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New Testament – Revelation

Historical Context

The century Christians lived in _____ of Christ's return. However, around _____ years after Christ's death some Christians began to _____.

Intense Persecution

- Biblical Evidence: Rev. 1:9; 2:3; 2:9-10; 2:13
- Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81-96) –

“[It is the] place [his palace] where... that fearful monster built his defenses with untold terrors, where lurking in his den he licked up the blood of his murdered relatives or emerged to plot the massacre and destruction of his most distinguished subjects. Menaces and horror were the sentinels at his doors... always he sought darkness and mystery, and only emerged from the desert of his solitude to create another” (Pliny, *Panegyricus*, 48.3-5).

Literary Context

Literary Genre: Includes letter, prophecy, and apocalyptic

- Revelation is a letter – The book begins and ends like a letter – Rev. 1:4-6; 22:21
 - This suggests that Revelation is meant to be read as one letter to the seven churches.
 - The 7 churches are written in order in which a letter carrier would visit them from Patmos.
 - Letters introduce major themes in the introductions that are developed in the body.

How can knowing this book is a letter help us in our interpretation of the book?

- Revelation is a prophetic letter – Rev. 1:3; 22:6-7; 22:10; 22:18-19 – Prophecy includes both *prediction* of the future and *proclamation* of God's truth for the present.

What proclamation of God's truth are the original audiences told to hold onto?

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- Revelation is a prophetic-apocalyptic letter – Rev. 1:1
 - “Most scholars believe that apocalyptic grew out of Hebrew prophecy and actually represents an intensified form of prophecy written during a time of crises.”¹
 - Apocalyptic literature was well-known to people living around 200 BC to AD 200.
 - It uses visual images and symbols to portray the main idea.

Interpreting Revelation

Helpful Tips in Interpreting Revelation (Taken from *Grasping God's Word*, 317-322)

1. Read Revelation with humility.

2. Try to discover the message to the original readers.

3. Don't try to discover a strict chronological map of future events.

4. Take Revelation seriously, but don't always take it literally.

5. Pay attention when John identifies an image.

6. Look to the Old Testament and historical context when interpreting images and symbols.

7. Above all, focus on the main idea and don't press all the details.

¹ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 314.

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Interpretive Journey of Revelation 12

1. Grasp the text in their town. What did the text mean to the biblical audience?
2. Measure the width of the river to cross. What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
3. Cross the principlizing bridge. What are the theological principles in this text?
4. Consult the biblical map. How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?
5. Grasp the text in our town. How should individual Christians today live out this theological principle?

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Reflection For the Week:

Read the entire book of Revelation and write a one-line description of the main idea of each chapter of the book. For example, for Revelation 1 you might write, "John's vision of the glorified Christ among the churches."

Preparation For Next Week:

Read - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/the-two-keys-to-interpreting-old-testament-narrative/>

Resources For Going Further:

Duvall, J. Scott and J. Daniel Hays. *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

Kostenberger, Andreas J. and Richard D. Patterson. *Invitation To Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2011.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. *Is There Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality or Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998.