

Revelation - Introduction, Part 5

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COURSE COMMENTARY



Acceptance into the Canon

- **Interrelated Factors**
Three factors are difficult to treat in isolation: 1) the uniqueness of the style of writing; 2) the question of authorship; 3) and acceptance into the canon. Here we look at the last of these factors.
- **Early Abuse**
Montanus appealed to the book to support of some of his teachings, especially an extravagant view of the Millennial Kingdom.
- **Reaction of the Early Church**
In rejecting Montanism, the Church began to emphasize the purely **spiritual** and a denial of the **material** aspects of God's blessings.
- **Rise of Allegorism**
The tendency to reinterpret the material in spiritual terms was strengthened by the rise of allegorical interpretation.

Rejection by Eastern Church

- **Dionysius the Great**
Dionysius the Great, bishop of Alexandria, opposed the chiliastic views of Nepos, a bishop in Egypt. He concluded from linguistic aspects of the text that John was not the author of Revelation.
- **Doubts in the Eastern Church**
Dionysius' rejection of apostolic authorship led to doubts for years to come in the Eastern Church regarding the inspiration of Revelation.
- **Eastern Church Recognizes Canonicity**
Included in the list of canonical texts in Third Council of Carthage (A.D. 397). Not fully accepted by Eastern Church until Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 680).
- **Attitude of Reformers: One of Disdain**
Luther in 1522: " My mind cannot use itself to the Book, and to me the fact that **Christ is neither taught nor recognized in it** is good and sufficient cause for my low estimation. "

Acceptance by Western Church

- **Direct Knowledge of Author**
The seven churches of Asia, part of the Western Church, were direct recipients of the book.

- **Church Fathers who accepted Revelation**
Included Papias (bishop of Hierapolis); Justin Martyr; Irenaeus (bishop of Lyon); Theophilus (bishop of Antioch in Syria); Tertullian; and Clement of Alexandria.
- **Significance of Acceptance by Western Church**
Among these Church Fathers were men who had very close links to the time and place of writing: Papias in **Hierapolis** ; Justin Martyr in **Ephesus** and **Smyrna**.
- **Accepted as Canonical**
Recognized in Festal letter of Athanasius in 367. Listed in canon of New Testament Scriptures by the Damascine Council (382) and the Council of Carthage (397).

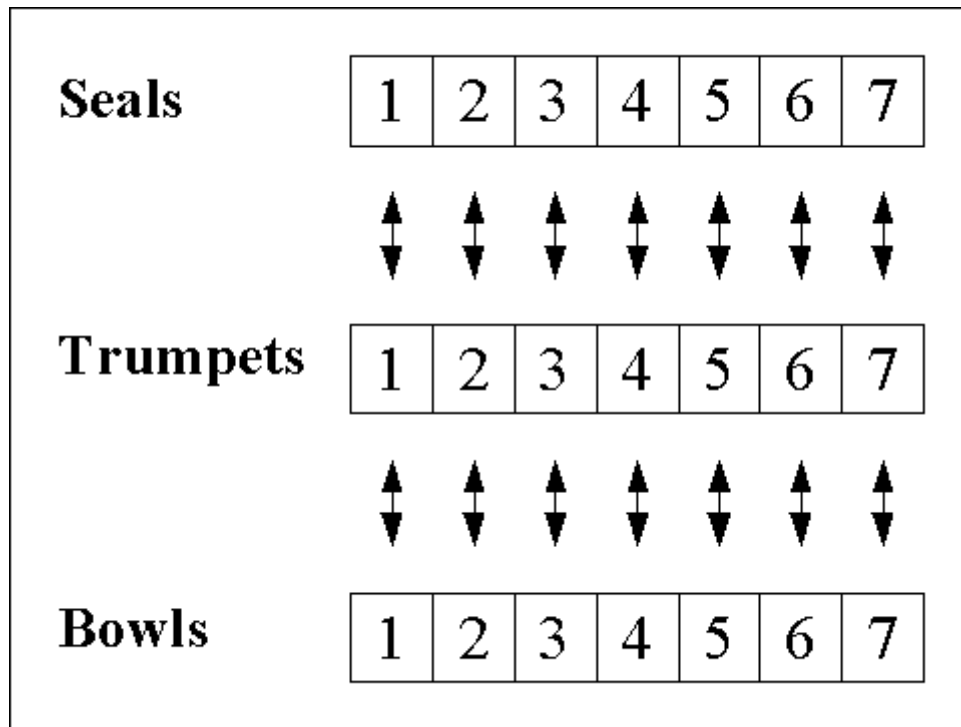
Status Today

- **Canonicity is Accepted**
The canonicity is no longer questioned, and its intensive allusions to the Old Testament have become more widely appreciated.
- **Disagreement over Interpretation not Canonicity**
The area of disagreement concerning *The Book of Revelation* is not over whether it is authoritative, but how it should be **interpreted**.

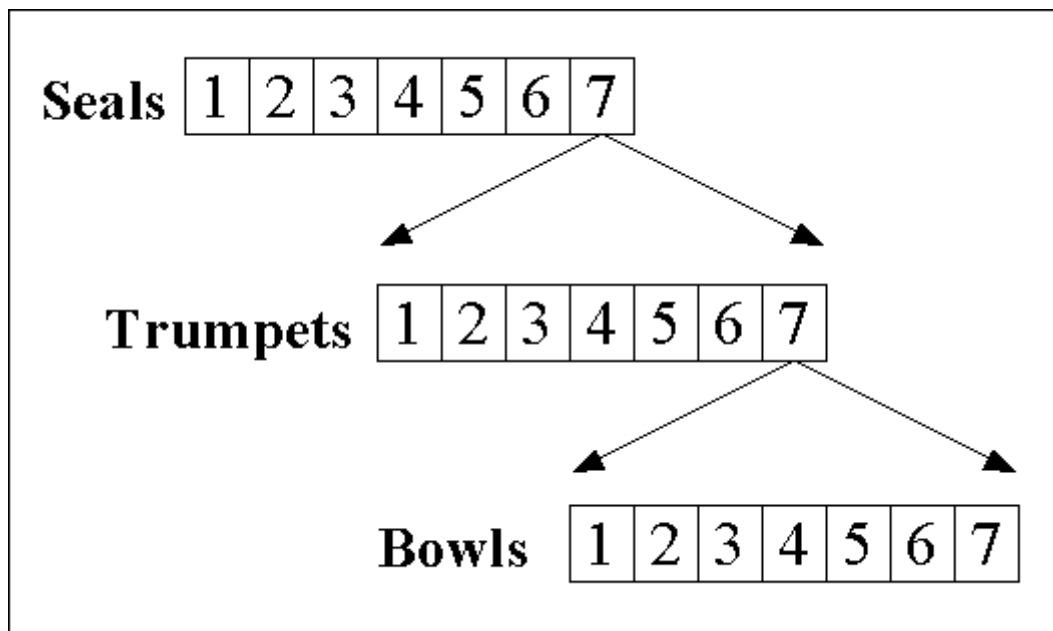
Literary Structure

- **Variety of Views**
Depending upon which elements of the book are seen as most determinative in outlining the material, widely different results are obtained.
- **Sequential or Recapitulation?**
Are the seals, trumpets, and bowls **sequential** ? Or do similarities between some of the passages imply a description of different details concerning the same event (**recapitulation**)?

Recapitulation of Events



Sequential Events



Evidence Favors Sequential Events

- **Evidence for Sequential Events**
 - 1) Seven seals are followed by seven trumpets which are then followed by seven bowls.
 - 2) Similarities between judgments are overshadowed by distinct differences.
 - 3) No parallel alignment between the 1st, 5th, and 7th judgements of the septets.
 - 4) Greek phrases *kai eidon* ("and I saw") and *meta tauta* ("after these") indicate sequential movement.
 - 5) Each set of judgments is more intense and destructive than the previous ones.
 - 6) The seventh trumpet is linked to the seven bowls.

7) 144,000 sealed after sixth seal are protected from demonic plague of fifth trumpet (sixth seal must precede fifth trumpet).

- **Structural Outline**

We will follow the structural outline shown in the [commentary](#).

For additional information on this topic, see the [commentary](#).