

INTRODUCTION TO

THE REVELATION

TO JOHN



Author and Title

Revelation 1:1 announces both the book's title (it is a "revelation") and its divine author ("Jesus Christ"). The book is an "unveiling" of unseen spiritual forces operating behind the scenes in history and controlling its events and outcome. This disclosure is conveyed in a series of symbolic visions that exhibit the influence of OT prophecies, especially those received by Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The book is also "prophecy" (Rev. 1:3; 22:7), not only as divine prediction of future events but also as divine diagnosis of the present state of affairs.

The divine author identified in the opening verse, Jesus the Messiah, has authority from God to describe coming events to his servant John (see also 1:4, 9; 22:8) for communication to the church.

Without denying his own role in the composition of the book, John presents himself more as a recipient and recorder of visions than as the author of Revelation's message. Although John does not call himself an apostle and he numbers himself among the prophets (22:9), early church fathers—notably Justin Martyr (writing c. A.D. 135–150), Melito of Sardis (mid-2nd century), and Irenaeus of Lyons (writing c. 185)—consistently identified him as John the son of Zebedee, the beloved disciple who authored the Fourth Gospel and three NT epistles. Because Revelation's Greek style differs markedly from other Johannine literature and its theological emphases are distinctive, a number of contemporary scholars think it was written by another John, called "John the elder," someone otherwise unknown (who also wrote 2 and 3 John). These scholars give weight to another early tradition (beginning with Dionysius of Alexandria in the 3rd century) that attributes Revelation to "John the elder." Nevertheless, thematic links (e.g., Jesus as Lamb and Word of God [John 1:1, 14, 29; Rev. 5:6; 19:13]) and the earliest church tradition both favor the traditional attribution of Revelation to John, the "beloved disciple," who with Peter and James belonged to Jesus' inner circle (John 21:20, 24).

Date

Irenaeus reports, on the basis of earlier sources, that "John received the Revelation almost in our own time, toward the end of the reign of Domitian" (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3). Since Domitian's reign ended in A.D. 96, most scholars date Revelation in the mid-90s. Some, however, have argued for a date during Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68) and before the fall of Jerusalem in 70, basing their conclusion in part on the belief that Revelation 11:1–2 is a predictive prophecy of the Roman siege and destruction of the earthly Jerusalem during the Jewish War. However, the conditions in the churches of chs. 2–3 and their cities favor a date around A.D. 95–96, and in Revelation "the holy city" does not seem to refer to the earthly Jerusalem (see note on 11:1–2). Assuming this later date, events relating to Nero's reign and Jerusalem's destruction, both of which would now have been in the past, are woven into John's visions as portents and prototypes of present pressures and coming traumas in the world's assault on Christ's church.

Genre

The book of Revelation identifies itself both as "apocalypse" (or "revelation," 1:1) and as prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19; see also 10:11; 22:9).

"Apocalypse" is derived from the Greek noun *apokalypsis*, meaning "revelation, disclosure, unveiling"—that is, the disclosure of unseen heavenly or future realities. Jewish apocalyptic literature flourished in the

centuries following the completion of the OT canon, perhaps in part to help the oppressed people of God find purpose in their sufferings and hope for their future in the absence of genuine prophetic words from God. Apocalyptic literature inherited and magnified features appearing in such OT books as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. These features include visions that dramatize the prophet's admission to God's heavenly council and that convey meaning through symbolism, promising an end-time intervention of God to reverse present injustices.

Yet Jewish apocalyptic literature of the period between the OT and NT differs from OT prophecy in important respects. Apocalyptic authors remained anonymous and attributed their works to prominent figures of the distant past (e.g., Enoch, Abraham, Moses, Baruch, Ezra), using this literary device ("pseud-epigraphy") to invest their message with the weight of antiquity and to suggest that those ancients foretold events in the readers' past and present. Whereas OT prophecy was primarily preached orally and only secondarily preserved in writing, apocalyptic works were crafted literary pieces from their inception. Old Testament prophecy not only comforted a righteous remnant but also called faithless Israel to repent and anticipated the gracious ingathering of Gentiles. Apocalyptic literature, on the other hand, divided humanity into two immutable camps: (1) the holy minority who await God's deliverance, and (2) their persecutors, destined for wrath and beyond the reach of redemption. Finally, although OT prophets pointed ahead to the Lord's future coming, they also emphasized his present involvement with his people in their sins and trials; but apocalyptic literature saw the present as so pervaded by corruption that no saving work of God could be expected before his cataclysmic intervention at the end.

Like Jewish apocalyptic literature and some OT prophecy, the Revelation to John is imparted in symbolic visions and conveyed not in oral preaching but in literary form. Unlike extrabiblical apocalyptic authors, however, John writes in his own name, not that of an ancient saint, and he brings a balanced message of comfort, warning, and rebuke. Because Christ's death has already won the decisive victory over evil, Revelation does not share the pessimism of Jewish apocalyptic literature regarding the present age (transient and sin-infected though it is). Rather, Revelation sees believers as conquerors even now through endurance under suffering and fidelity to the testimony of Jesus, through which even their persecutors are called to salvation through repentance and faith.

Revelation therefore stands in the apocalyptic "wing" of authentic, divinely inspired prophecy (emphasizing visionary experience, symbolism, and literary art), along with such NT texts as Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Mark 13) and Paul's discussion of the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2).

Theme

Revelation unveils the unseen spiritual war in which the church is engaged: the cosmic conflict between God and his Christ on the one hand, and Satan and his evil allies (both demonic and human) on the other. In this conflict, Jesus the Lamb has already won the decisive victory through his sacrificial death, but his church continues to be assaulted by the dragon, in its death-throes, through persecution, false teaching, and the allure of material affluence and cultural approval. By revealing the spiritual realities lying behind the church's trials and temptations during the time between Christ's first and second comings, and by dramatically affirming the certainty of Christ's triumph in the new heaven and earth, the visions granted to John both warn the church and fortify it to endure suffering and to stay pure from the defiling enticements of the present world order.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Revelation is addressed to first-century churches in seven cities of the Roman province of Asia (now western Turkey, see map, p. *****) (1:4, 11) as representative of all Christ's churches (cf. "all the churches," 2:23; and "to the churches," 2:7, etc.). These churches were threatened by false teaching (such as that of the Nicolaitans, 2:6, 15), by persecution (2:10, 13), by compromise with surrounding paganism through idolatry and immorality (2:14, 20–21), and by spiritual complacency (3:1–3, 15–17). Jesus sent his revelation to John to fortify his churches to resist the wiles of the devil, whether in the form of intimidating violence (the beast), deceptive heresy (the false prophet), or beguiling affluence (the prostitute).

History of Salvation Summary

Christians are called to be faithful to Christ amid spiritual war against Satan and sin (see note on Matt. 12:28) as they await Christ's second coming. (For an explanation of the "History of Salvation," see the Overview of the Bible, pp. ****_****.)

Timeline

	A.D.	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	90	95
John becomes disciple of Jesus (A.D. 28/30)		●												
Death, resurrection of Jesus (33 [or 30])†		●	●											
Nero's reign (54–68)							■	■	■	■				
Destruction of Jerusalem temple (70)										●				
Domitian's reign (81–96)													■	■
John, in exile on Patmos, writes Revelation (95–96*)														●

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. ****-****

Key Themes

1. Through his sacrificial death, Jesus Christ has conquered Satan, the accuser, and has ransomed people from every nation to become a kingdom of priests, gladly serving in God's presence.	1:5, 18; 5:5–10; 12:1–11
2. Jesus Christ is present among his churches on earth through his Holy Spirit, and he knows their trials, triumphs, and failures.	1:12–3:22
3. World history, including its woes and disasters, is firmly in the control of Jesus, the victorious Lamb.	5:1–8:1
4. God is presently restraining his own wrath and his enemies' efforts to destroy the church as he patiently gathers his redeemed people through the testimony that his suffering people proclaim about Jesus.	6:5–11; 7:1–3; 8:6–12; 9:4–6, 18; 11:3–7; 12:6, 13–17
5. Present disasters (war, drought, famine, epidemic disease), though limited in scope by God's restraint, are foreshadows and warnings of escalating judgments to come.	6:3–16; 8:6–13; 11:13; 16:1–21; 20:11–15
6. By maintaining their faithful testimony to the death, believers in Jesus will conquer both the dragon and the beast. The martyrs' victory, now hidden, will be manifest in their vindication at Christ's return.	2:10–11, 26–29; 3:11–13; 6:9–11; 7:9–17; 11:7–12, 17–18; 12:10–11; 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 20:4–6
7. Satan attacks the church's perseverance and purity through violent persecution, through deceptive teaching, and through affluence and sensual pleasure.	2:1–3:22; 13:1–18; 17:1–18:24
8. At the end of the age, the church's opponents will intensify persecution, but Jesus, the triumphant Word of God, will defeat and destroy all his enemies; the old heaven and earth, stained by sin and suffering, will be replaced by the new heaven and earth; and the church will be presented as a bride in luminous purity to her husband, the Lamb.	16:12–16; 19:11–21; 20:7–22:5

Literary Features

Numerous literary genres converge in the book of Revelation, one of the most complex books in the Bible. The overall genre is prophecy (22:19). Like biblical prophecy generally, the actual medium is visionary writing; the book unfolds as a pageant of visions, much like modern cinematic effects. Furthermore, the way in which real persons and events are actually portrayed is the way of imagination, with unlikelike details. The title of the book indicates further that it belongs to the genre of apocalyptic writing. Additionally, at every turn the author uses the resources of poetry—imagery, metaphor, simile, and allusion. The book begins and ends with the standard features of NT epistles. The overall shape of the book, following the introductory letters from Christ to the churches, is narrative or story, with the usual ingredients of setting, characters, and plot (including plot conflict, progression, and resolution). Greek drama was also an influence, seen in the attention John gives to the staging of events, positioning of characters in settings, crowd scenes, and costuming of characters.

The most important thing to know about the literary form of the book of Revelation is that it uses the technique of symbolism from start to finish. Instead of portraying characters and events directly, much of the time the author portrays them indirectly by means of symbols. For example, Jesus is portrayed as a lamb, churches are portrayed as lamps on lampstands, and Satan is portrayed as a dragon with seven heads and 10 horns. The symbols are sometimes familiar, and sometimes original and strange. Whenever a work of literature presents a preponderance of symbols instead of realistic details, readers should recognize the technique of symbolic reality, meaning that as they enter the work in their imaginations, information is

presented primarily through symbols. The book of Revelation is one of the most sustained examples of symbolic reality in existence.

The chief interpretive question is what the symbols refer to. In many cases historical background studies can help in understanding the way in which the symbols they were understandable to John's contemporaries, but in any case one cannot go wrong by simply relating the strange symbolic details to familiar NT images of the end times (with Jesus' Olivet discourse as a good frame of reference), including the following: moral degeneration; cataclysmic natural and military disasters; tribulation (including persecution of believers); the parousia (the "arrival" or second coming of Christ); the millennium; intermediate and final judgment; final dissolution of earthly reality; and glorification of believers in heaven. With an awareness of these eschatological realities, it is usually easy to see that the symbols of Revelation are referring to one or another of them.

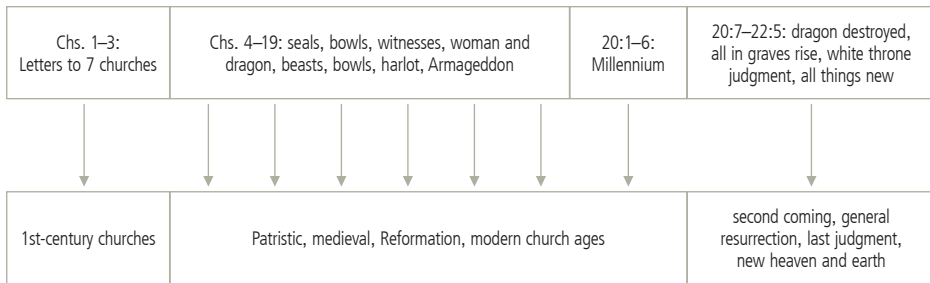
Schools of Interpretation

Four approaches for interpreting Revelation have been distinguished by their understanding of the relationship of the visions to one another and the relationship of the visions to the events of history:

1. *Historicism* understands the literary order of the visions, especially in 4:1–20:6, to symbolize the chronological order of successive historical events that span the entire era from the apostolic church to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.

Historicist School

Revelation's Visions

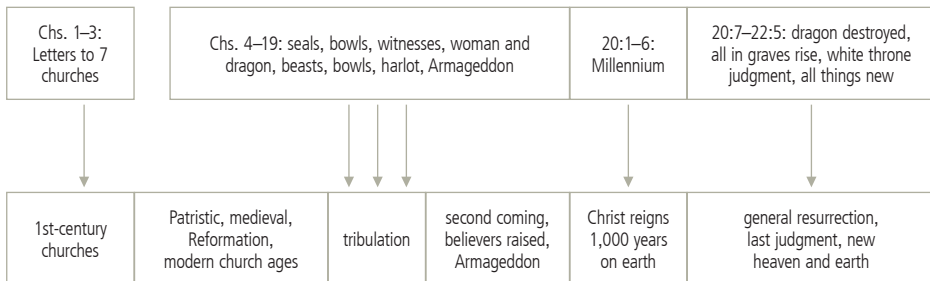


Historical References and Events

2. *Futurism* likewise treats the order of the visions as reflecting the order of particular historical events (with some exceptions). Futurists, however, typically view the visions of chs. 4–22 as representing events still future to twenty-first-century readers, thus in a *distant* future from the standpoint of John and the churches of Asia. For many futurists, these coming events include a discrete seven-year period of intense tribulation (chs. 6–19), followed by a millennium (20:1–6) in which Christ will rule on earth before the general resurrection and the inauguration of the new heaven and earth (20:7–22:5).

Futurist (Historical Premillennialism)

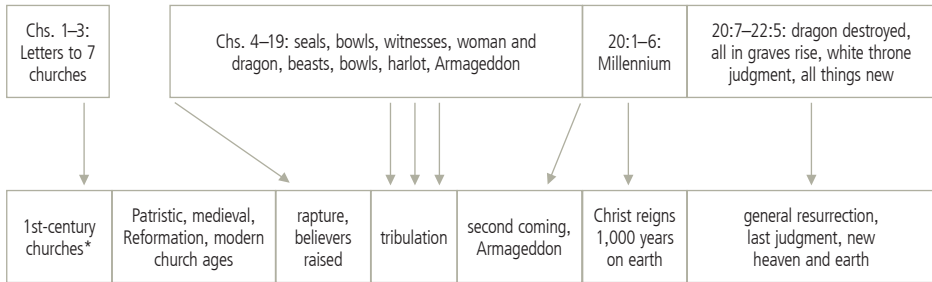
Revelation's Visions



Historical References and Events

Futurist (Dispensational Premillennialism)

Revelation's Visions



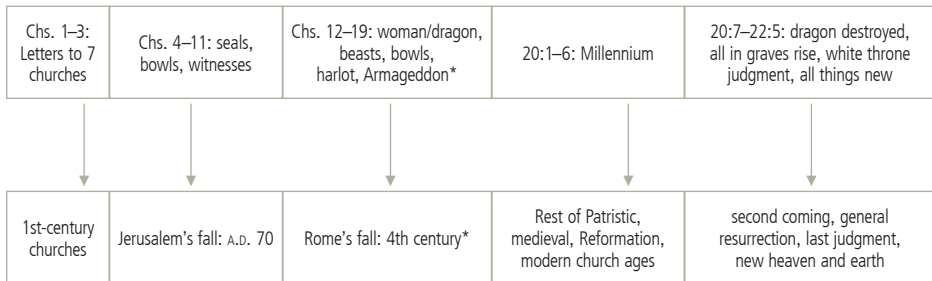
Historical References and Events

* Some dispensational interpreters think the churches addressed in chs. 2–3 predict different periods in church history.

3. *Preterism* (from Latin *praeteritum*, “the thing that is past”) thinks that the fulfillment of most of Revelation’s visions already occurred in the distant past, during the early years of the Christian church. Preterists think these events—either the destruction of Jerusalem or the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, or both—would “soon take place” only from the standpoint of John and the churches of Asia. Some preterists interpret the order of the visions as reflecting the chronological succession of the events they signify, but others recognize the presence of recapitulation (that is, that distinct, successive visions sometimes symbolize the same historical events or forces from complementary perspectives; see Structure and Outline). Full preterism—which insists that every prophecy and promise in the NT was fulfilled by A.D. 70—is not a legitimate evangelical option, for it denies Jesus’ future bodily return, denies the physical resurrection of believers at the end of history, and denies the physical renewal/re-creation of the present heavens and earth (or their replacement by a “new heaven and earth”). However, preterists who (rightly) insist that these events are still future are called “partial preterists.”

Partial Preterist School(s)

Revelation's Visions



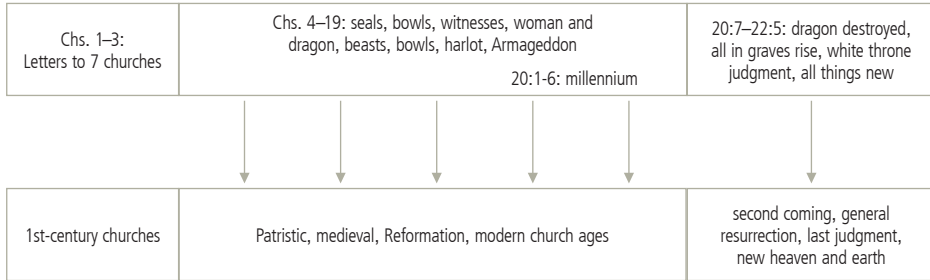
Historical References and Events

* Partial preterists differ on what would (from the original recipients’ viewpoint) precipitate the millennium. This chart represents the view that sees ancient Rome as the church’s main enemy. Others would understand Second Temple Judaism as the church’s main enemy.

4. *Idealism* agrees with historicism that Revelation’s visions symbolize the conflict between Christ and his church on the one hand, and Satan and his evil conspirators on the other, from the apostolic age to Christ’s second coming. Yet idealist interpreters believe that the presence of recapitulation (see Structure and Outline) means that the visions’ literary order need not reflect the temporal order of particular historical events. The forces and conflicts symbolized in Revelation’s vision cycles manifest themselves in events that were to occur “soon” from the perspective of the first-century churches (as preterists maintain), but they also find expression in the church’s ongoing struggle of persevering faith in the present and foretell a still-future escalation of persecution and divine wrath leading to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.

Idealist School

Revelation's Visions



Historical References and Events

5. Finally, some interpreters hold a *mixed* view, combining features of these various positions, such as saying that many events have both present and future fulfillments, or saying that many events have past fulfillments but that there may still be a future personal Antichrist.

Millennial Views

Christians disagree on the question of whether the Bible generally and the “thousand years” of 20:1–6 specifically predict a future, interim kingdom in which the Lord Jesus will return bodily to earth to reign with resurrected believers during an era of peace, justice, and physical well-being, before history’s consummation in the new heaven and earth. Three views have been maintained.

1. *Premillennialism*, usually associated with a *futurist* reading of Revelation (see Schools of Interpretation), teaches that Christ will return bodily in power and glory *before* (pre-) the “thousand years” (millennium) to defeat and destroy the beast and false prophet in the battle on the “great day of God the Almighty” at Armageddon (16:14–16; 19:11–21). This battle will issue in the binding (but not the destruction) of the devil, preventing him from deceiving the nations for a thousand years (interpreted literally by many premillennialists, but symbolically by others) (20:1–3). During that time Christ’s saints, having received their immortal bodies either by resurrection from the dead or by transformation of the living (1 Thess. 4:13–18) in the “first resurrection,” will reign with Christ on the present earth, still infected by sin and sorrow but relieved to a significant degree from sin’s societal and physical consequences. Although sin, sorrow, and death will not be eliminated until the new heaven and earth displace the first heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1–4; 22:3), the descendants of those who survive the battle of Armageddon will remain on the earth, ruled by resurrected saints, and they will live to extraordinary ages (Isa. 65:20–25). Many premillennialists, especially dispensationalists of various emphases, believe that OT prophecies of Israel’s restoration to fidelity and to political and material blessedness will be fulfilled in this millennial kingdom. Although diversity exists among premillennialists regarding the degree to which Revelation’s visions and other biblical prophecy should be interpreted “literally” or symbolically, many consider it safer to interpret both the recipients and the content of prophesied blessings as literally as possible, rather than to risk unwarranted symbolism.

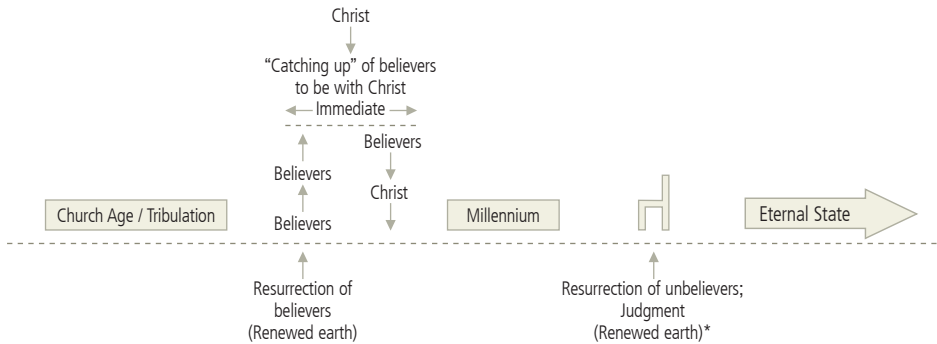
At the end of this idyllic foretaste of “paradise restored,” a second worldwide rebellion against Jesus’ reign will provoke another war, in which the dragon itself will be defeated and finally destroyed. At that point the wicked will be raised bodily to face God’s last judgment and eternal wrath in the lake of fire, the “second death” (Rev. 20:6, 11–14). God will replace the old, curse-infected heaven and earth with the new heaven and earth, where there will be no curse, sin, suffering, sorrow, or death—the eternal home of those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (chs. 21–22).

Classical premillennialism expects a future thousand-year reign of Christ on earth (the millennium), with both believers and unbelievers present, prior to the final judgment. Therefore it expects that Christ will come back before (pre-) the millennium. It also expects that believers will go through a time of “great tribulation” before Christ returns.

Pretribulational premillennialism also expects a future thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, but it expects that Christ will first come secretly to take believers from the earth before a “great tribulation” of seven years occurs. After the tribulation, it expects that Christ will come back publicly to reign on the earth, and that he will bring believers back with him at that time.

Classical Premillennialism

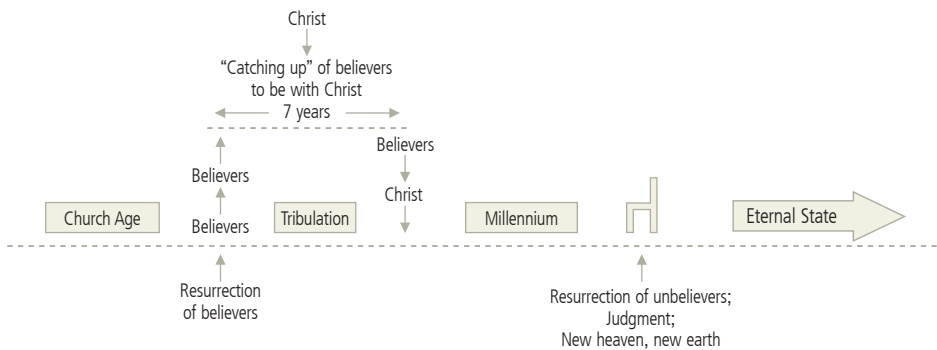
(Christ comes before the millennium but *after* the tribulation; the chair, in this and following illustrations, represents the judgment seat of Christ)



*Classical Premillennialists differ over whether the renewed earth will begin in the millennium or the eternal state.

Pretribulational Premillennialism

(Christ comes before the millennium and *before* the tribulation)

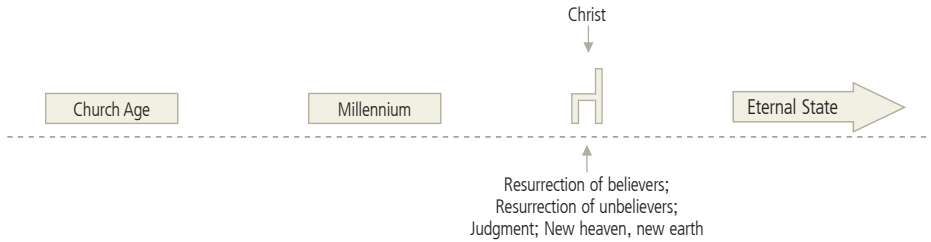


2. *Postmillennialism*, often associated today with *preterism* but also compatible with *historicism* (see Schools of Interpretation), teaches that Christ will return *after* (post-) the “thousand years” in which the dragon is bound. Classical postmillennialism holds that the “thousand years” is still a future time, a wonderful coming age in which the gospel will triumph so greatly as to thoroughly transform the world’s societies and cultures. However, a few postmillennialists think the “thousand years” symbolically portray the historical epoch that began with Christ’s ascension and that conditions in this long period will continually improve until they conclude with his glorious second coming. In the postmillennial view, during the millennium Christ is in heaven, not on earth; but he exercises his reign through his Spirit and the church’s preaching of the gospel. The “first resurrection” is believers’ spiritual transition from death to life through union with the risen Christ (Eph. 2:4–6). Because Satan cannot “deceive the nations any longer” (Rev. 20:3), the church’s mission will result in the conversion of all nations and peoples, until the earth is “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). This fruit of Jesus’ victory will be plain for all to see, as political and legal systems are conformed to God’s righteousness, cultural pursuits such as labor and the arts are redeemed, and increasing quality and length of life are displayed as God’s blessing.

After this “millennium,” however, for a brief interval before Jesus’ return, God will release his restraint on Satan and wicked humanity will converge in a defiant assault on Christ’s church. But Jesus will return bodily from heaven in power and glory to defeat and destroy his enemies, to administer the last judgment, and to introduce the new heaven and earth, untainted by sin and its toxic byproducts, in the eternal state.

Postmillennialism

(Christ comes after the millennium)

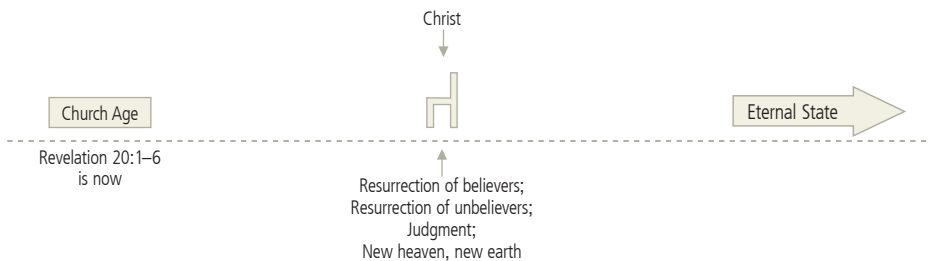


3. *Amillennialism*, typically advocated by *idealists* but consistent with some expressions of *preterism* or *historicism* (see Schools of Interpretation), concurs with postmillennialism that Christ will return after the epoch symbolized as “a thousand years” (20:1–6) and that OT prophecies and Revelation’s visions are ordinarily to be understood as symbolizing the blessings and trials of the NT church, composed of believers in Christ from every nation. However, amillennialists believe that the biblical evidence indicates that there is and will be *no* (a-) millennium in the sense anticipated by premillennialism or postmillennialism before the consummation of history, when sin and curse are utterly banished in the “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). Through Christ’s death and resurrection Satan was bound, and therefore he is unable to hold the Gentiles in ignorance or gather a worldwide coalition against the church. Therefore the gospel now advances by the Spirit’s power through the church’s witness, but always amid opposition and suffering. Just as Jesus the Lamb conquered by being slain, so the victory of his church consists in faithfulness “even unto death” (Rev. 5:9; 12:11). The “first resurrection” is, paradoxically, the martyrs’ death, which brings them to heavenly thrones from which they now reign with Christ (20:4–5). The “thousand years” vision prepares the church for a long era of witness and suffering between Christ’s first coming to bind Satan (Mark 3:26–27) and his return to destroy Satan. It does not promise relief from persecution, nor a general improvement of living conditions on the sin-infected “first earth,” prior to the pristine new heaven and earth. Rather, the vision promises that the dragon, already a defeated foe, cannot thwart God’s plan to gather people from all nations into the Lamb’s redeemed army.

Invoking recapitulation, amillennialists view Revelation 19:17–21 and 20:9–10 as complementary perspectives on the same last battle at the end of the “thousand years,” when Christ will come bodily and gloriously to rescue his suffering church and destroy its enemies: beasts, dragon, their deceived and defiant followers, and—in the general resurrection of the just and the unjust—death itself (20:14; see 1 Cor. 15:26, 54–55). The “appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” is the “blessed hope” for which believers wait (Titus 2:13).

Amillennialism

(No future millennium)



Each of these three primary millennial views falls within the framework of historic Christian orthodoxy. Though they differ in significant ways with regard to the interpretation of the book of Revelation and other passages related to eschatology, each view is well represented among Bible-believing, orthodox Christians.



The Setting of Revelation

c. A.D. 95

John addressed the book of Revelation “to the seven churches that are in Asia,” namely Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, although there were undoubtedly other churches elsewhere in the province of Asia (e.g., Miletus and Colossae, see Acts 20:17; Col. 1:2). John had apparently been exiled from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, southwest of Ephesus, and it is there that he recorded his visions.

Structure and Outline

Revelation is composed of a prologue (1:1–8), a body (1:9–22:5), and an epilogue (22:6–21). The prologue and epilogue are linked by repeated themes: an angel sent to show God’s servants what must soon take place (1:1; 22:6, 16), blessings on those who keep the prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 9), John’s self-identification (1:1, 4; 22:8), and the designation of God as Alpha and Omega (1:8; 22:13). The body contains four enumerated series of seven messages or visions: letters to churches (chs. 2–3), seals on a scroll (4:1–8:1), trumpets (8:2–11:19), and bowls of wrath (chs. 15–16). See chart, p. ****.

The general movement of the book is from “the things that are”—the first-century churches’ present situation (chs. 2–3)—to “the things that are to take place after this,” climaxing with the destruction of the enemies of God and his church and the presentation of the church as the Lamb’s bride in a new heaven and earth (1:19; 4:1). Within this general temporal movement, however, visions “double back” to present distinct, complementary perspectives on the same event or phase of the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan. For instance, 12:1–6 portrays the defeat of the dragon in its desire to destroy the child of the heavenly woman (vv. 1–5), followed by her flight for safety into the wilderness (v. 6); then 12:7–17 again portrays the defeat of the dragon, now in its desire to accuse believers (vv. 7–12), followed by the heavenly woman’s flight for safety into the wilderness (vv. 13–17). Earlier visions sometimes portray later events, and later visions portray earlier conditions. For example, 6:12–17 shows the shaking of earth and sky, so that the stars are cast to earth as by a great wind; then 7:1–8 shows angels restraining the winds of woe until God’s people are sealed; and still later, John sees sun, moon, and stars still in the sky and only partially darkened (8:12). This principle of repetition or *recapitulation* to elaborate God’s purposes and confirm their certainty is seen in earlier Scripture (see Gen. 1:1–2:25; 37:5–11; 41:1–32; Dan. 2:1–45 [with Dan. 7:1–28]; Acts 10:10–16). In Revelation, recapitulation means that the order in which John received visions does not necessarily indicate the order of the events they symbolize. These observations regarding the structure intrinsic to Revelation are reflected in this outline:

- I. Prologue (1:1–8)
 - A. Title, transmission, promise of blessing (1:1–3)
 - B. Epistolary opening (1:4–6)
 - C. Announcement of the coming King (1:7–8)
- II. Body (1:9–22:5)
 - A. “Things that are”: Christ’s presence with and knowledge of his churches (1:9–3:22)
 - 1. The Son of Man among his churches (1:9–20)
 - 2. Christ’s edict-letters to his seven churches (2:1–3:22)
 - a. To Ephesus (2:1–7)
 - b. To Smyrna (2:8–11)
 - c. To Pergamum (2:12–17)
 - d. To Thyatira (2:18–29)
 - e. To Sardis (3:1–6)
 - f. To Philadelphia (3:7–13)
 - g. To Laodicea (3:14–22)
 - B. “Things that shall take place after this”: Christ’s defense of his church and destruction of its enemies (4:1–22:5)
 - 1. The Lamb and the scroll: current and coming woes, precursors of the end (4:1–8:1)
 - a. Heaven opened: the Lamb receives the scroll (4:1–5:14)
 - b. The Lamb opens the scroll’s seven seals (6:1–8:1)
(Interlude: the sealing of God’s international Israel, 7:1–17)
 - 2. The angels and the trumpets: warnings of coming wrath (8:2–11:18)
 - a. Heaven’s incense altar: the saints’ prayers, and fire flung to earth (8:2–5)
 - b. Angels sound seven trumpets (8:6–11:18)
(Interlude: the safety and suffering of God’s city-sanctuary, his witnessing church, 10:1–11:14)
 - 3. The woman, her son, the dragon, and the beasts: the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan (11:19–14:20)
 - a. Heaven’s temple opened (11:19)
 - b. The woman’s son defeats the dragon (12:1–6)
 - c. Michael and heaven’s armies defeat the dragon (12:7–17)
 - d. The beast from the sea (13:1–10)
 - e. The false prophet from the land (13:11–18)
 - f. The Lamb and his sealed victors (14:1–5)
 - g. Angelic announcements of judgment (14:6–13)
 - h. Harvests of earth and vine (14:14–20)
 - 4. The bowls of God’s final wrath (15:1–16:21)
 - a. Heaven’s sanctuary filled with glory (15:1–8)
 - b. Angels pour out seven bowls (16:1–21)
 - 5. Babylon the prostitute (17:1–19:10)
 - a. Babylon’s power and luxury (17:1–15)
 - b. Babylon’s fall lamented and celebrated (17:16–19:10)
 - 6. The defeat and destruction of the beasts, the dragon, and death (19:11–20:15)
 - a. Christ defeats and destroys the beast, the false prophet, and their gathered armies (19:11–21)
Interlude: the thousand years of the dragon’s binding and the martyrs’ reign (20:1–6)
 - b. God defeats and destroys the dragon and its gathered armies (20:7–10)
 - c. The last judgment and the destruction of death, the last enemy (20:11–15)
 - 7. “All things new” (21:1–22:5)
 - a. The new heaven and earth, home of the Lamb’s bride (21:1–8)
 - b. The new Jerusalem, the Lamb’s pure bride (21:9–22:5)
- III. Epilogue (22:6–21)
 - A. Transmission and trustworthiness of the Revelation, promise that Jesus is coming soon, promise of blessing (22:6–9)
 - B. Prohibition of sealing the book, promise that Jesus is coming soon, promise of blessing (22:10–15)
 - C. Transmission of the Revelation (22:16–17)
 - D. Prohibition of altering the book, promise that Jesus is coming soon, and final pronouncement of blessing (22:18–21)