



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Revelation

## An Introduction

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

In this introduction to the Book of Revelation we will explore:

- Characteristics of the Book
- Theme and Purpose
- Author, Date, Recipients, and Place of Writing



# Significance of the Book

- The Holy Bible began with the Book of Genesis that proclaimed the endless love of God towards man
- He created everything for him, bestowed authority upon him and granted him that much dignity
- However, soon we see the disobedience of Adam and Eve and their fall
- Then we see them leaving Paradise expelled, degraded and bearing upon their shoulders the bitter crime of rebellion
- They were afraid to meet with God and escaped from the divine justice



# Significance of the Book

- But thanks be to God who did not leave man to live in this way aroused by sin
- He concluded His Bible by the *Book of Revelation* giving us a joyous picture; an open gate in heaven and Eternal Paradise awaiting humanity
- What a delightful and splendid book that is appropriate for every believer to hold, keep at heart, meditate on, and constantly repeat day and night
- It is the book of hope, victory and praise; entirely, the book of heaven



# The Book of Revelation

## A Blessing

*“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”*

*Revelation 1:3*

- A promise of blessing is made in the very first chapter of the book to those who read and hear the words of this prophecy
- A blessing to the person who obeys, keeps, and believes what it says
- How can we deprive ourselves from this blessing by not reading it claiming it is difficult, hard to understand, and mysterious?



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Love

The Book of Revelation is a wonderful way to end up the story that began in the Book of Genesis:

- In Genesis, heaven and earth were created (2:15)
- In Revelation we see a new heaven and a new earth (21:1) where man will find his eternal happiness in the bosom of the Lord as his beloved Father
- In Genesis, the sun and the moon were created to enlighten us (1:14)
- In Revelation, we are not in need of a sun or a moon (21:23). For Christ is the Light of the new heaven, who shines on our inner man and illuminates our souls with His Holy Spirit





# The Book of Revelation

## Of Love cont...

- In Genesis, we find the Garden of Eden where man could eat fruits
- In Revelation, there is a holy city where man will find his satisfaction in his dwelling with the Lord
- Genesis shows us the marriage between our first parents and how it ended by pain and troubles
- In Revelation, there is the joyful marriage supper for the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, which will remain forever (21:9)
- In Genesis, we see the entry of sin into the world
- In Revelation we see it condemned and finished
- In Genesis, we see the appearance of the great adversary, Satan, as a victorious conqueror. We also see sorrow, pain and tears
- In Revelation, we see the victory of man whereas the devil falls down to his everlasting destiny and his kingdom is ruined



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Love cont...

- In Genesis, the curse is pronounced
- In Revelation, there is eternal blessedness, no curse, no grief, no pain, no tears (21:4)
- In Genesis, death reigned over man
- In Revelation, death is no more (20:14)
- In Genesis, man became of fugitive, running away from the face of God
- In Revelation he comes back to His bosom
- Genesis declares the paradise lost
- Revelation shows it regained on a greater heavenly scale





# The Book of Revelation

## Our Journey

- Revelation begins by describing the things of the time of St. John the beloved through all ages until the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
- It describes the Church at the time of St. John and ends by showing us and describing the Heaven and the Eternal Kingdom
- Some scholars say that the first three chapters are from earth and the last two are from Heaven
- From chapter 4-20 is a description of the church journey from earth to heaven with all its pain and persecutions
- The Church on earth and the church in Heaven and our journey to reach heaven



# The Book of Revelation

## A Commandment

- It was written as a commandment
- At the beginning of the book Jesus Christ asked John to write *"What you see, write in a book"* Revelation 1:11
- At the end He asked John to not to add or remove any word *"If anyone adds to these things, God will add o him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* Revelation 22:18-19



# The Book of Revelation

## A Prophecy

- Revelation is the final book of the New Testament
- It is the only prophetic Scripture in the New Testament
- It's not hard to see that Revelation is very different than anything else in the New Testament
- The other New Testament books are
  1. Gospels (evangelistic biographies of Jesus' life and ministry)
  2. Epistles (letters designed to guide individuals and churches to better live out the Christian life)
  3. And the Book of Acts (a history of the early church)



# The Book of Revelation

## A Prophecy cont...

- John clearly identifies his work as a prophecy (Rev 1:3; Rev 22:7, 10, 18–19; Rev 19:10), and he is viewed as a prophet (Rev 22:9; Rev 10:7, 11; Rev 22:6)
- Many have distorted the Book of Revelation by changing its interpretation into a search for the details of future events and matters that we do not have to investigate
- And it is far too common for Christians to focus almost exclusively on the predictive nature of prophecy
- The basic message of Christ is to live according to God's will and that, if we do, we will have no worry for the future
- This is a recurring theme in the words and teaching of Jesus Christ



# The Book of Revelation

## A Prophecy, cont..

- Countless scholars have demonstrated that the dominant emphasis in the prophetic writings is not on predicting the future but on proclaiming God's will
- The book should be used to guide Christians in proper living between Christ's first and final comings rather than using it to predict the future
- One cannot comprehend or explain the Book of Revelation entirely
- The Lord told St. John to write certain things and not to write others
- So the picture is not complete
- It is not the work of one man, or of one age; probably it never will be clearly understood till it is all fulfilled





# The Book of Revelation

## A Prophecy, cont..

Pope Dionysius of Alexandria says:

[...having formed an idea of it as a composition exceeding my capacity of understanding, I regard it as containing a kind of hidden and wonderful intelligence on the several subjects which come under it. For though I cannot comprehend it, I still suspect that there is some deeper sense underlying the words. And I do not measure or judge its expressions by the standard of my own reason, but, making more allowance for faith, I have simply regarded them too lofty for my comprehension; and I do not forthwith reject what I do not been able to discern its importance]





# The Book of Revelation

## We cannot interpret every Event

- The Jehovah witnesses predicted the end of this wicked world - according to the numbers of Daniel and Revelation - to be in 1914 and the Adventists in 1843, then in November 22, 1844 etc
- While Jesus does say that before He returns “nation will rise against nation,” one would hardly find a period in history in which nations weren’t rising against nations
- There has always been war
- There has always been killing and murder and deception and evil, ever since the sin of Adam and Eve
- In fact, so long as Satan—the “father of lies and master of deceit,” continues to deceive people, there will always be evil



# The Book of Revelation

## We Cannot Interpret Every Event cont...

- When Christ comes again, the deception of Satan will be revealed fully, and any power that mankind may give Satan will be eternally destroyed
- In the 1970s there was an extremely popular book titled "The Late Great Planet Earth" which allegedly "interpreted" the Book of Revelation
- Among the things found in this book was the idea that Revelation was speaking about such things as the Soviet Union, nuclear attacks between the USSR and the US, etc.
- When Mikhail Gorbachov became president of Russia, individuals who followed the "Planet Earth" type of interpretation stated that Gorbachov was the antichrist, citing the references in Revelation to the "mark of the beast"—666—as proof of this



# The Book of Revelation

## We Cannot Interpret Every Event cont...

- Gorbachov had a rather large birth mark on his forehead
- The birth mark in no way resembles the numbers 666
- So, many people were saying that the end of the world was near because Gorbachov, complete with the “mark of the beast” on his forehead, had emerged as a world leader but in reality was the antichrist and that the Soviet Union is going to devour the nations of the world
- All sorts of “proofs” from Revelation were given for this idea



# The Book of Revelation

## We Cannot Interpret Every Event cont...

- Of course, the Soviet Union collapsed, as did the communist system, and Gorbachov was in fact rejected by his own people and retired into a quiet life
- So much for these kinds of interpretations
- Strange interpretations of Revelation are not new
- Already in the second and third centuries there were so many twisted and amazing misinterpretations that the false teachings that arose caused great confusion to the Christians of the time



# The Book of Revelation

## Is Symbolic

- It contains about 300 symbols
- Speaking with symbols indicates that the facts mentioned here cannot be expressed or explained in human language
- It is difficult to describe what, *“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”* 1 Corinthians 2:9
- St. Paul the Apostle who wrote 14 letters and was considered one of the most important figures of the Apostolic Age and founded several churches in Asia Minor and Europe could not describe what he saw, *“how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter”* 2 Corinthians 12:4





# The Book of Revelation

## Is Symbolic, cont..

- That is why St. John used human words, colors, and numbers in an attempt to describe what he saw
- The Coptic Church tend to believe in understanding the meaning of these symbols rather than taking it literally
- The purpose is not to know when is Jesus' Second Coming or to know the details of future events
- Jesus says, *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only"* Matthew 24:36
- *"It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority"* Acts 1:7
- Therefore searching for this matters is against God's will
- He just asked us to be ready, Matthew 24:33





# The Book of Revelation

Is Symbolic, cont..

St. Jerome wrote to Fr. Paulinus, bishop of Nola, saying:

[The secrets of the Book of Revelation are as many as its words.

Each word carries a secret inside it and this is little compared to the high honor of this book. Even any commendation of it is considered little, because every word in it carries a lot of meanings. I praise what I understand And what I don't.]



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Hope

- In it you see the door of heaven opened and realize that Jesus Christ, The Conqueror, is present in His church, as a support in the middle of her pains
- This book provided the persecuted Christians a sense of hope that would encourage them to remain faithful to Christ despite the fact that at any moment they could be put to death for the Faith
- Revelation focuses on the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God and how the Christians by remaining loyal and faithful to Christ, will ultimately reap the rewards promised by Christ
- They were challenged to remain hopeful and spiritually strong and to overcome state pressure, the slander against Christians that was prevalent in the synagogues, false teachers, etc.



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Victory

- St. John intended to show the continuous struggle between righteousness and evil, which ends with the victory of righteousness
- In this book we see God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the angels and the righteous ones all occupied in their war against the devil, his demons and wickedness
- St. John, in the Revelation, saw the devil's defeat and his fall from heaven
- This was followed by great rejoicing



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Victory cont...

- The Book of Revelation concentrates on the person of Jesus Christ who stood against evil
- He conquered on the Cross and still conquers through His Church by her participation in His Cross, "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*" 12:11
- The secret of victory is Christ's death and His Blood given with love for our salvation



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Victory cont...

- We bear witness by Him by giving our lives and sharing His Cross, which gives victory
- For when we die with Him all day long, we share His victory over Satan, and His victory over our sins
- The battle, in reality, is between the Lord and the devil
- We don't take part in it, but with all our free will we join one side at the expense of the other
- Our Christ is the conquering Hero inside us



# The Book of Revelation

## Of Praise

- It is a book of praises
- In it we hear voices of praise and chanting
- We learn the language of Heaven: the language of love and the language of continuous praise
- What's interesting is that no strange hymns are heard, but ones that were previously learnt in the Church," like the hymn of Moses, the hymn of the Lamb





# The Book of Revelation

## Final Redemption

- Some people see that this book includes two main cords, one is purple and the other golden
- The first cord is the Blood of Jesus Christ, giver of salvation, where His sacrificial title "the Lamb" is repeated more than 25 times
- The second is the advent (second coming of Jesus Christ) to carry His church to His glories, enjoying angelic life and continuous praise...
- Thus the book gives us a lively picture of the fulfillment of the final redemption where we see, before the throne, a multitude of believers who washed their clothes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14), wearing white robes and carrying palm branches (7:9), enjoying the new city, the inexpressible heavenly Jerusalem (21)



# The Book of Revelation

## The New Altar

- Before falling into sin, man enjoyed the divine presence of God wherever he was, but when he fell under the burden of sin, he needed to meet the Lord through the altar and the blood of sacrifice, the tabernacle, then the altar was a reconciliation place between the Lord and man in the merit of the Blood
- In the heavenly Jerusalem, the Lord dwells with His people and in them
- Thus they are truly considered God's holy Altar... That's why St. John did not find an altar there, because all the people are God's altar
- In the Book of Revelation, the people are considered an altar and a bride at the same time... Thus it is the book of heavenly worship (the altar) and the supper of eternal marriage (19:9; 21:2)



# The Book of Revelation

## A Source

- The Book of Revelation is a reference to the Church rites, rituals, dogma, and services
- The use of light and the of incense (Rev 8:3); the praises we sing (i.e., Holy God, Holy Mighty, Thine is the power), kneeling during our prayers, standing in the church, the white clerical clothing that the priests and deacons wear, and the church rituals are a copy of what was described in Revelation
- The best example is the celebration of the Bright Saturday (night of the Apocalypse) which is called after the name of this book
- After the Good Friday's prayers and the burial of Jesus Christ, all the lights are turned on, candles are lit, the church is dressed in white, and we read the book of revelation and sing it

# The Book of Revelation & Christians



St. John's designations for Christians are ultimately a reminder of who they are and what they should be doing

- His most frequent name used for the disciples is saints [Rev 5:8; Rev 8:3–4; Rev 11:18; Rev 13:7, 10; Rev 14:12; Rev 16:6; Rev 17:6; Rev 18:20, 24; Rev 19:8; Rev 20:9]
- They are to live holy lives in an unholy world
- Disciples are also called priests who serve God (Rev 1:6; Rev 5:10; Rev 20:6; Rev 22:3)
- God's people (Rev 18:4; Rev 21:3; Rev 5:9; Rev 7:9)
- The church (Rev 1:4,11,20; Rev 2:1,7,8,11,12,17,18,23,29; Rev 3:1,6,7,13,14,22; Rev 22:16)

# The Book of Revelation & Christians



- Servants (Rev 1:1; Rev 2:20; Rev 7:3; Rev 10:7; Rev 11:18; Rev 15:3; Rev 19:2,5; Rev 22:3,6)
- Fellow—servants (Rev 6:11; Rev 19:10; Rev 22:9)
- Brothers (Rev 1:9; Rev 6:11; Rev 12:10; Rev 19:10; Rev 22:9)
- Witnesses (Rev 11:3)
- A bride (Rev 19:7; Rev 21:2,9; Rev 22:17)
- A city (Rev 3:12; Rev 21:2,10)
- They are the called, the chosen, the faithful (Rev 17:14) as well as the righteous (Rev 22:11)



# The Book of Revelation & Christians



There are a number of phrases used to describe Jesus' followers

- They are those who are keepers of the testimony of Jesus (Rev 14:12; Rev 22:7,9)
- Obedient (Rev 12:17)
- Hearers (Rev 2:7,11, 7,29; Rev 3:6,13,22; Rev 22:17,18; Rev 1:3)
- They are also watchers (Rev 16:15)
- Keepers (Rev 16:15)
- Fearers (Rev 11:18; Rev 19:5)
- Followers (Rev 14:4)



# The Book of Revelation & Christians



St. John encourages and exhorts God's people through the use of direct commands

- In particular, disciples are commanded to repent (Rev 2:5,16; Rev 3:3,19)
- To remember (Rev 2:5; Rev 3:3)
- To do deeds (Rev 2:5)
- Not to fear (Rev 2:10)
- To be faithful (Rev 2:10)
- To be watchful (Rev 3:2)

# The Book of Revelation & Christians



- To strengthen (Rev 3:2)
- To obey (Rev 3:13)
- To hold fast (Rev 2:25; Rev 3:11)
- To be zealous (Rev 3:19)
- To leave evil behind (Rev 18:4)
- To rejoice (Rev 12:12; Rev 18:20)
- To praise God (Rev 19:5)
- Christians are challenged to hear (that is, to obey) what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev 2:7,11,17,29; Rev 3:6,13,22)

# The Book of Revelation & Christians



- Moreover, disciples are those whose names have been written in the Book of Life (Rev 21:27)
- Those who have been purchased (Rev 14:3)
- Those who have maintained their purity (Rev 22:14)
- Those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9)
- “To the one who overcomes” is a call to overcome any number of evils (Rev 2:7,11,17,26; Rev 3:5,12,21; Rev 15:2; Rev 21:7)

# The Book of Revelation and the Old Testament



- Jesus' revelation to John is linked to the Old Testament and Old Testament symbolism
- Although there is no single quote from the Old Testament books, the Book of Revelation is filled with references to events, symbols and persons of the Old Testament
- However, the books of the prophets Daniel and Ezekiel have the strongest ties to Revelation
- The throne vision - Ezekiel 1 & Revelation 4
- The book opened and eaten - Ezekiel 2:9-3:3 & Revelation 5:7-10; 10:8-9
- Those slain under the altar - Ezekiel 6 & Revelation 6:9-11

# The Book of Revelation and the Old Testament



- The seal on the Saint's foreheads - Ezekiel 9 & Revelation 7
- The measuring of the Temple - Ezekiel 40-43 & Revelation 11:1-2
- Comparing Jerusalem to Sodom - Ezekiel 16 & Revelation 11:8
- The great harlot - Ezekiel 16, 23 & Revelation 17, 18
- The Battle of Gog and Magog - Ezekiel 38, 39 & Revelation 20:7-9
- The New Jerusalem - Ezekiel 48 & Revelation 21
- The River of Life - Ezekiel 47 & Revelation 22



# The Book of Revelation and the Old Testament



- Three and a half time period (a time, two times and half a time) - Daniel 12:7 & Revelation 11:9,11
- The 10 horns - Daniel 7, 8 & Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,8
- The Leopard, the Bear, and the Lion - Daniel 7:4-6 & Revelation 13:2
- The Beast mouthing boasting and blasphemies - Daniel 7:8,11 & Revelation 13:5
- The war against the Saints - Daniel 7:21 & Revelation 13:7
- The worship of the Beast's statue - Daniel 3:5-7,15 & Revelation 13:15
- The Son of Man coming on the Glory-Cloud - Daniel 7:13 & Revelation 1:7; 14:14

# The Book of Revelation and The Book of Exodus



- The Book of Exodus concentrated on two facts: salvation through the blood of the Lamb (Ex 12), and God living among His people (Ex 25:40)
- The Book of Revelation is the symbolic Exodus that became reality through the Cross, where Christ was sacrificed as our Passover (1 Cor 5:7), and we became members of the household of God (Eph 2:19); God lives within us and we abide in Him
- Revelation is the book of complete Exodus to the heavenly Jerusalem through a battle that extends across the ages and gets harder with time, until reaching its peak when the Antichrist appears



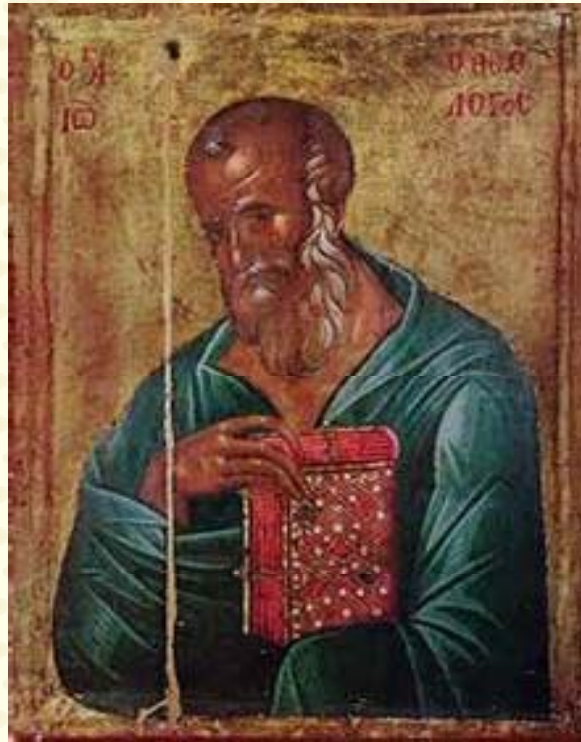
# The Title

- Revelation is often described as a “the Revelation of John” meaning the revelation to John
- It is actually a revelation of Christ (1:1)
- The English title comes from the Latin *revelatio* which in its verb form means “to reveal or unveil that which has previously been hidden.”
- The Greek title is Αποκαλυψις or *apokalypsis*
- It is derived from the first word of the text
- The Book of Revelation is the unveiling of the future to see it in the hands of the Lord who controls history and is the Master of it
- The Book of Revelation is the removal of the veil to discover the Lord who worked for our salvation and is still working and will still work in the future, presenting Himself to us as a safe royal path



# The Author

It is the Evangelist St. John





# The Author Cont...

- He was the son of Zebedee, and his mother's name was Salome [Mt 4:21, 27:56; Mk 15:40, 16:1]
- He lived on the shores of the sea of Galilee
- St. James was the older brother of Saint John
- The mention of the "hired men" [Mk 1:20], implies that they were well-off
- St. John followed John the Baptist when he preached repentance in the wilderness of Jordan and then followed Jesus (Jn 1:35)
- John apparently followed his new Master to Galilee, and was with Him at the marriage feast of Cana, journeyed with Him to Capernaum, and thenceforth never left Him





# The Author Cont...

- Jesus called John and James Boanerges, Sons of Thunder [Mk 3:17; Lk 9:54]
- He, James, and Peter were with Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane
- He was one of the three who witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ
- To John was committed by our Lord the highest of privileges, the care of His mother [Jn 19:27]
- John [the "disciple whom Jesus loved"] and Peter were the first to receive the news from the Magdalene of the Resurrection [Jn 20:2], and they hastened at once to the tomb, and there when Peter was restrained by awe, John impulsively "reached the tomb first."
- When Christ appeared on the shore in the dusk of morning, John was the first to recognize Him



# The Author Cont...

- Irenaeus says that St. John did not settle at Ephesus until after the death St. Peter and St. Paul
- Saint Jerome says that he supervised and governed all the Churches of Asia
- In his old age, when unable to do more, he was carried into the assembly of the Church at Ephesus, and his sole exhortation was, "Little children, love one another."
- He mentioned his name in this book as the author because he speaks about prophecies and in order to trust them it is necessary to know the author to whom God revealed these predictions
- As for the Gospel and the three Epistles, he did not mention his name in them out of humility
- However, the traces of his humility are clear in Revelation, he calls himself Christ's servant (1:1) and "your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (1:9)



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence

- There was a undisputed agreement in the early Church that the Book of the Revelation was an authentic work of the Evangelist St. John
- It was affirmed by Justin Martyr(100-165 A.D.) “*There was a certain man named John, one of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied by a revelation...*”(Dialogue with Trypho, 81, 3)
- St. Justin's testimony is especially valuable because Justin was converted to Christianity in Ephesus in 135 A.D.
- Not only is Ephesus one of the seven Churches to which the book was written (Rev 2:1), but Ephesus was by tradition and by the testimony of the Fathers of the Church the home of St. John the Apostle for many years where he served as bishop until his death



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- Justin testified that St. John Zebedee the Apostle was the inspired writer of the *Book of Revelation* only a few decades after St. John wrote down his visions
- It was affirmed by Clement of Alexandria( 150-211 A.D.)
- It was affirmed by Hippolytus (170-235 A.D.). He quotes Revelation chapters 17 and 18 a great deal
- Biblical scholar Origen of Alexandria, head of the Alexandrian Catechetical School (185-253/254 AD), testified that the author of Revelation was the man who wrote the fourth Gospel and had the good fortune to rest his head on Jesus' chest. (Origen, *Commentary of the Gospel of John* 1, 14; 2.45; 5.3)



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- St. Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria (d. 373 AD), accepted the book as canonical and recognized St. John the Apostle as author. He cited the book in his fight against Arianism (*Oratio II Contra Arianos, 23*)
- St. Basil (379 AD) accepted the authenticity of the book
- St. Gregory of Nyssa (389 AD) accepted authenticity of the book
- St. Jerome, the great Biblical scholar, (420 AD) identified St. John the Apostle as the author of the Apocalypse/ Revelation
- St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, theologian and scholar, (430 AD) identified St. John the Apostle as the author of the Apocalypse/ Revelation





# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- Victorinus - who wrote the earliest interpretation of Revelation that is still in existence - ascribes the Book to John, the Apostle
- It was affirmed by Irenaeus (120-200 A.D.)
- St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, made extensive use of Revelation in his writings and in 180 AD ascribed authorship of the book to "John, the Lord's disciple" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.20.11)
- He testified that St. John was the author, having written the Book of Revelation while a prisoner on the island of Patmos
- Irenaeus' testimony is important because he was a disciple of St. Polycarp (69/70-155 AD) who was a disciple of St. John the Apostle



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- St. Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna, one of the seven churches to receive letters in from Jesus Christ (Rev 2:1-11) and a church that received high praise with no criticism
- The point is that Irenaeus' testimony is very valuable because he is a second generation disciple with a direct connection to the traditions of St. John
- Tertullian (155-220 A.D.) also quotes from almost every chapter of Revelation
- Ignatius (30-108 A.D.) writes regarding John the Apostle,
- The book of Hermas "The Shepherd" refers several times to the Great Tribulation coming (Rev 2:2,5,7; 3:6) which can be an echo of Revelation 2:10, 7:14...



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- St. Melito, Bishop of Sardis, a contemporary of St. Justin and bishop to another of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation (Rev 3:1), wrote a commentary on the Book of Revelation
- Only fragments of his commentary have survived, but in Bishop Eusebius' 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. history of the Church he refers to St. Melito's testimony that John the Apostle was the author (*Church History*, IV, 26, 2)
- In accordance with the writer's statement that he was in exile on the isle of Patmos (1:9), the church Fathers identify this John as the Apostle John



# The Author Cont...

## External Evidence cont...

- In chapters 2--3 the writer seems to be over the churches of the province of Asia and strong tradition places the Apostle John in this position
- History confirms that John the Beloved, was banished by Emperor Domitian to Island of Patmos where the Apostle saw the Revelation (1:9)
- Muratorian Fragment: This document dates to 155 AD
- It contains the oldest list of canonical New Testament books and records: *For John too, in the Apocalypse, though he writes to only seven churches, yet speaks to all* (Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, vol. 1 page 107)



# The Author Cont...

## Internal Evidence

- The writer calls himself John (1:4,9; 22:8)
- The writer speaks with great authority as a prophet (1:3; 22:6-10, 18-19)
- The writer demonstrates himself to be a Palestinian Jew steeped in temple and synagogue rituals, the OT and the Targum
- The writer calls himself John without any further description, therefore, he must have been well known
- Many similarities exist between the Apocalypse and other writings of John





# The Author Cont...

## Internal Evidence cont...

- Despite the difference of the subject of the book from that of the Gospel of John, there are some words mentioned which, specify these two books and not others:
- The term "living water" is used by St. John as a metaphor for God the Holy Spirit
- In the Gospel of John 4:7-15 in the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus' announcement in the Temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles John 7:37-39
- Compare those passages from the fourth Gospel to the use of living water in Revelation, Revelation 7:17..., and in Revelation 22:1-2
- Also the connection between "water" and "thirst" in Revelation and the Gospel of St. John: Revelation 22:17 and John 7:37



# The Author Cont...

## Internal Evidence cont...

- The "Word of God" imagery (Jn 1:1; 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1, and Rev 1:1-2; 19:11-13)
- The imagery of "the lamb" (Jn 1:29; 1:36; Rev 5:6; 4:7; 6:1; 21:22-23)
- "Lamb" imagery connected to Christ is used 30 times in Revelation
- This comparison with Christ is not found in the Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark or St. Luke
- Light imagery (Jn 1:4; 1:9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9-10; 12:35-36,46; 1 Jn 1:5,7; 2:8-10; Rev 21:23-25; 22:5)
- A commandment received by Christ from the Father (Jn 10:18; Rev 2:27), white clothing for angels, (Jn 20:12) and the worthy (Rev 3:4)



# The Author Cont...

## Objection

- Perhaps St. Dionysius of Alexandria is the only father who, although accepting the canonicity of the book, says that the author is another John from the 70 Apostles
- The reason for this can be attributed to the claim that there is a difference in the style of writing from that in the Gospel of John and his epistles
- The church did not adopt this opinion



# Date

- St. Irenaeus says that this Revelation was revealed at the end of Domitian's reign (81-96 AD)
- The testimony of other Church Fathers is that the Revelation of Jesus Christ was written by John near the end of the reign of Domitian in 96 AD
- Victorinus in his *Commentary on the Apocolypse of the Blessed John*, recorded that John labored in the mines of Patmos
- According to Church Fathers, John was exiled by Domitian to the lonely Isle of Patmos, a desolate Greek island in the Aegean Sea only 11 square miles in area
- Domitian was a particularly cruel Roman emperor, who reigned from 81-96 AD



# Date

- He regularly arrested, imprisoned, and executed his enemies
- According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "The years 93-96 were regarded as a period of terror hitherto unsurpassed."
- Upon his death, his successor, Nerva, reversed many of the cruel judgments of Domitian, and John was subsequently released
- Domitian's reign ended in 96 AD, and this has provided the traditional means for dating the writing of the Book of Revelation
- This leads us to the reasonable conclusion that many of the events prophesied in it must occur *later* than the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD





# Place of Writing

- Internal and external evidence seem to support Patmos, modern day "Piteno."
- A small island approximately 25 miles from the coasts of Asia Minor not far from Ephesus (modern day Turkey) (Rev 1:9)
- The Apostle wrote it when he was exiled (1:9)
- A few scientists say that he wrote the Revelation revealed to him while in exile when he returned to Ephesus, but this opinion is not based on proof, especially as he was ordered to write what he saw without delay (1:10,11)
- There was a cave on this island that the inhabitants say was the dwelling of the Apostle during his exile



# The Recipients

- The seven churches of Asia Minor and the Church today
- The Revelation was addressed to the seven Asian churches that were under the guidance of St. John the Evangelist
- There is a special message for each church
- Since this letter is from the Lord of the Church, it certainly carries a communal message concerning the life of Church in the whole world in all ages, especially in the days of the Antichrist



# The Theme

- The theme of the book is the victory of Christ and of His church over the dragon (Satan) and his helpers
- The theme is stated in 17:14  
*"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."*
- John takes the reader behind the scenes to see the power which rests in the line of Judah, the Lamb that was slain, the throne room of God
- Sub-themes might also be judgment (14:77; 20:11-15), redemption (1:5; 5:6; 7:14; 12:11) and the kingdom (5:10; 11:177; 12:10; 20:4)



# Schools of Interpretation

**The Preterists (Preteric theory)** (from the Latin term for "past")

- They believe all the events of St. John's visions were fulfilled during the period of the Roman Empire
- This view has the strength of making John's vision exceedingly meaningful for the early Church, but less relevant to the present age
- They ignored the interpretive key to the book: "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (1:19)
- We can't consider this interpretation apart from the spiritual and the eschatological ones, because although the Apostle mentioned events that were contemporary to him, the words carry meanings that concern the believer's life in every age
- It also predicts the events of the last days



# Schools of Interpretation

## The Historicists (Historic theory)

- They believe that the Book of Revelation includes the history of the world concerning its relation with the church, from St. John's days until the end of time
- They think that the end of the world is not far away and that history is divided into seven eras that all appear in the seven messages to the seven churches (2-3) respectively
- This interpretation ignores the previous one and ignores the spiritual conception of God's word
- The major disadvantage to this view is that historicists fail to agree on which events of human history are foreshadowed in the symbolism of the visions





# Schools of Interpretation

## The Spiritualists:

- In this view particular historical events and characters have no one-on-one correspondence to the scenarios and figures in the Book of Revelation
- Instead John's imagery simply symbolizes spiritual realities depicting the fight between good and evil, God and the Devil, etc. that Christians witness in every generation



# Schools of Interpretation

## The Futurists

- This school of thought holds that the middle chapters, beginning with chapter 4 and including the concluding chapters, apply strictly to the future
- They consider verse (1:19) as a key to the book
- The difficulty with this view is that it robs St. John's vision of any meaning for the early Christians for whom he was writing



# Schools of Interpretation

## The Progressive Parallels View

- This view holds that the book is structured in seven sections that run parallel to each other
- Each of these sections portrays the Church and the world from the time of Christ's First Advent to the time of his promised Second Advent
- In other words it is not a historical chronology; the story starts all over again with each new section but is told or viewed from a slightly different perspective



# Schools of Interpretation

## The Idealist school

- They see and read the Book of Revelation as entirely symbolic
- They translate the symbols found in the book as universal symbols illustrating the clash between good and evil



# Schools of Interpretation

Many think that each interpretation completes the other ones and that it is impossible to adopt one interpretation whilst neglecting the others... For it is a spiritual prophetic book that takes us to the end of ages, not to recognize periods and times but to get ready for the Lord's final coming and the participation in His glories, not ignoring what the church suffers from troubles and persecutions that reach the summit in the Great Tribulation, in the days of the Antichrist.



# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



Number "7" is repeated several times in Revelation

- **The Seven churches (1:4,11) or the Seven Lampstands (1:12,20)**

The message of this book is to reveal Jesus Christ being the Sun of Righteousness present in His church, illuminating her and preparing her to meet Him face to face on His great day, to dwell with Him in His eternal light

- **The Seven Spirits (1:4)**

Some think these are the seven archangels, while others think it is the perfect work of the Holy Spirit in the church of Christ

- **The Seven Messages to the Seven Churches (2:1; 3:22)**

Every message is offered for the advantage and edification of the whole church, without ignoring the personal relationship between Christ and the local church, or every member in it

# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



## ➤ The Seven Lamps of burning fire (4:5)

If the Seven churches are lampstands, then their light is not their own but a divine gift from God's Holy Spirit who appears as seven lamps of fire lighting the church and inflaming her with the fire of divine love

## ➤ The Seven Seals (5:1; 6:1-8; 8:1)

We need God's Lamb to open the seals of His Holy Bible, granting us His divine wisdom and real knowledge by His Holy Spirit. What did the seven seals reveal? He walks ahead of us as a conqueror and to conquer (seal 1), and we enter into a series of successive pains but He turns pains into glories (seal 2-6), He makes wonderful things for us and this amazes the whole of heaven who stand as if in silence, astonished at the glory prepared for humans (seal 7)

# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



## ➤ The Seven Horns (5:6)

The horn refers to strength. The week Lamb declares with His Cross what is greater than strength. "*And has raised up a horn of salvation for us. In the house of His servant David*" Luke 1:69

## ➤ The Seven Eyes (5:6)

Our Christ has seven horns, i.e. has complete power, and seven eyes, i.e. has complete knowledge... He sees all matters with all hidden details. By His redemption He grants us power as well as spiritual knowledge, i.e. power together with wisdom and inner insight

## ➤ The Seven Trumpets (8:2; 11:9)

Indicating God's warnings to the wicked ones who persecute His people

# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



- **The Seven talking thunders (10:3,4)**
- **The Seven thousand Slain due to the earthquake (11:13)**  
In the days of the two prophets witnesses against the oppressor
- **The Seven Heads (12:3)**  
The great fiery red dragon has seven heads, i.e. is continuously thinking and planning to destroy and exterminate the church...  
His continuous work is deception (12:9; 13:14; 20:8)
- **The Seven Crowns on his heads (12:3)**  
The devil appoints many kings in many countries, thus becoming like a king over kings... He never stops deceiving or using authority as well as violence. It is said that in the days of "the Antichrist," many countries will follow him and fight against God's people

# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



## ➤ The Seven Bowls and the Seven Plagues (15:1; 16:21)

The matter does not stop at warnings (the trumpets), but God pours out His firm punishment so that the wicked ones may stop following the Antichrist

## ➤ The Seven Mountains (17:9)

On which sits Babylon, the harlot. Perhaps this refers to the kingdom of the Antichrist which includes a number of great leaders, like mountains to lean on

## ➤ The Seven Kings (17:10)

Referring to authorities who submit to the kingdom of the wicked one



# The Book of Revelation and Number Seven



## ➤ The Seven judgments

The judgment and fall of Babylon (17,18), the judgment of the beast (19:20), the judgment of false prophet (19:20), the judgment of the evil nations' leaders (19:21), the ruin of Gog and Magog (20:7-9), the end of Satan (20:10) and the destiny of all wicked ones (20:15)

## ➤ The Seven "New" things

New heaven (21:2), new earth (21:1), the new city (21:2), new nations (21:24), new river as crystal (22:1), new market (street) (22:2), new tree of life (22:2)



# The Seven Revelations

The Book of Revelation is divided into seven revelations

- First revelation is the church on earth (Chapters 1-3)
- Second revelation is the seven seals (Chapters 4-7)
- Third revelation is the seven trumpets (Chapters 8-11)
- Fourth revelation is the woman, the dragon, and the beast (Chapters 12-14)
- Fifth revelation is the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God (Chapters 15-16)
- Sixth revelation is the fall of Babylon and the Millennium Reign (Chapters 17-20)
- Seventh revelation is the church in heaven (Chapters 21-22)

# Divisions of the Book of Revelation



- The Seven Churches 1 - 3
- The Prophetic Revelations 4 - 20
- The Glory of Heavenly Jerusalem 21 - 22



# The Book of Revelation

It is important to note that:

- The Orthodox Church does not accept the notion that everyone can properly interpret the Holy Bible as he or she wants
- The Church has the ability to properly interpret Scripture, and this means that we should study and adopt the interpretations that have been handed down over the 2000 years of the Church's living history
- Given the fact that the Scripture is the inspired word of God, revealed to mankind and not to a single individual, no individual has the right or ability to offer "the" definitive interpretation of Scripture
- This is especially the case with Revelation, which cannot be interpreted as one wishes



# Discussion

- What does the word “*Revelation*” mean? Why is this called a Revelation “*of Jesus Christ?*” Why is this considered the primary purpose of Revelation?
- Who wrote the book? Provide evidence
- Why was John on Patmos?
- To whom was the book addressed?
- What is the purpose of the book?





# Discussion

- What is important to know to properly interpret the book?
- How are the teachings of the Book of Revelation still applicable for people who live fairly comfortable and secure lives today, without experiencing much religious persecution?
- How does the historical context of the Book of Revelation affect its content?
- What are the different views of interpretation of the Book of Revelation?