7th July, 2019 Sungai Nibong Gospel Hall

Series: ***Understanding Revelation***

## STUDY No. 1 An Overview of the Seven Churches

## Rev. chs. 1-3

**Prologue**: The Book of Revelation is the only book .....

* with a **P**romise of Blessing for the reader. 1:3a
* of **P**rophecy in the New Testament. 1:3b
* with a **P**ortrait of Jesus . 1:12-16

##### The Problems in Interpreting Revelation – The Different Approaches:

**A**. **The Allegorist or idealist approach** - Events described are allegorical and metaphorical.

1. "Spiritualized" interpretation as opposed to literalism; antichiliastic in character. Originated in the Alexandrian School of Theology represented in Clement of Alexandria and Origen. [Ct. Antioch School]

2. The book is a form of spiritual encouragement and assurance of the ultimate triumph of Christianity to those of the first century - no prediction of the future. Cady H. Allen

3. The book is a symbolic presentation of the conflict between Christianity and evil - the city of God versus the City of Satan. Augustine.

1. Amillenial and Postmillennial in character.
2. **The Preterist Approach -** A History of events in John's day; purpose was to encourage the persecuted

Christians in the Roman Empire.

Preter = (prefix) more than; of other nature than;. The accent is on that of the second element, e,g. preternatural = abnormal; gram. = expressing past action.)

1. The book is a record of the conflicts of the early church with Judaism and paganism, with the closing chapters (20-22) constituting a picture of contemporary triumph of the church.

2. It is a symbolic history, rather than prophetic, (Jesuit Alcasar) descriptive rather than predictive.

1. Maintains that the majority of the prophecies have been fulfilled and have therefore no significance for the present day, other than as moral lessons drawn from past history.

**C**. **The Historicist Approach** - A History of the Church

1. A symbolic representation of the total church history culminating in the Second Advent. Originated by Joachin, a Roman Catholic scholar;

1. Postmillennial in character. Supported by Wycliffe, Luther, Sir Isaac Newton, Bengel, etc.

**D**. **The Futurist Approach. -** Regards Revelation as futuristic. Pre-millennial in character.

1. Beginning with chapter four all events described are subject to future fulfilment. Chapters 4-19 refer to The Great Tribulation. Ch. 19 - Christ's Second Coming to earth; Ch. 20 - Future millennial kingdom; Chs. 21,22 - events either contemporary or subsequent to the millennium.

**The Golden Rule of Interpretation**: *When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate text, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.* -- Dr. David. L. Cooper

1. **THE PERSPECTIVE of REVELATION.**

**A. The Penman of the Book**: John, the Apostle. 1:1, 2, 4,9; 22:8

1. Only survivor and representative of the apostles - no designation needed.

2. Universally accepted by the early church until the 3rd century as such.

3. John was historically on Patmos. (cf. 1:9)

4. Irenaeus stated that John lived in Ephesus after his return from Patmos.

5. Confirmed by modern scholarship.

**B. The Period of the book**: AD 96

1. John was released shortly after the assassination of Domitian in A.D. 96
2. Irenaeus referred to John's return to Ephesus.
3. Rev. 1:9 refers to a persecution. The first of such persecutions was in the reign of Domitian. Nero's was confined to Rome, not Asia Minor.
4. The degeneration of the state of the churches (Rev. chs. 2, 3) would argue for a fairly late date.

**C. The Panorama of the Book.**

**1. The Three-fold Plan in the Book. Chs.1:19**

a. The **P**ast - "*things which thou hast seen*." 1:11 cf. 1:19 **Ch. 1** John's Vision of the Exalted Christ.

b. The **P**resent  **-** “*things which are*" **Chs. 2, 3**

i. The Messages to the Seven churches.

ii. Rapture of the Church between 3:22 and 4:1 Cf. occ. of "church/churches" in 3:22 and 22:16

c. The **P**rospect - "*things which shall be hereafter*." **Chs. 4-22** cp. 4:1

The future events. 4:1-22:5

**2. The Two-fold Prophecy in the Book.**

a. *The Things which are.* Chs. 1-3 Outline of the Dispensation of the Church:

1. The Seven Churches.
2. The Seven Stars.
3. The Seven Letters.

b. *The Things which shall be Hereafter***.** Chs. 4-22 Outline from Rapture to the Eternal State

i. The **S**even Seals. Chs. 4-6; 8:1

ii. The **S**even Trumpets. Chs. 8, 9; 11:15 - 19

iii. The **S**even Vials. 15:1 - ch. 16

iv. The **S**overeign and His Kingdom. 19:7 - ch. 20

v. The **S**even New Things. Chs. 21, 22

**3. The** **Seven Parentheses (Interludes) in the Book**.

a. Ch. 7 - The **T**ribulation Saints - Jewish and Gentile.

b. Ch. 10 - The **T**hunders, the Mighty Angel and the Little Book.

c. Ch.11 - The **T**wo Witnesses.

d. Ch. 12 - The **T**ravail of Israel and the Dragon.

e. Ch. 13 - The **T**wo Beasts.

f. Ch. 14 - The **T**riumph of the Lamb.

g. Ch. 17:1-19:6 - The **T**ermination (Destruction) of Babylon.

i. Political Babylon. 17:8-17

ii. Ecclesiastical Babylon 17:1-7, 18; 18:1-24