

An Interpretive Outline of Revelation

1 [The book of Revelation is the revealing of Jesus Christ in victory, exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords](#)

2 [Background & Interpretation](#)

- 2.1 Apocalyptic literature - highly symbolic using Old Testament imagery so must be interpreted non-literalistically
- 2.2 Written to 7 churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) to encourage their perseverance through Jewish and Roman persecution (1:4,9)
- 2.3 Apostle John wrote it while under Roman exile to island of Patmos (1:1,4,9)
- 2.4 The readers in John's day would have understood this literature and its symbols as relevant in their own day (1:3)
- 2.5 Revelation was written about AD 64-65 since the Temple is still standing in 11:1 (not destroyed until AD 70) and Nero Caesar began the Roman persecution against Christians (AD 64-68)
- 2.6 The prophecies in Revelation were to take place "soon" and the time was "near" (1:1,3; 3:10-11; 22:6-7,10,12,20)
 - These statements are in the straightforward teaching portions of the book, not in the main body of the symbolism
 - Numbers 24:17 prophesies Christ's first coming in Bethlehem and says it was NOT near 1400 years before it came to pass
 - Revelation then must have been fulfilled in the past - primarily in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70
- 2.7 Revelation 1:7 is the theme of the book and blends Daniel 7:13 (Christ's ascension) with Zechariah 12:10 (Christ's crucifixion)
 - This coming of Christ is a "cloud" coming (judgement - Isaiah 19:1; Matthew 23:29-39) and was the "soon" coming He spoke of in Matthew 24:2-3,30,34)
 - Those who crucified Him would witness this coming in judgement and mourn because of it (Acts 4:10; Matthew 26:64) though Jesus Himself would not be visible (cf. Isaiah 30:30-31)
 - "all the peoples of the earth" is literally translated "all the tribes of the land" referring to Israel as the slain Lamb takes vengeance upon those who crucified Him and are now persecuting His people (6:9-10)

- 2.8 The significance of the destruction of the Temple in AD 70
- The New Covenant church met in the temple and was seen as a Jewish sect - no longer after AD 70
 - Old Covenant order of things abolished from the earth - if there's no temple, there's no OT religion
 - Christ is vindicated as King of His people against their persecutors (Jews & Romans)
- 2.9 If Revelation is speaking about the final coming of Christ in the future from us, then Jesus was deceptive in saying it was "soon" and "near"
- If revelation is speaking about repeated events throughout history, then it would not be of value to the historical churches to whom it was written in their particular crisis of persecution
 - It is relevant to us the same way all fulfilled prophecy is - in showing us how God has brought about His plan with the abiding principles of how He works

3 [Revelation is structured with 7 main sections in the book](#)

Section 1: *Exhortations of Perseverance to the Churches (1-3)*

- a. The glorified Christ revealed as Lord in His church (1:9-20)
- b. Ephesus must restore first love for Christ (2:1-7)
- c. Smyrna must prepare for persecution (2:8-11)
- d. Pergamum must be cleansed of immorality (2:12-17)
- e. Tyatira must be purged of idolatry (2:18-29)
- f. Sardis must be revived (3:1-6)
- g. Philadelphia must use their opportunity (3:7-13)
- h. Laodicea must repent of worldliness (3:14-22)

Section 2: *The Seals introduce the Destruction of Jerusalem (4-7)*

- a. God's throne room - judicial setting (4)
- b. Only the Lamb is worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll (5)
 - Ezekiel 1-2 is a similar scene where the scroll is a decree of judgment on Israel
 - Lev. 26:18 is God's warning of a sevenfold punishment on Israel
 - God's certificate of divorce to Israel (Jer.3:6-8)
- c. The seals of judgment give a brief introduction to Israel's judgments (6; cf. Ezekiel 14:21)

- Seal 1: Christ leading the roman armies to Jerusalem (v.1-2)
- Seal 2: Collapse of the *Pax Romana* as the Jewish War begins in Spring of A.D. 67 (v.3-4)
- Seal 3: Famine in Jerusalem due to the siege (v. 5-6; cf. Josephus 5:10:2-3)
- Seal 4: Death of those fallen in the battle (v. 7-8)
- Seal 5: Christian martyrs in heaven crying out for vengeance which is promised to come soon (Lev. 26:25)
- Seal 6: De-creation language sums up the covenantal implications for Israel's world (v. 12-17; Isaiah 13:1,9-10; 34:4-5; Ezk. 32:7-8; cf. Josephus 6:7:3)

- d. The sealing of 144,000 shows God's protection of His elect in the midst of the Jewish War (7)
- answers 6:17, "Who can stand?"
 - a brief reprieve in the attack on Jerusalem gives Christian Jews a chance to "flee to the mountains" as Roman Generals Vespasian and Titus attend to matters of state in light of Nero's suicide A.D. 68
 - 144,00 is a symbolic number representing all the elect from the Jews (v. 4-8)
 - the Gentile believers who have been martyred are also seen, but as an innumerable multitude compared to the Jewish remnant (v. 9-17; cf. Isaiah 49:8-13)

Section 3: *The Seven Trumpets (used for calling people to war) give further details of the Destruction of Jerusalem (8-11)*

1. The seventh seal gives answer to the prayers of the saints against their persecutors, unleashing seven trumpets of judgment (8:1-5)
2. The first six trumpets give further details of the Lamb's wrath in the Jewish War with Rome (8:6-9:21)
 - Trumpet 1: Hail, fire and blood destroy one third of the land of Israel as Vespasian and Titus march from Galilee to Jerusalem burning villages (8:6-7; cf. Josephus 3:4:1)
 - Trumpet 2: The Roman forces destroy Israeli ships and dump dead bodies into the lakes and rivers (8:8-9; cf. Josephus 3:9:3 & 4:7:6)
 - Trumpet 3: The result of the pollution caused by trumpet two (8:10-11; cf. Josephus 3:10:9) Wormwood is a common plant in Israel that is very bitter
 - Trumpet 4: Sun, moon and stars often picture the people of Israel and one third of them are killed (8:12-13; cf.

Lev. 11:13) Eagles were unclean birds and the symbol of the Roman army

Trumpet 5: When Titus laid siege to Jerusalem in April, A.D. 70, for 5 months, the Jews went mad engaging in cannibalism and all kinds of cruelties, due to demonic inspiration (9:1-12; cf. Mt. 12:43-45; Josephus 5:10:5 & 5:13:6)

Trumpet 6: Four more legions of Roman soldiers come from the area of the Euphrates to bring the siege to an end with catapults and battering rams. The Jews continued their madness, even cursing God (9:13-21; cf. Josephus 5:1:6 & 6:1:1) "200 million" is literally "myriads of myriads"

3. Christ is the real conqueror and executioner of His enemies by Divine decree (scroll) (10)
4. The temple and the two witnesses (11)
 - measuring only the inner sanctuary of the temple indicates preservation of God's inner spiritual worshipers while the outer physical temple is destroyed by the Gentiles (Roman armies) (v.1-2; cf. Luke 21:24)
 - the Jewish War lasted about 42 months from the Spring of A.D. 67 to August of A.D. 70 (v. 2)
 - during that time the two witnesses of the Law (pictured by Moses' plagues) and the prophets (pictured by Elijah's miracles) testified in the Jews' consciences of the curses for breaking God's covenant (Dt. 28:15-19, 25-29, 49-63) (v. 3-6)
 - once the temple was destroyed the OT (Law & Prophets) gave way to the New Covenant (v. 7-12)
 - once Jerusalem fell the slain Lamb was vindicated (v. 13-19)

Section 4: *The Focus Changes from Rome's destruction of Jerusalem to Rome's persecution of Christians (12-14)*

1. Satan tried to destroy the seed of Israel (Christ) when he was born (Herod's slaughter in Bethlehem) but failed. The Jewish remnant was saved from the Jewish War so Satan attacked them and Gentile believers with persecution (12)
 - 12:3 - cf. Daniel 7:3-7
 - 12:4 - cf. Daniel 8:10,24; 12:3
2. The beast refers to both the Roman Emperor and/or the Roman Empire throughout this section - coming out of the sea is the geographic orientation of Rome to Israel (v. 1)
3. The beast is Nero Caesar (13)
 - he was often called a "beast" in the contemporary literature
 - 10 horns with crowns - the 10 kings of the 10 Imperial Roman Provinces

- his description is that of Daniel's fourth beast (Rome), following Babylon, Medo-Persia & Greece (Dan. 7) (v.1-2)
- when Nero committed suicide the empire seemed to die along with him, but it revived to everyone's amazement (v. 3-4)
- the Neronian persecution of Christians lasted for 42 months from November, A.D, 64 to his suicide in June, A.D. 68 - Paul was beheaded about A.D. 66 (v. 5-9)
- Nero killed himself by driving a sword through his throat (v. 10)
- the beast from the land is either the Jewish false religion or the Roman imperial priesthood who made the people worship Caesar (v. 11-15)
- the mark of the beast speaks of allegiance to him rather than to Christ by emperor worship. Nero Caesar's name in Hebrew has the numerical value of 666 (v. 16-18)
- for more on Nero as the beast see notes on chapter 17

4. In the midst of the Jewish War and Neronian persecution Christ protects His people (14)
 - His presence with His church (v. 1-5; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2)
 - three angelic announcements mark:
 - 1) Gentile evangelism from the Jewish remnant (v. 6-7)
 - 2) the final destruction of Jerusalem (Babylon) (v. 8)
 - 3) warning against emperor worship and blessing upon martyrdom (v. 9-13)
 - the drama now returns to Jerusalem's destruction as the wrath of God against those following the beast(s) instead of the Lamb (v. 14-16 - harvest of martyrs; v.17-19 - harvest of wrath)
 - v.20 - 200 miles/1600 stadia ie. The length of Israel as a Roman province (cf. Ezk 32:6)

Section 5: *The Seven Bowls give a Final Recap of the Destruction of Jerusalem (15-16)*

1. The heavenly view of Jerusalem's Destruction is one of praise for God's justice as He (using the Roman army) executes His wrath on the enemy (Jerusalem) (15)
2. The seven bowls are poured out repeating and intensifying the scene of Jerusalem's destruction (16)
 - v. 15 this was Christ's coming
 - v. 16 the Jewish War was the battle of Armageddon (cf. 2 Chron. 35:20-25; Zech. 12:10-11)
 - v. 21 God stones his adulteress wife to death according to His own law (Lev. 20:10) with the Roman catapults (Josephus 5:6:3)

Section 6: *The Adulteress Relationship of Jerusalem and Rome is Exposed (17-*

19)

1. The Babylonian Prostitute is Jerusalem (17:1-6,18; cf. Isaiah 1:21)
 - she is begin punished for adulteress relationships with the kings of Rome rather than being faithful to God (cf. Jn. 19:15) (v. 12)
 - she relied upon the Romans to execute her wickedness against Christ (v. 3)
 - she is dressed in the clothing of the high priest and with the adornment of the temple (Ex. 28) (v. 4)
 - she has a name on her forehead the opposite of the high priest (Ex. 28:36-38) (v. 5)
 - she was a persecutor of Christians (v. 6)
 - she is the "great city" (v. 18) (cf. 11:8; Ezk. 5:5)

2. The Beast is corporately Rome and specifically Nero Caesar (17:7-17)
 - the seven heads are seven hills - Rome (v. 7-9)

 - the seven heads are also seven kings of which 5 are already dead, the sixth is ruling and the seventh will rule only a short time (v. 10)

 - The Caesars of Rome
 - 1. Julius
 - 2. Augustus
 - 3. Tiberius
 - 4. Gaius
 - 5. Claudius
 - 6. Nero (alive when John wrote)
 - 7. Galba (who reigned for only 7 months)
 - an eighth is not the eighth emperor but the empire itself, which revives following the civil wars during and after Nero (v. 8,11)
 - the ten kings represent those nations under Roman authority who engage in persecution of Christians (v. 12-14)
 - they also attack Jerusalem in the war (15-17)

3. The Fall of Babylon is Jerusalem's Final Destruction. It has repercussions throughout the roman Empire since there were synagogues in many cities (18)

4. Now that the adulteress wife is divorced and executed, Jehovah takes a new bride, the Church (19)
 - in contrast to the nations mourning over Jerusalem's destruction in chapter 18, there is rejoicing in heaven

(19:1-5)

-the Marriage of the lamb can now take place (19:6-10)
-Christ has come, the victorious conqueror over Jerusalem and Rome, to rule over the nations with his New Covenant bride (19:11-21)

Section 7: *The Glories of the New Covenant Church, the Bride of Christ are Extolled (20-22)*

1. The 1,000 year reign of Christ refers to the whole New Covenant era (20:1-6)
 - 1,000 means a long period of time in its completeness (1,000 being the cube of 10) and is always used symbolically in Scripture (cf. Ps. 50:10)
 - Christ has bound Satan (Mt. 12:28-29) so he no longer deceives the nations, making the Great Commission successful (v. 1-3)
 - the martyrs were evidently resurrected to reign with Christ (v. 4-6)

2. The final resurrection and judgment take place after the New Covenant church ends (20:7-15)
 - this is the only part of Revelation that has yet to be fulfilled
 - Satan will be released for one last persecution, but will be cast into hell (v. 7-10)
 - the final resurrection and judgment of the rest of the dead will send everyone to their eternal destiny (v. 11-15)

3. The new Heaven and new Earth refers to the New Covenant order of the Glorious Bride of Christ today (21-22) (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)
 - the New Jerusalem is the Bride of heavenly origin vs. earthly Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 4:24-26) (21:1-5)
 - these are the redeemed (21:6-8)
 - the city is pictured as the dwelling place of the glory of God (21:9-11), built on the foundation of the apostles (21:12-14; cf. Eph. 2:20) and as a perfectly giant cube (21:15-21) big enough to hold the disciples nations (21:24-27), as God's new holy Temple (21:22-23)
 - all who are part of this new creation have eternal life (22:1-2) and freedom from the curse of sin (22:2) as servants of God's kingdom (22:3-6)

Conclusion: 22:7-21

1. At the time of John's writing Jesus was coming soon so John was not to seal up the prophecy, but make it known to the churches (v. 6-16)

2. The final invitation and warning is given to take heed to this prophecy and come to Christ (v. 17-21)