

FOUR INTERPRETATIONS

The interpretation one gives the book of Revelation will obviously determine its message. There are four basic interpretations that are worthy of note.

Futurist Interpretation

The futurist view, which seems to me to be the most satisfactory, accepts the book of Revelation as prophecy that primarily is yet to be fulfilled, particularly from chapter 4 on. This was the interpretation of the early church during its most evangelistic history, from the apostles until the fourth century. Today it is the accepted position by most premillennial Bible teachers.

A safe rule to follow in the study of the book of Revelation is to accept the book as literal unless the facts are obviously to the contrary.

Historical Interpretation

The historical view suggests that John was describing the major events that would take place during the history of the Church. It therefore suggests that we can see these events as we look back

Spiritualizing Interpretation

There are those who believe everything in the book should be taken figuratively or metaphorically, that John was talking about a spiritual conflict and not a physical experience. This view is held by most amillennialists and postmillennialists. Until the turn of the century, postmillennialism gained many followers with the idea that the world was getting better and better and we were about to usher in the kingdom. The perpetual degeneracy of the human race during the twentieth century, two world wars, and over 160 million deaths to communist dictators have rendered this a most untenable position.

Preterist Interpretation

The preterist view holds that John wrote the book prior to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 and was referring to events of his own day. This requires mental gymnastics that are unnecessary if one would apply the Golden Rule of Interpretation. The Roman emperors Nero or Domitian could scarcely fulfill the requirements of this book for the Antichrist, much less the desecration of the temple for forty-two months or for the worldwide cataclysms that are yet future.