



Leaders Introduction

The book of Revelation fascinates us. We seem to have a love hate relationship with it. Its imagery and symbolism is bizarre and yet somehow familiar. We find ourselves shouting “couldn’t you have made yourself clearer?” yet also enjoying having to puzzle it out. To suggest Revelation as a sermon series may seem a little crazy, however if we don’t preach it (with a firm foundation in the Gospel of Jesus’ death and resurrection), the resulting vacuum may open this book to undiscerned and dangerous interpretation.

Revelation, like every other book in the New Testament, is an exposition of the gospel. Goldsworthy has said that “John has woven this fact into the apocalyptic idiom by depicting the slain lamb as the one who alone is worthy to unlock the truth (Rev 5:1-6, 9).”

The vision given to John is like a majestic musical pageant with vivid costumes, operatic singing, jaw dropping stage sets, and a cast of thousands. Scene after heavenly scene rolls by and John does his best to record what he sees and hears, but it is a bit like trying to describe an elephant to a blind man. We snatch glimpses here and there of an out-of-this-world performance that defies mere human understanding. And yet, we can understand it, because we actually already know the story.

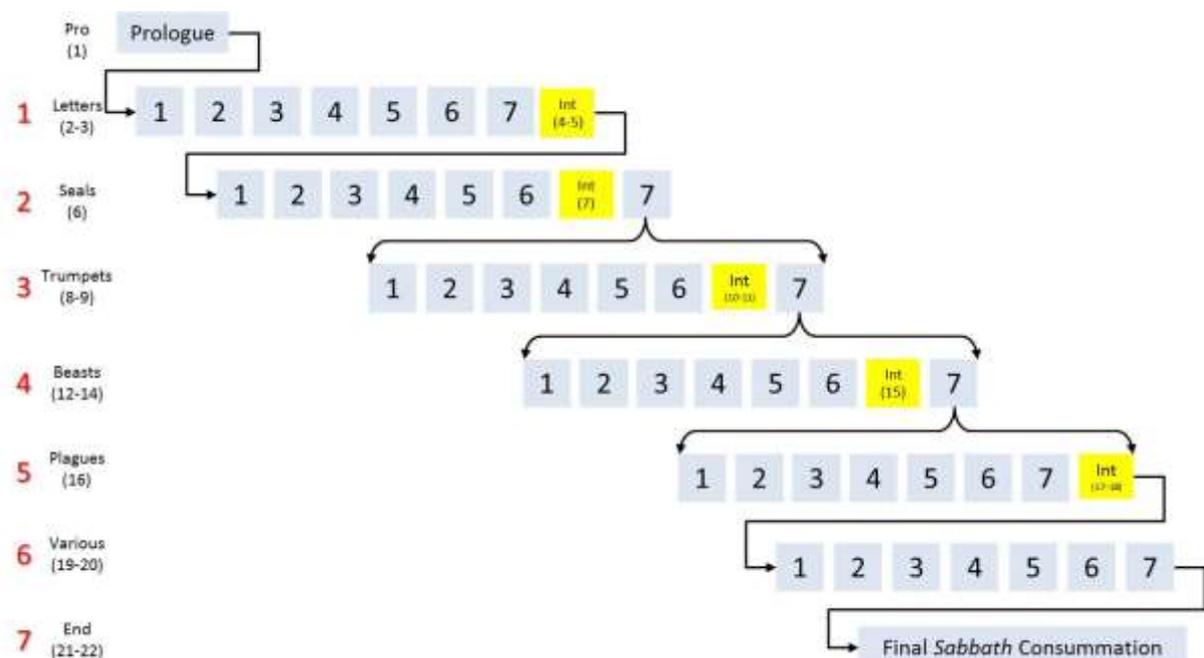
Structure

In general Revelation is a study in contrasts between the judgement facing the world, and the salvation offered by Jesus. There are a number of possible structures for Revelation. For this series I have taken that there are six distinct scenes of seven, followed by a final scene.

1. Seven letters (Rev 2-3)
2. Seven Seals (Rev 6)
3. Seven Trumpets (Rev 8-9)
4. Seven Beasts (or a beast with seven heads) (Rev 12-14)
5. Seven Plagues (Rev 16)
6. Seven Visions (Rev 19-20)
7. Re-creation – or final Sabbath consummation (Rev 21-22)

In between each scene there is a brief interval (except between scenes six and seven). At the end of scenes 2, 3 and 4 the interval precedes the seventh event. When this occurs the seventh event ushers in the next scene of seven (see Figure 1). But what does this mean? Some have said this is reflective of the seven days, with the final day symbolising the final day of rest. Indeed we do find seven distinct scenes, but I'm not convinced that these relate to seven consecutive days. Rather it seems that these scenes overlap each other, like laying overhead transparencies on top of each other. In the majestic pageant the scenes may all be occurring at once, and John just focuses on one at a time. This is the problem with a time bound creation trying to comprehend non-time bound heavenly realms.

Figure 1- Revelation Structure



Major themes

The bible studies should help the church come to a deeper understanding of these major themes and tie them to concrete applications:

- Gospel of Jesus death, resurrection and return
- Christ's victory
- Redemption and Justification by faith
- Suffering and persecution
- Judgement and punishment
- Prophecy
- Hope
- Eschatology (the end times)
- Now, but not yet
- Re-creation

Bible Study

Roger Lewis has kindly produced our Revelation Series Bible Studies. They are based on the idea of a 1 hour study, following the usual group pattern where there is also time given over to arrival, prayer, songs, morning tea or supper etc. Here are some things to keep in mind:

- The cross is central! This is the main point of the Sermon Series - and of the Bible Studies. The idea is that each study has at its centre the cross!
- **Part A [usually 10 minutes]**
 - an icebreaker/passage overview. Intended to be accessible to anyone, non-Christian, new Christian, old Christian. Idea is that there is no 'right' answer - anyone can give a valid answer. Passage introduction, where included, meant to be readable by anyone with any level of Bible knowledge.
 - from here [Australia 2016] to there [Mediterranean first century]
- **Part B [usually 20 minutes]**
 - meant to be basic understanding of passage, getting main features
- **Part C [usually 20 minutes]**
 - meant to go deeper and wider
 - depending on the chapters, in some cases these have been combined/interleaved
- **Part D [usually 10 minutes]**
 - applying the passage today; to the group and the individual includes memory verse
 - from there to here