

Understanding 4 Interpretive Approaches to Revelation 6-18

Today there are 4 main approaches to Rev. 6-18:

- 1) It is all in the PAST
- 2) It is all (or almost all) in the PRESENT
- 3) It is all (or almost all) in the FUTURE
- 4) It is a combination of PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE

*note: some sources divide #2 and/or #3 into 2 views, and some don't list #4

View #1. Revelation 6-18 is all in the PAST – specifically before ____ A.D.

Technical term: preterist (pre=before, Latin *praeteritus*=before, bygone)

- also sees all of Matthew 24 as only taking place before fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- strength: interprets many things more literally than view #2 (ex: Rev 6:1-11, literal Jews sealed in Rev. 7, literal temple/time of 42 months in later chapters) but not others (6:12-17)
- weakness?

View #2. Revelation 6-18 is all (or almost all) in the PRESENT – the present age till 2nd coming

2A - Technical term: historicist (historic majority Protestant view from 1500s-1800s)

- views Rev. 6-18 as chronological history of church, chapter by chapter, century by century
- ex: Rev. 6:1-8 is wars in early centuries, v. 9-11 is only martyrs killed around 300 A.D., v. 12-17 may symbolize fall of Roman Empire, later chapters rise of Islam, Pope, Reformation
- strength and weakness?

2B – Technical term: idealist (seems to have replaced 2A since 1900s?)

- views Rev. 6-18 as ideals/principles always at work in every age of church history
- almost all of Rev. 6-18 is not chronological or specific events in the past or future
- however, verses that seem to speak of the 2nd coming (ex: 6:12-17) some take more literally than other views. Many idealists see events of 2nd coming replayed several times in Rev. 6-18 from different angles as a literal and specific event
- strength and weakness?

View #3. Revelation 6-18 is all (or almost all) in the FUTURE – time right before the 2nd coming

3A – Technical term: dispensational (popularized in 1900s, developed in 1830s)

- views Rev. 6-18 as strictly chronological and for Israel after church age over/church raptured
- strength and weakness?

3B – Technical term: historic futurism (historic view of many early church fathers)

- views Rev. 6-18 as for the church and not necessarily strict sequential order or strict 7 years
- church isn't raptured before Rev. 6-18 or separate from Israel
- strength and weakness?

View #4. Revelation 6-18 combines PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE events

Technical term: eclectic

- strength and weakness?

Conclusion:

GCBC End Times Views - Supplemental Handout, by Pastor Phil

From “4 Views of End Times” Class in June 2014, audio at www.sermonuadio.com/gcbc

1. What does our church believe about the end times?

“We believe in the personal, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth and the establishment of His kingdom in its final form. We believe there will be a final resurrection with eternal judgment of God on the unbeliever in Jesus Christ and on Satan and his angels, and that there will be eternal blessedness for the believer.”
-- *What We Believe, Essentials of GCBC Statement of Faith*

Above is “required for all members and those who serve at GCBC to affirm. See also ‘*What We Teach*’ with our Philosophy of Ministry and GCBC Constitution for more on GCBC leadership's convictions, including areas Christians differ in” (preface to above). [Note: “kingdom in its final form” refers to Rev 21-22, the final state of Christ’s kingdom, but some may differ on how it or events look before (Rev. 6-18, 20), or to what degree His kingdom was established/inaugurated at His 1st coming – Pastor Phil]

2. What do our church leaders agree about end times teaching?

The GCBC *What We Teach* document states that our leaders ‘annually fully affirm “What We Teach” and we ask members and ministry partners to acknowledge and be in essential unity and agree not to contradict or stir disunity here on secondary matters some may differ on.’-- www.goldcountrybaptist.org
Below is from *What We Teach: convictions that inform and impact our perspective*, by GCBC Elders:

On “the Already” – His Present Reign Since His First Coming

‘We teach God's Son ascended to the right hand of His Father and is enthroned in glory, where He intercedes on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sake (Rom 8:33-34; Heb 7:25, 12:2)’ [section #10 of *What We Teach*, note also kingdom texts like Col 1:13, Lk 17:21, Mt 12:28, etc.]

On “the Not Yet” – His Future Reign After His Second Coming: ‘We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to raise the dead bodily, both righteous and unrighteous, and that the righteous shall enjoy everlasting life and the wicked endure everlasting conscious punishment (Matt 9:47-48, 13:41-50, 25:41-45; Lk 16:23-28; 2 Thess 1:9; Rev 20). It is our belief that God has a future for Israel and the nations (Rom 11) and that the return of Christ will be followed by His earthly reign as described in the prophets (Zech 14, Rev 20-22). For us, full agreement on some of the finer points of doctrine (ex: timing of rapture or exact nature of the millenium/kingdom after Christ returns, see 2 Peter 3:11-18) are not requirements for membership, fellowship, leadership, or ministry partnerships with others who share our high view of God, His Word, and the gospel, and who agree not to be divisive or to speak or teach here contrary to our doctrinal convictions (2 Cor 13:11; Phil 2:1-2; 1 Pet 3:8; Eph 4:2-7).’ [section #16, note some members/teachers may differ on millennial views or if rapture happens at 2nd coming–Pastor Phil]

On Scripture: ‘It is to be interpreted according to normal literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutics (interpretation) within its contexts (Isa 28:9-10; Neh 8:7-8; Mt 19:3-6, 22:29-32, 2 Pet 3:16-17).’ [#2] [Note: when it comes to the book of Revelation, “within its contexts” includes the literary context (genre or literature type), and “literal” doesn’t mean there’s no symbols or metaphors in Scripture in general or in apocalyptic literature. “Literal” can mean the symbols point to literal events or realities. For example, “dragon” and “stars” in Rev 12:2-3 are not to be interpreted as a literal fire-breathing reptile and literal stars crashing into our planet, but it symbolizes a reality and event with Satan and fallen angels (v. 9). Since not all symbolism is explained in prophecy, and godly scholars don’t agree on what is symbolic, as we seek clarity in prophetic study it’s vital to also have charity and humility with others--Pastor Phil]

On Our Focus [#1, Overarching Principle]: ‘Christ alone ... should be the ultimate focus of all we do’