



HOW TO READ THE BIBLE

UNDERSTANDING GENRE



LESSON 3

INTERPRETING APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE



WHAT IS APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE?

- Apokalupto- “to reveal/unveil”- symbolic imagery used to reveal God’s mysterious, providential workings behind the scenes and his coming plans for the future.



CHARACTERISTICS

- Expectation of the inbreaking of God into the present age to usher in a qualitatively different existence in the age to come.
- The use of angelic mediators to communicate to God's spokesman



CHARACTERISTICS

- The journey of the spokesman into the heavenly realms, with ongoing interaction and communication with the angelic mediator
- Highly symbolic visions or dreams that describe hidden spiritual realities and future divine intervention



CHARACTERISTICS

- Visions of final, divine judgment
- Warnings of coming distresses and trials to be faced by the faithful
- Encouragements to the faithful to persevere in light of the true spiritual realities and coming divine interventions

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Consider the purpose of the text
- Use the clear to help understand the obscure
- We must not adopt an interpretation that is out of harmony with the rest of the Bible
- Interpret symbolic imagery according to the author's intent
- Have humility

REVELATION

4 DISTINCT INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

(MOST MIX
SOME)

Preterist

Most events described took place in the first century or soon thereafter (tied to the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70)

Historicist

Revelation is a blueprint for all of history, some describe past periods others future

REVELATION

4 DISTINCT INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

(MOST MIX
SOME)

Idealist

Revelation describes the spiritual realities that reoccur throughout history until the end of all things, many events in history correspond to the events in the book

Futurist

mainly as applying to future-end time events that will occur directly prior to Christ's return

GUIDELINES

1. Old Testament apocalyptic passages provide helpful background to understanding.
2. Consider the original audience first. How would they have read and understood?
3. Symbolic images should not be taken literally, but they are important, meaningful, and authoritative.
4. They are not to be read chronologically.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *40 Questions About Interpreting the Bible*
by Robert L. Plummer
- *ESV Study Bible*



Where to Start

Read the book of Revelation. Mark up and investigate every instance symbolic visions and imagery. Using a good study Bible, try to outline the overall message of the book. After reading and studying the book, try to distill in the message of the entire book into 2-3 sentences. What is John's main message? How would you explain that message to someone who's never heard?

A stack of books with a smartphone on top, framed by a white border. The books have a textured cover, and the smartphone is a dark color with a visible home button. The text "Resources to Get You Started" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Resources to Get You Started

- *Breaking the Code:
Understanding the Book of
Revelation* by Bruce Metzger



QUESTIONS!

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