

REVELATION

Revelation 1:1–8

The **revelation of Jesus Christ**, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. **He made it known** by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this **prophecy**, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from **Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth**.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (ESV)

1. **Verse 1 teaches us that Revelation is a series of apocalyptic visions.** The word “revelation” is the word “apocalypsis.” It literally means an uncovering of truth, a revelation of truth.
 - a. “Things that must soon take place” teach us it is a revelation of something that is either happening or is going to happen soon
 - b. “He made it known” to John.
 - c. So, we’ve got a revelation of something that is already happening or is going to happen, and this book is written to make it known.
 - d. See Daniel 2:28-30, 44.
 - e. In Daniel 2, God uses a dream, a vision, to reveal/uncover the reality that one day God was going to set up a kingdom that will never, ever be destroyed. And so when John opens the book of Revelation, the very first verse he points us back to, of all places in the Bible, is the day when God revealed through a vision how His kingdom would be established and would never, ever be destroyed. And that is what the book of Revelation is all about. **This book is a revelation through a vision of how God’s kingdom is being and will ultimately be established, and will never, ever be destroyed.** So just like

with Nebuchadnezzar, God is giving a vision to John that is filled with all kinds of symbols and images.

- f. **There is a predominant use of symbols all over Revelation.** Revelation is less like a systematic theology and more like a picture book—and it's designed that way. This book is designed to communicate truth through pictures and symbols. In fact, some translations, instead of "made it known" there in verse 1, actually say "signified" because that's what that word literally means—to make known or to communicate by signs and symbols. These are symbols that are being "shown" (another word used in verse 1). This is a book that's about all that John "saw" (end of verse 2).
- g. Not everything here in the book of Revelation is intended to be understood literally. John tells us from the start It's a vision filled with symbols that signify the coming of God's kingdom on earth.
- h. It is a series of apocalyptic/revealing visions filled with symbols and numbers. Certain numbers are used over and over again as symbols of various things. 12 and its multiples (like 144,000) to symbolize God's people. 10 and its multiples (like 1,000) to describe complete amounts of time. The number 7 is used to symbolize perfection and completion. Here in verse 4 the Holy Spirit is described as the "seven spirits," a picture of the perfect Spirit of God. Revelation is written to the 7 churches that are in Asia, but there were more than just 7 churches in Asia. It's a picture of the entire church, not only here in Asia but around the world. We're going to read about 7 letters, 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls, all of which together symbolize God's complete judgment in Revelation. The number 4 also symbolizes completeness, particularly in the world. The earth is described in 4 parts with 4 corners and 4 winds. Sometimes 4 and 7 are used together. We read about 4 series of 7 judgments on the earth. Various names of God and Christ are used either 4 or 7 times. The 7 spirits are mentioned 4 times. Jesus is referred to as the Lamb 28 times (which is 7 times 4), and 7 of those times Jesus as the Lamb and God as Father are mentioned together.
- i. Help in understanding the apocalyptic imagery...
 - i. John interprets the most important images.
 - ii. Pay attention to the fixed images throughout the book.
 - iii. See the visions as a whole, not always pressing every detail.

2. Verse 3 teaches us that Revelation is filled with prophetic announcements.

- a. We have a series of apocalyptic visions filled with prophetic announcements
- b. Revelation is the climax of all prophecy because, unlike all of the Old Testament prophets, Revelation is not announcing the coming of God's

kingdom. The book of Revelation is about a King who has already come and who reigns right now (verse 5), and that His kingdom will soon be consummated.

3. Verse 4 teaches us that Revelation is written as a congregational letter

- a. So, this is a series of apocalyptic visions (revelation through symbols) filled with prophetic pronouncements and written as a congregational letter.
- b. John is writing a letter to seven churches in Asia Minor (which is eastern Turkey today) who represent all the church.
- c. If you follow the progression from verses 1—3, you see that this revelation comes from God in Christ through an angel to His servant John for the church.
- d. This letter was written in such a way that members of the church in the first century could hear it, read in a church service, and understand what was being said and be able to apply it to their lives, to “keep what is written in it.” (verse 3)
- e. First-century hearers, many of whom didn’t even have enough education to read for themselves, were able to hear this book once, understand it, and apply it to their lives. They didn’t have charts in their hands. No commentaries (as if they could read those). No Bible search software. They just listened to the Word. – DON’T OVERCOMPLICATE THIS.
- f. Question: So why is it so hard for us?
 - i. The images and style of writing was familiar to them but not to us
 - ii. Example: Poetry can be hard to understand for those unfamiliar with the style of poetry

BIG Question #1: When will all these prophecies be fulfilled?

Four Different Views

1. Preterist - prophecies were fulfilled in the first few centuries of Christianity.

- a. Some people believe that everything that’s written here in Revelation was fulfilled not long after it was written. Some people believe the book is prophesying the fall of Jerusalem in the first century. Other people believe the book is prophesying the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century but nothing beyond that. Now the good thing about this interpretation is that it takes seriously the potential application of this book to its original audience. The bad thing is that it ignores the clear allusions to final judgment, not just for Israel, but for all the nations of the earth.

2. Historicist - these prophecies have been and are being fulfilled in the course of Western Christian history.

- a. Basically, it's been common throughout more recent history, in particular, over the last 500 years or so, to read predominantly Western Christian history into the pages of Revelation. During the Protestant Reformation, many reformers believed that the pope was the antichrist or the Roman Catholic Church was the false prophet. Others have said Hitler was, or Napoleon, or Mussolini. In the 1980s, it was the Soviet Union, led by Mikhail Gorbachev, and the mark of the beast was that thing on his head. Particularly after the last 60 years, after Israel became a nation, there's been heightened intensity with this interpretation, where people see every detail of Revelation through the eyes of current events in the Middle East.
- b. The problems with this, obviously, are many. The focus is almost exclusively on Western church history. There's all kinds of speculation that's involved in trying to find contemporary parallels, then you have to rework it for every new period in world history. And on top of all this, this interpretation makes the book of Revelation virtually irrelevant for its original hearers. This was not a message that when they heard it made them think about Hitler or Mussolini or the Pope or Benjamin Netanyahu.

3. Futurist - which says these prophecies are largely unfulfilled and that basically chapters 4-22 are still awaiting fulfillment in the future.

- a. There are different versions of this view. Some believe these prophecies will be fulfilled literally in the order in which they're listed here in the book of Revelation. Others believe these prophecies will be fulfilled not quite as literally or as strictly chronological as they're described here in Revelation. Again, one problem here is this calls into question what application this book would have had for its first-century hearers if the majority of the book was talking about things that haven't happened in the 2000 years since then. And then it leads to a lot of speculation about how these prophecies will literally play out.

4. Idealist - these prophecies are being fulfilled, and have been, fulfilled symbolically throughout the history of the church.

- a. Basically, this interpretation views Revelation as a symbolic portrayal of the conflict between God and Satan, Christ and His church battling with the forces of sin and evil, a conflict that is reflected in every age of the church and a conflict that will one day culminate in the ultimate triumph of Christ and His church. This interpretation obviously avoids some of the speculation that's common in the other interpretations, but at the same time it seems to

downplay some of the literal historical realities that are represented by certain symbols in the book of Revelation.

Help for your reading: Like the preterist view, we do need to seriously consider how these words spoke and applied to the very first people who heard them. Like the historicist view, we need to think about how this cosmic war between Christ and Satan is playing out in every age in the church. Like the futurist view, we need to consider how Revelation is pointing to a coming reality when the kingdom of God will be consummated in a new heaven and a new earth, final judgment and final redemption. And like the idealist view, as we've already seen, we need to seriously consider the symbols of this book and what they represent, not reading too much literal into them where that ends up skewing the meaning of the text.

BIG QUESTION #2: Why was Revelation written?

1. **To bring grace and peace** (from the throne, from Jesus, through the Spirit). Verse 4
 - a. This book was not written to create confusion for the Christian, cause division in the church, or promote speculation about the coming of Christ.
2. **To give unshakeable hope to suffering Christians.**
 - a. This book was written to give unshakeable hope to suffering Christians in the present. John is writing, God is revealing truth to the hearts of brothers and sisters who are suffering in the first century, and the world seems to be falling apart around them. The church is under attack, Christians are losing their lives, and they're wondering, *"What is going on? Does God see our tears? Does God hear our prayers? Why are our enemies prospering while we are suffering?"*
 - b. And God gives John a vision to say to the church: *"Children, things are not what they seem. You may think that things are out of control as you see the beast come up out of the abyss to make war with you and persecute you and kill you, leaving you for dead. But take heart. Christ has conquered death, Christ has conquered hell, Christ has conquered Satan, and Christ is in control. And He does see your tears, He does hear your cries, and He will raise you up to reign with him as King forever and ever and ever."* John writes this book to give unshakeable hope to suffering Christians.
3. **To encourage holy living in an unholy culture**
 - a. First-century Christians were tempted to turn away from Christ in the middle of all these things. They were tempted to compromise in order to save their jobs or families or lives, and some of the teachers in the church were saying they should compromise. And then, in addition to the threat of persecution,

there was the lure of pleasure in the Roman Empire. Sex and success, money and materialism. Some of the supposed Christians were falling away, giving themselves over to the seductive power of worldly pleasures.

- b. And so God through John calls them to holiness. Ten different times in Revelation, we see the people of God urged to keep the commands of God. It's interesting. The book doesn't end with a vision of heaven. That's what you think it would end with, but it doesn't. Yes, we see the picture of a new heaven and a new earth for God's people, but right after that, to close out the book, John gives repeated exhortations to holiness in the church. Eight of the last fifteen verses in Revelation are calling God's people to obey, to stay faithful.
- c. Revelation as a whole is filled with promises of blessing for the faithful. Seven of them actually—a picture of perfect blessing.

4. To refute deception in the church

- a. Along these lines, Revelation was written to refute deception in the church. As we'll see, there were false teachers who were leading the church astray, and Revelation addresses them and warns Christians of the danger these teachers pose to the church.

5. To fuel mission among the nations

- a. Revelation was written to fuel mission among the nations. There is a decided emphasis all throughout this book on the glory of God in Christ being exalted not just among the people of Israel, but among all nations, tribes, and tongues on the earth

6. To lead us deeper into WORSHIP

- a. See the majesty of God in Christ all over Revelation!
- b. Throne is used 44 times.
- c. King, kingdom, or rule about 37 times.
- d. Power and authority about 40 times.
- e. This is a worship book!

Practical Helps for Reading Revelation

BIG PICTURE

SEE how it shows God's grace in preserving his people through cataclysmic suffering, a preservation founded on the shed blood of the lamb. (12:11)

SEE how Genesis and Revelation serve as book-ends of the Bible.

- Creation of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1-2)
 - Creation of the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21-22).
- The first Adam reigning on earth (Gen. 1:26).
 - The last Adam reigning in glory (Rev. 21:5).
- Night and seas created (Gen. 1:5, 10).
 - No more night; no more sea (Rev. 21:1, 25).
- A bride brought to Adam (2:18-25).
 - The Bride prepared for Christ and presented (Rev. 19:7ff, 21:9.)
- A tree of life in Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:22).
 - A tree of life in the new creation (Rev. 22:2).
- Satan utters the first lie (Gen. 3:1).
 - Nothing that makes a lie enters the city (Rev. 21:27).
- Death and a curse (Gen. 3:14, 17-19).
 - No more curse; no more death or tears (Rev. 22:3).
- Conflict between Christ and Satan (Gen. 3:15).
 - Satan's final doom (Rev. 20:10).
- Man driven from God's face (Gen. 3:23; 4:16).
 - Men see His face in glory (Rev. 22:4).

Magnifying Glass

Structure: An Overview of Revelation

Vision 1 (chs. 1-3) PATMOS "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day"		Vision 2 (chs. 4-16) HEAVEN "At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven"				Vision 3 (chs. 17-21) WILDERNESS "He carried me away in the Spirit"		Vision 4 (chs. 21-22) MOUNTAIN "He carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain"	Conclusion and Words of Jesus (22:6-21)	
Introduction and Vision of Jesus (1:1-20)	Messages (2:1-3:22)	The Heavenly Throne Room (4-5)	Seals (6:1-8:5)	Trumpets (8:6-11:19)	Visions (12:1-15:8)	Bowls (16:1-21)	The Overthrow of Babylon (17:1-19:10)			Visions (19:11-21:8)
	Ephesus (2:1-7)		White horse (6:1-2)	Earth (8:6-7)	Woman (12:1-21)	Earth (16:1-2)				White horse (19:11-16)
	Smyrna (2:8-11)		Red horse (6:3-4)	Sea (8:8-9)	Sea beast (13:1-10)	Sea (16:3)				Supper (19:17-18)
	Pergamum (2:12-17)		Black horse (6:5-6)	Rivers (8:10-11)	Land beast (13:11-18)	Rivers (16:4-7)				Victory (19:19-21)
	Thyatira (2:18-29)		Pale horse (6:7-8)	Heavens (8:12-13)	144,000 (14:1-5)	Sun (16:8-9)				Satan bound (20:1-3)
	Sardis (3:1-6)		Martyrs (6:9-11)	Locorpions (9:1-12)	Three angels (14:6-13)	Darkness (16:10-11)				Martyrs (20:4-10)
	Philadelphia (3:7-13)		Tribulation (6:12-7:17)	Angels (9:13-11:14)	Harvest (14:14-20)	Frogs (16:12-16)				Judgment (20:11-15)
	Laodicea (3:14-22)		Silence (8:1-5)	Temple (11:15-19)	Sanctuary (15:1-8)	Temple (16:17-21)				New Creation (21:1-8)
JESUS unveiled		GOD'S THRONE unveiled				HARLOT unveiled				BRIDE unveiled

- **Chapter 1** is clearly a picture of Christ and the glory of the gospel.
- **Chapters 2 and 3** are letters to the churches and are clearly addressed to both believers then in the first century and believers today in the twenty-first century.
- **Chapters 4 and 5** offer a glorious picture of God on His throne, and the Lion-like Lamb who has conquered sin and death and the grave and who has authority to open the scroll in the Father's right hand and to bring the kingdom of God to ultimate consummation in the world. [Throne room of God]
- **Chapter 6** preachers really diverge. Judgement/Justice on the earth
 - There are bible-believing, faithful preachers who say that by this time, the church has been raptured, taken away into heaven, and Revelation 6 all the way to Revelation 19 is describing a specific period of Tribulation (usually described as seven years) that occurs between the taking up of the church into heaven and the beginning of a thousand-year millennial kingdom described in Revelation 20.
 - Then there are others who say the arrangement of Revelation seems cyclical, not chronological. Meaning that Revelation is not intended to be read as a day-by-day account of how the kingdom of God unfolds in the world with one thing happening after another chronologically.

- If you try to read Chapters 6– 22 as a chronological order of events, it's going to get really confusing, and chapters 6–7 are a good example of this. Chapter 6 ends with total devastation across the earth in the sixth seal, and then when you start Chapter 7, we see a vision where everything is great on the earth. Then at the end of Chapter 7, we see a portrait of eternity in heaven for all believers in the consummation of the kingdom. But then we get to Chapter 8 it looks like we're starting all over again. See verses below
 - Revelation 6:14–17 - The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (ESV)
 - Revelation 7:1 - After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. (ESV)
 - Revelation 7:15–17 - "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (ESV)
 - Revelation 8:7- The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon the earth. And a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. (ESV)
- When, reading the book think cycles that repeat and reinforce one another. Each cycle (whether it's the 7 seals or the 7 trumpets or the 7 bowls) describes similar themes and even similar events from different perspectives and in different ways.

- They all build on each other, so the visions in Revelation gradually build toward a climactic consummation. They don't just say the same thing over and over again. Instead, they build on one another as each one intensifies truths and themes that we've seen in the others, adding different details to emphasize different things as we get a comprehensive picture of the coming of God's kingdom in this world.
- The unity of John's book ... is not chronological ... but artistic, like that of a musical theme with variations, each variation adding something new to the significance of the whole composition. Just imagine the progression of a symphony. It's repeating and reinforcing but building and building and building toward a climax. So, these visions, these themes, are going to build on one another as you read along.

Four Series of Seven Messages or Visions

1. Seven Letters to Churches	chs. 2–3
2. Seven Seals on a Scroll	5:1–8:1
3. Seven Trumpets	8:2–11:19
4. Seven Bowls of Wrath	chs. 15–16

- In Chapters 6–7, we see seven seals, Chapters 8–11, we see seven trumpets, and Chapters 15–16 seven bowls.
 - These seals and trumpets and bowls are repeating symbols of God's judgment upon a world full of sin, and they're progressing in intensification, all leading up to the final judgment and the return of Christ for His people.

Progressively Increasing Destruction

6:8	Seals	Death and Hades given authority over one <i>fourth</i> of the earth
8:7–12	Trumpets	one <i>third</i> of all affected
16:3	Bowls	every living creature

- Chapter 6 – Judgment & Justice of God on the earth in the Seals
 - Question who can stand?

- John is exposing the myth that the Roman world can bring peace and prosperity as they occupied the known world
- *“For John’s first readers, these verses describe a world that they know and live in – a world marked by periodic famine and shortage, and one of chronic disease and early death (especially in the often-overcrowded cities of the empire), a world in which earthquakes bring sudden destruction and devastation. John is not yet describing to them an unknown future but revealing the reality of the present. The imperial myth of peace and prosperity is exposed as just that – a myth. There is only one who is sovereign – the one by whose permission the horsemen are released to allow humanity to reap what is sown—and this one is not the emperor. And it is he alone, not the emperor, who can offer answers to the crises the face humanity; he alone can usher in the true age of peace and prosperity.” – Ian Paul*
- Four Horses (6:2ff)
 - White – Conquer and War (6:2)
 - Red – Bloodshed and War – particularly civil war (6:3)
 - Black – Famine & Inequality of rich and poor (6:5)
 - Pale – Death, Famine, & Plague (6:8)
 - See present reality for them, but also us throughout history
- 2 Responses –
 - Martyrs (6:10) cry out how long until Justice??? A little longer there are still others who will give their lives. WAIT
 - The world suddenly realizes there is judgment – running to a mountain (kings, general, important people). Question who can stand? (6:17)
 - Chapter 6 can be summarized as God’s judgment.
- **Chapter 7** – God’s Protection. Those who can stand are those who are sealed, saved, and have a shepherd (Jesus).
 - Blessing is coming to those who are sealed (144,000) vs. 4
 - JW have hijacked this verse. It’s linked with verse 9. Vast multitude
 - Numbers are symbolic. 12 x 12,000 means completeness. The whole people of God who are sealed. [by the Holy Spirit..cf. Eph 1:13-14]
 - Blessing is coming to those who are saved vs. 10
 - Blessing is coming to those who have a shepherd vs. 17
 - Sidenote: See the diversity of vs. 9
- **Chapter 8 & 9** – Trumpets often represent worship or war in the Bible
 - Trumpets are building up a battle sequence in 8 & 9 that lead to a worship sequence in chapter 11
 - Judgment coming for not repenting (9:21).

- Escalating Judgement (Seals ¼,, Trumpets 1/3)
- First 4 trumpets, correspond to 4 horseman, to the first 4 creation days...by giving picture of exodus like plague language on the earth
- 5 & 6 trumpets (chapter 9)
 - Weird creatures [locust/scorpions vs. the horse lions 😊]
 - 9:9:3-6 - Trumpet 5 - Locust/scorpion sting but don't kill-torment for 5 months (demonic)
 - Cf Luke 10:17-19 – scorpions will not have the power to hurt you
 - Describing the consequences of the authority of christ and the falling down of satan.. Demons rage – with limited authority, just torment (9:5-6). The sting but they don't kill.
 - 9:13-18 - Trumpet 6 – horse/lions – big question good or bad? Maybe good coming to fight the locust/scorpion demons. But they do kill people to keep them from worshiping idols.
 - Very simple terms – I think it is a picture of angels (horse/lions) striking down idolatry, fighting demons, and demons (locust/scorpions) are attacking the people with limited authority. Demons and their teaching are grotesque, God is a righteous judge and holy, God preserves and protects His people.
 - Hold loosely.
 - See we still have demons trying to torment (persecute the church) or sneak in false teaching (to destroy the church witness), we still have angels battling idolatry and helping the church – or at least God preserving and protecting his people. Always a spiritual battle taking place (dynamics and powers) until Christ returns.
- 7th trumpet – temple opened and worship (11:15)
- **Chapter 10 & 11** – a passage about the triumph of the church
 - Long intro in 10 – then teaching in 11.
 - The two witness of the church (v. 4)
 - (v. 4) We've already been told that lampstands represent churches (1:20)
 - Two witnesses - prophesy to the world and testify to Jesus
 - Why two? Two witnesses is a way of showing someone is telling the truth in OT and big in John's gospel & letters

- Double witness of the church – who is telling the truth
 - Prophesying to the world
 - Witnessing about Jesus with words and their lives
- Verses 5 & 6 show the power of the church
 - Draw on the reference/images of Moses/Elijah ref
 - Law & Prophets
 - Kingdom of God is not just talk but power
 - Thru the power of prayer & prophecy
 - Thru the power of the word
- Verses 7 & 8 – Added to witness and prophesying is the persecution of the church [finish their testimony]
 - When people witness with power they get persecuted (all over bible)
- So, we see the witness, prophesying power, and persecution of the church, then we see the vindication and reward of the church (vs. 12) -
- Heaven while their enemies have to watch
- Through the double power of prophesying (truth speaking/witnessing about Jesus), the persecuted church wins, rises from the dead and ascends to heaven.
- Chapter 11 - Witness, power, persecution, triumph of the church. It's a great theology of the church.
- Ok two lampstands. What about the two olive trees?
 - Rev. 11:4 These are the two olive trees. In Zechariah's vision, the "two olive trees" symbolized "two anointed ones" (Zech. 4:11, 14): a royal leader to rebuild God's temple (Zech. 4:6–10) and a high priest to lead worship in it (Zech. 3:1–5). Thus the witnesses of Rev. 11:3 aptly represent all whom the Lamb has redeemed to serve as priests and rule as kings (1:6; 5:10). The church prophesies and witnesses, serves as priests and kings.
- Then... the 7th trumpet finally sounds..
 - Revelation 11:15 - Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (ESV)
 - The church wins thru their double witness...because of Christ. Read the rest of the chapter.
- From **Chapters 12 – 15:2 - 7 visions** [see overall structure graphic]

- 1- **WOMAN** - 12:1 – a great sign appeared in heaven
- 2- **SEA BEAST**- 13:1 – I saw a beast rising out of the sea
- 3- **LAND BEAST** - 13:11 – I saw another beast rising out of the earth
- 4 – **144,000** - 14:1 - Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. (ESV)
- 5 – **THREE ANGELS** - 14:6 - Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. (ESV)
- 6 – **HARVEST** - 14:14 - Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. (ESV)
- 7 – **SANCTUARY** - 15:1-2 - Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. (ESV)
- **John brings these visions together to illustrate the spiritual battle that has been waged, is being waged, and will continue to be waged in this world.** There is a cosmic war being waged in the heavenlies. All of earthly mankind is caught up in a heavenly war between Christ and Satan.
- What do we learn from these visions?
 - **Revelation 12** - Satan has been conquered by Christ the Savior and is being conquered by Christians as they suffer.
 - Revelation 12 consists of three different sections: verses 1-6, verses 7-12, and verses 13- 17. Together they combine to depict how Satan has been battling the people of God all throughout the Old Testament leading up to the coming of Christ, how he sought to defeat Christ himself, the promised Messiah of Israel, and how he seeks to defeat the church today. The imagery Revelation uses is of a heavenly war between Michael and the angels of God and Satan and the demons of hell. And the overall picture of this war is clear.
 - The birth of Christ declared the death of the ancient serpent (12:5)

- Once Satan figures out here that he cannot stop the Christ, he turns to attack the church —the people of God who believe in Jesus. It says in verse 13 that he pursues them.
- Revelation 12:13–14 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. (ESV)
- The adversary, the devil, that ancient serpent is still fighting Christ by opposing and persecuting the church, making war against her offspring, verse 17 says.
- Satan is a defeated foe. Jesus wins. The church wins. SEE Verses 10-11.

▪ **Revelation 13:1 – Sea Beast**

- In Chapter 13, we see how Satan (the dragon) rages against the woman (the church) in the world. And again, it's not chronological—this happens, and now this happens. Instead, here in Chapter 13 we see a picture of how the battle in Chapter 12 is being waged (and will be waged in the days leading up to the return of Christ) between this dragon and this woman in the world. So starting in Chapter 13, we see a beast rising out of the sea, under the authority of the dragon.
- In 2 Thessalonians, Paul describes a “man of lawlessness,” a “son of destruction,” who will exalt himself “against every so-called go or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.” So many equate this beast here with that man of lawlessness
- Still others don't limit this beast to any particular person or empire in history, but point to various antichristian governments and leaders who oppress and persecute God's people while leading the world astray.
- It should be realized that Satan works through government that functions as divine authority instead of under divine authority.
- Throughout the history of the church, from the resurrection to the return of Christ, there have been and will continue to be governments and leaders, systems and structures that the

devil uses to oppress the church and deceive the world. That doesn't necessarily rule out a specific person or empire (a specific antichrist or man of lawlessness) to come in the days ahead, but the overall point is that Satan works through government that functions as divine authority instead of under divine authority.

▪ **Revelation 13:11 – Land Beast**

- The land beast leads earth's inhabitants to worship the sea beast.
- Satan deceives through teachers who look like friends yet speak like enemies.
- And so we see the first beast, and the second beast working alongside one another in a concerted effort to deceive people. They look like what they do is right and good, yet they are leading the world into idolatry and immorality.
- Many understand that first beast as antichristian government, and subsequently they understand the second beast as antichristian religious and economic and social systems associated with antichristian government. There are others who see the first beast as the antichrist, and they would see the second beast as a false prophet arising even from within the church that encourages devotion to the antichrist. CF 1 John "many antichrists have already come, 2 Thess 2 "secret power of lawlessness already at work"
- But whether this is generally applicable today or specifically applicable in the future, the picture is clear when it comes to Satan's deception through false teachers and leaders. He massacres all who refuse him.

▪ **WHAT ABOUT THE MARK OF THE BEAST? 666? Rev. 13:18**

- The church has the name of God symbolically written on their foreheads (7:3), and the church has a number (144,000, 7:4, 14:1) to symbolize the completion of God's people, so it makes sense that those who set themselves up against God in Christ would also have something symbolically written on their heads, associated with a number not of completion (like seven or four or ten), but incompleteness (like 6 repeated over and over again).

- The number of the beast, which is 666, may symbolize creaturely deficiency as the number of a man in contrast to divine completeness (symbolized by seven). The invitation to one with understanding to calculate this number, however, suggests the use of gematria, an ancient code using the numerical values of letters. Both “beast” and “Nero Caesar,” written in Hebrew characters, add up to 666, but many interpreters still expect a future, greater fulfillment in a world ruler who is violently opposed to God and his people. So, some would say the Sea Beast represented the Roman Empire or Anti-Christian Governments throughout history, the mark of the beast was pointing to Nero and all the folklore associated and persecution with him, and that the land beast represented the false Jewish teachers who were persecuting the church and other false teachers to come, denying Christ, and leading others to worship false gods...while still saying because of 2 thess 2 and the trajectory towards the return of Christ, there is likely a futuristic picture here of a greater beast and false prophet to come.
- But don’t miss the point. Every person in all of history leading up to the end of history either belongs to God in Christ or to this world and its ways. And Satan, all throughout history and continuing today, is deceiving many through friendly words, enticing ideologies, appealing economic policies, and attractive religions that all subtly yet eternally pull people away from worship of the one true God. This is how the dragon works through these beasts.

Satanic Imitations of God’s Reality

God’s Reality		Satanic Imitation	
the real Trinity (Father, Son [Lamb], Spirit)	1:4–5	the false trinity (dragon, beast, false prophet)	16:13; 20:10
Lamb standing, as though it had been slain	5:6	many-headed beast with mortal wound healed	13:3
sealing of the saints	7:2–3	mark of the beast	13:16–18

Bride in white	19:7–8	prostitute in purple and scarlet	17:1–6
----------------	--------	----------------------------------	--------

- **Revelation 14:1** – The Lamb and His Sealed Victors. John’s second vision of the 144,000 (cf. 7:1–8)
- Faithful followers of Christ will one day stand boldly with him, sing loudly to him, and be satisfied completely in him
 - All of a sudden, a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters and the sound of loud thunder reverberates as the people of God (symbolized by 144,000 here, just like we see in Revelation 7) stand with Him and sing to Him as they are satisfied in Him. Yet again, John gives us a glimpse of the church in the midst of the challenges of this world, and he does this for a reason.
 - John is encouraging readers then and readers now to faithfully follow the Lamb amidst the idolatry and immorality of this world.
 - John sees three angels who announce impending judgment (14:6–13) and three who order and execute harvests (14:15–20). At the center, between the three announcing angels and the three harvesting angels, John sees a seventh figure, one like a son of man, gathering his grain from the earth (14:14). Despite the beast’s cruel persecution (ch. 13), these visions (like those in chs. 7 and 10–11) provide reassurance that God and the Lamb rule, and that martyrs already celebrate victory.
 - 14:6 – angel announces the eternal gospel to all nations with commands to worship
 - 14:8 – another angel announces Babylon has fallen. Babylon symbolizes adultery against the lord, the intoxicating immorality of this world in all of its forms, particularly in the form of sexual immorality
 - 14:9 – Teaches us who we worship on earth determines where we go in eternity. A third angel announces that the beast’s worshipers (like the prostitute Babylon, 16:19) will drink the wine of God’s wrath and endure constant torment in eternal

restlessness. The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever shows that hell is eternal, and that the wicked are not annihilated and put out of existence at death.

- 14:12 – a call for faithful endurance amidst persecution and suffering
- 14:14ff – vision of a judgment of God
 - You have two visions of harvest back-to-back here—a grain harvest and a grape harvest. The picture is clear that Christ will one day harvest all the saints who trust in Him. He will bring all true followers of his to Himself.
 - And at the same time, He will tread every sinner who turns from him. That's strong language, but it is language that is necessitated by this text. Is there any more graphic portrayal of the judgment of unbelievers than the picture of grapes being crushed in a winepress to flow out for miles like blood?
- **Revelation 15** - soon all the saints throughout all of history will rejoice together in the song of the redeemed.
 - The backdrop for the song of the redeemed in Revelation 15 is the song of Moses in Exodus 15. When God had delivered His people from slavery in Egypt and He brought them to the Red Sea, safely thru it, and crushed their enemies.
 - One day soon conquering Christians will shout as they consider God's incomprehensible works. "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!" (Rev. 15:3). One day, Christian, we will look back and see how all of history finally unfolded, and we will praise our God for the way He brought all of these things to pass. We have questions today about why this or that in this world, but on that day in the future, we will see that in it all, God was great and amazing in all His deeds.
 - And on that day conquering Christians will sing as they behold God's incomparable worth. "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Rev 15:4).
- **Revelation 16** - seven bowls that recap or repeat what we've already seen, except with more all-encompassing devastation.

- As each of these bowls are poured out upon the earth, you see reflections of the plagues with which God struck the Egyptians back in the book of Exodus when He delivered His people from slavery.
- In the first bowl (16:2), much like we see with the first trumpet, the earth is struck and sores come upon the people who bear the mark of the beast. Like we saw last chapter, this is a picture of those who have turned aside from the worship of God to worship the things of this world. It's a picture of unbelievers. All who worship the things of this world will eventually experience suffering at the hands of the things of this world.
- Then, in the second bowl (vs. 3), just like with the second trumpet, the sea is struck, and "every living thing" in the sea dies as its water is turned to blood. Just like with the parallel plague in Egypt, here God strikes down the entire economic life-support system of the world.
- In the third bowl (4), God pours out His wrath on the rivers, which also turn to blood. Sinners who have shed the blood of saints and prophets, causing their suffering, are here given blood to drink as God punishes the persecutors of His people.
- The fourth bowl (8) is poured upon the sky, specifically the sun, as it scorches people with fire. Again, is this literal? Maybe. We know that this image is more than just having a sunburn; it's fierce fire scorching people with heat. At the very least, it's imagery that is intended to evoke horrifying judgment.
- The fifth bowl (10) unleashes torment on those who worship the beast, on idolaters who worship this world instead of God. They are plunged into darkness, separated from the one true God and suffering in anguish.
- The sixth bowl (15:12) is not a picture of judgment in and of itself as much as it's a picture of preparation for wrath in the seventh bowl. Here we see in verse 13 the dragon, the first beast, and the false prophet that we saw in Chapters 12 and 13. This unholy trinity here sends out deceptive demonic spirits that call together the forces of this world to fight against God and His people.

- All of which leads to the seventh bowl (v 17), where cosmic judgment is fully poured out across the earth. The history of this world comes to a close as a massive earthquake and hundred pound hail falls from heaven upon unbelievers on earth, the rulers and ways of this world finally “drain the cup of the wine of fury of God’s wrath.” This is the climactic final judgment.
- Mark it down: God will one day pour out His wrath fully and finally upon this earth, and all who have turned from Him to worship the things and the ways of this world will drink His judgment forever. This is the point of the seven bowls.
- **Revelation 17 & 18** – Main point - don’t love the world or the things in this world. They will destroy you.
 - Revelation 17– 18, is basically a pictorial illustration of 1 John 2:15–17.
 - This is a vision that an angel shows to John.
 - The great prostitute sitting on a scarlet beast.
 - This vision is an expansion of what we saw in the 7 bowls of God’s wrath. In fact, the angel here who was holding the seven bowls is the one who reveals this, so this is tied directly to what we saw in the last chapters. Basically, the picture revolves around two main characters and two main actions that take place.
 - **Character 1: - Prostitute who symbolizes worldly seduction.**
 - This image (vs. 2) of a prostitute is a symbol of infidelity. It’s similar to imagery all across the Bible of God’s people turning from him to run after the things of the world, like a husband who goes running after other women instead of faithfully loving his wife. It’s powerful, poignant, gripping imagery symbolizing the tendency of all our hearts to leave our God to run after love for this world.
 - She is a symbol of idolatry. Idolatry = We run from the one true God to lesser gods in this world
 - **Character 2: sitting on a beast who symbolizes worldly persecution**

- The beast (v 8) has seven heads symbolizing seven mountains and seven kings as John explains in the middle of Chapter 17. Images of strength and power that some say refers to seven Roman emperors, other say refers to seven empires that have come or are to come in history leading up to the return of Christ. There's almost certainly a reference in some way here to Rome and it's worldly authority during the first century that was being imposed in many ways upon first century Christians, including their persecution. Yet it might easily stand for states and empires still to come throughout the world that impose similar persecution upon believers, and it may stand for a nation or empire to come that will persecute Christians in similar ways before the second coming of Christ.
- But the overall picture of seven—complete, seemingly perfect strength and worldly authority is also echoed by ten horns symbolizing ten kings. John is pointing us to leaders in this world who lead this world astray, operating under the authority of Satan (the dragon) and his beast to persecute the people of God.
- So you've got seduction by the world (in the prostitute) and persecution from the world (in the beast). Both were working together for sure in this first century context in both persecuting Christians and at the same time luring them away into worldliness. And we can see still see the lure of worldliness and persecution of Christians today and throughout history.
- **Action 1 – The prostitute is devoured by the beast (17:16-17)**
 - The picture is of an ungodly world system literally turning on itself and destroying itself.
 - The satanic alliance disintegrates.
 - Military power ravages the economic system
 - See the sovereignty of God (end of 17)
- **Action 2 – The prostitute (woman) disappears from the earth (17:18)**
 - That's what Chapter 18 is all about.

- Revelation 17:14 -They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” (ESV)
- **Revelation 18:** Babylon falls; we see the smoke of her burning.
 - In Revelation 18:21, an angel takes a millstone and casts it into the sea, saying, “*So will Babylon the great city*”— remember, a symbol of worldly ways with seductive promises of pleasure and wealth—“*be thrown down with violence, and will be found no more*” (Rev. 18:21).
 - And this happens as a result of the judgment of God. Verse 20, again, we see God praised because of His just judgment of this sinful, fallen world.
 - Revelation 17 & 18 together emphasizes the importance of loving God and not the world. Those who love the “world” instead of God will be judged

Enemies of the Church ([Revelation 13–19](#))

Enemy	Method of Attack
The beast	intimidating violence
The false prophet	deceptive heresy
The prostitute	beguiling affluence (seduction)

- **Revelation 19** - Jesus arrives (vs. 11) riding on a white horse with eyes like fire and crowns on His head and a sword in His mouth, and just like that the battle is over, the beast is gone, and a cascade of praise erupts in a chorus of hallelujahs across the heavens. Yes! This is where all of eternity is headed.
 - Revelation 19 teaches us that man-centered worldliness will ultimately be overcome by God centered worship.
 - Revelation 19:10 - Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. **Worship God.**” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. (ESV)

- Overcome man-centered worldliness with God-centered worship. Worship Jesus.
- “Hallelujah” – the word that drives Revelation 19
 - It’s found in verse 1, 3, 4, 6
- Rev 19:1 – After this...After what? After Babylon falls and is destroyed. They give God glory for his righteous judgment.
 - He’s avenged his servants (vs. 2)
 - Her smoke goes up forever (vs. 3)
 - His judgments are true and just (vs. 2)
- Rev. 19:7 - With the prostitute destroyed, the Lamb’s pure Bride is announced
 - Those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are believers who belong to his beloved bride, the church, who have been called through the gospel of grace
- Rev. 19:11–21 Christ Defeats and Destroys the Beast, the False Prophet, and Their Gathered Armies. The climactic battle for which the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet gathered the earth’s kings (16:13–16) is introduced with a description of Christ the victor (19:11–16), then with a grim “dinner invitation” forecasting the battle’s outcome (vv. 17–18). Finally, the conflict occurs (vv. 19–21). The beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire, whereas their followers suffer physical death (19:21)
- This passage shows the fulfillment of the single greatest promise of history: the return of Christ to reign on earth.
- **Revelation 20 – The Millennium**
 - One of the most disputed passages in the Bible
 - In the first seven verses, John references a 1000 year period six times.
 - This thousand-year period has been referred to throughout Christian history as the millennium, and for 2000 years, Christians have debated and disagreed about exactly what the millennium means. Someone has said, “*The millennium is 1000 years of peace that Christians like to fight about.*”
 - It’s ok to disagree about the millennium
 - It’s sin to divide over the millennium

- There are some in the church who would like to take this issue and make it a litmus test for fellowship together in the body of Christ, and I want to say as clearly as possible today that that is just plain wrong.
 - It is sinful, and it dishonors God to divide over issues that are not essential to our faith as Christians and not even essential to our mission and fellowship in a local church.
- What we know for sure
 - Satan is bound, thrown down, and sealed in a bottomless pit. For a thousand years, he is unable to deceive the nations. During that same period, either martyred or faithful Christians come to life and reign with Christ in what's called the "first resurrection." At the end of that time, Satan is released, he mounts a final assault against the church, and then he is overthrown and destroyed. The rest of the dead rise, and along with Satan, the beast, the false prophet, death, and Hades itself, they are judged before God. That's what happens here.
- When?
 - The big question is are the passages in Revelation arranged chronologically or cyclically?
 - Some people read Revelation 19–20 and think, *"Okay, this is clear. In Revelation 19, Jesus returns. Then, Satan is bound after Jesus returns. Then, Christians reign with Christ in a 1000-year period. And then, after that, Satan is finally defeated, and we are all judged. It's as simple as that."*
 - But others say that these passages are not arranged chronologically. Much like the rest of the book of Revelation, this is a picture of repeating cycles. They would say that, *"What's happening here has already been described at other places in Revelation."*
 - For example, turn to Revelation 16 (and hold your place here in Revelation 20). Revelation 20:8 says that Satan "will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four

corners of the earth...to gather them for battle” (Rev. 20:8). Look again at Rev 16.

- “And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty... And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon” (Rev. 16:13–14, 16).
- So, some would say, *“This is the same battle being described here in Revelation 20 that’s already been described in Revelation 16.”* And then, look at Chapter 19, you see a similar battle being described there. Verse 19 says, *“And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army”* (Rev. 19:19). So some say that when you get to Revelation 20:8, this is repeating what we’ve already heard about in Chapter 16 and Chapter 19, which goes to show that this is not a chronological account of this happens, then this happens, then this happens. Instead, it is still in repeating cycles so it doesn’t have to be forced to be read chronologically.
- So that’s the question: are these passages arranged chronologically or cyclically?
- And based in part on how we answer that question, we’re able to answer this question: is the millennium before Christ returns or after Christ returns? Does Jesus’ return inaugurate this millennium, which is what we would conclude if these passages are arranged chronologically. Or does Jesus’ return at the end of this millennium, which is what some might conclude if these passages are arranged cyclically. And for all those who are thinking, *“Who cares if all of this is in the future? We’ll just see what happens when it happens,”* well, we need to realize that how we answer these

questions actually sheds light on how we understand not just the future, but the present.

- Because all of this affects our answer to the question: is the millennium present (happening now) or future (still to come)? Some believe we're in the millennium now (amill), some believe the millennium is still to come in the future before Christ returns (postmill), and some believe the millennium is still to come in the future, after Christ returns (premill).
- So you have three different positions on the millennium based on these questions alone. Premillennialists say that Jesus will return before the millennium. Postmillennialists say that Jesus will return after the millennium, which is still something to come in the future. And amillennialists would say that the millennium is in the present, and Jesus will return at the end of the millennium. So are you confused yet? And that's just one set of questions.
- How long?
 - Is the millennium literally 1000 years? Some people say, *"There it is. The Bible says it, plain as day. This is 1000 years."* Or is the millennium simply a planned, perfect, limited time? Others say, *"John has used figurative numbers all throughout this book that are symbolic of certain things, and we've seen 1000 used as a number to refer to completion and perfection. So the point here is that the millennium is a complete, perfect, and limited amount of time that God has set, much like the number 144,000 isn't literally the total number of Christians. It's a symbol of a perfect, complete number of God's people, so the same thing is true here."* And you have different people coming down on both sides of this question.
- What and where?
 - Then you have the questions of what and where? In Revelation 20, you have some people seated on thrones. You have souls coming to life and reigning with Christ in a first resurrection. So, what does this mean?

- Option 1: Will the millennium involve a physical resurrection of Christians to reign on earth during the millennium? This is how many people interpret this passage—that Christians from throughout history will come to life and reign with Christ during a thousand year period on earth. Some would say that’s clearly what this text is teaching.
- Option 2: or will the millennium involve a spiritual resurrection of Christians to reign in heaven during the millennium? Some would say that this reign of Christians is a reference to what happens when followers of Christ die—their souls are resurrected to heaven, where they reign with Christ now as they await the final judgment and the second resurrection, which is a resurrection of their bodies as God ushers in a new heaven and a new earth.
- So, there are all kinds of discussion and debate and disagreement over what this “first resurrection” is, and how you understand that affects the way you understand the rest of the passage. Again, not just the future of the end of the world, but this even affects the way you might understand the present state of Christians who have died in the past.
- These are just some of the questions in this one passage of Scripture. Then you combine it with other things we read in the New Testament, and it gets all the more interesting. When other parts of the New Testament talk about the end of the world, we read about things like the worldwide preaching of the gospel and the salvation of Israel and the great tribulation and the coming of the antichrist and the rapture and Christians meeting Jesus in the air upon His return. We think, “*Well, how do all of those things fit in with this picture?*” It’s like a jigsaw puzzle with all these different pieces, and we’re trying to figure out how they all come together. Right now, all kinds of Christians have all kinds of different pictures at the end of putting together this puzzle.

- What I think...for now
 - **Christ has come once, and Satan has been bound.**
This language of Satan being “bound” is only used by one another person in the New Testament, and it’s by Jesus. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we read Jesus telling the crowds about his power over Satan, and this is the language he uses. [Matthew 12:28-29, also see Col 2:15]
 - The whole point of the book of Revelation seems to be that Satan could not stop Christ, and because of that Satan cannot stop Christians. He is bound! And we overcome him. That was the whole point of Revelation 12 when Satan was thrown down and a loud voice in heaven proclaimed, *“The salvation and power and kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down and they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony”* (Rev. 12:10–11a).
 - The scene there in Revelation 12 is eerily similar to the scene in Revelation 20. Both start with a heavenly setting, both describe or suppose an angelic battle against Satan, after which Satan is cast down, and Christians reign over him as they proclaim the gospel with their lives. This is not a future reign. This is a present reign, a reign inaugurated by Christ in His death and resurrection, and a reign that is now being experienced by Christians who conquer Satan by their testimony to Christ.
 - **We are in the millennium now.**
 - Satan has been bound, and we are reigning with Christ. Now that evokes all sorts of questions. How are we really reigning with Christ? And do you really think this picture of Satan bound in Revelation 20 accurately describes the state of the world today? *“Look around, don’t you see? Can you really say that Satan is bound when*

there is so much sin and suffering abounding around us?”

- Revelation 20 is not showing us a complete cessation of the devil’s influence on earth. Some people read verse 3 that says Satan was thrown into a pit, where he was shut up and sealed for this thousand years and conclude that this means Satan is completely gone. But I would say that this is symbolic imagery just like we see all throughout this book that is not intended to be understood spatially. We’re talking here, much like we are all over the book of Revelation, with spiritual realities that are represented by physical pictures, so this isn’t a picture of Satan completely cast out. Satan is bound not absent.. Rev 20:2 uses the same word as Mark 3:27, “binds”. Jesus, the stronger man, binds Satan and plunders his house – liberating people from demonic power. Satan’s influence continues thru political and religious powers (two beasts—sea and land) but no longer deceives the nations in the same way. Satan is cast completely out later in this chapter. This is a picture of Satan bound, restricted from a particular task.

- What is the particular task?
 - The angel bound Satan for a thousand years “*so that he might not deceive the nations any longer*” (Rev. 20:3). What does that mean? Well, we know that Satan’s ultimate weapon is deception, and this is how he has worked among the nations since Genesis 3.
 - But when Christ came, and He defeated the devil at the cross. Immediately after this happened, what did Jesus say? “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (Mt. 28:19). “...That repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations...”

(Lk. 24:47). “Be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

- Because of the coming of Christ, Satan has been bound, and this gospel is going forth to all peoples and Satan cannot stop the power of the Gospel.
- Satan could not stop Christ, and now, today, Satan cannot stop Christians. Christians who are alive now reign with Christ on earth. Not, “We will be conquerors one day,” but, “*We are now more than conquerors through Christ who loved us ...*” (Rom. 8:37) now, today and forevermore.
- Satan cannot keep the church from proclaiming the gospel, and he cannot keep the nations from believing the gospel. He is bound.
- Christians who are alive now reign with Christ on earth, and Christians who have died now reign with Christ in heaven. This picture in Chapter 20 of souls who have been beheaded for their testimony to Christ, & men and women who did not bow to the beast of this world. Where are they now? They are reigning with Christ, seated on thrones in heaven with him where they are worshiping God as priests while they rule with Christ as judge.
- We’ve seen a scene similar to this already in Revelation 6, as saints surround the throne of God and cry out for His justice and vindication. There are numerous parallels between Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4. Admittedly, there are many ways these phrases “came to life” and “first resurrection” could be interpreted. The picture I am convinced

(at least for now!) that these phrases paint is of men and women who did not give in to the ways of this world, who trusted in the Word of God, who proclaimed it at the risk of their lives. They are now reigning with Christ in heaven, worshiping Him with resurrected spiritual lives that testify to His justice as they long for the consummation of redemption to come and the resurrection of their physical bodies.

- **Christ Will Come Again, and When He Returns Satan Will be Obliterated.**

- Revelation 20 teaches us that after a final period of Satanic revolt, there will be a final point of Satanic defeat. Much like we've seen in the rest of the book of Revelation, there will be a time of particular tribulation and seeming defeat among God's people in the very end. I do think the millennium will end with a final deception. This aligns with the man of lawlessness in 2 Thess 2. You may remember in Revelation 11 where the witnesses proclaimed the gospel for three-and-a-half years, followed by three-and-a-half days of death and mockery and seeming defeat, a limited time for a little while. Revelation 20:3 says this binding that keeps Satan from deceiving will be let loose, and it will seem like all hell has broken out upon the earth, even to the extinction of the church. But rest assured, it will only be a little while.
- Jesus spoke in Matthew 24 of a "great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Mt. 24:21–22). And after a final period of Satanic revolt, there will be a final point of Satanic defeat.
- Christ will return, He will enforce the victory He has already won at the cross, and He will destroy the Satan

and all he has deceived. The return of Christ will usher in full and final judgment, once and for all. All men and women everywhere, along with Satan and all of his demons, will stand before God to give an account. This ultimate judgment scene will give way to eternal wrath in hell for all who have turned against Christ and everlasting life in a new heaven and a new earth for all who have trusted in Christ.

- My final understanding – the millennium is not about a timeline but a throne. Jesus Christ, the lamb of God reigns now. His victory began at His birth, was sealed in His resurrection, and is being worked out through His church. Satan is bound but not silent. His defeat is real but not final. We live in a world at war, but the outcome is secure. We reign with Christ by faith in him (believing the gospel) and following him in suffering, sacrifice, and faithful witness.

What we can all agree on

- **God is in control. Satan is not**
 - **Satan is subordinate**
 - Revelation 12 said that the devil is filled with “wrath because he knows his time is short”
 - **The gospel will advance through the church**
 - **Jesus will return for the church**
 - **There will be judgment**
 - **Jesus wins. The church wins.**
-
- **Revelation 21 – 22:5 – The New Heaven and New Earth**
 - Right now we live between two worlds, we are pilgrims on a journey
 - Rev 21 – 22:5 gives us a picture of the world/country to come
 - Rev. 21:1–22:5 “All Things New.” The destruction of the last enemy, death, and the last judgment will finally lead to the renewal of the entire created order, heaven and earth, to be the perfect home in which the Lamb will live forever with his bride, the people whom he has redeemed out of all the nations through his atoning death.
 - Death is replaced with life in Heaven

- We will see His face
- We will reign with Him
- GO BACK TO THE BIG PICTURE OF REVELATION AND VIEW IT
(*BOOKENDS OF THE BIBLE*)
- **Revelation 22:6-21** - Transmission and Trustworthiness of the Revelation, Promise that Jesus Is Coming Soon, Promise of Blessing.
 - Revelation 22:6–21 shows us that the book of Revelation is not intended to promote hopeless speculation about the future.
 - Revelation 22:6–21 shows us that the book of Revelation is intended to fuel hopeful obedience in the present.
 - If the primary point of Revelation was just to tell us when Jesus is going to come back and what things are going to look like, the book would have stopped at Revelation 22:5. What a climax that would have been: “They will see His face, and reign with Him forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5). That’s a good place to stop. Instead of stopping there, we’ve got 16 more verses, and half of them are telling us as Christians to obey, to be faithful.
 - Let the Book of Revelation Work in Us
 - See the world and its deception
 - See Christ in all of His glory
 - See the church in all of our beauty
 - See your life in proper perspective
 - Turn from sin and deception
 - Remain faithful
 - Get to work in God’s kingdom
 - Long for the Kings return
 - Revelation 22:20–21 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (ESV)

The Seven Blessings

Blessed is the one who reads aloud, hears, and keeps the words of this prophecy	1:3
Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord	14:13

Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on	16:15
Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb	19:9
Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection	20:6
Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book	22:7
Blessed are those who wash their robes	22:14

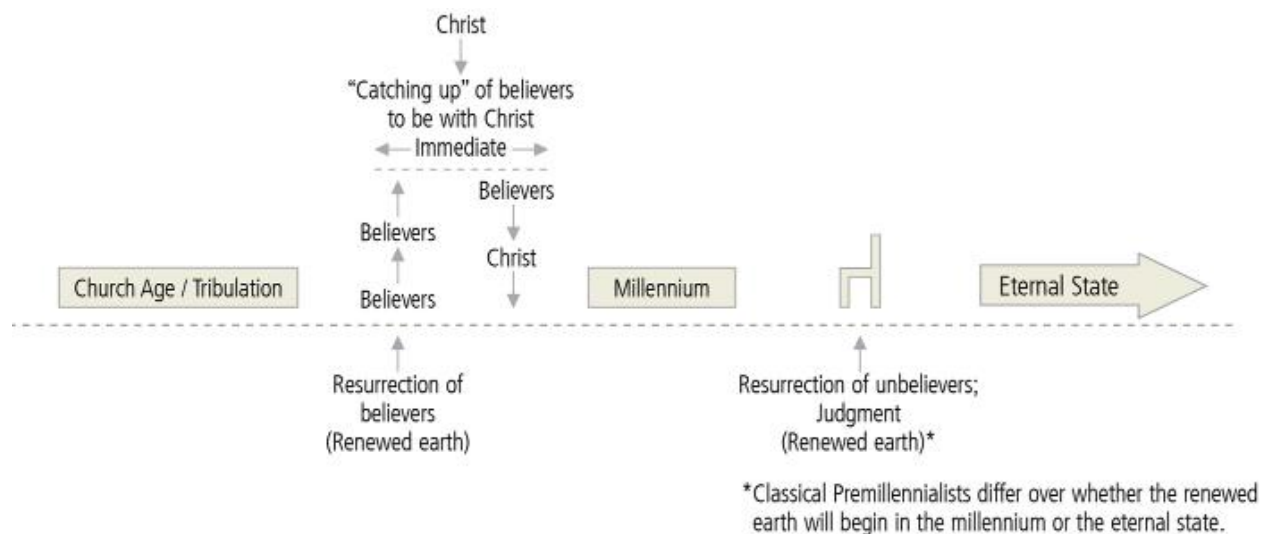
APPENDIX

The Big Millenium Views

Premillennialists understand Rev 20 to describe the future millennial reign of Christ and his people on earth before the final judgment and the new creation. On this view, “they came to life” ([Rev. 20:4](#)) refers to the bodily resurrection of believers.

Key Beliefs of Historical Premillennialists

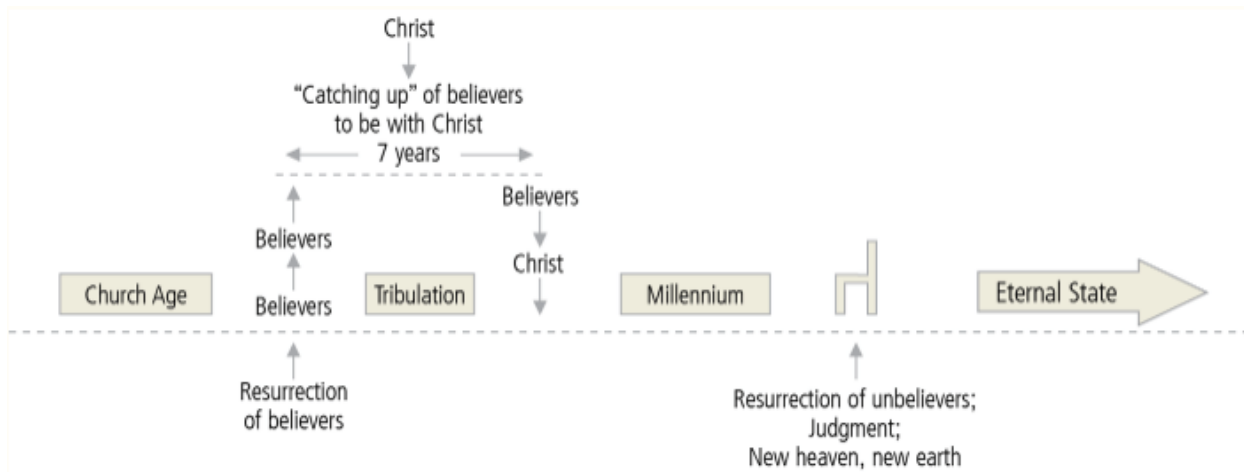
- Usually associated with a futurist reading of Revelation
- Christ will return in power and glory to inaugurate a 1,000 year reign
- Millennium will be preceded by a Great Tribulation
- During Christ’s reign, saints have received their glorified bodies either by resurrection or transformation
- Sin, sorrow and death still exist
- At end of Millennium, Satan is unbound for one final struggle
- There are 2 resurrections, believers first then unbelievers.
- Historic Premil is a Post-Tribulation view
- Prior to Christ’s return, believers will go through a great tribulation
- ”Single-phase” of Christ’s return



Key beliefs of Dispensational Premillennialists

- Disp. Premil is a Pre-Tribulation view

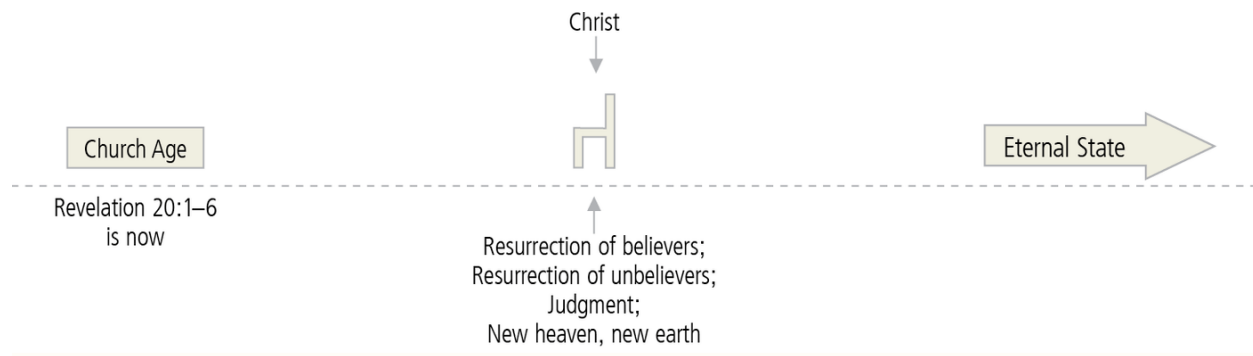
- Christ will take (“rapture”) the church first, then there will be a 7-year tribulation, after which Christ returns to reign for 1000 years
- Prophecies of Israel’s restoration fulfilled
- ”Two-Phases” of Christ’s return
- A major distinctive of Disp. Premil is a distinction between the church and Israel.



Amillennialists, on the other hand, understand the Rev 20 passage to describe the present reign (see Rev. 20:6) of God’s people in heaven, not on earth. The one thousand years is interpreted symbolically, referring to a long period of time. On this view, “they came to life” refers (ironically) to the saints’ physical death, which leads to spiritual life in heaven, where they presently reign with Christ. The rest of the dead, those who died apart from Christ, “did not come to life;” they await physical resurrection at the end of the age.

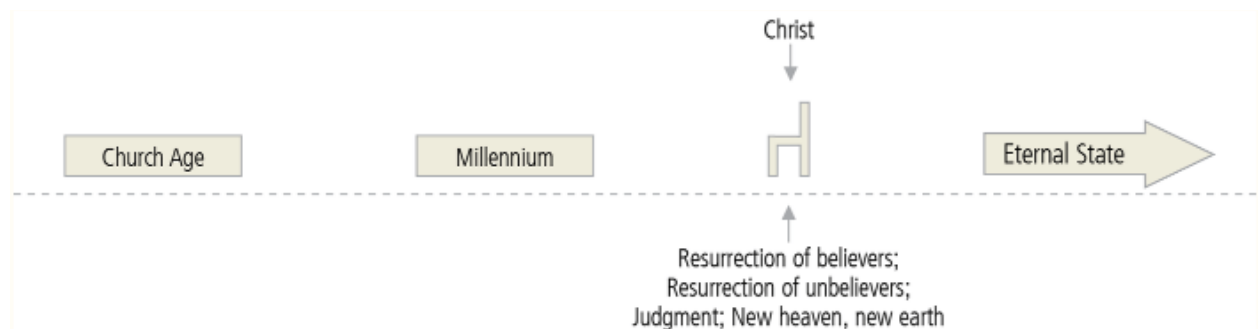
Key beliefs of Amillennialists

- Often associated with Idealist / partial-Preterist interp of Revelation
 - Recapitulation / Prog. Parallelism > Chronological sequence
- The millennium = the church age NOW
 - 1000 is symbolic, but the (spiritual) reign is literal
- Similar to postmil in chronology: no secret rapture, no “two-stage” return of Christ, etc
- Similar to premil in outlook: no worldwide conversion of nations, more expectant of the end
- Less optimistic than postmil, less pessimistic than premil
- Two resurrections: first spiritual, second physical



Postmillennialists

- Often associated with a partial-preterist reading of Revelation
- See's the millennium as a reign of Christ in which he is not bodily present
- The kingdom of God is a present reality → not over a realm, but the rule of Christ in the hearts of men. It grows gradually.
- Expects the conversion of all nations prior to Christ's return
- The millennium in the future will be a long period of earthly peace (the number 1000 is symbolic)
- At the end, there will be a time of apostasy and evil associated w/ the anti-Christ.
- Some believe the Jewish nation will be converted.



APPENDIX TWO

Other Questions:

- **History of the views**

- Historic Premill – well attested by early church, taken up by Anabaptists after reformation
- Postmill – 4th century, very popular after the reformation, declined sharply after 2nd half of 20th century, on the rise again
- Amill – debated in early church, Augustine earliest clear advocate, amill and postmill not clearly distinguished until 19th century, blossomed in 20th century, many reformed denom now espouse it
- Dispensational premill – didn't exist until 1830 John Darby (Plymouth brethren), 1909 scofield bible – 2 million copies by end of ww2, 1941 holocaust, 1948 israeli state, 1970 Late Great Planet Earth - 28 million copies sold, Left Behind – 80 million copies sold

- **What about the rapture?**

- Here is a summary of the arguments from John Piper:
- 1. The word for “meeting” the Lord in the air in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 (apantesin) is used in two other places in the New Testament: Matthew 25:6 and Acts 28:15. In both places it refers to a meeting in which people go out to meet a dignitary and then accompany him in to the place from which they came out. One of these, Matthew 25:6, is even a parable of the second coming and so a strong argument that this is the sense of the meeting here in 1 Thess. 4:17—that we rise to meet the Lord in the air and then welcome him to earth as king.
- 2. The wording of 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7, when read carefully, shows that Paul expects to attain rest from suffering at the same time and in the same event that he expects the unbelievers to receive punishment, namely, at the revelation of Jesus with mighty angels in flaming fire. This revelation is not the pre-tribulational rapture but the glorious second coming. Which means that Paul did not expect an event at which he and the other believers would be given rest seven years before the glorious appearing of Christ in flaming fire. Vengeance on unbelievers and rest for the persecuted church come on the same day in the same event.
- 3. The wording of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 suggests that the “assembling to meet him” is the same as “the day of the Lord” about which they are

confused. But the assembling is the “rapture” and “the day of the Lord” is the glorious second coming. They appear to be one event.

- Supporting this is the reference to “gathering” the elect in Matthew 24:31. Here there is a gathering (same word) but it is clearly a post-tribulational context. So there is no need to see the gathering and the day of the Lord in 2 Thessalonians as separate events.
- 4. If Paul were a pre-tribulationist why did he not simply say in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 that the Christians don’t need to worry that the day of the Lord? Instead, he talks just the way you would expect a post-tribulational person to do. He tells them that they should not think that the day of the Lord is here because the apostasy and the man of lawlessness have not appeared. . . .
- 5. When you read Matthew 24 or Mark 13 or Luke 21, which are Jesus’ descriptions of the end times, there is no mention of a rapture removing believers from the events of the end. A normal reading gives no impression of a departure. On the contrary, he talks as if the believing listeners and then the readers would or could experience the things he mentions. See Mt. 24:4, 9, 15, 23, 25f, 33, etc.
- 6. Going through tribulation, even when it is appointed by God, is not contrary to Biblical teaching. See especially 1 Peter 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10; Hebrews 12:3-11. But even so, Revelation 9:4 suggests that the saints will be in some measure protected in the time of distress by the seal of God.
- 7. The commands to “watch” do not lose their meaning if the second coming is not an any-moment one. See Matt. 25:1-13 where all ten maidens are asleep when the Lord returns. Yet the lesson at the end of the parable is, “Watch!” The point is that watching is not gazing up for an any-moment-return of the Lord; it is the moral vigilance that keeps you ready at all times doing your duty—the wise maidens had full lanterns! They were watchful!
- Nor does the teaching that the second coming will be unexpected lose its force if post-tribulationism is true. See Luke 12:46 where the point is that if a servant gets drunk thinking that his master is delayed and will not catch him—that very servant will be surprised and taken off guard. But as 1 Thess. 5:1-5 says, “You (believers) are not in darkness for that day to surprise you like a thief.” We still teach that great moral vigilance and watchfulness is necessary lest we be lulled asleep and fall prey to the deceits of the last days and be overtaken in the judgment.
- 8. The strongest pre-tribulational text, Rev. 3:10, is open to another interpretation without any twisting. It says, “Because you have kept my word

of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.” But to “be kept for the hour of testing” is not necessarily to be taken out of the world during this hour, and thus spared suffering. Compare Gal. 1:4 and Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in John 17:15 where to “keep from” does not mean physical removal. And notice the inevitability of martyrdom in Rev. 6:9-11. The promise is to be guarded from the hour in the sense of being guarded from the demoralizing forces of that hour.

- 9. The second coming does not lose its moral power in post-tribulationism. New Testament moral incentive is not that we should fear being caught doing evil, but that we should so love the appearing of the Lord that we want to be pure as the Lord is pure, for whom we hope, as 1 John 3:1-3 says.
- **Who are the people of God?**
 - Ephesians 2:18-22
 - 1 Peter 2:1-10
 - Galatians 3:28-29
 - Romans 11
 - [Who Are the People of God, and Where Do They Live? - The Gospel Coalition | Canada](#)
 - [Will the Jewish People Eventually Turn to Christ? - The Gospel Coalition | Canada](#)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- [Kingdom Come by Sam Storms](#)
- [One Harbor End Times Workshop](#)
- [John Hosier End Times Workshop](#)
- [An Evening of Eschatology – Desiring God](#)