

REVELATION

The book of Revelation is the most _____ [a] book in the New Testament and the reason is simple. When compared to every other New Testament book, it seems to be written in a foreign language. It just doesn't deliver its message in a _____ [b] we're accustomed to, and that can be very frustrating. On top of that is the fact that there are so many _____ [c] interpretations of the book. It's enough to make anyone throw up their hands and conclude that it just can't be understood, at least not by "ordinary" Christians. The truth is, however, Revelation can be understood. It isn't just for "prophecy buffs" or people with Ph.D.'s. It's for you. God gave you this book to strengthen your heart and encourage you to keep _____ [d] Him no matter what.

REVELATION: A BOOK TO BE SEEN

Revelation 1:1 tells us that Revelation is John's record of "all that he _____ [e]" and in Revelation 1:11 God tells John to "write in a book what you _____ [f] and send it to the seven churches." And throughout the book, some form of the verb "to see" appears fifty-two times with John as the subject (that is, more than fifty times we're told that John saw something). What this means, of course, is that God purposely chose to communicate the message of Revelation through _____ [g] images. In other words, He intended for us to _____ [h] the message of Revelation as well as _____ [i] it. Revelation comes to us as it came to the seven churches of Asia, in _____ [j]; but it's a piece of literature that delivers its message in _____ [k]. But most of the images in Revelation—that is, most of the pictures—aren't just images . . . they're _____ [l]. Of course, not every image in the book is symbolic, but most of them are.

REVELATION: A BOOK OF SYMBOLS

What exactly is a _____ [m]? In a nutshell, it's something that _____ [n] something else. For instance, John saw Jesus walking among "seven golden lampstands" (Rev 1:12-13) and he noticed that "in His right hand He held seven stars" (1:16). Then, in the last verse of chapter 1 (verse 20), John says, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches." Of course, most people sense instinctively that when they step into the book of Revelation, they are stepping into a world of symbols. For instance, scholars of all schools recognize the image in Revelation 13:1-2 as a

symbol of a world kingdom or world ruler who won't literally look like this. One of the major purposes for communicating through symbolic imagery is to express with vividness the true nature of something; after all, we know that a _____[o] is worth a thousand _____[p].

The symbolic imagery in Revelation communicates vividly how things appear on the physical observable plane. For instance, the beast in Revelation seems _____[q] (Rev 11:7; 13:7)—he is strong and powerful and in control. He represents the forces that seem to be in control of history—in John's day it was the military-political-religious-economic system of _____[r]. God's people, on the other hand, seem to be weak, helpless, hunted, poor, and _____[s]. But the symbolic imagery communicates just as vividly how things really are; things aren't what they appear. In reality the Lamb is stronger than the beast and will destroy what appears to be the invincible forces that control history. And God's people will be the victors through the Lamb of God!

WHY WAS REVELATION WRITTEN?

Revelation was written for a Church that is under _____[t] by our cunning adversary, _____[u]. Some of the recipients are struggling against persecution (Rev 1:9; 2:3, 9-10, 13; 6:9-11). The church is also facing another form of attack—spiritual _____[v] and material _____[w], two things designed by Satan to defile God's people through _____[x] (Rev 2:14-15, 20).

The visions of Revelation 12-19 symbolize these various ways that Satan seeks to _____[y] the church from God—_____ [z] threat, _____[aa] deception, and _____[bb] seduction. John's basic purpose in writing, therefore, is to _____[cc] God's people in the face of these _____[dd]. For those who have succumbed to the enemy—that is, Satan—and stopped following Christ because of the prospect of suffering, or because they've been enticed by the world's promise of security, comfort, and pleasure, John is trying to jolt them to _____[ee].

For those who refuse to repent, _____[ff] awaits. In other words, Revelation is saying that Satan and the world cannot _____[gg]. So, for those who choose the _____[hh], their future is defeat and doom along with Satan. For those who are _____[ii] to "the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus," John is calling them to endure and stay pure. He's calling them to steel their hearts and endure persecution and resist temptation. For those that do _____[jj] and remain faithful to Jesus, Revelation assures a glorious _____[kk] because Jesus is going to _____[ll] this _____[mm] between good and evil. Each letter to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 closes

with a promise “to him who overcomes” (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Generally, these promises reach ahead to the _____[nn] victory that’s portrayed in Revelation 19-22.

FOUR MAJOR INTERPRETIVE VIEWS

Basically, there are _____[oo] major ways that people have interpreted Revelation: (1) the preterist view, (2) the futurist view, (3) the historicist view, and (4) the idealist view. Each of these major views can be further divided into different versions, but we won't talk about the different versions of each of these major views. Here is a brief summary of each.

The Preterist View

The word "preterist" means " _____[pp]," so preterists think that almost all the material in Revelation was _____[qq] in the past. More specifically, they think the events of Revelation 1-19 were fulfilled in the early centuries of Christian history—either when Jerusalem fell in AD 70, or when the Roman Empire _____[rr] in the 400s. In other words, the preterist says that the visions of Revelation 1-19 were written for the people of John's day and concerns their struggles and God's promise to imminently judge and defeat their persecutors (which He did when He destroyed Jerusalem, and/or when He brought down the Roman Empire). The preterist view is based largely on the statement that the visions of John were to take place “soon” (1:1) because “the time is at hand” (1:3; 22:10). My biggest objection to this view is that it doesn't seem to have a lot of relevance to _____[ss] readers. If all but the last three chapters were fulfilled centuries ago, why should I spend so much time studying it?

The Futurist View

The futurist believes that everything from Revelation 4:1 through 22:5 refers to events that will take place immediately before the _____[tt] of _____[uu]. In most futurist readings of Revelation, the bulk of the book (chapters 4-19) describes what is going to happen during a _____[vv]-year period of intense trauma on the earth just before Jesus comes to establish an earthly 1,000-year kingdom. In other words, according to the futurist, Revelation basically maps out the events on earth that will take place during the _____[ww] generation before Jesus returns. To say it another way, Revelation isn't about anything that happened in the past or is happening right now. It's all about a very short period of time in the _____[xx]. Those who talk about things like “the earthly _____[yy] reign of Christ” and “the rapture” and a literal “battle of Armageddon” are futurists. One big objection to this view is that it seems to ignore John's statement that the things he

was writing “must _____[zz] take place” (Rev 1:1). Another major objection is that it would seem to offer no real meaning or encouragement to the suffering Christians of John's day. In other words, it seems to _____[aaa] the historical setting that gave birth to the book, and which the book was intended to deal with.

The Historicist View

The historicist believes that the visions of Revelation symbolically reveal in order some of the major historical _____[bbb] that span all of church _____[ccc] from John's day until the second coming of Jesus. In other words, the historicist says that Revelation is a chronological outline of history that reveals specific events, institutions, and movements. For instance, historicists identify parts of Revelation as predicting the invasion of the Roman Empire by the Muslims, the reign of Charlemagne, the Protestant Reformation, and the destruction wrought by Napoleon and Hitler. Catholic theologians during the Middle Ages typically identified the emergence of the beast from the sea (Rev 13) as the rise of Islam. Protestant theologians during the Reformation typically interpreted the harlot Babylon (Rev 17) as the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy which persecuted defenders of the true gospel. Some historicists viewed the release of locusts from the abyss with the sounding of the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:7) as the Muslim invasions of Europe. A major problem with this view, however, is that it would have had little _____[ddd] to the first-century readers of Revelation. In other words, it would have no _____[eee] to John's original readers. Another problem is that gives undo importance to _____[fff] Church history (every major historical event that Revelation supposedly predicts is in the West, which raises the question, “Did the only significant events in world history happen in the West?”).

The Idealist View

The idealist approach says that Revelation is a symbolic portrayal of the _____[ggg] cosmic _____[hhh] between good and evil, between the _____[iii] of God and of Satan. In other words, Revelation uses symbols to picture the church's _____[jjj] from John's day until the second coming, and then it reveals the eternal state of God's people. Another way of saying it is that the visions in Revelation symbolize the conditions that confront God's people throughout the church age. Revelation offers _____[kkk] images that give _____[lll] perspectives on the _____[mmm] spiritual warfare that every Christian of every generation must face until Jesus returns.

In other words, the visions of Revelation keep _____[nnn] a pattern: (1) Satan is attacking the church trying to separate people from

God through a variety of effective tactics; (2) even though Satan is powerful and effective, God is still in charge even though it may look like Satan is winning; (3) God's people must endure Satan's attack even if they die; (4) eventually God is going to win this cosmic war and crush Satan; (5) in the end God's people will be victorious. I would say it's like the three parables Jesus tells when He informs the disciples that no one knows when He will return. Each of those parables teaches the same lesson—always be ready. Jesus repeats the same thing in three different ways. Scholars call this structure of Revelation " _____[ooo]" or " _____[ppp]."

Idealism doesn't try to link every vision with a single specific event. In this way it differs from historicism. And idealism believes that the visions were directly relevant to the experiences of the first century Asian churches. In this way it differs from futurism and agrees with preterism. And idealism believes that the massive enemy forces symbolized by the beast, false prophet, and harlot were not completely defeated with Jerusalem fell in AD 70 or when Rome was overrun by the Vandals in the fifth century. In this way it differs from preterism and agrees with futurism and historicism.

My View

Basically, I hold to the idealist view of Revelation *with a few important modifications*. It would probably be best to describe my view as "modified idealism" or some call it "eclectic" because it combines some aspects of each of the major views. I believe the book was originally written to Christians at a definite period of _____[qqq] history to deal with very real problems and struggles they were facing (this is the emphasis of preterism). In other words, Revelation contains details about what the first-century church in Asia Minor was facing. I believe the book depicts some things that still lie in the _____[rrr]—an intensified hostility against the church shortly before Jesus returns, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, and the final reward and punishment of the righteous and wicked (these are some aspects that futurism emphasizes). I believe the book symbolically portrays events throughout history—from the time that John wrote until Jesus comes again (this is an emphasis of historicism). In other words, the book is not only interested in revealing something about the past or the future, but also the _____[sss]. Of course, I reject the main belief of historicism which insists that the prophecies of Revelation identify specific historical events like the Muslim invasion, the rise of the papacy, and the Reformation. The prophecies represent _____[ttt] forces and powers that operate in _____[uuu] generation throughout the _____[vvv] age (the period between the first and second coming of Christ).

LESSONS FROM REVELATION

- Our strength to remain faithful comes from knowing that God is the Lord of the _____[www], present, and future (Rev 1:4-8).
- We must regularly take inventory of our lives so that we can see both our failing and our strengths; and we must _____[xxx] where change is needed (Rev 2 & 3)
- We have to openly _____[yyy] Jesus and the gospel if we want Him to openly embrace us (Rev 3:1-6).
- When God pours out His _____[zzz] on the world, it will be indescribably awful for those who aren't His (Rev 8 & 9).
- Whatever _____[aaaa] is going to be like, it is going to be free from all hardship and discomfort, and we will enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with God (Rev 7:15-17).
- There is a predetermined day when God will _____[bbbb] history and complete His purposes (Rev 10:4-7).
- Unfortunately, we will undergo _____[cccc] in this world while we wait for Jesus' return (Rev 11:1-2, 7-11).
- No matter how hard Satan tries, he cannot _____[dddd] God's church (Rev 12:1-6).
- Surrender to the Word of God and you won't be _____[eeee] (Rev 13:11-18).

- Choose comfort now and suffering in eternity, or suffering now and comfort in _____[ffff] (Rev 14:6-13).
- Don't be taken in by the world's _____[gggg]. Don't be seduced by all it has to offer. It will eventually be gone (Rev 18).
- Jesus is our (the church's) _____[hhhh]; rest in His power to save us and eradicate His enemies (Rev 19:11-16).
- We must take part in _____[iiii] resurrection to avoid the second death (i.e., hell) (Rev 20:6, 14).
- God's _____[jjjj] is to undo all the mess that the fall created (Rev 21:1-8; Rev 22:1-5).

KEY PASSAGES FROM REVELATION

- Revelation 1:3, 17-18
- Revelation 2:10
- Revelation 3:21
- Revelation 5:11-14
- Revelation 7:14-17
- Revelation 19:9-10
- Revelation 20:1-6
- Revelation 21:1-4
- Revelation 22:1-5, 12-15

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] avoided	[ss] modern
[b] form	[tt] end
[c] diverse	[uu] history
[d] trusting	[vv] seven
[e] saw	[ww] final
[f] see	[xx] future
[g] visual	[yy] millennial
[h] see	[zz] soon
[i] hear	[aaa] overlook
[j] writing	[bbb] events
[k] pictures	[ccc] history
[l] symbols	[ddd] relevance
[m] symbol	[eee] meaning
[n] represents	[fff] Western
[o] picture	[ggg] ongoing
[p] words	[hhh] conflict
[q] invincible	[iii] forces
[r] Rome	[jjj] struggles
[s] defeated	[kkk] multiple
[t] attack	[lll] different
[u] Satan	[mmm] same
[v] deception	[nnn] repeating
[w] seduction	[ooo] repetition
[x] compromise	[ppp] recapitulation
[y] separate	[qqq] past
[z] physical	[rrr] future
[aa] spiritual	[sss] present
[bb] material	[ttt] Satanic
[cc] encourage	[uuu] every
[dd] attacks	[vvv] church
[ee] repentance	[www] past
[ff] judgment	[xxx] change
[gg] win	[yyy] embrace
[hh] world	[zzz] judgment
[ii] holding	[aaaa] Heaven
[jj] overcome	[bbbb] terminate
[kk] future	[cccc] tribulation
[ll] win	[dddd] destroy
[mm] war	[eeee] deceived
[nn] final	[ffff] eternity
[oo] four	[gggg] promises
[pp] past	[hhhh] champion
[qq] fulfilled	[iiii] spiritual
[rr] fell	[jjjj] purpose