



Historical Views of Revelation

Revelation 20

Historical Views

- Preterist – The view that most (or all) of the visions **pertain to historical events of the past** (i.e. Jerusalem, Domitian, Rome)
- Historical – The view that the visions are **prophecies of the history of the church from the first century to the return of Jesus Christ**
- Futurist - The view that most (or all) of the visions **pertain to events which will occur in the near future.**
- Spiritual – The view that the visions of historical events, **foreshadow the general conflict between Jesus Christ, His followers and their enemies.**

Four Historical Views

- Preterist – everything concerns events in the **distant past**
- Historical – a continuous **history of the Christian church**
- Futurist – everything concerns events **in the near future**
- Spiritual – historical events were used to **illustrate a timeless conflict**



Millennial Positions

- **Premillennialist** – Jesus will return **before the millennia**, set up an **earthly kingdom** (Chiliasm) and will reign with his saints **for a literal 1,000 years**.
- **Postmillennialism** – **The church is Christ's kingdom, in which He reigns**, for a **long but undefined period (not a literal millennia)**, the world will be **conquered by Christianity following which Christ will return** and usher in the end of history and material creation.
- **Amillennialism** – **The church is Christ's kingdom, in which He reigns**, for a **long but undefined period (not a literal millennia)**, the world will **wrestle with Christianity following which Christ will return** and usher in the end of history and material creation.

Millennial Positions

- Premillennial



- Postmillennial



1,000 years
(a millennia)

- Amillennial

Animated Map Shows the Spread of Christianity

[Click to open link to Animated Map](#)

Problems with the Historical and Futurist Positions

- Both would give little hope or encouragement to suffering Christians in the first century, except a long, drawn-out eventual victory.
- The futurist position has absolutely no evidence to support it (since it has not occurred) and all evidence provided is wild and speculative. Their defense is “The Bible says it, so I believe it.” The issue is not whether one believes what the Bible says, but **‘Is this what the Bible says?’**
- The historical position is open to broad and wild speculation. Naturally, the views of those who hold this position are almost as diverse as those who expound it.
- Revelation **expressly concerns imminent events**, and none of these views look at imminent events.

Realized Eschatology

- This view (prominent in northeast and Midwest Ohio) proposes the **entirety of Revelation** as well as **all eschatological events** were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
- The return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the gathering of the elect, the destruction of heavens and earth, the final judgement, the last day and commencement of the “next age” **are all in the past.**
- They view themselves as **consistent or full** preterists.
- Their position is essentially **premillennial**
- This is an **ancient heresy** (2 Timothy 2:17-18), its consequences are destructive and unthinkable.

The Spiritual Position

- This position is maintained by many today.
- Revelation does pertain to the age-old conflict between Satan and God, between Satan's adherents and God's faithful.
- **I believe this is a valid "application" of the message of Revelation.**
- However, this cannot be the *primary application* as **Revelation explicitly states** it pertains to **events** which were imminent (Revelation 1:1, 2,7; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20).
- This application is too broad, too general to be of comfort to suffering saints in the first century.

Two Preterist Positions

- The visions pertain to the growing persecutions by Rome and the victory of the Christ's church over the Roman Empire.
- The visions pertain to the punishment of Israel for rejecting Christ and persecuting His church, the dissolution of the vestiges of the old Mosaic covenant and the affirmation and consummation of the new Christian covenant.



The Roman Empire Position

- The proponents of this position would dismiss the historical and futurist visions because they lack encouragement for suffering saints in the first century.
- The view that these events pertain to the struggle with Rome has the same frailty; this struggle continued for another **two centuries**, about as long as our country has existed! This would have been little comfort to the saints of the first century, or the second, or the third!
- It so broadly generalizes some of the visions that they scarcely have application to any specific situations.
- It treats Revelation differently than other books in the Scriptures, even other *apocalyptic* books.
- I regard this, like the spiritual position, as a valid *application* of the visions of Revelation.

The Jerusalem Position

- The destruction of Jerusalem for rejecting Christ is a **prominent** new Testament theme.
- Four prominent Old Testament books were written to prophesy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.
- Do we to believe an event of such historic, cultural and spiritual significance to the *Jews and the world* would have no references, no warnings, no record in the New Testament (Amos 3:7)?
- The book of Acts and most of the New Testament address persecutions by **apostate Israel, not Rome.**
- The persecutions referenced in Revelation 2 and 3 are primarily by apostate Jews.
- An “empire wide” persecution does not appear to have yet started.
- Persecutions by and those incited by Israel, **were harming the church (Acts 8:1-4).**
- Whereas the persecutions initiated by Rome resulted in exponential growth!
- The book of Revelation takes the form of a **covenant lawsuit**, the Lord *never had a covenant with Rome.*
- Why was it written to saints in Asia minor? The message is not “Get out of Jerusalem”, it is “Expect an answer to your prayers.” (**Revelation 13:10; 14:12**)



Various Views of Revelation

Revelation 20