

## Session Two:

### How To Interpret The Revelation

#### I) Introduction

- A) It's important that as we begin to look at The Revelation Of Jesus Christ that we look at this book through the proper lens. Though many people look at The Revelation many different ways, there are some safe parameters that help rightly divide the word of truth.
- B) I do not claim to have full, or complete understanding/revelation of this glorious book but after studying The Revelation and looking at some different people's thoughts I have become fairly familiar with it. I am confident that I understand a good portion of the broad brush strokes while I am continually searching out the finer details of this book.
- C) In this session I am going to cover how to interpret the symbolism of this book and the four primary schools of thought concerning this book.

#### II) Understanding The Symbolism Of The Revelation

- A) I often hear Christian leaders and Christians in general speaking about the prophetic scriptures as bizarre, cumbersome and difficult to understand. Most often when people talk about The Revelation they speak of its heavy symbolic/allegorical nature.
- B) As I began to personally read and understand The Revelation, I realized that it's not nearly as symbolic as people make it out to be, and that The Revelation itself explains nearly all of the symbols that it sets forth.

##### 1) Revelation Chapter 1

###### (i) Symbols

- (a) 1:12= *"When I turned I saw seven golden lamp stands."* (7 Golden Lamp stands)
- (b) 1:16= *"He had in His right hand seven stars..."* (7 stars in His right hand)

###### (ii) Interpretation

- (a) 1:20a-b= *"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands; the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven Churches."* (Seven stars are Angel's, 7 lamp stands are 7 churches)

##### 2) Revelation Chapter 3

###### (i) Symbols

- (a) 3:1= *"These things says He who the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."* (7 Spirits, 7 stars)

- (ii) Interpretation
  - (a) **1:20**=*"The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands; the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven Churches."* (7 Stars are 7 angels, 7 lamp stands are 7 Churches)
- 3) **Revelation Chapter 4**
  - (i) Symbols
    - (a) **4:5**=*"Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne..."* (7 lamps burning)
  - (ii) Interpretation
    - (a) **4:5**=*"...of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."*
    - (b) **Isaiah 11:1-2** (*Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of understanding, Spirit of counsel, Spirit of might, Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord*). (7 Spirits of God-The 7fold Spirit of God)
- 4) **Revelation Chapter 5**
  - (i) Symbols
    - (a) **5:6**=*"...stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes..."* (7 horns and 7 eyes)
    - (b) **5:8**=*"...Fell down having before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense..."* (Harps and golden bowls)
  - (ii) Interpretation
    - (a) **5:6**=*"...which are the seven Spirits sent into all the earth..."* (The 7 Spirits of God)
    - (b) **5:8**=*"which are the prayers of the saints."* (Harps are music and the golden bowls represent the prayers of the saints)
- C) These are a few examples for you to see that most of the symbolism is explained within the very chapter in which it is mentioned. It's also safe to see that scripture interprets scripture. This means that when the serpent is mentioned, you can look up serpent in the whole of the Bible and often if not always you can see what it's referring to.

## III) Four Primary Views Of The Revelation

- A) When looking at the Revelation there have been four primary schools of thought. It's clear that **Revelation 1-3** is dealing with life in John's day (his calling and the Churches) and **Revelation 21-22** speaks about the eternal states. So the question is, what does **Revelation 4-20** speak about?

### 1) The Preterist

- (i) This school of thought sees the prophecies of Revelation having been fulfilled already. This school says it's fulfillment took place between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century and nothing more. This school sees the majority of Revelation as historical explanation and cares mainly about Revelation 20-22 as it relates to judgment and the final states.

- (a) The difficulty with this is that though this book may be speaking to some past events it's mainly speaking about things to come i.e. the return of Christ.
- (b) This book is a prophecy, not primarily a historical document.

## 2) The Historicist

- (i) This school see the Revelation and other end-time books as referring to history, past event and historical people. They have found world history throughout each of the chapters and would place us today somewhere around **Revelation 19**.
  - (a) One of the difficulties about this school of thought is that no two authors agree on any chapters of this book being the same piece of human history. The other difficulties with this school is that they place the seals, trumpets and vials in some place of human history, either way back or recent but without any scriptural warrant.

## 3) The Futurist

- (i) This school of thought believes this book contains a forecast of universal history. It takes that **Revelation 5-19** have not yet taken place, but are yet coming and give us a forecast of what we can expect. And Revelation 20-22 speaking about the eternal states of the unrighteous and the righteous.
  - (a) Though there are some difficulties with this school of thought, this is the most universally, and Biblically accepted view of the Revelation.
  - (b) Within the Futurist approach to the study of the Revelation it's important that we don't see all of the Revelation as being yet future. Revelation 1-3 are historical and the last 19 chapters are being prophetic.

## 4) The Idealist

- (i) This school of thought stresses the spiritual element of The Revelation and they discourage anybody from firmly establishing any of the more mysterious visions of The Revelation. The information contained within the book of Revelation are spiritual, symbolic and not to be taken literal.

- (a) I think I have made it clear that this is not an ideal way to view The Revelation.

- B) **Revelation 1:19** *"Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this."*

- 1) **Revelation 1** (The things which John had seen)
- 2) **Revelation 2-3** (Those things which are)
- 3) **Revelation 4-22** (The things which are yet to come)