



Various Views of Revelation

Revelation 1:9-20

Historical Views

- Preterist – The view that most (or all) of the visions pertain to historical events of the **past**; i.e. Rome, Jerusalem, Domitian (Postmillennialism, Premillennialism)
- Historical – The view that the visions are prophecy pertaining to the **history** of the church from the first century to the return of Jesus Christ
- Futurist - The view that most (or all) of the visions pertain to events which will occur in the **future** (Premillennialism)
- Spiritual – The view that the visions in Revelation do not apply to specific historical events, but only to the **general conflict** between Christ, his followers and their enemies.

Millennial Positions

- **Premillennialist** – The view that Jesus will return **prior to Christ's return**, following which He will set up an earthly kingdom and will reign with his saints for 1,000 years.
- **Postmillennialism** – The church is God's kingdom and following a *undefined long period* during which Christ reigns through His kingdom and righteousness, the world will gradually be converted to Christianity following which Christ will return and usher in the end of history and material creation.
- **Amillennialism** – The church is God's kingdom and following an *undefined long period* during which Christ reigns through His kingdom and righteousness, the church will struggle with persecutions but eventually, the Lord will return and usher in the end of history and material creation

Which View Do Members of the Church of Christ Hold?

- **Beware: This is a *denominational concept*.**
- Depending upon the time period, brethren have held **all of these positions.**
- Some early reformers and preachers until recent years (last 50 years) held the historical position (which has been largely dismissed, today).
- Other early reformers, "restoration", and pioneer preachers held the post-millennial position (possibly the most historic view).
- Homer Hailey and many of his students held (and hold) a "spiritual position".
- Ferrel Jenkins and many of his students hold an amillennial, preterist position that Revelation pertains to Christianity's struggle with the persecutions under the Roman Empire (a very "romantic" position).
- More recently the amillennial, preterist position that Revelation pertains to God's destruction of Jerusalem for rejecting and crucifying Christ and orchestrating a destructive persecution against the church (this **in my view** is the most accurate and the position I will present during this meeting).

Problems with the Historical and Futurist Positions

- Both would give little hope or encouragement to suffering Christians in the first century, except a long, drawn-out eventual victory.
- The futurist position has absolutely no evidence to support it (since it has not occurred) and all evidence provided is wild and speculative. Their defense is "The Bible says it, so I believe it." The issue is not whether one believes what the Bible says, but **'Is this what the Bible says?'**
- The historical position is open to broad and wild speculation. Naturally, the views of those who hold this position are almost as diverse as those who expound it.
- Revelation **expressly concerns imminent events**, and none of these views look at imminent events.

Realized Eschatology

- This view (prominent in northeast and Midwest Ohio) proposes the **entirety of Revelation** as well as **all eschatological events** were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- The return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the gathering of the elect, the destruction of heavens and earth, the final judgement, the last day and commencement of the "next age" **are all in the past.**
- They view themselves as **consistent or full preterists.**
- Their position is essentially **premillennial**
- This is an ancient heresy (**2 Timothy 2:17-18**), and its consequences are destructive and unthinkable.

It Has *Unthinkable* Inferences

1. The New Testament points to Christ's coming *for His church*
 - a. If the church was taken, what are we?
 - b. What assurances do we have of heaven?
2. What encouragement in persecution?
3. Are we of all people the most pitiable? (**1 Corinthians 15:19**)
 - a. Why should we endure persecution (if no reward)
4. Revelation, in fact the entire New Testament, is not written for us (**John 17:20-23**).
5. We should no longer observe the Lord's supper (**1 Corinthians 11:26**).
6. We should no longer marry or be given in marriage (**Matthew 22:30**).

The Spiritual Position

- This position is maintained by many today.
- Revelation does pertain to the age-old conflict between Satan and God, between Satan's adherents and God's faithful.
- I regard as a valid "application" of the message of Revelation.
- However, this cannot be the *primary application* as **Revelation explicitly states** it pertains to **events** which were imminent (Revelation 1:1, 2,7; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20).
- This application is too broad, too general to be of comfort to suffering saints in the first century.

Two Preterist Positions

- The visions pertain to the growing persecutions by Rome and the victory of the church over the Roman Empire.
- The visions pertain to the punishment of Israel for rejecting Christ and persecuting His church, the dissolution of the vestiges of the old Mosaic covenant and the affirmation and consummation of the new Christian covenant.

The Roman Empire Position

- The proponents of this position would dismiss the historical and futurist visions because they lack encouragement for suffering saints in the first century.
- The view that these events pertain to the struggle with Rome has the same frailties; this struggle continued for another two centuries, almost as long as our country has existed! This would have been little comfort to the saints of the first century, or the second, or the third!
- It so broadly generalizes some of the visions that they scarcely have meaning to any specific situations.
- It often treats Revelation differently than other books in the Scriptures, even other *apocalyptic* books.
- I regard this, like the spiritual position, as a valid *application* of the visions of Revelation.

The Jerusalem Position

- The destruction of Jerusalem for rejecting Christ is a **prominent** new Testament theme.
- Four prominent Old Testament books were written to “preannounce” the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.
- Are we to believe an event of such historic, cultural and spiritual significance to the Jews and the world would have no references, no warnings, no record in the New Testament (Amos 3:7)?
- The book of Acts and most of the New Testament address persecutions by apostate Israel, not Rome.
- The persecutions referenced in Revelation are by apostate Jews.
- An “empire wide” persecution does not appear to have yet started.
- The persecutions by and incited by Israel, **were harming the church (Acts 8:1-4)**.
- Whereas the persecutions initiated by Rome resulted in exponential growth!
- The book of Revelation takes the form of a **covenant lawsuit**, the Lord *never had a covenant with Rome*.
- Why was it written to saints in Asia minor? The message is not “Get out of Jerusalem”, it is “This is an answer to your prayers.” (**Revelation 13:10; 14:12**)