

IV. Revelation

A. Introduction¹⁸²

1. Timeline



2. Author and Date

Jesus Christ is the divine author of this “revelation” (1:1). He describes coming events to his servant John. John, son of Zebedee, was the “beloved disciple” who also wrote the Fourth Gospel and 1, 2 and 3 John. Most scholars believe John recorded these visions while imprisoned on the island of Patmos (1:9; in Greece) in the mid-90s A.D. Revelation is addressed specifically to seven first-century churches in the Roman province of Asia (now western Turkey), but the message is for all churches everywhere.

3. Purpose

The word “Revelation” translates the Greek word *apokalypsis*, which means “disclosure” or “unveiling.” Revelation unveils the spiritual war in which the church is engaged: the cosmic conflict between God and 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 (the beast), deceptive heresy (the false prophet), and the allure of material affluence and cultural approval (the prostitute).**

By revealing the spiritual realities behind the church’s trials and temptations, and by affirming the certainty of Christ’s triumph in the new heaven and earth, the visions of Revelation fortify believers to endure suffering. The reader of Revelation is encouraged to stay pure from the defiling enticements of the present world order.

4. Principal Theme

God rules history and will bring it to a triumphal climax in Christ. . . . Revelation is a picture book, a dramatic presentation to enable Christians to have a God-centered view of history.¹⁸³

¹⁸² *The Student Study Bible.*

¹⁸³ *New Geneva Study Bible*, 2005.

5. Key Themes

- a. Through his sacrificial death, Jesus Christ has conquered Satan, the accuser. Jesus has redeemed 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).
- b. Jesus Christ is present among his churches through his Holy Spirit. He knows their trials, triumphs, and failures (1:12–3:22).
- c. World history, including its disasters, is under the control of Jesus, the victorious Lamb (5:1–8:1).
- d. God is presently holding back his wrath and preventing his enemies' efforts to destroy the church. He patiently gathers his redeemed people through their witness for Jesus (6:5–11; 7:1–3; 8:6–12; 9:4–6, 18; 11:3–7; 12:6, 13–17).
- e. Present disasters are warnings of increasing judgments to come (6:3–17; 8:6–13; 11:13; 16:1–21; 20:11–15).
- f. Believers will continue their faithful testimony to the death. They will conquer both the dragon and the beast. The martyrs' victory is now hidden, but it will be obvious when Christ returns (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).
- g. Satan attacks the church's perseverance and purity through persecution, deceptive teaching, and the temptations of wealth and sensual pleasure (2:1–3:22; 13:1–18; 17:1–18:24).
- h. At the end of the age, the church's opponents will increase their persecution. Jesus, the triumphant Word of God, will defeat and destroy all his enemies. The old heaven and earth, marked by sin and suffering, will be replaced by the new heaven and earth. The church will be presented as a pure bride to her husband, the Lamb (16:12–16; 19:11–21; 20:7–22:5).

6. Overview

Revelation contains four series of **seven messages or visions**. These include **seven letters** to churches (chs. 2–3), **seven seals** on a scroll (4:1–8:1), **seven trumpets** (8:2–11:19), and **seven bowls** of wrath (chs. 15–16). [Seven is the number of “completion” or “perfection.” God's purposes are being completely carried out.] There is a general movement from “the things that are” to “the things that are to take place after this.”

Yet the visions sometimes return to subjects from the previous sections. This is called recapitulation: restating a vision or theme from earlier in Revelation or approaching it from a different angle.

The order in which John received the visions does not necessarily indicate the order of the events they symbolize.

Imagery in the Book of Revelation

Imagery	Revelation	Old Testament
Son of Man Coming in the Clouds	Rev. 1:7, 13	Dan. 7:13
One Who Is Pierced	Rev. 1:7	Zech. 12:10
Alpha and Omega/First and Last	Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13	Isa. 44:6; 48:12
Throne Room of God	Rev. 4:1–11	Isa. 6:1–3; Ezek. 1:4–28
Lion of the Tribe of Judah	Rev. 5:5	Gen. 49:9–10
Lamb Who Was Slain	Rev. 5:6–13	Ex. 12:1–13; Isa. 53:7
Horses and Riders	Rev. 6:2–8	Zech. 1:8; 6:1–6
No Hunger, Thirst, or Tears	Rev. 7:16–17; 21:4	Isa. 25:8; 49:10
Shepherd	Rev. 7:17	Ezek. 34:11–31
Swarm of Locusts	Rev. 9:3–11	Ex. 10:12–15; Joel 1:4; 2:25
Eating a Scroll	Rev. 10:9–11	Ezek. 2:9–3:3
Measuring the Temple	Rev. 11:1	Ezek. 40:3
Michael the Archangel	Rev. 12:7	Dan. 10:13
Serpent	Rev. 12:7–9	Gen. 3:1; Isa. 27:1
Beasts from the Sea	Rev. 13:1–2	Dan. 7:2–7
Foreheads Marked	Rev. 13:16–17; 14:1	Ezek. 9:4
Mount Zion	Rev. 14:1	Isa. 2:3; Zech. 8:3
Temple Filled with Smoke/Cloud	Rev. 15:8	Ex. 40:34; Isa. 6:4
Armageddon/Megiddo	Rev. 16:16	Judg. 5:19; Zech. 12:11
Adulterous Woman	Rev. 17:1–2	Ezek. 16:30–32
Wedding	Rev. 19:7; 21:2	Isa. 54:5–7; 61:10
Thrones of Judgment	Rev. 20:4, 11	Dan. 7:9–10
Gog and Magog	Rev. 20:7–10	Ezek. 38:2
Book of Life	Rev. 20:12	Ps. 69:28; Dan. 7:10; 12:1
New Heaven and New Earth	Rev. 21:1	Isa. 65:17; 66:22
God's Dwelling Place	Rev. 21:3–4	Ex. 29:45; Ezek. 37:27
Holy City Made of Jewels	Rev. 21:18–21	Isa. 54:11–12
Open Gates	Rev. 21:21, 25	Isa. 60:11
Living Water	Rev. 22:1–2	Ezek. 47:1–2; Zech. 14:8
Tree of Life	Rev. 22:2, 14, 19	Gen. 2:9

B. Outline¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, 484–486.

OUTLINE OF REVELATION

Part One: “The Things Which You Have Seen” (1:1-20)

- I. Introduction (1:1-8)
- II. Revelation of Christ (1:9-20)

Part Two: “The Things Which Are” (2:1-3:22) **Seven Churches**

- I. Message to Ephesus (2:1-7)
- II. Message to Smyrna (2:8-11)
- III. Message to Pergamum (2:12-17)
- IV. Message to Thyatira (2:18-29)
- V. Message to Sardis (3:1-6)
- VI. Message to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- VII. Message to Laodicea (3:14-22)

Part Three: “The Things Which Will Take Place After This” (4:1-22:21)

I. Person of the Judge (4:1-5:14)

- A. The Throne of God (4:1-11)
- B. The Sealed Book (5:1-14)

II. Prophecies of Tribulation (6:1-19:6)

- A. **Seven Seals** of Judgment (6:1-8:5)
- B. **Seven Trumpets** of Judgment (8:6-11:19)
- C. Explanatory Prophecies (12:1-14:20) **Seven People or Creatures**
- D. **Seven Bowls** of Judgment (15:1-19:6)

III. Prophecies of the Second Coming (19:7-21)

- A. Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:7-10)
- B. Second Coming of Christ (19:11-21)

IV. Prophecies of the Millennium (20:1-15)

- A. Satan is Bound a Thousand Years (20:1-3)
- B. Saints Reign a Thousand Years (20:4-6)
- C. Satan is Released and Leads Rebellion (20:7-9)
- D. Satan is Tormented Forever (20:10)
- E. Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)

V. Prophecies of the Eternal State (21:1-22:5)

- A. New Heaven and New Earth Are Created (21:1)
- B. New Jerusalem Descends (21:2-8)
- C. New Jerusalem Is Described (21:9-22:5)

VI. Conclusion (22:6-21)

C. Interpretive Challenges¹⁸⁵

1. Approaches to the Book

Interpreters disagree concerning the period of time and the manner in which the visions (7 seals, 7 trumpets, prophecies, 7 bowls) of 6:1-19:6 are fulfilled.

Interpretive Approaches¹⁸⁶

Approach	Basic Thesis
Preterist	All the events of Revelation were fulfilled during the period of the Roman Empire.
Historical	Revelation is a panorama of church history from the apostolic era until the final state.
Idealist	Revelation is not a representation of actual events but is rather a symbolic depiction of the spiritual warfare between good and evil.
Futurist	Beginning with chapter 4, Revelation describes future events accompanying the end of the age.

- A combination of these views is probably closest to the truth. The imagery in Revelation is multifaceted and is in principle capable of multiple embodiments.
 - Idealists maintain that general principles are expressed. If so, those principles had a particular relevance to the seven churches and their struggles in the first century (1:4).
 - The principles will also come to climactic expression in the final crisis of the Second Coming (22:20).
 - Christians throughout history are involved in the same spiritual war and so must apply the principles to themselves and their own time (1:3).
- **Hence, many passages have at least three main applications: to the first century, to the final crisis, and to whatever time in which Christians live.**

2. The Millennium

- **The thousand-year period of Christ's rule described in 20:1-10, commonly called the "millennium," is variously understood by interpreters.**
 - Caution is needed because the different millennial positions depend on the interpretation of OT prophetic texts as well as these verses in Revelation.
 - Moreover, like most of Revelation, 20:1-10 uses language that in principle may legitimately be capable of multiple fulfillments.
 - These facts make precise interpretation difficult.
- It is God's prerogative to reveal only as much about the order of future events as is good for us to know.

Acts 1:7
[Jesus] said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority."
- The major point is that Satan will finally be defeated, and that even before that time God takes care of his saints and blesses them through his triumphant rule. This assurance ought to comfort Christians, whatever their millennial position.

¹⁸⁵ *New Geneva Study Bible*, 2004.

¹⁸⁶ *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts*, 488.

EXPANDED OUTLINE OF REVELATION

Part One: “The Things Which You Have Seen” (1:1-20)

I. Introduction (1:1-8)

II. Revelation of Christ (1:9-20)

Revelation 1:9-20

⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹ saying, “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. ¹⁹ Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. ²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Part Two: “The Things Which Are” (2:1-3:22) **Seven Churches**

I. Message to Ephesus (2:1-7)

II. Message to Smyrna (2:8-11)

III. Message to Pergamum (2:12-17)

IV. Message to Thyatira (2:18-29)

V. Message to Sardis (3:1-6)

VI. Message to Philadelphia (3:7-13)

VII. Message to Laodicea (3:14-22)

Seven Churches of Revelation



	Church	Strengths	Weaknesses	Instruction	Promise
1	Ephesus Rev. 2:1–7	Perseverance; reject false teachers	Forsaken their first love	Do the things they did at first	Eat from the tree of life
2	Smyrna Rev. 2:8–11	Endure suffering and poverty, yet are rich	None	Be faithful to the point of death	Life as a victor's crown
3	Pergamum Rev. 2:12–17	True to Christ's name	Tolerate false teachers	Repent	Hidden manna; a new name
4	Thyatira Rev. 2:18–29	Deeds, love, faith, and service	Tolerate false prophets	Hold on to what they have	Authority; the morning star
5	Sardis Rev. 3:1–6	Some have remained faithful	Deadness	Strengthen what remains; wake up	Walk with Jesus; name in the book of life
6	Philadelphia Rev. 3:7–13	Kept Christ's word; not denied his name	None	Hold on to what they have	Kept from hour of trial; pillar in God's temple
7	Laodicea Rev. 3:14–22	None	Neither hot nor cold; trust in wealth	Open the door to Christ; buy riches from Christ	Sit with Christ on God's throne

Revelation 3:20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him to eat with him, and he with me.

Background Information

Ephesus: The City of Change

Ephesus was colonized by the Greeks no earlier than 1200 BC and was located near the Aegean Sea, providing a major harbor and caravan gateway for trade to all of Asia Minor and beyond. By the first century, Ephesus was already an established city, predominant in the Roman province of Asia Minor and home to the Roman governor. Besides becoming a city of great wealth, it was noted for the Celsus library, established in the second century. The Ephesians worshiped Diana, the Roman goddess of nature and fertility, identified with the Greek goddess Artemis. At the present day, Ephesus has all the appearance of an inland city, caused by natural changes in the coastline. Paul founded the church at Ephesus.

Smyrna: The City of Life

Smyrna, a thriving seaport city now called Izmir, is about 35 miles (56 km) north of Ephesus. Founded as a Greek colony more than 1,000 years before Christ, it paralleled Ephesus in wealth, beauty and commerce. Proud of being the city of the poet Homer, it was filled with the pagan temples of Apollo, Asclepia, Aphrodite, Cybele, Emperor Tiberius, and Zeus. Although it was a free city, it gave full allegiance to the Roman Empire which ordered Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, to be burned at the stake in Rome. The temple of Athena, dating back to the seventh century BC, was the most important building of that period. It was famous for its superb school of medicine. Although the origin of the city is not mentioned in the Bible, the church in Smyrna was probably founded by believers from Ephesus.

Pergamum: The City of Authority

Pergamum, founded no later than 399 BC, became the capital city of the Roman province in Asia giving the traveler the impression of a royal city, the home of authority. Located about 60 miles (97 km) north of Smyrna and 15 miles (24 km) from the Aegean Sea, Pergamum was a center of learning, medicine, and religious books. The library, rivaling the Alexandrian library, drew many princes, priests, and scholars. Noted for marble carving, it excelled the other six cities in architectural beauty. They worshiped Zeus Olympus, the savior-god; Athena, patron goddess of Athens; the Roman Emperor, as god; Dionysus, god of vegetation; and Asclepius, god of healing. The animal cult worship of the god-Serpent and the god-Bull were also practiced. Some scholars believe that Gaius, addressed by John in the book of 3 John, was the first Bishop of Pergamum.

Thyatira: Weakness Made Strong

Thyatira, a small town about 35 miles (56 km) southeast of Pergamum, was founded by the general Seleucid Nicator under Alexander the Great in about 300 BC. Military garrisons greatly strengthened the city which was noted for commerce and guilds such as tanners, coppersmiths, potters, and purple dyers. Objects of worship included the emperor, the Thyatiran war hero, Tyrinnos, and trade guild gods, for example, bronzesmiths worshiped the goddess of war, Pallas Athena. How the church was established is unknown, but "Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira," came to the Lord under Paul's ministry in Philippi (Acts 16:14–15).

Sardis: The City of Death

The city of Sardis was founded in about 1200 BC and became the capital of the Lydian kingdom located 30 miles southeast of Thyatira. It stood on a lofty plateau above the Hermus valley. Sardis was twice defeated, once by King Cyrus of Persia (359 BC), and again by Antiochus III of Syria (218 BC). The wealth of the Lydian kings arose from trade and the commerce with the East. An impressive acropolis housed a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis. Goddesses Artemis and Cybele were commemorated on local coins. Two hundred years after Christ's birth, Sardis lay in decay. Today Sardis is a small village called Sart. When and how the church there was started are unknown.

Philadelphia: The Missionary City

The city of Philadelphia, founded by King Attalus of Pergamum (140 BC), was located in the Hermus River valley about 28 miles (45 km) southeast of Sardis. An earthquake destroyed the city in AD 17; however, it was rebuilt by Emperor Tiberius. Famous for its grape industry, Philadelphia was also noted for textiles and leather goods. It became a strong fortress city and was called the "Gateway to the East." Although Dionysus was the major pagan god, people also worshiped sun and serpent gods. Philadelphia, the last of the Byzantine cities, was finally captured by the Turks in 1390. Christians lived there until the early 1900s. When and how the church was established there is not known, but it prospered for many centuries.

Laodicea: The City of Compromise

The city of Laodicea was located on a fertile plain overlooking the Lycus River about 50 miles (80 km) southeast of Philadelphia. Laodicea, which became the capital of ancient Phrygia, was established by Antiochus II (261–246 BC) and named in honor of his sister-wife Laodice before their divorce in 253 BC. Located on a major trade route running from Ephesus to Syria, Laodicea accumulated great wealth. It was known for banking and the manufacture of expensive cloth made from soft black wool. Its medical school became famous for the development of an ear salve made of spice and Phrygian powder. Zeus Azeus and Men Karou were the main Phrygian gods. Cicero lived in Laodicea in 50 BC. Laodicea was so wealthy that when a massive earthquake destroyed the city in AD 60, it refused aid from Rome and rebuilt at its own expense. Most scholars believe that Epaphras started the church there (Col. 1:7; 4:12–13). Paul was aware of their spiritual struggles (Col. 2:1).

Part Three: “The Things Which Will Take Place After This” (4:1-22:21)

I. Person of the Judge (4:1-5:14)

A. The Throne of God (4:1-11)

Revelation 4:1-8

¹ After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.” ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a **rainbow**¹⁸⁷ that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were **twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.**¹⁸⁸

⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”¹⁸⁹

B. The Sealed Scroll (5:1-14)

Revelation 5:1-14

¹ Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

⁶ And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸ And when he had taken the scroll, **the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.** ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

¹⁸⁷ Compare with the rainbow after the flood in Genesis 9:13 and the rainbow in Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 1:28.

¹⁸⁸ The 24 elders symbolize the entire redeemed church, both Old and New Testament believers.

- The number 24 is the sum of the 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles — representing the unity of God's people across both covenants.
- Their white garments signify righteousness (Rev 3:5), and their crowns indicate victory and reward (2 Tim 4:8; Rev 2:10).
- They are seated on thrones, sharing in Christ's reign (Rev 3:21).

¹⁸⁹ Compare with Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 6:1-8.

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

¹³ And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

GLOSSARY OF END TIMES WORDS

666—Number of the beast, spelled out in Rev. 13:18 as *six hundred sixty-six*.

144,000—Group of believers who endure the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14).

Abomination of Desolation—An event that desecrates the temple in Jerusalem and is a signal to Jesus' followers that soon Jerusalem will be ruined (Matt. 24:15).

Antichrist—(from Greek, *antichristos*, in place of Christ) Anyone who denies what the apostles taught about Jesus Christ (1 John 2:18–22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). Specifically, the antichrist is a Satanic counterfeit of Jesus Christ, described as "lawless" and as a "beast" (2 Thess. 2:3–8; Rev. 13:1–18; 17:3–17).

Apocalyptic Literature—(from Greek, *apokalypsis*, revealing) Jewish genre of writing structured around visions that figuratively pointed to hidden truths for the purpose of assuring God's people of the goodness of God's plans during periods of persecution.

Armageddon—(from Hebrew, *Har-Megiddon*, Mount Megiddo) The city of Megiddo was located between the Plain of Jezreel and Israel's western coast. Deborah, Gideon, Saul, Ahaziah, and Josiah fought decisive battles near Megiddo, so the valley of Megiddo became the symbol of a point of decisive conflict.

Babylon—In the book of Revelation, the name "Babylon" is symbolic, yet interpretations vary. It has been interpreted to refer to Jerusalem, Rome, or a one-world government and church.

Beasts, The Two—Symbolic creatures described in Rev. 11:7; 13:1–18. The first beast rises from the sea and has ten horns and seven heads that seem to point to Rome. The second beast rises from the earth with horns like a lamb and a voice like a dragon—in other words, a satanic parody of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Church Age—Time period from the beginning of the church (about AD 30) until Jesus Christ returns for everyone who has trusted in him, as promised in John 14.

Eschatology—(from Greek, *eschatos* meaning "final" and *logos* meaning "word" or "idea") The study of the Bible's teachings about the events leading up to the second coming of Jesus.

Final Judgment—Event described in Rev. 20:11–15 when God resurrects all people, judges them from the great white throne, and delivers them to their eternal destinies.

First Coming of Christ—Earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ, about 4 BC–AD 30.

Mark of the Beast—Indication of a person's allegiance to the teachings of the antichrist (Rev. 13:16–17). The people of God receive a similar mark indicating their allegiance to Jesus (Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4). Some interpreters believe that the mark of the beast will be an actual mark required by the Antichrist. Others understand the mark as a reference to someone's actions ("hand") and beliefs ("forehead") (Ex. 13:9, 16).

Millennium—(from Latin, *mille*, thousand) The 1,000-year reign of Jesus on earth described in Rev. 20:4–6.

Rapture—(from Latin, *raptus*, carry away) Event described in 1 Thess. 4:15–17 when Jesus Christ returns for his people. Dispensational premillennialists believe that the rapture and the second coming of Jesus are two separate events.

Second Coming of Christ—Bodily return of Jesus to earth to reign as king.

Tribulation, Great—Time when disasters happen on the earth and people who are faithful to Jesus suffer intense persecution, possibly lasting seven years (Rev. 7:14).

Witnesses, The Two—Two beings described in Rev. 11:1–14 who speak the truth about God before being killed and then resurrected.

II. Prophecies of Tribulation (6:1-19:6)

A. Seven Seals of Judgment (6:1-8:5)

1. A rider with a bow and crown on a white horse
 2. A rider with a sword on a red horse
 3. A rider with a pair of scales on a black horse
 4. A rider named Death on a pale horse, with Hades following him
 5. The souls of those who had been slain for the word of God
 6. Earthquake; black sun; moon like blood; falling stars; vanishing sky, mountains, islands
- Interlude:** 144,000 of Israel [7:4; 12,000 from each tribe] sealed [protected during judgment]; a multitude from every nation in white robes
7. Silence in heaven followed by the appearance of seven angels and seven trumpets

B. Seven Trumpets of Judgment (8:6-11:19)

1. Hail & fire, mixed with blood, thrown upon the earth: 1/3 of earth burned up; 1/3 of trees burned up; all green grass burned up
2. Great mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea: 1/3 of sea became blood; 1/3 of sea creatures died; 1/3 of ships destroyed
3. Great star named Wormwood [wormwood=a bitter, toxic plant] fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, fell on 1/3 of the rivers and springs: 1/3 of waters became Wormwood, and many people died because of the bitter water
4. 1/3 of sun, 1/3 of moon, 1/3 of stars were struck: 1/3 of their light was darkened; 1/3 of the day kept from shining; likewise 1/3 of the night
5. Woe #1: Star fallen from heaven to earth, given key to shaft of bottomless pit: smoke arose from the pit, locusts came from the smoke (with vivid appearance) who were allowed to torment those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads
6. Woe #2: Four angels released who were bound at the great river Euphrates [flows through Turkey, Syria, Iraq]: killed 1/3 of mankind with plagues of fire, smoke, sulfur
7. **Woe #3: Loud voices in heaven announce that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, who will judge the destroyers of the earth and reward those who feared and served him**

C. Explanatory Prophecies (12:1-14:20) Seven People or Creatures

1. **The Dragon: Satan**, defeated by Michael and his angels in heaven, thrown down to earth, conquered by the blood of the Lamb, but bringing woe to the earth because he knows his time is short, making war on those who keep God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus
2. The Woman who gave birth to a male child: The woman represents the people of Israel, from whom Jesus was born, attacked by Satan, and swept up to God's throne
3. **The Beast from the Sea: The Antichrist**, given power and authority by the Dragon, appears to have a mortal wound but is healed (prompting the whole world to marvel), blasphemes God, makes war against the saints, worshiped by everyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life. [The Beast from the Sea is not called the Antichrist in Revelation, but he appears to be same as the **Man of Lawlessness** in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; the **Antichrist** in 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7; and the "**little horn**" of the ten-horned beast in Daniel 7:7-8,19-27.]
4. **The Beast from the Earth (13:11)—the False Prophet** (16:13, 19:20): Exercises the authority of the Sea Beast and makes the earth's inhabitants worship the Sea Beast, performs great signs including making fire come down from heaven to earth, causes everyone to be marked on the right hand or forehead so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark (the name or number of the Sea Beast). The number of the Sea Beast "is the number of a man, and his number is 666" (13:18).

Satanic Counterfeits that Oppose God (the “unholy trinity”)

The Dragon—Satan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brings forth the beast out of chaotic waters 	God the Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brings forth creation out of chaotic waters
The Beast from the Sea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given power & authority by the dragon Has ten crowns & blasphemous names Recovers from a seemingly fatal wound Receives worship along with the dragon Attracts the worship of the world Utters blasphemies Makes war against the saints 	Jesus Christ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given power & authority by God Has many crowns & worthy names Resurrected from the dead Receives worship along with the Father Attracts the worship of the universe Utters the praises of God Makes war against the beast from the sea
The Beast from the Earth—the False Prophet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points people to worship the sea beast Forces the mark of the beast on his subjects 	The Holy Spirit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Points people to worship Jesus Seals believers w/ a guarantee of inheritance
Babylon the Prostitute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represents worship of the godless world Adorned w/ purple, scarlet, gold, jewels, pearls 	The Bride of Christ—the Church <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worshippers of the true God Clothed w/ fine, pure linen (righteous deeds)

5. The 144,000 who have the Father’s name and the Lamb’s name written on their foreheads: They have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. The 144,000 in 14:1-5 are possibly the same as the 144,000 in 7:4.
6. Three Angelic Messengers:
 - Angel #1 tells people to glorify God because the hour of his judgment has come.
 - Angel #2 tells people that Babylon the Great has fallen.
 - Angel #3 tells people that wrath will come upon those who worship the beast or his image or receive a mark on his forehead or hand.
7. **One Like the Son of Man: Seated on a cloud with a golden crown on his head and sharp sickle in his hand; tells an angel that the hour has come to reap the harvest from earth. Another angel instructs an angel with a sharp sickle to gather the grape harvest of the earth and throw it into the winepress of the wrath of God.**

D. Seven Bowls of Judgment (15:1-16:21)

1. Bowl poured on earth: Painful sores on those who bore the mark of the sea beast and worshiped its image
2. Bowl poured into the sea: Like the blood of a corpse; killed every living thing in the sea
3. Bowl poured into the rivers and springs: They became blood
4. Bowl poured on the sun: Scorched people with fire; they did not repent or give God glory
5. Bowl poured on the throne of the beast: Its kingdom plunged into darkness; people cursed God and did not repent
6. Bowl poured on the great river Euphrates: Demonic spirits come out of the mouths of the dragon, beast, and false prophet; the spirits go out to the kings of the world to assemble them for the Battle of Armageddon [16:16; symbolic location or a location in northern Israel known as Megiddo in the Old Testament; God’s forces of Jesus, angels, & believers will fight Satan’s forces of the sea beast, the false prophet, & kings]
7. **Bowl poured into the air: A loud voice from the throne says “It is done!” The great city (Jerusalem) is split into three parts; cities, islands, and mountains are destroyed; the people curse God for the plague of hail**

E. Fall of the Great Prostitute (17:1-19:5)

1. Called Babylon the Great: Seated on a scarlet beast (the beast from the sea from chapter 13, known as the Antichrist in 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2 John 7); represents the empire of the beast; holds a cup filled with sexual immorality (that symbolizes spiritual infidelity); drunk with the blood of the martyrs; represents Rome (she sits on seven mountains, 17:9), which itself represents the corrupt, seductive, intoxicating world system of power, wealth, and idolatry that seeks to draw us away from Christ
2. The world and the beast turn against Babylon; she is burned up with fire; a great multitude in heaven praises God for judging Babylon

III. Prophecies of the Second Coming (19:7-21)

A. Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:7-10)

Revelation 19:6-9

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah!

*For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.*

*⁷ Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

*⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

[Who is invited: All believers of all time; all of Jesus' redeemed people; all the elect.]

B. Second Coming of Christ (19:11-21)

A rider named Faithful and True, also called the Word of God, also called King of Kings and Lord of Lords, appears on a white horse. He wears a robe dipped in blood. The armies of heaven follow him on white horses. He throws the sea beast and the false prophet (the earth beast) alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. He slays their followers.

IV. Prophecies of the Millennium (20:1-15)

A. Satan is Bound a Thousand Years (20:1-3)

Revelation 20:1-3

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

B. Saints Reign a Thousand Years (20:4-6) THE MILLENNIUM

Revelation 20:4-6

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

C. Satan is Released and Leads Rebellion (20:7-9)

Revelation 20:7-9

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them.

D. Satan is Tormented Forever (20:10)

Revelation 20:10

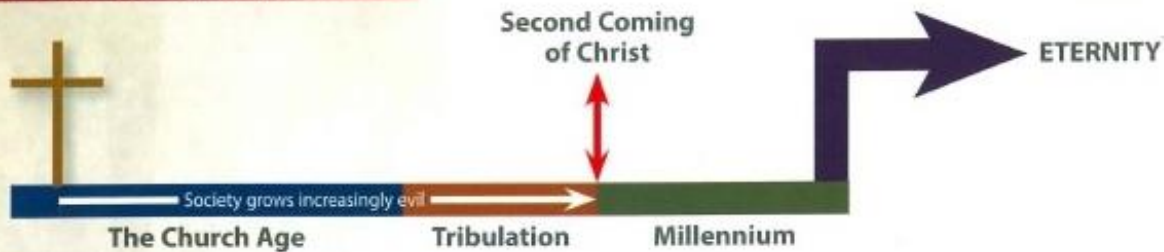
¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

E. Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)

The one seated on the great white throne presides over a judgment of those who have died who are now standing before the throne. Those whose names are written in the book of life enter the new heaven and the new earth (21:1). Those whose names are not written in the book of life are judged by their deeds and thrown into the lake of fire, a place of perpetual torment (20:10).

Four Views of the End Times

HISTORICAL PREMILLENNIALISM



What is historical premillennialism?

It is the belief that Christians will remain on the earth during the great tribulation, which will purify the churches by rooting out false believers. The second coming of Christ will precede the millennium, which is a literal, future event. God's promises of land and blessings to Abraham and his offspring were conditional promises based on their obedience. The church has replaced the nation of Israel as God's covenant people. God has maintained a covenant of grace throughout the Old and New Testaments with all who trusted in him. These believers—embodied today in the church—are the true Israel (Rom. 9:6–8; Gal. 6:16).

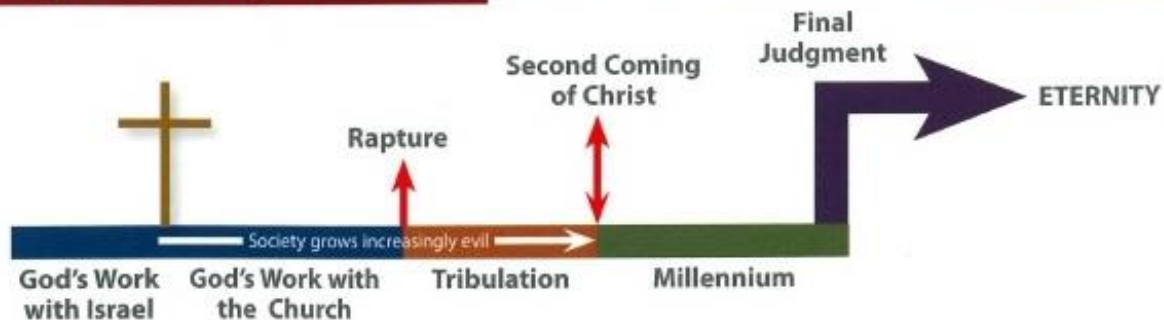
What Scriptures seem to support this view?

The revealing of the Antichrist precedes Christ's return (2 Thess. 2:3–4). The tribulation will root out false members from the churches (Rev. 2:22–23). The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Rev. 13:7). God's promises to Abraham and his offspring were conditional (Gen. 22:18; 2 Chron. 33:8; Isa. 1:19–20; Jer. 7:6–7). The New Testament frequently uses "Israel" and "the twelve tribes" to refer to Christians (Matt. 19:28–29; Rom. 9:6–8).

When has this view been popular?

It seems to have been the earliest view of the end times among Christians who lived just after the apostles, but it faded with later church fathers. Supporters included many early church fathers such as Lactantius, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, and possibly Papias. Modern supporters include David Dockery, John Warwick Montgomery, George R. Beasley-Murray, Robert Gundry, and George E. Ladd.

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM



What is dispensational premillennialism?

It is the belief that Jesus will come back to earth after a seven-year tribulation and will rule during a thousand-year millennium of peace on earth. God will still give to the nation of Israel the land described in Genesis 15:18. All references to Israel in Revelation refer to the nation of Israel. Most who hold this view are "pre-tribulationists"; they understand Revelation 4:1–2 to refer to the rapture. The rapture is the event when Christ removes Christians from the earth before the great tribulation begins. The rapture and the second coming of Jesus are two separate events. Others who hold this view are "mid-tribulationists"; they believe the rapture will occur during the tribulation.

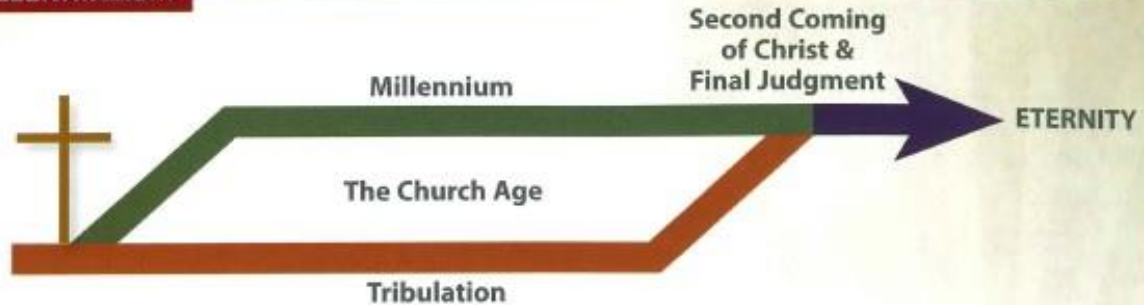
What Scriptures seem to support this view?

God will remove Christians before the tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10). God's promises to Abraham and his offspring were unconditional (Gen. 15:7–21). The church is not specifically mentioned between Revelation 4 and 19.

When has this view been popular?

This view emerged in the 1800s among the Plymouth Brethren. It increased in popularity in the late 1800s and remains widespread today. Supporters include J. Nelson Darby, C.I. Scofield, Harry A. Ironside, Gleason Archer, Donald G. Barnhouse, Hal Lindsey, Chuck Smith, John MacArthur, Charles Ryrie, Charles Stanley, Norman L. Geisler, and Tim LaHaye.

AMILLENNIALISM



What is amillennialism?

It is the belief that the millennium is the spiritual reign of Jesus in the hearts of his followers. The "first resurrection" in Revelation 20:5 is not a physical restoration from the dead, but a spiritual resurrection (regeneration). Christ's triumph over Satan through his death and resurrection restrained the power of Satan on earth (Rev. 20:1-3). Persecution of Christians (tribulation) will occur until Jesus comes again, as will the expansion of God's kingdom (the millennium). When Christ returns, he will immediately defeat the powers of evil, resurrect the saved and the unsaved, judge them, and deliver them to their eternal destinies. Most references to Israel in Revelation are symbolic references to the people of God on earth.

What Scriptures seem to support this view?

The Bible frequently uses the number 1,000 figuratively (Ps. 50:10; 90:4; 105:8; 2 Peter 3:8). The first resurrection could refer to the spiritual resurrection of those who trust Christ (Rev. 20:4; Rom. 11:13-15; Eph. 2:1-4). The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the saved and the unsaved will occur at the same time (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29). The saints are on earth during the tribulation (Rev. 13:7).

When has this view been popular?

It became popular in the fifth century and has remained widespread throughout church history. Augustine was possibly the first amillennialist. Martin Luther and John Calvin held this view. Other supporters include E.Y. Mullins, Abraham Kuyper, G.C. Berkouwer, Herschel Hobbs, Stanley Grenz, and J. I. Packer.

POSTMILLENNIALISM



What is postmillennialism?

It is the belief that the second coming of Christ will occur after the millennium, which represents a long time period when, through the preaching of the gospel, most of the world will submit to Jesus. Satan will have no power over the earth, and evil regimes will collapse (Rev. 19:19-20:3). Christ will rule the earth through his Spirit and through his church. He will not, however, be physically present on the earth. The resurrection depicted in Revelation 20:4 represents the spiritual regeneration of people who trust in Jesus Christ. The second coming of Christ, the final conflict between good and evil, the defeat of Satan, the physical resurrection of all people, and the final judgment will occur together, immediately after the millennium (Rev. 20:7-15).

What Scriptures seem to support this view?

Every ethnic group will receive the gospel before the second coming (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10). The second coming of Christ and the resurrection of all people will occur at the same time (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29).

When has postmillennialism been popular?

The earliest writer who was clearly postmillennialist was Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202). Earlier leaders such as Eusebius, Athanasius, and Augustine may have also been postmillennialists. During the missionary expansion of the 1800s, this view increased in popularity. But in the early 1900s, a world war and economic depression raised questions about whether the world was becoming a better place, and postmillennialism diminished in popularity. Supporters include Jonathan Edwards, B.B. Warfield, Augustus H. Strong, Charles Hodge, R.L. Dabney, Loraine Boettner, and R.C. Sproul.

V. Prophecies of the Eternal State (21:1-22:5)

A. New Heaven and New Earth Are Created (21:1)

Revelation 21:1

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

B. New Jerusalem Descends (21:2-8)

Revelation 21:2-4

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

C. New Jerusalem Is Described (21:9-22:5)

- Has the glory of God; radiance like jewels; a great high wall; gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel and foundations with the names of the twelve apostles (signifying the unity of Old Testament and New Testament believers)
- A city with equal length, width, and height; made of pure gold, clear as glass; foundations adorned with jewels; gates with pearls; street of pure gold, transparent as glass
- No temple is in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb; no need of sun or moon to shine, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb; the glory and honor of the nations will come into it; nothing unclean will ever enter it, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life
- The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; on either side of the river sits the tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit

VI. Conclusion (22:6-21)

Revelation 22:6-21

⁶ And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

⁷ "And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

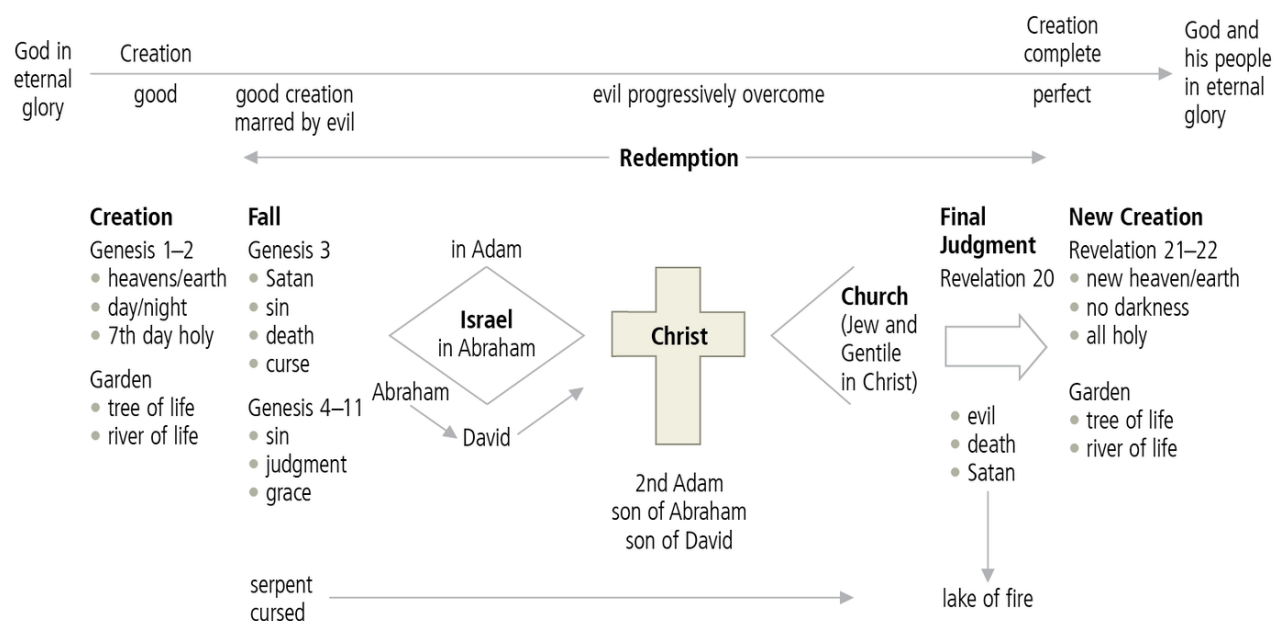
²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

The “Bookends” of Biblical Theology¹⁹⁰

God’s ultimate purpose in redemptive history is to create a people to dwell in his presence, glorifying him through numerous varied activities and enjoying him forever. The story begins with God in eternal glory, and it ends with God and his people in eternal glory. At the center stands the cross, where God revealed his glory through his Son.

The biblical story of redemption must be understood within the larger story of creation. First Adam, and later Israel, was placed in God’s sanctuary (the garden and the Promised Land, respectively), but both Adam and Israel failed to be a faithful, obedient steward, and both were expelled from the sanctuary God had created for them. But Jesus Christ—the second Adam, the son of Abraham, the son of David—was faithful and obedient to God. Though the world killed him, God raised him to life, which meant that death was defeated. Through his Spirit, God pours into sinners the resurrection life of his Son, creating a new humanity “in Christ.” Those who are “in Christ” move through death into new life and exaltation in God’s sanctuary, there to enjoy his presence forever.

The “bookends” concept of biblical theology illustrates that in the third-to-last chapter of the Bible (Revelation 20) God removes his enemies—Satan, death, and evil—that entered the story line in the third chapter of the Bible (Genesis 3), thus completing the story of redemption. The last two chapters (Revelation 21–22) don’t simply restore the first two chapters (Genesis 1–2); they go beyond them to a world that is fully ordered and holy, in which God is fully present with his people, completing the story of creation.



¹⁹⁰ *ESV Study Bible*, 2495.

