

# ***REVELATION MADE RELEVANT!***

Friday Night Bible Study with Fr. Ward



# Introduction

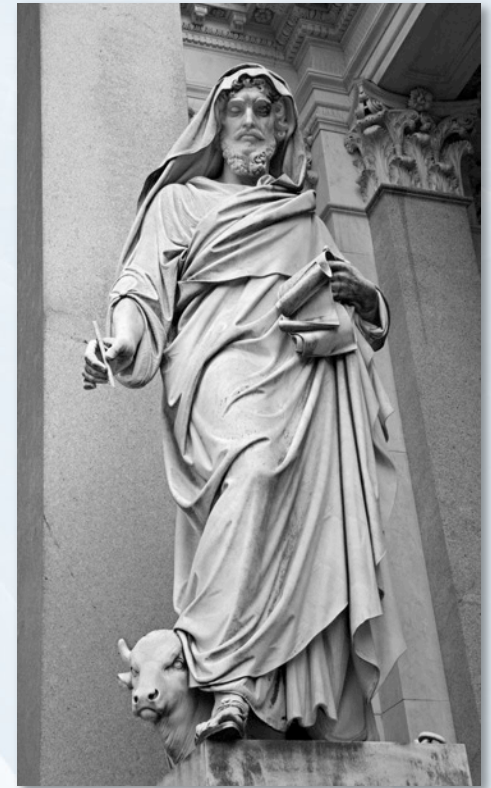
- ***Why Revelation?***
- It's more than a doomsday forecast!
- It is not primarily a social/political commentary.
- Rather it is the culminating expression of Christ's work on earth – past, present and future!
- And it's importance is highlighted in the first five words and three verses of chapter 1!



# Introduction

## Author

- the early well documented tradition among the church fathers was that John the beloved apostle, the author of the Gospel of John and the three letters of John, wrote Revelation



Apostle John

# Introduction

## Audience

- Revelation describes the vision that the apostle John had while on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.
- First sent to the seven churches on Asia Minor or the western part of modern day Turkey. Since these churches were located by widely traveled roads that connected them, Revelation was meant to be a circular letter.
- Its use spread throughout the Roman Empire until it was universally recognized as God's Word.



Island of Patmos today





† Cities of the seven churches  
— Major travel route

(Constantinople)  
Byzantium

**BITHYNIA**

• Nicaea

**MYSIA**

**ASIA MINOR**

**LYCAONIA**

**PHRYGIA**

• Antioch

**CILICIA**

**PISIDIA**

• Iconium

• Derbe

• Tarsus

**PAMPHYLIA**

**CYPRUS**

• Salamis

• Paphos

• Antioch

• Seleucia

**SYRIA**

**LYDIA**

• Patara

• Myra

**RHODES**

• Cnidus

• Patmos

• Samos

• Chios

• Smyrna

• Sardis

• Thyatira

• Pergamum

• Assos

• Troy

• Troas

• Samothrace

• Neapolis

**Aegean Sea**

• Athens

# Introduction

## Audience

- Revelation describes the vision that the apostle John had while on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea.
- Its message was to give hope to first century Christians who were or would be going through persecution. Ultimately, however, its purpose was to give hope and insight to believers of all ages of the future plan of salvation for our world and the unseen spiritual realities that pervade our natural world.



Island of Patmos today

# Introduction

## Date

- The content of Revelation suggests it was written during a time of severe persecution.
- There are two possible periods when Christians suffered persecution under the Roman Empire:
  - The reign of Emperor Nero (AD 54–68)
  - The reign of Emperor Domitian (AD 81–96)

# Introduction

## Date

- Argument for the earlier date (AD 54–68):
  - Some ancient versions of Revelation mention Nero's name.
  - Nero blamed Christians for a massive fire in Rome. He then severely persecuted them.
  - Revelation does not mention the destruction of the temple which occurred after Nero's reign in AD 70. If Revelation was written later than AD 70, proponents contend that a significant event like the temple's destruction would likely have been mentioned.



Emperor Nero



# Introduction

## Date

- Argument for the later date (AD 81–96):
  - Testimony from early church fathers reports that John wrote the book during the reign of Domitian.
  - Emperor Domitian required that he be addressed as “*lord and god.*” Christians refused, making themselves likely targets for persecution during Domitian’s reign.



Emperor Domitian

# Introduction

## Purpose

- It first served to encourage and challenge believers living in Asia Minor during a time of persecution. The Church not only faced persecution but false teachers, the temptations of immorality, idolatry, and spiritual complacency both within the Church and society! It eventually became accepted as God's Word for the Church for all ages.
- Revelation is meant to instruct, guide, comfort, and reassure Christians in their spiritual journey and point the world to the coming Day of the Lord and Return of the King!

# Introduction

## Revelation 1:1-2:

**“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His bond-servants what must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ.”**  
**—Revelation 1:1–2**

# Introduction

## Revelation 1:3:

***“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.”***

***Revelation 1:3***



# Introduction

## Therefore, the Book of Revelation

- is not just a book of prophecy
- It is a book of...
  - *worship*
  - *discipleship*
  - *evangelism*
  - *salvation*
  - *judgment*
  - *history*
  - *hope*
  - *but ultimately it is the book of Jesus Christ!*

# Introduction

## Revelation: An Outline

- **Prologue (1:1–3)**
  1. *Seven Messages to Seven Churches* (1:4–3:22)
  2. *Seven Seals* (4:1–8:5)
  3. *Seven Trumpets* (8:2–11:19)
  4. *Seven Symbolic Histories* (12:1–14:20)
  5. *Seven Bowls* (15:1–16:21)
  6. *Seven Messages of Judgment* (17:1–19:10)
  7. *Seven Visions* (19:11–22:5)
- **Epilogue (22:6–21)**



# FOUR VIEWS ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Preterist, Historicist, Futurist, Idealist



# Four Interpretive Views

## 1. PRETERIST

- Think “PRE” or before/early on! **Preterists** see Revelation as prophecy that was fulfilled primarily in **the first century AD**.
- **Partial Preterists** understand most of Revelation as prophecy fulfilled in the first century AD, though the final chapters describe future events at the end of time.
- **Full Preterists** contend that the return of Jesus described in Revelation 19 was spiritual and occurred in AD 70. This would be an unorthodox view and contrary to the Apostle’s and Nicene Creed.





# Four Interpretive Views

## 2. HISTORICIST

- Think “History!” - **Historicists** see Revelation as prophecy about church history from the time of John to the end of the world.
- Revelation is like a history textbook for the past, present, and future.
- The events in Revelation are symbolic descriptions of historical events throughout church history culminating in the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of God’s Kingdom.



# Four Interpretive Views

## 3. FUTURIST

- Think “Future!” **Futurists** see Revelation as prophecy primarily about the future end of the world.
- In the futurist view, all Revelation after chapter 3 is yet to occur. Those who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture believe the rapture occurs *before* chapter 4.
- Revelation is a prophecy that describes the end of time and the years leading immediately to the end (tribulation period).
- Some futurists understand the Seven Churches similarly to the historicist view: *the churches represent eras in church history.*



# Four Interpretive Views

## 4. IDEALIST

- Can you say, “Drama?” **Idealists** see Revelation as a non-historical and non-prophetic drama about spiritual realities.
- The images, visions, and dreams are symbolic expressions of struggles between good and evil throughout time.
- They represent the struggle between the kingdom of God and the powers of evil.
- This view originated among ancient Alexandrian theologians who frequently spiritualized and allegorized biblical texts.
- It’s an allegory for all times and places.



# Introduction: Timing

Interpretation of “what must shortly take place” & “for the time is near” (1:1, 3) AND verse 19!

Historicist

The prophecy began to be fulfilled close to the author’s lifetime.

Preterist

Near, soon, and quickly are taken literally.

Futurist

These words refer to the whole of the “last days” or to the quickness with which Jesus will return.

Idealist

Christ is always at hand, near and quick to save his people.