

No other New Testament book poses more difficult interpretive challenges than *Revelation*. The book's striking symbolism have produced four main interpretive approaches. Well-known pastor and theologian John MacArthur explains.

Preterist: *Revelation* is a description of first-century events in the Roman Empire. This view conflicts with the book's own repeated claim to be prophecy. It is impossible to see all of the events in *Revelation* as already fulfilled. The second coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century.

Historicist: *Revelation* is a panoramic view of church history from apostolic times to the present — seeing the symbolism of such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the emergence of Islam, and the French Revolution. This interpretive method robs *Revelation* of any meaning for those to whom it was written. It also ignores the time limitations the book itself places on the unfolding events.

Idealist: *Revelation* is a timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this view, the book contains neither historical allusions nor predictive prophecy. This view also ignores *Revelation's* prophetic character and, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs the books from any connection with actual events. *Revelation* becomes merely a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.

Futurist: The events of *Revelation* are future, and they depict actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene. Only this view does justice to *Revelation's* claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as the rest of Scripture.

From the *MacArthur Study Bible*

Major Views of the Millennium

The word *millennium* refers to 1000 years and comes from *Revelation 20:1-6*. Throughout church history, there have been three [if not four] major views on the millennium.

Amillennialism: There is no future millennium. *Revelation 20:1-10* describes the present Church Age. The exact duration of this Age cannot be known, and the 1000 years is a figure of speech for a long period of time. The Church Age will continue until Christ's return, at which all of the end time events will happen at once with one resurrection, not two.

Postmillennialism: Christ will come after the millennium. The progress of the gospel will increase until there will be significant Christian influence on society and gradually a millennial age of peace will occur. At the end of this period, Christ will return, believers and unbelievers will be raised, and so on.

Historic Premillennialism: Christ will come before the millennium, but after the Tribulation. The present Church Age will continue until a time of tribulation and suffering comes. After that, Christ will return to establish a millennial kingdom. When He comes, believers will be raised to rule for 1000 years. At the end, Satan will be loosed and will join forces with unbelievers to battle against Christ. They will be defeated. All unbelievers will face judgment, while believers enter eternity with God.

Pre-Tribulation Premillennialism (a.k.a. Dispensational): Christ will come before the tribulation and the millennium. Jesus could return at any moment and believers will not endure the Great Tribulation. The tribulation will be a great outpouring of God's wrath. It would not be appropriate for Christians to be on the earth at that time.

From Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology*

