

# Calvary Chapel Bible College

1100 Caprice Drive • Castle Rock • Colorado • 80109

Tel: 303.663.2514 • Web: [www.cbccastlerock.org](http://www.cbccastlerock.org)



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**Syllabus**

**NT377 The Book of Revelation: 'Heavy Revy'**

**Spring 2014**

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Your Part:

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

Our Part, as the Lord enables we will provide:

"All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for **doctrine**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction in righteousness**, that the man of God may be **complete**, thoroughly **equipped** for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16,17

As you present yourselves every Thursday night your life will be *invaded* by the Holy Spirit with doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, equipping from The Book of Revelation. That you may grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; be complete for the work God has called you into, and to give you hope for the future. You will also be given a framework on how to teach the Book of Revelation and thus enable you to fulfill 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, **commit** these to faithful men who will be able to **teach** others also."

**Instructor:** John Winder | 630-244-5434 | email: [John@CalvaryChapelCR.org](mailto:John@CalvaryChapelCR.org)

**Meeting Day:** Thursdays, 6:30 PM-8:30 PM

**Class Schedule and Outline**

- #1-February 20 Introduction
- #2-February 27 chapter 1
- #3-March 6 chapter 2
- #4-March 13 chapter 3
- #5-March 20 chapters 4 & 5
- #6-March 27 chapters 6 & 7
- #7-April 3 chapters 8 & 9
- #8- April 10 chapters 10 & 11
- #9-April 17 chapters 12 & 13
- #10-April 24 chapters 14 & 15
- #11- May 1 chapters 16 & 17
- #12- May 8 chapters 18 & 19
- #13- May 15 chapter 20
- #14- May 22 chapters 21-22
- #15- May 29 Final Exam

## **Course Description**

This 2 credit course will provide a verse-by-verse exposition with application of the Book of The Revelation.

## **Course Objectives**

The main objective of this course is to give the students an exposition of this important book of the New Testament. Challenging them to carefully explore the Scriptures to understand the personal impact of this profound book; bringing the totality of the Scriptures to bear upon this Book of The Revelation and thus upon us. We will also learn how to teach this glorious book, thus laying a broad base of teaching principles.

## **Required Books**

1. *The Holy Bible, NKJV*. In class we will use the NKJV version of the Bible. Tests and handouts will also use the NKJV exclusively. Students will be required to read aloud in class and participate verbally. Again we will read only from the NKJV.
2. *Revelation*, by Donald Grey Barnhouse, available in our bookstore.

## **Recommended Study Tools**

1. Bible Study Software or go to Blue Letter Bible.com
2. Strong's Concordance
3. Vines Complete Expository Dictionary
4. NKJV Study Bible with notes and cross-references
5. Jon Courson's Application Commentary, New Testament

## **Recommended Audio Studies on the Book of Revelation**

- 1- Chuck Smith on Blue Letter Bible
- 2- Chuck Missler from Koinonia House or on-line at *Firefighters for Christ*

## **Homework**

- 1) **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS (60 Points or 20% of your course grade)**

The following preparation will be required on a weekly basis:

- A) Read and re-read the chapters we will be covering for the next week.
- B) Reading of commentaries that cover the next section of assigned chapters.
- C) One page worksheet that covers the possible homework assignment.

2) **CLASS ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION** are essential whether you are seeking college credits or your are auditing the course. I pray that you have counted the cost of being here for each and every class before you signed up, and that you will guard your class time carefully from interruption. Read, evaluate, pray thru and apply Luke 14:28-30 regarding this class and the time commitment. **120 points** or 40% of a students grade are assigned for class attendance and participation. See also Phil 2:12-13.

3) **FINAL Exam (120 Points or 40% of your course grade)** A final exam will be given on the last Thursday

of the semester. Details concerning the type and content of the final exam will be given later in the course session.

## Grades

Your course grade will be based upon the amount of points you accumulate during the quarter from the requirements listed above. There are a total of 300 points that a student can earn throughout the course. The student's letter grade will be based upon the schedule below:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>
282 - 300	94% and above	A
270 - 281	90-93%	A-
258 - 269	86-89%	B+
228 - 257	76-85%	B
210 - 227	70-75%	B-
198 - 209	66-69%	C+
168 - 197	56-65%	C
150 - 167	50-55%	C-
149 - 0	49% and below	NC (No Credit)

## Miscellaneous Information:

### 1) ABSENTEEISM:

If you are absent from a class, it is up to you to get the appropriate media to keep current with the class and homework. Each class is video recorded and available on our website, under CCBC. If you miss an assignment or the final exam, it can be made up within one week; however, it is up to you to make the arrangements. If absent with an acceptable excuse, homework may be turned in the following week without penalty.

### 2) IF YOU NEED TO CONTACT ME:

If you need to contact me for any reason call me on my mobile phone: 630-244-5434.

Or

Email: John@CalvaryChapelCR.org

### 3) DIFFICULTIES:

If you experience any kind of difficulties during this course, please let me know. Satan does not want you to grow, therefore, he is going to try to discourage you, distract and convince you to drop out. Hang in there and remember; **GOD IS FAITHFUL, AND WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO BE TESTED BEYOND WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO BEAR!**

## Homework Schedule & Assignments

Homework will be explained and assigned every week.

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NT377 The Revelation: 'Heavy Revy'

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## Class #1-February 20 Introduction

### Author

### Date and Occasion of Writing

### Inspiration and Canonicity

### Apocalyptic Character

### Dependence on the OT

### Symbols and Symbolisms

### Keys to Prophetic Interpretation

### Interpretations

### Theology (Doctrine)

### Outline of the Book of Revelation

## Author

The opening verses of the book of the Revelation plainly claim the book was written by John, identified almost universally in the early church as the Apostle John.

The apostolic authorship of the book has, nevertheless, been questioned ever since the time of Dionysius of Alexandria in the third century. Dionysius challenged the traditional view that John the Apostle was the author on the ground that the book of Revelation had numerous cases of bad grammar. Dionysius said, "I perceive that the dialect and language is not very accurate Greek, but that he uses barbarous idioms, and in some places solecisms which it is now unnecessary to select."

Beginning with Dionysius those who object to Johannine authorship or to inclusion of the Apocalypse in the canon have tended to magnify the problems of grammar and alleged inaccuracies.

Impartial scholarship has admitted that there are expressions in the book of Revelation which do not correspond to accepted Greek usage, but this problem is not entirely confined to this book of the Bible. Conservative scholarship has insisted that infallibility in divine revelation does not necessarily exclude expressions which are not normal in other Greek literature and that such instances do not mar the perfection of the truth that is transmitted. Bible Scholar Swete: "The book seems openly and deliberately to defy the grammarian, and yet even as literature it is in its own field unsurpassed." It is important to note, however, that some of the supposedly bad grammar in Revelation was used in contemporary Koine (*Greek of the NT*) literature, as is revealed by discoveries in the Papyri.

**Book of John and Revelation:** When due allowance is made for the character of the book, as H. B. Swete has noted, there are remarkable similarities in some respects between the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation and that fact “creates a strong presumption of affinity between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse, notwithstanding their great diversity both in language and in thought or content.”

### **Behind the attacks:**

**1-**The arguments for rejecting the apostolic authorship stem largely from the theological climate of the third century. At that time the Alexandrian School of Theology, including Dionysius, opposed the doctrine of the millennial kingdom which is plainly taught in chapter 20 with its reference to the thousand years. An attack by them on the authorship of John tended to weaken the force of this prophecy.

**2-**Another early objection to the view that John the Apostle was the author of this book was occasioned by the fact that he never describes himself as an “apostle”, but rather as a “servant.” Many scholars, motivated by other reasons, have advanced the theory that the John of the book of Revelation is another person known as John the Presbyter or John the Elder, mentioned by Papias in a statement preserved in the writing of Eusebius.

**Early Church’s View:** The substantiating evidence for any other author than John the Apostle, however, is almost entirely lacking. While notable scholars can be cited in support of divergent views, the proof dissipates upon examination. It seems clear that the early church attributed the book to John the Apostle. **Justin Martyr** (100-165 AD) quotes John’s view that Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem. **Irenaeus** (125-190?? AD) quotes every chapter of the book of the Revelation. In like manner, **Tertullian** (160-225 AD) cites the author as “the Apostle John” and quotes from almost every chapter of the book. **Hippolytus** (170-235 AD) quotes extensively from chapters 17 and 18, attributing them to John the Apostle. Many other early fathers can be cited in similar fashion, such as **Clement of Alexandria** (150-215 AD) **and Origen** (185-254 AD). The latter not only quotes from the book but confirms that John the Apostle was on the Isle of Patmos.

**The first commentary on the book of Revelation** to be preserved, written by Victorinus (wrote about 270 AD), regards John the Apostle as the author. Though the book of Revelation was not commonly received by the church as canonical until the middle of the second century, it is most significant that the Johannine authorship was not questioned until the strong antichiliastic (*thousand year reign of Christ on earth*) influence arose in the Alexandrian School of Theology at the end of the second century.

**The internal evidence** for the Johannine authorship is based first on the fact that four times the writer calls himself by the name John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Describing himself as a “servant” (1:1) and “your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ” (1:9).

**John never states that he is an Apostle.** Taking into consideration, however, that in the Fourth Gospel there is a similar anonymity, this does not seem to be strange. Most conservative expositors regard the name John as genuine rather than a pseudonym as is common in nonscriptural apocalyptic books. There is really no solid evidence against accepting John the Apostle as the author, and there is much that confirms it.

In fact, it may be argued that the reference to John without further identification would presume a familiarity on the part of the readers which would make naming him unnecessary. John was very well known, having written his books and letters much later than Paul or Peter. John also did not need to defend his apostleship as Paul had to on occasion.

**Patmos: The evidence for John the Apostle** hangs largely on the question whether the Apostle John actually was exiled on the Isle of Patmos, as the author of this book claims (1:9). There is good historical evidence in support of this claim. **Clement of Alexandria** refers to the Apostle John as returning from the Isle of Patmos. Eusebius not only affirms John's return from the isle but dates it immediately following the death of Domitian, which occurred in a.d. 96. **Irenaeus** adds his confirming word when he states that John lived in Ephesus after returning from Patmos until the reign of Trajan.

**We will take the position that the Apostle John, Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is the author of The Revelation.**

## **Date and Occasion of Writing**

Related to the total problem is the question of date of the book. Though the tendency among conservative scholars has been to regard the date as a.d. 95 or 96, some have contended for an earlier date, such as 68 or 69, a conclusion supported by Westcott, Lightfoot, Hort, Salmon, and others.

The early date is supposedly supported by a statement attributed to Papias to the effect that John the Apostle was martyred before the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70. Swete in his thorough discussion of this point feels that if the statement of Papias is to be considered genuine, "it disposes of the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse." Accordingly, Swete concludes that if the evidence of Papias be acknowledged, the probability is that John the Elder is the John referred to in the book of Revelation.

The evidence for the early date, before a.d. 70, which depends both upon the genuineness of the quotation from Papias and the question whether Papias knew what he was talking about, has been challenged by many conservative scholars. The majority opinion seems to be that the traditional date of 95 or 96 has better support.

The historical evidence cited from Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, and Irenaeus would be left without any explanation if John the Apostle actually suffered martyrdom before the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70. Irenaeus placed the writing of the book in the reign of Domitian, which ended a.d. 96.

The weight of evidence is against accepting the testimony of Papias as valid and is for setting the date as 95 or 96. In any case, there is little tendency among scholars who accept the inspiration of the Apocalypse to place the date later as some liberal scholars have attempted to do. It is most significant that in many cases the theological bias against the chiliastic teaching of the book of Revelation seems to be the actual motive in rejecting the apostolic authorship.

Based on the historical evidence, the date, therefore, must be before the death of Domitian, who was assassinated in a.d. 96, as the apostle was apparently released from his exile shortly after this. The contents of the book fit this time.

In contrast to other apocalyptic books, the revelation recorded by John the Apostle is presented as having a solid historical basis in his exile on the Isle of Patmos. It was there these visions were given to him and in obedience to the command to write them and send them to the seven churches, John recorded the prophecies of the book. It would seem entirely reasonable that in the midst of persecution the church should be given a book of such assurance as that embodied in the content of the Revelation, which holds before them not only a realistic explanation as to why persecution is permitted but also a promise of ultimate triumph and reward.

We will take the position that the book was written in A.D. 95-96, well after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, and that it was written off the coast of modern day Turkey (where the seven churches of chapters 2 and 3 are located) on an isle called Patmos.

**We will take the later date of the book, 95-96 AD; and that The Revelation was written from the Isle of Patmos.**

## **Inspiration and Canonicity**

Because the book of Revelation was addressed to seven different churches, it would be only natural that each of these churches would want its own copy, and thus the circulation of the entire book would be given a good start. Note that Jesus says to each church in Revelation 2 & 3: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches", plural. Each church had what was written to each of the seven churches.

In the literature of the second half of the second century, evidence begins to reveal wide circulation of the Apocalypse. Andreas quotes Papias about Revelation 12:7. Irenaeus refers to old copies of the book and to people who knew John. Other early authors who mention the book are Justin, Eusebius, Apollonius, and Theophilus the Bishop of Antioch. It is referred to a number of times in the *Epistle of the Churches of Vienne*. Other references to the book abound. Tertullian, according to Swete, quotes from eighteen out of the twenty-two chapters of the book, and cites it as Scripture. Some literature from the period seems to refer to the book using similar phraseology, e.g., the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which refers to the great tribulation, and the *Acts of Perpetua and Felicitas*, which according to Swete abounds in imagery similar to the book of Revelation. The circulation and wide use of the book as Scripture are evident by the beginning of the third century.

It is true, nevertheless, that Revelation was slow in gaining universal recognition as Scripture. Important in the reasons for this is opposition to the chiliasm (*literal 1000 year reign of Christ*) which is expressly taught in Revelation 20. Other theological objections arose from various sects which for the most part were heretical. The more orthodox churches seem to have had less difficulty in accepting it as Scripture. The reasons for a slower reception arose principally from the unusual character of this book, the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament. As previously noted, critics also were quick to point to grammatical difficulties and to cite apparent discrepancies. Swete in his thorough discussion of the vocabulary, grammar, and style demonstrates that most of these objections have a suitable explanation and do not have real weight against acceptance of the book as inspired Scripture.

As Thiessen has shown, most of the objections and difficulties dissolve upon study and do not militate against either apostolic authorship or the inspiration of the book itself. The fact is that the early church, in spite of certain objections, generally accepted the book of Revelation by the end of the second century and the eastern church soon followed suit. Among conservative scholars, there is little disposition to exclude the book of Revelation from the canon.

**We will proceed with our study accepting the inspiration of the book of Revelation.**

## **Apocalyptic Character**

The book of Revelation, beginning as it does with the Greek word *apokalypsis*, by its very title is apocalyptic in character, that is, a book which claims to unfold the future, the unveiling of that which would otherwise be concealed. The nature of such a revelation requires a supernatural understanding of

future events. Although the book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic book of the New Testament, many other apocalyptic works preceded its appearance; and there were others which followed.

A sharp distinction should be observed between apocalyptic works outside the Bible and apocalyptic works which are Scripture, whose writing was guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Apocalyptic literature outside the Bible can be classified as pseudepigrapha (soo-duh-pig-ruh-fa). They were works pretending to emanate from characters of the Bible who are cast in the role of predicting the future. The actual authors, however, often lived long after the character to whom the work is ascribed. Among the most important pseudepigrapha are 'Ascension of Isaiah', 'Assumption of Moses', 'Book of Enoch', 'Book of Jubilees, The Greek Apocalypse of Baruch, Letters of Aristeas, III and IV Maccabees, Psalms of Solomon, Secrets of Enoch', 'Sibylline Oracles', 'The Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch', and 'Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs.' These works are usually dated as beginning about 250 B.C. and as continuing into the period following the apostolic church.

Apocalyptic portions of the Scriptures are in sharp contrast to these pseudepigrapha. The more important apocalyptic works of the Old Testament are Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, and Zechariah. Liberal scholars have sometimes drawn unfair comparisons between the apocalyptic writers outside the Bible and those within the canon. For instance, a common assumption is that the book of Daniel was not actually written by Daniel, as the book purports to be, in the sixth century B.C., but rather in the period of the second century when much of the book of Daniel would have been history. This, however, has been refuted by conservative scholarship, and the apocalyptic character of scriptural books is not a just ground for denying the historical content or the authorship indicated. It is an unwarranted assumption to conclude from the pseudoauthorship of apocalyptic writings outside the Bible that the same principle also applies to Scripture.

Swete points out that the Apocalypse of John is a new departure from former apocalyptic writings in the following particulars:

(1) The Jewish apocalypses are without exception pseudepigraphic; the Christian apocalypse bears the author's name. This abandonment of a long-established tradition is significant; by it John claims for himself the position of a prophet who, conscious that he draws his inspiration from Christ or His angel and not at second hand, has no need to seek shelter under the name of a Biblical saint.

(2) In contrast to the pseudepigrapha whose actual dates are often impossible to determine, Swete states: The Apocalypse of John, on the contrary, makes no secret of its origin and destination; it is the work of a Christian undergoing exile in one of the islands of the Aegean; and it is addressed to Christian congregations in seven of the chief cities of the adjacent continent, under circumstances which practically determine its date.

(3) The Apocalyptist differs from his Jewish predecessors in that he has produced a book which, taken as a whole, is profoundly Christian, and widely removed from the field in which Jewish apocalyptic occupied itself. The narrow sphere of Jewish national hopes has been exchanged for the life and aims of the society whose field is the world and whose goal is the conquest of the human race. ... In the Apocalypse of John the presence of the Spirit of Revelation is unmistakably felt, and the Christian student may be pardoned if he recognizes in this book a fulfillment of the promise of a Paraclete (*comforter*) who "*shall declare ... the things that are to come*" (John 16:13).

The Spirit of this Apocalyptic book and of Prophecy is Jesus Christ, Missler

Prophecy equals 'seeing' God's entire plan in perspective. There are 1,845 references to Christ's rule on



the earth in the Old Testament. A total of 17 OT books give prominence to the event.

Of 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming. It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books (excepting three that are single-chapter letters to private individuals, and Galatians).

For every prophecy relating to His first coming, there are eight treating His Second Coming. Still, most people assume that the future is but a linear extrapolation of the present; life will just go on. But the Bible says otherwise.

## **Dependence on the Old Testament**

There are 550 plus phrases from the Old Testament, very little in the first 20 chapters are new materials. Chapters 21 and 22 are new materials for they deal with the eternal order not the Messianic Kingdom Age (yet even in the final chapters there are symbols used particularly in the Old Testament).

Revelation uses many Old Testament symbols. BUT we shall never have to guess what they mean for with a few exceptions these symbols are explained in the Scriptures. Symbols are used consistently thruout the Scriptures. The more we know about the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, the more comfortable we will be with the idioms/symbols found in the Book of Revelation.

## **The Jewish Character of The Book of Revelation**

Few Gentiles when reading Revelation (or any other book of the New Testament) stop to consider that the "New Testament is a Jewish book, written by Jews, largely about Jews, and meant for both Jews and Gentiles." The religion, traditions and concepts of the New Testament are thoroughly Hebrew. The Jewishness of the apostolic writings is certainly evident in the cultural setting of the historical events and characters, but the Hebrew identity is especially manifest in both their terminology and the commonality of content with the Tanakh (Old Testament). Moreover, the incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus, in the flesh was and is a Jew and would have naturally spoken to His disciples in their native language, traditions and Scriptures. Indeed, as one Messianic Rabbi pointed out, Hebrew is the only language in Scripture that God used to speak audibly.

Many Gentile commentators assume that the language behind the Greek words on the lips of Jesus and the apostles to be Aramaic instead of Hebrew, based on the incidence of a few Aramaic words in the Greek New Testament text. The field of literary criticism generally assumes that Hebrew was essentially unused outside of rabbinic circles. However, Jewish scholars have presented strong arguments for the vitality and preeminence of the Hebrew language in first century Jewish life, as well as religious writings and discourse. David Stern quotes Professor David Flusser, Orthodox Jewish scholar in Jerusalem, "The spoken languages of that period [first century] were Hebrew, Aramaic, and to an extent Greek. ... It is possible that Jesus did, from time to time, make use of the Aramaic language. But during that period Hebrew was both the daily language and the language of study. The Gospel of Mark contains a few Aramaic words, and this is what has misled scholars. ... There is thus no ground for assuming that Jesus did not speak Hebrew; and when we are told (Acts 21:40) that Paul spoke Hebrew, we should take this piece of information at face value."

## **There are a variety of ways in which Hebrew may be seen as the foundation to the Greek text of Revelation.**

**First**, there are many Hebrew words that are transliterated into Greek. Transliteration is the attempt to reproduce the sound of a word with the substitution of letters of the target language for the letters of the

source language without interpreting the meaning. Examples of transliteration from Hebrew to Greek in Revelation include the words “amen,” “Armageddon,” “Hebrew,” “Jerusalem,” “Jew,” “Satan,” “woe” and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The **second** evidence of the Hebrew language is the presence of idiomatic words and phrases, which scholars call Hebraisms. An idiom is simply an expression peculiar to a particular language. For example, the phrase “the small and the great,” which occurs four times in Revelation (11:18; 13:16; 19:5, 18), actually refers to the young and the old rather than social or economic status. The titles of our Lord reflect the variety of expressions that packaged Jewish theology about God (1:4, 8; 4:8; 15:3; 16:5; 21:6). Many of the idioms that Jesus used and are recorded in the Gospels can only be properly understood when interpreted in their Hebrew context.

The **third** evidence of a Hebrew text is that sometimes taking the Greek literally results in a clumsy English translation or a sentence may even fail to make sense. However, the verse makes perfect sense when translated back into Hebrew. For example, in 10:1 an angel is described with feet like pillars. However, feet cannot be “like pillars,” only legs can. The problem is resolved by recognizing that while Greek has separate words for “feet” and “legs” Hebrew has only one word that can mean both. Apparently, a Greek translator unacquainted with Hebrew nuances translated the Hebrew word as “feet” when the intention was “legs.”

The **fourth** evidence of a Hebrew influenced text is the use of conjunctions. Joining individual words in a list within a sentence or one clause to another with the conjunction “and” is a frequent characteristic feature of the Hebrew Scriptures, whereas in Greek literature an independent clause will be subordinated to the main clause of the sentence and the use of conjunctions minimized. The conjunction “and” in Hebrew functions generally as a prefix to Hebrew words without using a separate word. To make a Hebrew word part of a connecting sequence, the letter *vav* (v) is added to the noun as its first letter. There are several conjunctions in the Greek language, but *kai*, meaning “and,” also” or “even” is by far the most common in the New Testament and used in the LXX to translate the *vav* character. English normally uses a coordinating conjunction only between the last two elements in a series of three or *more* (i.e. 1,2, and 3), so while the KJV faithfully renders *kai* modern Bible versions leave 80% of the instances of *kai* untranslated to avoid awkwardness. Yet, in the Greek New Testament there is an excessive use of *kai*, an excellent proof of an original Hebrew text, where *vav*, (v) is very common..

### **In addition to the Hebrew linguistic foundation of Revelation, the content of Revelation is decidedly Hebrew in three significant ways:**

**First**, as Stern points out, while there are few direct quotations, there are over 500 allusions to the *Tanakh*, principally from Exodus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah. The overall effect of so many references is to anchor Revelation in the God-inspired words of Israel’s prophets. Of course, except for the prologue (1:1-8), John writes in a straightforward narrative of a personal experience and nowhere does he use the familiar “it is written” (or similar words) to refer to one of the Hebrew prophets as Jesus and the apostles do in the rest of the New Testament. John declares that his narrative is a revelation directly from his Messiah. The similarities between Revelation and the Hebrew Prophets exist because both were inspired by the same source as “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Pet. 1:21) and both reflect God’s grace to warn His people and mankind that the Day of the Lord is coming.

**Second**, Revelation contains the same elements as the story of the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt. Dan Juster has summarized the points of commonality between the two books as follows (1) preparation of God’s people, (2) the plagues of God on worldwide Egypt, (3) God’s people

protected, (4) Anti-messiah, the last days of Pharaoh, (5) the exodus rapture, (6) wrath of the Lamb and His armies and (7) entry into the promised Land. Revelation could then be deemed the story of the last Exodus.

**Third**, Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) identified many parallels between the narrative and prophetic symbols in Revelation and the architecture, traditions, customs, worship and administration practices associated with the Jerusalem Temple. “But it is specially remarkable, that the Temple references with which the Book of Revelation abounds are generally too minutiae, which a writer who had not been as familiar with such details, as only personal contact and engagement with them could have rendered him, would scarcely have even noticed, certainly not employed as part of his imagery. They come in naturally, spontaneously, and so unexpectedly, that the reader is occasionally in danger of overlooking them altogether; and in language such as a professional man would employ, which would come to him from the previous exercise of his calling as a Rabbi. Indeed, some of the most striking of these references could not have been understood at all without the professional treatises of the Rabbis on the Temple and its services.”

Specific allusions to the Temple may be found in the following Revelation passages: 1:13; 3:5, 12, 20; 4:8, 11; 5:8-9, 12-13; 6:9-10; 7:2-3, 9-12; 8:1-4; 9:4; 10:7, 11; 11:15; 13:8; 14:1-5; 15:2-4, 6; 16:15; 19:1, 3-4, 6-8; 21:3, 16, 19-20. Edersheim’s pointing out of these details are especially valuable to understanding the spiritual lessons of Revelation, as well as its Jewishness.

**The Hebrew characteristics of the Book of Revelation has greatly added to the so called awkwardness of the Greek Text.**

## **Symbols and Symbolisms**

Symbolisms occur throughout Scripture as a vehicle for divine revelation (see Hosea 12:10), but it is undoubtedly true that the final book of the New Testament because of its apocalyptic character contains more symbols than any other book in the New Testament. In this it is similar to the book of Daniel to which, in many respects, it is a counterpart, and also to Ezekiel and Zechariah in the Old Testament.

Apocalyptic books in general are so designated because they reveal truth expressed in symbolic and guarded language. The symbolism of the book of Revelation has been explained on many principles. One of the most popular, however, is that it was necessary to state opposition to the Roman Empire during the persecutions of Domitian by expressing the revelation from God in symbolic terms which would not be easily apprehended by the Roman authorities. Ethelbert Stauffer explains the need for symbolism in the Apocalypse in this way:

“We may read the Book of Revelation with new understanding when we see it as the apostolic reply to the declaration of war [on Christianity] by the ‘divine’ emperor in Rome. And when we realize the perilous political situation in which the book was both written and “published” (22:10), we understand the reason for its mysterious and veiled pictorial language and its preference for words and pseudonyms from the Old Testament.”

Some items allude either to biblical background or to the geography of the Bible, but much of the imagery found in the book of Revelation is familiar also to students of Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The golden lampstand of the churches of Asia has some correspondence to the lamp-stand of the Tabernacle and Temple. Allusions to the heavenly Tabernacle and Temple, to the altar, ark, and censer, all have Old Testament background. Geographic descriptions refer also to Old Testament names and places such as

the River Euphrates, Sodom, Armageddon—the hill of Megiddo—Jerusalem, Babylon, Egypt, and to Old Testament characters such as Balaam and Jezebel. In many cases there are indirect allusions to Old Testament ideas, *situations-parallels to the context of The Revelation*.

A fair analysis of this compilation of symbols furnishes proof of frequent allusions to the Old Testament. In the center is Christ as the Lamb and Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. The twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned. As Snell states, *In the Revelation, THE LAMB is the centre around which all else is clustered, the foundation on which everything lasting is built, the nail on which all hangs, the object to which all points, and the spring from which all blessing proceeds. THE LAMB is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of Heaven and earth, from whose face all defilement must flee away, and in whose presence fulness of joy is known.* Hence, we cannot go far in the study of the Revelation, without seeing THE LAMB, like direction-posts along the road, to remind us that He who did by Himself purge our sins is now highly exalted, and that to Him every knee must bow, and every tongue confess.

It is nevertheless true that much of the imagery of the book of Revelation is new; that is, it is created as a vehicle for the divine revelation which John was to record. To attempt, as many writers have done, to consider this symbolism as allusion to extrabiblical apocalyptic literature, is to press the matter beyond its proper bounds. It is also true that some items, while partially symbolic, may also be intended to be understood literally, as in numerous instances where reference is made to stars, the moon, the sun, rivers, and seas. While there will never be complete agreement on the line between imagery and the literal, the patient exegete must resolve each occurrence in some form of consistent interpretation.

**Numbers:** Very prominent in the book of Revelation is the use of numbers, namely, 2, 3, 3½, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 24, 42, 144, 666, 1,000, 1,260, 1,600, 7,000, 12,000, 144,000, 100,000,000, and 200,000,000. These numbers may be understood literally, but even when understood in this way, they often carry with them also a symbolic meaning. Hence the number seven, used fifty-four times, more than any other number in the book, refers to seven literal churches in the opening chapter. Yet by the very use of this number (which speaks of completion or perfection) the concept is conveyed that these were representative churches which in some sense were complete in their description of the normal needs of the church thruout the ages. It is understood that there were more than seven churches in Asia Minor, but only seven are listed, and seven that are viewed very differently by the Lord Jesus.

There were not only seven churches but seven lampstands, seven stars, seven spirits of God, seven seals on the scroll, seven angels with seven trumpets, seven vials or bowls containing the seven last plagues, seven thunders, 7,000 killed in the earthquake of chapter 12, a dragon with seven heads and seven crowns, the beast of chapter 13 with seven heads, seven mountains of chapter 17, and the seven kings.

Next in importance to the number seven and in the order of their frequency are the numbers twelve, ten, and four. Some of this stems from the fact that there are twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve thousand were sealed from each of the twelve tribes. The elders of chapter 4 are twice twelve or twenty-four. The new Jerusalem is declared to be 12,000 furlongs wide and long, and its wall twelve times twelve, or 144 cubits in height.

From these indications it is clear that the use of these numbers is not accidental. Though the symbolism is not always obvious, the general rule should be followed to interpret numbers literally unless there is clear evidence to the contrary. The numbers nevertheless convey more than their bare numerical significance.

**Of special importance is the reference to forty-two months or 1,260 days**, describing the precise length of the 'great tribulation' (*last 3.5 years*). This is in keeping with the anticipation of Daniel 9:27 that the last half of the seven-year period would be a time of unprecedented trouble.

Endless speculation has also risen over the number 666, describing the beast out of the sea in Revelation 13:18. The most natural and simple explanation of this number, however, is that the beast is characterized by the number six, just falling short of the number seven and signifying that he is only a man after all. Possibly the threefold occurrence of the number six is in vague imitation of the trinity formed by his association of the antichrist with the devil and the false prophet (the unholy trinity).

The wide use of symbols is attended, however, by frequent interpretations in the book of Revelation itself either by direct reference or by implication. Symbols can often be explained also by usage elsewhere in Scripture.

**The following list may be helpful:**

The seven stars (1:16) represent seven angels *or messengers* (1:20).

The seven lampstands (1:13) represent seven churches (1:20).

The hidden manna (2:17) speaks of Christ in glory (Exodus 16:33–34; Heb. 9:4).

The morning star (2:28) refers to Christ returning before the dawn, suggesting the rapture of the church before the establishment of the Kingdom (Rev. 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19).

The key of David (3:7) represents the power to open and close doors (Isa. 22:22).

The seven lamps of fire represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (4:5).

The living creatures (4:7) portray the four revealed attributes of Jesus Christ.

The seven eyes represent the sevenfold Spirit of God (5:6).

The odors of the golden vials symbolize the prayers of the saints (5:8).

The four horses and their riders (6:1) represent successive events in the developing tribulation.

The fallen star (9:1) is the angel of the abyss, probably Satan (9:11).

Many references are made to Jerusalem: the great city (11:8), Sodom and Egypt (11:8), which stand in contrast to the new Jerusalem, the heavenly city.

The stars of heaven (12:4) refer to fallen angels (12:9).

The woman and the child (12:1–2) represent Israel and Christ (12:5–6).

Satan is variously described as the great dragon, the old serpent, and the devil (12:9; 20:2).

The time, times (*our dual*), and half a time (12:14) are the same as 1,260 days (12:6).

The beast out of the sea (13:1–10) is the future world ruler and his empire.

The beast out of the earth (13:11–17) is the false prophet (19:20).

The harlot (17:1) variously described as the great city (17:18), as Babylon the great (17:5), as the one who sits on seven hills (17:9), is usually interpreted as apostate Christendom.

The waters (17:1) on which the woman sits represent the peoples of the world (17:15).

The ten horns (17:12) are ten kings associated with the beast (13:1; 17:3, 7, 8, 11–13, 16–17).

The Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14).

Fine linen is symbolic of the righteous deeds of the saints (19:8).

The rider of the white horse (19:11–16, 19) is clearly identified as Christ, the King of kings.

The lake of fire is described as the place of the second death (20:14).

Jesus Christ is the Root and Offspring of David (22:16).

In many instances, where symbols are explained in the book of Revelation, they establish a pattern of interpretation which casts a great deal of light upon the meaning of the book as a whole. This introduces a presumption that, where expressions are not explained, they can normally be interpreted according to

their natural meaning unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. The attempt to interpret all of the book of Revelation symbolically ends in nullifying practically all that entails the book and leaving it unexplained, as in the work by Lilje, written during the early days of World War II and completed while the author was in prison in Germany.

The problems of interpretation of Revelation have often been made far greater than they really are. They frequently yield to patient study and comparison with other portions of Scripture. The linguistic study of Revelation is an endless task but offers rich rewards to the patient student.

**See Appendix A 'Revelation Potpourri'** for more interesting information on the Book of Revelation.

## **Keys to Prophetic Interpretation**

**#1. In order to interpret prophetic/apocalyptic Scriptures, or any Scriptures for that matter, the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit is necessary.** We must pray for the Holy Spirit, who is the Divine Teacher, to open our eyes and hearts so that we may receive the truths of God's Word. When we study Scripture we should pray as the Psalmist did in Psalm 119:18 which states: "Open mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

When we come to the Word of God we ought to come as eager students wishing to be taught by the Holy Spirit. We should come with a deep sense of humility, recognizing our need of instruction, along with a holy reverence for the Word of God. Since the subject matter is Divinely inspired we need the direction of the One who inspired it if we are to "rightly divide the word of truth" (I Tim. 2:15). I Corinthians 2:10-11 declares: "But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God *knows the things of God.*"

We are convinced that if we earnestly and fervently pray to the Father for the leadership and illumination of the Holy Spirit He will guide us into all truth and show us the truth about things to come. John 16:13 states: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you 'things to come' (*the Greek word for 'things to come' here is Eschatology*)."

### **#2. The Golden Rule of Interpretation:**

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense." Therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic (self evident) and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise".

Simply put, this law states that all biblical passages are to be taken exactly as they read unless there is something in the text indicating that it should be taken some way other than literally. If this rule is applied consistently, much of the present-day tangents can be avoided, as well as other errors, such as Amillennialism.

"So when the plain sense of Scripture makes sense, no other sense needs to be sought."

As in any language, literal or normal interpretation does not rule out figures of speech, but even these have a literal background. The key point is that the Bible should not be approached on the assumption

that it is loaded with symbols and hence hard to understand. It is not. The Bible should be approached with the assumption that this book can be understood just like any other book that is taken literally, but only with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Besides figures of speech, the Bible does use symbols, but the symbols are usually explained, and they are explained by the usage of literal words. Unless the text indicates clearly that it should be taken symbolically, the passage should be understood literally.

By a literal explanation, we mean that the words of prophetic Scripture should be explained in a simple, natural, unrestrained manner, and that we must not depart from the literal meaning except when forced to. A word is a vehicle of a thought, so the meaning of any passage must be determined by arriving at a correct grammatical understanding of the words in the text. We have no right to give the words of Scripture another meaning other than the common and literal one unless the Scriptures themselves plainly tell us to do so. For example, when Revelation twenty employs the phrase "thousand years" six times we are to understand that the writer is referring to a literal thousand year period of time since there is no indication from the context that it should be interpreted otherwise.

George N. Peters, the writer of the massive three volume study entitled *The Theocratic Kingdom*, wrote concerning the literal interpretation of prophecy: "it may be said: if God has really intended to make known His will to man, it follows that to secure knowledge on our part, He must convey His truth to us in accordance with the well-known rules of language. He must adapt Himself to our mode of communicating thoughts and ideas. If His words were given to be understood, it follows that He must have employed language to convey the sense intended of these words, agreeably to the laws grammatically expressed, controlling all language; and that, instead of seeking a sense which the words in themselves do not contain, we are primarily to obtain the sense that the words obviously embrace, making due allowance for the existence of figures of speech and symbols when indicated by the context, scope, or construction of the passage."

The Bible is an integrated whole. Every detail is there by design. Remember God means what He says and says what He means. God's Word in the whole is the best interpreter of God's Word in part.

**The reason why a non-literal interpretation is resorted to by many is because the literal meaning does not fit in with their preconceived opinions and theological training.** Those who abandon the law of literal interpretation do so because they want to avoid the obvious meaning the words of the text are trying to convey. For example, those who deny a future for the nation of Israel say that the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant were conditional and temporary. Yet God said unconditionally to Abraham and his seed: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an EVERLASTING COVENANT, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you. And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an EVERLASTING POSSESSION; and I will be their God" (Gen. 17:7-8).

An amillennialist who refuses to believe that the land of Canaan was intended by God to be the everlasting possession of His chosen nation must give the word "everlasting" a new and foreign meaning. This is dangerous indeed. What would prevent the same interpreter of Scripture from giving the word "everlasting" in John 3:16 a new and foreign meaning?

Unless otherwise indicated by the context all Scripture should be interpreted in a literal fashion, otherwise the individual could make the Bible say anything they want it to.

**When interpreting prophecy the student must understand the literal method of interpretation is sustained by the already literal fulfillment of certain prophecies.** Consider all of the unlikely prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ. His birth, His ministry, His unparalleled sufferings, His death and resurrection were all prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. All of the prophecies relating to His first coming were literally fulfilled, so we may safely conclude that all of the prophecies relating to His Second Advent will likewise be literally fulfilled. **The only and best way to know how God will fulfill prophecy in the future is to see exactly how He has fulfilled it in the past.**

A prime example of the literal method of interpretation being justified by literal fulfillment of prophecy is found in **Hosea 3:4-5** which states: v.4 "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod and without teraphim: v.5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days." The things mentioned in verse four have already been fulfilled. During the present age, the times of the Gentiles (the church age), Israel has been without a king. The things mentioned in verse four are literally true concerning the nation of Israel. Any amillennialist will agree with that. Why then do they change their method of interpretation when they come to verse five? Why not read it and believe it in the same way you read verse four? The literal fulfillment of the prophecy of verse four sustains and justifies the literal interpretation of verse five.

### **#3. The rules of: Double Reference and Time Gaps in Prophecy**

#### **Double Reference:**

This rule observes the fact that often a passage or a block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events that are separated by a long period of time. In the passage itself they are blended into one picture, and the time gap between the two persons or two events is not presented by the text itself. The fact that a gap of time exists is known because of other Scriptures, but in the particular text in question the gap of time is not seen.

A good example of this rule is some of the Old Testament prophecies regarding the First and Second Comings of Messiah. Often these two events are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a gap of time between the First and Second Comings. Zechariah 9:9-10 is a good example of *The Law of Double Reference*. Verse nine is speaking of the First Coming, but verse ten is speaking of the Second Coming. These two comings are blended into one picture with no indication that there is a separation of time between them. Another example is Isaiah 11:1-5. Verses 1-2 speak of the First Coming, while verses 3-5 speak of the Second Coming. Again, the two are blended into one picture with no indication of a gap of time between the two. Because many prophetic passages follow the principle of *The Law of Double Reference*, this is an important law to know. The gap is known because the left side of the 'gap' has been fulfilled and we understand the characteristics of that fulfillment. The right side has not been fulfilled and hence the gap between them.

A majority of prophetic utterances by the Old Testament prophets contain no reference to the time period between the first and second advent of Jesus Christ. Their vision of the future was like viewing two mountain peaks, yet not viewing the valley in between the two mountains. The first advent of Christ was the first mountain peak, and the second mountain peak was the second advent of Christ. The valley in between the two peaks, which they did not see, is what many call the church age, 'the gap'. The fact that two events are prophesied side by side, in the same context, is no proof that the fulfillment will take place at the same time, or in immediate succession. This is particularly true in the prophecies concerning Christ, where events of the first and second advents are spoken of together in the same context as though



taking place at the same time.

#### **Four classes of double reference\***

Four different kinds of Double References can be distinguished in Scripture:

**\*See Appendix B** for a More Detailed Analysis of the Rule of Double Reference

**A. Unforeseen Partial.** In this kind of double reference the prophet's focus is exclusively on the later event. Later, it is revealed by scripture that there is also an earlier event which, although unforeseen, is a real, but incomplete fulfillment of the prophecy. Frequently, the unforeseen event concerns the Church Age, which was not clearly revealed to the Old Testament prophets.

EXAMPLES: **see** Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:16-21; **see** Jer. 31:31-34 with Heb. 8:8-13;10:16-18

**B. Type.** In the case of a type, or a typical prediction, the seer's eyes are fixed on the closer of the two events exclusively. In other words, details of the prophecy are completely satisfied by the earlier event or person. Yet scripture states (either in the original passage or elsewhere) that there is also a subsequent event or person foreshadowed by the prediction.

EXAMPLES: Dan. 8:17-26; **see** Jer. 31:15 with Mt. 2:17,18

**C. Type-Gap** Often, type and gap are combined. In this case, the prediction of the earlier event or person is typical of the later fulfillment, but the description of the later event or person does not fit the earlier.

EXAMPLES: Is.13; Dan. 11:20-45

**D. Gap.** When the prophet predicts one event or person, followed without notice by a reference to a later event or person, it constitutes a "prophetic gap". It should be noticed in this case, that the predictive material referring to the later event will not fit the earlier event. Neither will the description of the earlier event fit the later event.

EXAMPLES: **see** Is. 11:1-5; Is. 61:1,2 with Lk.4:17-21; Dan. 2:40-44

We will explore Gaps more fully below.

**Time Gaps in Prophecy** (here we are more specifically looking at the actual gaps as the church age\*): Another key to interpreting prophecy is to understand that the church and the age in which it was to operate was an unseen mystery to the Old Testament prophets.

\* We also refer to these as 'gaps of time', typically the gap is the church age between the end of O.T. and the beginning again of God's dealings with Israel in the seven year tribulation on into the Kingdom Age.

To understand this one must understand that the church is not Israel and Israel is not the Church. When God deals with Israel in the Old Testament He is not dealing with the church. And when He is dealing with the church He is not dealing with Israel in a personal, direct way, only in a positional sense; He sets the stage for future direct dealings with Israel. Though they are blind as a nation in the Church Age He is preparing the stage for His direct dealing again with Israel during the 7 years of tribulation.

We must also understand that there is one seven year period left in the prophecy of the 70 weeks of Daniel 9:24-27 that is yet to be fulfilled. The stage will be set for this 7 year clock to begin when two events occur: **First:** Romans 11:25, when the fullness of the gentiles is complete; and **second:** the clock on the last seven years will start when Israel makes covenant with the Antichrist as per Daniel 9:27.

The focal point of most of the Israel prophecies relate to the apostasy, restoration, and latter day glory of God's elect nation-Israel. The establishment of the church by Christ during His earthly ministry, its

development and growth as an institution, as well as its commission were largely unknown to the Old Testament prophets. God used the apostle Paul to unveil the mysteries of the New Testament church which had been hid up until that time. Ephesians 3:9-11 declares: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

When this principle is understood the amillennial attempt to make Old Testament Israel the New Testament church becomes utter foolishness. They are two distinct and separate entities. The New Testament church did not take the place of Israel. The fact that many of the Old Testament promises to Israel may be *applied* to believers in the New Testament in no way nullifies their literal fulfillment to Israel. There is no warrant from Scripture to either cancel or transfer the promised blessings made to Israel in the Old Testament. Romans 11:1-2 and 29 makes this very clear: "I say then, has God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away his people which he foreknew...For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The reason why so many amillennialists are so far off base in their interpretation of Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel is because they fail or refuse to see that the New Testament church was an unseen mystery to the Old Testament prophets, and that the church is not Israel and Israel is not the church!

There are at least twenty-four time 'gaps' in the Bible...

located between Scriptures (that are not identified as having breaks in the text), there are hidden spaces in which God hides valuable treasures.\* They are hidden truths that God reveals to His own followers, in His own time. They center on the Church, Christ's Bride. The Church was not spoke of in the Old Testament; it is an un-revealed surprise, a "Mystery," (Greek, "Musterion," something totally hidden, with no hint that it existed) as Paul states in Ephesians 3:1-6; 3:8-9.

\*(some call them parentheses, wherein according to Daniel's 70 weeks [Dan. 9:24-27], there is a pause, a parentheses in the timeline where God's dealing with Israel stops at their rejection of Jesus and the Church starts the parentheses. Then when the Church is Raptured the parentheses stops, and God again deals with Israel as seen in Revelation chapter 4 on.

**An important example** can be found in the text of Isaiah chapter 61, between verse 1 and verse 2. Jesus Christ quotes this passage when He begins His ministry, where He speaks about part of His mission, that of His first coming and starting the Church. However, He only states part of the passage, then sits down and says that part is fulfilled. The Jews never taught that the passage was spilt into two, having two different dates of completion, or were two different events, with a gap of time between then. Luke 4:16-21, states, "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.' Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

Jesus read this text, which has always been understood to be a prophecy of the Messiah. It appeared to be a single event; however He revealed that in reality the passage was speaking about two separate events. The Messiah did not have a singular undertaking on earth, but two completely distinct missions that were separated by over two thousands years, that of Christ's first coming and His second coming, with the

Church set between the two (again, the pause in Daniel's 70 weeks, between week 69 and 70, Dan. 9:24-27; with week 70 starting again with the covenant made between Antichrist and Israel). His first mission was proclaimed in verse one, and in the first sentence of verse two.

However, He stopped short of finishing the rest of the text and said that the verses He had read thus far were fulfilled that day. What the rest of verse two said was, "...and the day of vengeance of our God." This was referring to another, future event which has come to be commonly called Christ's second coming, which is part of what is called the "Last Days," beginning with the covenant between the Antichrist and Israel.

This is a good example of Christ's dual missions: first as Savior, Redeemer, head of His Church, and as an earth-born man who was God. Then in His second coming as the Avenger of Blood, Judge and punisher, coming down from Heaven. Or as the two sides of 'The Kinsman Redeemer: Redeemer and then Avenger of Blood'.

This is one of many examples in God's Word where God has created mysteries, in which He would guide His own followers to uncover concerning Christ's Church and the "Last Days" that surround it. It has been wisely said that, "if there appears to be a contradiction in the Bible it is a signpost the Holy Spirit is using to get our attention so as to indicate that the text has hidden or special importance."

The same is true about Biblical gaps, the Luke 4:18, 19 passage is a good benchmark example. Because it reveals the misconceived notion that the Messiah of Israel was to come to earth only once as the conquering governor who would expel the usurpers. Where as, when Jesus revealed the gap located in the Isaiah passage, it then became known that the Messiah had to come to earth twice. First, as the Lamb of God to die for the sins of mankind, and the second time as the conquering King to take possession of that which He paid for with His life.

If you study the following 24 gaps (not listed is Luke 4:18.19), when you examine a passage, you will find that the particular gap in time that is being referred too is literally where the Church Age is present, and concerns Christ's Church, of which He is the Groom, or the time surrounding the Church. As is true with all studies in God's Word, pray to the Father that the Holy Spirit would have us understand that the underlying theme is always about Jesus Christ, and in this instances the gap is about Jesus as the Head of His Body, the Church and the right side of the prophesy is about Christ and Israel.

**The following are other gaps (besides Luke 4:18-19) written into God's Word:**

Psalms 34:12-16 (between 15 & 16) (Quoted in 1 Peter 3:10-12)

Psalms 118:22 (between A & B)

Isaiah 9:6 (between A & B)

Isaiah 11:1-5 (between the verses)

Isaiah 54:7 (between A & B)

Isaiah 61:2 (Quoted in Luke 4:18-20)

Daniel 2:40-44 (between 43 & 44)

Daniel 9:26, 27 (between 26 and 27)

Daniel 11:20, 21 (between the verses)

Hosea 2:13, 14 (between the verses)

Hosea 3:4, 5 (between the verses)

Amos 9:10,11 (Quoted in Acts 15:13-18, Out of the *Septuagint*, Greek translation of the OT, which is why it sounds different from our current Hebrew translations used in the English Bibles)

Micah 5:2, 3 (*between the verses*)  
Habakkuk 2:13, 14 (*between the verses*)  
Zephaniah 3:7, 8 (*between the verses*)  
Zechariah 9:9, 10 (*between the verses*)  
Matthew 10:23 (*implied in the context*)  
Matthew 12:20 (*between A & B*)  
Luke 1:31, 32 (*between the verses*)  
Luke 19:42 (*until Romans 11:25*)  
Luke 21:24 (*between A & B*)  
1 Peter 1:11 (*sufferings of Christ and the glories...*)  
Revelation 12:5, 6 (*between the verses*)

#### **#4. The Law of Recurrence.**

This law describes the fact that in some passages of Scripture there exists the recording of an event followed by a second recording of the same event giving more details to the first recording. Hence, it often involves two blocks of Scripture. The first block presents a description of an event as it transpires in chronological sequence. This is followed by a second block of Scripture dealing with the same event and the same period of time, but giving further details as to what transpires in the course of the event.

An example of 'The Law of Recurrence' in a prophetic passage is Ezekiel 38:1–39:16. Ezekiel 38:1–23 gives a complete account of the invasion of Israel from the north and the subsequent destruction of the invading army. This is followed by the second block of Scripture, Ezekiel 39:1–16, which repeats some of the account given in the first block and gives some added details regarding the destruction of the invading army. Another example is in Isaiah 30–31. Isaiah 30 gives a complete account of the fall of Judah's alliance with Egypt. Chapter 31 simply repeats the prophecy, adding more detail.

An example found in a non-prophetic passage is Genesis 1:1–2:25. Genesis 1:1–2:3 records the seven days of creation in strict chronological sequence. The passage ends on the seventh day. Then the second block of Scripture, Genesis 2:4–25, in keeping with 'The Law of Recurrence', goes back to the sixth day to provide added details as to the manner by which Adam and Eve were created. This law also functions in the Book of Revelation. Chapters 6–16 detail the chronological sequence of the events of the Tribulation, ending with Armageddon and the Second Coming. Then chapters 17–18 follow 'The Law of Recurrence': Chapter 17 provides more detail about the first half of the Tribulation and chapter 18 about the second half.

#### **#5. The Law of the Context, which states: 'A text apart from its context is a pretext'.**

A verse can only mean what it means in its context and must not be taken out of its context. When it is taken out of its context, it is often presented as meaning something that it cannot mean within the context. A good example of this is Zechariah 13:6. This verse is often used as a prophecy of the Messiah. Pulled out of its context, it does indeed sound like it refers to Jesus. But the context (Zech. 13:2–6) is speaking of false prophets. Verse six cannot refer to Jesus unless Jesus is taken to be a false prophet. This is the danger of studying a verse by itself rather than in its context. The common saying, "You can prove anything by the Bible," is only true **when this law is violated.** "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (II Pet. 1:19-20). The interpretation of prophecy is not up the private whims of the individual. Rather, we must bow to the clear and literal teachings of the Holy Book.

**#6. Finally, prophetic Scripture should be interpreted in light of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ:** "...Worship God: for the testimony (*the witness*) of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). All of the prophecies in the Word of God, whether fulfilled or unfulfilled, relate in some way to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the center and focal point of all of God's revelation to man. He forms the central theme of all of prophecy. Thus, all of the lines of prophetic Scripture converge upon some aspect of the glorious Second Person of the Sacred Trinity. I Peter 1:10-11 declares: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."

Any system of prophetic interpretation that takes away from the glory and sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ should be immediately shunned. Postmillennialism would have you believe that there will be a kingdom of peace and righteousness without the return to earth of King Jesus. This certainly robs Christ of His kingly glory. On the other hand, Amillennial eschatology limits the reign of Jesus Christ to that of a spiritual nature rather than a literal reality. Both systems fail to believe all that the law and prophets spoke concerning Jesus Christ. Luke 24:25 declares: "...O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken *concerning Him*."

May God grant us grace and wisdom to see the wonderful truths of prophetic Scripture. May the keys listed above enable and help us to unlock the vast treasures of the prophetic Word.

## Interpretations

The Five Interpretive Views of the Book of Revelation

Revelation's picturesque images, mysterious symbols, and apocalyptic language make it one of the most challenging books in Scripture to interpret. There are four main interpretative approaches of the book.

The teacher of the Book of Revelation is inevitably forced to choose one of the systems of interpretation which have emerged in the history of the church as a proper approach to this last book of the Bible. The author, John has assumed that this book should be interpreted according to the normal rules of hermeneutics as one would interpret the Gospel of John or the letters of John rather than as a special case, while keeping in mind that its special images, symbols, Old Testament/Hebrew speak, and futuristic language make it more like Daniel than any of the Gospels or the letters.

Instead of assuming that the interpretation should be nonliteral unless there is proof to the contrary, the opposite approach has and should be taken, namely, that terms should be understood in their ordinary meaning unless contrary evidence is adduced. Hence stars are stars, earthquakes are earthquakes, etc. unless it is clear in the context that something else is intended.

The Book of Revelation is one of the most encouraging books of the New Testament. In it, John talks about the ultimate defeat of evil and the glorious return and reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. It talks about a time when God will dwell with men and He will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain for the old order (i.e. under sin) of things that have passed away (21:3, 4).

While not forgetting about the overall broad message of hope contained in the book, we will focus in this section on the overall interpretive framework for the book. Even with the acceptance of the inspiration of

the book and its apostolic authorship, there still remain, however, serious exegetical problems illustrated in the variety of approaches found in conservative scholarship. These have often been divided into four or five categories.

There have traditionally been four or five schools of thought on the interpretive framework of the book of Revelation as a whole. There are many hybrids of these approaches; indeed George Eldon Ladd's moderate futuristic approach is really a hybrid of the mostly futuristic approach. In this discussion we will focus on the following 5 views: **Idealist (or Allegorical), Preterist, Historicist, Futurist and Moderately Futurist.**

### **The Idealist (or Allegorical) View**

The first view of Revelation is the idealist view, or the spiritual view, or the allegorical method of interpreting the Book of Revelation or the nonliteral view. The allegorical approach to Revelation was introduced in the Alexandrian School of Theology represented in the teachings of Clement of Alexandria and Origen, they regarded the book of Revelation as one great allegory going far beyond the natural symbolism which is found in the book (AD 185-254) and made prominent by Augustine (AD 354-420).

According to this view, the events of Revelation are not tied to specific historical or even future events. The imagery of the book symbolically presents the ongoing struggle throughout the ages of God against Satan and good against evil. In this struggle, the saints are persecuted and martyred by the forces of evil but will one day receive their vindication. In the end, God is victorious, and His sovereignty is displayed throughout the ages. Robert Mounce summarizes the idealist view stating, "Revelation is a theological poem presenting the ageless struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a philosophy of history wherein Christian forces are continuously meeting and conquering the demonic forces of evil." In his commentary on Revelation, late nineteenth century scholar William Milligan stated, "While the Apocalypse thus embraces the whole period of the Christian dispensation, it sets before us within this period the action of great principles and not special incidents; we are not to look in the Apocalypse for special events, both for the exhibition of the principles which govern the history of both the world and the Church."

The primary benefit of this view is that it renders the apocalypse quite understandable at a basic level. It is simply a book that was written to encourage suffering saints in the knowledge that God will someday conquer all evil and make things right. The strength of this view is that it avoids the problem of harmonizing passages with events in history. It also makes the book of Revelation applicable and relevant for all periods of church history. In general the idealist view is marked by a refusal to identify any of the images with specific future events, whether in the history of the church or with regard to the end of all things.

The Allegorizers are mostly motivated to their view by their antichiliastic (thousand year reign) premises which led them to take in any other interpretation other than in a literal sense anything which would teach a millennial reign of Christ on earth. They claimed that their view was the true "spiritual" interpretation as opposed to the literalism of their opponents. Once the Millennial reign of Christ is spiritualized thus eliminating it as an actual event on earth lasting for a thousand years, one must then allegorize the rest of the book, especially from chapter four on.

### **Examples of the Idealist's Use of the Revelation text...**

The symbols in Revelation are not tied to specific events but point to themes throughout church history. The battles in Revelation are viewed as spiritual warfare manifested in the persecution of Christians or

wars in general that have occurred in history. The beast from the sea may be identified as the satanically-inspired political opposition to the church in any age. The beast from the land represents pagan, or corrupt, religion to Christianity. The harlot represents the compromised church, or the seduction of the world in general. Each seal, trumpet, or bowl represents natural disasters, wars, famines, and the like which occur as God works out His plan in history. Catastrophes represent God's displeasure with sinful man; however, sinful mankind goes through these catastrophes while still refusing to turn and repent. God ultimately triumphs in the end.

### **Issues with the Idealist (or Allegorical) Interpretation**

The idealist view ignores Revelation's claims to be a prophecy. It also, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs Revelation from any connection with actual historical events, or to any prophetic writings of the Old Testament with regards to the second coming of Christ. The book is thus reduced to a collection of myths designed to convey spiritual truth.

One of the most significant criticisms brought against this view is the fact that Revelation is of the apocalyptic genre and as Ladd says, apocalyptic documents generally describe actual events in history. This also appears to contradict the clear language of the text wherein the writer says that Jesus will show him what must take place next (4:1). If there is no real chronology according to real historical events, then this statement seems to be superfluous and the section on the churches (2-3) seems to be a-historical as well.

Though the Alexandrian School in the early church is generally regarded as heretical, its leaders undoubtedly influenced such men as Jerome and Augustine and were responsible for turning the early church from its previous chiliastic (*thousand year reign*) position. The interpretative method of the Alexandrian school in its entirety has found little favor with modern interpreters, but there is a persistent tendency to return to some use of this method to avoid the premillennial implications of the book of Revelation, if understood more literally.

There are other weaknesses of this view:

**First**, as noted already this view denies the book of Revelation any specific historical fulfillment. The symbols portray the ever-present conflict but no necessary consummation of the historical process. Rev.1:1 states that the events will come to pass quickly when they begin, giving the impression that John is prophesying future historical events, that will unfold in a short period of time.

**Second**, reading spiritual meanings into the text leads to arbitrary interpretations. Followers of this approach have often allowed the cultural and socio-political factors of their time to influence their interpretation rather than seeking the author's intended meaning. Merrill Tenney states, The idealist view . . . assumes a "spiritual" interpretation, and allows no concrete significance whatever to figures that it employs. According to this viewpoint they are not merely symbolic of events and persons, as the historicist view contends; they are only abstract symbols of good and evil. They may be attached to any time or place, but like the characters of *Pilgrim's Progress*, represent qualities or trends or tendencies. In interpretation, the Apocalypse may thus mean anything or nothing according to the whim of the interpreter.

**The more moderate form of allegorical interpretation**, following Augustine, has achieved respectability and regards the book of Revelation as presenting in a symbolic way the total conflict between Christianity and evil or, as Augustine put it: the City of God versus the City of Satan. The modern liberal point of view expressed by Niles emphasizes a contemporary meaning of the book, averring that

even the final consummation of the triumph of righteousness has already begun.

But there is a distinction between prophecy and apocalypse, for whereas prophecy is a thrust of the Word of God into the present and in the future. Christian apocalypse is written from the standpoint of the contemporaneousness of the Church and the future salvation of Israel to the apocalypse or unveiling of the Christ who is risen and who will come again; not as kinsman-redeemer but as kinsman-avenger.

Unless interpreters are grounded in the grammatical, historical, and contextual method of hermeneutics, they leave themselves open to alternate interpretations that may even contradict the author's intended meaning. That moves to the second interpretive method...

### **The Preterist View**

The second view is called the 'preterist' view. *Preter*, which means "past," is derived from the Latin. There are two major views among preterists: full preterism and partial preterism. Both views believe that the prophecies of the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and Revelation were fulfilled in the first century with the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Chapters 1-3 describe the conditions in the seven churches of Asia Minor prior to the Jewish war (AD 66-70). The remaining chapters of Revelation and Jesus' Olivet Discourse describe the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, with the closing chapters (20-22) constituting a picture of the contemporary triumph of the church.

Though similar in some ways to the allegorical method, it considers Revelation as a symbolic history rather than prophetic. Though some in the early church may have had similar views, credit is usually given to the Spanish Jesuit Alcasar (1613) as originating this view who initially developed some of its particulars, which was held also by Grotius, famous theologian of the Netherlands. However, some preterists contend that preterist teachings are found in the writings of the early church as early as the fourth century AD. Alcasar's interpretation is considered a response to the Protestant historicist interpretation of Revelation that identified the Pope as the Anti-Christ.

A variation of this is the idea that Revelation is descriptive rather than predictive. David Brown writes concerning the design of the Apocalypse, "There are but two possible theories of what the Apocalypse is written for. It is either essentially *predictive* or purely *descriptive*." In keeping with his post-millennial viewpoint, he follows almost completely the descriptive interpretation.

**Full preterists** believe that all the prophecies found in Revelation were fulfilled in AD 70 and that we are now living in the eternal state, or the new heavens and the new earth.

**Partial preterists** believe that most of the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem but that chapters 20-22 point to future events such as a future resurrection of believers and return of Christ to the earth. Partial preterists view full preterism as heretical since it denies the second coming of Christ and teaches an unorthodox view of the resurrection.

### **Examples of Full Preterists descriptive interpretations**

In this approach to the book the symbols and content therein relate only to events and happenings at the time of the author. The beasts of chapter 13, for example, are related to "Imperial Rome and the Imperial priesthood." There is no future eschatology in the book whatsoever. This method is based primarily on relating the book to Jewish apocalyptic tracts written at that time to encourage faithfulness during times of persecution. Therefore, the message of the book would seem to be that while the church is threatened by the state and the demand of emperor worship, "those who endure will share in the final victory of God



over the demonic powers which control and direct the totalitarian state."

It is held by a great number of scholars today, including those from a more liberal perspective. The benefit of this view is that it interprets the book in its primary historical setting first.

Crucial to the preterist view is the date of the writing of Revelation. Since it is a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, preterists hold to a pre-AD 70 date of writing. According to this view, John was writing specifically to the church of his day and had only its situation in mind. This letter was written to encourage the saints to persevere under the persecution of the Roman Empire. Preterists who favor the AD 70 date pose the question, "Why doesn't John mention the fall of the Temple which occurred in AD 70?" Preterists point to several lines of evidence for a pre-AD 70 date of writing. **First**, John does not mention the fall of the Jerusalem Temple. If he had been writing two decades after the event, it seems strange that he never mentioned this catastrophic event. **Second**, John does not refer to either Jesus' prophecy of the destruction of the Temple (Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21) or the fulfillment of this prophecy. **Third**, in Revelation 11:1, John is told to "measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there." Preterists argue that this indicates that the Temple is still standing during the writing of Revelation.

Preterists point to several reasons to support their view. **First**, Jesus stated at the end of the Olivet Discourse, "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Mt. 24:34). A generation usually refers to forty years. The fall of Jerusalem would then fit the time Jesus predicted. **Second**, Josephus' detailed record of the fall of Jerusalem appears in several ways to match the symbolism of Revelation. Finally, this view would be directly relevant to John's readers of his day.

The preterist view, particularly the partial preterist view, is a prominent position held by such notable scholars as R. C. Sproul, Hank Hanegraaff, Kenneth Gentry, and the late David Chilton (who later converted to full preterism after the publishing of his books).

### **Issues with the Preterist Interpretation**

There are several criticisms of this view. The events described in Jesus' Olivet Discourse and in Revelation 4-19 differ in several ways from the fall of Jerusalem.

General Titus did not set up an "abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15) in the Jerusalem Temple. Rather, he destroyed the Temple and burned it to the ground. Thus, it appears the preterist is required to allegorize or stretch the metaphors and symbols in order to find fulfillment of the prophecies in the fall of Jerusalem.

Another example of allegorical interpretation by preterists is their interpretation of Revelation 7:4. John identifies a special group of prophets: the 144,000 from the "tribes of Israel." Preterist Hanegraaff states that this group represents the true bride of Christ and is referred to in Rev. 7:9 as the "great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people, and language." In other words, the 144,000 in verse 4, and the great multitude in verse 9 are the same people. This appears to go against the context of the chapter for several reasons. **First**, throughout the Bible the phrase "tribes of Israel" refers to literal Jews. **Second**, John says there are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is a strange way to describe the innumerable multitude of believers from all nations (Rev. 7:9). **Finally**, the context shows John is speaking of two different groups: one on the earth (the 144,000 referenced in 7:1-3), and the great multitude in heaven before the throne (7:9). Here Hanegraaff appears to be allegorizing the text.

Robert Mounce states, "The major problem with the preterist position is that the decisive victory portrayed in the latter chapters of the Apocalypse was never achieved. It is difficult to believe that John envisioned anything less than the complete overthrow of Satan, the final destruction of evil, and the eternal reign on God. If this is not to be, then either John the Seer was essentially wrong in the major thrust of his message or his work was so helplessly ambiguous that its first recipients were all led astray."

Mounce and other New Testament scholars believe the preterists' interpretations are not consistent and utilize allegorical interpretations to make passages fit their theological view. The preterist position rests on a pre-AD 70 date of writing. However, most New Testament scholars date the writing of the book to AD 95. If John had written Revelation after AD 70, the book could not have been a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem. This presents a significant argument against the preterist position.

The preterist view, in general, tends to destroy any future significance of the book, which becomes a literary curiosity with little prophetic meaning. Contemporary liberal works usually follow a combination of the preterist and symbolical methods of interpretation, disregarding the strictly historical interpretation as well as the futurist. Illustrative of this tendency is Laymon's work, *The Book of Revelation*, which significantly does not include a single premillennial work in its bibliography. Even universalists have attempted commentaries on the book of Revelation in which they explain away all judgment upon sin and make all future judgment contemporary, as in the work of Whittemore written over a century ago. Milligan regards the Apocalypse as a statement of principles with no time periods or specific events in view: "While the Apocalypse thus embraces the whole period of the Christian dispensation, it sets before us within this period the action of great principles and not special incidents."

The preterist view thus ignores the book's own claims to be a prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18-19). Nor were all the events predicted and depicted in Revelation fulfilled in the first century. The second coming of Christ described in chapter 19 obviously is yet to occur. But the preterist view requires that one see the words about Christ's second coming as fulfilled in the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., even though He did not appear on that occasion. Nor is there any persecution in the first century that fits the description of the horrific events depicted in chapters 6-19.

But, one of the most significant problems with the view however, is that none of what was supposed to happen, happened. Rome was not overthrown by God and the saints certainly did not share in any such victory. In conjunction with this problem is the fact that much of what is in Revelation appears to be prophetic and speaking of a time quite distant from John's time (i.e. the return of Christ and the consummation of all things), but the preterist interpretation cannot account for this. For that reason many interpreters who see the events described by John as extending past the first six centuries of the church are not in agreement with this view.

**Regarding the Temple and John writing before 70 AD.** Futurists respond that John wrote about future events, and the destruction of the temple was twenty-five years in the past. He also wrote to a primarily gentile audience in Asia Minor which was far removed from Jerusalem. Preterists also point to the fact that the Temple is mentioned in chapter eleven. Futurists respond that although John mentions a temple in Revelation 11:1-2, this does not mean the temple of chapter 11 existed at the time of his writing. In Daniel 9:26-27 and Ezekiel 40-48, both prophets describe the temple, but it was not in existence when they described a future temple in their writings.

What did Jesus mean in Matthew 24:34 when He said, "This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened"? The common futurist response is that Jesus was stating that the future

generation about which he was speaking would not pass away once “these things” had begun. In other words, the generation living amid the time of the events He predicted will not pass away until all is fulfilled.

Christ described his return to Jerusalem this way: “As lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Mt. 24:27). Preterists believe this refers to the Roman army’s advance on Jerusalem. However, the Roman army advanced on Jerusalem from west to east, and their assault was not as a quick lightning strike. The Jewish war lasted for several years before Jerusalem was besieged, and the city fell after a lengthy siege.

That brings us to the third interpretive view of the Book of Revelation.....

### **The Historicist View**

The third view is called the historicist approach. This view teaches that Revelation is a symbolic representation that presents the course of history from the apostle’s life through the end of the age. The symbols in the apocalypse correspond to events in the history of Western Europe, including various popes, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, and rulers such as Charlemagne. Most interpreters place the events of their day in the later chapters of Revelation.

Historicist interpreters often resort to allegorizing the text in order to find in it the various historical events they believe it depicts (e.g., the fall of Rome to the barbarians, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the advent of Islam, even the French Revolution). Not surprisingly, such a subjective, arbitrary, and whimsical approach has given rise to a myriad of conflicting interpretations of the actual historical events in Revelation. Like the preterist approach, the historicist view ignores Revelation’s own claims to be a prophecy. It also robs the book of any meaning for those first-century believers to whom it was addressed. And it removes the interpretation of Revelation from the realm of literal, historical hermeneutics, leaving it at the mercy of the allegorical and spiritualized meanings invented by each would-be interpreter.

Many adherents of this position view chapters 1-3 as seven periods in church history. The breaking of the seals in chapters 4-7 symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent the invasions of the Roman Empire by the Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks. Among Protestant historicists of the Reformation, the antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy. Chapters 11-13 in Revelation represent the true church in its struggle against Roman Catholicism. The bowl judgments of Revelation 14-16 represent God’s judgment on the Catholic Church, culminating in the future overthrow of Catholicism depicted in chapters 17-19.

**Though it had earlier disciples, Joachim, a Roman Catholic scholar, is largely responsible for this as he was also the originator of the first forms of postmillennialism.** This method of interpreting the book of Revelation achieved considerable stature in the Reformation because of its identification of the pope and the papacy with the beasts of Revelation 13. Thiessen cites Wycliffe, Luther, Joseph Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, William Whiston, Elliott, Vitranga, Bengel, and Barnes as adherents of this approach. It has undoubtedly influenced a large number of subsequent expositors, especially those of the postmillennial point of view.

Prominent scholars who held this view include John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry. This view rose to popularity during the Protestant Reformation because of its

identification of the pope and the papacy with the beasts of Revelation 13. However, since the beginning of the twentieth century, it has declined in popularity and influence.

The historical method of interpretation has achieved the status of respectability and in some ways is superior to the other two methods in that it provides a profound philosophy of history as well as a guide to the general principles of divine providence. Its major difficulty is that its adherents have succumbed to the tendency to interpret the book as in some sense climaxing in their generation. As many as fifty different interpretations of the book of Revelation therefore evolve, depending on the time and circumstances of the expositor.

**There are several criticisms of this approach.**

**First**, this approach allows for a wide variety of interpretations. Adherents have a tendency to interpret the text through the context of their period. Thus, many saw the climax of the book happening in their generation. **John Walvoord points out the lack of agreement among historicists. He states, "As many as fifty different interpretations of the book of Revelation therefore evolve, depending on the time and circumstances of the expositor."** Moses Stuart echoed the same concern in his writings over a century ago. He wrote, "Hitherto, scarcely any two original and independent expositors have agreed, in respect to some points very important in their bearing upon the interpretation of the book." Perhaps the most damaging critique is the fact that such an interpretive framework for the book leads to endless speculation and subjectivity in its interpretation. It is simply very difficult to arrive at a consensus in the identification of referents in history for the symbols in the text.

**Second**, this view focuses mostly on the events of the church in Western Europe and says very little about the church in the East. Thus, its narrow scope fails to account for God's activity throughout Asia and the rest of the world. Finally, this view would have little significance for the church of the first century whom John was addressing. It is unlikely they would have been able to interpret Revelation as the historical approach suggests.

Moses Stuart wrote more than one hundred years ago of the distress engendered in his day by the historical interpretation of the book of Revelation with its many conflicting theories resulting in the opinion that the book is impossible of plain exposition. Stuart raised the question: "Must this state of things always continue? This is a question of great interest to those who believe that the Apocalypse rightfully belongs to the Canon of Scripture. Hitherto, scarcely any two original and independent expositors have been agreed, in respect to some points very important in their bearing upon the interpretation of the book. So long as the Apocalypse is regarded principally as an epitome of civil and ecclesiastic history, this must continue to be the case. Different minds will make the application of apocalyptic prophecies to different series of events, because there is something in each to which more or less of these prophecies is seemingly applicable. Such has always been the case, in past times, whenever this method of interpretation has been followed; and why should anything different from this be expected for the future?"

The very multiplicity of such interpretations and identifications of the personnel of Revelation with a variety of historical characters is its own refutation. **If the historical method is the correct one, it is clear until now that no one has found the key.** As Gehman has pointed out, in the historical interpretation of Revelation, variations exist in an almost endless stream... touch every aspect of the book and even on major themes there is little agreement:... the inescapable conclusion is that historical interpreters are on the wrong highway of interpretation.

Which brings us to the .....

### **The Futurist View**

The fourth view is the futurist view. The futuristic approach is limited to conservative expositors who are usually premillennial, this point of view regards Revelation as futuristic beginning with chapter 4 and therefore subject to future fulfillment. This view teaches that the events of the Olivet Discourse and Revelation chapters 4-22 will occur in the future. Futurists divide the book of Revelation into three sections as indicated in 1:19: "what you have seen, what is now and what will take after the now or the church age." Chapter 1 describes the past ("what you have seen"), chapters 2-3 describe the present ("what is now, the church age"), and the rest of the book describes future events ("what will take place after the now or the church age").

The futurist view is widely popular among evangelical Christians today. One of the most popular versions on futurist teaching is dispensational theology, promoted by schools such as Dallas Theological Seminary and Moody Bible Institute. Theologians such as Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, and Dwight Pentecost are noted scholars of this position. Tim LaHaye made this theology popular in the culture with his end times series of novels.

**Futurists apply a literal approach to interpreting Revelation.** Chapters 4-19 refer to a period known as the seven-year tribulation (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God's judgments are actually poured out upon mankind as they are revealed in the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Chapter 13 describes a literal future world empire headed by a political and religious leader represented by the two beasts. Chapters 17-18 pictures the judgment of ecclesiastical and political/commercial Babylon. Chapter 19 refers to Christ's second coming and the battle of Armageddon followed by a literal thousand-year rule of Christ upon the earth and the Great White throne of Judgment in chapter 20. Chapters 21-22 are events that follow the millennium: the creation of a new heaven and a new earth and the arrival of the heavenly city upon the earth.

Futurists argue that a consistently literal or plain interpretation is to be applied in understanding the book of Revelation. Literal interpretation of the Bible means to explain the original sense, or meaning, of the Bible according to the normal customary usage of its language. This means applying the rules of grammar, staying consistent with the historical framework, and the context of the writing. Literal interpretation does not discount figurative or symbolic language. Futurists teach that prophecies using symbolic language are also to be normally interpreted according to the laws of language, and expositional constancy.

Charles Ryrie also states: Symbols, figures of speech and types are all interpreted plainly in this method, and they are in no way contrary to literal interpretation. After all, the very existence of any meaning for a figure of speech depends on the reality of the literal meaning of the terms involved. Figures often make the meaning plainer, but it is the literal, normal, or plain meaning that they convey to the reader. Futurists acknowledge the use of figures and symbols.

When figurative language is used, one must look at the context to find the meaning. **However, figurative language does not justify allegorical interpretation.**

Futurists contend that the literal interpretation of Revelation finds its roots in the ancient church fathers. Elements of this teaching, such as a future millennial kingdom, are found in the writings of Clement of Rome (AD 96), Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), Irenaeus (AD 115-202), Tertullian (AD 150-225) and others.

**Futurists hold that the church fathers taught a literal interpretation of Revelation until Origen (AD 185-254) introduced allegorical interpretation.** This then became the popular form of interpretation when taught by Augustine (AD 354-430). Literal interpretation of Revelation remained throughout the history of the church and rose again to prominence in the modern era.

Unfortunately, there have been and continue to be popular preachers who mistakenly apply the futurist approach to connect current events to the symbols in Revelation. Some have even been involved in setting dates of Christ's return. Although their writings have been popular, they do not represent a Biblical futurist view.

Critics of this view argue that the futurist view renders the book irrelevant to the original readers of the first century. Another criticism is that Revelation is apocalyptic literature and thus meant to be interpreted allegorically or symbolically rather than literally. Hank Hanegraaff states, "Thus, when a Biblical writer uses a symbol or an allegory, we do violence to his intentions if we interpret it in a strictly literal manner."

One of the key elements in the debate, particularly between preterists and futurists, is the date of writing for Revelation. Preterists argue for a pre-AD 70 date while futurists hold to a date of AD 95. There are several reasons for the later date. **First**, Irenaeus, in his work *Against Heresies*, states that John wrote Revelation at the end of Emperor Domitian's reign, which ended in AD 96. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He thus had a connection with a contemporary of the Apostle John.

**Second**, the conditions of the seven churches in Revelation appear to describe a second-generation church setting rather than that of a first-generation. For example, the Church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) is charged with abandoning their first love and warned of the Nicolaitan heresy. **If John had written Revelation in AD 65, it would have overlapped with Paul's letter to the Ephesians and Timothy.** However, Paul makes no mention of either the loss of first love or the threat of the Nicolaitans. Ephesus was Paul's headquarters for three years, and Apollos served there along with Aquila and Priscilla. **The church of Smyrna did not exist during Paul's ministry (AD 60-64) as recorded by Polycarp, the first bishop of the city.** Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) is rebuked for being wealthy and lukewarm. However, in his letter to the Colossians, Paul commends the church three times (2:2, 4:13, 16). It would likely take more than three years for the church to decline to the point that chapter 3 would state there to be no commendable aspect about it. Also, an earthquake in AD 61 left the city in ruins for many years. Thus, it is unlikely that in a ruined condition John would describe them as rich.

In chapter 3:10 the Lord says to the church at Philadelphia that they "will be kept from" the *hour of trial* to come upon the earth. This is a literary, programmatic statement wherein the *hour of trial* refers to the judgments described by John in 6-18. According to John, the church at Philadelphia will not even enter that tribulation. Walvoord argues that it is unlikely that just the church at Philadelphia is ultimately in mind here—surely it must be the church as a world-wide body. Therefore, the seals, trumpets and bowl judgments (6-16), which in this system are referred to as a time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), are all future and occur after the rapture (1 Thes. 4:16) of the church. They relate directly to Daniel's 70th week (see Dan. 9:24-27; a seven year period) and therefore concern Israel and not the church.

In Walvoord's system of interpretation, the seal, trumpets and bowl judgments are chronologically sequential, that is, after the seal judgments, come the trumpet judgments and finally the bowl judgments. These all occur in the seven year period of Daniel's 70th week. The end result of this Great Tribulation is

the destruction of ecclesiastical (17) and political/commercial (18) Babylon. Then Christ will return with the church and set up his kingdom (19, 20).

**Ladd is correct when he asserts that this interpretation relies heavily upon the distinction between Israel and the Church and the distinctive plan God has for both.** Ladd, as well as a host of other commentators, are extremely critical of this distinction between ethnic Israel and the church, but there appears to be significant precedent for this distinction (1 Cor. 10:32 and Romans 9-11).

Finally, in this method, proper attention is given to the grammatico-historical context of the letter and the churches in chapters 2 and 3 are generally taken as real, literal churches. Therefore, since the first three chapters deal with "things" during John's lifetime and chapters 4-22 deal with "things" to come in the future, we have called this view the *mostly futuristic* view.

**The futurist** approach sees in chapters 4–22 predictions of people and events yet to come in the future. Only this approach allows Revelation to be interpreted following the same literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutical method by which non-prophetic portions of Scripture are interpreted. As previously noted, proponents of the other three approaches are frequently forced to resort to allegorizing or spiritualizing the text to sustain their interpretations. The futurist approach, in contrast to the other three, does full justice to Revelation's claim to be a prophecy. The futurist approach is often criticized as robbing Revelation of any meaning for those to whom it was written, since it views much of the book as describing events in the distant future.

In reply John F. Walvoord notes:

Much of the prophecy of the Bible deals with the distant future, including the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, the prophecies of Daniel concerning the future world empires, the body of truth relating to the coming kingdom on earth as well as countless other prophecies. If the events of chapters 4 through 19 are future, even from our viewpoint today, they teach the blessed truth of the ultimate supremacy of God and the triumph of righteousness. The immediate application of distant events is familiar in Scripture, as for instance II Peter 3:10–12, which speaks of the ultimate dissolution of the earth; nevertheless the succeeding passage makes an immediate application: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent ..." (II Peter 3:14). (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* [Chicago: Moody, 1966]) **see** also 1John 3:2-3, Romans 15: 12-13, Titus 2:13-15,

Anything other than the futurist approach leaves the meaning of the book to human ingenuity and opinion. The futurist approach takes the book's meaning as God gave it. In studying Revelation, we will take this straightforward view and accept what the text says. It is nearly impossible to consider all the interpretive options offered by people holding the other three views, so we will not try to work through that maze of options. Rather, we will take the book as it comes in the normal fashion of language.

Some (E.W. Bullinger) have attempted to make even chapters 1, 2, and 3 futuristic and the seven churches as future assemblies, but the great majority of futurists begin with chapter 4. Under this system of interpretation, the events of chapters 4 through 19 relate to the period just preceding the second coming of Christ. This is generally regarded as a period of seven years with emphasis on the last three and one-half years, labeled the "great tribulation." Chapter 19, therefore, refers to the second coming of Christ to the earth, chapter 20 to the future millennial kingdom which will follow, and chapters 21 and 22 to events either contemporary or subsequent to the millennium.

**Objections to the futuristic view** often stem from the claim that it would rob the early church of

practical comfort. Summers expresses a common point of view when he states, 'I do not believe that any interpretation of Revelation can be correct if it is meaningless and if it fails to bring practical help and comfort to those who first received the book. To start from any other view-point is to follow the road which leads away from the truth of the book rather than the road which reveals the marvelous message of truth here given to troubled hearts.'

The general tenor of the book, even in unfulfilled sections, however, is the assurance that God will ultimately triumph, the saints will be blessed, and sin will be judged. To use the argument that the book must be understood by the first generation of Christians completely as a refutation of the futuristic position is not reasonable nor backed by the study of prophecy in Scripture in general. Summers himself adopts the combination of the preterist and historical views which obviously gives the interpreter a great deal of freedom but leaves his results mostly subjective.

It is strange that such an objection should be considered weighty. Much of the prophecy of the Bible deals with the distant future, including the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, the prophecies of Daniel concerning the future world empires, the body of truth relating to the coming kingdom on earth as well as countless other prophecies. If the events of chapters 4 through 19 are future, even from our viewpoint today, they teach the blessed truth of the ultimate supremacy of God and the triumph of righteousness. The immediate application of distant events is familiar in Scripture, as for instance 2 Peter 3:10-12, which speaks of the ultimate dissolution of the earth; nevertheless the succeeding passage makes an immediate application: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent..." (2 Peter 3:14).

Though the premillennial conclusions of the futuristic view seem to have been held by the early church, the early fathers did not in any clear or consistent way interpret the book of Revelation as a whole in a futuristic sense. In fact, it can be demonstrated that the principal error of the fathers was that they attempted to interpret the book of Revelation as being fulfilled contemporaneously in the trials and difficulties of the church. Subsequent history has shown that the events which would have naturally followed did not come to pass, and the assumption of contemporaneous fulfillment was thereby discredited.

The futuristic school has gained a hold upon a large segment of interpreters of prophecy in conservative evangelicalism largely because the other methods have led to such confusion of interpretation and have tended to make Revelation a hopeless exegetical problem. The futurist approach is rejected by most amillenarian\* and postmillenarian\*\* scholars, but is normally held by contemporary premillenarians\*\*\* who tend to follow the futuristic form of interpretation. Though many difficulties and obscurities remain, the futuristic school has the advantage of offering a relatively clear understanding of the principal events of future fulfillment, and tends to treat Revelation as a more normative piece of literature than the other interpretative principles.

\* "Amillenarian," which means there will be "no millennium," no reign by Jesus Christ, in Person, on the throne of His glory here on earth, for one thousand years or any years, as described in Revelation 20:3 to 7, Matthew 25:31 to 45, Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and other Scriptures.

\*\* "Postmillenarian" believe the coming of Christ is 'after the millennium.' The church will therefore bring in the millennium and then the return of Christ to be King; so they speak of bringing in, or the spread of, the Kingdom. Very few "Postmillenarians" are strong for a literal millennium on earth. They very seldom teach that there will be a thousand years of peace and righteousness on earth, a warless kingdom age in fulfillment of Isaiah 2 and Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 66:12 to 24 and Micah 4:1 to 8. Most of them are really "Amillenarians," believing that there will be no one thousand year golden age on earth.

\*\*\* The "Premillenarians" teach that there will be no millennium, there can be no millennium, until after the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfillment of Acts 1:11 and Luke 21:27 to 31, actually comes back to this earth in Person. They teach that Christ and His saints will reign over the earth for one thousand years.



The book of Revelation is in many respects the capstone of futuristic prophecy of the entire Bible and gathers in its prophetic scheme the major themes of prophecy which thread their way through the whole volume of Scripture. The scope and plan of the book as contained in the opening phrase "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass" (1:1) indicate that the primary intent of the book was to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. The book, therefore, has a special relevance for the generation which will be living on earth at that time. Because that event is undated, it constitutes a challenge to each succeeding generation of believers.

**The fifth view** and the one espoused by Ladd is referred to as a **moderate futurist** view. According to Ladd, an answer to the problem of the relationship of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments to one another, could provide the solution to the view of history affirmed in the book. With that in mind, he proposes that the seal judgments represent "the forces in history, however long it lasts, by which God works out his redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end." Therefore, Ladd understands the seal judgments to be going on throughout the church age and the trumpet and bowl judgments (really from chapter 7 onward) to be concerned with the time of the consummation. The primary reason he argues in this fashion is because the contents of the book cannot be opened until the *last* seal and 6:16, 17 explicitly says that the "great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand" (NIV) This text, according to Ladd, suggests that it had not yet arrived until the sixth seal was broken. Further, Ladd understands the seal judgments to parallel the woes outlined in Matthew 24 and that the white horse in Revelation should be understood to be the victories won by the gospel in an age characterized by evil and death.

There are several problems with this view of Revelation 6. First, it is unlikely for several reasons that the rider and white horse are to be associated with Christ and the gospel. It is true, as Ladd points out, that white is generally associated with spiritual victory in Revelation, but the identification of the rider and 6:2 rests partially on parallels with the rider in 19:11. They are similar in that they are both on white horses, but the parallel is difficult to maintain beyond this. The rider in 6:2 has a bow and a crown and is bent on conquest, the rider in 19:11 is judging to effect justice. Therefore, the purpose and contexts for their actions are different. Also, the language of "was given" (*ejdovqh*) is used of divine permission given to evil powers to carry out their destruction (9:1, 3, 5; 13:5, 7 and 14:14, 15). Therefore its use in 6:2 would tend to argue for the rider and his mission relating to some form of evil, perhaps military invasion, with the crown symbolizing eventual rulership over conquered peoples. Yet another thorn in the side of Ladd's theory is the fact that 6:2 is part of a series of judgments and calamities and it is difficult to believe that it could refer to the gospel going forth. Chapter 6 and the seals represents profound judgment, not salvation. This interpretation of the rider in 6:2 seems to promote confusion between Christ opening the seals and also being the one sent forth as the first rider. Lastly if this is the Antichrist he comes not just against Christ but instead of or in His place, whereby he will deceive many, especially God's elect people Israel. Enough so to make a covenant with them and many for 7 years: Dan. 9:27, Matt. 24:24. Hence the white horse of the AC and the white horse of The Christ. Remember Satan's charter of Is. 14:14 is: to be like the most high God.

From interpretation we come to Doctrinal Application.....

## **Theology (Doctrine)**

Few books of the Bible provide a more complete theology than that afforded by the book of Revelation. Because of its apocalyptic character, the emphasis of the book is eschatological in the strict sense of dealing with last things (note: "the word of this prophecy," Rev. 1:3). More specifically, however, it is Christological, as the material of the book relates to the "revelation of Jesus Christ." The objective is to

reveal Jesus Christ as the glorified One in contrast to the Christ of the Gospels, who was seen in humiliation and suffering. The climax of the book is the second coming of Jesus Christ. The wide range of revelation, however, deals with many subjects not specifically eschatological or Christological. In all important fields of theology, there are major contributions and, though written with the imagery and Hebraisms of the Old Testament, the revelation is definitely New Testament.

### **Bibliology**

*Bibliology*, 'The doctrine of Scripture' of the Apocalypse is deduced mostly by implication in that there are frequent allusions to other books of the Bible. One does not proceed more than a few verses, however, before a special blessing is pronounced upon the reader and hearer in a context which refers to the book as "the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:3). John claims divine authority and inspiration both for the book itself and for the revelation it contains. The book of Revelation, however, is not only Scripture itself but is saturated with Old Testament references. Swete notes "that of the 404 verses of the Apocalypse, there are 278 which contain references to the Jewish Scriptures."

Swete submits that the richness of Old Testament reference which proves that most of the books of the Old Testament including all of its three major divisions (*Torah, Writings, Prophets*) are referred to, with emphasis on the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, with Daniel having the greatest number of references. The fact that the Apocalypse is saturated with Old Testament references in itself tends to tie the book to the rest of Scripture and makes it a fitting climactic volume, a terminal for major lines of Scripture revelation.

### **Theology Proper**

*Theology Proper.* Apart from its eschatology, the Apocalypse contributes more to 'the doctrine of God' than to any other field of Theology. The study of its contribution to the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit would in itself merit a volume of considerable proportions. God is presented in all the majesty of the Jehovah of the Old Testament, who is holy, true, omnipotent, omniscient, and eternal. There is emphasis on the righteousness of God and His divine judgment upon sin, with comparatively little mention made of His love and mercy. The character of God is in keeping with the role in which He is presented as the divine Judge of men.

Though there is reference to both the Father and the Son, the central revelation concerns Christ, in keeping with the title of the book. Many allusions are made to His human origin as coming from the tribe of Judah and the house of David and to His humiliation while on earth as represented in the symbol of a slain lamb. Always, however, Christ is depicted as triumphant over death, the eternal One of infinite power and majesty who is worthy of all honor and adoration. Before His glorified humanity the apostle falls as one dead.

The supreme revelation is continued in chapter 19 where He is described as descending from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords to slay the wicked, and to accomplish His righteous purpose in the earth. Though the Apocalypse contains no defense of the deity of Christ, no book of the Bible is more plain in its implications, for here indeed is the eternal God who became man. This is, of course, confirmed by His relationship to God the Father described in 4:2-3 and 5:1, 7. Complementing the revelation of Christ is that of the Spirit through whom John received the revelation (1:10) and who appears frequently in various symbols, as in the seven horns and seven eyes of 5:6, and the seven spirits of 1:4 and 4:5, and who is seen in the special relationship to Christ in 3:1 and 5:6. It is fitting that the book of Revelation should close with another reference to the Spirit in 22:17 climaxing other indirect references to the Spirit throughout the book.

### **Anthropology and Hamartiology**

*Anthropology (man) and Hamartiology (sin).* The emphasis on the doctrines of man and of sin in the book of Revelation is apparent. Man is revealed in his utter need of the grace of God as righteously deserving the judgment of God for sin, in partaking, even in his best form, of the limitations of the creature. Few books of the Bible describe man in greater depravity and as the object of more severe divine judgment. The acme of human blasphemy and wickedness is portrayed in the beast and the false prophet who are the supreme demonstration of Satan's handiwork in the human race.

### **Angelology**

*Angelology.* No other book in the New Testament speaks more often of 'angels' than the book of Revelation. They are the principal vehicle of communication to John of the truth which he is recording. The holy angels are seen in power and majesty in sharp contrast to the wicked or fallen angels also described in the book. Angels are prominent in the scenes of heaven in chapters 4 and 5, and they reappear to sound the seven trumpets in chapters 8 through 11. The truth of chapter 11 concerning the two witnesses is transmitted to John through an angel, and the warfare against the wicked angels is described dramatically in chapter 12. The seven vials of the wrath of God are also administered by the angels in chapters 15 and 16, and the judgment upon Babylon is related to angelic ministry. Angels apparently accompany the Lord in His second coming in chapter 19. The final message of the book recorded in chapter 22 comes to John through the ministry of angels.

### **Soteriology**

*Soteriology (Salvation).* The redemptive purpose of God is constantly in view in the Apocalypse, beginning with the reference in 1:5 to Christ as the One who "loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." His crucifixion is mentioned in 1:7, and constant allusions follow as Christ is presented as the slain Lamb, as the One who redeemed mankind by His blood out of every kindred, tongue, and nation in 5:9, and the One whose blood can make white the robes of the martyrs in 7:14. It is because of His finished work in sacrifice that the invitation of the Spirit and bride of 22:17 can be made to anyone who chooses to partake of the water of life without cost. Salvation is ascribed to God three times (7:10; 12:10; 19:1).

### **Redemption**

After chapter 3 There is an overall emphasis on the doctrine of redemption, and the saints are declared to be a redeemed people. The emphasis or completion if you will is not the front side of Salvation but the back side of redemption. Jesus sets the stage for the two sides of our redemption in Luke 4:16-20. It is so important we will quote it fully here: Luke 4:16-20b: **16** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. **17** And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

**18** *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*  
**20** Then He closed the book.

These are characteristics of the first half of our redemption.

The rest of the Isaiah quotation presents the completion of the redemption process that we will study in particular in Rev. 4-19. The rest of the Isaiah passage reads:  
Is. 61:2b And the day of vengeance of our God;

Paul describes this two step redemption best: **Romans 8:18-25** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. **19** For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. **20** For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; **21** because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. **22** For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. **23** Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption to be complete, the redemption of our body. **24** For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? **25** But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

So we see in these verses an emphasis on the completion of the redemption process. A deliverance and hope for the final redemption of the body and the creation itself.

#### **In the meantime we.....**

**Eph. 1:13b-14: 13b** were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

**Eph. 4:30: 30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Again the redemption of that which was purchased in the first half of Redemption: Us and creation....

#### **Ecclesiology**

*Ecclesiology (the church).* A major section and contribution to ecclesiology is found in the opening chapters of Revelation with the incisive letters to the seven churches. Here the emphasis is on practical truth and holy living, in keeping with their relationship to the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Reference to the New Testament church as the *ecclesia* is not to be found in chapters 4 through 18, but the church as the wife of the Lamb reappears in 19:7-8 and is included in the mention of the apostles in the description of the new Jerusalem, which the church shares with saints of other ages. As in other books of the New Testament, *ecclesia*, when used in a spiritual sense referring to saints in the Body of Christ, is nowhere found in Revelation from 3:14 to 22:16; rather, the general word *hagios* ("saint") is used to include the saved of all ages. This tends to support the concept that the church as the Body of Christ is raptured before events pictured in the book of Revelation beginning in chapter 4. The true church is in contrast to the harlot of chapter 17, and it is to be distinguished from the saints described as Jews or Gentiles from chapter 6 to 19.

#### **Eschatology**

*Eschatology (things to come).* Undoubtedly, the principal contribution of the book of Revelation is in the realm of eschatology. Here is presented not only the eschatology of the church in a few scattered references to the doctrine of the rapture of the church (2:25; 3:10-11) but the majestic completion of the prophetic program of the times of Gentiles and Daniel's program for Israel, both culminating in the second coming of Christ. Nowhere else in Scripture is there more detailed description of the period just before the second coming with special reference to the great tribulation. The events immediately preceding and following the second coming are also spelled out in detail.

Here alone the millennial kingdom is declared to be one thousand years in length, and a clear distinction is made between the millennium and the eternal state which follows. Emphasis in the book is on the second coming of Christ itself, which stands in sharp relief against the sphere of humiliation depicted in the Gospels. Prominent also are the doctrine of divine judgment upon sin, the doctrine of resurrection, and the doctrine of reward. No book of Scripture more specifically sets before the believer in Christ his eternal hope in the new heaven and earth and gives greater assurance of God's triumph over wickedness, rebellion, and unbelief.

In a word, the book of Revelation is the eschatological section of the New Testament. Every major theme of prophecy is treated to some extent in this book, with special attention to completion or fulfillment of the prophetic program of God. For this reason the book of Revelation cannot be understood apart from the sixty-five books which precede it, although it is in itself a Bible in miniature.

## **Outline of the Book of Revelation**

### **I. Introduction of The Revelation: 1:1-8**

- A. Salutation of John *from* the Triune God: 1:4-5a
- B. Salutation *to* Him: 1:5b-6
- C. Announcement *concerning* Him: 1:7-8

### **II. The Things that John Saw: The Glorified Son of Man 1:9-20**

- A. Introduction by John: 1:9-11
- B. The Revelation Seen: 1:12-16
- C. The Interpretation of the Revelation Seen: 1:17-20

### **III. The Things which are: The Churches: 2:1-3:22**

- A. The Church of Ephesus: 2:1-7
- B. The Church of Smyrna: 2:8-11
- C. The Church of Pergamum: 2:12-17
- D. The Church of Thyatira 2:18-29
- E. The Church of Sardis: 3:1-6
- F. The Church of Philadelphia: 3:7-13
- G. The Church of Laodicea: 3:14-22

### **IV. The Things Which Must Come to Pass the Things that Are: 4:1-22:5**

- A. Caught up to Throne of God: 4:1-11
- B. The lamb and the Seven Sealed Scroll: 5:1-14
- C. The Great Tribulation: 6:1-18:24
  - 1. The First half: 6:1-9:21
    - a. The Seal Judgments: 6:1-17
    - b. The 144,000 Jews and Worldwide Revival: 7:1-17
    - c. The Trumpet Judgments: 8:1-9:21
  - 2. Events of the Middle of the Tribulation: 10:1-14:20
    - a. The Little Book: 10:1-11
    - b. The Tribulation Temple: 11:1-2
    - c. The Two Witnesses: 11:3-13
    - d. The Seventh Trumpet: 11:14-19

- e. Israel in the Tribulation: 12:1-17
- f. The Beast from the Sea: 13:1-10
- g. The Beast from the Earth: 13:11-18
- h. Mid-Tribulation Announcements: 14:1-20
- 3. The Second half, The great Tribulation: 15:1-16:21
  - a. The Prelude: 15:1-16:1
  - b. The bowl Judgments: 16:2-21
- 4. Recurrence, Greater Detail: The Two Babylons: 17:1-18:24
  - a. Ecclesiastical Babylon: 17:1-18
  - b. Political & Economic Babylon: 18:1-24
- D. The Second Coming of Christ and the Aftermath: 19:1-20:3
  - 1. Prelude to the Second Coming: 19:1-10
  - 2. The Second Coming: 19:11-18
  - 3. The Campaign of Armageddon: 19:19
  - 4. The Antichrist and the False Prophet: 19:20
  - 5. The Gentiles: 19:21
  - 6. The Binding of Satan: 20:1-3
- E. The Messianic Kingdom: 20:4-6
  - 1. The Reign of Christ: 20:4
  - 2- The First Resurrection: 20:5-6
- F. The Aftermath: 20:7-15
  - 1. The Last Revolt: 20:7-10
  - 2. The Great White Throne Judgment: 20:11-15
- G. The Eternal Order: 21:1-22:5
  - 1. The passing of the Old Order and the Creation of the New: 21:1-8
  - 2. The Eternal new Jerusalem: 21:9-22:5
    - a. The Establishment of the City: 21:9-10
    - b. The Description of the City: 21:11-22:5

**V. The Conclusion: 22:6-21**

- A. The Authentication 22:6-9
- B. Declarations in the Light of the Revelation: 22:10-15
- C. The First Affirmation: 22:16
- D. The Invitation: 22:17
- E. The Warning: 22:18-19
- F. The Second Affirmation: 22:20
- G. The benediction: 22:21

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NT377 The Revelation: *'Heavy Revy'*

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## Appendix A Revelation Potpourri

### Mostly from Chuck Missler

“The Book of Revelation is a “lens” that puts the entire Bible into focus. The lens is focused on the person of Jesus Christ, and His destiny is imminent. This is a book of victory: We are overcomers! We are the ultimate winners in the game of life! (I read the ending: we win!)”

“One of the reasons this book strikes us as strange is because of our lack of understanding concerning the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation has 404 verses, and in those verses there are 800 allusions to the Old Testament. The more we know about the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, the more comfortable we will be with the idioms found in the Book of Revelation.”

Note state 550 plus phrases from the OT. Whichever number you latch onto it is a very great number of OT reference, symbols, quotes, inferences etc.

“**It is relevant:** only the Biblically illiterate are unable to see that we are, indeed, in the “last days.” “

“The Holy Spirit shall teach you all things (Jn. 16:13). Don’t believe Chuck Missler *or John Winder or Barnhouse* (Acts 17:11). Do your own homework.”

“God is His own interpreter. God uses expressions to get ideas across; not just words, but “models.” (Hos. 12:10) These are types, “foreshadowings,” and analogies.

### Role of Types, Metaphors, and Idioms:

#### **Types:**

Gen 22

Dan 3

Ruth

Joshua

Abraham & Isaac

Nebuchadnezzar’s Image

Redemption of the land, etc.

Model of the book of Revelation

**Metaphors:** Tabernacle, Burning Bush

**Idioms:** “Friend of God” - prophetic insights (Abraham, Gen 18; Disciples, Jn. 15). “Beloved” - apocalyptic writings (Daniel, John).

**Signified by God** = in “code” (1:1) “to give a sign or signal.” There are, in the Bible, 4591 semaino {say-mah’-ee-no} from sema (a mark, of uncertain derivation); [Sememe = a basic unit of meaning]. It has two meanings: 1) to give a sign, to signify, indicate. 2) to make known.

...every code is explained in Scripture...every book required...

The word is translated “sign” (15:1), “wonder” (12:1, 3) and “miracle” (19:20). This same word is used by John for the miracles of Christ. It’s a “spiritual code” understood only by those who know Christ personally. “

**“Preparation:**

This is a spiritual and supernatural experience =>Prayer! (Satan will not want you here.) Prepare to be challenged to alter your view of everything. This will be the most “expensive” program you’ll ever take! It will cost you some cherished ideas... “

**“Why “Prophecy”?**

Prophecy = God’s entire plan in perspective. I believe we are plunging into a period of time about which the Bible says more than any other period of time in history—including the time that Jesus walked on the shores of the Sea of Galilee and climbed the mountains of Judea.

There are 1,845 references to Christ’s rule on the earth in the Old Testament. A total of 17 OT books give prominence to the event.

Of 216 chapters in the New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming. It is mentioned in 23 of the 27 books (excepting three that are single-chapter letters to private individuals, and Galatians).

For every prophecy relating to His first coming, there are eight treating His Second Coming. Still, most people assume that the future is but a linear extrapolation of the present; life will just go on. But the Bible says otherwise.”

“During this study, when we encounter issues which seem controversial, remember to test it against the “whole counsel of God,” with Christ at the center (Rev 1:1):

“More sure word...” 2 Pet 1:19

“Search the Scriptures...of me” John 5:39

“Volume of the book...of me” Ps 40:7”

**“Genesis vs. Revelation**

Genesis = Beginning; Creation

Revelation = Redemption; Completion

**Genesis & Revelation**

Earth Created 1:1

Earth Passed away 21:1

Sun to govern Day 1:16

No need of sun 21:23

Darkness called night 1:5

No night there 22:5



Waters He called seas 1:10  
No more sea 21:1

A river for earth's blessing 2:10-14  
A river for New Earth 22:1,2

Man in God's Image 1:26  
Man Headed by Satan's Image 13

Entrance of sin 3  
End of sin 21, 22

Curse pronounced 3:14-17  
No more curse 22:3

Death entered 3:19  
No more death 21:4

Cherubim first mentioned 3:24  
Cherubim final mention 19:4

Man driven out of Eden 3:24  
Man restored 22

Tree of life guarded 3:24  
Access to Tree of life 22:14

Sorrow & suffering enter 3:17  
No more sorrow 22:4

Religion, art, and science separated from God 4  
judged, destroyed 18

Nimrod founds Babylon 10:8-10  
Babylon falls 17, 18

God's Flood to Destroy evil generation 6 - 9  
Satan's flood to Destroy elect generation 12

A bow: God's promise 9:13  
A bow for remembrance 4:3; 10:1

Sodom & Egypt: Corruption, judgment 13, 19  
"Sodom & Egypt" (Jerusalem) 11:8

A confederation vs. Abraham's people 14  
Abraham's Seed 12

A bride for Abraham's son 24  
A bride for Abraham's Seed 19

Marriage of 1st Adam 2:18-23

Marriage of Last Adam 19

Promised Seed: Possess gate of enemies 29:8

Promised Seed possessing 19

Man's dominion ceased and Satan's begun 3:24

Satan's domain ended and man's restored 22"

### **"The Sevens in Revelation**

Seven Churches 1:4, 11, 20

Seven Lampstands 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1

Seven Spirits 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6

Seven Stars 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1

Seven Lamps 4; 5

Seven "Title-pairs" 2; 3

Seven Promises to the Overcomer 2;3

Seven Seals 5:1,6

Seven Horns 5:6

Seven Eyes 5:6

Seven Angels 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9

Seven Trumpets 8:2, 6

Seven Thunders 10:3, 4

Seven Thousand 11:13

Seven Heads 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9

Seven Crowns 12:3

Seven Plagues 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9

Seven Bowls 15:7; 17:1; 21:9

Seven Mountains 17:9

Seven Kings 17:10,11

(some are more subtle):

Seven Features in Ch. 1

Seven Divisions in each Letter Ch. 2, 3

Seven Personages: Ch. 12, 13 (Woman, Man-Child, Red Dragon, 7-headed Beast, False Prophet, Michael, Lamb)

Seven Beatitudes: 1:3, 14:3, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14

Seven Years of Judgments: 11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5

Seven "I Am's" of Christ: 1:8, 11, 17, 18; 21:6; 22:13, 16

Seven Doxologies in heaven: 4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2,3; 15:2-4; 19:1-6

Seven New Things: 20, 21

...and many, many more.

(Seven times as many?)"

"Four times John says he was "...in the Spirit..."

### **Where:**

Ch:1:10 on the day of the Lord Patmos

4:2 straightway I was... A throne in heaven

17:3 carried me away... in the wilderness

21:10 carried me away... to a mountain"

## **“Thunders, voices, lightnings, and an earthquake’**

4:5 Throne

8:5 Seals

11:19 Trumpets

16:18 Bowls”

## **“Climactic Glorious Escalation”**

1:6 (2) Glory, dominion

4:11(3) Glory, honor, power

5:13(5) Blessing, honor, glory, power

7:12(7) Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, might “

## **“Songs (Revelation is the Book of Singing, Psalms is the Book of Songs)**

1) 4:8 Holy, holy, holy

2) 4:11; 5:8-10 worthy art thou

3) 5:11-13 unto Him that sits

4) 7:9,10 Salvation to our God 11,12 Amen; Blessing...

5) 11:15 Kingdoms of the world 16-18 We give thee thanks

6) 15:2-4 great & marvelous...

7) 19:1-8 4 hallelujahs

## **“The Three Tenses of Redemption**

Past, Present, Future God (Rev 1:4)

Which Was: (Col 1:15-17; Jn. 8:58)

Which is: (Heb 7:25)

Which Is to Come (Rev 1:7)”

## **“Jesus Christ (Rev 1:5):**

The Faithful Witness: (Jn. 14:1-3; Jn. 8:14)

First Begotten of the Dead: (Col 1:18-20)

Prince of the Kings of the Earth: (Mt 25:31,32; 1 Cor. 15:24,25)

Unto Him That (Rev 1:5):

Loved Us (Gal 2:20; Jn. 3:16)

Washed Us from our Sins in His Own Blood (Heb 7:25; 9:14)

Made Us Kings/Priests (1 Pet 2:9; Lk 19:17; Rev. 2:26,26; 5:10; 20:4; 22:5)”

## **“Write (Rev 1:19):**

The Things Which you Have Seen (Rev 1:12-18)

The Things Which Are (Rev 2 & 3)

The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter (Rev 4-22)”

## **“Three Women**

Wife of YHWH (Israel) Woman of Rev 12

Virgin Bride (Church) Bride of Christ

Harlot Mystery Babylon”

## **“Preparatory Issues**

In preparation for this study, you should really read the entire Bible! You need to understand the

following:

In Genesis, the role of the “serpent,” the “seed of the woman,” the kinsman-redeemer, the coats of skins, the Way of the Tree of Life;

In Exodus, the concept of Redemption, deliverance from bondage, the plagues, the burning bush and why it wasn’t consumed, etc.;

In Leviticus, the Feasts, their offerings and the Jewish calendar;

In Numbers, the way the Camp of Israel was laid out;

In Joshua, the parallels between it and the Book of Revelation;

In Ruth, the title of real estate, redemption, and the kinsman-redeemer;

In 2 Samuel, David dividing the priests into 24 courses;

In Daniel, the 70 Week Prophecy;”

“Distinction between Israel and the Church;”

“John’s other books:

Gospel- Believe (Jn. 20:31), Epistles- Be sure (1 Jn. 5:13), Revelation- Be ready-(Rev 22:20)”

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NT377 The Revelation: 'Heavy Revy'

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## APPENDIX B THE PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE REFERENCE IN INTERPRETING PROPHECY

By DAVID JEREMIAH  
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The controversy over the principle of "double-fulfillment" in the interpretation of prophecy is not a new theological development. As far back as Theodore of Mopsuestia. There were conflicting opinions as to the validity of applying one prophetic passage to more than one situation. Theodore (350-428 A. D.). who was labeled "The Exegete" by his contemporaries. refused to accept any prophetic interpretation that approached duplicity.

In Frederick Farrar's History of Interpretation. Theodore of Mopsuestia is mentioned in connection with Zechariah 9 :8-10. Farrar says:

"In the ninth chapter of Zechariah. Theodore thought it an instance of frigid and foolish interpretation to apply one clause historically and another allegorically. To refer one to Zerubbabel. the next to Christ. and then to go back again to Zerubbabel. He refuses to read the latest revelations into the earliest utterances"<sup>1</sup>

Time has not solved the problem. Today there are good men on both sides of the debate. Perhaps Dwight Pentecost has stated the case in favor of the "double-sense" principle better than any other: "Few laws are more important to observe in the interpretation of prophetic Scriptures than the law of double reference. Two events, widely separated as to the time of their fulfillment may be brought together into the scope of prophecy."<sup>2</sup>

Other men who have agreed with Pentecost as to the legitimacy of this principle are: Berkeley Mickelsen, Bernard Ramm, C. L. Feinberg, Charles Ryrie, and John Walvoord.

The other side of the issue is championed by Milton S. Terry. He has devoted several pages in his book on Hermeneutics to the objections which he has to the "law of double reference." Some of these objections will be answered later, but perhaps this statement by Terry will open the door to debate:

"....the moment we admit the principle that portions of Scripture contain an occult or double sense, we introduce an element of uncertainty in the Sacred Volume, and unsettle all scientific interpretation."<sup>3</sup>

Terry also quotes Owen and Ryle, in that order: "If Scripture has more than one meaning, it has no meaning at all."<sup>4</sup> "I hold that the words of Scripture were intended to have one definite sense and that our first objective should be to discover that sense, and adhere rigidly to it."

Obviously this article will not settle a question that has been the source of heated battle for many years. It is the writer's objective to clarify the terminology used and the issues involved. For some this may add fuel to the fire of disagreement. If we can understand the basis of our agreement or disagreement, we will have accomplished our objective. For this reason, the first part of the study will be taken up with the setting forth of some definitions and distinctions.

The second part will try to answer the question, "Why the double reference principle?" By this time we hope to have answered some of the objections to this principle of interpretation, and to have prepared the way for an examination of the passages of Scripture which contain the double references.

This is an important question because: (1) It involves a great number of Old Testament passages. (2) It is one of the bones of contention between Premillennialists and Amillennialists. (3) It is misunderstood by many who would fight for its validity. (4) It is an often mentioned, but little-defined principle. (5) It involves, if carefully understood, a proof for, not against, the literal interpretation of the Scriptures.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE FULFILLMENT WHAT IS THE LAW OF DOUBLE REFERENCE?

### Definitions

The following definitions have been given by various authors and theologians:

J. Edwin Hartell defines double reference as:

...the peculiarity of the writings of the Holy Spirit, by which a passage applying primarily to a person or event near at hand is used by him at a later time as applying to the person of Christ, or the affairs of His kingdom. <sup>5</sup>

A. H. Strong puts it this way:

Certain prophecies apparently contain a fulness of meaning which is not exhausted by the event to which they most obviously and literally refer. A prophecy which had a partial fulfillment at a time not remote from its utterance, may find it's chief fulfillment in an event far distant. Since the principles of God's administration find ever recurring and enlarging illustration in history, prophecies which have already had a partial fulfillment may have whole cycles of fulfillment yet before them. <sup>6</sup>

Another standard definition is from the pen of Thomas Hartwell Horne:

The same prophecies frequently have a double meaning, and refer to different events, the one near, the other remote; the one temporal, the other spiritual or perhaps eternal. The prophets thus having several events in view, their expressions may be partly applicable to one and partly to another, and it is not always easy to make the transitions. What has not been fulfilled in the first, we must apply to the second; and what has already been fulfilled, may often be considered as typical of what remains to be accomplished. <sup>7</sup>

Charles Feinberg points out that the law of double reference,

...may assume anyone of several forms. Two or more events of a like character may be described by a common profile. ....Future events placed side by side in the prophecy, may have great gaps between them in their fulfillment. <sup>8</sup>

Charles Ryrie has taken the liberty of separating the two aspects of this one law into two distinct laws. The one he calls The Law of Double Reference, and the other he has named The Law of Time Reference. 9

It is much easier to separate these two laws in a theology book than it is in the Scripture. Whenever one finds the first part in operation, he is almost sure to find the second. For that reason it seems best to consider them together.

From the definitions and statements of the above-mentioned theologians, we may make the following observations:

1. In double reference prophecy, the first fulfillment of the prophecy usually is found in a person or event close in time to the prophetic utterance.

2. In double reference prophecy, the first fulfillment is usually only a partial fulfillment of the total prophetic message.

3. In double reference prophecy, the ultimate fulfillment is usually found in the person of Christ or the affairs of His kingdom.

Double fulfillment is particularly true of the predictions:

....concerning the Babylonian Captivity, the event of the day of the Lord, the return from Babylon, the world-wide dispersion of Israel, and their future regathering from all the corners of the earth.... 10

4. In double reference prophecy, the first fulfillment is usually temporal, whereas, the ultimate fulfillment may be spiritual or eternal.

5. In double reference prophecy, part of the prophetic message may be fulfilled close at hand, and that fulfillment in turn becomes another prophecy. A. J. Gordon says, "Prophecy has no sooner become history, than history in turn becomes prophecy." 11

6. In double reference prophecy, two or more prophecies may be grouped together in one area of vision, although they are really at different distances in fulfillment.

7. In double reference prophecy, observations 5 and 6 are usually found to be working in the same passage.

There are many other terms beside "double reference" which are used by various writers and theologians to describe what has been set forth in the seven observations we have just discussed. In most cases, the following terms are used interchangeably with "double reference" and may be understood to stand for any or all of the parts of the law: Near and Far View, Double Sense, Multiple Fulfillment, Gap Prophecy, Foreshortening, and several others.

There are two terms which need special mention here. "Compenetration" is a term used by Catholic writers to define what they understand by this law of double reference. "In an Old Testament passage, the near meaning and the remote meaning for the New Testament so compenetrates that the passage at the same time and in the same word refers to the near and the remote New Testament meaning." 12

The other term comes from the writing of Beecher. It seems to stand for the second aspect of double reference prophecy, the "time reference" application. Beecher used the term "Generic Prophecy" in this way:

A generic prophecy is one which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts separated by intervals,

and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole--in other words. a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of the parts. 13

The one fact that is obvious as one studies the material available on this subject is that each writer seems to have his own idea as to the meaning of this law of interpretation. It is because of this wide variety of understandings that so many have rejected the right and legitimate use of a principle which is necessary to the proper exposition of prophetic Scripture.

### Distinctions

Distinguish Between the Early and Later Meaning of "Double Reference".

The law of double reference seems to have undergone somewhat of an evolution since its early mention. Early expositors seemed to have held that "double fulfillment" was One literal fulfillment in the immediate context of the prophecy, and a second or multiple fulfillments which were not literal, but were referred to as allegorical or mystical fulfillments.

T. H. Horne's comment on Hosea 11:1 will serve to illustrate:

This passage in its literal sense, was meant of God's delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt; but in its secondary and mystical sense, there can be no doubt that an allusion was intended by the Holy Spirit to the call of the infant Christ out of the same country. 14

Today's writers would not express themselves this way. A double fulfillment prophecy loses not one bit of its literalness when it is fulfilled the second Or third time. This would violate our basic system of hermeneutics. "Double fulfillment is literal fulfillment and therefore consistent with basic rules of interpretation." 15

Distinguish Between Interpretation and Application:

The law of double reference is not the Pandora's Box of Biblical Hermeneutics as some opponents would claim. It is the failure of many to distinguish application from interpretation that has caused such an accusation to be leveled at the principle. To accept the law of double reference as a legitimate tool for interpretation of prophecy is not to open the door to all kinds of fanciful notions as to the hidden and allegorical meanings that might be alluded to in a prophetic passage.

To speak of the law of double reference is to speak of interpretation, not application. Double reference is not one interpretation and manifold applications. It is one message for two audiences separated in time. 16

Ryrie's example is sufficient to show why we must be careful to make this difference:

Psalm 122:6, may well be used as an example of the proper distinction between interpretation and application. The verse reads: 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.' The literal interpreter understands this verse in a twofold sense:

(1) The primary reference is to the city of Jerusalem, and that for which it, as the capital, stands representative, that is, the nation Israel and the land.

(2) There is also a secondary application, but not an interpretation, allowed, that is, an expression of the general truth that in all generations divine blessing has rested upon all who forwarded the work of those identified with the Lord. The application, however, does not in any way take the place of the interpretation... 17



If the above example would have had reference secondarily to a specific event or person, it would have been within the boundaries of the double reference principle. It does not, however, so it is one statement with unlimited applications, not one prophecy with two literal fulfillments.

Distinguish between Reference and Fulfillment:

Some writers are very careful to make it known that double reference is unacceptable to them, but that double fulfillment is a valid principle. This seems to be more a matter of semantics than anything else, but a word of explanation might help. The reason that some enemies of this law reject its use is that they just cannot accept the idea that the Holy Spirit had more than one intention when the prophetic message was given. They will concede however, that once the message was given, it could have found fulfillments outside the original scope of the prophecy. It is for this reason that they prefer fulfillment over reference or sense.

This distinction has not been followed in writing this paper. It seems to this writer that if the difference is made for the reason given above, we are left with the horrid thought that the Holy Spirit Himself is surprised with the ultimate fulfillment of His original prophecy.

#### WHY DOUBLE REFERENCE IN PROPHECY?

Why, in studying the Scriptures, should we expect to find some prophecies that are fulfilled more than once? Is it the purpose of the Almighty to confuse His people by making the understanding of His Revelation difficult? Certainly not! It is His desire that all who read might understand. It is also true, however, that there were humans involved in the writing of the Scripture, and our doctrine of inspiration holds that God used their personalities so that they were not simply secretaries taking down dictation. If we are to understand the writings of these men, we must understand not only the men themselves, but also the circumstances that surrounded their predictive statements, and the nature of Old Testament prophecy as well. In other words, we must be careful not to read into prophecy, especially Old Testament prophecy, all of the characteristics of prophetic revelation which we now understand because of the fuller message of the New Testament.

Why is the double reference principle part of the Word of God?

These reasons seem to stand out:

Because of the Unchronological Character of the Old Testament Prophecy

Not a few writers have observed this phenomenon. Raud says:

God uses spiritual order in writing prophecy. For example, the second chapter of Isaiah may be divided into three sections. (1) The vision of the Gentile nations flocking to Jerusalem when Christ reigns there, to worship Him and learn His laws. (vs. 2-4) (2) A rebuke to idolatrous Israel. (vs.5-11) (3) A warning of judgment upon all pride and idolatry in the Day of the Lord. (vs. 12-22)

If we should arrange this chapter to suit the time order of its fulfillment we should have (2), (3), and (1). But then we would lose the force of the rebuke which the Lord administered to His wayward nation by, (1) Pointing to the future submission of the Gentiles to Him, (2) Denouncing the Jews idolatry, and (3) Warning the Jews that His judgment is certain and final. 18

Feinberg quotes Kellogg:

....because two events are spoken of together or in close sequence, is no proof that these events will take place simultaneously or even in immediate succession, unless the Scripture specifically affirms so. 19

Stanley Leathes agrees:

needless to say, it is contrary to the analysis of the prophetic Scriptures to suppose that because events are mentioned in immediate juxtaposition that they must certainly come to pass in immediate chronological order. 20

The fact that the prophet was both a foreteller and a forthteller is significant here. Unlike many of our ideas of prophecy, the most important aspect of the prophecy to the prophet was the immediate not the future. He was interested in his generation and hoped, by the prediction of things to come, to cause them to repent and return to the God who was able to do such tremendous things as the prophet foretold. One should not be surprised to find two widely separated events referred to in the same chapter or verse, for the Holy Spirit enabled the prophet to bring these events together because they had a special meaning to his own situation.

This is much like the character of the New Testament Gospels. As the predictive history of the Old Testament is often given according to moral or spiritual order, so the actual history of the Gospels: We have every reason to believe that where there is a difference of order in the presentation of events in the Gospels, it is because moral and spiritual considerations are given precedence over the chronological. 21

One illustration of this is the Sermon on the Mount, which is given by Matthew as one connected discourse, but in Luke is found in about twenty different places.

Because of the Limited Perspective of the Prophet "In dealing with the predictive aspect of prophecy, we must remember that when God spoke to and through His servants, He did not give them unlimited vision. Instead they were confined within a divinely limited perspective." 22

A. H. Strong has given several illustrations of this principle from various avenues of life. Perhaps he goes a little overboard with his word pictures, but all have helped in the explanation of this rule to others. They are simply listed here without his replete explanations:

\* As in Japanese pictures, the near and the far appear equally distant.

\* As in dissolving views, the ultimate and immediate future melts into a future immeasurably far away.

\* The candle that shines through a narrow aperture sends out its light through an ever-increasing area.

\* The chalet on the mountainside may turn out to be only a black cat on the woodpile, or a speck upon the window pane.

\* A hill which is seen to rise close behind another is found on nearer approach to have receded a great way from it.

\* The painter by foreshortening, brings together things or parts that are relatively distant from each other. 23

Alva J. McClain refers to the limited perspective of the prophet Daniel as he prophesied the seventy weeks determined upon the nation of Israel:

...he saw events together on the screen of prophecy which in their fulfillment were separated by centuries of time. This curious characteristic, so strange to Western minds, was in complete harmony with the Oriental mind, which was little concerned with a continuous chronology..... the Oriental was

interested in the next important event, not in the time that might intervene. The Bible is an Oriental book, humanly speaking. 24

There is an interesting verse of Scripture in I Peter which seems to shed light on this from the prophets' viewpoint. Peter tells us that after the prophets had written, they actually sat down and tried to figure out the time element involved in their own prophecies: "Searching what, or what manner, of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (I Peter 1:11)

If the prophets could not understand the time element in their prophetic messages, it is proper and true to say that their perspective was limited. This does not in any way detract from the truth of their statements, since no one would insist that a statement be understood in order that it be true, literally true.

#### Because of the Christological Orientation of the Scriptures:

Another reason for expecting double reference in prophecy concerns the Christological orientation of the entire Word of God. When Christ was speaking to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He instructed them concerning Himself, and His text was the writings of Moses, and all the prophets. 25

Later on in the same chapter we read: These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. 26

According to Christ's own words, the message of the Old Testament was the coming Messiah. We should not be surprised then to discover that the prophets looked first at their own situation, but ultimately at the coming Messiah. (We have already observed that double reference prophecy is usually fulfilled ultimately in the person of Christ or the affairs of His kingdom.)

#### Because of the Necessity of Future Assurance:

Yet another provision was made to confirm men's faith in utterances which had regard to the far future. It frequently happened that prophets who had to speak of such things were also commissioned to predict other things which would shortly come to pass; and the verification of these latter predictions in their own day and generation justified men in believing the other utterances which pointed to a more distant time. The one practically a 'sign' of the other, and if the one proved true, the other might be trusted. 27

Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this dimension in double reference prophecy is found in Gabriel's words to Mary recorded in Luke 1:30-33. Gabriel told Mary the following things:

1. She was to conceive in her womb and bring forth a son.
2. She was to call his name Jesus.
3. He was to be great.
4. He was to be called the Son of the Highest.
5. The Lord was to give unto him the throne of his father David.
6. He was to reign over the house of Jacob forever.
7. And of his kingdom there was to be no end. 28

The first four parts of this prophecy were fulfilled literally in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. There is no way, however, that the last three parts can be said to have been fulfilled. They are yet future. They will yet be fulfilled in Christ. Feinberg's words are pertinent: According to the angel's words, Mary literally conceived in her womb; literally brought forth a son; His name was literally called Jesus; He was literally great; and He was literally called the Son of the Highest. Will it not be as literally fulfilled that God will yet

give to Christ the throne of His father David, that he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and that of His glorious kingdom there shall be no end? 29

#### WHERE IS DOUBLE--FULFILLMENT FOUND?

Not one passage was examined under this title that did not have a dispute connected with it. To examine every passage that might possibly contain double reference prophecy would exceed the limitations of space imposed upon this paper.

Certain general rules seem to suggest themselves to one who has studied the literature available on this subject. How can you tell if a prophetic statement has more than one fulfillment? These suggestions may help:

1. Determine if the prophecy has been fulfilled in its literal and complete meaning. Elsa Raud makes the following comment: We can know whether or not the law of double reference applies to the prophecy we are reading by ascertaining whether it has been fulfilled completely and literally. Genesis 12:3 says that "in you shall all families of the earth be blessed." All the families of the earth have not yet experienced the blessing in Christ which the promise declares .... Only a comparatively few Jews and Gentiles have thus been blessed in Him. The prophecy in Genesis 12:3 will be fulfilled for all the families of the earth in the Day of the Lord. 30

2. If the prophecy seems to have a double or wider meaning, examine that meaning only after you have carefully worked out the primary interpretation of the prophecy. What you understand by the first fulfillment will color your understanding of the second or ultimate fulfillment.

3. Look for some interpretive comment from the New Testament writers to aid your interpretation of the secondary or ultimate meaning.

4. If the understanding you get from the ultimate fulfillment is not completely in accord with that which is directly revealed concerning the person or event, reject it. Start over! In no case does our knowledge of a future event or person depend solely on the information contained in a double reference prophecy.

#### Conclusion

The Bible does contain some prophecies that are fulfilled in more than one situation. Eventually every Bible student says that, though he may not say it in those words. When we understand the reasons for our discovery of double reference prophecies, we will not be so concerned about what to call them, as we are about how to apply them. Since the Bible is a miraculous book, we may expect to find some miraculous things in it. Double reference prophecy is one of God's miracles.

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