

REVELATION
Exam 1 Study Guide

I. History of Interpretation

A. Textbook (Stevens)

1. Apocalyptic Traditions. Identify the four major periods in Jewish apocalyptic traditions and their key developments, sources, and ideas using the table, p.23.
2. History of Interpretation. For the history of interpretation through the Reformation period, one form of question might be short answer of the “identify, describe, or explain” type. Otherwise, be ready for specific objective questions.
3. Identify the three major millennial views in terms of the *timing* of the millennium, as well as the *nature* of the kingdom.
4. Distinguish patristic chiliasm from premillennialism: (1) traditionally, (2) hermeneutically, and (3) historically.
5. Outline in brief the seven periods of development in the history of the interpretation of Revelation in the church age.
 - Chiliastic (c. 130)
 - Montanus (c. 172)
 - Constantinian (d. 337)—Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic (deferred timing, symbolic timing, Last Emperor myth, City of God, Council of Ephesus)
 - Millennium (A.D. 1000)—Bede, Adso, Sylvester II
 - Crusades (A.D. 1095)—Hildegard, Joachim of Fiore
 - Reformation (1500s)—Hussites, Taborites, Wycliffe, Luther, Albrecht Dürer, Thomas Müntzer, Münster, Ribera (futurism), Alcazar (preterism)
 - American (1600s–present)—The New World (Puritans), War of Independence (civic millennialism), Nineteenth Century (Mormons, Millerites, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witness, Worldwide Church of God, Dispensationalists)
6. American Apocalyptic. Because developments of Revelation’s apocalyptic traditions in America are so important for our interpretive context, a discussion question might focus on this aspect. If so, you would want to organize your response around the following outline.
 - I. The New World** (short paragraph on Puritans’ postmillennial “commonwealth”)
 - II. The War of Independence** (short paragraph on King George, Stamp Act, inheritance of civic millennial discourse permanently embedded into American political rhetoric)
 - III. The Nineteenth Century** (three major movements)
 - A. Mormons* (Joseph B. Smith)
 - B. Millerites* (organized into three stages of development)
 1. First Stage: Millerites (William Miller)
 2. Second Stage: Seventh-Day Adventists (Helen G. White)
 3. Third Stage: Splinter Adventists (Armstrong, Russell, Koresh)
 - a. Worldwide Church of God (Herbert W. Armstrong)
 - b. Jehovah’s Witness (Charles T. Russell)
 - c. Branch Davidians (David Koresh)

C. *Dispensationalists*

1. Plymouth Brethren
 2. J. N. Darby
 3. Scofield Reference Bible
7. Overview the conclusion developed in the summary, pp. 97–98:
- the two main deposits on Revelation’s traditions
 - the four theological aberrations

B. *Boyer (When Time Shall Be No More)*

1. Summarize Boyer’s presentation. Understand the basic point of each chapter.
2. Interact with Boyer and the videos seen in class. What have you learned? What are the main challenges presented by a study of the history of interpretation for you in terms of understanding how to interpret the book of Revelation?

II. Interpretive Decisions (Genre, Prophecy, Judgments, Millennium)

1. Discuss the hybrid genre of Revelation related to epistle, prophecy, and apocalyptic.
 - Identify six interpretive corollaries that can guide an interpretation that is sensitive to these three genres, two for each genre.
 - What happens to interpretive strategy if one combines apocalyptic with epistle?
 - What happens to interpretive strategy if one combines prophecy and epistle?
2. Define preterist, historicist, futurist, and idealist approaches to understanding the prophecies in Revelation. That is, explain how each theory is trying to explain how to historicize whatever is supposed to be prophetic in Revelation on the timeline of history.
3. Define the broad “Judgment Cycle” in terms of its three component judgment cycles.
 - Explain why the material on the 144,000 (Rev 7) and the Scroll/Temple (Rev 10–11) material are each said to “interrupt” their cycles.
 - How is the Bowl series different from the Seals and Trumpets?
4. Identify the three theories on the sequence of progression of the judgments in the Judgment Cycle and briefly describe each. Who was responsible for introducing the recapitulation theory into the interpretation of Revelation that was picked up and legitimized by Augustine?
5. When were each of the three major millennial views introduced into the history of the interpretation of Revelation (amillennialism, premillennialism, postmillennialism)? What historical context explains the impetus for these developments? When and by whom was periodization and futurism introduced? When and by whom was Protestant historicist interpretation introduced? Who first introduced the papacy as Antichrist that later was legitimized by Luther?

III. Theological Decisions (Christology, Ecclesiology, Soteriology)

1. What are the four guiding principles developed in class for theological reflection on the theology of Revelation? Briefly state the importance and interrelationship of each one.

2. What Gospel helps with the theme of Christology?
 - Why is the theme of Jesus' identity in this Gospel significant? How does this Gospel define Jesus as Messiah?
 - Why is the theme of failure of discipleship important? How would this theme relate to the context of the book of Revelation?
3. What Gospel helps with the theme of ecclesiology?
 - How does this Gospel's two-volume composition help with understanding the nature of the church? How does the "light unto the Gentiles" theme within Simeon's prophecy illustrate this concept of the nature and mission of the church?
 - Discuss kingdom language in the second volume of this Gospel production in terms of kingdom framing, ecclesiological pattern, and Pentecost fulfillment that provides a foundation for understanding the nature and mission of the church.
4. What Gospel helps with the theme of soteriology?
 - How does this Gospel make eschatology the framework for the language of salvation? Explain briefly inaugurated eschatology.
 - On what aspect of inaugurated eschatology does this Gospel place emphasis? What does Dr. Stevens mean when discussing this Gospel by the idea "the future of the past"? That is, what historical event becomes the prism through which all discussion of salvation is refracted?
 - How does God conquer evil in this Gospel?
5. Describe briefly the five theological emphases of Revelation as identified by Reddish.

IV. Contextual Decisions (Historical, Literary Settings)

A. Historical Setting

1. Date.
 - Internal evidence. Understand how arguments from internal evidence are based on local conditions of the seven churches, the Babylon cipher, *Nero redivivus* myth, sequence emperors in Rev 17, measuring of temple in Rev 11, possible heresy.
 - External evidence. What is the evidence of Irenaeus? What is the evidence of Pliny's letter to Trajan?
 - Identify the two major proposals about date. Which is more likely in the view of most commentators when combining internal and external evidence?
2. Authorship.
 - John the Apostle. Contrast the views of the Eastern Church and the Western Church on the authorship of Revelation. What heretical movement permanently set the negative attitude of the Eastern Church?
 - Whose arguments in the Western Church represent a minority report against apostolic authorship? What were his arguments based upon?
 - John the Prophet. If John the apostle did not write Revelation, what can we conclude about the author?
3. Patmos. Identify the location of the island of Patmos.

- John and Patmos. Describe the issues of John and Patmos in terms of the reason why he is there (voluntary or involuntary, exile or refugee, company or alone). Was John on the island when he wrote Revelation?
 - Rome and Patmos. What about the idea that Patmos was a Roman penal colony? What about the idea that Patmos was a Roman quarrying center?
2. Recipients.
- Where are the seven churches addressed in Revelation located in the Roman empire? That is, are they scattered throughout the empire?
 - Describe general conditions of life in the Roman province of Asia Minor under Domitian.
 - Describe the general history of Christianity in Asia Minor in terms of major leaders working in this area.
 - How do matters of social accommodation and assimilation relate to the question of persecution? What is the attitude of the general public? What is the nature of persecution incidents at this time in Christian history?
 - What about emperor worship? What is the story of the progression of emperor worship in the Roman empire by the time of Domitian? Why do we have problems assessing Domitian's reign?
 - What is the significance of Roman imperial ideology as background to Revelation's imagery? What city of Asia Minor was used to illustrate this ideology? Give a brief statement of the importance of Roman legends of origin, Roman patronage, Roman conquest ideology, and the divine authorization of empire.

B. Literary Setting

1. Rhetoric.
- Describe how the rhetoric of Revelation is subversive to Roman imperial propaganda.
 - Give four examples of alternate images promoted by Revelation that illustrate this subversive rhetoric.
2. Old Testament.
- Describe John's use of the Old Testament in general.
 - What type of eschatology does John incorporate that changes the sense of the Old Testament contexts?
 - Explain John's "christological framing" of Old Testament material. What does Stevens mean when he says John "baptizes everything unto Christ"? Give an example in the use of the divine warrior imagery from Isa 63:1–6 in Rev 19.
3. Drama.
- What is John's literary goal with all of his imagery? In our reading, what should we be trying to recapture?
 - What about the character of Antichrist in Revelation? Where is the New Testament teaching on this figure of speech? Summarize the presentation of this figure of speech in this context. Name three important elements of the New Testament teaching on this figure of speech.
4. Structure.
- What is the major movement in the global structure of Revelation? What is the relationship of the two elements of this movement?

- What are the three major areas addressed in the global structure of Revelation with which the major movement above coordinates?
- Provide an outline of the global structure of Revelation based upon these observations.

IV. Canonization—Extra credit (info at end of Contextual Decisions handout)

1. Summarize the reception of the book of Revelation in the Western church by A.D. 200. Who is the exception to this prevailing view in the West? What were his arguments based upon?
2. Contrast the reception of the book of Revelation in the East. Was the book included in the Peshitta translation of 411? How many centuries pass before the Eastern Church finally included Revelation in the canon?
3. Briefly summarize the approach of Erasmus, Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin to the book of Revelation. What does this information tell us about the book's canonical history?
4. List five issues that abide today in the question of the canonical status of Revelation.

V. Problematic Readings—Extra credit (Chapter 5: A Hermeneutical Swamp)

1. Explain the problem of the literal dictum: "Take the plain, literal sense unless the literal sense makes no sense." Analyze according to the principle of genre, confusion in "literal" semantics, and contradictory application.
2. How does setting dates play to the audience? What is meant by the "Protean quality" of date setting tactics? Briefly describe the phenomenon of the end-time tease.
3. What is the problem of the "schizophrenic messiah"?
4. Describe briefly what is wrong with "signs of the times" preaching for each of the following often-used signs:
 - "this generation" (Matt 24)
 - "shall a nation be born at once?" (Isa 66);
 - "valley of dry bones" (Ezek 37)
 - "earthquakes, wars" (Mark 13)
 - "knowledge will be increased" (Dan 12)
 - "they will see" (Rev 11)