

# UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

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HOW TO READ THE BOOK OF REVELATION

IN LIGHT OF OUR TWO-AGE APPROACH TO REDEMPTIVE HISTORY



# THE CONTEXT

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- Author: John, probably the apostle.
- Written from Patmos
- Date: Either 90-95 A.D. or ca. 68 A.D. Most argue for later date.
- Situation: Persecution
- Destination: 7 churches of Asia Minor
- Genre: part prophecy, part letter, part apocalyptic

# APOCALYPTIC: WHO CARES?

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- First word of the book: Ἀποκάλυψις, *Apokalypsis*, “revelation, unveiling”
- Short version: A divine disclosure usually via angels to some prominent person in which God promises to intervene in human history, to destroy evil and bring in his kingdom.
- Long version: “*Apocalypse* is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another supernatural world. Apocalypse was intended to interpret present earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.” (Apocalypse Seminar of SBL)

# THEORIES OF INTERPRETATION

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- Preterist - Fulfilled entirely or mainly in A.D. 70
- Historicist - Fulfilled throughout church history
- Idealist - Fundamentally symbolic
- Futurist - Fulfilled mainly in future

# THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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- YOUR ENDURANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE (chapters 1-3)
  - Hope in the midst of hardship
  - Patience in in the midst of persecution
  - Confidence in the midst of confrontation
  - Courage for upcoming conflict

# SEVENFOLD REPETITIONS

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- The Almighty - 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22
- The one who sits on the throne - 4:9; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:15; 21:5
- Beatitudes - 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14
- Fourfold designation of the world (tribe, tongue, people, nation) - 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:19; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15
- Earthquake - 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 (2x), 11:19; 16:18 (2x)

# STRUCTURE: CYCLICAL, NOT CHRONOLOGICAL

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- Introduction (chapters 1-3)
  - Prefatory Letters
- Figurative Visions (chapters 4-21)
  - Throne Room Vision (4-5)
  - Seven Seals (6-7)
  - Seven Trumpets (8-11)
  - The Woman and the Dragon (12-14)
  - Seven Bowls (15-16)
  - The Fall of Babylon and the Victory of the Lamb (17-21)
- Conclusion (chapter 22)

## The Seven Seals of 6:1–8:1

Seal	Ref	Label	Symbol	Significance
Seal 1	6:1-2	The First Rider on the White Horse	Crown and bow	Conquest as the Lamb's instrument of salvation
Seal 2	6:3-4	The Second Rider on the Red Horse	Sword	War as the Lamb's instrument of justice
Seal 3	6:5-6	The Third Rider on the Black Horse	Balance	Famine as the Lamb's instrument of justice
Seal 4	6:7-8	The Fourth Rider on the Pale Green Horse	Sword, famine, pestilence, & wild beasts	Epidemic disease as the Lamb's instrument of justice
Seal 5	6:9-11	The Souls of the Slain	White robes	the rationale for God's righteous wrath and the restraint of the judgments of seals 1–4
Seal 6	6:12-17	The Great Earthquake	Present earth & heaven dismantled	the climax of judgment at history's end will come certainly and suddenly
Seal 7	8:1-5	Silence in Heaven	Calm before the storm	the rationale for God's righteous wrath

## **The Seven Trumpets of 8:7–11:19**

### ***Restrained Judgments Sent from Heaven in Response to the Saints' Prayers***

Trumpet 1	Earth	8:7	Hail, fire, and blood cast on land
Trumpet 2	Sea	8:8-9	Burning mountain cast into the sea
Trumpet 3	Rivers and spring	8:10-11	Burning stars fall on rivers and springs
Trumpet 4	Sky	8:12	Sun, moon, and stars darkened
Trumpet 5	First woe	9:1-11	Demons from the Abyss
Trumpet 6	Second woe	9:13-21	Demonic from the East
Trumpet 7	Third woe	11:15-19	Kingdom come

# SEVEN BOWLS

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- Each bowl corresponds to a plague that pictures God's judgment.
- The point is not to find one-to-one parallels between each of the seals, trumpets, and bowls, but to see that God's judgment is perfect, comprehensive, and final.

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