

Triumph of the Lamb

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (22:12-13)



Triumph of the Lamb

Part A: Introduction to Revelation

Why study Revelation?

- ▶ out of curiosity?
- ▶ to predict future dates?
- ▶ as a mere myth?
- ▶ Approach this book with deep respect as the very word of God spoken to us today

“What does
this book
mean?”

“an unveiling, a vivid
disclosure of unseen realities”

Full of bizarre imagery

Some important factors:

- the historical context
- “the words of this prophecy”
- how apocalyptic imagery works

To
understand
Revelation

Is Revelation puzzling?

Do not start with details

Revelation is a picture
book, not a puzzle book

To have a big picture of this book



Read it all the way through



Let the visions roll past you one after another



Approach with a proper degree of humility

- John, “God’s servant” (1:1)
- *“Your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus”* (1:9)
- Exiled on the island of Patmos *“because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”*

Author

of Revelation

ASIA

AEGEAN SEA

GALATIA

Pergamum

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Laodicea

Athens

PATMOS



Recipients

Seven churches (1:4,11)

Why “seven”?

“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22)

- ▶ Towards the end of Domitian's reign A.D. 95-96
- ▶ Christians suffering persecution and even martyrdom
- ▶ Persecution by a “beast” (Rev 13), the Roman Empire

Historical Context



Historical Context

- ▶ Heretical and false teachers: advocated sexual immorality
- ▶ Cultural influence: a pressure to compromise with the culture

Historical Context

Literary Type

Epistle

- Letter to the church

Prophecy

- “the words of prophecy” (1:3)

Apocalypse

- “revelation and unveiling”

Literary Type: Epistle

- ▶ Like a letter, it begins with greetings and ends with benediction (Rev 1:4-5; 22:21)
- ▶ To understand the message, pay attention to the historical context

Literary Type: Prophecy

(continued)

- ▶ Divine revelation “in the Spirit” (1:10)
- ▶ Over 250 specific echoes of the OT
- ▶ The climax of all the prophecies in the Bible which Jesus has fulfilled

Literary Type: Prophecy

(continued)

- ▶ Expressed in Old Testament language
 - ▶ Christ: the son of man, the Lion of Judah, the root of David, the Lamb
 - ▶ The church: the kingdom and priests,
 - ▶ Judgments: Exodus, Prophets
 - ▶ New creation: Genesis, Isaiah...
- ▶ Have a good grasp of the Old Testament

Literary Type: Apocalypse

(continued)

- ▶ The Greek word “*apocalypsis*” means “disclosure” or “unveiling”
- ▶ It uses visions and dreams
- ▶ Its language is symbolic and cryptic

Literary Type: Apocalypse

(continued)

- ▶ To interpret apocalypse, keep in mind:
 - ▶ 1) Apocalyptic images are often fantastical
 - ▶ 2) See the visions as wholes and not press all the details
 - ▶ 3) Significant images are already interpreted:
 - ▶ the son of man, the golden lampstands, the great dragon, the seven heads, the prostitute

Self-interpreted Symbols in Revelation

Reference	Symbol	Revelation's Interpretation
1:18	one like a son of man	The risen Christ
1:20	seven stars	angels
1:20	seven lampstands	churches
4:5	seven lamps	God's Spirit
5:6	Lamb's seven horns, eyes	God's Spirit
5:8	golden bowls	prayers of God's people
7:13–14	white-robed multitude	believers out of the great tribulation
11:4	two olive trees, lampstands	witnesses
12:9	the great Dragon	Satan
14:3–4	the 144,000	undefiled followers of the Lamb
17:9–10	beast's seven heads	hills (Rome), kings
17:18	the prostitute	The great city (Rome)
19:8	fine linen	righteous acts of God's people
20:5	thousand-year reign	first resurrection
20:14	lake of fire	second death

Literary Type: Apocalypse (continued)

- ▶ To interpret apocalypse, keep in mind:
 - ▶ 4) Many images are rooted in the Old Testament
 - ▶ 5) symbolism
 - ▶ Presents through symbols indirectly
 - ▶ Images relating to the Old Testament: e.g., Temple articles, lampstands, trumpets...
 - ▶ Numbers are symbols (figurative sense): the number 7 = completeness; 12; 1,000; 144,000 = $12 \times 12 \times 1000$

Seven in Revelation

Seven blessings	1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14
Seven angels	1:20; 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6–8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9
Seven churches	1:4, 11, 20
Seven spirits (of God)	1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
Seven lampstands	1:12, 20; 2:1
Seven stars	1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1
Seven blazing lamps	4:5
Seven seals	5:1, 5; 6:1
Seven horns and eyes	5:6
Seven trumpets	8:2, 6
Seven thunders	10:3–4
Seven heads	12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9
Seven plagues	15:1, 6, 8; 21:9
Seven bowls (of wrath)	15:7; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9
Seven hills, kings	17:9–10

MULTIPLES OF TWELVE IN REVELATION

144,000 sealed believers (12,000 × 12)	7:4–8; 14:1, 3
12 stars in the woman's crown	12:1 (cf. Gen 37:9)
12 gates/pearls in the new Jerusalem	21:12, 21
12 angels	21:12
12 tribes of Israel	21:12
12 foundations for the city's walls	21:14
12 apostles	21:14
12 crops of fruit from the tree of life	22:2

- ▶ Revelation is a structured whole
- ▶ each vision is an integral part of that whole
- ▶ Ask how a particular vision functions in the book as a whole

Structure

- ▶ 1-3: John, Christ, church
- ▶ 4-5: heavenly vision
- ▶ 6-7: Seven seals
- ▶ 8-11: Seven trumpets
- ▶ 12-14: The cosmic conflict
- ▶ 15-16: seven bowls
- ▶ 17-20: Judgement on Babylon, the defeat of the evil
- ▶ 21-22: The new heaven and earth

Structure

Subdivision by the number Seven

- ▶ Seven churches (2-3)
- ▶ seven seals (4-7)
- ▶ seven trumpets (8-11)
- ▶ seven bowls (15-16)

Structure
(continued)

- ▶ Subdivisions/cycles are not a chronological order of events
- ▶ Parallels which follow the pattern: suffering of God's people, judgment of the wicked, and the triumph of Christ
- ▶ Recapitulation: the repetition of the same truth in a different form

Structure
(continued)

Seven circles of judgments, (each leading up to the Second Coming)

- ▶ 1: seven seals 4:1-8:1
- ▶ 2: seven trumpets 8:2-11:19
- ▶ 3: the cosmic conflicts 12:1-14:20
- ▶ 4: seven bowls 15:1-16:21
- ▶ 5: judgement on Babylon 17:1-19:10
- ▶ 6: defeat of the beast 19:11-21
- ▶ 7: the final judgement 20:1-15
- ▶ The cycles parallel one another

Structure
(continued)

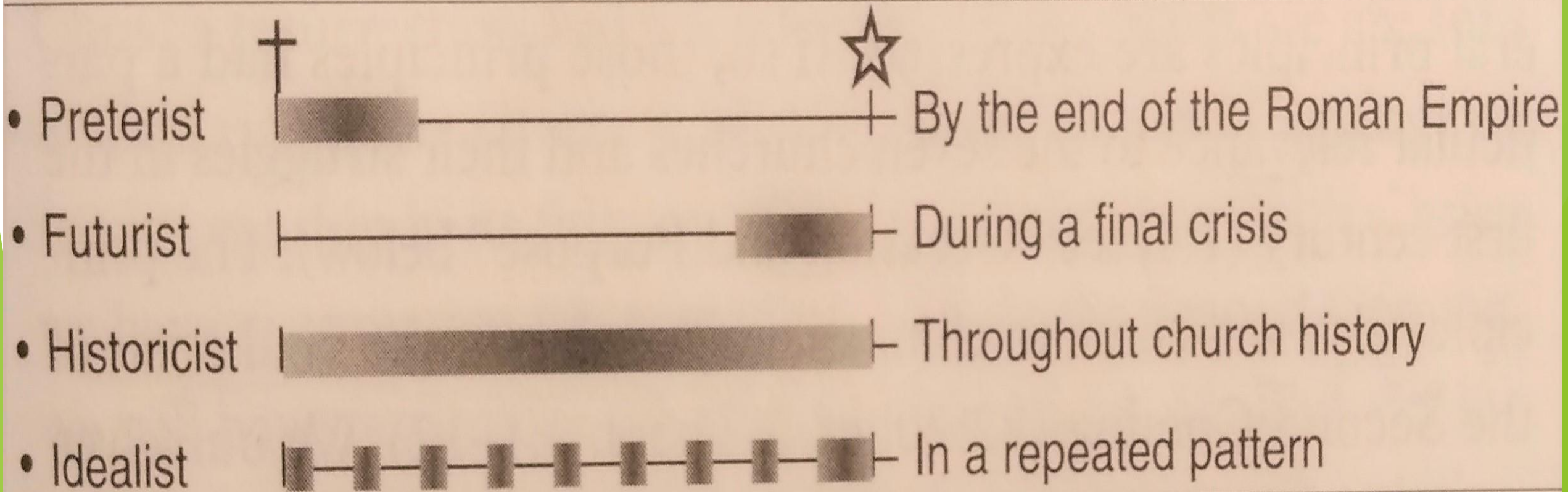
Overview of Revelation

- ▶ 1:1-20 prologue and John's vision of the risen Christ
- ▶ 2:1-3:22 the messages to the seven churches
- ▶ 4:1-5:14 the heavenly throne room
- ▶ 6:1-8:1 Seven seals
- ▶ 8:2-11:19 Seven trumpets
- ▶ 12:1-14:20 the cosmic conflict
- ▶ 15:1-16:21 Seven bowls of God's final wrath
- ▶ 17:1-19:10 Fall of Babylon the prostitute
- ▶ 19:11-20:15 the final defeat and destruction of evil
- ▶ 21:1-22:5 the new creation
- ▶ 22:6-21 conclusion

Interpretive Approaches

- ▶ Preterist
- ▶ Futurist
- ▶ Historicist
- ▶ Idealist
- ▶ Combined View

Time of Fulfillment according to the Schools of Interpretation



Combined view (recommended)

- ▶ Preterists take the historical context seriously.
- ▶ Futurists emphasize the reality of Jesus' second coming after a time of severe crisis.
- ▶ Idealists respect the apocalyptic picture language which speaks truth to every generation in symbolic form. The major symbols of Revelation repeat a pattern of the suffering of God's people, judgment against God's enemies, and the triumph of Christ. This is relevant to anyone, from the early church to the present time and into the future.

Main Message

- ▶ Even though the church will experience suffering and death, it is and will be triumphant in Christ the Lamb and the returning King.
- ▶ All the visions need to be seen in terms of the main message.

- ▶ God: *“the Almighty”*
- ▶ Christ: *“the Lamb, who was slain”*
- ▶ Worship: *“You are worthy”*
- ▶ Spiritual Warfare: *the Lamb vs the Dragon*
- ▶ The Church: *“a kingdom of priests, the bride”*
- ▶ The Spirit: *“the seven spirits before his throne”*
- ▶ God’s judgment: *“Certain, true and just”*
- ▶ The New Creation: *“I saw the new heaven and new earth”*
- ▶ Perseverance: *“To the one who is victorious”*

Main Themes

God: *“the Almighty”*

- ▶ *“God Almighty”* (1:8; 4:8...)
- ▶ God on his throne ruling
- ▶ *“who is and who was and who is to come”*
- ▶ *“I am the Alpha and the Omega”*
- ▶ Though evil seems to run rampant, God is always in control, and his final triumph is certain

Christ: “*the Lamb, who was slain*”

- ▶ Christ is the “Lamb”
- ▶ The Lamb was slain, yet he is victorious;
- ▶ The Lamb triumphs over the evil powers
- ▶ The returning, victorious King proclaims to his people, “*I am coming soon*”

Worship: “*You are worthy*”

- ▶ Revelation is the supreme worship book
- ▶ To worship God and the Lamb or the dragon?
- ▶ Response to who God is: “*Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come*” (4:8)
- ▶ Response to God’s mighty acts:
 - ▶ Creator: “*You are worthy, ... for you created all things*”
 - ▶ The Lamb of God as Redeemer: “*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain...*” (5:9)
 - ▶ God’s victory over evil

Spiritual Warfare (the Dragon vs the Lamb)

- ▶ the unseen reality of the spiritual forces at work
- ▶ a striking contrast between the Lamb and the Dragon
- ▶ Satan is a counterfeiter, to control everything for himself, attacking God's people
- ▶ Satan is defeated by the Lamb, Jesus Christ
- ▶ As the Lamb defeated his enemies by his blood, his followers overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

Spiritual Warfare: Satanic Counterfeiting of God's Reality

God's Reality		Satanic Counterfeiting	
The true 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

Spiritual Warfare: Enemies of the Church

Enemies	Methods of Attack
The beast	intimidating violence
The false prophet	deceptive heresy
The prostitute	seductive luxury

The Church: “*a kingdom of priests, the bride of the Lamb*”

- ▶ Redeemed by the blood of Christ and made to be “a kingdom and priests”(1:5-6)
- ▶ The church fights against the forces of evil (the church *militant*)
- ▶ We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony, already being united with the church *triumphant* in heaven (12:11)
- ▶ The bride of the Lamb; will be perfected, purified, and glorified, and will reign with Christ forever

The Spirit: *“the seven spirits before his throne”*

- ▶ “Seven spirits” (1:4; 3:1; 4:5), representing perfection, and as “seven torches of fire” (4:5) and “seven eyes” (5:6) express his omnipresence and omniscience
- ▶ *“The Spirit says to the churches”*: The Spirit is the main speaker of God’s message

God's judgment: *“Certain, true and just”*

- ▶ How long, Sovereign Lord, until you judge?
- ▶ God's judgment is absolutely certain, and his judgement is true and just.
- ▶ Who can withstand? Only those who have washed their robes
- ▶ God also judges Satan, our enemy; ultimately Satan and his efforts are doomed to defeat

The New Creation: *“I saw the new heaven and new earth”*

- ▶ The new heaven and the new earth (21-22)
- ▶ God makes everything new (21:5)
- ▶ There is no evil or impurity, and there are no tears, sorrows, pain, or death.
- ▶ Our relationship with God is fully restored. We see his face, enjoying the presence of God forever.

PARADISE RESTORED

EDEN (GENESIS 2-3)	NEW JERUSALEM (REVELATION 21-22)
A garden to inhabit and cultivate (2:8-9)	An established, glorious city (21:10)
River from Eden (2:10)	River of the water of life from God's throne (22:1)
Gold and onyx nearby (2:11-12)	Golden streets; walls have every precious stone (21:19-21)
Call to rule and serve (1:26; 2:15)	Serve as kings and priests (22:3, 5)
One man and woman (2:22-24)	Believers from all nations (22:2)
Unclean serpent deceives and brings shame (3:1)	Nothing impure, shameful, or deceitful (21:27)
Exile from God's presence (3:23-24)	God's presence endures forever (21:3, 23)
Lost access to the tree of life (3:22-24)	Eternal access for food and healing throughout the city (22:2, 14)

Perseverance: *“To the one who is victorious”*

- ▶ God’s people are patiently waiting for the final victory
- ▶ *“To the one who is victorious”*: This calls for our perseverance, faithfulness, and wisdom
- ▶ God gave us his sure promises

Promises to Overcomers

Promise	What Will Happen	Fulfillment
2:7	will eat from the tree of life	22:2
2:11	will not be hurt by the second death	20:6; 21:7–8
2:17	will be given a white stone	21:11, 18–21
2:26–27; 3:21	will reign with Christ on his throne	20:4
2:28	will be given the morning star	21:23; 22:5, 16
3:5	will be clothed in bright garments	19:7–8; 21:2, 9–10
3:5	name will be in the book of life	21:27
3:12	will be made a pillar in God's temple	21:22–23
3:12	will participate in the new Jerusalem	21:10
3:12	will have God's name written on them	22:4

Prayer for our study

- ▶ May we be assured of our final victory in Christ the Lamb and the returning King!
- ▶ May we engage in spiritual battle and overcome by the word of testimony and the blood of the Lamb!
- ▶ May we be faithful witnesses of Jesus by his triumph!
- ▶ *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!*
- ▶ *Worship: "Is He Worthy? He is!"*



References:

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