

REVELATION

Message

“The Book of Revelation is an *apocalypse (the unveiling or revelation)* of Jesus Christ, as to His Person, His Power, and His Program, for the rest of human history.”¹ John writes in obedience to Christ’s command to comfort and encourage believers in the midst of suffering and persecution at the hands of evil Gentile rulers by assuring them that Jesus Christ will ultimately and finally cause them to triumph; and to challenge the churches to practice godly living in view of the certain return of Christ and the final judgment of all forms of evil, human and spiritual.



Authorship

According to the book itself, the author of this final book of the Bible called himself John four times (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Although the author refers to himself only as “John,” it was traditionally held in the early church that this was none other than the apostle John. John is also referred to as a prophet in 22:9.

Date of Writing

As for the date of composition, there are two primary views concerning the time this book was written: (1) early in the seventh decade of the first century during the reign of Nero (A.D. 68-70), and (2) late, A.D. 95-96, during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

Those that propose an earlier date for the Apocalypse of A.D. 68-70, during the reign of Emperor Nero, overlook the fact that the persecution under Nero was confined more or less to Rome, while the latter persecution under Domitian (A.D. 90-95) reached out to other parts of the Roman empire. The later date is based mainly on accounts of the early church fathers that placed the apostle John as an exile on the Island of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian, who died in A.D. 96; following which, John was then allowed to return to Ephesus.

While it is not possible to be dogmatic because of the lack of conclusive evidence, it seems best in light of available evidence to place this writing during the reign of Domitian, A.D. 81-96, more precisely towards the end of his reign in A.D. 95 or 96. This is by far the most widely held view among evangelical scholars. Several reasons are presented in support of this view: (1) The churches of Asia Minor evidence a mature development, which would hardly have existed as early as A.D. 65 (Nero’s time). (2) Revelation was written in a period when Christians were suffering persecution and threats from Rome. (3) The imperial perse-

¹This is the message statement suggested by Tom Constable, who writes that “We must seek to understand what Jesus has revealed here to His servant John, we must never forget that He is the subject of this book (19:10)” (Adapted from Thomas Constable, “Revelation” [unpublished notes available on-line through soniclight.com], downloaded on December 15, 2000).

cution carried-out by Domitian was more universal than that of Nero, which tended to be more or less centralized in Rome.

Historical Setting

Place of Origin. The place of writing is specified by John to have been on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea (1:9). Statements by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius affirm that the book was written by John while on the Isle of Patmos in A.D. 95 or 96.

Place of Destination. Tradition claims that John came to Ephesus in his later years, settling there in around A.D. 70, and while there he appears to have taken charge as the overseer of seven Asian churches (1:11).² As stated above, John was apparently exiled to the Island of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian who died in A.D. 96. During his exile on Patmos John was commissioned by the resurrected Lord to write in a book all that he was about to see, and to then send it unto the seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (1:10-13). Although Christ directed John to record and send His message to the seven churches of Asia, the book is also intended for believers and churches of all ages, including our own.

The Purpose of Revelation

The occasion which prompted the book was a direct command from the Lord Jesus for John to record and send His message to the seven churches of Asia (1:10-13). The stated purpose of the book is to reveal the exalted and victorious Lord Jesus Christ. John is directed to record what he had already seen by way of a vision (chapter 1), what he was about to receive concerning conditions that existed in the seven churches of Asia at the time he wrote (chapters 2–3), and what he would see concerning all that will take place in the future (chapters 4-22; see 1:19). Gromacki points out very succinctly that, “The [primary] goal of the book is to reveal the latter stages of God’s eternal plan of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ: [the release of the wrath of God against a Christ rejecting world], the establishment of His messianic kingdom of righteousness and peace (11:15; 21:1-2). In all of this, Christ is central ‘for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (19:10).”³

Interpretative Approaches

There are four main schools of interpretation that have been used by expositors to interpret this strange and often misunderstood book so filled with visions and symbols.

1. *The Preterist School (Contemporary History).* “Preterist” is from a Latin word which means “past.” Proponents of this position feel that virtually all of the material in Revelation speaks of events that transpired in early church history (the first century). It depicts the conflicts between the early church and the Roman Empire. The book contains no supernatural predictions of future events. If this approach is correct, the book of Revelation tells nothing of the future. It has no real message for us today. Yet, a natural reading of the book seems to demand a prophetic character (1:3, 19; 22:18, 19). Chapters 4–19 deal with a relatively short

²Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 320.

³Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 393.

- period of time (seven year Tribulation period), which culminates with the second coming of Jesus Christ (19:11-21). The plain reading of Scripture does not at all fit with this view.
2. *The Historicist School (Continuous History)*. This interpretation contends that Revelation gives a prophetic narrative of continuous history from Apostolic times up to the second coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. Those holding this view see in the symbols the rise of the Papacy, the corruption of the church, and the various wars throughout church history. This was the prevalent view among the Reformers and the interpretation promoted by the classic commentators of past generations.⁴ While the Preterist's contend that all the events of Revelation have already happened, the Historicist's says that most of Revelation is now history (usually through chapter 18), but some of it yet remains to be fulfilled in the future. One weakness of this position is that a person would have to be an expert in Western history to interpret the book. I find it hard to believe that God would write a book that only the religiously trained in history could fathom.
 3. *The Idealist School (Spiritual History)*. This school of interpreters is committed to an allegorical approach of spiritualizing the symbols.⁵ Revelation is approached as a pictorial presentation of the triumph of divine truth over evil. The book does not intend to depict actual events as such. Rather, the visions are expressions of the principles and forces active in all ages. All of this is designed to tell us that truth will triumph ultimately in the end even though evil and righteousness are in constant combat. This book has only spiritual value. Now it is to be freely admitted that there are spiritual values in this book, however, this viewpoint simply does not take the symbols of the book seriously. It avoids the persons and events in the book and simply looks at the result (truth will triumph). It's like reading the conclusion and not paying any attention to the events that bring about the conclusion. Certainly truth will triumph, but this book presents a very short and yet detailed process by which truth will ultimately triumph.
 4. *The Futurist School (Prophetic History)*. The Futurist contends that the greater part of the Book of Revelation (chaps. 4–22) is yet to be fulfilled in the future at the end of the age. Only chapters 1–3 have already been fulfilled. The phrase “the things that shall be hereafter” (1:19 and 4:1) are understood as referring to the distant future or “end of the age.” The major advantage of this position is that it harmonizes beautifully well with the other prophetic portions of the Bible (Daniel 7 and 9, Matt. 24–25). This interpretation of the book requires no special extra-biblical training. Any diligent believer with a Bible in his hand can interpret the book. Finally, this view permits a “literal hermeneutic,” which allows a person to interpret the language of the book in its normal natural sense (sometimes called “literal interpretation”). As many have suggested, “The more literal an interpretation that one adopts, the more strongly will he be construed to be a futurist.”⁶

Literary Structure

The structure for the book is derived from chapter 1 verse 19, which divides the book into three natural sections. This key verse reveals the criteria used to divide each section: “Write therefore the things which you have seen (apparently a past vision, chapter 1), and the things which are (presently concerning the seven churches of Asia, chapters 2–3), and the

⁴Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 394.

⁵Ibid.

things which shall take place after these things (concerning the future culmination of God’s plans and the glorification of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, chapters 4–22).

The bulk of the book (4:1–22:5) deals with events that will occur during a future period commonly known as the Great Tribulation. John details the future tribulation period by dividing it into three sequences of seven divine judgments that God will release upon this Christ rejecting world: *7 seal judgments*, *7 trumpet judgments*, and *7 bowl judgments*.⁷ Interspersed between these narrative sections depicting the eschatological judgments of God are several literary parenthesis. The same phenomenon is witnessed in the Book of Hebrews. These parenthesis do not advance the prophetic narrative, and in fact they can either look forward or backward. They can at times speak of results that have not as yet taken place in the narrative section as though it had already taken place.

The following chart from Gromacki⁸ graphically illustrates the scope of the book:

Things You Have Seen	Things That Are	Things That Shall Be Hereafter
Ch. 1	Chs. 2–3	Chs. 4–22
Past	Present	Prophetic Future
Christ	Churches	Consummation

Unique Characteristics

1. Revelation contains more references to the Old Testament than any other book in the New Testament corpus, but as remarkable as it may seem, Revelation does not have a single direct quote; rather there are hundreds of places where John alludes in one way or another to the Old Testament Scriptures. Swete states that of the 404 verses that make up the Apocalypse, 278 contain references to the Jewish Scriptures.⁹ “Estimates of allusions in Revelation to the Old Testament range from 278 to over 400.”¹⁰
2. There are remarkable parallels between this revelation and the Lord Jesus’ teaching in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24–25; Mark 13; Luke 21). The Book of Revelation clearly builds on the Olivet Discourse foundation as well as on prophecies previously given to the prophet Daniel (Dan 7–12). Other prophets include Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah.
3. The book is full of apocalyptic literature, which is characteristically symbolic and full of figurative language. This fullness of imagery makes Revelation quite unique.

A detailed Outline of the Book of Revelation is available online at www.HorizonAlive.com

⁷There are three possible arrangements for the order of these judgments: parallel, consecutive, and telescopic. A correlation of concepts and passages seems to support the telescopic arrangement as the best. For a full development of the various literary features associated with the three sequences of seven divine judgments that God will pour out on the world during the tribulation period see the excellent charts provided by Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 395-97.

⁸Ibid., 395.

⁹Henry B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cxxxv.

¹⁰Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 397.

Outline

There are many ways in which the structure of the book can be determined. However, the most popular outline, and the one to be followed in this argument, is based upon 1:19; wherein chapter 1 refers to the past “things seen,” chapters 2-3 to the present “things which are,” and chapters 4-22 to the prophetic future “things which will take place.”

I. The Introduction 1:1-8

- A. The Superscription (1:1-3)
 - 1. The revelation from God (1:1-2)
 - 2. The blessing promised to the reader (1:3)
- B. The Salutation (1:4-8)

II. “The Things Which You Have Seen” (The Glorified Christ) 1:9-20

- A. Circumstances of the Vision (1:9-11)
- B. Content of the Vision (1:12-16)
- C. Consequences of the Vision (1:17-20)

III. “The Things Which Are” (Letters to the Seven Churches) 2:1–3:22

- A. The Message to the Church in Ephesus: A Backslidden Church (2:1-7)
- B. The Message to the Church in Smyrna: A Persecuted Church (2:8-11)
- C. The Message to the Church in Pergamum: A Licentious Church (2:12-17)
- D. The Message to the Church in Thyatira: A Lax Church (2:18-29)
- E. The Message to the Church in Sardis: A Dead Church (3:1-6)
- F. The Message to the Church in Philadelphia: A Faithful Church (3:7-13)
- G. The Message to the Church in Laodicea: A False Church (3:14-22)

III. “The Things Which Will Take Place”: Eschatological Program of God 4:1–22:5

A. The Eschatological Program of God: the Seven Year Tribulation Period (4:1–11:19)

1. The Scene in Heaven (4:1–5:14)
 - a. The throne of God in heaven (4:1-11)
 - b. The throne of the Lamb in heaven (5:1-14)
2. The Seven Seal Judgments (6:1-17)
 - a. First seal: cold war (6:1-2)
 - b. Second seal: open war (6:3-4)
 - c. Third seal: famine (6:5-6)
 - d. Fourth seal: death (6:7-8)
 - e. Fifth seal: martyrdom (6:9-11)
 - f. Sixth seal: physical disturbances (6:12-17)

* (*First Parenthesis: Salvation in the Tribulation: Jews and Gentiles (7:1-17)*)

 - a. The sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (7:1-8)
 - b. The salvation of the great multitude of Gentiles (7:9-17)
 - c. Seventh seal is opened: begins the trumpet judgments (8:1-6)
3. The Seven Trumpet Judgments (8:7–9:21)
 - a. First trumpet: third of the earth burned up (8:7)
 - b. Second trumpet: a third of sea life and ships destroyed (8:8-9)
 - c. Third trumpet: third of the fresh water polluted (8:10-11)
 - d. Fourth trumpet: third of the heavens smitten (8:12-13)
 - e. Fifth trumpet: (1st Woe) men tormented by demonic locusts (9:1-12)
 - f. Sixth trumpet: (2nd Woe) third of mankind killed by warfare (9:13-21))

* (*Second Parenthesis: Vision of the Little Scroll and Two Witnesses (10:1–11:14)*)

 - a. The angel and the little scroll (10:1-7)
 - b. The measurement of the future Temple (11:1-2)
 - c. The two witnesses (11:3-12)

- d. The earthquake: termination of the 2nd Woe (11:13-14))
- 4. The Seventh Trumpet Judgment: 3rd Woe—*Christ the Triumphant King* (11:15-19)
 - a. The world's kingdoms transferred to Christ: "*second advent of Christ*"¹¹ (11:15)
 - b. The worship of God the King (11:16-17)
 - c. The wrath of God released among the nations¹² (11:18-19)
- B. The Eschatological Program of God: the Seven Year Tribulation Period Restated
With Additional Details (12:1–19:10)
 - (1. The Seven Great Actors¹³ of the Tribulation Period (12:1–14:20)
 - a. The pained woman: Israel (12:1-2)
 - b. The perverted red dragon: Satan (12:3-4)
 - c. The promised male child: Christ (12:5-6)
 - d. The protector of Israel: Michael and his angels (12:7-17)
 - e. The two beasts: anti-christ and his false prophet (13:1-18)
 - 1) The beast out of the sea: anti-christ—the political ruler (13:1-10)
 - 2) The beast out of the earth: false prophet—the religious ruler (13:11-18)
 - * *Third Parenthesis*: Visions of the Triumph of the Lamb and the 144,000, and
Angelic Proclamations of Judgment (14:1-20)
 - a. The triumph of the Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
 - b. The six angelic proclamations of judgment (14:6-20)
 - 1) The first angel proclaims the everlasting gospel (14:6-7)
 - 2) The second angel proclaims the fall of Babylon (14:8; cf. chap. 17-18)
 - 3) The third angel pronounces judgment on beast worshippers (14:9-13)

¹¹At this juncture in John's development (11:15), Jesus Christ is portrayed as returning to the earth as the mighty Warrior-King to subjugate all the kingdoms of the world under the authority of His eternal kingdom (Ps. 2:8-9). In addition, Christ's second coming brings about God's climatic judgment on unbelievers, Satan, and this Christ rejecting world. Interestingly enough, although we would expect to find a description of the Lord Jesus' earthly kingdom reign in the following narrative by John, this is not the case. That event is not recorded until Revelation 20. As Pentecost points out, "John, who had brought us to the conclusion of the seven years of the Tribulation period and the return of Jesus Christ to the earth (11:15) [that he had been describing throughout this section (4:1–11:15)], will now survey that period a second time from a different viewpoint. In chapters 12–19 John will portray the important personalities and movements that play a significant role in the Tribulation period" (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 301).

¹²"The nature of the judgment associated with Christ's second advent is not revealed until Revelation 16, where the emptying of the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth is recorded. . . . The blessings of Messiah's reign are not enjoyed until some forty-five days later [after Christ's second advent]. Therefore, it is suggested that the forty-five day period is the period in which the [bowl] judgments associated with the second advent of Christ are poured out on the earth" (ibid.). **Thank you Dr. P. for your insights here!**

¹³For a full development of this concept of the "Seven Actors of the Tribulation period," as detailed in this section of Revelation (12:1-13:18), see John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 187-212.

- 4) The fourth angel pronounces the harvest by the son of man (14:14-16)
- 5) The fifth angel prepares to harvest with the son of man (14:17)
- 6) The sixth angel promotes the harvest of the enemies of God (14:18-20))
2. The Seven Bowl Judgments (15:1–16:21)
 - a. Preparation for the seven bowl judgments (15:1-16:1)
 - b. Pouring-out of the seven bowl judgments (16:2-21)
 - 1) The first bowl: earth (foul sores on men) (16:2)
 - 2) The second bowl: sea (kills every living thing) (16:3)
 - 3) The third bowl: rivers and springs (fresh water) turned to blood ((16:4-7)
 - 4) The fourth bowl: sun scorches mankind with fierce heat (16:8-9)
 - 5) The fifth bowl: darkness on the kingdom of the beast (16:10-11)
 - 6) The sixth bowl: Euphrates dried up for Armageddon (16:12)
 - 7) The seventh bowl: great earthquake and hailstones (16:17-21)
- * (*Fourth Parenthesis*: Judgment of Satan’s Religious and Political Systems of Tribulation Government, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (17:1–19:10)
 - a. The judgment of the Great Harlot: Religious Babylon (17:1-18)
 - b. The judgment of the Great City: Commercial Babylon (18:1-24)
 - c. The justified in heaven: Marriage Supper of the Lamb (19:1-10))
- C. The Eschatological Program of God Following the Tribulation: Consummation of the Present Age (19:11–22:5)
 1. The Second Coming of Christ¹⁴ (19:11-21)
 2. The Millennial Enthronement of Christ and Doom of Satan (20:1-15)
 - a. Satan, the Serpent of Old, who is the devil, is bound for a 1000 years (20:1-3)
 - b. Saints resurrected to reign with Christ for a thousand years (20:4-6)
 - c. Satan is released from his prison to deceive the nations one last time (20:7-10)
 - d. Sinners of every age judged before the Great White Throne (20:11-15)
“Every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!” (Phil. 2:10-11)
 3. The Eternal State: the New Heaven and Earth, and New Jerusalem (21:1–22:5)
 - a. Descent of the New Jerusalem (21:1-8)

¹⁴On the one hand, the return of Jesus Christ to the earth is the climax of all that has preceded. On the other, it is the first of seven final things that John saw and recorded. These things were (1) the second coming of Christ, (2) Satan’s capture and binding, (3) the saints resurrection, (4) the Millennial reign of Christ, (5) Satan’s final end, (6) the White Throne Judgment, and (7) the new heavens and earth including the New Jerusalem. These events are in chronological sequence. The chronological progression of events on earth resumes from 11:19 and 16:21 where John interrupted his narration to provide parenthetical details.

- b. Description of the New Jerusalem (21:9-27)
- c. Delights of the New Jerusalem (22:1-5)

IV. Epilogue: Words of Comfort, Caution, and Closing 22:6-21

- A. Words of Comfort (22:6-17)
 - 1. The assurance of Christ's Second Coming (22:6-15)
 - 2. The author of the book is Jesus Christ by an angel through John (22:16)
 - 3. The advice to come to Christ freely without cost (22:17)
- B. Words of Caution (22:18-19)
 - 1. A warning against adding to the Word of God (22:18)
 - 2. A warning against subtracting from the Word of God (22:19)
- C. Words of Closing (22:20-21)
 - 1. The final promise (22:20a)
 - 2. The final prayer (22:20b)
 - 3. The final benediction (22:21)

Argument

This work is the revelation from the glorified Lord Jesus Christ which God gave to Him and which He made known through an angel to John concerning what must soon take place and it will bring blessing upon those who read, hear, and keep it (1:1-3). The book is best divided, apart from the Introduction and Epilogue, by the three-fold division expressed in 1:19: (1) "Write therefore the things which you have seen" (apparently a past vision, chapter 1), (2) "and the things which are" (presently concerning the seven churches of Asia, chapters 2-3), (3) "and the things which shall take place after these things" (concerning the future culmination of God's plans: the judgment of this Christ rejecting world, evil, and Satan, and the ultimate glorification of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, chapters 4-22). Taking into consideration the two additional sections dealing with the Introduction and Epilogue, the development to follow will present a five-fold arrangement of the book.

The first section presents the Introduction to the Book of Revelation (1:1-8). The Superscription (1:1-3) declares that God gave this revelation to His Son, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, which He made known through an angel to John concerning what must soon take place (1:1-2). A blessing is promised to those who read, hear, and obey the words of this Revelation (1:3). The second part of the introduction provides the Salutation (1:4-8). John identifies himself as the human author and sends greetings to the seven churches of Asia, and a blessing from the triune God (1:4-5a). He glorifies Jesus Christ for His past work of redemption, His promised future coming, and His eternal sovereignty (1:5b-8).

The second section, or the initial division suggested in 1:9, deals with "The Things Which You Have Seen" concerning the glorified Lord Jesus Christ (1:9-20). John explains

the circumstances surrounding his reception and recording of the following vision. John was a prisoner who had been exiled to the Island of Patmos for his Christian beliefs and testimony where Christ selected him to record the visions which he was about to see, and which he is directed to send unto the seven Asiatic churches that he served (1:9-20).

The third section, or the second division suggested in 1:9, deals with “The Things Which Are,” and deals with the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia (2:1–3:22). John did not write seven individual letters, or books, to each of the seven churches; rather he penned one book, containing a brief but personal message addressed to each of the seven churches among whom the Book of Revelation was to be circulated. He addressed the church: at Ephesus (2:1-7), at Smyrna (2:8-11), at Pergamum (2:12-17), at Thyatira (2:18-29), at Sardis (3:1-6), at Philadelphia (3:7-13), and at Laodicea (3:14-22).

The fourth section, or the third division suggested in 1:9, deals with “The Things Which Will Take Place After These Things,” referred to as the “Eschatological Program of God” (4:1–22:5).¹⁵ The bulk of the book is taken up with the events that will occur during a future period commonly known as the Great Tribulation. This section (4:1–22:5) has been divided into three section. The first section deals with the eschatological program of God from the beginning of the seven year Tribulation period until Christ second advent in glory (4:1–11:19). The interpretive key to this division is derived from 11:15, which portrays Jesus Christ as returning to the earth as the mighty Warrior-King to subjugate all the kingdoms of the world under the authority of His eternal kingdom (Ps. 2:8-9). In addition, the second coming of Christ, as described in the verses (11:15-19), is seen to bring about God’s climatic judgment upon Satan, and a world full of Christ rejecters.

John begins the first division of this section (4:1–11:19), which is divided into three section (as well as containing two parenthesis), with a presentation of the scene in heaven (4:1–5:14). In chapter 4 John provides a vision of the throne of God in glory (4:1-3), Who is surrounded by the redeemed Church in glory (4:4-8), and worshipped by the 24 elders (4:9-11). The Lamb, Who, as the slain Savior, is presented as worthy to open the sealed scroll that none could open (5:1-14). The victorious Son of God, the slain Lamb of God, is delegated by the Father to release His judgments upon the earth. This scene leads to the second division in this section detailing the initial out-pouring of God’s wrath through Christ’s releasing of the seven seal judgments (6:1-17). (The narrative of judgment is interrupted by the *First Parenthesis*, which serves to show how God is effecting salvation of Jews and Gentiles in the midst of Tribulation judgment (7:1-17). The revelation of the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses seems to describe a work that God did before the judgments commenced (7:1-8). The remainder of this chapter describes the salvation of a great multitude of Gentiles redeemed throughout the Tribulation period (7:9-17).) Chapter eight continues God’s progressive judgment against the Christ rejecters on earth. When the seventh seal is opened the trumpet judgments begin (8:1-6). The seven trumpet judgments are recorded in chapters eight and nine (8:7–9:21). The last three trumpets are identified as three successive woes of intensifying judgment upon earth and mankind. These terrible judgments are primarily against the earth, the sphere in which men live. The sixth trumpet judgment (2nd Woe) results in the destruction of one third of mankind. Just as the first parenthesis occurred between the sixth and seventh seal judgments, so too, the second parenthesis occurs here

¹⁵This section is notorious for commentators to interpret because of the insertion of several parenthetical sections that interrupt the flow of the chronological narrative (refer to page 8 above).

between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments (The *Second Parenthesis* introduces the vision of the little scroll and the two witnesses (10:1–11:14). This section describes John’s eating of the little book (11:1-10) and the faithful ministry of the two Tribulation witnesses (11:1-12). A great earthquake signals the termination of the 2nd Woe (11:13-14).) The narrative of Tribulation judgments resumes with the seventh trumpet judgment (the 3rd Woe), which is the most climatic because it terminates with the second advent of Christ as the triumphant King (11:15-19). As mentioned earlier, even though the second advent of Christ occurs at this juncture (11:15), His millennial reign does not.¹⁶ This will not be detailed until chapter twenty. This concludes the first development of God’s Eschatological Program. In 4:1–11:19, the emphasis was upon the judgments of the Tribulation period, but in the next section of restatement and review of the Tribulation period (12:1–19:10) the emphasis will shift to describe the seven great actors of the Tribulation period (12:1–14:20), as well as the seven final bowl judgments (15:1–16:21).

The second section in this fourth division of the book restates the eschatological program of God concerning the seven year Tribulation period (12:1–19:10) and provides additional details not recorded in the first section (4:1–11:19). The writer describes the seven great actors of the Tribulation (12:1–14:20) and the final series of seven bowl judgments (15:1–16:21). This section concludes with the *fourth parenthesis*, which details the judgment of Satan’s religious and political systems of Tribulation government, and the marriage supper of the Lamb (17:1–19:10). In chapter 12 John introduces the pained woman, Israel (12:1-2), the perverted red dragon, Satan (12:3-4), the promised male child, Christ (12:5-6), and the protector of Israel, Michael and his angels who war against the dragon, Satan, resulting in his banishment to earth (12:7-12). This results in the dragon’s waging war against Israel (12:13-17). In chapter 13 the two human instruments, depicted as ravenous beasts, through whom Satan will work are introduced as the anti-christ and his false prophet (13:1-18). Anti-christ is introduced as the beast out of the sea, who comes forth as Satan’s final form of Gentile political power (13:1-10). The second beast that rises up from out of the earth denotes the world religious leader, the false prophet (13:11-18). The false prophet will use his Satanic might (13:11-12) to perform deceptive miracles (13:13-15) designed to cause all men to worship the beast and to receive his mark (13:16-18). John next introduces the (*Third Parenthesis* which details visions of the triumph of the Lamb and the 144,000, and additional angelic proclamations of judgment (14:1-20). It seems that the six angelic proclamations of judgment in this parenthesis are designed to show that Satan will not be successful in destroying the saints of God (14:6-20). In fact, the everlasting gospel will be proclaimed to all men by an angel flying through mid-heaven (14:6-7), Babylon will fall (14:8; cf. chap. 17-18), beast

¹⁶This point is deemed to be so important to the proper development of Revelation that I have chosen to repeat it in its entirety, rather than simply rewording it. At this juncture in John’s development (11:15), Jesus Christ is portrayed as returning to the earth as the mighty Warrior-King to subjugate all the kingdoms of the world under the authority of His eternal kingdom (Ps. 2:8-9). In addition, Christ’s second coming brings about God’s climatic judgment on unbelievers, Satan, and this Christ rejecting world. Interestingly enough, although we would expect to find a description of the Lord Jesus’ earthly kingdom reign in the following narrative by John, this is not the case. That event is not recorded until Revelation 20. As Pentecost points out, “John, who had brought us to the conclusion of the seven years of the Tribulation period and the return of Jesus Christ to the earth (11:15) [that he had been describing through-out this section (4:1–11:15)], will now survey that period a second time from a different viewpoint. In chapters 12–19 John will portray the important personalities and movements that play a significant role in the Tribulation period” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 301).

worshippers will be judged (14:9-13), and the enemies of God will be harvested by the son of man and angels (14:14-20).¹⁷

The narrative resumes in chapter fifteen, which supplies information in preparation for the seven bowl judgments (15:1-16:21) to be explained in chapter sixteen. John reveals God's glory out of which He pours forth wrath upon mankind with these final bowl judgments. The seven bowl judgments seem to occur in rapid succession at the end of the seven year Tribulation period, and just prior to Christ's second advent. The seventh bowl releases widespread destruction upon the earth and mankind in the form of a great earthquake and hailstones (16:17-21). Of particular importance is the phrase, "It is done," in 16:17, for these words signal the end of the three series of seven divine judgments of God, and the time of Gentile domination over the holy city of God, Jerusalem.¹⁸ Once again, the picture of the second advent of Christ is interrupted as John is presented with a final parenthetical vision concerning the judgments of God to be carried-out upon Satan's false religious and commercial systems of the Tribulation period. The (*Fourth Parenthesis* details the judgments that God will release upon Satan's religious and political systems of Tribulation government, and the marriage supper of the Lamb (17:1-19:10). Chapter seventeen details the judgment of the great harlot, religious Babylon (17:1-18) and chapter eighteen describes the judgment of the great city, commercial Babylon (18:1-24). The people of the earth express deep anguish, and lament over the destruction of commercial Babylon (18:9-20), and in verses 18:21-24 an appeal is issued for God's servants to rejoice over Babylon's destruction. Following Jesus' destruction of Satan's false political and religious empire, a great multitude in heaven can be heard rejoicing over God's destruction of Babylon (19:1-6). This parenthesis closes with multitudes of redeemed martyrs in heaven rejoicing over their participation in the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:7-10).)

The third and final section in this fourth division of the book details the eschatological program of God following the Tribulation, recording events associated with the consummation of the present age, introduction of the millennial age, and the eternal state (19:1-22:5). This section commences with the second advent of Jesus Christ to the earth, which serves at the climax to all the judgments that have preceded (19:11-16). This moving presentation is but the first of seven final things that John saw and recorded. These things were (1) the second coming of Christ, (2) Satan's capture and binding, (3) the saints resurrection, (4) the millennial reign of Christ, (5) Satan's final end, (6) the White Throne Judgment, and (7) the new heavens and earth, including the New Jerusalem.¹⁹ The second coming of Christ culminates with the battle of Armageddon. Carnage is determined against Christ's enemies as the kings of the earth are summoned and slaughtered at the great supper of God's wrath (19:17-21). Both the beast and the false prophet are seized and thrown alive into the eternal lake of fire (19:19-20). The

¹⁷The material presented in this parenthesis previews the campaign which will take place at Armageddon and shows that Christ will personally destroy Satan's politico-religious kingdom on earth at the time of His second advent (19:11-21). More details will be provided in the next parenthesis (17:1-19:10).

¹⁸The "times of the Gentiles" refers to the period of Gentile domination over God's holy city, Jerusalem which began under Nebuchadnezzar in 605/586 B.C. and continues until the time of Christ's second advent (Luke 21:24; Rom 11:25-27; Rev 19:11 ff.; see page 15 above for the previous development of this concept).

¹⁹As discussed above, all of these events appear to be in chronological sequence. The chronological progression of events on earth presented up to this point, which twice presented the return of Christ in power (11:19 and 16:21), but stopped short of introducing the establishment of His earthly kingdom, now resumes and concludes at this point.

next major event details the millennial enthronement of Christ and the doom of Satan (20:1-15). Satan will be bound at the beginning of Christ's millennial reign (20:1-3), saints will be resurrected to reign with Christ for the thousand years²⁰ (20:4-6), and Satan will be released from his prison at the conclusion of Christ's earthly reign in order to go forth to deceive the nations one last time (20:7). All those who follow Satan will be devoured by fire from heaven (20:8-9). Satan, himself, is doomed to eternal torment in the lake of fire and brimstone (20:10). Sinners of every age will be judged at the Great White Throne (20:11-15).²¹ This section ends with several nearly incomprehensible descriptions associated with the eternal state, specifically the new heaven and earth, and the New Jerusalem (21:1–22:5). The description of the New Jerusalem, which serves as the habitation of God (21:2) and abode of redeemed mankind (21:3-8), defies description. It is described as a city illuminated by the glory of God, with streets paved of pure gold, and that has no temple because God and the Lamb are the temple (21:11-23). The delights of the New Jerusalem are just as inexplicable (22:1-5). Believers will enjoy: the river of life (22:1), the tree of life (22:2), and the removal of the curse (22:3a). As the redeemed of Christ believers will: serve God (22:3b), share the name of God (22:4b), and reign with God forever (22:5).

The fifth and final section of the book concludes with an Epilogue (22:6-21). John provides words of comfort based on the assurance of Christ's second coming (22:6-15), guarantees his readers that the author of the book is Jesus Christ by an angel through John (22:16), and reveals Jesus' offer to the thirsty to come to Him to take of the water of life without cost (22:17). He next records words of caution to any that might tamper with the revelation of God by adding to (22:18) or subtracting from the Word of God (22:19). The book concludes with a final promise of reward to those who read and heed the words of this book (22:20a; see vv. 7, 12), a final prayer (22:20b), and a final benediction (22:21).

²⁰Order of the resurrections of the saints: Christ was "The Firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15:23); the Rapture of the Church, resurrection of dead believers and translation of living believers (1 Thess. 4:13-18); resurrection of the two tribulation witnesses (Rev. 11:3, 11); the Martyred/dead saints of the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4-5); to these may be added the resurrection of the O.T. Saints (Job 19:26; Isa. 26:19-21; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2-3).

²¹Paul writes, "Every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!" (Phil. 2:10-11).