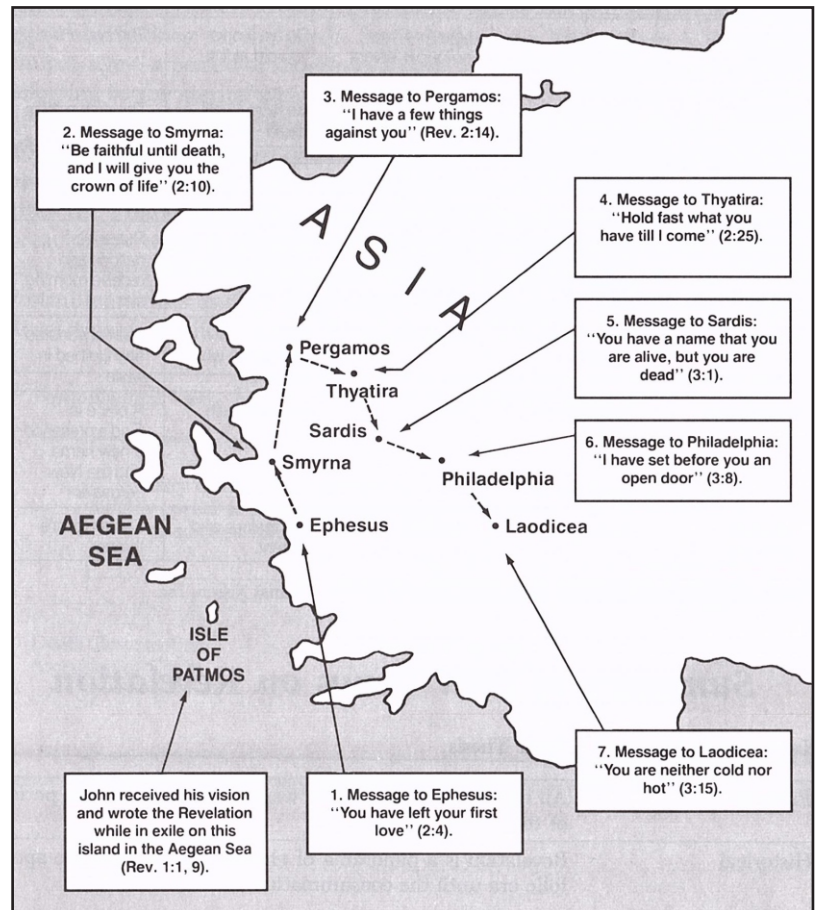


Introduction to Revelation

While Revelation is a book which unfolds a great deal about God's plan for the future, the intent of the book requires us to read it in a way that is meaningful for our present. Paul's assertion in 2 Timothy 3:16 applies to Revelation as well. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." As a result, whatever interpretation we bring out of the text of Revelation must have been beneficial to all God's children throughout history. The goal is that we would be obedient to Revelation. (See Revelation 1:3; 22:7)



Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts

The Author: John the Apostle

- The writer calls himself "John" five different times. (Revelation 1:1; 1:4; 1:9; 21:2; 22:8)
- However, he does not call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved."
- The writer is well known by the readers original recipients in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.
- He was exiled on the Isle of Patmos about 60 miles southwest of Ephesus. (1:9)
- The writer's use of the Old Testament, specifically Zechariah 12:10, matches what we know of the Apostle John. (see also John 19:37)
- The early church fathers overwhelmingly (but not unanimously) attribute the Revelation to John the Apostle.

The Time of Writing: Around 90-95 AD

- Attempts to date it earlier usually do so with the goal of supporting Preterism. (see below)
- The decline of the seven churches addressed suggests a later date.
- Roman Emperor Domitian reigned from 81-96 AD and demanded to be worshipped.
- Saints in Asia Minor endured waves of persecution during Domitian's reign.

Symbolism and Literal Interpretation

To say that we accept the book of Revelation to be literal does not deny that there is symbolism present. Sometimes the symbolism is explained (Revelation 1:20), often it is not explained. We should also keep in mind that sometimes he was receiving a vision of the future but faced the task of describing what he saw using 1st Century vocabulary.

Interpreting The Text

Throughout history there have been a variety of approaches to the Book of Revelation.

Preterism – Coming from the Latin word meaning “past,” Preterism argues Revelation is only about contemporary events in John's day. In this view, all prophetic references such as the Tribulation and the Second Coming, have already been fulfilled.

Historicism – This view argues the message of Revelation is not only about John's immediate future, but that it represents the arc of all Christian history from the day of Pentecost to the return of Jesus. For example, this view sees the seven churches of Asia as ages in church history which unfold in chronological order.

Idealism – Idealism uses an allegorical approach to all of Revelation's symbols. It doesn't equate the message of Revelation with any historical events or persons past, present or future. Instead, it sees the entire book as a struggle between good and evil.

Futurism – We will approach Revelation through the Futurist lens. This view takes the text itself as an interpretive key. Revelation 1:19 says:

“Write the things which you have seen (Past – John's vision in Chapter 1)
and the things which are, (Present – the church letters in Chapters 2-3)
and the things which shall be hereafter.” (Future – God's plan for history from Chapter 4-22)

Not every futurist agrees on the precise order of events. Even within this interpretive view, there are many details of which we may (and do) lovingly disagree. The benefit to the futurist view is that it takes the message of Revelation literally and does so in a way that sees the practicality for the original audience as well as contemporary readers.

- I. Introduction (1:1-3)
- II. Introduction and Vision of Christ (1:4-20)
- III. Messages to the Churches of Asia Minor (2:1-3:22)
- IV. God's Plan for Human History (4:1-22:21)
 1. The Scene in Heaven (4:1-5:14)
 2. Opening the Seven Seals (6:1-8:1)
 3. Sounding Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
 4. Seven Visions of Conflict (12:1-15:4)
 5. Seven Vials of God's Wrath (15:1-16:21)
 6. Justice on False Religion (17:1-18:24)
 7. The Return of King Jesus (19:1-21)
 8. The 1,000 Year Reign (20:1-10)
 9. The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)
 10. Describing the Heavenly Kingdom (21:1-22:5)
- V. An Invitation and A Warning (22:7-21)