**Revelation**

*Lesson 1 – Introduction*

1. Revelation is both overly used and underused at the same time. From one perspective, it’s neglected in the sense that it’s not preached often from the pulpit. There’s a reason people avoid it because they don’t know what to do after chapter 3.
2. From the other perspective, Revelation is overused in all the wrong ways. When you hear about it, it’s dramatic with charts, graphs, end of the world, track current news events, mysterious code to crack.
3. Author: All indications point to Apostle John
4. Location: Island of Patmos where John was exile/imprisoned for the rest of his life
5. Date:
   1. 68-69 A.D.: This is absolutely crucial to those who take the Preterist (past) view of Revelation that the book is all about the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.
   2. 96 A.D.: This is the majority view in Reformed circles based on internal and external evidence.
6. Audience: 7 real, historical churches but it is meant to be for the universal church and these 7 real churches were hubs that could circulate Revelation to other churches.
7. Purpose:
   1. To encourage and warn believers to hold on to the faith
   2. To demonstrate Christ’s ultimate victory
8. Message: “God rules history and will bring it to its consummation in Christ.” –Vern Poythress

*Can We Understand Revelation?*

1. YES! Revelation 1:1 – “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place.”
2. And it is written to “his servants” so that means you and me. Revelation 1:3 – “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”

*Why Is Revelation So Confusing?*

1. When we see charts like below, it can get overwhelming.
2. 
3. Many people treat Revelation like a puzzle book (trying to figure out all the details first) rather than a picture book (start with the big picture then dive down into the details).

*What is the Genre of Revelation?*

1. Prophecy: Revelation 1:1 says “the things that must soon take place” and Revelation 1:3 says “the words of this prophecy” so we know that in some way the book is going to be talking about the **future.**
2. Letter: Revelation 1:4 begins with a typical introduction like many of Paul’s letters🡪”John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him…” so we know in some way the book is going to be relevant to John’s audience and talk about their present situation. Revelation is not ONLY about the future, but also about **the present**.
3. Apocalypse: Apocalypse is a special subset of prophecy that uses visions, dreams, pictures, and images to talk about the end of the world and the final judgment. So in order to understand Revelation, we also need to understand other Scriptural apocalypses like portions of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. They set the background for Revelation and Revelation quotes or alludes to these OT writings so we are missing in our understanding of Revelation if we don’t have an understanding of OT apocalypses. Apocalypse also focuses and reinforces the fact that these visions originate from heaven so there’s a sense in which an apocalypse gives us God’s view of the world. Finally, since apocalyptic writing is so drenched with images, we need to understand the book as being highly symbolic rather than literal. The things seen in dreams and visions represent something else.
4. Summary: “Revelation is a prophecy cast in an apocalyptic mold and written down in a letter form.” –D.A. Carson/Doug Moo

*5 Schools of Interpreting Revelation*

1. Preterist: All of Revelation was fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D.
   1. Partial Preterist: Most of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 A.D. but the final few chapters will be fulfilled in the future.

Cross 70AD 2nd Coming

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Revelation  
  
Jay Adams and R.C. Sproul would fall into this camp. 2 main problems with this view are the early date and relevance for the church today. If the book of Revelation is a prophecy, then it was only a prophecy for about 12 months, but a lot of the early church didn’t have access to the book if it had to be circulated around. Additionally, if it’s all or 95% about the past, then how is it profitable for us today for instruction, rebuke, and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16)?

1. Futurist: Revelation is all about the future and has nothing for us today.   
   Cross 2nd Coming

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We are here Revelation

This view is held by all dispensationalists and those who would consider themselves “historic pre-millenialists” (non-dispensational). The main problem with this view is that it makes Revelation irrelevant to today. It doesn’t even apply to a church that will be raptured! Church won’t experience Revelation from chapter 4 onward; we experience the first 3 chapters and that’s it. It’s not about church or for church; it’s for non-Christians left behind. Why would there be a book for the church that doesn’t apply to the church and in which church won’t experience?

1. Historicist: Revelation offers a chronological reading of all of church history until the 2nd Coming. Revelation would cover the patristic age, the middle ages, the Crusades, rise of Islam, Reformation, modern day, etc.  
   Cross 2nd Coming

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Revelation (chronological)

This view is almost non-existent today. It changes its interpretation based on where one finds himself in church history. For example, in the middle ages, the church understood the Beast of Revelation 13 to the Muslims. But in the Reformation, the Beast was understood to be the Pope. And that is its main problem. The entire interpretation of the book is dependent upon where you think you are in church history. How do you know where you are in church history? Everybody who holds this view thinks they’re at the end, near the 2nd coming. They can see the book covering everything before them. What if they’re right? How do you know you’re not near the beginning closer to the cross? How do you know you’re not at chapter 4 of the book? Your interpretation of the book changes with every generation. Revelation is so connected in 1-1 way with current events that your view is going to expire.

1. Idealist: Revelation is about spiritual warfare but has no reference to specific events.  
   Cross ~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~ 2nd Coming

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Revelation (no real connection)

The main problem with this view is that it loosens the connection to earthly events. If you read the apocalypses in the OT, the visions always have a reference to something or somebody on the earth. For example, in Daniel the 4 beasts represent 4 empires. Apocaplyse always has a connection to the real world.

1. Iterist (aka Eclectic aka Modified Idealism): This view combines the strengths of the Preterist, Futurist, and Idealist views with a cyclical view (rather than chronological view) of Revelation  
   Cross applies across Inter-Advent time 2nd Coming

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Revelation (“the last days”)

The strength of this view is that it makes it relevant for the church until Christ returns. It was relevant for John’s audience in the past, it is relevant for us today, and it will be relevant for the future church on earth.

Additionally, in this view, the symbols have multiple applications rather than 1 fulfillment (the historicist view). So the Beast could be the rise of the Muslim empire, and the Pope, and any non-Christian government that set themselves up against Christ and His church. In John’s day, Rome was the Beast. The Beast is picture of a characteristic attribute of the last days. Any non-Christian government is the “Beast.”