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Approaching Revelation

The revelation (Ἀποκάλυψις) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy (προφητείας), and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. (Rev 1:1–3, ESV)

5



Approaching Revelation

⁹ I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. ¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet ¹¹ saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

¹² Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, ¹⁵ his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. (Rev 1:9-16, ESV)

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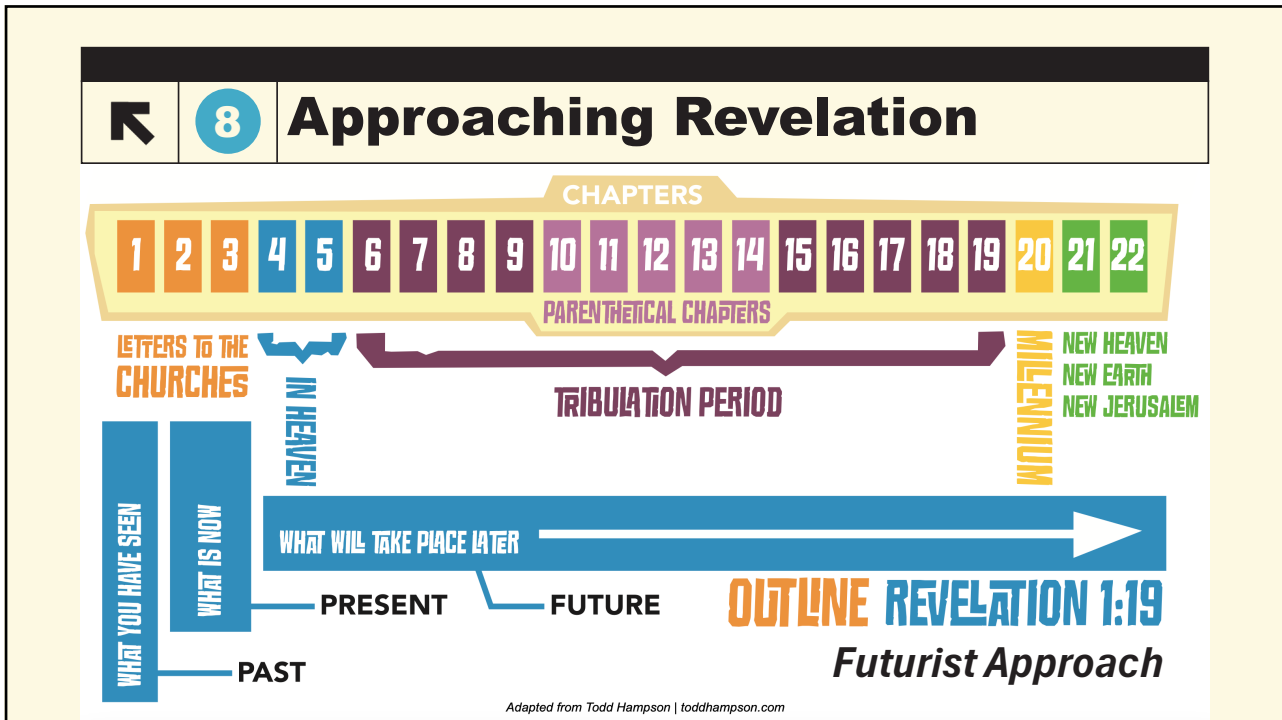


Approaching Revelation

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, ¹⁸ and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

¹⁹ **Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.** ²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. (Rev 1:17-20 ESV)

7



8

Four Approaches to Apocalyptic Texts				
	Analogy	Assumptions about Biblical Apocalypses	Analysis of Approach	Aim of Studying Biblical Apocalypses
Historicist	A history textbook for the past, present and future	Apocalyptic texts tell what is happening from God's perspective throughout a particular period of history	Writings are symbolic retellings of certain epochs of history. For example, John is using lavish language to retell the history of early Christianity, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, or some other series of events	To understand God's perspective on the events of human history
Preterist	An ancient newspaper	Apocalyptic texts tell about events that happened around the time that the texts were written or soon afterward	Apocalyptic texts are descriptions of events that happened near or soon after the time when the text was written. Typically, this is understood as the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in AD 70	To understand God's perspective on the events that happened around the time in which the text was written
Futurist	A road map for the future	Apocalyptic texts tell what will happen in the future, before and during the end times	The text is predictive about events that, even now, have not yet occurred. The emphasis is on events that will happen near the end of time	To understand the events that will occur before and during the end times
Idealist	All allegory for all times and places	Apocalyptic texts tell in picturesque language the conflict that is always happening between good and evil	Apocalypses are symbolic expression of struggles between good and evil. The scenes and symbols are picturesque expressions of the conflict between the reign of God and the powers of evil	To understand God's perspective on the conflict between the reign of God and the powers of evil

Adapted from Rose Guide to End-Time Prophecy

9

Approaching Revelation

REVELATION

Outline

THE SEVEN LETTERS	REV 1-3
THE SEVEN-SEALED SCROLL	REV 4-7
THE SEVEN TRUMPETS	REV 8-10
THE 1260 DAYS	REV 11-13
THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES	REV 14-16
THE GREAT BABYLON	REV 17-19
THE MILLENNIUM	REV 20
THE NEW CREATION	REV 21-22

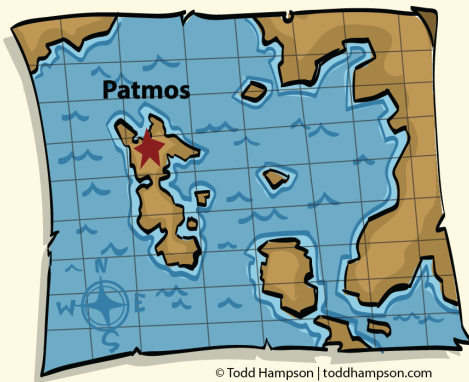
ADAPTED FROM
"REVELATION: FOUR VIEWS A
PARALLEL COMMENTARY"

10

The Seven Churches

11

↶ ● **The Seven Churches**



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12

	Praise	Rebuke	Command	Punishment	Reward	Meaning
Ephesus	Good works, patience, exposed false apostles, hated the practice of the Nicolaitans	Forsook their first love	Remember the height from which you have fallen. return to your first love	Removal of the candlestick	Overcomers will eat from the Tree of Life in the midst of the paradise of God	Desired one
Smyrna	Afflicted and poor, yet they were rich	No rebuke	Do not be afraid; be faithful to the point of death.		The faithful will be given the crown of life; overcomers will not be hurt by the second death.	Myrrh
Pergamum	Remained true to the name of Christ; did not renounce their faith	Some held to the teaching of Balaam; yet others to the teaching of the Nicolaitans	Repent	Christ will come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth.	Overcomers will eat of the hidden manna and will be given a white stone with a new name written on it.	Thoroughly married
Thyatira	Good deeds, love and faith, service, and perseverance; doing more than they did at first	Toleration of Jezebel	Repent	Jezebel will suffer intensely, along with those who commit adultery with her. Her children will be struck dead. God will repay each one according to his deeds.	Overcomers will be given authority over the nations and will rule with an iron scepter. They will also be given the morning star.	Continuous sacrifice

13

	Praise	Rebuke	Command	Punishment	Reward	Meaning
Sardis	A few people had not soiled their clothes	Had reputation of being alive, but they were dead	Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die; obey what you have received and heard. Repent.	Christ will come like a thief in the night to those who do not wake up.	Overcomers will be dressed in white, and their names will not be blotted out from the Book of Life. They will be recognized before angels.	Those escaping
Philadelphia	Kept the Word of God and did not deny his name	No rebuke	Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.		Overcomers will be made pillars in the temple of God. A new name will be given to them.	Brotherly love
Laodicea	No praise	Lukewarm; false sense of security; wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked	Buy gold that is tried in the fire, white clothes to cover your shameful nakedness, and eye salve to heal your blindness. Invite Christ in.	Christ will spew them out of his mouth.	Overcomers will sit with Christ on his throne	The people ruling

House, H. Wayne; Price, J. Randall. Charts of Bible Prophecy (ZondervanCharts) (p. 152). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

14

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The Seven Churches

- **Historicist Approach**
 - John is given a vision of Christ who announces that he is to write of things that would soon be to take place, and which would extend through the entire age of the church
 - Seven churches in Asia received these letters, but they represent seven periods of church history, each exhibiting the special features of the respective original church
- **Preterist Approach**
 - Christ appears to John on Patmos, commissioning him to write things that would soon afterward find fulfillment in the fall of Jerusalem
 - The letters reflect the conditions prevailing in seven churches in the Roman province of Asia prior to the Jewish war of A.D. 66-70.

15



The Seven Churches

- **Futurist Approach**

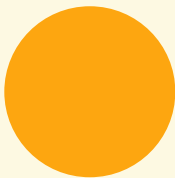
- While a prisoner in the isle of Patmos, John sees a vision of Christ, commanding him to write of events that would be fulfilled at the end of the present age, just prior to the Second Coming
- Some futurists take the letters in the same matter as do the historicists, representing periods of church history, while others taken them more as do the preterists or the idealist approach providing characteristics of actual churches

- **Idealist Approach**

- The symbolic vision of Christ depicts His glorious character and sovereignty, conveying Christ's sovereign involvement in the affairs of the world and the church, including the intimate concern for His suffering servant.
- The churches resemble churches that might exist at any time throughout the church age, and the letters are applicable to any churches that share their conditions.

Adapted from "Revelation: Four Views A Parallel Commentary"

16



The Seven Sealed Scroll: Rev 4-7

17



Revelation 4:1-11

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

18



Revelation 4:1-11

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all thin
and by your will they existed and were created."

19



Revelation 5:1-5

Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ³ And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, ⁴ and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. ⁵ And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

20



The Seven-Sealed Scroll



21



The Seven-Sealed Scroll

- **Historicist Approach**

- The unsealing of the scroll represent the beginning of the fall of the Roman Empire
- The seal sequence beings with the reign of Domitian (d. A.D. 96) and follows the decline of the empire through the invasions of the Goths and Vandals in the fourth and fifth centuries

- **Preterist Approach**

- The unsealing of the scroll represents the judgment of God upon Jerusalem (A.D. 66-70); 144000 Judean Christians escape to Pella
- The four horsemen represent the Roman invasion of Israel to quell the Jewish rebellion (A.D. 66) being bloodshed, civil war, famine, death and ultimately the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70)

22



The Seven-Sealed Scroll

- **Futurist Approach**

- The scroll and its unsealing represent the Rapture of the church and the beginning of the Great Tribulation (Rev 4:1); 144000 Jews (Rev 7) in the end times are sealed (saved)
- In the end times, the Antichrist rides for the conquering on the the white horse war, famine, and cosmic disturbances follow

- **Idealist Approach**

- The scroll and it unsealing represent God's dealing with mankind seen in cycles of war, martyrdom, and judgment recurring repeatedly throughout history.
- The vision underscore God's sovereignty in the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms and His protection of the saints in the midst of political upheavals, without trying these experience s to specific historical events.

Adapted from "Revelation: Four Views A Parallel Commentary"

23



24

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The Seven Trumpets

The Seven Seals of Revelation						
First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal	Seventh Seal
White Horse: Deception	Red Horse: War	Black Horse: Famine	Pale Horse: Pestilence	Martyrdom and Great Tribulation	Heavenly Signs	Seven Trumpet Plagues
Revelation 6:1-2	Revelation 6:3-4	Revelation 6:5-6	Revelation 6:7-8	Revelation 6:9-11	Revelation 6:12-17	Revelation 8:2

Silence in Heaven Rev. 8:1-6

Seven Trumpets: The Day of the Lord						
First Trumpet	Second Trumpet	Third Trumpet	Fourth Trumpet	Fifth Trumpet	Sixth Trumpet	Seventh Trumpet
Green grass and one-third of the trees are burned up.	One-third of sea becomes blood; one-third of ships and sea life are destroyed by fire.	One-third of waters turn bitter.	One-third of sun, moon and stars do not shine.	"Locusts" wield the Beast's military power.	200 million-man army gathers.	The Kingdom is proclaimed. Second Coming
Revelation 8:7	Revelation 8:8-9	Revelation 8:10-11	Revelation 8:12	Revelation 9:1-12	Revelation 9:13-21	Revelation 11:15-19

Seven Last Plagues						
First Plague	Second Plague	Third Plague	Fourth Plague	Fifth Plague	Sixth Plague	Seventh Plague
Sores afflict those who accepted the mark of the Beast.	Sea turns to blood; all sea creatures die.	Rivers turn to blood.	Mankind, scorched by the sun, blasphemes God.	The Beast's seat of government is afflicted.	The Euphrates is dried up; world armies gather to Armageddon.	The earth is utterly shaken.
Revelation 16:2	Revelation 16:3	Revelation 16:4-7	Revelation 16:8-9	Revelation 16:10-11	Revelation 16:12-16	Revelation 16:17-21

25



The Seven Trumpets

- **Historicist Approach**
 - The trumpets speak of a series of invasions against the Roman Empire (Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks).
 - The sixth trumpet brings the fall of Constantinople to the Turks (1453).
 - The little book represents the Bible being made available to the masses of Europe after the invention of the printing press.
- **Preterist Approach**
 - The first four trumpets correspond to disasters inflicted by the Romans on the Jews in the Jewish War (A.D. 66–70).
 - The fifth trumpet probably depicts the demonic spirits rendering the besieged Jews irrational and self-destructive.
 - The sixth trumpet refers to the Roman armies, who destroyed Jerusalem and slaughtered or deported all the Jews

26

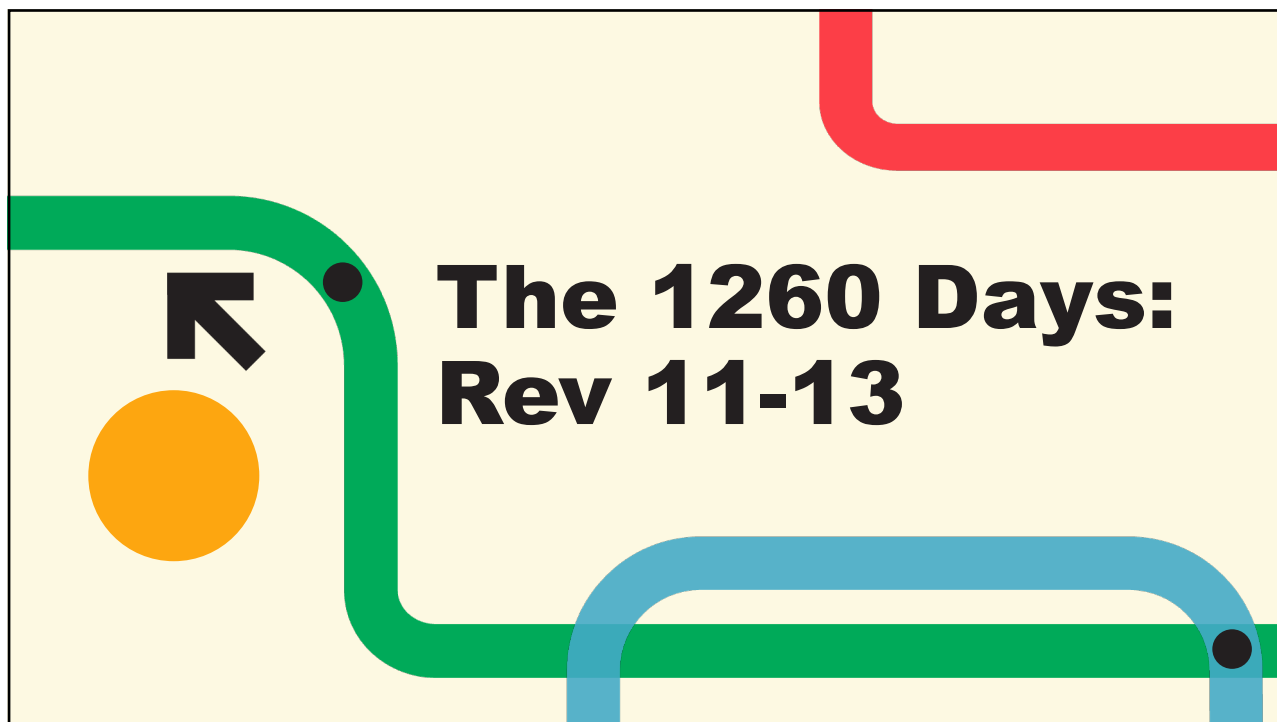


The Seven Trumpets

- **Futurist Approach**
 - Either literally or symbolically, the trumpets represent calamities that will be endured by the unrepentant inhabitants of earth during the coming seven-year Tribulation.
 - These may be supernatural judgments direct from the hand of God or merely the disastrous effects of man's improper stewardship of the earth and his abuse of technology
- **Idealist Approach**
 - Catastrophes reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt befall sinful humanity many times in history, demonstrating God's displeasure and, like trumpet blasts, warning of worse things to come upon the unrepentant.
 - Sinful humanity typically absorbs these injuries with defiance, refusing to repent.

Adapted from "Revelation: Four Views A Parallel Commentary"

27



28

↖	●	The 1260 Days
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Revelation 11:1-3
Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ²but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months. ³And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Revelation 12:1-6
And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. ²She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. ³And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. ⁴His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. ⁵She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, ⁶and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

29



The 1260 Days

• Historicist Approach

- The measuring of the temple represents the determining of the true remnant church in the midst of the papal church at the time of the Reformation.
- The 1260 days is actually 1260 years, the duration of the power of papal Rome.
- The two witnesses represent the Waldenses, Albigenses, and others who resisted the papacy.
- The woman is the visible church persecuted by Imperial Rome prior to A.D. 313, and her male child is the true church, vindicated by the Constantine.
- The beasts each represent different aspects of the papacy.

• Preterist Approach

- The 1260 days is the period of the Jewish War, of Nero's persecution, or both.
- The two witnesses are either historic prophetic witnesses against the Jews prior to the downfall of Jerusalem or a representation of the civil and religious authority in Israel.
- The woman (Israel), gives birth to a child (the church), which flees Jerusalem.
- The first beast is Rome persecuting the church, the second beast is either the cult of the emperor, some zealous Roman procurator, or false prophets in Israel

30



The 1260 Days

• Futurist Approach

- The 1260 days refer either to a period of a literal three and one-half years at the end of the Tribulation or to two different periods of that length totalling seven years.
- The two witnesses are two individual prophets yet to appear in Jerusalem—possibly Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah. Alternatively, they may represent a larger witnessing body.
- The woman (faithful Israel) will be forced by persecution from the Antichrist to flee into the wilderness during the Tribulation.
- The first beast is a political world-leader, and the second beast is his religious counterpart, who enforces universal worship of the first beast.

• Idealist Approach

- The 1260 days symbolise the entire church age.
- The two witnesses are the church throughout the church age.
- The woman sustained in the wilderness represents the same.
- The first beast signifies political power that persecutes the church at any time in history
- The second beast is false religion and especially that which venerates political power.

Adapted from "Revelation: Four Views A Parallel Commentary"

31



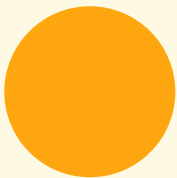
SATAN AND THE ANTICHRIST

- **Candidates for the Antichrist**

- **Emperor Nero** – He persecuted the church and his name in Hebrew can add up to 666
- **Pope Leo X** – Martin Luther wrote to the Pope - “Against the Execrable Bull of the Antichrist”
- **Napoleon Bonaparte** – In Leo Tolstoy’s novel War and Peace, his name is turned into a series of numbers that add up to 666.
- **Adolf Hitler** – If you assign the value to 100 to the letter A, then 101 to B, etc, then ‘Hitler’ adds up to 666.
- **John F Kennedy** – He received 666 votes at the 1956 Democratic convention, and he later died of a head wound.
- **Henry Kissinger** – A Middle East peacemaker of Jewish ancestry, his name in Hebrew adds up to 111, 666 divided by six)
- **Pope John Paul II** – He recovered from a serious gunshot wound after an assassination attempt
- **Barack Obama** – The day after the 2008 election, the Illinois Pick 3 lottery numbers were 666.

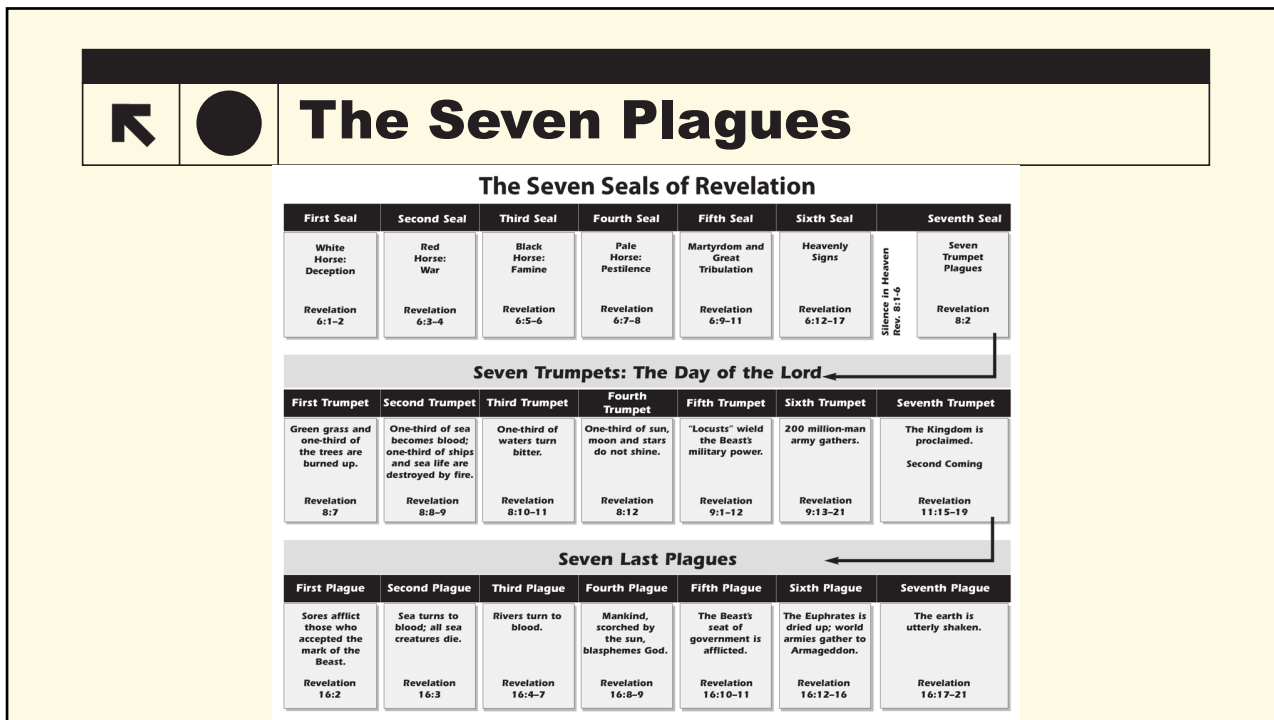
Adapted from “Rose Guide to End-Times Prophecy”

34



The Seven Plagues: Rev 14-16

35



36

The Seven Plagues

- **Historicist Approach**
 - In general, the seven bowls of wrath find fulfillment in the judgment upon the papacy (Babylon), beginning with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars and concluding yet in the future.
- **Preterist Approach**
 - The judgments of these bowls are largely against Jerusalem, culminating in its fall in A.D. 70, though the fifth bowl touches the Roman Empire as well—probably referring to the chaotic state of affairs that prevailed after Nero’s suicide.
 - Alternatively, this section says nothing about the fall of Jerusalem and refers strictly to the judgment of God upon pagan Rome.

37



The Seven Plagues

- **Futurist Approach**

- The bowls represent future, global judgments that, in their devastating effect, are unparalleled in history.
- These occur at the very end of the Tribulation period, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon.
- This war is the last battle to be fought by mankind, and it will be ended by the personal appearing of Christ as He comes to establish His millennial kingdom.

- **Idealist Approach**

- There is a relationship between the bowl judgments and the trumpet judgments.
- The principal distinction between the trumpets and the bowls is that the former are partial in their effects and serve to warn the wicked of their spiritual danger, whereas the latter are complete and represent final judgment upon the unrepentant
- The same event in history may serve as a trumpet judgment for one person (a mere warning) and as a bowl judgment for another (a final judgment, resulting in death).
- The disasters described recur in history repeatedly.

Adapted from "Revelation: Four Views A Parallel Commentary"

38

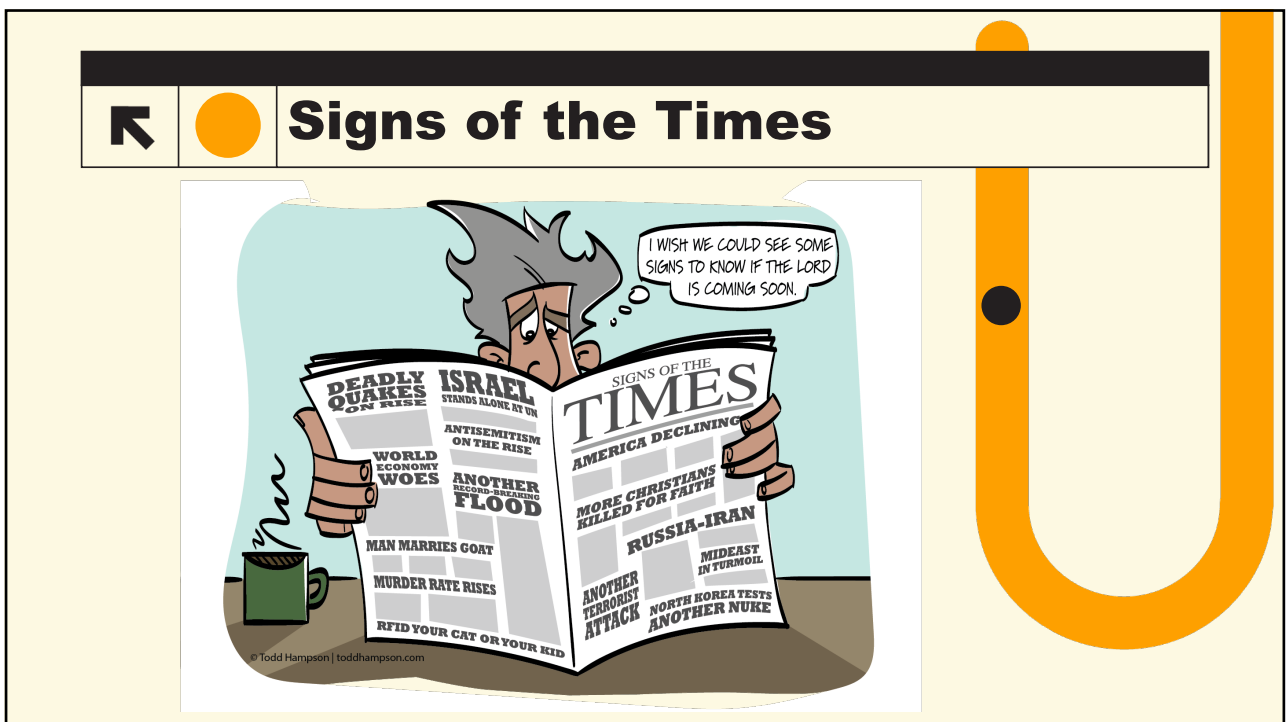


Questions & Discussion

39



40



41



Signs of the Times

- **God is in Charge**

- Revelation 4–5 introduce the pictures of God’s judgments on the world, they summon us to a heavenly perspective that reminds us who is in charge.

“The pastoral purpose [of Rev. 4–5] is to assure suffering Christians that God and Jesus are sovereign and that the events that the Christians are facing are part of a sovereign plan that will culminate in their redemption and the vindication of their faith through the punishment of their persecutors.”

- **God will Judge**

- Revelation 4-19 tells us that God is Judge, not our oppressors, but God remains sovereign. Suffering Christians like those in Smyrna and Philadelphia need not feel as if God will ignore their sufferings until the final day

42



Signs of the Times

- **God is Sovereign over History**

- God is sovereign over history; terrible things may happen that seem beyond explanation, but on the larger scale God is using such forces to bring history to its climax.

Wars remind us that our “modern civilization,” which so often regards with disgust the “barbarism” of ancient civilizations (and ancient writings like the Bible), remains captive to the same sinful human nature as past eras. Indeed, one could describe the twentieth century, at its beginning predicted as an apex of civilization, as one

“open-mouthed grave: an entire generation of European youth composting the World War I battlefields of Verdun and the Somme, Hitler’s six million Jews, Stalin’s twenty million Soviet citizens, Mao’s tens of millions of political enemies and peasant famine victims, Pol Pot’s two million Cambodians, the Interhamwe’s million Tutsi Rwandans, and the millions of lives wasted away during apartheid’s forty-year reign.”

(Adapted from Craig S. Keener, Revelation, NIVACT)

43

