**Revelation**

*Lesson 2 – The Structure of Revelation*

1. Most books of Scripture go in chronological order, generally speaking. Therefore structure as such is not necessarily important. However, it is different for the book of Revelation.
2. The key idea for my position is “recapitulation.” Recapitulation basically means to say the same thing in a different manner. In other words, Revelation uses parallelism. John is going to look at the time period between Jesus First and Second Comings (aka “Inter-Advent Period) and John is going to look at it from 7 different angles. Revelation gives us 7 different snapshots of this church age between the Incarnation and the end of the world.
3. However, as we progress through the 7 different snapshots of the same time period, there is intensification as well. William Hendriksen calls this “progressive parallelism.” In other words, more and more detail is given as we move through the 7 cycles. The opposition to Christ intensifies and more and more details about the Second Coming are given.
4. The Actual Structure
   1. The Seven Churches (1-3)
      1. These are 7 letters to 7 real, historical churches but these letters give us a picture of the church during this Inter-advent period. These are the kinds of things that all churches are going to be dealing with until Christ returns – degrees of apostasy and heresy, complacency, lukewarmness, some churches doing well while others do poorly, etc.
   2. The Seven Seals (4-7)
      1. 5:1-5 begins with an allusion to the crucifixion and death of Jesus as Jesus comes forth as one who has conquered which makes Him worthy to open the scroll with seven seals.
      2. 6:12-17 alludes to the great Day of the Lord (2nd Coming). We have the sun darkened and the blood moon and the Earth is being refashioned.
      3. 7:1-9 now moves to God’s people in heaven (144,000 = complete number of God’s elect). All of God’s people have now been gathered into His kingdom.
      4. 7:17 the Lamb is in the midst of God’s people and God will wipe every tear from their eyes (see Rev. 21:3-6).
      5. Jesus: Here Jesus is depicted as lamb/lion.
   3. The Seven Trumpets (8-11)
      1. These 7 trumpets lead to the fall of the worldly city (Rev 11:13).
      2. In 11:15, the world has become the kingdom of God. It uses language of consummation and completion.
      3. 11:18 talks about how the wrath of God came (past tense) upon those opposed to Him and the rewarding of those who served Him (see Rev. 20:12)
      4. This section ends with earthquake, lightning, thunder, hail, etc.
   4. The Persecuting Dragon (12-14)
      1. This section begins with Jesus’ birth (woman giving birth with a dragon waiting to devour the newborn). This is one argument about Revelation being all about the future.
      2. Satan is thrown down to earth. I understand this to happen at the cross so we’re still looking at the past.
      3. This section ends with 144,000 (again!). Babylon has fallen (14:8) and the Earth is harvested (14:14) unto salvation (14:15-16) and unto judgment (14:17-20). This is the separation of the sheep/goat, or wheat/tares that Jesus talks about in His parables in Matthew that will happen at the end of time.
      4. Jesus: Here Jesus is the Son of Man
   5. The Seven Bowls (15-16)
      1. This section begins with the 7 bowls of God’s judgment.
      2. 16:16 is the battle of Armageddon. Again, if Revelation is chronological, then what is Armageddon doing here at this point in the book?
      3. As the 7th bowl is poured out in 16:17, a voice from heaven says “It is done/finished.” This is repeated verbatim in Rev. 21:6
      4. 16:18 has more lightnings, an earthquake, and thunder.
      5. 16:21 has great hailstones which again we’ve already seen. What’s new as this intensifies is that the hailstones are described in greater detail (100 lbs each, falling on people, they respond by cursing God).
      6. This section ends with great detail given about God’s judgment upon unbelievers at the end. Babylon falls (again!) and they drink the cup of the wine of God's wrath (16:19).
   6. Fall of Babylon (17-19)
      1. This section begins with a description of the city of Babylon, pictured as a prostitute.
      2. Revelation 18 describes the fall of Babylon (again!!). This is like the 3rd time Babylon has fallen.
      3. Revelation 19 talks about the marriage supper of the lamb and it has come. Salvation and judgment are here.
      4. In Revelation 19:11-21, there is a war at the marriage supper. This is the battle of Armageddon all over again. Rev. 19:15 has God’s winepress of wrath on unbelievers all over again.
      5. Jesus: Here Jesus is the rider on a war horse.
      6. This section ends with all of God’s enemies dead (birds are eating their flesh, the beast and false prophets are thrown into the lake of fire).
      7. Revelation 19:21 – “And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of Him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.”
   7. The Great Consummation (20-22)
      1. 20:1-6 talks about the millennium and the dragon (Satan) is thrown into a pit. But notice that he’s already been thrown into a lake of fire at the end of time in chapter 19. How can he be alive again and deceiving the nations if it’s already over? Only if the tape has been rewound and we’re starting at the beginning again. You can’t read chapters 19-20 in a chronological fashion because if you do, it makes no sense because the enemies are all finished, but then they are all alive again!
      2. 20:7-10 is the Battle of Armageddon one more. Now that’s 4 battles of Armageddon so far. Are these 4 different battles of Armageddon, or are they all 4 pictures of the same battle. This view of Revelation as recapitulating itself makes more much more sense than Revelation going in chronological, straight-forward fashion.
      3. Then there is the Great White Throne Judgment where God’s people are delivered and unbelievers are judged and thrown into the lake of fire. How can they be thrown into the lake of fire again if they are already all dead from chapter 19?
      4. This section ends with the New Heavens/Earth and New Jerusalem. God is dwelling among His people and all their tears (21:4) are wiped from their eyes.
5. Further evidence in Revelation to support recapitulation (parallelism)
   1. In another sense, the book of Revelation can be divided into 2 major divisions:
      1. Rev 1-11 depicts the Church being persecuted by the world. It’s an earthly battle.
      2. Rev 12-22 depicts Christ persecuted by Satan
   2. Specific time periods are identical
      1. In Rev. 8-11 the duration is 42 months (11:2) or 1260 days (11:3).
      2. Revelation 12-14 has the same time frames: 1260 days (12:6), 3.5 years (12:14).
      3. The same time periods are described as days, months, or years, and they are all equivalent to each other.
   3. The 7 trumpets and bowls match up well with each other:
      1. The first ones affect the earth (8:7; 16:2)
      2. The second ones affect the sea (8:8; 16:3)
      3. The third ones affect a river (8:10; 16:4)
      4. The fourth ones affect the sun (8:12; 16:8)
      5. The fifth ones speak of the Abyss and the throne of the beast (9:1; 16:10)
      6. The sixth ones talk about the Euphrates river (9:13; 16:12)
      7. The seventh ones speak to the second coming of Jesus (11:15; 16:17)
6. Parallels with Genesis
   1. Genesis begins with a structure of 7 days. Revelation ends with 7 sections (and 7s all over the place within those 7 sections).
   2. Genesis begins with creation, garden, tree of life, and God with His people. Revelation ends with re-creation, garden, tree of life, and God with His people.
   3. The whole canon of Scripture has 7 sections: 3 Old Testament divisions (Law, Prophets, Writings) and 4 New Testament divisions (Gospels, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles, Revelation). “Obviously Scripture is a book that God has put together.” –Dr. Michael Kruger