



Introduction

- John 16:33
- 2 Peter 2:1-2
- 1 John 2:18
- Revelation 20:1-3

Interpreting Revelation

Revelation Basics

The purpose of Revelation is to comfort the church in its struggle against the forces of evil by showing that God rules over all things.

The theme of Revelation is Christ and his church are victorious over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers.

The book was written to the seven churches in Asia Minor but is relevant for believers of all times.

The Apostle John wrote Revelation during the reign of Domitian (AD 81 – 96).¹

Genre of Revelation

Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy written as a letter to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

Structure of Revelation

The book of Revelation consists of seven sections. They are parallel and each spans the period from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ.

- Christ in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, or the church on earth (chapters 1 – 3)
- The book with the seven seals (chapters 4 – 7)
- The seven trumpets of judgment (chapters 8 – 11)
- The woman and the male child persecuted by the dragon and his helpers, or aspects of warfare and salvation (chapters 12 – 14)
- The seven bowls of wrath (chapters 15 – 16)
- The fall of the great harlot and of the beasts, or victory for Christ (chapters 17 – 19)
- The judgment and the new heaven and earth (chapters 20 – 22)

The seven sections can be grouped into two major divisions.

¹ William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1940, 1967, 1998), 7-11.



- Chapters 1 – 11 contain the first three sections.
- Chapters 12 – 22 contain the remaining four sections.²

Symbolism of Revelation

Revelation uses symbolism from beginning to end. “Made it known” in verse one translates the Greek word (*semaino*), which is related to the noun *sign* (*sema*). It means, “to give a sign, signify, indicate” or “make known, report, communicate.”

Interpretive Approaches to Revelation³

1. Historicism understands the literary order of the visions, especially in 4:1–20:6, to symbolize the chronological order of successive historical events that span the entire era from the apostolic church to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.
2. Futurism views the visions of chapters 4–22 as representing events still future to us now, thus a distant future from the standpoint of John and the churches of Asia.
3. Preterism believes that the fulfillment of most of Revelation’s visions already occurred during the early years of the Christian church.
4. Idealism says that Revelation’s visions symbolize the conflict between Christ and his church on the one hand, and Satan and his evil conspirators on the other, from the apostolic age to Christ’s second coming.

Basis of Interpretation

Finally, let me give you our basis of interpretation of the book of Revelation.⁴

1. Revelation is rooted in the Scriptures. It should be interpreted in harmony with the entire Bible.
2. There are over 500 allusions to the Old Testament in 404 verses of Revelation with 14 incomplete quotes from the Old Testament.
3. Every chapter of Revelation has allusions to the New Testament.
4. We have to keep in mind the original recipients. Revelation was written to persecuted believers.
5. We have to keep in mind the historical context, in particular the conditions for Christians in the Roman Empire at the time.

The Binding of Satan

- Revelation 20:1-3
- Matthew 12:25-29

² Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, 21-23.

³ “Introduction to Revelation,” *ESV Study Bible*, 2456-2458.

⁴ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Book of Revelation*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 17-18.



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- Matthew 28:18-20
 - Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV)

Satan is Released

- Revelation 20:7-10

Revelation 11

- Revelation 11:1-3
- Deuteronomy 17:6
- Matthew 18:16
- Revelation 11:7-12

Revelation 12-14

- Revelation 12:7-14
- Isaiah 40:27-31
- Revelation 13:5-12

2 Thessalonians 2

- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Matthew 24

- Matthew 24:15-31 (ESV)

Conclusion

- Revelation 16:12-16