



Revelation

Introduction

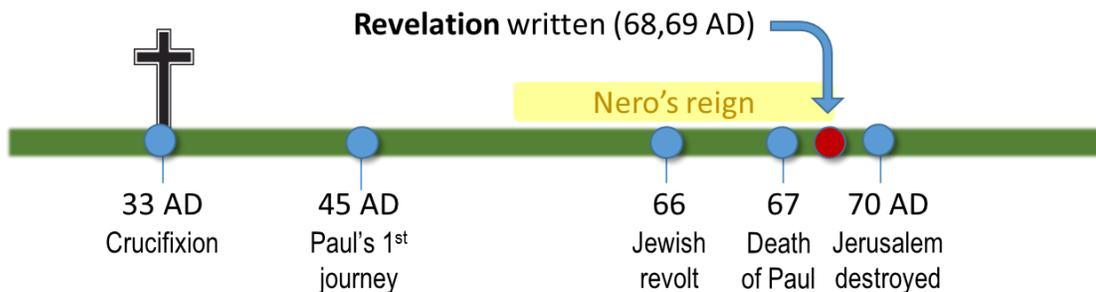
Revelation. The very title reveals the attitude with which we will approach our study of this book. It is the *Revelation*, not the *mystery*. This book is meant to be understood and it will be understood.

The book of Revelation is often called “The Apocalypse.” This is derived from *apokalupsis* the first word of the book in the Greek text in which it was written. *apokalupsis* translated in our English versions as “The Revelation.” The word means “an uncovering, or unveiling.” It is used about a dozen times in the New Testament, and related words are used another 30 times. We refer to all the Bible as God’s revelation and indeed it is, but there is one essential difference between the book of Revelation and the other books of the Bible. It was revealed by Jesus Christ to John through His angel (1:1).¹

The key to understanding the Revelation is in first understanding the **background** to its writing and the larger **context** of the Bible in which it fits.

Background

For the sake of our study we will assume the pre 70 A.D. writing of this book to be correct (around 68 or 69 A.D.)². At this time the gospel has spread throughout the Roman Empire with great success. Paul, who was largely responsible for taking the gospel to the Gentile world, has been imprisoned for the second time and has been most likely martyred in Rome.³



The church was undergoing a severe persecution from both Jews and the Roman government. To quote Jesus, this was a persecution “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever

¹ *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets*; Art Ogden, pg. 1,2

² I am well aware of the debate over the date which Revelation was written. The student is encouraged to familiarize themselves with the evidence for a pre 70 A.D. date and those for a post 70 A.D. date.

³ Paul’s death is traditional placed at 67-68 A.D.

will"⁴. Nero was the reigning Caesar at this time. Central to the conflict between Rome and the Christians was the issue of who was indeed Lord. Rome insisted that all must worship the Caesar while Christians were resolute in *only* worshipping God.⁵ The Christian teaching of their being only *one Lord* was "nothing less than a declaration of war against the pretensions of the Roman State."⁶

The frequent martyrdom of Christians raised the question as to the legitimacy of the church and the reign of Jesus Christ over His kingdom. The Jews still claimed that they were the only covenant people of God and they pointed to the temple in Jerusalem as evidence of their relationship with God. The continual murder of many Christians only served to substantiate their claim. The disciples were asking *why*?

"If we are the children of God why are we dying? Why is God not acting and avenging our deaths? Is not our death a sign of our defeat?"

It is to these events and these questions that Jesus writes to His people.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. (Revelation 1:3)

Jesus is about to take action. He is pictured in the Revelation as sitting on a white horse as the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16) who is ready to battle the nations. Revelation is book of vengeance, hope and victory.

Context

1. A Book of Prophecy: *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the **prophecy**.*
 - a. Understand that this is a book of prophecy: 1:3; 10:11; 22:7, 10, 18-19
 - b. It speaks of events which were *shortly to take place*. The reader is admonished to both hear and heed the message. To do so requires understanding of the prophecy.
 - c. Prophecy is not merely a prediction of future events, but rather a promise of what is to come based upon the "evaluation of man's ethical response to God's Word of command and promise."⁷ Consider God's statement spoken through Jeremiah:

At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; 8 if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. 9 Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; 10 if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. (Jeremiah 18:7-10)

⁴ Matthew 24:21 (NASB) see Revelation 7:14

⁵ "Let us not forget why the Christians were killed. They were not killed because they worshipped Jesus.... Nobody cared who worshiped whom so long as the worshiper did not disrupt the unity of the state, centered in the formal worship of Caesar. The reason the Christians were killed was because they were rebels. ... We may express the nature of their rebellion in two ways, both of which are true. First, we can say they worshiped Jesus as God and they worshiped the infinite-personal God only. The Caesars would not tolerate this worshipping of the one God only. It was counted as treason." *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*; Francis Schaeffer, Revell, 1976 pg. 24

⁶ *The Days of Vengeance*; David Chilton, Dominion Press, pg.8

⁷ Chilton pg. 11

- d. Revelation will speak of a coming judgment brought about by the failure of those being judged to be faithful to God and His covenant with them.
2. A Book of Signs: *He sent and **signified** it by his angel unto his servant John.* (ASV)
 - a. Revelation is authored by Jesus, and communicated to John by the use of **signs**. John was not told what *words* to write, but was shown visions and scenes which he was to write about.
 - b. The word “saw” is used over 40 times in this book in reference to what John was shown (i.e. “I saw”).
 - i. *Write in a scroll **what you see** and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”* (Revelation 1:11)
 - ii. *Therefore **write** down the things you have **seen**, and the things that are, and the things that will happen after this.”* (Revelation 1:19)
 3. The Context of Biblical language
 - a. The book of Revelation makes frequent references to the Old Testament.⁸
 - b. One of the keys to understanding this book is to become familiar with the language used in its writing.
 - i. Often called *apocalyptic language*⁹, Revelation employs judgment language that is used by God in the Old Testament.¹⁰
 - ii. The language is natural and understandable when it is first understood in its original context of the Old Testament. The reason people have trouble understanding Revelation is simple because they do not know the Old Testament.
 4. The Context of Time:
 - a. In the text we have clues which define and dictate the time frame in which the predicted events will take place. We will see that these events find their fulfillment in a time contemporary to those whom it was written.
 - b. The first clue is found in chapter one:
 - i. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place* (Revelation 1:1)
 - Must shortly come to pass (ASV, KJV)

⁸ “Revelation is the most “Biblical” book in the Bible. St. John quotes hundreds of passages from the Old Testament, often with subtle allusions to little-known religious rituals of the Hebrew people. In order to understand Revelation, we need to know our Bibles backward and forward.” Chilton, pg 11.

⁹ Type of biblical literature that emphasizes the lifting of the veil between heaven and earth and the revelation of God and his plan for the world. Apocalyptic writings are marked by distinctive literary features, particularly prediction of future events and accounts of visionary experiences or journeys to heaven, often involving vivid symbolism. Later apocalypses often build upon and elaborate the symbolism employed by earlier ones. This is particularly the case in the Book of Revelation, in which not only earlier apocalypses but the whole Old Testament is plundered for ideas and symbols. Readers need to be alert to discern allusions. Elwell, Walter A. “Entry for ‘Apocalyptic’”. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. . 1997.

¹⁰ “It is filled with references to events and characters of the Old Testament, and a great deal of its phraseology is taken directly from the Old Testament books. ... Oddly enough, there is not one direct citation in Revelation from the Old Testament with a statement that it is quoted from a given passage; but a count of the significant allusions which are traceable both by verbal resemblance and by contextual connection to the Hebrew canon number three hundred and forty-eight. O” Merrill Tenney; *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 101.

- Must shortly take place (NASB 1977)
 - Come to pass *quickly* (Young’s Literal Translation)
 - Original Word: *tachos*; (Strong’s 5034) quickness, speed, hastily, immediately
 - For others uses see Acts 12:7; 22:18; 1 Timothy 3:14
- ii. *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for **the time is near**.* (Revelation 1:3)
- Time is at hand ASV, KJV
 - Original word: *eggus*; (Strong’s 1451) near, nearby, close, ready
 - For other uses see Matthew 24:32; 26:18; John 2:13
- c. The Second clue(s) is found in chapter 22
- i. *“And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which **must soon take place**.”* (Revelation 22:6)
- Same word as used in 1:1 (*tachos*, Strong’s 5034)
- ii. *“And behold, **I am coming quickly**. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”* (Revelation 22:7)
- Similar to the word as used in 1:1; 22:6 (*tachu*, Strong’s 5035)
 - Used six times in Revelation: 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:7; 22:12; 22:20
- iii. *And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the **time is near**.”* (Revelation 22:10)
- Same word as used in 1:3 (*eggus*, Strong’s 1451)
- iv. *“Behold, **I am coming quickly**, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”* (Revelation 22:12)
- Same word as used 22:7 (*tachu*, Strong’s 5035)
- v. *He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, **I am coming quickly**.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.* (Revelation 22:20)
- Same word as used in 22:7, 10 (*tachu*, Strong’s 5035)
- d. These two clues server as *bookends* for the timeframe of the book’s coming events. The book opens with *“I am coming quickly...the time is near”* and the book closes with *“I am coming quickly...the time is near”*. Any interpretation of the events in between these two bookends must fit the time frame which they describe – *both quickly and near!*
- i. If the book was written around 68 A.D. then the events it predicts must have happened within the next generation (40 years) – all in the first century. For us, the events recorded in the book of Revelation are mostly history, having already happened.
- ii. Interpretations that make the fulfillment of these event still future to us today (some 2000 years after the book was written) do not fit the time frame established by our Lord and are therefore incorrect. This book is not a prophecy about nuclear war or any other event which may take place in the present 21st century.



**Soon!
Near!**

‘the things which must soon take place’

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
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**Soon!
Near! QUICKLY!**