

# THE REVELATION GIVEN TO JOHN

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**Approximate date:** 50s-70s C.E. or 80s-90 C.E.

**Time period:** deteriorating circumstances for the First Century Believers in the Roman Empire

**Author:** the Apostle John

**Location of author:** the island of Patmos

**Target audience and their location:** the congregations of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea (all in Asia Minor)

**People:**

Yeshua the Messiah, John, 144,000 sealed servants, Abaddon (or Apollyon), Michael, the antimessiah/antichrist, the false prophet, Gog and Magog (nationalities/principalities)

**People mentioned:**

David, Nicolaitans, Antipas, Baalam, Balak, Jezebel

**Places:**

Asia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum (Pergamos), Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, the Abyss, Mount Zion, Armageddon

**Places mentioned:**

Euphrates River, Sodom, Egypt, Babylon

**Key Themes and Events:**

John greets the seven assemblies in Asia that will receive his message / John describes the Divine revealing of Yeshua to him in Heaven (or eternity) / John relays Yeshua's specific messages to the seven assemblies of Asia (chs. 2-3) / John sees the awesome place of God's Throne in Heaven (or eternity) / John sees the Lamb (Yeshua) being handed the scroll that records the final history of humanity / John records the judgment of the six seals / John records the sealing of the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel / John records the presence of a great multitude in white / John records the massive judgment of the seventh seal / John records the judgment of the six trumpets / John is forced by an angel to eat a small scroll / John records the death of the two witnesses / John records the sounding of the seventh trumpet / John details the account of a war in Heaven with Satan being cast to the Earth / John details the coming of a second beast / the purity of the 144,000 is recorded / three angels (or messengers) proclaim God's judgment and His glory / a harvest of carnage

is taken from the Earth / John records the coming of seven angels with seven plagues to the Earth / John records the judgments of the seven bowls (or vials) of God's wrath / the Battle of Armageddon occurs / John records the judgment of Babylon, the woman that rides the beast / John records the judgment of Babylon, a city of commerce / a multitude in Heaven rejoices over the judgment of Babylon / Yeshua comes to the Earth with His armies / Satan is imprisoned in the bottomless pit for a thousand years / the resurrection of Believers occurs / the thousand-year reign of Yeshua on Earth commences / Satan is released at the end of the thousand years / the Great White Throne judgment of the unrighteous dead occurs / the New Jerusalem descends toward the New Earth / the city of New Jerusalem is described / the condition of the Eternal State is described / Yeshua the Messiah admonishes His followers to eagerly anticipate His return

**Key Scriptures:** Revelation 1:3; 4:11; 22:12-13 / **The Preface** (1:1-3); **The Seven Letters** (1:4-3:22); **Visions Introducing the Prophecy** (4:1-5:14); **The Seven Seals** (6:1-8:1); **The Seven Trumpets** (8:2-13:18); **Visions of the Worshipers of the Lamb** (14:1-20); **The Seven Bowls** (15:1-18:24); **Further Visions of Worship** (19:1-10); **Visions of the Lamb's Judgment** (19:11-20:15); **Visions of the New Order** (21:1-22:5); **Concluding Exhortations** (22:6-21)<sup>1</sup>

**Theological Summary:** The Book of Revelation, perhaps more than any other text in the Apostolic Scriptures, is one of the most confusing, as well as controversial, for Bible readers to digest. Also commonly known as the Apocalypse, because of its Greek title *Apokalupsis Iēsou Christou* (Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; 1:1), various questions and puzzles are presented. There are a wide variety of opinions concerning how the Book of Revelation should be approached and interpreted, and what it communicated to those in ancient times, as well as those living in modern times. As its third verse astutely informs each of us, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" (1:3). How "near" the accomplishment of the prophecy has been has certainly been a vigorously debated issue in the history of Revelation's interpretation.

The author of Revelation identifies himself in the text as being someone named "John" (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Church Fathers from the Second and Third Centuries, including Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement and Origin of Alexandria, and Irenaeus, believed that the author of Revelation was the Apostle John.<sup>2</sup> "So strong is this evidence that it is difficult to believe that they all made a mistake in confusing the John in the Apocalypse with John the apostle" (Guthrie),<sup>3</sup> as though another John were shown the Revelation by the Messiah. The following is a selection of key quotations from early Christian leaders to keep in mind about the composition of the Book of Revelation:

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 980-985.

<sup>2</sup> J.W. Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:60; Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 930-931; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," in *ABD*, 5:702; Carson and Moo, pp 700-701.

<sup>3</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 933.

[T]here was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell [Revelation 20:4-5] a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 81).<sup>4</sup>

In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times... (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.26.1; cf. 50.30.3).<sup>5</sup>

Now the Apostle John, in the Apocalypse, describes a sword which proceeded from the mouth of God as "a doubly sharp, two-edged one" [Revelation 1:16] (Tertullian *Against Marcion* 3.14.24).<sup>6</sup>

While a wide number of conservatives today believe in genuine Johannine authorship of the Book of Revelation,<sup>7</sup> some wonder about it, and liberals tend to doubt that the author of Revelation was John the son of Zebedee. Alternative authors for the Book of Revelation include a possible John the Elder/Presbyter,<sup>8</sup> some kind of pseudepigraphal writer<sup>9</sup> or a traveling prophet,<sup>10</sup> perhaps named John.<sup>11</sup> It is at least assumed, though, "Since the name John [*Yochanan*, יְחִיָּא or *Iōannēs*, Ἰωάννης] was exclusively a Jewish name until it came to be used by Christians beginning in the 2nd century, the Jewish origin of the author is certain" (Aune, *EDB*).<sup>12</sup> While it is not impossible that a John the Elder/Presbyter could have been the author, given his possible presence in Asia Minor (cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.6), it has been contested by conservatives on various grounds.<sup>13</sup>

There are two main views one will encounter for the dating of the composition of the Book of Revelation. Some date Revelation being written from around 54-68 C.E., during the reign of Nero Caesar. Others date Revelation being written in the reign of Domitian Caesar, from around 81-96 C.E.<sup>14</sup> The latter view would follow Irenaeus' assessment that Revelation was composed "towards the end of Domitian's reign" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3; cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.18-20; 5.8.6).<sup>15</sup> The dating of Revelation's composition is often influenced by one's eschatological position of either preterism or futurism, meaning whether the events of Revelation occurred in the late First and early Second Centuries C.E., or to a wide

<sup>4</sup> BibleWorks 8.0: Schaff, Early Church Fathers.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 932-938; Carson and Moo, pp 702-705.

<sup>8</sup> Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:60; Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," in *ABD*, 5:702.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. E. Shüssler Fiorenza, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDBSup*, 745.

<sup>10</sup> Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," in *ABD*, 7:702-703.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 1033.

<sup>12</sup> David E. Aune, "Revelation, Book of," in *EDB*, 1125.

<sup>13</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 945-946.

<sup>14</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 948-952; Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 1028; Carson and Moo, pp 711-712.

<sup>15</sup> BibleWorks 8.0: Schaff, Early Church Fathers.

degree remain to be fulfilled sometime in the future. Liberals, who tend to adhere to forms of preterism, often lean toward the early date.<sup>16</sup> Preterists largely ask the question, "Was Nero the antichrist of Revelation?" However, it would be too much to starkly divide conservatives and liberals among the futuristic and preterist camps, as some of the latter do lean toward a late First Century date for Revelation.<sup>17</sup> One newer proposal, seen among some liberals, is that the text was written over a long period within the First Century.<sup>18</sup> Conservatives who adhere to a late First Century composition of the Book of Revelation, generally dating around 90 C.E., follow the traditions of Second and Third Century Christianity.

The actual language and grammar of Revelation are very intriguing to scholars. It is widely recognized by theologians that there are many difficult to approach Hebraisms or Aramaisms in the text,<sup>19</sup> as the native language of the author was not Greek. A variety of perspectives are offered by interpreters. "[O]f no other NT writer perhaps may it be so truly said that he 'thinks in Aramaic and writes in Greek'" (*IDB*).<sup>20</sup> Black points out, "the grammar of Revelation...reflects the work of a Semitic-speaking person who is just learning Greek."<sup>21</sup> Why this is the case has been a matter of great academic discussion. Ladd indicates, "Undoubtedly the book reflects Semitic influences, but some of its solecisms appear to be deliberate, and possibly the writer's emotional state accounts for others" (*ISBE*).<sup>22</sup> To this, Guthrie observes how "the Greek of the Apocalypse is not simply an inaccurate form of Greek such as a learner writes before he has mastered the laws of the language, but a mixture of correct and incorrect forms which appear to be due to choice, not to accident, carelessness or ignorance."<sup>23</sup> While the Greek style of the Book of Revelation is not high, some of the forms one may encounter might be deliberate due to the genre of the text, and deliberate connections intended to be made to the Prophets of the Tanach. Gundry offers the appropriate summary,

"It is true that from a grammatical and literary standpoint the Greek style of Revelation is inferior to that of the gospel and epistles [of John]. But in part the 'bad grammar' may be deliberate, for purposes of emphasis and allusion to Old Testament passages in Hebraic style, rather than due to ignorance or blundering. In part the 'bad grammar' may also stem from an ecstatic state of mind, due to John's having received prophecies in the form of visions. Or writing as a prisoner on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, he did not have the advantage of an amanuensis to smooth out his rough style, as he probably did have for his gospel and epistles."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> G.E. Ladd, "Revelation, Book of," in *ISBE*, 4:172; G.R. Beasley-Murray, "The Revelation," in *NBCR*, 1279.

<sup>17</sup> Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:60, 4:61; Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," in *ABD*, 5:700-701; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Revelation," in *ECB*, pp 1535-1536.

<sup>18</sup> Aune, "Revelation, Book of," in *EDB*, 1125.

<sup>19</sup> Merrill C. Tenney, "Revelation, Book of the," in *NIDB*, 860; Beasley-Murray, "Revelation, Book of," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 1032; Aune, "Revelation, Book of," in *EDB*, 1125.

<sup>20</sup> Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:59.

<sup>21</sup> David Alan Black, *It's Still Greek to Me* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 150.

<sup>22</sup> Ladd, "Revelation, Book of," in *ISBE*, 2:172.

<sup>23</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 939.

<sup>24</sup> Gundry, "Revelation: Jesus is Coming!" in *A Survey of the New Testament*, 458.

The author of Revelation identifies his location as being the island of Patmos: “John...was on the island called Patmos” (1:9). Patmos was an island approximately 15 miles west of Ephesus.<sup>25</sup> The initial audience of the Book of Revelation is clearly identified in the first three chapters, as it was composed for seven congregations in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These were all Greek-speaking congregations. Those who deny genuine Johannine authorship of the text tend to place the composition of the Book of Revelation somewhere in Asia Minor.<sup>26</sup>

While some Messianics would like to believe that Revelation was originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, no extant, authenticated text has surfaced to substantiate such wishes. Theologian C.C. Torrey advocated in the early Twentieth Century that Revelation was originally written in Aramaic, but many of his claims have been dismissed by both liberals and conservatives per no available manuscript to substantiate his theory. In fact, “The book of Revelation was definitively rejected by the Eastern Syrian Church. It was not included in the early Syriac translation of the NT, the Peshitta” (*ABD*).<sup>27</sup> That the Book of Revelation was a Greek composition, with definitely detectable Hebraic or Aramaic style, to clue in the reader to concepts seen in the Tanach, is likely the best approach for one to take. The “bad grammar” of Revelation could have been deliberately overlooked by those who originally received the text, and not corrected by them, because of the strong apocalyptic nature of the work—and perhaps even more so the warning, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book” (22:18).

The Book of Revelation is divided into two principal parts.<sup>28</sup> Chs. 1-3 of Revelation include letters from Yeshua the Messiah directed to specific assemblies that existed in ancient times.<sup>29</sup> This part of Revelation is primarily directed to a late First Century-early Second Century audience. The thrust of the text is an unveiling by Yeshua to encourage these Believers through their persecution, and that they will be vindicated by His eventual return. From chs. 4-22, we see the presentation of some significant imagery and depictions of good clashing with evil, leading to the ultimate defeat of evil, the judgment upon all unrepentant sinners, and the inauguration of the New Creation. How this is to all take place in history, or whether much of this has already taken place in history, has been discussed and debated by many voices throughout Christian religious history. The overarching theme of the Book of Revelation, no matter what interpretational vantage point is chosen, is “the mind and purpose of God as seen in redemptive history” (*IDB*).<sup>30</sup> The Book of Revelation is to ultimately have a message of hope for those in distress, as the Lord will right the wrongs of this fallen Earth.

<sup>25</sup> Ladd, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ISBE*, 4:171.

<sup>26</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ABD*, 5:701.

<sup>27</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ABD*, 5:695; cf. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 932.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Yarbro Collins, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ABD*, 5:698-699.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Bowman, “Revelation, Book of,” in *IDB*, 4:59; Beasley-Murray, “Revelation, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 1026-1027.

<sup>30</sup> Bowman, “Revelation, Book of,” in *IDB*, 4:58.

The language of Revelation is apocalyptic, and much of its terminology is symbolic.<sup>31</sup> Generally speaking, there are four distinct schools of interpretation relating to the Book of Revelation:<sup>32</sup>

1. **Preterists** hold to the view that Revelation was written in the mid-First Century, during the reign of Nero Caesar, and that most of the events prophesied in Revelation, as well as in passages like Matthew 24, were largely fulfilled by the early Second Century. Preterists generally think that Nero was the antichrist of the Book of Revelation, and largely make up a liberal segment of Christian eschatology.
2. **Historicists** hold to the view that Revelation speaks to the many centuries of Christianity, and should be interpreted in light of the history of the Church. Historical events in Christian history are represented by the imagery of Revelation. Many of the early Reformers were historicists, as are some Roman Catholic theologians today.
3. **Futurists** hold to the view that Revelation was written in the late First Century, and although it had a message for the early Believers (chs. 1-3), it largely speaks to events to occur in the distant future (chs. 4-18), and believe in a literal thousand-year reign of Yeshua on Planet Earth. The majority of the early Church Fathers were futurists, as are many evangelical Christians today, and most people in the Messianic movement. Futurists may **all** be described as being **pre-millennialists**, believing that the Messiah returns before His thousand-year reign. There are distinct viewpoints within the pre-millennial camp, however, notably the “rapture debate” between pre- and post-tribulationists.
4. **Idealists** are those who widely do not take sides in the actual debate over what Revelation means, but simply believe that it speaks of the Messiah’s final battle over Satan, sin, and evil in the world. Some Roman Catholic theologians are idealists.<sup>33</sup>

It is notable that there are futurists who adhere to some of the elements of the other three groups, as some concede that a wider portion of Revelation may have been more applicable for the late First-early Second Century Believers than others. Likewise, there are problems with futurists who focus so much on the different symbols of Revelation, trying to attach them to modern political entities or institutions, that it can be forgotten that Revelation’s words are rooted within the First Century struggles of the early Believers in the Roman Empire: “John pictures [the] eschatological climax against the backdrop of events in his own day” (Carson and Moo; cf. 1 John 2:18),<sup>34</sup> and there may very well be important

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Beasley-Murray, “Revelation, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, pp 1034-1035.

<sup>32</sup> Bowman, “Revelation, Book of,” in *IDB*, 4:61; Ladd, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ISBE*, 4:173-174; Yarbro Collins, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ABD*, 4:706-707; Carson and Moo, pp 719-721.

<sup>33</sup> For a further discussion, consult C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

<sup>34</sup> Carson and Moo, 720.

insights lost from overlooking this. In stark contrast to this, “Liberal scholars largely endorse the ‘preterist’ view and repudiate the predictive elements of the book” (Beasley-Murray, *NBCR*).<sup>35</sup> In general terms, all interpreters of the Book of Revelation have been interested in comparing and contrasting the condition of the John who was shown things to come by the Messiah, and previous servants and prophets of God in the Tanach or Old Testament who were given visions.<sup>36</sup> All should be agreed that the arrival of God’s Kingdom, and the final defeat of evil, are positive and worthwhile spiritual themes to consider.<sup>37</sup>

It is very easy to realize the fact that the Book of Revelation is the only text in the Apostolic Scriptures that is “exclusively prophetic in character” (Tenney, *NIDB*).<sup>38</sup> No reader can deny the deep, ancient Jewish symbolism encountered in the Book of Revelation,<sup>39</sup> as seen in ancient literature like the Dead Sea Scrolls or Pseudepigrapha.<sup>40</sup> More important to Revelation’s ancient background in the First Century, though, would be its significant reliance upon Tanach texts like Ezekiel, Daniel, or Zechariah.<sup>41</sup> “[I]t is recognized by virtually all scholars that [this] work reflects a mind soaked in the OT, and [its] language is dominated by it” (Beasley-Murray).<sup>42</sup> It can be easily observed that if one’s approach to the Prophets of the Tanach is not strong, then it is quite easy to overlook important themes of the Book of Revelation. Yet at the same time, Carson and Moo offer the worthwhile thought, “The complicated character of Revelation therefore suggests that we should not place it neatly into one genre category. Elements of prophecy, apocalypse, and letter are combined in a way that has no close parallel in other literature.”<sup>43</sup> With this, it cannot go unnoticed that not all are agreed as to whether or not the prophecies delivered in Revelation occur in a strict sequential order, or if some of the scenes overlap and/or occur somewhat simultaneously to some degree. **The Book of Revelation definitely does sit in a class by itself.**

“The Book of Revelation is acknowledged to be a closed book by the majority of modern readers. This is largely due to the unfamiliarity of the prophetic books of the OT, [and] the almost total ignorance of Jewish apocalyptic writings and the historical setting of the book which determines its contents” (Beasley-Murray).<sup>44</sup> The Book of Revelation was debated in the early centuries of the emerging Christian Church, and in later history some of the Protestant Reformers even questioned its place in the canon. “Erasmus, Luther, and Zwingli questioned the Johannine authorship because it teaches a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ” (Beasley-Murray, *NBCR*).<sup>45</sup> In some past Christian exegesis, it cannot be avoided that many have struggled over 20:1-6 and its view that a thousand-year reign of the Messiah will occur. It has been considered “abhorrent because of its alleged Jewish roots and materialism”

<sup>35</sup> Beasley-Murray, in *NBCR*, 1279.

<sup>36</sup> Ladd, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ISBE*, 4:172-173.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 4:174.

<sup>38</sup> Tenney, “Revelation, Book of the,” in *NIDB*, 859.

<sup>39</sup> Yarbro Collins, “Revelation, Book of,” in *ABD*, 5:704.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 5:703-704.

<sup>41</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, pp 965-966.

<sup>42</sup> Beasley-Murray, “Revelation, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 1026.

<sup>43</sup> Carson and Moo, pp 715-716.

<sup>44</sup> Beasley-Murray, “Revelation, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Developments*, 1025.

<sup>45</sup> Beasley-Murray, in *NBCR*, 925.

(Carson and Moo),<sup>46</sup> but with a more futuristic view of the Book of Revelation revived in the Twentieth Century, such a negative view of a literal Millennial Kingdom is not at all held by a wide number of contemporary evangelical Christians. That the Book of Revelation features elements of a high Christology, presenting Yeshua the Messiah as Divine, also cannot be overlooked (1:8,<sup>47</sup> 12-20;<sup>48</sup> 22:13<sup>49</sup>). Because the Book of Revelation is such a confusing text for many, and that there is such a diversity of views and opinions, quite a few Christians today hold to the sentiment that they will just finally deal with the Book of Revelation when the end-times are upon us.

Most in today's broad Messianic movement are futurists of some sort. As can be expected, specific interpretations of sections of the Book of Revelation vary. Many Messianic approaches to and interpretations of sections of Revelation are essential carbon-copies of dispensational, pre-tribulational views concerning "the rapture of the Church." Many other interpretations of Revelation are post-tribulational in nature, and either align with well known viewpoints seen in non-dispensational sectors of evangelical Christianity, or may present their own levels of uniqueness.

Contemporary Messianic discussions regarding the Book of Revelation include debates over what the "churches" represent; whether or not "Babylon" exclusively represents Rome and Roman Catholicism, and the proper attitude we should have regarding it; and debate over what "666" really means. It cannot go unavowed that "Most of the tyrants of history, from Nero to Kaiser Wilhelm and Hitler, as well as the pope of the Roman Catholic Church, have at one time and another been said both to answer to the description of the beast and to furnish the numerical values attaching to their names" (*IDB*).<sup>50</sup> There are some Messianic prophecy teachers who have floated out names of world leaders' names equaling 666 in Hebrew gematria, similar to what many Christian prophecy teachers have done. Messianics surely debate over who the 144,000 sealed witnesses are (7:4-8), and why among the tribes of Israel the tribe of Dan is missing.<sup>51</sup>

While there are definitely discussions over different pre-millennial eschatological scenarios regarding the Book of Revelation among Messianics, debates over what is literal, symbolic, representative, or figurative are likely on the theological horizon as well. While this can involve how different apocalyptic figures and players are to be manifested in future history, one area where this is most likely to receive a significant amount of attention is in relation to the Eternal State.<sup>52</sup> In the past half-century in Protestant Christian theological studies, debates over the final destiny of the unrepentant condemned has significantly waged on,<sup>53</sup> and this is soon coming to the Messianic movement. How literal or figurative is the Lake of Fire? Are the condemned to be subject to a burning inferno of being "fried" for eternity in

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<sup>46</sup> Carson and Moo, 701.

<sup>47</sup> Isaiah 41:4.

<sup>48</sup> Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12.

<sup>49</sup> Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12.

<sup>50</sup> Bowman, "Revelation, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:67.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Ladd, "Revelation, Book of," in *ISBE*, 4:175.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 4:176.

<sup>53</sup> Consult William V. Crockett, ed., *Four Views on Hell* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

fire and hazardous chemicals (the literal view of Hell)? Are the condemned to be snuffed out of existence (annihilationism)? Is the Lake of Fire just a literary description, along with diverse others, that depicts an eternal banishment from the presence of God, and where the unrighteous still must exist for all eternity (the metaphorical view of Hell)?<sup>54</sup> It cannot go unnoticed that the Book of Revelation, while closing with the redeemed in the holy city of New Jerusalem (21:10-22:5), also closes with the unrighteous condemned separated out from the Holy City (22:15).

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## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON REVELATION:

**1. Have you ever considered the ancient historical context of the letters John relays to the seven assemblies in Revelation chs. 1-3? How do you think a First Century Believer might have interpreted Revelation?**

**2. Having just surveyed Revelation, and comparing it to what you know from the Prophets in the Tanach, do you think its prophecies are detailed in a strict sequential order? Why or why not?**

**3. Of all the prophecies or oracles witnessed in Revelation, which intrigue you the most? What do you admittedly need help with?**

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<sup>54</sup> Consult the author's article "Why Hell Must Be Eternal" for a Messianic evaluation of the subject matter, which is favorable to the metaphorical view of eternal punishment.

**4. Have you at all considered the different views of eternal punishment present in contemporary theological studies? How might this relate to one's approach to the different images and symbols witnessed in the Book of Revelation?**

**5. How do you think the Messianic movement today can have an appropriate view of Revelation, without falling prey to unwarranted prophetic speculation? How can the text be relevant for us—beyond examining it for the end-times?**

## REFLECTION ON REVELATION'S PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

*Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading the Book of Revelation:*