

Overview

Most scholars are agreed that there are four schools of interpretation for the book of Revelation. I personally feel that to hold fast to any one of these interpretations could quench the Holy Spirit because as the time approaches for the return of Christ more clarity of vision will be revealed to us. This is not to say that the previous conclusions are wrong, rather that they may be incomplete. It is therefore necessary to expect revelation each time we come to study the word of God.

The four schools of interpretation are as follows:

The Preterist Viewpoint

Preterist is from a Latin word that means *past*. Those who hold this view believe that most of the events have taken place already in the first three centuries of the church.

Chapters 1-4 cover the seven churches.

Chapters 5-11 are said to record the churches' victory over Judaism.

Chapters 12-19 are about the churches' victory over Rome.

Chapters 20-22 describe the churches' glory because of these victories.

The persecutions described in Revelation are those of Nero and Domitian and the entire book was fulfilled by the time of Constantine in AD 312.

The Historical or Continuous Historical Perspective

This interpretation states that in Revelation there is a view of the history of the church from the days of John to the end of the age. It holds that the book has been in the process of being fulfilled throughout the whole Christian era. Those who hold this opinion see in the symbols the rise of the papacy (Roman Catholic Popes), the corruption of the church and the various wars throughout church history. Most of the reformers interpreted the book in this manner and it is not always easy to follow their thinking.

The Futuristic or Plain Position

Those who hold this interpretation believe that Chapters 5 to 22 are yet to be fulfilled. They would say that the judgements in Chapters 6, 8, 9 and 16 have never been seen in history and that there has been no visible return of Jesus as found in chapter 19. Finally they believe that the resurrections and judgements that appear in Chapter 20 have yet to take place.

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The Spiritual Notion

This interpretation sees the events as principles revealed out of constant conflict; they are not real but depict the age long struggle between good and evil. The spiritual point of view would not see any of these events actually taking place.

Generally Christians may take two extreme attitudes about the book of Revelation; either that the book is too difficult to understand and therefore they advise that you should not study it, teach it or preach it. The other extreme is when some people consider that they know every detail of the book and begin to add dates and highly imaginative interpretations. Both extremes are wrong.

2 Timothy 3 v 16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

There is a real need to have Holy Spirit revelation in the here and now. This does not mean that everything that has been written in the past is wrong but God's word unfolds little by little and we should expect Him to bless us.

James encourages his peers thus:

James 5 v 7-8

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

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The following are some of the fruits of obedience.

Deuteronomy 11 v 13-15

"It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

These are words in season for us.

The author of the Revelation was John Boanerges. He was the son of Zebedee and Solome, brother of James, the apostle. His surname Boanerges means *the son of thunder*. He was also known as *the beloved disciple*. He wrote the gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John in addition to Revelation.

Revelation 1 v 1-2

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

The chain of communication was God the father, to Christ, to an angel, to John and finally to God's servants. John was the human instrument who was chosen to transmit God's message from that time until now, it is John's account of what he witnessed of Christ in the heavenlies.

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Revelation 1 v 3

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

This is an immediate promise of a blessing together with conditions for us to obtain this blessing as we read, hear and heed the scriptures.

A follower of Jesus is expected to be committed to scripture, it is in itself a sign to God that we want to become a disciple and ultimately Christlike in our daily lives. The book of Revelation discloses to us the battle that we are all in but also informs us that we can be victorious.

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