

SERIES: THE ELEVENTH HOUR: A STUDY IN REVELATION

Title: THE STUDENT OF REVELATION

Text: Rev. 1:3; Rev. 19:10; Isa. 46:8-10

- Bombing in the Golan Heights
- Attacks on the Temple Mount
- Concerns over a possible third world war
- The moral collapse of Western Civilization, which had been founded on Christian principles
- Historic global earthquakes, tornadoes, clusters of volcanoes and storms
- Just this week we have seen three back-to-back once-in-a-thousand-years rainstorms here in America.
- Famine in many parts of the world
 - The last major famine occurred between 2011 and 2012 in the Horn of Africa and primarily affected the countries of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. At its peak, more than 13 million people were in need of emergency assistance.
 - 750,000 people already facing famine conditions in Ethiopia, Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan.
 - News this week of foods that will be in short supply
- A global plague which is a foretaste of what may come

Is it the end of the world? ...Nope, just Monday.

“When the end of the world comes, I want to be in Kentucky. They're always 20 years behind everything.” Mark Twain

To my friends in Kentucky, I apologize. I have been eating a lot of pig and so my thoughts have been on the Aporkalypse.

People are asking, what is going on? Is this the end times?

People are making end-of-the-world jokes, like there's no tomorrow.

Radio hosts and sports hosts are saying, “Lord Jesus Come!”

Isa. 46:8-10

⁸ Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ⁹ remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done.

Rev. 19:10

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Rev. 1:3

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

The study of Revelation is both exciting and challenging.

- It is a book that has captured the imagination of many generations and has been the subject of intense study and debate.
- Its message is full of hope and encouragement for believers and provides a glimpse into the ultimate triumph of Christ over evil.

In this message we will be exploring the various aspects of the study of Revelation. As we go through the letter, I want you to become a student of it.

- My aim is to present a thorough understanding of the book and provide insights that can be applied to our lives as believers today.
- I hope that today will give you tools to assist you in understanding it.

The Blessing of Revelation

The book of Revelation begins with a blessing for those who read, hear, and keep the words of the prophecy

Rev. 1:3

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

- This blessing is significant because it sets the tone for the entire book.
- The message of Revelation is not just for the original audience but for all believers throughout history.
- The blessing assures us that there is a special reward for those who take the time to read and understand this book.
- It is a book that promises to bring blessings to those who receive its message.

The Dating of Revelation (65AD or 95AD)

The dating of the book of Revelation is an important issue because it helps us understand the context in which the book was written.

There are two main theories about the date of the book: the early date theory and the late date theory.

- The early date theory suggests that the book of Revelation was written around 65 AD during the reign of Nero.
- This theory is based on the fact that the book makes reference to seven churches in Asia Minor, which were known not to exist during this time period.

However, **the early date theory has been largely rejected by scholars** because it fails to account for many of the historical events that are described in the book.

- The late date theory suggests that the book of Revelation was written around 95 AD during the reign of Domitian. This theory is supported by the fact that early church fathers such as Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Clement of Alexandria refer to the book of Revelation as being written during the reign of Domitian.
 - Polycarp was the disciple of John, the author, and Irenaeus was his disciple.... They are the closest we have to first person testimony.
- Additionally, the persecution of Christians under Domitian is consistent with the themes of persecution and suffering that are found in the book of Revelation.
 - He was much more inclined to exile Christians than to kill them. And he had them exiled from all over the Empire.
 - Nero had them killed and historically those deaths were in and around Rome.
- This date is probably the most relevant point, for it will be the great point of contention when we discuss different viewpoints on the book of revelation.

The Apocryphal Writing of Revelation

The Apocrypha refers to a collection of Jewish and Christian texts that were written between 200BC and 400 AD.

- Yet, we see the visions of Daniel in a similar light. 620-538 BC. He was carried off to Babylon in 605 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar, the Assyrian, but was still living when Assyria was overthrown by the Medes and Persians.

Dualism - of two opposing forces in the universe

- The book of Revelation contains many examples of dualism, such as the contrast between the present and future.
- The dragon against the Lamb
- The whore against the bride
- The blessing for the redeemed vs. the curses for the unbelievers

Symbolism - symbols and images presented in the text are not mere metaphors

1. They are not merely representing something else or standing in for something else, but they are real beings, places, and events.

For example, the seven-headed beast with ten horns and seven crowns is not just a metaphor for something else.

It represents a real power with real characteristics and attributes.

2. The importance of understanding the symbols as real beings is that they help us to see the nature of the conflict between good and evil in the world.

3. Furthermore, the symbols and **images presented in the text are not arbitrary.**

They are carefully chosen and have specific meanings.

For example, the number seven represents completeness and perfection, while the number six represents imperfection and incompleteness.

The lamb represents sacrifice and redemption, while the dragon represents evil and destruction.

The description of the throne of God helps us to understand the majesty and holiness of God.

The description of the new Jerusalem helps us to understand the glory and beauty of the new heaven and new earth.

4. The timing of the events is also important.

The text uses phrases such as "in those days," "after these things," and "on the day" to indicate the timing of the events being described.

Understanding the timing helps us to understand the order and sequence of the events and how they fit together. And there is a sequence.

Dual fulfillment - an immediate and a long-term fulfillment.

Dual fulfillment is a concept that is often employed by interpreters of biblical prophecy to **explain the fulfillment of a prophecy in two distinct historical events.**

- This idea suggests that a prophecy can have both an immediate and a long-term fulfillment.

- The immediate fulfillment typically pertains to a near-term event that would have been recognized by the original audience, while the long-term fulfillment refers to a future event, usually the ultimate and complete fulfillment of the prophecy.
- This concept of dual fulfillment can be seen in several prophecies throughout the Bible, including those found in the book of Isaiah.
- For example, the abomination of Desolation –
 - Antiochus
 - Titus
 - Antichrist

One of the strengths of the concept of dual fulfillment is that it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of biblical prophecy.

- By recognizing that a prophecy can have both an immediate and long-term fulfillment, interpreters can avoid the error of trying to force a prophecy to fit a specific historical event or period.

Caution - However, the concept of dual fulfillment is not without its problems.

- Which is which
 - One of the main challenges is determining which events in history should be viewed as the immediate fulfillment of a prophecy and which events should be seen as the long-term fulfillment.
- Multiple Times
 - This can be particularly challenging when dealing with prophecies that appear to have been fulfilled multiple times throughout history, such as those related to the Messiah.
- Literal or symbolic
 - Another challenge with the concept of dual fulfillment is that it can be difficult to know which parts of a prophecy are meant to be taken literally and which parts are meant to be taken symbolically.
 - This can lead to varying interpretations of the same prophecy, depending on how an interpreter views the literal versus the symbolic elements of the prophecy.

Despite these challenges, the concept of dual fulfillment remains an important tool for understanding biblical prophecy.

Devotion - call to repentance and return to God

The book of apocryphal writings and Revelation contain a call to repentance and return to God, as well as a call to stay strong and faithful in the face of persecution.

- Repentant
 - These themes of devotion are also found in the Apocrypha, where there is a strong emphasis on the need for repentance
- Faithful
 - Throughout the book of Revelation, the author makes it clear that those who remain faithful to God will be rewarded with eternal life, while those who reject Him will face judgment.
- Perseverant
 - This message is echoed throughout the apocryphal works, which often emphasize the need for believers to **persevere in their faith, even in the face of persecution.**
 - For example, in the Book of Daniel, we see the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar and were thrown into the fiery furnace as a result.
 - However, God miraculously delivered them, and they emerged unscathed.
 - This story serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of remaining faithful to God, even when it may cost us everything.

Deity - ultimate victory and sovereignty of God

Another prominent theme within the apocryphal works of Revelation is deity.

The sovereignty of God

- These works emphasize the ultimate victory of God over His enemies, as well as His sovereignty over all of creation.
- The book of Revelation portrays God as the ultimate victor over evil, the ultimate judge of all humanity, and the ultimate source of salvation.
- In the Book of Daniel, we see the famous vision of the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, which represents the four great empires that would rise and fall throughout history.
- However, in the end, God's kingdom would be established, and all other kingdoms would be destroyed.

- Similarly, in Revelation, God is portrayed as the one who holds the keys to life and death, who will ultimately judge the nations and bring justice to the world.

The reality of spiritual warfare

- Both Daniel and Revelation depict the struggle between the forces of good and evil, with Satan and his allies seeking to thwart God's plans at every turn.
- In Daniel 10, for example, the prophet receives a vision of a heavenly being engaged in battle with the "prince of Persia," a demonic power that sought to prevent God's will from being carried out.
 - Similarly, in Revelation, the dragon and his minions seek to destroy the church and prevent the triumph of God's kingdom. The Dragon and the Antichrist and the False Prophet opposing God

Certainty of judgment: God will Judge

- The timing and descriptions of judgment that are found in Daniel and Revelation underscore the reality of judgment and the need to be prepared for it. These books make it clear that there will be a reckoning for all that we have done, and that we must be ready to face that judgment.

The hope of salvation: God will save

The descriptions of the new heavens and new earth in Revelation provide a vision of the ultimate redemption that awaits believers. This hope can sustain us in the midst of trials and give us the courage to persevere and remain faithful to God.

FOUR VIEWS OF REVELATION

THE PRETERIST VIEW

Everything fulfilled in 70AD

The preterist view of the book of Revelation holds that all of its prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, specifically by the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD.

This view is often called the "full preterist" view, but there is also a "partial preterist" view that holds that some of the prophecies were fulfilled in the first century, but others refer to events in the distant future.

PROBLEMS

1. It requires a highly symbolic interpretation of the book of Revelation.

Preterists often argue that the book is written in "apocalyptic" style, which uses symbolic language to describe events that are difficult to express in ordinary language.

- They interpret the beasts, the plagues, and other imagery as representing historical events that took place in the first century, but they do not interpret them literally.

This highly symbolic interpretation of the book of Revelation is problematic for several reasons.

First, it makes it difficult to determine the precise meaning of the prophecies.

- **Preterists often disagree on what the symbols mean,** and there is no consensus on how to interpret many of the passages in the book.
2. Second, the preterist view requires an assumption that the book of Revelation was written before the destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70 AD. This is essential for their view.
 - This assumption is based on the belief that the book describes events that took place before the destruction of the Temple.

However, there is no direct evidence that the book was written before this time, and many scholars believe that it was written later, during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 AD).

3. Preterists often interpret the book of Revelation based on their own historical and theological perspectives, which can lead to wildly different interpretations of the same passages.
 - This subjectivity makes it difficult to determine the true meaning of the book and undermines its authority as a source of divine revelation.
4. Fourth, the preterist view requires a rejection of the idea of predictive prophecy.
 - If all of the prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the first century, then there is no predictive element to the book and raises questions about its value as a source of guidance and encouragement for believers.
5. Fifth, the preterist view requires an interpretation of the book of Revelation **that is inconsistent with other biblical prophecies.**
 - Many prophecies in the Old and New Testaments predict events that have not yet taken place, such as the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom on earth.

- The preterist view of the book of Revelation contradicts these prophecies and requires an interpretation of them that is inconsistent with the rest of the Bible.

THE HISTORIC VIEW

- Things are being fulfilled over the last 2000 years
- The historic view of Revelation is also known as the continuous historical approach.
- This view interprets the events in the book of Revelation as unfolding throughout the history of the Church, starting from the first century until the end of time.
- According to this view, each event and symbol in Revelation can be linked to **specific historical events that have occurred over the past two thousand years.**

PROBLEMS

1. The main problem with the historic view of Revelation is that it is **highly subjective.**
 - Those who hold this view often interpret the symbols in the book of **Revelation according to their own understanding of history.**
 - This means that **different people may come up with different interpretations of the same symbols** based on their understanding of history.
2. Moreover, the historic view seems to **miss the apocalyptic nature of the book of Revelation.**
 - The book is not just a historical record of events that have occurred over the past two thousand years; **it is also a prophetic book that predicts future events.**
 - The historic view tends to **downplay the prophetic nature** of the book and focus more on the historical events.
3. Additionally, the historic view **also fails to explain how the events of Revelation relate to the second coming of Christ.**
 - While the historic view links each event to specific historical events, it does not provide a clear timeline of how the events will unfold leading up to Christ's return.
 - This lack of clarity makes it difficult for believers to prepare for the end times.

THE IDEOLOGICAL VIEW

The Book is an Allegory of Good over Evil

The ideological view of Revelation sees the book as a grand allegory.

According to this view, **Revelation is not to be taken literally**, but instead, it is an allegory that presents various abstract concepts such as good vs. evil, hope, and victory.

Proponents of this view argue that the book is **a symbolic representation of the spiritual struggles of the early church, rather than a prediction of future events.**

PROBLEMS

1. First, this view **is difficult to reconcile with the book's internal evidence.**
 - For example, the book contains **numerous specific references to historical events and places**, such as the seven churches of Asia Minor, which suggests that the book has a historical context.
2. Additionally, the ideological view **does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the vivid and often violent imagery in the book.**
 - If Revelation is merely an allegory, why does it contain such graphic descriptions of bloodshed, destruction, and chaos?
3. Finally, the ideological view's emphasis on **abstract concepts can lead to a lack of concern for the physical world.**
 - If the book is purely symbolic, it can be easy to ignore the real-world implications of its message.
 - This can lead to a dangerous disconnect between the message of the book and its impact on the world.

THE FUTURIST VIEW

There are last day prophecies that are yet to come

The futurist view of Revelation has several strong points that make it a compelling interpretation of the book. These include:

1. **Consistency with other biblical prophecies:**
 - For example, many of the themes and symbols found in Revelation can also be found in the prophetic books of Daniel and Ezekiel.

- The futurist view of Revelation also aligns with the teachings of Jesus regarding the end times, as recorded in the Gospels.

2. Contextual interpretation:

- They believe that the book was written to a specific audience and that the symbols and events described in the book are meant to be understood in light of the historical and cultural context in which they were written.
- This approach allows for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the text.

3. Literary genre:

- Take into account the literary genre of apocalyptic literature.
- This genre is characterized by highly symbolic language and vivid imagery, which can be difficult to interpret.
- Symbols and images should be understood as literal, unless there is clear evidence within the text to suggest otherwise.

4. Recognition of dual fulfillment:

- Some of the prophecies in Revelation may have already been fulfilled in the past, but they also believe that many of the prophecies have yet to be fulfilled in the future.
- This view allows for a more balanced understanding of the book, as it recognizes both the historical and future aspects of the text.

5. Emphasis on the sovereignty of God: The futurist view of Revelation places a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God. The events described in the book are seen as part of God's plan for history, and the ultimate victory over evil is attributed to God's power and authority. This emphasis on God's sovereignty provides comfort and hope to believers, even in the midst of difficult times.

PROBLEMS

1. Identifying the Beast and the False Prophet

- While many scholars have offered their own theories, there is still much debate about who these figures are and what they represent.
- Some have suggested that the beast represents a future global government, while others argue that it represents a particular nation or ruler.

- Similarly, the identity of the false prophet is also a matter of debate, with some suggesting that it represents a false religion or religious leader.

2. What is figurative and what is literal

- Some argue that the futurist view is based on a misunderstanding of the apocalyptic genre and the symbolism used in the book of Revelation.
 - Holding tight to literal interpretation until they are in a bind. Then figurative.
 - Example – Babylon: literal in OT, and in Rev., locations are literal except Babylon – that becomes figurative.

The book of Revelation is a powerful and awe-inspiring work of literature that has captivated believers for centuries.

- Through its vivid imagery and powerful themes, it reveals the divine plan for humanity and encourages believers to remain faithful to God in the face of persecution and suffering.

At the heart of the book of Revelation is the glory of God, which is manifested in a variety of ways throughout the text.

- Whether it is through the person of Jesus Christ, the various heavenly beings and creatures, or the ultimate triumph of good over evil, the glory of God is a constant theme that runs throughout the book.

Ultimately, the book of Revelation serves as a reminder that God is in control and that his will shall ultimately be done.

- It encourages believers to remain faithful and to trust in God's ultimate plan, even when things seem bleak and hopeless.
- In this way, the book of Revelation should inspire and uplift believers to this day.
- **Hold to the Truths of the book**

FIVE TRUTHS OF REVELATION

It is blessed

- A blessing on the reader
- A blessing to the believer

It is readable

- Recognize the Signs and Seasons
- Respond to the Savior

It is understandable

- Hold tightly the clear symbols
- Hold lightly the vague symbols

It is incredible

- It should bring Awe to the believer
- It should bring Fear to the unbeliever

It is imminent

- Be ready and watching
- Be sharing and showing

Challenge

Are you ready for the Lord's Return?

Are you watching for the Lord's Return?

Are you praying for others to be ready for the Lord's Return?

Are you sharing with others the Good News of Salvation?