

Overview of The Book of Revelation

The Apocalypse given to John is full of symbolism, complex visions, events repeated in different forms and narrative requiring wisdom. In order to understand Revelation it is, therefore, crucial to have an overview of the whole book. This means that one must understand the basic reason for the writing of it, what it is basically about and how it is structured. Unless this is done, it is impossible to see what God is saying. Without this necessary preparation it is possible to make a myriad interpretations, saying just about any imaginable thing possible.

So before we begin to expound chapters and verses, we must see the wood for the trees and get a foundational understanding of the scope of the whole vision and its purpose. The best way to do this is by first looking at some diagrams, which show the cyclic structure of the messages.

The reason for this is that Revelation is a repeated re-iteration of God's purpose in salvation seen from different standpoints. There are seven sections that show the victory of Christ and the fulness of God's plan for the elect from a heavenly and earthly viewpoint. First an event is seen from this perspective, then from another; first by one symbol, then by another. The overriding message concerns the sovereignty of God's decree, the victory of Christ and the security of his people.

So, first we look at several diagrams to show the cyclic progression of visions and how they relate to salvation history throughout the Gospel Age. Then we give a concise analysis of the chapters. After this we need to evaluate the use of symbolism and other themes so that we can best understand what John is saying. Then we will begin to study the specific sections in more detail.

Seven parallel visions.

Some sound commentators that adopt a form of this view:

1. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*; (US Reformed Presbyterian).
2. RCH Lenski, *Interpretation of St John's Revelation*; (Lutheran).
3. SL Morris, *The Drama of Christianity*.
4. BB Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines*; (US Reformed Presbyterian).
5. Herman Hoeksema, *Behold, He Cometh*; (Dutch Reformed Presbyterian).
6. Ron Hanks, Unpublished study; (Dutch/American Reformed Presbyterian).
7. Louis Berkhof, *NT Introduction*; (Dutch/American Reformed Presbyterian).
8. MF Sadler, *Revelation of St. John the Divine*.
9. CD Alexander, *Revelation Spiritually Understood*; (English Reformed Baptist).

Repeated time-frame

Various sections describe the Gospel Age in terms of the same time period but with different designations:

- Section 3 on the trumpets (c8-11) - 42 months (11:2) and 1260 days (11:3).

- Section 4 on Christ versus the dragon (c12-14) – 1260 days (12:6) and ‘a time and times plus half a time’; i.e. 3^{1/2} years (12:14).

All these time periods are the same; therefore, these two sections are parallel explanations.

Repeated events

- Section 3 (8-11) describes the same period as c20 (evidenced by careful comparison).
- Section 3 is synonymous with section 4 (see above).
- Section 3 (trumpets) is also parallel to section 5 (‘bowls’, 15-16). Compare:
 - 1st trumpet and 1st bowl affect the earth (8:7; 16:2).
 - 2nd trumpet and 2nd bowl affect the sea.
 - The 3rd trumpet and the 3rd bowl affect the rivers.
 - The 4th trumpet and bowl affect the sun.
 - The 5th trumpet and bowl refer to the pit of the abyss (the throne of the beast).
 - The 6th trumpet and bowl refer to the river Euphrates.
 - The 7th trumpet and bowl refer to the Second Coming and judgment.
- The fourth section (12-14) describes the rise of the dragon, the beasts and the harlot (Babylon) and this will have much correspondence with the sections outlining their judgment. The sixth section (17-19) describes the fall of Babylon and the beasts. The seventh section follows the fall of the dragon (Satan, 20:10). The final judgment is one event, therefore these two sections must be parallel.
- Section 5 (bowls, 15-16) ends in a battle (‘the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle’, 16:14). Section 6 (Babylon, 17-19) ends with a battle (‘the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war’, 19:19). Section 7 (20-22) refers to a battle (‘to gather them [the nations] together to battle’, 20:8) before describing the new world. These are clearly parallel, describing the events leading up to the last battle.

This sort of parallelism is seen in other Biblical apocalyptic passages, such as Daniel. Here we see that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2) exactly parallels the picture of the four beasts (Dan 7). The same time period is covered twice from different aspects, referring to world empires in history.

Two sets of visions

Above the seven parallel sections there are two divisions of visions. In broad terms, the first applies to the suffering of believers from an earthly perspective, the second set views this warfare from a heavenly vantage point.

We can summarise this as follows:

Section 1: The views from the believer’s experience on earth. Chapters 1-11.

- Three sub-sections (1-3; 4-7; 8-11).
- The world versus the church.
- The struggle between believers and the world.
- God avenges the church.
- The church is protected and victorious in the end.

Section 2: The view of the warfare from heaven. Chapters 12-22.

- Four sub-sections (12-14; 15-16; 17-19; 20-22)..
- What lies behind the church’s struggle is the eternal warfare between Christ and Satan.
- Having failed to defeat Christ, Satan (the dragon) attacks the church with fury.

- He uses three allies in this: the beast from the sea (physical persecution), the false prophet (the beast from the earth: religious/occult deception), and the harlot (Babylon – temptation to follow the world in all its forms).
- All these enemies are defeated in the end.

A more detailed analysis of the chapters follows later.

The unity of Revelation

Although we can divide the book into various sections and see developments from one to another, we must remember that the book is a unified whole. This is especially important in the face of criticism that it is a chaotic mess of visions.

Chapters 1-3

The description of Christ in chapter 1 is repeated in chapters 2 and 3, but applied to the churches. This indicates a very close harmony.

Christ in Rev 1	Christ in Rev 2-3
Seven stars in his right hand (1:16).	Seven stars in his right hand (2:1 & 3:1).
In the midst of the lampstands (1:13).	In the midst of the golden lampstands (2:1).
The first and last (11:17).	The first and last (2:8).
The one who was dead but is now living (1:18).	Was dead and came to life (2:8).
Has a two edged sword (1:16).	Has a two edged sword (2:12).
His eyes are as flames, feet like brass (bronze) (1:14-15).	His eyes are as flames, feet like brass (2:18).
Seven spirits before God's throne (1:4).	Seven spirits of God (3:1).
Faithful witness (1:5).	He who is true (3:7). Faithful & true witness (3:14).
Has the keys (1:18).	Key of David (3:7).
The firstborn of the dead (1:5).	The beginning of creation 3:14.

Symbolism

We know that John uses symbolism because he tells us so and sometimes interprets the symbol for us. Some symbols occur frequently, such as the number '7', which arises 54 times and cannot be ignored. The number seven is arranged in sets of three and four, or of four and three. This is another reason for believing that the arrangement of the book in seven sections is in line with the divine design.

We analyse the symbols used in Revelation in a separate paper.

Analysis of Ian Faux [Unpublished work c. 1973]

Seven sections, each covering the Gospel age viewed from different perspectives, which are all related to the conflict between Satan and Christ.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PERIOD	Rev 1-3	4-8:1	8:2-11:19	12-15:4	15:5-19:10	19:11-21	20:1-22:21
Old Testament dispensation		The heavenlies before the cross; 4:1-11		The woman is the OT church			
New Testament: cross, resurrection, government of Christ unfolded	Christ's message to the 7 churches	The heavenlies after the cross; 5:1-14. The seals of Christ's government.	8:6: The seven warning trumpets; see Ps 107 ↓	Her child – the Messiah, caught up to heaven, 12:5.	15:5, seven bowls of wrath, the last plagues to free the people of God.	19:11, the white horse of the Gospel conquest. The word of God and his army smite the nations.	Christ holds the key of the abyss. ↓
Satan cast out of heaven, confined to earth. His earthly inst: beast & false prophet.	2:13 Satan's throne. 2:24 Deep things of Satan.	↓	↓	12:7-12, Satan cast out of heaven, confined to earth. He wars against the church through the beast. C13.	16:10, Satan's kingdom in darkness.	↓	Satan bound and his power to deceive the Gentile nations is broken 20:2. ↓
Parenthesis: the security of the saints. Their testimony on earth. Babylon and her judgment.		7:1-17, The elect secured from evil and seen triumphant. ↓	Mystery of God preached c10. Temple measured c11. The 2 witnesses. All these speak of the church on earth.	14:1-13 the saints secure. The Gospel proclaimed. Babylon condemned.	17-18:24, Babylon explained, her overthrow and judgment.	↓	The saints reign with Christ as a kingdom of priests during the day of the Lord. The martyrs also reign with him.
Satan loosed. Kings assembled for final conflict. End of age: earthquake. The resurrection and judgment		6:12, The 6 th seal ushers in the end with an earthquake.	11:7, the Beast from the pit silences the testimony of the church. End time earthquake 11:19.	14:14-20, The resurrection of the just and the unjust. Final judgment.	16:12, the 6 th bowl summons God's enemies to the final battle of Armageddon. The final earthquake, 16:18.	19:19, the Beast gathers kings together for the final conflict. Judgment.	20:7, Satan loosed, he deceives the nations and gathers its kings for the final conflict. Judgment 20:11.
The new age: new heaven and earth. God's purpose completed.		8:1, heaven rests, the conflict is over with the 7 th seal		15:1-5 = the saints	19:7, the marriage of the Lamb.		C21-22, The new heavens and earth. The bride of Christ. The city of God.
Noted items		The earthquake is the symbol for the last day. (See Heb 12:26)	Note the period: 42 months, 1260 days, 3½ times which run parallel with each other.	The Beast has 7 heads which represent world empires. (Dan 7): Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome. The last is yet to come.	Babylon is Satan's answer to the church, both are women, both span Old and New Testament periods.	19:17, is a direct prophecy taken from Ezek 39:17, in which the Jews are restored to their own land before the final conflict.	

Analysis of Ron Hanko, based upon William Hendriksen

[Hanko, Unpublished study; Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, p48.]
 (Slightly adapted by Paul Fahy)

Christ's First Coming	1	The Christ-indwelt church in the world c1-3 <i>Lampstands</i>	The Second Coming	The Final Judgment	New Heaven & Earth
	2	The church suffering trial & persecution c4-7 <i>Seals</i>			
	3	The church avenged, protected & victorious c8-11 <i>Trumpets</i>			
	4	Christ opposed by the dragon c12-14 <i>Dragon</i>			
	5	Final wrath upon the wicked c15-16 <i>Bowls</i>			
	6	The fall of Babylon & the beasts c17-19 <i>Babylon</i>			
	7	The judgment & the victory c20-22 <i>Consummation</i>			

Clear area = The spiritual conflict as we see it.
 Shaded area = The spiritual background to the battle between Christ and Satan.

The seal reveals the trumpets, which reveal the bowls.
 Christ in the church leads to persecution and to victory.
 War between Christ and the dragon leads to judgment and victory.

Agreement between Hanko/Hendriksen and Faux:

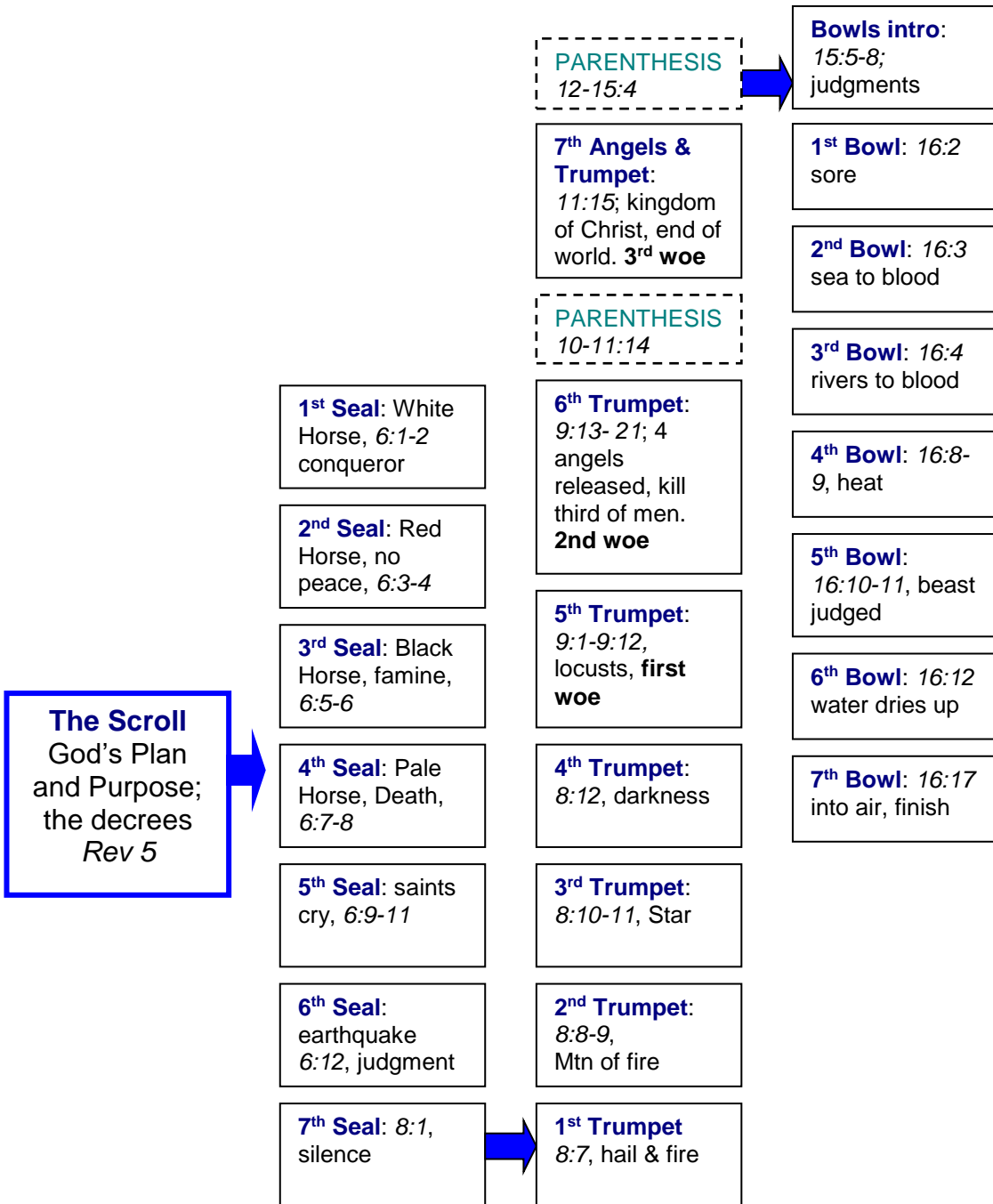
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Faux	Rev 1-3	4-8:1	8:2-11	12-15:4	15:5-19:10	19:11-21	20:1-22:21
Hanko / Hendriksen	Rev 1-3	4-7	8-11	12-14	15-16	17-19	20-22

There are only minor differences between these, with the only significant discrepancy being in sections 5 and 6. My view is below. It significantly follows Hendriksen but with one minor change in section 4/5. No one disputes the sections numbered 1 and 7. We can quibble about other details.

Analysis of Paul Fahy

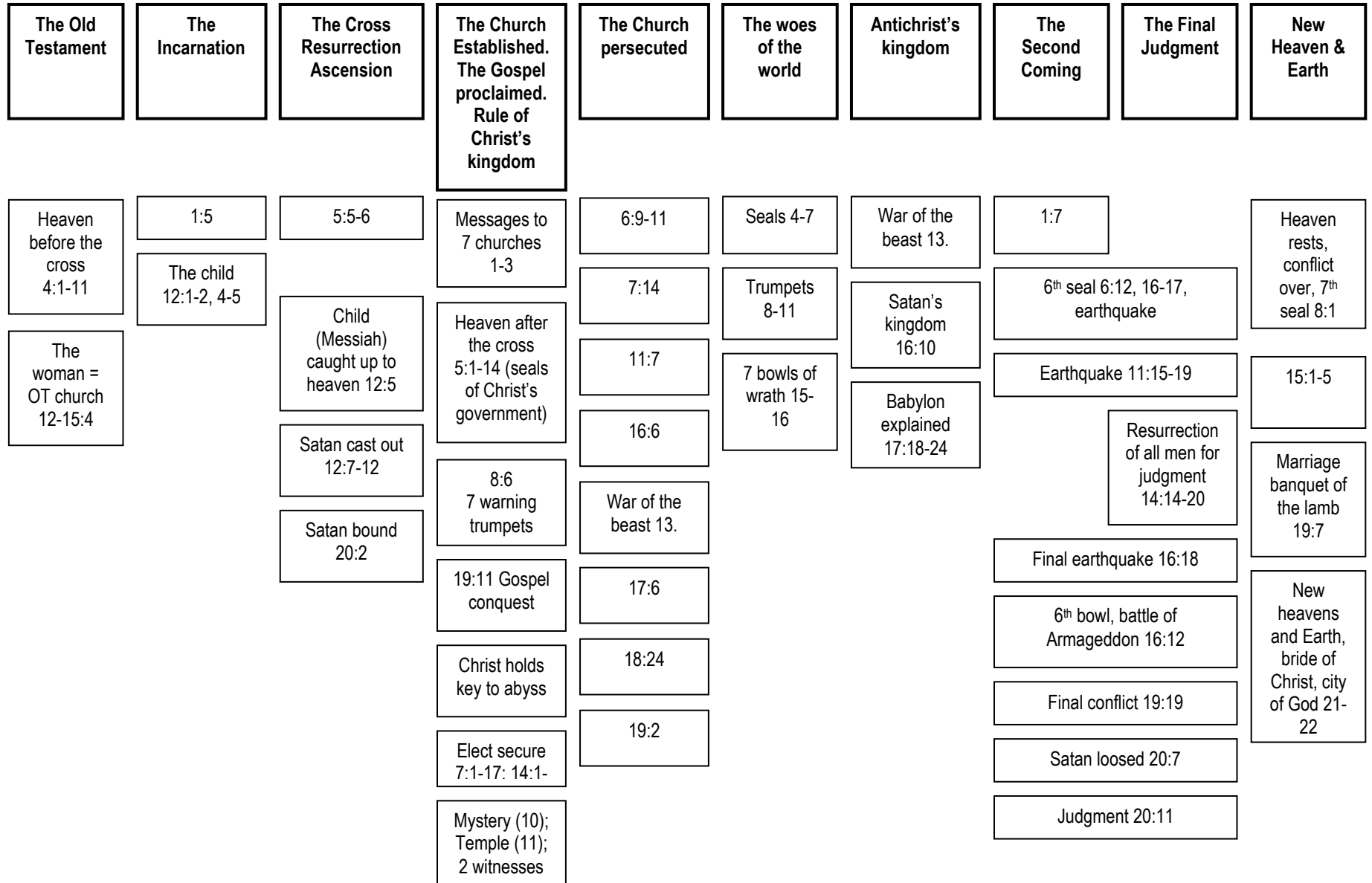
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Revelation	1-3	4-7	8-11	12-15:4	15:5-16	17-19	20-22
Subject	Intro. & Letters to the churches.	Trial of the elect.	Victory of the elect.	War on saints. Antichrist's satanic kingdom	Wrath on wicked.	Fall of Satan's kingdom.	Victory; new Heaven & Earth.
	Description of the Gospel Age from the perspectives of Heaven and Earth.						
	Mainly Earthly perspective.			Mainly heavenly perspective.			
	These span history.	This spans history, but some focus on the end.	This spans history, but some focus on the end.	Chief focus on the end.	Focus on the end.	Focus on the end.	Summary of history, the end & new beginning.
Key symbol(s)	Lampstand <i>(testimony)</i>	Seals <i>(judgments)</i>	Trumpet <i>(judgments)</i>	Dragon <i>(Satan – spiritual enemy)</i>	Bowl <i>(judgments)</i>	Babylon <i>(world system)</i>	City of God <i>(kingdom)</i>
		Scroll <i>(God's plan & decree)</i>	Two Witnesses <i>(church)</i>	Two beasts <i>(physical enemies)</i>			
		Lamb <i>(Christ)</i>	Temple <i>(church)</i>	Woman <i>(church)</i>	Temple <i>(church)</i>		

Seals, Trumpets, Bowls



Landmarks in Revelation

The Gospel Age



False ways to interpret Revelation

Preterist

The prophecies were fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of heathen Rome. It merely covers the early church having no relevance after John's time.

Problem: Revelation claims to be a prophecy (1:3; 4:1; 22:7; 10, 18, 19). The Second Coming is described and this has not yet occurred. E.g. liberal teachers.

Historicist

The prophecies are predictive of progressive history from the cross up to today, being partly fulfilled, partly unfulfilled. The visions are sequential. It symbolically teaches the Fall of Rome (the seals), the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the rise of Islam (locusts), the French Revolution etc. It depicts the Antichrist as the pope.

Problem: does great injustice to many symbols, especially the Antichrist. Tends towards a rationalist approach failing to see the spiritual application. It ignores the matter of time constraints within the book (e.g. 11:2, 12:6, 14). Most importantly, it makes the book useless to those it was originally written for by John. Many historicist interpreters vary greatly from one another on details; there is no universal agreement. E.g. the Reformers, many older commentaries, AJ Gordon, AB Simpson.

Idealist

The book is a summary of the continual war between God and Satan, or Christianity with paganism. There are no historical claims or predictions, just a picture of spiritual truth.

Problem: this ignores the prophetic nature of the book, which is clearly described and explicitly stated. It diminishes the book's value to real people in history.

Simple Futurist

Only the first three chapters relate to the present time or the time of John; from 4:1 refers to the Great Tribulation onwards; chapters 6-22 have reference to the absolute future of the Lord's Appearing (6-19), a supposed Millennium (20) and the eternal state (21-22). They use a strong literal interpretation. [Note that this is the view of John MacArthur.]

Problem: This is the mainstream Dispensational view, mostly Pre-Tribulational. If Rev 20:1-4 does not teach a future millennium (which it does not) then this view is false. This divests the bulk of the book, and the warnings in it, of any value to believers prior to the end. E.g. JA Seiss, CI Schofield, AC Gaebelien, HA Ironside etc.

Extreme Futurist

Even the first three chapters are a prophecy about the future Second Coming - being a prediction of the condition of the Jews after the first Resurrection; or they represent church periods throughout history. [E.g. many Brethren authors like W Kelly.]

Problem: This is extreme Dispensationalism and Pre-Tribulationism. The problems of Simple Futurism apply equally.

There are some aspects of some of these templates that have some value. The book is a graphic illustration of spiritual events; there *are* parts that have been fulfilled and parts awaiting fulfilment (as Historicism); it *does* illustrate the ongoing war in heaven (as Idealism). However, the Futurist and Preterist views have no value at all, ruining the book from having any relevance to you today. Reading any of the many popular books from these viewpoints will cause serious confusion.

Overview of the content of Revelation

Having identified the wrong way to approach Revelation, and having analysed the scope of the book with its key themes, we here open up the content of the teaching in groups of chapters. [This closely follows the method of William Hendriksen, but taking Herman Hoeksema, PE Hughes and Chas. Alexander into consideration.]

That John is using symbolism is clearly stated since he, at several points, interprets the symbols for us. He does this right at the beginning when he tells us that the stars in the Lord's right hand are the angels ('messengers' i.e. elders or leaders) of the churches and that the lampstands represent those churches. This is an early warning to approach the visions with caution and seek to understand the symbolism.

The purpose of writing the Revelation

Encouragement

In a nutshell, John is writing to encourage believers during a time of persecution; part of which was his own exile on Patmos. Such encouragement can be seen in portions such as:

- God sees the tears of believers (7:17, 21:4).
- The prayers of believers affect the world (8:3-4).
- The death of saints is very precious to God (15:2).
- Christ rules the world for the sake of the church (5:7-8).
- Final victory is certain (15:2).
- At the end all believers will share in the marriage supper of the Lamb (21:22) and know eternal life in the new world.

Like other NT letters the prime purpose is to teach the author's initial readers – those who were alive and would read the letter soon after writing. However, in God's plan the content is arranged in such a way as to be relevant to all believers throughout the Gospel Age. Indeed, a blessing is pronounced at the beginning on all (at any point in history) who read the prophecy (1:3) and all men that hear it are addressed at the end (22:18).

Thus the seven churches were real churches and addressed according to their characteristics at that time; yet these warnings stand as vitally appropriate to various churches throughout history. [While many churches in certain time-periods may have known the general characteristics of this or that church pictured in Revelation 2-3, this is not a snapshot of subsequent periods in church history, finalising in a poor Laodicean type church at the end (as the Futurist school). There are always exceptions and much variety amongst churches in the world. To state that this period was the Ephesian type church or that period revealed the characteristics of Smyrna is foolish.]

Thus Revelation is written by John, under God's inspiration, to encourage saints of all ages who undergo opposition, persecution and affliction. It is a book of comfort, assurance and edification.

To demonstrate the victory of Christ and the certainty of God's plan

This is the main theme of the book, expressed in various ways by a range of symbols and statements. It takes pains to show that our experience of suffering here on Earth, is not the full picture; the fruit of that experience is seen differently in heaven. To us we see hardship,

persecution, tribulation, affliction etc. but in heaven all this is but a stepping stone to the outworking of God's great victory in Christ.

We can tabulate this as follows:

The believer's perceived experience	The reality of God's grace
The saints have dirty garments (sin).	Yet they are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb (1:5; 7:14).
They experience the great tribulation (1:9; 2:9-10; 7:14).	Yet they are brought out of it (7:14).
They are martyred (17:6).	Yet they are made to stand (11:11).
They are persecuted (6:9; 12:11; 13:15; 16:6).	Yet they appear victorious on Mt Zion (14:1).
They suffer under the beast (13:7).	Yet they triumph over the beast (15:2).
Their prayers seem to be unheard (6:10).	Yet God's judgments on the earth are a result of those prayers (8:3-5).
They appear to be defeated and their death is celebrated by their enemies (11:7-10).	Yet they reign over those enemies (5:10; 20:4; 22:5).

Situations on Earth where the enemy seems to prevail and conquer are merely occasions where God allows superficial success in killing the saints to prepare the final conclusion – the absolute triumph of Christ over Satan forever and the glorification of God's eternal plan.

The victory of Christ is repeatedly stated throughout the book: 1:18; 2:8; 5:9+; 6:2; 11:15; 12:9+; 14:1, 14; 15:2+; 19:16; 20:4; 22:3. Every aspect of Satan's kingdom and strategy is defeated: death, Hades, the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the wicked. The enemies are defeated in reverse order to their appearance:

THE PROBLEM ARISES

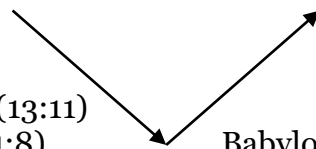
THE PROBLEM SOLVED

The dragon (12:3)

The beast (13:1)

The false prophet (13:11)

Babylon (14:8)



The dragon (20:10)

The false prophet (19:20b)

The beast (19:20a)

Babylon (18:2)

Thus the encouragement in this book is based upon the foundation of the victory of Christ who is governing all things for the church (Eph 1:22) according to God's eternal decree.

Overview of the Chapters of Revelation

The chapters form a series of seven parallel revelations regarding the victory of Christ over Satan. Each section focuses on a particular event or series of events within the whole Gospel dispensation.

Main Division 1: The struggle of the church with the world (c1-11)

This section centres upon the warfare of the church in the wilderness, our fight with the enemy, the struggle of faith and unbelief. Most of John's visions end with judgment; where judgment isn't explicitly stated, it is implied.

Section 1: Christ and the churches - part 1.

Jesus, the faithful witness and king of the world: The focus on Jesus as Lord and God, soon to return. (chapter 1:1-10)

As always in our discipleship, the matter of first importance is to focus upon Jesus above all things. Here we have submission and worship of the Lord, plus an emphasis upon his sovereignty.

The Lord Jesus Christ is identified in triplets as:

- The faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth (1:5).
- 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End*,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty' (1:8).
- Later he is described as: **the First and the Last ... [He] who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. [He who has] the keys of Hades and of Death (1:17-18).**

The persecuted churches are encouraged that Jesus is in control, that his coming is certain and that world events are pre-ordained according to God's plan. Despite being oppressed by kings on Earth, believers are themselves true kings and priests in God's eternal kingdom. Their cruel persecutors will one day mourn when Jesus returns. Our testimony on Earth at this time is described in another triple form as: **the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ (1:9).**

Section 1: Christ and the churches - part 2.

The Lord in the midst of the Lampstands: Jesus as the focus of the church's testimony (chapter 1:11-20)

- Jesus emphasises that the Revelation he gives John is for the comfort and assurance of the churches.
- Seven churches in Asia Minor are addressed, churches that John had been involved with to some degree (mainly at Ephesus).
- The number 'seven' identifies them as universal in historic scope, being the number of finished perfection. The messages have value to churches throughout history and are not identifying certain periods. Thus, these church problems are repeated throughout church history and require warnings. All of the church age is identified here, from Christ's incarnation (1:5) to his return (1:7).
- The churches are pictured as lampstands with Jesus in the centre. Lampstands give light and they shine upon Jesus. The church testifies and witnesses to the Lord; that is her spiritual job. It takes all the churches together to illuminate him, no one church is sufficient.

Section 1: Christ and the churches - part 3.

The testimony of the lampstands: Jesus' messages to the churches. (chapters 2-3)

1. EPHESUS. Testimony: some good, some bad. Key failing – having lost its first love,
2. SMYRNA. Testimony: good, despite suffering.
3. PERGAMOS (Pergamum). Testimony: some good, some bad. Key failing – toleration of some who held the doctrine of Balaam.
4. THYATIRA. Testimony: some good, some bad. Key failing: tolerating Jezebel.
5. SARDIS. Testimony: some good people, mostly bad. Key failing: deadness.
6. PHILADELPHIA. Testimony: good.
7. LAODICEA. Testimony: some good, some bad. Key failing: being lukewarm; saying that they needed nothing.

Note:

- Only two out of seven churches (28%) have no serious complaint against them.
- Suffering is not a problem issue.
- Doctrinal accuracy without love is wrong.
- Two churches have a serious problem with tolerating false ministry.
- One church is dead.

Section 2: The seven seals (chapters 4-7)

- 4:1 clearly marks the beginning of a new section.
- Emphasis upon God on the throne being worshipped.
- The light of the lampstands (spiritual testimony of the church) results in persecution from the world. [The 5th seal confirms this.]
- This is severe and results in the cry, 'How long, O Lord'.
- The willingness of Christians to undergo suffering is sealed to their hearts by the Spirit. This is an inward assurance that a believer is God's son.
- The seals are the unfolding of God's purpose on Earth. They lead to the trumpets and bowls.
- This section also covers the whole Gospel Age and ends with the glorious blessings of the elect.

Section 3: The seven trumpets (chapters 8-11)

- The key symbolism of trumpets is to sound a warning.
- These trumpets are warning judgments from God given throughout history (not consecutively). Thunder and lightning illustrate this.
- They affect all aspects of life on Earth: social life, politics and even climate (earth, sea, rivers, fountains, sun, air, battlefield).
- These judgments are the result of the world's persecution of believers and the prayer of believers (8:1ff).
- The church is described in 10-11.
- The section closes with the final judgment.

Main Division 2: The heavenly perspective on the war between Christ and Satan (12-22)

This is the second series of John's visions and a new dispensation. It gives us the spiritual perspective regarding the earthly warfare going on between Satan and the church in Christ; between the world and believers. The real war is between Satan and Christ; the dragon and the Lamb.

Section 4: Christ versus the dragon (chapters 12-14)

- This vision also covers the whole New Covenant dispensation.
- **THE DRAGON IS SATAN.**
- Satan seeks to devour the child (Jesus) of the woman (OT church) in labour (12:5); that is, to destroy the work of Christ or even Christ himself if he could. The child is taken into heaven's throne.
- Satan thus requires a new strategy and human allies.
- There are three allies or colleagues: the beast from the sea; the false prophet and Babylon.
- **THE BEAST (ANTICHRIST)** persecutes the physical body of believers through totalitarian political power. Physical temptation: to give in to violent force.
- **THE FALSE PROPHET, OR THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH**, is religious deception in partnership with the beast, seeking to delude Christians into spiritual corruption (occultism). Mental temptation: to yield the mind to deceit.
- **BABYLON, OR THE HARLOT**, is a seductress. This strategy aims to seduce believers into the world and away from Christ (worldliness). Emotional temptation: to succumb to hedonism and immorality.
- The section closes with a description of Christ's glorious return.
- While the essential aspects of this conflict are universal throughout history, the culmination of persecution in a global empire is particular to the end. Rev 20:1-4 explains that at the end Satan is released from bondage and is only then able to deceive the world into following him absolutely. Note 13:7-8, *It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life.* Thus chapter 13, and other following chapters expounding this aspect, are specifically about the final world-wide conflict when these strategies come to fulness.

Section 5: The seven bowls (chapters 15-16)

- The bowls are poured out wrath.
- This is judgment against the wicked.
- If the world does not listen to the warning trumpets and submit to God, they will receive wrath.
- This happens throughout history all the time.

Section 6: The judgment of the beasts and the harlot - Babylon (chapters 17-19)

These chapters are about the strategy and allies of Satan and how they are ultimately destroyed.

Section 7: The fullness of God's plan - part 1: The victory of Christ, (chapter 20)

- 20:1 begins a new subject [the judgment of the devil].
- The dragon is destroyed. Satan is finally judged after being let loose from his restraint.

- In the time of restraint (1,000 years i.e. a completed period of time allotted by God [10 x 10 x 10], the Gospel Age) Satan was prevented from deceiving the nations into killing the church and eradicating the Gospel message. [Remember that in John's time the whole world had not been reached.] Thus the Gospel was able to persevere throughout the globe. This binding does not mean that Satan can do nothing in this time, merely that he cannot gather the world into a global empire under his control. In other ways Satan is a roaring lion doing great damage.
- NB: in 20:4 'souls': during the Gospel Age those who have been martyred reign with Christ in heaven (not on Earth during a millennium). After this comes the Day of Judgement. The 1,000 years precede the Judgment Day not the other way round.
- The final judgment of the living and the dead.

Section 7: The fullness of God's plan - part 2: The Heavenly City (chapters 21-22)

- Then we have the description of the Holy City – eternal life in God's kingdom; a new heaven and restored Earth. [See key themes.]
- The blessings of the elect.

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