

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

- 1. Revelation was written first and foremost to a group of people living in the First Century, but it was also written for 21st century**
 - a. It is not confined to John's audience, but we must understand it as John's readers would have understood it – not, how does it correspond to today**
 - b. John is writing in a first century style of literature – apocalyptic literature – John has modified his writing for his need and audience**
 - c. “Apokalupsis – apocalypse”**
 - i. Literature which developed among the Jews after the exile**
 - ii. Distinctively Jewish – no parallel among other peoples in the Ancient Near East**
 - iii. A literature for oppressed people**
 - iv. Subject matter is the coming kingdom of God, the coming end of the world**

- d. Why did this develop during the Exile?**
- i. Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of God is coming – his central message**
 - ii. The basic meaning is the rule of God or the reign of God**
 - iii. Best illustrated by the Exodus from Egypt**
 - (1) we think about a group of slaves that were set free**
 - (2) in the OT and later Jewish interpretations of OT, the Exodus was not really about them and their forefathers, it was about God**
 - (3) God squared off with the pharaoh**
 - (a) one who sits himself up in opposition to God**
 - (b) Pharaoh becomes synonymous with arrogance and opposition to God**
 - (c) a human figure who says NO**

- (4) God begins to send the plagues**
 - (a) not primarily punitive**
 - (b) sends the plagues to break the will of pharaoh, to bring repentance (Rev 6-19 parallels that)**
 - (c) the purpose of the plagues were redemptive, to lead him to repentance**
 - (d) after plague 10, the pharaoh relents, but he changes his mind and sends his horses after Israel and the army is destroyed**
- (5) the promise God made to Abraham began to be fulfilled**
- (6) they knew what God was like because of what he did**
- (7) the rule of God became a historical reality in the exodus from Egypt;**

over-ruling one who set himself up in opposition to God

(8) was not a complete rule of God, it was ambiguous

(a) when they got out, they began to complain, wanting to go back to Egypt

(b) willing to go back into slavery if they could eat leeks

(c) their liberation was only partial – God had acted, God had ruled, he put down the pharaoh without a bit of effort

(d) they go to Mt. Sinai, God demonstrates his power, but they build the golden calf

(e) they go into Canaan, confront the fertility cults, and the chase the Baals, forsaking God

iv. finally they have an earthly king – Saul, David, Solomon

- (a) Royal Psalms – NT writers quote them in reference to Jesus**
- (b) originally sung on the occasion of the ascension of a king to Israel's or Judah's throne**
- (c) the king was declared as a son of God – “you are my son, today I have begotten you”**
- (d) they were not saying he was divine; rather the king was to rule on that throne as God would if he were sitting on it – he was a substitute for God**
 - (i) rule with justice and mercy as God rules with justice and mercy**
 - (ii) not an occasion to pump up the egos of kings**
 - (iii) but placed them under a tremendous responsibility,**

**to rule with justice and
mercy**

**(e) God as king is now visible in the
nation, ruling through these
kings**

**(i) the declaration was that they
would rule as God rules**

**(ii) but most of them came to
the throne through the
murder of their predecessor**

(iii) their lives did not reflect God

**(iv) God is ruling through the
kings, but God's rule is
veiled**

1) Saul consults witches

**2) David messes up his life,
the lives of his family,
and the life of the nation**

**3) Solomon was vain,
arrogant, insensitive;**

**after he dies, his
kingdom splits and was
never recovered**

- v. the rule of God becomes more veiled
until the time of the exile in 526 BC**
 - (a) Jeremiah's message was
surrender to the enemies, God is
using them to chastise his
people**
 - (b) it would be like someone today
saying, "Let's surrender to the
terrorists."**
 - (c) Jeremiah fights a patriotism
which was combined with
religion, which said until the very
end, "God will never let Zion
fall."**
 - (i) we can live like we want**
 - (ii) we have Jerusalem, we have
the temple**
 - (iii) we have the rabbit's foot**

- (d) after the exile, the false prophets said, it won't last long, but Jeremiah said, "We are going down the tubes. The fat lady has sung."**

- (e) the Babylonians took the sacred objects from the Temple, and breached the wall**

- (f) Psalm 137 – "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"**
 - (i) God was in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was desecrated**

 - (ii) God certainly isn't in exile in Babylon**

- (g) when Cyrus came to power and tried to send them back, this second generation had no desire to back**
 - (i) there was no evidence that God is ruling at all**

- (ii) God's sacred place was violated**
- (iii) they said we are receiving what we deserved**
- (iv) the ambiguity is full blown – they have no land, they have no Temple, they have no visible evidence that God is accomplishing his purposes through them at all**
- (v) they cant give up their concept of God as ruler, but they push it into the future and say, “God will rule some day” – they do not see the rule of God in the present**
- (vi) two ideas**
 - 1) we can rebuild, we can clean up the Temple, and restore Jerusalem**

2) there is nothing we can do, God must do something brand new in the future and it has nothing to do with the present

a) new Jerusalem

b) new earth

c) bride coming down to earth from heaven

d) earth is not that bad a place – it is fit for the New Jerusalem

(vii) the synagogue became the focus of Jewish life, not the Temple

1) they held onto the idea that God was ruler

2) but they pushed it into the future

- vi. there is little evidence in the world today that God is ruling**
 - (a) evil still wins**
 - (b) good guys finish last**
 - (c) we can do the right thing and be penalized**
- (2) it was not an absence of hope, but an absence of hope in the future**
- (3) they put hope off until the future**
- e. Jesus comes preaching, “the kingdom of God is coming,” and the people start looking for the heavenly army to come and destroy the Romans and restore their position and glory as a nation**
 - i. God was largely absent from the present world**
 - ii. But he is going to show his power and glory in the world to come**

- iii. Jesus announced the coming kingdom in Galilee where there were no Roman soldiers, because if they had heard it, they would have ended his ministry then**

- iv. He does not go to the Temple until the last week of his life – when he goes he kicks out the money changers**
 - (1) He stays in insignificant places**

 - (2) He calls a tax collector**

 - (3) He forgives a woman caught in the act of adultery**

 - (4) He talks to a Samaritan woman who becomes the first evangelist**

- v. The ambiguity**
 - (1) Jesus does not deny the kingdom in the future**

 - (2) but he says it is already here**
 - (a) people are healed**

- (b) sins are forgiven
 - (c) the kingdom is already here, but you can only see it through the eye of faith
 - (3) he calls fishermen to follow him
 - (a) it was an expression of the rule of God in the present
 - (b) but it could only be seen through the eyes of faith
 - (c) they saw something the others did not, and it transformed their lives and made choices that others thought was insane
 - (4) the most radical thing he said was not that God was going to fix things in the future, but that he is here now, acting now
- f. Revelation talks about the kingdom coming in the future, but it also talks about the kingdom coming now – it is the best exegesis of Jesus' teaching in the NT

g. The difficulty of talking about “apocalyptic” is are we talking about a literary form or a world view?

i. The apocalyptic mind set is: God is absent; this world sucks

(1) God is not dead

(2) God is still on the throne

(3) But it has nothing to do with me, and won't until the end when the kingdom comes

2. Apocalyptic as a form of literature

a. Characteristics

i. Eschatological

(1) the end of the age, the end of the world, the kingdom is coming

(2) interested only in the future

ii. Temporal dualism

- (1) contrast between this age and the age to come**
- (2) apocalyptic minimizes the value of this age and highlights the age to come**
- (3) John welds the two together and never separates them and you must talk about both in Revelation**

iii. Rigid determinism

- (1) everything is working according to God's plan that has been set before the foundation of the world**
- (2) what is happening on earth is not a surprise to God**
- (3) don't worry about the world falling apart – God knows what is going on**
- (4) the point is pastoral**
 - (a) frightened people, the world has turned hostile**

- (b) understanding through the apocalyptic that what is happening to you has not taken God by surprise, and he is in control and will work it all out**

iv. Symbolic

- (1) nations are often represented as animals**
- (2) numbers are used in symbolic fashion**
 - (a) 7 – God, perfection**
 - (b) 4 – natural world**
 - (c) 12 – God’s people (tribes, disciples)**
 - (d) 6 – all that man can do by himself (the perfect secular humanist; have it your way – man in his arrogance, short of 7, an evil number; 666 a concentration of**

human pride and arrogance and self-sufficiency)

(e) they are not taken literally – they are like the political cartoon in the newspaper

(i) contextualized

(ii) must be aware of the events

(iii) caricature

(f) the problem is, we don't use those symbols anymore, so we must learn the language of those symbols

(g) it is fluid and the meaning of the symbol may vary

(3) the symbols were understood in John's day – we have to try to figure out, how would his readers have understood this symbol

(a) they wouldn't literalize the 144,000

(b) they wouldn't literalize a 1,000 year reign

(4) this is where the chief difficulty is for us

v. "Insider" literature

(1) not written for general consumption

(2) written for the people of God and only for them

vi. Comes out of a time of persecution

(1) social disillusion

(2) society is falling apart

(3) no apocalyptic works from times of stability and prosperity

vii. World-defying

(1) this world is bad, evil, shot through with sin, injustice, cruelty

- (2) this world is going down**
- (3) God is absent from this world, God has given up on it, and his people need to wait until he does “his thing” – hang on, he is going to rescue you, destroy the enemies, and the kingdom will come**
- (4) the common ground is we are to be separated from this world**

viii. Pseudonymous

- (1) written in someone else’s name**
- (2) sometimes it was used to honor someone who lived in the past**
- (3) sometimes it was used to gain a hearing – you are nobody, but you sign someone else’s name so that people will read it**
- (4) in the first century is not unethical**
- (5) another example of “rigid determinism”**

- (a) writing primarily to give comfort to the people**
- (b) your situation has not taken God by surprise at all**
- (c) you read it and you learn that God had your situation in mind hundreds of years before you were born**
- (d) pastoral – gives comfort**

ix. Visionary or pictorial

- (1) the pictures are given in word**
- (2) intended to be seen as well as heard**
- (3) see the picture, see the vision – in the form of symbols**
- (4) open to a wide range of interpretation**

b. Characteristics John does not share in Revelation

i. Not world-defying

(1) the call is to faithful living

(2) the call is not to withdraw from the world, but from the evil world

(3) the world is a dangerous, seductive place, but don't get caught up in that

(4) the world is where you live your faithfulness

(5) you live your witness in the world

(a) witness is a featured word in Revelation

(b) Greek – martyr

(c) John reckons with the real possibility that if his readers are faithful to their commitment in the world, they will die because of that, but he calls them to live out their Christian lives in the very dirtiness of the world

- (6) there are no illusions about how seductive the world is and about what is going to happen to it, but if you are caught up in it, you are going to go down with the world**
- (7) the call is to faithful living in the world**
- (8) popular treatments of Revelation have missed this point**
 - (a) it doesn't pull you out of the world**
 - (b) it throws you in it, to live with reckless abandon, even to die for your faith**
 - (c) for the popular books, it becomes an anesthetic, to deaden yourself until Jesus comes**

ii. Not pseudonymous

- (1) John clearly identifies himself**

- (2) “I, John, your fellow suffer . . . I was given this vision by God and I now give it to you**

- (3) the effect on the readers**
 - (a) John is there with them – fellow sufferer**

 - (b) God is here now – not a thousand years from now – “We interrupt this broadcast for a breaking news story”**

 - (c) God is where you are, suffering where you are, living in the squalor where you are**

 - (d) Where is God in all of this?
Right here with you.**
 - (i) where he was when the Twin Towers fell**

 - (ii) where he was when his Son cried out and died**

(e) the immediacy of God speaking to their situation

3. Revelation is prophesy (1:3).

- a. OT prophets were not worried about predicting the future, but about what is happening now**
- b. He tries to communicate to his audience how God sees their situation – what does it look like in God’s eyes – it is not his opinion**
- c. Forth telling, not foretelling**
- d. Get people to live their lives on the basis of what God has told them**

4. Revelation is a letter (1:4)

- a. The whole book, the whole vision, is a letter**
- b. Its purpose is to address a concrete situation which existed in John’s day and time**
- c. A pastoral conversation**
- d. Anchors it in history**

- i. John gives seven names of seven churches that were real and existed in history**
- ii. Congregations who were facing the crises of their lives**

5. Importance of these designations

- a. Apocalyptic helps us to take symbols seriously, but not literally**
 - i. Metaphorical language is the most serious language of our lives**
 - ii. Very serious**
- b. Prophecy helps them to see their situation as God sees it and calls them to action**
- c. Anchored in history with real lives people, who were facing the most dangerous times and events of their lives**
- d. Wedge drive by some between prophecy and apocalyptic**

- i. For some the OT prophets are the highest level**
 - (1) they are calling for faithfulness to the covenant**
 - (2) at their pinnacle, they valued the prophets**
 - (3) concerned about here and now**

- ii. Apocalyptic represents the lowest point – for some**
 - (1) called substandard, bankrupt, inferior**
 - (2) the Jewish people had deteriorated, the prophets were gone, and they moved to the apocalyptic**
 - (3) concerned only about the future, had given up on the present**

- iii. D. S. Russell says the apocalyptic is the prophet who gave up waiting**

(1) the prophets believed people could change

(2) the prophets preached, but Jerusalem fell and the people were exiled

(3) Jeremiah 20 – utterly pessimistic

(a) can a leper change his spots

(b) of course he can, if the Gospel is true

(c) but Jeremiah's experience was they could not change

iv. The apocalyptic is another version of the prophetic tradition – moved it from the present to the future

v. John is squarely in both traditions

6. Source of Revelation; how did it come about

a. Author – John

- i. A sound case can be made for John the disciple, the son of Zebedee**
 - (1) strong tradition among the early church fathers that John the apostle was the last living eye witness to the events of Jesus life; living at the end of the FC; living in Asia Minor**
 - (a) the historical context of Revelation is Asia Minor**
 - (b) John, the last living apostle, was the most authoritative person in the church, functioned as a bishop-overseer in AM**
 - (c) the church was growing significantly in AM**
 - (2) what do you do with Revelation in relationship to the Gospel and the Letters?**
 - (a) Revelation is radically different from the other 4 (one word in 8 occur only in Revelation)**

- (b) humanly speaking it is difficult to argue for a common author for the 5 books**
 - (i) some attribute it to old age, writing in exile – doesn't make sense**
 - (ii) originally written in Aramaic and John translated faultily into Greek – doesn't make sense**
 - (iii) there was a Johanine school, and John's disciples may have written some of the works**
- (c) there are common themes, and common thought worlds**
- (d) the subject matter of Revelation and the Gospel of John are different and that may explain some of the stylistic differences**

ii. John, the elder

- (1) we don't know if he really was a distinct person from John the apostle
 - (2) in FC, "elder" simply meant "older"
- iii. some suggest John the Baptist, but Revelation makes too much sense for it to have been written by a Baptist
- iv. 1:9 – "I, John, your brother and fellow sufferer was on the island of Patmos. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."
- b. On Patmos for his testimony of Jesus
 - i. A prominent political or religious leader posed a threat to Roman security, he was "relegated" – cut off from his people, sent into exile, never to return, no longer able to influence the followers
 - ii. They could not afford to make a martyr out of the individual; it would create more problems than it solved
 - iii. Indicates John was a person of some prominence and influence, and is

perceived by the Romans as being dangerous

c. Possible dates for Revelation

i. The time of Nero (54-68)

ii. The time of Domitian (81-96)

(1) has more evidence

(2) when you read the letters to the 7 churches, you get the feeling that some of them have gone through a decline, had their heyday and declined (Lacodicea, Sardis)

(3) some of the cities were not in existence during the time of Nero, but were rebuilt and did exist at the time of Domitian

(4) the situation in Domitian's time best fits the book of Revelation

(a) Nero didn't send people into exile, he just killed them

(b) Nero didn't pay attention to the consequences

d. The situation in the time of Domitian

i. Father was Vespasian, and his brother Titus (who led the campaign that destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70)

ii. Domitian was the runt of the family, not famous for his military exploits

iii. He came to the throne totally ill-equipped to handle the job – inherited an empire with many problems

(1) the destruction of Jerusalem had a ripple effect throughout the empire

(2) economic and moral problems

iv. He seeks to bring about some measure of commonality, some measure of unity

(1) tried to get them to rally around the flag – become patriotic

- (2) he wanted a common ideology that would solve the problems**
- (3) he looked into Rome's past and found "Emperor Worship"**
 - (a) the citizens believed that the emperor was not just a representative of the empire; he embodied it**
 - (b) they did not look on him as divine, but the goddess who took care of the empire resided in the emperor**
 - (c) Domitian did not want to wait on recognition after he died, so he made emperor worship a requirement of the citizens of Rome**
 - (d) he adopted a title, "Our Lord and our God," and he imposed it on the people of the empire**
 - (e) emperor worship was most enthusiastically embraced**

- v. nobody except Domitian himself thought he was divine**
 - (1) it was a way to honor the emperor and show your loyalty to the empire**
 - (2) if you dishonored the emperor, then you dishonor the empire**

- vi. He exempted Jews from emperor worship**

- vii. The only people it penalized were the Christians**
 - (1) Rome put great stock in religious toleration, as long as it was an officially recognized religion – took pride in their tolerance as long as everyone was like them**

 - (2) Christianity was not**

 - (3) the Romans never understood Christianity, saw it as a flash in the pan that would quickly dissipate, but they were the first to be blamed when you needed a scapegoat**

- (a) lived by a different code, different morality**
 - (b) Rome was a conformist society, and there was little tolerance for anyone who got out of line**
 - (c) were viewed as an underground political movement that would one day rise up and destroy the empire**
- (4) great pressure on Christians to engage in this patriotic gesture**
- (5) for disobedience the offender could be jailed or executed**
- (6) there were other sanctions that were more subtle**
 - (a) economic pressure – pay higher taxes**
 - (b) pay higher prices at the store**
 - (c) businesses were boycotted**

- (d) more likely to be persecuted by your neighbors than by the soldiers**

viii. What did emperor worship consist of

- (1) imperial temples were built throughout the empire (every one of the 7 cities had one)**
 - (a) in the Western world religion and politics are separate – that idea is totally foreign to the Eastern world which has a total merger of nationalism and religion**
 - (b) Christians don't see the issue in terms of loyalty to Rome; they see it in terms of religion**
- (2) the imperial temple was staffed by Roman bureaucrats who were called priests**
- (3) there was an image or a bust of the emperor, and the day you went in**

was “the Lord’s Day” (sometimes it was the emperor’s birthday)

- (4) burned incense to the image and confessed Caesar as Lord**
- (5) for the Roman it was easy, basically no commitment was required, just do it**
- (6) Jesus – “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar”**
 - (a) if you live in Caesar’s household, you have certain obligations to Caesar**
 - (b) but give to God what belongs to God**
- (7) distinguishing between the two is not the easiest thing to do**
- (8) for Christians, Caesar is now asking for something that belongs to God**
 - (a) the earliest Christian confession says, “Jesus is Lord!”**

- (b) I can't confess both of them at the same time**
- (c) this was no problem for the Jews because they weren't required to do it**
- (d) this was no problem for the Romans because it was a simple act of patriotism**
- (e) "cowards," "liars," "fearful" are mentioned frequently in Revelation – were those references to Christians who confessed that Caesar was Lord just to save their lives**

ix. Emperor worship was probably not an official government passed policy

(1) In Rome it was completely ignored

(2) In Asia Minor, emperor worship was enthusiastically embraced

- xii. **John calls for the church to dig in and hold on**
- e. **Another view of the historical situation behind Revelation: Leonard L. Thomson**
 - i. **The persecution was really not all that bad, but John's readers perceived that it was**
 - ii. **That view ignores statements made by people who were close to Domitian chronologically who had little reason to write untrue things about the emperor**

7. The Structure of Revelation

- a. **Introduction (Ch 1) – the picture of the Resurrected Christ**
 - i. **Historical setting**
 - ii. **John takes attributes of God from OT and applies them to Christ**
 - (1) **a visual christological treatise**
 - (2) **the Christ of Revelation is God**

iii. A clue as to how we approach the imagery of Revelation

- (1) our tendency is to be literal; that won't work with Revelation**
- (2) John piles up metaphors – expressing what cannot be expressed, beyond the capability of language**
- (3) generally not like a stenographer using symbols to record words – a one to one ratio, correspondence – Revelation will primarily not allow you to do that – to hold to the stenographic approach will cause you to miss the power of the images**
- (4) imagery of Revelation is evocative – suggestive, points in another direction, appeals not to the mind, but to the imagination**
- (5) John's mind and heart are steeped in the OT**

- i. The issue of what is going to happen to evil has already been decided**

- ii. The victory has already taken place – it took place at Easter**
 - (1) “One” has prevailed, the Lion of the tribe of Judah**

 - (2) instead of a Lion we see a Lamb, standing, with the marks of slaughter**

 - (3) he takes the book and all creation breaks out in song**
 - (a) the Lamb has overcome**

 - (b) the victory has been won**

- iii. How do you connect that with what is going on around us (then and now)?**
 - (1) a group of Japanese soldiers in the Pacific theater did not get the word of the surrender and they fought as though they could still win**

- (2) evil – the devil and his minions – think they can still win, they seem to be doing quite well, but they have already been defeated**

- (3) the devil acts as if he still has a chance to win, so he continues his battle with a fury, but it is a lost cause – it was lost on Easter**

- (4) chapter 21 and 22 are the visible manifestation of the reality of chapter 4-5**
 - (a) the only way you see the ultimate victory of God is through the eyes of faith**

 - (b) faith becomes sight in 21-22**

 - (c) the distance between Easter and the Second Coming was seen to be small by the early Christians; it has been longer, but that does not take away the reality of the SC**

- (i) **God is not slack concerning his promises; he makes his promises and he keeps them (2 Peter)**
 - (ii) **he delays the end because he is merciful**
 - (iii) **all during the awful judgments of Revelation the Gospel is preached, but men turn harder and farther away from God**
 - (iv) **the resilience of evil; it is far more powerful than we realize**
- d. **Seven seals (limited punishment one-fourth of earth) – seventh seal becomes seven trumpets (limited punishment one-third of earth) – trumpet seven becomes seven bowls (no restraints – but God delays so people will be saved – judgment is final – end comes) PRIMARY PURPOSE IS THEOLOGICAL, NOT CHRONOLOGICAL – RESILIENCE OF EVIL (6-19)**

- i. The Lamb takes the 7-sealed book from the hand of the One who sits on the throne and judgment begins**
 - (1) John is writing to Christians who are experiencing the worst persecution of their lives, and judgment is expected to come to an end with the 7th seal (7 number of perfection).**
 - (2) The 7th seal becomes 7 trumpets and the judgments are repeated and intensified**
 - (3) They imagine the suffering is coming to an end with the 7th trumpet, but judgment is delayed when the 7th trumpet becomes 7 bowls – then judgment is complete**

- ii. This structure is profoundly theological**
 - (1) here is a picture of a God who is reluctant to pull the switch**
 - (2) he is reluctant to judge sinful humanity**

- (3) **grace is preached to sinful humanity**
 - (4) **God is remarkably restrained compared to most apocalyptic literature**
 - (5) **that understanding of God is foreign to some people's understanding of Revelation and of God and Christianity**
 - e. **Millennium (temporary kingdom) (20)**
 - f. **New heaven and new earth (21-22)**
 - i. **Revelation ends with an invitation**
 - ii. **Come, drink water**
 - iii. **The end of the Canon of Scripture**

8. Four Methods of Interpretation

a. Preterist

- i. Revelation is only about the first century**
- ii. It is not predictive or futuristic**
- iii. John is not talking about any day other than his own**
- iv. It has no meaning beyond understanding what was happening in the FC**
- v. Never gets out of the first century**
 - (1) John sees Rome as the greatest evil of his day, but Rome became the center of Christianity in the 4th century**
 - (2) “Soon” is the way that the entire NT deals with the Second Coming**
 - (3) Jesus did not come “soon” but that does not destroy John’s message – he misjudged the distance, but he**

presented all the issues of the end time

- (4) “Soon” expresses a certainty**
- (5) Paul in 1 Thess 4 says “we which are alive and remain”**
 - (a) he used a personal pronoun**
 - (b) he expected to be in that number**
- (6) The writers of the NT were inspired humans, but humans living with limits – they did not know the future**
- (7) For John the end of history is a person – Jesus Christ – not an event or a series of events**
- (8) It is the return of a person who has claimed us, but how and when he comes is his business**
- (9) John wants his readers to face the future with courage**

vi. Theme is 1:7-8 – “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,’ says the Lord, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

b. Futurist

- i. Never goes back to the first century**
- ii. What John is describing in this book is the Second Coming of Jesus**
- iii. It is primarily predictive**
- iv. Some futurists look at the image and try to find out what the symbol corresponds to today**
- v. They are all living in the Last Days – one day they will be right, but it will be totally by accident**

c. Dr. Melton’s Method is a combination of the two

- i. Revelation makes no sense if John's day is not the starting point**

- ii. The central message is the SC, but he uses language that his readers understand (and he does not say, "You are in trouble, but the end will not happen for 21 or 22 centuries. Have a nice day!")**

- iii. John describes Jesus riding a white horse**
 - (1) does he ride a literal white horse**

 - (2) or does John use the FC way of describing a conquering king**

- iv. John saw it happening sooner rather than later – FC Christians did not see much time transpiring**
 - (1) it is like standing on the top of a mountain looking at another mountain in the distance**

 - (2) the problem is misjudging the distance between the two mountains**

d. Historicist

- i. Sees Revelation as a symbolic depiction of the history of the Christian church from the first century to the end of the age**
- ii. John is recounting the history of the church, looking ahead, using images that will describe the future of the church**
- iii. Strongly anti Roman Catholic**
- iv. Little used today**

e. Timeless truth method

- i. Not tied to any historical situation in FC or predictive of anything that will happen in the future**
- ii. A literary approach which describes the constant battle between good and evil**

1. The Prologue (1:1-20)

- a. John, brother, fellow suffer, exiled to Patmos, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day**
- b. Voice like a trumpet (10)**
 - i. Loud?**
 - ii. High pitched?**
 - iii. An actual voice?**
- c. Write in a book, and send all that you see to the seven churches**
- d. I turned to see the voice**
 - i. Metaphors are mixed**
 - ii. Warns us against wooden interpretation**
 - iii. Images evoke other images that appeal not only to our minds but also to our hearts**
 - (1) the attributes he uses are used to describe God**

- (2) John has no hesitation of using these OT images in applying them to God**
- e. I turned to see the voice and saw seven lamp stands**
 - f. In the midst of the lamp stands, one like the Son of Man (cf. Daniel 7)**
 - g. Description**
 - i. Not a snapshot**
 - ii. Describing one who is indescribable**
 - iii. Forces us to ask “How is it like this?”**
 - iv. All allusions to OT texts which are describing God, but John sees the Son of Man who is also the Son of God (John – “I and the Father are one”)**
 - h. I fell at his feet as if I were dead (cf Isaiah 6 – “Woe is me, I am undone”)**

- i. The only appropriate response in the presence of God**
 - ii. Fall at his feet as dead**

- i. He lifts me up and says don't be afraid. I am alive, but I became dead. I have the keys of eternal life and am alive forever more.**

- j. Write**

- k. Vs 20: Interpretation of the first vision**
 - i. 7 lamp stands are the 7 Churches – troubled, confused, afraid, living in a world that is hostile to them, living in a world that is trying to exterminate them, living in a world that is overrun by evil that is so attractive**

 - ii. Vs 13 – in the MIDST of the lamp stands, I saw this one like the Son of Man who bears all the attributes of God, who was dead, but am alive for ever more**

(1) this is pastoral

- (2) John's readers are asking where is God**
- (3) the answer is not logical – it is pictorial – he is right in the midst of the seven churches and he is ruling and reigning because he has died and is alive forever more**
- (4) in many ways the rest of the book is an exposition of the vision John has seen**
- (5) it looks real bad, but evil has already been destroyed**
 - (a) D-Day for Christians is not the Second Coming**
 - (b) D-Day is Easter**
 - (c) they changed their day of worship to Sunday, and every Sunday was a day of celebration, a day of Easter**

(6) this first vision shows the end – the end is Easter – the Second Coming is just the manifestation of Easter

(7) they can be faithful unto death because their destiny is in Jesus' hands, not in Domitian's

(8) Pilate to Jesus – don't you know I have the power to release you or execute you. Jesus says, "You have no power except what has been given to you!"

(9) That scene is shown here in pictures.

I. Theme of Revelation: "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,' says the Lord, 'who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'" (Rev 1:7-8).

i. Almighty – the last part of the word is "to seize"

- (1) word occurs only in Mark**
- (2) Roman soldier reaches out and seizes an unnamed man by the cloak**
- (3) he has a dilemma – stay and be arrested or run away naked**
- (4) The Roman soldier with great strength is trying to hold on to the disciple and arrest him**

ii. “All” – everything

iii. Domitian thinks he holds everything and is controlling the shots

iv. The one who really holds everything in his grip, seizes, controls everything is The Almighty One

v. This sets the tone for the entire book

- (1) John’s readers are in despair, wondering how they can survive**
- (2) John describes the one in control as the Lord God Almighty**

- (3) designed to give comfort and encouragement to people who do not think they can face what lies ahead**

- (4) John is describing Jesus who is coming, and coming in judgment**
 - (a) some welcome him back**

 - (b) some wail because he has returned**
 - (i) regret**

 - (ii) a missed opportunity**

 - (c) common apocalyptic theme – his people rejoice and the nations wail**

2. The Seven Letters (2-3)

a. Characteristics of Asia Minor

i. It was a place that was very friendly to the Roman government

(1) Rome rewarded places that were friendly

(2) A tremendous amount of wealth was invested there by Rome

(3) Emperor worship was readily embraced

ii. Religious syncretism

(1) Romans were incurably religious

(2) Tied to politics and all parts of society

(3) Pick and choose what you liked out of the various religious

(4) No ultimate claims to truth

- (5) People were always ready to hear and receive new teachers**
- (6) they never lived out their lives based on their religious commitment – there was no connection on what you believed and how you lived out your life**

b. Churches face two dangers

i. Pressure from government to yield to the practice of emperor worship

- (1) tremendous pressure to make you conform**
- (2) when Christians refused to engage in emperor worship they are seen as a threat to the empire – they are not patriotic**
- (3) faced imprisonment and death**

ii. Assaulted internally

- (1) Nicolaitans, Jezebel are attacking the church from the inside**

- (2) take Christian belief and modify it, compromise**

- (3) Gnosticism**
 - (a) posed the greatest threat to the Christian faith internally**

 - (b) ill-definable**

 - (c) attached itself to whatever religion or philosophy it encountered**

 - (d) no wrong answers to life's problems, only different problems**

 - (e) accepts what parts it can and modifies it to fit its preconceived notions**

 - (f) great emphasis in Revelation is placed on the danger of false teaching**

- (4) The more religion you had the better off you were**
- (5) The Romans worshiped their gods to obtain good luck; they had no idea of a personal relationship with their gods**
- (6) Religious practices were to appease the gods – explain sickness, crop failures, natural disasters**

c. General

- i. Obviously more than 7 letters in AM, and John is not sending it to only these – they are representative**
- ii. Each letter has a distinctive form**
 - (1) “Write to the angel of the church”**
 - (a) church leader**
 - (b) guardian angel**
 - (c) ambiguity – perhaps a literary convention**

- (1) about AD 110 Ignatius wrote to Ephesus a letter that is perfectly consistent with Revelation**
- (2) took their faith seriously and guarded it against assault from false teaching**

iii. Criticized for forsaking their first love

- (1) typical response: these are people who lost their enthusiasm for their Christian faith as most of us do fairly quickly**
- (2) Ignatius warns the Ephesians against overdoing the correctness of their belief so that they act unlovingly to those they oppose**
 - (a) don't become judgmental**
 - (b) they defend the faith, but they don't act like Christians any more**
 - (c) so concerned about protecting the truth that our lives deny it by**

**the way we treat other people,
even our enemies**

**(d) don't be so worried about being
correct that you don't live out
your lives with love towards each
other**

**(e) resist the Nicolaitans, but don't
hate them – live out your faith**

f. Smyrna

i. Good

**(1) Smyrna was a proud city, laid out in
rectangles, architecturally planned**

**(2) Christians did not buy into that pride
and they have been suffering, even to
the point of martyrdom**

**(3) very little censure in this letter,
almost unbroken praise**

**(4) they are in a hostile environment and
they are remaining faithful, quietly
living out their Christian faith**

(5) they are going to continue to suffer persecution

(a) 10 days

(b) persecution is going to last for a while, but it is not going to last forever

(c) not a real long time, but you are going to continue to experience it

(d) praised for faithfulness

(e) not told to retreat – continue to live out your faith, but know that the persecution is not going to go away

g. Pergamum

i. Capital of AM

(1) name means “Citadel”

- (2) Has a prominent temple, freely embraced emperor worship**
- (3) Had a library with over 200,000 volumes**
- (4) had a famous medical school**

ii. Satan sits enthroned

- (1) possible allusion to the altar of Zeus that dominated the city skyline**
- (2) or emperor worship**

iii. Faithful in a hostile environment where one has already been killed

iv. Censure

- (1) allusion to Balaam (Numbers 25)**
- (2) associated with deception**
- (3) resisted the teaching, but must keep on resisting the false teaching**

h. Thyatira

- i. The city had no natural protection against invasion**

- ii. Known for the prominence of its trade guilds**
 - (1) manufacturing center**

 - (2) much commerce**

 - (3) trade guilds fixed prices**

 - (4) met frequently – involved worship with feasts and sexual immorality**

- iii. Christians belonged to trade guilds as part of their livelihood**
 - (1) trade guilds were great promoters of emperor worship**

 - (2) could turn against your business, cut off supply of raw materials**

 - (3) be pressured to compromise the Christian faith**

(4) not overt persecution, persecuted in the marketplace, discriminated in the marketplace

iv. The call is to be faithful and resist, even though it may be costly

v. Jezebel

(1) don't let her get her hooks in you

(2) ended up as dog food

(3) the assurance that God will take care of this Jezebel like he did the first one

i. Sardis

i. This church has done nothing wrong

ii. The rebuke is the most severe of all

(1) they go through the motions

(2) but they have no life

(3) connects to so much of Israel and Judah – performing all the right sacrifices, believing all the right things, but has no life

iii. What characterizes that life – what is it that Sardis lacks?

(1) a life of obedience

(2) not a life of slavish obedience to a law code, but a life lived out in community with other believers

j. Philadelphia

i. “The Gateway to the East”

(1) strong trading community

(2) good wine

(3) good farm lands

(4) very Hellenized – embodied the Greco-Roman festivals

(5) “Little Athens” because it was like Athens

ii. No specific reference back to 1:12-16 (nor for Laodicea)

iii. A suffering church

iv. The promise is an open door – the opportunity to bear witness at the point of suffering and martyrdom

v. The synagogue of Satan, and those who say they are Jews, but are not

(1) appears to be a reference of one source of the suffering of Christian in those communities

(2) great persecution actually came from the Jewish communities

vi. “I will keep you from the hour of trouble”

(1) not preventing the experience of the hour of trouble

- (2) I will keep you throughout the hour of trouble**
- (3) same word as used in the Lord's Prayer**

k. Lacodicea

i. One of the wealthiest cities in AM

- (1) In Col 4, Paul makes reference to a letter to the Laodiceans**
- (2) fabulous city in terms of its materialism**
 - (a) produced glossy black wool that was used in clothes that only the rich could by**
 - (b) banking center**
 - (c) medical school**
 - (i) eye salve**
 - (ii) ear salve**

(2) an appeal to the church to remain faithful, to not compromise

v. The one who overcomes

(1) the one who conquers

(2) one of the most frequently used verbs in the book of Revelation

(3) if you are overcoming, you are under assault, you are under fire

(4) the issue is a call to faithful living

3. The Exalted Heavenly Vision (4-5)

a. The fulcrum, the backbone, the spine of Revelation

i. Every rib is connected to the spine

ii. All of the book is connected here

b. The most majestic scene of worship in Scripture

- c. After the call to faithful living, the focus shifts to heaven**
 - i. The power for John's readers**
 - ii. This is why you can be faithful**
 - (1) it is one thing to call people to be faithful**
 - (2) it is another thing to equip them for faithfulness**
- d. Chapter 4**
 - i. The opening of the door of heaven**
 - (1) you don't storm into heaven**
 - (2) the door is opened for you – a passive idea**
 - ii. Heaven is dominated by a throne**
 - (1) a throne connotes a ruler**
 - (2) this throne is occupied**

(3) powerful OT imagery

(4) describing the Undescribable

iii. For John's readers, Domitian is on the throne, but in Revelation, God is on the throne

iv. Precious stones are used to describe the transcendence of God

(1) his holy otherness

(2) he is holy, we are unholy

(3) he is pure, we are impure

(4) he is eternal, we are finite

v. A rainbow around the throne

(1) the mercy of God

(2) the rainbow given to Noah was a promise of mercy

(3) the immanence of God – he is with us

vi. God is on the throne ruling, far removed from a pagan empire, far removed from the suffering of his people

(1) no indication that God is worried

(2) no indication that God is discomfited by what is going on in the world

vii. The heavenly creatures

(1) their purpose is to praise God day and night forever and ever

(2) because he is worthy

(a) you don't worship God out of duty

(b) you don't worship God to get something

(c) you worship God because he is God and you are not

(3) the content of their praise – he alone is worthy

viii. 24 elders

- (1) represents the unity of God's people**
- (2) 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles of the Church**
- (3) the continuity of God's working with Israel and God's working with the church is important to Revelation**
- (4) God has not closed down Plan A and gone to Plan B**
- (5) the continuity between Abraham and Jesus and the Church is important to maintain theologically**
- (6) the whole people of God that God saves**
- (7) they are praising and glorifying God**
- (8) the content of their praise**
 - (a) the Almighty**

- (b) the one who was, and is, and is coming**
- (c) reminiscent of YHWH**
 - (i) who shall I say has sent me**
 - (ii) tell them that the I AM has sent you**
- (d) John adds “the one who is coming”**
 - (i) not the one who “will” come**
 - (ii) the one who is coming now, the one who is always coming**
 - (iii) that is why they are praising him**
- (e) worthy are you our Lord and our God**
 - (i) clear evidence it comes from Domitian and not from Nero**

**(ii) this is the exact phrase
Domitian adopted**

**(iii) John is making fun of him –
Domitian thinks he is our
Lord and our God, but here
is our true Lord and god**

**(f) he is worthy to receive glory
because he has created all
things by his will and by his
permission**

**ix. this scene is totally disconnected from
earth**

**(1) the God on the throne is not moved
by what is going on on the earth**

(2) what does he have to do with me

(3) must be considered with chapter 5

e. Chapter 5

**i. John writes like the vision of Daniel 7:1-
14**

- ii. The transcendent one of Chapter 4 is connected to earth with Chapter 5**
- iii. The 7 sealed book**
 - (1) contents will be revealed**
 - (2) but to a special person at a special time**
- iv. A strong angel preaching with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the book and lose its seals, and no one was found worthy**
 - (1) a search was made throughout all of creation, throughout all of eternity**
 - (2) no one was found**
- v. John wept much because no one was found worthy to open the book or even look on the contents**
- vi. Do not weep, the Lion has overcome, has prevailed to open the book**
 - (1) warrior figure**

(2) predator

vii. I saw in the middle (same word as the one in the middle of the lampstands – sharing the suffering of the lampstands and the glory of the throne) of the throne – sharing the rule of the throne – a Lamb

(1) Greek – a little lamb

(2) you need a lion to break the powers of evil in the world

(3) a lion was what the elder promised

(4) what he got was a little lamb having the marks of slaughter, standing in the midst of the throne

viii. He took the book from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne and heaven exploded in worship

(1) worthy are you to take the book and open the seals

(2) because you have been slaughtered and have purchased to God with your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and have made them to be a kingdom of priests unto our God

ix. The voice of many angels around the throne, and the elders cry, “Worthy!”

(1) 7 things

(2) all of the things Domitian thought he had

x. The celebration of a victory that has already taken place

(1) not a future victory

(2) this is where the story is going to end

(3) this is the final act

(4) the final act is celebration of God’s people from all times and places

(5) not that we persevered, but the Lamb has shed his blood and has

purchased for himself a kingdom of priests

- (6) that is why they can be faithful unto death**
- (7) their fate is not in the hands of Domitian**
- (8) their fate is in the hand of the Lamb who was slaughtered**
 - (a) the scary parts of the story will not scare us**
 - (b) we know how the story will end**
 - (c) we have the celebration of Easter**
 - (d) the Second Coming is the enactment of Easter**
- (9) wants them to live as Easter people, living in anticipation of the certainty of the victory that has already been taken care of by God's raising Jesus from the dead**

(10) Jewish apocalyptic literature tells you to hang on until it comes

(11) John says, the victory has already come – live it out until Jesus comes in power and glory

xi. There is no discussion about what the book is, only who is worthy to open it

4. Chapter 6

a. The four horsemen are instruments of judgment

b. Restraint on the Four Horsemen

i. One-fourth

(1) God places limitation on judgment

(2) One-third in trumpets, and no restraint in bowls

ii. God is limiting the effects of his judgment because he is merciful

iii. He is not willing that any should perish

iv. Evil is limited

(1) 6:2 – was given

(2) 6:4 – was granted

(3) 6:8 – was given

c. This tells us that the book is God’s judgment of the world – God’s kingdom will come in power and judgment

d. A disturbing picture of God

i. He is allowing his anger to be worked out in human history

ii. “My God is not a God of judgment. He is a God of mercy”

iii. The revelation of the kingdom of God (the rule of God, the reign of God) must uproot another kingdom

(1) the rule of God is not established without judgment

- (2) there is resistance to the rule of God**
- (3) the darkness could not overcome the light (John 1), but it tried to**
- (4) pharaoh resists, but God imposes his rule on pharaoh through judgment**
 - (a) the plagues were to get sinful humanity to repent**
 - (b) in Revelation, God delays his final punishment by three sets of judgment**
 - (c) he allows his people to suffer while he extends mercy to sinful people, trying to get them to repent**

e. The question of chronology

- i. Revelation is not a book about chronology in the traditional sense**
- ii. The three judgments are pictures of the same thing, with an intensification**

- iii. The human response – humans become more resistant to God, not less so**

- f. Three traditions reflected in the seals, trumpets and bowls**
 - i. Echoes of the plagues of Egypt**
 - (1) the pharaoh is a symbol of arrogance and pride and resistance of God**

 - (2) Domitian is another pharaoh, setting himself up in opposition of God**

 - (3) Revelation speaks of an ultimate judgment**
 - (a) lake of fire that burns forever**

 - (b) no indication of a second chance after that**

 - (c) separate the wheat from chaff and burn the chaff**

 - (d) a garbage dump is a place where you discard things that used to have meaning and value, but**

now is useless – the dominate image is waste, which is even more tragic than punishment

(e) there is a final judgment that is not redemptive; it is separation

ii. Messianic Woes (birth pangs of the Messianic age, the time of tribulation)

(1) Jewish concept of time is linear

(2) this age and the age to come

(3) age to come comes when Messiah comes

(4) prior to that things will break apart

(5) wars and rumors of wars

(6) society will break apart

(7) Messiah will come when the world is at its worst and will bring an end to the chaos and will usher in the age to come

- (8) coming of the Messianic age is likened to the birth of a child**
- (a) birth is accompanied by pain**
 - (b) pain intensifies as the birth gets closer**
 - (c) pain disappears once the child is born**
 - (d) this suffering has meaning**
 - (e) hang on, things will get better**
- (9) John is reminding his readers, don't be alarmed by what is going on**
- (a) we are in the middle of the Messianic woes**
 - (b) this will soon come to an end with the appearance of the Messiah and the establishment of the Kingdom**

- (10) John has already told us the end (4-5) before he gets to the Messianic woes**
- (a) Jewish apocalyptic does not do this**
 - (b) Jewish apocalyptic wants his readers to hang on, keep your head down, this world is ending, don't get attached to this world**
 - (c) John's call is to engage the world**
 - (i) be cautious, understand what you are doing, but don't be afraid of it because your fate has already been sealed by the Lamb**
 - (ii) Paul: your life is hidden in God, the treasure chest is locked forever**
 - (iii) Rev 17 John "marvels" at the beauty of the harlot, but the angel says, don't do that,**

she is the image of the dragon, and she is going down

(iv) don't take the evil of this world lightly, it is seductive, it often takes the form of beauty, but underneath it is the old dragon, and he is doing the same thing he has always done – usurp the power and authority of God

iii. Synoptic apocalypse

(1) Mark 13, Matthew 24, Luke 22

(2) wars, rumors of wars, but the end is not yet

(3) the gospel version of the Messianic woes where God's people will be suffering as the result of the things that are happening on earth

(4) these things must take place, but your redemption draws near

- g. The symbolism of the horses**
 - i. White horse – bow, makes war**
 - ii. Red horse – power to take peace from the earth**
 - iii. Black horse – famine follows war**
 - iv. Pale horse – death**
 - v. Another version of the Messianic woes of the OT**
 - vi. God’s people suffer, they live in that world and they are not immune to that suffering**
 - vii. No need to be called to faithfulness if you are going to face a test**

- h. Fifth seal**
 - i. Souls under the altar who have been slaughtered for the Word of God**
 - (1) not limiting them to only those killed in John’s day**

v. John the Baptist sends word to Jesus from prison, “Are you the one to come or is there another?”

(1) not an intellectual question

(2) he is asking, is it worth it that I am laying down my life for you

(3) Jesus says, “Go back and tell him the blind are seeing, etc. Let him decide if I am the Messiah”

(4) John’s question is the ultimate question of faith – tell me it is worth it

vi. They are the martyrs from throughout all human history and they want to know if it was worth it

vii. They are told, wait a while, you will be vindicated, but it will take a while, and I will take care of it for you

viii. It is not blasphemy to ask God

(1) God can handle our questions

(2) he may not answer on our time table

i. Sixth seal – cosmic disturbances

j. The first of two interludes (chapter 7, and 10-14)

i. In a Greek drama (very popular in Asia Minor, particularly in Ephesus), the story is carried in the interlude – the acting stopped and the play was interpreted

ii. First interlude occurs between seals 6 and 7

(1) it delays the action

(2) creates suspense

(a) they are expecting the end of their suffering

(b) they are expecting the revelation of the kingdom

- iii. The four angels are commanded to hold back and not finish until the saints are sealed**

- iv. The sealing of two groups**
 - (1) 144,000 – a connection with the tribes of Israel**

 - (2) a multitude that no one can number**

- v. A seal shows ownership, authority**

- vi. The action stops so these groups can be protected**
 - (1) not in the sense that they are going to be removed from the chaos**

 - (2) they are sealed in the sense that they are preserved through the chaos**

 - (3) preservation in the midst of suffering – otherwise the call to faithfulness unto death has no meaning**

vii. God takes special care to call a time out to protect his people in the period when their suffering is going to be the worst

viii. Here is John's pastoral interest

(1) he is reminding them that God will preserve them in the suffering they are experiencing

(2) why seal them if they are going to escape from the judgments

(3) why the call to be faithful if they will not experience death, if they are not victimized by the judgments (which are intended to call all those who are not following Jesus to repentance)

(a) John is not using code words like "Babylon", etc

(b) the nickname for Rome was Babylon – like calling New York "the big apple"

(c) how many Roman soldiers were running around reading

**apocalyptic literature trying to
decode the book – a silly idea**

**(d) they knew who the culprits were
– they had them in jail – they
knew who the Christians were**

**(4) but this is why you can trust God –
your fate is in the hands of the Lamb
who bears the marks of slaughter but
is standing**

**(5) the sealing may be a reminder that
Domitian does not control your life –
Paul: your life is hid with God**

ix. Why two sealings

(1) Jews and Gentiles

**(2) maintains the continuity between OT
and NT**

**(3) God will restrain the activities of evil
men**

**(4) the point is the same regardless –
God takes special provision to take**

**care of his people at the point when
his suffering is most intense**

**(5) the answer to the petition in the
Lord's Prayer – deliver us from evil
(or the evil one)**

**x. Those who are sealed worship (similar to
chapter 5)**

xi. This shows John's heart

**k. 7:14 does not require a 7 year period of time
which futurists impose**

I. Seventh seal

i. John's readers expect redemption

ii. There is silence for a half hour

(1) this is heaven

(2) this is what he is waiting on

(3) we are being martyred

(4) we want vindication

- (a) how long do we have to wait until we see that our choice means something**
- (b) how long must we wait until everyone acknowledges that Jesus is Lord**
 - (i) if Jesus is Lord, why did my child die, my business fail, my marriage fail**
 - (ii) why are innocent people blown up by roadside bombs in Iraq**
- (c) how long must we wait until your just ways, which we believe in, be manifest to the whole world**
- (d) not an academic question – I am confessing that Jesus is Lord and he is not doing anything about what is going on in the world**
 - (i) Chinese foot-binding**

(2) more intense, afflict one-third, but still restrained

iv. The suffering of God's people will intensify as God extends mercy

v. God really does love sinners

5. The Seven Trumpets

a. Similar judgments, but still restrained

i. Evil, in Revelation, is always under God's control

ii. This far, and no farther

iii. But now the limit is increased, not decreased

(1) it goes from 1/4 to 1/3

(2) more death, more destruction

b. John's concern is more theological than chronological

i. God judges, but for redemptive purposes

(b) this is equivalent to what John's Gospel describes as "the world," the world system of values

(i) you worship the emperor to conform to society and replace God with this puny, ego-centric emperor

(ii) you do that because it benefits you economically

(iii) it gives you the comfort of not being persecuted

(iv) what the world says to us today

(c) those who are wed to this world

(d) this world shapes them, determines their life

(3) "Woe"

(a) the word of an OT prophet

- (b) the jig is up, the fat lady has sung**
- (c) a strong term of condemnation**
- (d) the fan has become covered with excrement**

e. Fifth trumpet

- i. Star has fallen to the earth and was given the key to the abyss**
- ii. Opens the abyss, the bottomless pit, and smoke pours out**
- iii. Abyss**
 - (1) there was a series of creation myths that existed in the ancient near east long before the time of Abraham**
 - (2) they did not believe that God spoke and the universe was created as Genesis says**
 - (3) not universal agreement, but similar motifs**

- (4) from ancient Babylonians (4000-3000 B.C.)**
 - (a) all that existed was a watery dark mass that was unfit for life, could not sustain life**
 - (b) there was no sun**
 - (c) it was controlled by the Chaos Monster who is often pictured as a seven headed female dragon named Tiamat**
 - (i) Leviathan is another term for this seven headed dragon**
 - 1) in one Psalm the psalmist celebrates that God plays with Leviathan like a pet and does with him what he wants**
 - 2) ironic because in ANE Leviathan was the master of chaos**

- (ii) Behemoth and Rahab (not the harlot) were other names**
- (d) the other gods were afraid of Tiamat**
- (e) one day a warrior god would be born and would destroy the chaos monster**
- (f) finally the warrior god, Marduk, was born**
- (g) Marduk goes out into the watery chaos and kills Tiamat with his sword, cuts the carcass in half**
 - (i) throws half of the carcass into the air and it becomes the “canopy” or the atmosphere**
 - (ii) the watery chaos was pushed behind it and the other half becomes the four pillars on which the earth stood**

(iii) the earth now can be inhabited

(iv) the watery chaos was dammed up

(h) they feared that the watery chaos would be released, that Tiamat would be resurrected, come back and seek her revenge, and destroy everything

(i) there was a deep-seated fear that creation would revert back to chaos with the return of Tiamat

(j) the abyss was a hole in the canopy that evil could come out of

(k) the abyss is that which can allow creation to revert back to chaos

iv. this is what is happening in these judgments

(1) “and it was given to them”

- (2) it does not say they took authority, but God allows chaos to erupt as an expression of his judgment**
- (3) God is clearly in control – not the star, not the scorpion-like creatures**
- (4) when the time comes for them to be stopped, they will be stopped**

v. Locust come out of the smoke, but they are not allowed to kill those people who are sealed, and their time is limited

- (1) five months**
- (2) may not be a specific length of time, but an indication that there will come an end to this torment**

vi. The description of the locusts

- (1) a compound image gathered from OT, Jewish apocalyptic, his own time (Roman military)**

- (2) produces a hybrid picture of something you do not want to meet**
- (3) their purpose is to torment humans, dwellers on the earth**

vii. Apollyon/Abaddon

- (1) not clear who or what it is**
- (2) obviously a satanic figure, a figure of judgment**

f. Sixth trumpet

i. “I heard a voice coming from the four corners of the altar saying, ‘Release the four angels that are bound at the Euphrates River.’”

- (1) Euphrates River the heart of ancient Babylon**
- (2) been restrained for a specific purpose of devastating one-third of the human race**

- ii. They gather around themselves an army that marches for battle**
 - (1) number of the army was inconceivable in John's day**
 - (2) beyond their comprehension**
- iii. Images would have reflected the circumstances of John's day**
 - (1) you fought a battle on horses**
 - (2) soldiers wore armor**
 - (3) John does not want us to literalize it**
 - (4) he is describing a form of evil that is almost unimaginable**
- g. There is no description of the battle**
 - i. In Jewish apocalyptic literature history always ends with a final battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil, featuring detailed descriptions of the battle**

- ii. Verses 20-21 presupposes the battle is over: “the rest of those who were not killed by these plagues”**

- iii. A way to draw us back to chapters 4-5**
 - (1) he does not describe the slaying of the Lamb; he shows the standing Lamb**

 - (2) the description of the battle is unimportant, the outcome is certain, the end is determined**

- iv. Those who are left did not stop worshiping, demons, they did not stop worshiping idols, nor repent of their murders, their magic, their sexual immorality, or their stealing**
 - (1) they think they are still in charge**

 - (2) they had a chance to repent, but they failed to grasp it**

 - (3) they continue to hang onto the things that have brought about this unbelievable suffering**

- (4) a strong and disturbing picture of the utter resilience of evil; the power, the hold of evil
 - (5) 2/3rds of humanity is left, but they think they have won; they still hold onto their idols
- v. the ultimate expression of love, sometimes is turning a person over to their own devices
 - (1) God respects our right to make choices
 - (2) a pictorial representation of Romans 1:18-32
 - (3) “the wrath of God is revealed against all of these things”
 - (4) God gave them up, God turned them over to their own devices
 - (5) it doesn't mean God stopped loving them

- (6) it may be love's most profound and costly expression**
- (7) sometimes as an act of judgment, God gives us what we ask for**
- (8) the thing that keeps human beings from self-destructing is not their freedom of choice, but God's intervention**

h. 10:8-11

- i. One of the few times in Revelation where John is the central character**
- ii. Similar to Ezekiel's call story**
 - (1) Ezekiel was taken into exile because he was a potential troublemaker**
 - (2) he ends up in an exile community and is given the task of comforting this exile community**
 - (3) he must also deal with the false sense of optimism that the exiles had that Jerusalem was not going to fall**

- (b) Ezekiel ends by telling the people their hope is out of this world; you aren't going to get much comfort here; don't settle in**
- (2) John's readers are dealing with the reality that because they are followers of Jesus Christ, somehow they are going to be spared what the world is going through**
 - (a) First Century version of the "health and wealth gospel"**
 - (b) they were saying, "we are exempt," but Christianity is not a magic pill that insulates Jesus' followers**
 - (c) John says you are going to suffer – not for their own sins, but for the sins of Domitian and the Roman world – but your fate is not in the hands of the beast or the dragon**
 - (d) John is shocking his audience into reality, just as Ezekiel did**

iv. John eats the scroll and it is sweet to his mouth and bitter to his stomach

(1) in Ezekiel it takes place at the beginning, chapter 1-2, here in chapter 10

(2) for John, it is a reaffirmation of his call

(a) when the heat is about to get turned up and you are ready to be thrown in the towel, or take the rough edge off of your prophetic thrust, you need reaffirmation

(b) even John does not escape it

(i) Isaiah 6 may not be his initial call, it may be a reaffirmation

(ii) the call is continually updated

(c) not only is the crisis real, it is going to get worse, so his call is reaffirmed

(d) sweet to your mouth, bitter to your stomach

(i) it is good for a while

(ii) it will later get bitter

i. The Two Witnesses

i. A second sealing – a measuring for the purpose of saving – that involves the inner court and the outer court being given over to the Gentiles

ii. The inner court was very small when compared to the outer court, and this is John’s way of saying, “We are going down folks.”

iii. You will be preserved; God has decreed that

iv. Two witnesses appear and preach and they are despised because of their preaching

- (1) the beast appears from the pit and kills them**
- (2) everyone rejoices over their dead bodies**
- (3) leaving a dead body exposed was the ultimate humiliation, the ultimate rejection of a person**
- (4) people are so happy that they leave the bodies in the open and they exchange presents**
 - (a) not the usual thing in FC**
 - (b) WalMart has a “Death of the Two Witnesses Sale”**
- (5) Jewish apocalyptic literature called for the appearing of two witnesses**
 - (a) Elijah and Enoch, the only two mentioned in the Bible who never died**
 - (b) Moses and Elijah (Moses’ death not recorded with clarity)**

- (c) Number 2 in Judaism always meant witnesses**
 - (i) Peter and John**
 - (ii) Paul and Silas**
 - (iii) Paul and Barnabas**
 - (d) Another tradition is that John is talking about the Church and its witness – he is using the tradition of the two individual witnesses to call the church to faithfulness and not renege on their commitment**
- v. Their message is so despised that there is great rejoicing at their death**
 - vi. Chapter 10 is the renewal of John's call; chapter 11 is the Church's call to witness is renewed**
 - (1) be faithful witness to the Gospel**
 - (2) enemies will rejoice at their deaths**

- vii. They are resurrected and caught up to the throne and the world sees them and are terrified – they cannot keep them dead**

- viii. The last chapter in these witnesses lives is not death and martyrdom, but resurrection**

- ix. Their most effectual preaching is not their words, but their death and resurrection**
 - (1) a tenth of the city fell, and the rest gave God the glory**

 - (2) a very different ending than the first woe**

 - (3) the preaching of the gospel in a hopeless, dismal situation, with a dramatic result**

- x. There is the same guarantee of preservation, but there is the call to not lay low and preserve their lives, but to**

witness faithfully, even at the cost of their lives

- xi. Three and a half years is used in apocalyptic literature for a long time, but not an indefinite time, of persecution; or a brief time of prosperity**

- j. Chapter 11 ends with the anticipation of the 7th trumpet and a song of rejoicing**
 - i. Song celebrates God's wrath, and the coming of the kingdom**
 - (1) the vindication of God's people**

 - (2) celebrated as though it had already happened**

 - ii. We are led to believe that with the 7th trumpet evil will end**

 - iii. But the interlude continues in chapters 12-14**

- k. Chapter 12 – the Woman, the Child, and the Dragon – is probably the most widely interpreted chapter in Revelation**

- i. Most commentaries say John is using an international myth that has been around for centuries**

- ii. Built on the chaos monster myth**
 - (1) the miraculous birth of a male child by one of the goddesses and that child would slay the chaos monster**

 - (2) after Marduk is born, the chaos monster seeks him out to kill him, because she knows he is going to slay her**

- iii. With his use of this myth John is pulling back the curtain and he is showing his readers the real nature of the conflict they are experiencing**
 - (1) he is helping them make sense of why they are being persecuted, opposed and slaughtered by Rome/Babylon and their only crime is they are being faithful witnesses (they are not breaking the law)**

- (2) their tendency is to think they are really fighting Rome or the emperor**
- (3) John is saying Rome is just the latest version of a battle that has been going on since the Garden of Eden**
- (4) who you are really fighting is the dragon, the serpent**
- (5) this is a pictorial way of saying what Paul says when he says, “We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against rulers of darkness in unseen places”**
- (6) this is only the latest version of the dragon’s fight against God**
- (7) John’s use of this myth (he is not giving any credibility to it) will give a familiar basis to his readers for what they are hearing**
- (8) John sees Rome as the last incarnation, but he was wrong**

- (a) it still exists in a secularized version today**
- (b) the power comes straight from the dragon**

iv. Characters

- (1) The woman is the Messianic Community (rather than limiting it to Israel).**
 - (a) by including John's readers with Israel, he shows the continuing continuity between the two faith communities**
 - (b) a very real problem in the First Century was total rejection of Israel and a hostile relationship that had developed**
 - (c) if Israel is out of business and the new covenant is operative, how can you trust God to keep his promises – because he made specific promises to Israel (Paul deals with this in Romans 9-11)**

- (1) there have been continued incarnations of the dragons battle from John's time to the present day**
- (2) they are not in a battle with a political power, they are in a battle with the dragon himself**
- (3) they should not be surprised that they are in this conflict – this is what the dragon always does**

I. 12:7 – Satan thrown out of heaven

- i. The idea that Satan was an angel who was thrown out of heaven was invented by John Milton in “Paradise Lost,” not Scripture**
- ii. The closest we come to the origin of Satan is in Genesis: “now the serpent that the Lord made”**
 - (1) Genesis tells us from the very beginning Satan was under God's control**

- (2) he has never not been under God's control**
- (3) he is a dog on a leash and when ever God desires to change his direction and yank him back, he can do so without breaking a sweat because he is that one whom the Lord has made**
- (4) why he allows him to wreak havoc is not explained**

iii. There is war in heaven

- (1) no wonder there is war on earth, there is even war in heaven**
- (2) opposition between Satan and Michael and his angels**
- (3) Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven and they end up on earth**
- (4) his arena has changed**
- (5) that's why Rome exists, that's why there is such persecution**

**(6) this is the only arena Satan has left
and he continues to try to usurp the
power of God**

iv. Satan – “the accuser”

(1) accuses Job before God

**(a) Job serves you only for what he
gets out of it**

**(b) Job serves you because you
didn't allow me to touch him and
any man will save his life at any
cost**

**(2) Satan is doing what he has always
done**

**v. He has failed in destroying the woman,
he failed to destroy the male child, so he
turns his attention to the descendants of
the woman – John's readers; God's
people of all time**

**vi. He fights as if he does not know that Ch
4-5 exist and that he is already defeated**

- vii. Jesus doesn't even lower himself to fight against Satan that he sends an angel, he sends the second string; no wonder he is angry**
- viii. The spewing out of water by the dragon shows his resilience, his continued and unrelenting effort to destroy the descendants of the woman**
- ix. The earth swallows up the water – picturing creation itself resisting Satan; Romans 8 creation groaning for relief**
- m. Chapter 13 – this is how Satan is working in the world**
 - i. Satan comes as an angel of light**
 - ii. John says I saw these two creatures; one coming from the land, one coming from the sea**
 - (1) Jewish apocalyptic sea is source of evil, death**
 - (2) Chaos monster lived in the depths of the sea**

- (3) The biblical story does not have a favorable idea of the sea – the sea is always dangerous and treacherous**
- (4) the fear that the chaos monster would rise again and destroy the created order**

iii. These are Satan’s minions, his operatives, the ones who accomplish his work for him, who carry out his agenda

iv. The beast from the sea

- (1) has blasphemous names**
- (2) derives his authority from the dragon**
- (3) seven heads, ten horns, ten crowns, a mortal wound**
- (4) John appears to be making use of a myth that was current in his time – the “Nero Redivivus myth” – Nero revived**

- (a) Nero was the worst tyrant of the FC emperors**
- (b) he was crazy; feared even by the Roman government**
- (c) set fire to Rome, blamed it on the Christians and set off the first major persecution**
- (d) his death was shrouded in mystery**
 - (i) story was he committed suicide by cutting his throat**
 - (ii) there were many in Rome who believed his death was faked and he actually escaped and gone to Parthia on the eastern edge of the empire, near the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers**
 - (iii) one day he was going to return and lead the Parthian army in a revenge attack on Rome**

(iii) although his fate is sealed, the Lamb is standing, the enemy is fighting as if he still has a chance to win the battle

(iv) the pressure for John's readers would be to give in and engage in emperor worship – a temptation that would be almost impossible to risk

(v) John says we are not talking about that, we are talking about the dragon

(vi) the only hope is what the angels keep calling for when they preach the Gospel: fear God, hang on to him

(5) this beast is a parody of Jesus

(a) he has the marks of slaughter

(4) a parody of the Third Person of the Trinity who causes people to know the Son

vi. They carry out the agenda of Satan

(1) this is what the dragon is doing

(2) he is working through the beast and the false prophet as though he were not destroyed

vii. The number of the beast

(1) 666 – Greek letters for numbers = “Nero”

(2) 616 (some manuscripts) – Latin = “Nero”

(3) John was telling them Domitian is just another Nero, but God is still in charge

n. Chapter 14 – A Celebration

- i. Celebrating as if the end has already come, but there is still a set of judgments to come, and they are the greatest of all in the book**

- ii. The proclamation of the angels**

- iii. Harvest at the end of the earth**
 - (1) sickle is used to harvest wheat, this sickle harvest grapes**

 - (2) harvest was an image of judgment**
 - (a) good news**
 - (i) you gather in the harvest**

 - (ii) vindicates the hard work**

 - (iii) ensures you will survive through the winter**

 - (b) bad news**
 - (i) a time of separation**

 - (ii) separating wheat from chaff**

- iv. Wine is thrown into the wine press and out comes blood**
 - (1) the end of the interlude**
 - (2) he is doing what he did in chapter 7, insuring people of the final victory that has been accomplished by the Lamb and that they will share in the victory**
 - (3) you press grapes you don't get blood – reminding them of the terribleness of the judgment that is about to come**
 - (4) the last judgment is worse than anything that has come so far**
 - (5) the gruesomeness and terror is emphasized in 17-20**

- v. This chapter looks ahead, foreshadows what lies ahead**
 - (1) the kingdom coming and judgment on sinful humanity are one and the same thing**

(2) John prepares us to see the third and final series of judgment

6. Chapter 15

- a. Preparatory for the pouring out of the bowls of God's wrath on sinful humanity, which occurs in chapter 16**
- b. The effect of chapter 15**
 - i. Suspense**
 - ii. A drum roll**
 - iii. An interpretation of the pause in 8:1**
 - iv. Then I saw another sign – a portent – in heaven**
 - v. This is how chapter 12 begins**
 - vi. Sees 7 angels with 7 plagues, and John says, "These are the last ones, the ultimate, complete expression of God's wrath."**

- c. Sea of glass (saw it in chapter 4) mingled with fire**
 - i. Don't think of sea as being made of glass**
 - ii. Throw fire into the picture, makes it more dissonant**
 - iii. When the people in the Exodus came to the sea, they cried, "We are out of luck. This is the end of the road. Our goose is cooked."**
 - (1) God has promised the land**
 - (2) but it is on the other side of the sea**
 - (3) total hopeless and despair**
 - (4) there is no way this can work**
- d. People of God are singing the Song of Moses**
 - i. Sang an on the occasion of the Exodus**
 - ii. Song of thanksgiving and rejoicing**

iii. The basis of the rejoicing is that God has shown his sovereignty in human history

(1) a face-off between God and the pharaoh

(2) the pharaoh caved in

iv. Also calls it the Song of the Lamb

(1) God is praised

(2) Who will stand in awe of you

(3) king of the nations

(4) all nations will come and worship you

(5) a strong statement of God's sovereignty

v. Seven angels with seven last judgments come out of the temple that is now open

(1) they are coming straight from God

(2) John has not said that about the other sets of judgment, but these are the final judgments

vi. One of the four living creatures (back to chapter 4) gave the angels the bowls

vii. Drenched in Exodus imagery

viii. Why is John alluding to the Exodus

(1) parallels the blood of the lamb over the door posts with the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world

(2) God shows his sovereignty over the powers of evil

(3) pharaoh was another incarnation of the dragon

(4) the ultimate and final victory

(a) the Israelites were set free from Egypt

(b) but Egypt was never gotten out of them

7. The Bowl judgments – the ultimate expression of God’s judgment on humanity (ch 16)

a. Pour out the plagues – no limitation

i. Painful sores on those who have the mark of the beast – parallels the boils from Exodus

ii. Sea turns to blood and every living creature in the sea dies

iii. Rivers and springs turn to blood so that which sustains human life are being eliminated

(1) the angel of the waters sings

(2) you are just O Lord

(3) they poured out the blood of God’s people and now they are given blood to drink

(4) they are getting what they deserve

- (a) in order for the new kingdom to come in the old kingdom must be overcome**

- (b) the day of the coming of the kingdom is a day of vindication**
 - (i) vindication is tied to “righteous” and “just”**

 - (ii) vindication of the nature and character of God**
 - 1) he proved to pharaoh he proved he was the God of all creation**

 - 2) would not be opposed by anyone**

 - (iii) vindication of God’s people in living faithful lives is finally confirmed as being the right choice**

1) John's readers were called losers and treated with contempt

2) if your God was real, he would rescue you

3) taunted by their enemies

(iv) the day of vindication is a day of rejoicing that God's name is vindicated and that God's people are vindicated

(v) Philippians 2 – the day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord

(c) even those who are being judged acknowledge that

iv. Sun burns with a fierce heat, and they cursed God and would not turn from their sins and rejoice in his greatness

(1) underscores human responsibility

- (2) suffering the terror of God's judgment**
- (3) did not melt their hearts**
 - (a) pharaoh pretended to repent, and then his pride kicked in and he goes after them – the resilience of evil**
 - (b) many think tragedy softens the human heart, but that is often not the case**
 - (c) proven here**
 - (d) rich man in torment asked for Lazarus to be sent to his brothers, and is told, if they don't believe the prophets, they won't believe one who comes back from the dead**

v. Darkness over the beast's kingdom

- (1) blasphemed God**

(2) bit their tongues so they would not be able to give praise to God

(3) did not repent

(4) hard-hearted resilience of evil

vi. Pours out his bowl on the great Euphrates River to provide a highway for the kings of the east to come – bring kings together for battle to Armageddon

(1) the only real beating the Romans got were from the Parthians who were from the east

(a) Rome feared another assault from the east

(b) they had no defense on the eastern boundary

(c) one of the motivations that caused Rome to inject themselves into Palestine was because it gave them a protection to the east

- (2) in Jewish apocalyptic, history always ends with a great battle, a final showdown between the dragon and God**

- (3) the identity of Armageddon**
 - (a) not a geographical location**

 - (b) combination of two Hebrew words which means “Mountain of Megeddo”**
 - (i) fortress built on Megeddo centuries before John**

 - (ii) at the mouth of the Valley of Jezreel, the only vulnerable point in Palestine**

 - (iii) put a fortress on Megeddo so Israel could not be sneak attacked**

 - (c) like us today making a reference to the Alamo, or the Titanic**

- (i) metaphor that does not have to be explained**
 - (ii) John is giving us a metaphor for battle, not a specific location**
- (4) evil spirits bring the kings for the final battle**
- (5) John gives no description of the battle**

vii. Seventh bowl

- (1) a loud voice echoes from the throne saying, "It is done. It is finished."**
- (2) the battle is so unimportant that John doesn't even describe it**
- (3) the victory is so certain, so assured that the mechanics of the battle are irrelevant, they are not even worth talking about**
- (a) a profound expression of ch 4-5**

(b) the Lamb standing

**(4) flashes of lightening and thunder,
like at Sinai**

**(5) great city split into 3 parts, great
destruction**

**(6) Babylon is made to get drunk with
the wine of God's wrath**

(a) undiluted wine was bitter

**(b) a common OT picture of God's
wrath**

**(7) people cursed God and would not
turn from their ways (third time he
has said that in these plagues)**

8. Chapter 17-18: The Great Harlot, Mystery Babylon

**a. In this section we finally hear, "It is finished!"
(end of 16) but there is another delay**

b. Fluid images

i. Woman in 17

- ii. City in 18**
- iii. They are the same**
- iv. He does not warn us, he forces us to make the change**
- v. Contrast between this and the final images**
 - (1) bride adorned for her husband, opposite a harlot**
 - (2) city coming to earth**
- c. Nothing unusual about the image of the harlot**
 - i. Israel in the OT is pictured as a bride and a harlot**
 - ii. Hosea**
 - iii. Prophets often used the term adultery**
 - iv. In ANE, the concept of the “Mother Goddess”**

- (1) goddess of all gods**
- (2) different cultures would see their local gods or goddess as the direct offspring of the mother goddess**
- (3) in the case of Rome, the mother goddess gave rise to the goddess Roma, the goddess of Rome**

d. Description

i. Decked out

ii. Attractive

iii. John marvels (vs 6) at her beauty

e. She derives her charms from the dragon – another extension of the dragon’s power

f. Vs 9-10

i. “Here is wisdom” – I’m going to let you in on a secret, I’m going to let you in on the code

ii. Seven heads, seven hills = Rome (like “Big Apple” is code word for New York City)

iii. Seven heads are also seven kings (represent two different things)

(1) five have fallen, one still rules, the other one has not yet come – when he rules he will rule only for a short time, the beast who died will be the 8th who was one of the seven

(2) no interpretation based on historical evidence fits tightly on who they are

(a) do you start with Augustus or with Julius

(b) after Nero, three men actually took the throne in a rebellion – do you count them

(3) John could be giving a specific identity to Domitian

(a) the 8th one, but he will only be here a short time

- (b) it is going to be tough, but God has already taken care of the fate of Domitian**
 - (c) so hang on**
- (4) more likely John is reflecting the Jewish view of the Antichrist**
 - (a) the typical Jewish apocalyptic view is the closer you get to the kingdom, world conditions become worse**
 - (b) Daniel says there will be a time of trouble such as people have never seen before**
 - (c) in the Synoptic Apocalypse, Jesus talks about brothers fighting brothers, nations against nations**
 - (d) things are bad, we are in these times of Messianic woes, but hang on, the kingdom is coming, and the woes will be gone**

- (e) in 2 Thess, Paul uses the term “the man of sin”**
- (f) this person will appear, sometimes he will be a historical person, sometimes he will be a demonic person who will return from the dead**
- (g) he will be the culmination, the most potent does of evil**
- (h) he will embody the evil of the age in his own life and actions**
- (i) he will set himself up against Messiah in the final battle – that is why he is called Antichrist**
- (j) he will be defeated by Christ in the final battle of history**
- (k) trying to determine who it is today, reflects that tradition**
- (l) regardless of who John is identifying in these kings, the**

real issue is Antichrist is going to appear soon, but his time is short

(i) Domitian?

(ii) someone who would follow Domitian?

(iii) doesn't matter – "It is done"

iv. John says Rome will be the end, the culmination of all the incarnations that the dragon has been since the beginning, but it doesn't come – Rome becomes the center of Christianity

(1) the key issue for John is he is lining up the participants in the final battle of history

(2) the harlot who appears harmless, but she is drunk with the blood of martyrs, but she is going down, her times is short

g. Come out of her, her time is short

- i. Come out of it in terms of not being caught up with it**
 - (1) you are dealing with something that is smarter than you are**
 - (2) you are dealing with something that is alluring**
 - (3) that John marvels is amazing – the subtlety of what the world offers to us**
- ii. Not a call to abandon the world**
- iii. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, because the world is passing away” (1 John)**
- h. This is a picture of the world that will face the return of Jesus Christ, and it is irrelevant who it is, because nothing can stop the end and the victory of the Lamb**
 - i. Seven kings – ten kings – seventeen kings – it doesn’t matter who they are, it is irrelevant**

- ii. **The harlot is going down**
- iii. **“It is done” – the same word Jesus used on the cross**
- iv. **It doesn’t matter who she is**
 - (1) **she exists in every generation**
 - (2) **who ever is the last one, if we are there, we will know about it**

9. The Fall of Mystery Babylon

- a. **A masterpiece in Greek – a funeral dirge**
- b. **No longer a harlot, it is now a city**
- c. **Whether he is identifying the actual city of Rome doesn’t matter**
 - i. **There is always a Rome**
 - ii. **There is always a Babylon**
 - iii. **A secular community totally oblivious to God**

iv. Lived in by the inhabitants of the earth

(1) their values never rise above the values of this earth

(2) they are burned by the sun and the curse God

(3) they are self-made, they can create their own world

d. Described as already fallen

i. Fallen, Fallen

ii. A home for demons, and unclean spirits, and detestable birds

iii. We just thought this was impossible until 9/11 and we learned that mighty structures can be reduced to rubble in a few minutes and there is nothing can be done except clean up

iv. The maddening wine of her adulteries

- v. Emperor worship was connected to commerce, and John likens that to adulterous affairs**
- vi. The gaudiness, the sheer materialism of the society – Rome was a trading center for luxury items**
- vii. Her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes**
- viii. Mix her a double portion from her own cup**
- ix. Give her as much torture and grief as the luxury and glory she gave herself**
- x. In her heart she boasts, I sit as queen, I am not a widow, I will never mourn**
- xi. In one day judgment will overtake her**
- xii. The prayers of the saints under the altar are answered!**
- xiii. The destruction is described from the viewpoint of her lovers**

(1) terrified of her torment, they will stand far off and cry

(2) they will abandon her

xiv. In one hour, your doom has come

xv. No one buys her cargos anymore – vs 12-13!

(1) human beings bought and sold just like wood or containers of cinnamon

(2) 60 percent of the Roman population were legally slaves

(3) Rome was a city of slave trade

(4) a society totally secularized and totally sold out to its lusts

xvi. The merchants will mourn because the Dow-Jones has dropped

(1) the merchants who gained from her will stand far off

(2) they will weep and mourn and cry out

(3) in one hour, such great wealth has been brought to nothing

xvii. The merchants and sea captains will stand far off

(1) they will exclaim when they see her burning, was there ever such a great city

(2) the answer in Greek is, “no”

(3) in one hour, she has been brought to ruin

xviii. Rejoice over her – God has judged her for the way she has treated you

xix. Then a mighty angel took up a great millstone and threw it into the sea

(1) the city will never be found again

(2) the sound of musicians will never be heard in you no more

- (a) Edgar Allen Poe said the two saddest words are “No more” because it presupposes, it used to be**
- (b) Poe also said the saddest thing to write about is the death of a beautiful woman**

(3) No more

- e. Not a single detail is given**
 - i. Babylon’s fall is so certain, but so insignificant that all John does is interview the people who saw it**
 - ii. It is irrelevant to tell it; she is doomed**
 - iii. Come out of her she is going down**

10. Chapter 19

- a. God’s ways have been vindicated, the sufferings of his people have been vindicated, the prostitute has been judged**

- b. The announcement of the wedding feast of the Lamb**
 - i. The most joyous occasion for the Jewish society**
 - ii. Didn't have much to do with the bride and groom**
 - (1) the marriage was prearranged**
 - (2) usually at birth**
 - iii. The wedding feast was about families and the preservation of the family line and the possibility that Messiah would come through this union**
 - (1) sumptuous meals**
 - (2) best wine**
 - (3) time of rejoicing**
 - iv. Became the dominate symbol in Jewish apocalyptic for the coming kingdom**

- c. The stark contrast of the judgment of the harlot – the wedding feast of the Lamb**
- d. The rider on the white horse**
 - i. Military figure, military conqueror**
 - ii. Has not come to negotiate**
 - iii. Has come to judge**
 - iv. Non-literal nature of the writing**
 - (1) eyes like flaming of fire**
 - (2) many crowns on one head**
 - (3) robe dipped in blood**
 - (4) name is not known, but his name is called the Word of God**
 - v. A composite image that goes back to the image of Jesus in chapter one and the OT**
 - vi. The warrior figure, the Messiah, Jesus**

- e. The River Euphrates was dried up in preparation for the final battle of history**
- f. Another contrast – the wedding feast vs the feast of the vultures eating the flesh of the enemies of God**
- g. Again, the battle is not described**
 - i. Preparation for the battle is mentioned**
 - ii. The results of the battle is mentioned and is certain**
 - iii. The fighting of the battle is so insignificant that John doesn't mention it**
- h. Another picture of Rev 4-5 – another vision of the Lamb standing**

11. Chapter 20

- a. The only place in scripture where there is a kind of intermediate or preliminary kingdom**
- b. John describes it as lasting for 1000 years – the millennium**

- c. Until the time of Augustine, there is no indication that the millennium was even discussed**

- d. Chapter must be understood in the context of all of Revelation, not the other way around – making those few verses the interpretative starting place for scripture**
 - i. The ultimate question is: what does this mean in the context of John and the book of Revelation?**

 - ii. Here is the end of history at the end of chapter 19**
 - (1) judgment**

 - (2) God's perfect plan fulfilled and completed**

 - iii. Now there is a temporary kingdom, then another assault with another battle, and a final judgment, and then the new heaven and new earth**

- e. There was a concept in Jewish apocalyptic literature that talk about a temporary messianic kingdom**
 - i. The whole history of the nation has been a history of up and down**
 - ii. They had a good king in David, but he has an affair, a cover up and essentially dies in disgrace**
 - iii. JAL deeply pessimistic about human nature**
 - iv. No kingdom in this world can be permanent because this world is shot through with evil and sin**
 - v. Not described as 1000 years, but the same context**
- f. A cryptic passage in Ezekiel – ch 37-39**
 - i. A favorite preaching point every time there is a national disaster**
 - ii. Chapter 37**

- (1) the vision of the valley of dry bones
- (2) The theme of restoration, of God completing his purposes
- iii. 38 – the assault of Gog and Magog on God’s restored people
- iv. 39- the judgement of Gog and Magog by God
- v. The same motif that John is using in Revelation 20-22
- g. Comes only after Satan has been thrown into the abyss
 - i. Satan is powerless over the earth
 - ii. During that time people flourish
 - iii. This is for those who have been executed for the truth
 - iv. In chapter 7, the people of God are sealed in a time out, 11 a sealing, now this is God’s special favor that he grants to those who are faithful in their witness,

especially to those who are faithful unto death

v. God has a special place for you

(1) the other dead are asleep at this time

(2) this is an exclusive kingdom

h. Why not at this point, just wake up the rest and get the show going? Why release the devil to gather his hosts for a final assault on the people of God?

i. The resilience of evil

ii. This world in itself cannot contain the rule of God

iii. It can only approximate the rule of God

iv. Evil is so deeply entrenched and has so affected every aspect, including the natural order, so that the rule and reign of God can never be established here

v. It must come from outside

- vi. The bride, the new heaven and new earth, the new Jerusalem descends to earth**
- i. Satan, the beast and the false prophet are cast forever into the lake of fire, and are powerless forever**
- j. One kingdom cannot come until another kingdom is destroyed**
- k. The cries of the souls under the altar, the answer to the petition, “Your kingdom come” are answered**

12. The Final Vision (21-22)

- a. One of the seven angels who had the seven last plagues who brought out the judgment of the harlot shows John the Lamb’s wife**
- b. The culmination of God’s redemptive purpose is a city, a bride, and a garden**
- c. The emphasis is life – this is a living place**
 - i. This is a place where the trees bear fruit twelve months a year**

- ii. **This is a place where there is abundant water**
 - iii. **All that its inhabitants need are provided for it**
- d. **The Bible begins in a garden and ends in a city**
- e. **The prominence of the city**
 - i. **We associate the city with crime, overpopulation, undesirable**
 - ii. **Corporate life – no notion that one mansion is bigger than another**
 - iii. **No consumerism**
- f. **The city of the stars (the city of the gods)**
 - i. **The Greeks did not have an eschatology; the only people who lived for ever were the gods on Mount Olympus**
 - ii. **An exceeding high mountain – the language John uses**

- iii. Occasionally a few heroes would be granted immortality; it was a rare commodity**

- iv. When they were dying they became a star and joined the milky way**
 - (1) the New Jerusalem has a wide street that runs down the middle**

 - (2) it is walled**
 - (a) walls keep people out, or people in**

 - (b) no one inside wants to get out; no one outside will get in**

 - (c) cities in the FC were made secure by walls and gates – John is showing the security of the city**

 - (3) John may be reflecting this notion because some of his readers may have come to Christianity from paganism and he is telling them what they longed for is here**

- g. The book ends with an invitation – it is evangelistic**
- h. There is no temple**
 - i. In every JA text there is a restored Jerusalem and a restored temple**
 - ii. John says there is no need for it**
 - iii. The temple is the place where people go to meet God – this is a realm where God is completely accessible, no barriers, no separations, no limitations**
 - iv. John is describing “home” in the most profound sense**
 - v. Here the vision ends**
 - vi. Where else could it end?**