

New Testament Survey

Class 33: Revelation

4 Main Interpretative Approaches to Revelation:

1. Futurist Interpretation
2. Historicist Interpretation
3. Partial Preterist Interpretation
4. Idealist Interpretation

What is the purpose of Revelation? Why did Jesus reveal these things to the church?

1. **Revelation is for all Christians:** Predictions about the future are important, but we must not fail to apply the revelation to our present situation. (conviction of sin, correction of false teaching, warning against compromise, encouragement to persevere in our faith in Christ, hope to stand firm in the face of opposition, help for remaining humble when mistreated, strength to hold fast to Christ when tempted)
2. **Be encouraged:** Revelation is the victory cry of God, the Glorious One, over his enemies.
3. **A framework for patience in suffering:** Contra any form of triumphalism or attempt to advance the cause of Christ by force, the saints “conquer by the word of their testimony,” that is, public acknowledgement that Jesus is worthy, because “they loved not their lives even unto death” (Rev 12:11), they are willing to die for Christ if necessary. Only God takes vengeance on the enemies of the saints (Rev 6:10; 16:6; 19:2).
4. **Expectation of spiritual decline:** Physical suffering serves as a warning to turn from sin, and yet people refuse to repent and turn to God (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9-11)

Next Week: The Canon of the NT (final class!)

The challenge of discerning a timeline in Revelation

The scenes described in Revelation are not necessarily chronological, but appear to be recapitulations (doubling back to retell the same story):

- The stars fall from the sky in 6:13, but in 8:12 the stars are still in the sky but become darkened
- Satan is thrown down to earth in Rev 12:9-10; 13, which is what Jesus saw when his disciples went on their mission in Luke 10:17-20.
- The Exodus plagues are unleashed by the trumpets (Rev 8-11) and then again by the bowls (15-16)
- God has made (past tense) his followers a kingdom and priests (Rev 1:6; 5:10) and yet he says that he will make them (future tense) into priests that will reign with Him (Rev 20:6).
- Repetition of 3.5 years = 42 months = 1,260 days

These highly visual descriptions are often a way of viewing the same scene from multiple angles. (compare recapitulations in Daniel and Ezekiel, as well as other prophets)

Outline of Revelation

1. Introduction of John and revelation from Jesus (Rev 1)
2. Seven letters to seven churches (Rev 2-3)
3. Vision of throne room: worship! (Rev (4:1-11)
4. Seven seals on a scroll (Rev 5:1-8:1)
5. Seven trumpets (Rev 8:2-11:19)
6. The dragon, the woman, and the beasts (Rev 12-14)
7. Seven bowls of wrath (Rev 15-16)
8. The fall of the harlot Babylon (Rev 17-18)
9. The marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19)
10. The millennium (Rev 20)
11. New creation hope (Rev 21-22)