

SESSION 7: REVELATION

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read the Book of Revelation.

Summary of the Video: Module 6, Episode 7

Rather than trying to go through the book chapter by chapter, we'll try to give an approach to reading the book that'll help our pastoral ministry.

What kind of a book is Revelation? Even though it's called an "apocalypse", it has multiple styles (genres) of writing in it. This shapes how we read it because each genre expects a different approach when we try to interpret it.

Then we're introduced to four main ways of understanding the overall message of Revelation: idealist, futurist, preterist, and historicist. It's likely that you've assumed one of these approaches without realizing it. Andrew Wilson weights idealist and preterist readings more heavily with a little less weight on the futurist/historicist approach. But he considers all four to be valuable at various points in the book.

We then look at an overview of the book. Pause the video and examine the chart before listening to Andrew Wilson walk through it. He shows us the repetition of "sevens" (letters, seals, trumpets, bowls, visions) interspersed with visions (Jesus, throne room, woman-dragon-two beasts, overthrow Babylon).

He gives special attention to the woman, the dragon, and the two beasts because this is less familiar and more confusing to most of us. Chapter 12 reveals the birth and preservation of the church against satanic attack. Chapter 13 reveals the two main opponents of God's people (beast of the sea-Rome; beast of the land-Jerusalem).

We then look at six different ways of summarizing the imagery and message of the book: romance, exodus, victory, exile, apocalypse and liturgy. The book begins by declaring Jesus' victory and the rest of the book showcases the church's inclusion in Jesus' victory.

What are the obvious pitfalls in reading the book that we need to get around? Not reading it (we should!); turn Revelation into a chart and over-identify the symbols with things that make sense in my context; only read the parts that you love (chs. 1, 4-5, 19-22).

How would you summarize Revelation to us? The church is suffering and will continue to suffer until it is finally vindicated.

In the final few minutes, Andrew Wilson shows us how the messages of John's Gospel and Revelation correspond and how Revelation fulfills some of the longing of the Gospel. One prominent example is that the Gospel opens with a wedding and Revelation culminates with one.

Terms You'll Need to Know:

Genre—a type of literature or writing; genres include history, narrative, comedy, tragedy, letter, song, apocalypse.

Peter Leithart, *Revelation* (2 volumes; T & T Clark, 2018).

Gematria—in Hebrew and Greek, letters are associated with certain numbers so names can correspond to a certain number.

Watch Video

Watch Module 6 Episode 7 (43 minutes).

The Church Age

- I. The Story So Far
- II. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-9)
- III. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 10-28; Galatians; 1&2 Thessalonians)
- IV. Romans
- V. 1&2 Corinthians
- VI. The Prison Letters
- VII. The Catholic Epistles
- VIII. Revelation**

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What Kind of Book is Revelation?

Changes of Genre in 1:1-9

	Text	Genre
1	The revelation of Jesus Christ	Apocalypse
3	Blessed is the one who reads	Benediction
4	John, to the seven churches	Epistle
5-6	To him be glory & power forever	Doxology
7	Look, he is coming on the clouds	Apocalypse
8	"I am the Alpha and the Omega"	Prophecy
9	I, John, your brother & companion	Epistle



Revelation as apocalypse (1:1)
A revelation from God, which peels back the curtain on the world and shows what is happening behind it
→ idealist?



Revelation as letter (1:4; 22:21)
An epistle to a specific group of believers with specific challenges & issues (whether in Asia Minor or not)
→ preterist?



Revelation as prophecy (1:3; 22:7)
A message from God that calls for repentance and obedience, based on who God is and what he will do
→ futurist / historicist?

Interpretive Frameworks

Idealist

Imagery and metaphor denotes timeless spiritual truths throughout human history

Preterist

Main focus is on events contemporary to the text, such as fall of Jerusalem or imperial Rome

Futurist

Much of the text focuses on the events leading up to the end of all things: what, where and when

Historicist

The shape of Revelation predicts the shape of church history as a whole, from C1st to today

Source: Ian Paul, *Revelation* (Tyndale), 29

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An Overview of Revelation

	Letters (2:1-3:22)	Seals (6:1-8:5)	Trumpets (8:6-11:19)	The Woman, the Dragon and the Two Beasts	Bowls (15:1-16:21)	Visions (19:11-22:5)
1	Ephesus	White horse: conquest	Destruction on earth	The Woman, the Dragon and the Two Beasts	Plagues on earth (boils)	White horse
2	Smyrna	Red horse: war	Destruction at sea		Plagues at sea (blood)	War
3	Pergamum	Black horse: famine	Destruction in rivers		Plagues in rivers (blood)	War
4	Thyatira	Pale horse: Death & Hades	Destruction in heavens		Plagues from the sun (fire)	Capture of the devil
5	Sardis	Martyrs: "how long?"	Locusts / scorpions		Darkness	Martyrs: 1000 years
6	Philadelphia	Cosmic collapse	Angelic judgment		Frogs	White throne: judgment
7	Laodicea	Silence and prayer	Temple, ark and worship		Temple, hail & judgment	New Creation

The first four trumpets & bowls evoke the first four creation days: earth, sea, waters on earth, heavenly lights. The judgment escalates (1/4 → 1/3 → total)

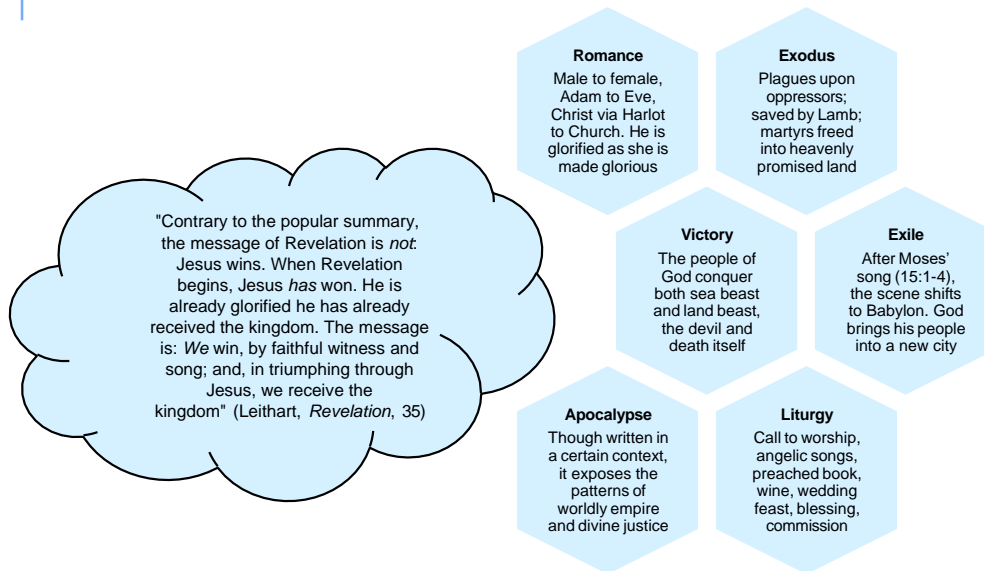
The echoes of the Exodus story are striking throughout: plagues (rivers to blood, locusts, boils, frogs, hail, darkness, angelic death); thunder, lightning and parting seas; altars and lampstands; worship of a beast; the song of Moses; "I AM"; the Passover Lamb

This echoes (& reverses) the four horsemen

The long wait becomes a long reign

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Revealing Revelation



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The Wedding Has Come!

The Gospel of John

- In the beginning was the Word (1:1)
 - "All things" came into being by him (1:3)
 - Light shines in the darkness (1:5)
 - The Word tabernacled among us (1:14)
- Behold: the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29)
- Judas controls the buying & selling (13:29), and is referred to as destined for destruction (17:12)
- Pilate judges from a throne (19:13)
- Judgment upon the temple in Jerusalem (2:13-22)
- Jesus & his disciples are invited to a wedding (2:2)
 - Jesus makes wine (2:3), but says that his hour has not yet come (2:4)
 - A promiscuous woman appears who is *not* the bride (4:16-18; cf. also 20:11-18)
 - John the Baptist rejoices because he hears the voice of the Bridegroom (3:29)

The Revelation of John

- I am the beginning and the end (22:13)
 - I am making "all things" new (21:5)
 - No night, because the Lord gives light (22:5)
 - The tabernacle of God is with humans (21:3)
- There is no more curse, because the throne of God and the Lamb is there (22:3)
- The beast controls buying & selling (13:17), and is referred to as destined for destruction (17:8, 11)
- Jesus judges from a throne (20:11, 13)
- Judgment upon Babylon (→ Jerusalem??) (18)
- Blessed are those invited to the wedding (19:9)
 - Jesus treads the winepress (19:15), as the hour of judgment has come (18:8ff)
 - A promiscuous woman appears who is *not* the bride (17:1-18; cf. 12:1-17)
 - Rejoice, for the wedding has come (19:7). The Spirit and the bride say: Come! (22:17)

Source: Peter Leithart, *Revelation* (ITC), 22-23

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GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. What has been your approach to Revelation in the past? Have you been fearful, curious, looking for current events? Idealist, futurist, preterist, historicist?

2. Which of the four "interpretive frameworks" is most common in your church? What are the pros and cons of that framework? What difference would it make to read the book from a different viewpoint than you commonly have?

3. Look at the overview of Revelation. How does that chart help you to understand the main point of the book? (Perhaps you would want to skim the book with the chart in hand to see how it works.)

4. Andrew Wilson gives us six words to describe what Revelation is: romance, exodus, victory, exile, apocalypse and liturgy. Which of these have you seen in your reading? How does approaching the book in this way change what you expect from it?

5. In your reading of the book, what about a theology of "God" do you think it develops?

6. What kind of “Gospel” does Revelation communicate? What is the “good news” it reveals?

7. What does the book of Revelation say about the People of God?

8. What do you think Revelation has to say about the Mission of God?

9. Consider your culture and church. What aspects of Revelation’s message would bring relief, joy and hope? What would cause people to consider changing their allegiances?

Meditation on Scripture

Perhaps you would like to read the songs of Revelation as part of your response: 4:8; 4:9–11; 5:9–10; 5:12; 5:13; 7:10; 7:11–12; 11:15; 11:16–18; 12:10–12; 15:2–4; 16:5–7; 19:1–4; 19:5; 19:6–8.

Putting This Session into Practice

We have seen the triumph of the Lamb and the promised vindication of the church. Revelation gives us “eyes” to see past what is visible to most everyone else; we can see behind the allure of power, privilege and cultural influence. This week, let’s ask the Lord to open our eyes to see things the way he does and in light of this sight to persevere through setback because Christ has won.