

**GOD'S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED!**  
*SYNOPSIS OF APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE AND BOOK OF REVELATION*  
REVELATION 1-3

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**Apocalyptic** (Revelation)

Literature written to people of faith who are undergoing persecution to encourage and strengthen their faith

Dragnet, "The story you are about to see is true, only the names have been changed to protect the innocent"

Addresses the reality of evil (demonic) while affirming the triumph of good (God)

**Mystery**

Not unknown but hidden to those who were outside of the community of faith

Language had to be understood by recipients so they could be encouraged

**Eschatology** (Last days)

We would be mistaken to believe that the writers of the apocalyptic literature were looking into the future and predicting the end of the world, as WE know it. They were addressing their situation and were forming conclusions about the future based upon their understanding of the triumphant word of God. They asserted that evil would be defeated because of the power, justice, righteousness and intervention of God.

Inherent in Christian apocalyptic literature is the belief that God has intervened in the life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Messiah (the Anointed of God).

Biblical truth however often outlasts its immediate context

The word prophetic as used in Revelation is appropriate

Prophecy as application

Prophecy as prediction based upon spiritual laws and principles

**Symbolic**

Language and images such as dragons, Babylon, great whore (Revelation 17: 1) and falling stars are not to be taken literally. These are symbols pointing to something else.

Author was describing a VISION with the best and only words he had at his disposal

**History**

Although the truths of scripture have eternal implications, they are written for and in specific historic contexts. Therefore to understand some of their truths we must understand the contexts in which they are written.

Contrast Romans 13: 1-7 and the attitude of Book of Revelation towards rulers and nations

Contrast recruitment efforts of Frederick Douglass during Civil War and criticism of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. towards Vietnam War

Book of Revelation written either around 64AD during time of Nero or around 97-98AD during reign of Domitian

Book written by either John the Apostle or another believer named John (writing styles)

## Scriptures

Much of language in Revelation comes from Hebrew Scriptures (Daniel, only apocalyptic book in Hebrew Bible), Ezekiel, and Zechariah

## Geographic Context

Patmos is a small island in Aegean Sea without much industry even now with only about 3,000 inhabitants, and is around 13.5 square miles. At its highest point it is only 883 feet above sea level. From this island he was familiar with “the sound of many waters.”

## The Audacity of Faith

We must never become lost in the frightening aspects of language and symbols we cannot understand without remembering the theme, **GOD’S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED!**

No matter how bold or brash or ravenous evil will be at times, **GOD’S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED!**

Consequently the Book of Revelation has more praise, worship and singing than any other book in the New Testament.

The only other book in scripture that has more singing is the book of Psalms, the hymnbook of the Bible. What is the reason for all of the singing in the Book of Revelation? This is the reason: **GOD’S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED.**

## The Book of Revelation: The Word of God to the Church

Since the Book of Revelation is the word of God to the church, it begins by addressing seven of the churches that were located in the Roman province known as Asia. These particular churches were located as major postal stations and could be easily circulated to outlying areas. The writer may have had a special relationship with these churches.

Seven represents the number of completeness and is used 54 times in Book of Revelation: seven candlesticks (1:12); seven stars (1: 16); seven lamps (4: 5) seven seals (5: 1) seven horns and seven eyes (5:6); seven thunders (10:3), and seven angels, plagues and bowls (15: 6,7,8). Since seven represents completeness, the letters were to whole church.

## The Seven Churches

Ephesus:

Commendation: Patient endurance; non-tolerance of pagan practices

Criticism: Loss of first love

Way to Restoration: Remember! Repent! Do (Act)!

Smyrna:

Commendation: Faithful despite poverty and persecution

Criticism: None

Promise: Crown of life

Pergamum:

Commendation: Faithful during persecution, even martyrdom

Criticism: Compromise with the world and lessening of standards

Way to Restoration: Repent

## Thyatira:

Commendation: Love, faith, service, patient endurance, growing church

Criticism: Accommodation with false teaching and with the world

Way to Restoration: Hold fast to truth until the Lord comes

## Sardis:

Commendation: Few who have remained faithful

Criticism: Smugness; arrogance; reality is different from reputation

Way to Restoration: Repent! Remember! Wake Up! Do (Act)!

## Philadelphia:

Commendation: Faithfulness during persecution

Criticism: None (Like Smyrna; only two among seven without rebuke)

Word of Promise: New name or mark of Christ

## Verses 14-22, The Church in Laodicea

## The City of Laodicea

1. Another of the great trade and commerce routes of the ancient world
2. Great banking and financial center. It's citizens were so rich that when an earthquake rocked, they built the city back without seeking any help or support
3. Great clothing manufacturer because of the violet-black glossy wool of the sheep that grazed in the area. It mass-produced cheap outer garments, and was famous for its tunics.
4. It was a considerable medical center whose eye salve and ear salve were sought after.
5. It also had a considerable Jewish population that lived in the area.

## The Message to the Church in Laodicea

1. Only church for which the Lord had no compliments and commendations.
2. Christ as the great Amen is the fulfillment of the promises and truth of the scriptures
3. Christ as origin of creation (John 1: 3; Colossians 1: 15, 18)
4. Church in Laodicea stood in great contrast to the hot springs located in the area that were believed to hold healing properties.
5. Christ unsparing attitude and condemnation of indifference and neutrality
  - a. Indifference allows evil to flourish (M.L. King and his pain regarding silence of good people in the South)
  - b. Indifference allows potential to die stillborn, without any encouragement
  - c. The hardest person to reach or teach is someone who is indifferent
  - d. Indifference is such an affront to Christ because of the depth and breadth of his love and the high cost of his sacrifice (Ephesians 3: 18-19)
6. Worldly credentials and spiritual standing
  - a. Materially rich and yet spiritually poor
  - b. Fashionably clothed and yet spiritually naked
  - c. Physically sighted and healthy and yet spiritually blind and sick
7. Hope for Church in Laodicea
  - a. Christ still cares enough to discipline
  - b. He has not given up on them (Standing at the door and knock)

- c. If they make right decision (open the door), Christ will abide with them and treat them as if they had never incurred his wrath or grieved his heart
- d. They will have opportunity to participate in reign of Christ (Second chance (3: 20) or second death (20: 14-15))