

Responding to God Word: How to Faithfully Interpret the Bible

Men's Bible Study at Park View

Lessons from the Revelation

April 19, 2005

Read Revelation 1:12-20

Notes

What is the time frame in Revelation chapter 1 -- the past or the future?

The book of Revelation is so named because it is a "revelation" of Jesus Christ to John on the island of Patmos. Some of the passages in the book of Revelation are a record of something that happened in John's time. Other passages are a prediction of the future.

What did John see and hear in this vision (or revelation)?

Much of the book of Revelation is symbolic. That is, the events, objects, or characters in the story stand for something else. In this passage, John explains some of the symbols. Identify these.

Several character attributes are used to identify the person in John's vision, but no personal name is given. What historical person do you think is being described in these verses? How did you come to this conclusion?

There are several literary forms or genres in the Book of Revelation. One section contains letters to the churches, apparently written by John, their overseer. There is also apocalyptic, as well as prophecy.

What is John's response to the sight of this person? What is John told to do by this person? Did he do it?

How might this passage of scripture be beneficial to the church today? How might the scripture be misused?

The book of Revelation is really a series of visions or revelations, some of which begin with the words "I saw."

Read Revelation 19:11-21

What did John see in this Revelation (see 19:11)?

What is the focus of Revelation 19-- the past or the future?

In John's vision, he saw a rider on a white horse. This person has several names written in different parts of his body. List these names.

A few special notes: Sincere Christians differ in regard to their interpretation of the 1000-year reign of Revelation 20: 2-7. Some believe that Christ will return to establish his kingdom before the millenium. This is the **premillennial view** which views the 1000 years as literal. The **amillennial view** sees the 1000 years as figurative.

Clyde Kratz (*Builder, Uniform Series*) summed up the two positions as follows, based on the teaching of Richard Detweiler, former president of Eastern Mennonite University: The **premillennial view** has ten important truths: 1) the return of the Jews to Palestine, 2) the rapture of believers, 3) a period of tribulation under an antichrist, 4) the revelation of Christ and judgment of the nations, 5) resurrection of the tribulation saints, 6) 1000-year of Christ followed by "the little season," 7) the Battle of Armageddon, 8) resurrection of the wicked dead, 9) judgment from the great white throne, and 10) eternal states of heaven and hell.

The **amillennial view** has seven important truths generally stated: 1) Christ's headship in the church as the reign spoken of in the New Testament, 2) the return of Christ will usher in an eternal reign, 3) the coming of Christ will cause a general resurrection of both wicked and righteous dead, 4) there will be one judgment for all people, 5) Christians, Jews, and Gentiles are now under the same "covenant" and make up the "Israel of God" for which the spiritual blessings promised to Israel are fulfilled in God's new Israel, the church, 6) Israel as a nation continues to be a sign of God's working, but God's plan of salvation is being fulfilled through the church, 7) the book of Revelation describes the persecution and victory of the church over the evil powers.

Even though there are significant differences between these views, they have the **following in common**: 1) Jesus Christ will come again, 2) the dead will be raised, 3) a judgment of all persons will take place, 4) creation will be restored to its original harmony, 5) believers will enter an eternal state of fellowship with God, and 6) unbelievers will enter an eternal state of separation from God.

Some possible meanings of number and other symbols in the Revelation according to David Barr in *New Testament Story*, Wadsworth, 1995, p. 391.

3 stands for the spiritual world.

4 stands for the created order.

7 stands for perfection (and is the sum of 3 and 4).

10 stands for totality.

12 stands for Israel, as the people of God (and is the product of 3 and 4).

White stands for victory (not purity).

Red is the color of war and strife.

Black is the color of famine and suffering.

Pale (the color of gray-yellow rotting meat) is the color of death.

Beasts are always Satanic powers.

The lamb is the animal of sacrifice.

The lion is king.

Eagles and oxen are the superior animals of their kind.

Horns point to power and thus to rulers.

Multiple heads point to multiple rulers.