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A STUDY OF REVELATION

A Term Paper

Presented to

the Faculty of the School of Religion

Ouachita Baptist University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Course

in

Special Studies

by

Ken Brown

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A STUDY OF REVELATION

By Ken Brown

Through the centuries man has felt a deep, innate thirst for an intimate relationship with the Infinite. Whether expressed in the ancient Babylonian mysteries of Tummuz or in present-day "flower children," the thirst has driven the human soul to reach out and to touch the ultimate, to know that which holds command of all things. And though the human soul has continually sought, it has sought blindly and, at best, has gained only limited spiritual insight.

Christianity, however, is quite different from the various cults which have arisen because it is the result of the Infinite's search for man and not of man's search for the Infinite. As this Person, whom we call God, showed Himself to the world, He effected the establishment of the church and of a written testimony to Himself. That written testimony, which is the collection of books called the Holy Bible, was written by men inspired of God. It speaks of the world's condition in relationship to God's nature, of God's past actions, and of the future events to be brought about by Him.

The early church encountered severe problems as it began to grow out of the influence of Jesus Christ working through the twelve disciples. From the outside it suffered persecution by the Roman government and by the orthodox Jews. From the inside there appeared heretics who tried to pervert or completely change the (unadulterated) beliefs of the Christians. The young church was

fighting the full power of evil to keep its balance and purity.

Out of this oppression came the need for a "new vision" one that would consummate apostolic teaching by tying together the different strands of Christian belief and one that would give hope and encouragement to the church by showing God's final plan concerning man's destiny. The new vision was needed to provide sufficient strength for endurance of the terrible conditions of persecution. This need was met when God through Jesus Christ revealed the forthcoming events to John, the Apostle. The written record of that vision is the last book of the New Testament, Revelation.

It is cause for deep regret that today Revelation has become what God never intended it to be--a sealed book. The book of Daniel was sealed until the time of the end (Daniel 12:9); but of Revelation, it was written, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand"(Chapter 22:10). Indeed, the title, Revelation, is derived from the Latin revelatio (from revelare, "to reveal or unveil that which has previously been hidden"). This was the title assigned to the book in the Latin Vulgate. The Greek title is Apocalypse, taken directly from the first word in the Greek text, apokalypsis. In the Greek text of Daniel, this word is often found referring to the uncovering of secrets, or the interpretation of dreams, or the revelation of God (Daniel 2:19, 22, 28; 10:1; 11:35).¹ Significantly enough, it is the one book of

¹The Wycliff Bible Commentary, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), pp. 1493-4.

the Bible which begins and ends with a blessing pronounced on those who read and keep what is written therein (Chap. 1:3; 22:7). God did not mean to mock the church promising a blessing to all who understood the book of Revelation when He knew they would not be able to understand it. Revelation, however, remains grossly neglected and perverted in today's society even though its message is true and relevant to all.

Proceeding upon the assumption that the book was necessary, relevant, and understandable both then and now, let us consider the record of John's vision. The true title is given in the opening verse. It is, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ;" not, "The Revelation of St. John, the Divine," as given in some translations. John was not divine; he was a saint as all believers in Christ are saints. He began many paragraphs with the phrase, "And I saw." It is the revelation of Jesus Christ to John for the church.

As it was written at the end of the first century, Revelation has many characteristics of the apocalyptic literature which was prevalent in Jewish writings from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 150. Out of this period, which was one of oppression of the Jews by Rome and, later, the persecution of the Christians by both Romans and Jews, there appeared books written in symbolic imagery telling of the expectation of an imminent, cosmic cataclysm in which God would destroy the ruling powers of evil and raise the righteous to life in a Messianic kingdom. The literature stressed the virtue of loyalty to God. It stimulated faith by showing the certain overthrow of evil and the victory of God's righteousness. Non-canonical

books like The Book of Enoch speak of the Holy One coming in judgment; the Assumption of Moses tells how the Heavenly One will arise and bring about a catastrophic end to evil. Another book entitled, The Secrets of Enoch, speaks of journeys through different heavens.² All maintain the underlying theme of the ultimate overthrow of evil by a righteous God. All give their message through detailed descriptions of visions. All use a system of symbolism in which qualities, ideas, and principles are represented by things concrete. The dramatic element is an inherent part of this type of writing. Frequently the author presents figures for the purpose of adding emphasis and vividness to aid in creating the desired impression; the figures are often exaggerated for the purpose of effect. Although these aspects of apocalyptic writing may be found in Revelation also, Revelation maintains a superiority to the other works that came forth out of this period of oppression.

Revelation was written under the name of the actual author of the book; in contrast, most of the apocalyptic literature was pseudonymous. Summers in his book, Worthy is the Lamb, quotes R.H. Charles (a recognized authority in apocalyptic literature) as saying in reference to Revelation that:

So far it is clear that the Apocalpse before us was written by a prophet (Revelation 22:9) who lived in Asia Minor, and that his actual name was John. This is just as assuredly the work of a John as 2 Thess. 2 and I Cor. 15 are apocalypses of St. Paul . . . There is not a shred of evidence, not even the shadow of a

²Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), pp. 8-16.

probability, for the hypothesis that the Apocalypse is pseudonymous.³

Thus, it is safe to hold that the book is not a forgery, but was written by someone named John.

Summers continues his apology for the Johannine authorship by stating that John, to whom is attributed the New Testament apocalypse, was a Jewish Christian who had in all probability spent the greater part of his life in Galilee before moving to Asia Minor and settling in Ephesus, the center of Greek civilization in that province. This conclusion comes from a study of his use of the Greek language. He takes unusual liberties with the syntax of the language and, to a certain degree, creates a Greek grammar of his own, although it does not seem intentional. The numerous infractions of Greek grammar appear to stem from the fact that he thought in terms of Hebrew while he wrote in Greek. Often the Hebrew idioms he used were literally translated into Greek. He had a profound knowledge of the Old Testament and used its phraseology very extensively.

Another thing that may be observed is that the author of Revelation exercised unquestioned authority over the churches of Asia Minor. He rebuked, reprovved, exhorted, and encouraged the churches as one whose authority would not be questioned.

Summers states that Irenaeus, pupil of Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna, one of the seven churches of Asia), said that the book

³Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 55.

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was written by John, the disciple of the Lord, and identifies him as the one who lay upon the breast of Jesus at the Last Supper. Irenaeus' witness is strong since he was only one step removed from association with John, the Apostle. The 70 or 80 years that elapsed between the writing of Revelation and the comments of Irenaeus was one well within the memory of men who could have corrected the statements if they had been false. Others who held John, the Apostle, to be the author without firsthand information were: Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 223); Tertullian of Carthage (A.D. 220); Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 223) and Hippolytus of Rome (A.D. 240).⁴

Eusebius quotes Origen as saying:

What shall we say of him who reclined upon the breast of Jesus, I mean John? Who has left us one gospel, in which he confesses that he could write so many that the whole world could not contain them. He also wrote the Apocalypse, commanded as he was, to conceal, and not to write the voices of the seven thunders.⁵

Writers subsequent to his date constantly quoted the book as written by the apostle, John. Some of these were: Basil the Great; Athanasius; Ambrose; Cyprian; Augustine; and Jerome.⁶

It seems that the unanimous opinion of the second-century tradition held to Johannine authorship. Summers remarks, "There are few books in the New Testament which have stronger support from ancient tradition."⁷

Although there is more room for debate in the field of internal evidence than in the external, the favor still seems to be with

⁴Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), pp. 58-60.

⁵Ibid., p. 61.

⁶Ibid., p. 62.

⁷Ibid.

John, the Apostle. First, the writer called himself John in four places (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The manner in which the name was introduced implies that it was sure to be recognized by those who first received the book. This was true of John. He had been in Asia Minor since the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; he had worked in churches there, especially Ephesus, and was well known to all of them.⁸

The Christology of Revelation is similar to that of the Fourth Gospel; the expression in Revelation 1:1, "which God gave him;" Christ, lies in perfect line with the teaching of John's Gospel. The Son has whatever the Father has, yet has nothing but what was given Him by the Father. This idea is found in John 17:7-8, as well as other places in the Gospel.

The use of the term logos to indicate the distinctive title of Christ is characteristic of only Johannine literature. John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; and Revelation 19:13 are sections which use the term. This point, along with other evidence brought out by Summers, seems to give conclusively the authorship to John, the Apostle.⁹

There are others who argue against Johannine authorship, one of which is William Barclay. Barclay states that the Greek writing is so different in the two books (the Gospel of John and Revelation) that it is obvious that the same man could not have written both. He says, "The Greek of the Fourth Gospel is simple but correct enough;

⁸Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb, (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 62.

⁹Ibid.

the Greek of the Revelation is rugged and virile and vivid, but notoriously incorrect."¹⁰ He quotes Dionysius (A.D. 250), the great scholar who headed the Christian church at Alexandria, as doubting the Johannine authorship. Also, the fact that the writer did not write like an apostle is mentioned. "He speaks of the twelve foundations of the wall of the Holy City, and then says, 'and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb' (Revelation 21:14)."¹¹ He states that the author writes as if he is an outsider to the twelve and not one of them.

In opposition to these points, it may be answered that: One, the difference in Greek grammatical correctness may well be due to the fact that John, when writing the Fourth Gospel, had plenty of time in which to write and could have possibly had friends to help him correct his Greek. When John wrote Revelation on the Isle of Patmos, he was writing what he was being shown and did not have much time to think about correct grammatical construction. The point may be noted that he was in an ecstatic state while receiving a vision of such magnitude and importance. Two, Dionysius was against attributing Revelation to John, but the weight of the many other early church elders for John outweighs him. Also, Summers states that Dionysius did not deny "outright" John's authorship, but says that he "would not easily agree" that John,

¹⁰William Barclay, Commentary on Revelation, Vol. I, p. 16.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 15-16.

the son of Zebedee, wrote the book.¹² In reference to the last point, it may be said that John was simply writing what he saw and was writing it for the people of the early churches. The absence of personal references which Barclay notes is not conclusive evidence. It is a conjecture based on silence, and such a conjecture is never very satisfactory.

There are other points for and against John that will not be mentioned because of their voluminous nature. Evidence as a whole points to John, the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, as the author of Revelation.

These things may be said in summary to the superiority of Revelation over the non-canonical apocalyptic literature. First, Revelation was written under the name of the true author; and that author was an authority in Christianity. In contrast, the authors of the other literature, as a rule, wrote pseudonymously. Their books were entitled after great leaders of the Jewish faith and there was no guarantee of authoritative authorship. Second, it is generally agreed upon by many prominent Bible scholars that not only was the author one of the original twelve, and therefore a reliable authority, but also he actually received a great vision from God and wrote what he was shown. There was no guarantee that the authors of the non-canonical books received any special vision from God. The book does not supersede the other books of the New Testament by any means, but acts as a prism through which the rest

¹²Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 66.

may be focused in order to project a picture of the consummation of the ages, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It has already been recognized that the Apocalypse came forth during a time of great persecution. The two different emperors of Rome who persecuted the Christians tirelessly were Nero and Domitian. Some have put the date of the writing as early as the 70's while Nero ruled, but for many reasons this seems too early. The unanimous verdict of the early church was that John was banished to the Isle of Patmos anywhere from 81 to 96 A.D., some placing his exile in the fourteenth year of Domitian's reign, A.D. 95.¹³ Because the seven churches in Asia showed a great deal of maturity (which could hardly have existed as early as A.D. 65) and because there is no evidence that the Apostle had any authority over the churches of Asia before the destruction of Jerusalem, the date of the writing has been generally accepted to be during the reign of Domitian, A.D. 96.

The Interpretations

The interpretations of Revelation rely mainly upon the method of approach. Throughout history Christianity has followed various interpretations. Some think it reveals all future history from the New Testament time until the end of the age; others suppose that it refers to the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church. A number of people feel that it is a product of early Christian myth with no significance for Christians today. Another group adheres to the

¹³The Wycliff Bible Commentary, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1493.

op. cit.

idea it points out principles of action on the basis of which God deals with man throughout all history. Then, some have sought to find the meaning that the book had in the day of its origin and to determine by application of that meaning its significance for every other generation.¹⁴

There are five assumptions, which formulate a method of approach, that must be accepted for a truthful and accurate interpretation of Revelation. First, the fact that John was a recipient of the vision must be kept in mind. Many times John says, "And I turned to see . . ." (Revelation 1:12), or, "After this I looked . . ." (Revelation 4:1). He did not determine what the vision would be; that was determined by the Holy Spirit. ~~Second~~ the objective of the presenting of the vision was: (a) to comfort the Christians who lived then, and (b) to put a final note to the New Testament by completing the prophecies of Christ's ultimate victory over all evil by His second appearing (which by its nature would make it applicable to Christians now). ~~Third~~ the interpretation taken must be in tune with the flow of the rest of the prophetic parts of the Bible, especially Christ's words concerning His own return. ~~Fourth~~ the Spirit of God spoke in terms which accurately conveyed the meaning of the vision to those who received it. Otherwise, why would there be a blessing pronounced on those who read it if they could not understand it. This assumption necessitates an understanding of the historical background of the book. These points are, of necessity, assured to guide the

¹⁴Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951) p. 27.

interpretation of Revelation in order to avoid randomness or inconsistency of interpretation.

In general, there are four principal schools of thought for interpreting Revelation. There is the continuous-Historical scheme, the Spiritual or Philosophy of History scheme, the Futurist scheme, and the Preterist scheme, each of which reveal varying degrees of truth. It is as if four men, each from different points of reference, were trying to describe a large, oddly-shaped building. The descriptions might differ, but all would be, to a certain degree, true. One, however, would be the most accurate and would depict to a greater degree the over-all plan of the building. The first two methods of approach may be eliminated because of their very narrow interpretation, which would put limits on the power of the Holy Spirit and which would present Revelation for less than it is. Let us consider the second two methods of approach (the Futuristic and Preteristic) as represented by premillennial dispensationalism and historical-background amillennialism in the light of the five basic assumptions.

It can hardly be denied that Revelation is a book of prophecy. To deny this is to disregard the style, the theme, and the future events of the Apocalypse. The Futurist scheme of interpretation insists that, for the most part, the visions of this book will be fulfilled toward the end and at the end of this age and that only the first three chapters refer to this age.¹⁵ This view looks

¹⁵H. A. Ironsides, Revelation (Neptune, New Jersey, Loizeaux Brothers, 1967, 27th printing), p. 12.

upon the cryptic symbols as a means of revealing the end of the age, the coming of the Lord, the millennial reign with the saints on earth, the loosing of Satan, the second resurrection, and the final judgment.¹⁶

Premillennial dispensationalists divide Revelation into three general parts based upon Verse 19, Chapter 1. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." "The things which thou hast seen" are the things of Chapter 1.

"The things which are" follow in the next two chapters and make the second division. "The things which are" have to do with the present age or dispensation, the whole professing church's history from the apostolic period to the coming of the Lord Jesus. The seven letters to the seven churches of Asia depict seven periods of church history. According to Scofield, they are: (1) Innocence--the period in Eden, from the creation of Adam and Eve until the Fall; (2) Conscience--from the Fall until the Flood (conscience is defined as the knowledge of right and wrong, and in this period it became man's guide); (3) Human government--from the Flood until the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai through most of the public ministry of Christ; (6) Grace--from the closing days of Jesus Christ's public ministry until the Second Coming; and (7) Kingdom--the Millennium.¹⁷

¹⁶Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 28.

¹⁷Lorraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Copywrite 1967), p. 150.

Interjected between periods six and seven is supposed to be the Tribulation, Daniel's seventieth week. It is to last seven years. Chapters 4 through 19 of Revelation give the order of events of the pouring out of God's wrath. The church is to be raptured before the beginning of the seven years of tribulation and is to be judged as to rewards during this period.

The church's history ends with the rapture. That event will close the present dispensation.

"The things which shall be after these things," Chapters 4 to the end, make the third and last division of the book--the things which shall take place after the church's history ends; the great tribulation, the Kingdom, and the eternal state.¹⁸

Boettner presents a good illustration for this over-all view of the beliefs of dispensationalism.¹⁹ (See Figure 1, Page 15.)

Also, Boettner gives a very good summary of the beliefs held by premillennial dispensationalism. This summary is followed in the following explanation for the sake of brevity. Boettner states that the schools of Premillennialism (and hence, classified as Futurists) hold:

1. That the Kingdom of God is not now in the world and that it will not be instituted until Christ returns.
2. That it is not the purpose of the present gospel age to convert the world to Christianity, but rather to preach the gospel as a witness to the nations and so to warn them of and make them justly subject to judgment; also to gather out of all nations God's elect, the Church saints.

¹⁸H. A. Ironsides, Revelation (Neptune, New Jersey, Louizeaux Brothers, 1967, 27th printing), p. 32.

¹⁹Lorraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, copywrite 1967), p. 148.

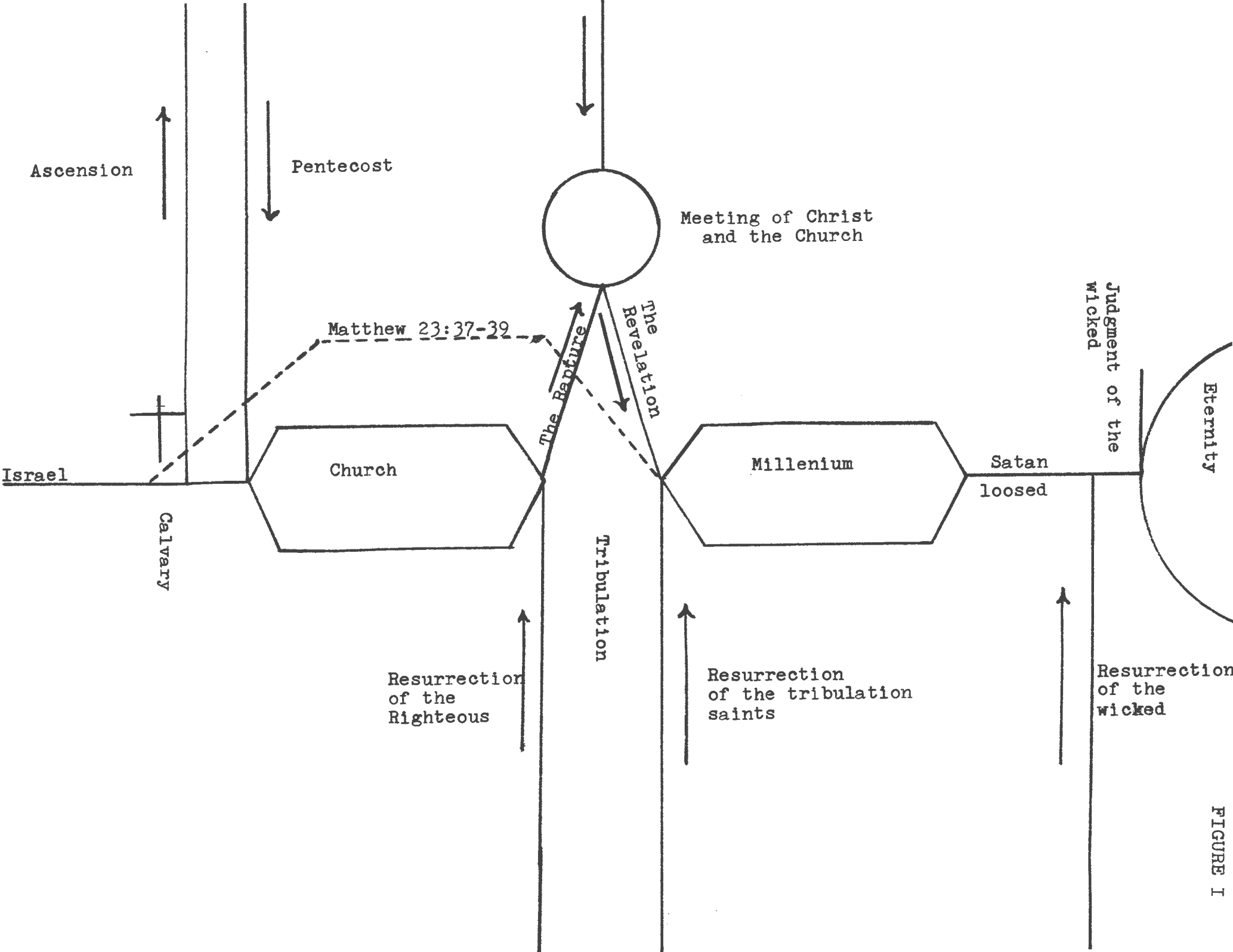


FIGURE I

3. That the world is growing worse and will continue to be a period of general apostasy and wickedness.
4. That we are now in the latter stages of the Church age and that the return of Christ is near, probably to occur within the lifetime of the present generation.
5. That at Christ's coming the righteous dead of all ages are to be raised in the "first resurrection."
6. That the resurrected dead together with the transfigured living saints who are then on the earth are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.
7. That the judgment of all the righteous then takes place, which judgment consists primarily in the assignment of rewards.
8. That before and during the tribulation period the Jews are to be restored to the land of Palestine.
9. That at the mere sight of their Messiah the Jews are to turn to Him in a national conversion in true repentance.
10. That Christ at His coming destroys the Antichrist and all his forces in the battle of Armageddon.
11. That after the battle of Armageddon Christ establishes a world-wide Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital, in which He and the resurrected and transfigured saints rule for a thousand years in righteousness, peace, and prosperity.
12. That during this reign the city of Jerusalem and the temple are to be rebuilt, the feasts and fasts and the priesthood, ritual and sacrificial system reinstated, though performed in a Christian spirit and by Christian worshippers.
13. That the golden age also is to be characterized by the removal of the curse from nature so that the desert shall blossom as the rose and the wild ferocious nature of the beasts shall be changed.
14. That during the Millennium great numbers of the Gentiles will turn to God and be incorporated into the Kingdom.
15. That while many remain unconverted and rebellious at heart they are not destroyed, but are held in check by the rod-of-iron rule of Christ.
16. That during the Millennium Satan is to be bound, cast into the abyss, and so shut away from the earth.

17. That at the close of the Millennium Satan is to be loosed for a short time.
18. That the Millennium is to be followed by a short but violent outbreak of wickedness and rebellion headed by Satan which all but overwhelms the saints and the Holy City of Jerusalem.
19. That the forces of wickedness are to be destroyed by fire which is cast down upon them from heaven.
20. That the wicked dead of all ages are then to be raised in the "second resurrection," judged, and with the Devil and the wicked angels cast into hell.
21. That heaven and hell are then introduced in their fullness, with the new earth as the future home of the redeemed, which will constitute the eternal state.²⁰

Amillennialism, in contrast, is a negative view which holds that any notion of an earthly millenium is ruled out as without Scripture support, that one phase of the Kingdom is acknowledged as being in existence during the present dispensation, and that the present dispensation is to be followed immediately by the kingdom in its consummate, eternal form.

Like the premillennialist, the amillennialist views the world as a mixture of good and evil up until the time of the Rapture. There is no hope or expectation that the whole world will be converted to Christianity. Wars are expected to continue right up until the time of the end when Christ will come. The elect are expected to be gathered out of the world. The forces of evil are expected to grow more and more violent in their opposition to Christianity. The obligation of preaching the Gospel to the world is still held, but there is no expectation of the whole of society being converted.

²⁰Lorraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, copywrite 1967), pp. 142-143.

At the close of the present age, forces of evil are expected to head up a powerful combination of political, economic, and religious power led by the Antichrist against the church.²¹ In this terrible tribulation vast numbers of Christians will be killed; but, when the host of Satan seems to be on the point of complete victory, Christ will appear to defeat him. The resurrection of all men takes place, and the transfigured bodies of the dead and living saints are caught up to welcome their Saviour.

Then, God will pour out his wrath and smite the unbelieving nations into destruction; the Jewish people look "on Him whom they pierced," repent, and instantly believe in their Messiah. They, too, are transfigured with the living Church of Christ, and join in the Rapture of the united body of the elect of Christ of all ages. After the Judgment the eternal kingdom of God is established in the new heavens and on the new earth.

The conflict between premillennial dispensationalism and the amillennial historical-background method revolves around whether or not most of the prophecy relates to events concerning the end-time or to Rome.

Dr. W. A. Criswell holds that the first horseman represents the personal antichrist of the end-time and that the following three horsemen portray war, famine, and pestilence. Summers suggests that the four horsemen represent potential causes for the fall of Rome, i.e., invasion, war (which includes moral and social degradation), famines (and natural calamities), and death (as by plagues, etc.).

²¹ Loraine Boettner, The Millennium (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, copywrite 1967), pp.115.

Criswell states that the 144,000 represent the number of Jews sealed for the passing through the tribulation, whereas Summers says it depicts the whole of redeemed mankind.

The two beasts in Chapter 13 are supposed to be the antichrist and the false prophet. Summers thinks that these represent the Roman government and the Roman counsel set up to enforce emperor worship. This comparison continues on in a similar slant.

Wycliff's Commentary states that the main objection to Dispensationalism is that it is strange to have in the New Testament a book which, for the most part, contains matters pertaining to the end of the age, (does not hold) when one reviews the fundamental factor regarding the basic far-reaching prophecies of the Scripture; namely, that from earliest times they point to the end of the age for their fulfillment.²² The book of Daniel speaks of "the end" many times. Eschatological prophecy was a part of the message of Christ, Paul, and Peter. It is not unreasonable that the Bible should conclude with a book of prophecies which, for the most part, will be fulfilled at the final consummation of this age--the end of the revolt against God and the beginning of that age of righteousness.²³

On the other hand, Summers states that Dispensationalism leaves Revelation altogether out of relation to the needs of the churches to which it was addressed and which first received it. Of what comfort would it be to give to an early church an outline of events

²²The Wycliff Bible Commentary, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and Everett F. Harrison, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1499

²³Ibid., p. 1500

pertaining to a period 2,000 years in the future and say, "Relax, in 2,000 years or so evil will be defeated." The stand which Summers takes is that the first purpose of Revelation was to meet the immediate need.

The approach of the Dispensationalists seems to be too literal and arbitrary, cluttered, and unnatural. This school claims to take the Bible at its word, literally, without the addition or subtraction of anything. At first glance, this appears to be a noble inspiration; however, according to Summers, this school fails to recognize that the Bible is written in different styles and methods of presenting the truth. It must be interpreted in a way consistent with the method of presentation.²⁴

Here are the best two interpretations of Revelation presented side by side. Both arguments have strong points and weak points. Both approaches were derived by men of great scholastic ability and of long experience in study of scripture. The question of which method is correct logically follows the preceding limited exposition.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Revelation is the hardest book in the New Testament to interpret and understand. Men have studied this book for a lifetime and still wondered about its marvelous imagery and truths. In studying Revelation, one must choose the interpretation which he feels has the greatest amount of truth.

For several reasons Premillennial Dispensationalism seems to be the best approach, and not all these reasons are based on textual criticism.

²⁴Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 35

In the first place, Dispensationalism places John in the correct perspective in relation to Revelation, as the recorder of a great vision. The Historical-Background method as presented by Summers gives John too great a part in the composition of Revelation.²⁵ Summers creates the impression of "these are the symbols John decided to use," rather than, "John was the recipient and simply recorded what he saw." It violates the assumption mentioned previously, stating that John's involvement was passive, not active.

Summers suggests that Revelation, written in accordance to apocalyptic style, contains many symbols used for effect only and are not to be interpreted. This idea raises the same question as does Rudolf Bultmann's "demythologizing"²⁶ of the Gospels' life of Christ. Where is one to draw the line and say, "This part of the Gospel is true, but that part is only a product of the Jewish and Hellenistic world and may be disregarded as an addition of folklore"?

Similarly, how does a person determine which of the symbols is for effect only? Where does one stop? This interpretation adds to the many other liberal approaches, and a person following this approach runs the risk of finding the Bible crumbling out of his hands into a dust of uselessness.

²⁵Ray Summers, Worthy is the Lamb (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 53-65.

²⁶William Neil, D.D., The Life and Teaching of Jesus (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, copywrite 1965), p. 17.

The final reason that Premillennial Dispensationalism appears correct is that those fundamentalists who follow such an interpretation are (in the judgment of this writer) displaying "fruits of the Spirit." It is the premillennialists who have carried the load of evangelism: Dr. W. A. Criswell, Dr. R. G. Loe, Dr. Billy Graham, and others. God's spirit must work through these ministers if they are to bring people to Christ. These men have great power in their preaching and are, by testimony of their works, spiritual giants. These are spiritual men; and, if it takes the Holy Spirit to reveal to men understanding of the Scriptures, then these men are more likely to see the correct interpretation.

It is recognized by the writer of this paper that the opinion taken is, to a great degree, based upon personal experience and observation, which are subjective by their very nature. It is also recognized that one short semester is not adequate time to give fair attention to the different schools of interpretation and to make an accurate evaluation of each.

Future study of Revelation is planned, but the author of this paper takes his stand on Premillennial Dispensationalism in light of the evidence studied.