

The Revelation to St. John

Introductory Matters

Author

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist (Rv 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8)

- One of Jesus' twelve apostles and a member of the "inner circle"
- Brother of James and son of Zebedee
- Author of the Gospel and three Epistles that bear his name

Date of Composition

AD 95 or 96

- The Church Father, Irenaeus, states that Revelation was written toward the close of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81-96)

Place of Composition

The island of Patmos

- St. John had been exiled there because he was a Christian (Rv 1:9).

Purpose

Comfort for suffering Christians and encouragement for continued faithful confession

- Congregations were being troubled by false teachers (Rv 2:6, 14-15).
- Christians were being persecuted (Rv 1:9, 2:9)
- Christians were being killed (Rv 6:9-11).
- Despite all of this, the victory in Jesus Christ is certain (Rv 2:10).

Recipients

Seven churches in Asia (Rv 1:4): Ephesus (Rv 2:1), Smyrna (Rv 2:8), Pergamum (Rv 2:12), Thyatira (Rv 2:18), Sardis (Rv 3:1), Philadelphia (Rv 3:7), Laodicea (Rv 3:14)

Literary Genre

Epistle in form (Rv 1:4); Prophetic (Rv 1:3) and Apocalyptic (Rv 1:20) in style

- Draws heavily from the Old Testament, more than any other New Testament writing.
- Makes use of figurative language and symbolic numbers.
- Focuses on Christ crucified, risen, and returning in order to give hope and courage now.

Major Theme

"The overarching and dominating theme of Revelation is the unveiling of Christ in his exalted glory as the reigning Lord. Before the eyes of the assembled worshipping Christians, the divine presence and the glory of the Savior and Lord is revealed."

(Dr. Louis Brighton, *Revelation: Concordia Commentary*, p.9)

Outline (taken from *The Lutheran Study Bible*, p.2198)

I. The Prologue: The Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1-8)

II. The Visions Given to John (1:9-22:5)

A. The Glorified Son of Man and the Seven Letters (1:9-3:22)

B. The Heavenly Sanctuary and Divine Throne (4:1-5:14)

C. The First Scene of the End Times: Christ Opening the Seven Seals (6:1-8:5)

D. The Second Scene of the End Times: The Blowing of the Seven Trumpets (8:6-11:19)

E. The Third Scene of the End Times: The Battle Between the Triune God and the Anti-Trinity (12:1-14:20)

F. The Fourth Scene of the End Times: The Pouring Out of the Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:1-16:21)

G. The Fifth Scene of the End Times: Babylon the Prostitute Overthrown (17:1-19:21)

H. The Sixth Scene of the End Times: The Final Judgment (20:1-21:8)

I. The Final Scene: The New Jerusalem as the Bride (21:9-22:5)

III. The Epilogue: Come, Lord Jesus! (22:6-21)

Map (taken from *The Lutheran Study Bible*, p.2197)



THE SETTING OF REVELATION

When John received his revelation, he "was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rv 1:9). Patmos is a small island off the coast of Miletus.

Revelation is addressed to the seven churches in the cities marked with squares: Ephesus was an important stop on Paul's second and third missionary journeys (Ac 18:19-21; 19). It successfully vied with Smyrna and Pergamum to be the chief city

of Asia Minor. Like Smyrna and the other cities mentioned by John, Ephesus embraced the emperor cult. It also held the temple of Artemis. Pergamum boasted of a great library and many pagan temples. Thyatira was known for its cloth dyers (Ac 16:14) and for general worldliness. Sardis lived to recall its past glory. Philadelphia was known for its pagan temples. Laodicea, located at an important trade-route junction, was a wool producer and a center of medicine (cf Col 4:13-16).