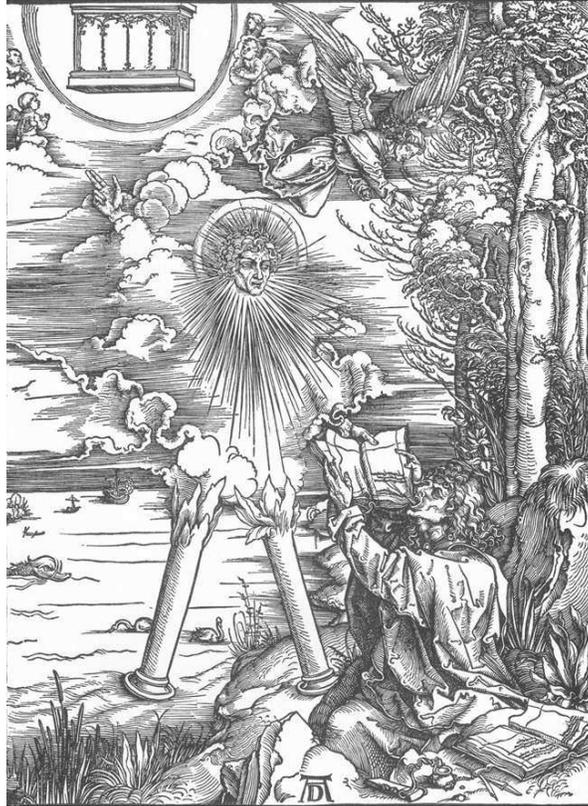


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Introduction and Superscription (1.1-3)



The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia ... (Revelation 1.1-4a)

1. What kind of a book is Revelation?
 - a. Apocalypse (v.1: *apokalypsis* – a supernatural unveiling of divine truth)
 - i. cf. Rom 8.18; 1 Cor 1.7; 2 Thess 2.8; 1 Pet 1.13; 5.1
 - b. Prophecy (v.3)
 - i. the Revelation is saturated with Old Testament references
 - c. Letter (v.4a)

2. Who wrote Revelation?
 - a. John: God's servant and witness, the theologian
 - b. the son of Zebedee, beloved disciple
 - c. differences between John's Gospel, letters, and Revelation

3. To whom is it written (audience)?
 - a. written to seven churches in Asia Minor (historical audience; seven introductions)
 - b. written to *seven* churches (catholic audience)
 - c. chain of communication: God > Christ > angel > John > book > reader > hearer

4. Why was it written?
 - a. "to show to his servants the things that must soon take place" (v.1; cf. Mark 1.15 – the last days have arrived and are unfolding)
 - b. for the blessing of those who read it, and hear it and keep it (i.e., obey it) (v.3)
 - i. Seven times: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (Rev 2.7, 11, 17, 29, 3.6, 12, 22)
 - ii. Seven blessings (Rev 1.3; 14.13; 16.15; 19.5; 20.6; 22.7; 22.14)

5. How should we listen to it?
 - a. Symbolically
 - i. "he made it known" = *sēmmainō* (to communicate by symbols/signs; KJV: "signified"; cf. Daniel 2.27-30, 44-45)
 - b. Symbolic imagery
 - i. aural imagery (look with your ears; listen to the images)
 - ii. places (e.g., mountains, wilderness, rivers, sea, cities, temple, etc.); characters (bride, virgins, beasts, dragon, etc.); clothing, accessories, and colours (e.g., white robes, thrones, crowns, footwear, etc.)

6. Numbers
 - a. *Three*: refers to the divine and the counterfeit divine
 - i. God in Revelation 4.8: "who was and is and is to come" and the beast in Revelation 17.8: "it was and is not and is to come"

ii. Revelation 1.4-5:

“Grace to you and peace from him

(1) who is and who was and who is to come,

(2) from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

(3) and from Jesus Christ

(a) the faithful witness,

(b) the firstborn of the dead, and

(c) the ruler of kings on earth.”

- b. *Four*: refers to the earth and creation (four corners, four winds, four points of the compass)
- i. fourfold division of humanity: “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5.9)
 - ii. all of creation: “I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea” (Rev 5.13)
- c. *Seven*: signifies completeness, fullness, or perfection (seven days of creation)
- i. is a combination of 3 and 4
 - ii. seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven bowls, etc.
 - iii. Revelation 5.6: “And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”
 - iv. Revelation 5.12: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”
- d. *Six*: one step away from seven, is penultimate; associated with incompleteness or imperfection
- e. *Ten*: signifies totality; multiples of 10 represent the intensification of heightening of a total period of time or number
- f. *Twelve*: like seven is a combination of 3 and 4, and so signifies completeness, fullness, or perfection; unity in diversity