

***Revelation:  
Four Views***

***What Kind of Book is  
the Book of Revelation?***

# ***I. A Paradoxical book***

# *I. A Paradoxical book*

A. The most difficult book of the Bible.

Presents difficulties regarding authorship, date, historical setting, relation to other books attributed to John, acceptance into the canon of scripture—and, of course, interpretation of its symbols.

# ***I. A Paradoxical book***

B. The only book promising a blessing to those who read it and keep its words (1:3).

## ***II. A Unique book***

## ***II. A Unique book***

The only book in the world that is at once:

## ***II. A Unique book***

The only book in the world that is at once:

- a genuine prophecy (1:3)



## ***II. A Unique book***

The only book in the world that is at once:

- a genuine prophecy (1:3)

*"He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."*

*(I Corinthians 14:3)*

## ***II. A Unique book***

The only book in the world that is at once:

- a genuine prophecy (1:3)
- an epistle (1:4)

## ***II. A Unique book***

The only book in the world that is at once:

- a genuine prophecy (1:3)
- an epistle (1:4)
- **an apocalypse (1:1)**

## **A. As a Prophecy...**

## **A. As a Prophecy...**

1. It foretells future events (1:1).

## **A. As a Prophecy...**

1. It foretells future events.

*“The revelation from Jesus Christ,  
which God gave him to show his servants  
what must soon take place.”*

*(Revelation 1:1)*

## **A. As a Prophecy...**

1. It foretells future events.
2. It "forthtells" Christ's message to the churches (Chapters 2-3).

## A. As a Prophecy...

1. It foretells future events (1:1).
2. It "forthtells" Christ's message to the churches:

*“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (2:7, etc.)*



## **B. As an Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia...**

## **B. As an Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia...**

1. It has the form of an epistle (1:4, 11; 22:21);

*“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia...”*

*(1:4)*

*“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia...”*  
*(1:4)*

*“...write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.” (1:11)*

*“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you  
all. Amen.” (22:21)*

## **B. As an Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia...**

1. It has the form of an epistle (1:4, 11; 22:21);
2. It is the only epistle dictated directly by Jesus;

*“These things says He who holds the seven stars  
in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the  
seven golden lampstands...” (2:1)*

*“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands...” (2:1)*

*“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...” (2:8)*



*“These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands...” (2:1)*

*“These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...” (2:8)*

*“These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword...” (2:12)*

## **B. As an Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia...**

1. It has the form of an epistle (1:4, 11; 22:21);
2. It is the only epistle dictated directly by Jesus;
3. It is primarily relevant to original readers in their life setting;

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience...  
Nevertheless I have this against you, that you  
have left your first love.” (2:4)*

*“I know your works, your labor, your patience...  
Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have  
left your first love.” (2:4)*

*“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your  
patience...Nevertheless I have a few things against  
you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who  
calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My  
servants...” (2:19-20)*

## **B. As an Epistle to the Seven Churches of Asia...**

1. It has the form of an epistle (1:4, 11; 22:21);
2. It is the only epistle dictated directly by Jesus;
3. It is primarily relevant to original readers in their life setting;
4. It has abiding relevance, secondarily, to all readers in like circumstances.

*“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

*(2:7, 11, 17; 29; 3:6, 13, 22)*

**C. As an Apocalypse, it is the "unveiling" of  
Jesus Christ.**

## **C. As an Apocalypse, it is the "unveiling" of Jesus Christ.**

*“The Revelation [Gr. apocalypsis] of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified [give a sign or token] it by His angel to His servant John...”  
(1:1)*



# *“Apocalyptic” Literature*

## ***“Apocalyptic” Literature***

In the two centuries just preceding the time of Christ, the Jews produced many uninspired works which resemble the book of Revelation in style or genre. Because of this resemblance, scholars refer to these books as Apocalyptic Literature. It is probable that this genre arose in imitation of inspired books like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel and Zechariah.

# *Apocalyptic Literature*

All such books shared certain characteristics:

1) They claimed to be written by famous individuals of the past (e.g., Ezra or Enoch);

- 1) They claimed to be written by famous individuals of the past (e.g., Ezra or Enoch);
- 2) They were highly symbolic, containing dreams or visions using animal symbolism, mythical, astral or catastrophic images to describe history, the unseen realm, or the future;

## **Apocalyptic Prologue to Esther (alleged dream of Mordecai):**

*"Behold, noise and confusion, thunders and earthquake, tumult upon the earth! And behold, two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and they roared terribly. And at their roaring every nation prepared for war, to fight against the nation of the righteous. And behold, a day of darkness and gloom, tribulation and distress, affliction and great tumult upon the earth..."*

- 1) They claimed to be written by famous individuals of the past (e.g., Ezra or Enoch);
- 2) They were highly symbolic, containing dreams or visions using animal symbolism, mythical, astral or catastrophic images to describe history, the unseen realm, or the future;
- 3) The authors are guided around by angels who explain the meaning of visions.

## **Apocalyptic Prologue to Esther (continued):**

*“...And the whole righteous nation was troubled, they feared the evils that threatened them, and were ready to perish. Then they cried to God and from their cry, as though from a tiny spring, there came a great river, with abundant water, light came, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and consumed those held in honor.”*



## **Apocalyptic Epilogue to Esther (by same author):**

*“I remember the dream that I had concerning these matters, and none of them has failed to be fulfilled. The tiny stream which became a river, and there was light and the sun and abundant water - the river is Esther, whom the king married and made queen. The two dragons are Haman and myself. The nations are those gathered to destroy the name of the Jews. And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and were saved.”*

In the following respects, Revelation is unlike the uninspired apocalyptic books:

In the following respects, Revelation is unlike the uninspired apocalyptic books:

a. It claims inspiration as a prophecy.

In the following respects, Revelation is unlike the uninspired apocalyptic books:

- a. It claims inspiration as a prophecy.
- b. It identifies by name its true author (John), rather than adopting a pseudonym.

In the following respects, Revelation is unlike the uninspired apocalyptic books:

- a. It claims inspiration as a prophecy.
- b. It identifies by name its true author (John), rather than adopting a pseudonym.
- c. It makes a moral appeal and calls for repentance.

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- People, nations, spiritual personages depicted as animals (e.g. a Lamb, a dragon, beasts, locusts, etc.);

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- People, nations, spiritual personages depicted as animals (e.g. a Lamb, a dragon, beasts, locusts, etc.);
- Two women (harlot and bride) are two cities (Babylon and New Jerusalem);



# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- Symbolic names [e.g. Jezebel (2:20), Egypt and Sodom (11:8), and Babylon (17:5)]

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- Symbolic names [e.g. Jezebel (2:20), Egypt and Sodom (11:8), and Babylon (17:5)]
- Frequent cosmic disruptions: sun & moon darkened, stars falling, 100-pound hailstones

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- Numbers that convey concepts, rather than statistical units:

# Elements of Apocalyptic Symbolism in Revelation

- Numbers that convey concepts, rather than statistical units:
  - "Seven" - the number of completeness or perfection (Deut.28:7,25/ Psalm 12:6; 119:164/ Prov.9:1; 24:16). There are seven of the following: seals, trumpets, bowls, thunders, beatitudes, etc.

- "One-third" suggests "a significant minority"  
(the largest whole fraction under one-half)

- "One-third" suggests "a significant minority"  
(the largest whole fraction under one-half)
- "Twelve" (and multiples thereof: 24 & 144,000)  
generally associated with God's people.

- "One-third" suggests "a significant minority" (the largest whole fraction under one-half)
- "Twelve" (and multiples thereof: 24 & 144,000) generally associated with God's people.
- "1000 years" means "a long time" (as in Psalm 90:4 and II Peter 3:8). Contrast this with "10 days" (2:10) , "one hour" (17:12), and the indefinite "a little while." (20:3).

# ***The Four Approaches***



## ***A. The Futurist Approach:***

## ***A. The Futurist Approach:***

Revelation has not yet been fulfilled, and is about events that are to transpire at the end of the world.

Revelation divides into three sections (1:19)—

*“Write:”*

Three sections defined (1:19)— “*Write:*”

- “*the things you have seen*” (meaning the vision of Chapter 1)

## Three sections defined (1:19)— “*Write:*”

- “*the things you have seen*” (meaning the vision of Chapter 1);
- “*the things which are*” (meaning the things of the Church Age, in the letters of Chapters 2 & 3);

## Three sections defined (1:19)— “*Write:*”

- “*the things you have seen*” (meaning the vision of Chapter 1)
- “*the things which are*” (meaning the things of the Church Age, in the letters of Chapters 2 & 3) and;
- “*the things which will occur after these things*” (that is, after the Church Age, Chapters 4-22).

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)



Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)
- Pergamos=the Imperial Church (A.D. 312-600)

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)
- Pergamos=the Imperial Church (A.D. 312-600)
- Thyatira=the Papal Church (A.D. 600-1500)

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)
- Pergamos=the Imperial Church (A.D. 312-600)
- Thyatira=the Papal Church (A.D. 600-1500)
- **Sardis=the Reformation (A.D. 1500-1700)**

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)
- Pergamos=the Imperial Church (A.D. 312-600)
- Thyatira=the Papal Church (A.D. 600-1500)
- Sardis=the Reformation (A.D. 1500-1700)
- Philadelphia=the Missionary Church (1700-1900)

Often, the seven letters (Chapters 1 & 2) are viewed as seven successive stages of the Church Age until the end:

- Ephesus=the Apostolic Church (A.D. 30-100)
- Smyrna=the Persecuted Church (A.D.100-300)
- Pergamos=the Imperial Church (A.D. 312-600)
- Thyatira=the Papal Church (A.D. 600-1500)
- Sardis=the Reformation (A.D. 1500-1700)
- Philadelphia=the Missionary Church (1700-1900)
- **Laodicea=the Compromised Church (1900-End)**

The “Rapture of the Church” is often seen as occurring in Revelation 4:1—

The “Rapture of the Church” is often seen as occurring in Revelation 4:1—

*“...the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”*



*After the Rapture comes the seven-year Tribulation period, depicted in Chapters 4-19.*

*After the Rapture comes the seven-year Tribulation period, depicted in Chapters 4-19.*

*This is the period of wars, cosmic phenomena, earthquakes and plagues of various sorts. It is also the time of the Antichrist, who is identified as “the Beast from the Sea” (Rev.13:1ff) who rules the world and persecutes God’s people.*

The “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” view is specifically that of the *Dispensationalists*, who are the most numerous segment of those today who hold the *Futurist Approach*.

The “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” view is specifically that of the *Dispensationalists*, who are the most numerous segment of those today who hold the *Futurist Approach*.

There are still many *Futurists* who are not *Dispensationalists*, and who do not hold that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation.

At the end of the Tribulation is the Battle of  
Armageddon: WW III (Rev.16:14, 16).

At the end of the Tribulation is the Battle of Armageddon: WW III (Rev.16:14, 16).

During the Battle of Armageddon, Christ returns with His previously-raptured saints, defeats the Antichrist and binds Satan in the Abyss. Christ then reigns on earth for a thousand years—the so-called “Millennium” (Chapters 19-20).

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is loosed briefly, and stages an abortive attempt to overthrow Christ's kingdom. Satan fails and is then consigned to the lake of fire. There is a resurrection of the dead and the Great, White Throne Judgment.

At the end of the thousand years, Satan is loosed briefly, and stages an abortive attempt to overthrow Christ's kingdom. Satan fails and is then consigned to the lake of fire. There is a resurrection of the dead and the great, white throne judgment.

After this, Christ brings in the eternal state – the New Heaven and the New Earth, ruled by the New Jerusalem.



Events are seen, generally, in their proper chronological order, though some would see two parallel sections with some overlap or parallel accounts (i.e., Chapters 4-11 and 12-19).

# **Advantages to the Futurist Approach:**

# Advantages to the Futurist Approach:

1. Of the alternative approaches, the *Futurist* takes the most literal interpretation to the visions, since it alone can do so. This clearly appeals to our tendency to take things literally and minimizes difficulties of interpretation);

# **Advantages to the Futurist Approach:**

2. This view encourages the reader to check and compare the visions with current events, and can usually be found to reward such attempts;

## **Advantages to the Futurist Approach:**

3. It is widely held and taught by popular books, pastors and Christian media voices. It is currently the best-known and most "popular" view among evangelical Christians.

# **Disadvantages to the Futurist Approach:**

# **Disadvantages to the Futurist Approach:**

1. Renders the book 90% irrelevant to Christians (since we leave at 4:1)

# Disadvantages to the Futurist Approach:

1. Renders the book 90% irrelevant to Christians (since we leave at 4:1)
2. Fails to recognize the symbolic character of apocalyptic literature



# Disadvantages to the Futurist Approach:

1. Renders the book 90% irrelevant to Christians (since we leave at 4:1)
2. Fails to recognize the symbolic character of apocalyptic literature
3. Struggles to explain the book's own expectation of near fulfillment (1:1, 3; 22:10)

*“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—**things which must shortly take place**...Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; **for the time is near.**”*

*(Revelation 1:1, 3)*

*“And he said to me, ‘**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is at hand.**”*

*(Revelation 22:10)*

*“And he said to me, ‘**Do not seal** the words of the prophecy of this book, **for the time is at hand.**”*

*(Revelation 22:10)*

*“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and **seal the book until the time of the end...**for the words are closed up and **sealed till the time of the end.**”*

*(Daniel 12:4, 9)*

## ***B. The Historicist Approach:***

## ***B. The Historicist Approach:***

Revelation is a sequential account of the whole of Christian history, from John's day to the end of the world, written in advance.

This approach arbitrarily adopts a-day-for-a-year interpretation of the time elements in the prophecies. For example, 150 days=150 years. The 1260 days represent 1260 years.

According to this view, the breaking of the seven seals is the breaking-up of the Western Roman Empire (Rome) and its conquest by Barbarians in the fourth and fifth centuries.



- The seven trumpets describe the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople) to the Muslim hoards.

- The seven trumpets describe the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople) to the Muslim hoards.
- The locust plague refers to Saracen (Arabic) invasions, from A.D. 612 to 763, and

- The seven trumpets describe the fall of the Eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople) to the Muslim hoards.
- The locust plague refers to Saracen (Arabic) invasions, from A.D. 612 to 763, and
- The lion-headed horsemen are the Turks who conquered Constantinople (1453).

- The “little book” opened in Chapter 10 is the Bible being made accessible at the time of the Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century).

- The “little book” opened in Chapter 10 is the Bible being made accessible at the time of the Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century).
- The Beasts of Chapter 13 are the political and religious power of the papacy.

- The “little book” opened in Chapter 10 is the Bible being made accessible at the time of the Reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century).
- The Beasts of Chapter 13 are the political and religious power of the papacy.
- The seven bowls of wrath correspond to the crippling of the papacy in the French Revolution (18<sup>th</sup> century).

- The fall of Babylon (Chapters 17-19) depicts the papacy finally being destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ.

# **Advantages to the Historicist Approach**



# Advantages to the Historicist Approach

1. It was the view of all the Reformers and of most evangelicals, for over 300 years. It was long referred to as “The Protestant View” due to its widespread acceptance.

# Advantages to the Historicist Approach

1. It was the view of all the Reformers and of most evangelicals, for over 300 years. It was long referred to as “The Protestant View” due to its widespread acceptance.
2. It is possible to identify striking historical parallels to the prophecies in Revelation.

# **Disadvantages to the Historicist Approach**

# Disadvantages to the Historicist Approach

1. It's scheme ran out of historical parallels in the 1800s;

# Disadvantages to the Historicist Approach

1. It's scheme ran out of historical parallels in the 1800s;
2. Those who hold it do not agree on the interpretation of many prophesied events, even after their alleged fulfillment.

## ***C. The Idealist Approach:***

### ***C. The Idealist Approach:***

Revelation is not about any single event or events, past, present or future, but depicts in symbolic visions grand spiritual principles repeatedly borne out in history.

According to this view, the great themes are illustrated without reference to specific historical events. Such themes include:



According to this view, the great themes are illustrated without reference to specific historical events. Such themes include:

- God's sovereignty over nations,

According to this view, the great themes are illustrated without reference to specific historical events. Such themes include:

- God's sovereignty over nations,
- Cosmic spiritual warfare,

According to this view, the great themes are illustrated without reference to specific historical events. Such themes include:

- God's sovereignty over nations,
- Cosmic spiritual warfare,
- **The triumph of good over evil & Christ over Satan,**

According to this view, the great themes are illustrated without reference to specific historical events. Such themes include:

- God's sovereignty over nations,
- Cosmic spiritual warfare,
- The triumph of good over evil & Christ over Satan,
- **The most-mortem vindication of the martyrs.**

Most *Idealists* see the Book of Revelation as being modeled after a Greek play, having seven Acts—each having seven Scenes.

Each Act (e.g. the 7 Seals, the 7 Trumpets, the 7 Bowls of wrath) parallels the others in covering the same timeframe, applying to the entirety of Church History, presenting different angles and different images (much as Daniel Chapters 2 and 7 do).

Each Act also has some reference to the  
Second Coming of Christ the end of time.

# **Advantages of the Idealist Approach**



# Advantages of the Idealist Approach

It eliminates the difficulty of harmonizing specific passages with specific fulfillments which has bedeviled the other views at certain points. It is theological or philosophical, rather than prophetic or historical.

# **Disadvantages of the Idealist Approach**

# Disadvantages of the Idealist Approach

The Book of Revelation itself claims to be predicting events that must shortly come to pass (1:1)—though the themes identified in the *Idealist Approach* can be wedded with any of the other approaches, since historical fulfillment in history or the future may still exhibit these principles in action.

## ***D. The Preterist Approach:***

## ***D. The Preterist Approach:***

Revelation was fulfilled shortly after it was written—in the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, in A.D. 70, and, possibly, in the fall of Rome as well. It is now history.

One school sees the entire prophecy as being fulfilled in the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), culminating with the fall of Jerusalem.

One school sees the entire prophecy as being fulfilled in the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70), culminating with the fall of Jerusalem.

Another sees this as the subject only of the first half (Chapters 1-11). They see the second half (Chapters 12-22) as being concerned with the fall of the Roman Empire.

The message of the book is the  
vindication of Christ and the martyrs  
upon their persecutors.



*“When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”*

*(Revelation 6:9-10)*

*“I saw the woman [Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”*

(Revelation 17:6)

*“I saw the woman [Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”*

(Revelation 17:6)

*“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”*

(Revelation 18:20)

*“I saw the woman [Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.”*

(Revelation 17:6)

*“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”*

(Revelation 18:20)

*“He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”*

(Revelation 19:2)

# **Advantages of the Preterist Approach**

# Advantages of the Preterist Approach

1. It makes the most sense, if passages like 1:1, 3, 19 (Gr.) and 22:10 are taken literally;

# Advantages of the Preterist Approach

1. It makes the most sense, if passages like 1:1, 3, 19 (Gr.) and 22:10 are taken literally;
2. It makes the book relevant to the original readers (like most epistles);

# Advantages of the Preterist Approach

3. It agrees in subject with the Olivet Discourse [Matt.24; Mark 13; Luke 21], which the early Church historian Eusebius (A.D.325) applied to the conquest of Jerusalem in A.D.70.



*“It is fitting to add to these accounts the true prediction of our Saviour in which he foretold these very events. His words are as follows: ‘Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day. For there shall be great tribulation, such was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.’” [Matthew 24:19-21]*

—Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter VII

# **Advantages of the Preterist Approach**

4. Agrees impressively with the history of the Jewish War recorded by Josephus.

# Advantages of the Preterist Approach

4. Agrees impressively with the history of the Jewish War recorded by Josephus.
5. Renders intelligible the “emperor” passages like 13:18 (666) and 17:10 (the sixth king).

# **Disadvantages of the Preterist Approach**

# Disadvantages of the Preterist Approach

1. Claimed (by critics) to have originated with the Jesuit, Luis de Alcazar (1554-1613) to refute the Reformers.

# Disadvantages of the Preterist Approach

However, the preterist approach to both Revelation and the Olivet Discourse were held by some much earlier than this time. In a sixth-century commentary on Revelation 6:12, Arethas writes:

# Disadvantages of the Preterist Approach

*"Some refer this to  
the siege of Jerusalem by Vespasian."*

On Revelation 7:1, Arethas writes:

*"Here then, were manifestly shown to the Evangelist what things were to befall the Jews in their war against the Romans, in the way of avenging the sufferings inflicted upon Christ."*



...and at Revelation 7:4, Arethas writes:

*"When the Evangelist received these oracles, the destruction in which the Jews were involved was not yet inflicted by the Romans."*

# Disadvantages of the Preterist Approach

2. It's validity requires, as no other approach does, a specifically early date of writing prior to A.D. 70, which is defensible but debated (see discussion of date, below).

# *Date of Writing*

*Date of Writing*

*Two theories:*

# *Date of Writing*

## *Two theories:*

- 1) Early Date, prior to A.D.70 (the reign of Nero)*

# *Date of Writing*

## *Two theories:*

- 1) Early Date, prior to A.D.70 (the reign of Nero)*
- 2) Late Date, around A.D.96 (Domitian's reign)*

# *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

1. Notable Advocates: Adam Clarke, Alfred Edersheim, J.B. Lightfoot, John A.T. Robinson, Philip Schaff, Jay Adams, and many others.



## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

1. Notable Advocates: Adam Clarke, Alfred Edersheim, J.B. Lightfoot, John A.T. Robinson, Philip Schaff, Jay Adams, and many others.
2. The church/Jewish situation

## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

### 3. The existing temple (11:1-2)

## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

3. The existing temple (11:1-2)
4. Identification of "666" (13:18) with Caesar Nero (Heb. Kaisar Neron )

## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

3. The existing temple (11:1-2)
4. Identification of "666" (13:18) with Caesar Nero (Heb. Kaisar Neron )
5. The current "king" (17:9-10)

## *Evidence of Early Date (pre-A.D. 70)*

6. The multiple assertions of an immediate fulfillment. Jerusalem's destruction was impending before A.D. 70, but history has shown that nothing of earth-shaking significance was impending in A.D. 96.

# *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

1. Notable advocates of this date include:  
Robert Mounce, Albert Barnes, B.B. Warfield,  
Donald Guthrie, John Walvoord, Merrill  
Tenney, and perhaps most other comment-  
ators since 1900.

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

### 2. Evidence of emperor worship (Chapter 13)



## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

2. Evidence of emperor worship (Chapter 13)
3. Extent of persecution

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

2. Evidence of emperor worship (Chapter 13)
3. Extent of persecution
4. “Nero Redivivus Myth” (13:3)

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

2. Evidence of emperor worship (Chapter 13)
3. Extent of persecution
4. "Nero Redivivus Myth" (13:3)
5. Wealth of Laodicea (3:17)

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

6). Existence of church in Smyrna. Polycarp wrote:

## ***Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)***

6). Existence of church in Smyrna. Polycarp wrote:

*"...among [you] the blessed Paul labored, who are praised in the beginning of his epistle. For concerning you he boasts in all the churches who then alone had known the Lord, for we had not yet known him."  
(Letter to the Philippians, 11:3).*

## *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

6). Existence of church in Smyrna.

7). Spiritual decline of Ephesus, Sardis, & Laodicea

# *Evidence of Late Date (A.D. 96)*

*The ambiguous testimony of Irenaeus:*

*“...since this number [666] is found in all the good and ancient copies, and since those who have seen John face to face testify... We will not... incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who **beheld the apocalyptic vision**. For **that was seen** no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.”*

(Against Heresies, 5:30:1, 3)



*“...since this number [666] is found in all the good and ancient copies, and since those who **have seen John** face to face testify...We will not...incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by **him who beheld** the apocalyptic vision. **For that was seen** no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.”*

(Against Heresies, 5:30:1, 3)

*“since this number [666] is found in **all the good and ancient copies**, and since those who have seen John face to face testify... We will not... incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For **that was seen no very long time since**, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.”*

(Against Heresies, 5:30:1, 3)

**Summary:**

- For many centuries, four different approaches have competed for legitimacy concerning the Book of Revelation.

- For many centuries, four different approaches have competed for legitimacy concerning the Book of Revelation.
- Men and women of very great stature in the evangelical Church can be found within each camp.

- For many centuries, four different approaches have competed for legitimacy concerning the Book of Revelation.
- Men and women of very great stature in the evangelical Church can be found within each camp.
- Most of these views predate the approach that is best-known and most popular today.

- For many centuries, four different approaches have competed for legitimacy concerning the Book of Revelation.
- Men and women of very great stature in the evangelical Church can be found within each camp.
- Most of these views predate the approach that is best-known and most popular today.
- Most Christians today only know of the popular view, and are completely unaware of the other three.

It is difficult to determine which of these approaches is the most ancient, since complete commentaries of Revelation were not produced prior to the fourth century, and by then, more than one view can be found alluded to by different writers. The oldest might have been some combination possessing elements of two, three or four of the known views.



It is therefore impossible to claim that one's own position was that which was held by John's first readers. Even the question of the Millennium seems to have been disputed in the earliest centuries. Our decisions about which view(s) to embrace must come from our own examination and assessment of the scriptural evidence—that is, from exegesis.

# **Review and Conclusion**

- *Futurists* see Revelation as a preview of the end of time.

- *Futurists* see Revelation as a preview of the end of time.
- *Historicists* see it as a panorama of history from John's time to the end of the world.

- *Futurists* see Revelation as a preview of the end of time.
- *Historicists* see it as a panorama of history from John's time to the **end of the world**.
- *Idealists* view Revelation as a series of visions affirming timeless principles, repeatedly observed in world events.

- *Futurists* see Revelation as a preview of the end of time.
- *Historicists* see it as a panorama of history from John's time to the end of the world.
- *Idealists* view Revelation as a series of visions affirming timeless principles, repeatedly observed in world events.
- *Preterists* see it as predicting the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and possibly of Rome, in the fifth century.

*It is never necessary to be confused*—even about matters that are difficult to decide. Every essential matter is clear in scripture. Some non-essentials are less clear and may require years of meditation and study to clear them up.

Instead of allowing “too much information” to create confusion, one would do well to simply remain “undecided” on matters that require more time to be sorted out.



Fortunately, no essential Christian doctrine rests upon our correctly interpreting the Book of Revelation itself. It was not even universally accepted into the canon for the first three centuries after Christ.

Every teaching of scripture necessary for life and godliness can be learned with certainty from the remaining books of the Bible. To focus disproportionately on the correct interpretation of Revelation has distracted many from actually doing the things that we have been told to do.

When the disciples asked Jesus about the timeline off the future, Jesus replied:

*“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

*(Acts 1:7-8)*