

BOOK OF REVELATION, WEEK 1
INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER 1

INTERPRETING SACRED SCRIPTURE

Continuity of Scripture

Use Scripture to Interpret Scripture

4 Senses of Scripture:

Literal

Allegorical

Moral

Anagogical

*These are always present. We do not just use one sense to understand a given pericope¹.

Catholic interpretation requires that Sacred Scripture is seamless and without rupture. What is predicted and foretold in Christ must have been present in what was predicted through the prophets. The end of Revelation cannot be a different ending than what the Prophets described.

SOME OBSTACLES WITH MANY PROTESTANT INTERPRETATIONS:

Ignore the Old Testament.

Forget about the New Testament and the purpose of the New Testament, which is to reveal Jesus Christ as the Son of God and who he is. The New Testament is not about human history.

Leave behind the Church Fathers, who are some of the most essential and authoritative interpreters of Sacred Scripture.

Ignore a spiritual understanding, largely because very few of us are gifted enough to see this on our own. We need insights from the Church Fathers, Saints and others in order to understand the different layers of meaning.

They have no clear or substantial definition for *God's Church*.

BACKGROUND ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Written around the year 92 by John the Evangelist, most widely considered to also be the "Disciple whom Jesus loved" and was the only Apostle not to receive a martyr's death.

Some consider that it may have been written around the year 63, based on evidence that John was exiled to Patmos by Emperor Nero. However, the dating to 92 seems to be the more authoritative and substantiated position.

While continuing to grow, the Church also faced significant persecution and remained an illegal church. It also was facing separation from the Jews and synagogues.

Many in the Christian community had believed that Christ's second coming was going to be immediate, and seemed to be long in being delayed.

The first generation of Christians was coming to a literal end by natural death. Most were either extremely young, or not yet born when Jesus was crucified, meaning that they were in a major time of transition and beginning to ask new questions about what his life meant and what was the role of the Church on earth.

¹ Pericope: A given selection from sacred scripture that can vary in length and is examined for interpretation and meaning.

SUMMARY POINTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation places the Old Testament prophets within the context of the Gospel and Jesus Christ as the revealed Son of God. Throughout the Gospels, the authors and Jesus remind us often of the prophecies that were necessary so that we would know that Jesus was the Son of God. But once his identity was established, a new question arose: Now that we have seen the Son of God, what do the words of the prophets mean? In other words, first the Prophets helped us to understand who He was, and now He helps us to understand the Prophets.

Describes the relationship(s) between 5 key figures:

God, the Lamb, the Church, the World and the Dragon

There are also several supporting characters who help draw out the drama between these figures: the 2 witnesses, the elders, the Beast, the woman, the inhabitants of the earth and others.

Salvation comes through the work of God and not through the work of man's accomplishments.

Through the Psalms and Prophets, the Book of Revelation describes the work of salvation, revealing how the sides are locked in a war for human souls, and the way in which God will ultimately be triumphant. Like Job, this book attests to the challenge that Satan put forth in the very beginning (it answers the question that he put forth to Adam and Eve in the Garden). His argument and contention is: When given the freedom of will, man will not choose God, but will rather choose to love himself and follow his own course, or the course of another. This is Satan's jealousy and envy. We could say that just as Revelation is about revealing God and the wages that come to those who follow Him, it is also revealing of Satan and his desires for the world, and the wages that come to those who follow him. (Here we could describe a little about the identity of the Beast and those who follow the Beast, this is what it means to bear his mark. Those who bear the mark of the beast, those who follow Satan's envy and jealousy will not allow anyone who does not also follow their way to trade, to work or to even eat. Such hostility toward others is a sign of one who has followed Satan. While those who bear the mark of God go out to all the nations and through them all nations will be saved.

If we reduce the Book of Revelation to one sentence it is the assurance that God will do whatever is necessary to save the greatest number of souls who can be saved and that He will indeed be victorious against those who will oppose Him, even to their dying breath and true death.

The Book of Revelation is also heavy with liturgical imagery and instructions. Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) wrote that it is "the book of the heavenly liturgy, which is presented to the Church as the standard for her own liturgy." Even in the structure of the book we find a reflection of the Holy Mass: Call for repentance; The presentation of a book that is sealed and then opened; Outpouring of chalices; A climax that comes in the bridal banquet of the supper of the Lamb.

CHAPTER 1

The beginning of the vision of John by the appearance of the Son of Man in the midst of the churches, and the one who alone has authority to interpret the vision

WHY DO THE EARLY CHRISTIANS NEED TO KNOW WHAT “MUST HAPPEN SOON”?

ESTABLISHING THE FIGURE OF THE LORD AS JESUS.

The one who is, who was and who is to come

Jesus Christ as: The Firstborn from the Dead

The Faithful Witness

Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

Who loved us and Freed us from our sins

Made us Kings and Priests

Comes with the clouds (as the cloud alerted and was a sign of God's presence on Mt. Sinai and Mt. Tabor).

He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End

One like a Son of Man

He Holds the keys of Hades and Death

He is he who was dead and is alive forever

THE LAMPSTANDS

Explicitly represent the the 7 churches

Represent God's eyes on earth such that they are the presence of God on earth.

The first chapter establishes beyond any question that Jesus Christ is living and that He and He alone is the Son of God. He stands among us, in the very midst of the churches and in His hands, He holds the power of creation, the stars that represent the angels who have watch over the churches. He has the authority and power, and He sees all that is happening.

The book begins by encouraging any who may be fearful and doubt that God has not abandoned them. What may seem like an apparent delay in the return of the savior, upon looking back will clearly be seen as having come soon. The reason for this is that there is much more happening behind the scenes. The churches themselves are not simply communities of believers trying to discover and work out their own salvation, but through them, God is present on earth. These are not mere symbols in a metaphorical text such that the churches are like lampstands that give light to the world. The beginning of the text, the description of John being taken up to heaven indicates that a veil has been lifted so that he can now see the reality behind events that are happening. As we will see more clearly and vividly, what is happening on earth is part of the spiritual battle that is happening in heaven. The churches are God's presence on earth and among the churches there are some which have greater responsibility. But they are not alone, again calling to mind that each has an angel, a protector who is in the hand of the Lord, they belong to Him and to no other.