

REVELATION *Introduction*¹

Author: the Apostle John (1:4)

Recipients: seven historical churches in the Roman province of Asia, modern-day Turkey (1:4, 11).

Date: either AD 54–68 or 81–96.

Genre: apocalypse, prophecy, and epistle.

- Apocalypse (1:1): peeling back the curtain.
- Prophecy (1:3): reveals things to come and preaches and applies known truths.
- Epistle (1:4–6): follows usual form of opening to NT letters.

Interpreting symbolism: must know two main backgrounds:

- OT: e.g.: 1:12: seven golden lampstands.
 - OT background:
 - Exod 25:31–40: a golden lampstand with seven lamps in the tabernacle.
 - 2 Chron 4:7: ten golden lampstands in the temple.
 - Zech 4:2–6: Zechariah’s vision of a golden lampstand, highlighting Israel’s need for the Spirit’s presence and power.
 - Application to Revelation:
 - 1:20: Jesus interprets the symbol: seven golden lampstands are the seven churches and he is among them (1:13; 2:1).
 - 11:3–4: John identifies the two prophetic witnesses as the two lampstands (cf. Zech 4:2, 11, 14), suggesting a corporate identification of the two witnesses.
 - 2:5: removing Ephesus’ lampstand may mean losing its identity as a church witnessing to Christ.
- Rome:

¹ Much of the information in this outline is based on G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), and Brian Tabb, “Introduction to Revelation,” in *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, edited by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015).

Interpretive approaches:

- Preterist: primarily first-century fulfillment.
- Futurist: primarily distant future from John's day—seven-year tribulation followed by millennium (various rapture positions).
- Historicist: primarily a prophetic outline of the major historical developments from John's day until Jesus' return; focus on Western church history.
- Idealist: symbolically depicts the ongoing conflict between the forces of God and Satan throughout the church age; slow to identify symbol with past or future events.
- Eclecticism: a mix of the above; Revelation describes the interadvent period in parallel sequences.

Situation, purpose, and theme:

- Situation: the tension between God's sovereignty and kingdom and the presence of evil forces that oppress believers.
- Purpose: exhort God's people to remain faithful so that they may inherit final salvation.
- Theme: the sovereign God through Christ glorifies himself by redeeming his people and judging unbelievers.