



Understanding and Applying the Bible

Pastor Michael Cranford

Schedule

- Jan 22nd Understanding God's Law
- Jan 29th Understanding Historical Narrative
- Feb 5th Understanding the Psalms
- Feb 12th Understanding Wisdom Books
- Feb 19th Understanding the Prophets
- Feb 26th Understanding the Gospels
- Mar 5th Understanding Parables
- Mar 12th Understanding Acts
- Mar 19th Understanding the Epistles
- Mar 26th Understanding Revelation (Apocalyptic)**



Apocalyptic

What is it?

Visionary experiences conveying God's judgment and salvation at the end of the age.

Visions are not hallucinations, but are rather the means in which the Spirit communicated his truth about specific events hidden until those events unfold. In the meantime, they encourage and challenge God's people to live expectantly.



Revelation

1. Revelation is a description of the Day of the Lord as described in the Old Testament and anticipated in the New Testament (Isa 13:6-13; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 28-32; Amos 5:18-19; Zeph 1:2-7; Mal 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10).



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¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near—
near and coming quickly.

The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter;
the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry.

¹⁵ That day will be a day of wrath—
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of trouble and ruin,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness—

¹⁶ a day of trumpet and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the corner towers. (Zephaniah 1:14-16)

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¹²And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became as black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; ¹³and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵Then the kings of the earth and the eminent people, and the commanders and the wealthy and the strong, and every slave and free person hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶and they said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the sight of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; ¹⁷for **the great day of Their wrath has come**, and who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:12-17; NASB)

Revelation



1. Revelation is a description of the Day of the Lord as described in the Old Testament and anticipated in the New Testament (Isa 13:6-13; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2, 28-32; Amos 5:18-19; Zeph 1:2-7; Mal 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1 Thes 5:2; 2 Thes 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10).
2. Apocalyptic is a form of prophetic literature. Apocalyptic (as well as some prophecy) can convey information not necessarily intended to be understood by the people to whom it was given. Dan 12:7-13; Eph 3:4-6; 1 Peter 1:10-12. Some prophecy is intended to encourage/assure/inspire the original readers, but not provide them with specific knowledge. *As with all scripture, meaning and application can have different targets.*

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One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?”

The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, “It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed.”



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I heard, but **I did not understand**. So I asked, “My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?”

He replied, “Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed **until the time of the end**. (Dan 12:6-9)



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Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. (1 Pet 1:10-12)

Revelation

Ways to View Revelation

I. Preterist (past) – The book is an expression of events in the first century, either in the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 or at both the fall of Jerusalem and the fall of Rome in the fifth century. It is not futuristic.

*The revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must **soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,² who testifies to everything he saw—that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is **near**. (Rev 1:1-3)*

Problems with the Preterist view:

1. “Soon” and “near” are ways of describing something that can happen without warning, not necessarily a description of a time frame.

Alas for that day! For the day of the Lord is **near**; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is **near** in the valley of decision. (Joel 3:14)

“The day of the Lord is **near** for all nations. As you have done, it will be done to you; your deeds will return upon your own head.” (Obad 1:15)

Problems with the Preterist view:

1. “Soon” and “near” are ways of describing something that can happen without warning, not necessarily a description of a time frame.

Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is **near**. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice; he has consecrated those he has invited. (Zeph 1:7)

The great day of the Lord is **near**— near and coming quickly. The cry on the day of the Lord is bitter; the Mighty Warrior shouts his battle cry. (Zeph 1:14)

The night is **nearly over**; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Rom 13:12)

Problems with the Preterist view:

2. Jesus indicates that no one knows the day and hour of his return, not even him. This indicates a lack of knowledge of any time frame.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” (Mt 24:36-41)

Problems with the Preterist view:

3. The element of surprise that Jesus indicates in parables and in Matt 24:37 doesn't make sense if he had in mind a near-term fulfillment.

Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Matt 24:33-35)



Problems with the Preterist view:

4. The events described in Revelation never happened in the first century.

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” (Rev 4:1)



Revelation

Ways to View Revelation

2. **Historicist** – The events of Revelation have unfolded across history and are building toward a future fulfillment of chapters 20-22. (No one holds to this view any longer.)
3. **Idealist (spiritualist)** – The book of Revelation is just an allegory for the struggle between God and Satan, good vs. evil, across all times. It is not historical in any way. The portion referring to the kingdom (20:1-6) designates an indefinite time frame. Jesus is ruling over the earth right now—in heaven.

Revelation

Ways to View Revelation

4. Futurist – The prophetic events of Revelation (chapters 4-22) are historical but unfulfilled.

They point to events at the end of the age, as Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse and in literal fulfillment of all the biblical prophecies regarding the Day of the Lord.

Dispensationalism is the added view that the church and Israel are different entities, that the current age is one where God has shifted his focus to the church and away from Israel. Each has a distinct role in God's prophetic plan (Romans 11:25-27).



Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

1. The futurist position on Revelation is the inevitable outcome of reading the Bible literally.

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. (Rev 3:10)



Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

2. Jesus intended that we be watchful and observe events but not be misled, thinking that events (especially those in the near-term, from their perspective in Matt 24) indicated the end had come.

Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.” (Matt 24:4-6)



Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

3. John called his Revelation prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 18-19). He wrote it near the end of the first century, after the destruction of Jerusalem had already occurred. It doesn't make sense to regard it as an explanation of events in the first century.

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this **prophecy**, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near. (Rev 1:3)



Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

4. If the futurist perspective is true, we expect things to get worse and worse until the day Jesus returns. If the millennial kingdom is still in the future, it means Satan is not bound, but is active.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or **Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.** After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Rev 20:1-4)

Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

4. If the futurist perspective is true, we expect things to get worse and worse until the day Jesus returns. If the millennial kingdom is still in the future, it means Satan is not bound, but is active.

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings. (1 Peter 5:8-9)



Why read Revelation (chaps 4-22) as future prophecy:

5. The futurist position follows the outline expressed in Revelation 1:19.

Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. (Rev 1:19; NASB)



Allegorical visions – The author/visionary is given a picture that conveys meaning through representative symbols.

“Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.” (Dan 2:31-33)



Allegorical visions – The author/visionary is given a picture that conveys meaning through representative symbols.

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. ...She gave birth to a son, a male child, who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter.” And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days. (Rev 12:1-2, 5-6)

Allegorical visions – The author/visionary is given a picture that conveys meaning through representative symbols.

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. (Acts 10:9-16)

Spiritual representations (noumena) – The author/visionary is given a picture of something that cannot, in principle, be depicted directly, such as God sitting on his throne.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:1-3)

Spiritual representations (noumena) – The author/visionary is given a picture of something that cannot, in principle, be depicted directly, such as God sitting on his throne.

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby. A rainbow that shone like an emerald encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. In front of the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. (Rev 4:2-5)

Physical semblances (phenomena) – These are physical (earthly) realities that are described in terms that may include symbols, if the author has no more effective way to talk about them.

Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the gate of the house of the Lord that faces east. There at the entrance of the gate were twenty-five men, and I saw among them Jaazaniah son of Azzur and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, leaders of the people. The Lord said to me, “Son of man, these are the men who are plotting evil and giving wicked advice in this city.” (Ezekiel 11:1-2)



Physical semblances (phenomena) – These are physical (earthly) realities that are described in terms that may include symbols, if the author has no more effective way to talk about them.

The number of the mounted troops was twice ten thousand times ten thousand. **I heard their number.**

The horses and riders I saw in my vision **looked like this:** Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses **resembled** the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were **like** snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. (Rev 9:16-19)

Application of Revelation for people of all times:

Parable of the Unsuspecting Homeowner (Matt 24:42-44)

But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matt 24:43-44)



Application of Revelation for people of all times:

Parable of the Faithful vs. Wicked Servants (Matt 24:45-51)

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, **‘My master is staying away a long time,’** and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt 24:45-51)

Application of Revelation for people of all times: Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13)

“The bridegroom was **a long time in coming**, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep...” (Matt 25:5)

“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.” (Matt 25:10-13)

Application of Revelation for people of all times: Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-29)

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them...” (Matt 25:19)

“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.” (Matt 25:26-29)

Application of Revelation for people of all times:

The Sheep and the Goats (Matt 25:31-46)

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (Matt 25:34-40)