

# New Testament Explored: Revelation

## Week 4: How should we read the book of Revelation, Part 2?

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### (1) Quick Review: Predictive Approach (Code) vs Pastoral-Prophetic Approach (Lens).

#### (a) Predictive Approach (Key Words: Code and Future)

- A focus on “the end times” (eschatology), which they interpret as the end of the world.
- This approach decodes Revelation by connecting symbols/images with later figures and events, especially those contemporary with the interpreter (e.g., Hal Lindsay, locusts in Rev. 9 = helicopters).
- Pictures: **Code** [deciphering], *Crystal Ball* [prediction], *Map* [1-to-1 correspondence], *Fear* [problems]

#### (b) Pastoral-Prophetic Approach (Key Words: Lens and Present)

- A focus on the present, which is given theological perspective and insight from God’s revelatory word.
- This approach triangulates Revelation according to its (1) apocalyptic form, (2) prophetic intentions to comfort/challenge God’s people, and (3) pastoral role of calling the church to faithfulness in the face of suffering and conflict with hostile powers. A living and active word for every generation and situation.
- Pictures: **Lens** [discerning], *X-Ray* [perspective], *Compass* [orientation to true north], *Hope* [promises]

### (2) Test Case: The Mark of the Beast in Revelation 13:1-2, 11-18.

<sup>1</sup> And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. <sup>2</sup> And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. ...  
<sup>11</sup> Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. <sup>12</sup> It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. <sup>13</sup> It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, <sup>14</sup> and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived. <sup>15</sup> And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. <sup>16</sup> Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, <sup>17</sup> so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. <sup>18</sup> This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.