

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

- Title:** The Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1)
“revelation”—*apokalupsis*: disclosure, unveiling
(The book of Revelation is the disclosure
from Jesus,
about Jesus,
belonging to Jesus Christ.)
- Theme:** The Majesty and Glory of the Warrior Lamb of God
- Author:** The Apostle John (1:1, 4)
- Date of Writing:** c. A. D. 90–96
- Purpose:** “To show . . . things which must shortly come to pass” (1:1;
cf. also 1:19)
- Promise:** Blessing for those who read and heed (1:3)
- Outline:** (1:19)
- I. *The Past*: “the things which thou hast seen” (chapter 1)
 - II. *The Present*: “the things which are” (chapters 2, 3)
 - III. *The Future*: “the things which shall be hereafter” (chapters 4-22)

Revelation
The Great Unveiling of Jesus Christ

Things you 1 have seen		Things which 2 are 3	Things which shall be hereafter 4				22						
Prologue (1:1-8)	Christ of the Churches (1:9-20)	Ephesus (2:1-7)	The Lord who is our Creator (4:1-11)	The Lamb who is our Saviour (5:1-14)	← 7 Seals →		Babylon Destroyed (17:1-18:24)	Marriage Supper and Second Coming (19:1-21)	Millennial Kingdom (20:1-6)	Final Rebellion and Satan's Defeat (20:7-10)	Great White Throne and Lake of Fire (20:11-15)	New Heaven, Earth and Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)	Epilogue: The Final Invitation (22:6-21)
		Smyrna (2:8-11)			7 th Seal is 7 Trumpets →	7 th Trumpet is 7 Bowls →							
		Pergamum (2:12-17)			Salvation of Jews and Gentiles								
		Thyatira (2:18-29)			Demon Armies Released								
		Sardis (3:1-6)			Two Witnesses								
		Philadelphia (3:7-13)			The Beast								
		Laodicea (3:14-22)			The False Prophet								
		7 Letter to 7 Churches			Armageddon								
					One World Government								
					One World Economy								
					One World Religion								
					Partial Judgments	More Severe Judgments	Climatic Judgments						
"In the Spirit" (1:10)		"In the Spirit" (4:2)		"In the Spirit" (17:3)		"In the Spirit" (21:10)							
Key verse: "Write the things which you have seen...which are...and which shall be" (1:19)													

Key words: Lamb (29); Throne (44)

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

I. Authorship (Authenticity/Genuineness)

A. The traditional view is that the Apostle John, the brother of James, both of whom were sons of Zebedee, was the author of the final book of the Bible.

1. The author calls himself John, the slave of Jesus Christ (1:1, 4) and “I, John” (1:9; 22:8) without any further qualification. His treatment of the seven churches in Asia suggests that he was a man of acknowledged apostolic authority.
2. The external evidence for Johannine authorship is both strong and early. For example: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue 81* from Ephesus (ca. A.D. 130) and Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* from Gaul (ca. A.D. 185), both affirm John the apostle as the author. Irenaeus knew Polycarp (d. A.D. 155), who was a personal disciple of the Apostle John (*Against Heresies* 3.3.4). This is significant evidence.
3. The internal evidence presents important considerations that are difficult to explain unless the author was the Apostle John
 - a. He knows and is known fully by the seven Asian churches.
 - b. He prophesies in his own name (not a pseudonym) and is conscious of divine inspiration (cf. 1:1, 11, 19; 10:10; 12:6-9).
 - c. There are similarities in the description of John in the Synoptic Gospels and the Revelation.
 - d. There are similarities between Revelation and the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles.

B. Objections to the traditional view

1. Dionysius of Alexandria (c. A.D. 264) denied the apostolic authorship of John based upon a comparison of Revelation with the Gospel of John. He noted linguistic, stylistic, and conceptual differences. Modern objections build on these. **Response:** There are also significant similarities, and the difference in genre (*John* is a Gospel, and *Revelation* is an apocalypse) accounts for much of the difference.
2. Revelation contains marked grammatical irregularities in comparison to John's Gospel. **Response:** This is correct, but these irregularities are best accounted for by (1) the nature of apocalyptic literature, and (2) the fact John may have had an amanuensis (secretary) when he wrote the gospel and epistles, but most certainly did not when he wrote the Revelation as a prisoner on the island of Patmos.
3. The author of Revelation makes no claim of apostolic authority nor does he allude to incidents in the Gospel or to having known Jesus Christ in the flesh. Thus, it is argued, he was not an eyewitness, i.e., an apostle. **Response:** The purpose of Revelation is eschatological and apocalyptic. One would not expect it to address the Jesus who walked with the disciples for three years.
4. The differences between Revelation and the other Johannine literature far outweigh the similarities. **Response:** Actually, Revelation is probably more like the gospel and epistles of John than any other books of the New Testament.
5. There is conflicting tradition regarding the date of the Apostle John's death—the stronger tradition maintains John lived to a very old age at Ephesus (ca. A.D. 96), but another tradition (accepted by some) claims that he was martyred at the same time as his brother James (ca. A.D. 44) or at least before A.D. 70. **Response:** This later tradition is weak and, therefore, it is not the more defensible position.

C. Alternative theories on authorship

1. John the Elder. This theory stems from Papias' reference to John the Elder (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.4) and Dionysius' statement about a second John at Ephesus (cf. Eusebius, *H.E.*, 7.25.16). Eusebius (and various modern scholars) concludes that there were two Johns at Ephesus—the Apostle John and John the Elder. To the latter he attributed the authorship of Revelation. However, the theory is not convincing, and their negative perspective of Revelation (they were amillennial) probably influenced their argument.
2. John the Prophet. R. H. Charles proposed this third John because he had attributed the Johannine epistles to John the Elder and the Gospel of John to John the Apostle. This theory also is weakly supported.
3. An Intentional Pseudonym. Some unknown author appropriated John's name to add support to his writing. This view raises more problems than it solves, and there is little evidence to support the view that the early church would have accepted a pseudepigraphical (false) writing.

D. In conclusion, the external evidence strongly supports the traditional view that John the apostle is the author and the internal difficulties can be satisfactorily resolved without rejecting it. Hence, John authored Revelation and five of our New Testament books.

II. Origin and Date

A. Traditional view: Revelation was written from the island of Patmos (1:9; an island in the Aegean Sea about 70 miles SW of Ephesus) where John had been exiled during the latter part of the reign of Emperor Domitian, who ruled from A.D. 81-96. This would place the date of writing c. A.D. 90-96.

1. The earliest and weightiest external witness attest this date. For example: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.30.3.

2. Other arguments in favor of this view are: (a) the historical background of imperial persecutions; (b) the condition of the churches in Asia—marked spiritual deterioration in some cases; (c) the relationship of Revelation to other NT writings.

B. Alternative views

1. During the latter part or just after Nero's reign, who was Roman emperor from A.D. 54-68. This view suggests a date of writing c. A.D. 66-69.
2. During the reign of Vespasian (A.D. 70-80).

C. Conclusion: The external evidence and also the internal evidence would point to the Domitian dating ca. A.D. 90-96.

III. Destination

- A. The immediate destination is the seven local churches in the Roman province of Asia (cf. 1:4, 11).
- B. The representative character of the seven churches (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) and the prophetic message of the whole book indicate that it was intended for a much wider Christian audience, the universal Church at large.

IV. Occasion (Historical Setting) and Purpose

A. The occasion

1. John records that he wrote his book at the direct command of the Lord who appeared to him (1:10-11, 19). This is the only instance in the NT in which a writer states this as his reason for writing.
2. The historical situation facing the churches/Church was also an important factor—persecution from without and compromise from within.

B. The purpose: a prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ in terms of His future final triumph as Lord of lords and the ethical implications of this for the present.

1. It would help the original readers understand their own times in light of the victorious and triumphant future.
2. It would help all future generations of Christians as a message of hope to counteract spiritual deterioration, to encourage perseverance and to fortify them with the assurance of Christ's ultimate victory.

V. Literary Structure, Characteristics, Unity

A. Revelation is a combination of three literary types:

1. Apocalyptic—a message expressed in an apocalyptic mode involves the use of cryptic, richly symbolic language portraying the dramatic end time vindication and triumph of God and His people.
2. Prophecy—God's word of proclamation is directed to His people in the face of intense persecution from without and spiritual decline from within.
3. Epistle—a letter is addressed to the needs of specific churches (cf. 1:4-7; chs. 2-3; 22:21).

B. Characteristics

1. Rich, representative symbolism—some of it familiar, some strange and bizarre—drawn from all areas of creation and life. Some of the symbols are explained in other passages of the Bible, especially the OT, and some are left unexplained presumably because (1) the author expected his readers to understand them (cf. 13:18; 17:9), and (2) the mystery of the events described was intentional.

2. Though Revelation is full of OT images, language and allusions, there is not a single direct citation from the OT. John made free use of OT material. He draws heavily from Daniel and Zechariah.
3. The book has a “one-world” outlook—a world united in rebellion against God over which He will triumph and establish His sovereign rule on earth.
4. It is a “revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1) both in judgment and in victory, which is in contrast to Jewish apocalyptic writings.

C. Unity

1. The traditional view maintains that that author (John) is directly responsible for all the material in the book.
2. Some interpretations hold that the book has several incongruities and adjacent passages that are unrelated to each other. Consequently, they propose various kinds of theories to explain this: (a) compilation theories; (b) revision of a basic document theory; and (c) interpolation theories. None of these theories is sufficiently strong to overturn the traditional view.

VI. Special Problems/Issues

A. The literary structure of Revelation (its outline)

1. The Lord’s command to John in 1:19 provides an internal key to the organizational plan of the book as a whole.
 - a. “the things which you saw,” 1:9-20 (past)
 - b. “the things which are,” 2:1 – 3:22 (present)
 - c. “the things which shall come to pass,” chapters 4-22 (future)
2. The intended relationship of the three series of seven judgments—seals, trumpets, bowls—is debated. There are three major views:

- a. concurrent fulfillment view
 - * b. partially concurrent fulfillment view
 - c. consecutive fulfillment view
- (see accompanying charts)

B. The method for interpreting Revelation (cf. Hiebert, 3:263-68)

Interpreters follow one (or more) of the four main approaches to understanding Revelation. Debate largely centers around chapters 4-20. Chapter 20 and the issue of the millennium is especially debated. The method adopted largely determines one's interpretation. See the accompanying chart for a brief description of these views. The futurist perspective is the predominant one, especially concerning chapters 4-22.

C. The millennium in Revelation.

Revelation 20 is crucial. The premillennial view that sees Christ returning (19:11-21) before the millennium (20:1-6) is the better interpretive position.

Four Basic Interpretive Approaches to Revelation

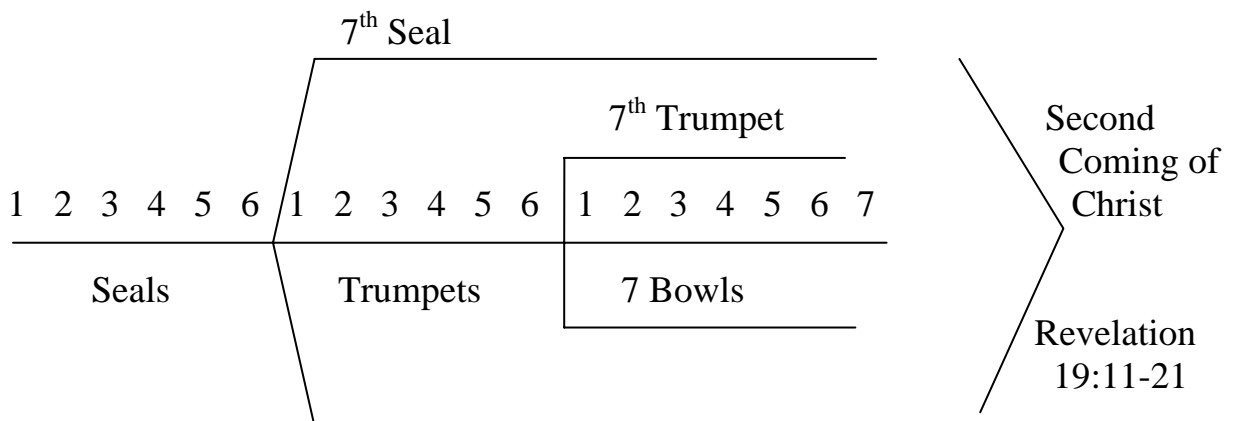
Interpretive Method	Basic Thesis	Major Advocates	Evaluation
<p>PRETERIST</p> <p>(USUALLY POSTMILLENNIAL)</p>	<p>All the events of Revelation were fulfilled during the days of either Nero or Domitian. The Book is concerned with only the events of the first century.</p>	<p>This view was developed by the JESUITS and is still held by many in the Roman Church and a growing number of Protestants.</p>	<p>The message of the Book is primarily for believers of the first century with no message for later generations.</p>
<p>HISTORICIST</p> <p><u>POSTMILLENNIALISM</u></p> <p>THE BELIEF THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIAL AGE.</p>	<p>Revelation is a panorama of church history from the initiation of the apostolic era to the consummation of the age.</p>	<p>This position was espoused by Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and most of the Reformers, except for the Anabaptists.</p>	<p>The multiplicity of interpretation of metaphors and symbols quickly becomes subjective and, therefore, problematic. No two historicists agree.</p>
<p>IDEALIST</p> <p><u>AMILLENNIALISM</u></p> <p>THE BELIEF THAT THERE WILL BE NO LITERAL MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH</p>	<p>The Apocalypse is not to be seen as a representation of actual events, whether past or future. The Book is viewed as symbol or metaphor to depict the great struggle between good and evil</p>	<p>This concept was spawned in the Alexandrian school of philosophy and theology by Origen (and later Augustine) and is maintained by a host of liberal, and some conservative Bible scholars today.</p>	<p>The wedding of Greek philosophy to Christian theology has seldom created a fruitful union. This seems to be the case in this method. The early Fathers of the church are overwhelming in their support of Revelation as representing actual history in some sense.</p>
<p>FUTURIST</p> <p><u>PREMILLENNIALISM</u></p> <p>THE BELIEF THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN TO USHER IN THE MILLENNIAL AGE ON THE EARTH PRIOR TO THE ETERNAL STATE</p>	<p>Beginning with chapter four or six, the events described belong to the future age and constitute a marvelous prophecy of God's program for the consummation of the age.</p>	<p>This view has wide acceptance among evangelicals around the earth. Anabaptists of the Reformation era were futurists. Numerous Church Fathers from the initial Christian centuries also were advocates.</p>	<p>The futurists perspective is harmonious with the message of the entire Bible. Far fewer interpretive enigmas are engendered by this approach.</p>

The Tribulation in Revelation (Chapters 6 – 19)

These chapters record the horrifying events of what is called “The Tribulation.” Though this seven-year period of time is one of retribution upon a world that has rejected the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it is also a time of redemption personally (ch. 7) and cosmically (ch. 20). The events of the tribulation center or focus primarily upon three series of seven judgments:

The Seals	6:1-17
The Trumpets	8:1 – 9:21
The Bowls	16:1-17

These series of judgments are best interpreted in their relationship to one another as partially concurrent. This is sometimes called the telescopic view. This approach understands the seventh seal to introduce and contain the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet to introduce and contain the seven bowls. The seven trumpets, therefore, are the seventh seal, and the seven bowls are the seventh trumpet. This would indicate both an increase in intensity and a greater rapidity of the judgments as the end of the period approaches. The diagram below is helpful in understanding this arrangement.



**CONTENT AND CORRELATION OF THE
JUDGMENTS OF THE 7 SEALS, 7 TRUMPETS, AND 7 BOWLS**

Number	The 7 Seals Opened by the Lamb of God	The 7 Trumpets Blown by seven angels	The 7 Bowls Poured out by seven angels
1	White horse: conqueror (Antichrist ?)	Hail and fire; 1/3 of vegetation burned up	Sores
2	Red horse: war	Mountain of fire; 1/3 of creatures in sea destroyed	Sea becomes blood; all marine life dies
3	Black horse: famine	Star called wormwood falls; 1/3 of fresh water poisoned	Fresh water turned to blood
4	Pale horse: death (1/4 of earth's population killed)	Partial darkness; 1/3 of sun, moon, and stars	Scorching sun burns men
	HIATUS: Last three trumpets announced as woes		
5	Martyrs comforted	Woe #1: Angel releases locusts (demons) from abyss	Darkness on beast's kingdom
6	Great day of wrath: earthquake, signs in heaven	Woe #2: Four angels loosed at Euphrates (1/3 of earth's population killed)	Euphrates dries up; kings assemble for war at Armageddon
	HIATUS: Sealing of 144,000	HIATUS: Mystery of God to be concluded with seventh trumpet	
7	1/2 hour of silence; introduction of 7 trumpets	Announcement of the Lord's victory	Severe earthquake and great hail

A Run Through Revelation: An Overview

- I. Introduction: The Christ of Communication (1:1-8)
(He is the God who reveals His will to His people.)

- II. *Vision 1: The Christ of the Churches* (1:9 – 3:22)
(He is the God who rebukes and refreshes His churches.)
 - A. To Ephesus He says, “Remember your first love.” (2:1-7)
 - B. To Smyrna He says, “remain faithful to your God.” (2:8-11)
 - C. To Pergumum He says, “repent of false teaching.” (2:12-17)
 - D. To Thyatara He says, “remain fast among false teachings.” (2:18-29)
 - E. To Sardis He says, “repent from incomplete service.” (3:1-6)
 - F. To Philadelphia He says, “rest in the promise of God.” (3:7-13)
 - G. To Laodicea He says, “repent from your indifference.” (3:14-22)

- III. *Vision 2: The Christ of the Cosmos* (4:1 – 16:21)
(He is the God who reclaims the earth for His kingdom.)
 - A. The Vision in Heaven (4:1 – 5:14)
 - B. The Destruction on the Earth (6:1 – 16:21)
 - 1. The seal judgments (6:1-17)
Detailed explanation (7:1-17)
The 144,000 Jewish Evangelists
 - 2. The trumpet judgments (8:1 – 9:21)
Detailed explanation (10:1 – 15:8)
The two witnesses (10:1 – 11:18)
The war in heaven (11:19 – 12:17)
The beast and false prophet (13:1-18)
A description of the end (14:1 – 15:8)

- 3. The bowl judgments (16:1-21)
- IV. *Vision 3: The Christ of Conquest* (17:1-18)
(He is the God who repays the ungodly for their sin.)
 - A. Judgment on false religion (17:1-18)
 - B. Judgment on evil commercialism (18:1-24)
 - C. Justice in Christ's return to the earth (19:1-21)
 - D. Justice in Christ's reign on the earth (20:1-6)
 - E. Justice in Christ's consignment of Satan and sinners to the Lake of Fire (20:7-15)
 - F. Joy in Christ's call of His saints to the new heaven and new earth (21:1-8)
- V. *Vision 4: The Christ of Consummation* (21:9 – 22:5)
(He is the God who reigns for all eternity.)
 - A. The description of eternity (21:9-27)
 - B. The delights of eternity (22:1-5)
- VI. *Conclusion: The Christ of Challenge* (22:6-21)
(He is the God who requests all to come to Him.)
 - A. He invites the church. (22:6-9)
 - B. He invites the world. (22:10-19)
 - C. He invites the individual believer. (22:20-21)

The Lamb Upon The Throne
(Prelude to Armageddon)
Revelation 5:1-14

I. Jesus Christ is the Lord of History (5:1-5)

- A. He is Lord because of God's plan (5:1)
(cf. chapters 6-22; a time of retribution, redemption, and restoration)
- B. He is Lord because of heaven's problem (5:2-4)
- C. He is Lord because of His power (5:5)
(cf. Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:1, 10)

II. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Victory (5:6-7)

- A. He is victorious because He was slain (5:6)
- B. He is victorious because He is standing (5:6)
- C. He is victorious because He is strong (5:6)
- D. He is victorious because He is searching (5:6)
- E. He is victorious because He is sovereign (5:6)

III. Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory (5:8-14)

- A. He is praised by the saints (5:8-10)
- B. He is praised by the angels (5:11-12)
- C. He is praised by all creation (5:13-14)