

## **The Four Major Methods of Interpretation of Revelation**

- I. The Continuous-Historical Method (Historicist)
  - a. Revelation is chronological outline of church history from John's time until Christ's return.
    - i. The seven churches are seven periods of church history.
    - ii. The seven trumpets are historical events.
      1. The fall of Rome
      2. The rise of Islam,
      3. The Protestant Reformation.
  - b. "Here are some examples of how historicism usually interprets events in Revelation: the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 are symbolic of seven ages of church history, starting with the apostolic church (the church of Ephesus) and ending with the modern-day, lukewarm church (the church of Laodicea). The seals in chapters 4—7 represent the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. The "little scroll" given to John in chapter 10 is a picture of the Protestant Reformation. The beasts of chapters 12 and 13 represent Catholicism and the papacy. Other passages in Revelation are linked to the invasion of the Huns, the spread of Islam, and the rise of the modern missionary movement."
  - c. Issues
    - i. Overlooks that John states these events "must soon take place" (1:1)
    - ii. Divorces the book from the first century thus making it of little value to those who first received it.
    - iii. Limits the scope to the church in Western Europe.
    - iv. The multiple and varied assigned details are determined by the interpreter placing himself always in the "last stage".
- II. The Philosophy of History Method (Idealist)
  - a. Basically the opposite of the Historicist Method.

- b. Denies the validity of any historic events being contained in the symbols used by John.
- c. This view holds that Revelation is not to be looked upon as referring to specific historical events but rather that it should be seen as the ageless struggle between the Kingdom of God and the forces of evil in age.
- d. Regardless of when the struggle occurs, God guarantees the ultimate triumph.

### III. Futurist

- a. This method holds that a majority of Revelation, particularly chapters 4-21 deals with events that will occur at the end of the world. It is a book of unfulfilled prophecy.
  - i. Hermeneutically
    - 1. It chooses to view the language and imagery (numbers etc.) literally as opposed to figuratively.
  - ii. Exegetically
    - 1. The events (particularly those found in chapters 19 and 20) are viewed chronologically and recapitulative.
  - iii. Theologically
    - 1. The distinction between Israel and the church and that the church is not the “new Israel” is the basis for the approaches chosen above.
- b. There are three divisions within this method:
  - i. Amillennialism
    - 1. Purely a heavenly reign of Jesus for a 1000 years.
  - ii. Postmillennialism
    - 1. An earthly reign of the church for a 1000 years, guided by Christ’s heavenly reign.
    - 2. Therefore Christ’s return occurs after the “millennium reign” or 1000 year reign.
  - iii. Premillennialism
    - 1. Christ returns invisibly, the Rapture, and removes all believers to heaven.

- a. Based on their interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; John 14:1-3
- b. There are three proposed thoughts on the timing of the Rapture.
  - i. Before the Great Tribulation.
    - 1. Pretribulation
  - ii. In the middle of the seven years of the Tribulation.
    - 1. Mid-tribulation
  - iii. At the end of the Tribulation but before Christ returns to reign on earth for 1000 years.
    - 1. Post-tribulation
- 2. At the end of the seven-year Tribulation, Christ returns to reign for, again, a 1000 years.
- 3. There are two main branches of Premillennialism.
  - a. Historic.
    - i. Adopts the Post-tribulation rapture.
    - ii. Not as literal in its interpretation of the symbolism found in Revelation.
    - iii. The acknowledgment of a continuity of Old Testament Israel and the Church.
  - b. Dispensational
    - i. The most held method of this approach.
    - ii. Popularized by John Nelson Darby in Brittan in the 1880's and brought to America by C.I. Scofield and published in his Scofield Bible.
    - iii. Became the mainstream approach after the embarrassing failure of the Millerite movement.
      - 1. William Miller predicted Christ would return, first on March 21,

1843, and when He didn't,  
proposed a new date of October 22,  
1844.

2. When this also failed, the  
movement split up.

iv. Major tenants:

1. God governs humanity through  
different dispensations or age.
  - a. Adamic age
  - b. Mosaic age
  - c. Davidic age
2. A strong distinction between Israel  
and the Church
3. God plans for the nation of Israel to  
return.
4. God intended for Jesus to establish  
His kingdom at His First coming  
but since the Jews rejected it, so  
God put in on hold until Jesus  
returns a second time.
5. Because of this, the church age is a  
“stop-gap” measure and not part of  
God’s original plan.
6. The church will cease to exist at the  
rapture.
7. “The prophetic clock stopped at  
Calvary. Not one tick has been  
since.”
8. The clock will restart at the rapture.
9. The Jews who returned will make a  
covenant with the Antichrist (an  
individual) to restore the Temple  
and the sacrificial system.

10. Halfway through the seven-year tribulation, the antichrist will break way with Israel, demanding they worship him. This will bring about great suffering.

11. Jesus will return, destroy the antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon.

12. Then the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth will begin.

#### IV. Preterist Method

a. This method holds that:

i. The majority of the Book is to be viewed symbolically.

1. Particularly chapters 4-21.

2. The letters of chapters 2 and 3 written literal churches.

ii. The majority of the events viewed in John's visions have already occurred.

iii. The must be interpreted through the lens of the first century and the writing was to the first century Christians and their suffering under the edicts of Rome.

b. There are two groups within this method:

i. Early date – prior to AD 70

1. During the reign of Nero

2. Predicts the fall of Jerusalem

ii. Late date – AD 94-96

1. During the reign of Domitian

2. Predicts the fall of Rome

## Series: Revelation

### Revelation 19:11-21 Handout

- I. Revelation 20:1
  - a. "...coming down out of heaven..."
    - i. Being done by \_\_\_\_\_ command.
  - b. "...key..."
    - i. The power to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
    - ii. See 1:18
      1. Jesus is the one who has this power.
  - c. "...to the Abyss..."
    - i. The spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.
    - ii. The abode and stronghold of Satan.
      1. See 11:7
      2. Even this part of creation is under Divine \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. "...great chains..."
    - i. See Mark 5:4
      1. A strong means to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- II. Revelation 20:2
  - a. "...the dragon..."
    - i. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. "...ancient serpent..."
    - i. The cunning \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. "...the devil..."
    - i. The \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. "...or Satan..."
    - i. The \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. "...and bound..."
    - i. Totally and flawlessly \_\_\_\_\_ so that he can no longer work through Rome to attack the Church.
    - ii. He is bound but not \_\_\_\_\_, restrained but not totally \_\_\_\_\_.

*What was he restrained from doing? From \_\_\_\_\_ the Roman Empire to persecute the church by \_\_\_\_\_ the taking of the Gospel to the world as Jesus commanded. (Mark 16:15) Satan knew the promise Jesus made to His disciples in Matthew 24:14. John does not intend for us to see in this vision of a "binding" that would \_\_\_\_\_ him from being our adversary that seeks to devour like a roaring*

*lion (1 Peter 5:8). This vision is for the first recipients to know that God will end the persecution of the saints by the dragon, using Rome as his henchmen.*

*Satan being bound is not a \_\_\_\_\_ restriction of his power, but only as it applies to his use of Rome to attack God's covenant people.*

- f. "...for a thousand years."
  - i. 10 is the number for \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ii.  $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$ 
    - 1. See Psalm 50:9-10, 105:8
    - 2. The cattle on hill 1029 are also His and His covenant promise applies to generation 1153.
    - 3. This is a comparison of a very long time of his being bound compared to the sort time (3.5-years, 42 months, 1,260 months) that they will be persecuted.

III. Revelation 20:3

- a. "...locked and sealed..."
  - i. Satan's confinement is not \_\_\_\_\_, that comes later in the chapter, but \_\_\_\_\_.
    - 1. That comes later.
- b. "...he must be set free for a short time."
  - i. I will address this when we look at verses 7-10.

IV. Revelation 20:4-5

- a. We need to begin addressing these verses by asking a series of questions:
- b. **Who** were those seated inverse 4?
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_ of the Roman persecution.
    - 1. See 6:9, 7:13-14, 14:1-4, 15:2-3
  - ii. "souls"
    - 1. Dead but not \_\_\_\_\_ from the dead as they have not received their \_\_\_\_\_ body.
- c. **Why** are they there?
  - i. They are \_\_\_\_\_ the events of chapter 19.
  - ii. The downfall of Rome
  - iii. This \_\_\_\_\_ a picture of all men being raised or even all Christians.
- d. **Where** are they?
  - i. Where have the martyrs been since chapter 6? - \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. Where has Jesus been since chapter 5? - \_\_\_\_\_

- iii. Where is every throne in Revelation found? - \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. This not a vision of Jesus reigning on earth.
- e. **When** do they reign?
  - i. At the beginning of chapter 20.
  - ii. What happened just prior in chapter 19?
    - 1. Rome is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - iii. When does it end?
    - 1. At the end of chapter 20 or generally, the final judgment.
  - iv. Whatever is meant by the 1000-year reign begins with the fall of Rome and ends with Christ's return.
  - v. It has been \_\_\_\_\_ than a 1000 years since it began.
- f. "...reigned with Christ a thousand years..."
  - i. This text never mentions an \_\_\_\_\_ reign.
  - ii. Jesus say His kingdom is not of this \_\_\_\_\_.
    - 1. See John 18:36
  - iii. Jesus says no one \_\_\_\_\_ when He will return.
    - 1. See Matthew 24:36, 44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2
  - iv. For Jesus to sit on David's throne in Jerusalem is \_\_\_\_\_.
    - 1. See Jeremiah 22:30; Matthew 1:11-12
- g. "...the first resurrection..."
  - i. The death of the two witnesses in 11:4-7 was symbolic of the effect of mandatory worship to put a \_\_\_\_\_ to or \_\_\_\_\_ the cause of the church.
  - ii. The "first resurrection" then refers to \_\_\_\_\_ of this cause.
    - 1. See Isaiah 26:19; Ezekiel 37:11-14
    - 2. This is "bringing back to life" what the dragon thought he destroyed.
    - 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Gospel over pagan Rome.

V. Revelation 20:6

- a. "...second death..."
  - i. The \_\_\_\_\_ of Satan and \_\_\_\_\_ those who through the ages who followed him.
    - 1. See Revelation 20:14, 21:8