

INTRODUCTION

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.”

DANIEL 12:9-10

From the time of Jesus’ first advent, his followers have sought to understand God’s plan for eliminating evil and transitioning them into a perfect relationship with him. Just before his crucifixion, Jesus’ disciples asked him about this transition, which Scripture calls “the time of the end.” Jesus’ response was documented in the

Gospels, most prominently in Matthew 24 and 25, but also in Mark 13 and Luke 21. It is interesting to note that John did not address this topic in his gospel account, but later received revelation concerning this time from Jesus. We know this as the book of Revelation.

In the Gospels, the descriptions of the time of the end are relatively short, concise, and straightforward. Revelation is another matter. For centuries scholars, theologians, and the common man have attempted to unravel its mysteries and what has long been accepted to be its symbolic language of seals, beasts, trumpets, witnesses, bowls, and war. According to most accepted interpretations, the events are prophesied in telescoping or recurrent expression. The seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls are alternate descriptions of the same events to one degree or another.

The other book of the Bible that contains the most extensive prophecies concerning the time of the end is Daniel. It, too, features strange beasts, war, and end-times visions. In fact, the visions troubled Daniel so deeply that afterward he said, “So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me. My radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength” (Dan. 10:8). Other not-yet-fulfilled end-times prophecies are found elsewhere in the Bible. Most notably (although not exclusively), they can be found in the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.

I originally intended this study to be an informal reading of the book of Revelation in an effort to gain some clarity about a book I had never understood. Early in the process I realized I needed to take notes in order to not get lost... again. But how does one take notes and organize them when one is unsure those notes are being placed in the right order? According to traditional interpretations of Revelation, the notes would be overlapping since the events sometimes appear redundant or outside a normal temporal framework.

Then I began to wonder if, rather than repeating the same events using different imagery, Revelation described these events in the actual order in which they occur. After all, Matthew 24 and 25 seem to describe events in the order in which they unfold, although without the detail

and specificity of Revelation. I began by overlaying the events described in Matthew 24 onto Revelation and found that they lined up in perfect chronological order. I took this as confirmation to maintain this process and continued using Revelation as a template. I overlaid other prophecies onto the detailed descriptions in Revelation and found that they, too, were a perfect match.

My study took a very different direction. I was now constrained by what seemed to be one obvious fact: history is told in the sequence in which it unfolds. If prophecy is the pre-telling of history, would it not follow that it would also be told in the sequence in which it will occur? If so, the prophecies in Revelation do not re-tell the same events. They begin with the opening of the first seal in Revelation 5 and end in Revelation 21 with a new heavens and a new earth.

The result is *A Chronological Revelation*, an interpretation that maintains the original sequence of events as described in Revelation and allows other prophetic Scriptures to retain their original sequences as well. What emerges is a beautiful picture of God's repeated calls to repentance prior to his ever-increasing judgment on mankind. I am convinced that God is patiently preparing a great harvest, allowing those who will turn to him to repent in order to spare them from his wrath before the end of the age.

The book of Revelation is not meant to frighten or confuse God's faithful. Rather, it is intended as a warning and call to repentance. It is also intended as a comfort to those who seek to know where they are in the sequence of history. The events described in Revelation are guideposts to reassure those who cry out, "How much longer before you judge and avenge us?" Above all, Revelation establishes that a loving God is, indeed, in control.

MY APPROACH

My training as an architect has taught me to solve problems in a methodical manner, taking into account both functional and aesthetic requirements in order to produce a unified structure. In architecture, the greater the number of parameters that must be considered

(including climate, soil conditions, available building materials, building codes, and building type), the greater the challenge of assimilating them into a design that accomplishes the goal. Yet it can be done. I applied this same approach to the interpretation of Scripture. If the parameters of God's design for the end of the age are scattered throughout Scripture yet authored by the same omniscient source, it should be possible to compile these texts into one document that reveals the complete design.

My approach is an honest attempt to let Scripture speak for itself by eliminating all other sources that might pollute its meaning. This approach, I believe, allows us to see what the text is really saying. In my studies, I found that when I could not reconcile a particular point it was generally because I had let the perceptions and interpretations of others creep into my understanding. When I yielded to the text and rejected preconceived or external notions of what the text should say, its meaning became clear. I view this as the Holy Spirit revealing truth.

Was I successful in maintaining this approach 100 percent of the time? Probably not, but the consistency of the patterns that I encountered led me to believe that my approach is correct. The more I continue to study Revelation, the more firmly I believe that its events are chronological, even if some of the details need to be refined over time.

This work is an attempt to assimilate all relevant biblical prophecy into one chronological framework. As I use these pages to walk through Revelation, I overlay prophecies from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as from Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets to show how they all work together to create a single, clear, and chronological picture of the time of the end.

To the best of my knowledge, this straightforward overlay approach does not abrogate the orthodox grammatical-historical method of interpretation. Nor is there any code or complex symbolism broken here. No esoteric knowledge is required, just a simple, forthright reading of the text under the control of the Holy Spirit. Isn't it just like God to place his revelation right in front of our faces and to open our eyes at his appointed time (Dan. 12:4)?

In short, I believe:

- Jesus foretold history in chronological order, just as is natural when documenting historical events.
- Because all pre-telling of history in scripture was authored by the same God, different accounts can be overlaid onto one another without conflict. The result is the revelation of a more complete picture and a confirmation of the sequence.
- Scripture interprets Scripture.
- Language that is clearly symbolic is to be interpreted symbolically. Anything else is to be interpreted literally.
- Symbolic language is consistent throughout the Scriptures.
- Prophecy will be understood (“opened up”) at the time of the end.
- These accounts speak solely of the time of the end. They should therefore be interpreted as occurring at a distinct period of time just before Jesus’ return.

Some of these discussions may require background not held by every reader. Therefore, to keep the main text simple and easy to read, I interweave important prophecies into the discussion, but for those needing further explanation, I have created short, topic-specific appendixes at the end of the book.

I have also provided a general outline and chart depicting the chronological order of events found in the book of Revelation to assist in maintaining a sense of place as we move through the book.