

Revelation:

Introduction:

- This is a book about the victory of Jesus
- This book talks about how Christ wins
- These 2 words are the important things about this book
- This book isn't designed to be scary or intimidating
- This book should bring hope
- That Jesus is victorious
- The overall theme of this book is worship
- This is a worship book
- If Christ is victorious, then why turn anywhere else
- Will you worship the lamb or worship the beast
- The lamb is victorious, so why would you worship the beast
- There are 4 or 5 different views about this book
- There are also 3 or 4 views just on Chapter 20
- They can't all be wrong, but they can't all be right since they are different
- How do we use this book to bring unity beyond all the differences
- How do we bring unity in the book of Revelation

Historical Background

- The authorship is John, who writes this to the churches
- Revelation doesn't tell us who this John is
- Traditionally, it is thought to be John the disciple, the brother of James, son of Zebedee.
- One of the 12
- One of the inner 3
- That we see in the synoptic gospels
- That is what most people think
- The reality is that we are not 100 percent sure it is him.
- All we know is that probably the author of the gospel of John and the Apocalypse of John is the same
- There are many reasons for that

## Similarities between John and Revelation

- 1) Jesus as “logos” (Jn. 1:1& Rev 19:3)
- 2) Jesus the Lamb (Jn. 1:29 & Rev 5:6)
- 3) Water of Life (Jn 7:37& Rev 22:17)
- 4) “Alethinos” (true) (Jn. 9 times; 1 Jn 4 times; Rev 10 times; rest of the NT 4 times)
- 5) Both books refer to Zechariah 12:10

## Differences between John and Revelation

- The book of John is **good Greek**; the book of Revelation is **very bad Greek**
- So, hence why people ask, can this be the same author
- Although they have these similarities
- It could be easily done, due to the situation involved
- Revelation is written from imprisonment
- The gospel isn't
- It is very common for writers, even for educated people like Paul, to have help from scribes writing letters for them
- Like John, a Galilean or from Jerusalem
- He wasn't highly educated in the Greek
- So naturally, he had help writing the gospel
- If Paul had to do so, so did John
- There wouldn't be many scribes in prison helping him
- So, it would conclude that this is the natural Greek of John

## Who was John

- We have 2 options
- The traditional view
- That he is the beloved disciple who is talked about in John's gospel, the son of Zebedee
- The second view from the early church would describe him as John the Elder
- Who is listed in the disciple list along with John the beloved
- So, hence 2 Johns
- So, there is this character that is talked about as being the author of Revelation and being the beloved disciple
- Probably wouldn't be John the fisherman

- He would be more likely to be John living in Jerusalem
- A part of the high priest family,
- Some people's reasons for allowing Peter into the courtyard
- Ex. (in the trail of Jesus in the high priest's house)
- So, there is a difference in opinion in which disciple He is
- John the disciple or John the elder
- He is the beloved disciple, but it's not clear if it's 100 percent that it's the son of Zebedee

#### When it was written

- There are 2 ideas about when it was written
- 60s ad or the 90s first century
- This depends on who is persecuting the church
- Who was the persecutor
- Is it Emperor Nero in the 60s or Domitian in the 90s
- Most scholars think it is Domitian in the 90s
- In more recent times, Domitian would be the correct
- Most scholars would believe that John wrote this in the 90s
- During the persecution of Domitian's reign
- Both of these 2 people are the bad guys
- If you want to say who the beast is
- Its either Nero or Domitian
- In terms of the first century
- The emperor is persecuting the church.

#### Who is it written to

- It is written to 7 churches (Pergamum, Smyrna, Ephesus, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)
- In the Roman province of Asia
- We know these are not the only 7 churches in Asia
- Colosi, Throes, Myelitis
- That we know from Acts and the New Testament letters
- There are more churches than these 7
- It is unknown why John is writing specifically to these 7
- What we do know
- John is identified as living in Ephesus

- Bringing Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Why Ephesus
- Ephesus was the mother church for the region
- It's where Paul did his ministry
- Where the gospel spread all over the province of Asia
- It's like Ephesus is the mother church, then you have daughter churches
- 7 is a significant number for the Jews
- It means completion
- Or perfection
- John might be talking about the complete church by choosing 7
- What we do know
- We have 7 churches in the province of Asia that John is connected to
- Through his connection through Ephesus
- That he is writing to
- Giving his visions to

#### Events that happened in the 1 century

- The fire of Rome, 64 AD
- We don't know how or who started it
- A huge part of Rome burned down
- Nero, the emperor, was quickly blamed
- Partly because he wanted to rebuild Rome
- Which he did
- So, what Nero does
- He deflects the blame to an unpopular group at the time
- He blames the church in Rome for the fire
- The fury of the city and the Roman state fall upon the church
- Mostly in Rome
- That could then affect the rest of the region or the emperor
- We have a short 3 ½ years of violent persecution
- Many are imprisoned
- Many are Murdered
- Including Peter and Paul die during this time
- So the idea of the blood of the Martyrs
- Comes from this event

- The first great mass persecution
- Between the state of Rome and the church.
- Another Event is the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD
- This happened because
- The zealots rebelled against Roman rule
- They started one of the longest and biggest rebellions in Roman history
- So, the Romans come back and retake the land and take Jerusalem
- While they are taking over Jerusalem
- Nero kills himself
- Then they need a new emperor
- There is a civil war happening
- Because they had 4 emperors in one year
- The last one stabilizes the empire
- Then send his son Titus to renew the empire
- This happens for 3 ½ years
- This is happening inside the city.
- The Zealots are doing terrible things inside the temple and in the city
- The Romans were attacking outside the city
- The Romans got in and it's said that they were so disgusted by what happened
- They destroyed Jerusalem and the temple
- Jesus had already prophesied this before it had happened in Mk.13; Matthew 24; Luke 21
- Jesus tells the church, if you see these signs, get out
- If 2 are in a field, go
- The entire Jerusalem church was saved because they fled

#### The emperor's cult

- This happens before the 1<sup>st</sup> century
- It's a movement that is growing through the New Testament
- In ancient times, the Roman leader were never worshipped while they were alive
- That's how they looked at it
- All this changes with Augustus
- He made himself the chief priest of Rome
- He made himself also the chief priest of all religions
- So all religions had to pray for him and thank him

- This was a new way to control people through religion
- Now this change in culture
- Makes people's idea to look at just one figure for the Roman Empire
- This shift happened in the culture
- When they stopped praying for him but now praying to him
- They began to worship him
- Creating a cult by worshipping Rome and the Emperor
- This was extremely strong in Asia
- There were multiple temples created for them
- So this shift in culture made people think that they were more than humans
- This resembles a lot to Domitian
- He is the first emperor to demand to be worshipped
- He demands that people call him lord and god
- It became a law that people would have to say Cesar is lord
- You had to worship Domitian as a god
- So, these churches easily accepted this
- Which made it difficult for people believe in God alone

#### Types of Literature in Revelation

- There are 3 types of literature in Revelation
- It's a letter
- It's a normal first-century letter
- This is one half of the communications between
- The 7 churches and John
- We don't know what kind of communications happen between them
- There is a reason why this letter is written
- They are the intended audience
- The message is to them
- We must consider them more than us
- First for them, then to us
- This is also a prophetic letter
- For us, this is a letter of hope
- It is to encourage and build up the church
- The goal is to console and comfort them
- This is an apocalyptic writing
- Apocalyptic literature was big between 200 bc and 100 ad

- Apocalypse is the revealing
- It's a revelation of what is going on
- This is written in the poetic art form
- From the Old Testament
- Isaiah, Daniel, Ezequiel, Zechariah,
- All this is the background of the book of Revelation

#### Revelation is an Apocalyptic literature

- This word is used as an end-of-the-world event
- Apocalypse means unveiling
- To have your eyes open
- That's why in English it is translated to revelation
- An apocalypse is an event of unveiling
- **2 Kings 6:8-17 CSB**

<sup>8</sup> When the king of Aram was waging war against Israel, he conferred with his servants, "My camp will be at such and such a place."<sup>9</sup> But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel: "Be careful passing by this place, for the Arameans are going down there."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the king of Israel sent word to the place the man of God had told him about. The man of God repeatedly<sup>(a)</sup> warned the king, so the king would be on his guard.<sup>11</sup> The king of Aram was enraged because of this matter, and he called his servants and demanded of them, "Tell me, which one of us is for the king of Israel?"<sup>12</sup> One of his servants said, "No one, my lord the king. Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in your bedroom."<sup>13</sup> So the king said, "Go and see where he is, so I can send men to capture him." When he was told, "Elisha is in Dothan,"<sup>14</sup> he sent horses, chariots, and a massive army there. They went by night and surrounded the city.<sup>15</sup> When the servant of the man of God got up early and went out, he discovered an army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. So he asked Elisha, "Oh, my master, what are we to do?"<sup>16</sup> Elisha said, "Don't be afraid, for those who are with us outnumber those who are with them."<sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed, "Lord, please open his eyes and let him see." So the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw that the mountain was covered with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha

- Elisha is in a city called Dothan
- Vs 15 says this
- The servant is confused

- All he can see is what his natural eye can see
- So, Elisha prays in verse 17
- Open his eyes
- Elisha was the only one who could see it
- So he asked God for an apocalypse of his eyes
- This is what is happening in the first century
- Christians are being persecuted
- Domitian believed that because the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 A.D
- Yahweh caused Mount Vesuvius to erupt, destroying parts of the Romans empire
- Which now causes severe persecution
- But John says, when I got a revelation
- When I went to Heaven
- It feels like Domitian is in control
- It feels like the Roman Empire is on the throne
- Guess what happened
- When the Spirit of the Lord opened my eyes
- I saw that the lamb was on the throne
- This is to reveal that Jesus is Lord
- This is to show the Christian people that Jesus is in control
- Fare beyond what we see or feel in this current time
- Apocalyptic literature is Jewish literature that relies on images and symbols to provide hope during persecution
- It is not to be taken literally
- It is to provide hope to people who read it

4 main ways that people read the book of Revelation

- 1) The historical view- revelation is being unfolded in every historical time of the church
- 2) A Preterist view- They believe that most of the prophecies happened in the first 100 years of the church.
- 3) A Futuristic View- Where people would say, the locus in revelation is a helicopter, since there was nothing close to it in that time.
- 4) An Idealist view- a spiritual application of the book

John is writing from Ephesus, and to understand Revelation, we must understand what was happening at that time

- The first church in the 7 churches is Ephesus

- Ephesus is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important city in the Roman Empire
  - Ephesus is also the home of the largest gymnasium in the Roman Empire
  - There are some similarities between the book of Revelation and the Olympic Games
  - This is how the opening games would start during **Domitian's rule**
- 1) The presentation of the emperor, Ch. 1. The emperor would enter the arena
  - 2) A herald would give announcements, but he would give the achievements of all the things Caesar did
  - 3) Caesar would start making some pronouncements. Ex. to this city or to this region, saying I've heard you have done a good job, but I think you can do better in these areas, and this is what I'm going to do if you don't do better
  - 4) There were 24 legal religions in the Roman Empire, which means there were 24 priests who represented those religions. There was then an empirical song that was sung led by a chorus of 24 elders
  - 5) Another herald would open the scroll to officially open the games
  - 6) We would get chariot races with 4 horses, not a competitive race, but of ceremony, a black horse, a white horse, a red horse, then a pale or spotted horse.
  - 7) The trumpet would sound, and the games would begin
- All John is doing is taking the opening format of the ceremony of the Olympic Games and formatting it to the first 7 chapters of Revelation
  - The presentation of the emperor is the first half of Chapter 1 of Revelation
  - The herald that gives announcements and achievements is the second half of Chapter One of Revelation.
  - The pronouncement of Caesar to the 7 churches is found in Ch. 2 and 3.
  - The chorus of 24 priests had to wear white robes; they would sing the emperor song Ch. 4
  - A herald would open the games with the scroll Ch. 5
  - Chariot race Ch. 6
  - The trumpets would have the games begin in Rev. Ch 7

The church at this time is not trying to see how the world would end

- John is sharing the similarities because
- John is trying to have the church remain faithful during persecution
- John is using the Olympics because
- In the Olympics, you weren't representing yourself when you ran the race
- You are representing the strength of the god that you are running on behalf of
- So, in today's Olympics, you run to represent your country

- In the original Olympics, you're running to represent the God of your city
- the God of your region
- Here's what John is saying he's saying
- You need to run this race called life in such a way that you represent Yahweh well
- That you represent Jesus well, you need to be faithful in the midst of persecution
- You need to run your race in the arena of life so that God will be displayed
- So that the empire will get an apocalypse of the person of Jesus

### Hebrews 12:1-3 CSB

Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, <sup>2</sup> keeping our eyes on Jesus,<sup>1a</sup> the pioneer and perfecter<sup>1b</sup> of our faith. For the joy that lay before him,<sup>1c</sup> he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

### 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 CSB

<sup>24</sup> Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. <sup>25</sup> Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. <sup>26</sup> So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. <sup>27</sup> Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.