

1. Foundations for Understanding

Why we study Revelation

- The reasons to wrestle through Revelation (the Bible's most complicated text)
 - To pursue a deeper relationship with and knowledge of Jesus as our Savior and Lord (Rev 1:1, Rev 22).
 - A blessing is promised for those who read or listen to Revelation (Rev 1:3).
 - It is the culmination of the Biblical arc of creation's redemption to unity with God.
 - To receive hope amid difficult circumstances (Rev 1:8, 5:2-5).
 - To strengthen the Kingdom of God.
- The wrong reasons to study Revelation (though they sometimes feel natural).
 - To decipher the date of the end of the world or the return of Christ (Acts 6:1-11, Matthew 24:36-44).
 - Out of fear-driven theology (fear of missing the rapture, accidentally getting the mark of the beast, or not being able to identify the anti-christ).
 - To use the book as a cipher to unlock secret knowledge in other parts of the Bible.

Authorship and Date (Rev 1:4, 9-11)

- John the Disciple of Jesus
 - The traditional view states that John the Apostle wrote Revelation. This is supported by examining thematic similarities between Revelation and The Gospel of John.
 - Apostolic authorship is the predominant historical viewpoint.
- John the Elder
 - The non-traditional view states that it was not John the Apostle but rather a different man known as John the Elder who wrote Revelation. John the Elder was a leader at the church of Ephesus, the closes of the seven churches to Patmos.
 - The author never claims to be an apostle (Gal 1:1, 1 Peter 1:1).
 - "Eugene Peterson rightly points out that in one sense, his identity is clear. In addition to our recognition of John as witness and prophet, Peterson rightly calls him a

theologian, poet, and pastor who is ‘God-intoxicated, God-possessed, God-articulate.’”¹

- Questions of authorship began as early as the third century.
- 96-96 AD.
 - During the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96).
 - This indicates that the letter is written to churches that lived through the Nero Persecution.

Types of Literature – Hybrid Text

- Apocalyptic Literature
 - Apocalyptic >> Apocalypse >> ἀποκάλυψις (apokolypsis) (Rev 1:1)
 - What does apocalypse mean?
 - Uncover or reveal
 - Apocalypses occur during visions or dreams (altered states of consciousness) and are cosmic glimpses that relate to specific individuals or groups.
 - “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed (apokolypto) from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.” – Romans 1:17
 - Other Examples of Apocalyptic Literature
 - The dreams of (or interpreted by) Joseph (Gen 37, 40, 41).
 - Much of the Book of Daniel and Ezekiel
 - Isaiah 6 – Commissioning of Isaiah
 - Acts 9 – Conversion of Saul
 - Understanding Apocalyptic Literature
 - Requires an understanding of the rest of the Bible that precedes it.
 - It uses visions, symbols, numbers, and ancient myths to convey its message. The language of the Literature is primarily pictorial, symbolic language to evoke powerful, emotive language, at times more akin to poetry than to prose.
 - It is narrative but not always linear.
 - Lends itself to misinterpretation.
 - Conclusion: Revelation is Apocalyptic Literature drawing heavily from other books of the Bible to reveal Jesus as the eternal victor and source of hope for our current circumstances and eternity.

¹ Gorman, Michael J.. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (p. 46). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- Prophetic
 - Five different times, Revelation explicitly calls itself a work of prophecy, and it also identifies John's actions as prophecy (Rev 1:3; 10:11; 19:10; 22:6-10, 18, 19).
 - Understanding Prophetic Literature –
 - Two Types of Prophecy
 - Foretelling – bringing enlightenment of events yet to occur (Isaiah 53)
 - Forthtelling – bringing new enlightenment to current circumstances (Jonah 1:1-2)
 - Prophecy and prophetic Literature is speaking words of comfort and/or challenge, on behalf of God, to the people of God first and foremost in their historical situation.
 - Revelation contains both types of prophecy (Rev 2-3, 22).
 - Conclusion: Revelation is a prophetic text written to the churches of the first century to comfort and challenge believers in their specific context and to look ahead to the future hope in the return of Christ. Both prophetic types apply to contemporary believers as we strive to be more like Christ and await his return.
- Circular Letter
 - It was written to the churches (plural) of Asian minor (Rev 1:4, 11).
 - Specific instructions were given that the letter was to be read aloud to assembled Churches (Rev 1:3).
 - “He who has ears let him hear what the Spirit says the Churches.” (Rev 2-3).
 - We see an introduction and conclusions similar to other NT epistles (Rev 1:4-5, Gal 1:1-3).
 - Understanding the Circular Letter Genre
 - Much of the NT is made up of Circular Letters (Epistles)
 - They were written to specific and broad audiences (often at the same time).
 - They were copied and circulated to different churches within the first century as sources of instruction, encouragement, hope, and personal affection.
 - To be considered for the Canon (Bible), they had to be of apostolic origin or close connection.
- Liturgical Literature (call to worship)
 - Liturgies within the Revelation

- Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come. . . . You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will, they existed and were created. (Rev 4:8b, 11).
- Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen (Rev 7:12).
- Additional (Rev 5:9-12, 11:17-18, 15:2-4).
- Historical and Contemporary Liturgies (worship)
 - Crown Him With Many Crowns
 - “Crown Him with many Crowns, the lamb upon the throne.” (Rev 5)
 - Handel’s Messiah
 - “Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. (Rev 19:6) The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. (Rev 11:1) King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah!” (Rev 19:16).
 - Agnus Dei – Michael W. Smith
 - Alleluia Alleluia
For our Lord God Almighty reigns
Alleluia Alleluia
For our Lord God Almighty reigns
Alleluia Holy Holy
Are You, Lord God Almighty
Worthy is the Lamb
Worthy is the Lamb
You are Holy” (Rev 4-5).
 - Revolution – Kirk Franklin
 - “Book of Revelation Chapter 7, verses 16 and 17. [Yes, sir!] You shall hunger no more, neither shall you thirst anymore. [Preach Preacher!] For God shall wipe away [Yes sir!] Ever tear from their eye [Yes sir!] Get ready! For the Revolution!”
- Conclusion: Revelation is a work of worship to God that gives instruction and insight on how we can worship God.

2. The Different Approaches to Interpreting Revelation

The Limitations of Millennial Camps

- The most common vocabulary used to define interpretive approaches to Revelation is in terms of the Millennial Reign of Christ that precedes the final judgment (Rev 20:1-6).
- Millennialists view the whole interpretive work of revelation through the prophecies concerning the eschatological (end times theology) prophecies in Revelation 20.
- There are four primary camps to the Millennial method of understanding.
 - Post-tribulation Premillennialism
 - Believes that the 2nd coming of Christ occurs after the tribulation
 - Pre-tribulation (dispensational) Premillennialism
 - Believes that the second coming for the church, called the rapture, precedes a literal seven-year tribulation, followed by the second coming with the church ushering in a literal 1000-year reign.
 - Postmillennialism
 - Believes the history progresses through a figurative 1000-year reign and to a Golden Age in which much of the world has converted to Christianity preceding the second coming of Christ.
 - Amillennialism
 - Believe in a figurative millennial reign in which we are currently living. In the millennium, we simultaneously experience the victory of the Gospel and the suffering for the Gospel.

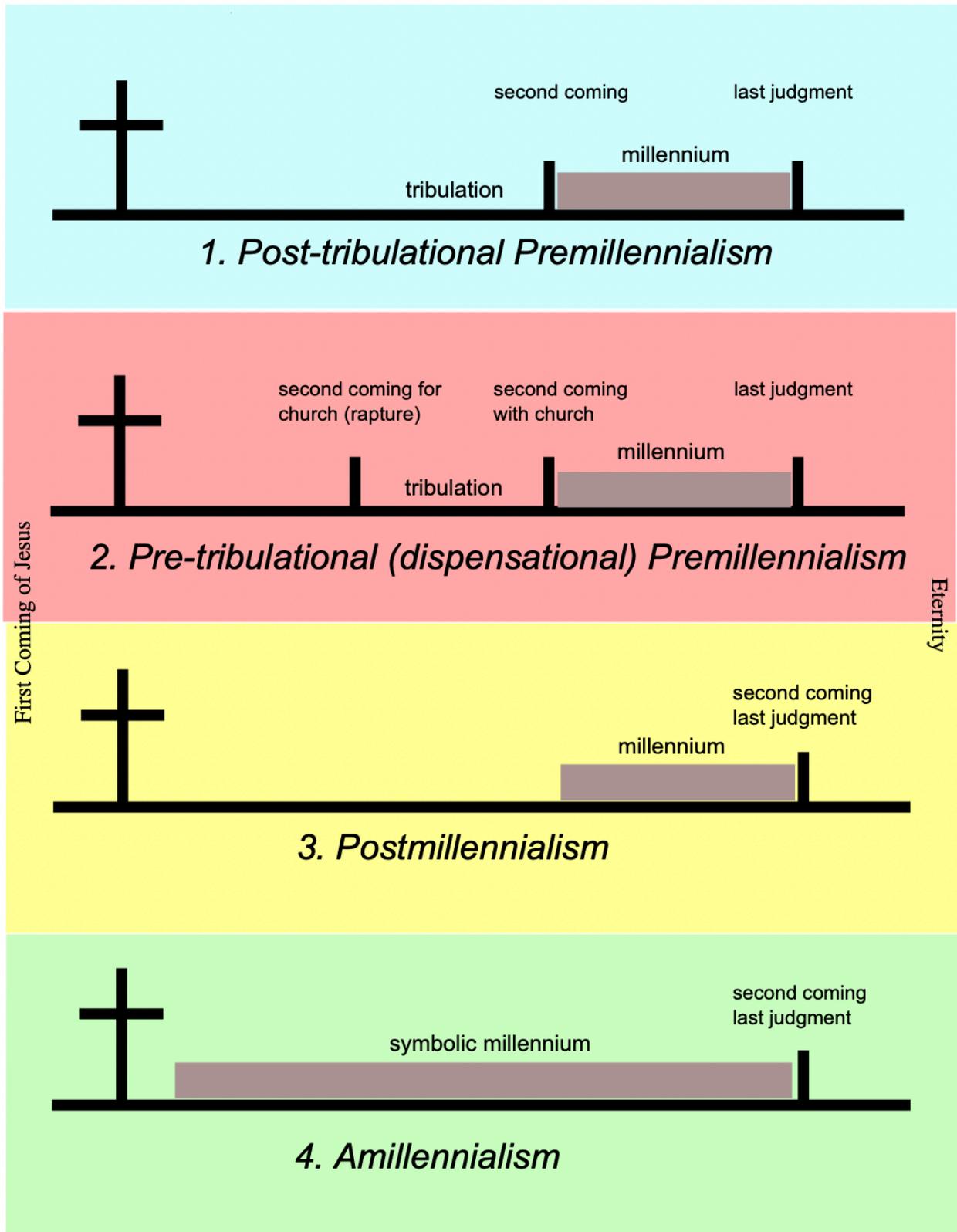


Image 2.1

The Graph

- Two Interpretive Spectrums
 - Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland’s research found that there are two spectrums on which most all interpretations of Revelation occur.
 - Application
 - Code - Focus on details that correlate with specific events, places, or dates.
 - Lens - Focuses on applying meaning in a contemporary context.
 - Time
 - Does the interpretation have application for the Past, Present, or Future?

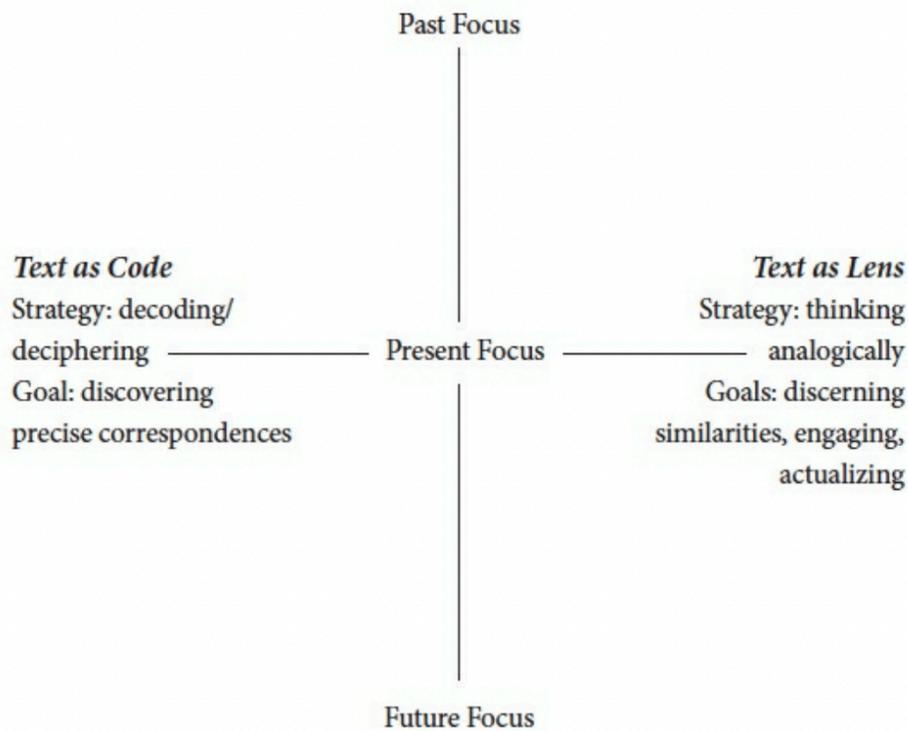


Image 2.2

Gorman, Michael J. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (p. 93). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Five Primary Interpretive Approaches (Michael Gorman)

- Predictive (Futurist)
 - Primary Interpretive Approach
 - The events depicted in Revelation will be fulfilled in the near future.
 - This has been a popular interpretive method since the 2nd and 3rd centuries.
 - Dispensationalism
 - Dispensationalists view Church History as seven sections of times called Dispensations where God works differently in different dispensations.
 - Dispensationalism emphasizes a literal translation of revelation, a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church, a special blessing for geopolitical Israel that is separate from the Church.
 - Believes that the Church is currently in a position of waiting for the Rapture.
 - Developed in the 1830s by Anglican Priest John Nelson Darby and was popularized in America by C.I. Scofield and his study Bible, and Dallas Theological Seminary
 - Popularized in culture through the *Late Great Planet Earth* and *Left Behind* Series.
 - Limitations and Shortcomings
 - “History is littered with failed attempts to use Revelation to predict history” - David Barr.
 - Futurists are often criticized for ignoring the original audience.
 - Dispensationalism has only been an established theology for 200 years and has seen several significant changes over that time frame.
 - Notable Futurists
 - Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Joachim of Fiore, Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, John MacArthur, Martin Luther King Jr.
 - There have also been unfavorable historical figures who ascribed to this, including Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Vladimir Putin.
- Preterist (Historic)
 - Primary Interpretive Approach
 - Revelation is strictly a document for its own time.

- The reader should decode the book for its meaning to the original audience, not as future predictive.
- Limitations and Shortcomings
 - Partially developed as a response to Futurists
 - This is primarily done in academic settings and not within the Church.
 - The interpretive method does not require an affirmation of faith.
- Idealist (Poetic, Theopoetic)
 - Primary Interpretive Approach
 - This approach contends that Revelation uses mythical and poetic language to express great truths about God, evil, and history and examines Revelation for allegorical truths that are spiritually applicable and timeless.
 - It does not rule out the historical context but rejects the decoding approaches of Preterists and Futurists.
 - Searches for the spiritual components of Revelation.
 - Limitations and Shortcomings
 - This approach was developed in reaction to abuses of futurists' predictions and shortcomings of preterist application.
 - Notable Idealists
 - Origen, Augustine, Paul Minear, Eugene Peterson, Richard Hays
- Theopolitical (Historic)
 - Primary Interpretive Approach
 - Revelation depicts a timeless or cyclical view of the Church focusing on opposition to the empirical powers of humankind.
 - The beast (Rev 17) could represent many empires, including Babylon, Rome, Ottoman, Russian, Nazis, etc.
 - Christians and the Church live in opposition to the oppressive powers in a broken world.
 - Limitations and Shortcomings
 - There can be a lack of spiritual application in the Idealist and Futurist interpretive approaches.
 - Notable Theopolitical Interpreters
 - Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards,

George Whitefield, Charles Finney, C. H. Spurgeon, Martin Luther King Jr.

- Pastoral Prophetic
 - Primary Interpretive Approach
 - Revelation is primarily a document of Christian formation. It is designed to call the church to faithfulness in the face of inevitable conflict with hostile powers.
 - The approach combines the Idealist and the geopolitical interpretive approaches.
 - Notable Pastoral Prophetic
 - Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Spurgeon, Charles Talbot.

3. To the Churches in Asia Minor (Rev 1 - 3)

Outlining the Text

- Introduction
 - Introduction and Message to the Churches
 - Rev 1-3
 - Messages that were publicly addressed to the churches in Asian Minor.
 - Prophetic and Circular Letter Literature.
 - The Throne of God and the Lamb
 - Rev 4-5
 - Depiction of the Heavenly Throne Room, God the Father on the throne, and Jesus depicted as a sleighed lamb.
- Three sets of 7 Divine Judgements
 - Seven Seals
 - Rev 6-8a
 - Introduces the 4 horsemen, the martyred saints and the final judgment (Day of the Lord)
 - Seven Trumpets
 - Rev 8b-11
 - Judgment in the form of Exodus plagues, the scroll is read revealing the two witnesses before the final trumpet brings forth the Day of the Lord.
 - (Seven Signs)
 - Rev 12-14
 - Interlude to the three sets of seven.
 - The story on the scroll depicting the cosmic and beastly battle between good and evil.
 - Seven Bowls
 - Rev 15-16
 - Again depicts Exodus plagues concluding in Armageddon and the final judgment on the Day of the Lord.
- Victory for the Kingdom
 - The Fall of Babylon
 - Rev 17-19a
 - The defeat of the prostitute called Babylon
 - The Final Battle
 - Rev 19b-20

- Jesus's return to lead the final battle with the martyred saints who reign with him for 1000 years leading the ultimate defeat of the Dragon and Babylon.
- The New Heaven and New Earth
 - Rev 21-22
 - Depiction of all creation restored to righteousness with God.

Addressing the Churches

- John is instructed to write what he observed and send it to seven churches. (Rev 1:9-20)
- Diversity of the 7 Churches
 - The Problem of Assimilation
 - Christians are threatened by overt hostility in social society.
 - Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira
 - The Problem Persecution
 - Churches engaged in internal conflict over leadership or the extent to which they should accommodate non-Christian culture.
 - Smyrna, Philadelphia
 - The Problem of Complacency
 - Christians that are comfortable and complacent in prosperous communities
 - Sardis, Laodicea
- Format of the letter
 - Address from Christ
 - Words of rebuke and encouragement
 - Summons to listen and promise to the conqueror
- Interpretive Views
 - Futurists (Dispensationalists)
 - The 7 ages of Church History (see image 3.1)
 - Preterist
 - Only historic
 - Theopoetic/Theopolitical/Pastoral Prophetic
 - Will ask the question, what can we learn from the message to the churches that applies to us today.

2:1-7	Ephesus	Apostolic church	to ca. 100 or 150
2:8-11	Smyrna	Persecuted church	ca. 100-312 (Constantine)
2:12-17	Pergamum	Compromised church favored by empire but judged by Christ	ca. 312-606 (election of Pope Boniface X)
2:18-29	Thyatira	Worldly, lax medieval church dominated by papacy and characterized by superstition and paganism	ca. 606-1500/1517 (Protestant reformation), but also continuing until the tribulation
3:1-6	Sardis	Reformation churches, still too much like the medieval church, more dead than alive	ca. 1517-1750, but also continuing today
3:7-13	Philadelphia	True church, loved by Christ, characterized by revival and missionary activity	ca. 1750-early 20th century, but also continuing until rapture
3:14-22	Laodicea	Lukewarm, apostate, anti-supernatural church	Ca. 1900-tribulation

Image 3.1

The Messages to the Seven Churches

- Ephesus
 - Backdrop
 - It was the chief Urban center of Arain Minor, located along the coast, hub of commerce and governance.
 - Lots of marble columns and buildings, including a theater for events and athletic festivals that could hold 24,000 people.
 - Temples to Artemis (considered one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world) attracted touring worshipers
 - The city also was also known for its temples to Julius Caesar and Domitian and the significant presence of the Roman Cult

- The A church that extended back to the mid-first Century (Acts 18:24-19:41)
 - Message
 - The Ephesians and loyal to God and have fought the false teachers and the Nicolaitans.
 - Nicolaitans were a group of people who encouraged Christians to participate in idol worship and cultural practices.
 - The Church is encouraged to remember their first love. Most interpret this as love for one another. They became rigid in their practice without being loving to their neighbors.
- Smyrna
 - Backdrop
 - Famous port city that was known for its longstanding loyalty to the Roman Imperial Cult (temples to Augustus and Tiberius)
 - Product of urban planning, the streets were stoned and laid in straights
 - Cultural center with library and shrine to Homer
 - The Christian community was poor.
 - Message
 - Fighting between Jews and Christian Community (Rev 2:9)
 - The Slander was a public denunciation of someone, in the case of Christians the slander would be that they do not participate in the Imperial Cult. This public denunciation could lead to Christian imprisonment or execution for “hatred against humanity.”
 - Jesus promises eternal security from death, not physical. (Rev 2:11)
- Pergamum
 - Backdrop
 - Cultural and administrative center, very large library
 - An acropolis with a massive altar to Zeus, temple to Augustus, and shrine for Asclepius, the god of healing.
 - Was the seat for legal proceedings for the Roman proconsul.
 - Locally persecuted the Church including a leader named Antipas (Rev 2:13).
 - Message

- Jesus says Pergamum resides “where Satan’s throne is” (Rev 2:13)
- The church is rebuked for following the teachings of someone named Balaam who taught eating food sacrificed to idols and practicing fornication (Rev 2:14)
 - Similarities with Balaam in Numbers (Num 31:16)
- Not eating meat sacrificed to idols would separate Christians from many social settings including, festivals, markets, and dining rooms.
- The faithful would be given “hidden manna”
- Thyatira
 - Backdrop
 - Southeast of Pergamum, known as a commercial center
 - Home to many trade guilds: potters, tailors, leather workers, shoemakers, linen workers, bakers, coppersmiths, dyers, and wool merchants.
 - Lydia from Thyatira dealt in purple cloth (Acts 16:14)
 - Message
 - Jesus Commends Christians for their love (in contrast to Ephesus) and endurance (Rev 2:19)
 - The church is rebuked for allowing the influence of someone nicknamed Jezebel who promotes (and participates in) fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols.
 - Similar to Jezebel Queen of Israel who violently opposed God and promoted “harlotries and sorceries” (1 Kings 18).
 - The fornication is probably sexual and religious, similar to the metaphor used in Hosea (Hos. 1:2).
 - Faithful believers share in ruling over the Nations and will receive the “Morning Star” who is Christ himself.
- Sardis
 - Backdrop
 - Gained reputation for wealth from gold, said to have been found in a nearby river.
 - The city prospered from commerce and fertile land.
 - The city had a citadel that gave the impression of being an impenetrable fortress (it was twice captured)
 - There were temples to August and the goddess Artemis.

- Devastated by and earthquake in 17 A.D. and rebuilt with Roman help leading to a new temple to the Imperial Cult
- The Jewish community was prosperous, influential, and had a supply of ritually clean food.
- Message
 - The community has “the name of being alive” which refers to the way the Christian community appears to other people (Rev 3:1).
 - Indication of wealth and absence of affliction
 - Jesus views the congregation as dead, this contrasts the spiritual reality with the social perception.
 - Sardis has a lack of vigilance, they are repeatedly told to “wake up” (Rev 3:2-3).
 - Some are called out for “soiled” clothes while the faithful are depicted as being dressed in white.
 - This is reference to sin and righteousness that will again be seen I ch. 7.
- Philadelphia
 - Backdrop
 - Philadelphia is in a rich agricultural area that was also devastated by the 17 A.D. earthquake.
 - After Rome helped rebuild the city would refer to itself as “Neocaesarea” and would later adopt the family name of emperor Vespasian calling itself Philadelphia Flavia.
 - The church was small and oppressed by the local Jewish synagogue (Rev 3:9).
 - Message
 - Church members refused to deny Christ.
 - Jesus refers to himself as the one “who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one will open”
 - This indicates that Jesus has the power to open the door for someone to enter the Kingdom of God and is a paraphrase of Isaiah 22:22.
 - Because of their relationship with the doorkeeper Jesus as set before them “an open door which cannot be shut” (Rev 3:8).
- Laodicea
 - Backdrop and Rebuke

- The city was very wealthy. After an earthquake in 60 A.D. they had enough wealth to rebuild the city without Roman assistance.
 - The Christians are told to buy Gold from Jesus refined by fire to be rich. (Rev 3:18)
- Known for the production of fine dark wool used in high-quality textiles.
 - Jesus tells them they are naked (Rev 3:17-18)
- The city had an important medical school located in an area known for its eye salve.
 - Jesus tells them they are blind (Rev 3:17-18)
- The nearby town of Hieropolis was known for its hot springs. The water in their aqueducts would have been tepid and unappealing. To get cold water they had to procure it from Colossae.
 - Jesus tells them they are neither hot nor cold and it makes him sick (Rev 3:15-16).
- Message
 - The message to the Laodiceans is complacent and weak were not in alignment with the Kingdom of God.
 - There is also a call to repentance and a promise that “when they open the door” Christ “Will eat with them” and that those who conquer will have a place on Christ’s throne (Rev 3:21; 22:5).

4. The Throne and The Lamb (Rev 4 -5)

Rapture Theology

- The word Rapture does not appear in the Bible.
 - It comes from a Latin Vulgate translation of the word αρπαζω (*harpazo*) In 1 Thes 4:17.
 - αρπαζω - which means to steal, carry off, snatch away, or drag away. (John 6:15, Mat 12:29, John 10:9)
- The word αρπαζω does not appear in Revelation, nor does any direct reference to the rapture, yet Revelation is most often associated with the Rapture. (Why?)
- Dispensationalists view the rapture as the next significant prophetic event to be fulfilled.
 - The theological approach is Futurist, pre-millennial, and pre-tribulation.
 - This view believes the events in Revelation predict the near future, and the rapture will occur before a literal 7-year tribulation that precedes the final battle, and the millennial reign of Christ.
 - The theological view believes that Jesus will partially return to snatch the church out of the world.
 - Supporters of this view often reference Rev 4:1-2 and the absence of direct references to the Church in Rev 4 – 21.
- The historic (pre-dispensationalist) view provides contrast. For most of Church history, the belief was that there is one return of Christ at the end of the tribulation, whether the tribulation is a literal or allegorical seven years.
 - This view included Futurists (before the 19th century), preterist believers, theopoetic, theopolitical, and pastoral prophetic.
 - This view rejects a two-stage return of Christ and understands 1 Thes 4:13-18 to reference the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of the Saints.
 - The view understands the resurrection of the Saints to occur at the same time as the visible (and only) return of Christ (Mat. 24:27; 1 Cor 15:23; James 5:8; 1Jn 2:28).
- Additional Reading
 - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-rapture-question/>²

² NOTE: The article's conclusion emphasizes a specific approach that can be critical of dispensationalism. While it is impossible to fully eliminate bias in such an article the bias should also be noted before reading.

Symbolism

- Allegory vs. Literal interpretations
 - Different understandings of the symbols used in revelation present the most significant division between interpretive and theological approaches to Revelation.
 - While most acknowledge the presence of symbols, the question of which texts should be translated as allegorical, symbolic, or literal is often contested.
 - Allegorical
 - Idealist, Historic, and Pastoral Prophetic interpretive approaches search for symbolism that references knowledge of scripture, historic culture, and timeless truth.
 - Examples: The sword from Jesus’s mouth is not an actual sword but a reference to the word of God; the 1000-year reign may not be a literal 1000 years but symbolizes a large (long) amount of time.
 - “Animals, colors, numbers, and other everyday entities take on symbolic value as apocalyptic seers attempt to express the nearly inexpressible. Certain colors and numbers are among the most frequent and important aspects of the symbolism in Revelation. The colors function more like images than adjectives, and the numbers more like adjectives than numbers.”³
 - Literal
 - Futurists and some Preterists often search for literal interpretation when possible. When symbolism is present, it is a code to be broken.
 - Examples: A literal 7-year time period for the tribulation, a literal battle at the end of the tribulation on the field of Megiddo.
 - The struggle with this approach is determining when there is a symbol to decode or when something is not a symbol.
- See Appendix 1 for a symbolism chart.

³ Gorman, Michael J.. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (p. 33). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
Lighthouse Church

The Throne and the Throne Room (Rev 4)

(Chapters 4 and 5 go together; they are two panels of the same painting and should be understood in unison and connected. The central figures are the Throne and the Lamb)

- God is the central figure of the Throne Room.
 - The throne being central to the chapter shows God's sovereignty and power (this is important in contrast to The Lamb).
- Depictions of Throne Room
 - Rev 4 depicts a blend of temple and throne-room scenes from the Ancient Near East, as reflected in Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7, Ezekiel 1, and from the Roman Empire, where the emperor was honored and worshiped as sovereign of the universe.
 - The Throne
 - The voice of God is depicted coming from the Throne in descriptive terms that can be found in
 - Descriptions:
 - God is depicted on a throne (1 Kings 22:19; Isa 6:1; Ezek 1:26),
 - God having a white appearance (Dan 7:9),
 - God is surrounded by beauty (Ezek 1:18, 26–28)
 - The presence of a sea (Ezek 1:22; Dan 7:2–3)
 - Fire/smoke/lightning (Exod 3:2–3; 19:16, 18; Isa 6:4; Ezek 1:4, 13–14; Dan 7:9–10),
 - Angels (1 Kings 22:19; Exod 3:2; Dan 7:10),
 - Various other living creatures (Ezek 1:5–25; 10:15–22; Dan 7:3–7).
 - The Creatures
 - The four creatures resemble a man, lion, ox, and eagle (Ezek 1:10, Isa 6:2).
 - The creatures lead all living things in worship of God.
 - Beginning in the 2nd Century AD, Christians began associating the four creatures with the four Gospels (READ BOOK).
 - Others interpret the creatures to represent creation in proper unity with God.
 - The Elders
 - The 24 elders
 - Seated on thrones around the one throne

- Dressed in white
- Each has a golden crown
- Who are the 24 Elders
 - Twenty-four elders as the people of God; the number is taken either from the 24 priestly orders instituted by David (1 Chron 24:1–19) or from the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles.
 - The word elder came from the Greek word presbyteros and was often used for Jewish or Christian leaders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Pet 5:1-2; 3 John 1).
- The Messages to the Churches
 - Sardis was told that those who conquer would be clothed in white (Rev 3:5)
 - Smyrna was told to be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life (Rev 2:10)
 - Laodicea was told that all who conquered would be granted to sit with Jesus on the Father’s throne (Rev 3:21).
- The
 - In the proper order of creation, everything is oriented towards God.
- Interpretive Understandings
 - Preterists and Historic (theopolitical)
 - There are several similarities to the rituals associated with the Roman imperial court.
 - The presence of attendants around the imperial throne
 - The offering of hymns and acclamations to the emperor
 - The practice of attendants and lesser kings giving golden crowns to him.
 - Public appearances of the empowered in the first century often depicted the emperor sitting on a throne surrounded by friends, advisors, generals, and attendants.
 - When the emperor would travel, communities would send representatives, often dressed in white, to greet him and present him with golden crowns to show their recognition of his sovereignty.

- Preterists will acknowledge the symbolism for what it meant to compare God to Ceasar.
- Historicists or Theopolitical will see this as God being more significant than any man-instituted ruler or king.
- Futurists
 - Futurists may draw a comparison to a singular Anti-Christ or opposition to the Throne of Satan (Rev 2:13; 13:2; 16:10)
 - Dispensationalists often focus on vs. 4:1-2 as a reference to the rapture.
- Centering Focus
 - “Worship is meeting at the center so that our lives are centered in God and not lived eccentrically. We worship so that we live in response to and from this center, the living God. Failure to worship consigns us to a life of spasms and jerks, at the mercy of every advertisement, every seduction, every siren If there is no center, there is no circumference. People who do not worship are swept into a vast restlessness, epidemic in the world, with no steady direction and no sustained purpose.” – Eugene Peterson.

Seven Theological Themes of Revelation⁴

- The Throne: The Reign of God and the Lamb
 - God the creator reigns.
 - Jesus, the redeemer and slaughtered Lamb, is Lord.
 - They rule together on one throne.
 - Their reign is past, present, and future.
- The Reality of Evil and Empire
 - Evil is real and depicted in imperial terms
 - The nature of empire is the control of power
 - Empire promises life but delivers death (both spiritual and physical)
- The Temptation to Idolatry and Immorality
 - Idolatry often seduces the Christian Church.
 - Imperial idolatry may seem appealing because of the investiture of religious meaning and authority.
- The Call to Covenant Faithfulness and Resistance

⁴ Gorman, Michael J. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (pp. 107-108). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

- Amid empire and civil religion, the Church has a calling of resistance.
- The Church stands in contrast to evil and empire with covenant faithfulness to God.
- Resistance requires spiritual discernment and may result in various kinds of suffering.
- **Worship and an Alternative Vision**
 - The spiritual discernment of the church requires an alternative vision of God and reality that unveils and challenges empire.
 - This vision is an alternative to the deception of power represented by empire.
 - Revelation provides this by focusing on the throne of the eternal holy God, the faithful slaughtered Lamb, and the coming of a new creation.
- **Faithful Witness: The Pattern of Christ**
 - Christian resistance follows the pattern of Jesus: faithful, trustworthy, courageous, just, and nonviolent.
 - The pattern is observable in Jesus's apostles, martyred saints, and prophets.
 - This is active, not passive, with Christians pursuing communities of individuals dedicated to life with God as an alternative to the empire's culture of death.
- **The Imminent Judgment and Salvation/New Creation**
 - God the creator and Christ the redeemer take evil and injustice seriously.
 - God and Jesus will judge humanity and save the cosmos, renewing creation.
 - The will of God is for all to follow the Lamb.

The Lamb on the Throne (Rev 5)

- **The Scroll**
 - In the right hand of the one seated on the throne (God the creator).
 - The scroll had writing on the front and back, which would be highly unusual for documents in antiquity.
 - The scroll had seven seals creating a sense of expectancy of a divine decree (Ezek 2:9-10).
 - Seals often denote legal authority and were used for decrees, wills, or legally binding documents.

- There are different interpretations as to the contents of the scroll, including Scripture, the Book of Life (Rev 20:12), and a legal document. Most believe it to be God's eschatological⁵ plan.
- It appears no one is worthy to open the scroll, which is highly distressing (Isa 6:8).
- The Lamb
 - The only one worthy enough to open God the creator's scroll.
 - John hears the one worthy is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Gen 49:9-10; Isa 11:1-10).
 - Both images invoke messianic power and rule.
 - John turns and does not see a lion but a slaughtered lamb (Isa 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19).
 - There is no doubt that the Lamb is Jesus.
 - The Lamb presents a contrast to the lion.
 - The lion is powerful, ruling, conquering.
 - The Lamb is innocent, meek, and appears defeated.
 - "The shock of this reversal discloses the central mystery of the Apocalypse: God overcomes the world, not through a show of force but through the suffering and death of Jesus, 'the faithful witness [martyrs] (1:5)." – Richard Hays
 - READ BOOK
 - The Lamb is the central figure of Revelation. Chapters 1-4 lead up to the Lamb, and chapters 6-22 flow from the Lamb.
 - The Lamb is seen as slaughtered but is not powerless.
 - Seven eyes – perfectly sees
 - Seven horns – perfect wisdom (Isa 11:1-3; Ps. 132:17)
 - The Lamb shares dominion with God the Creator – they are both on the throne.
- The Power of the Lamb
 - His Death
 - Jesus's death may appear as a defeat, but in reality, it is a victory. Through death, Jesus brings people of all nations into the Kingdom of God.
 - The sacrifice of the Lamb has the power to transform the believer's life.
 - The imagery of the Lamb and of "a kingdom and priests serving our God" (5:10; Exod 19:6) is reminiscent of the

⁵ Eschatology /,eskə'täləjē/ - the study of last things.

Passover and Exodus stories, only this time, the redeemed people come, not from one nation, but "from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9; 7:9; 21:24; 22:2).

- His Word
 - The messages to the seven churches use the phrase "the words of..." to emphasize the power of Jesus to instruct the churches (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18, 3:1, 7, 14).
 - His word is associated with a sword (Romans 8:31, Rev 1:26, Rev 19:15).
- The Throne and the Lamb
 - The Lamb is equal with God, the creator on the throne.
 - Rev 5:8-14 depict escalating worship of the Lamb that correlates with Phil 2:5-11.
 - Jesus shares the Father's white hair (Rev 1:14), name (Rev 1:17), and dominion (Rev 1:5-6). They share the throne (Rev 22:1,3) and divine wrath (Rev 6:16-17) and together constitute the New Jerusalem's temple of light (Rev 21:22-3). They are both the source of salvation (7:10).
 - The depiction of God the creator and Jesus the faithful and slaughtered Lamb are equally worthy of our complete devotion.
 - The Paradoxes
 - 1 – God shares sovereignty and honor, expressed in the receiving of worship, with the Messiah Jesus (Ex 34:14).
 - 2 – Jesus, worthy of worship, has exercised his messianic office and power by being slaughtered (Mt 20:25-28; Mt 18:5).

5. The Plot and Characters

Revelation as Plot (non-linear)

- Prologue: Setting the Cosmic Stage
 - God created humankind to worship Him and live in a relationship with Him, though the sin of mankind separated them from this relationship and fractured the worship. (Gen 1-3)
 - God sent Jesus as the Messiah.
 - Satan pursued Jesus, but Jesus remained faithful even to death (Rev 12, Luke 4:1-13)
 - Satan has seduced vital individuals to create a culture of death (Babylon) through idolatry, evil, and chaos.
- Act One: Satan is on the Move
 - Satan is directing the powerful, idolatrous culture of death and has seduced individuals and nations (including some in Asia Minor) (Rev 2-3, 12)
 - Satan promotes an unholy trinity of which he is a part, and two beasts join him; one of the land and one of the sea (Rev 13).
 - Followers of Jesus are being seduced by the work of Satan.
- Act Two: The Prophet Speaks
 - John calls the churches back to faithfulness (Rev 1-
 - John reminds the churches of the faithful Lamb, who is Jesus, and of His death and resurrection. (Rev 4-5)
 - The faithful who resist the seduction of Satan will receive blessing and honor from Jesus. (Rev 1-3)
- Act Three: God Judges
 - Babylon (the unholy culture of death) is under divine judgment and doomed to fall (Rev 17-18).
 - This is the longest narrative in Revelation (6-20) but can be summarized by Rev 18:2 – Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.”
 - God defeats the unholy trinity and death itself (Rev 20:14).
- Act Four: God Renews
 - Babylon, the city of death and oppression of the faithful, is replaced by Jerusalem, the new heaven and earth, and a new culture of wholeness and life (Rev 21-22).
 - Pain and sorrow are absent.
 - There is healing for humanity and restoration to a place of worship and relationship.
 - God and the Lamb dwell with a renewed humanity.

Key Figures

- The Trinity in Revelation
 - God the Father
 - The Alpha and Omega (Rev 1:8, Rev 21:6, Isa 44:6).
 - The One on the Throne (Rev 1:4, 4, 22:3)
 - The One who was and is and is to come (Rev 1:4, 4:8, Heb 13:8)
 - The Almighty (Rev 1-22 appears nine times)
 - God is the judge (Rev 16:7)
 - The creator (Rev 21:5, Gen 1-2)
 - The Son – Jesus
 - Jesus’s Titles in Revelation:
 - The faithful and true witness (Rev 1:5; 3:14)
 - Firstborn of the dead (Rev 1:5; Col 1:18)
 - Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:4-5; Dan 2:21, Mat 28:28)
 - Son of Man (Rev 1:9; 14:14; Mark 2:10-11; Mat 9:6)
 - First and last (Rev 1:8, Rev 21:6, Isa 44:6).
 - Alpha and Omega (Rev 1:8, Rev 21:6, Isa 44:6).
 - Living one (Rev 1:18)
 - Son of God (Rev 2:18; Mat 17:5; John 3:16)
 - Holy one (Rev 3:7; Isa 47:4)
 - True one (Rev 3:7)
 - Amen (Rev 3:14)
 - Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5; Gen 49:10; Isa 11:1-3; Hos 5:14)
 - Root of David (Rev 5:5, 22:16; Isa 11:1-2)
 - Lamb (Rev 5-22; Isa 53:7; John 1:29, 1 Pet 1:19)
 - Lord (Rev 11:3-4, 9:16; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Cor 15:3-7)
 - Word of God (Rev 19:13; John 1:14)
 - Kind of Kings and Lord of lords (Rev 9:16, 17:14; 19:16 Dan 2:21, Mat 28:28)
 - Bright and morning star (Rev 22:16)
 - Essential depictions of Jesus in the narrative are the faithful and true witness, the slain Lamb, and the divine warrior.
 - Jesus is depicted as the co-equal to the father, sharing names and the throne (Rev 1:8, Rev 5)
 - The Holy Spirit

- Seen in the Prophetic Voice of God and the Lamb speaking to the churches and bringing them into the presence of God. (Rev 1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10).
- The seven spirits of God (the perfect Spirit of God).
- Jesus instructs the churches to listen to what the Spirit is saying to them (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22).
- The Spirit (and the Bride) call people to experience the life that only God gives (Rev 22:17).
- The Unholy Trinity
 - One dragon
 - The dragon is “the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” – Rev 12:9 (Gen 3, John 8:44; 1 Tim 4:1).
 - Satan is the orchestrator and forces moving against God, the Lamb, and humanity through persecution, deception, and idolatry.
 - The dragon is red, symbolizing his dealing in death, and has seven heads with diadems and ten horns, symbols of power (Rev 12:3).
 - Two Beasts
 - The beast from the sea
 - Reflects Satan’s power of persecution, deception, and idolatry.
 - It also has seven heads and ten horns (later identified as hills, rulers, and client kings (Rev 17:9, 12).
 - It makes blasphemous claims about its own power but, in truth, receives power from the dragon (Rev 13:2, 4)
 - The beast has a resurrection like healing from a mortal wound (mimicking Christ) which results in people worshiping the beast and the dragon (Rev 13:3-4)
 - The beast’s reign is short, but the church undergoes persecution during his rule.
 - The beast’s number is 666 (Rev 13:18)
 - For many interpreters, “Antichrist” is synonymous with the beast, but the term does not appear in Revelation.
 - The beast from the land

- The function of the second beast is to promote worship of the first beast (Rev 13:2).
- It uses deception and tricks to convince people to worship the first beast (Rev 13:13-15).
- The beast appears like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, showing its mimicking of Jesus while revealing its true nature as a creature of Satan (Rev 13:1).
- Babylon the Harlot
 - A feminine figure identified as a prostitute and reminiscent of Jezebel and the Roman goddesses Roma Aeterna and Dea Roma (Eternal Rome and Goddess Rome).
 - She is seated on many waters (people?) and on the blasphemous first beast (Rev 17:2-3,15).
 - The prostitute has fornicated with the inhabitants of the earth and become drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev 17:2-6)
 - She is the all-powerful city to rule all others and has ten kings who serve her in war against the Lamb (Rev 17:2-6, 12-18).
 - Babylon is the antithesis of the people/city of God: the woman in Rev 12, the Lamb's Bride in Rev 19-22, and the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22.
- The Church/the People of God
 - The people of God are imperfect both as the Church and as individuals (Rev 2-3).
 - The people of God have been liberated and freed by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 1:5, 5:9); 9); that it produces faithful and "victorious" servants who have affirmed their identification with the Lamb's blood by shedding their own blood (Rev 6:10; 7:14). Their sacrifice is for ultimate victory and glory, symbolized especially by white robes (Rev 3:4-5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14; 22:14).
 - The people of God are presented as "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1-4).
 - The woman flees the wilderness, where she is protected and nourished by God.
- The Faithful Witnesses
 - The Church receives a calling to be a faithful witness (Rev 2:10, 12:14)

- The faithfulness is rooted in Jesus as the faithful witness (Rev 1:5, 3:14, 19:11).
- The martyrs share the attributes of faithful witnesses (Rev 6:9-11, 7:13-17, 12:11, 17:6).
- Two Witnesses (Rev 11:1-13)
 - They present a faithful testimony to and among the nations, which results in their death.
 - They also reflect Jesus as the faithful and true witness through their resurrection.
 - The witnesses call people to worship the Lamb and courageously testify to the truth of God and prophesy against falsehood and the distortion of truth
 - The two witnesses are called lampstands (Rev 1:20, 11:4).
- The Multitude
 - Depicted as 144,000 sealed people from the tribes of Israel (7:4).
 - The 144,000 have been sealed and marked on the forehead identifying them as God's people.
 - There is also a depiction of a great multitude from many nations before the throne and robed in white (Rev 7:9)
- The Nations and their Inhabitants
 - The term "nations" appears nineteen times in the book and refers to collaborators with evil powers and victims (Rev 18:3, 13).
 - Even though messengers tell them to repent, there is little sign of repentance in the book.
 - Some belong to the nations that think they are of the faithful (Rev 2:5, 16, 12, 3:3, 5, 16).
 - The ultimate goal for humanity is salvation and for the nations to be healed (Rev 21:22-27).

6. The Cycles of Sevens (Rev 6 - 16)

Timeline Perspectives

- Linear
 - The divine judgment depicted in Rev 6-16 is linear and sequential.
 - The sequence of divine judgments will escalate until the return of Jesus. (Futurist: Dispensationalism)
- Spiral

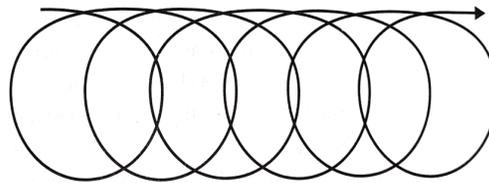


Image 6.1

- As far back as the third-century scholars have suggested that Revelation is not linear.
 - The oldest existing commentary on Revelation (written by Victorinus) suggests a spiral or series of overlapping loops
 - Each spiral consists of a series of visions
 - Messages to the churches (Rev 1-3)
 - Seven Seals (Rev 4-7)
 - Seven Trumpets (Rev 8-11)
 - Unnumbered Visions (Rev 12-15)
 - Seven Plagues (Rev 15-19)
 - Unnumbered Visions (Rev 19-22)
 - With increasing intensity, the visions at the bottom of the spiral threaten the reader's sense of security.
 - Each time the conflict becomes unbearable, the reader transports back to the presence of God, the Lamb, and the heavenly chorus.
- Nesting Dolls
 - The diving judgments in Rev 6-16 act more as nesting dolls representing different perspectives of simultaneously occurring events.
 - Each cycle of seven comes out of the previous, and all end on the Day of the Lord

Seven Seals (Rev 6-8a)

- The reader should feel increasingly uncomfortable when they begin hearing about the divine judgment leading to the question, "Who is able to stand?" (Rev 6:17)
- The Four Horsemen
 - First Seal
 - White horse, armed with a bow, given a crown, representing conquest.
 - It would have alluded to images of the Parthia, mounted archers that repeatedly drove back the Roman Army, halting imperial expansion.
 - The implication for Christians in Asia Minor is that Christians who partook in the sacrifices to the Imperial Cult were vulnerable to outside (spiritual) forces. (Preterist, Historic, Idealist, Pastoral Prophetic).
 - Second Seal
 - Bright red horse, given a sword, represents the removal of peace.
 - Warns not to be lulled into a false sense of peace.
 - The *Pax Romana* lauded Rome as the supreme source of peace and prosperity. In contrast, churches in Asian Minor had experienced local persecution, and Nero perpetrated mass persecution (Pr., H., I., Pp.)
 - Third Seal
 - Black horse, holding a pair of scales, represents economic hardship
 - Brings financial hardship on wheat and barley but is instructed to leave oil and wine alone.
 - The Roman economic system is known for its ability to make grain and other foodstuffs widely available.
 - The attack is again on the Roman system warning Christians against placing security in the Roman Empire (Pr., H., I., Pp.).
 - Fourth Seal
 - Sickly green horse, represents death, followed by Hades (the Greek name for Hell/death realm).
 - Possesses the escalated powers of previous horsemen to bring complete famine and death.
- The Martyrs and the People of Earth

- The fifth and sixth scenes are contrasting scenes, one in heaven and the other on earth.
- Fifth Seal
 - The martyrs are under the altar and ask the question, "How long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?" (Rev 6:10; Zech 1:12; Ps 79:5-10; Joel 2:11).
 - They receive white robes (Rev 6:11, Rev 1:10, Rev 4:4).
 - They are told to wait until the number of martyrs is complete
- Sixth Seal
 - The sky shakes, the sun becomes dark, the moon turns to blood, stars fall, and the sky disappears.
 - People run and hide from the one on the Throne and the Lamb.
 - This depicts the Day of the Lord consistent with Isa 34:4; Joel 2:30-31; Amos 8:9).
 - The response from the mass of humanity is, "who is able to save us?" (Rev 6:17).
- Interlude - The Multitude
 - An angel is charged to seal 144,000 for protection (Ezek 9:4-6).
 - John *hears* a list of 12,000 from the tribes of Israel (substituting Manasseh for Dan).
 - John sees a multitude from every tribe, language, and nation before the throne.
 - Two views
 - 1) There is one people of God that have been included (grafted) into Israel from every nation.
 - 2) There are two peoples of God, the 144,000 from the Tribes of Israel and the Church.
 - The Multitude are clothed in white and celebrate the Lamb's victory by waving palm branches –the traditional symbol of victory (1 Macc 13:51).
 - The promises to the Multitude are reflections of Old Testament promises.
 - God would make his "tabernacle" with his people in Ezek. 37:27. In Rev 7:15, the one seated on the throne will "tabernacle over them."

- In Isa. 49:10, God promises that the redeemed "shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of living water will guide them." In Rev 7:16-17, the Lamb in the center of the throne is a shepherd that guards the Multitude against hunger, thirst, sun, and heat and guides them to springs of the water of life.
- Isa 25:8 says that God "will wipe away the tears from all faces," while Rev 7:17 repeats the promise that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."
- The Final Seal
 - The Seventh Seal
 - This leads to silence and the beginning of the trumpet cycle.

Seven Trumpets (Rev 8b-11)

- Seven angels receive trumpets, creating a sense of anticipation
 - The field of battle used trumpets to signify the beginning of a battle (2 Chron 13:13).
 - They also warned of a coming assault (Amos 3:6).
 - In worship, it was an offering of praise to God (2 Chron 5:13).
- Before the blowing of the seven trumpets, an angel is given the bowl of heavenly incense (which includes the prayers of the saints) and throws it to earth (Rev 8:3-5).
- First Four Trumpets
 - First Trumpet
 - Hail and fire mixed with blood fall on the earth and scorches 1/3 of the earth.
 - Second Trumpet
 - A blazing mountain is thrown into the sea, turning 1/3 of the water into blood.
 - Third Trumpet
 - A start called "wormwood" falls into fresh water, turning it bitter
 - Wormwood is the name of a plant with an unbearably bitter taste.
 - Fourth Trumpet
 - 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars are afflicted, casting darkness on the earth.

- The trumpets are reminiscent of the plagues of divine judgment brought on Egypt (Exodus 7-11).
- The section concludes with an Eagle warning about the coming trumpets.
 - The Eagle and the Egyptian plague allusions should draw those who experience the first four trumpets to repentance.
 - The reader should understand that no one can find security apart from God.
 - The followers of the Lamb are promised a future where they are:
 - The redeemed are washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). Meanwhile, the world sheds the blood of the saints, which falls as fire from heaven and later finds itself awash in blood from the sea (8:7-9).
 - Do not suffer from scorching heat (7:16), contrasting the unfaithful who will be threatened by fire from heaven (8:7-10)
 - The Lamb will guide people to springs of the water of life (7:17) in contrast to the rivers and streams, which turn undrinkable and deadly (8:11).
- Creatures of Destruction
 - Abaddon/Apollyon
 - Fifth Trumpet
 - Grotesque demonic locust creatures that torture all unsealed on the earth
 - The locusts are under the rule of Abaddon/Apollyon, which means Death/Destruction.
 - The figures parody the created order in Rev 4-5.
 - The winged creatures before the throne have their own distinct faces (lion, human, etc.). Still, the locusts have the amalgamation of lion teeth and a human face.
 - Where the elders in the throne room cast their crowns before God in praise (Rev 4:10-11), the locusts continue to wear their crowns.
 - The fifth seal shows the result of God giving the world over to other powers to rule.

- Those afflicted by the locust no longer seek life but rather an escape from a painful life through death but will be unable to die (9:6)
 - Death and destruction rule the locusts, but people who seek death cannot find it, which is a sign of an imperfect rule contrasting God and the Lamb.
- The plague again mirrors the Egyptian plagues the prophet Joel uses as a sign of the Day of the Lord (Ex 10:1-20; Joel 1-2).
- The Cavalry of Destruction
 - Sixth Seal
 - The four angels restrained at the river Euphrates are released to kill 1/3 of mankind.
 - The cavalry of destruction is an army of 200 million grotesque horsemen of distorted creation that kill through plagues.
 - The power comes from lions' heads that breathe lethal fire, smoke, and sulfur from their nostrils.
 - They also have tails of serpents, the original sign of death and destruction (Gen 3)
 - The Euphrates area was where the Parthians posed a threat, again drawing a connection to the calvary threat to the Roman Empire
 - The sixth seal reflects the death plague in Exodus and similarly does not lead to ultimate repentance.
- Interlude –Thunder, Scroll, and the Two Witnesses
 - When John is about to write down the seven thunders, he is instructed not to write down the seven thunders
 - The Scroll
 - John is instructed to eat the scroll (Ezek 3:1-4)
 - It will taste sweet but be bitter in his stomach
 - Most likely the same scroll that was opened revealing God's plan
 - Leads to the next phase of prophecy
 - The Temple and the Two Witnesses
 - The Temple
 - John is told to measure the temple where the martyrs are.
 - This is an image of protection (Zech 2)

- The outer courts are excluded from the measurement and are destroyed by the nations
 - Two Views:
 - The destruction is the literal destruction of Jerusalem, either historically or yet to come. (F., Pr.)
 - The New Temple is a symbol of God's New Covenant People. There will be persecution by the nations, but external defeat even to the point death cannot take victory through the Lamb (1 Cor 3:16; Heb 3:6; 1 Peter 2:4-5) (I., H., Pa.)
 - The Two Witnesses
 - Appointed to call out sin and call people to repentance.
 - They are killed by a beast, and the nations celebrate their death (Dan 7, Rev 13)
 - They are resurrected after three days
 - People actually do turn back to God after their resurrection in conjunction with divine judgment
 - Who are they? – Two Views
 - Two Prophets, potentially previous prophets - (F., Pr.)
 - The Church serving as witness to the Lamb (I., H., Pa.)
- The Final Trumpet
 - The Seventh Trumpet
 - Depiction of the Day of the Lord
 - There is a contrast between servants, prophets and saints, and the nations (Rev 11:18)
 - The temple opened, revealing the Ark of the Covenant
 - The Ark is a symbol of God's presence and was taken into battle (Josh 6:13).
 - For the repentant, this is a sign of God's favor and promises; for opposing nations, it is a symbol of Judgment.
 - This is the very center of the Book of Revelation.

Cosmic Vision (Rev 12-14)

• The Cosmic Interlude

- Interrupts the cycles of seven.
- Begins Act II (specifically if the focus is on a spiral timeline)
- Tells a linear story out of time but inclusive of other portions of Revelation, including the cycles of divine judgment.
- There are several parallels with historic Asia Minor (Pr., I., H., Pa.)

• The Cosmic War (Rev 12)

- The woman, child, and dragon
 - A woman clothed in the cosmos is pregnant and pursued by a dragon with symbols of false deity,
 - The woman is the people of God (Rev 4:4; 10; Gen 3; Isa 66:7-10; Mich 4:10)
 - The Dragon is Satan (and his forces) (Rev 13; Gen 3; Isa 14:12-5; Jude 6; Isa 27:1)
 - The Child is Jesus (Rev 5, Psalm 2, 2 Cor 12:2)
- When the dragon pursues and tries to devour the child, the child rules and is enthroned with God (Rev 5)
- Michael and the battle against the Dragon
 - Michael is the angelic “prince” that defeats the powers that oppose Israel and the protector of God’s people (Dan 10:13, 12:1)
 - Those who understand that Michael fights for God’s people will assume that an agent of God fights for them.
 - The defeat of Satan limits him, banishing him from heaven and focusing his attention to the earth.
 - The timespan that the mother and child are protected can be interpreted as the time of the Church before the tribulation (F.).
- The Dragon on Earth
 - Not being able to find the woman who has gone into the wilderness, the dragon becomes furious and focuses his retribution on the woman’s other offspring.
 - Other offspring – those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (Rev 12:17).
- Parallels mythological story of Python and Leto
 - The Myth
 - Python was the dragon; Leto was pregnant by Zeus.

- Python pursued and tried to kill Leto and the child.
- Leto found refuge on the island of Delos and gave birth to Apollo and Artemis
- Four days later, Apollo pursued and killed Python to avenge his mother.
- Roman Popularity
 - Roman Emperors used the myth in popular culture.
 - Emperors associated themselves with Apollo and Roma (the Roman goddess) as Leto.
 - The Roman Emperor overcame the evil forces of the earth, ushering in Roman Peace (Pax Romana) for the world.
 - Nero often depicted himself as Apollo, even including Apollosque beams of radiance on Roman coins.
- Christian readers would have known the myth and seen the following reversals
 - Leto is the people of God (Israel), not a pagan goddess
 - Apollo is the Lamb (Jesus), not the Emperor
 - Python represents the forces opposing Christianity, including Satan, Rome, Nero, and Domitian.
- **The Two Beasts (Rev 13)**
 - Two beasts arise one from the sea and one from the land.
 - The most widely accepted view is that this chapter depicts the Antichrist and false prophet either as a singular figure (F.), historic figure (Pr., I., H., Pa.), or a recurring individual who abuses power to hurt the people of God. (I., H., Pa.).
 - Antichrist In the NT
 - The word antichrist comes from the Greek ἀντίχριστος, (*antichristos*).
 - The term antichrist is exclusively found in 1 John 2:18, 22, 4:3 and 2 John 1:7)
 - John uses the term to combat heresies and perverted doctrine.
 - He uses the terms to describe people who opposed Jesus and doctrines concerning Jesus as God.
 - The Synoptic Gospels (Matt, Mark, Luke)

- All three Gospels warn against following those proclaiming to be Christ (Matt 24:4–5; Mark 13:5–6; Luke 21:8)
 - Mark notes the rise of “false Christs and false prophets” who possess the power to perform “signs and wonders” to deceive people (Mark 13:2, 24:24)
 - False Christs is used in the same way as antichrist in the synoptic Gospels⁶
- Letter of Paul
 - Paul references a “man of lawlessness” and “son of destruction” whose coming will signify the leading of a rebellion. (2 Thess 2:3).
- Revelation
 - Political Antichrist – Beast from the sea (Rev 13:2)
 - Religious Antichrist – Beast from the land (Rev 13:13-14)
- **The Mark of the Beast 666**
 - One of the most mysterious passages of Revelation.
 - The mark is a parody of perfection, 777.
 - The mark of the beast parallels the seal of the believer (Rev 7:3; Gal 6:7).
 - The mark also parodies Exodus 13:16
 - The mark on the hand and forehead in exodus was a symbol of redemption and God’s strength to protect his people.
 - The mark of the beast is forced authority, not divine protection.
 - Readers are told: (Rev 13:18)
 - understanding the mark requires wisdom.
 - calculate the number of the beast, only if you have understanding
 - it is the number of a man
 - Most scholars believe the mark of the beast is a reference to Nero

⁶ Daniel I. Morrison, “Antichrist,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

- nerōn kaisar, (Latin for Nero Caesar) transliterates in NRWN QSR. The corresponding numbers add up to 666.
- Others who have been identified as the antichrist by connections to the mark of the beast
 - Adolf Hitler if a = 100, b = 101, c = 102
 - Henry Kissinger whose name in Hebrew allegedly has the value of 111 multiplied by 6 is 666.
 - Ronald Wilson Regan had six letters in each of his names and also lived at the street address 666
 - Bill Clinton whose name added up to 666 through a mixture of Greek and Hebrew
 - John F. Kennedy received 666 votes at the 1956 Democratic Convention.
 - The office of the papacy and many individual Popes including Leo X and Benedict XVI
 - Napoleon
 - Emperor Constantine
- **The Opposing Forces**
 - The Redeemed on Mt. Zion
 - The slain Lamb and his multitude stand in opposition to the unholy trinity.
 - The Multitude
 - 144,000 Redeemed that have been sealed on the forehead (Rev, Ex 13:16).
 - The 144,000 sing a "new song" praising the Lamb as redeemer (Rev 5:9)
 - Two views
 - The 144,000 are Jewish men and women who have chosen to follow Jesus after the beginning of the tribulation (F. Disp.)
 - The 144,000 represents all believers who have been redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus (F., Pr., I., H., Pa.).
 - Their proclamation and song give testimony to others to follow God.
- The Messages of Three Angels
 - The first angel proclaims the "eternal gospel."
 - Two views

- It is the announcement of the coming of the final judgment and a reprieve for the suffering believers (F. Disp)
- It is a call to repentance and worship of God and a promise that God has not abandoned creation but will purge it of evil. (Pr., I., H., Pa.).
- The second angel declares, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great" (Rev 14:8).
 - This is the first reference to Babylon in Revelation, though present in previous chapters.
 - Babylon is an illustration of power, corrupted nations, and evil rule.
 - For the people of Asia Minor, this is most certainly a reference to Rome.
 - For the believers in the seven churches, this should make them weary of putting their trust in Rome, imperial cult, or cultural association with sacrificial meat. (Pr., I., H., Pa).
- The third angel warns of the consequences of following the Beast,
 - "they will drink of the wine of God's Fury, which is poured out full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will torment with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb." (Rev 14:10).
 - Those who follow the Beast have submitted themselves to God's judgment.
 - The smoke created contrasts the smoke of incense from the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:8, 8:4, 14:11).
- The messages are warnings given to the seven churches and contemporary readers as warnings that should lead to repentance.
- The Harvesting
 - The Son of Man harvests the faithful (Rev 1:12-20)
 - This is an illustration of a grain harvest of the people of God, collected to their savior
 - Another angel harvests those loyal to the Beast as grapes
 - Sickles would not have been used to harvest grapes; it would give a visual of a harsh tool.

- The grapes are placed into a winepress that represents the wrath of God.
- We see wine used as a symbol of God's wrath and judgment on unbelievers (Rev 17:2)

The Seven Bowls (Rev 15-16)

- Seven Angels are presented with seven bowls, the final cycle of divine judgment.
- The First Five Bowls
 - First - painful sores (Ex 9:10-11)
 - Second - sea to blood and sea creatures death (Ex 17:17-21)
 - Third - fresh water to blood (Gen 9:6, Ex 21:23, Ex 17:17-21)
 - Fourth - Scorching sun
 - Fifth - The Beast's kingdom is engulfed in darkness (Ex 10:21)
- The Sixth Bowl
 - The bowl of wrath dries the Euphrates, making way for the Kings from the East
 - Historical context - Invokes threats against the oppressed people of God.
 - After Babylon conquered Judah, conquered Babylon from the East (Isa 50:2).
 - While oppressed by Rome, the Roman Kingdom was threatened by the Parthians to the East.
- Interlude: Armageddon
 - This is the only place where Armageddon appears in scripture.
 - **הַר מְגִידוֹ** – Har Megiddo – Mt. Megiddo
 - Megiddo is a plain in Northern Israel
 - The symbolism of Hebrew in Revelation
 - John often uses Hebrew words or references to denote when he is speaking in symbolism
 - Nicknames representing false teachers: Balak, Balaam, Jezebel (Rev 2:14, 20)
 - Demonic Angel: Abaddon (Greek for destruction) and Apollyon (Hebrew for Destroyer) (Rev 9:11)
 - Reference to the place of the crucifixion as Sodom and Egypt (Rev 11:8)
 - Babylon is used in connection to Rome (Rev 14:8, 16:19)

- In the OT, Megiddo was often connected to battles in which the adversaries of Israel were defeated (Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 9:27; Zech 12:11).
 - This is meaningful and suggests that more than a specific place or name of a battle, Armageddon is a symbol of the final victory for the people of God was secured. (Pr. I. H. Pa.)
- The Seventh Bowl
 - The final bowl releases lightning, thumber, and hailstones that crush people.
 - God's voice says, "It is done!" The cycles of divine judgment are completed.

RESOURCES:

Chip Ingram – Where is God in this Wicked World? (Futurist – Dispensationalism) - <https://youtu.be/-f2ymwncRZ4>

The Reform Forum – The Tribulation (Idealist/Historic) - <https://reformedforum.org/podcasts/tsp34/>

The Bible Project Podcast – On the 5 Interpretive Methods and an example of interpreting using the rest of scripture (Pastoral Prophetic)
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4KINFggH5sm8FEhdAP2K1b?si=CVS3PNnvQRi78tYlsmEltA&context=spotify%3Aepisode%3A4KINFggH5sm8FEhdAP2K1b>

7. The Defeat of Babylon (Rev 17-19a)

The Harlot Babylon

- A satirical description of a prostitute representing Babylon parallels the Woman who flees the Dragon.
 - Babylon as a prostitute contrasts with Israel/the people of God who are referred to as a bride (Hos 2:5; Jer 2:30; 3:1-14; Ezek 16:36; Eph 5:22-2; Rev 19:7)
 - The Woman (mother of the messiah) is clothed in the heavens while the harlot is dressed in crimson and ornaments (Rev 12:5, 17)
 - The dragon pursues the Woman while the harlot slovenly rides the dragon while drinking the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6).
- Several ancient cities referenced as prostitutes
 - The cities were known for their wealth that wooed the people of Israel into compromising their covenant with God.
 - Tyre
 - Coastal city – “Seated on many waters”
 - Called a prostitute for luring people in with its glittering network of sea trade (Ezek 27:3; Isa 23:17)
 - Nineveh
 - The capital city of Assyria built along to Tigris River
 - The city was called "the prostitute, gracefully alluring, mistress of sorcery, who enslaves nations through her debaucheries" (Nah 3:4).
 - King Ahaz was so enthralled by Assyria he had an Assyrian altar built in Jerusalem (2 Kings 16:5-16).
 - Edom
 - Invoked God's wrath for giving his "land to themselves as a possession with wholehearted joy and utter contempt" (Eze 36:5).
 - Rome
 - John makes the most connections with Rome using images the original audience would have associated with Rom.
 - Roma (the goddess of Rome) was depicted as reclining on the seven hills of Rome, whose foot stretched to the Tiber River, whose left-hand rests on a short sword).
 - John depicts the harlot sitting on seven heads of the dragon.

- The hand rests on an instrument of blood not as in battle but a disgraceful stupor (Rev 17:7).
- Rome's power. like the harlot, was both cruel and seductive.
- During Nero's persecutions, Rome "shed the blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses to Jesus" (Rev 17:6).
- Many (including Christians) had become intoxicated with the prosperity that Rome provided.
- The harlot is ultimately the representation of compromise and seduction that leads the people away from God and into the hand of the Dragon.

The Explanation (Rev 17)

- The Beast
 - "Was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit."
 - This poorly imitates the one who is, who was. and who is to come (Rev 1:4, 13:3).
- The Ten Rulers
 - Have been predicted to be the League of Nations, UN, European Common Marketplace, EU
 - Historic interpretations have included several different rulers in antiquity
- Seven Heads
 - Are seven mountains
 - Roman was often called "the city set on seven hills" (see above)
 - Are seven Kings
 - Seven roman Emperors? But which seven?
 - No number entirely fits the description in Rev 17
 - The waters
 - Representative of the peoples that will turn on and overthrow and destroy the harlot/Babylon.

The Dirge for Babylon (Rev 18-19a)

- The Funeral
 - Rev 18 is a song recounting the fall of Babylon and the mourning of its inhabitants.
 - The dirge is not sequential (referencing the fall of Babylon, then calling people to come out of her).

- The key passage: "come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part • e • s, and so that you do not share in her plagues."
-Rev 18:4
- Heavenly Contrast
 - In contrast to the mourners of Babylon, God is praised as the throne room scene celebrates.
 - The praise to God is not vengeful towards Babylon, rather celebratory towards God.

8. The Defeat of Evil (Rev 19b-20)

Two Interpretive Views

- Revelation 19-20 is a literal sequence of a battle in which Jesus returns, the 1000 year reign of Christ, and a period of time where Satan is released, and there is a final battle that ends in a final judgment. (F., Pr., I., H., Pa.)
 - Jesus Return > 1000 Year Reign > Final Judgment
- The two battles in ch. 19 and 20 depict the return of Christ from the perspective of two different angels, and the thousand years is the symbol of Jesus's present victory. (F., Pr., I., H., Pa. - not including F. Disp.)
 - Jesus Return/Satan and Evil Defeated/Reign of Christ and the absence of evil.
- Regardless of the interpretive approach the primary message remains the same – **Jesus will return as King to deal with evil and vindicate his followers.**

The Great Battles (Rev 19:11-21)

- The most common interpretive view is that Revelation 19:11-21 refers to the battle as Armageddon (F., Pr., I., H., Pa.)
 - The word Armageddon refers to a place where the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (2nd beast) assemble an army for battle (Rev 16:13-16).
 - The Bible never names a battle Armageddon, nor does Rev 19-20 mention Armageddon.
 - The name scripture gives the event is the “Great Day of God Almighty” (Rev 17:14)
- Culture and Armageddon
 - Armageddon has taken on a cultural meaning that has become extra-biblical
 - “The last and completely destructive battle” – dictionary.com
 - Read book
- Christ the Warrior
 - Jesus appears as a rider on a white horse.
 - Jesus perfectly contrasts the first horseman
 - The first horseman was given a crown and weapon to conquer

- Jesus is crowned with many diadems, he already has complete authority, and his weapon is his word (Rev 1:8, 4:10, 5).
- The same descriptions of Jesus are used at the very beginning of the book
 - His eyes are ablaze (Rev 1:14, 19:12)
 - The sword of the word of God coming out of his mouth (Rev 1:17, 19:15)
 - Faithful and True (Rev 3:14, 19:11)
 - For his followers, Jesus has already been revealed as Christ the Warrior (he already walks among the lampstands), but his power and authority are now on display for his enemies.
- Jesus returns in a robe that has been dipped in blood
 - Jesus conquered by faithful suffering and death. He shed his own blood for the people of every nation (Rev 5:6-10, 19:13).
- His Weapon
 - “From his mouth comes a sharp sword”
 - Jesus’s weapon is his word, this is the same tool used for correction of his followers in Asian Minor (Rev 1-3, 19:15)
 - The followers of Jesus learn and are at times rebuked by the Word of God.
- Jesus is accompanied by the armies of heaven, riding white horses (Rev 19:14)
 - They are clothed in white robes, fine linens for the bride of the Lamb because they are purified by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 19:8).
 - Those who resist evil in life and death conquer the powers of evil (Rev 3:4-6, 18, 6;11, 12:11)
 - The heavenly armies do not fight, because only Jesus “in righteousness judges and makes war” (Pr., I., H., Pa.)
- The second coming
 - Most all interpretive approaches agree that this depiction is the 2nd coming of Christ. (F., H., I., Pa.)
- Victory over the Beast and Its Allies
 - Through his word Christ destroys those who oppose him, and his rule.

- The bodies of those destroyed are given over to flocks of birds. Ezekiel refers to this as “the great supper of God” (Ez 39:17-20; Rev 19:18)
- The gruesome scene is uncomfortable but should cause readers to look to 1 Samuel 17:15-47
- Read pg 179

The Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:1-6)

- The Binding of Satan
 - Satan has had decreasing power throughout history (Rev 12).
 - He is defeated and confined to earth
 - He is chained and thrown into the bottomless pit (Rev 9:1-11, 11:7, 17:8, 20:1)
 - Views
 - Literal
 - Satan will be put in physical chains, in a physical pit, for a literal 1000 years. (F.)
 - Time and Space (F., Pr., I., H., Pa.)
 - The defeat brings spiritual victory which is confined by neither time nor space.
 - Similar to the fact that you cannot take a rocket-ship to heaven, there is no physical location of the pit that can be accessed from earth
 - The duration of 1000 is not literal but is representative of calendar years but rather a significant amount of time.
- Reign of the Saints (Rev 20:4-6)
 - The traditional is an earthly reign of peace and prosperity (Isa 65:20-21, 25).
 - Rev does not have direct references to OT texts in the passage (though several occur in Ch 21).
 - What it does say
 - Those martyred for Christ will reign with Christ as priests for 1000 years
 - The remainder of the dead would not live again until after the 1000 year reign
 - This is a venerated position
 - It never mentions if the 1000 year reign will be on earth or in heaven.

- Millennial Theology (copied from section 2)
 - The most common vocabulary used to define interpretive approaches to Revelation is in terms of the Millennial Reign of Christ that precedes the final judgment (Rev 20:1-6).
 - Millennialists view the whole interpretive work of revelation through the prophecies concerning the eschatological (end times theology) prophecies in Revelation 20.
 - There are four primary camps to the Millennial method of understanding.
 - Post-tribulation Premillennialism
 - Believes that the 2nd coming of Christ occurs after the tribulation
 - Pre-tribulation (dispensational) Premillennialism
 - Believes that the second coming for the church, called the rapture, precedes a literal seven-year tribulation, followed by the second coming with the church ushering in a literal 1000-year reign.
 - Postmillennialism
 - Believes the history progresses through a figurative 1000-year reign and to a Golden Age in which much of the world has converted to Christianity preceding the second coming of Christ.
 - Amillennialism
 - Believe in a figurative millennial reign in which we are currently living. In the millennium, we simultaneously experience the victory of the Gospel and the suffering for the Gospel.
 - Limitations
 - Focusing on the five verses of the millennial reign as the central point of the book supplants The Lamb and the Throne as the focal points.

Final Conflict and Final Judgment (Rev 20:7-15)

- Satan Released
 - After 1000 years Satan is released from prison and gathers the nations known as Gog and Magog to mount another attack on the Saints.

- The names come from Ezekiel 38-39 in which Gog from Magog attack those living securely on the mountains in Israel
 - God warns that he will destroy with fire and birds will feast on the carnage
- The leading F. Disp view is that Gog is Russia.
- God fulfills the warning from Ezekiel and fire defeats Gog and Magog (Rev 20:9)
- Satan has not changed, and is thrown into the lake of fire
 - This is the common depiction of Hell.
 - Satan does not rule hell, but is subject to the same punishment as those not “written in the lambs book of life” (Rev 20:17)
- The White Throne
 - All the dead stand before the throne to be judged
 - Books were opened The books are of defense and judgment (Dan 7:10)/
 - Death and Hades are destroyed
 - Physical death is no more
 - There is only one book that matters in determining innocence.
 - The guilty are thrown into the lake of fire.
 - Satan, the beast, the false prophet, death and hades, and the unrepentant are thrown into the lake of fire, completely eliminating the impurities of sin that began in Gen 3, preparing the way for New Creation.

9. New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22)

READING

New Creation

- Bookends
 - The scene depicted in Rev 21-22 is a creation scene and is parallel to Gen 1-3.
 - Gen – The beginning (Alpha).
 - Gen – God creates everything (new for the first time).
 - Gen – God creates man for a relationship with him.
 - Gen – Sin corrupts creation and separates mankind from God.
 - Rev – The end (Omega).
 - Rev – God recreates everything (all things new)
 - Rev – God is with mankind.
 - Rev – Sin is no more and the corruption from sin has been destroyed making way for new creation.
- New creation is pictured throughout the Bible (Rom 8:21-22).
- Revelation 11:15-18 shows God's wrath and judgment were in preparation for New Creation.
- New Heaven and New Earth
 - Rev 21 directly references Isa 65:17-19 & 66:22-23, depicting the new heaven and new earth (Also see Isa 54 and 60).
 - New Jerusalem Descends out of Heaven and is called the dwelling place of God.
 - When God first created, he made man a dwelling that is a garden; when he creates again, he replaces the garden with a city
 - The new creation does not ignore the history of mankind but rather recreates it as it should be.
 - The boundary separating God from mankind is removed. God dwells with mankind.
- What is absent from new creation
 - no sea (Rev 21:1)
 - Three views
 - There is no more ocean (F. Disp)
 - In Roman sea trade is eliminated (Pr.)
 - The sea is a symbol of chaos and evil (21:1) (F., Pr., I., H., Pa.,)
 - no death (21:4; cf. Rev 20:14; 1 Cor 15:26; Isa 65:25)

- no tears, mourning, or crying (21:4; cf. Isa 25:8; 35:10; 65:19)
- no evil, unclean, or accursed things/persons (21:8, 27; 22:3)
- no temple, because “its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (21:22)
- no sun, moon, or other luminaries, and yet no night (21:23, 25; 22:5; cf. Isa 60:19–20)
- no closed gates (21:25; cf. Isa 60:11).

Holy City – Holy People

- The faithfulness of New Jerusalem contrasts the corruption of Babylon
- The Wife of Christ
 - New Jerusalem is revered to as the “the Bride, the wife of the Lamb”
 - The title attributed to believers is applied to New Jerusalem
 - This is should draw readers to Rev 12-13 where the people of God is represented by the woman pursued by the dragon.
 - The people of God dwell in the city in perfect unity with God.
- Twelve Gates
 - The gates are open, there are three on each side, and each represents one of the 12 tribes.
 - 3 on each side.
 - What does 3 represent?
- The Perfect Dimensions
 - Perfection of the Holy City is expressed in its dimensions
 - Ancient cities were often built as squares which were considered the ancient ideal of perfection
 - New Jerusalem is depicted as a cube of 12000 stadia (1500 miles) per side (Ez 40:1-4, 43:1-5, 47:1-12).
 - This reflects true perfection
 - Two Views:
 - It is an enormous city, that is larger than any other city ever created.
 - It is representative of perfect holiness
 - The shape also should draw reader’s attention to the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle, which was a cube (Ex 28:17-20, 36-38).

- This identifies the New Jerusalem as the new Holy of Holies.
- The Temple
 - What is the temple
 - The dwelling place of God on earth (in the OT)
 - A place for the people of God to interact with God
 - A national symbol of home for ancient Jews.
 - There is no physical temple in the New Jerusalem
 - God and the Lamb are the Temple
 - New Jerusalem is the dwelling place of God
 - In New Jerusalem, people are with God
 - Is the home of all people and nations
 - The gates are open to all people; they are never shut.
- The River and the Tree
 - The River
 - Rivers are symbols of life in antiquity; they provided water, fishing, and trade.
 - The River of Life that flows from the throne of God, God is the source of life that is central for the perfect city he has built.
 - The Tree of Life
 - The grove of trees pictured again draws attention back to Gen 3.
 - The tree grants life and healing – the city is the eternal place for God’s people and peace for all nations.

Coming Soon! (Rev 22:6-21)

- The final chapters of Revelation serve as a bookend that parallels chapter 1. (Rev 1:1-6; Rev 22:6-21).
 - John is again addressing Jesus, who was seen among the lampstands
 - Jesus says, “And behold, I am coming soon.” And again blesses the person who keeps the words of the prophecy of the book (Rev 1:13).
 - Jesus says 3 times in Rev 22 that he is coming soon.
 - What is soon?
- The purpose for contemporary readers

- “¹⁷The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price (Rev 22:17).
- Revelation is intended to draw others into repentance and deeper in relationship with God.
- Final Warning (Rev 22:18)
 - This is not a warning for the entire Bible (though no one should add words to the remainder of scripture)
 - The weight of the words of prophecy is important.

Final Thoughts

- Revelation is a very complex text, that should be understood in historical context as well as for contemporary readers.
- The message of Revelation is not doom, but hope in Jesus and his power to save and restore.
- The Kingdom of God we are part of today will lead us into God’s Eternal Kingdom in new creation.

10.

Appendix 1: Symbolism of Color and Numbers

<i>Color/Number</i>	<i>Apparent Symbolic Significance</i>	<i>Text Examples</i>
White	Victory, resurrection, purity/cleanness, heaven/ divinity	Son of Man's hair (1:14); clothing of the faithful, martyrs, elders (3:4-5, 18; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14); horse of judgment (6:2); horses of Christ and his armies (19:11, 14); throne of God (20:11)
Red	Blood, violent power	horse of judgment (6:4); riders' breastplates (9:17); dragon (12:3)
Purple, scarlet (similar to red)	Decadence, empire and imperial evil	beast (scarlet; 17:3); clothing of great harlot/city = Babylon (purple, scarlet; 17:3-4; 18: 16); merchants' cargo traded to great harlot/Babylon (purple, scarlet; 18:12)
Black	Death, disaster	horse of judgment (6:5); sun (6:12)
(Pale) Green	Death	horse of judgment (6:8)
Gold	Incorruptible wealth, beauty, royalty; actual or false divinity	lampstands (1: 12, 20; 2: 1); sash of Son of Man and of angels (1:13; 15:6); what Christ offers the church (p8); elders' crowns (4:4); bowls of incense & censer =

		<p>prayers (5:8; 8:3); bowls of wrath (15:7); locusts' crowns (9:7); heavenly altar (9:13); idols (9:20); Son of Man's crown (14:14); jewels and cup of great harlot/city (17:4; 18:16); measuring rod for New Jerusalem (21:15); New Jerusalem and its streets (21:18, 21)</p>
1/3, 1/2	Limited scope or time	<p>silence (8:1); destruction (8:7-12; 9:15, 18; 12:4)</p>
3	A distinct group Divinity or false divinity	<p>angels (8:13), plagues (9:18), parts of the city (16:19) the one who was, is, is to come (1:4); triune source of grace (1:4-5) dragon+ two beasts (chaps. 12-13); foul spirits emanating from them (16:13)</p>
3 1/2	Limited time (half of fullness = 7)	<p>3 1/2 years = 42 months = 1,260 days, the time for: the trampling of the holy city and the two witnesses' prophesying (11:2-3); days between witnesses' death and resurrection (u:9, u); years of woman's nourishment in wilderness (12:6, 14) and of the beast's blasphemy (13:5)</p>

4	Universality, especially within creation	living creatures in heaven (4:6-8; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1, 6-7; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19=4); horses (6:1-8); angels, corners of earth, and winds (7:1-2; 9:15; 20:8)
6	Imperfection, false divinity	number of beast= 666 (13:18) (lack of fullness= 7)
7	Fullness, perfection	spirits of God (3:1; 4:5; 5:6); stars in Son of Man's hand = churches' angels {1:16; 2:1; 3:1); churches/lan1pstands (1:4, 11- 12, 20; 2:1); seals, angels and trumpets, and bowls of judgment (5:1, 5; 6:1; 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6-8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9); Lamb's horns and eyes (5:6); thunders (10:3- 4); dragon's heads and diaden1s (12:3); beast's heads (13:1; 17:3, 7); heads= n1ountains, kings (17:9)
12 (and its multiples 24, 144)	(fullness of) God's people, God's chosen tribes and/ or apostles, God's presence; cosmic fullness	12: ,woman's crowns of stars (12:1); gates of pearl, angels, inscriptions of tribes, foundations, and names of apostles in new Jerusalem (21:12, 14, 21); kinds of fruit on tree of life (22:2)

		<p>24: heavenly thrones and elders (4 , 10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4)</p> <p>144: 144,000 who are sealed (7:14) and the faithful with the Lamb (14:1, 3)</p>
1,000 and its multiples	Large number with enhanced symbolism in multiples	<p>thousands of heavenly angels (5:11); the 144,000 who are sealed (7:4), with 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes (7:5- 8); 7,000 killed in earthquake (11:13); 144,000 faithful, with the Lamb (14:1, 3); dragon bound for 1,000 years while Christ reigns, with the faithful (20:2-7)</p>

Gorman, Michael J.. Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb into the New Creation (p. 46). Cascade Books, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers