

REVELATION – OVERVIEW

The ancient Roman Empire defended its economic and political control in spiritual terms, calling its gospel the Pax Romana, or Roman Peace. While in exile on the island of Patmos, a Jewish Christian prophet named John received a vision showing that the cult of emperor worship would soon become deadly to followers of the Messiah.

The book of Revelation (or Apocalypse, meaning unveiling) is a warning, circulated to seven cities in the Roman province of Asia Minor. John's main point is to challenge and encourage the believers in the midst of their opposition and persecution.

Revelation is an apocalypse, a literary form well known in John's day. In an apocalypse a visitor from heaven reveals the secrets of the unseen world and the future through vivid symbols. While the symbols may appear strange at first, they become more clear when seen in their first-century setting and in light of other Bible imagery.

John's vision has four main parts, each marked by the phrase in the Spirit. After words of warning and encouragement to each of the seven churches, John's visions then centre on Jesus – his role in redemption and the judgments he brings to the world. The immoral political and economic forces that rebel against God will be destroyed, and the Messiah will triumph over all his enemies. The vision closes with the promise that God's faithful servants will reign over the new creation.

Revelation also functions as the appropriate conclusion to the entire drama of the Bible. John concludes with images from the garden of Eden, the first story in the Bible. The world will experience a fresh beginning: He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'