The Apocalypse

• Authorship
• Genre
• Theological approaches
• Theology of the Apocalypse
• The millennium
• Significance of the Apocalypse

Authorship

• Debate over authorship.
  – Author identifies self as John (1:1, 4).
  – Greek is very different from Johannine writings.
• From the same tradition as the Johannine Gospel and Epistles.
  – Asia Minor; emphasis on light and truth.
  – Dualistic imagery - heaven/earth, light/dark.
  – Jesus as Word of God, Lamb of God, Son.

Genre

• Revelation includes what three genres?
Genre

- Apocalypse = unveiling = revelation.
  - Flourished between 200 B.C. and A.D 200.
  - Dealing with the events surrounding world history (or “history as we know it”).
  - Often in form of dreams or visions, often given through angelic mediator.
  - Dualistic worldview; highly figurative.
  - Battles, cosmic cataclysms, final paradise.
  - Originates in crisis; designed to give comfort.

Other examples of apocalypse:
- Daniel
- Isaiah 24-27
- Zechariah 9-11
- Ezekiel 38-39
- Olivet Discourse (Mark 13 and parallels)
- 1 Thessalonians 4-5
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12
- Many apocryphal and pseudepigraphal books

Theological Approaches

- Theological approaches to Revelation:
  - Preterist - All events are already past; all belongs to the first century.
  - Historicist - Panorama of church history from first century to end times.
  - Idealist - Symbolic picture of struggle between good and evil; no historical events.
  - Futurist - Prophecy of future events surrounding the end times. Includes the Great Tribulation and the Millennium.
Theological Approaches

• Ladd splits the futurist view into two to distinguish his view from dispensationalism:
  – Dispensationalism
    • Two separate programs for Israel and the Church.
    • Pre-tribulation rapture of the church.
    • Tribulation and millennium are Jewish.
  – “Moderate futurist view”
    • Same program for Israel and the church.
    • No rapture separate from second coming of Christ.
    • Church goes through the tribulation.

Theological Approaches

• The approach you take to Revelation affects what you think it teaches.
• What is your view?

Theology of the Apocalypse

• Revelation pictures the struggle between God and Satan, and God’s ultimate victory through Christ.
• A dramatization of 1 Cor. 15:25 - Christ must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet.
• Stephen Neill: Revelation contains the words “victor,” “victory,” and “vanquish” more than the other NT books put together.
Theology of the Apocalypse

• Chapter 12 - struggle between Satan and Christ (child of the woman).
  – Woman = people of God, church.
  – Woman gives birth to Messiah.
  – Satan can’t destroy Messiah, so he tries to destroy the people of God (v. 17).
  – Ladd: Defeat of Satan here is victory of Christ in cross and resurrection.

Theology of the Apocalypse

• Chapter 13 - Short but intense period of evil before Christ’s return.
  – Beast sets himself up in opposition to Christ.
  – Heads evil political system.
  – Supported by evil religious system headed by False Prophet.
  – Inspired by Satan (dragon).
  – Persecution of people of God; people bear the mark of Christ or the mark of the Beast.

Theology of the Apocalypse

• Chapters 8-11, 16 - God pouring his wrath on the world - “anticipatory judgments.”
  – Seven trumpets and seven bowls.
  – Judgments in history that give a foretaste of the eschatological wrath.
  – Wrath as already/not yet!
  – Those bearing God’s seal pass through the judgments and may face martyrdom but are protected from wrath.
Theology of the Apocalypse

• Ladd: The tribulation is just the final and most intense expression of a struggle going on throughout church history.
  – Both/and idea - reference to historic events and to end times.
  – Cf. 1 John 2:18; 4:3 on “antichrists.”

Theology of the Apocalypse

• Christ’s victory described in 9:11-16.
  – Destroys evil with the word of his mouth.
  – Resurrection, millennium.
  – Then resurgence of evil, its final destruction, second resurrection and judgment.
  – Eternal kingdom in new heavens and new earth (21:1ff).
  – Emphasis on face-to-face relationship with God; no more suffering or death.
  – The end of salvation history!

The Millennium

• What is the theological significance of the millennium? Why do we need one?
  – Ladd: necessary for the universal acknowledgement of Christ’s lordship.
  – Bridge between this age and the age to come.
  – Demonstrates that evil still exists even here.
  – Early church fathers: suitable that the martyrs be rewarded for their suffering in this state with a vindication and reign in this state.
  – Redemption of Israel?
The Millennium

- Millennial views (see handout):
  - Amillennialism (no literal millennium)
  - Postmillennialism (church age; improvement)
  - Premillennialism
    - Dispensational (pre-tribulational)
    - Historic (post-tribulational) - Ladd’s view.
- Different views become popular as the church’s circumstances change.
- Remember this is only 3 verses in the NT...

Significance of the Apocalypse

What is the value of the book of Revelation for the church today?

- Revelation is a book of worship.
- Jerry Flora - Adults Approach the Revelation:
  - “This book is a revelation of Jesus Christ in the context of worship.”
  - Revelation was not meant to be read and analyzed, but listened to, experienced, and obeyed. See Rev. 1:3; 22:18 - read aloud.
Significance of the Apocalypse

- Stephen Neill - distinctive titles for Jesus:
  - Alpha and Omega, first and last, beginning and end (1:11; 22:13).
  - Bright and morning star (22:16).
  - Lamb that has been slain (5:6, 12).
  - King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:15-16).
- Revelation puts Christ at the center of redemptive history; it leads us to worship.