

Lesson 4 of Introductory Material Proceed With Caution!

Introduction: As we have already touched on, many people read Revelation in the wrong way and thus come to incorrect conclusions. We can avoid falling into that trap by understanding a few principles to keep in mind when reading and studying Revelation.

View Video *Explaining All the Scary Stuff in Revelation: Proceed With Caution* (20:30)

Note: As we discuss these points made by Rev. Klaus and some of the examples he gives do remember that our intent at this point is to break down each of the examples in detail. We will look at these things like the rapture, millennium, and Antichrist in more detail as the class goes on.

Principle #1: The Clear Passages of Scripture Explain Those That are Less Clear

1. Don't allow the less clear passages to _____ the more clear.

This principle is how the Bible has traditionally been interpreted.

Example: The (Secret) Rapture; We see in St. Matthew 24:40-41 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 passages that have been used to support such a thing.

2. When we look at the totality of what the Bible says about the return of Christ what are the clear things that we can conclude?

Principle #2 Differentiate Literal vs. Figurative

This goes back to something we discussed in the last class relating to understanding what type of literature a particular section of the Bible is. The Bible is all true and it means what it says. However, this does not mean that everything in Scripture is to be taken literally. Our default position is to take things in the Bible literally, unless there is a good reason not to. In Revelation, much symbolic and figurative language is used. From our *Herman Who?* Study a few years ago it gave some good advice concerning Revelation saying that if you read something that sounds really weird and strange it is probably figurative.

3. We must be careful not to _____ literal and figurative in the same passage unless God gives us a specific reason to do so.

Examples: A Literal Millennium of 1,000 years and 144,000 in heaven; We will see in the next lesson what these numbers really mean. If these are to be taken literally

then to be consistent you must also believe that the devil really looks like a dragon and he is put in a literal hole.

Principle #3 Understand that Revelation is Cyclical and Not Linear

Many people read Revelation as a straightforward and chronological timeline of history since the time it was written moving toward Jesus return. They attach events from history (and especially the current time) in a chronological manner. We will see that with the way that Revelation is written in moves in cycles rather than in a strictly linear manner.

Example: The Antichrist; The Antichrist is certainly described in Revelation (and briefly in the Epistles) but attempts to tie the fulfillment of the prophecy to a specific historical figure have come up short.

4. Revelation is for ____ times and eras.

Principle #4 John is Trying to Describe the Indescribable

5. There are _____ to human understanding, reason, and language.

If you can imagine being in John's shoes (sandals anyway) and being given this incredible vision, how could it be described? An awesome and daunting task to describe this experience, indeed. If that is too much to imagine, think of trying to explain the beauty of a sunset over a magnificent beach exactly as you saw it. Or to describe exactly how you fell in love with your spouse. It can't be done fully with words. Of course the Holy Spirit gave John exactly the right words, but he could only pen them with the vocabulary available to him. So this is something that we can remember to guard against too literal of an interpretation in that what is described is the best that can be done recognizing human limitations for expression.

Principle #5 Don't Overanalyze

Many ministries and materials put out about Revelation and the End Times analyze every little thing and try to tie to a specific historical or current event. They may get some things right, but also get many things wrong. Don't drive yourself to despair or frustration trying to figure out every little detail.

As Rev. Klaus pointed out, better questions are these:

What is the spirit of what the Lord is saying here?

What is the main point?

In closing, take a look at page 6 in your appendix. This summarizes some of the common interpretations of the Revelation that have been used. We will briefly discuss these and refer to this in later classes.