

# The Book of Revelation

Introduction

Revelation 1:1-3

## AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- I. Author
  - A. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1).
  - B. It is the revelation of God the Father (1:1).
  - C. It is the revelation of the Holy Spirit (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).
  - D. It was penned by the Apostle John, brother of James.
    1. There are many similarities with John's other writings.
    2. He was accepted as the author by a majority of the church fathers.
  
- II. Location
  - A. The vision was received and, apparently, the writing was done on the island of Patmos (1:9).
  - B. It seems that Patmos served as a prison settlement for the Romans.
    1. It was a small, rocky island about 4 miles wide by 8 miles long.
    2. It was located about 50 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea.
  - C. William Ramsey that "exile was preceded by scourging, it was marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground, a dark prison, and worse under the last of military overseers."
  
- III. Date
  - A. The book was written during a time of severe persecution of the church.
  - B. There are two dates suggested that fit the situation recorded in Revelation.
  - C. During the 60's, the church was persecuted by Nero.
  - D. During the 90's, the church was persecuted by Domitian.
  - E. Whatever date is correct, the message of the book remains the same.
  - F. However, it seems that the evidence better supports the later date – sometime around AD 95.
  
- IV. Audience
  - A. The book was addressed to the seven churches of Asia (1:4).
    1. These congregations were located in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.
    2. This was not the continent Asia, but the region known as Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).
  - B. It was written to them, in their culture, for their time.
  - C. It was written concerning "things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1; 22:10).
    1. "Shortly" (cf. Luke 18:8; Acts 12:6-7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom. 16:20)
    2. It means "quickly, with haste, in a brief time, with speed."
  - D. It was written with the understanding that the "time was at hand" (1:3).
    1. "At hand" (cf. Matt. 24:32-33; 26:18; Luke 19:11; John 2:13; 3:23; 6:4, 19, 23; 7:2; Heb. 8:13)
    2. It means "near, nigh, close, imminent, soon to come to pass."
  - E. It was written to be understood, especially by those in the first century.
  - F. It was written to Christians who were undergoing terrible persecution because of their faith (cf. 1:4, 6-9 – *God had not forgotten them!*).

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## V. Style

- A. The style of this book is known as Apocalyptic – a revealing of that which is veiled or hidden.
- B. One of the keys to understanding apocalyptic literature is to recognize that it is symbolic, using signs and imagery to illustrate its message.
- C. This kind of writing originated with the Old Testament prophets, namely Isaiah (24 – 27; 33 – 35), Daniel (2, 7, 8), Ezekiel (2:8ff; 38 – 39), Joel (3:9-17), and Zechariah (12 – 14).
- D. In the New Testament, Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; and 2 Thessalonians 2 are considered apocalyptic.
- E. The book of Revelation is also a book of prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18-19).
- F. Finally, this book is also an epistle (1:4).

## VI. Overview of the Book

### A. Historical Background

1. The city of Rome was built on seven hills in the year 753 BC.
2. It became a republic in 509 BC.
3. Julius Caesar was the first dictator of Rome and is usually credited with starting the Roman Empire.
4. Augustus Caesar (Octavian) became the first emperor of Rome in 27 BC.
5. Tiberius Caesar ruled during the life of Jesus and the establishment of the church (Luke 3:1).
6. Claudius Caesar ruled from AD 41 – 54 and is mentioned in Acts 11:28 and 18:2.
7. Nero Caesar ruled from AD 54 – 68 and was ruler when Paul appealed to Rome (Acts 25:10-12).
8. Flavius Vespasian ruled from AD 69 – 79 and was ruler when Jerusalem was destroyed (AD 70).
9. Titus, son of Vespasian, ruled from AD 79 – 81.
  - a. He was responsible for the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70.
  - b. During his reign, the city of Pompeii was destroyed by a volcanic eruption.
10. Domitian ruled from AD 81 – 96 and demanded to be worshipped as “Lord and God.”
  - a. Refusing to do this was considered treason.
  - b. Domitian severely persecuted Christians throughout the Roman Empire.
11. Following his assassination in AD 96, Rome began its great decline and fall.

### B. Chapter Outline

1. Chapters 1 – 3 - Christ addresses John and the seven churches
2. Chapters 4 – 7 - God’s heavenly throne and the book with 7 seals
3. Chapters 8 – 11 - The sounding of the 7 trumpets
4. Chapters 12 – 14 - The woman’s son VS. the Dragon
5. Chapters 15 – 16 - The seven angels with seven plagues
6. Chapters 17 – 19 - Defeat of the harlot, beast, and false prophet
7. Chapters 20 – 22 - Judgment, victory, and reward

### C. Key Verses (1:18; 2:10; 3:21; 4:1; 5:12; 12:11; 14:13; 22:14)