

NT Genres (Part 5)

Eclectic Literature Genre:

Is the Text the Book of Revelation?

GENRES OF REVELATION

1. Letter

- a. **Revelation 1:4–5**—“John: To the seven churches in Asia. Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.”
- b. **Revelation 22:21**—“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone. Amen.”

2. Prophecy

- a. **Revelation 1:3**—“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near.”
- b. **Revelation 22:6–7**— Then he said to me, “These words are faithful and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.” 7 “Look, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

3. Apocalyptic

- a. **Revelation 1:1–2**— “The revelation [apocalypsis] of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw.”
- b. “[A] supernatural unveiling of what is about to take place. A divine disclosure usually via angels to some prominent person in which God promises to intervene in human history, to destroy evil and bring in his kingdom” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Unpublished Introduction to New Testament, Part II Notebook: Acts, Epistolary Literature, and the Revelation*, 89).

How to Study the Bible

Lesson 29

APPROACHES TO REVELATION

1. **Preterist** – According to preterists, while portions of Revelation may have been forward-looking when initially written, almost all events described in Revelation already have taken place, most in the first century or soon thereafter. Preterists tie much of the cataclysmic symbols in Revelation to the destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
2. **Historicist** – Historicists approach Revelation as a blueprint of the entire span of church history. Thus, portions of the book describe the past, while others look the future.
3. **Idealist** – Idealists see Revelation as describing the spiritual realities that reoccur throughout history until the final consummation. It is erroneous, then, to seek particular rulers or events that uniquely correspond with the beasts or images and events in Revelation. Many events throughout history correspond to these same symbols.
4. **Futurist** – The futurist view sees the majority of Revelation as applying to future end-time events that occur directly prior to Christ's return.
5. **Eclectic** – This approach seeks to combine the strengths of several of the above approaches.

HOW TO READ REVELATION WELL

1. **Old Testament apocalyptic passages provide the most helpful background to understanding Revelation.**
2. **The book of Revelation should be read from the perspective of the original audience.**
3. **In accord with the standards of apocalyptic literature, the symbolic images in Revelation must not be taken literally.**
4. **Revelation is not intended to be read chronologically.**
5. **We should not adopt any interpretation that is out of harmony with the rest of the Bible.**

How to Study the Bible

Lesson 29

Lesson 29 Homework:

In this class, we will encourage growth in this discipline by committing ourselves to reading thoughtfully and prayerfully some assigned Scripture passage. At the beginning of each class, we will share our personal reflections on the passage for that week, particularly focusing on how our lives and ministries have been (or need to be) challenged by the truths we have thought so much about.

As the class progresses, each week's homework assignment will seek to apply the previous lesson content to the passage at hand. This will allow us to reinforce what we learn as we go, so that we may have our "powers of discernment trained by constant practice" (Heb 5:14, ESV).

Our assignment this week is to meditate on Revelation 7:9–17. As you read this passage, ask yourself the following questions:

Context

Are there any clues about the historical circumstances the literature is addressing?

Are other bits of the Bible mentioned or hinted at in the passage? What part do these 'memories' play in the text?

Observation

What images are used in the passage? What effect do they have?

What emotions does the passage arouse (e.g. fear, expectation, awe)?

How does the passage seek to reveal what God is like? Where in this passage might we find hope for men and women?

Is there a crisis in the passage? What is the tension/conflict about, and how does it relate to readers?

Meaning

Are there specific instructions/commands given to the reader? Does this passage mention any consequences for not following God's commands?

Does the text have a sense of expectation about something happening in the future? What is to be expected and when? How should this motivate action in the present?

Does the passage point to Jesus? Is the gospel foreshadowed or looked back upon in some way?

Application

How does this passage challenge (or confirm) your understanding?

How does this passage lead you to trust God and his promises in Jesus?

How does this passage call on you to change the way you live?

Come prepared to discuss your reflections on this passage at the beginning of next class.