The Book of Revelation
INTRODUCTION – Part 2

Nano Church
August 21, 2016
Outline

Methods of interpretation of Revelation

• Historicist
• Preterist
• Futurist
  • Historic premillennialism
  • Dispensational premillennialism
    • Dispensationalism
• Idealist
• Progressive Parallelism
## Structure of Revelation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chaps. 1-3</th>
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<td>Dragon destroyed, resurrection, judgment, new heaven and earth</td>
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Historicist view

• Historicism understands the literary order of the visions, especially in 4:1–20:6, to symbolize the chronological order of successive historical events that span the entire era from the apostolic church to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.

• Each historicist views the book in a way to make it fit the realities of his own age, which is always seen as the final one before Christ’s return.

• Advocates include John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Knox, Sir Isaac Newton, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Jonathan Edwards.

• Historicism is not held by many today.
### Historicist view

#### Revelation

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#### Historical references and events

| First-century churches | Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages | Second coming, general resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth |

Adapted from ESV Study Bible
Critique of historicist view

- It is highly subjective. Its proponents see the culmination of the events in Revelation occurring in their own time.
- It assumes that every symbol in the book can have only one historical referent or fulfillment but the referent must be constantly revised as time passes.
- The beast would whatever the threat of the church was at that particular time, such as Islam in the ninth century or the Pope during the Reformation.
- It views history from the viewpoint of the Western church, leaving out a world-wide view.
Preterist view

• The term “preterism” comes from the Latin word *praeteritus*, meaning “past.” John wrote of events future to him but which are now past to us.

• Preterism views the fulfillment of most of Revelation’s visions as having occurred in the events leading up to and including the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

• Some preterists extend the fulfillment to the time of the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century.

• Preterists take literally the time references saying the events predicted, for example, “must soon take place” (1:1), thus the book has immediate relevance to its first readers.

• Technically, this view is known as “partial preterism” in contrast to a “full preterism” view which holds that *all* the prophecies were fulfilled in 70 AD.
Preterist view

• Chapters 4-19 depict the struggle of the first-century church and promise the imminent defeat of their persecutors, Jerusalem and/or Rome.
• The destruction of the Temple is seen as the judgment of apostate Israel and the time at which there was a spiritual return of Christ in judgment.
• The 1,000 years symbolize either the entire age of the church between Christ’s ascension and return or a final phase of the church age in which Christ’s kingdom will advance through widespread conversion.
• It’s origin is usually attributed to Jesuit priest Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) who is said to have formulated it to counter the Reformers’ historicist view and its designation of the Pope as the Antichrist.
• Preterism is not a widely held view today although it has some notable proponents such as Kenneth Gentry, R. C. Sproul, and Hank Hanegraaf.
Jewish-Roman War (66-73 AD)

Siege of Jerusalem

Destruction of the Temple
Date of the writing of Revelation

- The preterist view requires that the book be written before 70 AD and several dates have been suggested between 63 and 69 AD.
- The consensus of most scholars today is that the book was written later during the reign of the emperor Domitian in 96 AD.
- One of the strongest points in favor of the late date is the testimony of early church father Irenaeus.
- Credible arguments based on internal and external evidence have been made in favor of each possibility.
- The date of writing is not crucial for the other four interpretive methods.
Preterist view

Revelation

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First-century churches | Jerusalem’s fall AD70 | Rome’s fall fifth Century | Rest of Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages | Second coming, general resurrection, last judgment, new heaven earth |

Historical references and events

Adapted from ESV Study Bible
RELAX!
It all happened in 70AD
Futurist View

• Futurism considers the order of the visions in Revelation to generally reflect the chronological order of historical events.

• Futurists typically view the visions of chapters 4-22 as representing events still future to twenty-first century readers and far distant to John’s first readers.

• The two major futurist views are both premillennial, meaning that the bodily second coming of Christ will occur prior to the literal, 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth.
  • Historical premillennialism
  • Dispensational premillennialism
Historical premillennialism

• This view was the dominant view in the early centuries of the church and is found in the writings of Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and Papias.

• Distinctives
  • Christ will not return until after the great tribulation which the church will experience.
  • This second coming will be immediately preceded by the resurrection and rapture of the saints.
  • The Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church (spiritual Israel).

• Modern advocates include Charles Spurgeon, George Eldon Ladd, Francis Schaeffer, Carl F. H. Henry, James Boice, Wayne Grudem, Craig Blomberg, and Albert Mohler.
Israel in Historical Premillennialism

• God’s primary purpose when he chose Abraham was for the children of Abraham to be the people through which Jesus would come into the world.

• Jesus is fulfillment of promises to Abraham.

• God’s plan has always been to create one people for his glory through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

• Many historical premillennialists anticipate a widespread turning by Jews to Jesus as their Messiah, Savior, and God prior to Jesus’ second coming.

• During the millennial kingdom, Jesus will reign from Jerusalem over the whole world.
Futurist view (Historical Premillennialism)

Revelation

Chaps. 1-3
Letters to seven churches

Chaps. 4-19
Seals, trumpets, witnesses, woman and dragon, beasts, bowls, harlot, Armageddon

20:1-6
Millennium

20:7-22:5
Dragon destroyed, resurrection, judgment, new heaven and earth

First-century churches
Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages
Tribulation
Second coming, believers raised, Armageddon
Christ reigns 1,000 years on earth
General resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth

Historical references and events

Adapted from ESV Study Bible
History of Dispensationalism

- Rudimentary forms of dispensations are found as early as the writings of some church fathers.
- C. I. Scofield popularized the teaching in America through the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909.
- Its influence also spread through the bible conference and prophecy conference movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- It was further popularized by Dallas Theological Seminary, founded in 1924 by Lewis Sperry Chafer.
Distinctives of Dispensationalism

- Since the Bible is God’s literal record of his plan for history, it should be interpreted **literally** and historically (past and future).

- God’s plan progresses through history and includes different dispensations, periods, or ages through which his creatures are tested.

- Scofield in his notes defined a dispensation as a period of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.

- The recognition of distinct periods in Biblical history is not unique to dispensationalism nor is it the primary characteristic.

- What is unique is the way in which these distinct periods are used to undergird a separation between Israel and the church.
Scofield’s seven dispensations

- Age of innocence (Gen. 1-3) – Adam and Eve before they sinned
- Age of conscience (Gen. 3-8) – First sin to the flood
- Age of human government (Gen. 9-11) – After the flood, government
- Age of promise (Gen. 12 – Ex. 19) – Abraham to law giving to Moses
- Age of law (Ex. 20 – Acts 2:4) – Moses to Christ
- Age of the Church (Acts 2:4 - Rev. 20:3) – Pentecost to millennial kingdom
- Age of the Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-7) – The rule of Christ on earth in the millennial kingdom
Israel and the Church in Dispensationalism

- In Genesis, God entered into a covenant with Abraham and his offspring, which included an innumerable seed through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed and a land (Canaan) for an everlasting possession.
- The promises to Israel were both unconditional and eternal.
- However, these promises to Israel in the OT were never literally and perpetually fulfilled so it is natural to assume their complete fulfillment is still future.
Israel and the Church in Dispensationalism

- Fulfillment of this covenant promise was the purpose of Christ’s first coming. But Israel as a whole rejected Christ and his offer of the kingdom.
- Thus, God has ceased dealing with his people Israel, and has postponed the fulfillment of the OT promises, and has turned to deal with his second (and new) people, the Christian Church.
- After God has completed his purpose for the Church in this present dispensation/age, when the “fullness of the Gentiles” has come in, God will remove the church from earth to heaven (the pretribulation rapture).
- He will then again turn to deal with his people Israel in order to prepare her (using the great tribulation) for fulfillment of the promises in the OT during the millennial reign of Christ on earth.
Dispensational Premillennialism today

• Dispensational premillennialism has been the dominant eschatological perspective in American evangelicalism for the last 100 years.

• Modern advocates: John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, J. Dwight Pentecost, Mark Hitchcock, Thomas Constable, John MacArthur, Warren Wiersbe, Bill Bright, Billy Graham, Norman Geisler, and many more.

Walvoord  Ryrie  Hitchcock
**Futurist view (Dispensational Premillennialism)**

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First-century churches | Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages | Rapture, believers raised | Tribulation | Second coming, Armageddon | Christ reigns 1,000 years on earth | General resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth |

Historical references and events

Adapted from ESV Study Bible
The idealist view sees the entire book as a symbolic representation of the battle between good and evil with no specific historical connections. It has also been called the timeless-symbolic view. The symbolism speaks to the events of human history in every age and give believers of all ages an exhortation to remain faithful in the face of suffering. The book is relevant not only to John’s first readers but to believers living in any age. This perspective may have originated with the Alexandrian church fathers who frequently spiritualized Biblical texts.
Idealist view

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The church in all ages

Historical references and events
Progressive Parallelism view

- Also known as modified idealist, redemptive-historical idealist, iterist, recapitulation, and eclectic view among others.
- Revelation has seven sections which are parallel, with each covering the entire inter-advent period, but with increasing intensity.
- It is eclectic in that it combines the strengths of the other four views.
- The symbols have multiple historical applications.
- Proponents include William Hendriksen, Michael Kruger, Greg Beale, Dennis Johnson, and Vern Poythress.
Progressive Parallelism view

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First-century churches

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Second coming, general resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth

Historical references and events

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The Book of Revelation

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Views to be considered in our study

Methods of interpretation of Revelation

• Historicist
• Preterist
• Futurist
  • Historical premillennialism
  • Dispensational premillennialism
• Idealist
• Progressive Parallelism
Recommended resources

Methods of interpretation of Revelation

- Historicist
- Preterist
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  - Historical premillennialism
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- Progressive Parallelism