

# Four Views of Interpretation of the Book of Revelation

## **Author Unknown**

The author of the Book of Revelation is the Apostle John (Rev.1:1, 9; 21:2; 22:8, also see the introductions to John's Gospel and 1 John). The title of the book describes the content and purpose of John's writing. The word "Revelation" means to take the cover off something. The Greek word apokálupis (602) means the "uncovering" or "unveiling" of the glory of Christ, and of future events (1 Thes 2:19).

Revelation was addressed to the churches of Asia Minor ( Rev.1:4) specifically named in chapters two and three. This book was written at a time when these churches were undergoing great persecution and difficulty. The two most important such periods were during the reigns of Nero in A.D.37-68 and Domitian in A.D.81-96.

## **There are four views on the interpretation of the Book of Revelation.**

1. The first is the **PRETERIST VIEW**. It places the events and visions describes as belonging to the past, particularly to the Roman Empire of the first century A.D. The proponents of this view explain the highly symbolic nature of the book as John's endeavor to hide the real meaning of what he was saying from the general populace, making it relative to the believers who lived at that time. They also consider the main purpose of this writing was encouragement for believers. But regarding God's ultimate intervention in the affairs of men: It is very unlikely that this view is correct in light of the prophetic nature of the book ( Rev.1:3). Some of the descriptions are of future events and cannot possibly be identified as historical ones.

2. The second view is the **HISTORICAL VIEW**, maintaining that Revelation is a panoramic view of history from the first century A.D. to the Second Coming of Christ. However, this position is unsubstantiated because historians have been unable to identify precise events in history which would answer particular visions that are symbolized.

3. The third view is the **SYMBOLIC (or ALLEGORICAL) VIEW** which contends that Revelation portrays the continuing conflict between the forces of good and evil throughout the span of human history. According to this view, the book was designed to give encouragement because good will triumph in the end.

4. The fourth view is the **FUTURISTIC VIEW**, maintaining that from chapter four to the end of the Book, Revelation deals with end-time events. According to this view, Revelation is not concerned with events of John's own day as much as later historical events, particularly those things that will take place in connection with the Second Coming of Christ. The proponents of this view would outline Revelation as follows: Chapter one deals with the past; Chapters two and three discuss things that were present at that time and throughout the church age; Chapter four through twenty-two speak of things that are yet to come, which things include the "Day of the Lord" as well as the Second Coming of Christ. This fourth view is the correct view as it aligns itself to the introduction of the book by John himself who says the following: Rev 1:1 KJV - "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants **things which must shortly come to pass**; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: It also aligns itself with Jesus' own words spoken to John about why He was giving him this vision: Rev 1:19 KJV - "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the **things which are, AND the things which shall be hereafter.**"

Even though the futuristic view is the correct approach to Revelation, one must also concede that there are many preterist, historical and symbolic patterns which can be overlaid upon history and our present culture, and the book does encourage us, and reassures us of the final outcome of things. This is because all prophecy in the Bible follows the **LAW OF MULTIPLE FULFILLMENT**. When someone prophesies accurately, that prophecy will not only address the particular context for which it was intended, but it will also echo and apply to many events in human affairs, past, present and future. Nevertheless John and Jesus, by their words in the first chapter, clearly tell us why the vision was given and the correct way to interpret it.