

NAME

The book is named by the author, “the revelation of Jesus Christ,” (Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) (1:1 cf. 1:11-18; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 22:16,20). The traditional designation of the book, Apokalypsis Ioannou (“The Revelation of John” - Αποκάλυψις Ἰηαννου), is derived from the first verse of the book which mentions that it is a “revelation” recorded by John. It is to be observed that the present title is not found in the earlier manuscripts, but was added by a later hand. Jesus Christ is the central Person of the book; thus, the title is in line with that fact. The book is often called the Apocalypse, which is a translation of the first word in the text, and means “unveiling” or “disclosure.” Note: Revelation comes from Latin, Apocalypse from Greek. Both have the same meaning.

AUTHOR

Adapted from Laney:

Internal evidence would clearly indicated that John the apostle and author of the Fourth Gospel also authored Revelation. The author of the Revelation calls himself John (1:1,4,9; 22:8). The only John who would have been so clearly known to the seven Asian churches would have been John the Apostle. The author received his revelation while on the island of Patmos where John remained until after the death of Domitian in 96 A.D. (Historia Ecclesiastica 3:20).

There are many significant resemblances between the Revelation and John’s Gospel. Only in Revelation 19:13 and John 1:1,14 and 1 John 1:1 is “logos” used in a personal sense. Jesus is referred to as the “Lamb” in John 1:29,36; 21:55 and 28 times in Revelation. In both books the activity of Satan is prominent (John 8:44; 13:2,27; 14:20; Revelation 2:10; 12:9; 20:2,7,10). Both refer to Jesus as “Shepherd” (John 10:11; Revelation 7:17). The expression “fountain of living waters” or its equivalent is found only in John 4:14; 7:38; Revelation 7:17; and 21:6.

External evidence as well attests to the Johannine authorship of Revelation. Justin Martyr (c. 150 A.D.) states that the work was authored by “*John, one of the apostles of Christ.*” Tertullian (c. 200 A.D.) ascribed the Revelation to John the apostle as did Clement of Alexandria (c. 200 A.D.), Origen (c. 250 A.D.), and Eusebius (c. 250 A.D.). The apostolic authorship of Revelation was not questioned until the middle of the third century when Dionysius of Alexandria challenged the view on the basis of comparing the language, thought, and style of the Gospel and the Revelation. The criticisms of Dionysius are subjective and misleading, and do not allow for stylistic difference between a treatise like the Gospel of John and the apocalyptic literature of Revelation.

There is absolutely no objective evidence whatsoever in favor of any other author than the apostle John. All evidence would indicate that the apostle John was the author of the book of Revelation.

DATE

The Early Date: 68-70 A.D.

This date is held by those who believe the events related to the seven churches correspond to the period of Nero’s reign. It is to be noted that the external evidence for this view is weak. Furthermore, the conditions in the seven churches fit well into the later rule of Domitian.

Laney:

Some scholars date the Revelation during the reign of Nero (54-68 A.D.) or shortly thereafter on account of the reference to Jerusalem as though it were still standing (chapter 11), and the mention of the five kings that have fallen (Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and

Claudius) and the sixth (Nero) “*now is*” (17:9-11). Westcott and Lightfoot date the book early because of the rough character of the Greek. An early date for the book, however, does not allow for the problems to have developed in the churches mentioned in the chapters two and three.

The Late Date: 100 A.D. or later

This view is held by those who maintain that the Book is not a unity. They insist that it was composed by many authors. Such a position is untenable in view of the facts.

The Traditional Date: 95-96 A.D.

This date has the advantage of being confirmed by definite historical evidence. The weight of historical evidence points to a date toward the end of the reign of Domitian, 95/96 A.D.

Laney:

Irenaeus, who knew Polycarp, a student of John, writes that the Revelation was recorded “*at the close of John’s exile was in the 15th year of Domitian*” (81-96 A.D.; Historia Ecclesiastica 3:18; Against Heresies, 5:30,3). Victorinus of the third century records in his commentary on Revelation 10:11 that John recorded the Revelation on the island of Patmos and was liberated when Domitian was assassinated in 96 A.D. Clement of Alexandria agrees with this testimony.

This later date allows for the growth and decline of the churches in Asia. The book reflects considerable persecution (1:9; 2:10,13; 6:9) and this certainly would have been the case during Domitian’s rule. He initiated persecution against Christians who refused to worship the emperor.

The Book of Revelation is best dated towards the end of the reign of Domitian, around 95/96 A.D.

THEME

Halley (page 44): “*Ultimate Triumph of Christ*”

Nelson’s: “*The Revelation of the Coming of Christ*”

Laney: “*The glory, judgment, and triumph of Christ*”

Mitchell: “*Ultimate victory over evil is assured through the conquering Christ*”

This book reveals the person and program of Jesus Christ in relation to the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God upon this earth. In order to establish a new order, the old order must first be abolished. Hence, we have the extensive descriptions of Divine judgments followed by the appearance of the conquering Christ. But this book is more than a blue-print of the future. It also was written to encourage Christians in the face of persecution and testing (this is especially evident in chapters 1-3). Hence, there is a link between prophecy and practice. Prophecy is given in order that its truths might have an influence on the present life of the believer.

Revelation presents the kingdom of God in conflict with and in victory over the kingdoms of this world. This victory will be achieved by the future literal coming of Christ to this earth. Without this coming, there can be no kingdom. Hence, this book presents the consummation of human history. It lets us know that Calvary was not a failure. God’s purposes will prevail upon earth. Revelation is a tonic for our faith. It lets us know that we have no reason to panic. All of the Lord’s foes are doomed. A person on the Lord’s side is on the winning side. All setbacks are at best temporary. Therefore, we can be encouraged to endure times of trial.

Adapted from Laney:

The Revelation is given to reveal future events (1:1,19; 4:1; 10:11; 19:10; 22:10,18,19). Within the overall purpose of the Revelation there are three specific purposes:

1. The historical purpose of the writing was to encourage the believers under the shadow of imperial persecution by showing them the ultimate victory of Christ over His enemies, and to warn churches of the dangers of spiritual lethargy and apostasy. By extension this encouragement is applicable to the saved during the tribulation period. (13:9,10,18; 18:4; cf. Matthew 24:13,15ff.) In this sense also the Revelation is given to condition present living on the basis of future events (1:3; 2:7,11,17,26-29; 3:5,6,12,13,20-22; 22:6,7,14,17).
2. The eschatological purpose is to bring the Old Testament prophesy and promises to full consummation showing how God will deal with the nations, judge sin on earth, establish His kingdom, and bring everlasting righteousness. (22:10-13)
3. The Christological purpose is to present a picture of the glory of Christ in directing the churches, judging the world, and ruling His kingdom.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this." (Revelation 1:19)

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." (Revelation 19:11)

Key Chapters (Nelson's): 19-22 - when the end of history is fully understood, its impact radically affects the present. In Revelation 19-22 the plans of God for the last days and for all of eternity are recorded in explicit terms.

Outline (Mitchell):

- I. Introduction 1:1-8
- II. Christ in Vision 1:9-3:22
- III. Christ in Vindication 4:1-19:10
- IV. Christ in Victory 19:11-22:5
- V. Conclusion 22:6-22

RECIPIENTS

Laney:

The readers of the Revelation are the seven churches of Asia (1:4) as identified as the church of Ephesus (2:1), Smyrna (2:8), Pergamum (1:12), Thyatira (2:18), Sardis (3:1), Philadelphia (3:7), and Laodicea (3:14). These were the leading centers of the province of Asia and were connected by a road on which one could make a complete circuit from Ephesus to Laodicea, passing through all the cities.

The individual messages of chapters two and three are direct to the angels or messengers of the churches. The Greek word "aggelos" (ἄγγελος) may refer to either. It is probably to be understood

here as a reference to the human messengers of these seven churches. They may have been sent to Patmos to inquire concerning John's condition and subsequently became bearers of his message.

Historical Setting:

Laney:

The Revelation was received by John while he was in exile during the latter part of the reign of Domitian. Patmos was a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor, about 35 miles southwest of Miletus. The island served as a place of banishment during the time of Roman rule. Political prisoners were sent there for exile or for forced labor in the mines. The small mountainous island measures only six by ten miles. John himself had been exiled to the island as part of Domitian's persecution against the Christians.

Domitian (81-96 A.D.) sought to raise the moral level of Roman society by restraining immorality and corruption, and by rebuilding the temples of older gods and suppressing new proselytizing religions. Emperor worship was practiced even before the advent of Christianity as seen by the fact that Julius Caesar claimed divine honors, and during the reign of Augustus the imperial cult was introduced in the provinces. Caligula demanded the universal worship of his statue, but it is questionable whether any effort was made to enforce the decree. In the period from Nero to Domitian emperor worship became the official policy of Imperial Rome. Not all the emperors took their divine honors seriously, but Domitian did and took steps to enforce it.

Domitian took the title of Dominus et Deus ("Lord and God") and proclaimed his infant son a god and his mother Domitia a goddess. The Christians would no doubt have refused to worship Domitian and as a result were severely persecuted under his reign. Eusebius writes:

Domitian, indeed, having exercised his cruelty against many, and unjustly slain no small number of noble and illustrious men at Rome, and having, without cause, punished vast numbers of honorable men with exile and the confiscation of their property, at length established himself successor of Nero, in his hatred and hostility to God. He was the second that raised a persecution against us, although his father Vespasian had attempted nothing to our prejudice (Historia Ecclesiastica, 3:17).

It was no doubt the refusal of John to submit to the imperial decree of emperor worship that led to his exile on Patmos. The persecution of the believers during the reign of Domitian is reflected in the message of Revelation (1:9; 2:10,13; 6:9). Eusebius records that the apostle John returned to Ephesus upon being released from exile after the accession of Nerva in 96 A.D. (Historia Ecclesiastica 3:20).

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

- Description of the Great Tribulation: The bulk of the book (4:1-19:10) deals with events that will occur during the future period commonly known as the Great Tribulation. John pictures the future tribulation period as three sequences of Divine judgments that fall upon this earth: 7 seal judgments, 7 trumpet judgments, 7 bowl judgments.
- Brings the Old Testament prophesy and promises to full consummation showing how God will deal with the nations, judge sin on earth, establish His kingdom, and bring everlasting righteousness. There are at least 348 quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. The symbolism, for the most part, is taken from the Old Testament and finds its explanation in its context, or in the imagery of the Old Testament.

The following two points are adapted from class notes. I apologize that I do not know from which class or from what professor.

- Although the Book of Revelation is vague in its character, and is difficult to understand, yet it constitutes a logical piece of Biblical literature, which is meaningful and related to the rest of Scripture. Dr. Herman Hoyt (Late President Emeritus, Grace Theological Seminary - Grace College; Professor of New Testament & Theology, Grace Theological Seminary March 12, 1909-August 29, 2000) has well written: *"It is the capstone in the great pyramid of divine revelation. Just as Genesis is necessary to explain the origination of all things, so Revelation is necessary to explain the consummation of all things. Without this book, the future is relatively dark."* (unpublished notes)
- The key person in the book is Jesus Christ, and the key event is His return to the earth to establish His kingdom.
 1. He is the risen, glorified Son of God walking in the midst of the churches judging their state by the Holy Spirit (chapters 2-3).
 2. Following the rapture, He is the Lamb in heaven invested with authority to carry out the determined preliminary judgments upon men before His personal arrival on earth as Judge and King (4:1-19:10).
 3. He returns to the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords in the Great Day of Wrath (19:11-21).
 4. He is Christ who reigns on the earth for one thousand years with His glorified saints (20:1-6). He is then King over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).
 5. He is the Judge upon the Great White Throne (20:11-15).
 6. He is the Lamb upon *"The throne of God and of the Lamb,"* through Whom, though subjected willingly to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:28), the glory and the love of God the Father will be expressed forevermore (21:22,23; 22:3,4).
 7. He is *"Jesus the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star,"* to His own, His beloved servants (22:16).

RESOURCES

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Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS - [especially those of Dr. J. Carl Laney]), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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