

Overview of the Book of Revelation

I. DAY OF THE LORD: 2 EXTREMES IN THE GENERATION JESUS RETURNS

¹¹ *For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)*

¹⁷ *For the great Day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)*

- A. The Book of Revelation gives us the most information on the End-Times in Scripture. The subject given the most emphasis and detail in the Book of Revelation is the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord refers to the unusual End-Time events related to the Second Coming of Jesus. These events will be very good for those who love Jesus and very terrible for those who refuse Him. The Day of the Lord activities come to fullness in the final 3½ years before Jesus returns.
- B. It will be a Great Day for the responsive and the greatest revival in history as the Church comes to victory full of God's glory and power. It will include miracles seen in the book Acts and the book of Exodus that will be combined and multiplied on a global scale.
- C. It will be a very Terrible Day to the rebellious because they will experience the most severe judgments of God in history along with Satan's rage against them. The negative dimension of the Day of the Lord is called the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1).

II. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

²¹ *There will be great Tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved... (Mt. 24:21-22)*

- A. The Great Tribulation emphasizes the negative dimensions of the 3½ years before Jesus' return. The great trouble will be caused by the wrath of God on the rebellious (three numbered judgment series: seals, trumpets, bowls), the rage of Satan seen in the Antichrist's reign of terror and the actions of evil people (on both believers and unbelievers) especially in murder, sorcery, immorality and theft (Rev. 9:21) along with convulsions in nature (earthquakes, storms, etc).
- B. The purpose of the Great Tribulation is to purify God's people, bring in the harvest (including the salvation of Israel), vindicate the saints, expose false believers within the Church, demonstrate God's power in protecting the saints (Rom. 9:17), punish sin (2 Thes. 1:6-10; Isa. 26:21), and purge earth from the defilement of sin (Isa. 24:4-6; Zech. 13:2).
- C. ***The principle of judgment:*** God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will in training the future rulers of the earth. The Goshen principle will be operative in this hour (Ex. 8:22-23).

³ *Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth...it may be that you will be hidden (protected from God's judgments) in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:3)*

III. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION: 4 MAIN PARTS

Pt. 1 Introduction (Rev. 1): John's commission to reveal Jesus' majesty and beauty

Pt. 2 Letters to the 7 Churches (Rev. 2-3): Exhortations to be overcomers

Pt. 3 The Heavenly Court (Rev. 4-5): Jesus receives the 7 sealed scroll

Pt. 4 Storyline on earth (Rev. 6-22): Tribulation, 2nd Coming, Millennium and New Jerusalem

The two structural features in the story line are the 5 chronological and 5 parenthetical sections.

1) **Five chronological sections** (they are written in a straight forward way)

First, the seven **Seals** (Rev. 6:1-17)

Second, the seven **Trumpets** (8:1-9:21)

Third, the **Rapture** of the Church (Rev. 11:15-19)

Fourth, the seven **Bowls** of wrath (Rev. 15:1-16:21)

Fifth, Jesus as **King** over the earth (Rev. 19:11-21:8) including His entry to Jerusalem

(Rev. 19:11-21) followed by the Millennium (Rev. 20) and the New Earth (Rev. 21:1-8)

2) **Five parenthetical sections** (Rev. 7:1-17; 10:1-11:13; 12:1-14:20; 17:1-19:10; 21:9-22:5)

Each parenthetical section follows a chronological section. These sections answer the questions that come up because of the severity of God's wrath as seen in the chronological sections. We ask what requires such severe judgments? *What will happen to the saints?*

IV. SEVEN PRIMARY SYMBOLS IN THE PARENTHETICAL SECTIONS

All the events and numbers in Revelation are taken in their plain meaning (literal) unless specifically indicated as symbolic as in Rev. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:1, 3, 9; 17:7, 9. Daniel used the same symbols.

A. **The dragon** (Satan): Rev. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4; 16:13; 20:2

B. **The first Beast** (Antichrist): Rev. 13; 14:9-11; 17:3-17; 19:19-21; 20:4, 10

C. **The second Beast** (False Prophet): Rev. 13:11-17; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10

D. **The 7 heads** (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3-16) are 7 empires through history that persecuted Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, revived Roman Empire).

E. **The 10 horns** (Dan. 2:41-42; 7:7, 20, 24; Rev. 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 12, 16) speak of a future 10-nation confederation that will be under the Antichrist's authority (Dan. 11:36-45).

F. **The Harlot** (Rev. 17-18; Isa. 13-14; 21; Jer. 50-51): is the city of Babylon on the Euphrates river that functions as the center for worldwide demonic religious and economic networks.

G. **The Woman with the Male-child** (Jesus) (Rev. 12:1-5): the woman is the faithful remnant of Israel through history. Satan makes war with her offspring (Gentile believers in the Tribulation).

V. PT. 1 INTRODUCTION (REV. 1): JOHN'S COMMISSION TO REVEAL JESUS' MAJESTY

¹ *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him (Jesus) to show His servants--things which must shortly take place. He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John...¹⁹ Write the things you have seen, and the things which are, and things which will take place... (Rev. 1:1, 19)*

- A. The Father's purpose in giving us the Book of Revelation is to reveal the beauty of Jesus. This book is first about Jesus and His leadership in preparing the nations to receive God's glory.
- B. It is secondarily a book about End-Time events. If we read the Book of Revelation right, it causes us to adore Jesus. Teaching on the End-Times is teaching on Jesus' beauty. Some say, "I'm not into the End-times." The End-times is the subject of Jesus' beauty and His leadership.

VI. PT. 2 LETTERS TO THE 7 CHURCHES (REV. 2-3): EXHORTATIONS TO OVERCOMERS

Jesus spoke prophetically to seven churches in first century Asia. His prophetic messages were intended to give us instruction on how to best prepare for His coming in the midst of the End-Time dynamics. We prepare by growing in love by being faithful in our obedience and faith. Jesus promised us eternal rewards (Rev 2:7, 10, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). If this suffering is seen in the right perspective, it loses its power to intimidate. The negative aspects that Jesus warned most about were heresy and immorality.

VII. PT. 3 THE HEAVENLY COURT (REV. 4-5): JESUS RECEIVES THE 7 SEALED SCROLL

In context to Heaven's Court, Jesus takes a 7 sealed scroll from the Father's hand. The scroll represented the title deed of the earth and the action plan required to prepare it for God's presence.

³ *The Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them (on earth)... (Rev. 21:3)*

VIII. PT. 4 STORYLINE ON EARTH (REV. 6-22): CHRONOLOGICAL/PARENTHETICAL SECTIONS

The storyline of Revelation focuses on what happens on earth during the Tribulation (3½ years), Jesus' Coming, the Millennial Kingdom and when the New Jerusalem descends to earth. The two main literary features in the structure of the book are the 5 chronological sections and the 5 parenthetical sections.

IX. THE THREE NUMBERED JUDGMENT SERIES (7 SEALS, 7 TRUMPETS, 7 BOWLS)

- A. The 3 judgment series are God's judgments against unbelievers as He purges the earth. They are literal (actual events not to be explained away symbolically), future (their greatest fulfillment is future), progressive (increasing in intensity) and numbered (released in a sequential order).
- B. The Seals alert us to something important to come. The Trumpets warn us of something more severe to come. The Bowls speak of that which is poured out in fullness without delay or hindrance. Each series has 7 events structured in a similar way divided into 3 parts i.e., the first 4 belong together, the next 2 are clearly grouped together and then the final one stands alone.

X. FIRST CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: 6 SEALS OF JUDGMENT (REV. 6:1-17)

- A. The timing of when Jesus opens the 7 seals is found in Rev. 5:8. When the **bowls of prayer are full** Jesus opens the first seal. In other words, when the prayer movement is mature worldwide.
- ⁸ ***When He (Jesus) had taken the scroll...the 24 elders fell down...each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Rev. 5:8)***
- B. The seven seals are released by Jesus, the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:5; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1).
- ¹ ***I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals... (Rev. 6:1)***
- 1. First Seal** (White Horse): Antichrist's political aggression (Rev. 6:1-2)
 - 2. Second Seal** (Red Horse): bloodshed and World War (Rev. 6:3-4)
 - 3. Third Seal** (Black Horse): famine and economic crisis (Rev. 6:5-6)
 - 4. Fourth Seal** (Pale Horse): disease and death to ¼ of the earth (Rev. 6:7-8)
 - 5. Fifth Seal** (Prayer Movement): spiritual atmosphere – releasing God's judgment (Rev. 6:9-11)
 - 6. Sixth Seal** (Cosmic Disturbances): natural atmosphere – cosmic crisis (Rev. 6:12-17)
 - 7. Seventh Seal** (Anointed Prayer): an angel is given Divine incense to enhance the End-Time prayer movement that contributes in releasing the judgments seen in the 7 Trumpets (Rev. 8-9)

XI. FIRST PARENTHETICAL SECTION: WHO CAN STAND? (REV. 7:1-17)

¹⁷ ***For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)***

This interlude answers this question, “Who can stand?” affirming the security of God's people. God answered this by revealing that 144,000 Jewish believers will stand in victory (Rev. 7:1-8). God reveals that the Gentile martyrs (7:9-17) stand strong without wavering in persecution. Many saints will be physically protected in the End-Times (Zeph. 2:3; Mic. 7:14-19; Isa. 11:15-16).

XII. SECOND CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: 6 TRUMPETS (REV. 8:2-9:21)

- A. The Trumpet judgments are supernatural acts of God to destroy the Antichrist's resources. They are not merely natural or historical acts portrayed in symbolic language. The Trumpet judgments have a 3-fold purpose: to warn God's enemy of coming judgment, warning to the lost to receive salvation and to signal victory for God's people.
- B. The first four Trumpets are released in nature (Rev. 8:7-12) affecting different areas of life such as food (vegetation, meat, fish), sea trade, water supply and the environment (light and heat). The fifth and sixth Trumpets release demons to torment and kill the Antichrist's people.
- 1. First Trumpet** (Food Supply): Burning 1/3 of the earth's vegetation (Rev. 8:7)
 - 2. Second Trumpet** (Food Supply): Destroying 1/3 of the earth's seas (Rev. 8:8-9)
 - 3. Third Trumpet** (Water Supply): Poisoning 1/3 of the earth's fresh water (Rev. 8:10-11)
 - 4. Fourth Trumpet** (Light, Energy): Darkening 1/3 of the earth's light (Rev. 8:12-13)
 - 5. Fifth Trumpet** (Torment): Release of demonic locusts plague (Rev. 9:1-12)
 - 6. Sixth Trumpet** (Death): Release demons that kill 1/3 of the earth's population (Rev. 9:13-21)

XIII. SECOND PARENTHETICAL SECTION: PROPHETIC MESSENGERS (REV. 10:1-11:13)

- A. Rev. 10:1-11:13 is a parenthetical section after the six Trumpet judgments. In this section, God promises to release an outpouring of prophetic revelation in the End-Times (Acts 2:17-21), on international, national and regional levels to help His people.
- B. God concealed key info about the End-Times, yet promises to reveal it in the End-Times (Rev. 10:4). God will use the “seven thunders prophetic messages” and the **Two Witnesses** (prophets) to help His people with great power during the last 3½ years of the Tribulation.

XIV. THIRD CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH (REV. 11:14-19)

¹⁵ *The seventh angel sounded...voices...saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord..." ...You have taken Your power and reigned. 18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come... (Rev. 11:15-18)*

The Rapture occurs at the last (7th) trumpet beginning the Second Coming procession in the sky. At this time Jesus' Kingdom will replace all kingdoms and their leadership as He shakes all nations (Heb. 12:26) and releases the 7 Bowls of wrath (Rev. 15-16).

⁵¹ *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment...at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible... (1 Cor. 15:51-52)*

XV. THIRD PARENTHETICAL SECTION: WAR IN THE SPIRIT (REV. 12:1-14:20)

- A. This parenthetical section (Rev. 12-14) occurs after the 7th trumpet and the Rapture (Rev. 11:15). It gives us insight into the nature of the war against the Church and thus **why God's wrath is so severe** and it assures the saints of **victory** (Rev. 14).
- B. In Rev. 12, war breaks out in heaven causing Satan to be cast to the earth during the Tribulation.
⁷ *War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon (Satan)...8 but they did not prevail...9 The great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil...he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Rev. 12:7-9)*
- C. In Rev. 13, Satan continues his war through two evil vessels the Antichrist and the False Prophet.
- D. In Rev. 14, God promises reward to His people and judgment to the followers of the Antichrist. In Rev. 14:1-5, 144,000 Jewish believers are set forth as a model for victory. In Rev. 14:6-13, four key prophetic proclamations are pointed out. In Rev. 14:6-7, we are assured that the gospel will be preached to all nations (Mt. 24:14). In Rev. 14:8, we are assured of Babylon's defeat.
- E. In Rev. 14:9-11, those who worship that Antichrist will be judged eternally. In Rev. 14:12-13, the faithful are promised eternal rewards. In Rev. 14:14-20, there will be a 2-fold Harvest.

XVI. FOURTH CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: 7 BOWLS OF GOD’S WRATH (REV. 15:1-16:21)

- A. The seven Bowls of wrath (3rd Judgment series) recall the ten plagues of Egypt (Exod 7-12).
- 1.) **First Bowl:** loathsome sores to Antichrist worshippers (Rev. 16:1-2)
 - 2.) **Second Bowl:** sea turns to blood and kills all in the sea (Rev. 16:3)
 - 3.) **Third Bowl:** all the fresh water turns to blood (Rev. 16:4-7)
 - 4.) **Fourth Bowl:** scorching heat and fire from the sun (Rev. 16:8-9)
 - 5.) **Fifth Bowl:** darkness on the Antichrist's global empire (Rev. 16:10-11)
 - 6.) **Sixth Bowl:** demons lure the nations to Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16)
 - 7.) **Seventh Bowl:** worst earthquake, 100 pound hail stones (Rev. 16:17-21)

XVII. FOURTH PARENTHETICAL SECTION: THE FALL OF BABYLON (REV. 17:1-19:10)

God assures the saints of judgment on Babylon, the evil worldwide economic and religious network that seduces many to follow evil and to persecute the saints. The judgment of the Great Harlot (Rev. 17) and the fall of Babylon (Rev. 18) will destroy many of the resources for the infrastructures of darkness.

XVIII. FIFTH CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: MILLENNIUM, NEW EARTH (REV. 19:11-21:8)

Jesus marches into Jerusalem as the Warrior-King (Rev. 19:11-21) to end the Armageddon campaign by defeating the Antichrist (Rev. 19:17-21) and casting Satan into prison (Rev. 20:1-3) to prepare the earth for the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:4-10). Then comes the Great White Throne judgment for unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15). The New Jerusalem will descend to the New Earth (Rev. 21:1-8).

XIX. FIFTH PARENTHETICAL SECTION: NEW JERUSALEM ON EARTH (REV. 21:9-22:5)

The 5th Parenthetical section describes the New Jerusalem’s relationship to the Millennial earth.

XX. FOUR VIEWS OF REVELATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FUTURIST VIEW

Futurists view Rev. 1-3 as fulfilled, and Rev. 6-22 as being fulfilled in the future. It is essential that we interpret the Book of Revelation in this way.

Preterists see most of the prophecies in Revelation as having been fulfilled in context to the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of Rome (in the first three centuries after Jesus’ death).

Historicists interpret Revelation as a progressive unfolding of Church history. They usually view the prophecies as partly fulfilled and partly to be fulfilled in the generation that the Lord returns.

Idealists do not see a special End-Time application Revelation. They interpret the book as a symbolic picture of the spiritual conflict between good and evil occurring throughout history.