

Wednesday Teaching Series
Revelation 1:1-3
January 21, 2009

The Book of Revelation
Lesson #1-Introduction to the Book (Part 2)

I. Additional Interpretive Considerations

A. Geographical scope of Revelation:

1. Often “all who dwell on the earth” or “the whole world”
2. Earth-Greek is “ge” earth or land; maybe the land of Israel.
 - a. Old Testament Gentile nations are symbolically all called “the sea” in contrast to “the land” Israel.

*The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.
4 "Lift up your eyes all around, and see: They all gather together, they come to you;
Your sons shall come from afar, And your daughters shall be nursed at your side.
5 Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy;
Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles
shall come to you. Isaiah 60:3-5 NKJV*

*Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven
were stirring up the Great Sea. Daniel 7:2 NKJV*

*Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having
seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a
blasphemous name. Revelation 13:1 NKJV*

- b. World (to us may mean planet) but biblical writers generally mean Mediterranean world or Roman Empire.

*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that all the world should be registered. Luke 2:1 NKJV*

*Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it
is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;
Colossians 1:6 NKJV*

And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. Acts 2:5 NKJV

"Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be A fourth kingdom on earth, Which shall be different from all other kingdoms, And shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. Daniel 7:23 NKJV

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Revelation 3:10 NKJV

NOTE: This may be empire-wide crisis that places stress on all who dwell in Israel.

B. The Coming of the Lord

NOTE: Promised or warned about at least 12 times in Revelation.

1. Occasionally comes in a spiritual sense.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20 NKJV

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. John 14:16-18 NKJV

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. John 14:23 NKJV

NOTE: Coming of the Spirit is the coming of Christ

2. Temporal judgments upon the nations are "visitations" from God.

For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth. Psalms 96:13 NKJV

For behold, the LORD comes out of His place To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; The earth will also disclose her blood, And will no more cover her slain. Isaiah 26:21 NKJV

For behold, the LORD is coming out of His place; He will come down And tread on the high places of the earth. Micah 1:3 NKJV

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place — unless you repent. Revelation 2:5 NKJV

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16 NKJV

3. He is coming quickly

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Revelation 3:11 NKJV

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." Revelation 22:7 NKJV

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. Revelation 22:12 NKJV

- a. Untrue because they didn't happen?
- b. 2nd coming but quickly doesn't mean very soon?
- c. Not 2nd coming, but some event that did happen shortly after writing?

4. May help us with troublesome passages

Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." Matthew 16:28 NKJV

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Matthew 24:30 NKJV

So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near — at the doors! 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Matthew 24:33-34 NKJV

- a. No negating the 2nd coming.
- b. But caution against quick application of "coming" to second coming of Christ.

C. The Millennium in Revelation

1. Only in Revelation 20
2. Most controversial chapter in the Bible
3. 3 views
 - a. Pre-millennialism: 2nd coming preceding the millennial kingdom; 1000 years of literal reign, peace and prosperity and Satan bound.
 - b. Post-millennialism: Christ returning after the millennial period (church will establish the kingdom; 1000 years of peace then Christ will return.
 - c. Amillennialism: Symbolizes long period of time which coincides to the period between the first and Second Advent.
 - o Binding of Satan happened at the cross.
 - o Reign of Saints is the present age.

II. History of Interpretation

A. Early church

1. Only a few fragments of early writings.
2. Not much said.
3. What is said is premillennial.

B. Alexandrian Fathers (185-254)

1. Clement
2. Origen
3. Spiritualized refuted millennium
4. Augustine also allegory

C. Historicism developed 12th century including Martin Luther in 1500 saw chapter 4 on as prophetic survey of church history.

1. Followed by most reformers and Protestants
2. Well into the 19th Century

D. Futurist approach

1. Plymouth Brethren in 19th and 20th Century
2. John Nelson Darby Dispensationalism

E. Spiritual approach; developed by liberal scholars in Germany toward end of the 19th Century.

F. Contemporary conservative Protestant scene

1. Historical approach
2. Preterist approach
3. Futurist approach
4. Spiritual approach

III. Analyzing the Four Approaches

- A. Historicist approach: Revelation surveys the whole church history (Spurgeon, Finney, Calvin, Luther, Matthew Henry)

*No longer common

1. Breaking of the 7 Seals; Barbarian Invasions of western Roman Empire
2. Scorpions out of bottomless pit; Arab attacks on Eastern Roman Empire
3. Beast; Roman Papacy; Papacy is the Anti-Christ; this is non-negotiable

- B. Preterist approach: Fulfillment in the past; shortly after the time of writing.

1. Revelation is prior to A.D. 70
2. Spoke to early church, but all prophecy already fulfilled.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants — things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, Revelation 1:1 NKJV

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. Revelation 1:19 NKJV

And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. Revelation 22:10 NKJV

Needs no alternate view

Compare:

And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Daniel 12:9 NKJV

C. Futurist approach: Everything after chapter 3 awaits fulfillment in the future.

1. Most popular evangelical writing and Bible teaching today.
2. Dispensational is most popular (Darby, Walvoord, Scofield, Ryrie)
3. Outline of 1:19

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. Revelation 1:19 NKJV

4. Can take many things literally (sea, blood, 1/3 ships, etc.)

NOTE: Other approaches cannot take literally.

5. Still some contorting and reading into required.
 - a. Yet Revelation does not address 7 year tribulation described in depth
 - b. Anti-Christ setting up an idol to himself

6. Sometimes called "newspaper exegesis."

(ILL) April 28, 1964: Red China army of 200 million (see 9:16)

7. What about original readers?
8. Irrelevant to the church which is raptured out 4:1
9. This approach cannot be scrutinized by history; church is gone when it all happens.

D. Spiritual approach: No single fulfillment; only transcendent principles and recurrent themes.

1. Great themes; Good over evil! Christ over Satan!
2. Battles are about spiritual warfare.
3. Beast is about satanically inspired political opposition.
4. Harlot is the compromising church.
5. Broken seals or trumpets are all calamities, wars/natural disasters which recur over time.
6. Avoids the need to determine specific passages with specific events.
7. Does not deny inspiration or authority.
8. Problem is found in 1:1.
9. So, most merge approaches.

Conclusion:

A. Care we should take:

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 2 Peter 1:19-21 NKJV

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV

B. Blessing in studying:

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near. Revelation 1:3 NKJV

C. Commitment to study:

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV

D. Call to repent and be ready!