

Introduction

Basic Information

- The Book of Revelation was written by John the Apostle (1:1,4,9)
 - He had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos
- It was written around the year A.D. 90 and was the last book of the Bible written.
- Rough Outline:
 - Prologue - 1:1-8
 - Vision of Christ - 1:9-20
 - The Seven Churches - Chapters 2-3
 - Tribulation and Millennial Kingdom - Chapters 4-20
 - Kingdom of Heaven - 21:1-22:5
 - Epilogue - 22:6-21

Methods for Interpreting Revelation

- Idealist - Revelation is an allegory about spiritual growth or good vs. evil.
- Historicist - Revelation describes an overview of human history
- Preterist - Revelation describes events fulfilled in our past, either in the 1st Century or in the Roman Empire.
- Futurist - Revelation describes events that remain largely unfulfilled until future

Dealing with Unfulfilled Prophecy

- In our previous study of Daniel, we saw both fulfilled and unfulfilled prophecy. Having the two side-by-side (sometimes in the same verse) helped us to see how prophecy has been fulfilled to make judgments on how it will be fulfilled.
- One of the biggest pitfalls we face in interpreting unfulfilled prophecy is our natural bias towards finding fulfillment in our own time and world.
 - Ever hear of “88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988”???
- I personally feel that I cannot be overly dogmatic on future events in prophecy. I'll try to be honest when I am not very confident in my interpretation.

J. Dwight Pentecost's Rules for Interpreting Prophecy from *Things to Come*

- Interpret literally
- Interpret according to the harmony of prophecy
- Observe the time relationships - “Mountain Peaks of Prophecy”
 - “It is important to observe that the prophet may view widely separated events as continuous, or future things as either past or present”
- Interpret prophecy Christologically
 - It is all about Him!
- Interpret historically
- Interpret grammatically
- Interpret according to the law of double reference
 - Some prophecies can have more than one fulfillment, or fulfillment in multiple events.
- Interpret consistently

The Prologue

1:1-20

Outline

- Prologue - 1:1-3
- Greetings - 1:4-8
- Vision of Christ and Seven Candlesticks - 1:9-20

Notes

- vs. 2 - "Word of God" - compare to John 1:1
- vs. 4 - Asia - present-day Turkey.
- vs. 4 - "Seven Spirits" - phrase will reappear 3x (3:1, 4:5, 5:6). Possibly could refer to the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2-3), other say seven high-ranking angels.
- vs. 8 - "Alpha and Omega" - the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Refers to Christ as complete ("from A to Z") and eternal ("from beginning to end")
- vs. 11 - We'll focus on each of these cities in the coming chapters.
- vs. 13 - "like unto the Son of Man" - this figure looks like Christ because He is Christ. John is seeing the familiar likeness now glorified.
- vs. 13 - the description of His clothing is similar to those of the High Priest in Exodus 28:4-8.
- vs. 16 - "two edged sword" - see Hebrew 4:12.
- vs. 17 - "fell at his feet as dead" - the common reaction for a human encountering God's glory (Ezekiel 1:28) or even an angel's (Daniel 8:17)
- vs. 20 - Christ interprets part of the vision for us:
 - seven stars - angels (lit. *messengers*, probably pastors).
 - seven candlesticks - churches in vs. 11.