

Revelation

1. Who was the writer? Who was the audience? What was the time of the writing?

The writer of the book of Revelation is John the apostle. The word “revelation” means unveiling, and according to the first verse of this book, this unveiling came from God → Jesus → angel → John. The particular audience consists of the seven churches of Asia – see Revelation 1:4, 11. Of course, like the rest of Scripture, this message has relevance to the whole church throughout the church age. While preterists push for a writing of this book prior to AD 70, it is generally accepted that it was written toward the end of John’s life around AD 96. External evidence for this comes from Irenaeus, who placed the writing of this book during the reign of Domitian. Internal evidence for a later date includes that this book was written to Gentile churches, many of which were already well on their way to apostasy. The problems within the churches spoken of in the book of Revelation seem to be second-generation problems, not first-generation. For example, the message from the book of Revelation to the church at Ephesus has a drastically different emphasis than that of the epistle of Ephesus and Paul’s letters to Timothy.

2. What is the main theme of the book of Revelation?

Within the book of Revelation is the unveiling of a great spiritual war. This war began in heaven and is being finished on earth. The war is about worship. On the one hand God desires those who will worship in spirit and in truth, while on the other hand the devil accepts worship in any form. The main theme of the book of Revelation is the victory of Christ and His church over the dragon (Satan) and his minions. This book communicates to us that things aren’t really the way they appear to be -- see 2 Corinthians 5:7. At any particular time, from the perspective of the world, it looks as if Satan is winning the war. However, the view from the throne is an eternal perspective, and tells quite another story. Revelation 17:14 tells us that "These [Satan and his agents] will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."

3. How do we know that Revelation is a symbolic book?

It seems that an honest person reading through the Apocalypse would conclude that this book is symbolic because of the wide use of pictures within the book. However, for a concrete answer as to how we know that Revelation uses symbols, here are a few thoughts to consider:

- In Revelation 1:1, the word "communicated" is better translated "signified"
- In Revelation 1:20, we are told that the seven stars represent the angels of the seven churches, and the lampstands represent the seven churches
- The dragon is symbolic of the devil -- Revelation 12:9
- The beast from the earth is later defined as the false prophet -- 19:20

When we view the clearly defined symbols, it is obvious that the other pictures presented in this book are also representative of something or someone.

4. Name the seven churches of the book of Revelation. Which ones were good, bad, or in between? Revelation 1:11 gives us a list of the seven churches, while chapters 2 and 3 go on to address these particular congregations.

- Ephesus – stood firm on doctrine, but needed to return to their first love – 2:1-7
- Smyrna – poor in the ways of the world, but rich toward God – 2:8-11
- Pergamum – confessed Christ under duress, but allowed licentious teaching – 2:12-17
- Thyatira – good deeds, but tolerated false doctrine justifying sin – 2:18-29
- Sardis – reputation of being alive, but were really dead – 3:1-6
- Philadelphia – good deeds, strong with the word, powerful – 3:7-13
- Laodicea – lukewarm, needed to repent

5. Name five enemies of the Church brought forth in this book. Who do these enemies represent? Within Revelation, there are five entities brought forth who are at enmity with God's people. Here they are:

- The dragon -- first presented in Revelation 12:3 -- clearly defined as the devil in Revelation 12:9
- The beast from the sea -- Revelation 13:1 -- antiChristian government. Notice that the beast is a composite sketch of the beasts of Daniel 7, which represented world powers. Notice that the sea represents nations and their governments -- Isaiah 17:12, Jeremiah 46:7-8, Isaiah 8:7-8, Revelation 17:1-3, 15.
- The beast from the earth -- Revelation 13:11 -- antiChristian religion -- clearly defined as the false prophet in Revelation 19:20.
- Babylon the harlot -- Revelation 14:8, 17:4-5 -- antiChristian seduction -- a commercial city and a harlot -- the pull of the world as described in Luke 8:14.
- Men with the mark of the beast -- Revelation 13:16 -- sinners who are held captive by Satan to do his will -- 2 Timothy 2:26.

6. What does the millennial reign represent? Many mistakenly believe that the 1000-year reign of Christ spoken of in Revelation 20 is yet to occur in the future when Jesus comes back to set up an earthly kingdom. However, Matthew 16:28 records the words of Jesus, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." The rest of the New Testament confirms that Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and is synonymous with Christ's church. Here are a couple of key points from Revelation chapter 20:

- Christians are priests who reign with Christ -- Revelation 20:6, Revelation 1:6, 1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 2:4-6
- The first resurrection of Revelation 20:6 is in reference to our immersion -- see Romans 6:1-11, Colossians 2:12

We have been in the 1000 years since the first "first resurrections" began in AD 30 with the establishment of the church. The millennial reign is representative of the entire church age.

7. How is the church pictured throughout the book of Revelation? Within the Bible, the church is pictured in many ways. One of the most beautiful pictures is the church as the bride of Christ. The book of Revelation pictures the church as that spotless bride. Here are a few places where this is brought forth:

- Revelation chapter 12 pictures the church as the woman (in sharp contrast to the other woman of Revelation -- the harlot)
- Revelation 19:7 -- "His bride has made herself ready"
- Revelation 21:2 -- "made ready as a bride adorned for her husband"
- Revelation 21:9 -- "I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb"
- Revelation 22:17 -- "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' "

8. What are some names for Jesus in this book? The book of Revelation gives some wonderful pictures of Jesus. Here are a few of His titles in this book:

- Christ -- 1:1,2,5; 11:15; 12:10; 20:4,6
- Faithful witness -- 1:5, 3:14
- First-born of the dead -- 1:5
- Ruler of the kings of the earth -- 1:5
- Alpha and Omega -- 1:8, 22:13 (attributed to the Father in 21:6)
- The One who is and who was and who is to come -- 1:8, (1:4, 4:8 attribute this to the Father)
- The Almighty -- 1:8 (attributed multiple times to the Father)
- One like a son of man -- 1:13
- The first and the last -- 1:17
- The living One -- 1:18
- Various depictions in the letters to the churches from the picture given in 1:13-16
- Son of God -- 1:18
- The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah -- 5:5
- The Root of David -- 5:5, 22:16
- The Lamb -- 5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,7,9,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9; 21:9
- Male Child -- 12:5
- Lord of lords -- 17:14, 19:16
- King of kings -- 17:14, 19:16
- Faithful and True -- 19:11
- The Word of God -- 19:13
- First and the last -- 22:13
- Beginning and the end -- 22:13
- Bright morning star -- 22:16

9. Who is the victor in the spiritual war? Revelation 17:14 establishes that the Lamb is the conqueror and that "the called, the chosen, and the faithful" who are with Him also overcome. The first three chapters along with chapter 21 communicate that all of the rewards are freely given to those who overcome. How are you going to finish?