

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

1. Futurist

A. Interprets entire text in eschatological terms.

B. Overview of the text from futurist view:

1. Chapters 1 – 3 Considered historical preview.

a. Most futurists believe we are in the Laodicean epoch.

b. Few have believed they are in “last times.”

2. Chapters 4 – 19 believed to describe Daniel’s seventieth week.

3. Chapter 20 believed to be the millennium.

4. Chapters 21 – 22 believed to describe eternity.



C. Two major futurist schools of thought:

1. Darbyites (John N. Darby, founder of Plymouth Brethren). Perspective is referred to as “*dispensational futurists.*”

a. Human history is divided into seven dispensations, affirming that in each God acts based on a particular principle:

- (1) Innocence
- (2) Conscience
- (3) Human government
- (4) Promise
- (5) Law
- (6) (* *Grace*)
- (7) Kingdom

b. Distinct doctrines of dispensational futurists:

- (1) Jesus intended to establish a literal, physical rule on earth.
- (2) John referred to this saying “at hand.”
- (3) Jewish rejection of Jesus caused him to postpone establishment of the kingdom until the second advent.
- (4) The church established as substitute for the kingdom.
- (5) The church age will end with stage one of second advent: rapture.
- (6) Public stage of second advent will follow the rapture by seven years: “the Revelation.”
- (7) Antichrist will rule the earth seven years, producing “Babylon.”





- (8) When Jews are restored to Palestine, the Antichrist will enter covenant with them to restore their worship. Temple will be rebuilt and the ten tribes will be gathered for reinstatement of the sacrificial system.
- (9) Many will come to faith in this time but not a portion of the church: the “tribulation saints.”
- (10) Antichrist will violate covenant after three and a half years demanding worship.
- (11) Intense persecution will ensue for three and a half years, nearly overwhelming the saints when Jesus will appear for the second stage of the second advent.
- (12) Antichrist will be destroyed and Jesus’ visible kingdom established, to continue for one thousand years.



2. Continuous Historical Method

A. Entire text interpreted as continual revelation of history.

Text is thought to predict church history of apostasy (Roman Catholic Church).




(1) Largely post-millennial.

(2) Recapitulation view is variation of this theme (ie: William Hendriksen More Than Conquerors).

B. Objections to continuous historical method:

1. Removes message and purpose of document from John's day.

2. Places too great an emphasis upon Catholicism.

- 
- 
3. Encourages miscalculations re: times, persons, and events.
 - a. Philip Melanchthon (contemporary with Martin Luther) may have originated this view.
 - b. Albert Barnes, a leading 20th century proponent.
 - c. B. H. Carrol (Baptist scholar 1843 – 1914).
 - d. Guy N. Woods (Gospel Advocate)
 - e. Kirk Cameron (Left Behind, 2000).
 4. Resorts to absurdity in interpretation of details.
 - a. Revelation 11 – seven unrecorded thunders.
 - b. John explains thunders as ‘no delay.’
- 




D. Strengths of continuous historical method:

1. Avoids literal interpretation of symbols.
2. Promotes ultimate overthrow of evil.

3. Philosophy of History Method:

- A. Well-represented by William Hendriksen.
1. Considers entire text a discussion of the forces behind historical event and not the events themselves.

Chapter	Visions	Second Coming	Judgment	New Jerusalem
1 - 3	Lampstands	→		
4 - 7	Seals	→		
8 - 11	Trumpets	→		
12 - 14	Christ & Dragon	→		
15 - 16	Seven Bowls	→		
17 - 19	Fall of Harlot	→		
20 - 22	Judgment of Enemies	→		





2. Does not anticipate continuity, but parallelism. Argument for parallels:

a. End of each section thought to project end of the world.

(1) Lampstands = church conditions cf: 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

(2) Seals and thrones cf: 6:12 – 17; 7:9 – 17.

(3) Trumpets cf 11:15 – 18.

(4) Woman and child cf: 14:14 – 20.

(5) Seven bowls cf. 16:17 – 21.

(6) Fall of harlot cf. 19:11 – 21.

(7) Judgment cf. 20:11 – 25.

b. Duration logic parallel:

(1) Forty-two months cf. 11:2.

(2) 1260 days cf. 11:3.

(3) 1260 days cf. 12:6

(4) Three and a half years cf. 12:14.



120

224

340

010010100

01





c. Trumpets and bowls:

Trumpets (chs 8 - 11)

Bowls (ch. 16)

- (1) Earth 8:7.....16:2
- (2) Sea 8:8.....16:3
- (3) Rivers 8:10.....16:4
- (4) Sun 8:12.....16:8
- (5) Pit of abyss 9:1.....16:10

Throne of beast

- (6) Euphrates 9:14.....16:12
- (7) Second coming 11:15.....16:17

d. Battles (last three sections are considered in continuity):

- (1) Bowls 16:14.
- (2) Fall of harlot 19:19.
- (3) Judgment 20:5 - 6.





B. Weaknesses of philosophy of history method:

- 1. Disassociates message and purpose of the author too far from first century church.**
- 2. Scope is too narrow in disallowing specific application to events of first century.**

C. Strengths of philosophy of history method:

- 1. Allows some meaning for early disciples.**
 - 2. Recognizes activity of God in history.**
 - 3. Anticipates ultimate victory for cause of God.**
- 



4. Preterist Method:


- A. Term derives from Latin, PRETARE = “past” or “beyond.”
1. Regarding *time*: connotation is “past.”
 2. Regarding *things*: connotation is “things about which awareness is lacking;” “things behind me.”
 3. Considers entirety of text to have been fulfilled in experience of original audience.
- B. Weaknesses of preterist method: The position is associated with philosophical/theological left wing which denies any possibility of any miracle.



B. Strengths of preterist method:

- 1. True to background and setting of document.**
- 2. Primary audience: first century church.**
- 3. View picture language tropically through first century idiom.**
- 4. Allows second covenant meaning for variety of first covenant language.**

C. Biblical reasons for preterist method:

- 1. The Apocalypse is “prophecy” cf. 1:1 – 2; 22:18.**
 - 2. The scroll is to remain “unsealed” cf. 22:10.**
 - a. “Do not seal”**
 - b. Daniel 12:1 – 4**
 - c. Daniel 12:6**
- 



d. Daniel 12:7

e. Daniel 12:8

f. Daniel 12:9

g. QUESTION: Biblically speaking, when does one seal and shut up a book?

h. QUESTION: Biblically speaking, when does one not seal a book?

3. Express statements in the document:

a. Revelation 1:1 “what must soon take place.”

(1) TAXEI = “rapidly;” cf. II Timothy 4:9, 21.

(2) DEI = “must;” cf. Hebrews 11:6.

b. Revelation 1:3 “blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and who keep what is written in it.”

