

# **Dominion or Departure?**

## **Matthew 24 – The Olivet Discourse**

**The Book of Revelation is a revelation --- it was meant to be understood.**

- Have to study.
- Revelation's symbols have their roots planted in Old Testament imagery.

## **Three Main Approaches to The Millennium**

- Premillennial – when Jesus returns, He will establish an earthly visible Kingdom for 1,000 years.
- Amillennial – do not believe in any earthly visible Kingdom prior to the final judgment.
- Postmillennial – the Church will bring the Kingdom to earth, then Christ will return.

## **Four Main Interpretations**

1. **Idealist** – believes that Revelation only sets forth timeless truths concerning the battle between good and evil that continues throughout the church age.
2. **Historical** – believe Revelation contains visions that reveal in advance outstanding moments and events in human history from the days of

Rome to the end of this present evil age. Within the book are discovered conjectured references to the various waves of barbarian invasions, the rise of Islam, the Protestant Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the French Revolution, World War I, and so on. The beast has been identified variously as Mohammed, the Pope, Napoleon, or some other subsequent dictator. The advocates of this theory endeavor to find in European political history the fulfillment of the various visions, considered to be in chronological order.

3. **Futurist** – sees Revelation as primarily a prophecy concerning the future of the church and the world. The seven letters are addressed to seven historical churches, and the seals represent the forces of history – however long it may last – through which God works out His redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end. However, beginning with chapter 8, the events described lie entirely in the future and will attend the final disposition of God's will for human history. The futurist interpretation is premillennial, but not dispensational. It teaches that Christ will return to establish a millennial kingdom on the earth, but this will not be a Jewish political kingdom.

3b. **Dispensational** – this view is the most recent to appear in church history. The seven letters to the seven churches are interpreted prophetically as an outline of a seven-stage church age. Revelation 4:1 is interpreted as the rapture of the church, understood as the secret departure of all believers to heaven before the great tribulation. The rest of the book is then seen as concerned exclusively with the great tribulation and the fate of Israel at the hands of the Antichrist. According to this view, Christ returns to destroy the Beast, to bind Satan, and to introduce His thousand-year reign on earth. Dispensationalists view this millennium as the time when the Jewish theocracy – with the temple, the sacrificial system, and the Law of Moses – is restored, and the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel's future political triumph over the Gentiles are literally and physically fulfilled. Interestingly, many of the Pentecostal/Charismatic tradition interpret Revelation and Daniel from this dispensational

view, even though such an interpretative approach anywhere other than in prophetic scripture would dictate a denial of the present manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit.

- Dispensationalism teaches that the seven churches represent “seven phases of the spiritual history of the church”.
- There is no scriptural evidence for this!
- It is based upon 2 main presuppositions.
- The “seven ages” doctrine, which presupposes that Revelation covers all of Church history.
- Scofield admitted, “It is incredible that in a prophecy covering the Church period there should be no such fore view.”
- The prophecy covers “the things that must shortly take place” (Rev. 1:1), and the time of which it speaks is “near” (Rev. 1:3).
- The Dispensationalist believes that the Church will end in defeat & apostasy.
- They say that today we are the Laodicean Church of Rev. 3, which is lukewarm, Jesus has nothing good to say about it, and it makes Him sick to His stomach.
- This is supposed to symbolize the Church of Jesus Christ at the end of the age.
- This is in stark contrast to the clear & numerous references in Scripture about the Church being pure, powerful, radiant, and faith-filled at the time of the Lord’s return.

4. **Preterist** – regards the visions of the book of Revelation as referring to events belonging to the closing of the decades of the first century, contemporary with the prophet John. The prophecy was concerned with the persecution of Christians instituted by the beast, usually understood to be Nero. Revelation was written to encourage believers with the hope that God would intervene, destroy the beast, bring deliverance to His people, and establish His everlasting Kingdom. Accordingly, preterists believe Revelation speaks to the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, and apostate Judaism – all of which took place in A.D. 70.
- Full preterists
  - Partial preterist / Orthodox preterist

## 1. Was Revelation written in AD 96?

- Popular opinion in the U.S. has shifted to a late date view (AD 95 or 96).
- The early date view (prior to AD 70) is older.
- St. Irenaeus: “These things are so, and this number is found in all the approved and ancient copies, and those who saw John face to face confirm it, and reason teaches us that the number of the name of the beast appears in its letters...If it were necessary that his name should be declared clearly at the present time, it would have been announced by who saw the revelation. For he/it was seen toward the end of Domitian’s reign”
- Domitian’s reign had no major persecution of Christians.
- Rev. 1:9 – I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation...

- John A.T. Robinson: “Domitian did banish some Christians, but when this limited and selective purge, in which no Christian was for certain put to death, is compared with the massacre of Christians under Nero in what two early and entirely independent witnesses speak of as “immense multitudes”, it is astonishing that modern commentators should have been led by Irenaeus, who himself does not even mention a persecution, to prefer a Domitianic context for the book of Revelation.”
- Muratorian Canon (AD 170): “The blessed Apostle Paul, following the role of his predecessor John, writes to no more than seven churches by name.”
- Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215): “The teaching of our Lord, beginning with the reign of Augustus, was completed in the middle of times of Tiberius. And that of the Apostles, embracing the ministry of Paul, ends with Nero.”

## **2. Does the millennium refer to a literal 1,000 year period?**

- There are places in the Bible where numbers are literal.
- But there are many more places in the Bible where numbers are not to be taken literally.
- Jesus tells Peter to forgive 7 x 70.
- 1,000 was a very large number in that day.
- Ps. 50:10 – God owns cattle on a thousand hills.
- There is no biblical prooftext that the millennium means a literal 1,000 years.

### **3. Is the Antichrist a person?**

- That word is not found in Revelation.
- 1 John 2:18-23 – Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.
- 1 John 4:1-5 – Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world, and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them.
- 2 John 7-11 – Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

### **4. Is the rapture in the Book of Revelation?**

- No.
- Dispensationalists say that it's there in Rev. 4:1, but read it: "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."<sup>2</sup> At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.<sup>3</sup> And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and ruby..."
- The text says nothing about the Church!
- Ralph Bass: "Dispensationalists make much of the fact that the word Church is not found from Revelation 4 all the way until Revelation 22:16. To them this means that the Church is not on earth, but in heaven. However, the word Church is not mentioned as being in heaven either! So what does this really prove? That the Church is not on earth and not in heaven? And consider this, although chapters 4-21 are said to be descriptive of the new Jewish age, please note that neither the words Jew, Jews, nor Israel are mentioned even one time in these chapters. By Dispensational logic, we must conclude that the Jews are also raptured here and are no longer on earth either! The fact of the matter is the whole book of Revelation is to and about the Church. Jesus starts off addressing the church in Chapter 1, and He ends the book doing the same. What has changed?"
- The word "rapture" isn't in Revelation, or anywhere else in the Bible.
- "harpadzo" in 1 Thes. 4:16-17.
- 1 Thes. 4:16-17 – For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

- “meet” = apantesis
- Acts 28:12-16 – And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli, where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome. And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.
- Verse 15 – “they came to meet [apantesis] us”
- Matt. 25:6-10 -- Parable of the Wise & Foolish Virgins – And at midnight a cry was heard: “Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, “Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.” But the wise answered, saying, “No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.” And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.
- Verse 6 – “go out to meet him!”
- They did not interrupt His progress or reverse His direction.

## **5. Why was Revelation written?**

- This is a very important question.



- The purpose of the Book of Revelation is to reveal Christ as Lord to a suffering Church.
- St. John is writing to strengthen the Christian Community in their faith.
- Jesus had ascended to His throne, and the ungodly were resisting His authority by persecuting His Church.
- Philip Mauro – “The suffering of the Christians was not a sign that Jesus had abandoned the world to the devil. Rather, it revealed that He was King! If Jesus’ Lordship was historically meaningless, the ungodly would have no reason to trouble His Church. The persecuted Christians were not at all forsaken by God. In reality, they were on the front lines of the conflict of the ages, and the outcome was sure!

## **6. Is Revelation contemporary or futuristic?**

- It was written to and for Christians who were living at the time it was delivered.
- From the outset it states that it’s intended for “the seven churches which are in Asia”.
- John clearly expected them to be able to understand the symbols in this prophecy.
- J. Stuart Russell: “Was a book sent by an apostle to the churches of Asia Minor, a bunch of unintelligible jargon? That can’t be true. Yet if the book were meant to unveil the secrets of distant times, it would have been unintelligible to its first readers – and not only unintelligible, but even irrelevant and useless. If it spoke about all sorts of future events, as some would have us believe, what possible interest could it have for the persecuted Christians to whom it was sent? What purpose would there be in sending them a document

which they were urged to read and ponder, if that document was mainly about events hundreds or thousands of years in the future? Is it conceivable that an apostle would mock the suffering Christians of his time with dark parables about distant ages? If this book were really intended to minister faith and comfort to the very persons to whom it was sent, it must unquestionably deal with matters in which they were practically and personally interested. The only tenable, the only reasonable, hypothesis is that it was intended to be understood by its original readers, and it must be focused on the things happening in their own day."

- The Revelation tells us its time period.
- Rev. 1:1 - The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place.
- Rev. 1:3 - Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.
- Rev. 22:6 - The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show His servants the things that must soon (shortly) take place."
- The words "soon" & "shortly" & "near" simply cannot be made to mean anything but what they say.
- There are contemporary references throughout the Book.
- In Rev. 13:18 he clearly encourages his contemporary readers to calculate the "number of the Beast" and decipher its meaning.
- In Rev. 17:10 he tells us that one of the 7 kings is currently on the throne.

- In Rev. 17:18, he tells us that the great Harlot "is [present tense] the Great City, which reigns [present tense] over the kings of the earth"
- A futuristic interpretation is completely opposed to the way St. John himself interprets his own prophecy.
- The instruction of the angel to St. John.
- Rev. 22:10 – Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

David Chilton: "The focus of the Book of Revelation is upon the contemporary situation of St. John and his first-century readers. It was written to show those early Christians that Jesus is Lord – "ruler over the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). It shows that Jesus is the key to world history – that nothing can occur apart from His sovereign will, that He will be glorified in all things, and that His enemies will lick the dust. But the Book of Revelation speaks powerfully to us as Christians today. And its message to us is the same as it was to the early Church: that there is not a square inch of ground in heaven or on earth or under the earth in which there is peace between Christ and Satan; that our Lord demands universal submission to His rule; and that He has predestined His people to victorious conquest and dominion over all things in His name. We must make no compromise, and give no quarter in the great battle of history. We are commanded to win."