

Text: Rev. 1:1-3

Title: “Reading Revelation”

Time: 6/11/2017 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: I am not going to ask for a show of hands, but I want to begin with a couple of questions for you. First, have you ever read the Book of Revelation? Second, if you have, what percentage of what you read did you understand?

I ask those questions because we have come in our study of the book to that portion that Bible students read very differently. There are basically four different ways to read chapters 4 through the end of the book that have been suggested by readers of Revelation:

- The Preterist view. This is the idea that Revelation is about the past from the perspective of the author. I read an article published by PBS’s Frontline TV program that claimed that this view is the one most widely held by modern NT scholarship. Those same scholars claim a late date for Daniel, so that what we read in Daniel and in Revelation are not prophecies, but apocalyptic descriptions of past events. The difficulty with this position is twofold. First, it is very difficult to match the content of Revelation with the history of the Roman Empire prior to 96 AD, the date when everyone agrees this book was likely written. Second and more seriously, this view makes John out to be somewhat deceptive – 1:1, “to shew unto his

servants things which must shortly come to pass”; 1:19, “the things which shall be hereafter.”

- The Symbolical view: This is the idea that Revelation should only be read to discover the spiritual meaning of its content, which is applicable to all ages. That is certainly one of the goals we all should have when it comes to the Book of Revelation (1:3a). But again, this view denies what John clearly says about his writing about things that must shortly come to pass. The reason we must apply the spiritual truth of this book to our lives is that the time it describes is at hand (1:3b).
- The Historical view. This is the idea that Revelation is about the future from its author’s perspective, but about the past from our own. This has the advantage of taking John seriously when he claims to be writing about coming future events. Those who have held this view have tried to find significant current events in the pages of Revelation. The problem with that approach to reading Revelation is that its message keeps changing as history moves along. To stay relevant, the book’s message has to keep up with the progress of history. Most NT scholars see this problem with this approach, and few take it when reading Revelation today.
- The Futurist view. This is the idea that Revelation is about the future from both its author’s perspective and our perspective today. The advantages for this view are essentially four: (1) it too takes John

seriously when he says that he is writing about future events; (2) it relieves the need to match the content of Revelation with the record of history—we never have to force square pegs into round holes; (3) and it treats the Book of Revelation as prophecy with the expectation that, like other books of prophecy (Daniel, for instance), we can expect that God will fulfill what He has predicted beforehand would occur. So Revelation is like other prophetic books in the Bible, all of which contain symbolism, and all of which have very practical consequences for our lives today; and (4) it allows for a simple chronological reading of the visions of Revelation.

(v. 17), and by faithfully serving Him in our local church (v. 16; chs. 2-3).

So with that groundwork, let's take a look at the handout, "The chronological reading of Revelation."

Key lessons from Revelation:

1. Revelation is about heaven taking back a rebellious earth (Rev. 11:14-18). Do not live for a world in rebellion against the Lamb.
2. Revelation is about the future (1:17-19). Understand that the future is under God's control and that Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of everything. The purpose of our existence is to know, love, and glorify Him (Rev. 5:11-14).
3. Revelation is about Jesus Christ (1:1). He is the Lamb of God, but also the Lion of Judah (5:5-6).
4. Revelation is about getting ready (22:12-17). We get ready by quenching our thirst with the water of life that Christ offers