

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Authorship of the Apocalypse

1.1.1 External evidence

1. Polycarp the disciple of John (69-115): John lived and buried in Ephesus

2. The external evidence for authorship by John the apostle is earlier, clearer, more definite, and more positive for Revelation than for the traditional authorship of any other NT book.
3. Testimony of the earliest Fathers is unanimous in favor of the apostolic authorship and authority of the book. These includes:
 - (a) Papias
 - (b) Justin Martyr (100-165)
 - (c) Muratorian Fragment
 - (d) Irenaeus (120-202)
 - (e) Clement of Alexandria (152-217)
 - (f) Tertullian (150-225)
 - (g) Hippolytus
 - (h) Origen (185-253)
 - (i) Methodius.

1.1.2 Internal evidence

1. The book of revelation itself testifies that Apostle John is the author

Re. 1:9. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation . . .

Re. 22:8-9. Now I, John, saw and heard these things . . .

2. Only John's gospel and Revelation use **Word logos** for Christ

Jn. 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

Re. 19:13. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God

3. Both has no. 7 pattern. (7 signs, 7-day passion, 7 church, 7 seal, etc.)
4. Close similarity between the vocabulary in Johns gospel and Revelation

- (a) Signify or indicate **semaino**:

Rev 1:1. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John

Jh 12:33. This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

(b) Pierce **daqar**:

Re. 1:7. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Jh. 19:37. And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced."

(c) Fellowship or share **Koinoneo**:

Re. 1:9. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

1 Jh. 1:3. that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

(d) Tribulation **thlipsis**:

Re. 1:9. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Jh. 16:33. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

- (e) Over comer is found 7 times in John and 15 times in Revelation.
- (f) Lamb 30 times in Revelation and 7 Times in John.
- (g) There are numerous other words which occur only in Revelation and other John's writings: e.g. tabernacle, lamb, I come, I anoint, I manifest, to name a few.
- (h) In addition, there are numerous syntax and styles, evident in Greek though not obvious in English occur only Revelation and other writings of John. What is listed above is only about 1% of all the internal evidences scholars have identified.
- (i) This does not mean that there is no differences between Revelation and the rest of John's writings. The differences can be attributed to the different nature of revelation and the purpose of these materials.

1.2 Date of the Apocalypse

The last decade of the first century, about A.D. 95, is the traditional time assigned to the book of Revelation. Persecution under Domitian reached even to the province of Asia where John was. During this time John was exiled to Patmos where he wrote the Apocalypse

Rev. 1:9. I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ

Roman Emperors	Time	Key Events
Nero	54-69	Paul, Peter martyrdom, John arrives Asia
Vespasian	69-79	Temple destruction, peace in Rome
Titus	79-81	Peace in Rome
Domitian	81-96	Exiled many Christian, John to Patmos Book of Revelation written
Nerva	96-98	Peace in Rome, John back to Ephesus
Trajan	98-117	Gospel of John, Johns death

1.3 Hermeneutics for Interpreting the Apocalypse

Approaches for interpreting the the Book of Revelation

1.3.1 Preterist approach

Argument: The book portrays the first-century conditions in the Roman Empire, thereby emphasizing its historical background.

Critic: Extreme spiritualisation that results in the second coming of Christ already took place (AD 70). But this negates the personal second coming of Christ specifically promised in this book; e.g.

Re. 11:15. Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war ... 15 ... And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

1.3.2 Tradition-historical approach

Argument: The background material in this book is a mix of Greek mythology and Jewish tradition.

Critic: It is true that there are many OT terms used in this book, but, this approach cannot explain the second coming of Christ.

1.3.3 Continuous-historical approach

Argument: The book shows a panoramic view of the church history from John's time until the second advent.

Critic: This approach matches historic events to various seal, trumpet, and bowl series. Needless to say that this approach is reading into the scripture. E.g. the fallen star following the fifth trumpet is Mohammed.

Re. 9:1. Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

1.3.4 Timeless-symbolic or idealist approach

Argument: The book represents the eternal conflict of good and evil in every age, especially when the reader lives. The book does not refer to specific events, but expresses the basic spiritual principles according to which God acts throughout history.

Critic: It is true that there are basic spiritual principles with which God governs our universe. But this view disregard the prophetic nature of the book. In addition, it allegorise every event. Further,

the personal return of Jesus Christ to earth is not accounted in this view. This view is the result of *Contextualization* concept.

Contextualization: The liberal World Council of Churches in 1972 coined this term. This means that one can assign meaning to the text of Scripture based on cultural and socio-political factors in contemporary society. This leads to many interpretations of the scripture based on the personal preference of the reader.

1.3.5 The futurist approach

1. The widely accepted view of the most conservative Christians.
2. Only view that recognises the prophetic style of the book.
3. It follows a normal literal interpretation which leads to the premillennial return of Christ.
4. It uses normal principles of grammar and facts of history to understand.
5. Even though human authors wrote with their imprint in their writing, but God is the real author of every book of the Bible.

6. Some have resorted to combining this view with other views. But it will result only in confusion.
7. **Grammatical-historical method of exegesis:** This is the conservative view which leads to unique interpretation although it may lead diverse personal application or present significance. E.g. Do not murder. Meaning is same all through history. But application to a first century gladiator is different from a twenty-first century pregnant woman.
8. What about symbols and visions in this book? This also has to interpret literally keeping in mind the symbols and visions are means of communicating just as in normal language. If something has to be interpreted symbolically that will be mentioned in the text itself. E.g.:
9. The 144,000 in Rev. 7:4 is to be understood literally for there is nothing in the text to mean otherwise

Re. 7:4. And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:
10. The city where the two witnesses will be slain is called **spiritually** Sodom and Egypt, indicating a figurative meaning rather than a literal one

Re. 11:8. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified

1.4 General

1.4.1 Purpose

1. Difficulty with this book: hidden, obscure, multiple interpretation, not relevant, etc.
2. But, it reveals the person of Jesus Christ
3. A book to be unlocked

Da. 12:9. And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.

Re. 22:10. And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand

1.4.2 Profit

1. Seven fold promise of being **blessed**

Re. 1:3. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Re. 14:13. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...'

Re. 16:15. "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments. . .

Re. 19:9. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" . . .

Re. 20:6. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power. . .

Re. 22:7. "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Re. 22:14. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

2. Unlocking require understanding of the rest of the Bible.
3. Response: Prayer to come transforms all areas of life.

1.4.3 Interpretation

1. **Idealist:** Moral stories for instruction but contradict OT prophesy.
2. **Preterits:** Happened in the history but does not fit well with prophecy related to second coming.
3. **Historical:** Happening in the history but need history to interpret the Bible.
4. **Futuristic:** Will happen (esp. 4-22) and it explains OT prophecy, so biblical.

1.4.4 Notes

1. 278/404 verses allude OT
2. Affirms full deity of JC
3. It reveals, not conceals

4. Only prophetic book in NT
5. Ring: Joins Genesis and Rev.
6. Pyramid: Base Genesis, Crown Rev.
7. Contrast I and II coming
8. Secondary: Judgment, Hope etc.
9. Claims inspiration

Re. 1:2. The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants . . .

Re. 22:6. Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants . . .

10. Warning

Re. 22:18-19. For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and

if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

1.4.5 Features

A Numbers

1. No. 7 Churches, seals, trumpets, bowls, Spirits, etc. (hepta: 54/87)
2. No. 4 Living creatures, bound angels, winds, corners, etc., (30/42)
3. No. 3 Triads: e.g. holy holy holy (4:8), woe woe woe (8:13), etc.
4. No. 10 Related to Satan: days of persecution, horns, crowns, etc. (11/27)
5. No. 12 Related to Christ: tribes, stars, gates, angels, foundation, name, etc.

B Contrasts (examples)

1. Christ and Satan; Light and darkness, Life and death, Heaven and hell; Love hate

2. Father, Son, Holy Spirit and devil, beast, false prophets, Son of God and anti-Christ
3. Who was, who is, who is to come (1:4, 1:8; 4:8) and who once was, and is not, and gone for destruction

Re. 1:4. ... Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come ...

Re. 1:8. ... says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

Re. 4:8. ... Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"

Re. 17:8. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit ...

4. **Son:** the lamb that was slain and **Beast:** one head with fatal wound that was healed

5. **Believer:**

- (a) seal of the living God on the forehead

Re. 7:3. saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

- (b) bear the name of the Lamb and Father

Re. 14:1. Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads

6. Unbelievers:

(a) mark of the beast on the forehead

13:16. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads

(b) bear the mark of the beast

13:17-18. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name

7. Victory of Christ and His followers. Defeat of anti-Christ and his followers

C Emphasis

1. Fallen-fallen (18:2), Woe-woe (18:10, 16, 19), Song of Moses-Song of Lamb (15:3,4)

D Parallels

1. Letters to 7 churches: each has

- (a) address
- (b) appearance of JC
- (c) evaluation
- (d) praise / reproof
- (e) exhortation
- (f) promise
- (g) command

2. Johns description of Jesus parallels in Ch. 1 and 2-3:

- (a) seven stars (1:16, 2:1)
- (b) golden lamp stands (1:13, 2:1)
- (c) first and the last (1:17-18, 2:8)

- (d) double edged sword (1:16, 2:12)
- (e) eyes with fire (1:14-15, 2:18)
- (f) seven spirits and stars (1:4,6, 3:1)
- (g) one who holds the key (1:18, 3:7),
- (h) faithful witness (1:5, 3:14)

1.4.6 Outline-I

1. Chronological/Historical (1:19)

- (a) The things which you have seen (Ch. 1)
- (b) Things which are (Ch. 2-3)
- (c) Things which will take place (Ch. 4-22)

2. Thematic/Theological

- (a) Christ enthroned in heaven (1-5)

- (b) Christ enthroned on earth (6-20)
- (c) Christ enthroned on new heaven/earth (21-22)

1.4.7 Outline-II

- I** Christ glorified (1) Past: Purpose of the book
- II** Christ evaluates (2-3) Present: letters to 7 churches
- III** Christs first cycle of judgments (4-7) Future, seven seals
- IV** Christs second cycle of judgments (8-11) Seven trumpets
- V** Christ confronts enemies (12-14) Anti-Christ
- VI** Christs third cycle of judgments (15-18) Seven bowls
- VII** Christ triumphs (19-22) II coming, Millennium, Heaven

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