

Chapter One

FROM NOW TO THE RAPTURE

Welcome to the study of the book of Revelation.

My theological position about Revelation is in line with historic-conservative thought. However, I do not know of any other book that places every verse of Revelation in chronological order. I thought it someone would have accomplish this task long ago.

I have prayed over my study of the book of Revelation. I have studied long, and gleaned much. However, I have also studied those whom I believe to be eschatological-theological giants. My presentation draws from many quarters; too many to recall, and too many to note. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge three individuals.

I am indebted to Dr. Richard M. Fales (Northridge, CA), my Pastor from 1971 to 1974. His love of the Bible and enthusiasm about prophetic events first sparked my lifelong interest in eschatology. I am also indebted to author Roy Gingrich (Memphis, TN) whom I consider one of the foremost authorities in Bible interpretation, including the study of prophesy. Third, years before I knew I could write, my wife (Laura) encouraged me towards expression with penned word, and tactfully continued doing so until I took up the task. Writing has become a passion I might not have known were it not for her encouragement. No man is worthy of recognition that refuses to give thanks to those who have contributed most to a completed task. To these three, I am deeply grateful.

I speak in absolutes. For example, I will say, "The Apostle John is the human writer of the book of Revelation." In fact, there are theologians who do not think John the Apostle is the author.

I write, "Revelation was written between 90 AD and 96 AD, and was the last of the New Testament writings." Those who date the book 96 AD (or after) believe John wrote the book after his time of exile (to Patmos) ended (about 95 AD). Those who date the book between 90AD and 95AD believe that he wrote the book while on the isle of Patmos. However, whether John wrote the book while

on Patmos or after makes little difference. He wrote it, and that is what matters.

I do not let the theological mud and mire deter me. In this book, I do not address the various views of differing theologians past or present.

For everything I say with confidence, there are those who say the opposite with as much confidence. I am right and they are wrong, they are right and I am wrong, or we are all wrong. In reality, probably no one is completely right and only a few are completely wrong. You study. You investigate. Prove the truth for yourself.

It is easy to get "hung up" on who is right and who is wrong regarding the interpretation of and the events of Revelation. People who aggressively argue over who is right and who is wrong will miss the major point of John's writing. The Revelation is, primarily, about the revelation of Jesus Christ in the midst of events, and, secondarily, about the events. Concentrate on seeing Jesus in the events. The primary goals are to understand and see Jesus in the book of Revelation. Concerning Jesus, everyone can agree. Jesus is wonderful, powerful, magnificent, victor, and coming again!

The way most people study prophecy leaves them feeling confused and unfulfilled. It is depressing to study biblical prophecy only to realize that your hours of study have left you more confused about the subject than when you began. I have found a method to study prophecy and actually turn the hours of study into a solid grasp of the subject.

My goal is to give those who know little or nothing about prophecy a broad understanding of the book of Revelation. With this understanding, the reader is well-prepared to forge ahead in the study of end-time events with an overwhelming (and justified) sense of confidence. In 1998, a copy of this book in semi-final form ended up in the hands of a man who told me that "I just finished reading your book. For the first time in my life, I have a good understanding of the book of Revelation!" I asked him what he did for a living. He said, "I am a New Testament professor at a Bible

college.” I was encouraged and devoted myself to perfecting this workbook to the best of my ability.

This book is a combination of translation, paraphrase, and commentary. My purpose is to take away the confusion about the book of Revelation without taking away the wonder. Revelation is like all other difficult tasks in life. It is complicated when it is taken as a whole, but simple when taken in small amounts of information and that information properly understood within the whole. It is like a puzzle. Dumping all of the pieces out in one pile and trying to see the picture is impossible. The first step is to spread the pieces around and look at them in the broadest terms. The blue pieces may be the sky, water, or blue clothing. The green pieces might be trees or grass. The yellow pieces might be part of a sunrise. Who knows? All you can do at this point is look at the individual pieces and try to determine with what piece to begin the project of making sense out of the, seemingly, unrelated pieces.

The book of Revelation is exactly like putting together a puzzle. You look at the whole, find one piece to begin with and build as much of the project around that piece as you can. When you find another piece you understand, you set that piece and build around that known until the pieces begin to fit together, almost by themselves. The more you work, the clearer the picture becomes.

In working with a puzzle, we first view a picture of the finished project. This guides your efforts. Likewise, in the book of Revelation, we need to first view a finished picture. That finished picture should guide our work as we piece the Book together chronologically. The completed picture is composed of several theological truths.

1. Jesus is God.
2. Jesus is the Son of God.
3. Jesus is the eternal judge of every person.
4. Jesus is the Savior offered to the world. Only those who receive him as Savior go to Heaven.
5. Jesus is the ultimate winner of any eternal conflict between good and evil. God wins every eternal conflict. There is only the illusion of a contest. It is not a "fair fight" between good (God) and evil (the Devil). Be assured that you (if you are a Christian) win.

6. God permits evil, but God is never out of control over evil.
7. Salvation from hell is always an act of God's grace, and never God's reward for good behavior. This has always been true from the beginning of time and will remain true until the end of the Church Age (which ends with the Rapture of the Church). After the Rapture, those who receive the mark of the beast cannot go to heaven.
8. Differing interpretations of the Word of God do not change the Word of God. The events of the Revelation will unfold exactly as and exactly when God wants them to even if these events are contrary to the interpretation of the most learned scholars of all time. Man's errant theories and lack of understanding does not change God's plan.
9. The book of Revelation, as written, unfolds in a general, but not strict chronological order. However, the placement of those specific events within the text is often out of numerical order relative to chapter and verse.
10. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then God is for you and not against you. As a Christian, beyond having sympathy for others, you should relax through your study of Revelation. You are reading the future diary of others.