

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION: FULL OF EXPECTATION

## **I**ntrouction

The last book of the biblical canon is both fascinating and puzzling. It uncovers as much as it conceals. Is there any clue that could help us to interpret the book of Revelation? This article intends firstly to explore the title as a textual key, suggesting a redemptive-historical perspective as the most appropriate approach to the book of Revelation as a whole, and secondly to grasp by means of this perspective the key motif of the future vindication of the Christian martyrs according to Revelation 20.

Many interesting introductory points will be left aside, such as the authorship, character and exact dating of the book of Revelation, because this article focuses particularly on several topics which are useful as a contribution to biblical theology. For our purpose, it is sufficient to observe that the author, who received a revelation during his exile at Patmos “because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1: 9-10),<sup>1</sup> calls himself ‘John’ twice, both at the beginning and the end of his book (1: 9; 22: 8); that Revelation is a prophetic-apocalyptic book; and that the circumstances of the seven churches in Asia, to which the book originally was addressed, reflects the situation of the second half of the first century AD.

## **1 Why, how, and when?**

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw...” (Rev. 1: 1-2). Here we have the title of the last book of the biblical canon. What does this title tell us about the why, how, and when of the revelation which came to John on the island of Patmos?

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<sup>1</sup> In itself it is also possible that the Greek preposition διὰ with accusative indicates not the cause but the purpose of John’s stay at Patmos. In that case, he would have gone to the island in order to receive the revelation or to proclaim the gospel. Yet the phrase “Because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” occurs twice later on in a martyr’s context (Rev. 6: 9; 20: 4). And it was not unusual that the Roman authorities deported annoying persons to an island (‘relegatio ad insulam’). Moreover, there is also a strong exile-tradition around John at Patmos, referring to the stay of the prophet Ezekiel in the land of Babylon (Ian K. Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary. Ezekiel’s Influence on the Book of Revelation.” In *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*, eds. Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007], 147-164). Therefore, the traditional interpretation of banishment still seems preferable.

### 1.1 The alleged chain of revelation

A popular approach to understanding the title of the book of Revelation, one which is followed in many commentaries, is that of a chain of revelation. This approach takes the view that the knowledge of divine revelation has been passed on successively as follows: God > Jesus Christ > his angel > his servant John > his servants. Smalley comments: “The writer himself is a decisive link in the chain of revelation, mediating God’s word through Christ and his angel to the Church”.<sup>2</sup> In the Greek, however, the two main verbs in the first sentence are grammatically in apposition: both of them have God as their subject (ἔδωκεν ... ὁ θεὸς ... καὶ ἐσήμασεν). There is no sign of an implicit change of subject within the sentence, as the usual approach is forced to assume.

This grammatical point is consistent with the theocentric perspective of the whole book. The commonly accepted interpretation requires that halfway through the sentence, the subject changes; the angel, then, is understood to be a servant of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> In the parallel text at the end of Revelation, however, we read that God has “sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place” (22: 6)<sup>4</sup>. The phrases ‘his servant John’ and ‘his servants’, also, must be understood with reference to God, for throughout Revelation we read about the ‘servants of God’ (7: 3; 19: 2,5; 22: 3,6; compare σὺνδουλοι, 6: 11). It is clear enough that ‘his servants’ are not servants of John. God is the one who is served in faith and obedience by John as well as his readers. ‘He’ (1: 1b) must refer to God himself. God, through his angel, has made this revelation known to John.

Liettaert Peerbolte, correctly beginning with God as the subject, identifies ‘the angel’ in this presumed chain with Jesus Christ. It is God who, by way of his divine messenger Jesus Christ, allows John to see something of the secret of how things really are.<sup>5</sup> The chain of revelation is understood, then, to have one chain less.

In this construction, however, the word ‘angel’ is simply understood as ‘messenger’, while in no other book of Scripture there are so many angels as in Revelation. It seems most likely simply to think of a real angel of God, distinct from Jesus Christ. After all, elsewhere in this book, angels are only fellow-servants of John (19: 10; 22: 9), while the exalted Christ, the Lamb of God, is in every way superior. Here, the angel is probably a so-called interpreting angel (*angelus interpretis*) such as those who play a mediating role in the visions of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah, an

<sup>2</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John. A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 30.

<sup>3</sup> David Aune, *Revelation 1-5* (Word Biblical Commentary; Dallas: Word, 1997), 15: “The subject of the verb... is ambiguous; it could be either God or Jesus Christ, though the latter is logically more probable since the revelation was transmitted by God to Jesus Christ, and it must be Jesus Christ who then further communicates the revelation”.

<sup>4</sup> This does not exclude, of course, that Jesus could send an angel (Rev. 22: 16). Still, Jesus himself usually spoke of ‘angels of God’ or ‘angels from heaven’. Zahn argues that without some kind of prior clarification, not one reader would be able to understand what ‘an angel of Jesus’ might mean (Theodor Zahn, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*. Erste Hälfte Kap. 1-5 mit ausführlicher Einleitung [Kommentar zum Neuen Testament; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924], 146).

<sup>5</sup> Bert Jan Liettaert Peerbolte, “Het boek Openbaring als visionaire brief,” *Schrift* 201 (2002): 96-98. He bases his presumption on 22: 8-9, where John says that he fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing all things to him. The angel, however, refuses divine worship, arguing that he is only a fellow-servant, operating on the same level as John.

angel whose task is to lead the seer by the hand, as it were, through the whole succession of visions.

The notion of a ‘chain of revelation’, therefore, does not seem to be especially helpful as a means to understanding the title of the book of Revelation. Instead, it might be better to envisage God as the great Initiator, and that in two ways: first with regard to the *source* and the *destination* of this revelation; then also in regard to its *mediation* and *proclamation*. The first aspect is that of ‘why’, the second that of ‘how’.

The schematic summary below may help to illustrate this. The overarching thought is that God takes the initiative to unfold the near future. The left-hand column shows that God gave his revelation to Jesus Christ, with the intention of showing God’s servants what must soon take place. The right-hand column shows that this was realised by sending an interpreting angel to John, one of God’s servants, to show him what must soon take place.

The revelation, which God	
gave	by sending
him (Jesus Christ)	his angel
to show	made known
his servants	to his servant John
what must soon take place	

## 1.2 ‘Soon’: four possibilities

The term ‘soon’ (ἐν τάχει: 1: 1) carries in it the urgency of the book of Revelation. A decisive moment has arrived. Everyone must give ear, without delay, to what this book says, for the time is near (ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς: 1: 3; 22: 10)! This word ‘soon’ raises the question how the book of Revelation ought to be interpreted. In broad terms, there have been four different approaches:<sup>6</sup>

1. The *preterist* (belonging to the past) view: Revelation relates exclusively to John’s own time; the book describes, in a prophetic manner, the situation of the Christian Church in the first century AD. This view insists that the visions of John describe events, rulers and forces of evil from the writers’ lifetime.
2. The *historical* view: Revelation relates to the entire Christian era; the book describes the situation of the Christian Church between Christ’s ascension and his return. This view was popular with the Reformers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, enabling them to identify the visionary beasts with the papacy, but is still found among orthodox Christians, who look for other contemporary identifications.

<sup>6</sup> I follow the classic division given by Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957; reprinted 1980). A brief summary of the history of interpretation of the book of Revelation can be found in Gerhard Maier, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes. Kapitel 1-11* (Historisch-Theologische Auslegung; Brunnen: Brockhaus, 2009), 59-76. Although David A. de Silva presents his interesting rhetorical reading as a ‘fifth interpretative key’, this way of reading can only be one of the instruments for approaching the book of Revelation (*Seeing Things John’s Way. The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009)).

3. The *futurist* view: From chapter 4 onwards, at least, Revelation relates exclusively to the end-time; the book describes events which are still to take place and will be fulfilled in the very last days of human history.
4. The *idealist* view: Revelation describes in symbolic terms the struggle between good and evil; the book has no direct relationship with historical events, neither in the past nor in the future. The symbolism of Revelation is to be understood in a general way.

While in our time the first view is the one most commonly taken, the promises of the book of Revelation extend well beyond the first century AD: beyond the horizon of time we see a whole new world order appear, in which the New Jerusalem – heaven on earth – will realise the old ideal of an eschatological ‘city of God’.

The problem of the second view, which builds on Augustine’s conception of the ‘millennium’ in Revelation 20 as period between Christ’s ascension and His return, is that it is often difficult to make a direct connection with historical events. Augustine lived in the first millennium, but every historical period has its own characteristic features.

The third view, popular among all kinds of dispensationalists,<sup>7</sup> fails to do justice to the prophetic significance of Revelation for every age; moreover, it is strongly oriented to Western culture and history.

The fourth view does not account for the moment of recognition the first readers would have had: the seven churches of Asia Minor. In a more general sense, it deprives the book of Revelation of its concrete relevance for all time.

In short, none of these four perspectives does full justice to the significance of this extraordinary book.

### 1.3 A redemptive-historical approach

The command to ‘write’ found in Revelation 1 might serve as the key to unlock the whole book: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later” (1: 19, with a repetition of the command already given in verse 11).<sup>8</sup> The expression ‘what you have seen’ encompasses the entire content of the book of Revelation; it is followed by a two-fold elaboration: ‘what is now’ and ‘what will take place later’.<sup>9</sup> There are two aspects to the whole: John is shown something that throws light on both the present and the future. ‘What is now’ cannot be separated from ‘what will take place later’. Both aspects of the one reality are described.<sup>9</sup> If, in this manner, we do justice to the prophetic-apocalyptic character of

<sup>7</sup> Worked out and defended by W.J. Ouweeneel, *De Openbaring van Jezus Christus. Bijbelstudies over het boek Openbaring* (Vaassen: Medema, 1988), 38-49. In his view, the seven letters in Rev 2 and 3 represent seven successive periods in the history of the church (Ephesus: the apostolic period; Smyrna: the time of the martyrs; Pergamum: the period of the state church; Thyatira: the Middle Ages, with Rome as the world church; Sardis: the time of the Reformation; Philadelphia: the greater revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Laodicea: the apostasy of the major churches from beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

<sup>8</sup> An overview of the different views of 1: 19 as an interpretative key to the whole book of Revelation can be found in G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 152-170.

<sup>9</sup> For the interpretation of 1: 19 see also: H.R. van de Kamp, *Openbaring. Profetie vanaf Patmos* (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament; Kampen: Kok, 2000), 84-86; J. de Vuyst, *De Openbaring van Johannes* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), 27-28).

Revelation, throwing light on both present and future, it becomes possible to bring together elements of truth which are present in all four of the views outlined above. In this way, we arrive at an interpretation that could be called *redemptive-historical*.<sup>10</sup>

Proceeding from the first-century historical situation in which the Christians in Asia Minor lived, John was given an overview, in one glance, of how the church of Jesus Christ will grow and develop; how it is involved in the global conflict between good and evil, a conflict which escalates as the end-time approaches. John's book has become a guide which, in a manner similar to the interpreting angel of the visions, leads Christian readers of all ages through the various facts and events of this world into the Kingdom of God. The courage-inspiring perspective held before them on their way is the victory of the Lamb. Christians, especially in times of trial and oppression, must focus all their hope on him. From the beginning to the end, Revelation tells us, Jesus Christ is the one who testifies to these things (1: 2; 22: 20). Near the end of the book, Christ himself speaks: "I am coming soon", and John responds with a believing Amen. It speaks to every reader and listener, whose response in turn encapsulates their Christian expectation for the future: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (22: 20).

## 2 A thousand years of vindication

Applying what was found in section 1 regarding the questions as to the why, how and when of the book of Revelation, and reading from a redemptive-historical perspective, section 2 of this article explores chapter 20 in particular. Of all of the apostle John's visions on the island of Patmos, the one described in Revelation 20 is among the most difficult to understand. What kind of Christian expectation is pronounced there? Where millenarianism (also known as 'chiliasm', the doctrine of the thousand-year kingdom of peace) draws on the New Testament, it bases itself largely on this chapter. Reformed exegetes, for the most part, follow the interpretation of Augustine. In his view, the millennium began with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, has continued ever since, and will end when Christ returns.

### 2.1 Martyrs in Revelation

I will attempt to approach Revelation 20 from another perspective, one that the book itself holds out to us. For one blood-red thread runs throughout the Book of Revelation: God himself acts on behalf of his innocent martyrs.<sup>11</sup> Martyrs are persons who choose to suffer a violent death rather than renounce their religious principles. The Almighty takes their side, and in the end, will publicly vindicate their cause. By the programmatic reference in his introductory remarks to his own suffering and endurance (1: 9a),<sup>12</sup> John, the exile, had positioned himself as a companion of his fellow believers, sharing their Christian conviction that God will triumph over the forces of evil in this world and will establish his kingdom on earth.

<sup>10</sup> Yarbrough has pointed again to the lasting relevance of this perspective: Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> For an overview, see Jan Willem van Henten, "The Concept of Martyrdom in Revelation." In *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte und Konzepte / The Revelation of John: Contexts and Concepts*, eds. Jörg Frey e.a. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) [forthcoming].

<sup>12</sup> See again footnote 1.

One of those martyrs in the book of Revelation is the otherwise unknown Antipas, who was put to death or murdered in the city of Pergamum. He is described as ‘my faithful witness’ in 2: 13 (literally: ‘my faithful one, my witness’ - ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου). Although the witness vocabulary in Revelation generally speaking probably does not refer to martyrdom, in this case the term μάρτυς is connected with a violent death. The circumstances of Antipas’ assassination are not specified in the text. This one verse remains very vague about the persons who or institutions that were responsible for his death. But Antipas appears to be in the book of Revelation the only Christian who is mentioned by name, apart from John himself.

John hears the martyred witnesses (“the souls of those who had been slain”) cry out for justice, for the avenging of their blood. The posthumous existence of these persons implies that they were vindicated by God, but the divine retribution for their violent death remains outstanding. A voice from heaven assures them that God will provide justice in the future (6: 9-11; compare also 16: 5-6). The woman Babylon personifies a society that will, if necessary, go over dead bodies. She is drunk with “the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth” (18: 24; compare 17: 6). But God will avenge the blood of his servants. He will provide justice, once and for all, for those who have been beheaded, or have met other violent ends “because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God” (20: 4; compare 19: 2). They will be publicly vindicated!

From this perspective, Revelation can be read as a book about Christian martyrs, full of comfort. As Bauckham puts it: “The negative aspect of the final judgment (19:11-21), in which the beast was condemned, requires as its positive counterpart that judgment be given in favour of the martyrs, who must be vindicated and rewarded”.<sup>13</sup> When John recorded his visions, the blood of relatively few martyrs had as yet been shed, at least on a global scale. Still, in this respect, the book of Revelation has a prophetic character. Throughout all of history, it has remained extremely relevant.<sup>14</sup>

## 2.2 The martyrs’ reign and vindication

Actually, Revelation 20 doesn’t really talk about a kingdom as such. It focuses on a thousand-year reign of the martyrs, together with the Messiah. Those who share the privilege of this shared dominion are, as verses 4 and 5 tell us, the martyrs who had been beheaded.<sup>15</sup> In his vision, John sees them come back to life (just as Christ himself “died, and came to life again”, 2: 8b). They had been told to “wait a

<sup>13</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 106-108 [107]. Bauckham rightly observes that the theological point of the millennium is to demonstrate the triumph of the martyrs. However, he thinks that the millennium belongs to the imaginative scheme of John, designed to depict no more than the meaning of judgment.

<sup>14</sup> A persecution of Christians under Domitian is denied by many commentators, but according to recent research both Jewish and Gentile Christians – especially if they were rich – could indeed individually be threatened with confiscation of their property and even with death. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation, 4-27*; Marius Heernstra, *How Rome’s Administration of the Fiscus Judaicus Accelerated the Parting of the Ways* (diss. Groningen 2009), chapter 5 [Revelation and the *fiscus judaicus*].

<sup>15</sup> The verb πελεκίζειν in verse 4, a New Testament *hapax*, denotes execution by beheading with an axe, a form of capital punishment that was regularly practised by the Romans.

little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed” (6: 11).<sup>16</sup>

Chiliasm fleshes out an assumed ‘millennium’ with Old Testament prophecies about a kingdom of peace, prophecies that in reality fit much better with the New Jerusalem of chapters 21 and 22. For in chapter 20, there is no mention of Israel at all.<sup>17</sup> A thousand years, a symbolic expression, points to a relatively long period. And that is in clear contrast to the ten days of oppression we read about in the letter to Smyrna (2: 10b). Unfortunately, this vision does not contain a detailed chronology, so that we are not able to construct for ourselves some kind of calendar. All we can say is that the millennium seems to be a lengthy period of time in heaven, during which the resurrected martyrs will reign together with Jesus Christ. Only after this period, will the general resurrection take place on the day of the final judgment.

This eschatological resurrection of the martyrs – their souls are given a body – appears to mean that they are to be vindicated: they will be given justice (20: 4: *καὶ κριμα ἔδοθη αὐτοῖς*).<sup>18</sup> In verses 5 and 6 this is referred to as ‘the first resurrection’, some kind of resurrection-in-advance, one that precedes the general resurrection of all the dead, which takes place on Judgment Day. At the same time, it also denotes a judgment-in-advance, in which the resurrected martyrs are declared holy. Later in the vision, John sees ‘the rest of the dead’, the ones who died a natural death, who lie buried in the sea or in the earth. Then the books are opened – the book of life also – and everyone will be judged by God (20: 11-15). The threatening prospect of ‘the second death’, the fire of hell, follows this final judgment. For the martyrs, however, there is no such threat (20: 6). Those who, like them, have overcome “will not be hurt at all by the second death”; but the cowardly, the unbelieving, are headed for destruction (2: 11b; 21: 8).<sup>19</sup>

### 2.3 Forever together with the Messiah

All faithful Christians may look forward to reigning forever with the Messiah (5: 10b; 22: 5b; compare also Daniel 7: 21-22); however, only the martyrs may already share in this reign during the thousand years when Satan is bound. Their public vindication makes them the advance guard of all the righteous. These witnesses, whose blood was ruthlessly shed, are the first to enjoy the victory through Jesus Christ.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Because of the double *καὶ* and the repeated article in Greek it is likely that two different groups are considered: *συνδουλοῦν* as fellow Christians, generally, *ἀδελφοί* as specific other martyrs in the future (“their brothers and sisters, who were to be killed as they had been”).

<sup>17</sup> The expectation of an earthly Messianic kingdom has parallels in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, such as 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*. However, the Book of Revelation is unique in that it pays special attention to the martyrs’ resurrection. See Thomas Johann Bauer, *Das tausendjährige Messiasreich der Johannesoffenbarung. Eine literarkritische Studie zu Offb 19,11-21,8* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Compare Daniel 7: 22 in the Septuagint: *καὶ τὴν κρίσιν ἔδωκε τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῦ ὕψιστου*.

<sup>19</sup> Van de Kamp, in his commentary (*Openbaring*, 434-435), also rejects the millenarian point of view, albeit from a different perspective: all believers live on after their deaths. However, death and resurrection are to be understood here in a bodily sense.

<sup>20</sup> For comparable interpretations, see: L. van Hartingsveld, *Openbaring. Een praktische bijbeverklaring* (Tekst & Toelichting; Kampen: Kok, 1984), 101-102 and 122; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (The International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 351-360; N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 472-476;

This thousand-year imprisonment of Satan also proves to be a judgment-in-advance. After a short time of release, he is to be thrown into the lake of fire, and this will bring his acts of deceit to a definitive end (20: 10). When Death and Hades themselves are also thrown into the lake of fire ('the second death'), there will finally be room for the full realization of the promise of God. For then, John sees a new heaven and a new earth.

In Revelation 21 and 22, John describes the features of a new Jerusalem, a city of peace at the centre of the new world. And here we have the Christian expectation for the future, both for martyrs and for every faithful believer. With transgressors at a safe distance, and with the Lord God Almighty together with the Lamb on the throne, all the righteous will flourish. And the Messianic kingdom of peace will have no end!

### Conclusion

The book of Revelation functions as a guide which, in a manner similar to the interpreting angel of the visions, leads Christian readers of all ages through the various facts and events of this world into the Kingdom of God. Their expectation, based on the victory of the Lamb, will be focused on the glorious return of Jesus Christ at the last day of this world. As for the Christian martyrs, they may already share in the rule of the Messiah during the thousand years when Satan is bound. Their vindication makes them the advance guard of all the righteous.

The redemptive-historical approach, developed in this article, is rooted in the actual situation of early Christianity, remains valid through the ages until the return of Jesus Christ, points ahead to the triumph of all Christian martyrs and predicts the victory of good over evil, thanks to the Lamb of God. Read in this way, then, the enigmatic book of Revelation appears to be a book full of expectation.

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to reflect particularly on the questions as to the why, how and when of the last book of the biblical canon. The first part deals with the title, where nobody other than God is indicated as the great initiator of the revelation which came to John on the island of Patmos, and suggests a redemptive-historical perspective as the most appropriate approach to the enigmatic book of Revelation. In the second part, as an example of such an approach, the 'millennium' in chapter 20 is interpreted as a thousand years of vindication of the Christian martyrs. The article concludes that the book of Revelation, read in this redemptive-historical way, appears to be a book full of expectation, both for martyrs and for every faithful believer.

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"It is conceivable that he [the writer] thought of this 'first resurrection' in physical terms, locating the righteous in an embodied heavenly world" (474).

## SAMENVATTING

Dit artikel wil speciaal nadenken over het waarom, hoe en wanneer van het laatste Bijbelboek. In het eerste gedeelte wordt de boektitel behandeld, waar niemand anders dan God zelf wordt aangeduid als de grote initiatiefnemer van de openbaring die Johannes ten deel viel op het eiland Patmos. Er zijn verschillende interpretatievoorstellen gedaan om het raadselachtige boek Openbaring te begrijpen, maar een heilshistorische benadering biedt het meeste perspectief. In het tweede gedeelte wordt, als voorbeeld van zo'n benadering, het 'duizendjarig rijk' uit hoofdstuk 20 geïnterpreteerd als een periode van rechtsherstel voor de christelijke martelaars. De conclusie van het hele artikel is dat het boek Openbaring, op deze heilshistorische manier gelezen, een boek vol verwachting blijkt te zijn, zowel voor martelaars als voor iedere gelovige die trouw blijft.

## A JELENÉSEK KÖNYVE: TELE VÁRAKOZÁSSAL

Ez a cikk a bibliai kánon utolsó könyvének kérdéseivel foglalkozik: Miért, hogyan és mikor íródott A jelenések könyve. Az első rész a könyv címét értelmezi, amiből kiderül, hogy egyedül Isten a Patmosz szigetén levő Jánoshoz küldött kinyilatkoztatásnak a kezdeményezője, valamint arról szól, hogy többféle értelmezéssel lehet ez a rejtélyes könyvet megközelíteni, de a legtöbbet az üdvtörténeti megközelíté nyújtja. Ennek az üdvtörténeti módszernek a példájaként a második rész a 'milen niumról' szóló 20. fejezetet magyarázza, mint a keresztyén mártírok ezer évre szóló rehabilitását. A cikk végső konklúziója, hogy az üdvtörténeti módszerrel olvasva titokzatos könyvről kiderül, hogy nagyon sok mindent tartogat mind a mártíroknak, mind minden hívőnek, aki hűséges marad.