

Insights into the Book of Revelation The Summary

Introduction:

The summary provides information about the title, author(s), date of writing, chronology, theme, theology, outline, a brief overview, and the chapters of the Book of Revelation.

Author: Four times the author identifies himself as John (1:1,4,9; 22:8). From as early as Justin Martyr in the 2nd Century A.D. it has been held that this John was the apostle, the son of Zebedee (Mt 10:2). The book itself reveals that the author was a Jew, versed in Scripture, a church leader who was known to the churches of Asia Minor, and a deeply religious person convinced that the Christian faith would soon triumph over the demonic forces

Date: Revelation was written when Christians were entering a time of persecution. The two periods most often mentioned are the latter part of Nero's reign (A.D.54-68) and the latter part of Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96). Most interpreters date the book c. 95

Occasion: Since Roman authorities at this time were beginning to enforce emperor worship, Christians -- who held that Christ, not Caesar, was Lord -- were facing increasing hostility. The believers at Smyrna are warned against coming opposition (2:10), and the church at Philadelphia is told of an hour of trial coming on the world (3:10). Antipas has already given his life (2:13) along with others (6:9). John has been exiled to the island of Patmos (the site of a Roman penal colony) for his activities as a Christian missionary (1:9). Some within the church are advocating a policy of compromise (2:14-15,20), which has to be corrected before its influence undermined the determination of believers to stand fast in the days that lay ahead.

Purpose: John writes to encourage the faithful to staunchly resist the demands of emperor worship. He informs his readers that the final showdown between God and Satan is imminent. Satan will increase his persecution of believers, but they must stand fast, even to death. They are sealed against any spiritual harm and will soon be vindicated when Christ returns, when the wicked are forever destroyed, and when God's people enter an eternity of glory

Literary Form: For an adequate understanding of Revelation, the reader must recognize that it is a distinct kind of literature. Revelation is apocalyptic, a kind of writing that is highly symbolic. Although its visions often seem bizarre to the Western reader, fortunately the book provides a number of clues for its own interpretation (e.g., stars are angels, lampstands are churches, 1:20; "the great prostitute," 17:1, is "Babylon" [Rome?], 17:5,18; and the heavenly Jerusalem is the wife of the Lamb, 21:9-10).

Distinctive Feature: A distinctive feature is the frequent use of the number seven (52 times) which means completeness. There are seven beatitudes (see note on 1:3), seven churches (1:4,11), seven spirits (1:4), seven golden lampstands (1:12), seven stars (1:16), seven seals (5:1), seven horns and seven eyes (5:6), seven trumpets (8:2), seven thunders (10:3), seven signs (12:1,3; 13:13-14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20), seven crowns (12:3), seven plagues (15:6), seven golden bowls (15:7), seven hills (17:9) and seven kings (17:10), as well as other sevens.

Interpretation: Interpreters of Revelation normally fall into four groups:

Preterists understand the book exclusively in terms of its first-century setting, claiming that most of its events have already taken place.

Historicists take it as describing the long chain of events from Patmos to the end of history.

Futurists place the book primarily in the end times.

Idealists view it as symbolic pictures of such timeless truths as the victory of good over evil.

Fortunately, the fundamental truths of Revelation do not depend on adopting a particular point of view. They are available to anyone who will read the book for its overall message and resist the temptation to become overly enamored with the details.

Outline:

Introduction (1:1-8)

Prologue (1:1-3)

Greetings and Doxology (1:4-8)

Jesus among the Seven Churches (1:9-20)

The Letters to the Seven Churches (ch. 2 - 3)

Ephesus (2:1-7)

Smyrna (2:8-11)

Pergamum (2:12-17)

Thyatira (2:18-29)

Sardis (3:1-6)

Philadelphia (3:7-13)

Laodicea (3:14-22)

The Throne, the Scroll and the Lamb (ch. 4-5)

The Throne in Heaven (ch. 4)

The Seven-Sealed Scroll (5:1-5)

The Lamb Slain (5:6-14)

The Seven Seals (6:1;8:1)

First Seal: The White Horse (6:1-2)

Second Seal: The Red Horse (6:3-4)

Third Seal: The Black Horse (6:5-6)

Fourth Seal: The Pale Horse (6:7-8)

Fifth Seal: The Souls under the Altar (6:9-11)

Sixth Seal: The Great Earthquake (6:12-17)

The Sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-8)

The Great Multitude (7:9-17)

Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven (8:1)

The Seven Trumpets (8:2;11:19)

Introduction (8:2-5)

First Trumpet: Hail and Fire Mixed with Blood (8:6-7)

Second Trumpet: A Mountain Thrown into the Sea (8:8-9)

Third Trumpet: The Star Wormwood (8:10-11)

Fourth Trumpet: A Third of the Sun, Moon and Stars Struck (8:12-13)

Fifth Trumpet: The Plague of Locusts (9:1-12)

Sixth Trumpet: Release of the Four Angels (9:13-21)
The Angel and the Little Scroll (ch. 10)
The Two Witnesses (11:1-14)
Seventh Trumpet: Judgments and Rewards (11:15-19)
Various Personages and Events (ch. 12-14)
The Woman and the Dragon (ch. 12)
The Two Beasts (ch. 13)
The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
The Harvest of the Earth (14:6-20)
The Seven Bowls (ch. 15-16)
Introduction: The Song of Moses and the Seven Angels with the Seven Plagues (ch. 15)
First Bowl: Ugly and Painful Sores (16:1-2)
Second Bowl: Sea Turns to Blood (16:3)
Third Bowl: Rivers and Springs of Water Become Blood (16:4-7)
Fourth Bowl: Sun Scorches People with Fire (16:8-9)
Fifth Bowl: Darkness (16:10-11)
Sixth Bowl: Euphrates River Dries Up (16:12-16)
Seventh Bowl: Tremendous Earthquake (16:17-21)
Babylon: The Great Prostitute (17:1;19:5)
Babylon Described (ch. 17)
The Fall of Babylon (ch. 18)
Praise for Babylon's Fall (19:1-5)
Praise for the Wedding of the Lamb (19:6-10)
The Return of Christ (19:11-21)
The Thousand Years (20:1-6)
Satan's Doom (20:7-10)
Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)
New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (21:1;22:5)
Conclusion and Benediction (22:6-21)

Finally:

So now we have a roadmap for our journey into this fascinating prophetic book. This is going to be an amazing journey as we explore what this means for us today.

I am not given to flights of fantasy or conjecture or speculation and so one caveat, I am not going to speculate on the imagery in the book – I think that is foolish and extra-biblical.

As Christians we believe that the Bible is the Word of God. As such, it cannot err. So, we believe that the Bible cannot really contradict itself. Its teachings must be internally consistent

Sola scriptura has been the way we have always ministered here at Bellevue Church. Scripture alone is the sole rule and norm for faith and life. Being the very Word of God in written form, the reformers also maintained that “*Scripture interprets Scripture*” which means that the Bible is its own interpreter.

This is a profound concept to be sure. But here is an even deeper truth: Scripture not only interprets itself but also interprets us. As we read and hear the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and then points us to Christ so we can be comforted by the Gospel.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12)

We can speculate about Russia and China and Iran and so on, but for me personally that is not as important as being found faithful to the end – because after all that will be all that matters. In the last days many will fall away and many will turn away following deceiving spirits, flattering tongues, and the doctrines of demons.

I am also not going to set any timelines or dates. ***Matthew 24:36, 42,44 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. So you also must be ready because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him”***

Instead of seeking a sign, seek the fulfillment of the signs, Jesus Himself. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Jesus is the answer to the sign you seek, and He is the only one who can truly save and satisfy.

I pray this next number of weeks will not only challenge you to hold firm when everything around us seems to be crumbling but this series will encourage you to “go deeper” with God.