

A Study of Revelation chapters 1 to 3

Introduction

Revelation written to promote holiness. Apocalypse – an unveiling, a revelation from God.

Written about AD 90 by John the apostle to encourage and strengthen the early first century Christians.

Four main views:

1. Preterist

All has already taken place. Fulfilled and completed by the fourth century.

All that took place up till the time of Constantine.

Promoted and popularised by Roman Catholic Jesuit priest early in 17th Century. To 'counter' the teaching of the reformation that the Pope was the antichrist.

However, the book deals with the final overthrow of Satan, the end of the world. Patently, not an acceptable view.

2. Futurist

Also promoted by (possibly originated with) a Jesuit priest in 1603.

The first three chapters deal with the history from the first century till the Second Coming of Christ. Seven 'dispensations' between the first and second coming.

Chapter 4 onwards is future and will take place either at the end of the age, or when Christ comes for the church. Therefore most of the book is unfulfilled.

However:

1. It robs most of the book of its original purpose.
2. Prophecy is always written to strengthen faith.
3. It destroys the unity of the book.
4. It postpones the Kingdom to the future.

3. Idealist

These are not 'happenings' in history, but symbols, ideas and principles. Great emphasis on allegorical interpretations.

However:

1. This does not help us in trying to expound the book.
2. It denies the book has any specific historical fulfilment.

4. Historicist

The whole book is an unfolding of the history of the church between the First and Second Coming of Christ.

4.1 Prophetic (Continuous) Historicist

Revelation is a chronological unfolding of the history of the church between the comings of Christ.

Many who take this view consider that most of Revelation has now been fulfilled.

4.2 Parallel Historicist

A series of crises of judgements described from different angles and aspects. Each covers the whole period from Christ's first coming to the second.

Every one of the 7 churches, 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls of wrath can be and should be applied to every age.

The Bible has an end in view. A view from eternity for us in time.

Beware of any system or theory that says that any part of the Bible is not relevant to today.

Why does this view commend itself to us?

1. It puts Christ in His rightful place

Christ in ALL the Scriptures.

2. It is written to the Church of God

Seven churches. Seven fold – the perfect, the complete description of the church. Not just chapters 2-3 but the whole book – see 1:3-4.

3. It is Revelation – Apocalypse – Unveiling

To open our eyes. To make things plain and simple to us.

4. Revelation by signs and symbols

Revelation 1:1 “...signified...” By signs.

5. To edify and comfort the believer

There is an end in view. Christ IS King. Even in the face of severe persecution. If you are His, then you will triumph in HIM.
