

Revelation

Authorship

According to Revelation 1:1, 4, 9, 22:8, the author of Revelation is John. The early church typically understood this to mean John the Apostle. For example, Justin Martyr (d. 165), Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. 220), Hippolytus (d. ca. 236), and Origen (d. ca. 254) affirmed John the Apostle as the author. The first extant challenge to this identification was put forth by Dionysius of Alexandria (A.D. 248–264) who suggested that the theology and grammar of Revelation could not be reconciled with that of the Gospel of John. A number of modern scholars have followed Dionysius in rejecting Johannine authorship.¹

It must be admitted that there are significant differences between Revelation and the Gospel and Epistles of John. It must also be admitted that there is some evidence from Papias (*Fragments of Papias* 2:3–4) that two Johns were associated with Ephesus and that the John of Revelation could be this other John. However, it seems better to maintain the traditional position that John the Apostle is the author and that differences in theology and grammar can be attributed to the use or non-use of an amanuensis, and differences in purposes, and genre. From a positive sense six arguments can be made. First, as noted earlier, Revelation enjoyed early popular support as a Johannine writing. Second, the use of “John” with minimal qualification would suggest the seven churches to which he writes would be familiar with him, a likely assumption if it were an apostle. Third, apostolic authorship would also be in keeping with the authoritative tone of the book (cf. 1:3; 22:9, 18–19). Fourth, early church tradition places John’s later ministry in Asia Minor, the same region of the seven churches addressed in the book.² Fifth, the author’s use of Old Testament imagery and themes suggest that he was a Jew which was true of John the Apostle. Sixth, although some argument can be made concerning the differences between Revelation and the other Johannine texts, there are significant similarities between Revelation and John’s Gospel including common themes and vocabulary.³ As Guthrie notes,

Both books use the word “Logos” of Christ, an expression used nowhere in the New Testament apart from the Johannine literature (Jn. 1:1; Rev. 19:13). Here, as also in the other writings, Christ is described as a Lamb, although a different Greek word is used (*ἀρνίον* in Revelation, *ἀμνός* in the gospel). In both gospel and Apocalypse, figures of speech involving waters, springs, etc., are used (cf. Jn. 4:10 f., 14; 7:38; Rev. 7:17; 21:6; 22:17). In both the figure of the shepherd is used of Christ (Jn. 10:1 ff.; cf. Jn. 21:16 f.; Rev. 7:17). Both contain the suggestion that a temple is no longer needed for the worship of God (Jn. 9:21; Rev. 21:22) and both contain a symbolical allusion to manna (Jn. 6:31 f.; Rev. 1:17). A notable similarity is the common variation in the citation from the Old Testament found in John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7, where Zechariah 12:10 is cited in a form differing from the LXX.⁴

¹ Dionysius may have also been reacting against Chiliasm in his critique of Revelation.

² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.23.

³ Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, New revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 468.

⁴ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 937.

In summary, it is best to maintain the traditional attribution of Revelation to John the Apostle. The questions regarding Johannine authorship can be answered adequately and that the early testimony of the church as well as other evidence suggests that John the Apostle is the most likely author.

Date and Place of Writing

Discussions of the date of Revelation generally involve two options, early and late. The early date view holds that the book was written shortly after Nero's death. Dates range from A.D. 54–68. Support for this view is made on both internal and external grounds. Internally, proponents of this view see evidence of the “Nero redivivus”⁵ myth in the book (e.g., 13:3) and take the reference to the temple in chapter eleven as evidence of a pre-A.D. 70 date. External evidence for this view can be found in the Muratorian Fragment (A.D. 170) and the Monarchian Prologues (ca. 250–350) which suggest that Paul was following John's example in Revelation by writing to seven churches. Since Paul died in the mid-to-late sixties, Revelation must have preceded his death, and indeed his authoring of his epistles.

A second common view holds that Revelation was written late in the first century near the end of Domitian's reign (A.D. 81–96). This view can be supported internally by several clues contained primarily in the references to the seven churches (Rev 2–3).⁶ First, the apparent spiritual decline associated with Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea would probably require time to develop. Second, the heretical group the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15) is not mentioned in any other of the earlier New Testament epistles. Third, Charles argues that the church at Smyrna may not have existed until A.D. 61–64.⁷ Fourth, the affluence of Laodicea alluded to in 3:17 would need time to develop since the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60–61. To this, one might note, the general themes of persecution and allusions to emperor worship fit well with the time of Domitian. Furthermore, Revelation 1:9 places John on the isle of Patmos as does Eusebius who puts him there during the reign of Domitian (*Eccl. His.* 3.18.1).

But perhaps the strongest case for a late date is made with external evidence. Irenaeus (ca.185) states that John “saw the revelation ... at the close of Domitian's reign” (*Contra Haereses* 5.30.3; *ANF*, 1:559–60). The statement of Irenaeus appears to be supported by Eusebius (*Eccl. His.* 3.18.1), Clement of Alexandria (*Quis Div. Salv.* 42), and Origin (*In Mt.* 16.6).

Overall, the evidence seems to favor a late date and the reign of Domitian. As far as the place of writing, Revelation 1:9 states that John received his vision(s) on the isle of Patmos, a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea used by the Romans to incarcerate criminals.

⁵ This was apparently a common belief that Nero would return after his death to reclaim his power.

⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, ed. F. F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 34–35.

⁷ R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introduction, Notes, and Indices, Also the Greek Text and English Translation*, 2 vols., *International Critical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), xciv.

Original Recipients

The original recipients are identified in 1:4 as “seven churches in the province of Asia” and identified more specifically in 2:1–3:22 as the churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Some have suggested that since the address is made to the “angels” (ἄγγελοι) of the churches, that one should not think in terms of literal churches. But the detailed nature of the messages would seem to make this view unlikely. On the whole, commentators have understood the references to the seven churches literally.

However, there is some debate as to the significance of the seven. For example, Ramsey suggests that the significance is geographical, that is, the seven churches are all on a circular travel path.⁸ While the circular route may explain the order, it is not likely that this alone can explain the significance. Others suggest that the churches have prophetic significance in that each of the seven churches point to a specific period in church history. Two problems arise with this view. First, the typical identifications of the specific periods seem to relate primarily to the history of the Western church. Second, the prophetic churches view would seem to undermine the doctrine of imminence. Jesus would not be able to return until all the prophesied periods of church history were fulfilled. The best option is to understand the selection of the seven churches in terms of their representative nature. That is, these seven churches represent the challenges and triumphs of churches in every age. It is worth noting that the concluding exhortation of each of the seven messages is a call to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (plural). Thus, each message is apparently intended to speak to more than just the specific church addressed.

Historical Setting

As the churches in Asia Minor approached the end of the first century A.D. they were facing three major challenges. First, Rome began to officially encourage and enforce emperor worship throughout the Roman Empire (see Dio Cassius 67.13.4). Only three first-century Roman emperors demanded worship, Gaius Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, during their lifetimes. Second, Christians were experiencing sustained and widespread persecution often in conjunction with their refusal to worship the emperor. The threat of persecution was exacerbated by the increasing separation from Judaism which was an officially recognized and protected religion. The author of Revelation himself testifies that he was “on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9). Third, the church continued to be plagued by false teaching such as those propounded by the Nicolaitans.

Purpose

It is generally recognized that Revelation was written to encourage believers in Asia Minor who were facing the threat of persecution, the temptation of compromise, and the danger of false teaching, by reminding them of Christ’s inevitable and ultimate victory. This purpose is underscored through the revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) of the glorified Christ and the culmination of

⁸ William M. Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (New York: George H. Doran, 1904), 183.

God's eschatological program. The addresses to the seven churches in chapters 2–3 also indicate that a purpose of the letter was to correct deficiencies in the churches.

Literary Features and Structure

Discussions concerning the literary qualities of Revelation typically relate to issues of genre, the distinctive nature of apocalyptic, the use of the Old Testament, and grammar. Each of these issues is a complex issue that merit discussion which would go beyond the scope of this argument. Nonetheless, a cursory survey of the issues is unavoidable.

Identifying the genre of Revelation is a difficult task. As Beasley-Murray notes, the prologue (1:1–4) “employs three different categories of composition,” apocalypse (1:1), prophecy (1:3), and epistle (1:4).⁹ These genres need to be taken seriously and provide significant aid to the interpretive task.¹⁰

The identification of Revelation as an apocalypse, that is, an apocalyptic work merits a brief discussion concerning the nature of apocalyptic literature. Probably the most oft quoted definition of apocalyptic literature comes from John J. Collins who states: “Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”¹¹ But this definition and other attempts to define the genre have been controversial. Part of the debate concerns whether it is a form of eschatology or whether it is a genre in its own right. If it is the latter, then what works define the genre? Should the apocalyptic books in Scripture (Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Revelation) define the genre or should these books be considered part of, and thus in some sense, defined by, the extra-biblical apocalyptic literature written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 100? The answers to these questions are difficult but the answers must be pursued. It is obvious that Revelation is considerably different from the other New Testament books. Thus, the interpreter who seeks to follow a “normal” hermeneutic must ask what is “normal” for apocalyptic literature. For our part, we will allow the apocalyptic books in Scripture to define the character of the genre.

Another literary feature of Revelation is the extensive use of the Old Testament. It is often noted that although there are many allusions in Revelation there is not a single direct quotation of the Old Testament. The exact number of allusions varies between sources but most would suggest that the allusions number in the hundreds.¹² For example, H. B. Swete notes that out of the

⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, The New Century Bible Commentary, ed. Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 12.

¹⁰ For example, since Revelation is an apocalypse (see below) the interpreter needs to be sensitive to the distinctive nature of the apocalyptic genre, as a prophecy the interpreter should interpret with an eye toward future fulfillment, and as epistle great care must be taken to take the historical seven churches context seriously.

¹¹ John J. Collins, “Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

¹² The problem is related to exactly what constitutes an allusion. See J. Paulien, “Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” *Biblical Research* 33 (1988): 37–53. Beale provides a helpful threefold method of categorization: (1) clear allusions, (2) probable allusions, (3) possible allusions. G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 78.

Apocalypse's 404 verses, 278 reference the Old Testament.¹³ One standard Greek translation identifies over 600 allusions in its index!¹⁴ The most frequently referenced books appear to be Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.¹⁵ The quality of the Old Testament allusions is also a point of discussion. A. F. Johnson suggests that "The OT used by John is primarily Semitic rather than Greek, agreeing often with the Aramaic Targums and occasionally reflecting Midrashic background materials to the OT passages; and it can be shown that he used a text other than the Masoretic that has a close affinity with the Hebrew text of the Qumran MSS."¹⁶ While the specific number, character, and qualities of the Old Testament allusions in Revelation could be debated, it is clear that the book is undergirded by the language and thought of the Old Testament. Revelation is arguably the most Old Testament New Testament book.

A final literary issue is the grammar and syntax of Revelation. From at least the time of Dionysius of Alexandria (d. 264),¹⁷ interpreters of Revelation have noted its grammatical and syntactical irregularities (solecisms). The majority of solecisms involve disagreements in case, number, gender, and person. Various explanations for these solecisms have been proposed from incompetence¹⁸ to purposeful protest.¹⁹ But perhaps the most satisfying explanation, and one fitting the Old Testament character of the book, is the encroachment of a Semitic style into the Greek. As Aune contends, "The Greek of Revelation is the most peculiar Greek in the NT, in part because it exhibits interference from Semitic languages, perhaps both Hebrew and Aramaic."²⁰

Concerning the structure of Revelation, proposals for the structure of Revelation are legion. Identifying the structure entails wrestling with issues of genre, literary seams (e.g., μετὰ ταῦτα), the relationships of the seal, trumpet, bowl judgments (recapitulation, consecutive, telescopic), the purpose of the book (preterist, historicist, idealist, futurist), and the significance (if any) of 1:19.

One way to structure the book is to structure it according to the "sevens" of Revelation. That is, the seven churches (2–3); seven seals (6–7); seven trumpets (8–11); seven signs (12–14); seven bowls (16–18); and seven last things (19–22).

Another approach is to divide the book according to "visions." The exact number of visions vary somewhat, from four to eight separate visions. For example Johnson notes the following: "Some divide the contents of the book around four key visions: (a) The vision of the Son of man among the seven churches (chap. 1–3); (b) The vision of the seven-sealed scroll, the seven trumpets, the seven signs, and the seven bowls (4:1–19:10); (c) The vision of the return of Christ and the

¹³ Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1906), cxxxv.

¹⁴ Eberhard Nestle and others, *Greek-English New Testament*, 27th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 770–800.

¹⁵ Swete, *Apocalypse*, cliii.

¹⁶ Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 411.

¹⁷ See Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 7.25.26–27.

¹⁸ E.g., Dionysius of Alexandria.

¹⁹ A. D. Callahan, "The Language of the Apocalypse," *Harvard Theological Review* 88 (1995): 453–57.

²⁰ David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52a, ed. John D. W. Watts (Dallas: Word, 1997), clxii.

consummation of the age (19:11–20:15); and (d) The vision of the new heaven and new earth (chap. 21–22).”²¹

The book has also been structured chiastically. Once again approaches vary in number of parallel elements and what exactly constitutes the central element in the chiasm. One approach is as follows.

Prologue. 1:1–20

I. The Church in Imperfection. 2:1–3:22

Seven Letters to the Seven Churches

II. The Authority of God over Evil Explained. 4:1–8:6

The Scroll with the Seven Seals

III. The Warning Judgments. 8:7–11:19

Seven Trumpets

IV. The Lamb - God’s Answer to Evil. 12:1–14:20

Seven Unnumbered Figures and Angelic Messages

V. The Consummated Judgments. 15:1–16:21

Seven Bowls of Wrath

VI. The Authority of God over Evil Exercised. 17:1–20:15

Seven Unnumbered Descriptions of God’s Authority

VII. The Church in Perfection. 21:1–22:5

Descriptions of the New Heaven and New Earth

Epilogue. 22:6–21²²

While each approach has something to commend it, preference should be given to what appears to be the basic structure provided by the book itself, namely, 1:19. That is, Past: “the things which you **have** seen” (1:1–20); Present: “the things which **are**” (2:1–3:22); and Prophetic or Future: “the things which shall take place **after** these things” (4:1–22:21).

Basic Outline:

- I. The Second Coming is grounded in the past: “Things which you have seen” (1:1–20).
- II. The Second Coming is motivation for the present: “Things which are” (2:1–3:22).
- III. The Second Coming is assurance of future victory: “The things which shall be after these things” (4:1–22:21).

Interpretive Approaches:

It is generally acknowledged that there are four basic interpretive approaches that are commonly brought to bear in the study of Revelation: preterist, historicist, idealist, and futurist. The preterist approach is a literal approach that contends that the content of Revelation is to be limited to events in the first century.” Some proponents of this view understand the events generally in

²¹ Johnson, “Revelation,” 411.

²² <http://www.centerce.org/BIBL266/Introduction.htm>

relation to the church versus the Roman Empire (whose fall is predicted). Others within the view see Revelation as a prophecy of fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The historicist approach is a literal approach that contends that Revelation is a symbolic prophecy of the entire course of the history of the church from the first century to the eschatological end. This was the view of Wycliffe and Luther. The idealist approach is a non-literal approach that contends that Revelation represents the eternal conflict of good and evil, light and darkness, and God and evil. Thus, this approach does not seek any sort of specific literal fulfillment but rather relates to principles and themes. The futurist approach is a literal approach that contends that Revelation 4–22 is to be fulfilled eschatologically in the period immediately before and after the Second Coming of Christ. While there are commendable elements in each of the approaches above, the futurist approach appears to do the best justice to the content of Revelation.

A Summary of Interpretive Approaches

Revelation	1–3	4–19	20–22
Preterist	Historic Churches	First Century Events	Symbolic of Heaven and Victory
Historicist	Historic Churches	Church History from 1 st Century to Second Coming	Eschatological Judgment, Millennium (?), Eternal State
Idealist	Historic Churches	Picture of eternal conflict between good and evil	Ultimate triumph of good
Futurist	Historic Churches (typical or prophetic)	Eschatological events before and after the Second Coming	Millennium, Eternal State

Message:

The message of Revelation is, “The Second Coming of Christ is grounded in the past, motivation for the present, and assurance of future victory.”

Exposition:

I. The prologue introduces Revelation and identifies its main subject (Jesus Christ) and its main theme (the Second Coming) (1:1–8).

A. The prologue introduces Revelation and identifies its main subject (Jesus Christ) and its main theme (the Second Coming) (1:1–8).

1. The prologue (vv. 1–2)

The Meaning of “Shortly” in Revelation 1:1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shortly” <i>means</i> John’s generation, the first century. • “Shortly” <i>means</i> imminent. • “Shortly” <i>means</i> quickly, in the sense that when the events occur, they will occur rapidly.

2. The promise (v. 3).

The Seven Beatitudes in Revelation
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near (1:3). 2. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors for their deeds follow with them" (14:13). 3. ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.") (16:15). 4. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God" (19:9). 5. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years (20:6). 6. "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:7). 7. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city (22:14).

3. The proclamation (vv. 4–8).

The Work of Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He died for us: "released us from our sins by His blood" • He made us to be a kingdom: "priests to His God and Father" • He is coming for us: "Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him"

Revelation 1:1–8: Think and Do

- Note the rich theology in this passage and list all the things that you can discern about the person of Christ from Revelation 1:1–8.
- Encouragement concerning the future can help us to face challenges in the present.

- B. John is commissioned by Christ to write Revelation and send it to the seven churches (1:9–20).
1. The details concerning John's encounter with the glorified Christ (1:9–11).
 2. The depiction of the glorified Christ (1:12–16).
 - a. His location (1:12-13a).
 - b. His description (1:13b-16).

The Description of Christ and the Seven Churches		
Text	Characteristic	Church in Chapters 2–3
1:13	Standing in the middle of lampstands	Ephesus (2:1)
1:14–15	Eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze	Thyatira (2:18)
1:16	Holding seven stars in His right hand	Ephesus (2:1); Sardis (3:1)
1:16	A two-edged sword out of His mouth	Pergamum (2:12)
1:17–18	The first and the last, the One who was dead but now alive	Smyrna (2:8)
1:18	Holds keys of death and of Hades	Philadelphia: Holds the key of David (3:12)
1:5	Faithful Witness	Laodicea (3:14)

3. The declarations of the glorified Christ (1:17–20).

Revelation 1:19: A Built in Outline		
Chp 1	Chps. 2–3	Chps 4–22
The things which you have seen	The things which are	The things which shall take place after these things
Past	Present	Future

Revelation 1:9–20: Think and Do

- It is sometimes in the midst of our trials (like John) when we meet Christ in unexpected ways.
- Always remember that the Lord Jesus Christ in His full glory and divinity is awesome.
- The proper response to Christ is neither frivolous nor fearful. For the believer, Christ is both God and friend (John 15:14).

II. The Second Coming is motivation for the present: “Things which are” (2:1–3:22).

Views of the Seven Churches:

- The Strict Historical view
- The Symbolic Historical View
- *The Similar Historical View*

General Observations:

1. Christ is aware and concerned about the spiritual condition of His churches.
2. Most churches have some problems.
3. Uncorrected problems lead to divine discipline.

Map of the Seven Churches²³



A. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Ephesus (2:1–7).

1. A church addressed (2:1a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (2:1b)

²³ Barry J. Beitzel, *The New Moody Atlas of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2009), 267.

3. A commendation (2:2–3)
4. A condemnation (2:4)
5. A correction offered (2:5–6)
6. A concluding promise and exhortation (2:7)

The Promises to the Overcomers ²⁴		
Text	Promise	Fulfillment
2:7	Right to eat from the tree of life	22:2
2:11	Not hurt by the second death	20:6; 21:7–8
2:17	Given a white stone with a new name	21:11, 18–21
2:26–27; 3:21	Reign with Christ over the nations	20:4
2:28	Given the morning star	21:23; 22:5, 16
3:5	Clothed in white garments	19:7–8; 21:2, 9–10
3:5	Name not blotted from the book of life	21:27
3:12	Made a pillar in God's temple	21:22–23
3:12	Participate in the New Jerusalem	21:10
3:12	God's name written on them	22:4

Revelation 2:1–7: Think and Do

- If you are working for the Lord keep it up. If you are not working for the Lord start now.
- Don't tolerate false doctrine.
- If you have left your first love follow the three-step process found in v. 5 (Remember, Repent, and Return).
- Don't be under your circumstances, but be an overcomer!

B. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Smyrna (2:8–11).

1. A church addressed (2:8a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (2:8b)
3. A commendation (2:9)
4. A comfort offered (2:10)
5. A concluding promise and exhortation (2:11)

²⁴ Modified from ESV Study Bible.

Revelation 2:8–11: Think and Do

- Standing up for biblical truth (like Smyrna) will often times cost you something. Pay the price.
- Remember that if you are standing for what is right, you will never stand alone because Christ will stand with you. Be encouraged!
- Christ has overcome death. So do not be fearful but be faithful!

C. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Pergamum (2:12–17).

1. A church addressed (2:12a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (2:12b)
3. A commendation (2:13)
4. A condemnation (2:14–15)
5. A correction offered (2:16)
6. A concluding promise and exhortation (2:17)

Revelation 2:12–17: Think and Do

- Compromising biblical truth is NEVER acceptable.
- The best weapon against false teaching is the Word of God. Know your Bible!
- Maintain your allegiance to Christ (like Antipas) no matter the consequences.
- Remember that living in a sinful society does not give you license to sin.

D. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Thyatira (2:18–29).

1. A church addressed (2:18a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (2:18b)
3. A commendation (2:19)
4. A condemnation (2:20–23)
5. A counsel offered (2:24–25)
6. A concluding promise and exhortation (2:26–29)

Revelation 2:18–29: Think and Do

- Cultivate a balance between good works and sound doctrine.
- Confront false teaching because people can be led astray and hurt.
- God will deal severely with false teachers and their followers who do not repent.

E. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Sardis (3:1–6).

1. A church addressed (3:1a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (3:1b)
3. A condemnation (3:1c)

Some Reasons for Spiritual Death

1. Worship of the past.
2. Greater concern with cosmetics than character.
3. Love of tradition over the love of Christ.
4. Inflexibility and resistance to change.
5. Losing evangelistic and missionary fervor.

Charles Swindoll, *Letters to Churches . . . Then and Now*, 33.

4. A correction offered (3:2–3)
5. A confirmation of the faithful (3:4)
6. A concluding promise and exhortation (3:5–6)

Revelation 3:1–6: Think and Do

- The Church at Sardis was dying spiritually and yet, did not even realize it. Take regular inventories of your spiritual life in order to avoid a similar result.
- The Church at Sardis was not totally corrupt and neither are you. Reinforce those things which are good and edifying and remove those things which hinder you spiritually.

F. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Philadelphia (3:7–13).

1. A church addressed (3:7a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (3:7b)
3. A commendation (3:8–10)

4. A confirmation offered (3:11)
5. A concluding promise and exhortation (3:12–13)

Revelation 3:7–13: Think and Do

- Faithfulness is manifested through actions or deeds (3:8). If Christianity were illegal, would there be enough circumstantial evidence to convict you?
- One aspect of faithfulness is an unbending loyalty to Jesus Christ despite persecution. Are you embarrassed to be identified with Jesus Christ?
- God is not limited by our limitations (see 3:8, “you have a little power”). So forget your limitations and ask God to do great things through you that He might be glorified!

G. Christ proclaims His message to the church in Laodicea (3:14–22).

1. A church addressed (3:14a)
2. A characteristic of Christ (3:14b)
3. A condemnation (3:15–17)
4. A counsel offered (3:18–20)

3:17	3:18 (note the change in order for the 2nd and 3 rd conditions / solutions)
Poor	v. 18a: Buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich
Blind	v. 18c: [Buy] eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see
Naked	v. 18b: [Buy] white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed

5. A concluding promise and exhortation (3:21–22)

Revelation 3:14–22: Think and Do

- Avoid self-deception by regularly examining your own life (2 Cor 13:5).
- Spiritual lukewarmness is unacceptable.
- Christ is the source of all that we need spiritually. Do you need to “buy” from Him today?

SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

Church at . . .	Characteristic of Christ	Commendation	Condemnation	Correction	Concluding Promise and exhortation
Ephesus (2:1-7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holding 7 stars - Wailing among the 7 lampstands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor materially but rich spiritually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Left first love 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remember, Repent, return - Or removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eat of the tree of life
Smyrna (2:8-11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The First and Last - Dead but now alive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works, toil, endurance - Resist evil and false doctrine (Nicolaitans) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crown of life - Not hurt in second death
Pergamum (2:12-17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharp two-edged sword 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steadfastness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tolerate idolatry, immorality, and false teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repent, - Or removal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hidden Manna - White stone with new name
Thyatira (2:18-29)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eyes like a flame of fire - Feet like burnished bronze 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Works - Love, faith, service, perseverance - Growth in works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some tolerate immorality, idolatry, and false teaching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfaithful must repent or be judged - For faithful are to continue to hold fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rule with Christ - Relationship with Christ
Sardis (3:1-6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seven Spirits of God - Seven Stars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A few remain faithful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spiritually dead - Unfinished works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wake up and strengthen the faithful - Remember and repent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clothed in white - Name not erased from book of life - Name confessed before the Father
Philadelphia (3:7-13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Holy and True - Key of Davidic authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small but used of God - Kept the Word - Perseverance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No correction, but exhortation to hold fast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made pillars in God's temple - Name of God and God's city
Laodicea (3:14-22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amen, faithful and true witness - Before creation 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spiritually luke-warm - Spiritually self-deceived 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find true riches, provision, and sight in Christ - Open door to Christ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship with Christ - Rule with Christ

III. The Second Coming is assurance of future victory: “The things which shall be after these things” (4:1–22:21).

Revelation now moves from the present to the future. Although it is not explicitly stated, the rapture is likely to be placed between chapters three and four.²⁵ Thus, the book shifts from a focus on the church in John’s day to Israel and the world in the last days.

A. Assurance of future victory is established by a heavenly assembly (4:1–5:14).

Revelation 4 and 5 Compared ²⁶	
Focus on God the Father (Rev 4)	Focus on Christ (Rev 5)
v. 8: “holy, holy, holy” (see Isa 6:3)	vv. 1–6: alone worthy—(implied) holy
v. 8: “was, and is, and is to come” = eternal	v. 13: “forever and ever” = eternal
v. 9: “glory and honor and thanks”	v. 12: “power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise”
v. 11: “glory and honor and power”	v. 13: “honor and glory and power”
v. 11: worthy	vv. 9, 12: “worthy”
v. 11: Creator	vv. 9–10: Redeemer
vv. 2–3: sits on the throne	v. 13: sits on the throne

1. Victory is assured because there is worship in heaven (4:1–11).

The Stones of Revelation 4:3				
Stone	Color	Symbolism	Priestly Breastplate	New Jerusalem
Jasper (possibly refers to a diamond)	Clear (Rev 21:1)	The clarity could represent God’s purity, holiness, and majesty	Jasper was the last stone in the breastplate, representing Benjamin (“son of my right hand”)	The first foundation stone (Rev 21:19)

²⁵ A thorough defense of the location of the rapture in Revelation and a pretribulation rapture in general is beyond the scope of this argument. Nonetheless, the following six arguments can be made. (1) The phrase “after these things” (μετὰ ταῦτα) in Revelation 4:1 seems to signal a change in emphasis. Pretribulationists believe that the emphasis is changed from the church (which has been raptured) to the earth which now goes through the Tribulation. (2) A few commentators see the command in 4:1 for John to “come up here” as a picture of the rapture. (3) The word “church” (ἐκκλησία) is used twenty times in Revelation 1–3 but not at all in chapters 6–18. This omission is understandable if the church has been raptured. (4) Revelation 6–18 covers the Tribulation, a period of God’s wrath. However, several passages suggest that the church is not the object of God’s wrath (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9) or will be delivered out of God’s wrath (Rev 3:10), that is, raptured out. (5) Revelation 6–18 centers on the nation Israel and not on the church (cf. Rev 7:4–11; 11:1–2; 12:1–17). (6) The seven lampstands representing the churches are missing from the description of the throne room in Revelation 4–5. Some suggest that this is due to the church’s rapture. Furthermore, some believe that the twenty-four elders in these chapters represent the churches in whole or in part.

²⁶ Modified from C. Marvin Pate, *The Writings of John: A Survey of the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 394.

Sardius (Sardis is named after this stone)	Red	Red could symbolize God's redemption (the blood of Christ) or judgment (fire)	Jasper was the first stone in the breastplate, representing Reuben ("behold a son")	The sixth foundation stone (Rev 21:20)
Emerald	Green	Green might picture the mercy of God. The rainbow recalls the covenant with Noah (Gen 9:13)	Emerald was the fourth stone in the breastplate, representing Judah ("he will be praised")	The fourth foundation stone (Rev 21:19)

Symbolic Identifications of the Gospels in the Early Church				
Early Christian Author	Human / Angel	Lion	Ox	Eagle
Irenaeus	Matthew	John	Luke	Mark
Augustine	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Pseudo-Athanasius	Matthew	Luke	Mark	John
Jerome	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John

Revelation 4:1–11: Think and Do

- God is worshipped continually in Heaven by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. How often do you worship God?
- The praises in this chapter acknowledge God for who He is and what He has done. In many ways, worship is simply responding to God for who He is and what He has done.

2. Victory is assured because the Lamb is worthy to open the sealed scroll (5:1–14).

Six Views of the Scroll's Contents ²⁷
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Luke 22:14-23). 2. The inheritance of God's people. 3. The book of life (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27). 4. God's plan of redemption foreshadowed in the OT and fulfilled in the NT. 5. The title deed of the earth (Jer 32:10-14). 6. God's plan of the future judgment of the world (Ezek 2:9-10).

²⁷ Summarized from Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 376–79

The Sevenfold Praise of the Lamb

Worthy is the Lamb to receive . . .

1. Power
2. Riches
3. Wisdom
4. Might
5. Honor
6. Glory
7. Blessing



Underlined terms were ascribed to God the Father in 4:11.

Revelation 5:1–14: Think and Do

- When all seems lost, the Lord appears (5:1–5). Therefore, we do not need to despair but are able to worship Him who is worthy.
- The four living creatures, twenty-four elders, and the angels teach us that none of us are above worshipping God. Worship Him who is worthy!
- True worship is based on true doctrine concerning God's person and work. Make it a point to learn about God so that you will be able to worship Him more effectively.
- Notice the importance of hymns and music in worship. When you sing, sing with conviction!

B. The victorious Second Coming is preceded by the Tribulation (6:1–19:5).

The Tribulation is a seven year period following the rapture in which God judges the world. This judgment is both retributive and redemptive. It is retributive in the sense that sin and sinners are judged. It is redemptive in that a remnant of the Jews as well as some Gentiles will be saved. The Tribulation is cosmic in scope but centered in Israel. Most of the content of the judgments in the Tribulation are contained within three series of judgments which open telescopically (i.e. the last in one series of judgments opens the next series of judgments). The three judgments follow a basic common structure. Each series of judgments consists of seven judgments and the first four judgments are usually set apart as a distinct unit. The final judgment is separated from the rest by an interlude in the seal and trumpet judgments and the final judgment is of a different nature in the seal and trumpet judgments. Each series of judgments is typically characterized by an escalation in the severity of judgments

1. The seal judgments are commenced (6:1–17).

Comparison of Future Judgments in Revelation 6 and the Synoptics ²⁸					
Seals	Rev 6	Matt 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	Events
1. Antichrist	1-2	4-5	5-6	8	Don't be misled: many will say "I am the Christ"
2. War	3-4	6-7a	7-8a	9-10	Wars and rumors of wars—end not yet—nation against nation
3. Famine	5-6	7b	8b	11	Famines
4. Death	7-8	8-9	9, 12	11,16	Deliver and kill you
5. Martyrdom	9-11	9-10, 16-22	9-22	12-24	They will kill you and you will flee to the mountains—if days not shortened—all die
6. Cosmic Events					
a. Upheavals	12-14	7c, 29	8c, 24-25	11, 25	Earthquakes, sun dark, moon not give light, stars fall, powers of heavens shaken
b. Response	15-17	24:32-25:46	28-37	29-36	Fig tree, 10 virgins, 10 talents, sheep/goats

- a. The first seal unleashes the Antichrist (6:1–2).

Three Views of the First Horseman
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christ • The Gospel • Antichrist
Arguments in Favor of the Antichrist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The other three horsemen bring catastrophes on earth • This is the beginning of the Tribulation, that is the end • Some minor differences between this rider and Christ in Rev 19 (differences in crowns [στέφανος vs. διάδημα], a bow vs. a sword) • This view fits the idea that the Anti-christ is a counterfeit christ • Other biblical passages suggest that the Antichrist will be a conqueror • Jesus taught that there would be false christs in the future and the Tribulation (Matt 24:4-5; Mark 13:5-6; Luke 21:8)

- b. The second seal unleashes war (6:3–4).

²⁸ Modified from Harold W. Hoehner, NT390 Revelation Class Notes, Fall 2002.

- c. The third seal unleashes famine (6:5–6).
- d. The fourth seal unleashes rampant death (6:7–8).
- e. The fifth seal reveals those who have been martyred in the Tribulation (6:9–11).

The Identity of the Martyrs

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First century martyrs • Christian martyrs of all ages • Martyrs killed during the Tribulation |
|---|

- f. The sixth seal unleashes cosmic disturbances (6:12–17).

Interpreting the Sixth Seal

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it Symbolic • Is it Literal? • Is it Figurative? |
|---|

Revelation 6:1–17: Think and Do

- The seal judgments are a sober reminder that judgment is coming: “Who is able to stand?” Are you ready?
- If you believe that judgment is coming then take the opportunity to share the gospel.
- The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is worth both living for and dying for. Be faithful!

- 2. The seal judgments are interrupted by an interlude (7:1–17).

A Comparison of the Great Multitude and the 144,000	
---	--

144,000	Great Multitude
Intro: “After this”	Intro: “After these things”
Specific number	General number
Specifically identified by nationality and tribe	Generally identified as from every nation and tribe
Present on earth	Present in heaven
Sealed = protected?	Suffered and persecuted

- a. 144,000 Jews are sealed (7:1–8).

Three Views Concerning the Great Multitude

- Both the great multitude and the 144,000 represent the church. The 144,000 picture the church sealed prior to the Tribulation and the great multitude pictures the church following the tribulation. This is a post-trib. view.
- Both the great multitude and the 144,000 picture Jewish believers which are preserved through the Tribulation and then enter the millennium. The great multitude and the 144,000 are separate groups. The former represents primarily Gentiles while the latter are strictly Jewish.
- Some believe that the great multitude represent the evangelistic results of the witnessing efforts of the 144,000. This view is pre-trib.

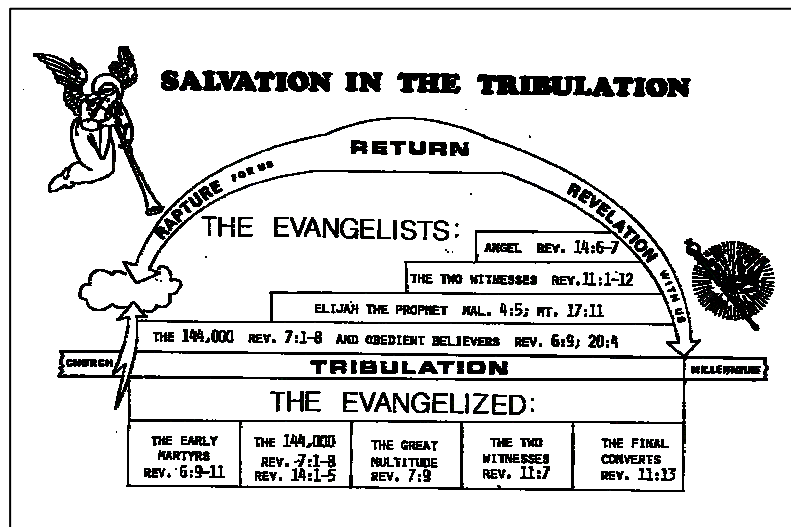
Theories Concerning the Four Winds

- The four winds symbolize universality
- The four winds symbolize the seal judgments of Revelation 6, especially the first four
- The four winds are a picture of the coming trumpet judgments in Revelation 8–9

The Spiritual Significance of Sealing

- Ownership (2 Corinthians 1:22)
- Authentication (John 6:27)
- Preservation leading to final salvation (Ephesians 1:14; 4:30)

b. Innumerable Gentiles are saved (7:9–17).



Source unknown.

Revelation 7:1–17: Think and Do

- The identification by sealing of the 144,000 reminds us that God knows those who are His (John 10:14-16). He has also sealed us to insure that we will ultimately spend eternity with Him (Ephesians 1:13-14). Praise Him!
- God's salvation is extended to all nations and races. Let us lay aside our prejudices and take up the call of worldwide missions.

3. The seventh seal introduces silence and the trumpet judgments (8:1–9:21).

- The opening of the seventh seal introduces silence in heaven (8:1).
- The trumpet judgments are introduced (8:2–6).

The Structure of the Trumpet Judgments (8:7–9:21)

- The first four trumpet judgments focus on nature whereas the next two focus on humanity.
- The first four trumpet judgments are separated from the other judgments by an eagle's cry (8:13).
- The fifth and sixth trumpets are described in more detailed than the first for judgments.
- The trumpet judgments are similar in structure to the seal judgments.

- The first trumpet unleashes hail, fire mixed with blood upon the earth (8:7).

A Comparison of the Trumpet Judgments and the Exodus Plagues

Trumpet Judgments	Exodus Plagues
Revelation 8:7	Exodus 9:13-35
Revelation 8:8-9	Exodus 7:14-21
Revelation 8:10-11	Exodus 15:22-25
Revelation 8:12-13	Exodus 10:21-29
Revelation 9:1-12	Exodus 10:1-20

- The second trumpet unleashes something like a blazing huge mountain into the sea turning it into blood, destroying some sea life and ships (8:8–9).
- The third trumpet unleashes a great blazing star which pollutes the fresh waters resulting in human death (8:10–11).
- The fourth trumpet unleashes partial darkness on celestial bodies (8:12).

- g. Three woes are announced (8:13).
- h. The fifth trumpet and first woe unleash demonic locusts (9:1–12).

The Identification of the "Star" in 9:1

- The "star" is a "fallen" angel, that is, a demon
- The "star" is the "fallen" angel satan himself (Isa 14:12; Luke 10:18)
- The "star" is one of God's angels

The Identification of the "Bottomless Pit" in 9:1–2, 11

- The Greek word is *abyssos* from which we get abyss.
- *Abyssos* is used in the Septuagint of the deep waters (Gen 1:2, 7:11; Ps 107:26), the depths of the earth (Ps 71:20), and the abode of the dead (Deut 30:13).
- In the NT *abyssos* is used of the abode of the dead (Rom 10:7), the abode of demons (Luke 8:31), the abode of the Antichrist (Rev 11:7), and the temporary abode of Satan in the Millennium.
- Seven of the nine NT uses of *abyssos* is found in the Revelation (Luke 8:31; Rom 10:7; Rev 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3).

The Identification of the "Locusts" in 9:3–11

- The locusts are a personification of evil.
- The locusts are natural, although unusual, creatures.
- The locusts are hideous demonic beings.
- The locusts represent some kind of weapon or machine.

- i. The sixth trumpet and second woe unleash a demonic cavalry (9:13–21).

The Euphrates River (9:14; 16:12)

- It is named explicitly almost 20 times in the Bible.
- It was the longest river in Western Asia (about 1800 miles long).
- It was one of four rivers associated with the Garden of Eden.
- It was one of the borders for the land given to Abraham (Gen 15:18).
- It was the area beyond the Euphrates that was traditionally the place from which Israel was attacked.
- It was the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire.

Revelation 8:1–9:21: Think and Do

- The silence in 8:1 reminds us that God silence should not be equated with God's unconcern.
- According to 8:2, the prayers of God's people are received in heaven. So why don't we send more prayers there?
- The serious nature of these judgments indicates the serious nature of sin. Do not laugh at sin, and do not flirt with it, but rather flee from it.

4. **An interlude introduces the Little Book and the Two Witnesses (10:1–11:14).**

- a. **The vision of the Little Book points to the imminent final judgment (10:1–11).**

Revelation 10:1–11: Think and Do

- God has gone to great measures to reveal His intentions to humanity. Therefore, we should go to great measures to seek to understand what He has chosen to reveal through His Word.
- God in His wisdom has chosen not to reveal everything. Do not be overly concerned with what God has chosen not to reveal, but focus on those things that He has chosen to reveal.
- Living the Christian life can be both sweet and bitter. Embrace both as coming from the sovereign hand of God.

- b. **The vision of the Two Witnesses typifies the preservation and protection of God's people (11:1–14).**

Views Concerning the Temple (11:1–2):

- Jewish Apocalyptic View
- Symbolic Church View
- Symbolic Jewish View
- Literal Jewish View

Common Candidates for the Two Witnesses

Literal Views	Symbolic Views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enoch and Elijah • Moses and Elijah • Zerubbabel and Joshua • Elijah and Elisha • James and John • Peter and Paul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Law and Prophets • The Law and gospel • The Old and New Testaments • Israel and the church

Views Concerning the Measuring of the Temple (11:2):

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is protective • It is possessive • It is punitive • It is particular (to show partiality or favor) |
|--|

Some Tribulation Time Designations

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel's Seventieth Week [of years] (Dan 9:24-27) = 7 years • Rule of the "little horn" [Antichrist] for a "time, times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25) = 3½ years • Abolishment of regular sacrifices and abominations of desolations set up is 1,290 day (Dan 11:11) = 3 years 7 months [The additional month may be for judgment of the nations] • Jerusalem trampled underfoot by the nations for 42 months (Rev 11:2) = 3½ years • The ministry of the two witnesses is 1,260 days (Rev 11:3) = 3½ years • The woman (Israel?) is preserved for 1,260 days (Rev 12:6) = 3½ years • The woman (Israel) is nourished for a time, times, and half a time (Rev 12:14) = 3½ years |
|--|

5. The seventh trumpet and third woe points to the proleptic triumph of God and establishment of his kingdom (11:15–19).

Revelation 11:1–19: Think and Do

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is the one who provides the standard of measure and the One who ultimately decides what will and what will not be measured. • The two witnesses demonstrate that you are invincible until God's purpose for you is complete. |
|---|

6. An interlude provides the background to the spiritual conflict in the Tribulation (12:1–14:20).

Seven Major Characters in Revelation 12–13

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The woman representing Israel 2. The dragon representing Satan 3. The man-child referring to Christ 4. Michael, representing the angels 5. Israel, the remnant of the seed of the woman 6. The beast out of the sea, the world dictator 7. The beast out of the earth, the false prophet and religious leader of the world |
|---|

- a. The conflict between the woman and the dragon symbolizes the spiritual conflict between Israel and Satan (12:1–17).

- (1) A cosmic battle involving the Messiah (12:1–6)

Views Concerning the Woman:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary the mother of Jesus • God • The “Ideal” Israel • Ethnic Israel |
|--|

Views Concerning the Flight of the Woman:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary the mother of Jesus • The historic escape of the Jews to Pella in A.D. 66 to avoid the invading Roman armies. • A general picture of the preservation of God's people through trials and tribulations. • The future preservation of the church during the Tribulation period. • The future flight of the Israelites midway through the tribulation (See Matthew 24:15-28). |
|---|

- (2) A cosmic battle involving Michael (12:7–12)

Views Concerning the Battle:

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This battle refers back to the primordial fall of Satan. • This battle occurred at some unknown point in the past. • This battle occurred between the crucifixion and ascension of Christ. • This battle will occur during the latter half of the tribulation period. |
|--|

- (3) A cosmic battle involving Israel (12:13–17)

Revelation 12:1–17: Think and Do

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The battle between God and Satan is not a battle between equals, but between God the Creator and Satan the creation. “Greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). • God is able to protect His own. Do not fear. • This passage teaches us the fact that the spiritual victory has been won by God through the blood of the Lamb. So live your spiritual life in the confidence and assurance of that victory. |
|---|

b. The spiritual conflict in the Tribulation will involve two beasts (13:1–18).

(1) A beast from the sea deceives the world, commits blasphemy, and persecutes believers (13:1–10).

Views Concerning the Beast out of the Sea:

- The Roman Empire with Nero the wounded head.
- "The persecuting power of Satan embodied in all the nations and governments of the world throughout human history" (W. Hendriksen).
- The Roman Catholic papacy (Luther, Calvin).
- The revived Roman Empire of the Tribulation period.
- The ultimate false Christ, the Antichrist

(2) A beast from the earth deceives the world and encourages the worship of the beast from the sea (13:11–18).

Views Concerning the Beast out of the Earth:

- The priests of the Emperor worship cult in the first century Roman Empire.
- The pope of the Roman Catholic Church.
- False religion and false philosophy throughout the church age.
- The false prophets mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:24 and Mark 13:2.
- A specific false prophet of the last days who works in conjunction with the Satan and the Antichrist.

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO BEASTS

THE ANTICHRIST

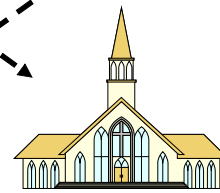
A satanically inspired civil leader



BEAST OUT OF THE SEA

THE FALSE PROPHET

A satanically inspired religious leader



BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH



Revelation 13:1–18: Think and Do

- Not all things which appear to be miracles are truly miracles. We must be discerning.
- God may permit blasphemy for a time but ultimately God will punish blasphemers.
- Satan is the great counterfeit. Don't be fooled.

- c. The spiritual conflict will end with God and His people Triumphant (14:1–20).

A Comparison of Revelation 13 and 14	
Revelation 13	Revelation 14
Emphasis on the activities of the unrighteous	Emphasis on the activities of the righteous
The Antichrist, the False Prophet, and their followers	The Lamb and His followers (144,000)
The mark of the beast on foreheads and hands of the unrighteous (13:16-18)	The name of God the Father and Christ on the foreheads of the righteous (14:1)
Those who refuse the mark are persecuted (13:15, 17)	Those who have received the mark punished (14:9-11)
The forces of evil triumph	The forces of God triumph

- (1) The reappearance of the 144,000 (14:1–5)

Views Concerning the Virgins:

- The virgins are those who have never had sexual relationships with any woman.
- The virgins are those who have never had any immoral sexual relationships with any woman.
- The word virgin is used in a figurative sense in that it represents spiritual purity. Thus, the 144,000 were faithful to God and did not participate in any type of idolatrous activity.

- (2) The report of the three angels (14:6–13)

Views Concerning Babylon:

- Babylon is Jerusalem.
- Babylon is a symbol for those who worship the Beast.
- Babylon is Rome.
- Babylon is Babylon.

(3) The reaping of a human harvest (14:14-20)

Views Concerning the Harvest:

- It is the reaping of unbelievers.
- It is the reaping of believers.
- It is the reaping of both unbelievers and believers.

Revelation 14:1–20: Think and Do

- The 144,000 had the great privilege of standing with the Lamb. Are you joyful or embarrassed of your privilege of standing with and for Christ?
- The 144,000 lived lives of spiritual and moral integrity and distinct from their society. Live a life that is different from the world.
- We must always remember that this world system, like Babylon will ultimately fall. Don't become too enamored with the world (1 John 2:15-17).
- God's judgments are severe. Let this fact motivate us to greater godliness and zeal for evangelism.

7. The seven bowl judgments are commenced (15:1–16:21).

Differences Between the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments

- Several of the trumpet judgments are *partial* in effect, whereas the bowl's effects seem to be *complete*.
- There is an air of *finality* that surrounds these judgments (e.g., 15:1; 16:17).
- The trumpets seem to be a call to *repentance*, whereas the bowls emphasize the pouring out of God's wrath on the *unrepentant*.
- The first four trumpets *indirectly* affect humanity whereas from the beginning the bowls *directly* affect humanity.
- The customary interlude between the sixth and seventh judgments is absent from the bowls passage.
- The fourth bowl judgment is unique to the bowls.
- The bowl judgments are called the "last" (15:1).

a. The bowl judgments are prepared (15:1–8).

Exodus Imagery in Revelation 15	
Exodus	Revelation 15
The plagues against Egypt (7–12)	The plagues against the world (vv. 6-8)
The Red Sea (14:31–33)	The sea of glass mixed with fire (v. 2)
The song of Moses (15:1–18)	The song of Moses (vv. 3-5)

The smoke of God's presence covering Mt. Sinai (19:18)	The smoke of God's presence filling the temple (v. 8)
The erection of the tabernacle (40:1–38)	The appearance of the tabernacle of testimony (v. 5)

Revelation 15:1–8: Think and Do

- Standing faithfully for Christ may result in death, but never defeat.
- Spiritual victories are not opportunities to pat ourselves on the back, but rather opportunities to praise God who has given us the victory.
- Sin may go unpunished for a season, but God is storing up wrath which will be poured out on the day of judgment.

b. The bowl judgments are poured out (16:1–21).

Overview of the Bowl Judgments	
Bowls 1-4	Bowls 5-7
Direct effect on individuals	Direct effect on groups/powers
Nature is affected	Political/spiritual effects

- (1) The pouring out of the first bowl inflicts sores upon those who follow the beast (16:2).
- (2) The pouring out of the second bowl causes the sea to turn into blood and everything in it to die (16:3).
- (3) The pouring out of the third bowl causes all the fresh waters to turn to blood (16:4–7).
- (4) The pouring out of the fourth bowl causes the sun to burn people (16:8–9).
- (5) The pouring out of the fifth bowl causes the world to plunge into darkness (16:10–11).
- (6) The pouring out of the sixth bowl results in the drying of the Euphrates River in preparation of the battle of Armageddon (16:12–16).
- (7) The pouring out of the seventh bowl results great seismic disturbances and hailstones (16:17–21).

Revelation 16:1–21: Think and Do

- The horror of these judgments should serve as a wake-up call to God's people to share their faith with those who otherwise may face first hand these judgments.
- We should not be surprised when people fail to repent and accept the gospel. But do not allow this rejection to stop you from sharing the truth.
- The three unclean spirits were able to influence the leaders of the world to gather for what ultimately will be their destruction. One either follows God or Satan, there is no other option. Which do you choose?

8. **Babylon is destroyed (17:1–19:5).****Introductory Observations:**

- "The section 17:1–19:10 is a unit with introductory and concluding formulas (17:1–3a; 19:9–10). Whether referred to as an appendix or as an extended footnote, it is an explanation of the seventh bowl judgment."²⁹
- Chapters 17–18 picture the judgment of God against Babylon which "represents the total culture of the world apart from God."³⁰
- While this section may have reference to Rome, its ultimate fulfillment will occur during the tribulation.
- One should not miss the obvious contrast between the great harlot and the bride of Christ.

a. **The destruction of religious Babylon (17:1–18).****Interpretations of Revelation 17:8**

	Entirely Past	Past, Present, and Future	Entirely Future
Was	Nero ruled (AD 54-68)	Satan rules the earth unchallenged	The Antichrist rules
Is	Nero died (AD 68)	Satan defeated by Christ at Calvary	The Antichrist dies (see 13:3, 12, 14)
About to come	Belief that Nero would return from the dead (Nero <i>redivivus</i> myth)	Satan allowed to oppose God for a little while until his final destruction	The Antichrist lives again

²⁹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8–22: An Exegetical Commentary*, ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 279.

³⁰ Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews–Revelation*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 736.

Four Views Concerning 17:9–11:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven Roman hills view³¹ • Seven Roman emperor view³² • Seven types of Roman governments view³³ • Seven successive world empires view

<p>Revelation 17:1–18: Think and Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin like the harlot will ultimately be judged and punished. Don't do it! • Sin like a harlot is enticing and alluring. Don't fall for her! • False religions are like harlots who seduce the peoples of the world. Political correctness demands acceptance but God demands spiritual correction.
--

b. The destruction of commercial Babylon (18:1–24).

An Overview of Revelation 17–18	
Revelation 17	Revelation 18
Babylon as a religious system	Babylon as a political and economic system
Emphasis on interpretation of symbols	Emphasis on the judgment of Babylon
Judgment anticipated	Judgment accomplished

c. The destruction of Babylon is celebrated (19:1–5).

<p>Revelation 18:1–19:5: Think and Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Babylon pictures a society with materialism running out of control. Have you been sucked into the system or have you separated from it? • Notice that the three charges leveled against Babylon are also three pitfalls of wanton materialism in our day: a unhealthy pride, a tendency to manipulate, and callous disregard of others. Could these charges be made against you? • Rejoicing in the defeat of evil can be appropriate.

³¹ The seven Roman “hills” are (1) Palantine, (2) Aventine, (3) Caelian, (4) Esquiline, (5) Viminal; (6) Quirinal, (7) Capitoline or Janiculum. As discussed by John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 250.

³² Although there are several variations of this view, according to Summers, the seven Roman emperors were (1) Augustus [31 BC-AD 14], (2) Tiberius [AD 14-37], (3) Caligula [AD 37-41], (4) Claudius [AD 41-54], (5) Nero [AD 54-68], (6) Vespasian [AD 69-79], (7) Titus [AD 79-81]. See Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), 192.

³³ The seven types of Roman governments are (1) kings, (2) consuls, (3) tribunes, (4) decemviri, (5) dictators; (6) emperor, (7) Roman Catholic papacy. See Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), 6:1173.

C. The victorious Second Coming is anticipated and described (19:6–21).

1. The marriage supper of the Lamb anticipates the Second Coming (19:6–10).

The Marriage of the Lamb	
The Event	Possible Spiritual Significance
The Betrothal	The moment that the individual is regenerated.
The Marriage	At the rapture of the church, Christ claims His bride and takes her to His Father's house (John 14:1-3). In heaven, the believer's works will be judged (1 Cor 3:1-15) in preparation for the wedding which takes place at the Second Coming.
The Marriage Feast	The marriage feast may be celebrated either in heaven or on earth during the Millennium and perhaps beyond. Some believe that the guests at the wedding (19:9) include the Old Testament and tribulation saints.

Revelation 19:6–10: Think and Do

- God chose the metaphor of marriage to illustrate the intimacy between Him and His people. Consider how that fact affects the way you relate to God.
- The wedding garment of the bride is described as "the righteous acts of the saints." If this were literally true right now, would you be practically naked or gloriously clothed?

2. The Second Coming is described (19:11–21).

- a. Christ comes in glory and with his army (19:11–16).

- (1) His appearing (19:11)

Characteristics of the Second Coming of Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The return of Christ will be personal ("they will see the Son of Man," Luke 21:27) • The return of Christ will be visible ("every eye will see Him," Rev 1:7; Matt 24:27) • The return of Christ will be sudden ("like a thief in the night," 1 Thess 5:2) • The return of Christ will be in glory ("the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory," Matt 24:30)

- (2) His appearance (19:12–13)

- (3) His armies (19:14)

Identifying the Armies of Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army composed of angels • Army composed of Tribulation martyrs • Army of the saints (the Church) • Army of angels, martyrs, and the Church

(4) His activities (19:15)

(4) His authority (19:16)

- b. Christ's coming results in the defeat and judgment of the antichrist and his allies (19:17–21).

Revelation 19:11–21: Think and Do

- Christ is coming again. Do you know Him?
- Live your life as if Jesus is indeed the King of kings and Lord of Lords.
- Those opposed to God look like a formidable army, but before Christ they are nothing more than bird feed.

D. The Victorious Second Coming Establishes God's Kingdom Forever (20:1–22:5).

1. God's kingdom is expressed in the Millennium (20:1–15).

The Millennium	
Other Major Passages	Major Views
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:3–9; 65:17–25??? • Jeremiah 31 • Ezekiel 40–48 • Revelation 20 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Premillennial • Postmillennial • Amillennial

Some Reasons to Take the 1000 Years Literally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plain reading of the text suggests a literal thousand years. How else would John have been able to communicate a literal thousand years? • It would seem strange that a symbolic number would be repeated six many times in a single passage. • Nothing in the Book of Revelation, the New Testament, or Old Testament conflicts with a literal thousand year kingdom. • John received the revelation of the thousand years directly, apart from other symbols. • The early church fathers generally understood the thousand years literally.

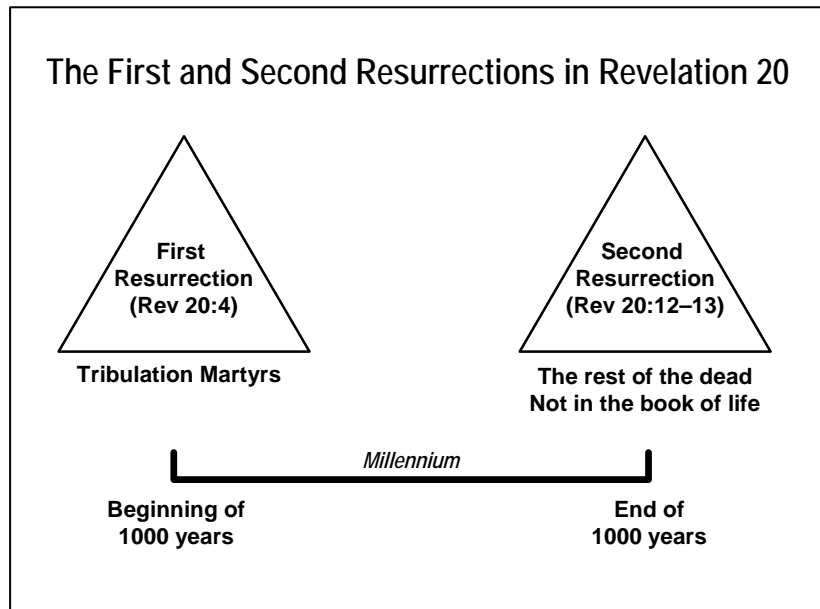
- a. Satan is imprisoned (20:1–3).
- b. The tribulation martyrs are resurrected (20:4–6).

The People of the Millennial Kingdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The raptured Church • The Old Testament Saints • The martyrs of the Tribulation • The survivors of the Tribulation

- c. Satan leads a final rebellion and is defeated and judged (20:7–10).

Four Possible Reasons for Satan's Release ³⁴
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice. 2. To demonstrate the foreknowledge of God who foretells the acts of men as well as His own acts. 3. To demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan. 4. To justify eternal punishment, that is, to show the unchanged character of wicked people even under divine jurisdiction for a long period of time.

- d. All unbelievers are condemned at the great white throne judgment (20:11–15).



³⁴ Adapted from Robert Govett, *The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture* (London: Chas. J. Thynne, 1920), 506–8.

The Fires of Hell in the New Testament
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Furnace of fire (Matt 13:50) • Eternal fire (Matt 18:8) • Unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43) • Lake of fire and brimstone (Rev 20:10)

Revelation 20:1–15: Think and Do

- Notice that God exercises authority over Satan, not the other way around.
- In anticipation of your participation in the Millennial kingdom, faithfully serve Christ now.
- The deception of Satan at the end of the Millennium reveals that fallen human nature gravitates toward evil. How should that inform your view of people?
- The great white throne judgment makes it abundantly clear that the unsaved will ultimately be cast into the lake of fire. Since salvation through Jesus Christ is the only way to avoid this fate, then be even more diligent to share the gospel.

2. God's kingdom is expressed eternally in the new heavens, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem (21:1–22:5).
 - a. The new creation is introduced (21:1–8).

Two Views of the New Heavens and Earth	
Renovation	Replacement
Scriptures which appear to support this view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romans 8:19-22 • Acts 3:21 • Matthew 19:28 	Scriptures which appear to support this view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 102:26-26 • Isaiah 34:4; 51:6 • Matthew 24:35 • 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13

- b. The New Jerusalem introduced (21:9–22:5).
 - (1) The New Jerusalem is revealed (21:9–14).
 - (2) The New Jerusalem is described (21:15–22:1–5).

The New Jerusalem according to Revelation 21–22	
The Walls	The City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 216 Feet high (21:17) • Walls made of Jasper (21:18) • Foundation stones of 12 types of precious stones (21:19-20) • Twelve gates of pearl (21:21) • Gates guarded by angels (21:12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal in length, width, and height [1500 miles] (21:16) • Street of pure gold (21:21) • Illuminated by God's glory (21:23) • River of water like clear crystal (22:1) • Tree of life with 12 kinds of fruit (22:2)

Revelation 21:1–22:5: Think and Do

- The fact that there will be a new heaven and earth should remind us not to become too enamored with the present world.
- The absence of sin from the New Jerusalem reminds us that an ideal world cannot exist if sin is present.
- Of all the great things in the New Jerusalem (its beauty, size, etc.), the greatest is the presence of God in the city. Great cities are not made with stone and iron, but by the presence of God.

E. The Epilogue offers a confirmation and issues a call for consideration (22:6–21).

Some Similarities Between Revelation 22:6–21 and 1:1–20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both are attributed to God the Father and God the Son (1:1; 22:6) • Both indicate that the events "must shortly take place" (1:1; 22:6) • Both revelations come through angelic mediation (1:1, 22:8) • Both identify John as the recipient of the revelations (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) • Both address God's bond-servants (1:1; 22:6) • Both exhort the reading of the revelations by the churches (1:3, 11; 22:16, 18) • Both promise blessing to those who heed the prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 12, 14) • Both reiterate that Christ is coming soon (1:3, 7; 22:7, 10, 12, 20) • Both make reference to the "Alpha and Omega" (1:8; 22:13) • Both refer to Jesus as the "first and the last" (1:17, 22:13)

1. The truth of Revelation is confirmed by an angel (22:6–10).
2. The truth of Revelation merits consideration (22:11–19).

<p style="text-align: center;">Three Titles for Christ in Revelation 22:13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Alpha and Omega (used of God the Father in 1:8) • The First and the Last (used of Yahweh in Isaiah 44:6; 48:12) • The Beginning and the End (used of God the Father in 21:6)
--

3. The truth of Revelation is Jesus confirmed by Jesus (22:20–21).

Revelation 22:6–21: Think and Do

- While the book of Revelation can be difficult to understand at times, it can be trusted as "faithful and true." Therefore, be cautious in your interpretations of difficult passages, but steadfast in your applications of clear ones. The uniqueness of the Lord (see 22:13, 16) makes it even surer that, "there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Don't share religion. Share Christ.
- The admonition of 22:18-19 illustrate the seriousness in which we should approach the book of Revelation in particular, and God's Word in general (2 Timothy 2:15).

The End is Just the Beginning	
Genesis 1–3	Revelation 20–22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First creation of the Cosmos (3:1) • First rebellion (3:6) • Satan enters (3:1) • Sin enters (3:6) • Death enters (3:6) • Sorrow enters (3:16) • Paradise lost (3:23) • Driven from God's presence (3:24) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second creation of the Cosmos (21:1) • Final rebellion (20:7-9) • Satan exits (20:10) • Sin eliminated (21:7) • Death eradicated (21:4) • Sorrow erased (21:4) • Paradise returned (21:25) • Dwelling from God's presence (22:4)