

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

By: Chad Knudson

Introductory Objectives

- 1.) Familiarize ourselves with other views on Revelation and eschatology in general.
- 2.) Lay out a framework and pattern for interpreting Revelation.
- 3.) Understand the true nature of biblical eschatology.
- 4.) Understand our responsibilities as readers and interpreters of Revelation.

Specific Objectives for Interpreting Revelation

- 1.) Understand and articulate how the book of Revelation is rooted in the Old Testament.
- 2.) Understand and articulate the already-not-yet dynamic and its importance for Revelation.
- 3.) Gain a fuller picture of Revelation from a biblical-theological standpoint.
- 4.) Avoid sensational speculations and arbitrary connections with people or events.
- 5.) Understand the message of Revelation in light of the historical setting of the Early Church.
- 6.) Comprehend and articulate the theology of the book of Revelation.

Specific Objectives for Applying Revelation

- 1.) Gain a deeper appreciation of Revelation as an important contribution for the church today.
- 2.) Recognize and understand our true enemies and their methods for destroying the church.
- 3.) Understand God's sovereign rule over the spiritual and physical realms.
- 4.) Understand and pattern the ministry of the church as displayed in Revelation.
- 5.) Apply the message of perseverance and purity to our lives and to the church.
- 6.) Grow in our love, knowledge, and devotion to our great God and Savior Jesus Christ
- 7.) Grow in our hope, anticipation, and understanding of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Introductory Notes Concerning Revelation

Introduction

Within the arena of eschatology and the study of the book of Revelation two problems often exist.

- 1.) There is the tendency to sensationalize the study or discipline.
- 2.) There exists a failure by Christians to properly deal with the issues.

Therefore, when we read Revelation we must start with the proper foundation.

- 1.) It must first be biblical, thus, Scripture (the entire canon) must be the source and guide for the study of this book, not current events.
- 2.) It must be theological in nature.

Authorship

The author of the book tells us that his name is John (Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). John is also the author of the fourth gospel and three epistles. We are convinced of this for several reasons.

- 1.) The early church held that John was in fact the author who was exiled to the island of Patmos.
- 2.) The keen interest in the OT is characteristic not only of Revelation, but also the fourth gospel.

Gospel of John

Old creation and visitation of the Word (1:1-51)

Serving of wine for restoration (2:1-11)

Wedding at Cana (2:1-11)

Cleansing at temple (2:13-25)

Revelation

New creation and presence of the Word (21:1-22:5)

Serving of wine for judgment (19:11-20:15)

Wedding of the Lamb (19:1-10)

Cleaning of earth (17:1-18:24)

Distinction between those born anew versus those of old birth (3:1-22)

Gathering of those born anew versus those not born anew (16:17-21)

True worshipers versus false worshipers (4:1-45)

True worshipers versus worshipers of the beast (15:1-16:16)

Struggle of Jesus with world and faithful witness to God (4:46-11:46)

Struggle of church with world and faithful witness to Christ (6:1-11:19)

Enemies of Jesus seek to kill him and the defeat of Satan (11:47-12:50)

Defeat of Satan and enemies of the church seek to destroy her (12:1-14:20)

Comfort before suffering (13:1-17:26)

Comfort before suffering (4:1-5:14)

Suffering before glory (18:1-19:42)

Suffering before glory (2:1-3:22)

Risen Christ in glory (20:1-18)

Glory of risen Christ (1:9-20)

Testimony of gospel (20:19-21:25)

Testimony of Revelation (1:1-8)

With this parallel we see two important points.

a.) What began in the gospel of John is completed in the book of Revelation.

b.) At the center of both the books is the victory of the Lamb, the defeat of the Satan, and the dragon's attempts to destroy the church.

Gospel of John

Revelation

World sees Jesus as king (12:12-26)

Christ is king over the nations (11:15-19)

Satan is cast down (12:27-31)

Satan is cast down (12:7-9, 12)

Take hope for Jesus will overcome (16:33; cf., 13:1-17:26)

Persevere for Jesus has overcome (12:10-11; cf., 12:13-14:20)

3.) It is no surprise to find the apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus writing this book, since it was John who was loved by Jesus.

Date / Setting / Audience

If a person holds to a view that all the events between chapters one through nineteen were fulfilled prior to 70 AD then the dating is between 65-70 AD (this is the preterist position); however, if one accepts the witness of the early church the dating of the book is between 81-96 AD (e.g., Irenaeus).

The setting of Revelation is to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea). The early church was under immense political and religious persecution from the Roman Empire.

Theology and Approach to Interpretation

Interpretative schools of eschatology

1.) Covenant Theology:

2.) Dispensational Theology:

3.) Views on Israel and the Church:

a.) Classical Dispensationalism (most Evangelicals).

b.) Progressive Dispensationalism (many Evangelicals).

c.) Reformed (few Evangelicals):

4.) Views on the Rapture:

a.) Pre-tribulation:

b.) Mid or Post-tribulation:

c.) Pre-wrath rapture:

5.) Views on the millennium:

a.) Amillennialism:

b.) Historic Premillennialism:

c.) Postmillennial:

d.) Dispensational Premillennialism:

Interpretative methods of Revelation

1.) Historical:

2.) Preterism:

3.) Futurism:

4.) Idealism:

Important things to remember when we read Revelation

1.) The already-not-yet dynamic.

2.) The relationship of the book of Revelation to the OT and NT.

3.) The role of symbolism in the book of Revelation.

4.) Numbers.

5.) Repetition.

6.) The struggle between the light and darkness.

At this point some might say that we are simply “spiritualizing” the text; however, a few comments should be made in response.

a.) If we are accused for spiritualizing the text, then Jesus and the apostles were guilty of the exact same offense.

b.) Is not Jesus’ kingdom spiritual, rather than physical?

c.) We do affirm a physical reality to the promises of God at the consummation or second coming of Jesus; however, we do not view these things as a dispensationalist would.

Within the book we find several important themes (theology of Revelation)

1.) The Trinity:

2.) The Gospel:

3.) God's sovereignty:

4.) God's enemies:

<u>Original</u> ¹	<u>Counterfeit</u>	<u>Function</u>
Father	Dragon	Originate, plan
Christ	Beast	Execute plan
Spirit	False Prophet	Witness and propagate

5.) The church:

6.) New creation:

All of these themes have a two-fold purpose (purpose of Revelation)

1.) To understand that the book of Revelation has profound significance for the church today.

¹ Taken from Vern Poythress, *The Returning King*, 18).

2.) The church is able to take great comfort in the midst of political and religious persecution.

The reader's responsibility with the book of Revelation

1.) Know the Scriptures (especially the OT).

2.) Read the book of Revelation again and again.

3.) Apply the book rightly and realize it can be understood.

Outline

I. Jesus reveals himself to John (1:1-8)

II. The message to the church on earth: John's first vision (1:9-3:22)

- A. The message to Ephesus (2:1-7)
- B. The message to Smyrna (2:8-11)
- C. The message to Pergamum (2:12-17)
- D. The message to Thyatira (2:18-29)
- E. The message to Sardis (3:1-6)
- F. The message to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- G. The message to Laodicea (3:14-22)

III. God's throne and the seven seals: John's second vision (4:1-8:5)

- A. The throne of God (4:1-11)
- B. The Lamb of God (5:1-14)
- C. The seals opened (6:1-17)
- D. The 144,000 of God and the final seal (7:1-8:5)

IV. The seven trumpets: John's third vision (8:6-11:19)

- A. The trumpets of God (8:6-9:21)
- B. The angel and the little book (10:1-11)
- C. The two witnesses (11:1-19)

V. A deeper conflict: John's fourth vision (12:1-14:20)

- A. The woman, the dragon, and the male child (12:1-17).

- B. The beast from the sea (13:1-10)
- C. The beast from the earth (13:11-18)
- D. The followers of the Lamb and the doom of the worshipers of the beast (14:1-20).

VI. The seven bowls: John's fifth vision (15:1-16:21)

- A. The heavenly vision (15:1-8)
- B. The bowls of God's wrath (16:1-21)

VII. The victorious Christ: John's sixth vision (17:1-19:21)

- A. God's judgment on Babylon (17:1-18)
- B. Babylon and her people are defeated (18:1-24)
- C. The Lamb returns (19:1-21)

VIII. New heavens and new earth: John's final vision (20:1-22:21)

- A. Satan bound, freed, and judged (20:1-10)
- B. Judgment of the nations (20:11-15)
- C. The new Jerusalem and the tree of life (21:1-22:5)
- D. Jesus' final message to the church (22:6-21)

Jesus reveals himself to John (1:1-8)

In the opening verses of Revelation we are given the author, the message, the recipients, and the blessings of the book (Rev 1:1-4a).

1.) It is a revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gives (Rev 1:1). Jesus is given the title Christ, which speaks to his work as God's anointed.

2.) It is about what must soon take place (Rev 1:1). This phrase is very interesting in light of the time in which John wrote and our present day end-times madness.

This helps us understand two things:

a.) The nature of our battle is the nothing new. It has always been a spiritual battle and has been for Christians from every generation.

b.) The nearness of Christ's return. The NT apostles understood the return of Christ as imminent (1 Thess 5:2-4; 2 Pet 3:10) and understood that they were living prior to the Lord's return.

3.) Jesus revealed it to his bond-servants by sending an angel (Rev 1:1). The message is something that God has given to his church.

4.) The angel communicated it to John (Rev 1:1). John, as the recipient of the revelation communicates it to us in human language. This language is symbolic (i.e., signified), which means two things:

a.) Since it is written in human language it can be understood. Therefore, we should strive to understand the book even when we feel frustrated.

b.) The book may be difficult to understand, but God intended one meaning and John wrote one revelation. In other words, there are not several meanings to the book, but one meaning, the meaning that the angel communicated to John.

5.) John bears witness to what he sees (Rev 1:3). This statement is simple, but profound. It tells us of the accuracy of what is recorded in the book.

6.) Blessed is the one reads and hears this word of prophecy (Rev 1:3). Here we find the first of the seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

7.) It is addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev 1:4a). The message to the seven churches of Asia does not mean that this message is only for them, but that it is to the wider church of Jesus (i.e., throughout every generation) as signified with the number seven.

This message is also from Jesus, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. With this three-fold description we find significance in light of the meaning of Revelation.

1.) The faithful witness (Rev 1:5). Jesus is the faithful witness to God's dealings.

2.) The first-born from the dead (Rev 1:5; cf., 2 Sam 7:14; Psa 2:7-8; 89:27; Rom 8:29; Col 1:18; Heb 12:23). Because Jesus was obedient and faithful to bear witness to the Father, God was also pleased to raise him from the dead (John 8:29; Acts 2:24).

3.) The ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5). Despite the suffering and persecution the saints must endure at the hands of evil men and wicked nations, Jesus is ruler over them all.

Jesus not only is sovereign God, but he is our loving God, who has freed us from our sins by his blood. We see not only what God did for us, but what he now gives us in Revelation 1:5b-6.

1.) He loves us and has released us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:5). Jesus has set us free from the bondage of sin.

2.) He made us a kingdom of priests to serve him (Rev 1:6; 20:6; 1 Pet 2:9-10). The promise of a kingdom of priests was given to Israel after the exodus (Exo 19:6), but here we find John apply this language to the church.

Why do we worship him, because he has released us from our sins, he has made us a kingdom of priests, and because he has dominion over all things. The confidence the saints can have is that their great and loving God who redeemed and sanctified them, will also come again for them. John assures us of his coming by quoting from Daniel 7:13-14 and Zechariah 12:10-12 (cf., Gen 22:18; 26:4).

1.) Quoting from Daniel 7:13-14 John alludes to the final act of Jesus, when he comes to receive all authority and power.

2.) Quoting from Zechariah 12:10-12 John states that Jesus' coming is very visible. He does not have multiple comings; nor is his coming secret, but is very visible (every eye will see him).

Zechariah 12:10-12

Spirit given to Israel _____ Spirit given to all who have faith in Jesus and repent for killing the one whom they pierced

Jesus' 1st coming (already)

Israel will mourn _____ Jesus' 2nd coming (not yet)

All who reject Jesus will mourn and will not receive the Spirit

Zechariah 12:10-12 is transformed in light of the NT, specifically the first and second coming of Jesus. Thus, all unbelieving people, both Jew and Gentile will mourn at the second coming of Jesus, since they did not mourn, repent, and believe in him at his first coming (John 19:37).

The message to the church on earth: John's first vision (1:9-3:22)

John is a genuine witness for he too is suffering the same things that his fellow brethren are facing (i.e., a companion or fellow partaker). He uses a two-fold description.

1.) He is a companion in the tribulation (Rev 1:9). For John tribulation is here and now.

2.) He is a companion in the kingdom and perseverance (Rev 1:9; cf., 2 Tim 2:12). We are fellow-partakers in the kingdom of God. John's statement is significant for two reasons.

a.) By using the word kingdom and stating that we are fellow partakers of it, John is speaking of the "already" presence of the kingdom with God's people.

b.) However, by using the word perseverance, he highlights the "not-yet" dynamic of the kingdom, namely the future and full manifestation of the kingdom with the second coming of Jesus.

John understands that tribulation, the presence of the kingdom, and the need for perseverance are all present realities in the life of the church; therefore, we would be wise to see what God is already revealing to us through John's words—namely, that the book of Revelation has profound significance for the church today, for we are still fellow partakers like John and the early church.

John sees the risen Christ in all his splendor and majesty ready to give his revelation to his church.

1.) John hears a voice that tells him who to write this vision to (Rev 1:11). John is to write what he sees to the seven churches of Asia Minor. These seven churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

2.) John sees seven golden lampstands and one like the Son of Man standing in the midst of them (Rev 1:12—13a; cf., 2 Cor 12:4). The seven lampstands are the church in its totality.

3.) John gives a description of this son of man (Rev 1:13b-16). Here John describes not what Jesus looks like, but what Jesus is like, which is deeply rooted in the OT and the descriptions we find of God (cf., Ezek 1:25-28; Dan 10:5-6; cf., Dan 7:9-10, 13-14).

a.) Clothed in a robe reaching to his feet, and girded across his chest with a golden sash (Rev 1:13b).

b.) His head and his hair were white like white wool, like snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire (Rev 1:14).

c.) His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters (Rev 1:15).

d.) In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and his face was like the sun shining in its strength (Rev 1:16).

Jesus' declaration to John is though I am radiant and powerful, you have no need to fear me, but trust me for I am the first and the last, the living one, I was dead, but am now alive forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:17-18).

Jesus instructs John to write what he sees (Rev 1:19). John is instructed to write what he has seen, what is now, and what will take place; however, each of these statements tell us that which is characteristic of each vision, namely that John will see things of the past, the present, and the future.

The apostle Paul also stresses this past, present, and future reality of the Christian and the church's existence with Christ when we read Colossians 3:1-5 (cf., 2 Pet 3:3-16; Goldsworthy, *According to Plan*, 300-301).

Past

Present

Future

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ (3:1a)

keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God
Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth (3:1b-2)

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God (3:3)

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory (3:4)

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry (3:5)

The whole idea here is that eschatology is much more than "last things," and is bound up with what has taken place, what is taking place, and what will take place.

Angels are corporately identified with the believing people of God as those who serve God (Rev 19:10; 22:9; cf., Rev 8:3-4). Thus, these seven angels, as heavenly beings, represent the church and in some sense are accountable with the churches that Christ is about to address. The representation of the church with angels also stresses the intimate relationship between the

church and the abode of God's dwelling, heaven itself. The church is not an earthly people, but a heavenly people (Phil 3:20).

The message to Ephesus (2:1-7)

The messages given to the seven churches are meant to convey rebuke and judgment to the church and their present situation. The message is not just for these seven churches, but for all churches throughout time. We support this idea with two points.

- 1.) The message is not one that is only for the first century, but the number seven represents the totality of the church (cf., Col 4:16; 1 Thess 5:27).
- 2.) The message to hear shows that the message is for anyone who will heed Christ's word, which points to the global and timeless message to the church (Rev 2:7, 11, 17; 3:6, 13, 22).

The messages to each of the seven churches follow a basic pattern (variations among some scholars, but the patterns carry the same basic elements).

- 1.) Address or commandment to write.
- 2.) Identification of Christ and self-description.
- 3.) Clarification of knowledge (I know).
- 4.) Evaluation or description of the church's present situation (the key to each message is found in this point).
- 5.) Promise or threat: call to repentance or faithfulness.
- 6.) Reinforcement of call to repentance or faithfulness with judgment or reward.
- 7.) Summons to hear and obey (he who has an ear), which is rooted in OT where the message is meant to reveal and enlighten believers and conceal and harden unbelievers (Isa 6:9-10; Matt 13:9-16).

The order of churches is not too important, but there are a few notable items.

- 1.) The order of the cities may be determined by geographical orientation. Ephesus was the closest city to Patmos (the island John was exiled to) and the message may have headed clockwise.
- 2.) The order may be thematic. The first three cities (Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum) as well as the last three cities (Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea) have a city that does not receive a rebuke sandwiched between two cities that are rebuked.

The first message is given to the church at Ephesus.

Despite their doctrinal fidelity they lack one thing: they had forgotten their first love. The usual way this phrase is understood is that the Ephesians had forgotten to love Christ. In other words, they had forgotten the practical aspects of their doctrine: devotion to Jesus. However, this interpretation is problematic for several reasons.

- 1.) Jesus describes the Ephesians as having sound doctrine and hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which seems to indicate that they did not lack devotion to Christ.
- 2.) The text does not indicate that the Ephesians lack of love was from idolatry or false doctrine, but something else.

So who or what was the object of the Ephesians lack of love? Before we answer the question, two points will help direct us in the right direction.

- 1.) We only find the word love mentioned four times in the book of Revelation (2:4; 2:19; 3:19; 12:11). In Revelation 2:19 love is equated with service.
- 2.) Jesus' threat to remove their lampstand gives us insight into their sin.

It is safe to conclude that the Ephesians' loss of love was not a lack of devotion to Christ, for they loved the truth and hated falsehood, but they lacked love for one another and the unbelieving world.

The message to the Ephesian church is love one another and be my witnesses in the world and in doing so you will partake of the tree of life in the paradise of God.

The message to Smyrna (2:8-11)

Because of their testimony for Jesus the saints at Smyrna had faced persecution at the hands of the Jews. The persecution was manifested in two distinct ways.

- 1.) Jesus' statement that they are rich even though they were poor was an indication that because of their testimony they had been cut off from the economic structure of the city, which meant possible loss of work, inability to purchase or sell goods, or seizure of property or money (Rev 2:9; cf., Rev 13:17).
- 2.) They faced physical persecution. For ten-days the saints will face tribulation (Rev 2:10).

These saints faced persecution from the Jews. The Jews were not the people of God, but the people of Satan (John 8:44). Those who persecuted the church were not Jews at all, but enemies of God (1 Thess 2:14-16).

Jesus' message to Smyrna is to remain faithful. The promise to them is if they overcome and remain faithful to him, he will grant them the crown of life as victors and they will avoid the second death.

The message to Pergamum (2:12-17)

Jesus knows the church is the throne of Satan (i.e., three pagan temples) and he knows they have remained steadfast even when Antipas was murdered, but they have embraced the teachings of the Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:13-15). They have been lead astray in two ways.

- 1.) They have eaten things sacrificed to idols
- 2.) They commit acts of sexual immorality.

The reference to Balaam and Balak is from the OT. In the OT Balak summons Balaam to deceive Israel through idol worship and sexual immorality with Moabite women (Num 22:5ff; 25:1-4; 31:6), from which 24,000 died.

However, for those that overcome, to him will be given some of the hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name. What are these three things in reference to?

- 1.) The manna reminds us of what God gave to Israel in the wilderness (Exo 16:33-35; cf., Heb 9:4).
- 2.) The white stone represents purity (cf., Exo 28:21; Rev 14:1; 22:4), which is rooted in the OT.
- 3.) If the plate represents presence with God as his priest, then the new name on the plate or stone is like that which was written on the OT priestly plate, "holy unto the Lord." As the redeemed of God the people of God will be holy unto him.

The message to Thyatira (2:18-29)

While the church at Thyatira had done great things, loved the brethren, and persevered in the faith, the church had tolerated the woman Jezebel.

Although the woman may not have been named Jezebel, the point is that whoever this person may be, she was like Jezebel of the OT. In the OT Jezebel lead the children of Israel astray with idolatry and sexual immorality (1 Kings 16:30-33; 19:1-2; 21:5-26; 2 Kings 9:30-37).

Again it was not wrong for saints to eat meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 10:14-22); however, the saints participated in the idolatry and immorality associated with that meat at pagan temples; therefore, they had sinned against Christ.

Those who hold fast the truth will not only be separate from the other nations, but judge the nations with Christ and be given the morning star (cf., Num 24:17; Rev 22:16).

The idea of morning star is that the true people of God will share in Christ's likeness. He is the morning star and at the end the true church will be made manifest and will dawn. It is at that time that the wheat will be harvested from the tares (Matt 13:25-30; Rev 14:15).

The message to Sardis (3:1-6)

The believers at Sardis were not facing any false teaching or pagan persecution, but had simply become apathetic or spiritually dead. Although they were alive, they were really dead.

The threat of suddenness brings judgment, but also tells the believers at Sardis that they cannot become apathetic or complacent.

They must be prepared for the Lord's return and the way they show their preparedness is by waking up and looking for the Lord's return with purity and holiness.

The only one who can revive these people is the one who has the seven Spirits of God.

The church at Sardis may think they are spiritually fine and in one sense even believe they are fooling God, but he knows those that are his.

The message to Philadelphia (3:7-13)

Jesus has the key of David to open the door to the kingdom (cf., Isa 22:20-25) and despite what ethnic Jews may say, the believers at Philadelphia are the true people of God, not those of the synagogue of Satan. Those who persevere and keep his word will receive three things.

- 1.) He will make the Jews bow down to them (Rev 3:9).
- 2.) He will keep them from the hour of testing that will come on those who live on the earth, which are unbelievers (Rev 3:10).
- 3.) He will make those who persevere a pillar in the temple of God and write the name of God on him (Rev 3:12; cf., Gal 2:9; 1 Tim 3:15).

The message to Laodicea (3:14-22)

Much like the church at Sardis, the church at Laodicea did not face false teaching or pagan persecution, but their problem was that they were selfish and un-useful for the Lord. The contrast between the people living in Laodicea and the rebuke by Christ is two-fold.

- 1.) As the city received hot or cold water from outside sources, they were neither (Rev 3:15-16). The church is not useful. Whereas hot or cold water is useful, they are neither, but only lukewarm.

2.) The church thought it was in need of nothing, but it was in need of something far greater than anything medical or material (Rev 3:17-18; cf., Hos 12:8). The church was in need of cleansing and clothing from Christ.

Jesus is a loving bride-groom who calls his church to renewed relationship with him and to be ready at his return. He is patient with her, because it is she whom he purchased with his own blood.

Jesus' word to the seven churches is to exhort and encourage the church to be faithful. The message is to overcome.

The irony is that in order to overcome one must be willing to forfeit their own life (Matt 16:25; Luke 17:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:35-37; cf., John 16:33).

The church is about to see the true conflict that exists in the world and the message in light of this conflict: trust in Christ, confess his name, love the truth, and remain faithful (or pure).

The rebuke and encouragement that Jesus grants to his church now is merely a foretaste of what awaits those who are either faithful or unfaithful to him. To those who are faithful awaits the presence with God forever in the New Jerusalem (i.e., resurrection unto life), but for those who do not persevere awaits judgment and eternal separation from God (i.e., second death). The message to the church is either you are a follower of the lamb or a follower of the beast. If you are of the lamb then expect tribulation, but if you are of the beast, enjoy your idolatry and immorality, for it is only for a short time.

God's throne and the seven seals: John's second vision (4:1-8:5)

The throne of God (4:1-11)

The phrase, "after these things" occurs nine other times in the book (Rev 1:19; 4:1; 7:1, 9; 9:12; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1; 20:3), which signifies for us a change in scenery, not necessarily time orientation.

The call of John in Revelation 4:1-2 is reminiscent of the prophetic call of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel (Isa 6:1ff; Ezek 1:26; cf., Gen 28:17; Dan 7:9).

What we see in Revelation 4-5 corresponds to Daniel 7, which demonstrates for us that the completion and filling out of Daniel's vision has come with John's vision (Beale, *Revelation*, 315).

Daniel 7:9-27

Revelation 4:1-5:14

Introduction to the vision (7:9)

Introduction to the vision (4:1)

A throne in heaven (7:9)

A throne in heaven (4:2)

God sitting on a throne (7:9)	God sitting on a throne (4:2)
God's appearance on the throne (7:9)	God's appearance on the throne (4:3)
Fire before the throne (7:9-10)	Fire before the throne (4:5)
Heavenly servants surround throne (7:10)	Heavenly servants surround throne (4:4)
Book(s) before the throne (7:10)	Book(s) before the throne (5:1)
A divine figure approaches throne (7:13-14)	Lamb approaches throne (5:5-7)
The kingdom of God's people (7:14)	The kingdom of God's people (5:9)
Daniel's distress (7:15)	John's distress (5:4)
Daniel's comfort (7:16)	John's comfort (5:5)
Authority given to saints (7:18, 22)	Victory given to saints (5:10)
God's eternal reign (7:27)	God's eternal reign (5:13-14).

John's glimpse into the heavenly sanctuary is what Moses experienced in the book of Exodus and what the writer of Hebrews speaks about (Exo 25:12, 40; Heb 8:5; 9:11-12, 23-28). In other words, the worship of Israel was to reflect the heavenly sanctuary (or throne of God). However, John is not told to construct what he sees in heaven, but with vivid symbolism he describes the sanctuary of God.

John's description of the throne is very much rooted in the OT, but is also highly symbolic and not exact to the descriptions we find in the OT. What does this teach us? Symbolism warns us that we can never fully exhaust or fathom God.

Around the throne are twenty-four elders on thrones, clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads (Rev 4:4). There has been disagreement among scholars as to the identity of these 24 elders. There are two interpretations.

- 1.) These 24 elders are believers in heaven.
- 2.) These 24 elders are angels.

While the message of the elders to the church could be a reference to themselves, the internal evidence of Revelation tends to lend support for the view that the 24 elders are angels. What then is the significance of twenty-four? Remember, angels are corporately identified with the believing people of God as those who serve God (Rev 1:20; 19:10; 22:9; cf., Rev 8:3-4).

Around the throne is also a glass sea (Rev 4:6; 15:2; Exo 24:9-10) and the four living creatures. These four living creatures are described as being full of eyes. This idea is the all knowing presence of God—he sees all things (Ezek 1:18). What are these four living creatures?

- 1.) Each of the four creatures has a specific face (Rev 4:7-8).
- 2.) We can also conclude these creatures are angels because of their praise (Rev 4:8-9).

If these are in fact angels and the same angels we find in the OT, then why do we have variations between the visions of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John?

The Lamb of God (5:1-14)

In the hand who sits upon the throne is a book or scroll with writing on the inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals (Rev 5:1). The identification of the book or scroll is rooted in the OT.

Who is worthy to carry out God's purposes? There is only one—Jesus. Jesus alone is worthy to take the book and break its seals and carry out God's plan, because he has overcome death and sin. This description is a paradox to some, but magnificent to those who understand its meaning.

- 1.) He is the Lion from the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5; Gen 49:9-10; Isa 11:1, 10).
- 2.) He is the root of David (Rev 5:5; Psa 110:1; Isa 9:6; 11:10; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; Matt 1:1; 22:41-46). He is not only a might king, but a conquering king when we combine the descriptions of lion and king together.
- 3.) He is also a Lamb slain with seven horns and seven eyes (Rev 5:6). Jesus paradoxically is a conquering king, but also a humble servant. He is the Lamb of God taken to the slaughter.

Jesus as the conquering Lion and humble Lamb has accomplished several things on the behalf of men.

- 1.) It is Jesus who has accomplished salvation and purchased with his blood men from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation to be kings and priests unto God (Rev 1:5-6; 5:9, 10-11, 13; 20:6; cf., Exo 19:3-6; 1 Pet 2:9-10).
- 2.) Because of Jesus' work, the prayers of the saints are offered up to him, for he has all authority and rule to answer these prayers because only he is worthy to open the scroll (Rev 5:8; cf., Exo 30:1-10, 34-38; Psa 141:2; Luke 1:10; Rom 8:26-27; Heb 7:23-25; 9:12-14; 10:4-10).
- 3.) Because of Jesus work at the cross, he alone is worthy to open the scroll and sit on the throne (Rev 5:11-14).

What we see in chapters four and five of Revelation is a chiastic structure and similarity of doxologies or praises that move from God to Jesus (chiastic structures are meant to show us what is emphasized in a text; modified from Johnson, *Triumph*, 111 and Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 200).

A.) God is praised for his eternity (Rev 4:8)

B.) God is praised for his excellencies (Rev 4:11)

C.) A new song is sang: worthy is the Lamb of God (Rev 5:9)

B.) Jesus is praised for his excellencies (Rev 5:12)

A.) Jesus is praised for his eternity (Rev 5:13).

Revelation 4

Revelation 5

He who sits on the throne (4:2, 9)

He who sits on the throne (5:1, 7, 13)

The four living creatures (4:6)

The four living creatures (5:6, 8, 11, 14)

The 24 elders (4:4)

The 24 elders (5:6, 8, 14)

Fall and worship (4:10-11)

Fall and worship (5:8, 14)

Worthy (4:11)

Worthy (5:9, 12)

You created (4:11)

You created (5:13)

The portrayal we find in Revelation four and five is fitting for it is foundational for the saints' perseverance in light of what they will see in the following chapters.

We will share in Jesus' glory and his throne if we overcome and persevere until the end, because Jesus has made us fellow-heirs with him through his precious blood (Matt 26:29; Luke 22:30; Rom 8:17, 32; Col 1:12; 1 Pet 4:13; Rev 20:4).

The seals opened (6:1-17)

In chapters six and seven of Revelation we begin to witness the unfolding of God's plan on the world. Just as God's provision and blessing has come in principle (already), so has his judgment. We begin with the seals, which are the first cycle of God's judgments on the world.

We see a parallel between the first four seals and the first four trumpets of chapter eight (point four and five are interchangeable below), namely that they take place on earth; and the final three seals or judgments take place in or come from heaven.

- 1.) God is origin of the judgments on behalf of the prayers of the saints (Rev 5:1-4; 8:2-6).
- 2.) Six seals or trumpets are given (Rev 6:1-17; 8:5-9:21).
- 3.) Then comes the sealing of God's people (Rev 7:1-17; 10:1-11:14).
- 4.) The new heavens and new earth (Rev 7:12-17; 11:15-19).
- 5.) The final and seventh judgment (Rev 8:1-5; 11:15-19).

These four horsemen are tied to the four chariots found in Zechariah 1:8 and 6:1-8 (cf., Lev 26:18-28; Deut 32:24-25; Ezek 14:12-23). The four horseman and chariots found in Zechariah are similar to those of found in Revelation.

The judgment in Zechariah's day was on Israel's enemies, so here we find judgment coming from God against those who persecute the true Israel—the church.

Here we are introduced to the typological structure of judgment. We see judgment that happened in the past, which was geographical as a picture of a future judgment that is global in its scope (e.g., locusts, wine-press, Babylon, Gog and Magog).

- 1.) The first seal (Rev 6:2). The horseman is called to go and conquer.
- 2.) The second seal (Rev 6:3-4). He is called to take peace from the earth and a great sword is given to him in order to slay men.
- 3.) The third seal (Rev 6:5-6). The third seal is broken and a rider on a black horse comes and has a pair of scales in his hands.
- 4.) The fourth seal (Rev 6:7-8). The fourth seal is the rider on an ashen or pale horse.

Saints are not immune from such horrible realities (Mark 13:6-8; Luke 21:9-11), but what the church is assured of is that they will never be cut off from God. In light of these afflictions the saints cry out to God and the focus shifts from the earth to heaven.

- 1.) The fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11). The fifth seal is the cry of the saints.
- 2.) The sixth seal (Rev 6:12-17). With the breaking of the sixth seal, God's judgment is almost complete.

We see two things happen here.

1.) A great earthquake takes place that shakes the entire cosmos (Judg 5:4-5; Psa 97:5; 99:1; Isa 13:13; 24:18-20; 29:6; 34:4; Jer 51:29; Joel 2:10; Micah 1:4; Hagg 2:6; Mark 13:24-26; Luke 21:25-27; 27:54; Heb 12:26-27; Rev 11:13; 16:18; cf., Exo 19:18).

2.) Wrath comes upon the unbelieving world (Isa 2:19; Hos 10:8; Luke 23:30).

Among men who can stand and face God's fury? Only those who are sealed of God.

The 144,000 of God and the final seal (7:1-8:5)

Those that are able to stand are those that are sealed of God.

The interlude found in Revelation 7:1-3 signifies two things.

1.) Nothing will separate God's people from himself. The saints are sealed on their foreheads by God.

2.) Final judgment is delayed, but not for long. The saints cry out for judgment to come.

Those sealed of God are described in two ways: First, as the 144,000 of God and, second, as a great multitude. Before we answer the question of the identity of the 144,000 let us look at two crucial texts that are often interpreted as speaking of ethnic Israel.

Galatians 6:15-16

Throughout the book of Galatians, as well as much of his epistles, Paul insisted that all Jew and Gentile distinctions have been erased in Christ. By his death he made one new man, breaking down the wall of separation, and brought together the mystery of the Church (Gal 3:27-28; Eph 2:11-3:7; cf., Acts 10, 15).

In Galatians 6:15 Paul closes his letter by arguing that neither physical circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but what matters is a new creation. The new creation is the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles and all those who boast in the cross of Christ (6:14). As a result, those who hold to this standard or rule may mercy and peace be upon them. The question remains, who is the Israel of God that Paul includes in this blessing? There are three possible positions:

1.) Paul is speaking of ethnic unbelieving Israelites who still will inherit the covenant promises given to Abraham.

2.) The Israel of God is believing ethnic Jews.

3.) The Israel of God is the church. The only plausible explanation that fits with the entirety of Paul's argument in the book of Galatians and the immediate context is that Paul's phrase, "and upon the Israel of God" is explanatory.

Romans 9-11

The primary purpose in examining Romans 9-11 is not to determine whether a massive influx of ethnic Israelites will be saved with the coming of Christ, but whether Israel maintains a distinct and special plan apart from the church and whether God has kept his promises given to Israel.

- 1.) Romans 1-3: Paul introduces his gospel and states that everyone is condemned, whether by the written law (Jew) or moral law (Gentile).
- 2.) Romans 4: God's way of justification has always been by faith. Abraham was justified by faith prior to the sign of circumcision (Rom 4:1-25).
- 3.) Romans 5:1-11: The hope of Israel's, as well as all of humanities, restoration is being fulfilled through Jesus.
- 4.) Romans 5:12-21: Christ is the answer to Adam's sin and Israel's disobedience.
- 5.) Romans 6:1-7:25: By identifying with Jesus' death and resurrection believers are delivered from Adam's sin, which was manifested as well in the life of Israel.
- 6.) Romans 8:1-39: Restoration now takes place for all those who trust in Christ, not simply for humankind, but for all of creation.
- 7.) So has God kept his promises to Israel since his purposes have stretched beyond ethnic and local boundaries to all people in all places?
- 8.) In Romans 9-11, Paul is addressing the anticipated objection that God's covenant faithfulness in chapter eight is a contradiction due to his apparent lack of faithfulness to the Jewish people.
- 9.) Paul shows that God has not broken his covenant, but rather not all Israel is Israel. It is the children of the promise who are the covenant seed, not the children of the flesh (9:1-9; cf., Rom 2:28-29).
- 10.) The promise depends entirely on God's mercy and sovereignty in accordance with his electing purpose, a purpose that extends past ethnic boundaries (9:10-29). God has kept his promise to the Jews by saving a remnant and giving them a posterity (cf., Isa 10:22-23; 1:9).
- 11.) The promise is concerned with righteousness through faith. The Jewish people sought to establish their own righteousness, which showed them not to be of their father Abraham (9:30-10:21). God's word of righteousness by faith was always before them, but they have rejected that word.

12.) As a result and based upon the irrevocability of his gifts and calling, God purposed to make Israel jealous by showing mercy and covenant favor to the Gentiles. Though the nation as a whole had been cut off, at the present time an elect remnant remains, just as it has in every generation. God did not completely cast off his people (stumble so as to fall, 11:11), but their transgression has meant salvation for the Gentiles. Paul now uses the salvation of the Gentiles to make jealous his fellow countrymen to believe in Jesus. It is like a wave effect, the Jewish rejection means salvation for the Gentiles and the Gentiles' acceptance means salvation for the Jew (by means of jealousy). If they (Jews) are cut off, how much more can God graft them back in, of which they are a natural branch. Thus, believing Jews, with the believing Gentiles, comprise the one holy olive tree (11:1-10) and that branch is Christ.

13.) Thus, Israel does have a future in God's redemptive plan in a certain sense, since the irrevocability of the gifts and callings establish it (11:25-31), but that future is not apart from God's new creation—the church.

Thus, who are the 144,000?

1.) The 144,000 of God (Rev 7:4-9).

a.) The NT teaches that the true people of God are those that trust in Jesus. In other words, ethnic Israel was always a picture of the true people of God (1 Cor 10:1-11).

Furthermore, if there is to be a special future for ethnic Israel, Peter, the apostle to the "circumcision" (Gal 2:7), makes no mention of it. For Peter, the consummation of human history comes with Jesus' second coming (2 Pet 3:5-13). Notice how Peter understands human history:

i.) Creation to the flood (2 Pet 3:5-6).

ii.) The heavens and earth now, from the flood to the Jesus' return (2 Pet 3:7-9).

iii.) The time after Jesus' return, a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells (2 Pet 3:10-13).

b.) The tribe of Dan is replaced with Manasseh (the first-born son of Joseph).

c.) The beginning of the genealogy does not start with Reuben, the first born son of Jacob, but with Judah, the tribe that Christ came from.

d.) In addition to the re-order of Reuben and Judah, the rest of the placement of the tribes is out of order. This point is illustrated below (Johnson, *Triumph*, 132-133).

Sons of Jacob or physical Israel

Sons of the Lamb or true Israel

Of Leah

Reuben
Simeon
Levi
Judah
Issachar
Zebulun

Judah
Reuben
Gad
Asher
Naphtali
Manasseh (replacing Dan)

Of Rachel

Joseph
Benjamin

Simeon
Levi

Of Bilhah

Dan
Naphtali

Issachar
Zebulun

Of Zilpah

Gad
Asher

Joseph
Benjamin

The exaltation of the slaves sons to the head of the line show us that this listing of tribes is not literal, but meant to convey a greater truth—the true people of God are not those who are favored, but unfavored by men.

e.) What do we make of the number 144,000 or 12,000 from 12 tribes?

2.) The great multitude (Rev 7:9-17). To further solidify that the 144,000 are not ethnic Israel, but the believing saints of God, John records that he sees a great multitude of people from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev 5:9).

The great tribulation is not a separate or a future time in which certain people will experience persecution. If we hold that the 144,000 and the great multitude are the totality of God's people, then it means that God's people in the past, present, and even in the future face tribulation—a great tribulation in which Satan tries to destroy the church (cf., Matt 24:21; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; 1 Thess 1:6; 2 Thess 1:5-6; 2 Tim 3:1, 12; Heb 11:4-38; Rev 1:9; 2:9-10).

For those that come out of the great tribulation God will do three things for them (not limited to three, but three things are described here for our sake).

a.) The intimate presence of God (Rev 7:15). The saints are given the privilege of standing in the presence of God and they will serve him day and night and he will spread his tabernacle over them (Rev 7:15; cf., Psa 61:4; Lev 26:11-12; Ezek 37:26-28; Zech 8:8; 21:2-3).

b.) The lamb will take away all suffering and pain (Rev 7:16-17).

c.) Not only will he put away death and suffering, but he will be a shepherd to us and lead us to springs of living water and we will have our thirst quenched and our stomach's satisfied with the Lord (Psa 23:1-2; Ezek 34:13, 23-25; 37:24-28; Matt 5:6; John 4:10-11; 6:35; 7:38; 10:11, 14; 21:16; 1 Pet 5:1-4).

Who is able to stand? It is those who are sealed of God—the 144,000, the great multitude; and it is not by their doing that they stand, but it is because of the Lamb of God, who has washed them white with his blood.

One last point that should be made is that the non-dispensational approach to Revelation 7:3-17 is amplified when we compare it to the final two chapters of Revelation.

- 1.) The saints are sealed (7:3; 22:4).
- 2.) The totality of God's people (7:4-8; 21:12-14; cf., 14:1).
- 3.) People from all nations (7:9; 21:24-26).
- 4.) The sanctuary of God among men (7:15; 21:3, 22).
- 5.) Serve the Lord (7:15; Rev 22:3).
- 6.) Springs of living water (7:16-17; 21:6).
- 7.) The wiping of tears (7:17; 21:4).

Many of the themes and ideas of the OT are heightened and find their true fulfillment in the new heavens and new earth, in which the physical-earthly reality was only a picture or symbol of a much deeper embodiment (e.g., temple, tabernacle, altar, Zion, Jerusalem, nation, etc).

After the sealing of God's elect the angel breaks the seventh seal. There is silence in heaven for about half an hour (Rev 8:1). The silence seems odd, but it too finds its meaning in the OT.

Christian prayer becomes an integral part of the downfall of those who would stand against the gospel (Rev 5:8; 8:4-5; Exo 40:5, 26-27; Psa 114:2; Luke 1:10). The final seal is broken and God's judgment is complete; but now John will receive further insight into God's judgment and the saints' redemption through the vision of the trumpets.

The seven trumpets: John's third vision (8:6-11:19)

The trumpets of God (8:6-9:21)

In chapters eight and nine we are introduced to another vision that displays God's judgment and the saints' work and victory.

Trumpets have played a significant role in the OT by announcing the Lord's coming and serve as an alarm for warning (Exo 19:16-19; Num 10:2-3; Lev 25:9; 1 Kings 1:34; Jer 51:27; Joel 2:1; Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16). One example is found in the narrative of the Israelites taking Jericho.

When we read this OT narrative in light of the book of Revelation two things come to mind.

- 1.) Just as the Israelites marched around the city for seven days and declared the name of the Lord, which offered the people of Jericho an opportunity to repent, so these seven trumpets in Revelation make the same call for repentance.
- 2.) Just as the city fell in the day of Joshua, God's judgments are poured out on the world and we see part of the great city fall (Rev 11:13). We see its entire destruction at the end of God's bowl judgments (Rev 18:9).

Beyond the description of the trumpets and their relation to the narrative in Joshua, we observe several other key points regarding the trumpet judgments.

- 1.) The trumpet judgments are reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt (cf., Rev 11:8; modified from Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 272).

<u>The Seven Trumpets</u>	<u>The Plagues of Egypt</u>
Hail and fire (8:7)	The 7 th plague (Exo 9:22-24)
Blood (8:7)	The 1 st plague (Exo 7:17)
Bitter water	None directly (cf., Exo 7:17)
Darkness (8:12)	The 9 th plague (Exo 10:21)
Locusts (9:1-11) Army	The 8 th plague (Exo 10:4)
Great army / frogs (9:12-21; cf., 16:12-14)	The 2 nd plague (Exo 8:2)
Destruction/Earthquake (cf., Exo 19:16-19)	None directly, but visitation of God

2.) The trumpet judgments are limited in their devastation.

The limited suffering we see in the world is God's merciful way of calling people to repentance and salvation (e.g., natural disasters; modified from Poythress, *Returning King*, 122-123 and Beale, *Revelation*, 809-810).

<u>Trumpets</u>	<u>Bowls</u>
1/3 of the land judged (8:7)	All the inhabitants of land judged (16:2)
1/3 of the sea judged (8:8-9)	All the sea judged (16:3)
The water turns bitter (8:10-11)	The water turns to blood (16:4)
1/3 of the heavenly bodies harm men (8:12)	All of the heavenly bodies effect men (16:8-9)
Plagues upon unbelievers: Locust (9:1-11)	Plagues upon unbelievers: Darkness (16:10-11)
A great army from the east kills unbelievers (9:13-19)	A great army from the east: Frogs (16:12-14)
Kingdom of unbelievers falls (11:15-16) (lightning and hail, 11:19)	The great city is destroyed (16:17-21) (lightning and hail, 16:21)

Just like there is similarity between the first four trumpets and bowls, we also find similarity between the final three trumpets and bowls. The final three trumpets and bowls highlight the difference between believers and unbelievers. Certain judgments will only come upon unbelievers, whereas believers will be exempt.

We see that there is not one area of human existence that is not affected by God's judgment.

The first four of the seven trumpets take aim at the land, sea, fresh water, and sky (Rev 8:6).

- 1.) The first trumpet (Rev 8:7). In the first trumpet we find hail and fire mixed with blood hurled down to scorch a third of the earth.
- 2.) The second trumpet (8:8-9). Something like a great mountain burning with fire is thrown into the sea and a third of it becomes blood and a third of its inhabitants die or are destroyed.
- 3.) The third trumpet (8:10-11). A star fell into the fresh water sources and made the water bitter to drink.
- 4.) The fourth trumpet (8:12). A third of the heavenly bodies were affected.

With the end of the first four trumpets, three woes are announced on the unbelieving world (Rev 8:13; 9:12; 11:14). We find that the first four trumpets affected the spheres of man's existence, whereas the final three affect man directly.

We will look at the first two woes and then come back the final woe in chapter eleven.

1.) The fifth trumpet and the first woe (8:13-9:12). John hears an eagle flying in midheaven announcing woe to those who dwell on the earth.

The fifth trumpet introduces demonic forces represented as swarming locusts that come to inflict torture on men.

A star falls from heaven and is given a key to open the Abyss to go torment men. In the OT stars are personified and they engage in battle or sing songs (Judg 5:20; 38:7). Some have supposed that this star is Satan for two reasons.

a.) In Scripture he is spoken of as a star (Isa 14:12).

b.) The description, "which had fallen" reminds of Jesus' words in Luke 10:18 and John 12:31.

While it is difficult to determine if this star is Satan, the star is an agent of evil that is given authority to open the Abyss. The great furnace is opened and out comes horrible realities.

The locusts' sting men for five months and men will seek relief, but will not find it. We can learn two things here.

a.) The time of suffering is short to call men to repentance (Rev 9:5).

b.) We see that the pleasure of sin does not bring death, but only suffering (Rev 9:6).

2.) The sixth trumpet and the second woe (Rev 9:12-21). The first woe has passed and now we are introduced to the second woe and sixth trumpet.

The description of the horsemen is telling of their mission.

a.) They had breastplates the color of fire, hyacinth, and brimstone or sulfur (Rev 9:17).

b.) They had heads like lions (Rev 9:17).

c.) They breathed out fire, smoke, and brimstone or sulfur (Rev 9:17).

d.) They had tails like snakes that had heads to inflict harm (Rev 9:18-19).

As a result of these three plagues a third of the inhabitants of the earth are killed. Despite the sickening and painful destruction that comes on the unbelieving world they do not repent, but continue to practice idolatry and immorality and fail to give God worship. Revelation 9:20-21 show us that the purpose behind God's judgments is to bring men and women to a place of repentance and humility.

The angel and the little book (10:1-11)

In Revelation chapters ten and eleven, we see the church's commission and victory.

A strong angel comes and speaks to John (Rev 10:1-8). Many have supposed that this strong angel is Christ because his description so closely resembles the vision of the throne (e.g., rainbow, shining face, feet like fire, stands over earth, roars, etc.). However, the angel is probably just that—an angel, rather than Christ for two distinct reasons.

- 1.) Although the description of the angel is very similar to Jesus, his descriptions merely reflects God rather than that he is God.
- 2.) The angel specifically addresses God, which shows he is not God.

The scroll of Revelation 5:1 is God's eternal plan, but this scroll is the gospel that John is to eat and prophesy, just as we see the church is to do in 11:1-19. The book is described two ways.

- 1.) It is sweet (Rev 10:9-10).
- 2.) It is bitter (Rev 10:9-10).

John is told to preach in light of God's judgment and the church today is to carry forth this message as well (Rev 22:10-21). The message of peace and bitterness is to be taken to the nations (Rev 10:11). It is to go forth to all people. John is commissioned to eat the eternal gospel and prophesy and, in like manner, the church is to prophesy on earth (i.e., the two witnesses). What we see in Revelation 11:1-19 is the authority of Christ's church as a conquering kingdom taking a message of peace and judgment before the nations.

The two witnesses (11:1-19)

John is commanded to measure the temple of God and the altar and those who dwell in it (Rev 11:1).

While it would be very easy to identify the outside of the temple with the unbelieving world, John speaks of it as the holy city. What is the holy city and why do the Gentiles trample it for 42 months.

- 1.) In the OT the temple had an inner and outer court.
- 2.) The holy city in Scripture referred to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was holy not because of where it was or what it was made from, but because God dwelt there with his people.

There is a juxtaposition that takes place in the text. While the church is safe, it is persecuted; while the church is assured victory, it is rejected and trampled by the world (cf., Isa 63:18; Dan 8:13).

In the book of Revelation we find this chiastic structure concerning God's people and the time period of 42 months (modified from Johnson, *Triumph*, 172).

- A.) There is an assault on the church for 42 months (Rev 11:1-2).
 - B.) The church is to persevere and is protected for 1260 days (Rev 11:3).
 - B.) The church is to persevere and is protected for 1260 days (Rev 12:6, 14-17).
- A.) There is an assault on the church for 42 months (Rev 13:5-7).

Before we move forward to examine the length of 42 months or 1260 days we have to ask, why is a three-and-a-half year period chosen to describe the church?

- 1.) God has appointed a specific amount of time for the church's mission and suffering.
- 2.) The idea of three-and-a-half years is deeply rooted in the OT.

Daniel 9:24-27

Daniel 9:24-27 is structured in the following way.

- 1.) Daniel 9:24 covers the entire period between verses 25-27 (70 weeks).
- 2.) Daniel 9:25 divides the sixty-nine sevens.
- 3.) Daniel 9:26 describes the final seven in indefinite terms.
- 4.) Daniel 9:27 describes the final seven in definite terms.

Since God has given them seventy years of exile for the 490 years of neglect, God will now give 70×7 or 490 until certain things take place. Several things will take place at the end of the seventy weeks (Dan 9:24).

- 1.) Finish transgression.

- 2.) Make an end to sin.
- 3.) Make atonement for iniquity.
- 4.) Bring in everlasting righteousness.
- 5.) Seal up the vision and prophecy.
- 6.) Anoint the most holy.

The following comparison can be made to help better understand the relationship between Daniel 9:26 and 27.

	<u>Daniel 9:26 (indefinite)</u>	<u>Daniel 9:27 (definite)</u>
<u>Messiah</u>	Messiah cut off	Makes firm covenant, etc.
<u>The people and the one</u>	Destroy city, sanctuary, etc.	Makes desolate / complete destruction

How did Jesus fulfill what is spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27?

- 1.) He finished the transgression (Dan 9:24; Isa 53:5).
- 2.) He made an end to sin (Dan 9:24).
- 3.) He made atonement for iniquity (Dan 9:24; Isa 53:6).
- 4.) He brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan 9:24; Isa 53:11).
- 5.) He sealed up the vision and prophecy (Dan 9:24; Deut 18:15-16).
- 6.) He was anointed as the most holy (Dan 9:24).
- 7.) He was cut off (Dan 9:26).
- 8.) He confirmed a covenant with many for one week (Dan 9:27).
- 9.) He put a stop to the sacrifice and the grain offering in the middle of the final week (Dan 9:27).

How does the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple fit within a three and a half year period if these events take place during the later half of the 70th week? The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple took place almost forty years after the life of Christ.

The answer is found in the already-not-yet dynamic we find in Scripture. Jesus' ministry was three and a half years and with another three and a half years would come the end of the age. However, with the coming of Jesus we are introduced to the last days, which entails all sorts of promises (e.g., new covenant, Spirit, sonship, etc.), but this final ushering in of the kingdom has been postponed for over two-thousand years.

Therefore, as the extension of Christ, the church is in the last half of the 70th week, which would also make the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple fit within the last half of the 70th week. In other words, the last half of the 70th week is from the time of Christ's ministry to the end of the age, which is also called the last days by the apostles. The idea of the church age as three and a half years is further supported by John's description of the church's work as "forty-two months, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, a time, times, and half of time" (Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14; 13:5).

With the coming of Jesus he not only introduced the ultimate Sabbath, which we see fully consummated at the end of the age (Heb 3:1-4:11), but he also ushered in the favorable year of the Lord, the Jubilee year, which began at his first coming and will be complete at his second coming (Luke 4:18; cf., Isa 61:1-2).

In Revelation 11:3-19 we see the mission of the church.

- 1.) They are described as two witnesses (Rev 11:3).
- 2.) The two witnesses are olive trees and lampstands before the whole world (Rev 11:4).
- 3.) The two witnesses are given authority and have a prophetic ministry (Rev 11:3, 5-6).
 - a.) Moses turned water into blood (Exo 7:20-21) and brought all sorts of plagues on the earth in his confrontation with Egypt.
 - b.) Elijah shut up the sky for three-and-a-half years (1 Kings 17:1).

There is a real authority that the church has as Christ's commissioned ambassadors, to bring the message of salvation and conquer with the gospel (cf., Ezek 37:10).

The three-tier role of Christ as prophet, priest, and king is now discharged to the church as his loyal representatives on earth (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-20; 1 Pet 2:4-10).

The difference between the true witness and the false witness and the true gospel and the false gospel is discovered when we understand the church's prophetic ministry in comparison with the second beast or false prophet's ministry (modified from Kitsemaker, *Revelation*, 336).

Two Witnesses

True prophets (11:10)

Second Beast

False prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)

Performs signs (11:6)

Performs false signs (13:13-14; 19:20)

Receives authority from God (11:3)

Receives authority from first beast (13:12)

Torments the inhabitants of earth with truth (11:10)

Torments the inhabitants of the earth with deceit (13:14)

Two olive tress/lampstands (11:4)

Two horns of power (13:11)

Breath of life from God (11:11)

Breathes life into first beast (13:15)

When the two witnesses have finished their testimony of Jesus the beast that comes out of the abyss will make war with them (Rev 11:7; 13:7; cf., Dan 7:3, 21).

The reference to Sodom, Egypt, and even Jerusalem (where the Lord was crucified) is symbolic of the people who oppress God's people and commit immorality.

- 1.) Sodom was a city full of immorality, which was destroyed by the Lord (Gen 18:20ff; cf., Isa 1:9-10; 3:9; Ezek 16:46-49).
- 2.) Egypt was the place where God's people were oppressed for 400 years (Exo 1:1ff).
- 3.) Jerusalem (earthly) was the place where the Lord was crucified (cf., Heb 13:12).

So great will be the relief of the world at the two witnesses apparent demise that they will do two things.

- 1.) Leave their bodies in the street of the great city for three-and-a-half-days (Rev 11:9).
- 2.) The world will rejoice by celebrating and exchanging gifts (Rev 11:10).

Although the church appears defeated it rises by the breath of God. The fact that the church lies dead for three-and-a-half days signifies two things.

- 1.) They appear defeated only for a short period of time.
- 2.) As a faithful and true witness of Christ they are resurrected.

Upon the resurrection of the saints (John 5:29; 11:25) the whole world sees their ascension. Two things are important here.

- 1.) The fact they are taken up in a cloud shows not only the glory of the church, but the special work of God in bringing his church to himself.
- 2.) The appearance before their enemies is like Christ (Rev 1:7; cf., Zech 12:10).

Now a great earthquake shakes the great city (Rev 11:13-14; cf., Rev 6:12; 16:18). The earthquake destroys a tenth of the city and seven thousand people are killed. The background for a tenth and seven thousand people is found in the judgment brought against Israel in the OT and the faithful remnant that remained.

- 1.) In the OT a tenth is symbolic of the faithful remnant of Israel (Amos 5:3; Isa 6:13).
- 2.) In the OT 7000 is the number of believing Jews in the day of Elijah (1 Kings 19:14-18).

What does the amount in Revelation 11:13 refer to? A few thoughts are possible.

- 1.) These people killed represent unbelieving Jews who think they are helping God as his true remnant.
- 2.) The people killed simply demonstrate the limited scope of God's judgment as he gives people time to repent.
- 3.) Both of these numbers are turned upside down.

The symbolism is meant to give us another perspective on God's judgment.

If these verses refer to the end of the age why then do we see only a partial description and why do we find unbelievers giving God glory?

- 1.) We have to remember the context.
- 2.) We have to remember the nature of the book of Revelation.

With the announcement of the seventh trumpet three things take place.

- 1.) The kingdom of God has come in full manifestation (Rev 11:15-17).
- 2.) The judgment of the righteous and the wicked (Rev 11:18).
- 3.) The presence of God comes down to be with men (Rev 11:19).

Chapters 12-14 are the hinge to the book of Revelation and show us the past, present, and future, but also usher in a new stage and depth to the spiritual conflict we see, the church's struggle and eventually victory, and the demise of the wicked and their eternal destruction.

A deeper conflict: John's fourth vision (12:1-14:20)

The woman, the dragon, and the male child (12:1-17)

Revelation chapters 12-14 is the hinge that holds the first part of the book (chapters 1-11) and the second part of the book (15-22) together. We can see the following chiastic structure to better understand this relationship (modified from Strom, *Symphony*, 270).

A.) The church is warned and the victorious Christ is among his people in the present heavens and earth (1-5).

B.) Judgment on God's enemies characterized by seven seals and the promise of victory for God's people (6-8).

C.) Judgment on God's enemies characterized by seven trumpets and the promise of victory for God's people (8-11).

D.) The true spiritual conflict behind the physical world and the promise of victory for God's people (12-14).

C.) Judgment on God's enemies completed and characterized by seven bowls and the promise of victory for God's people (15-16).

B.) Final judgment on God's enemies, the return of Christ, and the promise of victory for God's people (17-20).

A.) The church is purified and the victorious Christ is with his people forever in the new heavens and new earth (21-22).

In Revelation twelve we are not only introduced to the players, but see a battle that is both heavenly and earthly.

1.) A battle on earth between the male child and the dragon (12:1-6).

2.) A battle in heaven between the dragon and Michael (12:7-12).

3.) A battle on earth between the saints of God and the dragon (12:13-17).

Moreover, we see the defeat of the devil portrayed vividly in five sequences of events (note the phrase cast down; Rev 12:9, 10, 13).

1.) The dragon tries to devour the male child, but he is snatched up by God (12:5).

2.) The dragon fights with Michael, but loses and is cast down (12:9).

3.) The dragon tries to destroy the woman, but God prepares a place for her (12:6, 14).

4.) The serpent pours out a flood of deceit, but the world drinks up the lies (12:15-16).

5.) The dragon goes and makes war with the rest of the woman's seed, but is unsuccessful because they keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus (12:17).

We see the complete failure of Satan to destroy Christ and his people. However, what we find in chapters 13-14 is his continued attempts to destroy the church, but the saints eventual victory.

In Revelation 12:1-6 we see a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars (Rev 12:1). The symbolism of the woman is two-fold.

1.) The symbolism stresses the woman's glory (cf., Rev 21:11, 22-27).

2.) The symbolism informs us that this woman represents Israel.

Is the woman ethnic Israel or the church?

1.) If we say that the woman always refers to ethnic Israel, then we are reading the text as a dispensationalist.

2.) We have a problem if we strictly read the woman as the church, because this position will lead us to covenant theology, which insists the church existed in the OT.

The only way to get at the identity of the woman is to understand the continuity and discontinuity between the OT and NT. There are two ways we can think of the woman.

1.) In the OT Israel is identified as the wife or woman of God (Isa 54:3-6; Jer 31:32; Ezek 16:32; Hos 2:16). We know that the title of Israel was personified in the person of Jesus (Matt 2:15; cf., Isa 41:8-9; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4 / 42:1-7; 49:3; 50:6; 53:1ff) and that by virtue of Jesus being the offspring of Abraham all those who have the faith of Abraham are his sons, and; thus, true Israelites regardless of ethnicity (Rom 2:28-29; Gal 3:16ff; 6:16).

2.) I think a better solution is to see that the woman refers to the believing people of God, whether from the OT or NT.

John sees another sign in heaven. The sign is that of a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns with seven diadems (Rev 12:3).

1.) He has seven heads (Rev 12:3).

2.) He is also pictured with ten horns (Rev 12:3).

At the time of Jesus' birth Satan unleashed a barrage of attempts to destroy him whether as a child or with temptation (Matt 2:1-18; Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13).

Since the dragon was unable to destroy the male child, he makes war with the woman.

We see God do two things for his people during the wilderness experience.

- 1.) He prepares a place for her (Rev 12:6).
- 2.) He nourishes the woman for 1260 days (Rev 12:6).

The dragon makes war with Michael the angel, who is the protector of God's people (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1).

Nevertheless, Satan is defeated and there are two things we must point out in regard to his defeat.

- 1.) In the OT Satan stood behind the pagan nations.
- 2.) While Satan is a defeated foe and his destruction is certain, the church is still open to his deception (2 Cor 11:3; 1 Pet 8-9).

Because of Satan's defeat salvation and judgment are secured.

- 1.) Salvation has been secured for God's people (Rev 12:10-11).
- 2.) The doom of the world is secured because of God's salvation (Rev 12:12).

The dragon persecutes God's people, but just as we saw in 12:6 God protects his people. God protects his people two ways.

- 1.) God provides protection for his people by nourishing them (Rev 12:14).
- 2.) God protects his people by having the world drink up Satan's lies (Rev 12:15).

Because the dragon is unsuccessful at destroying the woman with lies, he goes and makes war with the rest of her children (Rev 12:17). There are three views as to what this verse means.

- 1.) The dispensational view.
- 2.) Children equals Gentile believers.
- 3.) Children equals individual believers.

The dragon is persecuting the offspring of Christ and his church, which is believers all throughout the age.

God's people have been persecuted, are being persecuted, and will be persecuted by the dragon.

In Revelation thirteen we see the agents of deception and persecution that the dragon unleashes against the church during this age.

The beast from the sea (13:1-10)

John sees the dragon standing on the seashore. This reference may allude to his offspring.

The beast of the sea (Rev 13:1-10).

The beast is similar to the dragon, but not exact.

The dragon

Seven heads, seven crowns

Ten horns

The beast

Seven heads, seven blasphemous names

Ten horns, ten crowns

The beast does two things with his power.

- 1.) He receives worship for his counterfeit miracles and great power (Rev 13:3-4).
- 2.) He speaks arrogant words and blasphemies against God and his people (Rev 13:5-8).

Paul does seem to allude to a singular person that will come against God and his people in the future (2 Thess 2:1-12; cf., Matt 24:4-14; 2 Tim 3:12-13). This person is very similar to what is described of the beast; however, there are some important points to make that will help us gain a better perspective of the beast and this man of lawlessness.

- 1.) John makes clear that there are many anti-christ's in the world now (1 John 2:18, 22; 2 John 1:7; cf., Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22).
- 2.) While Paul's reference to the man of lawlessness is an individual, the object of his attack and his work is unlike the dispensational position.

The following comparison can be made (modified from Poythress, *The Returning King*, 139-140).

Jesus Christ

Image of God (1:8)

Many crowns (19:12)

Eternal great power (5:11-14)

Truly resurrected (1:18)

The beast

Image of Satan (13:1)

Ten crowns (13:1)

Temporary great power (13:2)

As if a Fatal wound and healed (13:3)

Father worshiped (11:15-17)

Dragon worshiped (13:4)

True nation worships (5:9-10)

False nation worships (13:7-8)

Sing unto Jesus (15:3-4)

Sing unto beast (13:4)

Wars with unbelievers (19:11-19)

Wars with saints (13:7)

The message to the church is two-fold and the message is that the church will be secure despite the suffering it faces (Rev 13:8-10).

- 1.) The saints are secure because their names are written in the book of life.
- 2.) The judgment of the wicked is sure and sealed.

The beast from the earth (13:11-18)

The beast is pictured as a lamb with two horns. The reference to a lamb and two horns is significant for two reasons.

- 1.) As a lamb he is pictured as gentle, peaceable, and approachable (Rev 13:11; Dan 8:3).
- 2.) He has two horns (Rev 13:11).

The work of the second beast or false prophet is four-fold.

- 1.) The second beast works his power before the first beast and makes the whole earth worship the first beast (Rev 13:12).
- 2.) The second beast performs great signs in order to deceive people (Rev 13:13).
- 3.) The second beast commands the world to make an image of the first beast and causes it to speak (Rev 13:14-15; Dan 3:1-11).
- 4.) The second beast causes all who worship the beast to take a mark on their forehead or right hand (Rev 13:16-18).

To understand the mark of the beast requires wisdom (calculate, Luke 14:28; cf., Dan 11:33; 12:10).

We want to avoid two fallacies here with the number of the beast.

- 1.) We want to remember that the book of Revelation is a book of symbols.

2.) In a similar vein we want to be careful not to make a one-for-one correspondence to some person in human history.

The followers of the Lamb and the doom of the worshipers of the beast (14:1-20)

John sees the lamb standing on mount Zion with the 144,000 elect of God (Rev 14:1). There are three things we want to see here.

- 1.) The lamb standing at Zion (Rev 14:1).
- 2.) We see that those who are with the lamb in his presence are the 144,000 of God (Rev 14:1).
- 3.) We see in contrast to the followers of the beast, that the 144,000 are sealed with the name of the Father on their foreheads (Rev 14:1).

We gather from the text that the sound from heaven like harps is a sound of victory, because it is a new song that they play and sing. We see several features of this song.

- 1.) It is a new song (Rev 14:3).
- 2.) The object of their new song is the Lord (Rev 14:3).
- 3.) It is a song that only the elect know (Rev 14:3).

We see a contrast between those who follow the false prophet versus those who follow the lamb (modified from Kitsemaker, *Revelation*, 400).

<u>False prophet</u>	<u>Lamb</u>
Like a lamb (13:11)	Is the lamb (14:1, 4)
Out of the earth (13:11)	From Mt. Zion (14:1)
Worship the image (13:12)	Worship the true image on the throne (14:3)
Take a mark of the beast (13:18)	Take the mark of the Father (14:1)
Enslaved to the beast (13:16)	Redeemed unto God (14:3)
The beast and its followers deceive (13:14)	No lie found in Jesus and his followers (14:5)

Those who are faithful unto Christ are given the privilege of singing a new song, because of four things.

- 1.) They are pure (Rev 14:4).
- 2.) They follow the lamb (Rev 14:4).
- 3.) They are the first fruits of God (Rev 14:4).
- 4.) They speak no lies and are blameless (Rev 14:5).

Before the final scene of judgment, John sees three angels that come to make a great pronouncement (Rev 14:6-13).

These angels announce a final call to repentance and the certain doom for those who reject Christ before the judgment is complete in Revelation 15-19.

- 1.) The first angel announces the gospel (Rev 14:6-7).
- 2.) The second angel announces the doom of Babylon (Rev 14:8).
- 3.) The final angel announces suffering and doom that will come upon the worshipers of the beast (Rev 14:9-13). The final angel declares the judgment of those who do not repent from their wickedness. Those who worship the beast, his image, and receive his mark are doomed for three things.
 - a.) They will drink the wine of God's wrath.
 - b.) They are tormented with fire and brimstone.
 - c.) Their torment will be forever and ever and they will have no rest day or night.

The contrast between the elect of God and the worshipers of the beast is laid out in the next few verses (Rev 14:12-13).

- 1.) Unlike the wicked that will be destroyed, the elect will persevere.
- 2.) Instead of torment, the elect will be blessed.
- 3.) Instead of perpetual torment and unrest, the elect find rest and their deeds follow with them.

The final scene of chapter fourteen is the great harvest of God.

The idea of harvest is common in the OT to speak of the end of the age, but what do these two harvests represent?

- 1.) The harvest of the righteous (Rev 14:15-16).

a.) In the NT we find that the sowing and gathering of God's elect is done by Christ himself, whereas the reaping of the wicked for destruction is done by angels (Matt 13:1-30, 36-43).

b.) Likewise, we find the wheat is often associated with the righteous in contrast to the wicked as chaff, which are burned or blown away by the wind (Matt 3:12; Luke 3:17; cf., Psa 1:4; 35:5; Isa 17:13; 29:5; Jer 51:33; Dan 2:35; Hos 13:3; Micah 4:12-13; Habb 3:12).

c.) While wheat is not mentioned in this passage, the idea of "harvest" (as well as the Greek) is usually associated with harvesting wheat, which is synonymous with believers (Mark 4:29; John 4:35-38). We have already seen the wheat harvest idea alluded to with the mention of first fruits (cf., Exo 23:16; Rev 14:4).

d.) What follows the harvesting or reaping? With the first reaping we do not see wrath follow, but with the second gathering we see judgment follow. The first sickle is not associated with something that is crushed down like grapes, whereas the second sickle is a clusters of grapes.

e.) The second reaping is characterized as gathering grapes, something that is synonymous with God's judgment on the wicked (Isa 63:1-6; Jer 51:33; Lam 1:15; Joel 3:12-13).

Thus, it is safe to say that the first act of reaping is the gathering of God's elect. It is not that the believers are taken out of the world as some would suppose, but what we see here is the separating of God's people from the worshipers of the beast (Matt 25:31-46).

2.) The gathering of the wicked (Rev 14:17-20).

a.) It is outside the city.

b.) The destruction of the wicked will be great.

i.) To even consider draining the blood of every human being that lives today, there would not be enough blood to fill the space that is described here.

ii.) If the amount of blood that is spilt is literal, how can that amount of blood be contained without it dissipating out? The dispensationalist argues that the huge hailstones that fall on the earth block the blood from dissipating out, but we find no mention of that anywhere in this text.

The depth runs up to a horse's bridle and its distance is two hundred miles. John is conveying two things here.

- 1.) The mention of horses invokes images of warfare (cf., 9:13-19).
- 2.) The mention of two hundred miles invokes images of complete destruction.

In Revelation 15-18 we see a vivid picture of what is briefly described in Revelation 14:20. In those chapters we see the completion God's judgment on the world and the worshipers of the beast. Part of the hope for the believer is that God will judge righteously and this is what we see unfold with the bowl judgments.

The seven bowls: John's fifth vision (15:1-16:21)

The heavenly vision (15:1-8)

John sees something great and marvelous in heaven. It is interesting to note that what John sees as great and marvelous is both blessing and judgment.

- 1.) John sees seven angels with seven plagues (Rev 15:1).
- 2.) John sees the victory of the saints (Rev 15:2-4).
 - a.) We see the saints stand with harps of God.
 - b.) The song is about the great exodus that Christ performed.

We can see a clear connection between this song and the song of Moses from Exodus 15:1-18 (modified and expanded from Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 99-100).

The song of Moses

After the plagues on Egypt Moses leads a great Exodus (Exo 12:33-40)

God's deliverance and judgment of Israel's enemies (Exo 15:1-10, 12)

God's greatness over pagan gods (Exo 15:11)

God's judgment filled the pagan nations with fear (Exo 15:14-16)

God's deliverance brought his people

The song of the Lamb

After the plagues on the world, like the plagues of Egypt, Christ leads a greater Exodus (Rev 14:1-20; cf., Luke 9:31)

Great and marvelous are your works, Righteous and true are your ways (15:3)

Nations come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed (15:4)

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify You name (15:4)?

Those who had been victorious over the

to his dwelling place—temple (Exo 15:13, 17)

beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God (15:2; cf., 4:6)

“The Lord shall reign forever and ever”
(Exo 15:18)

Implied in the text and mentioned in Rev 11:15.

Following the scene of the righteous worshiping God, John sees the temple of testimony in heaven opened and sees the seven angels with the seven plagues coming from the temple commissioned to pour out God’s wrath.

The angels are described as being clothed in clean and bright linen with golden sashes (Rev 15:5-6; cf., Exo 28:42; Lev 16:4; Dan 10:5). Their description is similar to Christ, which indicates for us that these angels proceed from God (Rev 1:13).

The statement that “no one was able to enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues or the seven angels were finished,” is not suggesting that saints in God’s presence were expelled until the bowl judgments are finished or that God is now unapproachable until the judgment is finished, but it is meant to convey that no person dare approach God for great is his holiness.

The next few chapters portray those who receive God’s wrath versus those who are in Christ where his wrath has been satisfied. For the unbeliever there only awaits a fearful expectation of suffering and death, but for the believer there awaits the marriage supper of the lamb and the new heavens and new earth (Rev 19:7-9; 21:1).

The bowls of God’s wrath (16:1-21)

John hears a loud voice from heaven from the temple (Rev 16:1). As we have already seen the loud voice is the voice of God (Rev 14:2). The voice of God commands the angels to go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of wrath (cf., Jer 10:25). We see two things here.

- 1.) That the judgment is from God.
- 2.) With the seven bowls, judgment is now complete. In keeping with the progressive-parallel structure of Revelation we have seen God’s judgment from different perspectives (e.g., seals and trumpets) and we have seen it progress in its intensity and destruction (e.g., bowls).

The major difference between the first four trumpets and first four bowls is the intensity of God’s judgment.

- 1.) The first bowl (Rev 16:2). Like the first trumpet this bowl judgment falls upon the earth; however, the difference is that it strikes not the earth itself, but its inhabitants.
- 2.) The second bowl (Rev 16:3). The second bowl judgment destroys every living thing in the sea, unlike the partial judgment found in Revelation 8:8-9.

3.) The third bowl (Rev 16:4-7). The third bowl not only shows God's judgment on the world's fresh water, but the reason for turning the water of the sea, the rivers, and springs of water into blood.

4.) The fourth bowl (Rev 16:8-9). God has always been gracious to humanity and unbelieving world to provide the seasons and luminaries to bring forth food and gladness (Gen 8:22; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:17), but now he takes all that away and the world is scorched with great heat.

5.) The fifth bowl (Rev 16:10-11). Because of their refusal to repent the judgments becomes worse.

6.) The sixth bowl (Rev 16:12-16). The wickedness of men is given over to the power of Satan and in their foolishness they gather against the Lord thinking that they might destroy Christ and his church.

The army that is prepared is brought forth by Satan himself. In light of this war, we see three key points.

a.) Three unclean frogs come forth to deceive the whole world (Rev 16:13-14).

b.) The believer is to stay awake and holy in light of impending war (Rev 16:15).

c.) The place where they gather for battle is called Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16).

7.) The final bowl (Rev 16:17-21). With the nations gathered against God, the completion of his judgment is at hand. God speaks from heaven (lightning, thunder; Rev 4:5; 8:5), "it is done" and with his spoken word comes five things (cf., Rev 21:5-6).

a.) The bowl is poured out on the air (Rev 16:17).

b.) A great earthquake (Rev 16:18).

c.) Babylon is remembered before the Lord (Rev 16:19).

We see an interesting parallel take shape between the believer and unbeliever.

The unbeliever

Gets drunk off the blood of the saints
(16:6; 17:6; 18:24)

Drinks the cup of God's wrath (16:19;
10; Matt 26:29)

The believer

Is not drunk with wine,
but filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18)

Drinks the cup of the vine with Christ (19:7-
10; Matt 26:29)

d.) The shaking of all things (Rev 16:20).

e.) Great hailstones fell on men (Rev 16:21).

Revelation chapters 17-19 as well as part of twenty will provide us various perspectives on the destruction of God's enemies.

The saints have lived in light of two-ages and have lived in the gap of promise and reality, but now the Lord will tarry no more. His delay is not failure or forgetfulness, but three things.

1.) Mercy to the unbelieving world.

2.) The salvation of the elect.

3.) Our sanctification.

The prayers of the saints have come to an end; the woman, the beast, and the false prophet and their followers will be destroyed, and the followers of the lamb will inherit the new heavens and new earth and be with God forever.

The victorious Christ: John's sixth vision (17:1-19:21)

God's judgment on Babylon (17:1-18)

The message to the church remains the same, persevere and keep yourself pure. We can see how the two commandments line up with the respective enemies of the church.

1.) The church is to be a light bearing witness to the world, but the beast tries to destroy the church (Rev 11:4ff). In light of the mission of the church and the persecution from the beast the church is to persevere and keep the testimony of Jesus.

2.) The church as Christ's bride is to remain pure and spotless, but the seductive harlot tries to get the church to commit acts of immorality. Despite the temptations of the world, the church is to remain separate and pure.

In Revelation 17-18 we find the following structure.

1.) The three messages of doom from the angels (17:7-18; 18:1-3; 4-8).

2.) The three laments of the world (18:9-10; 11-17; 17-19).

3.) The climax and rejoicing of the saints (18:20-24).

The idea of identifying this seductive woman with Babylon begins in the OT. We can trace the city throughout the OT.

- 1.) Babel was the original place of Babylon (Gen 11:9).
- 2.) Babylon was the great city that took captive God's people (Dan 5:1ff; 7:4; cf., Jer 50-51).
- 3.) Babylon is identified with Rome (1 Pet 5:13).
- 4.) Babylon could even be equated with Israel, for her idolatry and immorality (Matt 23:1-39; Luke 11:47-51; cf., Isa 1:21; Jer 2:20; Ezek 16:15; 23:1ff; Hos 2:1ff).
- 5.) Babylon is synonymous with the world itself (James 1:1; cf., Rev 1:9).
- 6.) Babylon is much more than an individual city, empire, or king, but is representative of everything seductive and immoral.

Just as the beast counterfeit's Christ, and the false prophet counterfeit's the Holy Spirit and the church, so, too, the woman counterfeits the people of God (we will develop this further in Revelation 21).

The great harlot

The bride of Christ

Seductive adornment (17:1ff)

Righteous adornment (21:1ff)

Seal of harlotry on forehead (17:5)

Seal of God on forehead (21:4)

Drunk off the saints blood (17:6)

Drinks of the true vine (19:7-10)

Woman of many men (18:9-20)

Wife of the Bride-groom (19:7-10)

Woman of the great city (17:5)

Woman of the holy city (21:1ff)

We find a three-fold description of the woman (Rev 17:1-2).

- 1.) She sits on many waters (Rev 17:1).
- 2.) She intoxicates the world with immorality (Rev 17:2).
- 3.) She is destined for judgment (Rev 17:1).

John sees the woman adorned with articles of seduction and is drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev 17:6-7). There are several things we observe here.

- 1.) The woman is in company with the beast (Rev 17:3).

- 2.) The woman is in the wilderness (Rev 17:3).
- 3.) The woman is a seductress (Rev 17:4-5).
- 4.) The woman appears very great (Rev 17:6-7).

The comfort to John is two-fold.

- 1.) The beast will persecute the church only for a little while longer (Rev 17:8-13).
- 2.) The woman will be destroyed and Christ will be destroyer of her (Rev 17:14-18).

Again, it is God who will fight for and on behalf of his people (modified from Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 475).

- A.) They will wage war
 - B.) Against the lamb
 - B.) The lamb will overcome
- A.) Them that wage war

As Christ will destroy the beast, so the beast will destroy the woman, which is all the peoples of the earth. It is ironic that the very thing the people of the world love, the beast, becomes the source of their annihilation (cf., Mark 3:23-24). The idol will destroy the idolatrous.

The great comfort to the church is that while the beast seems powerful and great, his reign is almost over and his time is short. Thus, the church is called to endure tribulation and remain pure.

In Revelation chapters 18-19 we will see the lust and lament of the world for their harlot bride, but then we see the love and joy of the true bride as she makes herself ready for her glorious bride-groom.

Babylon and her people are defeated (18:1-24)

If the woman represents the seduction of the world and the world is comprised of individuals, then how can we have the lament of the peoples of the world over the woman (themselves) in chapter eighteen? I think three things need to be considered here.

- 1.) If we recall the introductory statements to the book of Revelation, as well as the beginning of chapter seventeen, we must not view these chapters as chronological per se, but thematic.

2.) Because of the thematic and symbolic nature of chapters 17-19 (as well as the entire book), we should recognize that the woman is not just the world itself, but the world's system of seduction.

3.) The woman is a corporate entity, just like the church.

Much of what we find in chapter eighteen is heavily rooted in the OT, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

The third angel or voice comes from heaven and calls the church to purity in the midst of her harlotry and announces the judgment that is about to come upon the prostitute.

1.) The call to come out from her (Rev 18:4).

2.) God has remembered her iniquities (Rev 18:5-8).

With the three judgments completed, we see the three laments of the woman.

1.) Kings of the earth mourn (Rev 18:9-10).

2.) Merchants of the earth will mourn (Rev 18:11-17).

3.) Every shipmaster, passenger, and sailor of the earth will mourn (Rev 18:17-19).

There are four major themes we see arise with each one of these groups of people.

1.) Each group laments the wealth and luxury they gained from the woman.

2.) The description of each group and their lament is meant to give us a multi-dimensional picture of the woman's seductiveness (e.g., trade, riches, wealth, etc.).

3.) Each group laments the woman from a distance (Rev 18:10, 15, 17).

4.) The time of the woman is short lived (Rev 18:10, 17, 19).

Her destruction is described vividly by three things.

1.) There will be silence (Rev 18:22).

2.) There will be no light and no presence of Jesus (Rev 18:23).

3.) Her punishment is severe (Rev 18:23-24).

What we find in the last four chapters of Revelation is the victory that was promised way back in Revelation chapters one through five has come in all its fullness and glory for those who keep the name of Jesus.

The Lamb returns (19:1-21)

At the beginning of chapter nineteen we are introduced to a five-fold hallelujah by the saints (Rev 19:1, 3, 4, 6, 7).

- 1.) The first hallelujah is for God's righteous judgment on the wicked and his vindication of his people (Rev 19:1-2).
- 2.) The second hallelujah is for the perpetual and total destruction of Babylon (Rev 19:3).
- 3.) The third hallelujah is the heavens praising the sovereign God of the universe who sits on the throne (Rev 19:4-5).
- 4.) The fourth hallelujah is a praise to God for he reigns (Rev 19:6).
- 5.) The fifth praise is to God for the marriage supper of the Lamb has come (Rev 19:7-10).

In this passage we see three things.

- a.) The marriage supper is for those who are the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7-8).
- b.) Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper (Rev 19:9).
- c.) The promise of the marriage supper of the lamb should humble the saints (Rev 19:10).

The judgment that was secured at the cross and has been progressively poured out on the world, now comes in its completion with Christ the divine warrior.

We find a detailed description of Christ.

- 1.) He rides a white horse (Rev 19:11).
- 2.) He is called faithful and true (Rev 19:11).
- 3.) He judges in righteousness (Rev 19:11-12).
- 4.) He has many crowns and a special name (Rev 19:12).
- 5.) He is the word of God that carries forth judgment (Rev 19:13).

6.) His servants come with him, but it is only him who destroys and judges (Rev 19:14-15).

7.) He is king of kings and lord of lords (Rev 19:16).

In contrast to the marriage supper of the Lamb, there is another supper, a supper of the wicked. An angel stands in the sun summoning the birds in the sky to come and eat the supper of flesh of the people of the earth (Rev 19:17-19).

The beast and the false prophet are seized (captured or arrested) and thrown into the lake of fire. We see that the rest of the world is killed with the sword and then consumed by the birds of the air (Rev 19:20-21).

After beholding the return of Christ, we will now finish the book of Revelation with John's final vision (chapters 20-22). There is still one last enemy to destroy—the dragon. John will see in this final vision the reign of the saints, the final destruction of the dragon, and the coming down of the new heavens and new earth.

New heavens and new earth: John's final vision (20:1-22:21)

Satan bound, freed, and judged (20:1-10)

Three major positions:

- 1.) Historic Premillennialism (pre—Jesus returns before millennium).
- 2.) Postmillennialism (post—return of Jesus after millennium).
- 3.) Dispensationalism.

The position we will propose is the amillennial position. This statement is a little unfair for two reasons.

- 1.) The term amillennial tends to carry with it negative connotations.
- 2.) While the term amillennial summarizes the position, you cannot really get at a proper understanding of Revelation twenty without understanding all of Revelation and all of Scripture.

The purpose of the binding of Satan is so that he would deceive the nations no longer (Rev 20:3). In order to get at what is taking place in the text a few points should be made.

- 1.) It should be noted that the time span of the binding of Satan represents the time from Christ's victory at the cross (or ascension) to his second coming.

The following chiastic structure will help illustrate the parallel between Revelation chapters 17-19 with chapter twenty (Beale, *Revelation*, 983).

A.) Judgment of the harlot (17:1-19:6)

B.) Divine judgment (19:11-16)

C.) Judgment of beast and false prophet (19:17-21)

D.) Satan imprisoned for 1000 years (20:1-3)

D.) Saints reign and judge for 1000 years (20:4-6)

C.) Judgment of Gog and Magog (20:7-10)

B.) Divine judgment (20:11-15)

A.) Vindication of the bride (21:1-22:5)

2.) The binding of Satan is his defeat at the cross where he does not have authority over the nations like he once did and he cannot harm the church as he would wish.

We can see the following parallel to help us understand Revelation 20:1-6 (Beale, *Revelation*, 992)

Revelation 12:7-11

Revelation 20:1-6

Heavenly scene (12:7)

Heavenly scene (20:1)

Satan defeated (12:7-8)

Satan laid hold of (20:2)

Satan cast down (12:9)

Satan cast in abyss (20:3)

Multiple names (12:9)

Multiple names (20:2-3)

Short time (12:12)

Short time (20:3)

Saints triumphant (12:10-11)

Saints triumphant (20:4)

Saints keep testimony of Jesus (12:11)

Saints kept testimony of Jesus (20:4)

3.) The thousand years represents a long period of time and paradox.

John sees a heavenly scene of thrones with the souls of those who were killed for their testimony of Jesus (Rev 20:4).

The saints who die in the Lord come to life and reign with him for a thousand years, whereas the rest (the world) do not come to life until after the thousand years is up. John identifies the believers coming to life as the first resurrection and the unbelievers coming to life the second death. How should we understand the issues of first resurrection and second death?

- 1.) Dispensationalists suppose that this first resurrection is a physical resurrection.
- 2.) Some people propose that the first resurrection is a believer's time of regeneration and conversion.
- 3.) To "come to life" means at your physical death you start reigning with Christ, which is the first resurrection.

	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>
<u>Resurrection</u>	Physical death of believers*	Physical resurrection of believers
<u>Death</u>	Physical death of unbelievers	Eternal death of wicked*

(*The first resurrection, spiritual; and the second death, spiritual)

Although Satan is bound, he is released for a short season to gather the nations to assault the church (Rev 20:7-9).

All the nations of the earth are now summed up and given the description of Gog and Magog.

There strength and power seems great (cf., Rev 17), but nothing is taking place apart from God's knowledge and power. The protection of God's people is described with two phrases.

- 1.) The camp of the saints (Rev 20:9).
- 2.) The beloved city (Rev 20:9).

Because of God's love for his city, he brings fire upon the unholy trinity and casts them into the lake of fire.

Judgment of the nations (20:11-15)

Before God permanently sends the wicked to their respective destiny he judges them for their deeds. We see two books opened up.

- 1.) The books (Rev 20:12; cf., Dan 7:10).
- 2.) The book of life (Rev 20:12; cf., Dan 12:1-2).

Whoever's name was not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire with the unholy trinity for everlasting suffering and torment (i.e., the second death).

With the enemies of God destroyed and death along with them the way is paved now for the new heavens and new earth, the new Jerusalem, the city of God, and the bride of Christ.

The new Jerusalem and the tree of life (21:1-22:5)

There are several features of the new heavens and new earth that we will outline below.

- 1.) The new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1).
- 2.) The new Jerusalem comes down from heaven ready for her husband (Rev 21:2).
 - a.) We see the New Jerusalem coming down to men.
 - b.) The church is called the city of God; the bride of Christ.
 - c.) With the arrival of the New Jerusalem, heaven comes down to earth, which ushers in peace and righteousness because of God's presence.

Here we are given a foretaste of what we will see more fully described in Revelation 21:9-22:5. We must keep this premise in mind, namely that the people of God are his place and not a place for his people.

- 3.) God will be among his people (Rev 21:3).
- 4.) He will wipe every tear from their eyes and there will be no death or suffering (Rev 21:4-5).
- 5.) These words are faithful and true (Rev 21:5-6).
- 6.) He will give life to whoever thirsts without cost (Rev 21:6).
- 7.) Whoever overcomes will inherit these things and be a son of God (Rev 21:7).

There are two other points to mention in regard to the previous seven points.

- 1.) The parallel between Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:1-6.

Isaiah 65:17-25

Will make a new heavens and new earth
(65:17, 66:22)

Will make Jerusalem a place of rejoicing

Revelation 21:1-6

Saw a new heavens and new earth (21:1)

A new Jerusalem coming down (21:2)

(65:18)

There will be no death or suffering
(65:19-21, 25)

There is no death or suffering (21:4)

They will be his people (65:22)

They are sons of God (21:7)

He will hear them and save them
(65:24)

He hears them and gives them life (21:6)

2.) The promises offered to those who overcome in the seven churches of Asia Minor are found in Revelation 21:1-6 (and some in Revelation 21:10-22:5).

- a.) Ephesus: eat of the tree of life (Rev 22:2).
- b.) Smyrna: not hurt by second death (Rev 21:7-8; cf., 20:6).
- c.) Pergamum: name of God (Rev 22:4; cf., 21:14, 19).
- d.) Thyatira: rule the nations (22:5; cf., 19:15; 20:4; 22:16).
- e.) Sardis: kept in the book of life (21:27; cf., 19:14; 20:12).
- f.) Philadelphia: pillar in the temple of God (21:2-3, 22-25).
- g.) Laodicea: sit with Christ on his throne (21:3, 5; 22:3-5; cf., 20:4).

However, we also find that the churches can just as easily follow the pattern of the whore if they do not persevere and remain pure.

- a.) Ephesus: remove lampstand (Rev 18:23)
- b.) Smyrna: you will be persecuted; second death has no power over you (Rev 20:2-7)
- c.) Pergamum: war with sword of his mouth (Rev 19:15-21)
- d.) Thyatira: give according to your deeds (Rev 18:6-9)
- e.) Sardis: come like a thief upon you (Rev 18:10)
- f.) Philadelphia: you are rejected by the Jews, but I love you (Rev 20:9)
- g.) Laodicea: your nakedness will be exposed (Rev 17:4, 16; 18:7)

In Revelation 21:10-22:5 we will see a detailed description of what John has already seen in Revelation 21:1-6.

1.) We find a contrast between the introductions of the bride and the harlot woman (modified and expanded from Kitsemaker, *Revelation*, 562).

The harlot

The bride

One of the angels takes John (17:1)	One of the angels takes John (21:9)
Come and I will show you (17:1)	Come and I will show you (21:9)
The judgment of the harlot (17:1)	The bride, the wife of the lamb (21:9)
Brought John to a desert in the Spirit (17:3)	Taken to a high mountain in the Spirit (21:10)
Harlot adorned (17:4)	Saints adorned (Rev 21:12-14)
Woman sitting on beast full of blasphemy (17:3)	City of God coming down (21:10)
Kings of the earth fornicate (17:2)	Pure and chaste bride (21:2, 9)
Nations walk by her seduction (18:2, 23)	Nations walk by God's light (21:24)
Harlotry is her splendor (18:12-13, 16)	The glory of God is her splendor (21:11-21)
Nations glorify woman (18:12-17)	Nations glorify God (21:26)
Drunk off of blood of the saints (17:6; 18:3)	Drinks living water (21:6; 22:1-2)
On her forehead a name (17:5)	God's name on their foreheads (22:4)
God's people called to come out of her (18:4)	Saints called into New Jerusalem (21:14)
Mother of abominations (17:5)	No abominations (21:27)
Not in the book of Life (17:8)	In the book of Life (21:27)

2.) The city is the people of God (Rev 21:10).

3.) The city has the glory of God and her brilliance is like costly stones, as clear as crystal-clear jasper (Rev 21:11).

4.) The city has twelve gates of the sons of Israel, twelve foundation stones of the twelve apostles, and three gates on each side of the city, twelve total gates (Rev 21:12-14).

5.) The city is measured and represents the people of God (Rev 21:15-18). The measurement of the city points to the people of God for the following reasons.

- a.) The city is laid out in a square (Rev 21:16).
- b.) The length, width, and height of the city is 12,000 stadia, which points us to a large population of the people of God (Rev 21:16).
- c.) The city walls are 144 (,000) cubits thick (Rev 21:17).

We should gather from these verses that the city is not a literal city, because the city is out of proportion. Rather we should see it as a description of God's elect, perfectly secure and perfectly redeemed, full of his presence.

6.) The materials of the city represent the people of God as priests unto him (Rev 21:19-21).

OT breastplate

Foundation stones

Ruby (28:17, in LXX Sardius)

Sardius (21:20)

Topaz (28:17)

Topaz or Chrysolite (21:20)

Emerald (28:17)

Emerald?

Turquoise (28:18)

Chrysoprase (21:20)?

Sapphire (28:18)

Sapphire (21:19)

Diamond or Emerald (28:18)

Emerald (21:19)

Jacinth or Liguria (LXX) (28:19)

Jacinth (21:20)?

Agate (28:19, a type of Chalcedony stone)

Chalcedony (21:19)?

Amethyst (28:19)

Amethyst (21:20)

Beryl or Chrysolite (28:20)

Beryl or Chrysolite (21:20)

Onyx (28:20)

Sardonyx (21:20, a type of onyx)?

Jasper or Onyx (LXX) (28:20)

Jasper (21:19)?

We should make several points about the stones and their less than exact correspondence.

a.) Although the stones from Exodus only roughly correspond to the stones in Revelation, we should not miss the theological point, which will be detailed below. However, I will offer some reasons why exact correspondence or order of the stones between Exodus and Revelation is inconsequential.

i.) “Most ancient writers were somewhat vague in their identification of precious stones, so that a single Hebrew stone could easily be equated with more than one Greek one” (Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, 314).

ii.) Many of the Hebrew words for the stones above, simply mean, “precious stone.”

iii.) Only nine stones are mentioned in the Ezekiel 28:12-14 along with gold, but in the LXX version all twelve are mentioned from Exodus showing variance even within the OT canon.

iv.) Of all the twelve stones only two (jasper, sardius) are not *hapax legomenon*.

v.) While we know the stones in Revelation are symbolic, we also see this in Exodus (Exo 28:12).

vi.) Although we did see that order played a part in the twelve tribes of Israel spoken of in Revelation 7:4-8 we should avoid allowing that re-order to influence our understanding of the order here of the stones.

b.) We should understand the message that stands behind the presence of stones in the new heavens and new earth.

Moreover, in the OT we find two places where stones characterized God’s presence with his people.

a.) In Isaiah 54:11-12 precious stones are mentioned in conjunction with God’s salvation of his people.

b.) We also get a clue into the idea of a restored Eden with the introduction of these stone, because precious stones characterized the original Eden (Gen 2:11-12; cf., Ezek 28:12-14).

The bride of Christ is characterized as having pearls as gates and streets of gold clear as transparent glass (Rev 21:21).

In the Scriptures pearls are considered items of great value (Matt 7:6; 13:45-46), so too the people of God are of great value.

7.) The city of God is inhabited by God and his people (Rev 21:22-27).

Because the glory of God has come down to men (cf., John 1:14) there will be no need of sun or moon. There is a double reference here that we should consider.

a.) The presence of the sun and moon meant the spender of God's creation to rule the day and night in the OT (Gen 1:14-18).

b.) The moon ruled the darkness in the old age, but here the moon is taken away.

Because there is no darkness and only daytime, the nations will walk by the light of the Lord and bring their splendor into it.

Several things should be observed here in light of the OT.

a.) In the OT God promised to Israel that the nations would bring their wealth to them and that Israel would be the center of the world.

b.) In the OT the Jew believed these promises of restoration and service from other nations was just for them; however, through Jesus we see this vision transformed to include all those who trust in Christ, regardless of ethnicity (Rev 21:27).

We can see a comparison between the present church and the final church (or eschatological bride) in the new age, where nothing unclean will dwell (cf., Matt 13:25-30; Beale, *Revelation*, 134).

The seven churches

False prophets (2:2)

False Jews (2:9; 3:9)

Christians dwell where Satan's throne is (2:13)

Some in church are dead (3:1)

The church is a faltering lampstand (1:20; 2:5)

The church is full of impurities and liars (2:9, 14-15, 20; 3:9)

Christians face persecution, hoping in God's promises (2-3)

The purified bride

Twelve true apostles (21:14)

True Israel (21:12)

Christians dwell where God's throne is (22:1)

Written in Lamb's book of life (21:27)

God and the Lamb are the eternal lamps (21:23-24; 22:5)

There is only purity and truth in new creation (21:8, 27)

In new creation saints reign and inherit promises (21-22)

8.) The city of God is Eden restored (Rev 22:1-6).

We see many characteristics of Eden in this new heavens and earth.

a.) A river of life (Rev 22:1).

b.) A tree of life (Rev 22:2).

c.) Walk with God (Rev 22:3-5).

His presence will be characterized two ways.

i.) We will be priests unto God.

ii.) We will be kings with God.

We can gain a clear picture of the idea of restored or new Eden when we compare the last vision of Revelation with the opening chapters of Genesis (modified from Pate, *Story of Israel*, 271-272).

Genesis 1-12

Revelation 20-22

In the beginning God (1:1)

Alpha/Omega, First/Last, Beginning/End (21:13)

Creates first heavens and earth (1:1ff)

Creates new heavens and earth (21:1)

Water as unordered chaos (1:2)

No longer any sea (21:1)

Light and Darkness exists (1:1-5)

No darkness, only light (21:23; 22:5)

Marriage of Adam and Eve (2:23-24)

Marriage of second Adam with bride (21:2, 9)

God gives humans dominion (1:26-28)

The church reigns with her God (22:5)

Forbidden to eat fruit of the tree (2:17)

Eat freely from the tree of life (22:2)

Satan deceives humanity (3:1-7)

Satan bound and destroyed (20:2-15)

God rejected by sinful people (3:1-7)

God's people made ready for him (21:2, 9-21)

Father / Son relationship broken (3:1-7)

God's people are sons to him (21:7)

Death and sickness enter world (3:14-19)

No more death or sickness (21:3-4)

Sinful people ashamed (2:25; 3:8-10)

Saints will see God's face (22:4)

Sinful people sent away (3:22-24)	God lives with his people (21:3-21; 22:4)
Exiled on the earth (4:12-14)	God gives a permanent home (21:3)
Relationships broken (4:1-11)	Genuine relationships (21:3, 7)
Creation grows old (5:1ff)	All things made new (21:5)
Water used to destroy wicked (6:1-9:29)	Water used to satisfy God's people (22:1)
Nations scattered (11:1-9)	Nations united in Christ (21:24-26)
Blessing promised to all (12:1-3)	Blessing secured by Christ (21:1ff)

We see a parallel between Ezekiel and Revelation as a whole, which sets up a parallel between Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 21-22 (modified from Strom, *Symphony*, 268).

Ezekiel

Revelation

Call of Prophet and vision of God (1:1-3:27)	Call of Prophet and vision of Jesus (1:1-20)
Judgment of Israel (4:1-24:27)	Rebuke of God's people (2:1-3:22)
Judgment against nations (25:1-32:32)	Judgment against nations, intermingled with restoration (4:1-16:21)
Future restoration (33:1-37:28)	Present restoration (20:1-6)
Restoration and final judgment (38:1-39:29)	Final judgment and return of Jesus (17:1-19:21; 20:7-15)
God's presence with his people (40:1-48:35)	God's presence with his people (21:1-22:21)

Just as the city-temple found in Revelation 21-22 is non-literal, there would be no reason to think of the temple in Ezekiel 40-48 as literal, especially in light of the fact that Revelation (and the NT) is the final interpreter of the OT (modified from Beale, *Temple*, 351).

Ezekiel's city-temple

John's city-temple

Carried up on high mountain (40:1-2; cf., 8:3)	Carried up to high mountain (21:10)
Write down what you see (40:3-4)	Write down what you see (1:11)
One with a measuring rod (40:3)	Angel with measuring rod (21:15; cf., 11:1)
The city-temple is measured (40:5-42:20)	The city-temple is measured (21:16-17)

The city-temple is a square (48:30-35; cf., 41:4)	The city-temple is a square-cube (21:16)
There shall be sacrifices, Worship is central (43:13-27; cf., 46:1-21)	The nations shall bring their glory and honor, worship central (22:26)
No abomination in the city-temple (44:4-14)	Nothing unclean in the city-temple (21:27; cf., 21:8)
The priests will minister before the Lord (44:15-31)	Priests unto God (21:18-20; cf., 20:6)
Twelve gates for the sons of Israel (48:30-34)	Twelve gates and twelve foundation stones of the apostles (21:12-14)
Water comes from the temple (47:1-5)	Water comes from the throne of God (22:1; cf., 21:6)
Trees bear fruit and provide healing (47:6-12; cf., Ezek 28:12-18)	Trees bear fruit and provide healing (21:2)
God will have a place for his people (47:13-48:29)	The people's place is the Lord (22:5; cf., 21:3-4, 7)
The Lord will be there (48:35; cf., 43:1-12; 45:1-25)	The Lord will illumine them (21:22-23; 22:3-5)

The differences we find between Ezekiel's temple and John's city-temple can be attributed to two factors.

- 1.) John, like Ezekiel, is seeing apocalyptic visions which mean that often the same object can be described in different ways to suit the author's particular theme and audience.
- 2.) As mentioned before the vision of John completes, clarifies, and fills out Ezekiel's vision of the temple in light of the New Covenant.

Not only do we find explicit parallels between Ezekiel and Revelation that are transformed and clarified in light of the new covenant, we also find some implicit parallels that are transformed and clarified in light of the new covenant.

- 1.) The absence of certain temple instruments.
- 2.) The city-temple is not built by humans, but by God.
- 3.) The people are protected in the city-temple.

4.) The use of common stones versus precious stones.

With the vision of the city-temple complete, John is given a final message and warning to take to the church and the unbelieving world.

Jesus' final message to the church (22:6-21)

There are two initial parallels we see with the last section of the seventh vision.

1.) What is the reaction of John to the vision of the bride (Rev 22:6-9)?

It is parallel to what we saw in Revelation 19:9-10 (modified from Johnson, *Triumph*, 323).

Revelation 19:9-10

True and faithful words of God (19:9)

Blessed are those that are invited (19:9)

John falls at angel's feet (19:10)

Worship God (19:10)

Revelation 22:6-9

These words are true and faithful (22:6)

Blessed is the one who heeds the words of the book (Rev 22:7)

John falls at angel's feet (22:8)

Worship God (22:9)

2.) There is a parallel between Revelation 1:1-3, 8 and 22:6-8, 13 (modified and expanded from Kistemaker, *Revelation*, 584).

Revelation 1:1-3

Show his bondservants (1:1)

Soon take place (1:1)

The time is near (1:3)

Blessed is the one who heeds the words (1:3)

John testifies (1:1)

The Alpha and Omega
The First and the Last (1:8)

Revelation 22:6-8

Show his bondservants (22:6)

Soon take place (22:6)

He is coming quickly (22:7)

Blessed is the one who heeds the words (22:7)

I, John heard and saw these things (22:8)

The Alpha and Omega
The First and the Last (22:13)

Part of that proclamation is found in the last few verses of Revelation chapter twenty-two.

- 1.) The wicked and righteous are completely antithetical (Rev 22:11).
- 2.) Jesus is coming quickly with his reward (Rev 22:12-13; Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 54).

God: I am the Alpha and Omega (1:8)

Christ: I am the First and the Last (1:17)

God: I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End (21:6)

Christ: I am the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (22:13).

- 3.) Blessed are those who remain pure and cursed are the wicked (Rev 22:14-15).
 - a.) Blessing on those who hear and heed God's word.
 - b.) Blessing on those who turn away from sin and remain pure.
 - c.) Blessing on those who persevere and follow the Lamb until the end.

Just as there were blessings and curses under the old covenant (Deut 28), so under the new covenant we find blessings and curses; however, the new covenant blessings and curses are singular.

Revelation 21:7-8

He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

An interesting parallel develops between the beatitudes and the new heavens and new earth that awaits those who persevere and remain pure.

Matthew 5:3-12

Blessed are the poor in Spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (5:3)

Revelation 22:14-15

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Revelation 21:1-22:5

They will reign forever and ever (22:5; cf., 20:4)

Blessed are those who mourn
for they shall be comforted (5:4)

Blessed are the gentle for
they shall inherit the earth (5:5)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness for they shall be satisfied (5:6)

Blessed are the merciful for they shall
receive mercy (5:7)

Blessed are the pure in heart for
they shall see God (5:8)

Blessed are the peacemakers for
They shall be called sons of God (5:9)

Blessed are those who have been persecuted
For the sake of righteousness for theirs is the
Kingdom of God (5:10-12)

He will wipe every tear from
our eyes (21:4)

Partake of the new heavens and
new earth (21:1; 22:1-2)

The river of water, the tree bearing
fruit, and the leaves for healing
(21:1-2)

Only those whose names are
written in the Lamb's book
of life come to the city-temple
(Rev 21:24-27;

They will see his face and his
name will be on their foreheads
(22:4; cf., 21:22-23)

He who overcomes, I will be his
God, and he will be my son (21:7)

They will reign forever and
ever (22:5; cf., 20:4)

4.) The church should cry out for Jesus to come (Rev 22:16-17).

5.) Do not change God's word (Rev 22:18).

The main point of the whole book is that faithful endurance and obedience to the end will result in eternal blessing and reward, with the ultimate result of glorifying God and Christ *and enjoying him forever* (emphasis mine, Beale, *Revelation*, 1157).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biblical Theology

- Alexander, T. D. *The Servant King*. UK: InterVarsity, 1998.
- Alexander, T. Desmond, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, eds. *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2000.
- Bartholomew, Craig G. and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*. UK: InterVarsity, 1991.
- Pate, C. Marvin, et al. *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Ridderbos, Herman. *The Coming of the Kingdom*. Philadelphia: P & R, 1962.
- Roberts, Vaughn. *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Story-line of the Bible*. UK: InterVarsity, 2002.
- Scobie, Charles H. H. *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Strom, Mark. *The Symphony of Scripture: Making Sense of the Bible's Many Themes*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001.
- VanGemeren, Willem. *The Progress of Redemption*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. UK: Banner of Truth, 1975.
- Williams, Michael D. *Far as the Curse is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2005.

The Book of Revelation

Books and Commentaries

- Aune, David E. *Revelation*. 3 Vols. WBC. Dallas: Word, 1997-1998.
- Bauckham, Richard. *New Testament Theology: The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: University Press, 1993.
- _____. *The Climax of Prophecy*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993.
- Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
- _____. *1-2 Thessalonians*. IVPNTC. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003.
- Beasley-Murray, George R. *The Book of Revelation*. NCB. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- Caird, G. B. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. HNT. New York: Harper And Row, 1966.
- Gregg, Steve. *Revelation: Four Views: A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Nelson, 1997.
- Hendriksen, William. *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation to the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967.
- Hughes, Phillip. *The Book of Revelation*. PNTC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Johnson, Dennis E. *Triumph of the Lamb: A Commentary on Revelation*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001.
- Keener, C. S. *Revelation*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.
- Kistemaker, Simon J. *Revelation*. NTC. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001.
- Ladd, George E. *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *Interpreting the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- Morris, Leon. *Revelation*. TNTC. Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 1987.
- Mounce, R. H. *The Book of Revelation*. NICNT. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. BEC. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002.
- Poythress, Vern S. *The Returning King: A Guide to the Book of Revelation*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2000.

Spilsbury, Paul. *The Throne, the Lamb, and the Dragon: A Reader's Guide to the Book of Revelation*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago: Moody, 1966.

Wilcock, Michael. *Revelation*. BST. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1975.

Articles and Essays

Clowney, Edmund P. "The Final Temple." *WTJ* 35 (1972-73): 156-189.

Gundry, Robert H. "The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People." *NovT* 29 (1987): 254-64.

Hughes, Phillip E. "The First Resurrection: Another Interpretation." *WTJ* 39 (1976-77): 315-318.

Kline, Meredith G. "Double Trouble." *JETS* 32 (1989): 171-179.

_____. "The First Resurrection." *WTJ* 37 (1975): 366-375.

_____. "Har Magedon: The End of the Millennium." *JETS* 39 (1996): 207-222.

Poythress, Vern S. "Genre and Hermeneutics in Revelation 20:1-6." *JETS* 36 (1993): 41-54.

Shepherd, Norman. "The Resurrections of Revelation 20." *WTJ* 36 (1974-75): 34-43.

Smith, Christopher R. "The Portrayal of the Church as the New Israel in the Names and Order of the Tribes in Revelation 7:5-8." *JSNT* 39 (1990): 111-18.

_____. "The Tribes of Revelation 7 and the Literary Competence of John the Seer." *JETS* 38 (1995): 213-18.

White, R. Fowler. "Reexamining the Evidence for Recapitulation in Revelation 20:1-10." *WTJ* 51 (1989): 319-44.

Eschatology

General

Archer, Gleason L., ed. *Three Views on the Rapture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

Berkouwer, G. C. *The Return of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

- Bock, Darrell L., ed. *Three Views of the Millennium*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999.
- Clouse, Robert and George E. Ladd, eds. *Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1977.
- Erickson, Millard J. *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977.
- Goldberg, Louis., ed. *How Jewish is Christianity: Two Views on the Messianic Movement*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992.
- Moaz, Baruch. *Judaism is Not Jewish*. Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003.
- Moore, Russell D. *The Kingdom of Christ*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2004.
- Pate, C. Marvin. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Reisinger, John G. *Abraham's Four Seeds: A Biblical Examination of the Presuppositions Of Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism*. Frederick, MD: New Covenant, 1998.

Amillennial

- Bavinck, Herman. *The Last Things*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.
- Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004.
- Cox, William E. *Amillennialism Today*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1966.
- _____. *Biblical Studies in Final Things*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1966.
- Dumbrell, William J. *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985.
- _____. *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994.
- Goldsworthy, Graeme. *The Goldsworthy Trilogy: Gospel and Kingdom, Gospel and Wisdom, The Gospel in Revelation*. UK: Paternoster, 2000.
- Hoekema, Anthony A. *The Bible and the Future*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.
- Poythress, Vern. S. *Understanding Dispensationalists*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1994.

Riddlebarger, Kim. *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.

_____. *The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

Robertson, O. Palmer. *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2000.

Venema, Cornelius P. *The Promise of the Future*. UK: Banner of Truth, 2000.

Vos, Geerhardus. *The Eschatology of the Old Testament*. Edited by James Dennison Jr. Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001.

_____. *The Pauline Eschatology*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1994.

Williams, Michael. *This World Is Not My Home: The Origins and Development of Dispensationalism*. Scotland: Mentor, 2003.

Postmillennial

Boettner, Loraine. *The Millennium*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1990.

Davis, John J. *Christ's Victorious Kingdom: Postmillennialism Reconsidered*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986.

Gentry, Jr. Kenneth J. *Before Jerusalem Fell*. Atlanta: American, 1998.

_____. *He Shall Have Dominion: Postmillennial Eschatology*. ICE, 1992.

Mathison, Keith A. *Dispensationalism: Wrongly Dividing the People of God*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1995.

_____. *Postmillennialism: An Eschatology of Hope*. Phillipsburg: P & R, 1999.

Murray, Iain. *The Puritan Hope*. London: Banner of Truth, 1971.

Historical Premillennialism

Ladd, George E. *Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

_____. *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.

_____. *The Blessed Hope*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

_____. *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952.

Dispensational Premillennialism

Archer, Gleason L., et al. *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

Baker, Charles F. *A Dispensational Theology*. Grace, 1971.

Bateman, Herbert W., ed. *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.

Blaising, Craig A. and Darrell L. Bock. *Progressive Dispensationalism: An Up-to-date Handbook of Contemporary Dispensational Thought*. Wheaton: Victor, 1993.

_____. *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Gundry, Robert H. *The Church and the Tribulation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973.

McClain, Alva J. *The Greatness of the Kingdom*. Reprint. Winona Lake: BMH, 1974.

Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Things to Come*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965.

_____. *Thy Kingdom Come*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1995.

Ryrie, Charles C. *Dispensationalism*. Chicago: Moody, 1995.

Stam, Cornelius R. *Things That Differ: The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism*. Berean, 1959.

Walvoord, John F. *The Millennial Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959.

_____. *The Rapture Question*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957.