

# 2.2 - As We Begin

## 2.2 - As We Begin

### CONTENTS

- [2.2.1 - An Invitation](#)
- [2.2.2 - Using the Commentary](#)
- [2.2.3 - Why Another Commentary on Revelation?](#)
- [2.2.4 - Attacks upon the book of Revelation](#)
- [2.2.5 - Avoidance within Christianity](#)
- [2.2.6 - Hiding or Revealing?](#)
- [2.2.7 - The Importance of Historical Perspective](#)
- [2.2.8 - Overemphasis on Extra-biblical Sources](#)
- [2.2.9 - Simplicity over Academics](#)
- [2.2.10 - A Policy of Inoculation](#)
- [2.2.11 - Dispensational, Premillennial, Pretribulational Exposition](#)
- [2.2.12 - Learning God's Way](#)
- [2.2.13 - Focus is Christ](#)
- [2.2.14 - The Primacy of Scripture](#)

### 2.2.1 - An Invitation

We invite the reader to journey along with us as we explore what the lastbook of the Bible, the book of Revelation<sup>1</sup> has to say concerning a simple carpenter born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem, Israel. Although many recognize that the life of Jesus has had a greater impact upon the world than that of any other person of history, relatively few realize how much He will intervene in history *yet to come* as He proves Himself to a skeptical world as being much more than a simple carpenter: the King of kings and Lord of lords risen from the dead. If you do not yet know Jesus, we urge you to consider the importance of believing in Him:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" (John 14:5-6) [emphasis added]

God our Savior . . . desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* (1Ti. 2:3-6)

We invite you to consider the free gift offered in the final chapter of the Bible:

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev. 22:17<sup>±</sup>)

If you already know this carpenter personally, may your knowledge of Him be increased by our study of the book of Revelation.

### 2.2.2 - Using the Commentary

In this section, we discuss some practical matters related to the use of this commentary.

#### 2.2.2.1 - Section Numbers

Because this commentary is being made available in a wide variety of formats (including digital formats), it is not practical to rely upon page numbers to locate information. Instead, numbers are used to designate the section where related information appears.<sup>2</sup> Sections are numbered in an hierarchical fashion where subsections include the section number of their containing section. For example, section 5 will have subsections numbered 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, etc. Section 5.1 will have subsections numbered 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and so on.

#### 2.2.2.2 - Finding Your Way Around

Digital versions of the commentary contain navigation controls to facilitate movement through the text. The following controls are located at the top and bottom of each major section.

Each control in the diagram above is described below:

1. **Audio Course** - Click on this button to listen to the companion audio course on the book of Revelation.
2. **Hebrew and Greek Fonts** - Click on this button to obtain the necessary Hebrew and Greek fonts for viewing the original Bible languages in the text. See [Hebrew and Greek Fonts](#).
3. **Download** - Click on this button to download the commentary from our website to your computer. This allows the commentary to be viewed when disconnected from the Internet. It also provides faster access for those with a slow Internet connection.
4. **Choose Bible** - Click on this button to choose between different Bible translations when looking up verses.
5. **Subscribe** - Sign up to the newsletter, RSS feed, or podcast from [SpiritAndTruth.org](http://SpiritAndTruth.org) to be notified of newly-published material.
6. **Get a Copy** - Obtain a copy of the commentary for offline access or sharing with others.
7. **Find Entry** - Type a section number, topic, or Bible address of interest. Click on the *Go* button (or type [ENTER] on the keyboard) to open the related section, topic, or address. To open section 1.3, type 1.3. To find the topic *symbol*, type *symbol*.<sup>3</sup> To open this section you are reading from anywhere in the commentary, type *navigating*. To open the verse-by-verse commentary associated with Revelation 3:10<sup>+</sup>, type 3:10 or *Rev. 3:10<sup>+</sup>*.
8. **Go** - Click on this button (or type [ENTER] on the keyboard) to find the section number, section heading, or Bible address in the *Find Entry*.
9. **Previous** - Click on this button to go to the preceding topic (the previous major section heading).
10. **Up** - Click on this button to go to the containing "parent" section (e.g., from 2.2 to 2).
11. **Table of Contents** - Opens the [Expanded Table of Contents](#) listing every section heading in the entire commentary.)
12. **Next** - Click on this button to go to the following topic (the next major section heading).

### 2.2.2.3 - Cross-References

Several types of cross-references are found within the text. Cross-references appear as hyperlinks and display with a different color from the main text. When the mouse is placed over them they exhibit an underline. Click on the underlined cross-reference to follow it.

- **Glossary Entry** - Words and phrases explained in the glossary appear as hyperlinks. For example: [Amillennialism](#).
- **Section Title** - A cross-reference to a related section title appears in italics. For example: [Why Another Commentary on Revelation?](#)

### 2.2.2.4 - New King James Version

This commentary utilizes the *New King James Version* (NKJV) English text based upon the Greek *Textus Receptus* (TR) which stands in the line of the *Majority Text* (MT).<sup>4</sup> We feel this text has several advantages.<sup>5</sup>

- The NKJV text provides a readable, modern text.
- Because of its close affinity with the historic *King James Version* (KJV), the NKJV indirectly benefits from the many historic reference works based on the KJV.<sup>6</sup>
- We are unconvinced by arguments that the *Critical Text* (NU)<sup>7</sup> necessarily represents an improvement over the traditional text.<sup>8</sup>
- The NKJV text provides helpful footnotes where the *Critical Text* (NU) and the *Majority Text* (MT) differ from the *Textus Receptus* (TR).

Although there are many variations in the Greek Text of the book of Revelation, they are mainly associated with minor aspects of the text and do not present undue difficulty in understanding the message.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.2.2.5 - Use of Bible Addresses

All book names within Bible addresses appear in one of two forms: (1) the full formal name (e.g., Revelation), or (2) a standardized abbreviation. The standardized abbreviations are: **Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deu., Jos., Jdg., Ru., 1S., 2S., 1K., 2K., 1Chr., 2Chr., Ezra, Ne., Est., Job, Ps., Pr., Ecc., Sos., Isa., Jer., Lam., Eze., Dan., Hos., Joel, Amos, Ob., Jonah, Mic., Nah., Hab., Zep., Hag., Zec., Mal., Mat., Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Rom., 1Cor., 2Cor., Gal., Eph., Php., Col., 1Th., 2Th., 1Ti., 2Ti., Tit., Phm., Heb., Jas.,**

**1Pe., 2Pe., 1Jn., 2Jn., 3Jn., Jude, Rev.**<sup>10</sup>Citations from other works appear *verbatim* with the following exceptions: (1) Bible addresses where the book of Revelation is assumed (that omit an explicit book name) have been modified to include an initial book name designating the book of Revelation; (2) Bible addresses employing abbreviated book names have been converted to use the standardized book abbreviations (above); (3) Bible addresses for single-chapter books omitting the chapter number (e.g., “Jude 5”) have been augmented with an initial chapter number of “1” (e.g., “Jude 1:5”). These changes have been made to standardize Bible addresses to facilitate the automated conversion and adaptation of this text for inclusion in computer-based study tools. In digital versions of this commentary, all Bible addresses are cross-referenced to a companion Bible. Hover the mouse over the Bible address to see a pop-up containing the verse. Clicking on the Bible address with the mouse opens the companion Bible at the specified passage. **Bible addresses within the books of Daniel and Revelation contain an additional cross-reference to the verse-by-verse commentary within the associated commentary. Click on the triangular symbol following the address to open the verse-by-verse commentary for the related chapter and verse. Clicking on the address opens the companion Bible whereas clicking on the triangular symbol following the address opens the verse-by-verse commentary.** You can try it with the following Bible addresses: Dan. 1:1; Rev. 1:1<sup>+</sup>.

### 2.2.2.6 - Hebrew and Greek Fonts

The digital version of the commentary displays the original languages of the Bible using the free *Ezra SIL* (Hebrew) and *Galatia SIL* (Greek) unicode fonts available from [www.SpiritAndTruth.org/fontsu/index.htm](http://www.SpiritAndTruth.org/fontsu/index.htm). If you are viewing this commentary in a digital format, you may need to download and install the fonts in order to view the original Hebrew or Greek characters. Wherever Hebrew or Greek occurs in this commentary, a transliteration into Roman characters is included for those who cannot read the original languages or who cannot access the Hebrew and Greek fonts.

#### 2.2.2.6.1 - Transliteration

The transliteration of Hebrew and Greek makes use of the *Arial Unicode MS* font. If you are viewing this commentary in digital format you may need to obtain this commonly-available font in order for dots and overbars and underbars to be displayed within the transliteration (see below). A key for the transliteration from the original language symbols into Roman characters follows:

- **Hebrew consonants:** Aleph : א [ʾ], Bet : ב [b] ב [b̄], Gimel : ג [g] ג [ḡ], Dalet : ד [d] ד [d̄], He : ה [h] ה [h̄], Waw : ו [w], Zayin : ז [z] ז [z̄], Het : ח [h̄], Tet : ט [t] ט [t̄], Yod : י [y] י [ȳ], Kaf : כ [k] כ [k̄], Lamed : ל [l] ל [l̄], Mem : מ [m] מ [m̄], Nun : נ [n] נ [n̄], Samek : ס [s] ס [s̄], Ayin : ע [ʿ], Pe : פ [p] פ [p̄], Tsade : צ [s̄] צ [s̄̄], Qof : ק [q] ק [q̄], Resh : ר [r], Sin : ש [š] ש [š̄], Shin : שׁ [š̄] שׁ [š̄̄], Tav : ת [t] ת [t̄].

- **Hebrew vowel vocalizations:**

**Short Vowels** : Pathach : בַּ [bah], Seghol : בֶּ [beh], Hireq : בִּ [bih], Qamets Hatuf : בְּ [boh], Qibbutz : בֻּ [buh].

**Changeable Long Vowels** : Qamets : בֵּ [bâ] בֶּ [bāh], Tsere : בֵּ [bēh], Holem : בֹּ [bōh].

**Unchangeable Long Vowels** : Qamets Yod : יֵ [bâ], Tsere Yod : יֶ [bê], Seghol Yod : יִ [bè], Hireq Yod : יִ [bî], Holem Waw : וֹ [bô], Shureq : וֹ [bû].

**Reduced Vowels** : Hateph Pathach : בְּ [bāh], Hateph Seghol : בֶּ [bēh], Hateph Qamets : בֶּ [bōh], Shewa : בְּ [b<sup>e</sup>h].

- **Greek** - Alpha : Α α [A a], Beta : Β β [B b], Gamma : Γ γ [G g], Delta : Δ δ [D d], Epsilon : Ε ε [E e], Zeta : Ζ ζ [Z z], Eta : Η η [Ē ē], Theta : Θ θ [Th th], Iota : Ι ι [I ī], Kappa : Κ κ [K k], Lambda : Λ λ [L l], Mu : Μ μ [M m], Nu : Ν ν [N n], Xi : Ξ ξ [X x], Omicron : Ο ο [O o], Pi : Π π [P p], Rho : Ρ ρ [R r], Sigma : Σ σ ς [S s s], Tau : Τ τ [T t], Upsilon : Υ υ [U u], Phi : Φ φ [Ph ph], Chi : Χ χ [Ch ch], Psi : Ψ ψ [Ps ps], Omega : Ω ω [Ō ō].

Greek transliteration examples: [εὐαγγέλιον](#) [euangelion], [μυστήριον](#) [mystērion], [ἡπρ](#) [hyper], [ἁββί](#) [hrabbi], [ἰσραήλ](#) [Israēl], [ἱεροσόλυμα](#) [Hierosolyma]. Hebrew transliteration examples: [אָדָם](#) [ʾādām], [עֵרֶשׁ](#) [eres̄], [יִשְׂרָאֵל](#) [yisrāʾēl], [יְרוּשָׁלַיִם](#) [y<sup>e</sup>rūšālayim], [אֱלֹהִים](#) [ʾēlōhīm], [יָהּ](#) [Yah].

### 2.2.2.7 - Automatic Lookup

The [HTML version of this commentary](#) supports the ability to automatically open at a section or chapter and verse. To perform an automated lookup, include a search string specifying the section number, section name, or Bible address of interest. For example, to open the commentary at this section, specify: [www.spiritandtruth.org/id/revc.htm?Automatic Lookup](http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/revc.htm?Automatic%20Lookup). To open the commentary at section number 1.6, specify a search string of ?1.6. To open the commentary at Revelation chapter 1 and verse 10, specify: ?1:10. If

you downloaded the HTML commentary for offline use, pass the search string to the *index.htm* file in the top-level directory of the commentary, for example: *index.htm?Automatic Lookup*.

### 2.2.2.8 - Endnote References

This commentary draws from reference works in both digital and traditional paper media. Citations to references in traditional book or article form typically make use of the page number to locate the citation. While this means of locating a citation is viable for books in print form and for some forms of digital media, many digital references do not support traditional pagination. Therefore, a different means of locating a citation is required. Moreover, even those references currently existing in print may eventually be more readily available in digital format where pagination may not be preserved. Wherever possible, we have chosen to indicate the location of citations by Bible address (e.g., *Rev. 12:10+*) rather than page number. Such citation is not possible in all cases (for example, citation of a non-biblical source, or citation of a source which does not use a verse-by-verse treatment of the biblical text). We expect that over time this approach will prove to be more digital-friendly for the use of this work in conjunction with other study aids in electronic format.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.3 - Why Another Commentary on Revelation?

If one were to attempt to climb to the moon upon a stairway made of books published upon a single topic, the informed person would choose to build that staircase out of biblical commentaries. Next to the Bible itself, the most voluminous stream of publication down through history must be the writing of men and women who have attempted to understand and explain the biblical text. The number of commentaries, dictionaries, devotionals, and other study aids which focus upon the Word of God is truly staggering. Out of this vast stream of biblical interpretation, perhaps the largest tributary consists of commentaries upon the book of Revelation, otherwise known as *The Apocalypse*. The sheer number of commentaries on the last book of the New Testament is a daunting consideration for anyone who would attempt to contribute to this flow of words which has spanned centuries and occupied some of the best minds and most devoted spirits mankind has been graced with by God. When scanning the footnotes or bibliography of one of the many modern commentaries on the book of Revelation, one is immediately overwhelmed by the breadth of material which has been written on this book. Any writer who considers casting his small pebble into such a mighty flow must ask himself what his work could possibly contribute to the already large body of material on the subject? Why attempt to extend the work of giants who have gone before? Will it not be equivalent to painting over the face of a finished diamond? Surely, close attention must be given to the motives and goals of such a task! It is from such a perspective that we offer this work. It is not our intention to supersede or improve upon those which have gone before, but to glean from their work while achieving the following goals:

- **Unrestricted Use** - To provide a commentary unrestricted by royalty and permission limitations so prevalent in our times. A *primary goal* of this work is to provide a modern commentary on the book of Revelation that may be copied and freely distributed by any means and for any purpose. This is particularly important in our current age of digital study tools and worldwide distribution via the Internet. It is our desire that this commentary would be freely available for reading or inclusion with any of the many free or low-cost Bible-study programs now available.<sup>12</sup> The [copyright](#) for this commentary embraces this goal.
- **Use of Modern Technology** - To present the commentary using modern text-processing, cross-referencing, and presentation technology. This facilitates access to the material when using a computer, with or without an accompanying digital Bible text.
- **Introduction to Other Works** - To guide the inquiring student toward what we believe are the most valuable and trustworthy works available on the book of Revelation. Readers will find additional works for the study of the book of Revelation mentioned within the endnotes and [bibliography](#). A conscious decision was made in favor of including quotations from the works cited because some readers may be unable to access the works directly. This is especially the case for foreign readers and works which are difficult to obtain in electronic format.<sup>13</sup>
- **A Policy of Inoculation** - It is our desire to alert the unfamiliar reader concerning some of the potential [pitfalls](#) accompanying a study of Revelation, and the Bible in general.

### 2.2.4 - Attacks upon the book of Revelation

As we consider this last book of the Bible, we would do well to bear in mind the strategy of the enemy who has long sought to undermine a plain acceptance and understanding of this capstone of God's revelation. The confusion concerning the interpretation of the book of Revelation is one of many evidences that reflect his desire that this important part of God's Word might not have its intended effect among the saints. In fact, the two "bookends" of the Bible, Genesis and Revelation, are of foundational importance in revealing the purposes and plan of God. If the authority of Genesis can be unseated, then the rest of God's Word constructed upon it will also be seriously eroded. This, then, is a key aspect of the admittedly clever but unsupportable theory of evolution which substitutes random events for the Grand Designer. If evolution were true, then the entire gospel of Jesus Christ collapses. As one

atheist has observed:<sup>14</sup>

Without Adam, without the original sin, Jesus Christ is reduced to a man with a mission on the wrong planet. Sin becomes not an ugly fate due to man's disobedience, but only the struggle of instincts. Christianity has fought, still fights, and will fight science to the desperate end over evolution, because evolution destroys utterly and finally the very reason Jesus' earthly life was supposedly made necessary. Destroy Adam and Eve and the original sin, and in the rubble you will find the sorry remains of the son of God. Take away the meaning of his death. If Jesus was not the redeemer who died for our sins, and this is what evolution means, then Christianity is nothing! Christianity, if it is to survive, must have Adam and the original sin and the fall from grace or it cannot have Jesus the redeemer who restores to those who believe what Adam's disobedience took away.<sup>15</sup>

Similar spiritual elements at work attempting to undermine the trustworthiness of the book of Genesis are also busily attempting to undermine the message of the book of Revelation. Morris observes the importance of both Genesis and Revelation as antidotes for existentialism and postmodernism which now characterize secular philosophy:

It is small wonder that the great Enemy of God's truth has directed his most intense attacks against Genesis and Revelation, denying the historicity of the former and the perspicuity of the latter. With neither creation nor consummation—neither beginning nor ending—all that we would have is the existential present, and this unfortunately has become the almost universal emphasis of modern philosophy and religion.<sup>16</sup>

Not only do the books of Genesis and Revelation serve as important moorings for understanding our place in the scheme of God's universe, but the book of Revelation serves also as God's unveiling to His saints of important future events. The master deceiver is well aware of this and has specially targeted this book for attack.

The Apocalypse not only reveals much concerning the person and work of the Man of Sin, but it describes his doom, as it also announces the complete overthrow of the Trinity of Evil. This, no doubt, accounts for much of the prejudice which obtains against the study and reading of this book. It is indeed remarkable that this is the only book in the Bible connected with which there is a distinct promise given to those who read and hear its prophecy (Rev. 1:3+). And yet how very rarely it is read from the pulpits of those churches which are reputed as orthodox! Surely the great Enemy is responsible for this. It seems that Satan fears and hates above every book in the Bible this one which tells of his being ultimately cast into the Lake of Fire. But 'we are not ignorant of his devices' (2Cor. 2:11). Then let him not keep us from the prayerful and careful perusal of this prophecy which tells of those things which must shortly come to pass.<sup>17</sup>

What may be surprising to the newer believer is the source of these attacks: from both outside and *within* Christianity. Of these two, the latter is more damaging.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2.5 - Avoidance within Christianity

As has been long observed, the book of Revelation is not often taught from the pulpits of Christianity by the very men whom God has raised up for the purpose of serving as balanced, in-depth guides to the truths therein.

There is a widespread prejudice against the study of the Apocalypse. Though it is the great prophetic book of the New Testament, the last of all the writings of Inspiration, a special message from the ascended Saviour to His Churches on earth, and pressed upon every one's attention with uncommon urgency, there are religious guides, sworn to teach "the whole counsel of God," who make a merit of not understanding it, and of not wishing to occupy themselves with it.<sup>19</sup>

Even the greatest commentator of the Reformation, John Calvin, avoided writing a commentary on Revelation.<sup>20</sup> One side-effect of this avoidance of the book of Revelation by pastors tasked with edifying the saints is that others who are less qualified step in and attempt to do the job in their place. Due to its seemingly mysterious nature and wealth of symbols, the curiosity of believers is aroused. If they are unable to find solid teaching about the book from their local church pulpit, they naturally look elsewhere. Unfortunately, most of the alternative sources are lacking in intimacy with our Lord, biblical understanding, or are motivated to gain followers and notoriety by "tickling the ears" of the saints, as Paul warned Timothy (2Ti. 4:3-4).

## 2.2.6 - Hiding or Revealing?

The intent of the book of Revelation is provided by the very first word of the first verse: *Ἀποκάλυψις* [Apokalypsis]<sup>21</sup> which Strong defines as "1 a laying bare, making naked. 2 a disclosure of truth, instruction. 2A concerning things before unknown. 2B used of events by which things or states or persons hitherto withdrawn from view are made visible to all. 3 manifestation, appearance."<sup>22</sup> The emphasis shared by all these varied meanings is *making known* or *revealing* things previously unknown and is rendered by our English word *revelation* having a similar meaning: "1.a. The act of revealing or disclosing. b. Something revealed, especially a

dramatic disclosure of something not previously known or realized.”<sup>23</sup> That it is God’s intent to *reveal* information is made plain later in the same verse where it is said that God gave the Revelation to Jesus “**to show His servants.**” Clearly, the book of Revelation is not meant to obscure, but to reveal! Yet many would admit to finding the last book of the Bible difficult to understand, even puzzling—almost as if written to frustrate the very goal stated in the first verse.<sup>24</sup> It is our belief that this *tension* between God’s desire to reveal and the fact that many are unable to understand the book of Revelation stems from a principle Jesus spoke of. Like many of Jesus’ teachings, it is a disturbing teaching that is very important to grasp. After Jesus had been rejected by the religious leaders of the Jews, Matthew records:

On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in [parables](#), saying. . . (Mat. 13:1-3)

This is the first mention of the word “parable” by Matthew and underscores an essential shift in the teaching ministry of Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Previously, Jesus had not relied heavily upon the use of parables for teaching. Matthew identifies this shift for the reader:

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and **without a parable He did not speak to them** (Mat. 13:34) [emphasis added]

At first, one might be tempted to interpret this change in teaching style to Jesus’ desire to impart deep truths through simple illustrations. Such an understanding is *partly* true, but there is another more ominous aspect of the use of parables germane to our topic at hand—understanding the book of Revelation. Toussaint explains:

According to the etymology of the word “parable” [παραβολή](#) [parabolē] is the act of placing one thing beside another so that a comparison may be made between them. As a result the word came to mean a comparison, illustration, or figure. [Henry Barkclay Swete, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, p. 1.] . . . The key to the purpose of these parables is found in the Lord’s own explanation (Mat. 13:11-18). He says that He uses parables at this juncture for **two purposes**—to reveal truth and **to conceal it**. To the ones who accept the Messiah the truth and interpretation of the parables is revealed (Mat. 11:25-26; 13:11-16). On the other hand, to those who have **hardened their hearts** the truth is veiled by the parables (Mat. 11:25-26; 13:11-15). [emphasis added]<sup>26</sup>

Here then is a principle all who seek to understand God’s Word must come to grips with: the Word of God is like a two-sided coin. One side *reveals* His truth to those who seek Him. The other side *hides* that same truth from those who have hardened their heart against Him. Jesus Himself explained it best:

He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive.’ ” (Mat. 13:11-14 cf. Isa. 6:9-10)

The surprising and rather difficult aspect of this teaching of Jesus is to some *it has not been given*. Jesus spoke of this need for spiritual regeneration to receive revelation when Nicodemus came visiting one night. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born-again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3). This need to be born-again reflects the fact that those who have not come to faith in Christ are unable to understand the things of God. Paul also wrote of it: “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; **nor can he know them**, because they are **spiritually discerned**” [emphasis added] (1Cor. 2:14). Isaiah related the same principle. Unless men have the proper attitude and heart toward God, He will keep things hidden from them and frustrate their attempts at understanding:

Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with intoxicating drink. For the LORD has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, *namely*, the seers. The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which *men* deliver to one who is literate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I cannot, for it *is* sealed.” Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, “Read this, please.” And he says, “I am not literate.” Therefore the Lord said: “**Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men**, therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hidden.” (Isa. 29:9-14) [emphasis added]

Here we meet with the first of several caveats to consider when attempting to understand the book of Revelation. Unless you, the reader, are “born-again,” you will not understand God’s Word—including those things recorded in the book of Revelation. Even if you are born-again, commentaries and study aids produced by those who have not experienced regeneration are of very limited, even

negative, value. This alone eliminates massive volumes of verbiage by those who lack the illumination of the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup> For how can those who lack the essential means of spiritual understanding ever hope to teach spiritual truth to others? The very symbols and allusions within God's Word are intended *by design* to conceal spiritual truth from the unregenerate. Yet many commentators throughout history have continued in this vain attempt to rely on purely natural insight to explain this spiritual book. The fruitlessness of such attempts are perhaps no more evident than in prophetic portions of Scripture employing symbols like those found in the book of Revelation. "Prophecy therefore must be expressed in symbolic language in order that only the faithful and the spiritually discerning might know. Symbols confuse unbelieving skeptics without unnecessarily frustrating believing Christians."<sup>28</sup> Although there is clearly an intent by God to hide truth from those without eyes to see, Tan notes this is not the primary purpose of prophecy: "Prophecy is given more primarily to reveal the future to believers than to veil it from unbelievers."<sup>29</sup> Another source of difficulty is the variety of interpretations resulting from those who undertake to study the book and explain it to others. "It is doubtless true that no other book, whether in sacred or profane literature, has received in whole or in part so many different interpretations."<sup>30</sup> Many of these interpretations are more enigmatic than the book itself. "The literary genius G.K. Chesterson once quipped, 'Though St. John the Evangelist saw many strange monsters in his vision, he saw no creatures so wild as one of his own commentators.'<sup>31</sup> This variety of interpretive results has been damaging to the cause of Christ and was certainly not His intention when He first gave it to His servant John.<sup>32</sup> This diversity of interpretive results serves to *obscure* rather than *reveal* the message God intended His saints to understand and receive a blessing from (Rev. 1:3+, 22:7+, 14+). If God Who created language also created the human brain, surely He did so having in mind the *sufficiency* of communication between His creature and Himself and from creature to creature. If language and man's intellect is sufficient and God's revealed Word is Holy and perfect, what accounts for the wide variations in understanding attributed to the book of Revelation? In a word: *hermeneutics*! Although we treat the issues in more depth in our discussion of *Interpreting Symbols*, here we will simply note that unless a uniform approach to interpretation based on the normal rules of communication is extended to every part of God's Word, then the perspicuity of Scripture is greatly compromised. This can be seen in the huge variation of interpretive results by those who depart from these rules of grammatical historical interpretation. The large variety of meanings attributed to the book of Revelation are the result of using a faulty hermeneutic. This is one of the many tools used by the enemy of God to undermine the understanding of His Word. When one restricts the interpretive variations to those who employ a literal hermeneutic, the range of possibilities dwindles significantly resulting in much agreement and thus, the perspicuity of the Scriptures is preserved. One can only wonder why those who employ techniques yielding widely varying interpretations fail to see the variance in their results as irrefutable evidence of the faultiness of their approach! No, it is God's intent that we understand the message He has given. Although we may never understand all that He has revealed, it is not His purpose to frustrate or confuse (1Cor. 14:33). While it is our firm conviction that much may be known with confidence, it would be foolhardy to lay claim to a complete understanding. As Pink has observed:

To speculate about any of the truths of Holy Writ is the height of irreverence: better far to humbly acknowledge our ignorance when God has not made known His mind to us. Only in His light do we see light. Secret things belong unto the Lord, but the things which are revealed (in Scripture) belong unto us and to our children. . . . As the time of the manifestation of the Man of Sin draws near, God may be pleased to vouchsafe a fuller and better understanding of those parts of His Word which make known "the things which must shortly come to pass."<sup>33</sup>

## 2.2.7 - The Importance of Historical Perspective

As we will see when we come to the various *systems of interpretation*, maintaining the proper historical perspective is of utmost importance. In particular, two extremes must be avoided: (1) assuming that everything written in the book applies exclusively to *our day*; (2) assuming that everything written in the book applies exclusively to *John's day*. While this may seem obvious to some, it is amazing how often interpretation runs astray of these guidelines by overemphasizing one or the other of these two extremes. Hindson explains the tendency most prevalent in the time of any reader:

There is always a great temptation to read about the future through the eyes of the present! From our current standpoint in history, we presume to speculate on how the events predicted in the Revelation will eventually be fulfilled. **The problem is that each generation tends to assume that it is the terminal generation and that the end will come in their lifetime.** [emphasis added]<sup>34</sup>

This has been the bane of historical and futurist interpretations of Scripture and has led otherwise careful interpreters into the trap of date-setting when they should have known better.

[Hal] Lindsey taught that within a generation (a generation equals forty years) of Israel's becoming a nation again, the Lord would return (*Late Great Planet*, p. 43). This was based upon his interpretation that the fig tree in Matthew 24:32 is a symbol for the reconstitution of Israel as a nation. Thus, the generation (Mat. 24:34) that saw Israel become a nation would also see the Second Coming. Since Israel became a nation in 1948, many believe that Lindsey implied Christ's return would occur by 1988. . . . none of Lindsey's mentors agreed with his view.<sup>35</sup>

The unfortunate result of such errors has been the discrediting of the most valid interpretive system applied to the book of Revelation: ([futurism](#)). This is throwing the baby out with the bath-water. Another common danger is to see all of Scripture through the eyes of the salvation history of our own experience. For those who have come to Christ since the Day of Pentecost, this is the perspective of the *Church*.

No matter what part of the Bible may we read, the one object seems to be to “find the Church.” . . . This arises from our own natural selfishness. “We” belong to the Church, and therefore all “we” read “we” take to ourselves, not hesitating to rob others of what belongs to them. . . . On this system of interpretation the Bible is useless for the purposes of Divine revelation. . . . And yet it is on this same principle that the Apocalypse is usually treated. Everywhere the Church is thrust in: John . . . represents the Church; the living creatures, or Cherubim . . . are the Church; the four and twenty elders . . . are the Church; the 144,000 . . . are the Church, the great multitude . . . is the Church; the “women clothed with the sun” . . . is the Church; the man child . . . is the Church; the bride . . . is the Church; the “New Jerusalem” . . . is the Church.<sup>36</sup>

While we might disagree with some of the foregoing examples, the general tendency is no doubt valid: a tendency to read past distinctions in the text and to read “ourselves” into passages intended primarily for believers in another age. Here we must use caution since “all Scripture is given by [inspiration](#) of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2Ti. 3:17). But whereas all Scripture *is profitable*, not all Scripture *is written to the same specific audience*. This is especially true of the prophetic passages of Scripture which are written *primarily* to those who will live through the times described and only *secondarily* to the rest of the saints throughout history.<sup>37</sup> Here, we are touching on the foundational issues of [dispensationalism](#): a belief that a careful reading of Scripture while recognizing its self-consistent nature results in the understanding that God has dealt with different people in different ways as biblical history and progressive revelation have unfolded. When we ignore these distinctions found in God’s Word, our understanding of His message suffers. The flip-side of our tendency to find the “church” everywhere in Scripture is a failure to recognize the Jewishness of God’s Word. Especially our lack of familiarity with God’s promises made to national Israel throughout the Old Testament. Even when we have studied these promises of God from the older books, many incorrectly assume these are no longer to be literally understood. Instead they subject them to spiritual interpretation in a vain attempt to replace Israel with the Church. The failure to grasp the Jewishness of much of what transpires throughout Scripture, but especially in the book of Revelation, has led many interpreters astray. No more so than in their attempt to understand and explain allusions made in the Apocalypse using pagan or historic sources tangential or even opposed to the principles of God.<sup>38</sup> We discuss these and other issues related to [the interpretation of symbols](#) in greater depth elsewhere. Another error to beware of is artificially limiting the scope of the events described within the book of Revelation. The scope can be limited in numerous ways. Historically, there is a tendency to neglect vast ages of time having a bearing on the visions John sees, but which don’t conveniently fit with the polemic purpose of the interpreter. For example, many Reformers, intent on using every weapon at their disposal to separate from Rome, tended to limit their understanding of the harlot of Revelation 17+ to the machinations of the Roman Catholic system. Geographically, the historical school of interpretation has tended to limit the scope of events portrayed in the book to only those of significance to Western Christianity or even Europe:

To limit [the scope of the Apocalypse] to Popery, or to Christendom (so called) is we believe, wholly to miss the scope of the Book; and committing the mistake condemned by true logic—vis., of putting a part (and a small part too) for the whole. The awful conflict is of far wider extent than this. It exceeds all the general petty views of its scope; as affairs of State transcend those of a Parish Vestry. . . . the scope of the book, . . . is the winding up of the affairs of the whole creation, and the fixing of the eternal states of all things in heaven and on earth. . . . While many fritter away its solemn scenes in the common-place history of Europe, there are others who see beyond.<sup>39</sup>

The careful interpreter will understand this capstone of God’s revelation as closing up all history covering a worldwide scope and will strive to avoid artificially limiting his interpretation where the text itself does not.<sup>40</sup> Anderson has observed, “The bible is not intended for the present dispensation only, but for the people of God in every age.”<sup>41</sup> The correct interpretation will recognize the benefit of the entire book of Revelation for all readers of all historic ages and perspectives yet without denying specific prophetic settings peopled by different saints of God in different historic situations. These historical and prophetic scenes are described from both the vantage point of heaven and that of earth:

We have here . . . a doctrine of the *history* of the consummation . . . an exposition of the *nature* of history. The book is a revelation of the connection between things that are seen and things that are not seen, between things *on earth* and things *in heaven*; a revelation which fuses both into one mighty drama; so that the movements of the human action, and the course of visible fact, are half shrouded, half disclosed, amid the glory and the terror of the spiritual agencies at work around us, and of the eternal interests which we see involved. . . . it becomes more plain that the earth is the battlefield of the kingdoms of light and darkness.—Canon Bernard, *Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament*<sup>42</sup>



## 2.2.8 - Overemphasis on Extra-biblical Sources

There is an endless amount of material written about and urged as essential to understanding the book of Revelation. Most authors recognize the [OT](#) context from which the book of Revelation springs, but some assert the need to go ever farther afield in the quest to find related material. Thus, not only must we understand the historical context and setting necessary for grammatical historical interpretation, we should seek the explanation of symbols and their intended meaning from secular and even pagan source material. We believe this to be an incorrect emphasis on extra-biblical material. While it is certain that elements of the book of Revelation are intimately connected with the historical setting of the recipients (e.g., the letters to the churches of Asia), commentators too often *assume* this cultural/historical connection extends to the rest of the book where no such direct connection may be established. For example, Osborne states: "It is clear in Revelation that one of the primary problems of the believers in the province of Asia is some form of emperor worship (Rev. 13:4<sup>+</sup>, 14-17<sup>+</sup>; 14:9<sup>+</sup>; 15:2<sup>+</sup>; 16:2<sup>+</sup>; 19:20<sup>+</sup>; 20:4<sup>+</sup>)."<sup>43</sup> It is one thing to recognize the significance of emperor worship to the immediate readers at the time the book of Revelation was written. It is quite another to assert that a proper understanding of prophetic passages revealing events in a potentially distant future are dependent upon the events of the time of the writer. This goes too far and fails to appreciate the pattern established throughout Scripture by prophetic passages which, although written and entrusted to an immediate readership, serve to set forth events to come for the benefit of God's people yet unborn (Ps. 22:30; 102:18; John 17:20; 20:29; Rom. 15:4). The unintended but real result of this over-emphasis on extra-biblical material is an implicit denial of the sufficiency of Scripture (Ps. 19:1-14; John 8:31; 1Cor. 4:6; 2Ti. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12-13; 2Pe. 1:3, 19-21; Jude 1:3) and a subtle, but disastrous drawing of the reader ever further afield from the [inspired](#) Word of God in search of gold that, more often than not, is *fool's gold*. This is especially problematic for the new believer who is ill-equipped to dredge through non-[canonical](#) writings such as the [pseudepigrapha](#) and [apocrypha](#) while avoiding catastrophe. Commentators who encourage this route are akin to blind guides who leave blindfolded travelers at the edge of a precipice to wander at their pleasure. Such action is in direct contradiction to the mandate of God's Word for those more experienced to *proactively guide and guard* both themselves and those under their influence (Acts 20:28-29; Col. 2:8; 1Ti. 6:20; 1Pe. 5:2-3). The truths of God are not to be taught by the university model—where the widest smorgasbord of ideas is presented for the ungrounded to sample. Instead, we are to guard our minds and to cast down non-canonical writings and ideas attempting to assert their influence above the very inspired Word of God (Rom. 1:21-22; 1Cor. 1:19; 2Cor. 10:5; Col. 2:3, 8, 18; 2Pe. 3:16-18). Not only is this emphasis on extra-biblical sources dangerous, but it results in all manner of incorrect conclusions as pagan or legendary ideas form the basis for the interpretation of inspired symbols. Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than in the far-fetched identifications proffered for the Woman of Revelation 12<sup>+</sup>. This emphasis on extra-biblical material becomes so acute that the implication for the simple child of God is that an understanding of the last book of the Bible is essentially beyond his grasp unless he immerses himself in the socio-political details of the late first-century, *including the broad study of pagan beliefs, practices, and symbols* of the secular society. Such an emphasis fails to understand the guidelines the divine Author of the book has set forth for His children (Ps. 101:3; Isa. 33:15; Php. 4:8) and undermines the perspicuity of Scripture because most saints through the ages have lacked and continue to lack access to the extra-biblical materials these authors assert as essential to our understanding of this important book. Another deleterious side-effect of the over-emphasis on extra-biblical material for an understanding of the Apocalypse is the blurring of the distinction between inspired writings versus uninspired writings. When the boundary between the [inerrant](#) and the speculative and even fraudulent is minimized or overlooked, the results are predictable: questionable conclusions result and the student of Scripture begins to equate the uninspired writings of secular writers with the matchless and unique written Word of God. This is the well-traveled path to religious liberalism and even apostasy that has been a key tool of Satan throughout history and in our own day. Within this commentary, we make occasional reference to extra-biblical writings, mainly when they provide insight into thought patterns, beliefs, and historical events of their time. For example, in the discussion of [related passages and themes](#) we make mention of [Jewish rabbinical writings](#) because these help illustrate the common understanding of Jewish rabbis regarding events related to the book of Revelation. We are not using the Rabbis to teach about the book of Revelation, but as a point of evidence that the Old Testament was understood by early rabbis to teach a future time of peril coming upon the world. It is our conviction that those similarities occurring between extra-biblical writings and inspired Scripture reflect a *dependence of the extra-biblical material upon the Scripture*. It has been our observation that many scholars assume exactly the opposite—that extra-biblical myths and beliefs had great influence upon the writers of Scripture.

## 2.2.9 - Simplicity over Academics

As J. Vernon McGee was fond of observing, "Remember. . . [God] is feeding *sheep*—not *giraffes!*" Nowhere is this observation perhaps more relevant than to the topic at hand. If our tone regarding the dangers of various streams of thought regarding the interpretation of the book of Revelation sounds overly negative, perhaps it is in reaction to the painful, laborious, and often depressing task of hours spent wading through numerous commentaries which are deeply academic and highly acclaimed by many, but void of faith and spiritual insight. Worse, they propose a seemingly endless series of fanciful or disjointed interpretations served up with a *large dose of unbelief and skepticism*. With rare exception, the words of former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower could describe many of these works: "An intellectual is a man who takes more words than necessary to tell more than he knows." Much of what passes for enlightened inquiry is an endless series of conjectures and discussions centered on a number of

highly-questionable assertions made, for the most part, by unbelievers and their allies, liberal academics. These ever-taller ivory towers are impressive at first sight, until one learns to recognize the house-of-cards foundation upon which they are built. The sooner the believer recognizes these tangents as the distractions they are, the less time will be spent attempting to understand and subsequently refute ideas contradicting the teachings of Jesus. We are speaking here of ideas such as the Documentary Hypothesis, Deutero-Isaiah theories, redaction criticism and others which consume an *enormous* amount of energy and time while yielding little if any fruit.<sup>44</sup> For those who are born-again, the simple words of Jesus fell these academic constructions. For those who are *not* born-again, we suggest that there is a more pressing issue than academic distractions concerning the book of Revelation—such as one's stance in regard to these infrequently quoted verses from another of John's writings: John 3:18-19, 36. Let us say upfront that the approach we have chosen is unlikely to appeal to academics who place greater emphasis on interacting with each other's often questionable theories than on understanding the text and edifying the saints. Our approach here is not encyclopedic nor does it favor critical scholarship.<sup>45</sup> While recognizing alternate views, the emphasis is upon an understanding of the text itself and its priority over secondary commentary.

### 2.2.10 - A Policy of Inoculation

Someone has said "every writer has biases, but only *some* admit to it." It is not our intention here to provide an unbiased tour of a wide variety of views concerning the Apocalypse. There are many other works the reader could refer to which fill that function. Here, we will practice a policy of 'inoculation' in regard to alternate views. That is, we intend to set forth enough information concerning the alternative view for readers to be aware of its major features. We also provide information refuting aspects of the view we find most problematic. Neither the alternate view nor the refutation will proceed in great detail, but will include suitable references for those who wish to pursue the subject in greater depth. It is our hope that in the same way that an inoculation injects a small amount of a deadly disease into the human body so that it may build up its natural defenses, an understanding of aspects of alternate views will help the reader understand the problems accompanying them and so avoid the mistake of endorsing questionable ideas mainly because they are "new" or "different."<sup>46</sup> Some of the matters we discuss are not simply differences in view within Evangelical ranks, but touch on basic issues concerning the nature of the Scriptures undermined by many by many who purport to guide others into a deeper understanding of Scripture. Teachers who endorse questionable views concerning the [inspiration](#), [inerrancy](#), and authorship of Holy Scripture are adept at dressing their skepticism within the garb of inference, making it less obvious to the inexperienced student of Scripture. We hope to make these implicit teachings more explicit where needed.

### 2.2.11 - Dispensational, Premillennial, Pretribulational Exposition

The reader should know that this commentary is written from the perspective of a [dispensational](#), [premillennial](#), and [pretribulational](#) view of Scripture as we believe that this is what God's Word teaches when rightly interpreted. By way of background, let us state that we came to salvation and spent the first five years of our Christian walk in a church teaching [preterism](#). The book table at the church featured books by authors such as David Chilton and embraced both [Dominion Theology](#) and [Replacement Theology](#). During these five years, we learned many valuable things for which we will eternally be grateful. Yet the place of prophecy in the Word of God and the book of Revelation specifically were seldom, if ever taught. Having a better grasp of the issues and interpretive systems involved, we now understand that the book of Revelation was seen as having *already passed its point of relevance*. Having believed it was written primarily for first-century believers describing political events of their day, all fulfilled by the [hyperbolic](#) language thought to be found in the book, the book was relegated to serving as a devotional text for Christian living. While it is undeniable that one great purpose of the book of Revelation is to inspire the saints of all ages, especially those in times of intense persecution, this is not the *only* or even *primary* purpose of the book. Even though raised in a [preterist](#) environment, as our understanding of the Word of God grew over time, it became clear that a plain reading of Scripture (we didn't know about *grammatical historical interpretation* or [hermeneutics](#)) portrayed a very different picture than that what we had been taught. It has been our observation since that time that many who are trained to observe details and integrate the teachings of Scripture into a self-consistent whole wind up in the dispensational, premillennial camp.<sup>47</sup> Not because we hold this *a priori* understanding, but because the Scriptures, when interpreted in a consistently literal way where figures of speech and symbols are duly recognized as such and handled in their normative fashion, evidence differences in the requirements God prescribes to different groups at different times.<sup>48</sup> For example, Scripture maintains a consistent distinction between the role of the nation Israel and the Church,<sup>49</sup> and sets forth Jesus as returning *prior* to the Millennium (Rev. 19±-20±). This may disappoint those who find the "straightjacket" of literal interpretation too constraining. Some favor the broad vistas of devotional creativity and alternative understandings resulting from non-literal interpretation. But it is our opinion that the very breadth of such vistas is strong indication of their unsoundness for they evidence an "unknowability" undermining the value of the book of *Revelation* itself. If the stated purpose of the Revelation is for God to "show His servants things which must shortly take place" (Rev. 1:1±), what value can there be in allegorical or devotional interpretation misplacing the locus of understanding from the actual words of the text to the mind of the reader? How are His servants to *know* when the results of non-literal interpretation abound in variety of meaning? The variety of results evidenced by non-literal interpretation serve as strong

evidence against its suitability for the purpose stated by God.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.2.12 - Learning God's Way

Each of us that comes to the book of Revelation would do well to consider the words of Paul to the Corinthian church:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able. (1Cor. 3:1-2)

Although Paul is admonishing the Corinthian believers regarding their lack of maturity, as evidenced by relational confrontation among them (1Cor. 3:3), the inability to teach mature subjects to immature believers is also evident. The writer to the Hebrews echoes this principle:

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. (Heb. 6:1-3)

The writer hopes to avoid conveying the same foundational knowledge previously related, but to go on to more advanced principles. There is a progression found in God's Word. Many of its foundational truths are extremely simple and readily understood. Other truths are less evident and require a long-term foundation of Scriptural knowledge upon which the Holy Spirit builds our understanding. As Gregory the Great succinctly observed: "Holy Scripture is a stream of running water, where alike the elephant may swim, and the lamb walk."<sup>51</sup> This explains why God's Word is fresh and powerful for both the new believer and the elderly saint—the "lamb" is refreshed in the shallows of the stream while the "elephant" plunges into the depths. But a problem may develop when the "lamb" decides to take matters into its own hands and undertake a *short-cut* straight for deeper waters. It will quickly find itself out of its depth, and in the case at hand, confused. There is a head-on collision between the fast-food, instant-gratification mentality of our society and the way the Holy Spirit reveals the truths of God's Word to the *diligent* student. In our rush to plumb the depths of Scripture, we neglect the reality that the truths therein are often presented like peeling an onion—layer by layer God leads us deeper in His Word. He is not a God of our making and most certainly not a "God of the short-cut." He is the antithesis of "have it *your way*" and instead favors the spiritual tortoise over the hare. Numerous times we have observed eager believers who are not yet truly acquainted with the basics of God's Word charge ahead attempting to master the book of Revelation. This is guaranteed to be unfruitful and even dangerous. *God owes us nothing!* Let us keep that in mind as we approach this book! If we are not ready for certain revelation and understanding, *so be it!* Let's rest in that fact and trust God to give us what we need when we need it. To attempt to "push" into the book or to "cram" for long hours to force the understanding from the text is manifestly sin as it substitutes our selfish desire for elevated knowledge over trust in the gentle leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit as we invest *daily* in God's Word. Ultimately, if we persist in a strong-armed insistence in "obtaining the goods" from a passage we are not spiritually ready for, it may even become dangerous. We become open for deception as Satan or our flesh will readily provide a substitute for that which God, in His ultimate wisdom, has not yet given us. Thus, by pressing too hard or too soon to master a passage, we often wind up with an incorrect or superficial understanding of its true contents. The damage comes when we turn around and teach what we don't understand. We also suffer as we grow satisfied and rest in our flawed understanding. Instead, why not allow for puzzlement and wonder in our exploration of the book? When we encounter things we don't understand (not *if*, but *when*), why not simply "put them on the shelf" and pray about them? Over time, God will bring the key that helps unlock the puzzle. In the meantime, enjoy the journey and depend upon His Spirit to gradually bring your understanding to maturity.

## 2.2.13 - Focus is Christ

As we enter our study of the book of Revelation, it will serve us well to remember that the book is "the revelation of *Jesus Christ*" (Rev. 1:1<sup>+</sup>). As the angel tells John later in the book "the **testimony of Jesus** is the spirit of prophecy" [emphasis added] (Rev. 19:10<sup>+</sup>). Jesus made a similar statement when He criticized the Jewish religious leaders, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and **these are they which testify of Me**" [emphasis added] (John 5:39). How many commentators, hoping to lead us into a deeper understanding of this book have themselves fallen into the same error as the "searchers" of Jesus' day? "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40). May we not fall into the trap of searching the Scriptures for reasons *other than* to find our Lord?<sup>52</sup>

The central theme of the Apocalypse is given in the title to the book. It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place" (Rev. 1:1<sup>+</sup>). Jesus Christ is the central theme of the Revelation. He is the most important key to understanding the book. He is both the author of the Revelation and the subject of it.<sup>53</sup>

When studying the book of Revelation, it is easy to become distracted from this central theme because there is so much going on—visions being seen, seals being opened, trumpets blown, bowls poured forth, judgments taking place, and so on. There can also

develop a sense of morbid fascination with the details revealed regarding the two beasts (Rev. 13±). Yet as believers, our primary motivation while awaiting the return of Jesus is to watch for *our Lord*, not the man of sin (Mat. 24:42; 25:13; Mark 13:33, 35, 37; Luke 12:36-40; 21:36; 1Cor. 1:7; 16:13; Php. 3:20; 1Th. 1:10; 5:6; 2Ti. 4:8; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 2Pe. 3:12; Rev. 3:2-3±; 16:15±). As we wait for Him, the book of Revelation provides a greater insight into His status today, no longer a man of sorrows, but the risen and glorified Lord!

The book of Revelation is the only book in the New Testament that presents Jesus Christ as He really is today. The gospels introduce Him as the “man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering” during his incarnation. Revelation presents Him in His true glory and majesty after His resurrection and ascension into heaven, never again to be reviled, rebuked, and spat upon.<sup>54</sup>

The focus of the book of Revelation upon Christ and His return to institute His perfect, earthly kingdom can be seen in the numerous titles John records:

The book of Revelation is preeminently the ‘Revelation of Jesus Christ’ (Rev. 1:1±). It describes Him by many titles, including ‘the faithful witness’ (Rev. 1:5±); ‘the firstborn of the dead’ (Rev. 1:5±); ‘the ruler of the kings of the earth’ (Rev. 1:5±); ‘the Alpha and the Omega’ (Rev. 1:8±; 21:6±); ‘the first and the last’ (Rev. 1:17±); ‘the living One’ (Rev. 1:18±); ‘the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands’ (Rev. 2:1±); ‘the One who has the sharp two-edged sword’ (Rev. 2:12±); ‘the Son of God’ (Rev. 2:18±); the One ‘who has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze’ (Rev. 2:18±); the One ‘who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars’ (Rev. 3:1±); the One ‘who is holy, who is true’ (Rev. 3:7±); the holder of ‘the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens’ (Rev. 3:7±); ‘the Amen, the faithful and true Witness’ (Rev. 3:14±); ‘the Beginning of the creation of God’ (Rev. 3:14±); ‘the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah’ (Rev. 5:5±); ‘the Root of David’ (Rev. 5:5±); the Lamb of God (e.g., 5:6±; 6:1±; 7:9-10±; 8:1±; 12:11±; 13:8±; 14:1±; 15:3±; 17:14±; 19:7±; 21:9±; 22:1±); the ‘Lord, holy and true’ (Rev. 6:10±); the One who ‘is called Faithful and True’ (Rev. 19:11±); ‘The Word of God’ (Rev. 19:13±); the ‘King of kings, and Lord of lords’ (Rev. 19:16±); Christ (Messiah), ruling on earth with His glorified saints (Rev. 20:6±); and ‘Jesus - the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star’ (Rev. 22:16±).<sup>55</sup>

The book of Revelation claims to be prophecy (Rev. 1:3±; 10:7±, 11±; 22:7±, 10±, 18±, 19±). But, as the angel explains to John “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10±).<sup>56</sup> It is with a devotional heart and a longing for our Lord that we should enter into our study of this book rather than an idle or morbid fascination with events to come. Without the proper focus, we risk turning this masterful message of Jesus Christ intended for personal response into a cold documentary of future events. Make no mistake: future events are here foretold, but the *purpose* of the events and their revelation to us is to glorify Jesus and to draw men to Himself. May it be so!

## 2.2.14 - The Primacy of Scripture

Now we come upon a subject of great importance: the primacy (ultimate importance) of Scripture. While the [inspiration](#) and [inerrancy](#) of Scripture is often heard on the lips, in *practice* we often demonstrate confusion on this matter. I’m speaking here of our tendency to be drawn away from the Scriptures themselves into secondary sources of lower quality. Satan is a master at using motivation, whether good or bad, and is adept at diluting our exposure to the very Words of God in favor of the fodder of man. One of his most fruitful avenues to distract believers from direct exposure to God’s Word is a biblical commentary such as this. If he can draw us ever further afield through our pursuit of secondary material, he stands a better chance of separating us from the truth of God’s Word. We begin to subsist on man’s moldering and stale bread in place of the Bread of Life. If this is done in a gradual enough manner over time, our taste buds lose the ability to distinguish the difference. This is a dangerous diet which is both filling and utterly empty! Yet such is the situation in many of the academies today. Forever commenting on the comments of commentators of the inspired Scriptures, the mountain of words grows ever higher and more distant from the centrality of God’s Word. In our fleshly pursuit of knowledge and status, Satan is happy to provide whatever material is needed for our journey away from God. Is this not the central error of the rabbinical schools where such great priority is placed on the study of the secondary teachings of famous rabbis that precious little time is left for God’s original message to dispel the darkness? What value is there in mastering Maimonides or Rashi if it precludes a basic understanding of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant (Isa. 53)? Men grow in education and learning while the devil leans back and smiles! We are not against education or human teaching. To hold such a view would be to contrary to the Scriptures themselves which indicate that God has given us *fallible human teachers* in order that we would be edified and equipped for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:1; 2Ti. 2:24).<sup>57</sup> Yet as we seek to understand God’s Word, it is of utmost importance that we understand the relative priority among the different sources of instruction we utilize.

Bible Study Target

Bible Study Target

The *Bible Study Target* helps to illustrate this principle. The closer we feed to the center of the target, the more reliable and fruitful will be our growth. The further afield we go from the center. . . toward the outer edges, the greater the danger of being subtly taken off track or perverted in our understanding of God’s unadulterated Word. The general principle is as follows: **maximize the time spent near the center of the target!** Lest someone say that *all* we need do is to remain within the inner two rings, we counter that this will not result in a mature understanding of all that God intends. For example, if we were to *completely* neglect extra-biblical history, how are we to benefit fully from Gabriel’s words to Daniel: “the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary” (Dan. 9:26)? Scripture nowhere records the nationality of the people who destroyed Jerusalem and God’s House. If it were not from the historic record, we would not know that it was *Titus of Rome* who destroyed Jerusalem and the [Temple](#) (Mat. 24:2) and thus, be able to conclude that the “prince who is to come” is related to the Roman people. This tension between the desire to stay immersed in God’s inerrant Word versus understanding the broader context of history within which the Bible plays out and to benefit from God-given human teachers is a continual dilemma for the serious student, one that is a matter for much prayer and wisdom. Many have followed a path leading toward the edges of the target, eating stale bread and imbibing the dangerous elixir of academic liberalism only to find themselves shipwrecked in matters of faith and salvation. Fewer, but also impoverished, are those who refuse to wander beyond the center two rings. These remain ignorant of important factors which would greatly enrich their understanding of our Lord and His Word.<sup>58</sup> It is with an eye to recognizing the need to spend time in all rings of the diagram, yet avoiding the dangers of over dependence upon the outer rings that motivates this discussion. The table below describes the various rings of the *Bible Study Target* and provides representative works falling within each ring. (Consult the [Bibliography](#) for additional information on the texts mentioned below.)

Rings of Biblical Study

Ring	Category	Description	Examples

1	Original-Language Bible	God's inspired Word in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek). <a href="#">59</a>	<p>[Hodges, <a href="#">The Greek New Testament According To The Majority Text</a>],</p> <p>[Aland, <a href="#">The Greek New Testament</a>],</p> <p>[Maurice A. Robinson and William G. Pierpont, <a href="#">The New Testament in The Original Greek : Byzantine Textform</a> (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005)],</p> <p>[ <a href="#">Biblia Sacra Utriusque Testamenti Editio Hebraica et Graeca</a> (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1994)],</p> <p>[K. Elliger and Rudolph, <a href="#">Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</a> (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1977)],</p> <p>[Aron Dotan, <a href="#">Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia</a> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001)].</p>
2	English-Language Bible <a href="#">60</a>	<i>Word-for-word</i> translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts <a href="#">61</a>	KJV, KJ2000, NKJV, ASV, NASB, LITV, MKJV

3	Primary Study Tools	<p>Concordances, Cross-references, Language Tools. These tools are denoted as <i>primary</i> because they help us to understand the raw biblical text while <i>minimizing</i> man-made interpretation.</p>	<p>[Strong, <a href="#"><i>The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible</i></a>],</p> <p>[Robert L. Thomas, ed., <a href="#"><i>New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance</i></a> (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1998)]<sup>62</sup>,</p> <p>[Torrey, <a href="#"><i>The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge</i></a>]<sup>63</sup>,</p> <p>[W. E. Vine, <a href="#"><i>Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words</i></a> (Nashville, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)],</p> <p>[Frederick William Danker and Walter Bauer, <a href="#"><i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i></a> (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000)],</p> <p>[Spiros Zodhiates, <a href="#"><i>KJV Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible</i></a> (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1991)] or</p> <p>[Spiros Zodhiates, <a href="#"><i>NASB Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible</i></a> (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1990)],</p> <p>[Jay P. Green and Maurice A. Robinson, <a href="#"><i>A Concise Lexicon to the Biblical Languages</i></a> (Lafayette, IN: Sovereign Grace Publishers, Inc., 1987)].</p>
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4	Secondary Study Tools	<p>Dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries. These tools are denoted as <i>secondary</i> because although they can be of great value to our understanding, they also unavoidably include the biases of the authors. If we derived our primary understanding of the text from these sources, we will be 'tainted' (sometimes dramatically so) by the 'spin' different interpreters bring to their understanding of the Bible. The dangers here are subtle, but can be far-reaching and take a long time to overcome until additional Bible study in rings 1-3 corrects misperceptions that have been learned.</p>	<p>[Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., <a href="#"><i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised</i></a> (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, 1915)],</p> <p>[Merrill Frederick Unger, R. K. Harrison, Frederic F Vos, and Cyril J. Barber, <a href="#"><i>The New Unger's Bible Dictionary</i></a> (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988)],</p> <p>[John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., <a href="#"><i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i></a> (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, 1983)],</p> <p>[C. I. Scofield, <a href="#"><i>The Scofield Study Bible</i></a> (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002, 1909)],</p> <p>[John MacArthur, ed., <a href="#"><i>The MacArthur Study Bible</i></a> (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1997)], etc. <a href="#">64</a></p>
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5	Background Material	Historical and cultural works helping to anchor the biblical revelation within the historic setting and culture wherein it was first written.	<p>A large number of works fall into this category. A small representative sample is given here:</p> <p>[Nathan Ausubel, <a href="#"><i>The Book of Jewish Knowledge</i></a> (New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 1964)],</p> <p>[Eli Barnavi, <a href="#"><i>A Historical Atlas of the Jewish People</i></a> (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1992)],</p> <p>[Alfred Edersheim, <a href="#"><i>Bible History, Old Testament</i></a> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995)],</p> <p>[Alfred Edersheim, <a href="#"><i>The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah</i></a> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993)],</p> <p>[Alfred Edersheim, <a href="#"><i>The Temple: Its Ministry and Services</i></a> (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994)],</p> <p>[Flavius Josephus, <a href="#"><i>The Complete Works of Josephus</i></a> (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981)],</p> <p>[Geoffrey Wigoder, ed., <a href="#"><i>Encyclopedia Judaica CDROM Edition Version 1.0</i></a> (Keter Publishing House, Ltd., 1997)],</p> <p>[Philip Birnbaum, <a href="#"><i>Encyclopedia of Jewish Concepts</i></a> (New York, NY: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1995)], etc.</p>
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The observant reader will notice that as we move outward from the center of the target toward the outer rings, the number of study sources dramatically increases. *This is a blessing and a curse*: a blessing because of the many excellent resources enabling us to

better understand the Bible, its times, and historical context; a curse because only the inner-most ring contains the *inspired and inerrant* Words of God. To the degree the secondary works draw our attention away from the center of the target, we are in danger. One need only observe the many young men of God who have gone off to seminary returning as highly “educated” liberal skeptics.<sup>65</sup> Our advice is to concentrate on the inner-most three rings, especially as a new believer. **As soon as we find ourselves spending the larger share of our time outside of ring #3, let that be cause for alarm and motivate us to scurry back to the Bread of Life itself and feed upon its supernatural qualities** (Ps. 119; Heb. 4:12; 1Pe. 1:23). The observant reader will also notice that we have just now recommended he minimize his time spent in ring #4—the very ring within where he is currently feeding when reading these words! Yet the truth remains, as much as it is our desire to see the reader blessed by this commentary, we would be doing a disservice if we failed to warn him that such fare cannot be the mainstay of his biblical diet. Although the Words of *Scripture* herein are life, the reader, aided by the Holy Spirit within him, should carefully judge whether the associated commentary remains true to God’s Word.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Also known as the *Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*

<sup>2</sup>Due to the absence of page numbers, endnotes are utilized instead of footnotes.

<sup>3</sup>Topics are searched for within section titles, [glossary entries](#), and [index entries](#). The first section title, glossary entry, or index entry containing the word or phrase is opened.

<sup>4</sup>Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>5</sup>[Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, *The Greek New Testament According To The Majority Text* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985)]. We are aware that many prefer the KJV text. We have neither the mandate nor opportunity here to consider the arguments for and against the KJV text.

<sup>6</sup>e.g., [James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1996)], [R. Torrey, *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1995)].

<sup>7</sup>Kurt Aland and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1983).

<sup>8</sup>Neither space nor subject permit a more elaborate treatment of the relative merits and weaknesses of the *heuristics* upon which the critical Greek text depends. It is evident that many of the textual decisions underlying the *Critical Text* hinge upon unproven generalizations which are essentially unknowable on a case-by-case basis. In essence, the “algorithm” by which the textual variations are transformed into the “best” text is non-determinative and subjective. For an example which reveals these problems, see the commentary on [Revelation 5:9](#). Also see [Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994)] for additional details. The book of Revelation has fewer extant manuscripts than other books of the NT. “The MSS of Revelation are few compared to those of other NT literature. Thus, of the important early witnesses, only three papyri and scarcely half a dozen uncials of the Apocalypse are extant. While there are over a thousand minuscule MSS for each of most of the other books, Revelation has a total of only about 250.”—Alan F. Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 12.

<sup>9</sup>“It should, however, be observed that the variants relate very largely to differences in the order of words, to the use or omission of the article or a connective, and to syntactical construction. Numerous as the variants are, they are not of a kind to cause uncertainty in a single paragraph taken as a whole.”—Isbon T. Beckwith, [The Apocalypse of John](#) (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 411.

<sup>10</sup>Recognizing that no single set of Bible book abbreviations is optimum in terms of length, readability, and compatibility with other study aids, we are mainly interested in standardization to facilitate digital processing of this document.

<sup>11</sup>In some resources, while the majority of information may be located by verse, other information is not verse-specific. In the latter case, references cite the page number rather than the verse location.

<sup>12</sup>See [www.e-sword.net](#), [www.swordsearcher.com](#), [www.SpiritAndTruth.org](#), and others.

<sup>13</sup>Some classic works have not yet been digitized or licensed so as to make the transition from print to electronic media.

<sup>14</sup>How one might wish that all believers had as good a grasp of the essential relationship of Genesis to the gospel as this enemy of the cross!

- <sup>15</sup>Bozarth, G. R., *The Meaning of Evolution*, American Atheist, 1978, 20:30.
- <sup>16</sup>Henry Morris, *The Revelation Record* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1983), 21.
- <sup>17</sup>Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Antichrist* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1999, 1923), s.v. "Antichrist in the Apocalypse."
- <sup>18</sup>This is due to the fact that most believers automatically know to test unbiblical philosophy and teaching by God's Word. What is more damaging, are teachers who appear to fall within the pale of Christianity, but whose views concerning Revelation deny essentials of the faith or its prophetic relevance for the future.
- <sup>19</sup>J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), v.
- <sup>20</sup>"John Calvin, the greatest commentator of the Reformation, who wrote commentaries on the other books, did not attempt to write a commentary on Revelation."—John MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 1.
- <sup>21</sup>The definite article ("the") does not appear within the Greek text.
- <sup>22</sup>Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*
- <sup>23</sup> *American Heritage Online Dictionary*, Ver. 3.0A, 3rd ed (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).
- <sup>24</sup>Even Luther admitted: "Even if it were a blessed thing to believe what is contained in it, no man knows what that is."—Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness Of The Kingdom* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1959), 6.
- <sup>25</sup>Jesus began using parables later on the same day (Mat. 13:1) the unpardonable sin was committed (Mat. 12:24-31).
- <sup>26</sup>Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold The King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 168-169.
- <sup>27</sup>John 14:26; 16:13-14; 1Cor. 2:10-13; Eph. 3:5; 1Jn. 2:20, 27.
- <sup>28</sup>Mal Couch, *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications), 72.
- <sup>29</sup>Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy* (Dallas, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1993), 139.
- <sup>30</sup>Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 1.
- <sup>31</sup>Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999), 308.
- <sup>32</sup>"No other part of Scripture has proved so fascinating to expositors, and no other part has suffered so much at their hands."—Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1957), 13.
- <sup>33</sup>Pink, *The Antichrist*, s.v. "foreword."
- <sup>34</sup>Edward Hindson, *Revelation: Unlocking the Future* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 2.
- <sup>35</sup>Thomas Ice, "Harold L. Lindsey," in Mal Couch, ed., *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1996), 242.
- <sup>36</sup>E. W. Bullinger, *Commentary On Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1984, 1935), 1-2.
- <sup>37</sup>Matthew 24 serves as an excellent illustration. The primary audience of this passage will live during a time when there will be a *holy place*—a temple standing in Jerusalem (Mat. 24:15), will be living in Judea (Mat. 24:16), and living under conditions of the Mosaic Law (Mat. 24:20).
- <sup>38</sup>"If we count up the number of Old Testament passages quoted or alluded to in the New Testament, we find that the gospel of Matthew has a very large number, amounting in all to 92. The Epistle to the Hebrews comes higher still with 102. . . . when we turn to the Apocalypse, what do we find? . . . No less than 285 references to the Old Testament. More than three times as many as Matthew, and nearly three times as many as the Epistle to the Hebrews. We ask whether this does not give the book of Revelation a very special connection with the Old Testament, and with Israel? **It is undoubtedly written about the people of the Old Testament who are the subjects of its history.**" [emphasis added]—Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>39</sup>[Ibid.](#), 111-112.

<sup>40</sup>The extreme of historical and geographical limitation is represented by the [preterist interpretation](#) which sees the entire book written to 1st-Century readers and concerning events localized in either the fall of Jerusalem or the fall of Rome.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Anderson, [The Coming Prince](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1957), 171\*.

<sup>42</sup>Bullinger, [Commentary On Revelation](#), 123-134.

<sup>43</sup>Grant R. Osborne, [Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 6.

<sup>44</sup>“The roots of the present Age of Apostasy began in Europe, particularly with German rationalism, where the inerrancy of the Scriptures was denied with the development of biblical criticism and the documentary hypothesis.”—Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), rev ed (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003), 72.

<sup>45</sup>Perhaps the greatest weapon of critical scholarship is its academic *mandate* that other views engage its speculative theories else lose a hearing. This mandate denies the rule of faith of the believer and our trust in God’s written revelation. Believers do not exercise a ‘blind faith,’ but neither should we waste precious time interacting with speculative theories which only serve to keep us from a deeper understanding of what God has revealed.

<sup>46</sup>Here we might pause to observe that many who have defected from solid doctrinal positions based upon the Word of God have done so because they never truly understood the position they initially endorsed. Having ridden on a “straw horse,” it became all too easy for others to push them off and lead them elsewhere.

<sup>47</sup>Being trained as an electrical engineer, we soon found other engineers who had reached similar conclusions. Men like Clarence Larkin, Henry Morris, and Robert Thomas.

<sup>48</sup>One need only contrast the different instructions given by God pertaining to the eating of meat to see the essence of dispensationalism: Gen. 1:29; 9:3; Deu. 12:15; Isa. 11:7; 65:25; Rom. 14:2; 1Ti. 4:3.

<sup>49</sup>“Of the twenty-seven uses in the Gospel of Luke and Acts, Jervell concludes: ‘In Luke’s writings Israel always refers to the Jewish people. At no time does it serve to characterize the church, i.e., it is never used as a technical term for the Christian gathering of Jews and Gentiles.’ ”—Robert L. Saucy, [“Israel and the Church: A Case for Discontinuity.”](#) in John S. Feinberg, ed., [Continuity And Discontinuity](#) (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 245.

<sup>50</sup>Like a helium balloon in the wind, once the ‘tether’ of literal/normative interpretation is cut, the interpreter is ‘free’ to drift further and further afield from the intended understanding.

<sup>51</sup>Johnson, [Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary](#), vii.

<sup>52</sup>Ps. 40:7; Luke 18:31; 24:27, 44; John 5:39, 46; Acts 8:35; 10:43; Heb. 10:7.

<sup>53</sup>Hindson, [Revelation: Unlocking the Future](#), 7.

<sup>54</sup>Tim LaHaye, [Revelation Unveiled](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 9-10.

<sup>55</sup>MacArthur, [Revelation 1-11 : The MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#), 2.

<sup>56</sup>“He is the source of all prophecy, and all prophecy moves toward a fulfillment by Him with a view toward His own glory.”—Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 351.

<sup>57</sup>Eze. 34:3, 15; John 21:17; Acts 2:42; 6:2-4; 11:25-26; 20:27; Eph. 4:11; 1Ti. 3:2; 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17-18; 2Ti. 2:15, 24; Tit. 1:9; 2:1.

<sup>58</sup>Nowhere is this perhaps more evident than in the ignorance of Jewish culture lacking from western Christian commentary throughout history.

<sup>59</sup>Students who do not know the original languages can derive considerable insight into the original languages by the use of some of the tools in ring #3.

<sup>60</sup>Readers whose primary tongue is other than English would utilize the Scriptures in their native tongue.

<sup>61</sup>Translations utilizing *dynamic equivalency*, such as the NIV, and those that are paraphrases (such as *The Message*) are not suited for detailed Bible study.

<sup>62</sup>An exhaustive concordance for the NKJV is available, but it lacks support for Strong's number and a Hebrew and Greek dictionary.

<sup>63</sup>The older *Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* is more widely-available, but is not as complete or accurate as the newer version by Jerome Smith. [Torrey, [The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge](#)]

<sup>64</sup>Many works in this category, such as [David Noel Freeman, ed., [The Anchor Bible Dictionary](#) (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1996, c1992)], are so compromised by academic liberalism that we cannot recommend them except for comparative study by mature, well-grounded saints. Even then, the value-per-page of many works in this category is extremely low. The hugely-popular *NIV Study Bible* is not recommended. As mentioned elsewhere, the NIV translation is not suitable for in-depth study and the commentary attending the *NIV Study Bible* is compromised by an attempt to appeal to too many interpretive positions.

<sup>65</sup>"Apostasy would first begin in a denominational school and thus affect the training of ministers who were to fill the pulpits of the churches of those denominations. Eventually, more and more liberals took over the pulpits, and more and more churches became liberal themselves. So throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, apostasy took over the schools and trained ministers for denominational churches."—Fruchtenbaum, [The Footsteps of Messiah](#), 73.

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