



ERSKINE
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

For Christ and His Church

NT 780

The Book of Revelation

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Summer, 2010

Thursdays, 5/20, 6/24, 7/29, 8/19

Due West Campus

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course surveys the literary and historical background of the book of Revelation with particular attention given to the book's structure. The focus of the course is to understand the message of Revelation in its first-century context. Emphasis is placed on the relevance of the book of Revelation for the present-day Church and world.

Exegesis/Elective. *Three hours credit.*

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The Seminary Mission Statement maintains that "The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church." (*ETS 2009-2010 Catalog*, p. 6) Central to the ministry of the Church in the world is the preaching and teaching of the Bible. This course in Revelation will enable students to understand and to communicate to others the powerful message of hope that is the heart of the book of Revelation.

More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Define apocalyptic literature and describe the apocalyptic movement in Judaism;
2. List and define the basic characteristics of apocalyptic literature;

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3. Indicate how Revelation is both like and unlike apocalyptic literature;
4. Describe the political conditions of the Roman Empire late in the first century A.D. as they affect our understanding of Revelation;
5. Describe the character of Christianity in Asia Minor late in the first century A.D.;
6. List and describe the four basic methods that have been used to interpret Revelation;
7. Outline the structure of Revelation;
8. Describe the likely date and purposes of Revelation;
9. Describe how the vision of Revelation 4-5 is central to understanding the book;
10. Identify at least one specific contemporary issue that is addressed in Revelation;
11. List and describe at least five major resources for the study of Revelation.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Each student must purchase the following textbooks for the course:

Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book Of Revelation*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1993.

ISBN 0-6870-8999-9

Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, Revised. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. **ISBN 0-8028-2537-0**

In addition, each student will need a copy of the New Testament in a translation of his/her choice. Students who are proficient in Greek are encouraged to use the Greek New Testament (either UBS or Nestle).

As a convenience, the seminary has a bookstore portal of the website at <http://www.erskineseminary.org/bookstore.html> . There you will find links to familiar vendors and can check availability of texts, compare prices, and place orders. The ETS SBA will receive a modest percentage of the profits from students' and professors' purchases through this portal. The Erskine Campus Bookstore will carry a limited number of every required text and orders for books can be placed through the Campus Bookstore.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Students must attend every class meeting.** If a student must be absent for all or part of a session, he/she is responsible for all work done and due for that session. Normally, a student who misses all or part of a session will be required to do additional work. This extra work must be negotiated with the professor. **A student who misses more than a total of one class session will not pass the course.**
2. Students must be adequately prepared for each class session. Adequate preparation consists of completion of all reading and/or writing assignments for that day. Much of the format of this course will be lecture/discussion. Thus, it is imperative that each student be adequately prepared in order to participate in an informed manner in classroom discussions. **Note especially the reading assignment that is due prior to Session 1.**
3. Students may occasionally be given short, informal research-type assignments on which to report back to the group. These are voluntary and will not be graded. Nothing written is required to be turned in.
4. All work must be turned in on time and the tests (See below) must be taken on the assigned dates. **Late work may be penalized at least one letter grade.** The professor reserves the right to reject any work that is excessively late.
5. **Two one-hour tests will be given.** The first will be during Session 2 and the second will be during Session 4. Prior to the tests, specific instructions will be given about how to prepare for them.
6. **One major paper will be required.** Students intending to use this course to fulfill their New Testament exegesis requirement must choose a passage from Revelation and do a thorough exegetical study, using the exegetical procedure taught in the Principles of Exegesis course. Such students, then, must have successfully completed BI 502 Principles of Exegesis and, for those who began in Fall 2008 or after, BI 503 Introduction to the Biblical Languages prior to taking any course for exegesis credit. Additionally, students who are required to take the Biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek) must, in place of BI 503 Introduction to the Biblical Languages, successfully complete Greek I and II prior to

taking this course for exegesis credit. Students taking any Bible electives without having met the exegesis and language course prerequisites may only count those courses as general Bible electives, and cannot receive exegesis credit for them. The student who chooses to write an exegetical paper on Revelation will need to take note of the bibliography in Mounce's commentary (pp. xxi-xxxvi).

If the student is using this course simply to fulfill his/her Bible elective or free elective requirements, then he/she may choose to do an exegesis paper or a research paper related to the background, structure, theology, interpretation, etc. of Revelation. A list of possible topics is included in this syllabus. The student may choose one of these topics or may devise his/her own.

The major paper should be no more than 20 pages long. The paper must be typed/processed (12-point type, double-spaced, one-inch margins) and fully documented, following the standards in the "Style and Form Standards" (Erskine Seminary). In this course, footnotes and a bibliography are required in each paper. The paper's cover page and bibliography are not counted towards page requirements. **The final copy of this paper is due no later than August 27.**

If the student is using this paper for his/her portfolio requirement, it is his/her responsibility to provide a corrected, clean copy after it has been graded to the Seminary office.

7. The student is encouraged to keep a loose-leaf notebook for the course. He/she can use it for class notes, reading notes, hand-outs, sermon/lesson ideas, bibliographical information, etc. If done properly, this notebook can be a great resource for further study, teaching, and preaching from Revelation.
8. No specific bibliography is included with this syllabus. The student is encouraged to use the extensive and up-to-date bibliography that appears in Mounce's commentary (xxi-xxxvi).
9. The Seminary encourages all students to make use of language, in reference to human beings, that is inclusive rather than needlessly exclusive. Although God transcends the distinction between male and female, the Bible and the Church's historic creeds and confessions use masculine language in reference to God. Thus, the Seminary

encourages all students to retain this masculine usage when speaking and writing about God. Furthermore, the Seminary recognizes that all human beings, male and female, are created equally in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and believers of both sexes are fellow heirs of the grace of life (1 Pet. 3:7). Accordingly, whenever students are speaking and writing about males and females, they should use language that clearly includes both men and women (for example, by saying/writing “humanity” rather than “man” or “people” rather than “men”).

10. Erskine Seminary is committed to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and it expects its students to show respect for all who identify with that one Church. In all written work, oral presentations, and discussions both inside and outside the classroom, the Seminary expects students to conduct discussions of controversial issues in a context of respect for those with whom one disagrees. Please see the Community Life Statement in the *Catalog* for more information.
11. The grade of “I” or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of “I” is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student’s request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student’s behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An “I” in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become an “F.”
12. Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract, and billing will be based on this

registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a “drop/add” form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student’s receiving a grade of “F” for the course, and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.

13. The professor is available for consultations during the summer semester. The student, however, should call ahead of time to make an appointment before coming.

V. EVALUATION

The Seminary grade scale (*ETS 2009-2010 Catalog*, p. 46) will be used. The student’s final grade will be computed as follows:

Two one-hour tests	=	60%
Major paper	=	40%

VI. CLASS MEETING DATES

This class will meet from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the following days:

- Session 1: Thursday, May 20**
- Session 2: Thursday, June 24**
- Session 3: Thursday, July 29**
- Session 4: Thursday, August 19**

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Thursday, May 20

Course introduction, requirements, etc.

I. An Introduction to the Book of Revelation

- A. The genre of Revelation as prophecy, apocalyptic, and letter
- B. The methods of interpreting Revelation
- C. The apocalyptic movement in Israel and in the Christian church
- D. Revelation as like and unlike apocalyptic literature
- E. The authorship of Revelation
- F. The date of Revelation
- G. The historical circumstances behind Revelation
- H. The purposes of Revelation
- I. The structure of Revelation
- J. The imagery of Revelation
- K. Another view of the historical situation behind Revelation: Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (1990)

II. The Prologue (Revelation 1:1-20)

- A. Introduction
- B. The superscription (1:1-3)
- C. The salutation and doxology (1:4-8)
- D. The first vision and John's call (1:9-20)

III. The Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2:1—3:22)

- A. Introduction
- B. Christianity in Asia Minor in the first century A.D.
- C. The letter to Ephesus (2:1-7)
- D. The letter to Smyrna (2:8-11)
- E. The letter to Pergamum (2:12-17)
- F. The letter to Thyatira (2:18-29)
- G. The letter to Sardis (3:1-6)
- H. The letter to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- I. The letter to Laodicea (3:14-22)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 1:

1. Read Revelation 1-22 in an English translation of your choice. In your notebook, describe the general effects the book has on you as a reader. What is the tone of the book? Note especially places where its language and imagery are worshipful and majestic. Note also the musical quality of the book. Think about the numerous occasions where figures in Revelation are singing or making music.
2. Read Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 1-115.
3. Read Bruce Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, in its entirety.

Session 2: Thursday, June 24

TEST # 1 ON I-III ABOVE (11:00 a.m.)

IV. The Central Vision of Revelation (Revelation 4:1—5:14)

- A. Introduction
- B. The importance of Revelation 4-5 in the structure of the book
- C. The worship of God as Creator (4:1-11)
- D. The worship of the Lamb as the Redeemer (5:1-14)

V. The Opening of the Seven Seals (Revelation 6:1—8:1)

- A. Introduction
- B. The seven seals and the plagues in Egypt
- C. The seals and the birth pangs of the Messianic age
- D. The first four seals (6:1-8)
- E. The fifth seal (6:9-11)
- F. The sixth seal (6:12-17)
- G. The first interlude (7:1-17)
- H. The seventh seal (8:1)

VI. The Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8:2—11:19)

- A. Introduction
- B. The significance of the trumpet in Judaism
- C. The relationship between the trumpets and the seals
- D. The preparation (8:2-5)

- E. The first four trumpets (8:6-12)
- F. The warning of the eagle (8:13)
- G. The fifth trumpet (9:1-12)
- H. The sixth trumpet (9:13-21)
- I. The second interlude (10:1—11:14)
- J. The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2:

1. Read carefully Revelation 1:1—11:19. What are the major symbols and images used. How do these chapters show us what is going on with John's readers?
2. Read Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 116-228.

Session 3: Thursday, July 29

VII. The Real Nature of the Church's Conflict in the World (Revelation 12:1—14:20)

- A. Introduction
- B. Jewish and pagan parallels to Revelation 12
- C. The woman, dragon, and male child (12:1-6)
- D. The war in heaven (12:7-12)
- E. The war on earth (12:13-17)
- F. The beast from the sea (13:1-10)
- G. The beast from the earth (13:11-18)
- H. The redeemed and the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-5)
- I. The third interlude (14:6-20)

VIII. The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath (Revelation 15:1—16:21)

- A. Introduction
- B. The relationships of the bowls, trumpets, and seals
- C. Preparation for the bowls (15:1-8)
- D. The pouring out of the seven bowls (16:1-21)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3:

1. Read Revelation 12:1—16:21 in an English translation of your choice. Notice the Old Testament parallels that are present here. What scenes from the Old Testament are called forth here?

2. Read Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 229-305.

Session 4: Thursday, August 19

TEST # 2 ON IV-VIII ABOVE (11:00 a.m.)

IX. The Final Fall of Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:1—19:5)

- A. Introduction
- B. The significance of the name “Babylon”
- C. The harlot and the scarlet beast (17:1-18)
- D. The funeral dirge over Babylon (18:1-24)

X. The Final Victory of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6—20:15)

- A. Introduction
- B. The Old Testament and Jewish traditions of the lamb
- C. The announcement of the marriage of the Lamb (19:6-10)
- D. The appearance of the Warrior-Lamb (19:11-16)
- E. The destruction of Antichrist and his allies (19:17-21)
- F. The binding of Satan (20:1-3)
- G. The millenium (20:4-6)
- H. The destruction of Satan (20:7-10)
- I. The final judgment (20:11-15)

XI. The New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:1—22:5)

- A. Introduction
- B. Jewish traditions in Revelation 21:1—22:5
- C. Pagan traditions in Revelation 21:1—22:5
- D. The new creation (21:1-8)
- E. The new Jerusalem (21:9-27)
- F. The restoration of the garden of Eden (22:1-5)

XII. The Epilogue (Revelation 22:6-21)

- A. Introduction
- B. The relationships between the Epilogue and the Prologue
- C. The command to write (22:6-11)
- D. Blessings and curses (22:12-15)
- E. The authenticity of John's vision (22:16)
- F. A gracious invitation and a solemn warning (22:17-20)
- G. Benediction (22:21)

XIII. The Value of the Book of Revelation for Today

- A. Introduction
- B. The preaching/teaching values of Revelation
- C. Contemporary issues addressed by Revelation
- D. Creative ways to teach/preach Revelation

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4:

1. Read Revelation 17:1—22:21 in an English translation of your choice. Note the contrasts between the two cities and the two armies. How do these chapters present to us the real nature of evil and show to us the real ground of Christian hope?
2. Read Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, pp. 306-411.

8-27 MAJOR PAPER DUE

POSSIBLE RESEARCH TOPICS IN REVELATION

1. A History of Emperor-Worship in the Roman Empire
2. The Book of Revelation as an Anti-Gnostic Document
3. Christology in Revelation
4. An Evaluation of a Current Interpretation of Revelation
5. The Use of Revelation by a Current Doomsday Cult

6. The Reign of Domitian
7. Ecclesiology in Revelation
8. The Acceptance of Revelation into the New Testament Canon
9. The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation
10. Worship in Revelation
11. A Study of One of the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3
12. Greco-Roman Traditions in Revelation
13. A Study of a Particular Symbol in Revelation
14. Revelation as a Drama
15. The Millennium in Revelation
16. The Figure of Satan in Revelation
17. Discipleship in Revelation
18. Numerology in Revelation
19. The Place of Angels in Revelation
20. A Comparison of Revelation to a Particular Jewish Apocalypse
21. The Dating of the Book of Revelation