

The Requisite Preface That No One Ever Reads

Most see Revelation as a book of prophecy revealing God's *future* purposes. The rest of the New Testament is viewed regarding God's *redemptive* purpose. This artificial separation has been the main cause of error when it comes to an understanding of the book of Revelation. Although its language is picturesque, it is essentially a poetic description of redemption. Revelation approaches its themes differently. The subject matter, however, is identical to the rest of the NT. God's redemptive *and* future purposes for man are intertwined. The two are one and merely represent different *aspects* of the same purpose and plan.

Whether you are a Christian or an unbeliever, I hope that you are a lover of the truth. Many refuse to change their doctrinal positions. I have found this to be especially true among preachers. Change is nearly impossible unless you are truly humble and love truth above your own opinion. Most do not. With some, it is not so much an unwillingness to look at a doctrine from a different perspective; it is laziness. It is *easier* to see things a certain way. Sadly, today's Christians do not meditate on God's word "day and night" (Joshua 1:8), but prefer to have it packaged in 30-minute segments, already cut up by the preacher and spoon fed in small bites.

A curious thing about Revelation is that we all have an opinion on the book, be it a single element or event, or an entire chapter. These extractions are tucked carefully away and protected from any who seek to change them. For example, many believe the infamous '666' to be a literal mark tattooed on the head and right hand of a future generation. To others, it is a code for someone's name. Still, to others, 666 means a generalized attitude existing among the unsaved. The more education (bible college) a person has prevents them from changing their viewpoint unless someone with a higher degree or reputation comes along.

As in Jesus' day, today's religious leaders exalt learned positions over the authority of God's word. It is God's Word that should determine what each of us believes to be true or false. Therefore, it is that same authority that determines Revelation's meaning. There is no commentary—including this one—or best-seller that has been God-breathed. (2 Tim 3:16)

When Jesus commissioned the 70 disciples, He told them, "Carry neither purse nor bag nor sandals." (Luke 10:4) This principle must be employed when approaching God's word. Just as Jesus humbled Himself, (Phil 2:8) we need to leave our opinions, estimations, and other judgments at the cross, regardless of how long we have studied the bible or the number of degrees we hold. If you are not willing to dump a long-cherished belief when you come to the crossroads of scripture, you are not a lover of the truth. Period.

Jesus also said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My Word shall never pass away.” (Luke 21:33) Since the word of God is the Rock on which we base our faith, the Supreme Authority by which we “test all things” (1 Thess 5:21), it stands to reason that Revelation can only be understood in light of that Authority. Newspapers and opinions are in constant change and written with varying degrees of bias. History is invariably being written. As such, these things can never give closure to Revelation’s meaning. Using current events to “prove” anything in this book subjects God’s word to the shifting sands of uncertainty. Unfortunately, this is how many have chosen to interpret Revelation.

No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Pet 1:20) (NIV)

Many have stumbled in their attempt to fit historical events into Revelation. There is an extensive list of writers, reformers, scholars, and preachers who have mistakenly taken this route, identifying history's bad guys, certain countries, and other events as “proof” of John's vision coming true. While they have all gone to their graves, others quickly step in to take their place.

When Hal Lindsay wrote *The Late, Great Planet Earth*, in 1970, he had predicted that Gog and Magog were symbols for Russia and a future invasion of Europe. When Russia collapsed, premillennialists were wringing their hands at this unforeseen event. Book writers made quiet changes to their interpretations and announced some “new enlightenment” had forced them to change their views.

In June 2016, Great Britain departed from the rest of Europe, upsetting the 10-nation super-power that was supposed to be the Antichrist's base of power. Once again, so-called scholars who insist that Revelation speaks of the future, are flummoxed as to this wrinkle. Without the 10-nation European economy, their entire premillennial doctrine becomes a house of cards.

There is only one Final Authority—God's Eternal Word. No current event, regardless of its place on the world's stage, can verify Revelation's meaning. It may be true, but it cannot be verified. The reason for this is simple: God no longer speaks to us through prophets, but only through His Word.

In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, *but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son.* (Heb 1:1-2) NIV

In other words, God spoke through men in ancient times. When Christ came, God said what needed to be said. Jesus said that His purpose was to *finish* His Father’s work. (John 4:34) No scripture anywhere hints at some “unspoken truth” or unfinished business that had to be introduced later.