

Topic Outline – The Book of Revelation

- I. Introductory: the general significance of The Apocalypse (or "The Revelation to John").
 - A. Questions concerning the literary character of the Book of Revelation: epistolary, prophecy, and apocalyptic.
 - B. Questions concerning the authorship and the composition-date of the Book of Revelation (Who was "John," and when did he write this book?).
 - C. Questions concerning the meaning of the Book of Revelation (Praeterist, Futurist, Historicist, Symbolist-Spiritual, and Continuous-Historical schemes of interpretation).
 - D. The overall purpose and theme of the Book of Revelation: "Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (14:12). The book was written to encourage Christians (of all ages?) during times of spiritual confusion (the problem of heresy) and persecution. Such tribulations are interpreted by John as visible manifestations of the spiritual warfare which is going on between the Kingdom of Heaven and the legions of Satan. Christians are urged to patient endurance and faithful confession in light of Christ's certain victory over the Kingdom of Darkness. We will all "overcome" the world, the flesh, and the Devil in the Triumph of Christ and the Kingdom of Heaven.
 - E. The attitude of the Orthodox Church toward the Book of Revelation, and the book's significance in the liturgical life of the Church.
 - F. The difficulties of summarizing the Book of Revelation.
- II. An analytic outline of The Apocalypse: overall structure and major themes.
 - A. Preliminary considerations:
 1. The title: "Revelation" or "Apocalypse" – an unveiling of things not normally accessible to human knowledge, a "prophecy" based upon ecstatic visions.
 2. The thematic significance of John's visions: their non-chronological and perspectival nature.
 3. The significance of John's symbolism: the dramatization of spiritual truths and the "underground" nature of the book.
 4. The significance of John's use of numbers (numerology?):
 - a. The number "4" symbolizes the created universe.
 - b. The number "7" symbolizes completeness and perfection (derived from the Genesis Creation account).
 - c. The number "12" symbolizes the People of God (Israel/ Church). Multiples of "12" are also significant.
 - d. The number "10" symbolizes indefiniteness and magnitude. Multiples of "10" are also significant.

- e. References to "three and a half years," "42 months," and "1,260 days" (all equivalent time periods) symbolize the "second half" of human history – the age of the New Covenant (from the Incarnation to the Second Advent of Christ).
- f. The number "666" ("the number of the Beast") symbolizes the Roman Emperor, and especially Nero Caesar (an Hebraic cryptogram).

5. John's angelology.

6. The historical and theological context of The Apocalypse: the problem of heresy (especially Gnosticism) and the problem of persecution (especially during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, r. 81-96 A.D.). A message to the "churches" and to the Church concerning these problems.

B. The major divisions of The Apocalypse:

1. Introduction: Christ's concern for His Church (1:1-3:22).

a. Prologue (1:1-3).

b. John's salutation "to the seven churches that are in Asia" (1:4-8).

c. John's vision of the risen, glorified Christ (1:9-20).

d. Christ's messages to the "seven churches" and to the Universal Church: the trials, tribulations, and characteristics of the True Church (2:1-3:22).

1) The general structure of the seven letters.

2) The specific content of the seven letters (see 2:1-3:22).

3) The universal import of the seven letters: love, suffering, holiness, sound doctrine, spiritual vitality (aliveness), evangelism, and humility as seven marks of the True Church.

2. John's vision of the Heavenly Court (the heavenly worship of God the Father) (4:1-11): God enthroned and the devotion of the "twenty-four elders" and of the "four living creatures."

3. John's vision of the Lamb (God the Son), the Great Scroll, and the opening of the Seven Seals (5:1-14, 6:1-17, and 8:1): signs of the coming Judgment.

a. The Great Scroll and the Heavenly adoration of the Lamb (5:1-14).

b. The opening of the Seven Seals: the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and other signs of the coming Judgment (6:1-17 and 8:1).

4. John's vision of the Universal Church (i.e., the "sealed" servants of God – "sealed" by God the Holy Spirit): the Church Militant (the "144,000" and the Church Triumphant (the great "white-robed" multitude) (7:1-17).

The Church is preserved by God from the catastrophes which accompany the opening of the Seven Seals.

5. John's vision of the Angels and the Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19): another picture of the coming Judgment.
 - a. The Seven Angels and their Trumpets are made ready (8:2-6).
 - b. The sounding of the Seven Trumpets (8:7-11:19).
 - 1) The first four Trumpets are sounded (8:7-12).
 - 2) An eagle announces the coming of the "three woes" which will follow the sounding of the last three Trumpets (8:13).
 - 3) The "three woes": the sounding of the fifth and sixth Trumpets (9:1-21); John's eating of the little scroll, the measuring of the Temple, and the ministry of the "two witnesses" (10:1-11, 11:1-14); and the sounding of the seventh Trumpet (the Last Judgment foreshadowed) (11:15-19).
6. John's vision of the spiritual warfare between the Lamb and the Dragon (and between the Church and the world) (12:1-20:15).
 - a. The demonic assault upon Christ and His Church (12:1-13:18).
 - 1) The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon (12:1-17).
 - a) The Dragon's attack upon Christ (12:1-6).
 - b) The Dragon's fall from Heaven (accomplished by St. Michael and his angels) (12:7-12).
 - c) The Dragon's pursuit of the Church and of individual Christians (12:13-17).
 - 2) The Dragon's alliance with the world: the Two Beasts (13:1-18).
 - a) The Beast from the sea (worldly authority and power) (13:1-10).
 - b) The Beast from the earth – the false prophet (worldly religion and philosophy – idolatry) (13:11-18).
 - b. Christ and His Church strike back (14:1-20:15).
 - 1) The Lamb and His Church on Mount Zion (14:1-5): the gathering of God's forces.
 - 2) Angelic exhortations and proclamations concerning the coming Judgment (14:6-13, 14-20).
 - 3) The pouring out of the Seven Bowls "of the wrath of God" – the last seven plagues and the final overthrow of evil (15:1-16:21).
 - 4) The judgment and the fall of the Great Harlot (Babylon-Rome-etc.) 17:1-18:24): worldly morality.
 - a) The vision of the Great Harlot (17:1-18).
 - b) The destruction of the Great Harlot announced by angels and lamented by the world (18:1-24).
 - c) The destruction of the Great Harlot, rejoicing in Heaven, and the Marriage Feast of the Lamb and His Bride (the Church) (18:20, 19:1-10).

- 5) Christ's victory over the Two Beasts (19:11-21): world^ly authority and worldly religion overthrown.
 - 6) The binding of Satan and the millennial reign of Christ and the Holy Martyrs (20:1-3, 4-6).
(Note that there are pre-millennial, post-millennial, and a-millennial interpretations of this passage – a few comments on this subject have been added at the end of the tape.)
 - 7) The loosing of Satan, the Last Battle, and the final and ultimate victor of the Kingdom of Heaven (20:7-10).
 - 8) The Last Judgment (20:11-15).
7. John's vision of the New Jerusalem (i.e., the Kingdom of God) (21:1-22:5).
 - a. "A new heaven and a new earth" (21:1-8).
 - b. The New Jerusalem (i.e., the glorified Church) (21:9-27).
 - c. The Divine Life of the Heavenly City (22:1-5).
 8. Epilogue: exhortations and warnings (22:6-21) – the need for constancy, diligence, obedience, and proper response to the invitation of Christ and His Church.
- III. Summary and conclusions: The Apocalypse is an enduring message to a sinful, doubtful, and fearful Church. Turn sincerely to Christ, and "overcome" your sin, your doubt, and your fear.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come!' And let him who heareth say, 'Come!' *And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!*" (22:17).

Let us live in the light of Christ – the light of His present reign and of His future return!

(A footnote on the concept of the Millennium?)