

Ian Paul

StJohn'sNottingham

www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk

Grove Books Ltd

www.grovebooks.co.uk

The Book of Revelation

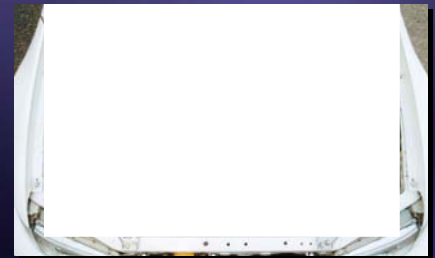
Why are we here?

Why am I here?

The Book of Revelation



The Book of Revelation



The Book of Revelation



Kinds of writing

The stars will fall from heaven,
the sun will cease its shining;
the moon will be turned to blood,
and fire and hail will fall from heaven.

The rest of the country will have sunny
intervals
with scattered showers.

Kinds of writing

To whom it may concern Re: ongoing personal relationship	<i>Formal letter</i>
My dearest darling wife, I love you more than I can say.	<i>Love letter</i>
LOVE STILL BURNS STRONG, CLAIMS ANGLICAN PRIEST	<i>Headline</i>
In a surprise announcement, Anglican priest Ian Paul claimed that he loved his wife more than ever.	<i>Newspaper</i>
How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.	<i>Sonnet</i>
Thou art more temperate than a summer's day.	
Yours faithfully...	<i>Formal letter</i>

Kinds of writing—'genre'

1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to show his servants what must soon take place...	<i>Apocalyptic</i>
3 Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy...	<i>Blessing</i>
4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia...	<i>Letter</i>
5 ...To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood...	<i>Praise</i>
7 Look! he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him...	<i>Apocalyptic</i>
8 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God...	<i>Prophecy</i>
9 I, John, your brother...	<i>Letter</i>

Kinds of writing—'genre'

Genre ('kind of writing')
is that set of conventions
by which authors
communicate
their expectations
of how their readers
should make sense
of what they have written

Three claims

- + A revelation
challenge versus comfort *Listen*
- + A letter
here and now v there and then *Think*
- + A prophecy
forthtelling versus foretelling *Respond*

Historical context

The messages
to the seven
churches of
Asia Minor



Historical context

The church at Laodicea:
'Because you are neither
hot nor cold, I will spew
you out of my mouth'
(Rev 3.16)

Historical context



Historical context



Historical context

- + Smyrna
 - + 'dead and come to life'
 - + 'crown of life'
 - + No rebuke
- + Pergamum
 - + Satan's throne
 - + 'white stone with a new name'
 - + 'wake up'
- + Sardis
 - + 'rich, prospered'
 - + 'poor, naked and blind'
- + Laodicea

Historical context

- + How does the life of your church reflect its community—positively and negatively?
- + What biblical ideas or themes might speak to this?
- + How might this shape the way you share the gospel in your context?

Old Testament

- + 405 verses
- + 676 allusions to the Old Testament
 - Isaiah 128
 - Psalms 99
 - Ezekiel 92
 - Daniel 82
 - Exodus 53

Cultural context

- + 'I have the keys to Death and Hades' (Rev 1.19)
- + 'I am coming quickly'
(four times)
- + 'I am the Alpha and the Omega'
(five times)

Revelation 4

- + throne
- + rainbow
- + four living creatures
- + jewels
- + lightning, thunder
- + throne room
- + twenty-four
- + elders
- + dressed in white
- + golden crowns
- + casting down
- + choruses

Power and worship

- + Who has power in your culture or society?
- + What are the symbols and practices associated with that power?
- + How might recognizing that this power belongs to God shape our worship?

Revelation 7

- + What is pastorally helpful about the idea of seeing God's people as an army getting ready for war?
- + In what situations might this way of thinking be unhelpful?
- + Have you experienced this idea being used well or being misused?

Old Testament in Rev 7

- + Sealing/markings of the faithful—
 - + Ezekiel 9
- + Numbering—
 - + Num 1 'able to serve in the army'
 - + 2 Sam 24 'go and take a census'
- + 'out of every nation and tribe and people and tongue'—
 - + Ex 19.5 (Ez 36.24) + Gen 10.31
- + Hearing (7.4) and seeing (7.9)

Revelation 7



Revelation 12

Structure



- + v 11: 'accuser thrown down...
...by the blood of the lamb'
- + v 9: 'no longer a place found'
= Ps 37.36 = Dan 2.35

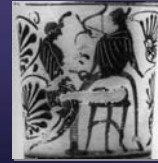
Revelation 12

+ Characters:

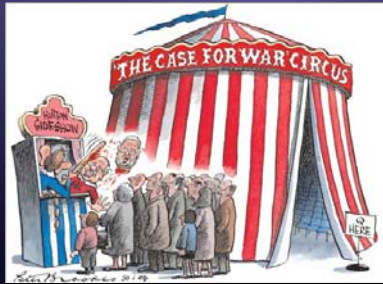
- + woman in childbirth:
Is 26, 66, Micah 4, 5
- + dragon:
Gen 3.13, Ez 29.3, Job 1.6, Zech 3.1
- + male child:
Ps 2.9, Dan 10.13

+ Plot??

Rev 12—the plot



Plot and character



Plot and character



Plot and character



Plot and character



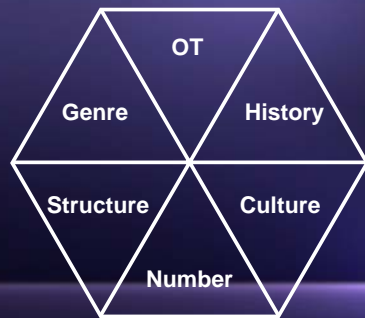
Plot and character



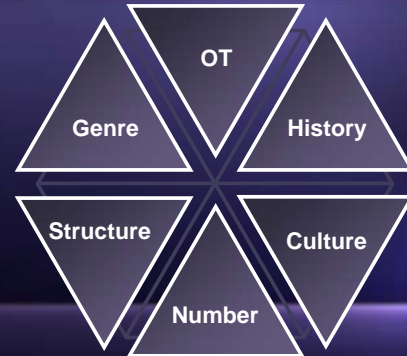
Plot and character



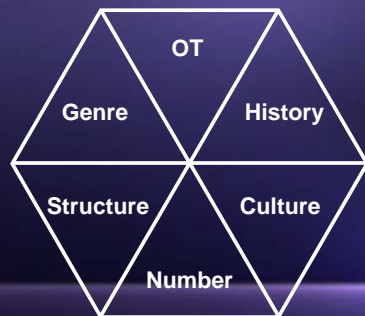
Interpreting Revelation



Interpreting Revelation



Interpreting Revelation



How to avoid crazy readings

Any credible reading of Revelation must:

- ✦ Make sense of all the data in the text
- ✦ Have been possible for the writer and first readers
- ✦ Fit with the wider message of the book

Numbers

- + Word frequencies
- + Square, triangular and rectangular numbers
- + Enumerating words—
gematria or isopsephism




Word frequencies

+ blessed	7 times
+ sickle (ch 14)	7 times
+ prophecy	7 times
+ testimony to Jesus	7 times
+ Jesus	14 times
+ Spirit	14 times
+ saints	14 times
+ Dragon	13 times
+ Satan	8 times
+ Babylon	6 times

Word frequencies

- + Unity and structure
—an amazing piece of literature!
- + God's order in the world
—evil is disordered
- + Structure and meaning

Numbers

	Square	144
	Triangular	666
	Rectangular	42 1,260

Numbers

'Let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is 666' (Rev 13.18)

Numbers

a = 1		
b = 2	k = 20	t = 200
c = 3	l = 30	u = 300
d = 4	m = 40	v = 400
e = 5	n = 50	w = 500
f = 6	o = 60	x = 600
g = 7	p = 70	y = 700
h = 8	q = 80	z = 800
i = 9	r = 90	
j = 10	s = 100	

Numbers

'I love her whose number is 545'

The Messiah will have number 888

'A new calculation:
Nero killed his own mother'

'The branch of David will be Menachem'

Numbers

th e r i o n
y h r i o n
t r y w n
400 + 200 + 10 + 6 + 50

N e r o n C a e s a r
N e r w n K a i s a r
n r w n q o r
50 + 200 + 6 + 50 + 100 + 60 + 200

Connecting with today

'666' → Hitler, Rome, Europe, bar codes etc


Connecting with today


'666' -----> Hitler, Rome, Europe, bar codes etc


↓ ↑


Roman Imperial power → Beastliness

The Millennium

Pre 

Disp 

A 

Post 

The Millennium

- ✦ The victory of God
- ✦ The lordship of Christ
- ✦ The vindication of the saints
- ✦ The renewal of the earth

Old Testament in Rev 21

Parallels with Ezekiel:

- + Throne vision—Rev 4, Ez 1
- + Sealing of saints—Rev 7, Ez 9
- + Eating scroll—Rev 10, Ez 3
- + Measuring—Rev 11, Ez 40

Climax of Ezekiel, vision of temple *but*
Rev 21.22 'I did not see a temple'