Overview

Much abused but little used, Revelation is one of the most fascinating books in the bible. Through an intensive study of the Greek text against its OT, Jewish, and Hellenistic background, we will seek to better understand the message of the Apocalypse in its first-century setting [Mission statement 1-2]. We will then seek for responsible applications of the text for our own day [MS 1-2].

Textbooks

Required

The Book of Revelation, G.K. Beale
The Revelation of St. John, G.B. Caird [if available; if not, you can substitute Grant Osborne’s Baker commentary]
The Theology of the Book of Revelation, Richard Bauckham
The Apocalyptic Imagination, J.J. Collins

Course Requirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Greek Competency Quiz</td>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>0% (Pass/Fail)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>20-25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trans. of Gk text of Rev.</td>
<td>Dec 4 (no extensions)</td>
<td>15-30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(see below)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exegesis Paper</td>
<td>Dec 18</td>
<td>50-60%</td>
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On the Quizzes

The Greek Competency Quiz is required of every Greek exegesis class. You must pass this quiz to remain in the class. The quiz will be given the third class meeting and will consist of a translation passage from Revelation chapters 1-3 with parsing. The remaining quiz is designed to ensure an active engagement with the Greek text, readings, and lectures. It will contain a translation section with related short-answer questions, and short-answer questions pertaining to reading and lecture material.

On the Exegesis Paper

Each student is required to produce an exegesis paper of 12-15 pages (1.5 spacing, 12 point type; appendix accepted for charts, diagrams, illustrations, etc.) based on a portion of the Greek text of Revelation. You may choose a passage from anywhere in the book. Generally the passage should range from 6-12 verses, but there may be exceptions. This is meant to be an intensive exploration of the Greek text, and as such it should display the full range of exegetical skills developed in Interpreting the New Testament. The format should be a brief
introduction followed by a verse-by-verse discussion in the style of the Harper’s New Testament Commentary series. (The Revelation text by Caird, required for this course, is actually from this series, although we are using a reprint edition.) Your interaction with the Greek text, however, should often be more detailed than in the Harper’s commentary.

Translation/Preparation
You are required to translate the entire Greek text of Revelation. At the end of the term you will be asked to submit a sheet stating what percentage of the translation you have completed.

1. **No translation, no comments.** Students who have not read the Greek text for the day with reasonable understanding are not permitted to ask questions or make comments in class (aside from e.g. “Could you move the overhead up?” or “Is the quiz next Monday?”). As noted in “What We Do and Why” (see below), there are comments that are not at all helpful, and this rule is intended to minimize such comments.

2. **If you translate less than 50% of the required Greek text, you fail the class.** There is simply no way a person should pass a Greek exegesis class when he or she has read less than half of the relevant material. This does not mean you have to parse every last word, but you do need to read the Greek with a reasonable level of understanding.

3. **The less you do, the more it is worth.** I don’t want to artificially inflate grades by giving a huge bonus to people who do what I consider the minimum reasonable amount of translation – namely 100% -- but I do want to discipline those who do considerably less. So if you do between 90-100% of the translation, it will be worth 15% of your final grade. If, however, you do between 80-90%, it will rise to 20%. Between 65-80% will be worth 25%, and between 50-65% will be worth 30%. For example: if you read 50% of the Greek, you will receive a 50 on the translation component, and that will be worth 30% of the final grade. This means you are essentially starting with a B, and you can only go down from there.

**NOTE 1:** If you wish to receive papers or quizzes back, you must include your box number on them. Material without box numbers will be retained in my office.

**Note 2:** NO WORK IS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL. Each paper must be handed in as a hard copy.

**Note 3:** Please refrain from putting the paper in an envelope unless absolutely necessary.

**Schedule (subject to adjustment)**

**Sept 9**

*The One who Is and Was and Is To Come* Rev. 1

Reading: Begin working with Beale and Caird
Sept 11
*The One who Is and Was and Is To Come* Rev 1 (continued)
Reading: Bauckham, all

Sept 16
*For the One who has Ears to Hear* Revelation 2-3

Sept 18
*For the One who has Ears to Hear* Revelation 2-3 (continued)

Sept 23
*The Heavenly Throne Room* Revelation 4-5

Sept 25
*The Heavenly Throne Room* Revelation 4-5 (continued)

Sept 30
*The Four Horsemen* Rev. 6

Oct 2
*Warning Shots* Rev. 7-9

Oct 7
*Warning Shots* Rev. 7-9 (continued)

Oct 9
*Faithful Witness* Revelation 10-11

Oct 21
*Faithful Witness* Revelation 10-11 (continued)
Reading: Collins, selected pages to be announced

Oct 23
*The Woman, the Dragon, and the Beast* Revelation 12-14

Oct 28
*The Woman, the Dragon, and the Beast* Revelation 12-14 (continued)

Oct 30
*Quiz*

Nov 4
*Judgment* Revelation 15-17

Nov 6
*Judgment* Revelation 15-17 (continued)

Nov 18
*Fallen, Fallen* Revelation 18-19
Nov 20
   *The Millennium* Revelation 20

Dec 2
   *The New Jerusalem* Rev. 21-22

Dec 4
   *The New Jerusalem* Rev. 21-2 (continued)
What We Do in Class, and Why
Q&A

Class Participation

Q: Why should I have to put up with inane comments from fellow students? I pay to hear what the Professor has to say!
A: There are several reasons. The most important one is that I believe God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer for the edification of the whole (see esp. 1 Cor. 12-14). While I also believe in special gifting for teaching (see James 3), this hardly absolves others of the responsibility to be active learners. We regularly hear complaints about people not putting into practice what we preach from the pulpits. Is this any wonder if we train them to focus their attention exclusively on the speaker? We are meant to make disciples, not to perpetuate Stalinist personality cults. Disciples ask questions, make mistakes, need rebuke and encouragement. You cannot just tell them, “Shut up and do what you’re told.” I would hope that in the graduate classroom we would model the dynamic interaction that was meant to flourish in the Spirit-filled body of Christ. Another reason is that you may actually learn valuable content from your fellow students. It is true that in general the professor ought to know more than the students about the topic at hand. But this hardly means he or she has exhaustive knowledge of the subject, or that everything will be communicated with crystal clarity.

Q: Amen! I love that answer to Question 1, because I love to talk in class! There’s no such thing as a dumb question, right?
A: Ah, wrong, actually. There are all sorts of dumb questions that get asked: questions that stem from people not listening to what was said earlier in class, questions that stem from people willfully mis-hearing things because of their theological prejudices, questions that stem from people wanting to make themselves the center of attention even though they are making a statement of little or no value. As a rule of thumb, students in a medium size class (twenty-thirty students) ought to make one or two comments per class. When you open your mouth to speak in class, you should not do it casually or simply because the mood strikes you. You ought to do it because you are compelled by the Spirit, and you discern that the question you ask or the comment you make will build up the others in the class, not simply display your erudition. Paul is clear in 1 Cor. 14 that even people with the Holy Spirit cannot claim to be “carried away” and unable to control themselves. “The spirit of prophets is subject to prophets” (1 Cor 14). This may speak to the fact that prophets can exert internal checks on their own speaking, or it could refer to the fact that other prophets can rightly tell a speaker that his or her message is not in fact springing from the Spirit but from some other source. In either case, there is a need for responsible speech in the assembly of God’s people.

This of course ends up requiring a delicate balance. It is the Professor’s responsibility to manage things for the benefit of all students, but it is difficult to simply ignore a given student because you suspect they might say something useless. The onus, as I see it, is primarily on each participant who chooses to speak. Could this lead to some less valuable things being said? I suppose so, but that is a risk I am willing to take. If nothing else, the (occasional!) ridiculous
comment provides a laboratory for breaking down faulty reasoning, and a model for handling such situations in your own ministries – because, yes, people will actually make inane comments in churches!

Unusual Educational Experiences

Q: Why do we sometimes have to listen to children’s books or folk songs or watch film clips? I thought we were supposed to be studying the gospel of Luke, or New Testament theology.

A: Two points here. First, we are not only studying the text in its original language and setting, we are learning to communicate that text in the contemporary world. While I primarily emphasize communicating from the pulpit or the lectern, it is important to utilize more non-traditional delivery systems, provided they are carefully chosen and relate meaningfully to the biblical passage in question. Second, there are times when a song or story may in fact capture the essence of a passage as well or better than a detached, clinical examination of the grammar or historical background.

Q: Amen, again! (It’s me, the guy who likes to talk in class!) I hate grammar and history and all that. It’s so liberating to hear that none of that matters!

A: Ah, wrong again, although I guess technically that was “more a comment than a question.” Grammar and history and all that do in fact matter, profoundly. In Greek exegesis classes in particular, you are expected to know the details of the text intimately. Even if we spend much of our discussion time on a question of theology or application, I am presupposing that you will have worked hard at translating the passage and exploring any relevant background material. If you want to preach God’s word rather than your own word, you need to work.

References to Popular Culture and Sports

Q: Why are there so many references to popular culture and sports in the lectures? And why are they all to things that happened, like, a million years ago? Like, who is Johnny Bravo, or whatever?

A: The pedagogically correct answer is that I am trying again to show that the gospel can relate meaningfully to modern culture. Pastors and teachers are always under a cloud of suspicion that they have no real understanding of the everyday lives of people inside or outside of the church. The occasional reference to popular culture (and I hope it is only occasional, not a steady diet) can serve as a reminder that we do in fact keep in touch with what is going on. The less pedagogically correct answer is that I spent an inordinate time of my semi-misspent youth watching television and listening to new wave music, so that when my little mind is searching for illustrative material, it is more likely to hit upon the Brady Bunch than a Brandenburg Concerto. And the older I get, the less distant those days feel, so 70’s references seem “contemporary” to me (if I really want to be down with it I may venture into the 80’s or 90’s). Sorry. That also leads us to your final question: Johnny Bravo, in my parlance, is not a reference to the current Cartoon Network animated program. “Johnny Bravo” was to become Greg Brady’s stage name during his short-lived bid for pop stardom. Greg rejected the enterprise when he realized the promoters had chosen him not for his innate abilities (first evidenced in his work with The Banana Convention), but because he “fit the [matador-like sequined] suit.” Thus a “Johnny Bravo situation” could refer to any circumstances in which personal authenticity or lack thereof is in question.
Greek Exegesis Classes
12 Step Method

The Method and the Class

Those of you who have not had me for Interpreting the New Testament, or who have not had Dr Stuart for Old Testament, may not be familiar with the 12 Step Method for interpreting the Bible. Don’t panic: all of the New Testament faculty teach essentially the same methodology. It is simply the terminology that differs. Below I give a brief summary of Stuart’s 12 step method (with my own very minor adjustments) so that you will know what I am referring to during the course of the semester.

In Greek exegesis classes, I will expect you to think through all twelve steps as you prepare the texts we will be covering that day. Obviously this will involve consulting secondary sources on matters like historical background, but the bulk of the work will consist of you assessing for yourself the various exegetical issues that may arise. It is also important to remember that not all the steps will be equally relevant for every text. We may be speaking about a passage which has no significant textual variants but raises major theological issues. Or we may find a passage in which the meaning of a single word carries enormous weight in interpretation.

Generally speaking, in the early lectures of the term I try to do in-depth exegesis of the initial chapters of the book, explicitly invoking the various steps of the exegetical process (not necessarily in order). As the semester goes on, we tend to take a more synthetic approach, dealing with the major themes of the chapter or section, and dealing with particular exegetical problems as they arise. Often the discussion may focus on one exegetical skill with particular relevance for that text.

The reason I find the 12 step method so helpful is that it forces you to think through all the potentially relevant information for exegesis and application. The Bible is a very complex book, and a single favored approach can never do justice to its richness. We need to be open to a variety of questions that arise from the text and develop skills for addressing all of them. The 12 step method gives you a framework for asking and answering those questions.

The Method in Brief

The twelve step method can be broken down into five major categories. The various steps answer the questions:

- What is there? (*Text, Translation, Lexical Data, Grammatical Data*)
- What sort of thing is it? (*Genre/Form*)
- How is it set up? (*Structure*)
- How does it fit in? (*Historical Context, Literary Context, Biblical Context, Secondary Literature*)
- Where does it go? (*Theology, Application*)

Here is a little more detail on each of the steps, with the questions you will ask yourself as you work through a passage:

*Text*

Is the NA27 secure, or might the original have read differently? Do the variants highlight any interesting interpretive issues?
Translation
How are you going to put your Greek text into your target language? How can you capture nuances in the text without overtranslating?

Lexical Data
Speaking of translation, what do the words mean, anyway? Do any of them necessitate a thorough word study? How are the important words used in the OT?

Grammatical Data
Speaking of words, how do they fit together? What is intended by the various prepositions, nouns, verbs, articles, particles, etc.?

Genre/Form
What am I dealing with at the macro level (genre) – an epistle, an apocalypse, a gospel? How should that affect the way I interpret this passage? What am I dealing with at the micro-level (form) – a miracles story, a household code, a dream vision account? Can I compare with similar forms inside, or outside, the canon?

Structure
What does the X-ray of my passage look like? How does it flow? Is there an argument I need to follow? Any parallelism?

Historical Context
The passage was not written in a vacuum – how does the “outside world” affect my understanding of the text?

Literary Context
How does my passage fit with the surrounding material? With the book as a whole?

Biblical Context
How does my passage fit in with the OT? With the rest of the NT?

Theology
How does my passage fit in the flow of the bible’s story of the work of the creating and redeeming God? What contribution does it make to questions asked in systematic theology?

Secondary Literature
What have other people said about my passage? Do I need to alter any of my conclusions in light of their input?

Application
How does this text apply to those in my church community? How should it affect my own life? How would it relate to other church situations I am aware of around the world?