

PREPARING TO TEACH REVELATION

INTRODUCTION:

God gave the message of Revelation to the churches to be understood and obeyed (1:3, 11). Church leaders have changed His message by changing the ordinary meaning of words to fit their interpretation of His message. This is not the right way to treat the Word of God.

AIM OF THE LESSON:

Use the right method to interpret Revelation and use the right principles to know the truth in Revelation.

Study (be diligent) to show yourself approved to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).

OUTLINE OF THE LESSON (use the Study Notes to add to this lesson plan as the Spirit leads you):

Four Basic Methods of Interpretation: John Walvoord says there are four basic methods that have been used to interpret Revelation.

1. **Allegorical** – The allegorical method treats Revelation as a story of a war between God and Satan. There is no chronology in the story and no predicted events, except the triumph of God over Satan. The natural meanings of words are spiritualized when necessary to fit their theology. Many deny the return of Christ to rule over the nations on earth; they believe Christ rules over the nations now from Heaven.
2. **Preterist** – Revelation is treated as a symbolic history of the persecution that the early Church suffered by Jews and Roman Caesars (Nero and Vespasian) during the first century.
3. **Historical** – Revelation is interpreted as a symbolic representation of the entire Church age from the time of John's writing to the Second Coming of Christ. Interpreters that used this method tended to view the book as climaxing in their generation, so the meaning of symbols kept changing when Christ did not return. There is absolutely no consistency among the interpreters as to what Revelation means. It has been said that more than fifty different interpretations of Revelation have been made using this method.
4. **Futuristic** – Interpreters that used this method understood the words of Revelation in their natural sense. The early Church used this method of interpretation for several centuries until the allegorical method dominated the thinking of Church leaders for nearly ten centuries. In the late sixteenth century the futurist system was revived by evangelicals in many parts of the world. This was the method that the Anabaptists adopted during the Reformation era. Futurists understand that Revelation is largely a prophetic book referring to the future Tribulation, Millennial Kingdom and Eternal Kingdom. The futurist method of interpreting Revelation is the one that is used in this study of the book.

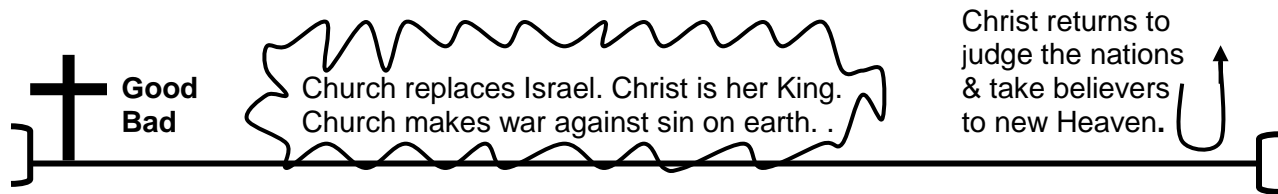
Principles for Interpreting Prophecy. A proper method for interpreting prophecy is crucial for a correct understanding of its message. God has given believers an important message in Revelation that He wants His people to know. The method of interpretation used for this study is guided by nine principles.

1. **Give Words Their Natural Meanings-**
2. **Find the Meaning of a Figure of Speech in the Bible.**
3. **Consider the Cultural-Historical Setting in a Prophecy.**
4. **Keep in Mind the Immediate Context of a Prophecy.**
5. **Make Christ the Center of a Prophecy.**
6. **Recognize Progress and Gaps in Prophecy.**
7. **Let Other Scriptures Help Interpret a Prophecy.**
8. **Allow Only One Interpretation for a Prophecy.**
9. **Keep the Interpretation Theologically Sound.**

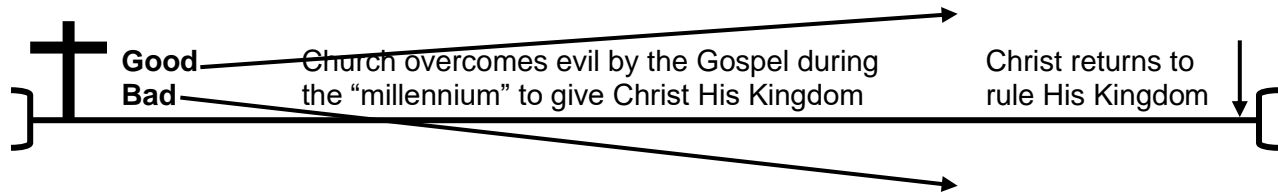
See the Study Notes for more information on these nine principles for interpreting prophecy.

Millennial Views. At this time a brief survey of millennial views is given to help learners understand the platform from which a speaker or writer is interpreting Revelation. More information on this subject can be found in John F. Walvoord's book, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 284-289.

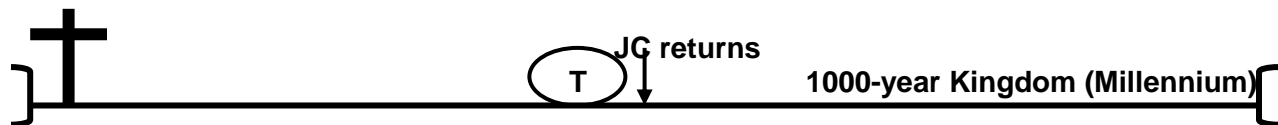
1 Amillennial – Amillennial doctrine says there is “no millennium.”



2. Post-millennial – Post-millennial doctrine says Christ will return “after the millennium.”

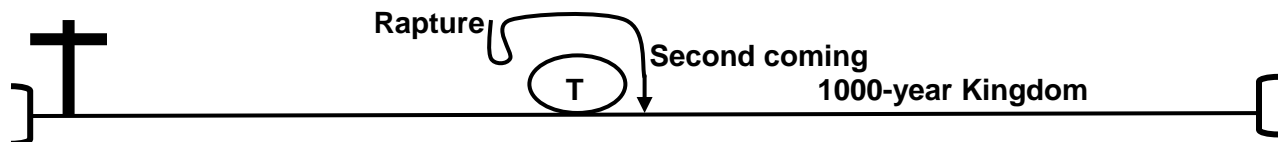


1. Pre-millennial – Pre-millennial doctrine says Christ will return “before the millennium.”



Rapture Views and the Tribulation. Those who hold a pre-millennial view of Christ's return see the rapture of the Church at different times. Will it occur before, during or after the Tribulation?

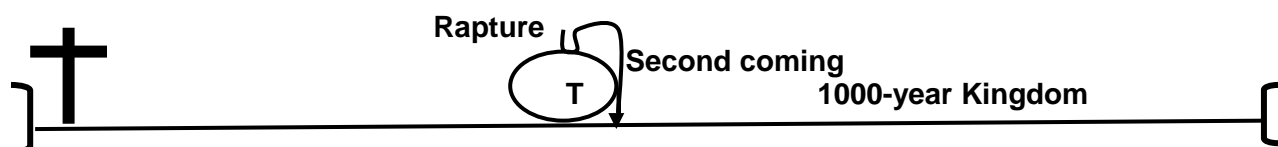
1. Pre-tribulation – Those who hold to the pre-tribulation view believe Christ will resurrect and rapture the Church to Heaven before the wrath of God comes during the seven-year Tribulation (1 Th 4:13-5:11).



2. Post-tribulation – Post-tribulationists believe Christ will rapture the Church after the Tribulation. Post-Tribulation view says the Rapture will occur at the end of the Tribulation.



3. Mid-tribulation and Pre-wrath. Mid-tribulation and pre-wrath believers have different views, but both say the Church saints will go through part of the Tribulation.



See the Study Notes for more information on Millennial and Rapture views.

3. Dispensational – God chose to have different programs operating in different ages to reveal the progression of His complete plan. God's revelation to man was not completely given at one time, but began to be unfolded from the time He spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden until He gave His final message to the Apostle John. People are responsible to obey the revelation that God has given to them during the age in which they lived. This system of theology is the result of understanding the Bible in a natural sense, especially recognizing the distinction between God's dealings with Israel and with the churches.

REVELATION			
FOCUS		DIVISIONS	
“Things which you have seen”	1:1	Revelation of Jesus Christ	1:1
	1:20		1:20
“Things which are”	2:1	The Seven Churches of Asia Minor	2:1
	3:22		3:22
“Things which shall be hereafter”	4:1	God's Throne / Christ's Scroll with 7 Seals	4:1
			5:14
		The Seven-Year Tribulation	6:1
			19:6
		Jesus Christ's Marriage / Second Coming	19:7
			19:21
		Christ's Millennial Reign / White Throne	20:1
			20:15
	22:21	New Heaven / New Earth / New Jerusalem	21:1
			22:21
PLACE: Island of Patmos			
DATE: About A. D. 95-96			

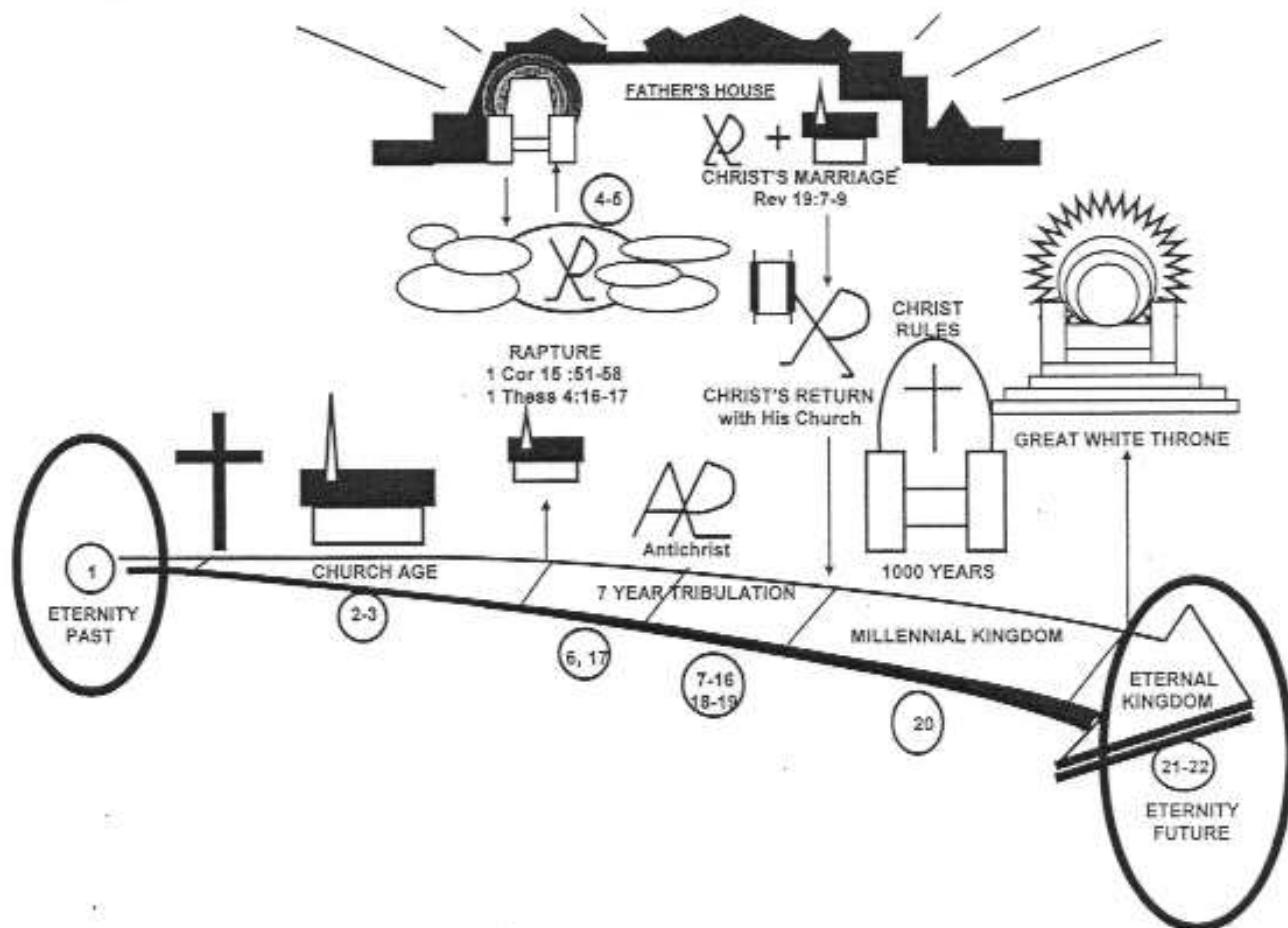
APPLICATION:

It is important for you to know how to interpret God's Word so you understand His message correctly. This is especially true when you interpret Revelation and other prophetic books. Follow the principles given in this lesson and ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand this book. He is the One who guided John in writing this book, so He is the One who will help you understand it correctly.

SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF THIS PROPHECY AS FINE GOLD

TIME LINE FOR THE EVENTS IN REVELATION

Revelation begins with the triune God in eternity past and proceeds to His Kingdom in eternity future. Even though Revelation does not deal with the ages of the Old Testament, it is filled with hundreds of references to the Old Testament. Revelation reveals many things about Jesus Christ in the first chapter. Seven churches in Asia are examined by Christ in chapters 2 and 3. Heaven is the focus of chapters 4 and 5, where God rules Heaven and earth. He gives His Son a scroll which authorizes Him to remove Satan and his followers from the earth, so He can claim His inheritance and rule the nations of earth. The main subject of Revelation is in chapters 6-19 describing the seven-year period of time known as the Tribulation. The 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth and His white throne judgment of unbelievers is found in chapter 20. The last two chapters reveal the state of affairs in the Eternal Kingdom. The circled numbers in the diagram below refer to the chapters in Revelation where these events are found.



A symbol for Christ



A symbol for Antichrist