

Reading the New Testament Well

The book of Revelation



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'most modern readers find it baffling and impenetrable... moreover they are often not sure it is worth attempting to understand, since they most readily associate it with eccentric and even dangerous sects'

'Yet this is a book that has inspired the martyrs, nourished the imagination of visionaries, artists, and hymn writers, resourced prophetic cliques of oppression and corruption in state and church, sustained hope and resistance in the most hopeless situations'

Richard Bauckham
Revelation in the Oxford Bible Commentary

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Author: John the Apostle
(Polycarp -> Irenaeus)

Date: AD 95 / late 1st century
(Local persecution, Rome = Babylon)

Place: Island of Patmos
(Exile/Imprisonment)

4

Reason: Imperial Cult in Ephesus



Emperor Domitian

5

Jewish Converts: Turn back

Gentile Converts: Compromise

6

Apocalypse

Revelation



**To reveal/uncover that
which was hidden**

7

'The goal fo Revelation is to bring encouragement to believers of all ages that God is working out His purposes even in the midst of tragedy, suffering, and apparent Satanic domination. It is the Bible's battle cry of victory, for in it, more than anywhere else in the NT is revealed the final victory of God over all the forces of evil.'

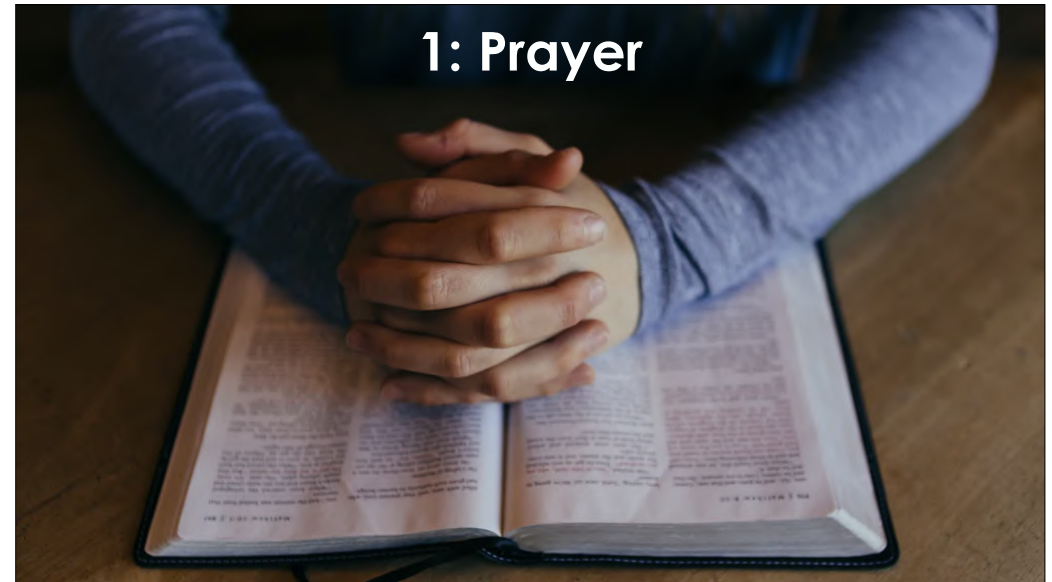
Revelation
G.K. Beale

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'Primarily the book purposes to encourage Christians undergoing persecution, **not** to confuse or divide its readers over fine points of eschatology'

Introduction to Biblical Interpretation p441
Klein, Blomberg & Hubbard

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1: Prayer

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2. The Old Testament



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2. The **Old Testament** is the key

John identifies himself as a prophet (1:3) in the line of the OT prophets, speaking the word of the Lord in both judgement and promise.

278 out of 404 verses in Revelation contain references to the OT

Over 500 allusions (rather than direct quotations) to OT texts
e.g 'One like a Son of Man' in 1:13 references Daniel 7:13

There are 7 OT allusions 1:5-1:16 alone

Revelation has more allusions to the OT than the rest of the NT put together!

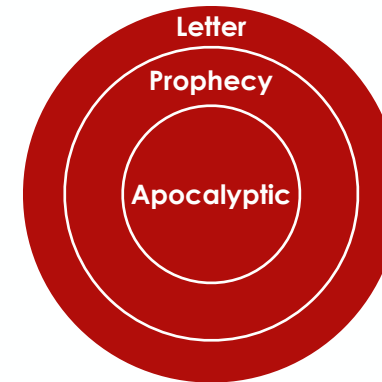
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3. What kind of writing is it?



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3. What kind of writing is it?



A Prophetic / Apocalyptic Letter

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Prophetic / Apocalyptic

Ezekiel

25 Then there came a voice from above the vault over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. 26 Above the vault over their heads was what looked like a throne of lapis lazuli, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. 27 I saw that from what appeared to be his waist up he looked like glowing metal, as if full of fire, and that from there down he looked like fire; and brilliant light surrounded him.

Daniel

'As I looked, 'thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze.

Revelation

2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne.

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Prophetic / Apocalyptic



Throne and throne room, angels, the glory of God, Heavenly Temple

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Key features

1. **Forth Telling** as well as **Fore telling**
2. **Heavenly** perspective
- Call to come back into harmony with Gods will
3. **Spiritual** dimension
- Spiritual realities behind the physical world
4. **Symbolism**

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NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S STATUE

Daniel chapter 2

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Symbolic or Literal Readings

28 but there is a God in heaven who **reveals** mysteries. **He has shown** King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these:

29 'As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to **things to come**, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen....

...45 The great **God has shown** the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.'

Daniel 2.28-29,45

1. **A revelation**
2. **God showed**
3. **Concerning what will come to pass**
4. **He signified/showed it**

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Symbolic or Literal Readings

'The **revelation** from Jesus Christ, which **God gave him to show** his servants **what must soon take place**. He **made it known** by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.'

Revelation 1:1-2

1. A revelation
2. God showed
3. Concerning what will come to pass
4. He signified/showed it

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Symbolic or Literal Readings

'Unless there is strong evidence in the text to the contrary, the visions are for the most part to be taken non-literally. This does not mean that they have no meaning or historical reference, but that the meaning is to be found symbolically - and almost always within the context of OT references which run through the visions God gave to John.'

Revelation (p12)
G.K. Beale

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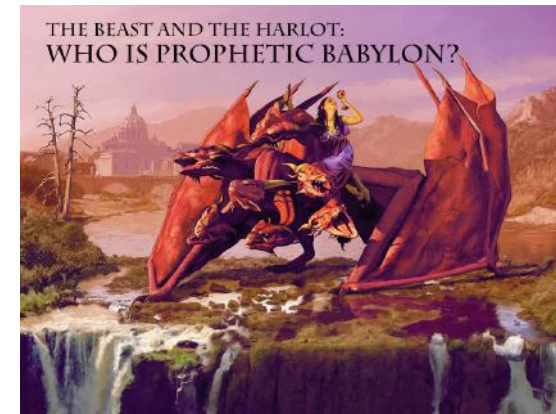
Symbols in Revelation

1. Where John explains the symbol we need to stick to his interpretation e.g. Lamp-stands = Churches (Rev1:20)
2. If no direct interpretation is given we need to look to the OT and the context.

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'Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. 2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.'

Revelation 17:1-2



Rome?
(Them?)

Future?

Corrupt political and economic systems (Us?)

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Symbols: Numbers in Revelation

1. Four, Seven, Ten, Twelve and their multiples appear all over the place!

2. These numbers point to the completeness or universal nature of something

4 **Based on:** the completeness of Creation (4 rivers)
OT examples: 4 points of compass/4 corners the earth/4 winds

7 **Based on:** the completeness of Creation (7days)
OT examples: Sevenfold anger of God, Seven lamps in Tabernacle

10 **Based on:** the 10 commandments
OT examples: heavenly temple in Ezekiel measurements

12 **Based on:** 12 tribes
OT examples: numbers of priests and musicians (24,288 etc) in 1 Chronicles

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Symbols: Numbers in Revelation

Names of God appear in patterns of 4 and 7

Christ - 7 times

Jesus, Spirit - 14 times

The Lamb - 28 times

The key parts of the book are the sevens - churches/lampstands, bowls, seals, trumpets

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Symbols, Prophets and Parables

Why use all these symbols?

They function like parables in the gospels and OT:

'The prophets used parables in Israel...indicating that judgment was coming on the anaesthetised majority, though a remnant would be shocked out of the spiritual malaise' G.K Beale

'He who has an ear, let him hear' - in each of the letters to seven churches
- equivalents used by Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jesus following parables.

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Outline of Revelation

Chapter	Theme
1	Prologue
2-3	7 Churches - letters to the imperfect church
4-5	God on the throne - Vision of Heaven
6-8:5	7 Seals
8:6 -11	7 Trumpets
12 - 15:4	7 visions/signs
15:5 - 16	7 bowls
17 - 19	Final judgement of Babylon & Beast
20	God on the throne - The Millennium (1000 years)
21 - 22:5	The new creation - the church perfect in glory
22:5 - end	Epilogue

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Outline of Revelation

Chapter	Theme		
1	Prologue	The Church	God is Sovereign Battle and Judgement
2-3		7 Churches - letters to the imperfect church	
4-5			God on the throne - Vision of Heaven
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Outline of Revelation

Chapters 2-3 Chapters 21-22:5
 7 letters to the imperfect church The church perfect in glory

false apostles (2:2)	true apostles (21:14)
false Jews (2:9; 3:9)	tribes of the true Israel (21:12)
Christians dwell where Satan's throne is (2:13)	Christians dwell where God's throne is (22:1)
some in the church are dead (3:1)	all in the perfected church are alive (21:27)
the church is an earthly lampstand (1:20; 2:5)	God and the Lamb are the lamps (21:23-24; 22:5)
the church contains idolaters (2:14-15, 20-23)	the perfected church has no idolatry or lying (21:8)
Christians are persecuted (2:8-10, 13)	Christians reign as conquerors (21:6-7)

Source: Revelation by G.K. Beale

Outline of Revelation

Chapters 2-3 Chapters 21-22:5
 Promise Fulfilment

They will eat of the tree of life (2:7).	The tree of life bears fruit in heaven for the believer (22:2).
They will be a pillar in the temple (3:12).	God and the Lamb are the temple in heaven where the believer dwells (21:22).
They will be part of the heavenly Jerusalem (3:12).	They are part of the heavenly Jerusalem (21:23-27).
They will have the name of their God (3:12).	The name of God is on their foreheads (22:4).
Their names will be written in the book of life (3:5).	Their names are written in the book of life (21:27).
They will be clothed in white (3:5).	They are the bride adorned for her husband (21:2).
They will have a white stone and receive the morning star (2:17, 28).	They are part of the city whose foundations are precious stones (21:1, 18-21), whose light is God and the Lamb (21:23; 22:5), and that lives with Jesus, the bright morning star (22:16).
They will rule the nations (2:26-27) and sit with Christ on His throne (3:21).	They reign forever and ever (22:5).
They will be saved from the second death (2:11).	They are saved from the second death (21:7-8).

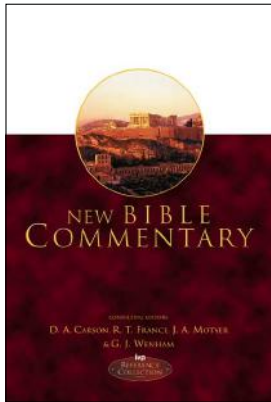
Source: Revelation by G.K. Beale

Outline of Revelation

From the death and resurrection of Jesus to His return will be an incredibly challenging time for His followers but they should persevere with hope and confidence in the face of those challenges.

Revelation reminds us that God is the supreme King with power and authority over all creation, both physical and spiritual, and He will prevail, Jesus will return, and His church will be lifted up to spend eternity with him in fulfilment of all His promises.

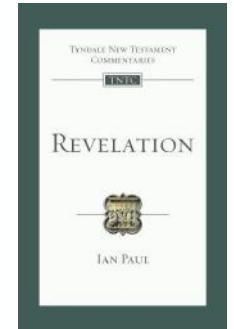
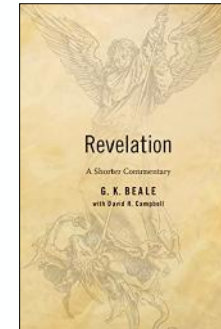
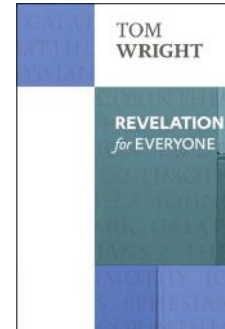
Resources



'New Bible Commentary'
D. Carson, R.T. France,
A. Motyer & G. Wenham

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Resources



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