

# *A Survey of the Revelation of John*

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## Author:

The apostle John, identified as one "*who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (1:1-2). This apostle was the brother of James, the author of the gospel of John, and three other epistles that bear his name (I John, II John, III John). His authorship of this particular book is supported by the testimony of Justin Martyr (165 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (220 AD), Hippolytus (236 AD), Origen (254 AD), and several early councils.

## Date:

Dating when the book was written is not without controversy. When one dates the book, it will certainly have a bearing upon one's interpretation of the book. This is especially true if one follows the "preterist" view. Two dates are usually proposed: (1) An "early date", around 64-68 A.D., during the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero. (2) A "late date", around 95-96 A.D., during the reign of emperor Domitian.

There are at least five different views of interpreting the book of Revelation that generally fall into the following categories:

(1) *The "preterist" view* - The events were fulfilled in the first few centuries after the book was written. Its value for today would be didactic (the value of faithfulness to God).

(2) *The "historicist" view* - The book provides a panoramic view of the future of the church. Its value for today would be to encourage Christians to stay faithful.

(3) *The "futurist" view* - Apart from the first few chapters, the book depicts events which immediately precede the second coming of Christ. Therefore, most of the book has yet to be fulfilled (or is being fulfilled now). Within this view point there are three main divisions: Pre-tribulationists, Mid-tribulationists, and Post-tribulationists. Its value for would only be for Christians living at the time Jesus returns.

(4) *The "idealist" view* - The book does not deal with any specific historical situation. Instead, it is simply enforcing the principle that good will ultimately triumph over evil. Its value for today would be that it is applicable to any age.

(5) *The "eclectic" view* - They take a combination of all of these views to fit their view.

## Theme:

The Greek word "revelation" (no "s") means "an uncovering" or "unveiling." The book was designed to uncover not to conceal. It starts off with letters to seven churches, then intertwines history and prophecy. Its purpose, stated at the beginning and end, was to prepare the seven churches for persecution (1:1,3, 22:10,16) and to reveal "THINGS WHICH MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS." In particular, it is a revelation from Christ Himself of the judgment to come upon those who were persecuting His people (6:9-11, 16:5-7). This judgment was directed toward two enemies: (1) "Babylon, the harlot" (17:6, 18;20,24, 19:2). (2) The "beast" that supported the harlot (17:7-13). In fulfilling this purpose, the book is designed to warn and comfort. For erring disciples, it is a book of warning ("repent" or else, 2:5,16). For faithful disciples, it is a book of comfort ("blessed" are those who "overcome", 1:3; 2:7; 3:21; 14:13; 22:14).

Audience:

The early church, specifically the seven churches mentioned in the book, would have benefited greatly from this writing. John said, "*Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*" (1:3). This thought is echoed from start to finish (1:1, 1:4, 1:7, 1:9, 1:19-20, 22:6, 22:10) and is evident by the messages to seven churches of Asia that were contemporaries of John, whom he joined in this "present" suffering (1:9-11).

Any application derived from the book is no different than that of any other prophetic book in the Bible. . . . God's way is the best way. His way is the only way to ensure victory! Revelation 17:14 says, "*These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*"

Key Verses:

**Revelation 1:1, 1:4, 1:7, 1:9-11, 1:19-20, 2:5, 2:7, 2:10, 2:16, 3:16, 3:21, 4:2-5, 6:9-11, 7:11-17, 10:9-11, 12:10-12, 14:13, 16:5-7, 17:6, 17:7-13, 17:14, 18:20-24, 19:2, 19:16, 22:6, 22:10, 22:12-15, 22:16-17, 22:18-19, 22:20**

Outline:

INTRODUCTION (1:1-20)

1. Introduction & benediction (1-3)
2. Greetings to the seven churches of Asia (4-6)
3. Announcement of Christ's coming (7)
4. The Lord's self-designation (8)

I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONFLICT (1:9-11:19)

- A. VISION OF CHRIST AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS (1:9-20)
- B. LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1-3:22)
- C. THE THRONE SCENE (4:1-5:11)
- D. THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:1)
- E. THE SOUNDING OF SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:2-11:19)

II. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CONFLICT (12:1-22:5)

- A. THE GREAT CONFLICT (12:1-14:20)
- B. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (15:1-16:21)
- C. THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE HARLOT (17:1-19:10)
- D. THE DEFEAT OF THE LAMB'S ENEMIES (19:11-20:15)
- E. THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED (21:1-22:5)

CONCLUSION (22:6-21)

1. The time is near, do not seal up the book (22:6-11)
2. The testimony of Jesus, the Spirit, and the bride (22:12-17)
3. Warning not to tamper with the book, and closing prayers (22:18-21)