

**Syllabus for  
THE BOOK OF REVELATION  
NTL786**

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**I. Course Description and Objectives**

*Description:* This course is an exploration of the major passages and theology of the book of Revelation and the history of its use in the Church. More specifically, it will focus on ways of approaching this text, the historical, social and literary background against which it is to be understood, the theology it expresses, and the consequences for the Church's worship and ministry in light of this theology. Specific attention will also be given to the contemporary problems and possibilities it generates for the pastor in the North American Church (*Prerequisite: BIB550 or the equivalent*).

*Objectives:* Upon successful completion of the course you will have:

1. Demonstrated a basic grasp of the content and theology of the book of Revelation (R1, R3, R5, R7).
2. Demonstrated a rudimentary understanding of the social, political, rhetorical, and inter-textual/canonical backgrounds against which it might be best understood (R2, R3, R5, R7).
3. Demonstrated familiarity with the overall contour of Revelation's interpretation in the history of the Church, including some of its popular interpretations today (R 3, R4).
4. Demonstrated an ability to articulate various consequences that taking Revelation seriously has for the identity, worship, and ministry of the Church (R5, R6, R7).
5. Demonstrated an ability to utilize responsibly a passage or passages from Revelation in an ecclesial setting i.e., most probably teaching or preaching in a local church or para-church setting (R6, R7).

**II. Required Textbooks/Reading**

Bauckham, Richard. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Koester, Craig. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.

LaHaye, Tim and Jerry B. Jenkins. *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*. Tyndale House, 1995. **(You should obtain the cheapest [or even a free] copy you can online or elsewhere.)**

Lindsey, Hal. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970. **(You should obtain the cheapest [or even a free] copy you can online or elsewhere.)**

Longenecker, Bruce. *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

Reddish, Mitchell. *Revelation*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001.

### III. Helpful Websites

<http://www.ntgateway.com/rev.htm>

This is the Revelation section of the NT Gateway site. It is one of the best sites on the Web for generally reliable information on Revelation and the rest of NT studies.

<http://www.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/Main.htm>

A website by Craig Koester. Clearly presented information and nicely illustrated pictures and images relevant to interpreting Revelation. A nice tour of the seven cities of Revelation 2-3.

[http://www.religioustolerance.org/end\\_wrlld.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/end_wrlld.htm)

A website that keeps track of recent wrong predictions related to popular predictions of the end of the world which are, at times, based on particular interpretations of the book of Revelation.

### IV. Course Requirements

Note: Most of the assignments below involve using the online classroom software, Moodle, in some way. To find out how to complete the task the assignment asks you to do, go into the Moodle website at <http://Moodle.nts.edu>. Sign in by using the user name and password sent to you by the IT department here at NTS. (If you do not have a user name and password, email [support@NTS.edu](mailto:support@NTS.edu) immediately and they will send them to you.) From there, click on “Support” in the menu bar at the top of the page. Next, click on “Student Frequently Asked Questions.” In this resource you should be able to find instructions on any task that you will be required to do.

**1. Reading Revelation.** You must read Revelation through (preferably in one sitting but **in no more than two** sittings) at least eight times immediately prior to, or during, this course. **The first reading is due by 11:59 PM on Wednesday, September 16. The second is due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, September 20.** (Between your first and second readings, you should complete the Longenecker assignment below.) See the other scheduled readings on the Schedule of Topics and Assignments below. (As an aid to help focus your reading, I’ve included a diagram of the structure of Revelation that I’ll use in class in the Course Resources topic area in Moodle. Use it if it is helpful to you but don’t bother with it if it isn’t helpful. It will make more sense to you after the class than before.) Each time a reading is due, you must post a statement in the Reading Revelation Forum in Moodle by the due date/time saying that you have completed that reading. Each reading counts 10 points toward your final grade, making all eight readings count 80 points toward your final grade. **You cannot “make up” any of this reading. You can only get credit for what you actually read by the due date listed on the Schedule of Topics and Assignments below. Since these are basically “give away” points, this is an all or nothing assignment. You do not get credit for partial reading.**

**\*\*Note Carefully\*\*** To save time, as you read Revelation, you should keep a running master list of *critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of the text. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions will later become a part of requirement 5 described below.

- 2. Longenecker Reflection Paper:** Read Revelation carefully (this will count as your **first** reading of Revelation). Next, read Bruce Longenecker’s novel, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum*. Then read Revelation carefully again (this will count as your **second** reading of Revelation). Assume that Longenecker’s historical novel adequately captures the socio-historical, cultural, and especially the political and social feel of the first century setting in which Revelation would have been first heard. Write a 750-1,000 word (3-4 pages) paper, typed, and double-spaced, answering the following question: How does understanding Revelation in light of this background change the way I read it? Give **specific examples from the text of Revelation** which sound different to you after reading Longenecker and **explain why they now sound different**. You may earn up to 80 points for this essay. You will submit your paper in Moodle within the Assignments topic area. Under Assignments click the appropriate link for “Longenecker Paper.” On the screen that appears click the **Browse** button, select your file, click **Open**, and then click **Upload this file**. Your assignment must be uploaded as an MS Word file by 5:00 PM CT, Monday, September 21.
- 3. Insights from Bauckham, Reddish, and Koester.** Read the following pages in these three books carefully: Bauckham, 1-22; Reddish, xix-xxiv, 1-30; Koester, 1-40. Briefly describe 25 insights you gained from these books that you consider to be significant. Make sure you draw at least 4 insights from Bauckham, 5 from Reddish, and 6 from Koester (= 15) noting the author and page number from which you are drawing the insight. The remaining 10 insights may come from any of these books. You may earn up to 50 points for this assignment. You will submit your paper in Moodle within the Assignments topic area. Under Assignments click the appropriate link for “Insights.” On the screen that appears click the **Browse** button, select your file, click **Open**, and then click **Upload this file**. Your assignment must be uploaded as an MS Word file by 5:00 PM CT, Monday 9/28. An example of an “A” quality CRR will be available in Moodle in the Course Resources topic area. It will be called “Model Insights Assignment.” Please keep in mind that this example will be over the entirety of one book, not portions of three books.
- 4. Fishbowl Discussions.** You will actively participate in two “fishbowl” discussions. The “fishbowl” will consist of a class discussion/critical analysis of the book or essays assigned for that day. **I will not simply give these points away because you show up in class that day.** You must make regular contributions during this discussion period in a way that demonstrates an understanding of, **and a critical engagement with**, the assigned book or essays.
  - a.** You may earn up to 40 points by actively participating in a “fishbowl” discussion of *Late Great Planet Earth (LGPE)* focusing on its driving theological agenda and assumptions. It will be held on Monday, October 5. Depending on how many students are in the class, I may split the class in parts with parts of the class discussing sections of the book. If this happens, you will not know which part of the reading you will be assigned to discuss. **In any**

**case, you are responsible for all of the assigned reading.** Hence, you should carefully read the whole book and take notes on it (in some form or fashion). In any case, we will attempt to limit the total class time we spend on the book to 60-90 minutes.

- b. You may earn up to 40 points by actively participating in a “fishbowl” discussion of *Left Behind (LB)* **focusing on its driving theological agenda and assumptions.** It will be held on Monday, November 9. Depending on how many students are in the class, I may split the class in parts with parts of the class discussing sections of the book. If this happens, you will not know which part of the reading you will be assigned to discuss. **In any case, you are responsible for all of the assigned reading.** Hence, you should carefully read the whole book and take notes on it (in some form or fashion). In any case, we will attempt to limit the total class time we spend on the book to 60-90 minutes.

**5. Critical Reading Responses (CRR) to Revelation, Bauckham, Witherington, and Reddish.**

You will prepare two critical reading responses of **1,500-2,500 words** each in which you critically engage a portion of Revelation and the textbook reading associated with it. You will be penalized for having significantly more or less words than the lower and upper limits. For the specific content and due dates of these CRR’s, see the Schedule of Topics and Assignments below.

These responses should have three sections: (1) *Critical* questions and insights of comprehensive or theological significance that arise from a careful reading of Revelation itself **prior to** reading the selections from the textbooks. These questions and comments should not only note the scriptural context of the concern, but what matter of importance is at stake. These questions should be an **edited version** of your running master list of *critical* questions and insights that you generated during your prior readings of Revelation. (2) *Critical* questions and observations that your reading of Reddish, Koester, and Bauckham raises in your mind about the biblical text and/or vice-versa, critical questions and observations that reading the biblical text raises in your mind about your reading of Reddish, Koester, and Bauckham. (3) A comparative section noting any significant disagreements or inconsistencies between Reddish, Koester, and Bauckham **as to how they address specific critical issues.** An example of an “A” quality CRR will be available in Moodle in the Course Resources topic area. It will be called “Model CRR.”

You will submit your CRR’s in Moodle within the Assignments topic area. Under Assignments click the appropriate link for the particular CRR you are submitting (e.g., CRR1 or CRR2). On the screen that appears click the **Browse** button, select your file, click **Open**, and then click **Upload this file**. CRR1 must be uploaded as an MS Word file by 5:00 PM CT on Monday October, 26 and CRR2 by 5:00 PM CT on Monday, November 23. You may earn up to 125 points for each CRR making them worth a total of 250 points. My assistant, Laura Lyons, will be grading your CRRs.

- 6. “In Ministry” Assignment.** During the semester, you will teach or preach from a passage in Revelation 4–22. You could do this in a local church setting (e.g., preaching, teaching a Sunday School class, a Bible study, etc.) or a para-church setting (e.g., preaching at the Kansas City Rescue Mission, leading a Bible study at the KC Urban Youth Center, etc.). Whatever setting

you choose, you must ask someone (preferably a pastor, a person in charge, someone with theological training who is not currently an NTS student, or a professional type person) to fill out an evaluation form and sign it. **I must approve the person you plan to ask ahead of time.** I will use that person's evaluation of your presentation as well as your written sermon, notes, lesson plan, etc. to evaluate this assignment. You may earn up to 60 points for it. It can be done any time **after October 12** but it must be completed with the evaluation and your written materials in my mailbox at NTS **by no later than Thursday, December 3 at 4:30 PM CT.**

- 7. Take-home Essay/Research Paper.** You may choose to either write a take-home essay on a question that will be distributed the last day of class (3,000-5,000 words) or a research paper on some aspect of the interpretation of Revelation (4,500-6,000 words). You may earn up to 400 points for this essay/research paper. You will submit your Essay/Paper in Moodle within the Assignments topic area. Under Assignments click the appropriate link for "Essay/Paper." On the screen that appears click the **Browse** button, select your file, click **Open**, and then click **Upload this file**. Your essay/paper must be uploaded as an MS Word file by 11:59 PM CT on Monday, December 14.

The take-home essay will be a question (or questions) related to the interpretation of Revelation and the ministry implications of the material we've covered in class and in the reading. Hence, to answer it, you will creatively draw on your class notes, all your course reading, and on your own theological reflections in the context of a ministry situation.

Unless you will have access to the NTS library or another equivalent theological library, you should **not** choose to write the research paper. As a research paper, it clearly **requires additional research over and above your class resources**. If you do choose to write the research paper, **I must approve whatever topic you choose by Monday, November 16 by the time class is over**. If I haven't approved a research topic for you by that time, I will assume you are writing the take home essay.

As general guidelines for the research paper, follow the instructions given by Joel Green in the document, "Some Comments on Research Papers." It is located in Moodle in the Course Resources topic area. **I will assume you have read and followed Green's directions when I grade your paper.** Note carefully: You should begin your research paper with a thesis statement that explicitly states the thesis you intend to argue and return to that thesis statement in your conclusion. While the paper should generally follow Turabian style, you may consult the *SBL Handbook of Style* for proper form for footnotes, abbreviations, etc. You may also use the document entitled "Ripples and Luke 24HBT.doc" located in Moodle in the Course Resources topic areas as a general guide as to how this paper should look in terms of footnotes and style. Although you are not limited to them, I have included some possible topics below.

*Possible Topics:*

- 1) Is it possible for Revelation to be read with a missional hermeneutic? If so, demonstrate how it might look.
- 2) Explore in detail a theological theme on the basis of your reading of Revelation (e.g., creation, redemption, Christology, ecclesiology, holiness).
- 3) How do we square the violence of Revelation with the God of the Gospels?
- 4) Give a critical history of interpretation of one of the major symbols in Revelation (e.g., 666, the Beast, the False Prophet, Babylon, the New Jerusalem).
- 5) How does John make use of and reshape an OT theme/image (or themes/images) in Revelation (e.g., Exodus, creation, temple, redemption, messianic war, the eschatological earthquake)?
- 6) Give a summary and critique of the interpretation of key passages in Revelation put forward by one of its major or popular interpreters (e.g., Irenaeus, Augustine, Joseph Mede, John Nelson Darby, Tim LaHaye).
- 7) Does Revelation contain an implicit universalism (i.e., the view that all will ultimately be saved)?
- 8) Is there an implicit “secret rapture” in Revelation?
- 9) Construct a theology of worship based on the book of Revelation.

## V. Summary of Grading Policy

**A Word about Grading:** Evaluation in this kind of course, by its very nature, involves an element of subjectivity. It involves someone who is an expert in the field making a judgment on the kind of work you produce. That is a part of what you are paying for in this class. The primary factors I take into account in assessing “good solid graduate work,” the sort of work to which I assign a “B” are (1) ability to demonstrate a breadth and depth of understanding of the material engaged; (2) ability to engage this material **in a critical way**; (3) ability to exhibit how the material is related to a larger theological and ecclesial context. If you demonstrate a **consistent** ability to do these things in all your coursework, you can expect to receive a B. If you demonstrate consistent ability to do them **incisively and with excellence**, you can expect to receive an A. If you demonstrate an ability to do these things **often, but not consistently**, you can expect to receive a C. (Hence, I assume that a C means “average,” or “satisfactory” work. It does **not** mean “bad” or “unsatisfactory.”) If you **seldom** demonstrate an ability to do these things, you can expect to receive a D.

The final grade will be computed using the following point scale. There are 1,000 possible points.

80 points	Reading Revelation
80 points	Longenecker Reflection Paper
50 points	Insights
40 points	<i>Late Great Planet Earth</i> Fishbowl
40 points	<i>Left Behind</i> Fishbowl
250 points	Critical Reading Reviews
60 points	“In-Ministry” Assignment
400 points	Final Project

The following point scale will determine letter grades:

A	1,000-900
B	899-800
C	799-700
D	699-600
F	599-0

## Schedule of Topics and Assignments

**Note: All Revelation Readings are due at 11:59 PM CT**

(R = Reddish, Bk = Bauckham, K = Koester)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
09/14	Getting acquainted/Intro to the course/Revelation in History	
09/16		1 <sup>st</sup> Revelation Reading
09/20		2 <sup>nd</sup> Revelation Reading
09/21	Intro to Apocalyptic Literature/Intro to Revelation/Nature of Symbols/Political and Social Background	Longenecker Paper (5:00 PM CT)
09/27		3 <sup>rd</sup> Revelation Reading
09/28	Revelation 1 and the Messages to the Seven Churches (Rev. 1-3)	Insights Assignment (5:00 PM CT)
10/04		4 <sup>th</sup> Revelation Reading
10/05	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 4-7)/LGPE Fishbowl	
10/12	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 4-7)	
10/25		5 <sup>th</sup> Revelation Reading
10/26	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 8-11)	CRR 1 by 5:00 PM CT (Content: R, 31-228; K, 41-113; Bk, 23-108)
11/02	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 12-14)	
11/07		6 <sup>th</sup> Revelation Reading
11/09	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 12-14)/LB Fishbowl	
11/16	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 15-19:10)	Research paper topic must be approved by end of class time
11/23	TBA	CRR 2 by 5:00 PM CT (Content: R, 229-438; K, 115-205; Bk, 109-64)
11/30	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 19:11-20:15)	7 <sup>th</sup> Revelation Reading
12/03		“In Ministry” Assignment Due in my mailbox by 4:30 PM
12/07	Key Passages in Revelation (Rev. 21-22)	
12/13		8 <sup>th</sup> Revelation Reading
<b>12/14</b>		<b>Take-home Essay/Research Paper by 11:59 PM CT</b>