

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 38, Excursus: Revelation 3 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 38, Excursus: Revelation 3, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture offers an in-depth analysis of key sections in the Book of Revelation, focusing on symbolic interpretations relevant to first-century Christians. He examines the two witnesses in Chapter 11 as symbolic of the church's role to witness even in suffering, and how God preserves His people. The lecture explores different views of the millennium in Chapter 20—premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism—ultimately proposing it symbolizes the vindication of God's people rather than a literal period. **Additionally, the lecture contrasts the corrupt Roman Empire with the vision of the New Jerusalem in chapters 21 and 22, emphasizing the ultimate destiny of God's people is a renewed earth.** The lecture argues that Revelation is ultimately a call to resist worldly arrogance, remain faithful to Christ, and recognize God's sovereignty.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 38 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).



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3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 38, Excursus: Revelation 3

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on the Book of Revelation, focusing on chapters 11, 20, 21, and 22, and the overarching message of the book.

Briefing Document: Dr. Dave Mathewson on Revelation (Lectures 38)

Overall Theme: Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that Revelation is not primarily a predictive text about the end times but a symbolic book addressing the challenges faced by first-century Christians in the Roman Empire. It calls for faithfulness to Jesus Christ in the face of persecution and unveils the true nature of the conflict between God's kingdom and worldly powers.

Key Sections & Ideas:

- **Revelation 11: The Two Witnesses**
- **Symbolic Interpretation:** The two witnesses are *not* literal figures (like Moses and Elijah returned), but symbolize the *entire church*. "Probably these two individuals are symbolic of the entire church." Their role is to witness for Jesus Christ, even in the face of suffering.
- **Old Testament Connection:** The witnesses' power (plagues, stopping rain) and the requirement of "two or three witnesses" link them to Moses, Elijah, and Old Testament legal principles.
- **Church's Role:** The church's primary role, even during persecution, is to be a witness and testimony for Jesus Christ.
- **God's Preservation:** God will not allow His church to be completely exterminated. While it may suffer, God will preserve it. "God will not allow his church to be dealt a death blow. It will not be completely wiped out. Although it may suffer persecution, God will still preserve it."
- **Temple Imagery:** The measuring of the temple symbolizes God's protection and preservation of His people. "That whole picture of the temple and altar and the people that worship all symbolize God's people, the church."
- **Vindication:** The resurrection of the witnesses symbolizes the ultimate vindication of the church. "In the end, they will be vindicated. Rome will not have the last word. The empires of this world will not have the final say."

- **Call to Faithfulness:** Chapter 11 encourages Christians to remain faithful witnesses to Jesus, even amidst suffering, with the assurance of eventual vindication. It addresses the question: "Is it worth compromising faith in Jesus Christ for allegiance to Rome? Or is it worth resisting?"
- **Revelation 20: The Millennium**
- **Three Main Interpretations:** Dr. Mathewson outlines the three main historical interpretations of the millennium:
 - **Pre-millennialism:** Christ returns *before* the millennium, inaugurating it Himself. Can be literal (1000 years, restoration of Israel) or symbolic (transition between ages).
 - **Post-millennialism:** The millennium is established *before* Christ's return, through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Spirit. The church is responsible for ushering in this "golden age."
 - **Amillennialism:** The "thousand years" is symbolic of the *entire period of church history* between Christ's first and second comings, during which Christ reigns from heaven. "The thousand years does not refer, according to amillennialism, the thousand years is not a physical period of time on earth, but, symbolically, it portrays the reign, spiritual reign of Christ right now from heaven."
 - **Mathewson's Interpretation:** Dr. Mathewson proposes that the millennium is *not* a specific period of time at all, but a symbolic way of describing what takes place at the second coming of Christ: the complete vindication and reward of God's people, and the judgment of the earth. "It's simply a symbolic way of describing the complete vindication of the people of God and the reward of God's people." He finds the text "laconic" and believes questions about the specifics of the millennium go beyond what the text intends to convey.
- **Focus on Vindication:** The main point is the vindication of God's people and the establishment of God's justice and judgment.
- **Revelation 21-22: The New Jerusalem**
- **Counterpart to Babylon (Rome):** The New Jerusalem is presented as the alternative to the corrupt and doomed Roman Empire (Babylon). "John now provides them with an alternative. If they will leave Rome... they have somewhere to go. And that is a city that far outstrips and far surpasses anything that Rome could have offered."

- **Old Testament Roots:** Virtually every verse is rooted in the Old Testament, drawing on prophetic literature from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. "Virtually everything goes back to the Old Testament." It represents the ultimate fulfillment of Old Testament promises.
- **Symbolic Interpretation:** The New Jerusalem is *not* a literal, physical city, but symbolizes the *perfected people of God* dwelling on a new earth. "In my opinion, the city in Revelation 21 and 22 symbolizes once again the people of God."
- **People, Not Architecture:** John is more interested in describing the *people themselves* than giving an architectural blueprint.
- **New Earth, Not Just Heaven:** The ultimate destiny of God's people is *not* a disembodied existence in heaven, but a physical existence on a new earth. "The ultimate destiny of God's people is intriguingly not heaven but a new earth." This echoes the creation narrative in Genesis.
- **Continuity with Creation:** There is continuity between the first creation and the new creation, emphasizing the physical reality of our future destiny.
- **Call to Separation and Hope:** Christians are called to separate from the corrupting influences of the world (like Rome) and embrace the hope of belonging to the consummated community of God's people in the new creation.
- **Creation and New Creation:**
 - God intended humanity to live on the earth and dwell with Him.
 - Israel's failure mirrors Adam and Eve.
 - Prophets anticipated Israel returning to the land and a greater transformation to take place.
 - New Creation is both already present (in Christ) and not yet (Revelation 21-22).

Overarching Message of Revelation:

- **Unmasking Evil:** Revelation exposes the pretensions and anti-godliness of worldly systems and institutions.
- **Resisting Worldly Power:** It calls for resistance to those powers and a commitment to living holy lives. "Revelation unveils all the pretensions and false claims of our society and any institution or person or empire that sets itself up over God. And it calls on us to resist that."

- **Exclusive Obedience to Christ:** It demands exclusive obedience and worship to Jesus Christ, regardless of the cost. "It's a call to render exclusive obedience and worship to Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost."
- **Worship God Alone:** Only Jesus Christ and God are worthy of worship and allegiance.

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 38, Excursus: Revelation 3

Revelation: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, demonstrating your understanding of the material.

1. What is the symbolic significance of the "bottomless pit" mentioned in Revelation 11 and 20?
2. According to the lecture, who do the two witnesses in Revelation 11 likely represent?
3. How does the measuring of the temple in Revelation 11 symbolize God's protection of his church?
4. Briefly describe the pre-millennial view of the millennium.
5. Briefly describe the post-millennial view of the millennium.
6. Briefly describe the amillennial view of the millennium.
7. According to Dr. Mathewson, what is the primary function of the millennium passage in Revelation 20?
8. Who or what does the "woman riding a beast" in Revelation 17-18 likely symbolize for first-century readers?
9. What is the relationship between the New Jerusalem and the Old Testament?
10. What is the ultimate destiny of God's people according to Revelation?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The "bottomless pit," also referred to as the abyss, is not a geographical location, but rather a symbolic representation of the origin of demonic evil and chaos that opposes God. It's a place from which the beast, representative of the Roman Empire, emerges.
2. The two witnesses in Revelation 11 are not likely two literal individuals, but symbolically represent the entire church. Their role is to witness for Jesus Christ, even in the face of suffering and persecution.

3. The measuring of the temple symbolizes God's security and preservation of his people. It suggests that God will protect and keep his church safe, even as they face trials and tribulations.
4. The pre-millennial view holds that Jesus Christ will return to Earth before the millennium. He will then establish a literal or symbolic 1,000-year kingdom, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies.
5. The post-millennial view states that the millennium will be established on Earth by the church through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. This will be a golden age of righteousness, after which Christ will return.
6. The amillennial view interprets the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 symbolically, representing the entire period of church history. During this time, Christ is already reigning from heaven, and believers reign with Him.
7. According to Dr. Mathewson, the millennium passage in Revelation 20 is not meant to describe a specific period of time. Rather, it serves as a symbolic way to depict the complete vindication of God's people and the establishment of God's justice at the second coming of Christ.
8. For first-century readers, the "woman riding a beast" in Revelation 17-18 most likely symbolized the Roman Empire and the Roman Emperor. The woman's seduction of the world represents Rome's corrupting influence.
9. The New Jerusalem vision in Revelation 21-22 is deeply rooted in Old Testament prophecies and imagery. It represents the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, drawing from texts like Isaiah and Ezekiel.
10. The ultimate destiny of God's people, according to Revelation, is not an ethereal existence in heaven, but a physical life on a new earth. This new earth mirrors the original creation, with God dwelling among his perfected people.

Essay Questions

Consider these essay questions, drawing upon the lecture material to formulate well-supported arguments.

1. Analyze the symbolic significance of the beast in Revelation 11-13, exploring its connection to the Roman Empire and its role in the persecution of Christians.
2. Compare and contrast the three major views of the millennium (pre-millennialism, post-millennialism, and amillennialism), outlining their key differences and implications for understanding Revelation 20.
3. Discuss the function of the New Jerusalem vision in Revelation 21-22 as an alternative to the corrupting influence of Rome, emphasizing its connection to Old Testament prophecies and its depiction of the ultimate destiny of God's people.
4. Examine the theme of creation and new creation in Revelation, tracing its origins in Genesis and exploring its significance for understanding God's redemptive plan for humanity.
5. Discuss the importance of exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ, the dangers of idolatry, and the false claims of earthly powers.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Abyss/Bottomless Pit:** A symbolic location representing the source of demonic evil and chaos, not a physical place.
- **Amillennialism:** The view that the millennium is symbolic of the current church age, where Christ reigns from heaven.
- **Beast:** A symbolic figure often representing the Roman Empire and its oppressive power.
- **Eschatology:** The study of the end times, focusing on the culmination of history and God's ultimate purposes.
- **Millennium:** The 1,000-year period mentioned in Revelation 20, interpreted differently by various theological viewpoints.
- **New Creation:** The transformed and renewed state of existence promised in Revelation 21-22, representing the ultimate fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.
- **New Jerusalem:** A symbolic city representing the perfected people of God dwelling on a new earth.
- **Post-Millennialism:** The view that the millennium is a golden age established by the church on Earth before Christ's return.
- **Pre-Millennialism:** The view that Christ will return to Earth before the millennium, establishing his kingdom.
- **Two Witnesses:** Symbolic figures in Revelation 11 representing the church's role in witnessing for Jesus Christ, even in the face of suffering.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 38, Excursus: Revelation 3, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Revelation FAQ

1. In Revelation 11, who do the two witnesses represent, and what is their significance?

The two witnesses in Revelation 11 are likely symbolic, not literal figures. They are modeled on Moses and Elijah, recalling the Old Testament requirement of two or three witnesses for a valid testimony. They most likely symbolize the entire church, emphasizing the church's primary role to witness for Jesus Christ, even in the face of suffering. Their vindication signifies that God will preserve His church and that their witness is valid, despite persecution.

2. According to the lecture, what does the "beast" in Revelation likely represent?

The "beast," particularly in Revelation 12, 13, and 11, probably represents the Roman Empire and the Roman Emperor. It symbolizes the oppressive system of Rome and emperor worship that opposed God's kingdom and persecuted Christians in the first century.

3. What are the three main interpretations of the millennium in Revelation 20, and how do they differ?

The three main interpretations of the millennium are:

- **Premillennialism:** Christ returns *before* the millennium and establishes His millennial kingdom on Earth. Some interpret the 1,000 years literally, others symbolically as a transition period.
- **Postmillennialism:** The millennium is established *before* Christ's return, through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit, leading to a golden age of righteousness on Earth. Christ then returns *after* the millennium.
- **Amillennialism:** The millennium is not a literal period of time but a symbolic representation of the entire church age, from Christ's first coming to His second, during which Christ reigns spiritually from heaven.

4. What is Dr. Mathewson's perspective on the meaning of the millennium in Revelation 20?

Dr. Mathewson suggests that the reference to a thousand years in Revelation 20 is likely *not* a description of a specific period of time at all. Rather, he believes it is a symbolic way of describing what takes place at the second coming of Christ: the complete vindication and reward of God's people, as well as the complete judgement of evil in the world.

5. What is the significance of the "New Jerusalem" in Revelation 21 and 22?

The New Jerusalem, according to Dr. Mathewson, is not a literal, physical city, but symbolizes the perfected people of God dwelling on a new earth. It is the ultimate fulfillment of all the hopes and expectations of God's people, as articulated in the Old Testament prophets, and serves as a counterpart to the corrupt and arrogant city of Rome (Babylon).

6. What Old Testament concept is central to understanding the New Jerusalem, and how is it fulfilled in Revelation?

The concept of "new creation," rooted in Genesis 1-2 and further developed in the Old Testament prophets (e.g., Isaiah 65), is central. God's original intention for humanity to dwell in His presence in a blessed environment (the Garden of Eden, the promised land) is thwarted by sin. Revelation fulfills this intention by depicting a new heavens and a new earth, where God dwells with His perfected people in the New Jerusalem.

7. What is the ultimate destiny of God's people according to Revelation, and how does it relate to the first creation?

The ultimate destiny of God's people is not a disembodied existence in heaven, but a very physical one on a *new earth*. This mirrors the first creation, where humanity was created to enjoy God's presence on earth. While the new creation is transformed and purified, it maintains continuity with the original, emphasizing the physicality of God's ultimate plan for humanity.

8. What is the central message of the book of Revelation, according to Dr. Mathewson?

Revelation is more than just a book about the end times. It unmask the false claims and anti-godliness of worldly systems, calling believers to resist these forces, live holy lives, and render exclusive obedience and worship to Jesus Christ, no matter the cost.