

# CONSUMMATION

What new thing did you learn from this week's reading?

What stood out the most to you from the reading?

Take a moment to read & reflect upon favorite passages from this week's part of the story?

## THE STORY CONTINUES

### Revelation

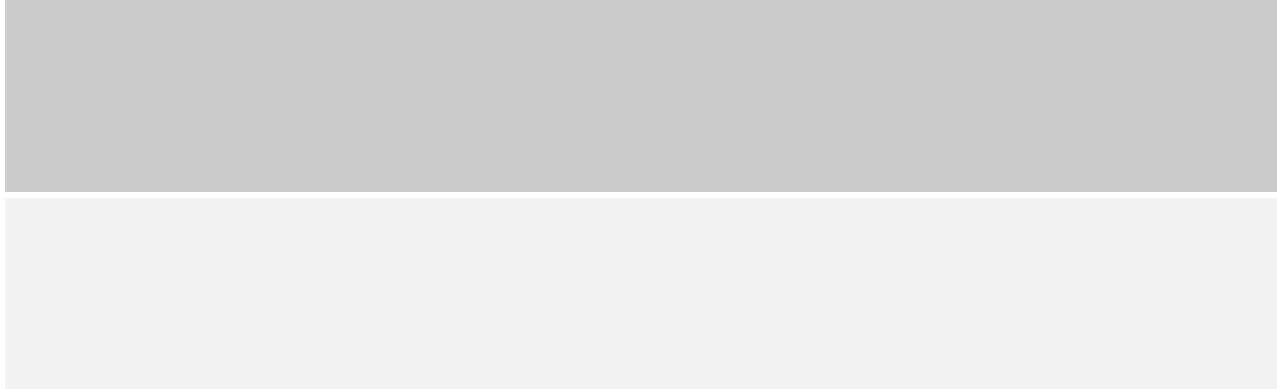
Three horizontal gray bars stacked vertically, intended for writing reflections on the reading.

# DISCERNMENT AND REVELATION

"The book of Revelation encourages us by giving us tools of discernment, to recognize political exploitations, injustices, corruptions, and power mongering...it forms us to be the kind of people who can discern these problems in our cultures wherever they show up."

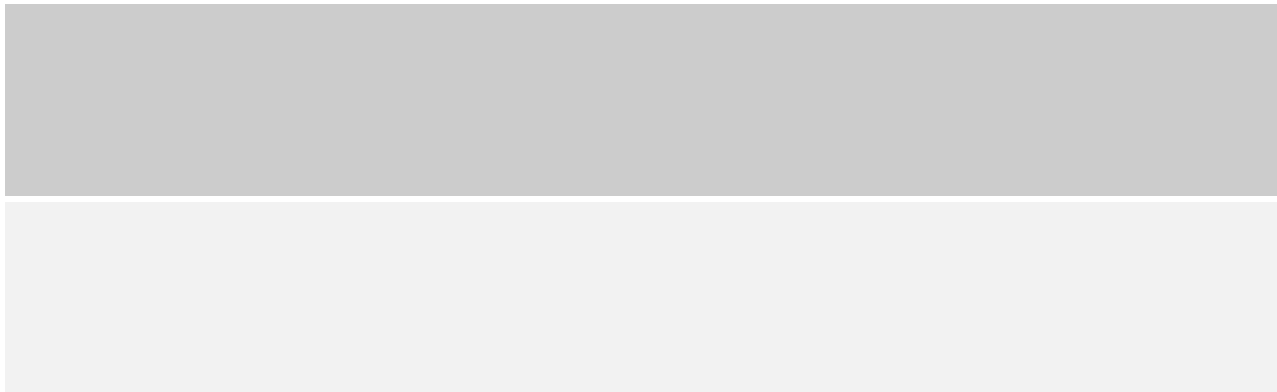
McKnight, Scot and Cody Matchett. *Revelation for the Rest of Us*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2023.

## Two Teams



See the Playbill of Revelation

## Babylon



# SEVEN MARKS OF BABYLON

A large rectangular area consisting of seven horizontal bands of alternating light and dark gray, serving as a template for writing.

## **Literary context / Genre**

- Rev 1.1 – a revelation [about] and [from] Jesus Christ.
- Letter - a specific letter that was to be circulated to specific churches.
- Prophecy - predictions of the future and proclamation of the present, with an emphasis on the later, Hybrid literature (Jewish and Greco-Roman prophecy). Readers are often commanded to obey.
- Unveiling of secrets and truths about God's perspective on a variety of subjects including justice and the problem of evil (Witherington, 34).
- Apocalyptic - God claims that he will intervene on human history to overthrow evil and establish his kingdom. This type of literature uses images in a unique way.
- Numbers are symbolic in nature therefore not precise calculations (Witherington, 40).

## **Historical situation**

- Christians were suffering persecution under Domitian (81-96).
- Domitian was worshiped as, "our Lord and God" as part of the imperial cult.
- Some Christians were not standing strong in the face of persecution. Some were reverting back to Judaism (legal). Others were just plain syncretistic.
- Christians were ready for Christ's return, but this persecution was instilling doubts, these churches needed encouragement. They needed to know that God was in control. Christ was in authority, not Ceasar.
- Revelation has comfort and warning.
- A false religion teamed up with pagan political power.

## **Purpose / How does revelation as prophetic-apocalyptic work transform its readers?**

- Provides counter-images to the powerful images of Rome in order to...
- Their whole way of thinking is cleansed and purified so their perspective on the world in which they live is changed (Duvall, 256).
- Heavenly perspective with God as ultimate victor. Rome's true character is revealed.
- Purge their imagination of pagan view of world and replace with life after God's ultimate restoration.
- By immersing them in God's story.
- John creates a single symbolic universe in which its readers may live for the time it takes them to read (or hear) (Bauckham, 10).
- Not literal descriptions or encoded literal descriptions, but theological and powerful to evoke response (Bauckham, 20).
- Written for people who feel vulnerable in a world that largely does not concur with their own worldview (Witherington, 39).
- Revelation must be grasped by imagination (Witherington, 72).

## **Message**

- God is awesomely majestic, as well as sovereign in our troubles.
- Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb ultimately brings complete deliverance for those who trust him.
- God's judgments on the world are often to serve notice on the world that God will avenge his people regardless of how things appear in the short run, "sin does not go unpunished," and God will judge.
- God can accomplish his purposes through a small and persecuted remnant; he is not dependent on what the world values as power.
- Worship leads us from grief over our sufferings to God's eternal purposes seen from a heavenly perspective. There is no panic in heaven.
- Proclaiming Christ invites persecution, the normal state of committed believers in this age.
- Christ is worth dying for.
- A radical contrast exists between God's kingdom (exemplified in the bride, the new Jerusalem) and the world's values (exemplified in the prostitute, Babylon).
- The hope God has prepared for us far exceeds our present sufferings.
- God's plan and church ultimately include representatives of all peoples.

### **Interesting notes about the book of Revelation:**

- Revelation is not all about the future. Revelation 4-5 depicts heaven as it is right now.
- Much of the book is a polemic against Caesar and the Roman Empire. Caesar claimed to be a living son of the gods and was persecuting the church. Jesus is the living Son of God, who will eventually vindicate the church.
- The events of the book are not strictly chronological. Much of it is ordered according to literary repetition and rhythm.
- The vision of the end of the world is not of us going up to heaven, but heaven coming down to earth.

### **How to Read Revelation**

- Read Revelation with humility. We understand the difficulty in interpretation and are willing to change our view in order to adhere to the biblical evidence.
- Attempt to discover the message to the original audience. We cannot ignore what John was communicating to those seven churches – the primary meaning of the text is wrapped up in what John intended it to mean, which means something his readers would understand – not what only applies to us.
- Don't try to make a strict chronological map. The book is meant to make an impact on its readers, not map out the future.
- Take the text seriously and truthfully, but not always literally. "Picture language is just another language vehicle, another way of communicating reality."
- Note when John identifies an image. Pay close attention when John identifies an image so that you can make a connection with images later in the book and not confuse them with more fluid images.
- Don't forget to reference the Old Testament when interpreting images. Revelation contains more OT references than any other book – the OT appears in almost 70% of revelation verses with over 660 OT allusions.
- Focus on the main message and don't wrestle over all the small details.
- Know that God wins. Expect our victory to be like Christ—a victory through suffering.

### **Authorship**

- the author is one who can be identified by the churches of Asia Minor as John. Many argue that this is John the Apostle but some evidence exists that this is a different John. Witherington notes that the author does not identify himself as an apostle, the beloved disciple, or an Elder; nonetheless, this John does have some connection with those who wrote the other Johannine literature. Therefore, Witherington believes that this John is a part of that Johannine community writing at a time when there is no apostolic presence left.
- It's also worth noting that "John" identifies himself whereas most apocalyptic literature was autonomous.
- Try not to get too caught up in these debates.

### **Questions**

1. How does significant background information change the way we should read Revelation?
2. What makes reading Revelation so difficult?
3. What are these images trying to do?
4. What else in this world attempts to purge our imaginations?
5. Why do we make Revelation just about the future?
6. How Biblical are the "Left Behind" books?

### **Works consulted**

Witherington, B., III. *Revelation* (NCBC). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.  
Bauckham, R. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.  
Duvall, J. Scott "Revelation" In *Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2004.  
Keener, C. S. *Revelation* (NIVAC). Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

# CONTENTS OF REVELATION

## Revelation 1

Greeting

Vision of Glorious Christ ; compare Daniel 7 where now Jesus =Heavenly Son of Man and Ancient of Days

## Revelation 2-3

Seven churches of Asia Minor and the battle over Caesar Worship

## Revelation 4-5

Doxology to God (Chp. 4) =Doxology to Christ (Chp. 5)=Jesus is God

These chapters govern the entire main section.

## Revelation 6

Beginning of Messianic Woes/Great Tribulation=Seal judgments

## Revelation 7,14

144,000/Followers of the Lamb

## Revelation 8-9

Trumpets judgments-Messianic Woes intensify.

## Revelation 10

Two Witnesses

## Revelation 11

The temple

## Revelation 12

War in Heaven

## Revelation 13

Mark of the Beast – 2 Fold

## Revelation 15-18

Bowl judgments and fall of Babylon as conclusion of the Messianic Woes

Note: These chapters do give us a hint to the historical context and are helpful in reading the entire book.

## Revelation 19

Parousia

## Revelation 20

The Millennium

## Revelation 21-22

The New Jerusalem + Bride of the Lamb

# HOMework

## Read

- Duvall/ Hays – *Living God's Word*, Conclusion

## Personal Reflection Question:

- Reflect on the statements and questions in the middle of page 320.
- Summarize the Great Story in one sentence.

# CAESAR – THE RULERS OF ROME



AUGUSTUS  
27BC - 14AD



TIBERIUS  
14 - 37



CALIGULA  
37 - 41 †



CLAUDIUS  
41 - 54 †



NERO  
54 - 68 †



GALBA  
68 - 69 †



OTHO  
69 †



VITELLIUS  
69 †



VESPASIAN  
69 - 79



TITUS  
79 - 81



DOMITIAN  
81 - 96 †

## The Republic (50 BC-14 AD)

Julius Caesar  
Augustus, or Octavian

## The Julio-Claudians (14-68 AD)

Tiberius  
Gaius (Caligula)  
Claudius  
Nero

## The Year of the Four Emperors (69 AD)

Galba  
Otho  
Vitellius  
Vespasian (see Flavians)

## Flavians (69-96 AD)

Vespasian  
Titus  
Domitian