**Introduction to Revelation – RV01-01**

Please open your Bible to the book of the Revelation. It’s easy to find because it's the last book of the Bible. You can hardly overshoot it. The book of the Revelation obviously closes the New Testament canon of Scripture and it reveals to us the conclusion of God's dealings with humanity. The major part of this book deals, in contrast to all the other books of the New Testament, with what is in the future. It's a book of predictions. It's a book of prophecy. Please remember that the title of this book is Revelation. It is not Revelations. Do not put an “s” on it. The title of this book is Revelation. It is one revelation given by God the Father to God the Son and then transferred down to us via a chain of communication. So we are studying tonight Revelation. See if we can remember that much right off the bat.

The book of the Revelation does deal with distant prophecy—prophecies which only God could obviously know and thus only God could reveal it to us. This is a book of great comfort. It is a comfort to the people of God who in one way or another over the centuries have had to suffer persecution, oppression, and rejection at the hand of Satan and his world. It reveals to us that God is fully in command of the world situation now and that he continues to be in command right down to the end. So if you ever hear that smart-aleck talk about who's in control of the world and how did God let things get so out of hand on Himself, you can just recognize that that is the devil talking and that's human viewpoint. God is fully in command of the situation. And this book is going to make it clear to you that he's going to be in charge right down to the end.

It reveals to us the catastrophic judgments which are in store for the wicked and the supernatural deliverance in store for the righteous, and that's a source of comfort. To the people who will be living at the time that these things take place, who are believers, it’s going to be a time of great turmoil. It's going to be a very traumatic era for them and they're going to suffer tremendous things. And this book is going to be a monumental comfort to them far more so even than it is to us today.

This book declares to us the ultimate triumph of God in the angelic conflict and the final doom of Satan's hosts. While the devil may seem to be riding very high today, the truth of the matter is that the handwriting is on the wall with Satan. It has been ever since the time of the cross. It has been ever since Christ rose from the grave. So this book makes it very clear to us that Satan and his demonic hosts are going to lose in the angelic conflict.

By the end of the first century Christians were on the defensive everywhere in the Roman Empire and they certainly needed a book such as this is that would give them the comfort of knowing where history is going and that history promises nothing but victory for the Christians and for the position that they hold.

**Prophecy**

Now the study of prophecy, first of all, would raise the question of why we're doing this—our purpose. So let's make it clear right from the beginning that our purpose is not to set the date for the rapture. It is not our purpose even to set a general one. The time of the return of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom on this earth, as a matter of fact, at this point is known only to one person and that is to God the Father. Even the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity does not know the point of His return, and consequently He does not know the point of the Rapture which is seven years before His second coming. Acts 1:6-7 gives us that information. It says that it is not for them to know this information but the Father has put it in His own power which means that only He knows it.

So we read in Matthew 24:36, “But of that day (that is the Lord's second coming) and hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels of heaven but my Father only. So the secret is one that is well kept with God the Father. We're not going to try to set dates, while Jesus in His deity knows the answer to when He's coming back, in His humanity this is reserved to the Father. All past attempts at setting dates for the return of Christ have gotten people very excited and they've sounded many times very logical but they have always proven to be a disappointment.

Now we know from Bible prophecy, and we'll know from this book, where events are going, but we do not know when they are going to arrive at the point that they're going to. We can see, I will confess, a general alignment of conditions which indicate a general proximity to the second coming of Christ and therefore a general proximity to the Rapture. We have things that are true today that we who have been pre-millennialists, and who for decades and decades and decades have been preaching the fact that Jesus Christ is going to come back and rule over the Jewish people on this earth in their own kingdom have been scoffed at. And it has not been uncommon to see the amillennialist smile because the Jew didn't even have a homeland, because the Jew didn't even possess Jerusalem, and we're talking about things that the Bible says could only be fulfilled if the Jew was a nation, if the Jew possessed Jerusalem, and if the Jew had his temple.

Now within our generation fantastic things have taken place. The amillennialists are not smiling at us so condescendingly anymore because history is beginning to drive them into a corner and the fallacy of their position is being demonstrated by the current events that we're living through. The Jew is a nation again. He does have his homeland. He does possess Jerusalem. The temple has not yet been rebuilt but the plans are afoot for that.

However, while that is true that we have a coming together of something that has not been true for 2,500 years remember. That's when they lost control of the nation of the land of Palestine under Nebuchadnezzar. And for 2,500 years they have been under Gentile domination. While it's true that all of that has been changed, and therefore we may say now that is lining up with the second coming of Christ. And of that lines up with the second coming of Christ, seven years before that we've got the rapture taking place. That is all we can say—that things are lining up, because remember the Jewish nation today is a weak nation. It is economically a very tenuous nation. It cannot exist without great aid from outside sources. It has to have financing from outside sources. That's why when the Jews are confronted with a war, they have to go in and make a fast kill, because they could not carry a sustained war.  
  
But the Arabs have all the money in the world. They have all the armaments in the world, and their soldiers are finally learning how to fight and win battles. And so therefore the Arab world is mounting in power in great intensity in multiplied excess over anything that the Jews could resist. So it is not inconceivable that overnight the city of Jerusalem could be taken away from the Jews again. It is not inconceivable that overnight the Jewish homeland could again be brought under Arab domination and control, and then to settle the battle be put under a United Nations mandate and control. And then where are we? Then we're right back to where we were before 1948, and all of this has been reversed.

All of this can be change that has taken place thus far. So don't go too far and say, “Hey, hey, this is it. We're the generation.” We may be, but on the basis of present circumstances it looks like we are, but we have to keep open the option that all of this can be reversed because it could be.

So our goal in this study is not to set dates. If that was your hope, to know when to start borrowing money like crazy and making loans that you're never going to have to repay, I'm not going to be able to help you too much on that because you're going to have to face the music.

Now there are some practical results for us if we follow this attitude of not setting dates. For one thing it keeps us as Christians functioning effectively as a local church. It prevents us from neglecting our properties and it prevents us from phasing out ministries because we think we won't need them. It is good for a local church to recognize that the rapture can be a hundred years away. I am not thinking in terms of shutting down. I am thinking only in terms of expanding. Until the rapture actually takes place, that's what we should be doing. When we leave this place, the electricity should be on, the heat should be on, the presses should be running, and the buses should be driving on the streets, and we leave it with a bang of glory. So it's good when we recognize that we're not going to set dates, that it keeps us from pulling in and restricting our outreach.

**Luke 19 – The Parable of the Talents**

Now of course this is the very principle which was stated by the Lord himself in a parable that we have recorded in Luke 19, if you'll turn to that for a moment. The background of this parable is that Jesus and His disciples are approaching the city of Jerusalem in the course of their ministry. Again I remind you the disciples were well acquainted with the coming Messianic Kingdom. This was, after all, promised in the Davidic covenant. And the disciples began thinking that maybe this is it. And the Lord sensed that they were really really ready to go, and their hopes were high that they were going to Jerusalem this time to set up the kingdom, and this was going to be it—the establishing of the Messianic Kingdom on this earth.

So he gave them this parable about a nobleman who goes on a journey here in Luke 19 to receive the appointment as a king over the territory in which he resides. Now this was often done in the Roman Empire. A local official, a suitable person of noble rank, would go to Rome, and the Roman senate conferred upon him the authority of king over a certain area. Or it would be conferred by the Emperor himself. But to receive that he had to go to Rome, he had to go directly, and receive the conferral. So that's the background of this parable. This was commonly done. This was how Herod who ruled the land of Palestine received his authority as king over the Jews. It was because he went to Rome and it was conferred upon him officially there.

So this nobleman in this parable is doing that very thing. Now the people who are in his territory expressed the fact that they don't like him, and they let it be known that they don't want him to be ruling as king over them. Now obviously you see the comparison here, the analogy of this parable to the person of Christ is that Jesus is the nobleman, and that the Jewish people and their leaders are the folks who rejected Him and did not want him to rule over them. However, before the nobleman leaves, he brings his servants together and he says, “Now I'm going on a long journey and I'm going to be gone for quite a while. I can't tell you specifically how long, but I'm going to give you a mission to perform and I'm going to give you what you need to work with to perform this mission. I'm going to give you the ability.” And he gave to each of them a sum of money described here under the word “pounds.” He gave them a sum of money. And the mission was to invest it, to multiply it, to earn a profit, so that when I come back you can report to me as to what you have done with the funds that I gave you to invest.

Now the purpose perhaps of the master in doing this was that he wanted to test out his various servants, because when he returned he was going to come back with authority as king and as king it would be his duty to appoint agents of responsibility, to appoint men to places of service, and perhaps this was the way that the king was testing his servants to see which of them were qualified to carry this kind of authority. In any case, the key verse that I want you to notice is Luke 19:13 where after having delivered to them a certain amount of money, and here it’s called “pounds.” This is the key version, and the key phrase is the last phrase that says, “occupy till I come.” Now the word “occupy” looks like this in Greek: “pragmateuomai.” Now the word “pragmateuomai” means to trade. It means to be engaged in business. It means to busy oneself. It is in the aorist tense. Aorist tense means a point action. It's just a point in time action. So what he is doing is looking at the whole period of time that he's going to be gone. He says, “All the while I'm gone I want you to be characterized by one thing. You’re engaged in business. You’re trading.” What? The money he gave them. That's the mission to which he has committed them. And he said for the totality of the period from start to finish to be engaged in business. You engage in “pragmateuomai.” It is middle voice, and middle voice means that they who do this will be benefited. That's the beauty of the Greek language. It tells us who's going to profit by this action, and it is very clear here that the Lord is telling his servants, this master is telling his servants, “If you do this, it's going to be to your benefit. And by the same token if you don't do it, it's going to be to your loss.” To trade, to be engage in business, to busy yourself on this mission.

Now the servants are to be about their master's business until he returns, investing the allotted funds. When he returned, he found some faithful and he found some unfaithful. Those who were faithful were rewarded upon his return, while those who were inactive and who did not trade and engage business and carry out the mission suffered loss of rewards. Luke 19:16 says, “Then came the first saying, ‘Lord thy pound hath gained ten pounds,’ and he said unto him, ‘Well done thou good servant. Because thou has been faithful in the very little, have thou authority over ten cities.’” This gives us a little clue as to maybe what part of our rewards will be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Ruling with Christ will not be unusual for some of you to actually be administrators over whole cities.

“And the second came saying, ‘Lord Thy pound hath gained five pounds,’ and he said unto him, ‘Be thou also over five cities.’ And another came saying, ‘Lord behold here is thy pound which I kept laid up in a napkin for I feared thee for thou art an austere man. Thou hast taken up that thou latest not down and reapest that thou didst not sow.’ And he said unto him, “Out of thine own mouth will I judged thee thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down and reaping that I did not sow,’” meaning “I would expect you to perform.”

“Why then gavest us thou not my money into the bank that at my coming I might have acquired mine own with interest.’ And he said unto them that stood by, “Take from him the pound and give it to him that hath ten pounds,’” and so on. And some of these people complained, “Well he's already got reward. Why give him one more?” Well because he can carry it. Capacity is the thing, and if you and I occupy ourselves going about the Lord's business which is fulfilling God's plan for us, whatever our scriptural gift is, investing it and using that gift, that is occupying ourselves. That is busying ourselves with the mission and who build up greater capacity by doing it will be even more richly rewarded for that. You’ll not only get what you’ve got coming but you'll get super grace returns.

So it is important as we study the book of the Revelation that you understand that this should in no wise cause us to get up on the mountaintop in the white robe and start strumming the guitars, waiting for the Lord to come. The only thing that we are to do as a result of learning this book is to occupy until He comes—is to stay on the job and to be faithful. And of course this is the principle reiterated many times in the Word of God to those of us who live in this age of grace.

Galatians 6:9-10 says, “Let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. And as we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto to all men, especially unto them who are the household of faith. That is going about the Lord's business right down to the line until He returns. Take a look at 2 Thessalonians 3:13 where the apostle Paul says, But ye brethren be not weary in well.” That is again a variation of the same principle.

**Occupying Ourselves With the Right Things**

So our purpose in studying the book of the Revelation is not to set dates. Our purpose therefore has the practical value because we do not set dates. Our purpose is to see what's coming and thus to recognize that the time is short and to hasten, to develop a sense of urgency, to get about the Lord's business.

I know that in an audience the size of this one tonight there are some of us, in the very nature of the case, who have not been occupying ourselves with the right things, who have not been moving with a sense of urgency that we have to invest what God has given us in a the way of a spiritual gift and get it functioning. That we have to stop getting up in the morning and going to work, picking up our paycheck, feeding ourselves, clothing ourselves, housing ourselves, keeping ourselves alive, and then going and repeating it again as if we were nothing but animals. A farmer does that for his pigs, and we are something more than that. We have a mission more than existing, and if you can't do anything else under God's heaven, you can pray. You can pray you can ask God to move into position the things that need to be brought together to accomplish the things that your life needs and other people need and that this ministry needs. You can occupy yourself with the Lord's business in one way or another. The finest way of course is to find your gift and your spiritual ability and to use it. You will be a very disappointed and sad Christian if you keep waiting for a better day. You will never have a better day to give anything to God—yourself, your money, your life, than you have right now.

Another reason for studying this book is to see how it authenticates the Bible. About 25% of the Bible was prophecy at the time that it was written. Much of this has now been fulfilled. The prophecy which has been fulfilled we see has been fulfilled in detail and always without failure. Such perfect fulfillment of long range Bible predictions proves that the Bible is God's. It has a divine authority stamped upon it thereby. Only our loving God knows what the future holds. And our Father has taken us into his confidence. Prophecy gives the believer a perspective on his own values and on the use of his life, and that's what all of us need. We need to be able to stand back from the point of eternity, and that’s what prophecy is going to do for us, what the study of this book of Revelation is going to do for us. It is going to enable us to stand back and look from the perspective of eternity upon what we think is important now—upon our values, upon the investment of our life. And don't forget that's another thing you’re using up. Some of you may not make it through this week. Some of you may have a heart attack and that will be the end of the line for you, and you’re in the Lord's presence, and the records are all in there, and the investment is all there. And it is important that you recognize that prophecy such as in this book of Revelation will help you to keep your head straight and your thinking in the direction of where the real values lie.

**2 Peter 3:10-11**

In 2 Peter 3 the elder prophet spoke on this when he said, beginning in verse 10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are in it shall be burned up. Now this passage is speaking about a time called The Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord begins with the seven year tribulation and runs through the millennium. At the end of that time, the elements out of which the universe is made will melt, fuse, and be remade into a new heaven and a new earth. But that's the end result. And it's a guideline for where we are going now. Verse 11 says, “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness,” and that's what you're going to learn about in this book.

“Wherefore beloved seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless.” Now if you have to go into the Lord's presence with a lot of unfinished business in your life relative to what your gift would have enabled you to do, you're going to go without the peace that you should have. You're going to go with a little bit of discomfort into His presence. So it's going to happen either by death or by rapture, sooner or later, and the time of preparation for that is now, and the study of the Book of Revelation will help give you the perspective to see that straight.

**Interpreting the Book of the Revelation**

Now one of the problems we face in studying this book is the fact that there's a great deal of disagreement as to what is in this book. The reason for this disagreement is because there have been distinct ways of approaching the interpretation of Revelation. So we first of all have to lay some basic ground work by discussing just how to approach and to interpret this book. Whatever way you approach the interpretation will determine where you come out as to what it says.

**The Allegorical Approach**

The first method is called the allegorical approach. This method was begun in the third century in the Alexandrian School of Theology in North Africa under the influence of a man named Clement of Alexandria, and particularly under a man named Origen. This allegorical approach completely rejected any literal interpretation of the book of the Revelation. What Origen came up with in his school of theology was that the words in the book at the Revelation are meaningless—that the thing that is important is that under these words lies a hidden spiritual truth. They not only applied to Revelation but they applied it to the other parts of the Bible as well in time. But certainly they wanted to apply it to the book of the Revelation because this school of theology in North Africa was completely anti-millennial in its viewpoint. It was completely against the idea that Jesus Christ would ever come back to this world to set up a kingdom for a thousand years to rule on this earth.

Now I won't go reviewing with you again. We have done this in the past, but I'll just remind you that for the first 250 of Christian history there was not a whisper of suggestion that there was any other point of view concerning future things except that which is represented by the premillennial viewpoint which we hold here at Berean Memorial Church. There was not a faintest suggestion that there was any other point of view. All of the records that we have of the writings of those early church fathers consistently testified to the fact that they expected Christ to come back and set up a kingdom upon this earth.

**Origen and Clement of Alexandria**

Origen and Clement of Alexandria come along and say those do-dos were really mixed up. Those poor fellows who were living right there and could talk to the disciples right there close to the time of the Lord who could get the traditions right down directly from the people who lived there got it all mixed up. And they said the trouble with that was because they were literalists. They read Revelation and they said hey we’ll believe this for what the words say. A third of the population is going to die in one war. Oh, that's what it means. A fourth of the population is going to die. That's what it means. That kills off half the world. That's what it means. They said that's terrible, terrible—nobody but idiots would believe that kind of literal talk. So consequently they said we'll get rid of this thousand-year reign business on this earth because we will look for the true meaning under the words—that’s where it’s hidden, not in the real meaning of the words. And so this is with they claimed by the allegorical method to have discovered in the book of the Revelation—the true meanings.

This school of theology was actually considered heretical by the early church but its ideas unfortunately influenced such later important influential theologians as Jerome who translated the Bible into Latin, and which was the basis of all Roman Catholic translations of the Bible for many centuries, and to one of the great church fathers Augustine who himself was very straight. But Augustine unfortunately was influenced by this school of thought and he picked up this idea that the book of the Revelation must not be treated in a literal sense.

Well the Alexandrian school succeeded in turning orthodox theology away from its original literal interpretation approach and its literal premillennial viewpoint, and that is generally followed by many groups still today, and all of them follow it for one reason, the same reason that Origen and Clement of Alexander did. They want to get rid of the idea of an earthly kingdom. Because if you read the book of the Revelation and you just let the words mean what they say, you cannot read the 20th chapter without saying, “Hey, Jesus Christ is going to rule on this earth for 1,000 literal years. That's what it says. That's what he's going to do. And the only way you can get rid of that is the way I had a professor at Baylor University try to get rid of in the Bible department when he read that passage and taught us that section. He said, “Now of course that doesn't mean a real 1,000 years. That just means a long period of time.” What was he saying? He was saying, “I accept the position of the allegorical method of the school of Alexandria.

Consequently, from this point of view, the overall concept of Revelation is that it portrays the ultimate triumph of Christianity but it has no predictions concerning the future. The great church father Augustine converted this viewpoint into the idea of the conflict between Christianity and evil, or as he described it, between the city of God and the city of Satan. And the whole allegorical approach simply said this is a picture of Christianity winning out. It has nothing to do with future events.

Now it's obvious that the allegorical approach is a very subjective method. So there's wide disagreement among interpreters. Anybody's opinion is as good as anyone else's and they all have very many different opinions.

**The Preterist Approach**

There's a second method called the preterist approach. The preterist approach rejects the view that Revelation is prophecy at all. It came up with the idea that the book of the Revelation only applied to John’s day. John is the writer. John the apostle wrote this book. And the preterist’s point of view said the only time that the contents of Revelation have any application is right there in that early church period when it was written. And it relates to the conflicts between the early church and Judaism and paganism.

Now this view originated really way down the line in the 17th century by a Jesuit priest named Alcasar. And this approach again requires a non-literal interpretation and a very subjective application to 1st century Christianity. So this is another view that people have held over the centuries, that when you read Revelation it doesn't do you any good to study it because it only applies to the first 100 years of Christianity, to that 1st century period.

**Historical View**

A third view concerning interpreting Revelation is a historical view. Now we're coming closer to home. The historical view approaches the book of Revelation as a book of symbols which spans the entire period of the church age from the time of Christ to His second coming again, and it takes the view that the book of Revelation covers this whole period time. Well, it's been a period of almost 2,000 years now that that is supposedly applied to. Now this again originated with a Roman Catholic. This was a Roman Catholic named Joachim.

The historical interpretation unfortunately was favored by the reformers. The reformers did not do battle and did not do research in the area of eschatology, that is, the area of final things—he area of prophecy. They were faced with restoring the doctrine of justification by faith. Their battles lay in the areas of salvation. Consequently, when it came to interpreting in the book of the Revelation, they just went along with this historical approach of the Roman Catholic Church.

Now, one of the reasons that they liked the historical approach is because anybody can apply it to any place in history. Now you just or you just read through the book of the Revelation and then they said, “Now, when did the things under the first seal happen? When did the second seal happen? When did the locusts come here? When did this happen?” And you can apply it as you look over human history. You can say, “Oh, that applies to this. That applies to this.” And one of the things they enjoyed was going to Revelation 13 which speaks about the beast coming up out of the sea, which is the Antichrist, and they associated that with the pope and the papacy, and that fit right into their antagonistic attitude toward the Roman Catholic system. But this viewpoint unfortunately has been held by most theologians since the Reformation. Most of the preachers you go to talk to and ask them what's the book of Revelation all about will give you an answer that reflects that they hold the historical view of that book.

Now this seemingly gives a philosophy to history. It tells you something about what history is doing, but the problem is that in the past all interpreters have seen the climax of this book in their own day. This is a subjective method, and consequently you have many different interpretations because you have many different applications. All of these methods are very subjective. It's what you think over against what I think over against what somebody else thinks. You don't get it from the words that say what they mean and therefore you don't have any option to insert your opinions.

This is the basic position of amillennialism today. Amillennialism (as this letter “a” indicates) means that there isn’t going to be any millennium at all, of any kind. The amillennialists hold the historical method and they throw in some allegorizing or spiritualizing features along with it. To them the millennium is the present age. There is no specific thousand years. And in reference to believers the millennium is also applied to heaven. There was a time when they said the millennium was going to take place in the year 1,000. And then when that didn't come to pass they transferred the millennium to heaven and said that the millennium are the believers who are at the throne of God.

**The Futurist Approach**

Now there is a fourth and the true method of interpreting the book of the Revelation—the only one that will stand up to the tests of the rest of Scripture, and that is the futurist approach. Now obviously, as the name indicates, the futurist approach deals with the Revelation as being something which is yet in the future. From Revelation 4 on to the end of the book, everything in it is future. Revelation 4:19 is related to world history just prior to the second advent of Jesus Christ. Now let's get a little time chart here so that we've got that straight in our minds. We begin here with eternity past. Then we have a segment of God's dealing with humanity when he deals with Gentiles. That is divided into three main segments. One was the period of innocence, before Adam and Eve sinned. Secondly was the period called conscience when there were no rules and no regulations and everybody did what was right in his own eyes. And then third was the period of human government which came after the flood when God delivered to Noah the right of a magistrate and the right to take life and to punish people even to capital punishment, the taking of a life for murder one.

This period had a specific direction by the group of people that we call Gentiles. In each of these three segments under the Gentile era these segments of the dispensation had variations within them as to how God was dealing with them. Here it was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that you could not eat of. In conscience it was something else. In human government it was a whole new set up again.

Then came a second period in which the dominant people were the Jews, and God had given them a period of dealings on the earth where they were the ones that He was specifically dealing, just a tributary now of the human race, and that period is divided first into the period of the promise, or the patriarchal period, and then came the period of the law where Moses was given the law on Mount Sinai. There was a third period also for the Jewish people—the period called the tribulation. But as we find from the timetable of God's plan of the ages in the Book of Daniel, that third period which was supposed to come in here did not materialize. Instead God inserted another period in which the dominant group was a body called Christians, and this was called the church age. It has gone for about two thousand years now.

This was never revealed in the Old Testament and it simply interrupted God's dealing with the age of the Jews. The era of the Christians is a distinct error that is dealt with primarily in the New Testament—never revealed the Old Testament. Then we find that the third period of the dispensation of the Jews which was interrupted by the church now takes place, and it's called the tribulation period. We find from the Book of Daniel that is a period of seven years, and this is the period that the book of the Revelation deals with, particularly the last three-and-a-half years of this period. Following the tribulation is going to come the age that we call the age of Christ. It is the millennium, that is, a period of 1,000 years when Christ is ruling in His earthly kingdom from the city of Jerusalem. Finally after that comes eternity future. That is God's plan of ages in the in brief. So get this anchor point in your mind so you understand the progression that we're dealing with. We're dealing with this seven-year period, and when you hit Revelation 4 through 19, it's all poured on right there in that seven-year period. That is the futuristic viewpoint of scripture. It's all ahead of us.

Revelation 10 is about the millennium itself. Chapters 21 and 22 follow after the millennium and have to do with our heavenly situation. Now based upon the principle of literal interpretation, we come up with a totally different concept as to what this book is teaching. It's a piece of literature and therefore it must be interpreted as a piece of literature. It has to be interpreted the same way you interpreted the newspaper you read today. What you read in a newspaper you accept it for face value as to what those words meant. You didn't say, “Now what could this be a symbol of? What could that mean? Here was this man who walked a drive-in and he put two holes into the forehead of the man behind the counter. What could that mean? What could those holes stand for? What symbol is that? What could this man be? Who does this man represent? What does this passage tell us? What is the real meaning? And you turn and you squish the words all around and pretty soon an idea comes to you. Now I won’t pursue that. You can figure out what the holes are yourself. But everybody here would have a different idea.

Now you can treat literature that way. If it's a piece of writing, if it means anything at all, words have to me what common usage of those words mean, and we know what the Greek language means. That is one thing that God took care to preserve for us—the Koine Greek of the New Testament world, the common Greek of the New Testament. We know what it means. It was a crystallized frozen language. We know it today as they knew it then, and we have many records left to guide us in that understanding.

So the Futurist point of view says that even the symbols have literal meanings. These symbols are determined by scriptural usage. You can see now that this is a very objective approach. When the book of the Revelation says that one-third of the seas in this planet are going to be turned to blood, you have no problem unless you are a rebel against the authority of the Word of God, and unless you want to resist the normal way to interpret the Bible, you have no problem at all saying a-third of the salt water areas are going to turn to blood. And all the way through this book there are things that indeed are staggering to the human imagination. But just because they are staggering does not mean they are not true. You won’t have a problem believing these fantastic things if you recognize that this is the time when God says, “I've waited. I've waited. I’ve waited, and now I'm going to pour my wrath out, and I'm going to turn all hell loose upon this earth, and I'm going to pull out all the evil and all that Satan can do. He's going to have his final fling.” It is God's wrath upon unbelieving humanity, and it is terrible.

Because this approach is literal, there's a great deal of common agreement among interpreters. The general point of this approach is that God is going to ultimately triumph over Satan in the angelic conflict. The Saints are going to be blessed. Evil is going to be removed. This of course is the basic method of interpreting of the premillennial system.

So we'll tie this up tonight by stating certain basic presuppositions by which we will approach the study of this book. These presuppositions are based on bible doctrine teachings. One, we will begin with the presupposition that the divine method for interpreting the Bible as a piece of literature is the literal approach. That includes Revelation. Please remember that even amillennial theologians and preachers interpret all other books in the Bible literally except for Revelation. For Revelation they go to the symbolical allegorical combination and the historical application because they do not want to have a literal earthly millennium. Number two, we begin with the presupposition that the record of Revelation from Chapter four on describes future events not yet fulfilled. Number three, the church has been taken out of the world before the events of Revelation begin. We act from that presupposition that is determined by other scripture. Number four, we operate from the presupposition that Revelation describes the events of Daniel’s seventieth week of years which has yet been unfulfilled in Jewish history. 483 years of the predicted fulfilling of God's dealing with the Jews has been fulfilled. From the time that Artaxerxes gave them in 445 B. C. the authority to go back and rebuild Jerusalem, rebuild the temple, rebuild the walls, and to return from Babylon to the city of Jerusalem—from the time that he signed that edict to the time that Jesus rode on that donkey on Palm Sunday into the city of Jerusalem to the shouts of “Hosanna, son of David, son of the highest.” When he rode on that donkey on that day, that was the fulfillment to the day of 483 years.

Now this has been researched. There's a book by Sir Robert Anderson called The Coming Prince. Sir Robert Anderson gave us the classical analysis mathematically of the progression of time, and it was astounding when he discovered that it was to the day, that very day, which was the final rejection. That’s where they finally rejected Him. Daniel says that’s when the Messiah was cut off. So 483 have been exactly fulfilled. Seven more dropped out because the church was put in that seven years, we presuppose, is what the book of the Revelation is all about.

We also begin with the presupposition that the Revelation is a book designed by the Holy Spirit to be understood by believers. We reject the concept that this is a closed book. And finally we begin with the presupposition that Revelation will be most clearly understood by those who are living at the time of its fulfillment. We will be able to understand most of it. There will be some facets of it where we’ll wonder, and that may go in one way or another. But once you're living in that period, it will be most clearly evident what these things have meant. We will proceed from here next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977