

Tuesday Evening Bible Study at Tokyo Baptist Church
Revelation – General Introduction
Notes from Tuesday July 5, 2011
Last Revised on July 11, 2011

Songs

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord,

We are met here again this evening, by your grace, after a short time off.

Thank you for bringing us back together again, to study the Bible together.

Thank you for those who are returning and for those who are new among us, and for those who may yet come to join our study in weeks to come.

We wish to be here Lord to honor you and to know you and to love you and to obey you.

Where our motives are imperfect please forgive us and please perfect us.

We hope that everything that happens here will be pleasing in your sight,

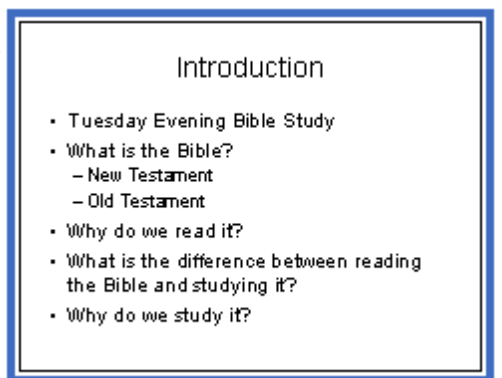
and will advance the purposes of your kingdom.

We plead with you Lord to be strong within us and strong among us,

this evening and as often as we gather here,

In Jesus Name we Pray,

Amen.



Introduction (Put up First Slide)

Welcome to the Tuesday Evening Bible Study

For those of you who are new to the class, let me explain a few things:

We meet here almost every Tuesday evening, from 7:30 until about 9:00.

Usually begin with 3 songs, followed by an opening prayer, Bible study, and a closing prayer.

Recently Wayne and Christi have been helping with the songs, for which I am grateful.

The Bible study itself is a mixture of lecture and discussion.

You are welcome to make comments and ask questions and I often invite your participation.

But when you speak in class, please try to remember to speak slowly and allow time for translation, so nobody gets lost or feels left out.

From time to time (but not very often) we may take a week off.

But when we do, we will let you know well in advance.

Please make sure that you sign the attendance sheet and give us your current email address.

We will then send you an email every week, reminding you to attend the class or (on those very rare occasions when we cancel) reminding you that class has been canceled.

I want to thank Fumiko Ray for always taking care of the attendance sheet.

We maintain a simple web site, where various information is provided, including directions to the church, a class schedule, a list of the references materials I am using in preparing the class, the notes from each week's class, and other things of possible use or interest.

I hope that the email and the web site will both help you to stay involved with the class, even if and when you must miss from time, and also make it easy for you to invite your friends to class.

I do apologize that the emails we send out and the web site we maintain are available only in English.

This is because of my own sinfully poor command of Japanese. I am sorry.

But as you will see the classes are very well translated into Japanese, by Kazuko Nakamura.

I really want to thank her for so faithfully attending this class every week and doing that,

And I want to thank God for giving those gifts to Kazuko and causing her to use them in this way!

I encourage those of you who might benefit from Japanese translation to sit near Kazuko.

I also encourage everyone who attends this class to have a Bible of your own, to read it as often as you can, and to bring it with you each week to this class.

If you do not have a Bible and need help to obtain one, please let me know. We'll fix you up.

There are of course many different translations of the Bible, and you may use whichever you prefer.

However for those of you who are reading the Bible in English, I encourage you, if possible, to buy and bring with you to this class, the English Standard Version of the Bible,

primarily because this is the version which we will be reading aloud in class and from which I will be teaching,

and also because I think it is one of the best English translations presently available.

For those of you who will be reading in Japanese, please speak with Kazuko-san about which translation will be best for you to use.

I believe she has decided to use "Kogoyaku" for classroom use this time.

In any case, all that you will ever need for this class is the Bible. We do not use any other materials in class, no do we require any homework.

As always Kazuko and I will try to have photocopies available of the Bible text we are using, just in case you forget your Bibles sometimes.

So please always do feel free to come to class, and to invite your friends from work, or whatever, even when you do not happen to have Bibles with you.

Now a word for those of you who have been part of this Tuesday Evening Bible Study in the past: you may notice some differences, which I hope will be improvements.

In particular for so long as we are able to meet in this room, I think we should experiment with the use of this screen,

particularly to project Bible text, thereby leaving the white board open for other things.

This will also allow us to project the Bible text in Japanese as well as English.

We should also be able to project song lyrics, for those of you who are getting tired of old hymns.

And I may add a few other things as well.

I don't want to get too dependent on technology, because this class may not always be able to meet in a room that has it, but while we have it, and a qualified operator, I will try to use it more.

I want to thank Michael Chan for helping with this, and George Abraham for suggesting it.

Alright then, does anyone have any questions regarding the mechanics of the class itself: where and when we meet, who may attend, what you need to bring, and etc?

Well, if any questions of this nature occur to you, please let me know.

For now, let's move on.

In preparing for tonight, I could not be certain who might attend.

I thought I should be prepared for the possibility that someone new might show up who do not know what the Bible is, why it is important, or what is the point of studying it.

So let's begin by touching briefly on these questions.

Q. What is the Bible?

A. The word Bible, originally and simply, means book.

A. Through common usage it has come to be understood by most people as referring to this book (hold up Bible) which is sometimes also referred to among Christians as the Holy Bible,

meaning that this book is considered by us to be special, sacred, holy --- not the actual book itself, but the words which it contains.

A. As most of you know, this holy book, is actually a collection of smaller documents which we refer to as the “books of the Bible.”

Q. How many books are there in the Bible? (Anyone!)

A. 66

Yes, and these 66 books are divided into two main groupings.

Q. What are these two main groupings? (Anyone!)

A. The Old Testament & New Testament

Q. How would you explain the difference --- i.e. between the Old and New Testaments?

A. The 27 books of the NT were all written by Christians, and they are all plainly centered on the things of Christ.

A. The 39 books of the OT were all written before the birth of Christ.

A. The Christian Old Testament is, by the way, the Jewish Bible; i.e. the books are the same albeit arranged a little differently.

Our Old Testament, then, is the essentially same Bible that Jesus studied!...the same Bible that was studied by all of authors of the New Testament Books.

The books of the New Testament refer frequently to the books of the Old Testament, so much so that it would be hard to understand the New Testament without the Old Testament.

Conversely the New Testament is the key to understanding the Old Testament.

Well that is some kind of an answer the question: “What is the Bible?”

It is in short this particular book, or collection of books, which I hold in my hand.

Q. So why should we care about this book?

Q. Why read it?

A. Well, that depends on who “we” are!

A. Non-Christians read the Bible, as they read other books which are historically important, because they are historically important. A well educated person will surely have read the Bible a bit just as he or she will have read a bit of Shakespeare, etc.

A. Non-Christians benefit from reading the Bible, as they also benefit from reading other historically important books containing works of great beauty and wisdom. Non Christian parents sometimes send their kids to Christian schools hoping they will pick up Christian morals through the Bible.

A. Best of all, non-Christians may come to know Christ and salvation through reading the Bible.

But most of us here in this room are Christians.

Q. Why do Christians read the Bible? *(n.b. the class gave many good answers)*

A. It is the source of information about Jesus Christ, whom we believe to be the only begotten Son of God, and God, our Savior, our Lord, now and forever!

Even more mysteriously, we understand the words in the Bible to be God’s speech to us, the only place where we can hear him speaking to us.

Understanding why Christians read the Bible is, perhaps, not so difficult as understanding why some Christians do **not** read the Bible, which amounts to ignoring what God is saying to us!

So this is some kind of answer to the question, “Why do we read the Bible?”

Q. But what would you say is the difference between **reading** the Bible and **studying** it? (Wait)

A. I remember Pastor Folds once saying that the difference between reading the Bible and studying the Bible is that, when you study the Bible you have a pencil in your hand.

I think that this simple answer goes a long way toward answering the question.

When we read about things that we understand well and fully, things that we consider be be

common knowledge, and common sense, and self evident, we rarely have a reason to use a pencil.

This does not mean that such things are not important --- they may be very important indeed and we may like to read them again and again, but we no longer need to study them very much, so we leave our pencil in the drawer. We read such things to review and meditate on them....to remember and appreciate them.

We take our pencil out when we need to stop and note something which requires further thought or action: something we find strange or perplexing and requiring further thought; something we do **not** understand, or something we wish to understand better, something we are afraid we might forget or that we wish to communicate with others. Etc.

The pencil is a tool in our struggle to understand, to remember, to communicate, what we read.

In fact, the Bible is a very hard book, and there is certainly no book more important.

This is true both intellectually and spiritually.

We are weak and sinful creatures. In the Bible, we are dealing with the speech of a holy God, the self revelation of the creator of the universe, and his revelation of what he intends for us and expects from us. Why would we ever think that it would be easy for us to understand the Bible?

The Bible itself repeatedly bears witness to how slow men are to understand the speech of God. Jesus' own disciples didn't understand him while he walked among them!

It is not easy for us to be Godly. Therefore we who suppose ourselves to be serious about God, will study the bible and struggle with it, throughout life, **without any hope of ever mastering it!**

Our Master is the one who is revealed in the Bible, the One who speaks to us there.

He does not submit to us and, as it were, give up his secrets, just because we are intelligent and studious. We learn God's secrets through obedience and the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever we finally come to understand is something that God has graciously revealed to us, and caused us to know, and never something that we have torn lose from his grasp by our efforts.

This means that, while the Bible is a hard book, it is not hard in the same **way** that other

books may be hard --- not like a scientific textbook or a philosophical treatise, for example, that we don't know how to even begin to read.

Even very young children are able to pick up and read and understand and remember much of what is written in the Bible, and what they are able to understand is sufficient to save their immortal souls and transform their present behavior miraculously. We can learn so much by watching Children read the Bible!

At the same time, adults of great intellect and scholarly sophistication may spend a lifetime studying the Bible texts and nevertheless fail to grasp even its most essential teachings, because this is not primarily a matter of intellect.

Bible study, then, is not a field in which any teacher may condescend to his students and fellow believers, who very easily might, and very often do, already have a better understanding than the teacher himself of the most important things that God has said in the Bible!

Bible study is a Spirit-directed activity, a form of worship, where those who are redeemed by Christ, together, seek to know Him better, love Him and one another more, and obey him more perfectly, by studying his words, or else Bible study is nothing profitable.

Bible study can only go forward profitably with prayer and humility, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with a sincere desire to understand and obey what the Lord has spoken in the Bible.

This is the kind of Bible study I hope we will have here. Please join me in praying for this, now and always

Let's pray.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Please help us to approach your word with humility and reverence,

seeking to understand such great and mysterious things as you may graciously teach us.

Lord God please do help us to be diligent, to apply ourselves to this important task.

But please also protect us from the sin of overreaching and mishandling your word through pride and arrogance, which is foolishness, and thinking that we might bend your words to

some purpose of our own,

of thinking that we might manufacture some meaning of our own,

of thinking that we might appropriate your words to glorify ourselves!

We submit ourselves to you, O Lord, and to your word.

Please make us teachable.

Please be our only teacher.

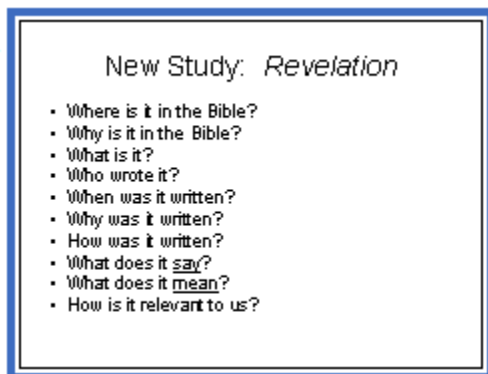
Please protect us from strange voices and allow us to hear only your Word..

And having heard you Word, O Lord, please cause us to do it.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen.

Revelation (Second Slide)



Tonight in this class, we begin a new study.

We recently concluded our study of the Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Before that we studied the Letter to the Hebrews.

Both of these are books of the New Testament.

Before that we studied the Old Testament books of Genesis and Exodus.

Before that well ... we have been studying different books of the Bible in this class successively for 10 years or more...and we have so far never repeated a book studied previously.

Each time we finish a book, the class discusses and votes on what will be the next book to study.

This time the class has selected the book commonly referred to as “Revelation”

I think most people tend to view this book as one of the most difficult books in the Bible to understand.

Perhaps it is. Perhaps not. Let’s see how it goes.

Q. First of all, can someone please tell me where to find it --- where in the Bible is this book located?

A. At the very end of the New Testament and, therefore, at the very end of the Bible.

Q. I wonder: Is there any significance to the fact that it appears last?

A. Certainly this does not mean that it was the last book to be written.

A. Neither was it the last book to be included in the Bible, whatever that means.

A. Neither does it necessarily mean that this book is the least important or most doubtful.

A. I think the book appears last in order mainly because it deals predominately with the end times and therefore logically belongs at the end of the collections of writings which comprise the Bible.

Please note that this is not the only Book in the Bible that deals with the end times.

Several books in both the New Testament and in the Old Testament also look toward the end, and in due course we will need to compare what they have to say on this subject to what is said here, in Revelation,

But no book in the Bible is more concentrated on the end times than the Book of Revelation.

So that answers where Revelation is in the Bible, at the end, and likely why this is the case.

Q. But why is it even in the Bible? (Wait)

A. The same reason that any book is in the Bible: because it belongs there!

For very approximately 17 centuries virtually all Christians have agreed that the 66 books which comprise the Bible are the 66 books which comprise the Bible.

The 39 books of the Old Testament are included because, as has been said, they are the Bible of the Jews, the Bible of Jesus and the Apostles, and because Jesus and the apostles considered them holy, and wholly relevant to Christian faith and practice.

The 27 books which comprise the New Testament were included because the early church recognized them to be true and authoritative, written by Godly men inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The point is often made, should be often repeated: these 27 books did not become authoritative because there were selected by some church committee, they were ultimately selected by some church committee because they had long been recognized as being authoritative.

Their authority was self-evident to the early church throughout all the regions where the church has spread, long before any meetings were ever convened to formalize the selection. The degree of consensus was astonishing.

This consensus came together early, and it lasted long, even through the period of the Protestant Reformation, when the question of of the canon was reopened seriously, and until this very day.

So this is some kind of answer to the question of why Revelation is in the Bible: because like all of the of the books in the Bible, Revelation has been long and widely recognized as belonging to the collection of documents which are inspired and authoritative.

Q. So what exactly is this inspired and authoritative document referred to as Revelation?

A. Of course it is words, originally Greek words, written on a page.

A. There are, incidentally, many fewer manuscripts available in support of the consensus Greek Text for Revelation than is the case for most other documents which comprise the New Testament. (This has something to do with the fact that much of the Eastern Church opposed the document in early years and, so, fewer Greek copies were made of it.)

A. The document is longer than many of the other books of the New Testament and shorter than some of them.

A. The quality of the writing is an issue that is much discussed --- the Greek grammar and syntax are highly irregular.

A. The document clearly does not belong in the same literary family as the four gospels and the Book of Acts, which are historical narratives centered on the life of Christ and his apostles.

A. The document bears some features of a letter, which is a common form of document in the New Testament. By my count 21 of the 27 books of the New Testament are letters. These are very much like the letters which were ordinarily written in the Greek speaking world at that time, albeit the subject matter was thoroughly Christian.

A. Revelation really does not belong to the collection of the letters of the New Testament, if only because the subject matter is so strange by comparison.

A. For any of you who have already read Revelation even just a little bit, you will have noticed all kinds of strange stuff in there --- stuff which is unlike most of the rest of the Bible: strange images and events which are very obviously not part of the “real world” that we inhabit but are, instead like the images and events seen in an abstract painting or a dream or a vision. It doesn’t take much literary skill to realize that some of this stuff is somehow symbolic, because the narrative itself stops sometimes to interpret itself. (i.e. this object/ action symbolizes that)

A. This sort of fantastic and symbolic writing seems more strange to us, perhaps, than it would have seemed to its original readers, because in many but not all respects it resembles a literary form which was common among the Jews in that era: a form of literature called Apocalyptic.

Apocalyptic is itself widely varied and difficult to characterize, but much of it was written under an assumed name -- typically a famous dead prophet --- so as to predict history which had already transpired before the date of actual writing. It borrowed from actual Old Testament prophesy and looked beyond the present time into the future when God would come to redeem his people and renew the world. It normally contained fantastic visions and images such as we see in Revelation.

This is my own characterization, but I think that most apocalyptic was a kind of fantasy fiction which people read and enjoyed and found comforting while, as the same time, knowing that it was fantasy fiction.

A. But Revelation does not share all of the characteristics of apocalyptic literature which is, itself highly varied as has been said. Revelation is not, for example, pseudonymous and it looks forward from the time of its own writing and not from some artificial historic vantage point. Its author is also much more concerned with the circumstances and behavior of his

contemporaries than is common in apocalyptic.

A. In these ways Revelation is more like Old Testament prophesy, which sometimes contains elements of both future prediction (“foretelling”) and present admonishment and encouragement (“forth-telling”). In addition the author of Revelation, like the Old Testament prophets but unlike most apocalyptic sometimes purports to be communicating the very words of God.

A. So it is perhaps best to think of Revelation as containing elements of both prophesy and apocalyptic. In this sense it is most like certain parts of the Old Testament book of Daniel. And as we will see Revelation draws heavily on Daniel, as well as other old Testament prophesy.

A. Unlike Daniel, however, Revelation does also have certain features of a letter.

A. Finally then we must conclude that Revelation is a document which cannot be assigned to any single, simple, literary genre. It is in a class of its own. I remember saying similar things about the first book of the Bible, Genesis, which is very difficult to classify in terms of literary genre. These are pieces of literature which are rare and unique and almost beyond description. Which, in my opinion is what makes them very great literature, in addition, of course to being divine oracles.

Q. Well, then, who wrote this document called Revelation?

A. In my Bible, the title is given as “The Revelation to John” and similar titles have been attached to the document down through the centuries. I remind you, once again, that the titles of these books as well as the various sub-headings and verse and chapter numbers and, of course, footnotes are not part of the inspired text of the Bible. All of these things have been added later by scholars for our convenience.

Q. Why would some scholar attach the title “The Revelation to John?”

A. Because that is the claim made by the inspired text itself, in the very first verse, and consistently elsewhere in the document.

A. So who is this person named John?

A. The earliest and strongest tradition makes this the beloved disciple of Jesus.

This view was almost but not completely unanimous among the Church Fathers, during the first two centuries of the Christian Era, particularly in the Western churches/

Dissent from this view became significant in the Third Century, particularly among the

Eastern Churches.

The chief dissenter was a Third Century Bishop of Alexandria known as Dionysius, who argued that Revelation could not possibly have been written by the Apostle John. He had several reasons for saying this, including: (1) no place in Revelation does the author John make it clear which John he is or claim to be an Apostle, (2) the theology of Revelation seems too different from the theology of the Gospel of John for the two documents to have been written by the same person, and (3) the Greek grammar and syntax is too different for the two documents to have been written by the same person.

Many modern scholars, and for substantially the same reasons, have followed Dionysius in concluding that Revelation must have been written by some John other than the Beloved Apostle.

However other scholars are still willing to trust the testimony of the early Church Fathers that this book was written by the Beloved Apostle, John.

That John does not identify himself as the Beloved Apostle is no strong proof that he is not that man: indeed this may speak to how clearly he was known by the church to be its author.

You must decide for your self whether the theology of Revelation and the theology of the Fourth Gospel are really so different. You must also decide for yourself what you believe about the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. The scholars are not nearly unanimous on either subject.

Perhaps the biggest problem in accepting that the Gospel of John and Revelation as having been written by the same person, is the profound difference in Greek grammar and syntax between these two documents. This problem is particularly acute for those who read these documents in Greek,

However some very interesting recent critical scholarship is beginning to moderate this objection.

John may actually have written Revelation “rough” on purpose --- as a matter of literary style. And whether or not intentional, his style might have been affected by the fact that in only one of these two documents was he recording an ecstatic vision --- not an easy thing to do!

Furthermore we know that Biblical authors often had scribes who helped them set things down on paper and that these scribes sometimes had more or less influence on the style of the final product.

John may have had more or different help in writing the two documents.

Finally, John might have aged significantly between the writing of Revelation (which he probably wrote first) and the writing of the Gospel and letters. Possibly as much as 30 years could have passed in between, and this could explain some or all of the differences that we see.

This latter point would depend on what you believe about when the various documents were written, which we will turn to next.

In short, it is reasonable to believe that Revelation was written by John, the Beloved Apostle, based primarily on the testimony of the early Church fathers, and the fact that subsequent objections have never been sufficient to overturn the early testimony and are, if anything, becoming less certain as time passes and critical scholarship advances. It is also possible that Revelation was written by a different John, in which case, I do not think our understanding of the document would be affected.

That is, I do not think that understanding of this document is controlled by authorship.

Q. When did John write Revelation?

A. Of course it was written after the resurrection of Christ and before this document first appeared in its present form and was read in the churches, which certainly places it in the First Century AD, almost certainly during the second half of that century. That dating is probably good enough for most purposes, and virtually all scholars would agree with that time-window of authorship.

It would in some sense be nice to know whether Revelation was written before or after 70 AD which is when Rome overthrew Jerusalem, because that fact would be handy when trying to interpret certain parts of the vision. But, in fact, we do not know whether Revelation was written before or after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Very generally speaking, those who date the writing of this letter before the fall of Jerusalem tend to interpret the fall of Jerusalem as fulfillment of certain prophecies contained in the vision. Another reason to prefer an early date for the authorship of Revelation, since the Gospel of John and the John's Epistles were written late, would be to explain the change in style and theological emphasis.

There may be some other and better reasons for dating Revelation before 70 AD, that is around the end of the reign of the Emperor Nero. However the earliest testimony of the church fathers dates this document later, during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, which was from 81 - 96 AD, and this also appears to be the broad consensus of modern scholars who, among other things, find this later period to be more consistent with the conditions of the seven churches described in Revelation 1-3.

Again, as with authorship, I do not think that the dating of this document controls its interpretation.

It is much more important to understand why Revelation was written, because our understanding of any document, including any Biblical document definitely is affected by the motive of the author.

In case of the the 4 Gospels, Acts, and all of the letters in the New Testament, as well as many of the books of the Old Testament, the motives and intentions of the authors are really very clear.

In every case, what is written in the Bible is inspired by God, we believe, but also in every case God is working through the human understanding. That is, the human authors know what they are trying to write and why.

Having insight into the intentions of the writer is a very great help in understanding what it is that they have written. When we say to someone: “why are you telling me this!?” it generally means that we do not understand what they are saying or that we do not understand the significance for us of what they are saying.

Q. So why did John write Revelation?

A. We are getting close now to the questions which cannot, or should not, be answered in a general introduction but should, instead, be discovered through prayerful reading of the text.

A. But several things can be touched on by way of introduction. First, there is a sense that during the second half of the First Century AD, Christians were suffering some degree of persecution, including some degree of coercion to engage in Emperor worship and etc. To the extent this is true and/or to the extent that John expected such problems to arise, he may have been writing to comfort and encourage and admonish Christians in these circumstances.

A. I would add that regardless of the dating of the letter and the nature and extent of persecution, regarding which there is no scholarly consensus, such persecution was foreshadowed and foreseen by Christ and has affected Christians at all times and places. So this is probably one of the motives John had in writing Revelation. Indeed the text itself will bear this out, I think.

A. It is also true that John wrote Revelation, because God told him to, just as Moses wrote the Ten Commandments and other things at God’s command; just as the Old Testament prophets spoke and later wrote by God’s command. God’s command is reason enough to write. In some cases and to some extent God may supply the very words: “thus says the Lord.”

In other cases, as often here in Revelation, it seems that God has communicated with John through ecstatic vision and John has obediently sat down to record it, just as we have sometimes seen in Daniel and Ezekiel and elsewhere in the Old Testament and even elsewhere in the New Testament. Figurative objects and actions and sounds are presented to John's view, perhaps only in his mind's eye, sometimes with words of explanation and sometimes not. Then John has tried to record it.

Q. I wonder: how would you do that? How would you write a description of a fantastic vision?

A. As near as I can tell, you could not easily record the vision while you were having it. You would probably need to sit down later and record it. You would need to record it carefully, prayerfully, and in a very orderly way. And I think that some amount of explanation or interpretation would necessarily enter in to the process, just to enable you to write it down. Otherwise you would wind up with a disconnected stream of confused images.

I am sure that God superintended the entire writing process. Yet finally, as with all of the Bible, you have words of God spoken through human understanding, here John's understanding of the message that God was communicating through this complex vision.

One of the things that will be clearly noted is that the visions **recorded** in Revelation are highly structured. And we find also that very much Old Testament scripture has been incorporated into this writing, more than in any other New Testament book. So what we have is, finally and despite, or perhaps because of the rough Greek, an elaborately stylized piece of Biblical literature.

It is, if you will, a complex Biblical gem that you can pick up and examine, always discovering new facets.

It is very far from being easy to describe, much less to interpret definitively and with confidence.. Therefore it will not surprise you to learn that there has never been any clear consensus regarding how to interpret this marvelous and inspired document. I don't think there ever will be. That may be the point!

It is in that sense a very good book to study, as an exercise in learning how properly to read the Bible or any document. We can not really cheat. We need to wrestle with the text directly.

Today we have touched on introductory topics that may help us, and which I believe that we, as sincere believers and readers of the Bible are obligated to consider first, before studying the text.

And we will return to many of these introductory topics again as we go forward.

But as we go forward what we will mainly be trying to determine, in this order, is this:

First, what does the text say? As much as possible, we will try not to bring any theological or literary preconceptions with us. We'll just do our best to hear what the words are saying.

Second, having heard the words, we will try to understand what they mean. What theological, or spiritual, or moral, or historical, or other truths are communicated to us by the words being spoken.

Finally, we will try to understand how these things are relevant and significant to us.

This will surely be a "study" and we will pick up the pencil many times.

But I hope that when we are finished, we will all find it easier and more rewarding to read Revelation, with or without a pencil.

I hope that it won't just sit there at the end of the Bible like something we are avoiding, as it has for me until now.

Likewise I hope that we will be in a somewhat better position to evaluate and discuss with others their sometimes widely disparate views about what Revelation means.

I have no hope or intention of delivering to you in this class the definitive interpretation which, if it exists, may exist only in heaven.

Revelation is not an easy book for a human to understand!

May God help us and guide us through it.

Let's pray

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for this time that we could spend with you this evening.

Please bless this time unto us.

Thoughts that we had this evening which are useful and wholesome and pleasing to you,

please help us to remember and carry with us into our study of Revelation.

Where our thinking has been amiss, Lord, please forgive us and cause us to forget.

Please make us constantly submissive to your word and to your Spirit,

In this class and in our lives,

Guiding us into your perfect truth.

Please see everyone safely home this evening and back again next week, if that be your will.

In Jesus Name we pray.

Amen