

Introducing the Book of Revelation

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Persuasion:

I. Revelation, Not Revelations

- A. Be sure to get the title correct.
- B. In some older Bibles it was titled The Apocalypse, because
 - 1. that is the Greek word that first appears in the text and
 - 2. that is the word we translate as revelation.
- C. Some older Bibles also titled it, The Revelation (or Apocalypse) of Saint John the Divine.
 - 1. However, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ
 - 2. that He showed to His servant John.
- D. This is not a matter of heaven and hell, but
 - 1. it is a matter of appearing competent to people.
 - 2. Know what you are talking about.

II. Hope, Not Fear and Frustration

- A. The average person reads the Book of Revelation and either:
 - 1. Fears its message or
 - 2. Gets frustrated in not being able to understand everything.
 - a) Although I believe most people want to understand it.
 - b) However, the interpretation alludes them, so they avoid it.
- B. Jesus did not give John the message of Revelation to John and
 - 1. John did not give it to us
 - 2. to frighten us.
 - a) If it frightens you, and if you are a faithful Christian,
 - b) you are reading it wrong or misunderstanding it.

- (1) The opening shows the message that the Lord intended.
- (2) 1.1–3 • There is a blessing in it.
- (3) 1.4–5a • Grace and peace come to us from the Trinity.
- (4) 1.5b–8 • Jesus is in control.

C. Do not expect to understand everything.

1. Even Daniel the prophet in his later years when his wisdom was great,
 - a) did not understand some of the things of which he wrote.
 - b) Dan 7.15
 - c) Dan 7.19
 - d) Dan 7.28
 - e) Dan 8.15
 - f) Dan 8.27
 - g) Dan 12.8
2. Peter informed us
 - a) that other prophets and amazingly, angels,
 - b) wanted to know about the things being spoken about in the Old Testament.
 - c) 1Pe 1.10–12
3. Therefore, you should not get frustrated if you cannot understand it all.
 - a) One man was very troubled because
 - (1) he thought that God required him
 - (2) to be able to understand and to interpret everything.
 - b) However, I assured him that was not the case, and
 - (1) I showed him the things that I have shown you.
 - (2) Also consider the Ethiopian Treasurer in Acts 8.
 - (a) Why is his story in the Bible?

(b) He could not figure out the meaning of a passage of Scripture.

(c) Acts 8.30–34

III. My advice is take it easy when you read the Book of Revelation.

A. Relax.

B. Do not get hung up on every thing that you read and do not understand.

C. Keep reading it and in time things will become clearer, but not everything.

D. Let the Book speak to you

1. instead thinking that you have to read between the lines.

2. Read without ceasing.

a) Write down questions.

b) Mark up your Bible.

c) Add notes that we will talk about in class.

IV. How Shall We Interpret the Book of Revelation?

A. Preterist?

1. The Preterist believes that Revelation was fulfilled in the first century,

2. especially in AD 70 with the fall of Jerusalem.

a) While Jesus did speak of the fall of Jerusalem (Matt 24; Luke 21),

b) that was not His ultimate or final concern.

(1) The Book of Revelation is a message for the church.

(2) The church is the true Jerusalem.

B. Futurist, Premillennial, Dispensational?

1. This view holds that the vast majority of the material

2. is what happens just before Christ returns.

a) This interpretation has caused most of those who adhere to it,

b) to make predictions about the time of the end.

(1) The repeated failure of all predictions

(2) should show that this method misses the point of Revelation.

C. Continuous Historical

1. These people just see general references in the Book of Revelation
2. as pointing to vague cycles that just happen repeatedly without any specific application.

D. How I approach the Book of Revelation:

1. I just thought to myself,
2. why do I have to choose an interpretation model?
 - a) Therefore, the first few times that I either taught or preached the Book,
 - b) I just started reading and explaining it as I went along.
 - (1) My thoughts were that I would just let it speak to me.
 - (2) The first readers, the seven churches of Asia, did not have to choose an interpretation method.
 - (a) They simply read the Book or listened to it be read.
 - (b) They would have understood it
 - i) just like any other Book of the Bible.
 - ii) As I read the Book,
 - (1) I saw patterns and
 - (2) it helped me to see why people say
 - (a) that you have to have a background in the Old Testament to understand the Book of Revelation.
 - (b) Here is yet another reason why you should read through the entire Bible.
3. When I read the Book of Revelation in this manner,
 - a) I discovered that the Book unfolds in the same way
 - b) that other Books of the Bible do, especially prophecy in the Old Testament.

E. The view that I take you could call progressive parallelism.

1. I believe there are seven parallel visions,
2. like what Pharaoh and Daniel received, but
 - a) each one goes a little further in time.

V. The Book of Revelation and the Old Testament

“...whoever endeavors to comprehend Revelation without a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament will find it virtually impossible to understand the book.”

– Ranko Stefanovic

“It is generally recognized that Revelation contains more OT references than does any other NT book, although past attempts to tally the total amount have varied...”

– Beale and Carson

- A. Therefore, let me urge you to continue to read all of the Old Testament, and
- B. if you avoid reading it,
 1. do not be surprised when you have difficulty understanding the Book of Revelation.
 2. If that be the case, then start reading through the Old Testament regularly.

VI. What Is the Book of Revelation? It Is God’s Final Say

- A. Read it more with wonder than trying to interpret everything.
 1. Do not let all the images you see bewilder you.
 - a) John shows us what he saw and heard, and tasted and felt emotionally.
 - b) When you read it, you experience what he experienced.
 2. John painted heavenly scenes with images of Earth.
- B. Yes, it is the Book of Revealing, but
 1. in revealing how He works behind the scenes,
 2. He also wants us to know that we cannot know everything.

- a) Revelation 10.1–4
 - b) When He decided to close up His word,
 - (1) He wanted us to know that with the vision to John,
 - (2) God had completed His word, so
 - (a) the Book of Revelation shows that He has not gone away, but
 - (b) that He has all things under His control.
- C. The Book of Revelation gets our eyes off a present crisis, and
- 1. shows us that we should think on God.
 - 2. God should fill our hearts.
 - a) People fill their hearts with fear, but
 - b) the Lord shows us the way of calm and peace.
 - (1) When we live that way in front of people and
 - (2) it draws them to the beauty residing in our souls.
 - c) Here is the spirit that I think Revelation conveys – Habakkuk 3.17–19.

VII. Not Interpretation, But Wonder

- A. The typical person reads the Book of Revelation as a calendar.
- 1. They read it
 - a) to know when everything ends, and
 - b) to know the signs of the end.
 - 2. When you read the first 65 Books,
 - a) you have all the information you need for getting to heaven, but
 - b) you may not see how all those Books fit together.
 - (1) God blesses us with a Book of unimaginable imagination,
 - (2) bringing everything together for us.
- B. When we open the pages of the Bible for the first time,
- 1. we watch God create everything, and

2. we agree with Him quickly,

31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day (Gen 1.31).

3. And we know that everything will be wonderful in the end,

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea (Rev 21.1).

4. God's Final Say shows that He is the Beginning and the End of all things,

8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev 1.8).

11a "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last" (Rev 1.11).

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Rev 1.17–18).

a) If the beginning was good and

b) if the ending will be good,

(1) should not the middle, the slot where we live, be good?

(2) So it seems, but it is not.

(a) True, we have moments of unexcelled bliss, but then

(b) we run into a brick wall.

i) Depending upon the wall,

ii) we fear, we hurt, or we get frustrated.

C. During this time in the middle,

1. the Lord gives us His Scriptures and His church.

2. The Book of Revelation

- a) closes the Scriptures and
- b) comforts the church.

Exhortation:

I. What then shakes your soul today?

- A. Do you have a queasy feeling inside,
- B. questioning how things will turn out?

II. Do not forget God's Final Say to you!

- A. He knows what makes you fear.
- B. He knows how your soul trembles.
 - 1. What then does He say to you as His Last Words?
 - 2. If you read it as a timetable in which you have to figure everything out,
 - a) you will get frustrated, but
 - b) if you read it,
 - (1) seeing what John saw,
 - (2) hearing what John heard,
 - (3) tasting what John tasted, and
 - (4) feeling what John felt,
 - (a) you will see why God gave you the Book of Revelation!
 - (b) Read it and experience wonder and victory.

III. Yes, the Book of Revelation

- A. shows that someday all things on Earth will end, and
- B. that we will all stand before God at the Judgment.