

Administrative Notes

Not every class has a handout, and some classes could have two or more handouts. For this reason, handouts are numbered sequentially by handout number in the order received. These numbers will not likely match the lecture/class number. Some classes will have no handouts at all, so for those classes only the audio file will be posted.

In order to conserve space on the host computer and time required to upload files to the host, audio files are in MP3 format with a single channel of audio (i.e., monaural).

There are two ways you may deal with these MP3 files:

- To listen to an MP3 file directly from your computer, simply click on the named file.
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- PC-type computer. Right click on the MP3 file name. Then after choosing where you want the downloaded file to be stored, click on your choice and the file will be downloaded.
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The Book of Revelation

Spring 2013

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The Returning King – A Guide to the Book of Revelation, by Vern S. Poythress

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Class 1**Introduction, Part 1****Understanding Revelation; Schools of Interpretation; Content and Style****I. Can We Understand the Book of Revelation?****The main points are clear.**

God rules history and will bring it to consummation in Christ.

Note: 1 Tim. 3:16–17 tells us that all Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting,

“The revelation of Jesus Christ” means that the book discloses rather than conceals its message.

But then why is the book so controversial and apparently difficult to understand?

Answer: In part because we get absorbed in the details and mix the big picture.

“Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book.”

II. Schools of Interpretation (Four main approaches)

The preterist view: believes that fulfillment occurred at the fall of Jerusalem (if Revelation was written in AD 67-68) and/or the fall of the Roman Empire.

Strength of preterist view: the connection of Revelation with the situation of the seven churches of chapters two and three.

The futurist view: believes that fulfillment will occur in a period of final crisis just before the Second Coming of Christ.

Strength of futurist view: even though there are “lesser” senses of Christ “coming” (for example in fellowship with his people or in various temporal judgments like the fall of Jerusalem), the Second Coming was the great hope of the early church and first-century Christians would have read Revelation with that in mind.

The historicist view: believes that 6:1 to 18:24 offers a basically chronological outline of the course of church history from the first century until the Second Coming.

The historicist view is the weakest of the various schools of interpretation.

The idealist view: believes that the scenes of Revelation depict principles of spiritual war, not specific events. These principles are operative throughout the church age and may have repeated embodiments.

Strengths of the idealist view:

It is addressed to “his servants” (1:1, 22:6) which includes all Christians of all time.

The seven churches stand for all churches, everywhere.

Since God is always the same, Satan’s counterfeiting will always be the same.

The “last times” encompasses the entire period between the first and second coming.

There is a common theological character to the entire church age.

Revelation is about theophany (God appearing). God appears climactically and finally at the time of the Second Coming, but even now he rules from his heavenly throne and is present with us.

What does it mean when it states that “the time is near”? (1:1,3;22:10)

Possible views:

John was wrong.

This refers to the beginning of fulfillments.

The “comings” referred to are not the Second Coming but lesser “comings” of Christ.

The meaning is more like “may be near” in the sense of imminence.

The nearness is a structural nearness referring to the whole church age.

“inaugurated eschatology” – focuses on the character of the times.

1 John 2:18 “Dear children, this is the last hour.”

III. Content: What are the major themes of Revelation?

God: God controls the course of history. He protects his people and punishes rebellion. He will bring his purposes to a final realization in the new heaven and the new earth.

Worship: The only proper response to such a great and loving God is to worship him.

The Lamb: In the realization of God’s purposes, the Lamb has the key role.

Theophany (God’s appearing): At the thematic center of all the visions stands the vision of God himself.

Spiritual War: Beneath the surface of history there is a great spiritual warfare going on.

Witness and Martyrdom; Reward and Punishment: God calls his people to be faithful, even unto death. Even though the saints may seem small, weak, and defeated in human eyes, full vindication is coming in God’s own time.

IV. Style: Apocalyptic Literature, but also Prophecy and Epistle