

## Book of Revelation Class

### **Classes**

Bi-weekly on Wednesdays at 7:30pm at the New Church of Concord.

### **Online Readings**

You can get readings and material by going to [www.newchurchconcord.org](http://www.newchurchconcord.org) and looking under “programs” – “programs for adults” – and then following the links under the “Book of Revelation Class”.

### **Online Discussion Group:**

Email comments or questions to: [book-of-revelation-class@googlegroups.com](mailto:book-of-revelation-class@googlegroups.com)

View answers/comments by going to:

<http://groups.google.com/group/book-of-revelation-class>

\*If you would like to get questions and responses emailed directly to you, go to the above address and sign up as a member of this group. You must also be a member in order to respond directly to questions/comments posted.

## Introduction to the book of Revelation

### **Who wrote it?**

Some scholars think the apostle, the author of Revelation, and the author of the epistles were all different people.

Most think the author of Revelation is the apostle.

“By the "twelve disciples" or "apostles" of the Lord, are meant all who are of the church in truths from good; and in the abstract sense, all things of the church; and by "Peter," all who are in faith, and, abstractly, faith itself; by "James," they who are in charity, and, abstractly, charity itself; by "John," they who are in the good of life from charity and its faith, and, abstractly, the good of life itself therefrom....

Since the good of life from charity and its faith makes the church, therefore through the apostle John were revealed the arcana concerning the state of the church which are contained in his visions....From these things it may appear, that by "He signified, sending by His angel to His servant John," is meant in the spiritual sense, what is revealed by the Lord through heaven to those who are in the good of life from charity and its faith; for charity through faith operates good, and not charity by itself, nor faith by itself.” (Apocalypse Revealed 5)

## Where was it written?

Modern day western Turkey.

Birth place of Greek philosophy and science.

- Thales of Miletus (around 600BC) was one of the seven sages of Greece and regarded by Aristotle as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition.

Patmos is in-between Asia and Europe, the gate way to Europe where the Christian world would spread.

“I was in the island called Patmos, signifies a state and place in which he could be enlightened. The reason that the Revelation was made to John in Patmos, was, because it was an island in Greece, not far from the land of Canaan, and between Asia and Europe; and by "islands" are signified the Gentiles more remote from the worship of God, but yet which are about to draw near to it, because they can be enlightened. The same is signified by Greece; but the church itself is signified by "the land of Canaan"; by "Asia," those of the church who are in the light of truth from the Word; and, by "Europe," those to whom the Word is about to come; thence it is, that by "the island of Patmos," is signified a state and place in which he could be enlightened.” (Apocalypse Revealed 34)

## Why was John on Patmos?

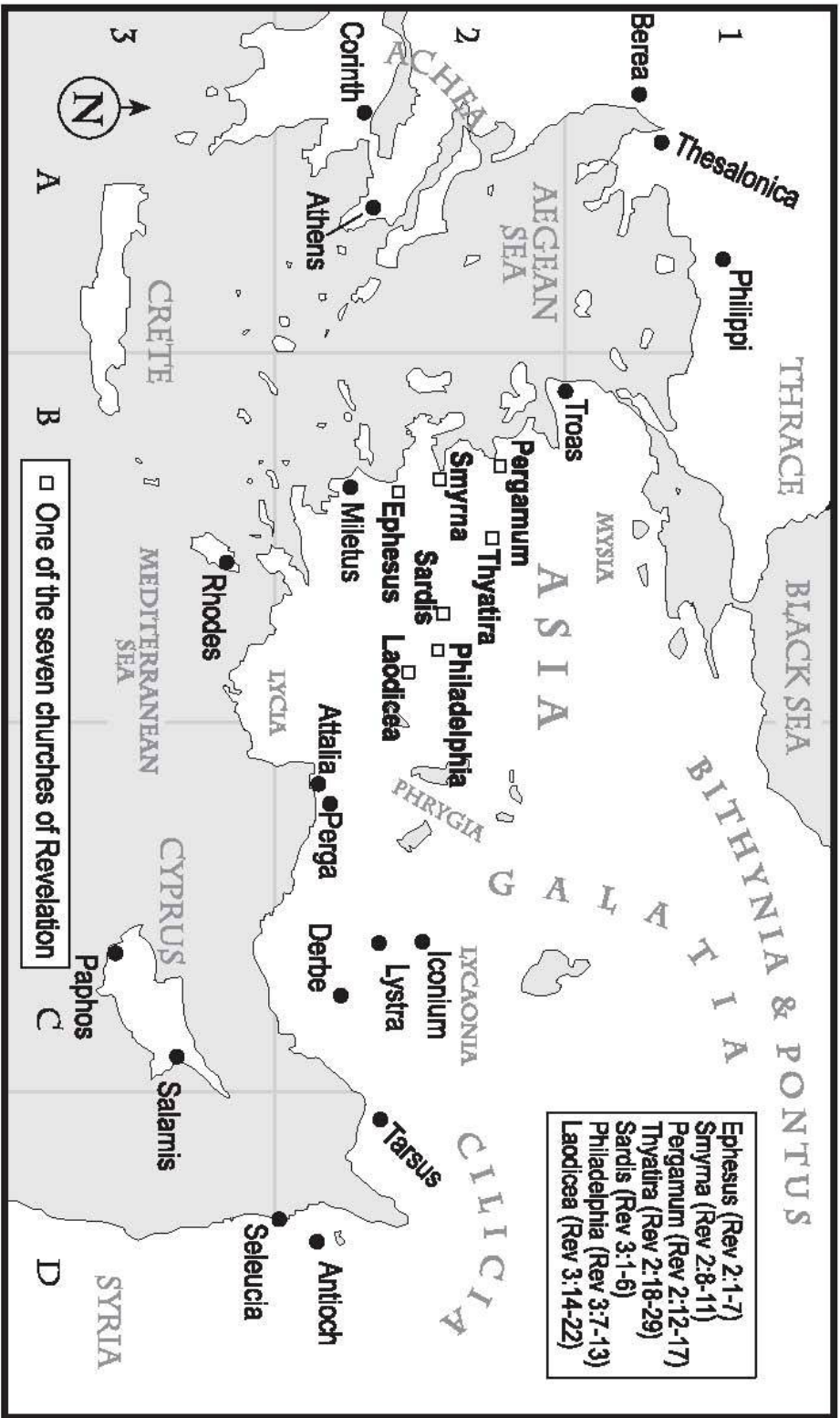
Traditional view is that he was exiled on Patmos in the Aegean sea during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian.

Revelation 1:9 is the only source for this assertion and it is doubted by some scholars.

- *Dia* = “for the sake of”

“I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos, **for** the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 1:9 NKJV)

“All persons mentioned in the Word, and all by whom the Word was written, were led to places that were significant, in order that all things might be significative of spiritual things. Even the Lord Himself, for the same reason, went to places thus significative; as into Galilee, to Tyre and Sidon, to Jerusalem, and to the Mount of Olives there, and also, when an infant, He was carried into Egypt. It was similar with the prophets, and with many who are mentioned in the historical Word, as may be abundantly shown. For this reason, John also was commanded to betake himself into the isle of Patmos, that the things that are to be at the end of the church might there be revealed, because "island" signifies a nation about to accept truths of doctrine. This island, moreover, is in the archipelago (Aegean Sea), where there are numerous other islands; and from this also it is that by "Greece" in the Word such nations are signified.” (Apocalypse Explained 50)



## Different Interpretations of the book of Revelation

**Preterism** holds that the contents of Revelation constitute a prophecy of events that were fulfilled in the first century. Preterist interpretations generally identify either Jerusalem or the Roman Empire as the persecutor of the Church, "Babylon", the "Mother of Harlots", etc. They see Armageddon as God's judgement on the Jews, carried out by the Roman army, which is identified as "the beast". It sees Revelation being fulfilled in 70, thereby bringing the full presence of God to dwell with all humanity.

**Historicist view** regards the prophecy as spanning the time from the end of the first century through the second coming of Christ. Politically, historicist interpretations apply the symbols of Revelation to the gradual division and collapse of the Roman Empire, the emergence of a divided Europe in the west and an Arabic empire in the east, and the collapse of the Byzantine Empire while Europe attempts to reunite and recreate the Roman Empire.

**Futurist view** assigns all or most of the prophecy to the future, shortly before the second coming. Today this is the most readily recognized view.

**Esoterist** views Revelation as bearing multiple levels of meaning, the lowest being the literal or "dead-letter." Those who are instructed in esoteric knowledge enter gradually into more subtle levels of understanding of the text. They see the book as delivering both a series of warnings for humanity and a detailed account of internal, spiritual processes of the individual soul. Christian Gnostics, however, are unlikely to be attracted to the teaching of Revelation because the doctrine of salvation through the sacrificed Lamb, which is central to Revelation, is repugnant to Gnostics. Christian Gnostics "believed in the Forgiveness of Sins, but in no vicarious sacrifice for sin ... they accepted Christ in the full realization of the word; his life, not his death, was the key-note of their doctrine and their practice.

**Spiritual** view (also called Idealist by some writers) does not see the book of Revelation as predicting specific events in history. Rather it sees the visions as expressing eternal spiritual truths that find expression throughout history. Only in the last few chapters are specifically predictive eschatological issues taken up.

**Radical discipleship** view asserts that the Book of Revelation is best understood as a handbook for radical discipleship; i.e. how to remain faithful to the spirit and teachings of Jesus and avoid simply assimilating to surrounding society.

**Paschal Spiritual** view holds that the book of Revelation describes a spiritual battle that took place while Jesus was on the cross and in the grave.

**Eastern Orthodoxy** treats the text as simultaneously describing contemporaneous events and as prophecy of events to come, for which the contemporaneous events were a form of foreshadow. It rejects attempts to determine, before the fact, if the events of Revelation are occurring by mapping them onto present-day events, taking to heart the Scriptural warning against those who proclaim "He is here!" prematurely. Instead, the book is seen as a warning to be spiritually and morally ready for the end times, whenever they may come.

**Paschal Liturgical** view which has found expression among both Catholic and Protestant theologians, considers the liturgical worship, particularly the Easter rites, of early Christianity as background and context for understanding the Book of Revelation's structure and significance.

**Historical-critical** method treats Revelation as a *text* and attempts to understand Revelation in its first century historical context within the genre of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. This approach considers the text as an address to seven historical communities in Asia Minor.

**Dismissal** Nineteenth-century agnostic Robert G. Ingersoll branded Revelation "the insanest of all books". Thomas Jefferson omitted it along with most of the Biblical canon, from the Jefferson Bible, and wrote that at one time, he considered it as "merely the ravings of a maniac, no more worthy nor capable of explanation than the incoherences of our own nightly dreams." Martin Luther changed his perspective on Revelation over time. In the preface to the German translation of Revelation that he composed in 1522, he said that he did not consider the book prophetic or apostolic, since "Christ is neither taught nor known in it." But in the completely new preface that he composed in 1530, he reversed his position and concluded that Christ was central to the book. He concluded, as we see here in this book, that through and beyond all plagues, beasts, and evil angels, Christ is nonetheless with the saints and wins the final victory." John Calvin "had grave doubts about its value."

## Apocalypse Revealed Preface

“There are many who have labored in the explanation of the Apocalypse; but, as the spiritual sense of the Word had been hitherto unknown, they could not see the arcana which lie concealed therein, for the spiritual sense alone discloses these; on which account expositors have conjectured various things, and the most of them have applied the things that are therein to the states of empires, intermingling also some things about ecclesiastical affairs. But the Apocalypse, like the whole Word, does not in the least, in its spiritual sense, treat of worldly, but of heavenly things; thus not of empires and kingdoms, but of heaven and the church. It is to be known, that after the Last Judgment, which was accomplished in the spiritual world in the year 1757...there was formed a New Heaven from Christians; but from those only who could receive the Lord as the God of heaven and earth, according to His words in Matthew 28:18, and who at the same time in the world had repented of their evil works. From this heaven the New Church on earth, which is the New Jerusalem, is descending and will descend. That this Church will acknowledge the Lord alone, is manifest from these passages in the Apocalypse:

There came unto me one of the seven angels, and spoke with me, saying, Come I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's Wife; and he showed me the great city, holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God (chapter 21:9, 10).

And in another place:

Let us rejoice and exult; for the time of the Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Wife hath made herself ready. Happy are they that are called unto the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (chapter 19:7, 9).

That there is to be a New Heaven, and that the New Church on earth will descend therefrom, is manifest from these words there:

I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth; and I saw the holy city Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband. He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new; and He said unto me, Write, for these words are true and faithful (chapter 21:1, 2, 5).

"The New Heaven" is a New Heaven from Christians: "the New Jerusalem" is the New Church on earth, which will act as one with that New Heaven. "The Lamb" is the Lord as to the Divine Human.

To this something shall be added for illustration. The Christian Heaven is below the Ancient Heavens. Into it, from the time of the Lord, when He was in the world, were admitted those who worshiped one God under three Persons, and who at the same time had not the idea of three Gods; and this because the Trinity of Persons has been received in the whole Christian world. But they who cherished no other idea of the Lord's Human than as the human of another man, could not receive the faith of the New Jerusalem; which is, that the Lord is the only God, in whom is the Trinity. These were for that reasons separated, and were sent away to the extremes: it was given me to see the separations and the removals after the Last Judgment. For the whole heaven is founded upon a just idea of God, and the whole church on earth, and in general all religion; since by that idea there is conjunction, and by conjunction light, wisdom, and eternal happiness.

Everyone can see that the Apocalypse can by no means be explained but by the Lord alone; for each word therein contains arcana, which could never be known without particular enlightenment, and thus revelation; wherefore it has pleased the Lord to open the sight of my spirit, and to teach me. Do not believe, therefore, that I have taken anything therein from myself, nor from any angel, but from the Lord alone. The Lord also said to John through the angel: Seal not the words of the prophecy of this Book (chapter 22:10). By which is meant that they are to be made manifest.”

## **Begins with review of Roman Catholic and Reformed doctrine**

“Since Babylon, which is the Roman Catholic Religion, is also treated of in the Apocalypse, chapters 17, 18, and 19, in the beginning of these explanations, its doctrinal tenets must be laid open, and in the following order: Of Baptism, the Eucharist or Holy Supper, Masses, Repentance, Justification, Purgatory, the Seven Sacraments, the Saints, and Power....The above are from councils and bulls, particularly from the council of Trent, and the papal bull confirming it, wherein all who think, believe, and act contrary to what was there decreed, which in general is as above adduced, they condemn by anathema.” (AR – Preface)

“Since the Reformed are much treated of in the Apocalypse in its spiritual sense, therefore, before entering upon the explanations, their doctrinal tenets are also to be laid open, and in this order: Of God, of Christ the Lord, of Justification by Faith, and of God Works, of the Law and the Gospel, of Repentance and Confession, of Original Sin, of Baptism, of the Holy Supper, of Free-Agency, and of the Church.....This faith reigns at this day in the whole Reformed Christian world with the clergy, but not with the laity, except a very few; for the laity by faith understand nothing else but to believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that he who lives well and believes well, will be saved; and of the Lord that He is the Savior; for they are ignorant of the mysteries of justification of their preachers, who, although they preach such things, yet, with the laity who hear them, they enter in at one ear and go out at the other; their teachers, indeed, think themselves learned, from knowing them, and labor much in their schools and universities to acquire them; therefore it is said above, that this faith is the faith of the clergy....But few of the laity know anything of these mysteries of the clergy; nor are they willing to publish them as they are in themselves, because they know that the laity do not relish them.” (AR – Preface)