

# Revelation Reference Guide

## The Authorship

The Apostle Joh (Rev. 1:1, 9)

## The Setting and Background

The Apostle John is in exile on the island of Patmos

Revelation was sent as a circular letter, to be read aloud in their meetings as a message directed to the real needs of real first-century people.

The seven churches were in the province of Asia (the western third of modern-day Turkey), which was well-known for its pro-Roman stance.

Revelation is responding to pressures inside and outside the church.

False teachers like the Nicolaitans (Rev 2:2, 6, 14, 20) convinced many that assimilation to the practices of the pagan world was acceptable, and as a result the church was being acculturated and spiritually endangered. But the battle between good and evil—between serving God and surrendering to the world—calls Christians to reject compromise and avoid complacency.

First-century Christians also experienced external economic and social pressure to participate in Roman life, and those in the church who refused to do so faced the antipathy of the rest of the populace. They were ostracized and persecuted, with punishments including imprisonment and death (2:9, 10; 13:10).

## The Purpose of Revelation

1. Just like other apocalyptic works, works of prophecy, and even epistles, the main purpose of Revelation is not to unlock secret codes or predict events, but to challenge and encourage God's people in the trials of the present evil age. IT IS A PICTURE BOOK NOT A PUZZLE BOOK.
2. To “Resist worldly compromise, spiritual complacency, and false teaching.” Brian Tabb
3. To encourage the church to stay faithful in the battle, to persevere in the midst of persecution; to maintain a prophetic witness in the world for the Lamb and against the world (false religious and political systems).
4. To challenge and encourage the church by helping them see things as they really are, not as they appear to be; that though at times their experience looks like perceived losses, they can be assured that behind it all is the victory of the Lamb and triumph of God's kingdom.

## **The Genres of Revelation**

1. It is apocalyptic.
2. It is a prophecy.
3. It is an epistle.

## **Date**

After investigation, the cumulative evidence seems to favor is that the Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian around 95 A.D., though there are also strong arguments for those who date it immediately prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

## **The Interpretive Views of Revelation**

**1. Preterism** - This view teaches that Though much of what was written was future to John, most have Revelation as being almost entirely been fulfilled with the exception of the consummating return of Christ which is still future. Focuses on specific literal events of the past. Asks the question: When did it happen?

### **2. Futurism**

There are two forms of the futurist perspective. Both understand the visions from ch. 4 up through 19 as referring exclusively to a future time immediately preceding the end of history. most popular form is dispensational futurism, which interprets very literally and generally sees the order of the visions as representing the historical order of future events. A second version of futurism may be referred to as “modified futurism” or classic premillennialism. It does not interpret as literally as the popular view and does not hold as strictly that the visions represent the chronological sequence of future history. In particular, this version can affirm that the church is true Israel and that there will be no “pretribulation rapture.” Rather, Christians will pass through the final period of trial. Focuses on specific literal events of the future. Asks the Question: How close are we?

### **3. Historicism**

Historicist interpreters generally see Revelation as predicting the major movements of Christian history, most of which have been fulfilled up to the time of the commentator. The majority of these commentators have understood the seals, trumpets, and bowls as unfolding successive events of history in general chronological order. “Where are we at now?”

#### **4. Idealism or Spiritual**

The idealist approach affirms that Revelation is a symbolic portrayal of the cosmic conflict between good and evil, between the forces of God and of Satan.

How do we have hope?

#### **5. Eclecticism or Redemptive-Historical (Modified) Idealism**

**This view argues that there are parts of all four of the previous views are interweaved throughout the Revelation.** The Revelation symbolically portrays events throughout history, which is understood to be under the sovereignty of the Lamb as a result of his death and resurrection. Much of the immediate events and abominations that the early church would undergo, were reflective of things it would face through all history, and foreshadows of events prior to the return of Christ. Christ will guide the events depicted until they finally issue in the last judgment and the definitive establishment of his kingdom. This means that specific events throughout the age extending from Christ's first coming to his second may be identified with one narrative or symbol. We may call this age inaugurated by Christ's first coming and concluded by his final appearance "the church age," "the messianic age," or "the latter days."

#### **The Structure of Revelation**

##### **1. Heavy symbolism and the use of numbers**

Most commentators have usually agreed that at least four numbers—three (Number of the Triune God), four (Universal or global scale), seven (Perfect Completeness), and twelve (Number for God's people), 1000 (denotes vastness) —and their multiples have symbolic meanings in Revelation

##### **2. OT passages and themes**

##### **3. Contrasts, reversals, counterfeits**

##### **4. Structure: Progressive parallelism**

A. Cyclical or repetitive patterns, where there is both thematic overlap and progression. When we look at the structure we will see that within the book there are 6 apocalyptic cycles (6-20) that reveal the course, character and consumption of the Kingdom each reflecting the church age.

B. The judgment/salvation cycles reveal the parallelism

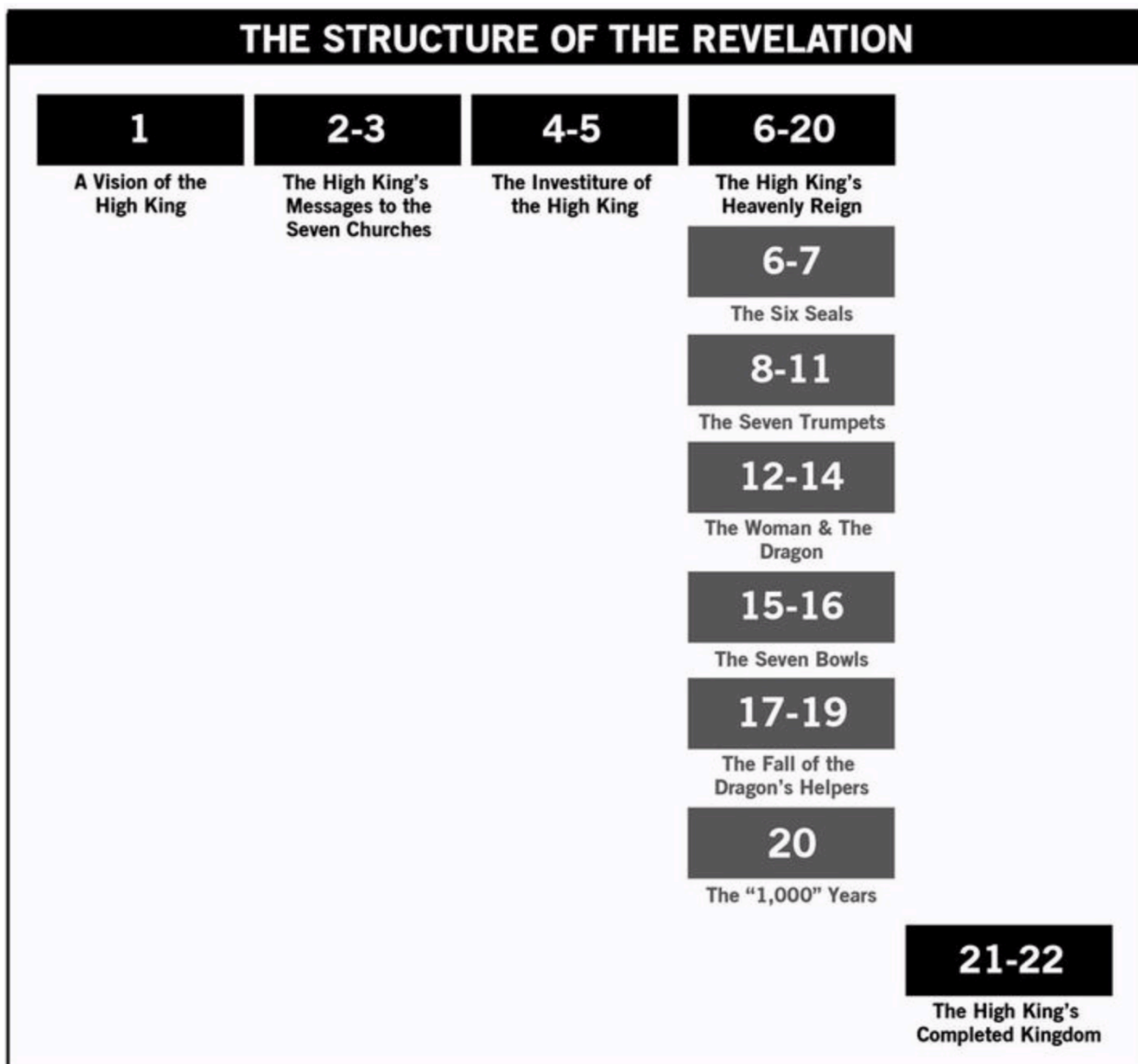
C. The nature of the scroll reveals the parallelism, the scroll is the script for the whole book which is why John weeps when no-one can open it.

D. The "time" language reveals the parallelism,

E. The progressive nature of the parallelism also explains why as we progress through the cycles they become more detailed, intense, and comprehensive. The book reveals a gradual progress in eschatological emphasis.

### The Theological Themes of Revelation

1. The sovereignty of God
2. The victorious Lamb
3. Suffering and spiritual warfare
4. The perseverance of the true church
5. The futility of Satan, sin, and death.
6. God's glory and His worship is central from beginning to end
7. The Centrality of God's Word in the life of his people.



## A Beginner's guide to eschatology

Eschatology simply means the study of last things.

Personal Eschatology - What happens to me when it's all said and done?

Cosmic Eschatology - What will happen to all the cosmos and all that is in it at the end of the age, what is its end?, does it have one?

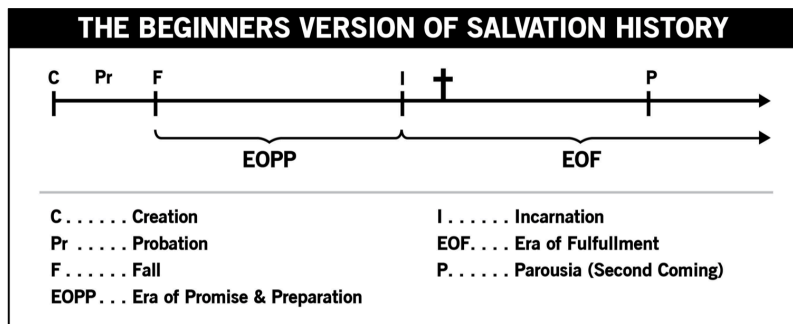
### Basic Biblical Understanding Personal Eschatology -

1) All Humans who die prior to Christ's return, at the moment of death their spirit separates from their body which is either buried or cremated, and the spirit goes to one of only two possible destinations—Heaven or Hades - this destination is fixed and directly related to a persons relationship with Christ.

### Cosmic Eschatology

History is his story. All of time began with Creation and will end with consummation.

And from Genesis 4-Revelation 22 the Bible provides the history of redemption for us.



Biblical cosmic eschatology does not just focus on the final little portion of the end of the age, but rather began with first coming of Christ which ushered in the era of fulfillment or the last days with the inauguration of his kingdom. Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2. So a true biblical understanding of cosmic eschatology centers on the entire era of fulfillment not just the end of it.

### Issues in Biblical Eschatology

- 1) Understanding the nature and coming of the kingdom of God.
- 2) Interpretation of Old Testament Kingdom Prophecy (OTKP)
- 3) Views of the Millennium
- 4) Arguments over the nature of the consummation.