

### *Bible Study Questions*

A quick comparison: Compare the way John introduces the letter and himself in Revelation 1.4-9 with a few other similar introductions in the NT. Try for example Jude 1, 2 John 1.1-2, 1 Peter 1.1-2 and 1 Corinthians 1.1-2. Does anything in particular from Rev 1.9 strike you?

In Revelation v.5b-6 we are given a description of what Jesus has done for us and the implications of this for our identity and purpose as Christians! What does the language in this description remind you of and how does or should this encourage you?

Take some time to read the description of the opening portrait of Jesus (1.12-16). What is your reaction to this?

You may like to compare the description with Daniel 7.9-14. What similarities do you see? What are the implications of this?

How do Jesus' words (read Rev 1.17-20) encourage you?

Throughout the book the phrase *to him who overcomes* or a variant similar to this reoccurs (for e.g. 2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21; 21.7: Note ESV uses *conquer*). In light of the opening description of Jesus and what he has done for us, what do you think this reoccurring phrase means? Where else in the NT do you see this? What would it look like to *overcome*? (Be practical) How might we help each other in this?

*A tale of two cities:* Take some time to read Revelation 18.

How do the different groups in vv.9-19 respond to the fall of Babylon?

What are these people concerned about?

To the original audience the references to Babylon would have been easily understood as a veiled reference to the Roman Empire. However, to limit the picture only to the Roman Empire and not other godless powers would be to misunderstand apocalyptic literature. What features of Babylon can so often characterize human powers?

Compare the picture of Babylon with the picture of the new Jerusalem by reading Revelation 21.1-22.5.

What allusions to the OT can you find in this picture?

Specifically, what allusions can you find to Eden and God's promise to Abraham?

Revelation ends on a plea: 'Come, Lord Jesus' (22.20). How earnestly do we desire the Lord's return? What factors make Jesus' return hard to grasp, remember or desire for you?

## Petersham Baptist Church Bible Overview Series



### ***#12 Revelation***

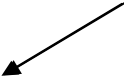


#### *Apocalyptic Literature*

Although the book of Revelation has elements similar to the rest of the NT letters, such as the letters written to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, this book has a different feel to it. Part of the reason why Revelation *feels different* is because of its apocalyptic genre.

While the word *apocalypse* may well conjure up for us B-grade end of the world movies, the word from which we get the title of this book actually means: unveiling or disclosure or as a verb: to reveal something that was hidden.

*Apocalyptic* gives us a different perspective from what we might naturally see and subsequently informs how we are to understand the present. It gives a heavenly perspective on our earthly existence often giving us an insight into the spiritual reality behind how and why certain events are occurring and where the world is heading.

Prologue and Introduction (1.1-20)
The <i>Seven Churches</i> (2.1-3.22)
The Throne in Heaven (4.1-5.14)
The <i>Seven Seals</i> (6.1-8.5)
Just before the seventh seal there is: The 144, 000 and The Great Multitude that no one could count (7.1-17)
The <i>Seven Trumpets</i> (8.6-11.19)
Just before the seventh trumpet there is: The Angel with the little scroll and the Two Witnesses (10.1-11.14)
“The seven signs” (12.1-14.20)
(note: there is no reference to “seven signs” but there is seven!?)
The <i>Seven plagues/ bowls of God’s wrath</i> (15.1-16.21)
The Destruction of Babylon and the World’s Final Judgment (17.1-20.15)
The New Creation (21.1-22.5)
Epilogue (22.6-21)

Seven Seals  
  
 Seven Trumpets  
  
 Seven signs  
  
 Seven plagues/ bowls

The point being that instead of a consecutive series of events, these events are concurrent detailing the same reality with different descriptions. Different camera angles if you like. This interpretation makes sense of those passages that ‘feel like it’s all over’ before you get to ‘the end’.

- Compare Rev 7.10-17; 17.15-19.
- Note how Babylon has ‘fallen’ in Rev 14.8 but is still around in chapter 17 then fallen again in 18.2.
- Also c 6.12 and 8.12

A picture paints a thousand words. Revelation is famous for its imagery. A great number of the images in Revelation arise from allusions to the OT. Another source of inspiration for the imagery and symbols was the Greco-Roman world.

You may find the following helpful<sup>1</sup>

Sea beast and Prostitute = Roman Emperor and his government
Land beast = Roman provincial governors
12 and its multiples = The tribes of Israel, Apostles; God’s OT people
7 = God and eternal perfection, or complete
6 = Satan and his claim to divinity
4 = everything or whole, i.e. ‘the four corners of the earth’
3.5 = incomplete, or not eternal

Like the parables Jesus taught, the images in Revelation should not be pressed in such a way that we attempt to interpret every brushstroke. There is a main point to the images that we are to appreciate and so, at times, we need to stand back and appreciate the portrait in its entirety.

Another point to consider is that the book of Revelation addressed an original audience in the first century. The important interpretative question of ‘what did this letter mean to the original recipients?’ holds true for Revelation.

You might like to think of images in Revelation like the cartoons of political satire in our newspapers. Those cartoons have particular individuals in mind, and yet at the same time can represent more broadly political parties and or particular ideologies. Similarly, the images in Revelation have particular individuals or empires in mind, and yet at the same time can represent more broadly the pursuits of all human powers. I think the trick is not in trying to sweep through history and find particular individuals, institutions or powers to fit particular images in Revelation, but to note how certain characteristics can so often be found in {}.

*Revelation and the rest of the Scriptures*

There could be a temptation to read Revelation in such a way that cuts ties with the rest of the Bible. Revelation is not a book that moves away from the gospel and off in a different direction. Rather, Revelation is about the gospel. Further, the rest of the Scriptures help us understand this book and warn us from interpretations that are contrary to either the gospel or the God who is revealed in the gospel.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Barnett, *Apocalypse Now and Then: Reading Revelation Today*. (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1989), 169.