

## OBSERVATIONS ON REVELATION

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### I. Literary Form

- A. Large number of doxological passages: **1:5-6; 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12, 13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 19:1-2, 5, 6-8**
- B. Simple vocabulary
- C. Numerological interest

1. Threes: three measures of barley (**6:6**); three woes of three angels (**8:13**) = three plagues? (**9:18**); three unclean spirits (**16:13**); three gates on each side of the new Jerusalem (**21:13**); a third of the trees, sea, creatures, ships (**8:8-9**); a third of the rivers (**8:10-11**); a third of the sun, moon, stars not shining for a third of the day (**8:12**); a third of men (**9:15**); a third of the stars (**12:4**)

2. Sevens: seven spirits of the churches (**1:4**); seven churches (**1:11**) = seven lampstands (**1:12**); seven stars (**1:16**); seven horns and seven eyes (**5:6**); seven thunders (**10:3**); seven thousand people killed by an earthquake (**11:13**); seven heads of the red dragon (**12:3**); seven heads of the sea beast (**13:1**); seven heads of the scarlet beast (**17:3**)

3. Tens: ten days of tribulation for Smyrna (**2:10**); ten horns on the red dragon (**12:3**); ten horns on the sea beast (**13:1**); ten horns on the scarlet beast (**17:3**); tenth part of the city fell (**11:13**)

4. Twelves: twelve thousand sealed from twelve tribes (**7:5-8**); twelve stars on the crown of the woman arrayed with the sun (**12:1**); twelve gates in the new Jerusalem (**21:12, 21**) = twelve pearls, one for each gate (**21:21**); twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem = the twelve apostles (**21:14, 19-20**); twelve thousand furlongs as the cubical size of Jerusalem (**21:16**); twelve kinds of fruit on the tree of life (**22:2**)

- D. Prevalence of Old Testament Imagery
- E. Highly Structured (like Dante's *Inferno*)

#### 1. Cyclical pattern

a. Heaven-earth pattern	<u>heaven</u>	<u>earth</u>
		<b>1:1-3:22</b>
	<b>4:1-5:14</b>	<b>6:1-7:17</b>
	<b>8:1-4</b>	<b>8:5-11:14</b>
	<b>11:15-12:8</b>	<b>12:8-14:1</b>
	<b>14:2-5</b>	<b>14:6-20</b>
	<b>15:1-16:1</b>	<b>16:2-18:24</b>
	<b>19:1-16</b>	<b>19:17-20:10</b>
	<b>20:11-15</b>	

b. Positive-negative-positive pattern

- (1) Letters to the churches first have a compliment, then an accusation followed by a promise.
- (2) Blessing of the readers at the beginning leads to a warning near the end followed by a positive conclusion.

c. Similarities between chapters **11**, **12**, **13**, and **17**

2. Series of sevens

first seal	<b>6:1-2</b>	white horse
second seal	<b>6:3-4</b>	red horse
third seal	<b>6:5-6</b>	black horse
fourth seal	<b>6:7-8</b>	pale horse
fifth seal	<b>6:9-11</b>	
sixth seal	<b>6:12-7:17</b>	
seventh seal	<b>8:1-17:3</b>	

**(Introduction to the seven trumpets: 8:1-6)**

first trumpet	<b>8:7</b>
second trumpet	<b>8:8-9</b>
third trumpet	<b>8:10-11</b>
fourth trumpet	<b>8:12</b>

**(Introduction to the three woes: 8:13-11:15)**

fifth trumpet	<b>9:1-12</b>	first woe
sixth trumpet	<b>9:13-11:14</b>	second woe
seventh trumpet	<b>11:15</b>	third woe

**(Interlude: 11:15-15:4: praise (11:15-19), tribulation (12:1-13:18), harvest (14:1-15:4)**

**(Introduction to the seven bowls: 15:5-16:1)**

first bowl	<b>16:2</b>
second bowl	<b>16:3</b>
third bowl	<b>16:4-7</b>
fourth bowl	<b>16:8-9</b>
fifth bowl	<b>16:10-11</b>
sixth bowl	<b>16:12-16</b>
seventh bowl	<b>16:17—(21:9 hence continues)</b>

3. Set form of individual letters to the seven churches

- a. “*To the church of . . . write.*”
- b. “*These things says . . .*” plus a description of Christ taken from chapter 1

- c. “*I know your works*” plus description, compliment, warning, and promise
- d. “*To him that overcomes I will give . . .*”
- e. “*He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*”

#### F. Unity

##### 1. Beginning and end

- a. **1:1-3:22** = **22:6-21**
- b. **1:5-8, 13-18** = **22:16b** description of Christ
- c. **1:11, 19-3:22** = **22:16a** informing of the church
- d. **1:3** = **22:18-20** address to the reader (blessing and warning)
- e. **1:17** = **22:8** (note **19:10**) fell down at feet of Christ/angel
- f. **1:1** = **22:6** imminence of the events (only “shortly” passages)
- g. **1:3** = **22:10** (only “at hand” passages)
- h. **3:11** = **22:7, 12, 20** (only “I come quickly” passages)
- i. **1:1, 4, 9** = **22:8** mention of John (**21:2** is the only other place)

##### 2. Descriptive terminology in chapter 1 reappears throughout the rest of the book.

#### G. Great amount of vivid description

- 1. Jesus (**1:13-16**)
- 2. Throne room (**4:1-5:14**)
- 3. New Jerusalem (**21:1-22:5**)
- 4. Detailed picture of persons, beasts, and so on.
- 5. Color (The visions are in color.)
  - a. White **1:14; 2:17; 3:4, 5, 19; 4:4; 6:2, 11; 7:9, 13, 14; 14:14; 9:11, 14; 20:11**
  - b. Golden **1:12, 13, 20; 2:1; 5:8; 9:3<sup>2</sup>; 9:13; 14:14; 15:6, 7; 17:4; 21:15**
  - c. Red **6:4; 12:3**
  - d. Black **6:5, 12**
- 6. grammatical peculiarities (See separate study.)

## II. Message

### A. Emphasis on the truth of things spoken

**3:7, 14; 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 9, 11; 21:5; 22:6**

B. John's personal witness of the events to come

"saw/see": εἶδον in 1:2, 12, 17, 19, 20<sup>2</sup>; 4:4; 5:1, 2; 6:1, 2, 9; 7:1, 2; 8:2; 9:1, 17; 10:1, 5; 13:1, 2; 14:6; 15:1; 16:13; 17:3, 6<sup>2</sup>, 8, 12, 15, 18; 18:1; 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11, 12; 21:1, 2, 22; βλέπω in 1:11, 12; 6:1; 22:8<sup>2</sup>; and εἶδω in 4:1; 6:8; 14:1, 14; 15:5; cp. John 1:1, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8 (total of 58 times)

C. Emphasis on imminence

The consummation of history is viewed as near, and the future history of the world as short: "shortly" in 1:1; 22:6; "quickly" in 3:11; 11:14; 22:7, 12, 20; "short time" in 12:2; 17:10; "near" (ἐγγύς, *engys*) in 1:3; 22:10; and "little time" (*χρόνον μικρόν, chronon mikron*) in 6:11.

D. Preoccupation with the future

Even chapters 2-3 are slanted toward the judgment (1:19; 4:1; 9:13. etc.)

- E. Universal scope in time and territory
- F. Christological emphasis: eternality (1:4), deity (1:7 + 19:10; 22:6), power, and so on.
- G. Emphasis on Christian maturity
- H. Ultimate, definite, full, and final triumph of God's good over earth's evil

Revelation gives three answers to the atheistic antilogism on God's omnipotence, God's holiness, and the fact of evil. The Christian God does not exist, so the argument proceeds, because one of the three elements above must be denied to have a consistent system. But Revelation reminds Christians that God was not the origin of evil. Satan by his free will was the ultimate source of it. God is responsible, however, and takes care of it in the following way: Christ provides the conquest of evil, and in the end evil will be overcome. Until then God righteously gives opportunity for evil people to take advantage of the salvation provided by his omnipotence through the slain and resurrected Lamb.