

## FOUR INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES TO REVELATION

We have begun a study of the book of Revelation together, and last week we introduced the book. We declared in that introduction that our goal in this study is to understand this book, and our goal is to see and rejoice in the triumph of Christ over sin and over Satan, which triumph this book tells us of as its major thrust and theme.

Revelation is a book of victory. It declares the victory of Christ and His people over sin and over Satan. It tells us that this victory over sin and Satan is both certain and it is total. And because Christ's victory over sin and Satan is both certain and total, this book has been a great source of comfort to suffering saints in every century since it was written.

We live in a time of great spiritual warfare and conflict, and Satan and his people relentlessly attack us. But the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and He has the keys to hell and to death, and no one is able to defeat Him.

So the constant theme of the book of Revelation, from start to finish, is that Christ is with His church as they battle the forces of evil, and Christ will ensure their victory over those forces of evil, even though the battle is very long and very difficult and very painful.

We said that one of the goals we had as we study this book was that we might understand it: that we would understand its structure; that we would understand its language; that we would understand its symbolism; and that most of all, we would understand its message.

Now this of course involves interpretation. If we are to rightly understand the book, we must rightly interpret the book. But the question is, How are we to interpret it? What perspectives and what principles should we employ in arriving at its proper meaning? This is supremely important, because if we do not employ a proper method of interpretation, we will fail to rightly understand the message of the book, and therefore, we will lose much of the benefit of the book.

So what we want to do today is look at the four major approaches that people have taken in interpreting the book of Revelation, and we want to set forth which one of them is the approach that we will be taking, and the approach that we believe is the correct one, as we strive to understand this book. Here, then, are the four major approaches that have historically been taken to the interpretation of the book of Revelation.

The first approach that has been taken historically in interpreting the book of Revelation has been what is called the Preterist view. The term Preterist comes from the Latin, and it simply means "past." We could entitle this the "Past" view.

The Preterist view of the book of Revelation is that the prophecies in the book were either largely or else completely fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman army in 70 A.D. Those who teach the Preterist view of the interpretation of the book of Revelation say, therefore, that

everything, or almost everything that the book of Revelation predicts has already been fulfilled in the past. So the book of Revelation was either largely or completely fulfilled already, and has been for nearly 2,000 years.

There are two schools of thought in the Preterist movement. There are, first of all, the extreme Preterists, who of course don't call themselves extreme Preterists. What they prefer to call themselves is "consistent" Preterists. They believe that the prophecies contained in the book of Revelation were totally and without exception entirely fulfilled in 70 A.D. They teach that all the tribulation and wrath and judgments that are described in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem. They believe that Jesus actually returned in 70 A.D. They believe that the resurrection occurred in 70 A.D., and that the new heavens and the new earth were instituted in 70 A.D., and that we are now living in them.

These positions can only be maintained by a very severe spiritualization of the nature of the second coming, the nature of the resurrection, and the nature of the new heavens and the new earth. Those who hold this view of extreme Preterism, or as they would prefer to call it, "consistent" Preterism, are in fact heretics. They fall under the condemnation of Second Timothy 2, verses 17 and 18, where it says, "<sup>17</sup> And their word will eat as doth a [cancer]: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; <sup>18</sup> who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." Those who say the resurrection is already past are cancerous teachers who are overthrowing the Christian faith, not establishing it.

This passage in Second Timothy 2:17-18 was written at the end of Paul's life, when he was in prison. So those who teach this extreme Preterist point of view really deny physical, bodily resurrection. They have other explanations, which I won't go into, for what this resurrection is. They say the second coming of Christ occurred in 70 AD, when He came in judgment, and we're now in some kind of a new heavens and the new earth. We're also perfected, and therefore we can't and don't sin.

There's a whole host of very evil conclusions that flow out of this extreme Preterist position. This view is promoted by J. Stuart Russell, by Max King, and by Edward Stevens, among others, in their periodical, *Kingdom Counsel*, and various pamphlets and books that they publish. We have, in fact, had these people show up in this church twice in past years, trying to promote this doctrine and persuade our people to believe it. I, needless to say, sent them out the door.

The second school of Preterist thought is what are called the "partial" Preterists. The partial Preterists hold that the vast majority of the prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 A.D., with the fall of Jerusalem; however, they would say that the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the new heavens and the new earth are yet in the future and yet remain to be fulfilled. So they hold that the vast bulk of what is spoken of in the book of Revelation *did* occur in 70 A.D., but that the final events, for example, of chapter 19 and chapters 21 and 22, remain yet to be fulfilled.

This is the view of the Christian Reconstructionists, the so-called Theonomists, and it's usually associated with a postmillennial view of Revelation chapter 20. The idea of postmillennialism is that the kingdom of God will be physically manifested in the governments of the world in some kind of a Christian golden age that precedes the second coming of Jesus Christ.

This view of partial Preterism, which is within the realm of orthodoxy, is held by people like Gary North and David Shelton and even R.C. Sproul. These men are all what are called partial Preterists, where they believe that the events of Matthew 24 and the events of the book of Revelation were fulfilled in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and the only thing that remains is for Christ to come back, the resurrection to occur, and the new heavens and the new earth to be established after the final judgment.

There are a number of problems with the partial Preterist view of the book of Revelation. First of all, this view necessitates that the book of Revelation had to be written very early, certainly before 70 A.D., when we know for a fact that Jerusalem fell. So they posit that it was probably written sometime in the 60s. The problem with ascribing an early date to the book of Revelation is that the vast majority of the evidence is solidly against it. There is strong evidence and strong consensus that Revelation was written by the apostle John around 95 or 96 A.D., during the persecution that took place during the reign of Domitian, who was the Roman Caesar at the time. Therefore, the theory that book of Revelation is a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is not possible if this book were written after that event, as it seems to have most probably been.

The second problem with a Preterist interpretation of the book of Revelation is not only that it doesn't appear that the book of Revelation was written prior to 70 A.D., but that the judgment depicted in the book of Revelation that constitutes God's final wrath, is one that falls on *all* the nations of the earth, not just on Jerusalem. The reference in Revelation to the fall of the city of Babylon as being a reference to the fall of Jerusalem is simply not tenable, because Babylon is a term that is always used to refer to secular foreign powers, and it is never a term that is used to refer to the city of Jerusalem, or to Israel itself. The depictions of God's wrath falling upon all the nations of the world in the book of Revelation is simply not congruent with the fall of a single city or nation, as the fall of Israel and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was. The fall of Israel and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is simply not a big enough event to fulfill the descriptions of the wrath of God that is declared to fall in the book of Revelation.

A third major problem with preterism is that, if it is true, the book of Revelation largely ceased to be relevant to Christians after 70 A.D. Since it was largely fulfilled at that point, it has little relevance to those who live after that time. Revelation would have been intensely relevant to Christians between 60 and 70 A.D., but after 70 A.D., the vast bulk of it would have become, according to their scheme, not a prophecy of the future, but rather a history book of the past. So Preterism confines the relevance of the vast majority of the book of Revelation to about a ten year period and to a single generation—that of the first century.

Well that, then, is a very brief overview of the Preterist position of the interpretation of the book of Revelation. It is a position that says that the vast majority of the book was fulfilled in 70 A.D. The only things that remain to be fulfilled are the second coming of Christ and the final judgment, and the new heavens and the new earth, and of course the resurrection that accompanies all of that. Everything else is already finished and fulfilled.

That brings us then to the second major view of the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Having seen the Preterist view, that is, that most of the book has been fulfilled in the past, the second view is the Historicist view. You might imagine that this view has something to do with history, since it's called "Historicist," and it does. The Historicist interpreters of Revelation see the book as a calendar of historic events, written in advance.

Now you all have calendars at your house, and I bet if I were to go look at your calendar, I would see several events penciled in that you hope to participate in in the future—birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, meetings, chores. You have this calendar of future events that you hope to accomplish. This is what the book of Revelation is seen as being.

According to this view, Revelation is seen to be a prediction of specific events during the time between the first and the second coming of Christ. The seals and the trumpets and the bowls paint a picture of the successive stages of Church history and the events that are going to occur throughout that history. So the historical events, like the collapse of the Roman Empire, and the rise of the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, the Reformation, and various wars are described by the various pictures and symbols set forth in the book of Revelation. For example, the swarm of locusts coming out of the bottomless pit in Revelation chapter 9 is said by some to represent and predict the rise and spread of Islam and its destructive armies and actions.

Now among Historicist interpreters, the historical events that are symbolically predicted in the book of Revelation seem to always be those that occur in European Western Civilization. This approach makes the book of little relevance to the rest of the world that lives outside of Western Europe. It also makes it of little relevance to those who lived in the first century, since most of what is addressed in the book of Revelation, according to them, lay centuries ahead of their time. Of what use to a first century Christian would be a prophecy that World War II was going to occur 1945 years later? Why would they even care or want to know?

The problem is that each Historicist interpreter views the book of Revelation differently, so as to make it fit the realities of the time in which he lives and the events that he considers significant. So, for example, if you see a Historicist interpreter writing in the 1400s, he fits the book of Revelation into that time frame; and then someone's writing in the 1600s, and they fit it into the events in that time frame; and then somebody writes in the 1800s; and now people are writing today and they are predicting various events.

The latest one I've seen is that now we can find the rise of America in the book of Revelation, chapter 12, where it talks about the eagle with wings, bearing the church into the wilderness.

The symbol of America is the eagle, right? So what we do is, as the centuries unfold, there is a constant reassessment of what these various symbols represent, in terms of unfolding historical events and which events they prophesied. The problem is that each Historicist interpreter views the book differently, so as to make it fit the realities of the time in which he lives, and the events he considers significant.

Various adherents to this method of interpretation ascribe various events during the last 2,000 years to the various symbols in Revelation, with little agreement among themselves. Among the Historicist interpreters, there are nearly as many interpretations as there are commentators. Since there is such a wide divergence among them as to what events are predicted by what symbols, it would appear this approach cannot yield any *real* hope for properly understanding this book.

It is telling that while insisting that all of history is set forth in this book under these various symbols, Historicists have not been able to agree among themselves as to the events in history that these various visions symbolize. In 2,000 years, one would think that at least the main outline of human history would have emerged with some clarity, but this has not yet been the case. And so it would seem that this Historicist approach in interpreting the book of Revelation can never yield any certainty as to its meaning.

Furthermore, nowhere does the book of Revelation indicate that the order of the seals and the trumpets and the bowls represent the chronological order of Western Civilization in history. The reality is that the seals and the trumpets and the bowls do not portray a chronological order of events, but instead, the seals and the trumpets and the bowls represent the same set of events, looked at from different perspectives. And we're going to talk more about the cyclic nature of the structure of the book of Revelation in our later messages.

The Historicists' view of the interpretation of Revelation was a view that was largely, and I would say almost universally held by the Reformers. It is a perspective that figures very largely in their writings. They saw the Pope as the beast, the man of sin and the antichrist. And they saw the Roman Catholic Church as the great whore, Babylon, who of course Christ would destroy with His second coming. We see this even in our Confession of Faith, where the Pope is identified as the Antichrist. This arose out of the Historicist view of the interpretation of the book of Revelation.

Well that brings us, then, to the third major view of how the book of Revelation ought to be interpreted. Having seen the Preterist view, that the vast bulk of Revelation has already been fulfilled in the past, in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; having seen the Historicist view, that Revelation describes specific events in the unfolding of the last 2,000 years of history; thirdly, we have what's called the Futurist view.

As the name suggests, the Futurist method of interpreting the book of Revelation holds that the vast majority of the book has yet to be fulfilled at some point in the future. So this is the inverse of the Preterist view. The Preterist view says that the vast majority of the book has already been

fulfilled, and the Futurist view says the vast majority of the book has yet to be fulfilled. In 2016, the vast majority of the book of Revelation has not yet been fulfilled.

Now this Futurist view of the book of Revelation is the dominant view in our day among Evangelical Christendom. It has been widely popularized by dispensational premillennialism, and by prolific endtimes books and movies that have been written for popular audiences. According to the Futurists, the first three chapters of Revelation are said to not only describe seven literal churches that existed in John's day during the first century, but these seven churches also represent seven periods of church history, from John's day until the rapture.

And so, strangely enough, Futurists are therefore Historicists, as they interpret chapters 1 to 3 of the book of Revelation, because they say that the churches of chapters 1 to 3 are prophetic of seven successive periods of church history as it chronologically unfolds, up until the rapture of the church. The characteristics of each of the seven churches are said to also characterize the period of church history that they represent.

For example, the church at Ephesus, the first church mentioned, represents the period of history from Pentecost to about 100 A.D., the apostolic era.

Then the second church mentioned, Smyrna, represents the period from 100 A.D. to 300 A.D., and that's the suffering period, under the great persecutions of the Caesars, until Constantine came along and ended that suffering, because the church at Smyrna, as you read about it, is a suffering church.

Then the third church mentioned, Pergamos, represents the period from 300 A.D. to 800 A.D.: Compromise, integration with the world through Constantine and the beginning of the Roman Catholic Church, and the combination of church and state.

This scheme goes on until the last church, Laodicea, the lukewarm church, which represents the church that exists in the last days, just before the rapture of the church and the commencement of the seven year great tribulation, which concludes with the second coming of Christ and is followed with the thousand year millennium.

So dispensational premillennialism is Historicist in its view of chapters 1 to 3, but then becomes Futurist, with reference to the remainder of the book. Apart from the letters to the churches in chapters 1 to 3, the remainder of the book details the events that will immediately precede the second coming of Christ. The Futurist interpretation holds that chapters 4 to 22 have had no bearing on, nor any fulfillment in, nor any application to, the last 2,000 years of church history.

According to this view, the book is not focused on the first century Christians nor focused on the last 2,000 years of church history. According to the Futurist view, chapters 4 to 22 are mainly focused on a very small and short period of time known as the Great Tribulation. In particular, chapters 4 to 19—all those chapters—refer only to a seven year period of time, the Great

Tribulation. They believe that the Great Tribulation will begin with the rapture of the church, which they say is described in Revelation 4:1. This Great Tribulation will last seven years, and it will end with the second coming of Christ, in chapter 19. So the period from chapter 4 to chapter 19, inclusive, describes the seven year Great Tribulation that will occur after the rapture and before the second coming.

They then think that chapter 20 details a millennium that lasts a literal 1,000 years, and concludes with the final judgment and the new heavens and the new earth, as described in chapters 21 and 22. So Futurists see chapters 4 to 22 as not only future to our time, they also see them as a strict chronology. Chapters 4 to 22 are seen as representing the actual historical order of events as they unfold. So the seals are followed by the trumpets, which are followed by the bowls, and so on. The events of chapter 20 occur after the events of chapter 19. It is all seen as a strict chronology.

Furthermore, Futurists not only see chapters 4 to 22 as a strict chronology, but they also take the symbolic language they contain and the imagery they present and attempt to literalize it all, as much as they possibly can. Literalism is a huge mark of Futurism. Thus, the mark of the beast is literally a physical mark in the forehead and hand, like a tattoo or an embedded computer chip. An actual one third—no more, no less—of all the creatures in the sea perish, and an actual one third—no more, no less—of all ships sink when the second trumpet is sounded, and so on. Clearly, symbolic language is by them made to be literal.

For we who live prior to the rapture, all chapters 4 through 20 do is provide us with an exciting preview as to what the Great Tribulation will be like, and what the second coming will look like, and what the thousand year millennium will consist of, but all of this has no real usefulness to us today, or any real personal application to us, nor has it had for the people of God for the last 2,000 years. It isn't for them. It's for the people who live during the Tribulation.

So chapters 4 to 19 are a mere curiosity to us, because even if we're alive when the Tribulation described in those chapters begins, we will completely miss all it describes because we will have been raptured up into heaven before it begins, and will come back with Christ after it is over. So we are guaranteed to have zero participation in chapters 4 to 19.

This Futurist approach robs the book of any significance to the early Christians of John's day, and it robs it of any significance for all subsequent generations as well. Its only applicability is to the ones living during the seven year Tribulation. It seems like chapters 4 to 19 were written for those who live during the Tribulation, and not for anybody else, because it has application to them alone. Yet this runs entirely contrary to the stated recipients that this book was addressed to, which was the seven churches, which represent the church universal throughout all the ages. This book is meant for all believers of all ages in all periods of history, not for a narrow segment of people living during a brief span of time of seven years under great tribulation.

The Futurist view was popularized by people like J.N. Darby and C.I. Scofield. It's taught today by Dallas Theological Seminary. Its scholarly presentation is contained in books like *Things to Come*, by Dwight Pentecost. One of its most popular proponents in our day and age is John MacArthur. It has been popularized by Hal Lindsey, in his book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, and *There's a New World Coming*, and by Tim LaHaye, with his *Left Behind* series and the movies that followed that series of books. And so Futurism is what 90% of the Christians you talk to believe.

That brings us then to the fourth and final view, and the view I believe is correct and the view that we will be using as we interpret the book of Revelation, and that is the so-called Idealist view. The Idealist view sees the entire book of Revelation as a symbolic presentation of the battle between Christ and Satan, the battle between the people of God and the people of the Devil, and the battle between good and evil. In a word, the book of Revelation is a depiction of spiritual warfare. It depicts the participants in that warfare, it depicts the struggles of that warfare, and it depicts the outcome of that warfare.

What this book does is it takes us repeatedly on a journey through the period between the first and the second coming of Christ, showing us in each of those journeys the nature and the outcome of spiritual conflict and warfare.

So we see the seven seals, and John takes us through them. And as he takes us through them, they span the time between the first and the second coming of Jesus, and they describe what spiritual warfare will look like during that time from a particular perspective.

And then in the trumpets, he takes us from the time period from the first coming to the second coming of Christ, and describes to us from that perspective what spiritual warfare will look like—who the participants are and what the outcomes will be.

And then we come to the seven bowls, or vials, and once again, John takes us on a journey from the time period from the first coming to the second coming of Christ, and describes from a third perspective what spiritual warfare will look like through that process of time.

So the seals and the trumpets and the bowls all run concurrently with each other, from the first to the second coming, each of them describing spiritual warfare that takes place during that time from a different perspective and with reference to the various participants and types of things that we will experience, and that the wicked will experience, as that time frame unfolds.

The seals and the trumpets and the bowls teach us over and over again of the spiritual conflict that exists in every age and every generation that will occur, and the struggles that will exist between the first and the second comings of Christ. It tells us of the faithfulness we must exercise in the face of persecution and the victory that we shall obtain if we do.



Now this is not to say that every single thing in the book is merely a description of spiritual warfare. It is to say, the vast majority of it is. However, there is certainly a specific predictive element in this book regarding the literal second coming of Christ, regarding the literal final judgment, and regarding the literal eternal disposition of the saved and the lost into either the new heavens and the new earth, or into the lake of fire.

So we're not saying there's no futuristic elements in the book of Revelation. Certainly, the second coming of Christ, the final judgment, the disposition of the saved into the new heavens and the new earth, and the disposition of the lost into the lake of fire—these things are yet future, these things are literal, and these things will certainly occur in the specific. But as for the vast majority of the book, it is a description in symbolic language, over and over again from various perspectives, of the kind of spiritual warfare that will be going on between the first and the second coming of Christ, between Christ and Satan, and between the people of God and the people of the Devil.

It is true that the literal second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the final judgment, the eternal disposition of the saved and lost and their respective destinies are repeatedly indicated in this book, and with increasing clarity as we move toward the end of the book. These things *are* yet to be fulfilled, but the vast majority of the book speaks of the kind and the nature of spiritual warfare that each and every generation of Christians between the first and second coming of Christ will have to fight.

What this means is that every generation must deal with the issues that the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 had to deal with. Every generation experiences the events described in the seals and the trumpets and the bowls. Every generation does battle with the dragon and the beast and the false prophets. Every generation does battle with the great whore, Babylon. Every generation must refuse the mark of the beast. Every generation must obtain the seal of God in the forehead and in the hand.

Therefore, this book and its message is of compelling relevance and value to all believers of all centuries between the first and second coming of Christ, equally. It is relevant to first century Christians; it is relevant to fifteenth century Christians; and it is equally relevant to twentyfirst century Christians.

So then, this book is a depiction of the spiritual warfare that we are going to be engaging in between the first and the second comings of Christ. This book is therefore designed to inspire persecuted, suffering, battle-weary Christians of every generation to keep up the good fight of faith and to endure to the end, knowing that the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever, and we will reign with Him.

Now to achieve this goal of depicting the spiritual warfare that is going to take place between the first and the second coming of Christ, symbolic language is employed. Symbolic language is

employed to depict the struggle of the believers and the triumph that they will achieve through the power of Christ and His saving work. Symbolic language is used to depict the wrath of God's judgments that will fall on the ungodly for their persecution of the saints. Symbolic language is used to depict the work and the witness of the church in conveying the message of God to the world.

In vision after vision, with symbol after symbol, the truth is emphasized that God is sovereign, that God controls people and events so that His purposes are always being achieved. This makes for a very thrilling book—a book that comforts us, a book that strengthens us, a book that fills us with joy and awe as we see God destroying His enemies and delivering His people and advancing His cause and kingdom in every generation, to the end of time.

The key to understanding these symbols and these visions in the book of Revelation and their applicability to each generation as they fight that same battle over and over, is to be found in the Old Testament. There is not a symbol in the book of Revelation that is not also contained in the Old Testament. Therefore, as these first century Christians read this book, being saturated with the knowledge of the Old Testament, as John referred to this symbol or that symbol, instantly they knew what that symbol represented: the concept, the idea, the circumstance, the principle, the truth. And this is the journey that we're going to go on.

We're not going to say, You know, it was fulfilled in 70 A.D. It really doesn't have a lot to do with us. We're not going to say, You know, in 1492, when Columbus sailed the ocean blue and discovered America, that was indicated in the third seal. We're not going to say that. We're not going to say, You know, don't worry too much about what's in chapter 6, because that refers to the Great Tribulation, and you're going to be raptured out of there, and you're going to be in heaven singing the praises of God while all this horrible stuff is happening down on earth. You're going to miss it all because God's going to save you from tribulation, and when you come back, you'll get to have the millennium and offer a few animal sacrifices and rule over all those unglorified people while you're in your glorified body. And that'll be cool. And this is supposed to sustain suffering saints?

No, what we're going to do is say, You know, the book of Revelation describes all of the tribulation that first century Christians went through, and all second century Christians go through, and all third century Christians go through, and all twentyfirst century Christians go through. And you know, as we read the book of Revelation and we interpret these symbols and these visions, you will see, Wow! This is what's happening to *me*! This is what has happened to me in the last decade. These are the kinds of things I'm going to struggle with in the decade to come of my life.

What you have in the book of Revelation is a description of the good fight of faith that you fight every day of your life, and every Christian has fought and will fight between the first and second comings of Christ, and that battle will end when Jesus returns. Over and over again, it takes us through the battle to the second coming, and then through the battle and to the second coming,

and through the battle and to the second coming, with increasing intensity and clarity, until the end, when the second coming does occur and the battle is over. And we go into the new heavens and the new earth, never to battle again. Thus, the Idealist view.

Now this view is held by people like William Hendriksen, in his book, *More than Conquerors*; G.K. Beale, in his commentary on the book of Revelation; Leon Morris, in his commentary on the book of Revelation, and many others. I think it's the only view that makes sense. It's the only view that makes sense *out of* the symbols and the pictures that are set before us in the visions that are contained in the book of Revelation. So this is the direction we're going to go.

Next time, we're going to talk about specific principles of interpretation, and of course those principles will be pursued within the framework of Idealism; that is, the book of Revelation is a book that describes spiritual warfare for every generation between the first and second comings of Christ, with an increasing clarity as you move from the front to the back of the book, and focus on the actual second coming of Christ, and then the literal eternal state, in chapters 21 and 22. So the book is progressive, while being cyclic at the same time. We'll talk more about that next time, God willing.

Well, I know that was a lot of information and it was a little academic, but hopefully it gives you a frame of reference now to understand the various perspectives people take when you hear them talk about the book and its interpretation. Shall we pray together.

Our Father, we thank you so much for this wonderful book, and Lord, we do pray that you would help us to have humility as we study it and to rightly understand the message that it contains. Father, I pray that we would not assume that the Futurist view that is so popular in our day has to automatically be the correct one just because everybody believes it. Help us to realize that it was not the popular view until just recently, in the last century or so, and prior to that time, other views prevailed and were the consensus. So may we not be caught up in a myopic perspective on our timeframe, as though it's the only way it's ever been. Lord, I pray that you would give us grace to not only understand the message of the book, but to put it into practice in our lives, for ultimately, the preaching of the word is designed to bring worship and conformity to Christ in the life of the believer who hears it. And so may the blessing that is pronounced in verse 3, on those who read and hear and obey the book, be ours as we read it and hear it and understand it and obey it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.