

## Overview

The book of Revelation evokes extreme responses in people: obsession, fear, confusion and skepticism. Some believe it to be an irrelevant rant of paranoia designed to moralize people through scare tactics. Many insist that every Christian must adopt the correct belief concerning this challenging book. The trouble is that there is a minimum of four distinct views of Revelation. Well-intentioned and educated Bible scholars seriously defend each viewpoint. Most of us have only been exposed to one or two positions. Usually we have been given bits and pieces of contradictory views in order to put that view in a negative light.

My purpose is not to persuade you to the "correct" view. My purpose is to present a holistic examination of the book, considering seriously defensible opinions. In fact, every viewpoint is an opinion. Only the actual complete unfolding of the events will reveal the truth. It is interesting that in the first Advent of Christ, almost everyone got it wrong. Christ did not come in a way in which they were expecting!

I would like to alleviate some of the fears the subject causes in many. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:7. "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:9. I want us to honestly evaluate the available information.

John wrote Revelation. This is most likely John the Apostle. The style of writing is quite different than the gospel of John and his letters to the churches. This fact can be explained by the apocalyptic nature of the material and that he is reporting what he received in a vision. It was written around 64 AD during Nero's persecution of the church or later between 81-96 AD.

There are four principal viewpoints that we will consider concerning the interpretation of the book. The one familiar to most evangelical Christians today is Classical Dispensationalist view. This is a very popular view, because of modern books written by Hal Lindsey, The Left Behind series and others. This is the view of many television preachers. Entire television shows are devoted to this viewpoint. In this view, the church is raptured away to heaven before the Second Advent of Christ.

We will also examine the Idealist view, which considers the book a pictorial unfolding of great principles in constant conflict, without reference to actual events. The Preterist view holds that the bulk of John's prophecies occur in the first century, soon after his writing of them. They were future to the original intended audience. They are history to us. Finally, we will explore the Progressive Dispensationalist view. For the progressive dispensationalist, the key to Revelation is the "already/not yet" eschatological tension. The first coming of Christ brought the beginning of the kingdom of heaven to earth, but is not yet complete. It awaits the Second Coming.

Every version believes that Christ came in the flesh. He will return physically to the earth to rule and to reign as King of Kings. Every version recognizes that these specific, actual churches were addressed in the vision. In every version, Satan is defeated eternally. Christ ultimately wins and takes full ownership of his creation at the Second Coming. Christ followers live eternally in our resurrected bodies in the New Heaven and New Earth. Every route leads us to this same conclusion.

We "now see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." 1 Corinthians 13:12

### Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1-3
  - Revelation of Jesus

- Must shortly take place
- Blessing for reading, hearing and *keeping*
- 4-8
  - Greeting
  - Who was and is and is to come
  - Seven Spirits
  - First Born
  - Ruler over Kings
  - Kings and Priests
  - Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced him
- 9-20 Vision of Son of Man
  - Companion in Tribulation?
  - In the Spirit
  - Alpha & Omega
  - Description of Christ
  - 7 Churches
  - Significance of 7

### **Chapters 2-3 Messages to Churches**

- Real churches with real people whom John probably knew
- Commendations
- Reprimands (except Laodicea)
- Corrective Measures (except Philadelphia)
- Rewards to Overcomers
- Loveless Church
- Persecuted Church
- Compromising Church
- Corrupt Church
- Dead Church
- Faithful Church
- Lukewarm (Ineffective) Church

### **Chapter 4 Throne Room of Heaven**

- After these things
- 24 Elders
- 7 Lamps
- 7 Spirits of God
- 4 Living Creatures
- Worship

### **Chapter 5 The Lamb of God**

- No one worthy to execute judgment, except The Lamb
- Lion of Tribe of Judah & Root of David = slain Lamb
  - 7 Horns = authority
  - 7 eyes = all seeing & knowing
  - 7 Spirits of God
- Worthy is the Lamb
  - Innocent
  - Gentle
  - Sacrificial
- Worship from hundreds of millions

## **Chapters 6-18 Judgments Executed**

- These chapters are the center of most of the debate!
- Who, what, when, where?

## **Chapter 19 Marriage Supper of the Lamb**

- Christ's return
- Beast, False Prophet & rebellious defeated

## **Chapter 20 Millennium**

- Satan is bound
- Saints reign with Christ
- Ultimate elimination of Satan
- Great White Throne Judgment of Unbelievers

## **Chapter 21 New Heaven, New Earth & New Jerusalem**

## **Chapter 22**

- River of Life
- Coming quickly
- Blessed are those who do his commandments
- Come!