

Methods of Interpretation

- A. Many methods of interpretation have been used for the book of Revelation.
 - 1. One is that it reveals the future to the consummation of the ages.
 - 2. Another idea is that it is the history of the apostate church.
 - 3. Some believe that it is simply a myth of the early Christians.
 - 4. Another interpretation is that the principles deal with every age.
 - 5. One's interpretation will depend on which method he chooses to use.
- B. Generally speaking, there are five different methods:
 - 1. The Futurist Method.
 - 2. The Continuous—Historical
 - 3. The Philosophy of History
 - 4. The Preterist Method
 - 5. The Historical—Background Method

THE FIVE METHODS OF INTERPRETATION:

A. **THE FUTURIST METHOD.**

- 1. This view is held by the millennial and dispensational groups who consider that it is unfulfilled prophecies about the future history of the world.
- 2. This method says that revelation 4-19 takes place in the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24-27.
- 3. This method sees:
 - a. Revelation 4-19 as just before the coming of Christ,
 - b. Then the thousand year reign. Revelation 21:1-10
 - c. Followed by the judgment. Revelation 20:11-15
 - d. Then the final state.

B. **THE CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL METHOD.**

- 1. This view presents the book as a forecast in symbols of the history of the church.
- 2. This system makes the book of prophecy in detail the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church, then the Reformation.

C. **THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY METHOD.**

- 1. This interpretation considers the events as not necessarily occurring, but as symbolic of forces at work.
- 2. This view sees revelation as a book setting forth the principles on the basis of which God deals with men.

D. THE PRETERISTS METHOD.

1. This method is the opposite of the Futurist Method.
2. This method says that the things pictured in Revelation are completed and past.
3. This view maintains that the book was written for the people of John's day, fulfilled then, and now has little or no value for people today.
4. Some preterists apply the visions mainly to the Jewish nation and pagan Rome, with most of them placed before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.
5. Two groups of Preterists:
 - a. "Right wing" group."
 1. Believe the book of Revelation to be inspired.
 2. Most of the book was fulfilled in the time of Domitian.
 3. Final judgment is in the future.
 4. Only of literary interest.
 - b. "Left Wing" group.
 1. Do not consider Revelation to be inspired.
 2. Its only value is literary.

D. THE HISTORICAL METHOD.

1. In some ways this view is part of the Preterist method.
 - a. This method seeks to find the meaning that the book had in the day of its origin.
 - b. As a book it is written to the people of that day, it is fulfilled in the events of the first two centuries (some extend if longer), but it is in this background is seen a message for all time.
 - c. The principles for this method come from the Right Wing Preterist and the philosophy of history interpretation.
 - d. Some principles of this method.
2. This method keeps in mind that Revelation was primarily written for those who were contemporary with John.
3. The book was written in largely symbolic language.
4. Revelation is a divine picture book.
5. One must ask two questions:
 - a. What is the picture?
 - b. What does it mean?
6. The book uses Old Testament terminology with a New Testament meaning.
 - a. Symbols do not always mean the same thing in different places.
 - b. Out of 404 verses in Revelation, there are some 278 allusions to the Old Testament.
7. To get the true meaning, one must take the symbols as a whole pattern.