

The “Eschatological” View

In our article on "The Four Major View of Prophetic Interpretation" we briefly discussed the four major schools of prophetic interpretation that have sprung up around the Book of Revelation. We noted that while these views are each distinct from the other, they all share a major characteristic. Each view, in one way or another, tells today's Christian that much of the book does not have a direct application to him.

The Preterist and the Historicist consign much (if not most) of the book to the distant past. The Idealist spiritualizes away the prophetic aspects of the book. The Futurist, while accepting that the prophecies of the book mostly apply to our immediate future, maintains that Christians need not worry too much about them, as they will be raptured to heaven before the prophetic pictures are played out.

The view explored in this series of Bible studies is essentially a fifth view. We have chosen to refer to it as the Eschatological (or End-Time) view. In this view Revelation is a road map of end-time events through which the people of God must pass. As such, it is an essential book for today's Christian – a guide for the most challenging and difficult times that the Church has ever had to traverse.

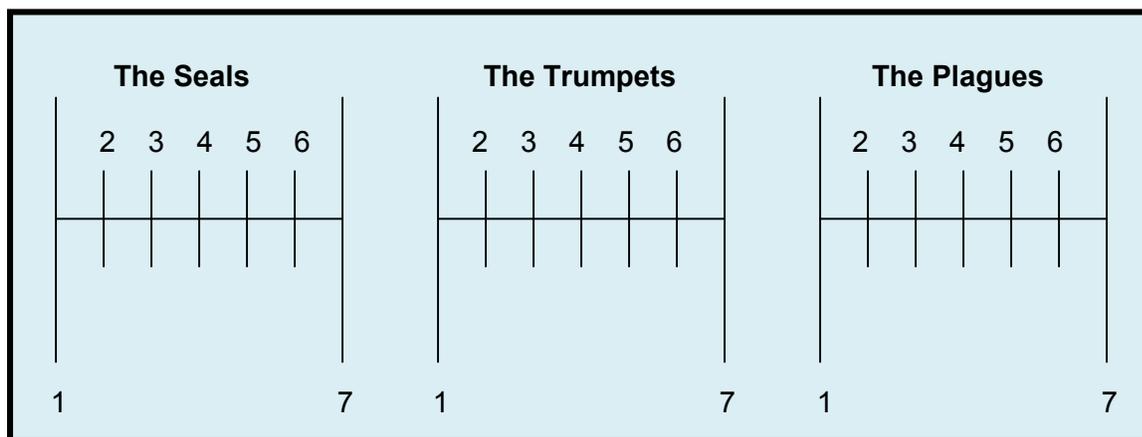
Does this future orientation make us “Futurists?” No, because that label stands for a specific set of teachings that we do not subscribe to. So to avoid that baggage and confusion, we have opted for a different - and appropriate - label. Eschatology is a big word that simply means “the study of end-times”. This study is eschatological in its perspective. That is to say, the intent of this study is to ask if there is a distinctly “end-time” perspective to the major prophecies of Revelation.

It is not simply idle curiosity - or a desire to come up with something "new" - that causes us to ask that question. Many elements of the prophecies suggest that such an end-time focus is intended. Some of the most pointed language used by Jesus himself clearly depicts the time just proceeding his return to earth. So whatever understanding we develop about the meaning of Revelation needs to line up with the statements of Jesus.

We will also point out in this study the numerous times that Ellen White foresaw end-time events that precisely dovetail with this eschatological view of Revelation. It is not clear that she understood the way in which those pictures fit within the prophetic outline of Revelation. However, there are several fascinating hints in her writings that suggest other views of Revelation than the one held in her time. For example in 8T, p 302, she wrote: “The solemn messages that have been given *in their order* in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God's people. Nothing else is to be allowed to engross our

attention.” And in Testimonies to Ministers, p.113 we find this jewel: “When we as a people understand what this book means to us, there will be seen among us a great revival. **We do not understand fully the lessons that it teaches.**” (Emphasis mine.)

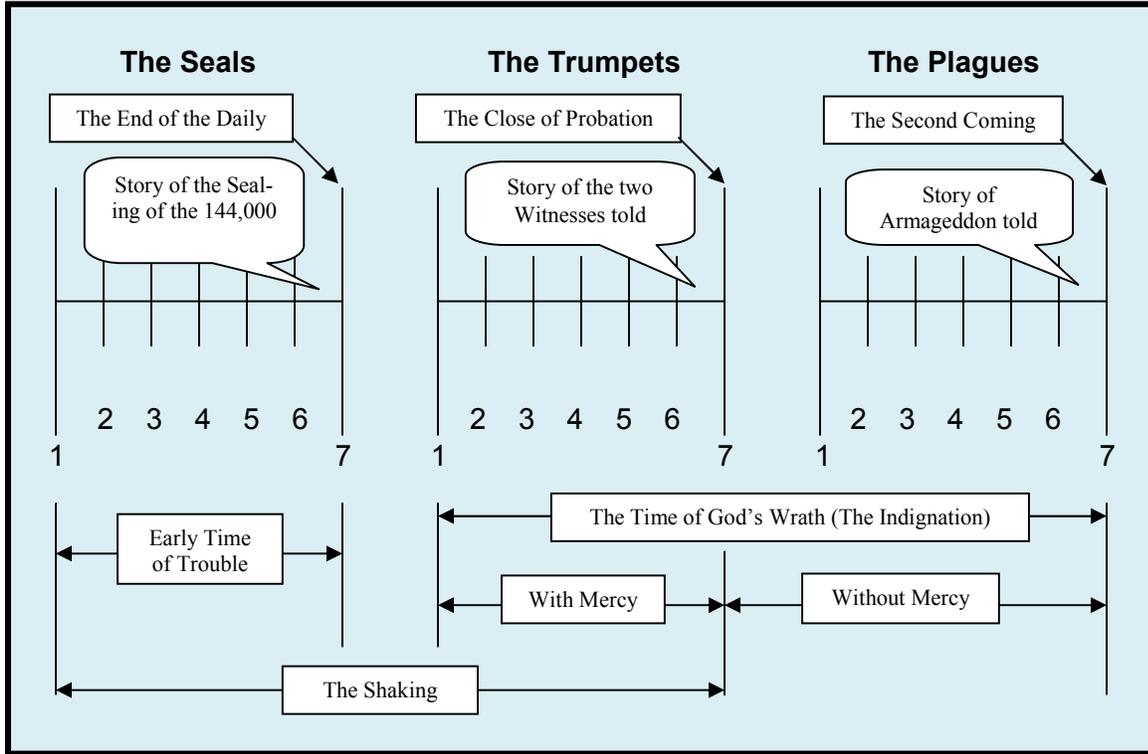
The prophetic portion of Revelation contains three major series of events. These are the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Plagues. If we were to outline the narrative of Revelation, we would note that these series of events are told in the following order:



What we will examine is this: Is it possible that this is not just the outline of Revelation, but in fact is its story line? Is it possible that the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 are expanded in the prophecies of Revelation - the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Plagues - and that they relate events that are associated with His second coming? Can such a view of Revelation be consistent with the words of Jesus, with the prophetic visions of Ellen White, and with established Seventh-day Adventist eschatology?

We believe that the answer to all of these questions is “Yes.” In fact, some of the events that we believe will transpire - such as the Early Time of Trouble - cannot be definitively supported from scripture apart from this view. In short, we believe that a future-oriented view of Revelation can be completely consistent with the end-time teachings of the Adventist church, while placing the Seals, Trumpets, and Plagues ahead of us as a series of consecutive events.

In the following chart we have added some “Adventist” labels to help clarify our view:



It is this view that we investigate in this study.