

Revelation

Introduction

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF INTERPRETATION:

- Different views of interpreting the book generally fall into four categories:
 - Preterist View
 - Historicist View
 - Futurist View
 - Idealist View

- **The “Preterist” View:**
 - The book refers to events that were fulfilled in the first century A.D., or shortly thereafter.
 - It was written primarily to encourage the original readers.
 - Its value for today would therefore be didactic (teaching the value of faithfulness to God).

- **The “Historicist” view:**
 - The book provides a panoramic view of the future of the church from as it goes through history.
 - This view finds in the book such events as the rise of Catholicism, Islam, the Protestant reformation, world wars, etc., ending with the return of Christ.
 - As such it would encourage Christians no matter when they lived.

- **The “Futurist” view:**
 - Apart from the first few chapters, the book depicts events which immediately precede the second coming of Christ.
 - Therefore most of the book has yet to be fulfilled (or is being fulfilled now), and its value is primarily for Christians who will be living at the time Jesus returns.

- **The “Idealist” view:**
 - The book does not deal with any specific historical situation.
 - Instead, it is simply enforcing the principle that good will ultimately triumph over evil.
 - As such the book is applicable to any age.

METHOD OF INTERPRETATION?

- **The “Preterist” View:**
 - Would be more applicable to 1st century Christians
 - Some that hold this view believe revelations was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem.
 - Some believe it was all fulfilled before the 3rd century
 - Most believe it relates to the persecution of the church

- **The “Historicist” view:**
 - Considered a chronology of the Christian dispensation (Age, era) until the second coming.
 - Requires a complete understanding of each symbol.
 - Where is the point of reference?
 - Where are we at in history?
 - **What benefit would it be to the early Christians?**

- **The “Futurist” view:**
 - Believe that all events are in the future.
 - All symbols are literal.
 - At this moment we are ready to start the events described in the book.
 - Has no application unless we’re near the end of time.
 - The “Interpretation” that has been used to play on fears.

- **The “Idealist” or “Spiritual” view:**
 - Has a more practical application no matter where in time you are.
 - Understanding is NOT based on “proper” interpretation of each symbol.
 - It makes theorizing (I.e. End of the world) powerless.
 - It removes the “Mysteriousness” of the book.
 - It complements the other books of the NT

THE DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK:

- To properly understand the book, we must try to understand the historical context in which it was written.
- We must also understand it in a manner that would have been meaningful to those to whom it was first addressed.
- Our difficulty with this book is due to our unfamiliarity with apocalyptic literature as a method of communicating a message.
- We are also far removed from the historical and cultural context of the times which would make the symbolism easier to understand.
- The early church likely did not have the problem understanding the book we do today.
- They were well acquainted with the style of apocalyptic literature.
- They were living at a time when the symbols of the book were likely familiar to them.

THE UNIQUE NATURE OF THE BOOK:

- Revelation is certainly different from other books of the New Testament.
 - Unfortunately, this has caused some people to shy away from the book; or on the other hand, to misuse it in propagating wild theories.
 - Most people conclude it is just too mysterious to understand.

- It was actually written to make things clearer.
 - The word "revelation" in the Greek is **apokalupsis**, which means "an uncovering" or "unveiling." It is therefore a book designed to uncover or unveil, not conceal.

- It is apocalyptic.
 - Apocalyptic is also Symbolic and the same rules apply (I.e. not literal)
 - It is a particular kind of symbolism.
 - Apocalyptic presents its message by visionary means

- It is symbolic in nature.
 - Written in symbolic language.
 - The first sentence informs us of that by using the word "*Signified*".
 - Symbols always signify something OTHER than that which is depicted.
 - Therefore, Revelation cannot be treated as literal!

- Apocalyptic Literature...?
 - Was quite popular from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.
 - It was a type of literature well known to the Jews and Christians of the first century church.
 - Features of apocalyptic literature include the use of highly symbolic or figurative language (cf. "signified", 1:1).
 - It was normally written in times of persecution, usually depicting the conflict between good and evil.
 - There are other examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible.
 - In the Old Testament, for example, the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah each contain elements of this style of writing.
 - In the New Testament, Matthew 24 contains apocalyptic elements.

- It is a revelation.
 - It was actually written to make things clearer.
 - The word "revelation" in the Greek is **apokalupsis**, which means "an uncovering" or "unveiling." It is therefore a book designed to uncover or unveil, not conceal.
 - It being a revelation means it is not hidden.

- It is practical.
 - How do we know it is practical?
 - It was addressed by the Lord to the churches.
 - The Lord's message is NEVER impractical.
 - The Lord had a message to HIS people therefore it would be misunderstood by his enemies.
 - It's purpose was to encourage the persecuted/downtrodden saints

AUTHOR

- John, identified as one "who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:1-2).
- Most likely the apostle John, brother of James, and author of the gospel of John and three epistles.
 - His authorship of this book is supported by the testimony of Justin Martyr (165 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (220 A.D.), Hippolytus (236 A.D.), and Origen (254 A.D.).
 - It is also referenced by Eusebius and Irenaeus.
- As an Apostle, no proof of inspiration is necessary.
- John used his name in such a way to imply he was well known by his readers.

THE DATE OF THE BOOK:

- Written before the destruction of Jerusalem?
 - It would have to be written several years before to be of any use or encouragement.
 - It would mean that the book was dependant on the date it was written to validate the Preterist View.
 - It would not allow enough time for the "seven churches" to reach the state they were in and not be addressed by in an epistle.
- Written before the destruction of Jerusalem?
 - What had transpired since the Gospel was preached?
 - Ephesus had lost its first love....
 - Smyrna had proven faithful despite persecution and poverty....
 - Pergamos had been faithful through the martyrdom of Antipas and permitted the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitains.....
 - Paul would have addressed the Nicolaitains if they existed.
 - Thyatira was commended for her works but permitted "Jezebel" to seduce them....
 - Philadelphia had endured with patience....
 - Implies a long time.
 - Sardis was dead....
 - Laodicea had grown lukewarm and didn't need the Lord...

- Written after the destruction of Jerusalem?
 - Tradition places John in Ephesus before the end of the first century.
 - Irenaeus writes that "...all the Elders witness, who in Asia conferred with John the Lord's disciple, to the effect that John had delivered these things unto them: for he abode with them until the time of Trajan.."
 - Another quote from Irenaeus, "The church in Ephesus was established by Paul and having John remain permanently until the time of Trajan.."
 - Trajan ruled from AD 98 to 117.
 - Domitian started a new wave of persecution in AD 93.
 - Most likely revelation was written around AD 96 to 98.

Purpose of this study:

- Remove the mystery.
- Edify through the encouragement the book offers.
- Equip the saints to combat false doctrines.