

St. Therese Catholic Church

Book of Revelation *Overview*

September 17, 2024

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General Comments

We try to do a Bible or book study each year for the following reasons:

1. Gives us a chance to be together and study God's Word and/or our Catholic Faith;
2. Provide encouragement that you can read God's Word to encounter Christ and/or deepen your relationship with Him;
3. Provide a framework to help you read books like the Book of Revelation in light of the Church's faith;
4. Better understand your life and experiences in light of God's revelation and deepen trust in His providential care.

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General Comments

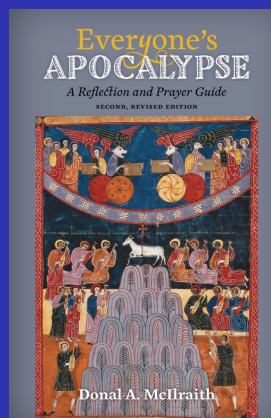
- Few books in Sacred Scripture are more challenging to interpret than the Book of Revelation.
- The difficult symbolism, many allusions to the Old Testament (several 100 references), style of writing, and principal topics of the last judgment and the end of history make for an uphill battle.
- We will look at this book in light of contemporary scholarship and traditional interpretation in harmony with the whole of Scripture and Catholic Tradition that is relevant for today.
- We will also make references to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where possible as this is the Year of the Mass with special emphasis on the Eucharist.

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General Comments

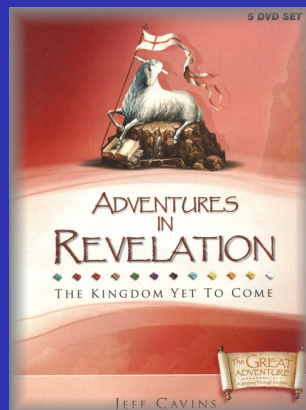
- The Apocalypse (Revelation) is a book about the Risen Jesus and what he is about in this world. And what he is about is preparing a Bride for himself, someone he can make happy for all eternity.
- This is the happily ever after story to beat all happily ever after stories. But you must go through the Cross to get there. Oops. A happy ending but a tough journey. This is the great story of love (Donal McIlraith, 4).



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General Comments

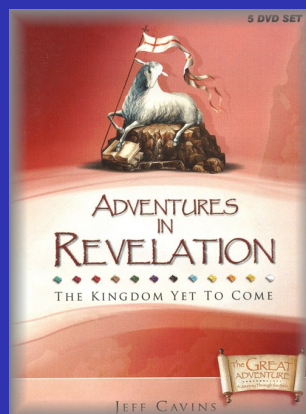
- Jeff Cavins has done a nice Bible study on the Book of Revelation.
- The Book of Revelation is about an unveiling – the unveiling of Jesus (Bridegroom) and the Church (Bride).
- The book is not about end time destruction but rather the beautiful, intimate, tender, life-affirming relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. Revelation is about an invitation to intimacy with God.



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General Comments

- **Key:** Revelation is a book of liturgy. Liturgy is center stage.
- It is about the relationship between Bridegroom and Bride that is consummated in the marriage supper of the Lamb – the Liturgy of the Eucharist.
- **Pope Benedict XVI:** The Book of Revelation is heavenly liturgy that is presented to the Church as the standard of her own liturgy.



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General Comments

Two major unveilings

- **Jesus as Bridegroom:** The One who always loves us through suffering and purification.
- **Church as Bride:** The One who is loved and called to offer love in gratitude.
- **Key:** Revelation moves toward a wedding – the eternal wedding banquet of the lamb.



Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain

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Genre

Examples of Biblical Styles of Writing

Examples of Biblical Styles of Writing	
Law: God's Rulebook	Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy
Historical Narrative: Tell story	Joshua, Judge, 1 & 2 Samuel, etc.
Psalms	Psalms, Song of Solomon
Wisdom Literature	Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
Prophecy	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.
Gospels	Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
Acts of the Apostles	Book of Acts
Epistles	St. Paul's Letters, St. John's Letters
Apocalyptic Literature	Daniel, Revelation

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Genre

- **Apocalyptic:** Derives from the Greek *Apokalupteo* – revelare (to reveal, unveil, disclose).
- A style of writing that we see in Daniel (chaps. 7-12) and Revelation of John; Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21.
- Literature originated around 200 BC and was widespread among Jews and Christians until a century or two after Christ (19).
- Generally, this literature was produced during time of persecution (i.e., Greek or Roman domination and persecution). It was a protective device to conceal the identity of the author from the oppressors of the time.

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Genre

- An apocalypse typically explains spiritual realities behind human events or looks forward to history's end. It is characterized by dreams, visions, and other highly symbolic ways of communicating (19).
- Revelation has similar characteristic as Old Testament prophetic books of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, as well as noncanonical apocalypses (*1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and *the Apocalypse of Abraham*) (19).
- Being dominated by apocalyptic and prophetic symbolism, the Book of Revelation is notoriously difficult to interpret (Hahn and Mitch, 34).

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Audience

- Original audience of the book is the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia named in 1:11.
- It is likely that the scroll was read at the liturgy or within a community in the city (18).
- Naturally, the book was meant to be a circular letter for the Church as a whole, not merely the seven churches which are specifically addressed in Rev. 2 – 3.



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Audience



Source: <https://davidjeremiah.blog/seven-churches-of-revelation-bible-study/>

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Author

- Four times the author of Revelation refers to himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) (19).
- The Western Church has generally followed the lead of many Church Fathers that John is the author (19).
- Modern scholars tend to assume that someone other than John is the author. We cannot know for sure who wrote Revelation (20).
- Regardless, the Church receives the book of Revelation as divinely inspired and canonical Scripture (19).

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Date

- **Mid-60s:** Some scholars argue that Revelation was written mid- to late 60s of the first century, during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero (AD 54 – 68) (21).
- **Mid-90s:** The majority of interpreters, ancient and modern, hold that Revelation was written in the mid-90s during emperor Domitian's reign (81 – 96) (21).
- Our commentary assumes the majority view that Revelation was written in the 90s.

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Theological Presuppositions

Assumptions about Revelation	
Assumes John is familiar with the Old Testament.	Anticipates times of trial and persecution for Christians during the time of their testimony to the gospel.
Manifests faith in the death and Resurrection of Jesus and his divine status.	Lines up with Christian understanding regarding Satan and eschatological opposition attested elsewhere.
Presupposes that Jesus will come again.	

~Williamson, 23

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Structure #1

- **Chapters 1-3**: Jesus, purifies the Church by His words
 - Jesus speaks to the author and dictates letters to seven Churches in Asia. Seven symbolizes completeness. Thus, Jesus speaks to the whole Church. The first part is a Liturgy of the Word.
- **Chapters 4-22**: Jesus, the Lamb is true salvation
 - Speaks of the purifying process of the Bride (those united with Jesus) before she is forever united with Jesus, the Bridegroom, in the "marriage supper of the Lamb." The second part is a Liturgy of the Eucharist (McIlraith, 3).

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Structure #2

1. The Account of "What You See" (1:1 – 20)

- A. Introduction (1:1 – 8)
- B. Inaugural Vision (1:9 – 20)

2. The Account of "What Is" (2:1 – 3:22)

- A. Letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira (2:1 – 29)
- B. Letters to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (3:1 – 22)

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Structure #2

3. The Account of "What is to Take Place" (4:1 – 22:21)

- A. The Heavenly Liturgy of Creation and Redemption (4:1– 5:14)
- B. The Seven Seals (6:1 – 8:5)
- C. The Seven Trumpets (8:6 – 11:19)
- D. The Seven Spiritual Figures (12:1 – 14:20)
- E. The Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:1 – 16:21)
- F. The Fall of the Harlot City (17:1 – 18:24)
- G. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:1 – 10)
- H. The Judgment of the Beasts, the Devil, and the Dead (19:11-20:15)

4. Epilogue (22:6 – 21)

~Mitch & Hahn, 35

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Structure #3

Chapters	Description
Chaps. 1 - 3	Prophet's first vision of the risen Christ
Chaps. 4 – 5	Vision of the heavenly throne room
Chaps. 6 – 20	Increasingly severe chastisements of the world and trials for the Church during her time of testimony
Chap. 19	The return of Christ
Chap. 20 – 21	The full arrival of God's kingdom
Chap. 22	Epilogue

~Williamson, 25

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Structure

Challenging	Consoling
Fearsome visions of judgment on earth	Consoling visions of God's throne in heaven (providing relief)
Tumult on earth via series of sevens (seals, trumpets, bowls)	Undisturbed worship and celebration in heaven despite great tumult on earth
Key: God is on his throne and the Lamb is in control. With God in heaven are powerful angelic beings and the faithful saints and martyrs, now comforted, protected, and at rest (25).	

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Structure

- Revelation's plot does not advance chronologically.
- Instead, the story advances by a spiral rather than a straight path, like a road that circles its way up the mountain, offering diverse vistas of the terrain below (25).
- Additionally, the forward movement of the visions is disrupted by flashbacks, such as those that recall the birth and exaltation of the Messiah, and by atemporal visions of heavenly worship in which God's victory is celebrated as already achieved (25).

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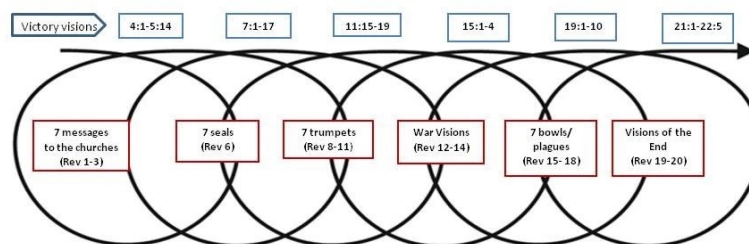


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Structure

- Revelation's story advances by circular repetitions rather than a straight line.

General Structure of the Book of Revelation



Adapted from Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, pg 42-43

Source: <https://throughandto.com/2024/04/09/the-book-of-revelations-structure/>

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Literary Features

Biblical Allusions

- Revelation has numerous allusions to the Old Testament – more than any other book in the New Testament (26).
- John seldomly explicitly quotes the Old Testament as other New Testament authors do, but weaves allusions into his reports of what he sees and hears (26).
- Every allusion to the Old Testament indicates the fulfillment of a prophecy (what God has done in Christ) (27).

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Literary Features

Figurative Language and Symbolism

- Revelation makes extensive use of images, symbols, and figurative language (27).
- Symbols can be used to communicate depths of meaning that go far beyond reference (think of a wedding band).
- The harlot Babylon is a symbol of Rome, but also of every proud civilization that resists God, persecutes his people, and idolizes wealth and pleasure (28).

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Literary Features

Symbol	Meaning
Cosmic symbols (heaven, earth)	Transcendence and this world
Cosmic upheavals (sun darkened, stars falling, etc.)	God's intervention (bringing about a new creation)
Animal Symbols (four living creatures, eagles, locusts)	Forces beyond human control; central symbol is the Lamb
Anthropological or Human Symbols	Marriage image (the new covenant); clothes (good deeds)
Number symbols	7: completeness; 12: patriarchs or Apostles; 1,000: uncountable
Color symbols	Red: blood; black: death
Old Testament symbols	More than 800 references to OT

~Donal McIlraith, *Everyone's Apocalypse*, 1995

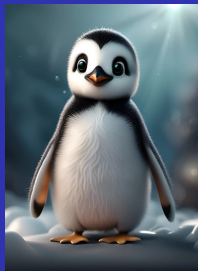
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Literary Features

- Example:** "Then I was caught up in the heavens, and I saw a man dressed like a penguin, angels were cutting his hair, and his face shimmered like the sun. Then the Lord said, 'Come up here and I will show you what must soon take place.'"



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Literary Features

- **Meaning:** “Those priests that remain faithful to Jesus, consecrated in total love to the Bridegroom, will be clothed in God’s grace and given a beauty in the life to come.
- With their sins trimmed away, they will be filled with such joy that even the angels will be in awe at the Son whose light and love shine forever.”



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Literary Features

- John often combines multiple symbols in his description of a single figure (29).
 - Lamb (Jesus) is described as standing (resurrection) as though it has been slain (the crucifixion), having seven horns (signifying fullness of power) and seven eyes (fullness of knowledge) (29).
- The symbolic language of Revelation engages the reader far more powerfully than it would if its message were stated in literal prose (29).



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Literary Features

Four views of relation of Revelation to history

- **Historicist view:** Holds that Revelation foretells in a linear way the history of Christianity (30). Tries to map the narrative of Revelation with actual historical events from the apostle's life through the end of the age. Revelation is a history book.
- **Preterist view:** Revelation speaks primarily, if not exclusively, of events in the first century (30). For example, the fall of Babylon refers to the fall of Roman Empire or Jerusalem. Major flaw is that it is meaningless for generations forward.

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Literary Features

Four views of relation of Revelation to history

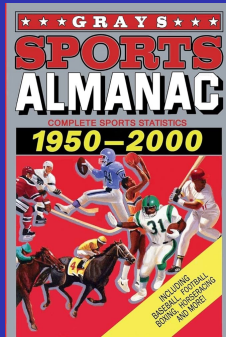
- **Futurist view:** Most of Revelation (chaps. 4- 19) pertains to the last few years of human history before the return of Christ (31). Major flaw is that Revelation is meaningless except for the last generation.
- **Idealist view:** Revelation provides images and narratives of the struggle between good and evil that have no specific relation to history (31). Revelation is divorced from history and reduced to symbolic moral exhortation. Revelation is concerned with ideas and principles of timeless truths.

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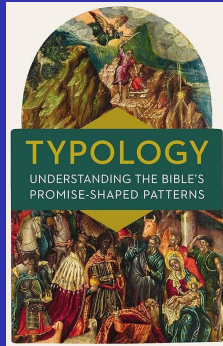


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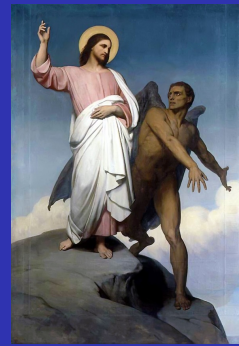
Literary Features



- Revelation is not an sports almanac – lays out sports events in history.



- Revelation uses typology – historical people and events that are later fulfilled.



- Revelation is not simply a symbolic battle between good and evil with no ties to history

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Literary Features

Typology Examples

Type	Fulfillment
Isaac carried the wood for (his own) sacrifice	Jesus carried the wood of the Cross
Through the Flood, God cleansed the world of sin and began a new creation through the line of Noah	Through Baptism, God cleanses the individual soul of sin and that person becomes a new creation
Jonah appeared to rise from death and he emerged from the belly of the fish after three days	Jesus rises from the dead and emerges from the tomb on the third day
Joseph, son of Jacob, received messages through dreams	Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, received a message through a dream
The Ark of the Covenant held the Manna, which was the "bread of God", and the Word of God (the tablets/Commandments)	Jesus is both the Bread of Life and the Word of God. Mary held Jesus in her womb
King David was a shepherd, born in Bethlehem	Jesus is the Good Shepherd, born in Bethlehem

Source: <https://quizlet.com/323614747/religion-test-2-diagram/>

- **Key:** God is a divine Poet – historical people/events later fulfilled.

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Message of Revelation

- **The Condition of the Church of Asia:** The Lord gives his evaluation of the condition of a local church, which often differs from what appears on the surface. Churches in other times and places rightly discern their own conditions in light of these inspired messages (33).
- **God's Sovereignty and Christ's Lordship:** Revelation unveils God's sovereignty and the lordship of the risen Christ. The Christians to whom the Lord addressed his letter were a small minority living in a time and place in which the social, cultural, religious, economic, and political forces that opposed them seemed overwhelming. However, Christ has conquered, and the blood of the Lamb allows Christians to be victorious as well (33).

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Message of Revelation

- **The Church's Trial before Christ's Return:** Revelation lifts the veil on the conflict in which the Church's is engaged and reveals its principal actors. These include the dragon, the first and second beast, and the harlot Babylon. At the end of the book, Christ appears as the victorious "King of kings and Lord of lords," to destroy the adversaries of God's people (34).
- **Preview of Promises Fulfilled - Salvation and Judgment:** Before the end comes there will be an interim period during which the gospel is preached to all nations. At Christ's second coming, all of God's promises will be fulfilled and the events that lead up to it (34).

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Meaning for Today

- Today, in many places the Church exists in a secular culture whose mass media, entertainment, and educational systems are often hostile to her beliefs and morals (35).
- There may not be literal idolatry. However, spiritual idolatry – manifest in excessive love for and ultimate trust in created things rather than in God, whether wealth, pleasure, science, technology, governments, institutions, celebrities, or leaders – is stronger than ever (35).
- Revelation reminds us that our destiny as Jesus' disciples is the wedding feast of the Lamb in an eternal city that defies descriptions, where we will see God face-to-face (36).

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Next Time

- Tuesday, October 8th



Revelation 1	
Prologue	VV. 1- 3
Greeting	VV. 4 - 8
The First Vision	VV. 9 - 20

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