

Author

- The book only identifies the author as “John.” It does not clarify further.
- I believe the apostle John is the author of the book.
- The opinion of the majority of scholars is that this is another John.
- The primary evidence is Polycarp, who was disciplined by John, and Irenaeus, who both say John wrote this book.
- He wrote this from exile on the island of Patmos, a Greek island near Turkey.
- After the death of Emperor Domitian, he was released from exile.

Date

- This is one of the most disputed dates for the book, even by evangelical scholars.
- It is dated anywhere from 60 AD to 135 AD.
- The dating depends on which John wrote the book and which Roman persecution is being referenced throughout the book.
- Irenaeus says, John wrote the book near the end of the Emperor Domitian’s reign.
- I believe it was written during Domitian’s reign between 85-95.

Genre

- Understanding the genre of a book of the Bible can help us be prepared to interpret it better. We need to approach narrative differently than a letter.
- This is an apocalyptic and prophetic letter to churches.
- Part of the book is apocalyptic and speaks to the end of all things.
- Part of the book is prophetic and reads similarly to Ezekiel, Isaiah, and others.
- Ultimately, the book is a letter meant to be read and distributed to the churches.
- Part of the challenge of interpreting the book is the different genres.

Persecutions

- The church in Smyrna is particularly mentioned as having to face persecution.
- The church generally will be persecuted and killed by the beast.
- Christianity was a minority religion in a polytheistic world.
- Rome did not have a national policy of persecuting Christianity, but it was often sporadic and local.
- Christians were accused of atheism, cannibalism, incest, child sacrifice, and treason.
- Christians were blamed for natural disasters because of their refusal to worship idols.
- Christians were not killed in the Colosseum, but usually in the Circuses.
- Christians would be forced to deny Christ, proclaim Caesar as Lord, and then sacrifice to idols. Anyone who refused to do this would be killed.
- They typically did not hunt down Christians, but periodically they would be accused.
- This is the persecution and opposition the churches were facing.
- There was tremendous pressure to give into the Roman Empire.

7 Churches

- These churches are in a circular route on a Roman road in modern day Turkey.
- Ephesus and Smyrna were two significant cities in the early church.
- The Apostle John led the church in Ephesus and was buried there.
- Polycarp, one of John's disciples, was the bishop of Smyrna.
- All of these cities had Roman courts where Christians would be put on trial.

Interpretations of Revelation

- There is an endless variety of interpretations on the book of Revelation.
- However, most of these largely fall under a few basic views.
- Preterist, which believes Revelation was literally fulfilled in the first generation of the church.
- Historicist, believes Revelation is fulfilled throughout the entire history of the church until now.
- Futurist, believes Revelation will be fulfilled literally in the future.
- Idealist, believes Revelation reveals general truths and principles.
- Typically there is some form of eclecticism that weaves different views together.
- I have held all of these views at one point or another.

Old Testament

- The use of the Old Testament in Revelation is not straight forward.
- Most of the time the OT is not directed quoted, but alluded or echoed.
- The amount of OT allusions or quotes in the text is highly debated.
- Understanding the OT is helpful to understanding Revelation, but often the quotations and allusions are just as difficult to understand in their original context.
- Daniel's eschatology is not any easier to interpret than Revelations.

Outline

- The Seven Churches (1:1-3:22)
- Vision of the Throne Room (4:1-5:14)
- Seals, Trumpets, & Bowls (6:1-16:21)
- The Judgement and Redemption of Christ's Return (17:1-22:21)