



**A Brief
Overview
of the
the Book of
Revelation**

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Revelation

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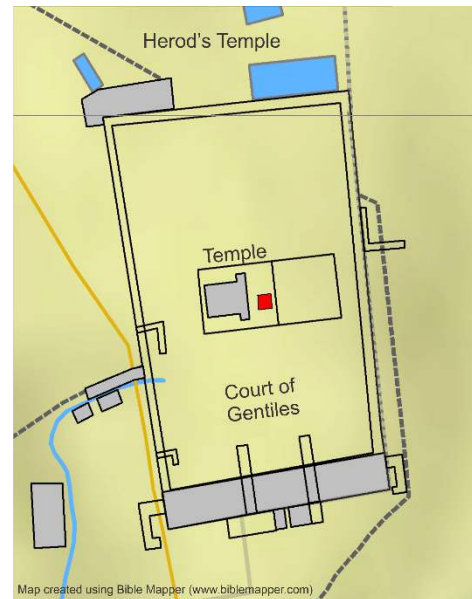
Contents

Background	4
Introduction	4
The first Vision (1:9-20).....	6
The Letters to the Churches (2:1-3:22).....	7
Ephesus	7
Smyrna	7
Pergamum.....	7
Thyatira	8
Sardis.....	8

Philadelphia.....	8
Laodicea	8
The vision in Heaven (4:1-11)	8
Book with the seven seals (5:1-8:1).....	9
Seven trumpets (8:6-11:19).....	10
Woman and dragon (12:1-17)	12
The seven last plagues (15:1-16:21)	13
Judgment of the great harlot (17:1-18).....	14
Jesus Returns (19:11-20:3).....	15
The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus (20:4-6)	15
The Final Battle (20:7-10).....	15
Great White Throne judgement and the Judgement Seat of Christ.....	15
New Jerusalem.....	18
The Deity of Christ in Revelation	18
The Seven Year Tribulation Period.....	18
Our Focus	19
Revelation Time Line Chart.....	20

Background

In 70 AD, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army and their auxiliary units. By that time, the Book of Acts and most of the books of the New Testament had been written. The Christian Church had greatly expanded. After this, the apostle John wrote his Gospel around 85 AD, his three letters around 90 AD and, while on the island of Patmos in exile, he received the “Revelation of Jesus Christ”. It is important to note that John recorded all that was told him and shown him. There are many mentions of “I saw”, “I heard” and the like. This is not something that John came up with or is “John’s theology”. There are also some things that are prophesied but not explained. For example, even in Daniel 12:8-9, some things are concealed. The same happens in this book with the seven thunders. John was



to refrain from writing those things down. God deliberately does not make His revelations so clear that everyone can see it. He uses imagery both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jesus, in His earthly ministry, also used parables and imagery to obscure some of His teachings. Just as Jesus explained the parables to His disciples, so some of the imagery in Revelation is explained to John. Just as creation was a supernatural event that cannot be explained in “modern” scientific terms, so many of the events in Revelation cannot be explained “scientifically” since they are acts of God. Sometimes the same word has different meanings. For example, sometimes “stars” refer to angelic beings, other times to heavenly bodies. It is prudent not to try and explain every item in this book, since it will likely not be able to be explained until the events occur.

Introduction

The book of Revelation has frequently been avoided by us since it appears somewhat ominous. We may be missing out on a blessing by not reading and obeying.

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written in it, for the time is near. (Rev. 1:3 LSB)

“And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” (Rev. 22:7 LSB)

The book is an eyewitness account of a revelation from God (the father) given to Jesus who sent an angel to John. (This is John the apostle, as Irenaeus who lived in the second century attested¹). John describes what was shown and told to him. Note the following:

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, saying, "Write in a scroll what you see, 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." (Rev. 1:10–11 LSB)

I, John, am the one who was hearing and seeing these things. (Rev. 22:8 LSB)

While some people work hard at trying to identify the various entities in the book, they may be missing out on the whole purpose of the book. The church will be raptured prior to the great tribulation. The latest that the rapture could take place is around the 6th seal, though it is likely prior to that. Consequently, present day believers will not be going through the trumpet and bowl judgements or the time of the beast and the mark "666" of the beast. With the severity of the judgements, it is quite possible that the structure and identity of the kingdoms during the tribulation period will be different from what we currently have. We should focus more on the message of the book. Jesus had summed up the Scriptures in Matthew:

And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." (Matt. 22:37 LSB)

"And the second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' (Matt. 22:39 LSB)

When Jesus was discussing the end times and the tribulation, he said the following:

"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (Matt. 24:9 LSB)

"But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matt. 24:13 LSB)

"Therefore stay awake, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. (Matt. 24:42 LSB)

"Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour. (Matt. 25:13 LSB)

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' (Matt. 25:40 LSB)

¹ Irenaeus – Against Heresies 4.20.11

“Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:45–46 LSB)

“And you will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. (Matt. 10:22 LSB)

Enduring, persevering, and overcoming are themes throughout the book.

The word “saw” is used 44 times in the book indicating what John saw. The word “looked” is used 12 times to describe what he saw. This book describes what John saw and heard, not what he came up with on his own. Most commentaries paint the picture that John was coming up with the various word pictures, imagery, and symbolisms, rather than acknowledging that John was just recording what he saw.

Paige Patterson in the New American Commentary series says:

An author of a biblical text may certainly disclose truth that reaches to insights given by the Holy Spirit transcending even what the prophet himself comprehended. But to insist that the text meant something entirely different from that which the author understood is asking far too much. Further, a fair reading of these texts will reveal that the prophets anticipated literal fulfillment—an actual fulfillment that included and focused on Israel as the recipient of the promises of God to Abraham.²

When studying the book of Revelation, it is prudent to stay within reasonable bounds of acknowledging what is said and staying away from speculating about those things that are not clearly identified and revealed. It is also important to stick with the obvious plain reading of the text and not come up with some fanciful, allegorical interpretations. For example, the 144,000 that are sealed in chapter seven, are very clearly identified as Israelites. Any notion that these might be the church or some other group can be ruled out with definite certainty.

The book is written to the seven churches in Asia. (Rev 1:4) The greeting is from God the father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus. (God the Son)

The first Vision (1:9-20)

While John is exiled on the island of Patmos, the first vision, or first part of the whole vision, if you will, is a vision of Jesus with the seven stars, the sharp two-edged sword and the seven golden lampstands. The letters are written to the “angels” (messengers) of the seven lampstands (churches) in Asia minor. These “angels” are best understood to be the leaders of these churches. There may also be a secondary reference to angels that are assigned to these

²Patterson, Paige, *Revelation*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 39 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

churches or leaders. Jesus identifies Himself as the “first and last” and as “having been dead and being alive forever and ever”. This clearly confirms the deity of Jesus.



The Letters to the Churches (2:1-3:22)

This section describes what John saw and heard regarding the seven churches of Asia.

Ephesus

The Ephesian church was commended for their deeds and perseverance. They were also praised for staying doctrinally pure by testing false apostles and not willing for evil to be present. They rejected the teaching and deeds of the Nicolaitans. They were reprimanded for having left their “first love”. They are called to “repent and do what they did at first”. Their “first love” would refer to their love for God. The deeds would be the outworking of this love. John writes about this principle in Jn 13:35, 1 Jn 3:17-18 and 1 Jn 4:20. Luke, in Acts 4:32-35 also describes how loving God worked itself out through the generosity shown by the believers.

Smyrna

First, Jesus re-affirms his deity. He then affirms their tribulation and poverty and lets them know that they are about to suffer, that they will be tested and have tribulation for a time. Jesus encourages them to be faithful until death and they will receive the crown of life.

Pergamum

Jesus acknowledges that they live where “Satan’s throne” is and that they did not deny their faith even when one of them was martyred. They were reprovved for tolerating those that committed sexual immorality and sacrificed to idols. They also had some who followed the

teaching of the Nicolaitans. They are commanded to repent. Tolerance of evil within the church leads to reproof by Jesus here and in Thyatira.

Thyatira

This church is commended for their deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance. They are reproofed for tolerating Jezebel, who proclaimed to be a prophetess and was deceiving and teaching sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols. Regarding the “deep things of Satan, as they call them” John MacArthur writes:

This pre-Gnostic teaching said that one was free to engage the sphere of Satan and participate in sins of the body without harming the spirit. Since the spirit belongs to God, their twisted logic went, what does it matter if the body attends idolatrous feasts and engages in sexual immorality? They imagined themselves to be free to explore the satanic sphere and then brazenly come to worship God.³

Leon Morris concurs with this in his commentary.

They did not hesitate to engage in grossly sensual practices, maintaining that these concerned only their bodies but that their souls were pure. It could well be that we have here an early representative of this kind of teaching.⁴

Sardis

This church had a reputation of being alive, yet was dead. The only commendation is that there are a few who are still upright. The church is called to repent.

Philadelphia

This church is commended for their deeds, having kept the word of Jesus, and not denying Jesus. This church is promised that they will be kept from the “hour of testing” that is coming on the whole world. Many commentators take this promise to have a wider, secondary application in that the true believers will be raptured prior to the tribulation.

Laodicea

This church is rebuked for being lukewarm. They had an attitude of self-sufficiency and smugness.

The vision in Heaven (4:1-11)

In chapter four, the transition to heaven takes place as John is called to “come up here” in order to be shown “what must take place after these things”. Here he sees a throne with someone sitting on it (God the father). There are 24 thrones around the throne upon which the

³MacArthur, John, *Revelation 1–11*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

⁴Morris, Leon, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 20 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Acordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987.

24 elders sat. Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder come from the throne. The Holy Spirit is present, as is described by the lamps of fire. There are four living creatures proclaiming praise to God. Jesus is then identified with the Lamb that looked like it had been slain. The Lamb has seven eyes which are said to be the “seven Spirits of God” (a reference to the Holy Spirit). This shows that, first, Jesus is God and second, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The Lamb (Jesus) is worshipped by the angelic host. This clearly shows the divinity of Jesus, as only God is worshipped by the angelic host. The angels ascribe to both God the Father on the throne and the Lamb the same worship (Rev 5:11-13). Angels would never allow someone to worship them as is shown in other passages.

Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that! I am a fellow slave with you and your brothers who have the witness of Jesus. Worship God” (Rev. 19:10 LSB)

Book with the seven seals (5:1-8:1)

The Lamb then opens the seven seals that are on the scroll that God the Father gave to Jesus. This reflects back to the first verse where God the father gave the revelation to Jesus.

1. A white horse with one that conquers and overcomes went out.
2. A red horse went out and the rider was to take peace from the earth and make men slay each other.
3. A black horse, appears and the rider has a pair of scales. There is a lack of food and consequent famine.
4. Ashen horse with Death riding on it and Hades following behind. They kill ¼th of the earth with sword, famine, pestilence and wild animals.
5. John sees martyrs that are under the alter asking how long will God refrain from judging and avenging their blood? Each is given a white robe and told to rest longer.
6. When the sixth seal is broken, there is a great earthquake, the sun became black, the moon became like blood, the stars fell to the earth, the sky split apart, the mountains and islands moved out of their place and people hid themselves. This is an extremely catastrophic event, which obviously has not happened yet, so this is definitely in the future. After this, 144,000 of Israel sealed. The rapture must have taken place prior to this since the only believers left are the 144,000 Israelites that were sealed. While it is not possible to pinpoint the exact time of the rapture, it is most likely prior to the sixth seal being opened. (Many would place it prior to the first seal). A great multitude from all nations and tribes stand before the throne – these come out of the great tribulation which is about to occur. John MacArthur writes:

The elder’s description of these believers as having come out of the great tribulation clearly distinguishes them from any other group of redeemed people in history. The term great tribulation refers to a specific time in the future that is unique in all of human history. It refers to the future eschatological day of divine

*judgment immediately before Jesus Christ returns to establish His earthly kingdom.*⁵

7. The seventh seal ushers in the seven angels with seven trumpets. Another angel takes a censer filled with fire and throws it to the earth. Lightning, thunder, and earthquake follow.

*No specific judgment is mentioned when the seventh seal is broken. The narrative moves directly to seven trumpet judgments. From this we infer that the seventh seal consists of the seven trumpets.*⁶

*W. Graham Scroggie states, "The trumpets, therefore, do not double back over all or some of the seals, but lie under the sixth seal, and proceed from it" (The Great Unveiling, p. 111). He also holds that the bowls of the wrath of God (chap. 16) "do not double back over the seal and trumpet judgments" (p. 112)*⁷

*C.A. Blanchard holds the same position: "The series of three sevens are really included in one series of seven, that is, the seven trumpets are included under the seventh seal and the seven bowls are included under the seventh trumpet, so that we have in fact a single series in three movements" (Light on the Last Days, p. 58).*⁸

Seven trumpets (8:6-11:19)

1. Hail and fire mixed with blood is thrown on the earth and one third of the earth, trees and all the grass is burned up.
2. Something like a great mountain burning with fire is thrown into the sea. This causes one third of the sea to become blood. Also, one third of the creatures in the sea died and one third of the ships are destroyed.
3. A great star (Wormwood) falls from heaven, burning like a torch and fell on one third of the rivers and springs. Many men died from the waters which were made bitter.
4. One third of the sun, moon and stars are struck.
5. First woe. A Star (angelic or spiritual being) from heaven had fallen to the earth and opened the bottomless pit (where fallen angels or demons have been kept).

A term for the underworld as

a. the prison of the disobedient (Lk. 8:31; Rev. 9:1) and

*b. the realm of the dead (Rom. 10:7).*⁹

⁵MacArthur, John, *Revelation 1–11*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

⁶MacDonald, William, eds. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2016.

⁷Walvoord, John F. *Revelation*. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.7. 2 vols. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983.

⁸Walvoord, John F. *Revelation*. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.7. 2 vols. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983.

⁹Bromiley, Geoffrey W., ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: Abridged in One Volume*. Accordance electronic ed., version 2.1. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985.

Locusts came out and tormented those without the seal (144,000 Jews) for five months and could torment, but not kill. These would be demonic forces who had a “king” over them who was the “angel of the abyss”. Some think that this refers to Satan but as John MacArthur notes:

*This angel is better viewed as a high-ranking demon in Satan’s hierarchy.*¹⁰

Kendall H. Easley writes:

*his is neither the holy angel of God with the key (verse 1) nor Satan, who is introduced in chapter 12. This is some other archdemon that appears here in Scripture and perhaps also in 11:7.*¹¹

6. Four angels are released to kill 1/3rd of mankind. There were 200,000,000 horsemen. A strong angel with a little open book cried out and seven peals of thunder uttered their voices, but this was not to be recorded. This would seem to indicate that there is another series of judgements that take place at this time. The angel says that there will no longer be any delay. John takes the book and eats it and is told to prophesy again concerning many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings. Here, the two witnesses are introduced. These two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days. They will have power to cause plagues and kill those who would harm them.

David Guzik makes a good point:

*Who they are must not be terribly important, or we would have been told exactly who they are!*¹²

Warren Wiersbe puts the timing of these witnesses into the first half of the tribulation. This makes the most sense, since the beast that overpowers them rules for the second 3½ years.

*The place is Jerusalem and the time is the first half of the tribulation. Israel is worshipping again at its restored temple, built under the protection of the Antichrist, whose true character has not yet been revealed.*¹³

After this, the beast that comes out of the abyss will overcome them and kill them. This would be the same beast that is described in chapter 13. After 3½ days they will rise and ascend to heaven. A great earthquake occurs. One tenth of the city (Jerusalem) fell. Seven thousand people are killed in the earthquake. The rest of the people were terrified and gave glory to God. This was the second woe, the third was to appear quickly. It would appear that the chronology for the events on earth continue in chapter 13. It would also appear that chapter 13 refers to the second half of the tribulation.

¹⁰MacArthur, John, *Revelation 1–11*. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999.

¹¹Easley, Kendall H., *Revelation*. Edited by Max Anders. Vol. 12 of Holman New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 1998.

¹²Guzik, David. *Enduring Word Commentary*. e-sword edition. Goleta, CA: Enduring Word, 2020.

¹³Wiersbe, Warren W., *Be Victorious*. BE Series Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010.

*Forty-two months (1,260 days or times and time and half a time) is equal to three and one-half years or one-half of the tribulation period. Since the judgments seem to intensify from the opening of the seals to the sounding of the trumpets and finally to the sounding of the seven thunders and the outpouring of God's bowls of wrath, apparently the 42 months are the last 42 months of the tribulation period.*¹⁴

7. There are loud voices in heaven and elders worship God. The twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshipped God. The temple of God in heaven was opened and there was lightning, thunder earthquake and hail.

Woman and dragon (12:1-17)

This is a bit of a side note in the sense that it does not follow the chronology, but rather explains some things.

- A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet with a crown of 12 stars. This woman represents Israel, from whom Jesus was born.
- She was with child (Jesus). This dates to the time when Jesus was born.
- The great red dragon (Satan) swept away 1/3rd of stars in heaven and threw them to the earth. This is sometimes taken to mean that 1/3 of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God. He stood before the woman about to give birth in order to devour the child.
- The male child (Jesus) was to rule all nations with a rod of iron and was caught up to God and His throne.
- The woman (Israel) fled to the wilderness where she would be nourished for 1260 days.

Paige Patterson notes:

*This temporal period described in Scripture as 42 months (Rev 11:2; 13:5), or as "a time, times and half a time" (Rev 12:14), and sometimes as three and one-half years (Dan 9:27), is a consistent reference to the final three and one-half years of the 70-week prophecy in Daniel 9.*¹⁵

The angel Michael and his angels fight Satan and his angels (demons). Satan and his host are defeated and are thrown down to earth. He knows he only has a short time and he persecutes the woman (Israel). This is in the middle of the Tribulation.¹⁶

¹⁴Patterson, Paige, *Revelation*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 39 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

¹⁵Patterson, Paige, *Revelation*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 39 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

¹⁶MacDonald, William, eds. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2016.

Since Satan could not come against the woman, he makes war against the rest of her children (the church). Paige Patterson comments on this:

Unnoticed by many is the distinction in the final verse. The “offspring” of the woman and their identification as those who “hold to the testimony of Jesus,” make it virtually certain that two separate groups are intended. The radiant woman, representing ethnic Israel is one object of Satan’s fury. But the saints of the church—every follower of Jesus who bears his testimony—become the final object of satanic hatred. Since God remains beyond the reach of Satan, the devil’s wrath against God is transferred to the two objects still partially within his sphere; Israel and the church of Jesus the Christ.¹⁷

The beast comes up from the sea and was given power, the throne and authority. One of his heads had a fatal wound that was healed. The world was amazed and followed him. Authority to act was given for 42 months. It was given him to make war against the saints and to overcome them. This calls for the perseverance of the saints. People have tried to identify the kingdoms, but ultimately it is best to wait to try and identify the nations and the one head (nation or person) that looked like it had a fatal wound.

The book of Revelation gives no insight into the identity of these kingdoms, and such hypothesizing will not prove helpful.¹⁸

A second beast comes and exercises the authority of the first beast and performs great signs. He is also able to make the image of the beast to speak. A mark is put on people’s forehead or hand so no one can buy or sell without it (666).

The lamb stands with the 144,000 Jews on mount Zion.

An angel flies in midair and proclaims the gospel to every nation, tribe, and people.

Another angel proclaims that Babylon is fallen.

A third angel proclaims that anyone receiving the mark will incur the wrath of God.

This calls for perseverance of the saints and those who die in Lord from now on are blessed.

The earth is harvested – the evil people were trampled in God’s wine press. This reference to harvesting may be an overview of what is about to happen.

The seven last plagues (15:1-16:21)

Those who were victorious over the beast are with God singing the song of Moses.

1. Malignant sores on the people with the mark of the beast.

¹⁷Patterson, Paige, *Revelation*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 39 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

¹⁸Patterson, Paige, *Revelation*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 39 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2012.

*kings of the earth had committed adultery with the woman; in other words, they had become a part of the religious system which she symbolized*²⁰

- The name on her forehead is “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth”.
- She is drunk with the blood of the saints.
- The beast represents kingdoms and kings and will be defeated By Jesus.
- Another angel proclaims that Babylon the great is fallen, God’s people are to come out of her and not participate in her sins. There is rejoicing in heaven and a great multitude of believers in heaven appear.

Jesus Returns (19:11-20:3)

- Jesus comes with the armies from heaven and fights against the armies of the kings of the earth and the beast and defeats them. He will rule them with a rod of iron. The symbolism is a sword coming from His mouth. The Word of God is portrayed as a sword (Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12) and thus it would appear that it is through His Word that Jesus defeats His enemies.

The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire and the rest of the people were killed by Jesus.

Satan is thrown into the abyss for 1,000 years.

The Thousand Year Reign of Jesus (20:4-6)

During the one-thousand-year reign of Jesus, those that have been martyred for the word of God and those who did not worship the beast or receive the mark of the beast during the tribulation will reign with Jesus. The rest of the dead will not come to life until after the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus.

The Final Battle (20:7-10)

Satan is released at the end of the thousand-year reign of Jesus and will deceive the nations. The nations will then come up against the camp of the saints where fire will come and devour them. At this point, Satan is thrown into the lake of fire.

Great White Throne judgement and the Judgement Seat of Christ

People are judged for what they have done, death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. Anyone whose name was not in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented there for eternity. Believers will be in the “New Jerusalem” with God the father and Jesus (the Lamb). There is a vivid description of the city in chapter 21 and 22. There is some

²⁰Walvoord, John F. *Revelation*. The Bible Knowledge Commentary. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck. Accordance electronic edition, version 2.7. 2 vols. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983.

disagreement as to whether there is just one judgment seat or more. Some of the passages that talk about the judgment seat of God or Christ.

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, (John 5:22 LSB)

and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:27 LSB)

“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EACH ONE ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS. (Matt. 16:27 LSB)

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. “And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; (Matt. 25:31–32 LSB)

“And He commanded us to preach to the people, and solemnly to bear witness that this is the One who has been designated by God as Judge of the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42 LSB)

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Rom. 14:10 LSB)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10 LSB)

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: (2 Tim. 4:1 LSB)

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sits upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. Then I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (Rev. 20:11–12 LSB)

The things that these verses make clear are:

- Jesus is the one who judges
- People will be repaid for their deeds, whether good or bad.
 - For believers, this will not be a salvation issue, but rather one of reward or lack thereof. (1 Cor 3:11-15)
 - For unbelievers, it will determine the severity of the punishment and is not a salvation issue either. (Matt 10:15, 11:22-24, Lk 12:47-48) William Macdonald writes regarding Matt 10:15

He warned that such rejection would bring severer punishment in the day of judgment than the perversion of Sodom and Gomorrah. This proves that there will be degrees of punishment in hell; otherwise, how could it be more tolerable for some than for others?²¹

Writing on Luke 12:47 – 48, William Macdonald writes:

Verses 47 and 48 set forth a fundamental principle in regard to all service. The principle is that the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility. For believers, it means that there will be degrees of reward in heaven. For unbelievers, it means that there will be degrees of punishment in hell. Those who have come to know God's will as it is revealed in the Scriptures are under great responsibility to obey it. Much has been given to them; much will be required of them. Those who have not been so highly privileged will also be punished for their misdeeds, but their punishment will be less severe.²²

- At the judgement, Jesus will separate the believers from the unbelievers.

There are some different views as to how many judgements there are and when they will happen. Some believe that the “bema” seat judgment in 2nd Corinthians 5:10 is for believers only. Frequently this is said to occur at the rapture. This would present an issue – what about the tribulation and 1000-year reign believers. Some would also see another where the “sheep and goats” are separated. As we look at the above Scriptures, the most straight-forward, logical view would be that there is one judgment – the white throne judgment. Romans 14:10 says that we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. Paul quotes Is 45:22-25 and it is quite clear there that “everyone” means everyone.

The sure word of God is that every knee will bow before him and every tongue will swear allegiance to him (45:23b). This includes Hebrews and non-Hebrews, all nations, all languages, and all people²³

these verses contain an implicit forewarning: we must all appear before the judgment seat of God.⁷⁰⁶ It is this divine judgment seat (bēma), not Pilate's (Matt 27:19; John 19:13), not Gallio's (Acts 18:12, 16–17), not the court of public opinion, that ultimately counts. No one, including Christians, can escape it.²⁴

The passage in Matthew 25:31-46 sounds very much like the great white throne judgment as well, so most likely there is one judgement.

²¹MacDonald, William, eds. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2016.

²²MacDonald, William, eds. *Believer's Bible Commentary*. Accordance electronic ed. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2016.

²³Smith, Gary V., *Isaiah 40–66*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and Kenneth A. Mathews. Vol. 15B of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009.

²⁴Garland, David E., *2 Corinthians*. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen and David S. Dockery. Vol. 29 of The New American Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999.

While the others are possibilities, we should not be too dogmatic on this.

New Jerusalem

Chapters 21 and 22 describe the New Jerusalem. It is brilliant like precious stones. The first heaven and earth have passed away at this point. There are twelve gates (which are pearls) with an angel at each one. The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written on the gates. There were twelve foundation stones with the names of the apostles on them. The city is square, measuring about 2300 kilometers in each direction – width, length, and height. The walls are about 64 meters wide. The wall material is jasper and the city is pure gold. The foundations stones are of precious, beautiful material.

A river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb with the tree of life being on either side of it.

The Deity of Christ in Revelation

There are several passages that make it clear that Jesus is indeed God.

In Rev 1:4, “the one who is, and who was and who is to come” is a reference to God the Father. In Rev 1:8, God the Father says that He is the “Alpha and Omega” and the one “who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty”. In this verse, Alpha and Omega and the one who is and was and is to come are equated with God.

In Rev 1:17-18, Jesus references his identity again by stating that He is the “first and the last”, that He is the “living one who was dead and now is alive forever and ever”.

As has already been established, Jesus is the one that Judges and sits on the throne at the great white throne judgment.

In the scene in Rev 21:1-7, the new heaven and earth appear. The one sitting on the throne spoke. One of the things said is “I am the Alpha and Omega”. The question is who is on this throne? Is it Jesus, who was on the great white throne just prior or is it God the father from Rev 4:2? The most natural reading would be that this is God the Father on the throne.

In Rev 22:13-16, Jesus is speaking and says that I am the “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last”. Here, Jesus proclaims that He is the Alpha and Omega, which previously has been used by God the father to describe Himself. Thus, the only valid conclusion is that both God the Father and Jesus, God the Son is God. Additionally, of course, the Holy Spirit is also identified as God, therefore we have a “triune” God – one God in three persons.

The Seven Year Tribulation Period

The 70th week of Daniel is in the future and is a seven-year period. Most charts that you see will have the tribulation period spanning from the beginning of the seven seals to the second

coming of Christ. Is this the correct view though according to the text? Let's look at Daniel's text.

“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. (Dan. 9:24 NAS95)

The seventy weeks apply to the Jewish people, not to Gentiles.

Now, looking at the book of Revelation, we have two 3 ½ year periods. The first begins with the arrival of the two witnesses at the end of the 6th trumpet. The second 3 ½ year period starts with the killing of the two witnesses and the beast being given authority to act for 3 ½ years. From the time of the opening of the seals to the arrival of the two witnesses, the judgements are on all the earth. It is not until the arrival of the two witnesses, that the focus shifts back to Israel. Considering this, it is likely that the seven-year tribulation period proper does not start until the arrival of the two witnesses. That is not to discount the judgements nor their intensity from the start of the opening of the seals. This also provides for the time of the seal and trumpet judgements prior to the two 3 ½ year events that are listed.

The apostasy that is referenced in 2nd Thessalonians 2:3 is a little harder to place, so this is a bit of speculation here. The apostasy must be prior to the man of lawlessness, so it must be no later than the middle of the Tribulation. Considering the severity of the judgements of the seals and trumpets, I would be inclined to think that it was prior to the opening of the first seal, so that going into the time of the judgements of the end, there would be very few Christians.

Our Focus

Considering all of this and seeing that God is in control and that the believer's final destiny is assured as is the defeat of Satan and all that follow him, we should concentrate on the commands that Jesus gave us.

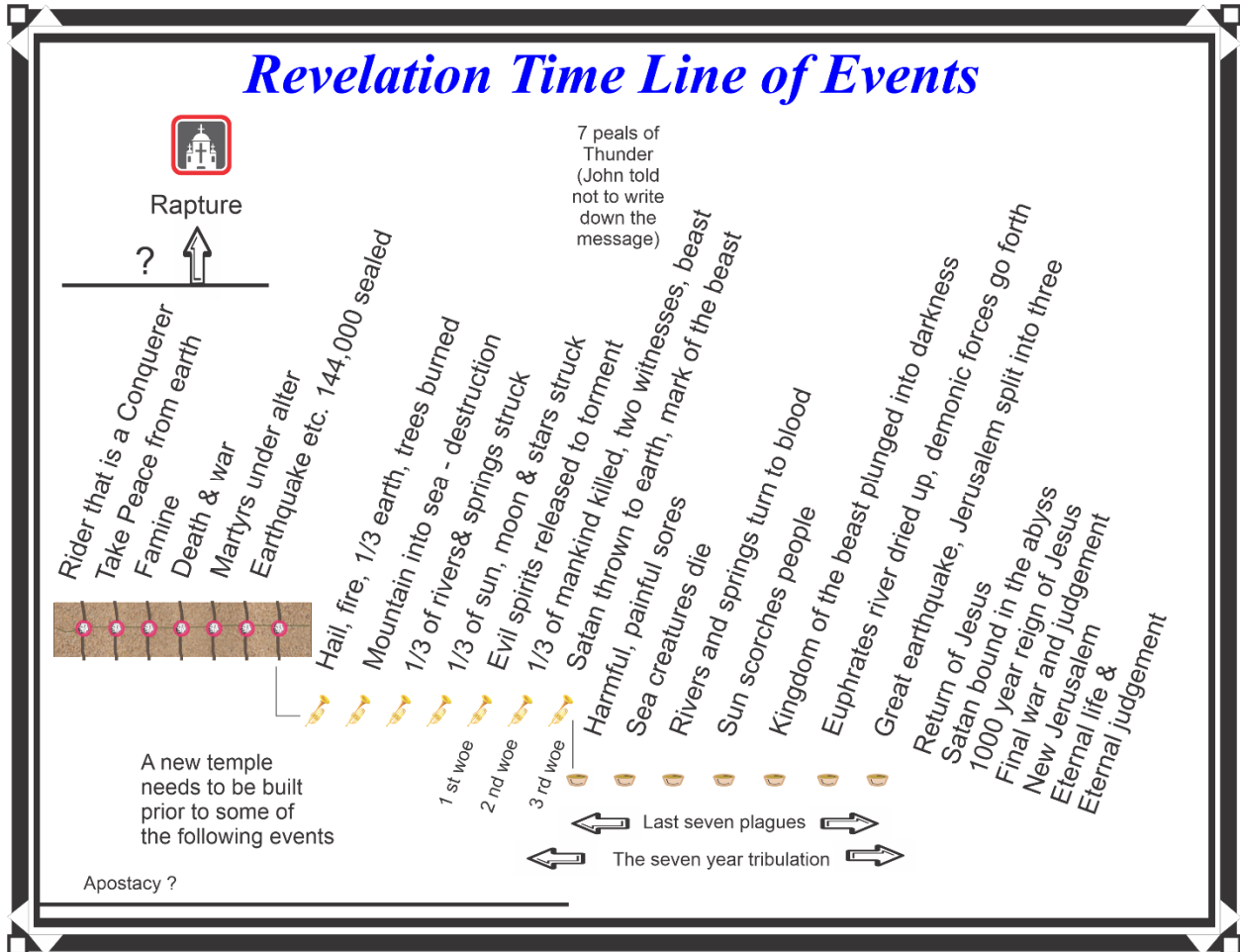
And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ “This is the great and foremost commandment. “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ (Matt. 22:37–39 NAS95)

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18–20 NAS95)

... However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8 NAS95)

Will you and I be found faithful?

Revelation Time Line Chart



Appendix:

Evaluating the various judgements and timelines.

Seals:

1. Conqueror
2. Take peace, make men slay each other
3. Famine
4. $\frac{1}{4}$ of the earth inhabitants are killed
5. 7th seal makes way for the seven trumpets.

Trumpets

1. Hail, fire, blood thrown to the earth, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the earth burned up.
2. Mountain into the sea, $\frac{1}{3}$ became blood and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the creatures died, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ships destroyed
3. "star" fell from heaven, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the waters were made bitter – many people died.
4. $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sun and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the moon and stars – no light from them for $\frac{1}{3}$ of the day and night.
5. Locusts torture people that are not sealed by God (144,000 Israelites) for five months. This is called the first woe. Two more are coming after these things.
6. Another $\frac{1}{3}$ are killed. Then there are seven thunders – John was not to record what was said.
7. In the days of the seventh angel who is about to sound... There will no longer be any delay. This now moves into the two $3\frac{1}{2}$ year periods.

Two witnesses

- By this time there is a sanctuary of God and altar, i.e the third temple must be constructed by this time.
- Here is where the 70th week of Daniel, i.e. the seven-year tribulation for the Jews starts.
- The Gentiles will trample Jerusalem for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.
- The two witnesses will prophecy for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. They will have power to keep it from raining, turn waters into blood and strike the earth with every plague as often as they wish.
- The beast from the abyss will overpower them after their time is up and kill them.
- After $3\frac{1}{2}$ days, God will raise them and they will go up into heaven. A great earthquake follows.
- The second woe is passed now – the third is coming quickly. Note again the sequential nature here.

The seventh angel now sounds his trumpet.

- Another beast is given authority for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years
- The beast comes against God's people and overcome them.

- Everyone on earth worships this beast.
- Another beast comes that does great signs and deceives people.

The last plagues (bowls).

- Rev 15:1 specifically says these are the last plagues.

 1. Loathsome malignant sores on people with the mark of the beast.
 2. Sea became blood, every living thing in the sea died.
 3. Rivers and waters become blood.
 4. Sun scorches people.
 5. Kingdom of the beast is put into darkness, pain and sores on people.
 6. Euphrates river is dried up to make a path for the kings of the East.
 7. Great earthquake, lightning, thunder, hail – much destruction.

Conclusion

As we look at these various judgements, we can see that you cannot overlap the seals with the trumpets or bowls. Also, the seal and trumpet judgements do not fit into the seven year period of the two witnesses and the beast.