

A Special Blessing (*Part 1*)

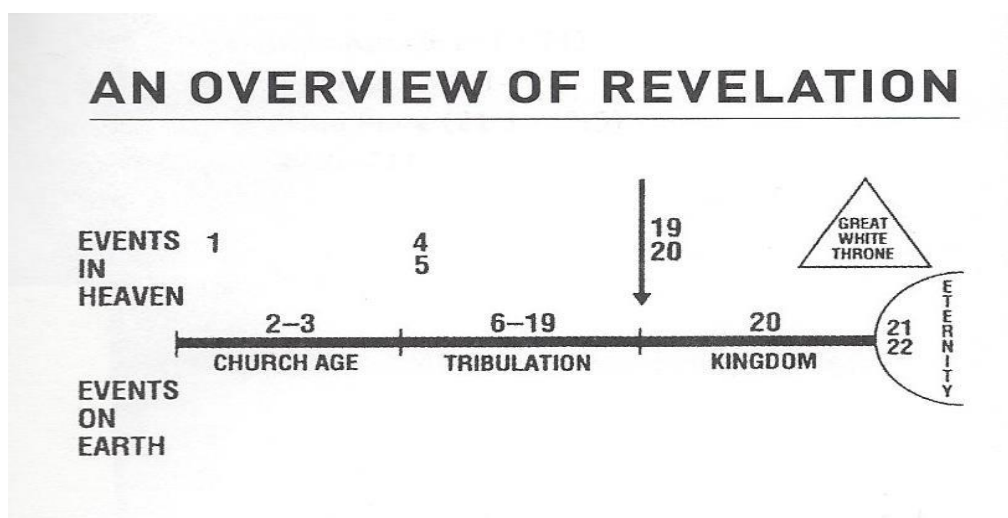
Revelation 1:1-3

Thought for the Day: There are many possible applications but only one correct interpretation of any given passage of Scripture. We must always be careful to correctly handle the Word of God.

I. The Prologue (1:1-3)

- A. The Basics
 - 1. Why the book is Important
 - 2. The author and date the book was written
 - 3. The basic message of the book
- B. The Title of the Book (1:1)
- C. The Chain of Communication (1:1-2)

The book of Revelation reveals two things: 1) The Lord Jesus Christ; 2) The things that must soon take place.



(Charles C. Ryrie, Revelation, p. 16)

D. The Interpretation of the Book (1:1, 3)

...the things that must soon take place (vs. 1) ...for the time is near. (vs 3)

- Revelation was written over 1900 years ago. Have the things written in the book taken place, or not?

1. The Futurist (Literal, Normal) Interpretation

- a. The futurist approach "sees the book from chapter 4 to the end as yet to be fulfilled. If one follows the plain, literal, or normal principle of interpretation, one concludes that most of the book describes what is yet future."
(Ryrie, ibid, p. 11)
- b. Revelation "obviously contains symbols... futurists do recognize the use of symbols in the book. [However, they] see the symbols as conveying a plain meaning... Indeed, symbols often make the meaning *more* plain... Futurists

do not deny the presence of symbols in the book, nor do they claim to be able to explain every detail with certainty. But they do insist that the principle of plain interpretation be followed consistently throughout the book." (Ryrie, *ibid*, pp. 11-12)

- c. The meaning of the symbols can usually be determined from the book of Revelation itself, or from other related passages of Scripture, mostly in the Old Testament. Therefore, to correctly interpret the many symbols in Revelation, one must be well-acquainted with several passages in the Old Testament.
- d. "Revelation contains 404 verses, and 278 of them (69%) allude back to the Old Testament. Revelation has no direct quotations from the Old Testament, but contains a total of 550 allusions or references (which appear in 278 verses) back to the Old Testament. So a significant portion of Revelation brings together content from the Old Testament into a comprehensive sequence of events." (Hitchcock, *101 Answers*, p. 27)
- e. "...the futurist approach is far superior to the other views. It is the only view that consistently follows the principles of interpreting Scripture literally." (Hitchcock, *ibid*, p. 24)
- f. "The Apocalypse reveals the future. It is God's road map to help us understand where human history is going. The fact that it points to the time of the end is clear throughout the entire book. It serves as the final consummation of biblical revelation. It takes us from the first century to the last century. From persecution to triumph. From the struggling church to the bride of Christ. From Patmos [where John received the Revelation] to paradise." (Ed Hindson, *Approaching Armageddon*, pp. 22-23)

2. The Preterist or Partial Preterist Interpretation

- a. The "preterist interpreters are those who see Revelation as having already been fulfilled in the early centuries of the church." (Ryrie, *ibid*, p. 10)
- b. "Revelation is primarily a prophecy of events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70... Christ returned in AD 70 during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans... all prophecies—including those pertaining to the second coming and the resurrection of believers—are past events... we are beyond the millennium and are presently [living] in the new heaven and new earth." (Hitchcock, *ibid*, pp. 19-20)

3. The Idealist (Spiritual, Allegorical) Interpretation

- a. "The book does not record actual events that have been fulfilled [in the past] or that are going to happen [in the future]; rather, it merely portrays the age-long struggle between good and evil. This viewpoint spiritualizes and allegorizes the text." (Ryrie, *ibid*, p. 11)
- b. "...the spiritual approach, does 'not look for individual or specific fulfillments of the prophecies of Revelation in the natural sense,' but believes 'only that spiritual lessons and principles (which may find recurrent expression in history) are depicted symbolically in the visions'... the symbols in Revelation picture the ever-present struggle between good and evil and teach ideal,

timeless principles to inspire believers as they endure the setbacks and suffering of life." (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 21*)

4. The Historicist Interpretation

- "...interprets Revelation as a panorama or overview of the entire church age... very few hold this view today. The key problem with historicism is that there is little agreement on what the symbols in Revelation refer to and thus what the book means." (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 20-21*)
- We should read the Bible very much as we read any other piece of writing: "If the plain sense makes sense, look for no other sense."
- How are we to understand the phrases, "the things that must soon take place" (vs. 1) and "the time is near" (vs. 3)
 - I think it is best to understand these phrases to mean that, when the things described in this book begin to take place, they will take place suddenly, quickly, and without further delay—in a relatively brief space of time.
 - "These events are near in the sense that they are the *next* events on God's prophetic calendar." (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 63*)
 - "The purpose of *soon* [and *near*] is to teach the imminence of the events foretold, not to set a time limit in which they must occur." (*Robert Thomas*)
 - "Jesus Christ can come at any moment... We are always living on the edge of eternity. And we are to be living on 'ready.'" Every generation who reads the Bible is to live as if these events could come to pass at any time. (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 65*)
 - "The imminency of these events, emphasized in Revelation from its commencement to its close, calls each generation to possess an attitude of expectancy and readiness." (*Hitchcock, ibid, p. 63*)
 - We should be living in such a way that we are watching and preparing for these things to happen.

Suggested Applications¹:

Know: There are many possible applications but there is only one correct interpretation of any given passage of Scripture. We must always be careful to correctly handle the Word of God, remembering that Scripture is the best commentary on Scripture. (2 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 5:11-14)

Grow: (vs. 1) We should live every day in the light of the Lord's soon Return. (Matthew 24:36,42,44; 25:10-13; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 John 2:28) We should be waiting, watching and working as we look for the Lord's coming.

¹ The three **spiritual priorities** of a follower of Jesus Christ: 1) To **know** and love the Lord by pursuing intimate fellowship with Him; 2) To **grow** and become like the Lord by cultivating Christlike character and conduct; and 3) To go and **show** the Lord to others through faithful and fruitful service.