fact that it had been received by the Church as scripture.

- G.** The Muratorian Fragment (c. 170 AD), which is the earliest known record of the canon of books in the Bible, included it.
- H.** The church of Carthage accepted it and Tertullian (c. 190-220 AD) quoted from eighteen of its twenty-two chapters.
- I.** The Western Church of the 2nd century was almost unanimous in accepting the Revelation, the only two dissident voices being Marcion (he was biased against any writing he thought was Jewish), and Irenaeus (he repudiated any work that gave support to the perpetuation of the gift of prophecy).
- J.** By the 3rd century AD, its place in the Western canon was fully established.
- K.** The Eastern churches were almost equally unanimously committed to the rejection of the Revelation.
- L.** Since Dionysius of Alexandria had repudiated its canonicity, Eusebius (c. 260-340 AD) followed his lead, and could not decide whether to list it with disputed works or with those termed spurious.
- M.** Eusebius had a powerful influence and Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386 AD) forbade believers from reading it aloud in their churches, and even depreciated it as having real value for any type of private, devotional reading.
- N.** Many continued to resist its place in the canon, and it was not until the 5th or 6th century AD that the Eastern churches finally recognized it.
- O.** While there are those that denigrate the book and its place in the canon of Scripture, no one has effectively discredited its authorship or contents.

III. Authorship.

- A.** While one might think that this question could be easily settled there are several views respecting the author of this book.
- B.** Any view that does not recognize that the author's name was John is to be immediately rejected since there is no textual proof to discredit the direct statements of the author in Revelation 1:1,4,9, 22:8.
- C.** Some have suggested that the author could have been someone else other than John the apostle, since this was such a common name.
- D.** Their argument is since John did not use his proper name in his other autographs, he would not have done so with the book of Revelation either.
 - 1.** In response to this, John, the only living apostle at the time, did not find it necessary to identify himself at all when he wrote the gospel, which is consistent with the fact that none of the three general epistles bear his name either.
 - 2.** This was due to the fact that he was the last remaining apostle when these books were written and the authoritative nature of their authorship and his overall familiarity to the church was of such that no explicit identification was necessary for the recipients to know it was from John.
 - 3.** However, at the time of writing Revelation, he was isolated on the island of Patmos (Rev.1:9), now out of public circulation and visibility among the churches and therefore, he would have had to clearly assert his name to identify himself to his readers.
 - 4.** In other words, he was no longer physically available to validate his writings in person instituting their circulation in the church.

5. Knowing that, who else could simply use the name John and expect people to know who he was and accept the authoritative nature of his writing, if it was not John the apostle?
- E.** As stated in the issue of canonicity, the patristic writers were clearly familiar with this book and John's authorship is frequently and abundantly attested.
1. Justin Martyr c. 140 AD, who calls it the work of "*a certain man, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ.*"
 2. Melito of Sardis (c. 170 AD), Theophilus of Antioch (c. 168 AD), and Apollonius (c. 210 AD) all cited this book as the Apocalypse of John.
 3. Tertullian, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and other writers attest Johannine authorship.
- F.** Nevertheless, doubts began to arise around the end of the 2nd century AD, and some attributed the book to Cerinthus, who held heretical views about Christ.
- G.** Others, such as Dionysius of Alexandria, held the view that the internal evidence and language proved that this book did not come from the same man that penned the gospel of John.
1. In spite of his rejection of John's authorship, he granted that this was the work of a holy and inspired author—another John.
 2. This view is still prevalent and has not been modified much, except with the addition of a few details that do nothing to solidify their case.
 3. In fact, one of the most recent such authors even acknowledges that "*while he wrote in Greek, he thought in Hebrew and frequently translated Hebrew idioms literally into Greek.*"
 4. Their conclusion is that this "other John", of whom we know nothing apart from this book was:
 - a. Jewish.
 - b. Wrote in Greek.
 - c. Exercised unquestioned authority.
 - d. Was readily recognized among the churches of Asia Minor to whom he wrote.
 - e. Penned this unique and amazing book, and was replaced in history by the memory of the Apostle John!
- H.** While we would not debate stylistic differences exist between the various writings of John, the circumstances, subject matter, and differences of purpose easily explain these.
- I.** While we will not list them here, the opponents of Johannine authorship do not list the stylistic similarities between the gospel of John, his general epistles, and the book of Revelation, which are quite extensive.

IV. Place and date of writing.

- A.** The author does not readily identify the place of writing for us and while he states that he was on Patmos, he does not explicitly say that he wrote down his visions at that time.
- B.** There are those that suggest that John received the Revelation on the island of Patmos, and later recorded his book after returning to Ephesus.
- C.** However, a careful examination of the language indicates that John wrote the book at the time that he received the visions, as seen in the following:
 1. While the repeated commands: *'Write!'* in 1:19, 14:13, 19:9 might leave the question open as to just when John was to do this writing, John's own statement in 10:4, informs us that he was about to write but was forbidden by

- the angel from writing what the seven thunders said.
2. John is to write *into a book* (1:11); in 22:6-19 we see *this book* completed except for the last few sentences.
 3. The angel and Jesus (22:7-16 speak of *this book* as one that has already been written, (22:19), employing a perfect passive participle to express completed action with existing results.
 4. It is therefore, incorrect to think that John wrote in Patmos some time after he saw these visions or waited even until he returned to Ephesus.
- D.** The island of Patmos was a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor, on which a penal colony was located.
- E.** Political prisoners were sent there for exile or for forced labor in the mines.
- F.** The language of Revelation does not state positively whether John meant that he had been exiled to Patmos as a result of persecution, or whether he had gone there voluntarily.
- G.** However, tradition affirms that John was arrested in a wave of persecution under the emperor Domitian, and that he had been condemned to work in the mines, something that is in harmony with the language of Revelation 1:9.
- H.** While it may not be wise to be dogmatic, based on the evidence we have it is best to place the date of writing in the reign of Domitian in 95-96 AD.
- I.** While there is a small group that has suggested a date in the reign of Nero during the early seventies AD, their arguments are based chiefly on internal evidence.
1. The allusion to the Temple in Revelation 11:1 suggests to them that the Temple is still standing, requiring a date earlier than 70 AD.
 2. However, most recognize that the passage may be regarded as completely predictive of a future rebuilt Temple, which is the proper interpretation.
 3. Another evidence that is cited for the early date is the meaning of the number 666, which they apply to NERON KESAR by using Hebrew numbers; thus, the beast of Revelation 13:18 is supposed to be an allusion to Nero.
 4. The problem with this is that the Revelation was not written in Hebrew, and the usual spelling of Caesar must be changed in order to fit this explanation, obviously making the interpretation quite suspicious.
 5. The advocates of an early date see Revelation 17:9-11 as referring to the Roman Empire and the seven kings refer to the Roman emperors, the fifth being Nero.
 6. However, the proper interpretation contextually of Revelation 17 finds its fulfillment in the Mother/Son cult, religious Babylon, and not in the Roman Empire.
- J.** While the arguments above are pretty easily dismissed, there is much more documentation for the later date.
1. The churches of Asia Minor are seen to have experienced a period of development, followed by decline that would have required some time lapse. Cp. Rev. 2:4; 3:1
 2. These churches were still flourishing when Paul was imprisoned in the mid-sixties AD, but by the reign of Domitian a second generation would have come on the scene, which may not have shared the convictions of its fathers.
 3. The persecution of Domitian was more universal than that of Nero, which was centralized in Rome.
 4. The worship of the beast may have been prefigured by Emperor worship, which became official policy during Domitian's reign.

5. Early tradition puts it in Domitian's reign when Irenaeus says that the Apocalypse, "*was seen no such long time ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian*".
 6. Victorinus (c. 270 AD), Eusebius (c. 325 AD), and Jerome (c. 370 AD) all agree with Irenaeus about this fact.
- K.** Therefore, along with the vast majority of conservative interpreters, we will date the book of Revelation in the reign of Domitian, likely occurring during 95-96 AD.

V. Background.

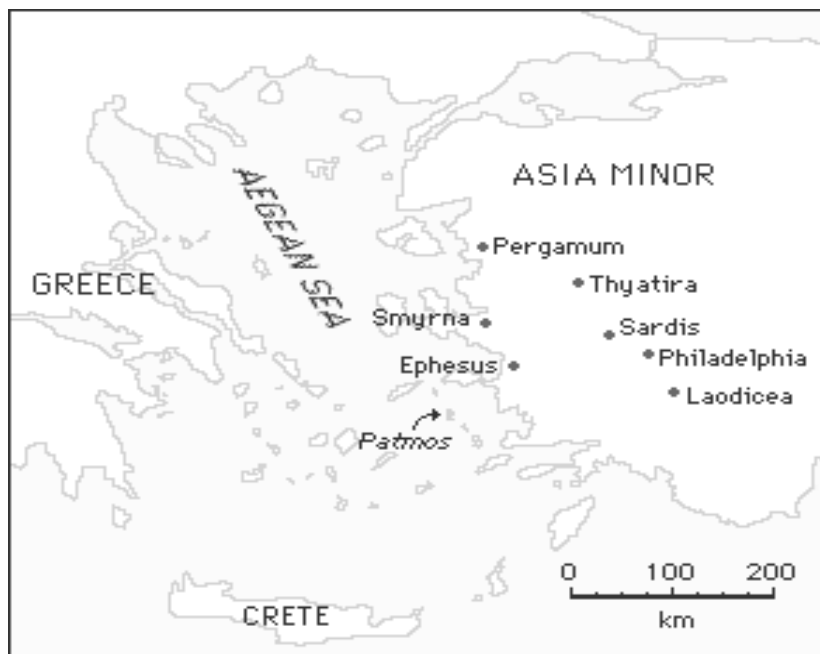
- A.** The Church enjoyed the status of *religio licita* (religion legal) in its early days, since the Roman authorities seem to have viewed the fledgling movement as simply a part of Judaism.
- B.** However, history is clear on the fact that the differences between Christianity and Judaism could not be reconciled, and a clear schism developed between the two groups.
- C.** Certainly by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD the Church was forced to sever its ties with the synagogue and Judaism, and was clearly moving in another direction.
- D.** The numerous cults that flourished in Asia Minor, then called the Roman province of Asia, were hostile to the ethics and the theology of the Church. Acts 19:23ff
- E.** The universal denunciation of idolatry and the insistence on monotheism, together with the much more strict moral code it advocated, created a wave of antagonism among the pagans with whom the Church came into contact.
- F.** The rapid growth and success of the gospel jeopardized their economic prosperity, since it emptied the temples of worshipers, depriving the makers of idols and the vendors of sacrificial animals of their livelihood. Acts 19:25
- G.** While the cultural, economic, and religious impact was certainly felt among the pagans, it was during this period that the Roman Emperors, particularly Nero, who ruled from 54-68 AD, and Domitian demanded a degree of acceptance that was little short of outright worship.
- H.** When the Christians refused to accord the sort of homage that these governments demanded for their emperors, they exposed themselves to the charge of being unpatriotic at best, if not actually subversive.
- I.** There is certainly little doubt that in the early stages, believers were lumped together in the mind of the Roman government with the Jews, who also had a known history of rebellion.
- J.** Certainly, these rebellions were part of the reason for the decree of Claudius that issued for all the Jews to leave Rome. c. 50 AD
- K.** I Peter, which was probably written in 63 AD, records the fact that there were active verbal attacks going on against Christians before actual overt persecution began. IPet. 2:12,15, 3:9, 4:4,12
- L.** It was during the reign of Nero in 64 AD that a fire started in Rome and burned for nine days, finally destroying or damaging almost three-quarters of the city, including numerous public buildings.
- M.** Nero himself was accused of starting the fire and laughing while the city burned, but he sought to divert such talk by blaming the disaster on the Christians.
- N.** While this account is recorded in the Annals of Tacitus 15.44, some believe that the persecution of Christians that began under his reign was unconnected to the fire and really resulted from their failure to participate in the cult of the Emperor.

- O. In any case, there is little doubt that an active persecution broke out against believers.
- P. Under the Flavian emperors, Vespasian (69-79 AD) and his sons, Titus (79-81 AD) and Domitian (81-96 AD), Rome enjoyed tremendous prosperity; they strengthened the integrity of the empire by suppressing revolt and by improving internal organization.
- Q. The government took on a new aggressive stance, appearing to make universal dominion inevitable.
- R. Through the special tax, known as the *fiscus Judaicus*, the Jews were discriminated against as an economic class, and this forced Christians, who had been sheltered somewhat under the banner of Judaism, to be viewed separately from their Jewish relatives.
- S. The fact that Domitian operated a totalitarian government, which may have well looked on the rapid rise of the new sect with suspicion, since Christians obstinately refused to worship the emperor, made him very wary of political potentials for revolt.
- T. Therefore, Christians were forced to take a stand for their beliefs, often suffering under the oppressive government that could be brutal and pitiless, which tended to view their lack of allegiance to the emperor as both political and religious treason.
- U. By the reign of Domitian, and more certainly Trajan in 100 AD, Christianity was definitely illegal (*religio illicita*); further, the Church had been assailed by the Jews, and was combatting Gnostics and various other enemies of the truth.
- V. Revelation recognized the spiritual force that lay behind the hostility of Rome's political power, identified it as coming from Satan, and recognized the totalitarian state as prefiguring the final form under Antichrist.
- W. It is against this background that we find the author, himself in exile on the island of Patmos for espousing Christianity, providing a revelation of the ultimate resolution to God's plan to believers that were under verbal and overt persecution.
- X. This type of literature flourished in periods of difficulty, as seen in the books of Daniel and Ezekiel, which were written during the Exile.

VI. Occasion, purpose and recipients.

- A. Domitian began his reign after a period of intense trouble for the Roman Empire.
 1. The destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD.
 2. A disastrous fire that devastated Rome.
 3. A plague of disease that ravaged the city until 81 AD, the year of Domitian's accession.
- B. This man was an egomaniac that demanded abject worship from all those people in his kingdom.
- C. He claimed the title of *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and God), and was the first of the emperors to assume the status of deity, though some others had been worshiped unwillingly during their lives, and others had been deified by the Senate after their deaths.
- D. Domitian had a small son that died in 83 AD, and he proclaimed him to be a god and his mother Domitia a goddess.
- E. He then had a coin issued in his memory representing him as sitting on the circle of the earth, with the moon and planets around him.

- F. This apotheosis (elevation of a person to the status of deity) of the mother and son, coupled with the deification of the emperor allowed extravagant titles and superhuman powers to be attributed to him.
- G. However, the arrogant and blasphemous claims of Domitian are countered by the eschatological honors bestowed on Christ as the true Sovereign and Savior of mankind.
- H. Therefore, this book was written for churches that were living under a government that prefigured that of Antichrist, and were under the shadow of imperial persecution.
- I. The imminent danger of legal repression certainly became a threat to their continued existence in the world, making the need for encouragement very necessary.
- J. Because of the prevailing uncertainty, this revelation was provided to keep them from succumbing to despair and consequently abandoning their faith in God's plan.
- K. Beyond that, there is an element of warning in this book that is designed to alert them to the subtle dangers of internal apostasy.
- L. They are encouraged to focus on the reality that Christ is coming to establish His kingdom, judge the church and world in righteousness, and reward those that are faithful.
- M. John specifically addresses his comments in verse 4 to *the seven churches that are in Asia*, which are listed individually in verse 11.
 1. There is no other sound interpretation that does not recognize that these are seven literal local churches that existed in Asia Minor at the time of writing.
 2. The great circular road that ran between them linked these seven churches, and their order in the book of Revelation is the same order as their appearance on the road.



3. Further, the fact that the author has authority over more than one local church is another definitive proof of his apostleship.

- N. However, based on the introductory comment in Revelation 1:1, we are right to recognize that this correspondence is not limited to the seven initial churches, but is written for any and all living believers that comprise part of the Church.
- O. The order of the Revelation is clearly seen in that it originated from the Father, was given to the Son, sent by an angel to John the Apostle, and finally inscripturated for the edification of believers.

VII. Schools of interpretation.

- A. While the book of Revelation is undoubtedly designed to reveal, one must remember that God hides the truth from those He does not want to see it.
- B. Therefore, we should not be surprised to find that there is hardly a consensus on this book with so many difficult and obscure references and symbols.
- C. There are primarily four main schools of interpretation that appear in the historic attempts to explain the meaning of this book.
- D. The first is the Preterist School, which regards the Revelation as descriptive of the historic conditions of the Asian churches at the end of the 1st century AD.
 - 1. The book of Revelation is then designed to use veiled language to describe the events of John's time in order to encourage believers in their time of persecution.
 - 2. This has the obvious disadvantage of limiting the relevance of the content to that period of history, since it is in no way predictive of the future.
 - 3. Babylon and the beasts refer to Rome, while the woman in chapter 12 refers to the persecuted Church.
 - 4. The various judgments are simply representations of natural calamities that occurred within the lifetime of John.
 - 5. This approach certainly does not do any justice to the predictive elements that we find in this book, almost ignoring the fact that Jesus Christ did not return as predicted.
 - 6. However, we would recognize that contemporary events at the time of writing were important, or its readers would not properly understand the imagery.
- E. The second type of interpretation is the historicist position that assumes that the Book of Revelation depicts the entire course of Christian history, from the time of the writer until the consummation of the plan of God.
 - 1. The various seals, trumpets, and bowls are regarded as chronologically successive, marking significant stages in the development of the Church.
 - 2. Therefore, with this method people will try to make sections of Revelation fit in with specific historical events.
 - 3. This view gained stature during the Reformation since it identified the Pope as the beast and the false prophet as the Catholic Church.
 - 4. This position is untenable because there will be (has been) a wide variation of interpretations through the ages, and one interpretation may be proven to be in error by subsequent events. *In fact, as many as 50 different views have evolved, based on the historical context of the expositor.*
 - 5. Further, this view seldom recognizes anything of the Church outside of Europe, concerning itself mainly with the period of the Middle Ages and the Reformation, having little to say about things that have developed since 1500 AD.
 - 6. This position argues that the book begins with the time of John and ends with the eternal state, demanding the natural progress of the book to concern intervening events.

- F.** The third form of interpretation is called the futurist and assigns all of the Revelation after the third chapter as events occurring after the end of the Church age.
1. This view sees the letters to the churches of Asia as being representative of seven distinct types of churches that are on the planet at any given time in the Church age.
 2. It views the rapture as occurring at the end of the Church age, with the translation of John from the earth to Heaven. Rev. 4:1
 3. The events of Revelation 6-19 then belong to Daniel's 70th week, a period of history when the Church has been removed as God's instrument and Israel has resumed her place.
 4. This accounts for why the term "*church*" is used nineteen times in the first three chapters, and is not mentioned again until the time of the wedding supper, being seen as the Bride of Christ. Rev. 19:7-9
 5. Therefore, none of the actions that are depicted during chapters 6-19 are applicable to the present time; it is really a preview of the final seven years just prior to the Second Advent.
 6. This view is more accurately called the *mostly-futuristic* view, since it allows for historical fulfillment in chapters 2 and 3, but looks to the future for the fulfillment of events beyond chapter 4.
 7. This view allows for the application and interpretation of symbols, but with a strict hermeneutic of comparing Scripture with Scripture, and not just current events.
 8. The major weakness of this school is that they tend to advocate a false view of imminence, resulting in the rejection of the ability to accurately identify the rapture generation.
- G.** The last general school of interpretation is called the idealist, which assumes that the visions of this book are not literal at all.
1. The visions simply represent the general conflict between good and evil, using figures that would have been familiar to Jews and Christians of the 1st century.
 2. This indicates that the book is applicable to all ages of the Church, since it really belongs to none of them.
 3. Many of the people that accept the idealist view fall into the theological category of amillennialism, the belief that there is no bodily return of Christ to planet earth to inaugurate His 1000 year reign.
 4. Some have recognized that this type of approach is much newer than some other approaches, and very difficult to distinguish from the allegorical interpretations from Alexandria since the symbols are spiritualized rather than interpreted as literal. (Clement and Origen)
- H.** For reasons outlined above, the historicist and idealist views seem untenable.
- I.** The preterist method of interpreting the book cannot adequately deal with the text as a prophetic piece whose many prophecies simply cannot be matched with any known fulfillment in the author's lifetime.
- J.** The association of the book with Jewish apocalyptic materials, while having some truth to it, is not completely adequate and remains an unreasonable ground for rejecting the futuristic aspects of the book.

VIII. The theology of Revelation.

- A.** Although this book is not designed to be a treatise on theology, it contains a very definite scheme of doctrine completely harmonious with the rest of the Bible.

- B.** There can be no question that the emphasis of the book is primarily, although not exclusively, related to the realm of eschatology (the study of last things).
- C.** Since this book is designed to provide us an explanation about how God will consummate His plan, we would expect that all the issues raised by the angelic conflict will be brought to a complete resolution in this book.
1. Various matters that are brought forth in the other 65 books of the Old Testament and New Testament find their ultimate explanation or consummation in this book.
 2. Genesis, the book of beginnings, and Revelation, the book revealing the endings, form the two bookends of the Bible; Genesis is the foundation and Revelation is the consummation of God's plan for all His creation.
 3. The following references to Genesis are clearly visible in the book of Revelation.
 - a. Original creation. Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11, 10:6
 - b. The garden of delight or paradise of God. Gen. 2:8; Rev. 2:7
 - c. The tree of life. Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2
 - d. The seed of the woman. Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:5,17
 - e. The old Serpent. Gen. 3:1; Rev. 12:9, 20:2
 - f. The Lion of the tribe of Judah. Gen. 49:9; Rev. 5:5
 - g. The twelve tribes of Israel. Gen. 49:28; Rev. 7:4-8
 - h. Sodom. Gen. 19; Rev. 11:8
 - i. Religious and political Babylon. Gen. 11; Rev. 17,18
 4. Genesis begins with God and a perfect creation and ends with Joseph in a coffin in Egypt; Revelation begins with the Church Age, details the final seven years of pre-2nd advent of human history, moves to the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ, and concludes with a return to perfection in the Eternal State.
 5. We find the final outcome of the angelic conflict, which began with Satan's arrogance and ends with his complete humiliation. Isa. 14:13-15; Rev. 20:10
 6. We see the final end of those that have rejected the plan of God over the centuries and their eternal torment as prophesied by Christ. Matt. 13:42; Rev. 20:15
 7. We find the issues raised by the fall of man resolved in a greater fashion than one might have thought possible.
 - a. The curse. Gen. 3:17; Rev. 22:3
 - b. Sorrow, pain, and death. Gen. 2:17, 3:18-19; Rev. 21:4
 - c. Restoration of the tree of life. Gen. 3:24; Rev. 22:14
 - d. In short, Jesus Christ has provided more for us than Adam lost in the fall; He not only restores the creation to the image of God, He removes the possibility of future failure.
 8. We find the resolution of the Church Age, the mystery dispensation, and see the Bride of Christ in her final glory. Eph. 5:26-27; Rev. 19:7-9
 9. We see the resurrection of God's earthly people, the Jews, and their exaltation in the Millennial Kingdom, fulfilling multitudes of Old Testament prophecies in this respect. Matt. 8:11; Rev. 20:6
 10. We see the destruction of the primary religious enemies of God, the Mother/Son cult, which began at the tower of Babel and is finally destroyed by the Antichrist. Gen. 11; Rev. 17
 11. We see the final disposition of the nations, including our own. Dan. 7:12; Rev. 18, 20:8-9, 21:24,26

- D.** One must recognize that since Revelation has a past element “*the things which you have seen*”, a current element “*the things which are*”, and a future element “*the things which will take place after these things*”, the theology of the book must incorporate a past, present, and future element as well. Rev. 1:19
- E.** The theology of the book of Revelation is not so much directly stated as it is implicit in the assumptions that the book makes.
- F.** The book of Revelation does not argue for the existence of the various people or events of which it speaks, it merely assumes that the reader has an understanding of these concepts.
1. God. Rev. 1:1
 2. The Trinity. Rev. 1:4-5
 3. The existence of angels and demons. Rev. 1:1, 9:11
 4. Various aspects of Christology. Rev. 1:5-6,17-18
 5. The reality of the Second Advent. Rev. 1:7
 6. Doctrine of suffering. Rev. 1:9. 2:8ff
 7. The doctrine of the importance of doctrine. Rev. 2:1ff
 8. Believer’s future place in God’s kingdom. Rev. 2:7,11,17 etc.
 9. The rapture. Rev. 4:1
 10. The existence of Satan, the angelic conflict, and Satan’s present possession of earth. Rev. 5, 12:4,7-9
 11. Daniel’s 70th week. Dan. 9:24-27; Rev. 3:10
 12. The Antichrist. Rev. 6:2, 13
 13. The spiritual restoration of the remnant. Rom. 11:25-31; Rev. 7
 14. The prophecy relating to Elijah. Mal. 4:5, Rev. 11:3
 15. The humanity of Messiah and His destiny. Rev. 12:5
 16. The doctrine of eternal torment for unbelievers. Isa. 66:24; Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 14:11
 17. Religious Babylon, the Mother/Son cult. Rev. 17
 18. Political Babylon, the most powerful nation in the last days. Rev. 18
 19. The Millennium, the earthly reign of Christ. Matt. 19:28, 25:31ff; Rev. 20:6
 20. The reality of the resurrection and the two distinct categories of humanity involved. Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:6,12-15
- G.** The theology of Revelation is strongly christological as it focuses on His unveiling and the establishment of His kingdom.
1. The historical reality that He was fully human.
 - a. He was a Jew from the tribe of Judah. Rev. 5:5
 - b. He had twelve apostles. Rev. 21:14
 - c. His cousin, John the Baptist, first identified him as the Lamb of God. Jn. 1:36; Rev. 5:6
 - d. He was crucified in Jerusalem. Rev. 11:8
 - e. He rose from the dead. Jn. 20:8-9; Rev. 1:5,18
 2. His present exaltation is documented according to prophecy.
 - a. Began with the resurrection. Ps. 2:7-9
 - b. Followed by the ascension. Acts 1:9; Eph. 4:9-10
 - c. His session. Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34; Rev. 3:21
 - d. His authority over the Church. Eph. 1:22-23; Rev. 1:4-5, 2:1,7 etc.
 - e. His authority over the nations. Rev. 2:26, 12:5, 15:3
 3. His future exaltation.
 - a. As heir to the throne of David. 2Sam. 7:12-13; Isa. 11:1; Rev. 5:5
 - b. His destruction of His enemies. Zech. 12:9; Rev. 19:15-16

- c. His function as Judge of the human race. Jn. 5:27; Acts 10:42, 17:31
- d. His eternal reputation and universal recognition. Phil. 2:9-11

IX. Structural divisions and general outline of Revelation.

- A.** Most interpreters have recognized that the book of Revelation is varied and complex in its structure; however, there are a number of different structural divisions clearly present.
- B.** The first main structural division that must be addressed is found in the first chapter and deals with the division of the book according to linear time—past, present, future. Rev. 1:19
 - 1. *The things which you have seen.* Rev. 1:20
 - 2. *The things which are.* Rev. 2:1-3:22
 - 3. *The things which are about to become after these things.* Rev. 4-22
- C.** This general outline must be understood before the interpreter can hope to arrive at a correct exegetical explanation of the text, since failure to place things in their proper time frame yields only confusion.
- D.** John uses the Greek phrase *meta tau/ta* (*meta tauta—after these things*) nine times in this book, and each usage advances the Revelation chronologically. Rev.1:19; 4:1 (2x); 7:9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3
- E.** Another form of division is seen in the book by the repetition of certain phrases that interpreters have viewed as being exegetically significant.
 - 1. The first is the phrase “*in the Spirit*”, which is found in Revelation 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, and 21:10.
 - 2. John was transported four times into a new state of conscious awareness where spiritual realities were disclosed to him.
 - 3. The contrasts and comparisons between these four phrases indicate that they exist in two pairs.
 - a. Each member of the first pair is introduced by the voice of the Lord Himself. Rev. 1:10, 4:2
 - b. Each member of the second pair is introduced by one of the seven angels that had the final seven plagues. Rev. 17:1, 21:9
 - c. The first pair contrasts Patmos, the island of exile where John was suffering under persecution, with Heaven, where he sees the redeemed and the Lord fulfilling His destiny.
 - d. The second pair contrasts the Mother/Son cult, the greatest of Satan’s false religions, with the redeemed inhabitants of the true city of God, the New Jerusalem.
 - 1. While the phrases are not absolutely identical, the phrases that contain the words *thunders, lightning, voices* are sufficiently similar to warrant a comparison. Rev. 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, 16:18
 - a. The last three of these respectively mark the conclusion of the judgments of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls, but these are simply used to denote the preparation for or execution of God’s justice.
 - b. Just as the ominous sights and sounds of an approaching tornado prefigure the catastrophe that is about to strike.
 - c. The first deals with the impending judgment following the rapture.
 - d. The second deals with the impending judgement of the Great Tribulation.
 - e. The third and fourth certainly appear to be concurrent, coming at the conclusion of Daniel’s 70th week.

2. The next phrase that is repeated quite often in this book, “*I saw/and I saw*”, is not used as much to divide the book as to stress the reality that John was an eyewitness to the truths which he records.
- F.** Numerical structure is obviously quite important to this book, as seen in the consistent use of certain numbers, particularly the repeated use (55X) of the number seven.
- G.** Seven is the number of completeness and is used to denote that which is complete, total or even perfect.
1. Seven horns, perfect power.
 2. Seven eyes, perfect knowledge.
 3. Seven spirits, perfection of the Holy Spirit.
 4. Seven churches, complete nature of the Church at any time in history.
- H.** The theological uncertainty and bias of some interpreters can be seen in how they approach these numbers, suggesting wrongly that “*finding a deeper meaning to these numbers can be dangerous. The ten horns of the beast are ten kings, we should not try to identify the ten kings because ten is a symbolic number meaning complete, it could therefore mean 10, 14, 16, etc. One can be quite sure that 1000 years does not mean a thousand years but simply a complete period of time as defined by God.*”
- I.** General outline.
1. Prologue. 1:1-3
 2. Address. 1:4-8
 3. Historic encounter with resurrected God/Man. 1:9-20 *The things which you have seen.*
 4. Communications to the seven churches. 2:1-3:22 *The things which are.*
 5. The rapture and new perspective from Heaven. 4:1-5:14 *The things which shall take place after these things.*
 6. The seal judgments. 6:1-17
 7. Parenthetic section dealing with Jewish remnant and Gentile martyrs. 7:1-17
 8. The trumpet judgments. 8:1-11:19
 9. The sign of national Israel. 12:1-17
 10. The beast and false prophet. 13:1-18
 11. The victorious 144,000. 14:1-20
 12. The bowl judgments. 15:1-16:21
 13. Religious Babylon. 17:1-18
 14. Political Babylon. 18:1-19:7
 15. Wedding supper, 2nd Advent, Armageddon. 19:8-21
 16. Millennial conditions. 20:1-10
 17. Judgment of unbelievers. 20:11-15
 18. New creation. 21:1-22:5
 19. Concluding exhortations. 22:6-21