

Introduction

Last week I spoke of two types of people:

- One person who read the book of Revelation fixated on the subjects of the End Times alone; and
- One person who didn't even bother reading the book of Revelation because they found it too confusing.

Both of these types of people miss out on the majesty and beauty of the book which reveals to us Jesus Christ!

It is my desire this evening that as we come to look at the various ways of interpreting the Book of Revelation that neither of these two attitudes develop in any of us: but that we focus always on Jesus Christ and the Gospel – for while Revelation will speak of matters regarding the End Times yet they are only within the realm of Jesus Christ. Even these small details are about Christ and to miss that is to miss the point of the detail!

Context

Before we begin looking at the interpretations, notice with me briefly the outline of the book. There are seven clear sections to the Book:

There are five clear sections – all notable by the number 7

- The 7 Letters (1:8-3:22) – written to seven real-life Churches
- The 7 Seals (4:1-8:1) – describing war, famine, death and darkness
- The 7 Trumpets (8:2-11:19) – describing natural disasters and war
- The 7 Histories (12:1-14:20) – describing war and deception
- And the 7 Bowls (15:1-16:21) – disasters and destruction

Then at the very end of the book two women are compared and contrasted...

- The Defeat of the Whore Babylon (17:1-19:21) – one who is wicked, persecutes God's people and has power over many nations and kings;
- And finally, the Victory of the Bride Jerusalem (19:11-22:21) – one who is holy, having the glory of God and dwells with God for eternity.

Having seen this outline, notice with me now....

1) The Explanation of the Interpretations

There are four ways in which people generally interpret the Book of Revelation. Let me mention them to you:

A) *The Futurist Interpretation*

Like the title suggests, this form of interpretation believes that MOST of the book of Revelation has to do with the Future – namely, the last few years of time before the coming of Christ.

For example...

- Putting emphasis on Revelation 1:19 where Jesus Christ tells John, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter", the futurist believes this is the key to understanding the Book.
- The Introduction in chapter 1 is the past.
- The 7 letters to the 7 churches in chapters 2-4 are the present
- The remainder of the book from chapters 5-22 are the future. So...
 - o The 7 seals, the 7 trumpets, the 7 histories and the 7 bowls all refer to a time of great tribulation that will occur on this earth JUST BEFORE the coming of Christ.
 - The 7 seals and 7 trumpets refer to the horror of this tribulation
 - The 7 histories speak of persons within this tribulation; and
 - The 7 bowls speak of God's judgment upon some of the ungodly at the end of these 7 years.
 - o At the end of these 7 years, the great whore is defeated; and
 - o Immediately after these 7 years...
 - Christ returns, reigns on earth for 1000 years and eternity begins

So the main thing to remember about the Futurist interpretation is that over 80% of the book is Future: from chapter 5 to chapter 22!

The second form of interpretation is what is known as,

B) The Historicist Interpretation

Like its title suggests it sees Revelation to be describing all History – particularly history from the 1stC until the 2nd coming of Christ.

For example...

- The 7 letters are written to 7 churches in the 1stC
- The 7 seals with their war and death describe the fall of the Roman Empire in the 1st-4th centuries (4:1-8:1)
- The 7 trumpets with their natural disasters describe nations invading the Roman Empire from the 4th-15th centuries – such as the Vandals, Huns, Saracens and Turks. (8:2-11:19)
- The 7 histories of war and deception speak of the 16thC and the Roman Catholic Church's attack on the true religion of Protestantism (12:1-14:20)
- The 7 bowls of wrath and destruction then speak of God judging the Roman Catholic Church (15:1-16:21) – possibly in the 18th and 19th centuries when the French Revolution took the Pope captive.
- The Defeat of the Whore is the ultimate fall of Roman Catholicism and false religion (17:1-19:21); and
- The Victory of the Bride is the return of Christ and the setting up of eternity on the new heaven and earth.

So the important characteristic of this view is that...

- Revelation is not primarily about the future – the last few years before Christ's return.
- No, Revelation is primarily the unfolding of major events in history – from the 1stC to the final century.

The third form of interpretation is what is known as,

C) The Preterist Interpretation

The term preterist comes from a Latin word which means *past*. This view believes that the book of Revelation is not about the future; it is not about many centuries of history – no, it is about what happened in the 1stC with the Roman Empire and its persecutions on Christians.

To us today who live after the 1stC this view teaches Revelation is therefore primarily about the past.

This view puts emphasis on Revelation 1:1 where Jesus Christ gives John this message to speak about that which “must shortly come to pass”.

For example, to the preterist...

- The 7 letters to the churches are the churches in the 1stC
- The 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 histories and 7 bowls all refer to the war between the Romans and the Jews in the 1stC. These passages will speak of...
 - o The 7 seals and 7 trumpets will speak of disasters that will happen during that war;
 - o The 7 histories will speak of God's saved people who will escape that war – heeding Christ's words in Matthew 24 to flee this judgment.
 - o The 7 bowls of wrath speak of Rome attacking Jerusalem in AD70 as God's judgment on the nation of Israel for rejecting Christ
- The Defeat of the Whore is the defeat of Jerusalem with her false religion; and
- The Victory of the Bride is the return of Christ for His true church – one that is made up of people who have faith regardless of genealogy. Christ will dwell with His true church for all eternity .

The key characteristic of this third view is that Revelation is primarily about the past, specifically the 1stC because it is what comes shortly.

The only future aspects of the book of Revelation are the final chapters describing Christ's return and eternity.

So far we have seen three views of the book of revelation:

- The futurist says the book is primarily about the future and very end of time
- The historicist says the book is primarily about all of the NT age and the unfolding of history; and
- The preterist says the book is primarily about the past, the 1stC

Completely different views!

There is now a fourth and final view...

D) The Idealist Interpretation

As the name suggests, this view believes the book of Revelation is a book primarily about ideas and principles.

Take for example the seven sections of the book:

- In the 7 letters we have 7 churches. Why does Christ write to only 7 churches out of the hundreds there were at that time? Surely the lessons for those real-life churches were a summary of the lessons all churches in every age need to take note of.
- In the 7 seals we have pictured war against Christ, but Christ and His people are victorious and the wicked are judged (4:1-8:1)
- In the 7 trumpets we have war again, but again we see Christ's people being protected and the wicked being judged (8:2-11:19)
- In the 7 persons we have war against Christ and His people again – this time with a great dragon, but again we see Christ's people protected and Christ bringing judgment on the wicked
- In the 7 bowls we have judgment upon the wicked who have warred against Christ (15:5-8)
- In the Defeat of the Whore we have her who has warred against Christ and His people (17:6+14) being judged
- In the Victory of the Bride we have Christ and His people being attacked (20:9) but Christ bringing judgment (20:11-15) and Christ's people being with Christ for eternity

According to this view...

- The Book of Revelation is primarily not about the end of the end – Futurist;
- The Book of Revelation is primarily not about the beginning of the NT age – Preterist;
- The Book of Revelation is about the history of the church from the first coming of Christ unto the second coming of Christ
 - o However, unlike the Historicist view which says Revelation is a chronological history that moves in each section from the 1stC to the 4thC to the 15thC to the 16thC and so on until the coming of Christ.
 - o The Idealist view says Revelation is a cyclical history – that is, every section deals with the 1stC to the coming of Christ; and in repetitive cycles it describes the same events but from different perspectives.

For example...

- Again and again Tribulation and trouble is seen
 - o In the 7 Seals we have war, famine and death (6:4-8)
 - o In the 7 Trumpets we natural disasters (8:8-12) and war (9:13-18)
 - o In the 7 Persons we have war and persecution – (12:11-17, 13:7)
 - o In the 7 Bowls we have disasters (16:2-4)
 - o In the Defeat of the Whore we have persecution (17:6)
 - o In the Victory of the Bride we have persecution (20:9)

Are such realities not the reality of people in all ages: the world hating and attacking God's people bringing misery and even death?

You had it in the 1stC with the apostles – including John
 You had it in the early church with the colosseums
 You had it in the reformation era with the Inquisition
 You have it today in so many parts of the world like North Korea, India and China

- Again and again however, in section after section you see Christ coming and bringing judgment upon the wicked...
 - o In the 7 Seals we read of “the great day of (Christ's) wrath where men will cry for rocks to fall on them (6:12-17)
 - o In the 7 Trumpets we read of how Christ's “wrath is come” and the nations are “judged” 11:18
 - o In the 7 Persons we read that “the hour of (God's) judgment is come (14:7), the wicked drink the wrath of God and the wicked are “tormented with fire and brimstone” (14:10) a judgment which lasts “ever and ever” (14:11)
 - o In the 7 Bowls we read of “the fierceness of (Christ's) wrath” – a wrath so great the earth flees away (16:19-20)

- In the Defeat of the Whore we read of Christ coming (19:11) with “the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (19:15) and wickedness being cast “into a lake of fire burning with brimstone” (19:20)
- Then in the Victory of the Bride we read of Christ appearing on His throne (20:11), the earth fleeing away (20:11), the wicked being judged (20:13) and the wicked being cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

Surely, all of these sections are speaking of the same event? Christ's return at the end of time to judge the wicked?

Is this not made the more clear when we read of Babylon being ultimately judged in three sections:

- *Babylon falls in 14:8 (the section of the 7 persons)*
- *Babylon falls in 16:19 (the section of the 7 bowls)*
- *Babylon falls in 18:2 (the section where the whore is defeated)*

How many times can you ultimately judge Babylon?

Of course, there are other themes seen in the seven sections such as the Victory of God's People as they worship the LORD as He reigns and judges the wicked:

- In the section of the 7 seals we read, “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God” (7:9-11)
- In the section of the 7 trumpets we read of the twenty-four elders which “fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned” (11:16)
- In the section of the 7 persons we read of “the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders” (14:2-3)
- In the section of the 7 bowls we read of those who “sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints” (15:3)
- And in the section of the defeat of the whore we read of “the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (19:6).

So there it is men and women...four ways of interpreting the book of Revelation:

- One view sees Revelation as being primarily about the end of the end – a few years before the coming of Christ (The Futurist)
- One view sees Revelation as being primarily about the beginning of the end – the 1stC (The Preterist)
- One view sees Revelation as being primarily a chronological unveiling of historical events century after century until the time of Christ (the Historicist); and
- One view sees Revelation as being primarily a cyclical revealing of ideas and truths which permeate every age from different perspectives (The Idealist)

You must take time to learn the differences of these views; and through prayer and meditation of God's Word discern which is correct.

Of course there are many who will hold to a variety of these views: seeing in Revelation historical events, idealistic lessons for all time and lessons for John and the 1stC Christians. But while you may be able see the benefit of various views you must believe one of these to be the dominant and foundational interpretation of the book for John in the 1stC and for us today.

Perhaps you say, sure what does it matter? Well notice with me secondly,

2) The Implications of the Interpretations

Having seen what the four major interpretations are, let us now observe to you the important every day implications of each interpretation.

A) *What is the Mark of the Beast?*

Many people today are afraid of receiving the Mark of the Beast for in Revelation 20:4 we read that it is only those who do not have the Mark of the Beast that reign with Christ. Those who do have the Mark are judged!

It was only the other day that a Christian text me to say that they were afraid of the Mark of the Beast being used with this coronavirus: some newspapers speaking about how people need to have applications on their mobile phones to track where they are and who they have been in contact with in case they catch and spread the coronavirus. To the person who was contacting me, this was a further development on people being given an electronic identity.

So what is the Mark of the Beast?

In Revelation 13:16-17 we read, “*And he (the false prophet) causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*”

There are two main options regarding this:

- Many who hold to a futurist interpretation of Revelation believe the Mark of the Beast is a physical mark (or implant) that is given to people and is required for buying and selling. This could be something like an electronic microchip (or an application on a personal mobile phone).
- However, if you hold to one of the other interpretations of Revelation you will likely believe that the Mark of the Beast is not a physical mark at all but is the visible belief and behavior of a person.
 - o For example, in Exodus 13 God commanded His people that when they entered the land of Canaan, they were to remember the great deliverance He had given them from the wickedness of Egypt by the means of shed blood. In v13 the LORD told them this would be as “*a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes*”. Or to put it another way, by thinking upon God’s love to them, their belief (the mind) and their behaviour (their hands) would be changed and they would live and act for Him and not the way of the wicked Canaanites.
 - o This can be illustrated during the time of the apostle John in the cities of Pergamum and Thyatira (and no doubt others) where trade guilds were set up to prevent people from buying and selling if they did not first worship the emperor. People did not have a physical mark on them, but by their belief and behaviour – they would be visibly seen as belonging to God or not.

Important Question: When people in the 1stC read of “a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads”, what would they have thought of?

You can see how your interpretation of Revelation can have an everyday impact. Let me ask you...

- Are you one who fears identity marks? Or,
- Are you one who is not afraid of identity marks, only about forgetting to think upon the Grace of God in the Gospel and so have a belief and behaviour which is of the devil rather than of God?

B) Who is the Antichrist?

According to Newsweek magazine, 19% of all the people in America and nearly 50% of all evangelical Christians in America “*believe that the Antichrist is on the earth now.*” The strength of this belief among God’s people and others results in many books being written about the identity of the Antichrist and tens of millions of people buying these books. Certainly the identity of the antichrist is something people want to know about!

Well it may surprise you that the term *Antichrist* is not actually found in the book of Revelation. The Antichrist is referred to Revelation 13 as...

- A beast that demands to be honoured as a god (13:1 – name of blasphemy)
- A beast that is from the devil (13:2)
- A beast that blasphemes God (13:13),
- A beast that is set against God’s people (13:14); and
- A beast that has power and influence over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (13:14)

So who is this beast? Who is the antichrist?

- *Many who hold to a futurist interpretation of Revelation believe the antichrist is one person who comes at the end of time.*
- *Many who hold to an historicist interpretation of Revelation believe the antichrist and beast is the Pope.*

Their reasoning for this is that the section that contains Revelation 12+13 is referring to the time of the Reformation era in the 16thC, and therefore the beast is to be seen within this time frame!

- *Many who hold to the idealist and preterist interpretations believe the antichrist is every authority that is anti-Christ/against Christ*

For example...

- In Revelation 17:8 we read that this Beast of Antichrist is honoured by the world but not by God's people
- In Revelation 17:14 we read that this Beast is overcome by Christ, and immediately after we are told Christ is King over the kings of this world and Lord over the lords and masters of this world.

These references link the Beast to authorities in this world.

Then in 2 John we read that the Antichrist is not so much an individual person but a spirit and principal:

- 1 John 4:3, *"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."*

In 1 John we read that everyone and everything which is against Christ is antichrist – even if this finds its climax in an organisation like the Papacy.

- 1 John 2:22, *"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."*
- 1 John 2:18, *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."*

Depending on your view of Revelation,

- You are either looking out for an individual at the end of time who will mark the final countdown to the return of Christ and with whom you must resist; OR
- You are looking out for everything that is against Christ today and withstanding it – including the Church of Rome.

C) When is the binding of Satan?

All of God's people want to live in times where the Gospel goes far and wide and with great power and effectiveness!

Well in Revelation 20:1-3 we read of Satan being bound from deceiving the nations! *"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more".*

- ❖ *If you hold to a futurist interpretation which believes most of Revelation is in the future, then Revelation 20 speaks of the very very end of this age.*

As a result the binding of Satan is what occurs at the coming of Christ, when Christ will bind Satan with a great chain, throw Him into the bottomless pit and stop him from deceiving the world for a period of 1,000 literal years.

During this period of time Christ will reign on the earth and there will be an unparalleled time of Gospel prosperity when the Gospel goes forth with great power and effectiveness and many people are saved: more so than any other time in the history of the world!

- ❖ *However if you hold to an idealist or preterist interpretation which considers Revelation 20-22 to be a summary of the period between the first and second coming, then Revelation 20 does not speak of the end of the NT age, it speaks of the beginning of the NT age*

This means that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ, and is bound today from doing two things:

- 1. From preventing the spread of the gospel, and
- 2. Gathering all the enemies of Christ together to attack the church

Now what would make anyone believe that Satan is bound today? The basis of this view comes from Scripture itself.

- In Matthew 12:29 Christ said that at His first coming He was going to bind the "strong man". The same Greek term for binding is used in Matthew 12:29 and Revelation 20.
- In John 12:31-32 Jesus Christ said that at the cross the prince of this world would be "cast out" and all the world would come to Christ – not just the Jews. The Greek term used here is from the same Greek root used in Revelation 20 which speaks of Satan being bound and the nations of the world not being deceived.

It is a reality that in the OT age the nations of this world lived in darkness: they knew not the Gospel and were without hope (Ephesians 2:12).

But now (according to this view) Christ has filled His people with the Holy Spirit in a greater measure than ever before at Pentecost so that they will fulfil His great command to “Go into all the world” and “preach the Gospel to every creature” and teaching “all nations”. (Matthew 28:20, Mark 16:15).

So depending on your view of Revelation your view of preaching the Gospel today will be impacted!

- If you are Futurist you will believe that the preaching of the Gospel is successful now but the time of great success when all the world will come to know Christ is future and will occur only when Christ returns and Satan is bound!
- However, if you are an Idealist or Preterist, you will believe that the time for the Gospel to be successful is now! There is no opportunity after this age for after this age is judgment and eternity!

This leads us on to ask another question...

D) What about the Thousand years

Does Revelation 20 not say very clearly that there is to be a period of 1,000 years in which Christ reigns and the Gospel advances? Surely the timing of Christ's first coming to second coming is much more than 1,000 years? Well, that is exactly the argument of the Futurist!

- Revelation 20 says in v4 that Christ reigns “a thousand years”. How can that be denied.

According to the preterist, idealist and many historicists, the thousand years is not denied, it is just explained in a different way. For example...

- The timing of one thousand years is only mentioned in Revelation 20. Nowhere else.
- Every single time you read in the rest of Scripture of the phrase “one thousand years” it refers to an indefinite period of time.
 - o Psalm 90:4
 - o 2 Peter 3:8
- In the example of 2 Peter 3:8 the thousand years goes before the coming of Christ, not after.

So according to the preterist, idealist and many historicists, the thousand years is real – it is just an indefinite period of time.

Below is an example of the two ways in which explain Revelation 20:1-15

SUBJECT AND VERSE	QUESTION	FUTURIST	IDEALIST/PRETERIST/MANY HISTORICISTS
The Binding of Satan Verses 1-3	When	Satan is bound after Christ's 2 nd return	Satan is bound at Christ's 1 st coming
	What	What: The spiritual dragon is bound with a spiritual chain and cast into a spiritual pit for a literal 1,000 years	The spiritual dragon is bound with a spiritual chain and cast into a spiritual pit for a symbolic 1,000 years
	Why	This binding brings a time of unparalleled peace and many people are saved from all nations	This binding brings a time of unparalleled proclaiming of the Gospel and many people are saved from all nations
Christ's reigning verses 4-6	When does He reign?	According to these verses He reigns for a literal 1,000 years.	According to the teaching of Scripture, He is reigning now in Heaven. This reigning lasts for 1,000 years – and as used elsewhere in Scripture, it is an undefined period of time. This time period is from His first coming to just before His second coming.
	Where does He reign?	He reigns on earth	He reigns from heaven over earth

Who does He reign with?	He reigns with believers of all ages who are resurrected from the dead at His second coming	He reigns with the souls of all believers who die and go to be with Him in Heaven
Who are the rest of the dead?	They are the ungodly who die between Christ's first and second coming	They are the ungodly who die between Christ's first and second coming
What does it mean when it says they do not live?	It means the ungodly do not physically live again on the earth.	It means the ungodly do not live with Christ.
What is the blessed first resurrection that the godly have?	When all believers rise at Christ's second coming to reign with Christ join all those living, saved and unsaved, on the earth.	It is their rising from spiritual death to spiritual life in salvation, and their subsequent rising to be with Christ upon their physical death

THE BATTLE

verses 7-10

What is it?

It is a literal battle when at the end of Christ's reign of peace Satan will gather together from all parts of the world those who have rejected Christ to fight against Him and His people.

It is a spiritual battle when at the end of time Satan will greatly attack the Truth of Christ and the people of God. He will deceive the nations of this world.

Christ and His people will fight together and the enemy will be destroyed.

Christ will come from Heaven and like lightning will destroy all those in opposition to Him.

THE JUDGMENT

verses 11-15

All people are brought before the Great White Throne and judged according to their works

All people are brought before the Great White Throne and judged according to their works

E) What does the number 666 refer to?

In Revelation 13:18 we read about the number of the beast: *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*

There are a variety of views regarding this:

- Many Futurists: 666 is a physical mark, perhaps like a tattoo, a barcode, a computer chip, or something similar during the great tribulation just before Christ's return.
- Many Idealists: 666 speaks primarily of idolatry: men worshipping men as opposed to men worshipping God.
 - o The only other time we read of this number in Scripture is 1 Kings 10:14 and there we read of Solomon's wealth which led him into idolatry: "the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold"
 - o The number 6 in Scripture is also the number of man and falls short of the number 7 which is the number of perfection. The antichrist and the worship of him falls short of the worship of God again and again and again!
- Many Preterists and Historicists: In many of the ancient languages letters were given numbers. This is called *gematria*. The name of the Antichrist will add up to 666.
 - o Historicist: The pope wears upon his pontifical crown in jeweled letters, this title: "*Vicarius Filii Dei*," "Viceregent of the Son of God;" *[sic]* the numerical value of which title is just six hundred and sixty-six. The antichrist is the papacy.
 - o Preterist: The Roman Emperor in the 1stC was Nero Caesar and his official title adds to 666 in Hebrew.

F) What is the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21?

Revelation 21 is a chapter that brings much hope to the child of God.

- It speaks of a new heaven and new earth where “there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”

But what is the New Jerusalem that is referred to throughout this chapter?

- ❖ Many Futurists – the New Jerusalem is a literal city for God's people to live in
- ❖ Many Idealists, Preterists and some Historicists – the New Jerusalem is the literal people of God that live on the new heaven and earth
- Revelation 21:2 – city is said to be prepared as a bride
- Revelation 21:3 after speaking about the city in v2, we are told in v3 God will dwell with them? Who is them? They are the city!
- 21:9-10: An angel says to John, “Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God”
- Other Scriptures:
 - Jonah 1:2, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it” – why?” Jonah was to cry against a city – not the bricks and buildings but the people of the city. This is clear for in 1:2 we further read, “for their wickedness is come up before me”.
 - Matthew 11:23, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell” Will God send a physical city to Hades? No, but we will send the people of the city who are rebellious against Him!
 - Psalm 147:12, “Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.” Who praises God? The physical walls of Jerusalem, or the people in it?
 - Revelation 3:12, we are told of them who believe in Christ and God “will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem”

This will have a large impact on your understanding of Revelation 21:

- When it speaks of the city being holy – 21:10
- When it speaks of the city having the glory of God and being most precious – 21:11
- When it speaks of the city having the Lamb of God in it and the glory of God lightening (or enlightening it) – 21:22-23

If Futurist

- You will live in clean, pure, beautiful city, with the glory of God shining into it; OR
- You as one of God's people will be perfectly holy; you as one of God's people will have the glory of God; you will be declared as most precious; you will have the Lamb; and you will have the glory of God ever enlightening you

Either this is the literal city or this is the literal people of God: what implications it has!

3) Common Lessons of the Four Interpretations

A) *God's throne*

There is a poem that often brings great comfort to God's people in times of difficulty and hardship. It is...

God is on the throne, and He will remember His own.
Though trials may press us and burdens distress us, He never will leave us alone.
God is still on the throne, He never forsaketh His own;
His promise is true, He will not forget you. God is still on the throne!

Is the reality of this poem not found most clearly in the book of Revelation?!

- The word *throne* is found about 48 times in the Book

- Some references are to Evil powers are seen to sit on thrones as they claim authority to promote evil in the world. 2:13 speaks of Satan's throne where he threatens the people of God with suffering and martyrdom.
- Most references are to the throne of God.
 - Grace and Salvation:
 - In 1:4 we see that God's throne is the source of our salvation –
 - Protection and Victory:
 - In sections 1, 2, 4 and 7 God's throne assures and guarantees He will bring all His people to glory with the blessings of the new creation.
 - Eternal Refreshment and Delight:
 - When Revelation 21 speaks of a river flowing from God's throne and from this we see that God's throne is the source of all our life, our joy, and our peace in Him.
 - Freedom and Fellowship
 - Revelation 22 speaks of being ruled by God's throne is not a curse, but the blessed freedom from the curse and as such the throne of God is where God's saints are seen again and again to meet around and worship Him!
 - Again and again we read of the apostle John seeing "Him that sat on the throne"
 - With absolute power He reigns
 - With absolute power He prevails
 - He punishes His enemies, He overthrows their seats of power; and even in the attacks they make God overrules such to do His perfect will.

Like Christian in Pilgrims Progress who leaves the city of Destruction and fights his way to the Celestial City, the book of Revelation gives comforting hope and assurance to enable the Christian to endure and win every battle, knowing the celestial city soon awaits him

- The words Testimony, Witness, and Testify appearing 16 times in Revelation
- The words *overcome*, along with *prevailing* and *conquering* is used 17 times in the book.

Why, because God's people go through much hardship and trial – but because God is on the throne and they are united to Christ who is on the throne, He who has overcome will then enable God's people to overcome!

Child of God this evening be encouraged,

God is on the throne, and He will remember His own.
 Though trials may press us and burdens distress us, He never will leave us alone.
 God is still on the throne, He never forsaketh His own;
 His promise is true, He will not forget you. God is still on the throne!

B) The Person of Jesus Christ

At the centre of Revelation stands the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 1:1 tells us the book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation adorns the Lord Jesus with many titles and symbols of majesty: Jesus Christ is our Heavenly husband, our radiant light, our sovereign King, our fountain of life, and our eternal abode.

But pre-eminently Jesus Christ is the Lamb – a description given to Him 27 times in Revelation. This beautiful title highlights...

- Christ's purity; and
- Christ's love for His people – He suffered for them the most violent death of God's eternal wrath. This He did willingly by the shedding of His precious and pure blood to pay for the awful wickedness of our crimson sins

Revelation 5 speaks of those who meet around the throne of God and there they sing a song to the Lamb that was slain. One day you and I will join them who do it now, and seeing Him who loved us, we will sing, "Worthy is the Lamb".

Will you and I sing today – not only with our voices but with our hearts...

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath come now with praises before Him.
Let the Amen, sound from His people again:
Gladly for aye we adore Him.

Thoughts