

Christ in Prophecy
Pre-Trib 17: “Theme of Revelation & Preterism”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: What would you say is the theme of the book of Revelation? And what would you say to a person who believes that the prophecies in the book of Revelation were all fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem? What about it- is Revelation history or prophecy? Stay tuned as 13 Bible prophecy experts respond to these questions.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our blessed hope and welcome to Christ in Prophecy. Last week we began presenting a series of interviews with 13 Bible prophecy experts concerning the book of Revelation. Our questions last week were: “Why is it important to read the book of Revelation?” and, “What are the keys to understanding the book?” If you missed those programs you can view them on our website at lamblion.com. The interviews were conducted at a national Bible prophecy conference that was held in the Dallas, Texas area. In this program we are going to seek the answers to a couple of more questions about the book of Revelation. The first has to do with what the book is all about. My specific question for our experts is, “What is the theme of the book of Revelation?”

Ed Hindson: I think the ultimate theme of the book of Revelation is the person of Jesus Christ Himself. That it's not just a prophecy of what is going to happen in the future, that's certainly involved. But it's ultimately all about who is coming in the future. Jesus is coming. And He is coming in triumph and in victory. So the theme really is like a two sided message. The seven sealed scroll is written on the inside and on the outside. I think it's a message to the world on the outside- bad news you lose. And a message to the Church on the inside- good news we win. That's as simple as you can make the message of the book of Revelation.

Al Gist: Well the theme of Revelation is that God is going to be the ultimate victor in everything. The day is going to come when Jesus Christ will return to this earth, and He will destroy all the enemies of God. And He will establish His kingdom, His rightful kingdom on this planet. And that He will rule for a thousand years in what we call the Millennial Kingdom. And even beyond that as we enter into the eternal ages of ages that we will live with our God in His very presence. So to me the theme of Revelation is to give us that future hope. Now in Revelation chapter 1:19 I believe the Bible says that God told John I'm going to show you the things which you have seen, I want you to write about those things which you have seen, those things which are, and the things which shall be here after. So that kind of gives us an overall overview of the format of what's going to be told. But the emphasis I think for us as Christians is that glorious future that we have for Christ, and I would nail that down as the theme.

August Rosado: The theme of the book of Revelation is the person and program of Jesus Christ. But also the theme is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When you read Revelation 1:7 John says, "Behold He cometh in the clouds and every eye shall see Him. And they also who pierced Him: and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." When you look at Revelation 1:7 that parallels with the Jewish prophet Zechariah in 12:10 where he says that, "I will pour upon the house of David, upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." Parallel that with Revelation 19:11 where it says, "I saw Heaven open and behold a white horse and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true and in righteousness doth He judge and make war." So the theme of the book of Revelation is the second coming of Jesus Christ back to this earth. Those verses I just quoted all are Second Coming passages and not the Rapture. Because at the Rapture He's coming for His Church, not every eye is going to see Him except the Church itself. But at His Second Coming He is coming to come back with His Church. So the Rapture and the Second Coming are separated by Daniels seventieth week of prophecy that seven year period of Tribulation. So the theme of the Book of Revelation I believe would be the Second Coming of Jesus back to this earth.

Daymond Duck: Well it's all about Jesus. That's what I would say. It is a prophecy; it is a book of prophecy about Jesus Christ. Revelation 19:10 the second part of that verse says, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The book of Revelation starts out with the

resurrected Jesus and then it starts talking about His dealings with mankind through the Church Age, and through the Tribulation period, and through the Millennium, and on the New Earth and that kind of thing. In the book of Revelation Jesus is presented as the head of the Church, the line of the tribe of Judah. He's the coming King of Kings, and Lord of Lords and He's going to sit on the throne and judge mankind and that kind of thing. And so I think Jesus is going to come back. He's going to straighten out this world. He's going to defeat the Devil. He's going to finish what He started in the Garden of Eden. It's going to be a wonderful thing. I would say to you Dave, and your staff I love the book of Revelation. And I thank you and your people for teaching it. We are living in exciting times and I just wish more people would do it.

Don McGee: The theme of the book of Revelation is God revealing to us through Jesus what He is going to do. If you look at the first verse of chapter 1 you see that God gave Jesus this revelation to give to us. Again that implies a need for us to know some things. It's also a statement that says man does not know what's going to happen and he needs to know. Only God knows what the future holds. And our Lord is not the kind of God that's capricious in any kind of way. He doesn't just act randomly. And He wants us to understand a course of history that He has set about. And that He is going to bring to a conclusion.

Mark Hitchcock: Now the overall theme of the book of Revelation I believe is the reign of the Messiah. It's the kingdom of God on the earth. And I get that I really think the couple of key chapters in Revelation are Revelation 4 and 5, where we have a picture there, especially in Revelation 5 of Jesus there the Son of Man, the Lamb who is a lion. And He takes the seven sealed scroll from the hand of the Father. And Jesus is the one then who begins to open the seals on the scroll. The only document in ancient times that was sealed that way with seven seals, by seven witnesses was a will, the last will and testament. So I think Jesus there is taking the will in this passage or the inheritance from the Father. And in order for Him to get the inheritance these seals have to be opened which is one judgment right after another. And of course the seventh seal then issues forth into seven trumpets. And I believe the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowls when all that is finally taken place in Revelation 20 the Kingdom of God comes to this earth. So I think that's what the book of Revelation is about. What I would say to kind of give a definition: the book of Revelation is the advanced history of how Jesus Christ by means of judgment becomes King. God's given the advanced history how Jesus

Christ becomes King, but it's through judgment He judges the sinful world first. But it reaches all of it does all human history reaches it pinnacle and zenith in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Ken Humphries: Oh to me the overall theme of the book of Revelation of Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ. You read through the Book of the Revelation chapters 1-3 and you see Jesus there as the Lord walking in the midst of the Churches. You come into chapter 4 and 5 and you see the Lord Jesus in the midst of the throne. You come into chapter 6-20 you see Jesus as the Lion in the midst of the tribes. Chapters 21, 22 you see Jesus as the light in the midst of eternity. So for me the whole theme of the Book of the Revelation is primarily Jesus Christ. There would be more added themes to that but primarily for me the theme is Jesus Christ.

Terry James: I'd say it is a revelation not of many prophecies or many different unfolding of events and things like that. But it is a revelation of Jesus Christ and all of His power and glory, and honor. And is also a record from announcing the end from the beginning of the history and the consummation of human history. So the fact is that God knows the end from the beginning of course, and another reason to study Bible prophecy.

Tom McCall: Well the revelation of Jesus Christ. It is His revelation. He is the one being revealed. And it's specifically about His Second Coming, so that's the overall theme. But there are a lot of details involved. And there's the Church history. There's the Rapture of the Church. There's the Tribulation period. There's the whole rise of the Antichrist and his fall and then Armageddon. Then the Second Coming of Christ; and then the truth about the Millennium and the eternal state. So there's a lot of details but the basic theme is Christ is coming again.

Nathan Jones: I got a crash course in this question during my ordination. When I was being ordained a bunch of elders were around me and they were all asking questions. And the one sitting right in front of me says, "In a few words sum up Revelation." Well I went on, and on, and on about sheep and goats and Antichrist and stuff like that. And he said, "No, no, no it's this: Get Ready." And it was so simple. But he was right Revelation is about get ready. Get ready for Jesus to come back. Get your life in order. And get ready for an eternity with Christ.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: I hope you are enjoying these interviews with such a variety of Bible prophecy experts. Our next question regarding the book of Revelation is a very important one. It has to do with a very strange interpretation of the book of Revelation that's called Preterism. That word is based on a Latin word that means past tense, and thus, a Preterist is a person who believes that most of the prophecies in the book of Revelation were fulfilled in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Extreme Preterist even believe that the Second Coming of Jesus occurred at that time. In summary, Preterist believe the book of Revelation was written before 70 AD and that it contains prophecy that has been fulfilled rather than prophecies that relate to the future. This brings us to our second question for our Bible prophecy experts. Basically we asked each one to tell us how they would respond to the Preterist argument that the Book of Revelation is history rather than prophecy.

Mark Hitchcock: The difficulties that Preterism has is when they really try to go through the book of Revelation and consistently take what it says in a literal way. If you use a consistent literal interpretation they can't fit the things in the book of Revelation into the events around 70 AD. They try to fit it all in the Roman war, the Jewish War and the events of 70 AD the destruction of Jerusalem. But what they do is they find some things that you could fit with a stretch but then when they come to places that don't fit they say, "Well that's just symbolic." So they're not consistent. And a friend of mine used to say, "If you keep changing the rules in the middle of the game you know anybody could win that way." And that's what they do. The other big problem they have is the book of Revelation was not written in 65 AD see they take it as prophecy of events in 70 which means it had to be written before 70 AD. Whereas the consistent witness of church history from the very beginning is that the book of Revelation was written near the end of Domitian's reign in 95 AD. So if the book of Revelation was written 1 day after 70 AD then the whole view goes down the drain. That's really the Achilles heel of Preterism is the book of Revelation was written in 95 AD.

AI Gist: I would say that Preterism is probably the most ridiculous interpretation of Bible Scripture ever devised by man. The idea that the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD is utterly ridiculous. I mean where in 70 AD do we find the

two great witnesses? Where do we find the 144,000 special servants of God? Was there a great earthquake, the mother of all earthquakes at that time? Were there 200 pound hailstones falling from the sky? And above everything else did Jesus come at that time? And so the only way a Preterist can answer any of those questions and many more like them is to just spiritualize the Scriptures. And to simply say that even though the Bible says it clearly this way it doesn't mean it that way it means something different. And of course if you do that you can make the Bible say anything in the world. So Preterism is just in my mind is way off the mark. It doesn't even come close to truly understanding end time events.

Daymond Duck: Well my response is that Preterism is non-sense I just want to cut right to the chase its nonsense. Preterist spiritualize the Scriptures, they allegorize it. They have the Bible saying things that it does not say. And I think because they do this kind of thing they do a lot of harm. They cause a lot of misunderstanding and a lot of damage in the Church. I believe the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy one because God gave it and He never calls it a book of history. In fact five times in the book of Revelation He calls it a book of prophecy. So if God calls it a book of prophecy I really am kind of offended by people calling it a book of history. God knows what He wrote. The Bible tells us to watch for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There would be no reason to watch for it if all prophecy has been fulfilled. You know if Jesus has come back and that kind of thing. It is not a book of history. Dave there is no evidence that there was a seven year covenant before 70 AD for peace in the Middle East. There is no evidence that Babylon was destroyed by fire in 70 AD in one hour, in fact it wasn't. There is no evidence that the Euphrates River dried up so the kings of the east could cross in 70 AD. There is no evidence that anybody was able to track all buying and selling in 70 AD. There is no evidence that the sun and the moon were darkened and the stars fell out of the sky in 70 AD. There is no evidence that the two witnesses were killed and their bodies lay in the street of Jerusalem for 3 1/2 days and the whole world could see it in 70 AD. There is no evidence that Jesus came back and rescued Israel at the Battle of Armageddon in 70 AD. But if you think about it there is tons of evidence that these things are coming on the scene right now in the form of the peace negotiations and globalism, and technology and barcodes, and television and all of this kind of thing.

Don Perkins: My response is that the Preterist view is wrong for a number of reasons. I believe that there are many things in the book of Revelation that has not been fulfilled, we haven't seen completed after 70 AD. Case in point the mark of the beast; chapter 20 of Revelation gives us the literal reign of Messiah. Nowhere in history do you see Christ reigning on the throne of David as a Messiah. So it is a number of things that the book of Revelation talks about. We have the 21 judgments of the Great Tribulation. No where do we see that in world history as a means that the book of Revelation was complete. So I believe the Preterist view is incorrect.

August Rosado: I disagree strongly with the Preterist interpretation. Many of the early church fathers Dr. Reagan believed that the book of Revelation was written between 90 and 96 AD. For instance Irenaeus who was a disciple of Polycarp was directly discipled by the Apostle John said that John authored the book of Revelation at the end of Domitian's reign. And Domitian reigned roughly between 81-96 AD so here we have an early source that confirms that John wrote the book during 81 or 96 AD. So I would rather believe an earlier source rather than an 18th Century source in this case Luis del Alcázar. And so I strongly disagree with the Preterist's viewpoint. The early Church Fathers believed that he wrote that book between 90 and 96 AD. And if that's the case the Preterist's view goes out the window.

Gary Fisher: Oh, I've been all over this one. First of all if Revelation is history then where is Jesus at the Mount of Olives in Revelation 19? There is no record account of Jesus ever coming back to this earth as of yet. Praise the Lord He is coming as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But He hasn't been here yet. And to insist that this is history is nothing but an insult to the glory that will appear when He shows up on the Mount of Olives. And that never has happened. Second of all Revelation 6 there is carnage described in the first eight verses I believe 25% of the world's population will die that has never occurred in history. So the problem emerges, the question comes: Do we take this book literally? Is the Second Coming of Christ even allegorical? Is Revelation 6 allegorical? And this number 25% of the population dying is that just an allegorical statement that some people die and we don't know the exact number whatever. And so we get into trouble again allegorizing the Scripture. If we take it literally then none of this has ever been fulfilled in history. There is also a third issue the question between the date. We have these writings of the early Church Father's that give credence to the fact that there is a late

date it is like 95 AD Irenaeus wrote something about Domitian being in place when John wrote. And that could not have been the early date of 70 AD it had to been the later date.

Tom McCall: Well of course the Preterist believe that the Second Coming of Christ occurred before or at 70 AD. Well that means they've got to get everything in the New Testament including the writing of the book of Revelation before 70 AD. But that just doesn't stand up to history. That would mean that John would be put into prison on Patmos during the time of Nero. Well Nero was very concerned about Christianity in Rome, but one never reads about him doing persecution of Christians outside of Rome. So how would that fit in? It just doesn't make sense. But we do see that the Emperors later they were very concerned about Christianity all through the Roman Empire and that would have fit very well with the scenario of John being on Patmos and writing the book of Revelation in the 90's. So that's the traditional view and it fits into history, and that's the better view by all means.

Nathan Jones: Well with all due respect to our brothers and sisters in Christ who follow the Preterist view but they've got to be blind. I mean Israel is a nation again. After almost 1,900, 1,900 years of Israel being exiled and roaming the world they've become a nation again in May of 1948. I mean it's not just any nation either; it's the nation of the Bible. So clearly God has a purpose for them. Now the Preterist view is based on the fact that the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD and so the Book of Revelation must have been written before 70 AD. But Irenaeus one of the early Church Father's said, "At the end of Domitian's reign which was 81-96 AD that that's when John wrote the book of Revelation." So about 95 AD. So clearly the references to the Temple in the book of Revelation are to a future Temple, not the Temple that was destroyed in 70 AD. I think between those two things it is very obvious that Preterism isn't a correct interpretation of end time prophecy.

Don McGee: There are some secular reasons why I believe that the book of Revelation was written at a late date. Irenaeus was an early Church Father; he lived in the 2nd Century. And he said that the book was written in the last part of Domitian's reign. Domitian died about AD 96 and if you look at the structure of the book you can see that there is a flow of events there. The seven letters written to the seven churches were written at a time when the seven churches

were in decline. Now at the early date those churches were not in decline during the time of Paul the churches were doing pretty good. During those times, the time of Nero the first generation of those church leaders was still there. They were conservative they were very fundamental in doctrine and theology. But by the time of Domitian the second generation was there. And because of the influence of the Greek and Roman world that second generation of leaders had changed some things, had changed their thinking those kinds of things. So the letters written to the seven churches were written to correct those things. They could not have been written during the time of Nero. And lastly if you look at the book there are some things that are clearly and plainly addressed that must be relegated to a future date.

Ed Hindson: Well it says that it is prophecy. The book itself calls itself a prophecy; it is a revelation of what will come here after in the future not in the past. And then the dating of the book trying to date that book in the 60's is virtually impossible. None of the early Church Father's thought that. Preterist argue that the Antichrist figure in the book the beast is Nero, and yet for the first 500 years of Church history not one person in print suggests Nero is the Antichrist. If the people living closets to the time of Nero did not think he was the Antichrist, why in the world should we think that 21 centuries later?

Jack Kinsella: I think there is plenty of evidence that says the Book of the Revelation was written well after AD 70. But whether or not it was is really irrelevant because the events that are described in the book of Revelation have not been fulfilled in history, or even come close to being fulfilled in history. Not the least of which the events described in the book of Revelation is the Second Coming of Christ. So if it's all history then well that doesn't make any sense.

Ken Humphries: Well certainly I believe the Lord came in judgment in AD 70 although not visibly. But He did not come in His kingdom. And to me that's the big part of that. I think there are actually 10, I was researching this going through it, there are actually 10 amazing thoughts that when Christ comes in His kingdom. He will return to earth for example number one and be seen by every eye; now that did not happen in AD 70. When He comes in His Kingdom the Jewish people will be regathered; that didn't happen in AD 70. When He comes in His Kingdom there will be no wars on earth; that didn't happen in AD 70. When He comes in His Kingdom the

Kingdom will be restored to Israel; that didn't happen in AD 70. When He comes in His Kingdom it will be a time of great deliverance; that didn't happen in AD 70. And when He comes in His Kingdom God's Sanctuary His Temple will be in the midst of His people; that didn't happen in AD 70. And when He comes in His Kingdom there will be a priesthood operative again in the Temple; that didn't happen in AD 70. And when He comes in His Kingdom the Jews will possess their land again; that didn't happen in AD 70. When He comes in His Kingdom there will be a message of good news declared to Jerusalem; that didn't happen in AD 70. And when He comes in His Kingdom there will be joy and gladness brought to the people of God; that didn't happen in AD 70. And I believe this didn't take place in AD 70 because the Jews were fortunate enough to survive the Roman invasion. And they didn't have joy and gladness, they didn't have anything other than sorrow, and real depths of sorrow after that.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: I hope you were as fascinated by the responses of our Bible prophecy experts as I was when I interviewed them. And I hope you picked up some new insights into God's prophet Word. Even more I hope that what you have heard will motivate you to earnestly study Bible prophecy. Next week the Lord willing we will present another program in this series as we ask our Bible prophecy experts two questions about salvation during the Tribulation. First we will ask them if the Rapture of the Church can be found in the book of Revelation. And secondly we are going to ask them if a person can be saved during the Tribulation if that person had heard the Gospel before the Rapture and rejected it.

Well that's our program for this week. I hope it's been a blessing to you. Until next the Lord willing, this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying, "Look up, be watchful, for your redemption is drawing near."

End of Program