

God's Glory in God's Word

Revelation Part 1: Introduction

"Revelation's apocalyptic-visionary mode of speaking is foreign to many modern readers' way of thinking, so our minds quickly experience fatigue, like the bewildered exhaustion we feel when surrounded by people conversing in a language that we are only starting to learn. With intense effort we manage to pick out a word, a phrase, occasionally a whole sentence or a vague idea of the topic. But we miss more than we grasp, and the effort needed to pierce the veil of foreignness and hear the patterns that make meaning wearies us."

Dennis E. Johnson. *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Kindle Locations 90-93). Kindle Edition.

Schedule:

4/28 Overview of Revelation
5/5 Symbols & Numbers
5/12 The Tribulation of the Church
5/19 Victory in Jesus

Book recommendations:

Revelation:

Triumph of the Lamb by Dennis Johnson
More Than Conquerors by William Henricksen
The Theology of the Book of Revelation by Richard Bauckham
Revelation: A Shorter Commentary by G.K. Beale

Eschatology:

The Bible and the Future by Anthony Hoekema
The Promise of the Future by Cornelis Venema
A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times by Kim Riddlebarger
Understanding Dispensationalists by Vern Poythress
MacArthur's Millennial Manifesto by Sam Waldron

Principles for Reading Revelation:

(as summarized in Dennis Johnson's *Triumph of the Lamb*)

Revelation is Given to Reveal

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (Rev 1:1-3)

Revelation is a Book to be Seen

If you recall our discussion concerning interpretation of Scripture from a few weeks ago, you should remember what we said about considering the genre of Scripture when we try and interpret a passage. Revelation's genre brings into question the idea of applying a default rule of "interpret the Bible literally where possible". Johnson makes the case, and I tend to agree that with Revelation, the opposite is a better way to rightly interpret what is intended. From Johnson: "If we are to follow an interpretive rule of thumb in reading Revelation, it should be that we take what John sees as symbolic where possible".

- Jesus doesn't have a sword protruding from his mouth
- There aren't seven Holy Spirits
- Satan is not a dragon

Revelation Makes Sense Only in Light of the Old Testament

And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2:9)

through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (Rev 22:2)

But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. (Rev 2:20)

But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. (Rev 2:14)

Numbers Count in Revelation

- Seven churches
- Seven horns
- Seven eyes
- Seven spirits
- Seven seals
- Seven trumpets
- Seven bowls
- Seven heads
- Seven hills
- Seven kings

Revelation is for a Church Under Attack

"Revelation is addressed to a church that is under attack. Its purpose, to reveal "things which must soon take place," is not to satisfy idle eschatological curiosity or feed a hunger for revenge but to fortify Jesus' followers in steadfast hope and holy living."

Dennis E. Johnson. Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation (Kindle Locations 227-229). Kindle Edition.

Revelation Concerns "What Must Soon Take Place"

*The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must **soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for **the time is near**. (Rev 1:1-3)*

*And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants **what must soon take place**." "And behold, **I am coming soon**. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." (Rev 22:6-7)*

"If we begin our inquiry with the assumption that God intended first-century believers to get the message of Revelation, we read its visions against the backdrop of Old Testament imagery rather than forcing them into the template of twenty-first-century technologies or politics. This principle also encourages us to understand Revelation in the context of the cultural and intellectual forces that were affecting the churches of first-century Asia: religious institutions, political structures, military conflicts, natural disasters, and even, perhaps, the symbolic vocabulary of Jewish apocalyptic literature or pagan myth. God is so much the sovereign of history that he can use every dimension of his people's experience to communicate his word."

Dennis E. Johnson. *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation* (Kindle Locations 278-282). Kindle Edition.

The Victory Belongs to God and to His Christ

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (Joh 16:32-33)

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1Jn 2:13-17)

And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Rev 5:8-14)

Next Week: Symbols & Numbers in Revelation