

## **The Revelation to John Eschatology 2024 Daniel J. Baker**

“Can you understand the Book of Revelation? Yes, you can. You can summarize its message in one sentence: God rules history and will bring it to its consummation in Christ. Read it with this main point in mind, and you will understand. You will not necessarily understand every detail—neither do I. But it is not necessary to understand every detail in order to profit spiritually.... Revelation is about theophany, God appearing.”  
Vern Poythress, *The Returning King*<sup>1</sup>

### **I. Introduction**

Revelation is not the beginning of the Bible’s teaching on the end times. It’s only the great culmination of it. The winds of the age to come begin blowing in chapter 2 of our Bibles. When we hear of “the tree of life,” we know immediately that there is something greater, richer, fuller, better that God has and we long for. That “tree of life” will reappear at the end when all is accomplished—Rev 22:2.

And then it becomes really clear in that promise spoken first to the serpent himself:

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen 3:15)

There is a Redeemer coming! There is a redemption coming that shall lead to the crushing of the devil. The Serpent-crusher is promised, and the end of our great enemy is sure.

That’s what we read about in Revelation, God fulfilling these promises. The tree of life will be ours, the Serpent-crusher finishes his work of redemption.

As the Bible unfolds, this promise is revealed in more detail. But it’s in Revelation where God in so many ways peels back the curtain for us.

John opens the book of Revelation with these words,

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, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that

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<sup>1</sup> Vern Poythress, *The Returning King* (P&R, 2000). Available at <https://frame-poythress.org/ebooks/the-returning-king/>.

he saw. 3 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. (Rev 1:1–3)

- “Revelation” = apocalypse in the Greek
- “Soon take place”
- “Sending his angel to his servant John”
- “Bore witness...to all that he saw”
- “Blessed” if “reads aloud,” “hear,” “keep what is written in it”

## II. Who, When, and Why?

### A. Who?

1. Author is John the apostle, who identifies himself as “John” in 1:1, 4, 9.
  - a. The author’s name is “John” and so familiar to the early church that no other modifier was needed.
  - b. The options: John Mark (John 12:12), John the Baptist (Matt 3:1), or the apostle John (Matt 4:21). John the Baptist did not write, John Mark has never been connected to this work, so...it’s John the apostle.
  - c. Same author as the Gospel of John and 1–3 John (all written earlier).
2. The external evidence confirms this. No other author is ever put forward in the early church’s writings.

### B. When?

1. In the 90’s AD, *after* he wrote his gospel.
2. The dating is connected to the issue of which emperor was in power at the time. D.A. Carson and Greg Beale<sup>2</sup> and many early church fathers say **Domitian (reigned AD 81–96)**. Domitian matches the “emperor worship” practiced and rebuked in Revelation (references to not bowing to the beast); also 7 churches match later date better than early (Laodicea is wealthy in Revelation, but it was destroyed by earthquake in AD 60).<sup>3</sup>
3. Several early church fathers<sup>4</sup> affirm Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian:

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<sup>2</sup> Greg Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Carson, Moo, Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (1992), 473–476.

<sup>4</sup> Cited Carson, 708.

- a. **Irenaeus** (ca 130–200) says it was written “toward the end of the reign of Domitian” (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30.3)
  - b. Clement of Alexandria (150–215), *Quis div.* 42
  - c. Origen (185–253), *Matt.* 16.6
  - d. Victorinus (300s), *Apoc.* 10.11
  - e. Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.18 (published AD 313)
4. Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, argues for a date of AD 95/96 for similar reasons. The conditions during the reign of Domitian, toward the end of his reign, fit best (20–21). He cites Irenaeus, “For that (the apocalyptic vision) was seen not a very long time since, but almost in our own day, toward the end of Domitian’s reign” (*ibid.*).<sup>5</sup>
  5. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC, argues for a late date as well: “To sum up, the earlier date may be right, but the internal evidence is not sufficient to outweigh the firm tradition stemming from Irenaeus” (27).

C. Why?

**“In the main, the purpose of the book of Revelation is to comfort the militant Church in its struggle against the forces of evil.”<sup>6</sup> It is written to inspire God’s people in every generation to stand strong in the face of persecution, remember the greatness and glory of your Redeemer, and not be fooled by the wiles and reality of the devil.**

### III. A unique kind of writing

- A. It is “apocalyptic” (from *apocalypse*, Greek word for “revelation” as in *Rev.* 1:1).
  1. Symbols, vivid pictures
    - a. “Show me, don’t tell me.”
    - b. Note the refrain of, “***Then I saw...***” (*Rev* 5:1; 7:2; 8:2; 10:1; 13:11; 14:6; 15:1; 19:11, 17; 20:1, 4, 11; 21:1).
    - c. It is theology through pictures. God is all-seeing, but this is conveyed by “the Lamb” having “seven eyes” (5:6), not by saying “Jesus sees all things” or “knows all things.”
  2. Dramatic scenes of judgment: Blood, fire, death, war, famine
  3. Prophecy that is more future-oriented: Less about what’s happening *now*, more about what’s to come.

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<sup>5</sup> William Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 7.

4. Closest parallels are OT writing in several places:
    - a. Daniel (e.g., speaking of massive epochs of history with creatures and statues, esp. Daniel 7-12),
    - b. Ezekiel (e.g., Ezekiel 1 and the four living creatures, some filled with eyes and wheels spinning in multiple directions), and
    - c. Zechariah (e.g., different-colored horses in 6:1-8).
  5. Poythress makes a good point that we shouldn't over-generalize about apocalyptic literature. Even though it has general tendencies, we need to also allow that each apocalyptic work has to be read on its own terms and looking for the specific author's intent.<sup>7</sup>
- B. It is prophecy
1. Forth-telling *and...*
  2. Fore-telling
- C. It is an epistle
1. A letter from John.
  2. A letter to the churches of Asia Minor (7 cities listed, likely a circular letter to be sent to one, passed to another).
  3. I.e., it has a specific author and a specific audience—even though God is also the author and all people (especially the church) are the audience.
- D. Interpreting Revelation: The opening chapters (1–5) and closing chapters (21–22) are clearer, the middle ones can get fuzzy. *When in doubt, remember the big ideas from the opening and closing chapters!*

#### IV. A Guide to Some of the Symbolism

- A. The Numbers
1. Numbers are very significant in Revelation, especially the numbers 7, 10, 12, and 1,000, and also the varieties of 3 ½. Some are easier than others.
  2. 7 is the number of perfection, tracing back to the seven days of creation, which means a perfect whole.
    - a. Jesus has “seven horns” because he is *omnipotent* (5:6) and “seven eyes” (5:6) because he is *omniscient*.

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<sup>7</sup> Poythress, *The Returning King*.

- b. He has sovereignty and can open the “seven seals,” which refer to *all* of history (5:1), the seven trumpets (8:2) and seven bowls (15:7) speak to “all of God’s expressed wrath.”
  - c. Some “sevens” seem to be more literal like the “seven heads” of the beast from the sea, which connect to “seven kings” (17:10) or world rulers.
- 3. 10 means “a lot!” – Satan and the beast out of the sea have “ten horns,” and so “a lot of power!” (12:3; 13:1). Yet, Christ is *greater* because he has “seven horns,” not lesser! He doesn’t have “a lot of power,” he has “all power.” Later these ten horns are said to be “ten kings who have not yet received royal power” (17:12). It is debated whether they are literal human rulers or not.
- 4. 12 relates to the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles.
  - a. When we find a 12, we usually find a reference to “all of Israel” or “all of the New Testament church.”
  - b. An example is the New Jerusalem where you have the 12 gates named after the 12 tribes (21:12) and then “12 foundations” named after the “12 apostles of the Lamb” (21:14). This tells us the New Jerusalem includes all the saints from the Old and New Testaments.
- 5. 1,000 is symbolic and means “all of” something, a complete set. But it’s also a big number and so meant to communicate something extremely large (or *long* if it’s years). The 144,000 in chapter 7 isn’t just “all of” God’s people but a reminder that there will be a huge number of God’s people proclaiming his glory. The symbolic nature of 1,000 gets more obvious as we see how the number is used in the book:
  - a. The angels around the throne are “many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands” (5:11).
  - b. The “mounted troops” at the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet number “twice ten thousand times ten thousand” (9:16) or 200,000,000. The classical premil George Ladd and the amil Hendriksen both see this number as symbolic and simply meaning *an enormous horde*.
  - c. The “144,000” in 7:4; 14:1, 3; which are 12 (tribes) x 12 (apostles) x 1,000 (big and complete) (7:4–8).
  - d. New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia (1,380 miles) in length, width, and height (21:16). It’s a cube, and it’s *massive*. But as a cube, think “holy of holies” in the OT, the only other cube in the Bible. Because it’s a cube, this feels like a symbolic image and not a literal one.

6. Three-and-a-half is another significant number but more complicated. John uses “1,260 days,” “42 months,” “three-and-a-half-years,” “time, times, and half a time.”
- a. If we take a month as 30 days, then a year is 12 months/360 days. 3 ½ years is 42 months and 1,260 days. If a year is a “time,” then “time, times, and half a time” is 1+2+½ or 3 ½.
  - b. In other words, all these time descriptions are equivalent. All of these are the same three-and-a-half.
  - c. But why 3 ½? This number comes from Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week in Daniel 9, which comes after the 69<sup>th</sup> week:
 

And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed.<sup>27</sup> And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.” (Dan 9:26–27)
  - d. In Daniel 9:25 we read of “the coming of an anointed one, a prince,” and so the “anointed one” and the “prince” are the same person—**Christ!**
  - e. In the 70<sup>th</sup> week, Christ the “anointed one” is “cut off” (crucified), and he is also “the prince” who shall “destroy the city” of Jerusalem in AD 70. He works through the Roman general Titus, but it is Christ really leading this attack.
  - f. Halfway through this 70<sup>th</sup> week, “he shall put an end to sacrifice and offering” (9:27), which is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. The city is destroyed in 9:26, sacrifices end in 9:27. Sacrifice ends spiritually with the rending of the veil at the crucifixion, physically with the destruction of the temple in AD 70.
  - g. The second half of this week or 3 ½ days concludes when “the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” (Dan 9:27)—**the devil**.
  - h. This means that Daniel’s 70 weeks depict all of human history from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Dan 9:25) until the destruction of the devil in the lake of fire.<sup>8</sup>
  - i. Within this framework, then, half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week is the entire church age—or 3 ½ days.
  - j. *Therefore, the number 3 ½ in Daniel 9:27 refers to the entire church age.*

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars who read Daniel 9:25–27 include Kim Riddlebarger, Sam Storms, Meredith Kline.

- k. This lines up well with the use of 3 ½ in Revelation.<sup>9</sup>
- 1) 11:2, holy city trampled for “forty-two months.”
  - 2) 11:3, two witnesses (i.e., the church) prophesy for 1,260 days (1,260/30 days = 42 months = 3.5 years).
  - 3) 12:6, woman (i.e., the church) nourished by God in wilderness for 1,260 days.
  - 4) 12:14, woman (i.e., the church) nourished in wilderness for “time, times, and half a time.”
  - 5) 13:5, beast utters blasphemies and opposes people of God for “forty-two months.”

#### B. The Two Witnesses

1. These “two witnesses” (11:3) represent the church (Beale, Hendriksen).
2. First, because of their ministry, a ministry of witness and prophecy.
3. Second, because of the duration of their ministry: “1,260 days” (11:3). This is Revelation code for “the church age.”
4. It is only when “they have finished their testimony” that “the beast...from the bottomless pit” will kill them (11:7).
5. Yet, where they ministered for 1,260 days, their death will last only 3 ½ days (11:9) and then God will beath life into them again (11:11). This all occurs just prior to the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which is the declaration of Christ’s eternal reign (11:15). Thus, the devil will have some short-lived victory over the church at the end.

#### C. The Woman

1. In Chapter 12 “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (12:1) gives birth to a male child who is violently opposed by “a great red dragon” (Satan, 12:9). This “male child” who is to rule the nations is taken up “to God and to his throne” (12:5).
2. The woman is “the faithful community” both before and after Christ (Beale, NIGTC, 625). The sun, moon, and stars idea echoes Gen 37:9 where in Joseph’s dream these all bow to him.

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<sup>9</sup> One exception being 11:9, 11, where the two witnesses are dead for 3 ½ days. Beale says that the brief time of their apparent defeat at the hands of Satan is presented as brief compared to the 1,260 days of their ministry (NIGTC, 594–595). Their death is right before their glorification, so it fits with a great tribulation at the end of the church age when many Christians will likely die.

3. After Christ ascends (12:5), she lives hidden by God in the wilderness for “1,260 days,” or, “the church age.”

#### D. The Anti-Trinity

1. Beginning in chapter 12 is the appearance of an “anti-Trinity” (Hendriksen), which includes the Dragon (12:3), the “beast from the sea” (13:1) with “ten horns and blasphemous names on its heads” (13:1), and “the beast from the earth/land” (13:11) who is also the false prophet and a kind of anti-Holy Spirit as he does miraculous signs and speaks (16:13).
2. The Dragon is Satan (12:9).
3. The Beast from the Sea is “civil authorities” in opposition to God (a clue is that the beast has “ten horns” with “ten diadems”).
4. The Beast from the Land is “false religion” in opposition to God (clue is in 13:11–17 where it is so connected to false worship and appears as a “parody of Christ.”
5. “The beast” and “the false prophet” are “thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur” in Rev 19:20. “The devil” is thrown into the lake of fire in Rev 20:10.

#### E. Babylon

1. The name ties this city to the OT city of Babel/Babylon (Gen 11; Dan 4:30) but also to Rome (see 1 Peter 5:13).
2. It is a picture of wealth, self-indulgence of all kinds, self-importance, godlessness, and idol worship. Not clear how much it ties to an actual city in John’s message (whether Rome, Jerusalem, or a future city). With Beale and Hendriksen, I lean toward it being symbolic for the world and its opposition to God.
3. Mounce: “It is a symbol of the spirit of godlessness that in every age lures people away from the worship of the Creator. It is ‘the dark counterpart of Jerusalem,’ the final manifestation of ‘secular humanism’ in its attempt to destroy the remaining vestiges of true religion. Society set free from God is its own worst enemy” (NICNT, 271).

### V. Four Views on the History of the Events Described in Revelation

- A. Historicism – Written chronologically in order from John’s day to eternal state



“Historicism can plausibly claim to read Revelation quite straightforwardly as a series of sequential visions that symbolize, in order, the sequence of events that span the history of the church, from John’s day to the second coming, millennium, last judgment, and the eternal state.”<sup>10</sup>

1. This view holds that you can more-or-less read Revelation chronologically. It progresses from John’s day to the last day as its chapters unfold.
2. Medieval Catholics saw “the beast from the sea” as the rise of Islam. Reformers saw the harlot Babylon as the Roman church and its papacy.<sup>11</sup>
3. Historicists of every generation simply re-interpret the dramatic signs described by John according to their own place in church history. Yet, there are too many signs given to us that John is not writing such “history in advance,” but is giving us different scenes of the present and future, only some of which are in chronological order.

B. Futurism – It’s future to us, not just to John

“Futurism, as the name indicates, views Revelation’s visions as concentrated on events still largely future not only to John’s first-century readers but also to us twenty-first-century readers—events that will immediately precede the second coming of Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

1. In other words, most of the book refers to the return of Christ and the years immediately preceding that.
2. This view dominates much of the conservative Christian landscape (Sam Storms). It has adherents among Charismatics who are post-millennial (we’ll get to the millennium in another post), Baptists who are Dispensational, scholars like Wayne Grudem (cf. his *Systematic Theology*), D.A. Carson, George E. Ladd, Daniel Wallace. Also the view of Tim LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series.

C. Preterism – Much of it has already happened and concerns the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

“Preterists may be either amillennial (Jay E. Adams) or postmillennial (David Chilton, Kenneth Gentry) in their interpretation of Revelation 20....The defining feature of preterism is not its understanding of the

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<sup>10</sup> Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2001), 353.

<sup>11</sup> Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, 353.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, 355.

conditions on earth during the time period symbolized by the ‘thousand years’ of Revelation 20. Rather, preterists of all millennial viewpoints share a common agreement that a large proportion of Revelation’s visions were fulfilled in the early Christian centuries.”<sup>13</sup>

1. Preterists can hold to an earlier date and so believe that the book largely concerns the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70, or they can hold to a later date and see John’s contemporary situation in the AD 90’s as the fulfillment of the prophecies.
  2. Keith Mathison<sup>14</sup> affirms this position, and Kenneth Gentry<sup>15</sup> has written and spoken extensively on it.
- D. Recapitulation (Idealism, Iterism, progressive parallelism) – John retells the history of the church with different emphases each time.

“Idealism is sometimes called iterism or recapitulationism because it interprets Revelation as a series of repeated symbolic pictures of the church’s struggle from John’s day until the second coming, the last judgment, and the eternal state. Thus Revelation offers multiple images that provide different perspectives on the same great warfare, sometimes in terms of its behind-the-scenes heavenly sources and at other times in terms of their visible, earthly outworking in the experience of churches, countries, and cultures.”<sup>16</sup>

1. Excellent resources: William Hendriksen’s *More than Conquerors*; Dennis Johnson’s, *The Triumph of the Lamb*. Dennis Johnson also does the notes in the *ESV Study Bible*.
2. Other advocates: Anthony Hoekema (*The Bible and the Future*), B.B. Warfield in at least 1928,<sup>17</sup> [G.K. Beale](#) in his massive NIGTC commentary and shorter abridgement of it, [Vern Poythress](#)’ *The Returning King*, Sam Storms’ *Kingdom Come*.

## VI. Progressive Parallelism (Recapitulation) Further Defined

Tolkien’s *LOTR* uses a similar kind of story-telling technique. He retells the same events from the viewpoint of different characters. Each set of chapters connected to the respective characters is “parallel.” Revelation is doing that with the church age.

- A. Anthony Hoekema’s definition:

<sup>13</sup> Dennis Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb*, 358.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/preterist-approach-revelation-unfolding-biblical-eschatology>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2020/11/06/i-am-not-a-preterist/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>17</sup> See B.B. Warfield, “The Millennium and the Apocalypse,” *Biblical Doctrines* (NY: Oxford, 1928).

“According to this view, the book of Revelation consists of seven sections which run parallel to each other, each of which depicts the church and the world from the time of Christ’s first coming to the time of his second coming.<sup>18</sup>

## B. The Parallel Elements

1. Passages about the “End-time” – Each of the seven sections contains a passage (or more than one) that depicts the “end-time”—Christ’s return, final judgment, or the age to come in some way.

Anthony Hoekema:

When one asks, How do we know when one of these seven parallel sections ends (except for the first one, which forms an obvious unit), the answer is that **each of the seven ends with an indication that the end-time has come**. This is the strongest clue for the recapitulation view. Such an indication may be given in terms of a reference to the final judgment at the end of history, or to the final blessedness of God’s people, or to both.<sup>19</sup>

2. The revelation of Christ has this same parallel aspect:
  - a. He is the Lion/Lamb in 5:5–10 crucified and raised;
  - b. The “man child” in 12:1–6 ascended to God’s right hand for 1,260 days but then also the deliverer of God’s wrath in 14:14–20;
  - c. The returning “King of kings” in 19:11–16;
  - d. The Lamb in the new heaven and new earth worshiped by the servants of God in 22:3

## C. The Progressive Elements

1. There is a high-level progress: Hoekema points out that the first half of the book (1–11) sees “the struggle on earth, picturing the church as it is persecuted by the world.” The second half (12–22) “gives us the deeper spiritual background of this struggle, setting forth the persecution of the church by the dragon (Satan) and his helpers. In the light of this analysis, we see how the last section of the book (20–22) falls into place. This last section describes the judgment which falls on Satan, and his final doom. Since Satan is

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<sup>18</sup> Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 223.

<sup>19</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 224.

the supreme opponent of Christ, it stands to reason that his doom should be narrated last.”<sup>20</sup>

2. The progress is also evident as each of the seven sections tends to highlight more and more *the final major eschatological events of the church age (or even the age to come, as in chaps 21–22)*.

## VII. Progressive Parallelism: The 7 Sections

- A. Section 1 – chaps 1-3
  1. Key events: Introduction to the book, Letters to the 7 churches
  2. View of the End:
    - a. This opening section contains more general references.
    - b. Jesus is “coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him” (1:7)
    - c. The letters to the churches contain many eschatological promises to those who “overcome” (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21).
  3. Key Unique Material: Who Christ is, what God asks of us in the churches
- B. Section 2 – chaps 4-7 (though technically 4:1–8:1)
  1. Key events: Throne of God and the Lamb (4–5); 7 seals (6:1–8:1)
  2. View of the End
    - a. Rev 6:12–7:17 is the 6<sup>th</sup> seal (7<sup>th</sup> is 8:1, silence in heaven for half an hour).
    - b. Judgment: Stars fall from the sky (6:13), kings of the earth hide themselves and pray for death (6:15–16), because “the great day of their wrath has come” (6:17).
    - c. Redemption: The 144k sing the of God’s redemption “clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (7:9). They shall never hunger or thirst and be forever with the Lord (7:15–17).
  3. Key Unique Material: Much! God enthroned, the Lamb revealed, the day of wrath and redemption gets developed for the first time in Revelation.
- C. Section 3 – chaps 8-11 (technically 8:2–11:19)
  1. Key events: Seven Trumpets (8:2–11:19).

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<sup>20</sup> Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 226.

- a. Once again it is the 6<sup>th</sup> of the series that is longest and most developed, covering 9:13–11:14.
  - b. During the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet era, “the holy city” is trampled for “forty-two months” (11:2). Two Witnesses rise up with authority to “prophesy” for 1,260 days (11:3). They are also called “two olive trees” and “two lampstands” (11:4). These “two witnesses” are the Church, described in her prophetic role, her preaching role (lampstand), and by her sacraments (olive trees). The Church’s ministry endures for 1,260 days or *the church age*. The Church is killed in the great war (11:7) and dead for “3 ½ days” (11:9). But then God will give them “a breath of life” (11:11) and shall call them to himself in heaven (11:12).
2. View of the End: 11:15–18 (7<sup>th</sup> trumpet) speaks of the arrival and accomplishment of the kingdom and rule of “the Lord God Almighty”:

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.”<sup>16</sup> And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,<sup>17</sup> saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.<sup>18</sup> The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.” (Rev 11:15–18)

3. Key Unique Material: The Church’s ministry and destiny in chapter 11—a ministry of prophetic teaching and the sacraments, bitterly opposed by God’s enemies. So much so that the Church will die and yet rise again at Christ’s return.
- D. Section 4 – chaps 12–14
1. Key events:
    - a. **Christ “the man child’s”** birth, death, and ascension is described (12:1–6).
    - b. Also, the Anti-Trinity is revealed: The Devil (12:9), “a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads” (13:1), and “another beast rising out of the earth” (13:11).

- c. Satan is introduced but then presented as immediately defeated by “Michael and his angels” (12:7) and “thrown down” (12:9).
- d. His response is to pursue and persecute “the woman who had given birth to the male child” (12:13).
- e. But she is hiding in the “wilderness” for “time, and times, and half a time” (12:14). Also said to be “nourished” in the wilderness” for “1,260 days” (12:6).
- f. **The beast of the sea** connected with “haughty and blasphemous words” (13:5), and he exercises authority “for forty-two months” (13:5). The “ten horns” with “ten diadems” speak to governmental power (13:1). As does the fact this beast is “like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth” (13:2). Satan gives this beast “his power and his throne and great authority” (13:2). Hendriksen says, “the sea-beast symbolizes the persecuting power of Satan, embodied in all the nations and governments of the world throughout all history. World-dominion directed God’s people wherever and whenever it appears in history, that is the beast. This beast assumes different forms; it has seven heads.”<sup>21</sup> Ladd says this beast represents “civil power, satanically inspired.”<sup>22</sup>
- g. **The beast from the land** is different. Seems to be a fraud, “two horns like a lamb” but “spoke like a dragon” (13:11) as “a parody of Christ,”<sup>23</sup> and “makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast” (13:12). Even performs “great signs” (13:13). Later this beast will be called “the false prophet” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Ladd says this beast “represents religious power employed to support civil power.”<sup>24</sup>

## 2. View of the End

- a. 14:1 introduces again the “144,000,” but this time they are in heaven after God’s judgment. That’s why “I heard a voice from heaven” (14:2). They are also “the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth” (14:3).
- b. As the scene progresses, Christ appears: “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” (14:14). He is told to “reap” (14:15) and

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<sup>21</sup> Hendriksen, *More than Conquerors*, 145.

<sup>22</sup> G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Eerdmans, 1972), 183.

<sup>23</sup> G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Eerdmans, 1972), 183.

<sup>24</sup> G.E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Eerdmans, 1972), 183.

then “the earth was reaped” (14:15). This reaping as a result of God’s wrath results in a dramatic and bloody end to God’s enemies (14:19–20). *But the end here does not yet involve the Anti-Trinity* (Devil, beast from the sea, beast from land/false prophet). That awaits the next section.

3. Key Unique Material: Christ and Satan enter the picture more explicitly. We are presented as the “offspring” of the woman—remember Genesis 3:15! This is also a key passage to see that Revelation isn’t giving us a chronological telling of history but is giving us different ways to view it. Satan’s demise is presented by various images. The image here is the wrath of God being delivered by the reaping of the Son.

E. Section 5 – chaps 15–16

1. Key events: 7 bowls of wrath.
2. View of the End
  - a. During the 6<sup>th</sup> bowl (16:12–16), we read about “Armageddon” (16:16), the place where the Anti-Trinity influences “the kings of the world” (16:13–14), and they gather “for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (16:14). The Anti-Trinity is present but in a more indirect manner: “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” (Rev 16:13).
  - b. But then is the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl, which is poured and “a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’” (16:17). Then is a hailstorm of 100-lb hailstones and people are cursing God because of it (16:21). It is the battle that wasn’t. The battle between an angry and self-important Enemy of God—and God himself. God says, “Enough!” And it’s over.
3. Key Unique Material: Armageddon with a clear mention of the Anti-Trinity present at this final battle. They are not portrayed as destroyed but simply present.

F. Section 6 – chaps 17–19

1. Key events: A lot happens in these chapters!
  - a. The judgment of “**the great prostitute**” (17:1) who is “sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns” (17:3). In other words, it’s the earlier “**beast rising out of the sea**” (13:1). “The great prostitute” is “Babylon the great” (17:5) and is all that is the

world which seduces God's people away from God himself, his holiness, and his Word.

- b. Riding atop the beast from the sea, the world powers throughout history are utilized to help with this seduction. Worldliness and worldly power are seen as totally intertwined with Satan himself, and "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 who are with him are called and chosen and faithful" (17:14).
  - c. In chapter 18 this "Babylon" is judged.
  - d. In 19:1–10 those in heaven celebrate God's salvation and triumph and glory. They see the victory over the prostitute and celebrate it. Then they celebrate all those "invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9). Note the contrast between "the great prostitute" seducing the world with her worldiness, and "the marriage supper of the Lamb."
  - e. Then comes the great arrival of **Christ on his white horse** (19:11–16) with "the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure...following him on white horses" (19:14).
  - f. When Christ comes he confronts "the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies" (19:19). **The beast and the false prophet** are defeated and "**thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur**" (19:20).
2. View of the End: Chapters 18–19 is an extended scene of God's judgment and triumph over all that opposes him. The only one left out? *The devil himself*. We're not quite to THE end.
  3. Key Unique Material:
    - a. The present: These chapters reveal the massively seductive power of worldliness in its full opposition to God and his people. Sex, wealth, power, and earthly success are even now being used by the devil to tempt and destroy us.
    - b. The future return of Christ and his total and almost instant victory: With this section we begin to see in more detail the sheer dominance and glory of Christ, our "King of kings and Lord of lords."
    - c. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb: This is what awaits us!
- G. Section 7 – chaps 20–22
1. Progressive Parallelism
    - a. The parallel elements: The church age (20:1–6), God's judgment (20:7–15), and future redemption (21:1–22:5) are presented as in earlier sections. In some form or fashion, we have seen all these before.



- b. The progressive elements: Yet, there is only a short section on the present era (20:1–6) and an enormous development of future redemption with material not all seen before in such a full way (21:1–22:5).
  2. Key events: Millennium, devil and his army destroyed, white throne judgment, new heaven and new earth.
  3. View of the End
    - a. After millennial imprisonment of the devil, there is the war to end all wars. Since this is THE END, at this last battle all the key players are present. The devil himself is “thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (20:10).
    - b. Then the “great white throne judgment” where everyone is judged “according to what they had done” (20:8-15).
    - c. And finally, “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1) where “the dwelling place of God is with man” (21:3) and all the effects of sin and its curse are removed and a new fullness of life begins (21:4). “New Jerusalem” is described (21:2, 9–27), which is either a city or a people. It’s not easy to decide between these. If it’s a people, it’s showing what we find in places like 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The idea of being chosen, royal, holy, precious is captured by the New Jerusalem imagery.
    - d. We meet again “the tree of life” (22:1) and “the river of the water of life” (22:1–2) before “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1).
    - e. What will we do? “His servants will worship him” (22:3). We shall see his face (22:4). And “they will reign forever and ever” (22:5).
  4. Key Unique Material: The destruction of the devil, the scene of final judgment, and the “new heaven and new earth” are all unique to this final section of Revelation. How much we agree with John’s close: “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20).

**VIII. Chart of the 7 Seals, 7 Trumpets, 7 Bowls of Wrath and Similarities**

<b>The Repeating Cycle of 7 Seals, Trumpets, Bowls of Wrath Repetition with Growing Intensity</b>			
#	7 Seals	7 Trumpets	7 Bowls of Wrath
1 <sup>st</sup>	6:1-2 – Living creature goes out to conquer	8:2-7 – 1/3 earth burned up	16:1-2 – “Painful sores” on those with "mark of the beast"
2 <sup>nd</sup>	6:3-4 – Living creature brings war	8:8-9 – 1/3 ships, sea creatures destroyed, 1/3 sea becomes blood	16:3 – Everything in sea destroyed
3 <sup>rd</sup>	6:5-6 – Living creature brings famine	8:10-11 – 1/3 waters embittered, many die	16:4-7 – Rivers/springs become blood, Lord worshiped as holy and righteous
4 <sup>th</sup>	6:7-8 – Living creature kills ¼ of the earth	8:12 – sun and moon struck and darkened, 1/3 stars fall	16:8-9 – Sun scorches people, but men do not repent
5 <sup>th</sup>	6:9-11 – Souls slain because of word of God given white robes	8:13-9:12 – Locusts destroying who rise up from "the bottomless pit" (v. 2), kill for 5 months	16:10-11 – Kingdom of beast darkened, but did not repent
6 <sup>th</sup>	6:12-17 – Sun became black, moon to blood, stars fell, mountains & islands removed, kings cry out	9:13-21 – 4 angels kill 1/3 mankind, but rest of mankind did not repent (vv. 20-21)	16:12 – Euphrates dried up.
	7:1-17 – 144,000 sing of God's salvation, who survived the "tribulation"	10:1-11:14 – "Holy city" trampled for 42 months and two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days (same as 42 months). **Beast (cf. 13:1ff.) kills them, but after 3 ½ days Witnesses resurrected.	16:13-16 – False prophet comes out of mouth of Dragon and mouth of the Beast (thus, False Prophet = Beast from the Sea = False religions); Assembled at Armageddon. (Note: 20:7-10 says devil, beast, false prophet thrown into lake of fire after 1,000 years ended)
7 <sup>th</sup>	8:1 – ½ hour silence in heaven	11:15-19 – Celebration that the kingdom of the world now the kingdom of God.	16:17-21 – Cry by "seventh angel" is, "It is done!" (v. 17). Earthquake, "great city" Babylon destroyed, hailstones destroying, people blaspheming and not repenting.

**IX. Therefore...**

Revelation 22:18-21:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Malcomb Guite:

So we begin to contemplate the end,  
With shadowed glimpses of apocalypse.  
How can we even start to understand?  
The heavens shaken, and the vast eclipse  
Of everything that we have ever known,  
Then, suddenly revealed, the power and glory,  
Once veiled in symbols of the lamb and throne,  
The all-revealing climax of our story.

About that day, you tell us, no one knows,  
But we must wake and watch for you, look up.  
Yet hidden in this warning you disclose  
A tender yearning, a deep stirring hope,  
And bid us, in the visions that you bring,  
To see the world's end as a sign of spring.  
Malcomb Guite, "World's End"<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Malcomb Guite, "World's End," *Parable and Paradox: Sonnets on the Sayings of Jesus and other poems* (Canterbury: Norfolk, 2016), 73.