Floral Heights Church of Christ
1814 Buchanan, Wichita Falls, Texas 76309

Schedule of Services
Sunday Worship:
9:30 AM Bible Study
10:30 AM Worship
6:00 PM Worship

Wednesday:
7:30 PM Bible Study

Floral Heights Church of Christ
WWW.floralheightschurchofchrist.org

Clips from Psalms
Psalms 100:4-5
All Men Exhorted to Praise God

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: give thanks unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his loving-kindness endures for ever, and his faithfulness unto all generations."

How to Approach the book of Revelation

There is gold in the Bering Sea off the coast of Nome Alaska. No gold is ever found, however, without planning and hard work. Likewise, truths in the book of Revelation are treasures that no one obtains without thorough investigation and hard work. One wrong turn in the pursuit of knowledge may lead to disastrous conclusions. An ill advised approach to the study will only result in the rich truths slipping between the fingers and down the drain of confusion.

The word "Revelation" (Greek apokalupsis) means, "an uncovering or a revelation" (Liddell Scott 99). Arndt and Gingrich define the word as a "disclosure [to expose or uncover]" (see also Moulton 42). The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia adds, "Disclosures from God of the secrets of the heavenly world..." (ISBE Volume 4; page 172). Our English word apocalypse also means a "prophetic uncovering or disclosure" (AHD 118). The meaning of the word infers a divine objective to cause man to understand those things that would otherwise be unknown secrets.

A revelation is just that, a disclosure or uncovering of divine information. The Apostle Paul used the same Greek word, apokalupsis, at Galatians 1:12 to define what he was preaching (i.e., divine revelation). God discloses the otherwise secret things to man through the process of revelation in "diverse manners" (Hebrews 1:1). Prophets of God saw divine visions and dreams wherein God disclosed to the world his plans (see Obadiah 1:1; Joel 2:28ff; Amos 1:1). John and Ezekiel were "in the Spirit" when they were shown apocalyptic visions (Revelation 1:10; Ezekiel 37:1). Zechariah and Daniel also received revelation from God in the form of visions (Zechariah 1:7ff; Daniel 7:1; 8:1; etc.). Nehemiah writes, "Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testified against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets" (Nehemiah 9:30; see also Ezekiel 1:3; 11:4-7). The Apostle Peter tells us that God "moved" men to speak divine revelation by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit “entered into” (Ezekiel 2:2) and "fell upon" (Ezekiel 11:5) men causing them to know and speak the mysteries of God. The Lord's objective is obvious. God wants man to hear and understand truth.

Revelation naturally falls into the classification of apocalyptic literature by way of its contents "pertaining to prophetic disclosures" (AHD 118). The Old
Testament books of Daniel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel fall into this category as well and prove to be very helpful in formulating an approach to studying and understanding the book of Revelation. The objective of these notes will be to help you see the simplicity of not only the book of Revelation but also the entire Bible. Whether one encounters apocalyptic literature, parables, or difficult Bible text in general; always be aware that God intends for you and I to know these truths (John 8:32; Ephesians 3:3-4). The Lord did not give us the book of Revelation to confuse us (see 1 Corinthians 14:33). Let us get started on the right foot to understand the contents of this book by formulating a right approach and work ethic.

The book of Revelation examines various time frames that make no since to the student of God's word unless there is a firm foundation established. Establishing a firm foundation in the word of God takes a diligent "work ethic." If you have not spent much time in studying the Old Testament books of Daniel and the major prophets then Revelation will be a more difficult study for you. Develop a strong work ethic, when it comes to studying God's word, and put the necessary time into learning all you can about the entire Bible so that all the books harmonize in your mind (see 2 Timothy 2:15). The Bible is like a computer network system where all parts are dependant and connected to each other. The network of passages are all interconnected so that the more we study the clearer the meanings. The Bible, in some ways, is like a puzzle or a connect the dot picture. When all the pieces come together the picture is very clear.

The approach one takes to studying the book of Revelation will determine whether one receives truth or is misguided into error. Let us first examine various approaches that have failed people in their understanding of Revelation and then look to the only one true approach to studying this book.

Consider some Popular World Views of the book of Revelation

E. B. Elliot wrote a four volume commentary titled Horae Apocalypsicae (A Commentary on the Apocalypse) and published it in London during the year 1862. The fourth volume of this commentary gave an exhaustive overview of every major apocalyptic commentary in the history of Christian literature (i.e., from the days of John to the mid 1800's). This fourth volume was termed, "History of Apocalyptic Interpretation." E. B. Elliot concluded, after vast research, that there are three primary contending schools of prophetic interpretation; i.e., Preterists, Historcists, and Futurists. More recent research illustrates additional interpretations of Revelation. These interpretations are the Idealist, Eastern Orthodox, Paschal liturgic, Esoteric, Radical discipleship, Paschal spiritual, Aesthetic and literary, and Academic interpretations. Lastly there are professed agnostics, such as Robert Ingersoll, who believe the book to be, "The insanist of all books." Consider a brief explanation of each of these approaches to the book of Revelation.

Preterists believe that most all of Bible prophecy has already been fulfilled during the apostolic age. They believe that the second coming of Christ occurred in 70 AD (The year Titus marched on Jerusalem and destroyed it). The Preterists believe that Nero was the beast or Antichrist and that the "man of sin," found at 2 Thessalonians 2:4,

has come and gone. Preterists view the writings of Revelation as events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. This is an erroneous approach to the book of Revelation.

Another approach to Revelation is the Historcists view. E.B. Elliott defined Historicism as "that view which regards the prophecy of Revelation as a pre-figuration of the great events that were to happen in the church, and the world connected with it, from St. John's time to the consummation; including especially the establishment of Popedom, and reign of Papal Rome, as in some way or other the fulfillment of the types of the Apocalyptic Beast and Babylon." (Horae, Volume 4, page 564). The Historcists believes that the Roman Catholic Church, specifically its Papal symbol, represents the antichrist. This also is an erroneous approach to the book of Revelation.

Lastly, E. B. Elliot examined the Futurist view of Daniel, Revelation, and the antichrist. Futurist "general characteristic is to view the whole Apocalypse, at least after the Epistles to the Seven Churches, as a representation of the events of the consummation and second advent, as all will future, and Israel depicted in it, being the literal Israel; the temple, Apoc. xi., a literal rebuilt Jewish temple at Jerusalem; and the Antichrist, or Apocalyptic Beast after his last head, a personal infidel Antichrist, fated to reign and triumph over the saints for three and one half years, (the days in the chronological periods being all literal days) [rather than years], until Christ’s coming shall destroy him." (Horae, Volume 4, page 597).

Many Futurists teach Premillennialism; i.e., the belief that there will be a future rapture in which the saints of God will be taken from the earth. There will then follow seven years of tribulation and a battle of Armageddon when Christ shall come again with his saints to defeat Satan and the beast. Christ will then reign upon the earth for one thousand years. Futurists Hal Lindsey taught this in his best selling book, "The Late Great Planet Earth" as did Tim LaHaye in the very popular book series, "Left Behind." This approach to the book of Revelation is also false.

More recent approaches to the book of Revelation include the Idealist interpretation. The Idealist holds that Revelation does not refer to actual people or events, but is an allegory of the spiritual path and the ongoing struggle between good and evil. The Eastern Orthodox believe that Revelation is a book that simply prepares readers now to be ready for the day of the Lord in the future. Paschal liturgical interpretation views Revelation as insight into the eucharist. The gnostics or Esoteric interpretation is that Christ did not die as a vicarious sacrifice for sins and therefore the book of Revelation is simple warnings for humanity with instructions regarding the inner soul. The Radical discipleship interpretation views the book of Revelation as instructions for disciples to remain faithful to the teachings of Jesus rather than being assimilated into one's surroundings.

The Paschal spiritual interpretation is the belief that Revelation describes a battle that took place with Jesus while he was on the cross and in the grave. Then there is the Aesthetic and literary interpretation which believes the book of Revelation is a work of art and imagination, viewing the imagery as symbolic depictions of timeless truths and the victory of good over evil. Finally, there is the Academic interpretation of Revelation which views the book as a letter to seven communities warning them not to conform to demonic Roman ways. Though there are bits and pieces of truth scattered throughout these modern approaches none of them really hit the nail on the head as far as having a solid approach to studying the book of Revelation.

Next week we shall examine the only correct way to approach the book of Revelation.