

THE WHOLE BIBLE: Revelation

Introduction

- Bible, written over 1,600 years, is a single, coherent story
- like a novel written by brilliant writer, beginning anticipates end
- Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 are the bookends of Scripture

The question Revelation addresses – why hasn't history ended?

- idea of redemptive-history, story of salvation
- redemptive-history has a beginning, middle, and end
- **beginning** is Garden of Eden | **middle** is story of Old Testament
- **end** is climatic coming of the king, smash evil and save people

Isaiah 40:1-5

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. ³ A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

In the coming of the Messiah – history will end

- God's people will be comforted and restored
- the warfare of God's enemies will end because evil will be smashed

Question: if Jesus is the Messiah, why does history continue?

- why does evil and unbelievers seem in triumph?
- why are God's people suffering and persecuted?

Answer of New Testament – delay while nations are gathered

Matthew 24:14

This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

2 Peter 3:9-10

⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

But in the meantime, the church suffers while she awaits the end

Revelation 6:9-11

⁹ When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. ¹⁰ They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

Main point of Revelation – Spiritual Battle

- extended commentary on Ephesians 6

Ephesians 6:11-12

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Revelation is peeling back the curtain, to show the spiritual reality

- like Job, where Satan asks God permission to torment Job
- like chariots of fire with Elisha at Dothan:

2 Kings 6:14-17

¹⁴ So the king of Syria sent horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ He said, "Do not be afraid, for

those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

How do we read Revelation? | two main views

- density of fantastical imagery | not straightforward like Epistles

(1) Future sequence | also called Futurist view

- events in Revelation are mostly in the future – “end times”
- each scene describes a sequence of events, in chronological order
- specific figures/details correspond to people/events in world history

Basic sequence of future events:

- church is raptured to heaven / Israel returns to land
- 7-year period of tribulation
- reign of Antichrist begins, nations gather to war against Jerusalem
- Christ returns and defeats the nations (Revelation 19)
- 1,000 year period of peace (Revelation 20)
- final climatic battle between Satan and Christ (Revelation 20)
- New Heavens and New Earth (Revelation 21-22)

(2) Recapitulation | also called Idealist view

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- various scenes are parallel descriptions of the same events
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Basic sequence of events:

- Christ wins victory over Satan on cross – already, but not yet
- Millennium, tribulation – all same period
- final battle, then New Heavens and New Earth

Reasons why Recapitulation view is correct

- simplest and clearest way to read Revelation
- has most value for Christians living today
- Israel and church are united as one people

Snapshots of Revelation

Revelation 4:2-8 | God is in control and reigns from heaven

² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

Revelation 17:1-6 | Satan and Rome persecute the church

¹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. ⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” ⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Revelation 20:1-3, 7 | 1,000 years – Satan bound, church gathers

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. ... ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison.

Notes

Introduction

- Bible, written over 1,600 years, is a single, coherent story
- like a novel written by brilliant writer, beginning anticipates end
- Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22 are the bookends of Scripture
 - starts in garden, ends in garden-city
 - story starts w/ tree of life, unattainable | ends tree, healing nations
 - begins w/ marriage of Adam and Eve | ends w/ heavenly wedding

The question Revelation addresses – why hasn't history ended?

- idea of redemptive-history, story of salvation
- redemptive-history has a beginning, middle, and end
 - anticipated in Garden of Eden: Tree of KGE, Tree of Life
 - “life” is not just biological life, mere existence, but life with God
- **beginning** is Garden of Eden | **middle** is story of Old Testament
- **end** is climatic coming of the king, smash evil and save people

Main theme of later prophets is “end of history”

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God's people are oppressed and crying out for deliverance

- message of Prophets is that God will send savior-king, Messiah
- “voice crying out in the wilderness” – John the Baptist
- Jesus is the Messiah

Zechariah 9, Palm Sunday

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold your king is coming to you” – **king crush enemies**

Question: if Jesus is the Messiah, why does history continue?

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This is central tension of Revelation – suffering of God's people

- answer is complex set of reasons:
 - Parable of Wheat and Tares | Judgment Day is delayed
 - to gather God's people from nations
 - Judgment is being stored up for the wicked
 - suffering refines God's people | gold in furnace

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- not straightforward like Epistles | extended Parable

(1) Future sequence | also called Futurist view (Dispensational)

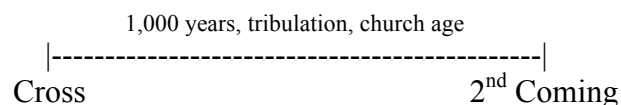
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Basic sequence of events:

- Christ wins victory over Satan on cross – already, but not yet – between the times
- Millennium, tribulation – all same period
- final battle, then New Heavens and New Earth

Reasons why Recapitulation view is correct

- simplest and clearest way to read Revelation
 - Futurist view lends itself to obsessive speculation
- has most value for Christians living today
 - in the tribulation now, demonic forces are at work now
- Israel and church are united as one people
 - don't have separate destinies | overly literal interpretation

Snapshots of Revelation

- hyper-density of OT allusions – Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Isaiah
- more allusions to OT than all the rest of NT together

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Above tumult of Earth, heavenly scene – throne room of God

- 24 elders – 12 tribes of Israel + 12 apostles, whole people of God
- 7 spirits – Holy Spirit
- sea of glass – in ancient world, sea was terror | dragon emerges
- 4 living creatures – angels worshipping God, Isaiah 6
- four animals represent the whole of creation

Message – God is in absolute control

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prostitute who is seated on many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality, and with the wine of whose sexual immorality the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. ⁵ And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth’s abominations.” ⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

Unholy alliance between the dragon and the prostitute

- dragon represents Satan | prostitute represents great empires of w
- prostitute is called “Babylon” – greatest of pagan cities

Empires of world are pawns of Satan

- vehicles of oppression and injustice
- Christians have ambiguous relationship to civil governments
 - obedience and respect, Romans 13
 - expect hostility and mistreatment

Prostitute arrayed in costly jewels, clothing and wealth

- allure of world | worldliness will always beckon Christians
 - particularly sexual immorality
 - sign of beast, 666, in Revelation 13
-

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Futurists read Millennium as following battle in Rev. 19

- “premillennial” means Christ comes before Millennium

Idealists read battle of Rev. 19 as after Millennium

- “postmillennial” and “amillennial” positions

Satan bound – not a future event, but on victory on cross

Mark 3:23-27

²³ And Jesus called them to him and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.”

Colossians 2:15

Christ disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Matthew 16:18

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Satan is bound, so nations may gathered into church

But how can Satan be bound and still be dangerous foe?

- Revelation 6-19 depicts Satan as this monstrous beast on loose

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober-minded, for your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Ephesians 6:11-12

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:1-2

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience.

Answer – both

- Satan is bound, already defeated
- and Satan is the prince of age, working to destroy the church

- emphasis of Revelation 20 is Satan’s limitation
- Lord’s Prayer – “deliver us from evil”
- Luke 22:31-32 – Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

Paradox of Revelation

- we are safe in the Savior’s hand | Satan’s doom is assured
- fight for your life for Satan seeks to destroy you