

HAVE YOU REALLY READ REVELATION? (Revelation 1:1-3)

Introduction:

- 1. Revelation is the most misunderstood book in the entire Bible!**
 - a. It is the playground for sensational preachers who want to shock and awe their hearers.**
 - b. False teachers of every kind seek support for their speculations in its pages.**
 - c. Premillennialists base their system primarily on the books of Revelation, Daniel and other apocalyptic passages.**

- 2. Does Revelation really teach the bizarre system of premillennialism?**

Discussion:

I. REVELATION HAS A MESSAGE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE IN EVERY AGE.

- A. An elder in the church said: "I do not think anybody understands Revelation, and I do not believe God expects us to understand it."**
 - 1. Why did God include Revelation in His Word if it can not be understood?**
 - 2. God pronounced a blessing upon those who hear and keep the things written in Revelation (1:3).**
 - 3. God pronounced a curse upon those who pervert its teachings (22:18,19).**

- B. The same rules of interpretation that apply to any other Biblical book also apply to Revelation.**
 - 1. Most people "read into" Revelation what they already believe.**
 - 2. The right way to understand any book is to know its historical background, the problems facing the recipients, and the kind of language being used.**

II. REVELATION MUST BE STUDIED IN ITS HISTORICAL SETTING.

- A. A persecution of the church had been unleashed by the Roman emperor, Domitian.**
 - 1. About 95, Domitian ordered images of himself set up throughout the empire.**
 - 2. Every head of a household was required annually to offer up incense to Domitian as a god.**

3. The penalty for non-compliance included torture, confiscation of property, imprisonment and/or death.
 4. Those who complied received a certificate which was required to carry on any sort of business.
- B. The center of the persecution was in Asia where the church had its greatest strength (1:4; chapters 2 and 3).
1. John was exiled to Patmos (1:9).
 2. Those who overcame were given promises (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:1, 5, 12, 21).
 3. They were warned they would be imprisoned and even killed (2:10,11).
 4. Antipas had already suffered a martyr's death (2:13).
 5. The souls of the slain were under the altar in Heaven (6:9,10).
 6. Others were going to be killed (6:11).
- C. The purpose of Revelation is to encourage persecuted saints.
1. Christ is aware of His people's suffering (1:7, 20).
 - a. He has washed us from our sins in His blood (1:5).
 - b. He had been killed, but was alive forevermore (1:18).
 - c. He is coming to punish the persecutors (1:7, 12,13, 20; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).
 - d. Though persecutions rage on earth, Christ is on His throne in Heaven (1:8).
 2. Saints in all ages can find comfort in Christ's promises.

III. REVELATION MUST BE UNDERSTOOD ACCORDING TO ITS LANGUAGE.

- A. The first verse of Revelation gives two keys to understanding it.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants things which must shortly take place. And He sent it and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (1:1).

1. The things foretold in Revelation “must shortly take place.”
 2. These things were “signified” (given in signs or symbols).
 - a. Those who project the prophecies in Revelation to hundreds of years in the future miss the message!
 - b. Those who take Revelation literally miss the message!
- B. Some of the symbols in Revelation are:

1. Christ is both a lion and a lamb (5:5,6).
2. The devil is a great dragon (12:3,9).
3. A book is the future of God's persecuted people (5:1; 10:2;8-11).

C. Numbers are also used with symbolic meaning:

1. Two signifies strength (11:3-12).
2. Four signifies the world (4:6;6:1; 7:1).
3. Ten signifies a large number, the whole of what is spoken of.
4. Seven signifies perfection (1:11, 12, 20; 5:1; 8:1,2,6; 15:6,7).
5. Three and a half is half of seven, thus incomplete, indefinite (11:2,3,9,11; 13:5).
6. Six is one short of perfection and thus signifies man who is weak and imperfect (13:18).
7. Twelve is the number of God's people (4:4; 7:4-8; 14:1; 21:12-21).
8. Multiples of numbers intensifies them; thus 144,000 (multiples of 12) + 1,000 (multiples of 10) signifies all of God's people on earth (7:1-8).
9. Multiples of 6 signify a man (666) who is very evil in 13:18.

D. Revelation is written in apocalyptic language.

1. This symbolic language was used in times of persecution.
 - a. Its message was understood by the recipients.
 - b. Its message was concealed from the persecutors.
2. The message was usually presented in a series of visions.
3. Apocalyptic language was also used in OT prophecies in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah.

Conclusion:

1. "Revelation" comes from the Greek "apocalypsis" which means "an unveiling," a "revealing."
2. Premillennialists make three major mistakes in their use of Revelation:
 - a. They look for future fulfillment of things already come to pass.
 - b. They ignore the historical setting of the book.
 - c. They interpret symbols in a literal sense.
3. Those "who do His commandments" have the right to enter Heaven (22:14).

