

## **Four Approaches to Interpreting the *Book of Revelation*** **(REV01)**

<p><b><i>The Preterist Approach</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views <i>Revelation</i> as a historical record of events that took place in the first-century Roman Empire.</li> <li>• Ignores the fact that the book itself claims to be a prophecy! (<b>Rev. 1:3</b>)</li> <li>• Christ did not return in the first century as predicted in <b>Revelation 19!</b></li> <li>• No persecution equal to the horrific events depicted in <b>Revelation 6–19</b> took place in the first century.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>The Historicist Approach</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sees <i>Revelation</i> as a panoramic record of church history from apostolic times to the present.</li> <li>• Must often resort to allegorizing to make the text fit some historical event it is supposed to represent (the fall of Rome, the rise of Islam, etc.).</li> <li>• Leads to all sorts of opposing interpretations; a virtual free-for-all.</li> <li>• Ignores <i>Revelation</i>'s own claims to be a prophecy.</li> <li>• Removes the interpretation of <i>Revelation</i> from the realm of the literal and historical and leaves it to allegorical and spiritualized interpretations.</li> </ul>
<p><b><i>The Idealist Approach</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Revelation</i> depicts the struggle between good and evil found in every age.</li> <li>• <i>Revelation</i> is neither a historical record nor a predictive prophecy.</li> <li>• This view also ignores <i>Revelation</i>'s claims to be a prophecy.</li> <li>• <i>Revelation</i> is a collection of myths designed to convey spiritual truth.</li> </ul>

## *The Futurist Approach*

- Sees **Revelation 4–22** as predictions of yet future people and events.
- Only this approach allows *Revelation* to be interpreted following the same literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutical method by which the rest of the Bible is interpreted.
- While sponsors of the other three approaches are frequently forced to allegorize or spiritualize the text, the futurist is not. The futurist alone accepts *Revelation's* claim to be a prophecy.
- The most common criticism of the futurist approach is that it robs the book of any meaning for those to whom it was written, since most of its events are future. Dr. John Walvoord comments:

“Much of the prophecy of the Bible deals with the distant future, including the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, the prophecies of Daniel concerning the future world empires, the body of truth relating to the coming kingdom on earth as well as countless other prophecies. If the events of chapters 4 through 19 are future, even from our viewpoint today, they teach the blessed truth of the ultimate supremacy of God and the triumph of righteousness.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Walvoord, John, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press) 1966, p. 22.