

# The End Times: Eschatology

An Informational Report Prepared for the ACCA Elder Body

by an Elders Teaching Resource subcommittee\*

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**Eschatology: “(From Gr. *eschatos*, last and *logos*, study). A theological term employed to designate the doctrine of last things, particularly those dealing with the second coming of Christ and the events preceding and following this great event.” *Unger’s Bible Dictionary, 1966, 321.***

**This paper is designed to give readers an overview of the basic ideas common to studying Biblical eschatology.** It is telescopic, meaning that a reader who only reads the first four pages will get a good sense of the direction and main points of the paper.

**There are links to further information in these first four pages,** should the reader be interested in particular topics. Clicking on blue, underlined words will access those links. There are links to outside documents for even deeper study.

**The table of contents will also guide the reader through the rest of this document,** should he or she choose to study further.

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***The committee has worked hard to be fair to all sides and accurate in all of our claims. We apologize in advance if we have not succeeded. Each member has approved of this document, though we do not all agree with every perspective presented in it.***

**The committee’s desire, as we reflected on our charge, has been to present to the elders a resource useful for any depth of research,** from gaining a familiarity with the basic ideas of eschatology to achieving a deeper understanding of the more difficult questions and controversies. We have sought to be as neutral as possible by giving various perspectives fair treatment and avoiding steering the Elders in any particular direction. However, there are several suggestions that we would like to humbly submit for your consideration.

**The study of eschatology can be divisive; we recommend encouraging the study of eschatology with humility and grace.** The [history](#) of the study of eschatology teaches us that the Church has never been unified in its interpretation of Revelation or other eschatological Scriptures. From the [Early Church](#) onward, Godly, Bible-believing, faithful Christians have come to substantively different conclusions regarding the details of interpretation, though they have always united around core doctrines. This should humble us.

**One way of studying eschatology that we believe can actually unify our church is to discern in eschatological passages larger themes that are timeless gifts to the Church.** Rather than being confused and dismayed at the variety of possible interpretations of Revelation (which sometimes leads to “de-canonizing” the book by avoiding it), or being frightened or repulsed by its graphic imagery, grasping its overarching themes allows us to rejoice in its power and beauty. Revelation promotes the worship of Jesus Christ; confidence in Jesus’s ability to guide His Church through the greatest of difficulties to a wonderful eternal reward; personal and corporate repentance for idolatry, immorality, and other sins; humble living according to the Way of Peace exemplified by Jesus, the Lamb that was slain; and the thrilling privilege of spreading the Gospel.

**We feel that a thematic approach may resonate with elders who have expressed concern at growing fear among some of our brethren, who are growing disheartened,** even panicked, by current events. Sometimes this panic can breed division and hostility at a time when the body of Christ needs to shine brightly in our dark world. We have prepared a [Recommendation for Teaching the Book of Revelation](#) that we hope can serve as an example for this kind of discerning, thematic approach. The committee has found this approach to be beautifully edifying by reducing fear, fostering a desire for godliness, and inspiring us with greater desire to worship and receive Jesus our King.

We also recommend Bro. Steve Stieglitz’s (Leo) series on Revelation (the first session can be found on AC Central Sermons, Leo, scroll down to January 27, 2019), and [this teaching outline](#) created by Bro. Jonathan Zahner (Rockville) on Revelation 19. Both studies represent this type of approach.

**To teach eschatology thematically is not to denigrate or dismiss the more popular approach to eschatology, which is to decipher these Scriptures for what they foretell for the end of the age.** Indeed, Jesus warned his audience to observe signs of the times. We have included resources to help elders engage this type of study. We have included a [working outline](#) from Bro. Dave Obergfell and the Peoria ministers as a fine example of a study that explores possibilities of future fulfillment of prophecies. Bro. Brandon Emch's (Kansas City) [The Day of the Lord and the Coming Kingdom](#) is an excellent, book-length example of this method. By recommending these sources we do not mean to imply that we agree with their interpretations of the end times; recognizing the diversity of opinions, we seek to be neutral on these matters.

**To assist elders in their study, we have prepared several documents** that we pray can help in both the discernment/thematic approach and the decipher approach (which we find to be the two dominant overall approaches to studying eschatology). You may access these by clicking on the titles or by using the Table of Contents on the next page. Either way, **we strongly recommend reading these documents in the following order.**

1. **[“Key Scriptures Relating to Eschatology.”](#)** Any study of the Bible should probably begin with the Bible itself. As you will discover in these resources, we believe it is important to read eschatological passages within the context of the overarching themes of the entire Bible, and to recognize that those passages often contain quotations or allusions to other Scripture that may not strike us immediately as eschatological. Nonetheless, these Key Scriptures seem to be common in typical studies of eschatology, and a familiarity with them will probably help you when you pick up a book on end times.
2. **[“Key Terms to Understand.”](#)** We have laid out the Key Terms that students of eschatology often encounter during study. Familiarity with these terms can help prepare you to make sense of the differing views and interpretations of end times Scriptures. If you are already a veteran of such study, we still encourage you to review this paper to see how we use these terms in these resources.
3. **[“Key Questions Concerning Eschatology.”](#)** Considering first what you want to learn from a study of eschatology can be vitally important to studying well. For example, “how is the concept of antichrist used in the New Testament” is probably more important to ask, at least initially, than “is Politician XYZ the antichrist?” Asking Key Questions can set a student in a profitable direction.

4. **[“Key Interpretive Principles and Methods for Reading Biblical Eschatology.”](#)** In similar fashion, thinking through what it means to study any part of the Bible can be formative in how we conduct that study. We know, for instance, that the parable of the lost coin is a fictional account told not for the purpose of describing what happened to a historical figure but for teaching about the high value of salvation in Jesus. We have prepared a short “Key Interpretive Principles and Methods for Reading Biblical Eschatology” paper that we hope can help you successfully navigate end times study.
5. **[“Key Boundaries.”](#)** Not all study of eschatology ends well. The Key Boundaries paper identifies some common pitfalls.
6. **[“Key Resources Eschatology Bibliography.”](#)** We have also prepared a Key Resources Eschatology Bibliography of books and other sources for deeper research. Each listing is accompanied by a short description, with keywords to help you find what you need. Each listing is linked to an online vendor for purchasing.

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## *Key Scriptures Relating to Eschatology*

The following passages are often seen as having special eschatological significance and are frequently encountered when reading books on eschatology.

- Genesis 1 and 2. Often these chapters are read in comparison to Revelation 21 and 22
- Genesis 3:15
- Genesis 12
- Psalms 2, 82, 89, 110
- Isaiah 11, 25, 26, 60, 65, 66
- Jeremiah 31
- Ezekiel 9, 36, 37, 40-48
- Daniel 7, 9, 12
- Amos
- Zechariah, especially 12 and 14
- Luke 12
- Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21)
- John 14
- 1 Corinthians 15
- 1 Thessalonians 4
- 2 Thessalonians 2
- Revelation

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## Key Terms to Understand

The following terms are essential for understanding what the Church (broadly conceived) understands are the basic elements of eschatology.

### Terms for understanding methods of interpreting eschatological passages:

- **Allegory** (vs literalism): An interpretive method wherein symbolic meanings are discerned in the text. Some allegory is explicit in the text (“the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed”), and some is implied (finding shelter under God’s “wings”). Controversy erupts when a reader perceives symbolism within scriptures that have a clear literal meaning. For instance, nobody disputes the fact that the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 were real churches in the first century. Some, however, argue that each of those churches also symbolizes an era in church history
- **Literalism** (vs allegory): An interpretive method wherein deference is given to the straight-forward, plain, or obvious meaning of a text. This is considered the default method of understanding a text. This in no way overlooks the multiple non-literal forms of expression widely employed. Rather, this method notes that since literal statements are the baseline of all communication, non-literal expressions will contain clues from within that the reader can discern in order to successfully follow the author into a non-literal conceptualization. For instance, when Jesus said that “the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard see,” the text itself tells us not to equate the Kingdom of Heaven with a mustard see, but to look for

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**Originalism.** *Argument and confusion abound regarding whether or not literalists fail to comprehend non-literal passages consistently and accurately. Those who see more allegory in a text occasionally argue that “literalists” miss the deeper, spiritual lesson in a text because they are so concerned with finding literal fulfillments of prophecy. Meanwhile, “literalists” sometimes imply that literalism, defined as strict adherence to the literal, explicit meaning of a text, is the only legitimate method of interpretation; when someone perceives symbolism, accusations are sometimes made that the reader is not faithful to a “literal” reading of the text. In truth, most readers seek to understand the text the way the author intended. We propose the term “originalism,” borrowed from Constitutional law, to refer to the method that seeks the original meaning of the text as intended by the author. This recognizes that authors intend to speak literally, metaphorically, hyperbolically, symbolically, or with any other literary device available within his or her language. Our goal should be to read a text symbolically when it appears the author intended an allegorical meaning, and “literal” when it appears the author intended for us to read the text literally.*

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similarities between the two that tell us something about the Kingdom of Heaven.

For a deeper discussion of allegory versus literalism, or originalism, we offer [this essay](#).

- **Allusion:** a non-quotation reference to another Scripture. The Book of Revelation contains many allusions, whereby John makes references to images, themes, and concepts in the Old Testament without explicitly quoting or even identifying those Old Testament passages.
- **Apocalyptic Genre:** a genre (or style) of Biblical writing that reveals God's actions and coming judgment in symbolic language. Apocalyptic differs from prophecy in that apocalyptic is characterized by an increased use of symbolism and an increased use of heavenly mediators explaining the vision. This genre was common from approximately 200 BC to AD 200 and included Jewish writings as well as Christian. It reflects its social context of great unrest and oppression and seeks to give faithful believers hope and inspire perseverance and faith in God's power to defeat evil and restore truth and goodness. It does this by pulling back the veil on spiritual realities that exist now and in the future. Examples of apocalyptic: the Book of Revelation and the second half of Daniel.
- **Grammatical-historical method:** the dominant method for studying the Bible today. It involves the study of the language structure of the Bible (its "grammatical" composition) and the historical context of the Bible in order to understand the original meaning of Scriptures intended by its authors. We have composed a [few comments about this method](#) and linked it to a scholarly article.
- **Progressive Revelation:** the belief that God has revealed his plan of redemption incrementally across time as recorded in the Bible. Put simply, early Biblical authors did not see the end from the beginning. For example, sacrifices were instituted early in Genesis and were done away with thousands of years later by Jesus, who the Old Testament writers did not live to see. Jesus fulfilled the purposes of the sacrifices in a way that the Old Testament writers could not have comprehended, at least not as much as those who lived after Jesus. Therefore, progressive revelation suggests that we should interpret the Old Testament in light of the New. That does not deny that Old Testament teachings and practices had meanings and value significant for its own times (so sacrifices still had meaning and value even though they foreshadowed Jesus's future sacrifice in ways Israelites likely did not understand).



- **Prophetic Idiom:** Prophetic idiom refers to the language that a prophet uses that arises out of the historical framework or context in which the prophet wrote his prophecy. For example, when John described a horse with a rider who had a sword in his mouth with which to “smite the nations” (Revelation 19:11, 15), a person who uses the notion of prophetic idiom to interpret Revelation would say that at the end there will not be a man with a sword in his mouth riding on a horse; rather, John used terms familiar to him to describe symbolically the final “battle” (itself another prophetic idiom) between God and evil.

Approaches to, or overarching methods of, understanding eschatological passages (note that approaches are not *necessarily* mutually exclusive):

- **Futurist:** A futurist approach sees events in eschatological passages, including most events in Revelation, as foretelling what will happen at the end of time. Compared to others, futurist readers see less symbolism in these events. For example, they understand the “thousand years” period in Revelation 20:2 as a literal millennium, whereas others might see it as perhaps the present age of the church while it waits for the final, bodily return of Jesus Christ. A limited form of futurism has been used alongside idealism (see below) since the Early Church, but today’s dominant form of futurism, whereby most eschatological events are awaiting the end, and which expects a rapture of the Church, are only two centuries old.
- **Historicist:** A historicist approach looks for how eschatological passages were fulfilled across church history, divided into eras. For instance, a historicist view of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 would see each church as symbolic of a specific era. Though elements of historicism trace all the way back to the early Middle Ages, it was not until the Protestant Reformers of the 1500s that this approach prevailed (with the most unsavory passages in Revelation symbolizing the development and triumph of the Catholic Church). Samuel Froehlich held historicist views, as did Matthew Henry, John Wesley, and Albert Barnes. The historicist approach diminished by the end of the 1800s.
- **Idealist/Spiritual:** An idealist approach sees eschatological passages as revealing the true, spiritual nature of the ongoing struggle between Jesus (and His Church) and the powers of evil. A strictly idealist approach does not seek to programmatically match specific events in history (or the future) to passages in Scripture and is held most commonly by liberal Protestants who read most of the Bible symbolically anyway. A more limited idealist approach has been used since the Early Church and continues today among many theological conservatives.

- **Preterist:** A strictly preterist view sees all eschatological Scripture as having been fulfilled in the past, usually by the end of the first century. Matthew 24 and Revelation were thus fulfilled by the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Most Bible interpreters today who use this approach are “partial preterists,” seeing many or most events as already fulfilled but recognizing a few others as awaiting the future. This view only became popular in the Reformation era when some Catholic scholars, seeking to refute historicist Protestants who saw the Pope as the anti-Christ, began to construct a preterist view of Revelation and other passages. It is becoming somewhat more popular today.
- **Eclectic:** An eclectic approach seeks to combine the best interpretive methods and approaches. For instance, it recognizes prophecies fulfilled before AD 70 (preterist), fulfilled across the history of the church (historicist), or likely fulfilled in the future (futurist), and when a prophecy simply (or additionally) teaches spiritual lessons to be applied universally (idealist/spiritualist). An eclectic approach may also hold that a prophecy might be fulfilled multiple times, before AD 70 (preterist), during a particular era of church history (historicist), and once more at a final fulfillment in the future, even while being fulfilled spiritually by all Christians across time (idealist/spiritualist).

### Interpretations:

- **Covenants:**
  - **Grace:** Typically, amillennialists (see below) perceive that God has always committed Himself to His people via the covenant of grace. Grace has always been the basis of the covenant relationship between God and His people, from the beginning of the Old Testament through the New Testament and into eternity.

*In contrast, many (especially dispensationalists (see below)) identify several covenants in the Old Testament. These covenants operate on different terms and are still in effect today. They include . . .*

- **Abrahamic:** God told Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” Certainly the primary fulfillment of this covenant is Jesus. But many believe it is also about the nation of Israel. God told Abraham that He would “bless them that bless thee,

and curse him that curseth thee. . . .” This promise is repeated in the Old Testament, and many believe it is still in operation today such that the nation of Israel (or ethnic Israel, the genealogical descendants of Abraham) enjoys special status in God’s eschatological plans. Israel’s failure to follow God will cause them to lose blessings, but since the covenant is (believed to be) unconditional, it will never be annulled. Therefore, any interpretation of end times must include the nation of Israel.

- **Davidic:** In 2 Samuel 7 God highlights one specific Israelite family, the house of David. God tells David that his throne will be established forever and repeats the promise in Psalm 89. Therefore, any interpretation of end times must include David or a descendant of David sitting on a throne. Typically, premillennialists assign this to the Millennial Reign.
- **Palestinian:** Also called the Land Covenant, this is a companion to the Abrahamic Covenant described in Genesis 12 and 13. Some believe that this covenant identifies the geographical boundaries of Israel not only during the Old Testament but during the end times as well.
- **New:** In Jeremiah 31 God gave the beautiful promise that He will eventually put his law within the hearts of the people, who will enjoy a new and more intimate relationship with God. It is believed that this covenant was and is still being fulfilled through Christ.

*When will these covenants be fulfilled? Both amillennialists and premillennialists believe that these covenants did not expire with the New Testament. Many amillennialists, following a more symbolic reading of Revelation, believe they are fulfilled now in Jesus and/or will be fulfilled finally in eternity, while premillennialists believe they will be fulfilled primarily in the thousand-year literal millennium.*

- **Israel and the Church**

- **Israel:** The ethnic group God selected as His chosen people. This could refer to an entire ethnic group (Romans 11:2) or to those in this group who have remained faithful to God (Romans 9:6).
- **Church:** The body of Christ, made up of those who believe in the Triune God of the Gospel, of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Israel and the Church: Generally, the relationship between Israel and the Church can be understood in one of three ways:

- Adoption: the Church has been adopted, or grafted, into Israel, and the promises given to Israel are now given to the Church, though this does not deny those promises to the ethnic descendants of Abraham.
  - Replacement: The Church has replaced Israel, which has been rejected by God.
  - Separation: Israel and the Church are two separate groups, although an individual may belong to both. Promises to Israel (see “covenants” above) still apply to ethnic Israel, separate from the Church.
- **Christ’s return:** understanding that there are several Greek words translated in KJV as “coming” or “appearing,” with reference to Jesus’s return, may be important to interpreting end times passages.
    - **Parousia:** the Greek word commonly used in the Bible to describe Christ’s appearance in the end is *parousia*. Literally, it can mean “presence,” as opposed to “absence,” but in the sense of a sudden presence. It can also be commonly used to refer to the coming of a royal person and even have connotations of enthronement.
    - **Apokalupsis:** this Greek word means unveiling, or the uncovering of something, like the pulling back of a curtain to reveal a truth.
    - **Epiphaneia:** a Greek word for “manifestation,” or, in the KJV, “appearance.” Associated in Greek literature with the appearance of a God.
  - **When will Christ return?**
    - Some believe that Christ will return one time, at the completion of the present age, when He will judge everyone who has ever lived.
    - Others believe that Christ will return more than once.
      - Some preterists believe that when Christ said in His Olivet Discourse, “This generation shall not pass, till all

these be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34), he was referring to His "heavenly coming to the Father (Daniel 7) and receiving the Kingdom. “Full” or “hyper” preterists deny a final, bodily return of Jesus at the end of the age, though generally this is seen as outside the bounds of orthodox Christian faith. “Partial” preterists still hold to a return at the end of the age.

- **Dispensational Pre-Millennialism:** First, Christ will return secretly at the rapture, and then again at the end of the tribulation period when some judgments will occur (dispensationalists disagree on the exact nature and extent of the judgments). Finally, the literal Millennial Reign will culminate in the Great White Throne Judgment, which will bring about the end of the age and the beginning of the next.

○ **Rapture:**

- The term is popularly used to refer to the return of Jesus Christ before or during the tribulation period. In this case it is distinguished from His second coming. Occasionally postmillennialists, amillennialists, and posttribulationist premillennialists refer to His second coming as the rapture. In their view, the church is caught up to heaven to meet the Lord and then either returns to earth to begin the millennial reign or enters eternity.
- **Dispensational Pre-Millennial:** this view believes that a rapture of the Church will occur separate from His other return(s). The main rapture verse is 1 Thessalonians 4:17. John 14:3 and Revelation 4:1 are also usually included, though not always. The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word *rapturo*, which translates the Greek word *harpazo*. It also appears in Acts 8:39, when Philip was “caught away” after baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, which gives us a sense of what the word can portray. The main interpretations of when the rapture will occur are below.
  - **Pre-tribulation:** The Church will be taken out of the earth to be with the Lord before the tribulation (see below) period begins. All believers will appear before the judgment seat (bema) of Christ at this time.

- **Mid-tribulation:** The Church will be taken out of the earth at the 3 ½-year point of the tribulation period. A variation of this is the pre-wrath rapture interpretation, which believes that the Church will be removed from the earth during the tribulation and just prior to the wrath of the antichrist.
  - **Post-tribulation:** the Church will be taken at the end of the tribulation period.
  - **A chart helpful to understanding** pre-tribulation, post-tribulation, and mid-tribulation views on key Scriptures dealing with the return of Jesus can be found in the back of Alan Hultberg (editor), [Three Views on the Rapture](#), an excellent book that goes into great depth on each view and that includes rebuttals by critics of each view. The chart can be viewed [here](#).
- **The Day of the Lord:** This is the day (literally a 24-hour day, or figuratively “the time”) when the Lord intervenes to pour out justice on the world. The Bible often portrays this as a horrible time of judgment on evil and sinners.
- **Seventy Weeks of Daniel:** Daniel 9 (especially 20-27) describes a seventy-week period, which has been a matter of considerable dispute. Usually each day of a week is interpreted as a year, with the entire time period then lasting 70 x 7 years (490 years). Many consider Daniel 9 as Messianic, and thus interpret the time period using dates associated with first coming of Jesus Christ, and sometimes of the judgment of Jerusalem in AD 70. In the past couple of centuries the “seventy weeks” passage has become popularly understood as a messianic prophecy, with the first sixty-nine weeks as the time period between Daniel and the first coming of Jesus. According to this interpretation, the final week (of seven years) will occur as the future great tribulation of Revelation. This creates a unique “pause” in the playing out of the time period (69 weeks to the first coming, then a pause, and then the seven-year tribulation in the end times). The pause is sometimes described as a church-focused “parenthesis” in the covenant with Israel, with the Church occupying central stage before the restoration of the nation of Israel at the end.
- **Millennium:** the segment of time spoken of in Revelation 20, interpreted by some to be a literal thousand years, and others to be simply a period of time. The interpretation of when this millennium takes place significantly affects one’s view of end times.

- **Amillennialism:** “a” means “without,” so a-millennial refers to those who do not hold to a “literal millennial kingdom.” Rather, they believe that the period described in Revelation 20 (which is the only Biblical passage describing such a millennium) can be interpreted symbolically as simply a period of time. This view was held in the Early Church, along with premillennial interpretations. Augustine’s view of Constantinian Christendom as the “millennial reign of Christ” influence centuries of thought; many see the millennial reign as the age of the Church. After competing with postmillennialism after the Reformation, and then premillennialism in the past two centuries, amillennialism is again becoming popular.
- **Postmillennialism:** the belief that Jesus will return after the millennium. Typically, postmillennialists agree with amillennialists that there is no literal one-thousand year reign of Jesus Christ as King enthroned on the earth. Rather, the millennium of Revelation 20 refers to the Church age when Christ rules the world in the form of the Church. Because of this, postmillennialism and amillennialism are easily confused. The difference is that postmillennialists believe that the Church will gradually establish truth and righteousness over all of the earth (after which Christ will return and reign eternally), while amillennialists do not. The Reformation, followed by the modern missionary movement that began accelerating in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, made it appear that Christianity was going to become the dominant religion in the world. This led to the belief that Christ would return after the Church had expanded triumphantly throughout the world.
- **Premillennialism:** the eschatological view that believes Jesus will return prior to the millennium. This view holds the millennium of Revelation 20 to be a literal one-thousand year period wherein Jesus will reign over all the earth, with all humanity worshiping and obeying Him without exception. Christians since the Early Church have held to some form of premillennialism, though it was less popular after Augustine promoted amillennialism in the 400s and postmillennialism became popular during and after the Reformation. It returned to popularity in the western Church in the past two centuries, especially in the form of dispensationalism.
- [This set of charts](#) from H. Wayne House, *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine* (Zondervan, 1992), may be helpful for understanding arguments for and against each major millennial view.

- [This web article](#) is helpful, but the main feature is an interesting and attractive graphic that lays out key points of the major views of the millennium.
- **Judgments:** Some Christians believe the following judgments all speak of the same final judgment when believers and unbelievers alike are judged. Others divide them into multiple, separate occurrences. There is no agreement as to the extent, nature, and outcomes of the judgments.
  - **Judgment Seat (bema) of Christ** (2 Corinthians 5:10): Believers are judged here. Some believe that this occurs, at least to some extent, upon the believer's death. Some associate it with the rewarding of believers based on their works.
  - **Sheep and goats** (Matthew 25:31-36): God separates believers and unbelievers. Many premillennialists believe this occurs after the Millennium, and that those judged were converted during the tribulation period.
  - **Great White Throne Judgment** (Revelation 20:11-15): People here are judged according to their works and sentenced to the lake of fire. Those who believe in other judgments differ about who is judged here and the extent or nature of the judgment.
- **Tribulation Period:** Typically this term signifies a period of time of trial unique in human history. Opinions vary as to the length and degree of tribulation. Sometimes interpreters separate out the "Great Tribulation" as a particularly grievous subset of the tribulation period.
  - **Dispensational premillennialists:** this is the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9:24-27. The first 69 weeks are past, and the last (70<sup>th</sup>) week will be in the future as the seven years of tribulation. During that time, and depending on the timing of the rapturing of the church out of the world, Israel will be the center of global attention, especially from the anti-Christ. This view often designates the last half of the tribulation as the "Great Tribulation," when conditions will be even more horrible and the antichrist sets himself up in the temple and institutes the "mark of the beast" (Revelation 13:16-17).
  - **Tribulation as a past event:** some associate the tribulation period spoken of by Jesus with the siege of Jerusalem in the late AD 60s.
  - **Tribulation as happening now:** Some futurist interpreters perceive the tribulation has already begun, as evidence by such global phenomena as COVID-19, US turmoil, peace treaties between Israel and Arab and Muslim countries.



- **The tribulation is always happening:** Many amillennialists and idealists do not try to identify singular historical events as the tribulation event but see tribulation as characterizing the experience of the Church from the ascension of Jesus until His return at the end.
- **New Jerusalem and the Temple:** Ezekiel 40-48 and Revelation 11 speak of a temple that apparently has not yet been built. Matthew 24 speaks of the “abomination of desolation” in the temple, which may yet need to happen. Many interpreters conclude, then, that the end times will include the rebuilding of the temple, probably in Jerusalem in the nation of Israel. Others note that Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John refer to Jesus, and the Church, as the temple. Measuring a space in the ancient world symbolized security of that space, so that the measuring of the new temple points to the believers’ secure standing that will take them into God’s presence after their persecution has ended.
- **The Beast:** this character first appears as the beast arising from the sea in Revelation 13. He is in league with the dragon (Satan) and the beast from the land (later described as the false prophet). This league forms an unholy triumvirate that imitates and mocks the Holy Trinity: the beast was alive, suffered a mortal wound, and lives again; just as Christ places His seal on those who are His so the beast marks those who follow him; the beast receives his power from the head of the unholy trinity; and the beast claims uncontested authority over all the world. Preterists see the beast as a Roman Emperor (most often Nero). Dispensationalists see a future world leader, while others detect a trail of historical figures that have served Satan’s program against God and His People and His creation. There is some congruence between the historical view and dispensational view in that where Jesus describes “birth pains of the Messiah,” historicists anticipate an increase in frequency and intensity (labor pains) of beast manifestations.
- **Antichrist** (1 and 2 John and Revelation 13): some preterists see the antichrist as Nero. Historicists understand the antichrist as anyone or any force who opposes the church. Futurists perceive that the antichrist, at least in Revelation 13, is a single figure who will appear at the end.
- **Mark of the Beast:** see “beast” above for context. There is disagreement on the essence of the mark of the beast. Some see it as a primary feature of a future Great Tribulation where eternal condemnation is contracted through acquiescence to a mandatory mark of the beast. An alternative view is to see the flow of the message in the imagery where God has marked His people (Ezekiel 9, John 6:27; 2 Timothy 2:19; and, most significantly perhaps, in various places in Revelation); the mark of the beast is then another instance of Satan imitating and mocking the work of God.

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## Key Questions Concerning Eschatology

We believe asking good questions is essential to arriving at answers useful for understanding end times. We suggest the following. (*Numbering is for ease of reference only and is not meant to imply a hierarchy of importance.*)

The first two sets of questions we believe will be useful in seeing the larger, unifying themes in Revelation and other eschatological Scriptures.

### Questions for personal study and meditation:

1. What are the presuppositions and prior understandings we bring to reading eschatology, and how do they lead us to particular conclusions? You might want to read these comments [here](#) to help you think through this question.
2. What emotions does reading Revelation provoke in you? What emotions do you think the Biblical authors intend to provoke in their readers?
3. What is prophecy, and what role is it intended to play? Is it for forecasting future events, unveiling truths for all time, calling to repentance, encouraging or correcting the saints, building perseverance, or something else?
4. As you read Revelation, take note of the numerous times verses have been adapted to worship hymns. Does this suggest anything to you about the application of the book to corporate worship?
5. What does your congregation need to hear about end times theology?
6. What role does literary genre (apocalyptic, prophetic, poetic, narrative) play in reading books like Revelation?
7. Revelation 1:3 tells us that those who read and keep Revelation will be blessed. How so?

### Questions for group discussion:

1. Is eternity about escaping to heaven or about bringing heaven to earth?
2. Has the Kingdom of God already begun on earth? If so, when and how?
3. What emotions did John display in Revelation?
4. Revelation 1:3 refers to the hearing of the prophecies. This reminds us that most believers encountered Scripture together, as a community gathered for worship, rather than reading and interpreting it individually. What difference might that make in how we receive the Book of Revelation?
5. What are dangers of false prophecies to the church?
6. What does it mean to interpret Revelation literally?
7. What is the importance of understanding the history (Apostolic Christian and the larger Church) of the interpretation of Revelation?

8. Put yourself in the shoes of a first-century person hearing the Revelation for the first time. How might they have made sense of it?
9. How might our ethnic identity or situation in terms of freedom and affluence condition our understanding of eschatology? How might persecuted or impoverished or despised believers interpret Revelation, for instance? Would a Jew read it (or hear it) differently than a Gentile?
10. How might a non-western reader interpret or receive eschatology differently than westerners.

### Traditional Questions that Define Major Interpretations

The following questions represent issues that good, Bible-believing Christians have discussed without consensus.

1. What does it mean to interpret Revelation literally? You might want to read these comments [here](#) to help you think through this question.
2. What is the role of numbers in eschatological passages?
3. What role, if any, does ethnic Israel play in end times?
4. What is the role of Abrahamic covenant in eschatology? To whom does it apply today?
5. What should we make of the 70 Weeks in Daniel 9? Is the 70<sup>th</sup> week a period of unusual tribulation that will take place at the end?
6. Should the “thousand years” in Revelation 20 be understood as one thousand years of Jesus’ reign on earth at the end of time, or figuratively as the reign of Christ for a period of time before his return, or figuratively as his eternal reign?
7. Is there a rapture? If so, when will it happen?
8. Did events described in eschatological passages already occur close to the time of their writing, or across the history of the church, or are they still waiting to happen at the end of time?
9. When Jesus describes future events in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24 . . .), did he mean for us to understand them as happening in the first century or at the end? Or should we divide the events into first-century events and future events?
10. When was Revelation written, in the AD 90s or before the destruction of the temple in AD 70?
11. What (or who) is the temple in eschatological passages?
12. Do the events in Revelation take place in chronological order?
13. Is “antichrist” a single individual or power or movement that works through history?
14. Is Babylon symbolic of a specific system or power, or does it represent the evil spirit of the age?

15. Is there a comparison to be made between the mark in Ezekiel 9:4, the seal of the Spirit (Revelation 7), the name given in Revelation 14, and the Mark of the Beast (Revelation 13 and others)?

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## *Key Interpretive Principles and Methods for Reading Biblical Eschatology*

The subcommittee considers the following principles and methods to be useful for, perhaps necessary to, reading eschatological passages well.

- Reading Revelation out loud helps us experience Revelation as it was received by the original audience. Most people then could not read, and those who could would probably have had a hard time getting a copy of the book for their own private reading, and so they heard it read to them out loud. We highly recommend this.
- [This graphic](#) provides an excellent way to understand major approaches to reading eschatological passages. One axis represents chronology: do we think of most prophecies as having already been fulfilled, being fulfilled throughout Church history, or to be fulfilled in the future? Standing in the present, we can either look backwards to the past when reading these passages or look forward into the future. Secondly, from our position in the present, do we see these passages as codes to be used to decipher specific events in history, or do we see the passages symbolically teaching us spiritual lessons of universal applicability? Note that readers can place themselves along each axis and not merely at the ends. This graphic is from Michael J. Gorman, [Reading Revelation Responsibly](#), 2011, page 64.
- All major views are represented by Biblical scholars who hold tightly to the historical-grammatical method of interpreting the Bible, whereby the historical context and the agreed-upon rules of language and literary methods are taken into consideration. It is important to recognize the sincerity and skill of Bible interpreters working in good faith to understand eschatology well but who nonetheless end up with differing opinions.
- Scholars of varying opinions recognize that our presuppositions will condition how we read eschatology. A very useful, if a bit scholarly, [article by Bible scholar Brad Klassen](#) suggests that there are three questions that should be answered when studying Christian eschatology. One's interpretation of Revelation depends largely on how he or she answers these questions.
  - Literal vs figurative?: Some readers using a more figurative/allegorical approach will interpret the 1,000 years of Rev 20 as an extended period of time and will see the word Israel as referring to the church. A more

literal approach believes the 1,000 year period to be an exact time and will believe that the word Israel refers to ethnic Israel. These basic differences can lead to very different eschatological conclusions when reading scripture.

- What is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament with regard to progressive revelation, the belief that God has revealed truth to humanity gradually over the 1500 years of authorship of the Bible? Should we read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, or should we read the New Testament in light of the Old Testament? If God said something in the Old Testament that had specific, historical meaning among the Old Testament audience, can that revelation be reinterpreted, even changed, by New Testament readers in light of Jesus? A major area of eschatology where these questions are vital is how we understand OT covenants with Israel in light of the New Testament church. Some believe the promises of land ownership, peace and safety to Israel in the Old Testament are yet-to-be-fulfilled earthly promises, so they will interpret New Testament passages through that lens. While God is now using the church to proclaim the gospel message, he will eventually also use Israel (thus, the Church is raptured before the Tribulation, and ethnic Israel is gathered to God and once again is the primary witness during the Tribulation). Others believe the New Testament sheds new light/revelation on those Old Testament passages, especially in believing that Israel's function as the main vehicle God used to bring His message to mankind is past, never to be used again. After Pentecost He is working exclusively through His church. The Church may not be raptured before the Tribulation and will remain God's primary witness during the End Times.
- How are we affected by our presuppositions/preunderstandings? From our youth we've had many experiences while hearing and reading many teachings which have helped us form our opinions. Similarly, while reading the scripture, trying to determine what we believe about end times prophecy, we tend to stay on a path that is guided by what we already believe. Sometimes, after seriously studying the scriptures, we've had to change some deeply held beliefs, which is hard to do. Other times, after serious study, we are more convinced that our previous interpretations have been largely correct, even while recognizing that this subject is so woven throughout the entire scripture that no human knows the complete eschatological picture. Either way, it is important to recognize the influence of our preconceived opinions and attempt to allow God to speak to us afresh as we read His Word.

- The original recipients of Revelation were more familiar with the genre of apocalyptic than we are today. Thus, it would not have sounded as strange to them as it does to us. Learning about the apocalyptic genre can help us receive the book in ways closer to the original audience. [This article](#) is a scholarly example of how one might interpret Revelation by thinking about genre.
- Proponents of all major views recognize the importance of NT eschatological allusions to OT visions, images, themes, and typologies. Most eschatological Bible passages link to each other. The Book of Revelation alone alludes to or quotes Old Testament passages hundreds of times. We recommend reading NT passages with their OT corollaries at hand. Many Bibles with study notes suggest appropriate linkages. Of course, some correlations are matters of debate.
- Most approaches to eschatology insist that the interpretation of individual passages must pay attention to overarching stories and themes in the Bible. Indeed, one of the criteria for inclusion of a book in the Christian canon (Bible) was the book's compatibility to the rest of Scripture and the larger set of doctrines as handed down by the Apostles. Therefore, one should read eschatological passages in ways that cohere with the rest of the Bible. For example, creation and re-creation, the Day of the Lord, covenant, sacrifice, the Lamb, the necessity, purpose, and fruit of suffering, and redemption, to name just a few, are all discussed at various points in both Testaments and can be important to developing a comprehensive eschatology that accounts for the various themes interwoven throughout the Bible.
- [This study](#) of the souls of the martyrs in Revelation 5 is an example of using these principles to arrive at good understandings and applications of eschatological passages.

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## Key Boundaries

There may be pitfalls to avoid with all approaches, methods, and interpretations of Biblical passages. To suggest a pitfall is not to imply that the approach, method, or interpretation is therefore to be avoided. Rather, we simply suggest that observing good boundaries can keep us on fruitful pathways while avoiding unfortunate conclusions.

- **The problem of disunity.** As noted in the [Key History](#) paper, the Church has long tolerated a [wide diversity](#) of eschatological views. But not always. When a particular view becomes so entrenched as to be perceived as nonnegotiable orthodoxy, peaceful disagreement can become difficult. It is important to note that all of the major views and approaches in the resources we are providing have been held by numerous faithful, Bible-believing, Jesus-following Christians. [This](#) is an example of how the Early Church handled a controversy of a different sort. An example of divisions among Mennonites caused by differences in eschatological views can be found [here](#) (regrettably for our purposes here, this article is strongly anti-dispensational; we are not trying to take sides by posting this article). Another historical example, along with some good advice for maintaining unity, can be found [here](#).
- **Presentism:** because I can find similarities between what a Biblical writer wrote two thousand years ago and my own situation today, I assume he must have been writing about me and my world. Through history, the Church seems to have adopted eschatological stances in reaction to contemporary circumstances. This suggests that Christians are vulnerable to reading the Bible according to how they feel about their social context at the moment. For instance, if the future looks bright, they may choose interpretations that appear more optimistic. Or, they may lose interest in eschatology. When the future turns more dismal, their enthusiasm for eschatology may grow. They may also be attracted to more pessimistic interpretations that seem to fit the trends they perceive around them.
- **Date-setting.** Perhaps the most enticing form of attention to contemporary events is the tendency to set dates for Christ's return, which has up to this point always resulted in disappointment, disillusionment, and occasionally the loss of faith entirely. Date-setting has occurred throughout Church history with a frequency too high to enumerate.

- **Sensationalism.** Eschatology can lend itself to sensational readings and predictions which capture people’s attention, particularly when conveyed by magnetic personalities with seemingly profound familiarity with Scripture.
- **Heretical spiritualism.** Fervent interest in end times can lead to heterodox claims of new visions and prophecies. The Montanists of the late 100s and early 200s famously attracted Tertullian to its ranks, but they were first known for their intense and unusual spirituality. Radical reformers in the 1500s, including some Anabaptists like Melchior Hoffman and the people of the City of Munster, sometimes introduced unorthodox beliefs and practices with sometimes deadly result. David Koresh and the Branch Davidians did much the same harm in the 1990s.
- **Novel definitions of terms in the Biblical language.** We need to be careful to not read into Biblical language meanings that were not there two thousand years ago.
- **Newspaper exegesis/eschatology.** Playing off the paired concepts of eisegesis (reading something into the text) versus exegesis (getting the meaning out of a text), "newspaper exegesis" refers to the (usually unintentional) practice of starting with current world events and attempting to read isolated prophetic symbols and statements onto them. An example would be the almost daily attempts to match up current events with Biblical prophecy in modern Christian media.
- **Too strong of adherence to literal reading.** For instance, a preoccupation with predicting future events, or pushing everything into the future because we haven’t yet seen literal fulfillment, may lead to undervaluing the spiritual lessons taught by eschatological passages. Likewise, there is a tendency among some to slander people as “the antichrist” by comparing an individual’s personal attributes to a simplistic, literal reading of the antichrist in Scripture. This sometimes occurs with the presentation of esoteric, sensational end times theories on Youtube.
- **Too strong of adherence to allegorical reading.** The church has always insisted on the eventual return of Jesus Christ and the bodily resurrection. It has never accepted the possibility that these two events are merely allegorical. Likewise, we should be careful of ignoring potential relevancies between current events and eschatological passages.
- **Isolating passages from their Biblical context.** This seems to happen often with such seemingly sensational concepts as the Mark of the Beast and the antichrist. These concepts can take on a life of their own separate from the teaching and setting of Revelation and the Bible.

- **De-canonization of Scripture individually and as a church.** Confusion caused by the diversity of opinions about end times can frustrate people to the point of ignoring eschatology altogether. This essentially “de-canonizes” a part of the Bible. This has a church application as well. The more quality teaching we provide our congregations, the better equipped they will be to discern truth and error in popular eschatological movements and fads.
- **Anti-Semitism.** Some interpreters have excluded ethnic Israel from their Biblical view of end times to the point of veering perilously close to anti-Semitism.

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## Key Resources Eschatology Bibliography

- Benware, Paul N. [\*Understanding End Times Prophecy: A Comprehensive Approach\*](#). Revised and Expanded. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2006. 421 pages. Written by a professor, this book has been used as a college textbook. However, it is written in an easy to read and easy to understand style for those of us who are not so academically inclined. While he is a pre-tribulational premillennialist, he describes the main eschatological views in detail. But he, like all of these authors, faces difficulty when writing about a view he himself doesn't believe. Benware is very helpful in explaining the variations between the different views both in their belief systems and how they were developed throughout church history. Recommended. Keywords: covenants, church, dispensationalism, Israel, Kingdom of God, pre-, a-, post-millennialism, preterism.
- Bock, Darrell L., Gundry Stanley N. [\*Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond\*](#). Zondervan, 1999. 329 pages. The value this book brings to the discussion is that it is edited and not written by these two men only. Whereas other books in this bibliography contain chapters on the main eschatological views written by the author of that book, who already is predisposed to his own view, each of the chapters in this book dealing with a specific view is written by a proponent of that view. Then the chapter is followed up by responses to that view by the other contributors to the book. Highly Recommended. Keywords: Comparative, Millennium, Application.
- Daley, Brian E. [\*The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1991. 224 pages. This reads more like an encyclopedia of Early Church Fathers and their views of eschatology than a narrative of changes over time. In other words, it is not particularly interesting to read, but it can serve as a very useful reference book for research into the views of any particular person or literature. It is recommended for that purpose. Keywords: Early Church, patristics, millennialism.
- Emch, Brandon L. [\*The Day of the Lord and the Coming Kingdom: A New and Biblical Framework for the End Times\*](#). Notable Day Publishing, 2017. 301 pages. This book is written by an Apostolic Christian minister. Emch is a post-tribulational premillennialist, although he avoids millennialist and other eschatological debates to focus closely on the tribulation period, which may make his views adaptable to both pre- and post-millennial approaches. His seems to be an original (and compelling) interpretation that compares the Old Testament feasts to the events of the last days. Understanding the meaning and chronological sequence of the feasts provides a timeline for the end times. Privately published. Highly recommended because of its interpretation and its AC author. Keywords: tribulation, feasts, premillennialism,
- Erickson, Millard J. [\*A Basic Guide to Eschatology: Making Sense of the Millennium\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998. 184 pages. This is a popular entry-level introduction (much less exhaustive than the Menn book below) to many of the key

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debates and issues of eschatology. Easily read and fair-minded. Recommended.  
Keywords: comparative, historical theology, millennialism, hermeneutics, dispensationalism, post- and pre- and a-millennialism.

Froehlich, Samuel Heinrich. [\*Meditations on the Book of Revelation\*](#). This is a collection of Froehlich's brief personal notes written down after holding regular weekday meditations on the Book of Revelation during the 1840s at gatherings of believers near Strasbourg. The collection was later obtained from his family and published by various sources.

Gentry, P. J., & Wellum, S. J. [\*God's Kingdom through God's Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology\*](#). 2015 Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 271 pages. An excellent and concise overview of biblical theology that has overlap with eschatology in the way it approaches an understanding of God's progressive revelation to us in the scriptures using the framework or structure of the six biblical covenants (Creation, Noah, Abraham, Mosaic, David, New/Everlasting). "In evangelicalism, the dominant biblical-theological systems of covenant theology and dispensationalism (and their varieties) are the way that most Christians conceive of the Bible's larger story. It was our (Gentry and Wellum) conviction that both of these views—as much as we agree with them on most matters related to the gospel—were not quite right in their specific way of rendering the Bible's plotline. Hence, it was necessary for our book to interact with technical details in exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology." Keywords: covenants, biblical theology, literary structure, new covenant, kingdom.

Gorman, Michael. [\*Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness: Following the Lamb Into the New Creation\*](#). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011. 190 pages. An interpretive approach that finds worship of Jesus as the primary purpose of the book of Revelation, to know Christ better as He is portrayed as 1) the Faithful Witness; 2) the Present One; 3) The Lamb slain and now reigning; and 4) the Coming One. Of particular interest is the non-violent resistance affirmed by the author. The author's left-leaning political bias may annoy some, but the book is well worth overlooking that bias. Keywords: worship, the lamb, non-violence, idealist, apocalyptic literature, discipleship, literary genre, syncretism, nationalism, exceptionalism, patriotism, civil religion, empire.

Gregg, Steve, ed. [\*Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary\*](#). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997. 506 pages. Gregg moves through the Book of Revelation passage by passage, using four parallel columns to summarize how futurist, historicist, preterist, and spiritualist approaches would interpret the Biblical text. Highly recommended as a reference book. Keywords: Revelation, futurist, historicist, preterist, spiritualist, comparative reference. (note: the link is to the updated edition)

Grenz, Stanley J. [\*The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options\*](#). Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1992. Grenz gives his primary attention to explaining how the historical, religious, and political environment of each successive age has shaped

the dominant eschatological view of that age. This really brings to the fore how our preconceptions shape our interpretations of scripture far more than we realize. I highly recommend this book on this feature alone. He also shows how most adherents of an eschatological view work very hard to show the alignment of their view to the ancient church. Through careful assessment of the historical setting Grenz time and again shows more dissonance than congruence. One last point that I have found helpful is the hermeneutic progression within each view through time. Many shifts have come about by attempting to answer critics from other views. This exposes the inequitable, and often misleading, slant of a critique on a writing from an early proponent of any eschatological view. Keywords: "Historic Premillennialism", Dispensationalism, Postmillennialism, Amillennialism, Kingdom.

Hill, Charles. E. [\*Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity\*](#). Second Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: 2001 Eerdmans Publishing Company. 298 pages. This historical analysis surveys the first four centuries of church fathers as well as 2nd temple Jewish writings and rabbinical sources to provide perspective on the common claim that early Christian eschatology was predominately "chiliasm" (premillennial). The author's analysis contends that there were diverse views in Judaism and early Christianity and that a claim of a ubiquitous chiliasm view is not accurate. In Part 1 the author provides evidence of intersections between Jewish and Christian eschatologies as well as the influences of gnostic thinking that show connections "between chiliasm views of the future and a subterranean intermediate state (e.g. the view that upon death, those who are Christ's do not spiritually go to an intermediate state of being with Christ in heaven, but instead go to Hades etc)." In Part 2 the author provides historical evidence of views that were non-chiliasm (today called amillennial) and who also reveal their understanding of the intermediate state to be "that after physical death and before the 2nd coming and general resurrection, there is an expectation of an immediate entry into heaven of the disembodied soul/spirit to be with Christ for the righteous." The book concludes with a helpful table that categorizes six criteria for discerning chiliasm in a writing, and how many early writings correlate to these criteria. Keywords: patristics, early church, chiliasm, non-chiliasm, historical, millennium.

House, H. Wayne. [\*Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. 128 pages. This is an excellent collection of charts comparing various Christian theological views, including eschatology. Recommended for general use, including study of eschatology. Keywords: charts, comparative.

Hultberg, Alan, ed. [\*Three Views on the Rapture: Pretribulation, Prewrath, or Posttribulation\*](#). Second. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010. 283 pages. An in-depth explanation and Biblical defense of pretribulation, mid-tribulation (prewrath), and post-tribulation views on the rapture. Each view is explained by a proponent and critiqued by a scholar of each of the other views. Highly recommended for those seeking a better understanding of this important and popular debate. Keywords: rapture, comparative.

- Koester, Craig R. ["On the Verge of the Millennium: A History of the Interpretation of Revelation."](#) *Word & World* 15, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 9 pages. This is an excellent, brief, and easily read history of the interpretation of Revelation and eschatology. Koester briefly presents his idealist perspective, which is a useful introduction as well. Keywords: historical theology, Revelation, comparative.
- Kraybill, J. Nelson. [\*Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010. 195 pages. An Anabaptist theologian articulates a profound application of Revelation towards allegiance to Jesus and nonviolent resistance to the political machinations across all times, eras and cultures. The author recommends reading Revelation in full sensory mode, reading it out loud and paying attention to sights, sounds, smells, tastes and the liturgical / worshipful elements of the book. Some historical claims about the Greek-Roman world are disputed and/or overstated. Keywords: empire, worship, politics, allegiance, King Jesus, the Lamb, syncretism, subversion, Revelation as Poetry, Already not yet, Kingdom of God, peacemakers, justice, New Creation, fellowship, healing.
- Kyle, Richard. [\*The Last Days Are Here Again: A History of the End Times\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998. 201 pages. This is a relatively short, easy to read and interesting survey of how Christians (and a few others) have understood and engaged with end times prophecy, from Jewish pre-Christian antecedents to American popular culture today. Highly recommended for a historical perspective, although one should note that the depiction of the Early Church as premillennial, though common, has recently been challenged by those arguing that the Early Church was also amillennial in perspective. Keywords: apocalypse, historical.
- Johns, Loren L. [\*Apocalypticism and Millennialism: Shaping a Believers Church Eschatology for the Twenty-First Century\*](#). Kitchener, Ontario. Pandora Press, 2000. 419 pages. This book combines many different essays and presentations, largely from an anabaptist conference held in Bluffton, Ohio in 1999. The topics addressed are diverse, and give insight into biblical, historical, theological and pastoral consequences of eschatological views in the modern era. An emphasis on "how we live in light of the return of Christ" is shared throughout the book and aligns well with ACCA non-violence or "the way of peace." Some of the contributors include well-known John Howard Yoder, William Klassen, Kevin James Gilbert, Daniel Hertzler and a fascinating study (PDF available on the Google Drive) by William Vance Trollinger Jr. on the influence of "Darby-ism" that includes Berne, IN (several AC members were swept away with this movement in the WWII era). Highly recommended. Keywords: AC, millennialism, non-violence, apocalypticism.
- Mangold, G.M. *Blicke in die Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, und Zukunft* (Translation published as *Meditations on the Past, Present and Future*). Zurich, Switzerland: Zürcher und Furrer, 1862. 342 pages. This self-published commentary on the Book of Revelation by one of Froehlich's contemporaries and co-elders presents an essentially historicist view along with an interpretative framework in which the various portions of the book (the letters to the churches, seals, tribulations, etc.)

each individually reflect the entire history of the Christian Church and the New Testament world. Both the original version and the translation by Ernest Graf of Akron, Ohio have been widely read in various branches of the Froehlich tradition.

Menn, Jonathan. [\*Biblical Eschatology\*](#). Second edition. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2018. 352 pages, plus 142 pages of useful appendices. This is a thorough examination of most key eschatological Bible passages, debates and issues, written by an amillennialist with an eclectic approach to eschatology. He surveys other approaches critically, but the reader may find him sufficiently fair to those with other views. Argues for an amillennialist, at times spiritualist interpretation of Revelation, suggesting that it is a book which should be used primarily as a set of symbols warning the apathetic Christian and giving hope to the spiritually alive. This has a compelling section at the end surveying “application to Christian living based on eschatological views.” Highly recommended as a reference book. Keywords: comparative, genre, eschatology, Old Testament, New Testament, hermeneutics, millennium, rapture, Olivet Discourse, Revelation, Zechariah, futurism, historicism, preterism, spiritualism, idealism, Ezekiel, Daniel, parousia, tribulation.

Pate, C. Marvin, ed. [\*Four Views on the Book of Revelation\*](#). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998. 232 pages. Intended to give the reader a fair view of different interpretive approaches. Included in this comparison are two forms of futurist dispensationalism, the classical dispensational view and a “literal” hermeneutic emphasized by Robert Thomas. Marvin Pate writes for the newer “progressive dispensational” view of blending all 3 views while maintaining a distinction between Israel and the church. A classic preterist view is argued by Kenneth Gentry while the idealist view is defended by Sam Hamstra. Keywords: Revelation, dispensationalism

Rosenthal, Marvin. [\*The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church: A New Understanding of the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the Second Coming\*](#). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990. 320 pages. A premillennialist and former dispensationalist and pretribulationist, Rosenthal’s book popularized the idea that the rapture will occur after the first part of the Great Tribulation and before the portion of the Great Tribulation during which God pours out His wrath on the earth. Written for a popular audience. Keywords: tribulation; rapture; mid-tribulation; pre-wrath tribulation. Recommended as an introduction to the midtribulational and pre-wrath rapture views.

Sprinkle, Preston, ed. [\*Four Views on Hell\*](#). Second edition. Counterpoints. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016. 206 pages. Each chapter offers an explanation of either eternal conscious torment, terminal punishment (annihilationism or conditional eternal life), or Christian universalism. A fourth chapter explains purgatory. Each chapter is written by an adherent to the chapter’s theory and includes critiques by the other three authors. Useful for answering an eschatological question that is often forgotten in debates but is probably on many people’s minds: what happens to the individual after death and after the final judgment? Recommended.



Keywords: comparative, annihilationism, conditional immortality, eternal conscious torment, purgatory, Christian universalism; hell, death.

Stanley, Alan P., ed. [\*Four Views on the Role of Works at the Final Judgment\*](#).

Counterpoints. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. 213 pages. What role do works play towards our eternal destiny? A Baptist who adheres to “once-saved, always saved” (147) argues that only agreement that Jesus is the Christ is necessary for eternal salvation, and that our works only play a role in that they earn for us varying levels of rewards. A Reformed theologian argues that our works will need to testify to the validity of our faith when we are judged by God. But God works in the elect such that they will certainly have good works to commend them at the final judgment. The third writer contends that “Paul’s talk of judgment by faith and not by works” was intended to encourage the faithful, while Paul warned those in danger of apostasy that “judgment will be according to works” (121). Finally, a Catholic theologian argues that judgment of the believer will be made on the basis of works made possible only by the grace of God working in the one who has faith in Jesus. Each author makes the case for his own view and writes short critiques of the others’ essays. Easy to read and engaging. Recommended. Keywords: judgment, works, grace.

Storms, Sam. [\*Kingdom Come: An Amillennial Alternative\*](#). Fearn, Scotland; Mentor, 2013.

676 pages. This book presents a unique view, as Sam Storms went to school at Dallas Theological Seminary, a renowned school for creating some of the greatest teachers of dispensational premillennialism, and was taught by some of the leading proponents of that view. Over time a few other authors caught his attention and he started to wonder if there were other valid scriptural interpretations regarding eschatology. Over a decade of studying led him to leave the dispensational camp, and he landed firmly as an amillennial. In this book, Storms outlines five essential hermeneutical principles he contends are critical for eschatology. He firmly stands on an inaugurated kingdom of God established at the first coming of Jesus and believes in the full consummation of the kingdom upon the second coming of Christ. He believes that the Bible must be read and understood from the framework of the identity, life and mission of Jesus. Storms also views typology as a critical element in proper understanding. The book is comprehensive in that it addresses his former views and critiques dispensational premillennialism, reviews key OT passages from Daniel, does a thorough review of the Olivet Discourse, delves into Acts and Romans, and discusses the “promises to Israel”. He also does a review of postmillennialism, spends two chapters on Revelation 20 and wraps up with a study of the meaning of antichrist. Keywords: hermeneutics, progressive revelation, Daniel, Olivet Discourse, people of God, amillennialism, antichrist, kingdom of God.

Wright, N.T. [\*Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church\*](#). New York: HarperOne, 2008. 295 pages. This is not a book on eschatology per se, but it does have eschatological ramifications, and it is gaining a wide Apostolic Christian readership. Wright’s thesis is that Christians should eagerly anticipate our final, bodily resurrection into a new heaven and earth, rather

than emphasize our temporary, mystical entry into the presence of Jesus after we die. Doing so will restore a proper understanding of the work to be done now as part of Jesus's redemption of this world, rather than seeking to escape this earth for a spiritual existence in the sky. Keywords: death, heaven, resurrection, Kingdom of God, new heaven and earth, parousia, mission, gospel. Recommended, especially since many ACs are reading this book.

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## *Recommendation for Teaching the Book of Revelation*

A traditional method of teaching Revelation is to go chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and explain how each passage reveals an event that has been fulfilled in the past (preterist or historicist) or the future (futurist). An especially bold approach might attempt to match specific verses to events described in the latest newspaper. Alternatively, one might move slowly through the book and allegorize each scene as a spiritual lesson (idealist), though taken to its extreme this can lead one to deny historically orthodox beliefs of the Christian faith, such as the literal return of Jesus Christ.

A thematic approach recognizes the value of what Revelation can teach every generation while not denying that it has special significance for the end times. It seeks to draw out of the book spiritual truths that continue to be relevant to every Christian of any era and context.

We recommend the following themes:

- **Jesus the King to be worshipped.** One of the purposes of the book seems to be to exalt Jesus as King of Kings, far above the Roman Emperor or any other human imposter. The book begins with a beautiful exaltation of the Lord in chapter one verses five through eight. Periodically throughout the book, John pauses to focus on the glory of the Son. His final victory over all evil in chapter 19 serves as something of a climax to the book. The Revelation ends with a heartfelt cry to “come, Lord Jesus!” It is no coincidence that many passages in Revelation have been used in hymns and other music for worship. Revelation can serve as a sort of New Testament “book of Psalms,” healing and encouraging the soul by uniting our hearts in praise of our King.
- **God the Creator and Lord of the universe.** The Bible begins with Creation and ends with the new Creation, or re-Creation. Both “bookends” point to God’s power, goodness, and justice. He reigns, and especially during tumultuous times, remembering his rulership is an antidote to fear. Revelation depicts this truth wonderfully by illustrating just how extensive is His ability to govern the world. A church enduring the world’s hostility and abuse, in John’s day and increasingly in ours, does well to be mindful of this great truth.
- **Repentance and Humility.** Recognizing the Kingship of God the Son and the Rulership of God the Father calls us through the power of God the Holy Spirit to repentance and humility. This may perhaps be most evident in the letters to the churches in chapters two and three, but does not the rest of the book demonstrate that one of the purposes of the book is to warn the wandering and slumbering Christian of the impending judgment? For instance, whatever form

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Babylon may take at the very end, is not the arrogance, luxury, immorality, oppressiveness, and callousness of heart described in chapter eighteen a call to guard ourselves against any cultural systems that implicate us in such attitudes and behaviors? Do we have idols of any form that detract us from worship of God?

- **Preparation:** In addition to calling believers and unbelievers to repentance, Jesus in the Gospel accounts and the Apostles in their letters, including Revelation, exhorted believers to prepare for persecution and trials through a Spirit-led daily walk. Prophetic and apocalyptic Scriptures often call us to watch, to strengthen, to encourage each other, to overcome, and to be diligent. We are to treat this life as a marathon that requires perseverance, not a sprint towards an easy goal. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer" (2:10) said John, "your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus" (1:9). Peter said that he wrote his letters to "stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" who warned of spiritual laziness at the end (2 Peter 3:1-2). In this way, study of eschatological Scripture can work like spiritual exercise, building endurance as we make our way to the end.
- **Jesus the Lamb that was Slain.** Some consider the depiction of Jesus in chapter five as a turning point in the book. Nobody is able to open the book that will lead to the fulfillment of all that follows in the rest of Revelation. Then one of the elders comforts John by drawing attention to the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (5). He, and He alone, will be able to open the book. But when the Lion stands to open the book, He is the Lamb that was Slain (6)! What an unexpected development—the mighty lion is actually a lamb, and a slaughtered one at that! This graphically depicts a central truth of Revelation and the Bible: Jesus conquered sin, evil, and death by giving up His life sacrificially. Jesus, as a sacrificed lamb, opens the book that leads to the culmination of this present age. In chapter nineteen, Jesus, dressed in a robe stained with His own blood, defeats the beast and his vast human armies by the Word of His mouth. Meanwhile, throughout the book the Saints are called to witness through preaching and suffering, not by intrigue, conspiracy, militancy, or political power. Like Jesus, our power lies in following Jesus through sacrificial suffering. We believe this theme wonderfully supports the Way of Peace, and in a way that is particularly applicable to those among us who fret over current events and seek to fight back.
- **Victory.** This theme is a repackaging of the above themes. Jesus the King conquers. God is on His throne and in the end He wins. Evil will be defeated.

Wrongs will be made right. Our world will be recreated and redeemed. The victory is gained through Christ's sacrificial power, not our own.

Subsidiary Themes.

- The genres of Revelation
- Revelation's allusions to other Scripture

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## Teaching Revelation 19:11-21

**Main Teaching Proposition:** Jesus goes to war against evil and defeats it with his Word

**Introduction:** Do you shy away from reading the book of Revelation because you don't know how to process it? If so, you are not alone! "Revelation" comes from the Greek word *apocalypse*, and the book of Revelation is considered "apocalyptic literature." In modern use, *apocalypse* often refers to a large-scale catastrophic event, and in religious terms often refers to the end of the world. However, *apocalypse* in literature more accurately means an unveiling or unfolding of things not previously known and which could not be known apart from the unveiling. In other words, it is a vision of heavenly secrets that can make sense of earthly realities. So instead of being an intimidating book of secret codes, when read in context, the Revelation can hold powerful lessons on how we view our world.

**Goals of today's lesson:** understand this genre of literature and use a passage from Revelation to demonstrate its usefulness to us today.

**Apocalyptic literature** (like Revelation and parts of the book of Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, and Isaiah) are a small subset of a very common genre from the Babylonian exile through the middle ages. Think of it like dream literature written by bible nerds... it's loaded with imagery and references to other books of the Old Testament. Reading the Revelation without understanding the references would be like looking at a political cartoon without knowing the context. "Why are these donkeys and elephants dressed in clothes and talking?" you might ask. This would be like reading Revelation without knowing the books of Genesis, Daniel, Isaiah, and Psalms.

Books like Revelation or Daniel have been interpreted many different ways throughout the centuries. Some read them as a mystery code that has a hidden meaning that will only be made known at some future date. Others see them as prophecies that have been or will be fulfilled. This lesson will demonstrate the strength of reading the Revelation as a lens through which to view other things past, present and future.

## Encouragement on how to read Revelation

1. Read the book as a whole, looking for themes, patterns, and anchor images (throne room, dragon, beast, lamb)
2. Read it as a letter from John
  - a. Written to 1st century Christians, who were poorly accepted socially. (Heb 10)
  - b. These Christians were also struggling against the oppression of the Roman Empire (another Babylon)
  - c. Why would it bring hope to someone reading this letter?
3. Decode the symbols (not the prophecy)
  - a) Hebrew Bible (with lots of emphasis on Genesis 1-7). You have to know the whole Bible! Example: Rev 12 is largely based on Gen 3.
  - b) Recognize that you are swimming in the deep end of the pool (especially for me!). Use a concordance to understand symbols like dragons & snakes. Community is important: you will benefit immensely from the input of other people and are unlikely to unlock all of the connections by yourself. Read the Bible alone, but not alone!
4. Use it as a lens
  - a. Shaping us through imagery more than giving us concrete information
  - b. Shaping how we think more than telling us what to think
  - c. *Example:* The image of the slain lamb on the throne is trying to teach us that human exaltation is not what God desires. This summons every generation of readers to follow the lamb and resist the beast, helping us to live in all ages in light of the coming new creation.
5. Look for Jesus! After all, it is the Revelation of Jesus Christ!

Let's use a selection from Revelation to demonstrate how we can read apocalyptic literature and how it can inspire us today.

### Revelation 19:11-21

#### 1. Phrasing Summary

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King Jesus, The Word of God, goes to war.

Out of his mouth comes judgment on the nations of the world.

The vultures are called to prepare to consume all flesh.

In the final battle, all that oppose King Jesus are destroyed.

2. *OT References.* In this one short passage, at least a dozen! Here are a few of them:

a. Psalms:

i. V.11: “for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.”

ii. V.15: “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron”

b. Isaiah, the most referenced prophet in the New Testament:

i. V.15: “with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked”

ii. V.13, 15: “ I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.”

c. Ezekiel, the source of the imagery about the vultures coming to eat:

i. V.17-18: “Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.”

d. Daniel: when Jesus is called King of Kings, Lord of Lords:

i. V.16 : “The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.”

3. *Symbols to be interpreted*

a. King on the white horse:

i. Wonderful names: Faithful and True, King of Kings, Lord of Lords

ii. Many crowns (diadems) symbolizes rulership and royalty



- iii. All the imagery is contrasting the beast
    - iv. Were you looking for Jesus? This is Him!
  - b. Blood on the robe before the battle begins
    - i. Whose is it? His own or the trampled grapes (enemies)?
  - c. Beast
    - i. "Animal." There were beasts in the throne room too!
    - ii. In this use, it depicts Antichrist, both his person and his kingdom and power: brutal, savage & ferocious.
    - iii. In Revelation 12-13, the dragon (Satan) gives the beast its power and ruling authority after being cast out of heaven.
    - iv. What is the beast that John is writing about? Think about the progression of the oppression of the Jewish people:
    - v. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon (in Daniel's day), Persia, Greece, Rome (in John's day)
    - vi. Nations become beasts when they exalt their own power and economic security as a false god.
  - d. Mark of the beast
    - i. Source of so much speculation! The mark = Allegiance to the beast.
    - ii. But this is not some new idea that John is dreaming up. Rather, it's a continuation of an ancient theme
    - iii. "Shema" = prayer of allegiance (Deuteronomy 6:4-8) written on forehead (ie thoughts) and hand (ie actions).
    - iv. The mark = The anti-Shema, which is a present reality based on where we are placing our allegiance.

#### 4. Letter from John

- a. The readers of this letter were sick of being 2nd rate citizens, oppressed by Roman rule. They are asking "Will this end? When?" The resounding answer is YES! With ease, Jesus will set all of the injustices right.
- b. The modern day problem of reading about God's violence in these passages is not an issue if you read through the lens of people craving to be delivered from oppression.

## 5. *Lens for us*

- a. Nations turn into beasts when they exalt the wrong things. This is a warning to all nations and generations, including our own.
- b. Jesus is going to set things right that seem impossible. How?
- c. “Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword”.
  - i. His weapon is in his mouth, not his hand. The judgement of the nations will come from his Word, not physical violence.
  - ii. *Hebrews 4:12* “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
- d. In the words of Joshua: “Choose you this day whom ye will serve!” Whose army do you want to be part of? One is going to be victorious, one is going to be defeated. Let's join the army which fights evil with words of truth!
- e. Be inspired that our seemingly small participation in the army following Jesus “upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” is a noble and worthwhile calling!

## **Conclusion**

Apocalyptic literature has powerful lessons for us today, even if it can seem intimidating at the outset. In particular, Revelation contains John’s vision of Jesus setting right all of the wrongs being experienced by oppressed 1st century Christians. He uses dense references to Old Testament writers to show that though oppressive nations will keep arising, Jesus will lead us to victory through his Word. This is both a warning and encouragement to every generation who ponder whether to make allegiance with the beast of this world or with God.

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## Peoria End Times Working Outline

### Are We Living in the Last Days?

No one know for sure except God Himself – **Matt 24 and Acts 1** (Emphasis on **Acts 1:6-8** -- On Doing not worrying)

Use this thought as a foundation for our study of the End Days. Be cautious that our own personal bias and thoughts don't become dogmatic when trying to explain specific dates, individuals or places. Thus, causing people to turn off from the blessings of studying this topic. It's acceptable to say "this is my thought, but you may differ in your view and that's alright because we see thru a glass darkly." We will try to use this as a study to encourage people to study the Word, pray, be prepared and watch for signs of Christ return, be encouragers of others, sharing the Gospel, etc. Reference **Rom. 13:11-14** as another reason to study this topic.

**Lesson One Overview Part 1:** Know your enemy. Incorporate **2 Timothy 2:2-4** (as a good soldier of Jesus Christ) into the message. This Good Soldier theme should be woven throughout the following lessons.

Some possible thoughts:

1. Compare a soldier's need to change his/her thinking to deal with difficult training, staying focused mentally, not become discouraged, etc. to a Believer's receiving the mind of Christ
2. Soldiers learn in training: A. Warfare tactics current and past, just as, Christians study the OT and NT to learn how to deal with the enemy of our soul. B. Soldiers are trained to use various weapons, keep them close by and ready to use, similar to Believers using spiritual weapons (**Eph. 6**) and **2 Cor. 10:4**)
3. Soldiers learn to call in help when needed like airstrikes, artillery, etc. While Believers call on Holy Spirit (**Heb. 4:16**), counsel from other Believers, etc.
4. Soldier wears a uniform that identifies a service branch like Marines. Believer's lives reflect our service branch, we serve in, which is Jesus Christ.
5. Soldiers eventually exit the service thru discharge, death, retirement. Believers never should exit or stop being in the service of Christ except only by death or rapture of saints.
6. Other thoughts.....

**Overview Part 2:** Provide a Biblical overview (from OT and NT) of some main events related to the end of times. Don't go into detail but use selected thoughts to whet the people's appetite for more. Also, how we are encouraged by this study that shows God is sitting on the throne always in control no matter what is going on in the earth. (**Rev. 4**)

We rent this earthly home, but get to inherit the place Christ has paid for and prepared for us forever! Look Up!!

**We will focus on the main topics of this study, and not every chapter and verse. Also, try to weave in the Good Soldier thoughts from lesson 1 when applicable. Most importantly, keep reminding of Rev. 4 and what peace and encouragement that gives Believers.**

**Lesson 2:** Using the tactics from Lesson 1 (like studying past tactics) we'll review **Daniel Ch. 7-8**

**Daniel 7**

- A. 4 Beasts Vision – Explain using past kingdoms they represent
- B. Compare 4 Beasts to Rev. 13:1-2
- C. Tie in relevance to today's world
- D. Additional research/thoughts and Good soldier tie ins

**Daniel 8**

- A. Vision of the Ram and Goat – explain who these past kingdoms represent
- B. Abomination of Desolation – Antiochus Epiphanes
- C. Judas Maccabees – restores sacrifice (**Dan.8:13**) after 2300 days (prophecy)
- D. Foreshadowing of Antichrist in Revelations?
- E. Additional research/thoughts and Good soldier tie ins

**Lesson 3: Daniel 9 and Ezekiel 37-38-39** (These chapters deal with Jerusalem and the Jews)

- A. **Dan. 9** - 70 Weeks - Explain the meaning
- B. 7 weeks still remaining – Explain and tie in end times, Revelations, etc.
- C. **Ezekiel 37** – Dry bones - Explain the symbolism, who are they (Jews), etc.
- D. Need of Spiritual revival today? Is the world full of dry bones today?
- E. **Ezekiel 38** – Gog, Magog, Sheba and Dedan, other names of places and countries – Who are they?

Relevance in today's world events, and Israel?

- F. Additional research/thoughts and Good soldier tie ins

**Lesson 4: Matt. 24-25 and Acts 1:13** Jesus' words on the Biblical signs

- A. List the numerous signs Jesus told his disciples, (not one sign but a convergence of them)

SKIP THE FIG TREE AS THAT WILL BE PART OF LESSON 5

- B. What about those signs and things happening today or past few years? Use United States Geological Survey

For earthquakes increasing and in strange places; for example.

C. What weapons, of spiritual warfare, did Jesus imply we should use in the end times when he said Watch, Pray, etc.

What are our duties as a soldier of Christ?

D. What practical applications can we apply from these 2 chapters?

E. Additional research/thoughts and Good soldier tie ins

**Lesson 5: Fig Tree and Israel** written in **Matt. 24:32-35**

A. Review **Ex. 37** - Dry bones and connect with these verses

B. Israel Born by UN decree May 14, 1948 - God Blessing the nation and immediate war with 5 Arab nations

C. Examples of Israel Blossoming – Farming, Orchards, Military, Oil in present day, etc.

D. Spiritual condition of Israel today

E. Wars Israel has fought, since 1948, and won by God’s help and calling on other nations like USA and Britain (like soldiers call for help when things are overwhelming? (Eph. 6, Holy Spirit moving countries, doing miracles, etc.)

F. Role in the World and how it is treated

G. Role in the last days and during 1000-year reign.

H. Addition research/thoughts and Good soldier tie ins

**Lesson 6 - Rapture: 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 5:9** and Rev. (Caution in presentation as not everyone believes this)

A. Sudden Event – Explain it and why it is to happen

B. Positive event that Brings comfort to us (emphasis here)

C. 2 witnesses in Revelation

D. Additional research/thoughts and good soldiers tie ins

**Lesson 7-8-9 Revelation 5-20** (main parts not verse by verse)

**Lesson 7 -- Emphasis on Rev. 4 Encouragement to Believers to stay focused on Christ during times of daily troubles.**

**A. Rev. 4 - God is in Control- -Jesus on the right hand--worship continues day/night -- We need not fear but be encouraged**

A. 7 Seals – explain the devastation and tie into today’s world view

B. 144,000 witnesses – role in tribulation (Rev. 7 and 14)

C. Trumpets 1-4 – explain its impact on the devastated world

D. Additional research/thoughts and good soldiers tie ins

**Lesson 8**

A. Review of Seals and Trumpets from 7

B. Trumpets 5-7 Explain the impact on the world, etc.

C. 2 Witnesses – their purpose and what happens to them

D. Woman and the Dragon – Explain the symbolism, etc.

- E. Armageddon
- E. Additional research/thoughts and good soldiers tie ins

### **Lesson 9**

- A. A quick overview of Revelations -key happenings
- B. 1000 years – what happens to Satan, anti-Christ, Beast
- C. Where does Christ Return and what does He do? Judgment -Sets up Reign on earth
- D. Where are the saved Believers?
- E. Who are the people in the 1000 years?
- F. What happens at the end of 1000 years?
- G. Victory is Final -Emphasize this!
- H. Thoughts

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## *Key History of Christian Eschatological Understanding*

**Historically, only a few points of consensus about eschatology have united the Church.**

The Church has always taught that Jesus will return in bodily form; that all humans will be resurrected bodily from the dead; that there is a final judgment whereby some people will be rewarded and some people punished; and that one's final, eternal state is not experienced until after that bodily resurrection.

**Most, perhaps all, Christians have approached eschatological Scriptures with some degree of idealism/spiritualism,** perceiving that the Spirit uses these passages to awaken the sinner to repentance; warn the believer of deception and temptation and the need for godliness; and encourage the faithful to perseverance with the promise that God will set things right in the end.

**There has been little agreement beyond these fundamental doctrines, and it does not appear that too many have been bothered by that fact as long as believers stay within the bounds of orthodox belief and practice.** The Church as a whole has insisted only on belief in Jesus's return, a bodily resurrection, and a final judgment. Sometimes fervent interest in eschatology has unleashed enthusiasm for new visions and prophecies (for example, Montanism in the late 100s and some radical reformers in the 1500s), which the Church has discouraged. Finally, the Church has long looked with great skepticism at date-setting, although that practice has proven irresistible to many people over the centuries.

**Current circumstances have many times inspired date setting.** During the first century of the Church, many believers expected Jesus to return at any moment, and so did not typically set dates. As time stretched on, some felt it necessary to explain the delay by calculating a future date, claiming thereby that the Bible had all along provided information about when Jesus would return. Thus began the common practice of calculating dates; interestingly, the date-setter almost always predicts a return during his own lifetime. Predicted dates appear through Church history and are almost too numerous to list.

**Especially in the Early Church, many believed the earth would exist for seven thousand years, and that Jesus's first coming had occurred somewhere in the middle or end of the sixth millennium.** The final judgment would mark the beginning of the seventh millennium, which was either a thousand years or symbolic of eternity. This belief was likely inherited from Jewish eschatology, which flourished in the centuries leading up to and including the first century of the church. It diminished during the Middle Ages when the earth seemed to outlast its predicted lifespan. It appears to be making a comeback with the turn of the second millennium.

**The Church has often (but not always) adopted interpretive stances in reaction to its circumstances.** Date-setting began early in response to Jewish eschatology and to changes in the circumstances of the Church. Premillennialism seems to grow popular during times of stress and persecution. It was common in the Early Church until Constantine brought an end to persecution in the AD 300s, after which amillennialism came to dominate and the Church began to discourage millennialism.

**A more optimistic form of amillennialism becomes more attractive when the future seems less bleak.** Postmillennialism became popular after the Reformation (1500s) appeared to reestablish faithful Christianity, during times of widespread revival (mid-1700s), and during the Enlightenment and rise of modernity (1600s-1800s), with its promises of social progress.

**Nevertheless, premillennialism survived until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when dispensationalism became overwhelmingly popular among many evangelical Christians.** In this form, the Church would be raptured (the notion of a pretribulational rapture is a recent eschatological innovation) and replaced on earth by ethnic Israel, who would be saved in great numbers at the end before Christ returns and ushers in the millennial Kingdom. The Zionist movement was popular among dispensationalists for this reason, and the establishment of Israel lent great credibility to the idea among many.

**Diversity of opinion has also characterized general approaches to eschatological chronology.** Futurism and idealism have been constant through Church history; historicism has old roots but became a popular approach only during and after the Reformation when Protestants used it as a means of making theological sense of the seeming apostasy of the Church during the Middle Ages. In response, some Catholics developed preterist and futurist approaches to explain why Revelation was either 1) mostly about the first century, or 2) about the future and final 3 1/2 -7 years of tribulation. As noted above, idealism/spiritualism has affected most people's eschatology since the first since century.

**We should not forget some of the other dimensions of eschatology, such as what happens to a soul between death and the end times.** From perhaps the second century, many have believed that the period between death and the resurrection would serve to purge and prepare believers; some even suggested the less wicked unbeliever might be brought to repentance in time for the resurrection. The Catholic Church would develop this idea into the doctrine of purgatory during the later Middle Ages. Some in the Early Church took this idea further and suggested that in time, all would be brought to belief in Jesus and experience eternal glory (Christian universalism). Meanwhile, some amillennialists viewed the millennial reign to be symbolic of the believer's intermediate state. At any rate, from the earliest centuries, most Christians believed in some type of connection between the worship of the living and the experience and welfare (and for some, intercession) of the deceased.



## Regarding Froehlich and the Apostolic Christian Church

**Samuel Froehlich’s personal notes and the published work of his co-elder George Mangold reveal a shared historicist view of Revelation**, meaning that both saw the visions and symbols as being fulfilled throughout the history of the New Testament church. This understanding included the fulfillment of certain prophecies in A.D. 70, while allowing for some “layered” or additional fulfillments later in time.

**Froehlich and Mangold clearly had a “remnant” view in which the greater part of the apparent or “visible” church since the Apostolic age has actually comprised an apostate, corrupt institution.** In this view, the establishment of the state churches and “Christian” nations was not a triumph but an eschatological evil and the primary source of persecution of the true or remnant church, which persisted in much smaller numbers over the centuries. This view was shared and supported by a minority of church historians, such as Lutheran Pietist Gottfried Arnold, who was cited heavily by both Froehlich and Mangold. (He was also the author of two song lyrics selected for the Zion’s Harp, #35 “Jesus Mighty Liberator” and #49 “Now Another Day is Ended”.)

**Beyond specific interpretive positions, some overall observations** can be gained from studying these writings. Compared with the more “spiritualized” vernacular we tend toward today in describing the Christian hope, Froehlich and Mangold seem much more at ease with the Biblical themes that make claims on our present physical reality: the bodily resurrection, the new earth, and the City of God coming to earth. Similarly, they saw the anti-Christian figures of New Testament prophecy as real-world institutions interacting with the Church, not as portrayals from a futuristic “world stage” that may have seemed odd to the original audience.

When interpreting specific passages and prophetic symbolism, **Froehlich’s personal notes and letters seem to take the tone of helpful pondering rather than hard-and-fast position statements**, sometimes offering multiple interpretation for consideration. Mangold’s self-published book does offer a specific understanding of the structure of Revelation, namely that the subsequent portions of the book (the letters to the churches, the seals, etc) provide a repeated, layered allegorical description of the same set of seen distinct periods in Church history.

**The millennial views of Froehlich and Mangold were most similar to the historic premillennial position.** Interestingly, Froehlich was a contemporary of Darby (the father of the dispensational premillennial view) and although Froehlich expressed some common thoughts such as the possibility of a future restoration of an ethnic or national Israel, he responded critically to what he called the “Darbyist” movement.

**Despite this early rejection of at least some of Darby's teachings, several Apostolic Christian ministers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were strongly persuaded by the dispensational view and spoke and wrote extensively on the topic.** These advocates within the denomination were influenced heavily by writings that were coming to dominate the broader evangelical scene, due particularly to interest generated by the establishment of modern Israel in 1948. [This journal article](#) describes the influence of dispensationalism among Mennonites. It is strongly anti-dispensational, which is regrettable for our purposes. For an excellent, more sympathetic book-length explanation of how premillennial dispensationalism came to dominate the thinking of most Americans, see George Marsden's book [Fundamentalism and American Culture](#).

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## Eschatological Views in the Early Church, in Chronological Order

Adapted from Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*. The chart was rearranged in chronological order, and an “x” was replaced with a “?” when we were less sure of Hill’s interpretation of the evidence, which does not always fit our modern categories.

Chiliasm is another term for millennialism (usually premillennialism).

	Definite chiliast	Subterranean intermediate state	Paradise only for the translated	Definite non-chiliast	Heavenly intermediate state	Indefinite on chiliasm
1 Clement 27-97					X	X
2 Clement				?	X	
Clementine Recognitions		X	X			X
Papias 90-140	X	X	X			
Hermas 60-120				?	X	
Polycarp (69-155)					X	X
Ignatius (50-117)					X	X
Irenaeus 120-180	X	X	X			
Clement of Alexandria (150-215)				X	X	
Athenagoras 150-200					X	X
Tertullian (160-240)	X	X	X*			
Origen (185-254)				X	X	X
Dionysius of Alexandria (190-265)				X	X	
Methodius	?				X	
Cyprian (200-270)				X	X	
Lactantius (290-350)	X	X				

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Commodianus(300-360)	X	X				
<i>Ascension of Isaiah</i> 6–11					X	X
Pseudo-Barnabus	?	?				X
<i>2 Baruch</i>	X	X	X			
<i>4 Ezra</i>	X	X	X			
<i>Epistula Apostolorum</i>				X	X	
<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i>				X	X	
<i>5 Ezra</i>					X	X
<i>Odes of Solomon</i>					X	X
<i>Acts of Thomas</i>					X	X
Melito					X	X
<i>Epistle to Diognetus</i>					X	X
<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>					X	X
<i>Martyrdom of Justin Martyr</i>					X	X
<i>Epistle of Vienne and Lyons</i>					X	X
<i>Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs</i>					X	X
<i>Passion of Perpetua</i>					X	X

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## *Handling Disagreement in the Early Church*

Among at least some people today, the Early Church may have the reputation as a golden age of unity and unanimity among brethren. This is inaccurate. The Early Church had to spend much energy and time fighting off heresies regarding core doctrine and often allowed a surprisingly wide range of opinion regarding more minor issues.

We found the following short piece indicative of how the Early Church, and perhaps we ourselves, can maintain unity while disagreeing about doctrines left unclear in Scripture.

### **Irenaeus: Solving conflicts in the church**

#### **Polycarp's view of communion was different than Anicetus, the Bishop of Rome.**

For the controversy is not merely as regards the day, but also as regards the form itself of the fast. For some consider themselves bound to fast one day, others two days, others still more, while others [do so during] forty: the diurnal and the nocturnal hours they measure out together as their its origin in our time, but long before in that of our predecessors, **some of whom probably, being not very accurate in their observance of it, handed down to posterity the custom** as it had, through simplicity or private fancy, been [introduced among them].

And yet nevertheless all these lived in peace one with another, and we also keep peace together. **Thus, in fact, the difference [in observing] the fast establishes the harmony of [our common] faith.** And the presbyters preceding Sorer in the government of the Church which thou dost now rule--I mean, Anicetus and Pius, Hyginus and Telesphorus, and Sixtus--did neither themselves observe it [after that fashion], nor permit those with them to do so. Notwithstanding this, those who did not keep [the feast in this way] were peacefully disposed towards those who came to them from other dioceses in which it was observed (although such observance was [felt] in more decided contrariety [as presented] to those who did not fall in with it; and **none were ever cast out [of the Church] for this matter.**

On the contrary, those presbyters who preceded thee, and who did not observe it. And when the **blessed Polycarp** was sojourning in Rome in the time of Anicetus, **although a slight controversy had arisen among them as to certain other points, they were at once well inclined towards each other [with regard to the matter in hand], not willing that any quarrel should arise between them upon this head.** For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp to forego the observance [in his own way], inasmuch as these things had been always observed by John the disciple of our Lord, and by other apostles with

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whom he had been conversant; nor, on the other hand, could Polycarp succeed in persuading Anicetus to keep [the observance in his way], for he maintained that he was bound to adhere to the usage of the presbyters who preceded him.

**And in this state of affairs they held fellowship with each other; and Anicetus conceded to Polycarp in the Church the celebration of the Eucharist, by way of showing him respect; so that they parted in peace one from the other, maintaining peace with the whole Church, both those who did observe**

Taken from *Fragments from The Lost Writings of Irenaeus* section III.

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## *Thoughts on the Methods We Use to Read and Interpret Eschatological Scripture*

### **Introduction**

Brad Klassen, in an article titled “[Premillennialism and Hermeneutics](#),” explores the question of why conservative scholars who agree on such a broad range of core doctrines scatter widely on the issue of eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

Klassen organizes his article around three major points of divergence on the approach scholars take in the art of interpreting end times passages.

- The legitimacy of grammatical-historical (or “literal”) method of interpretation
- “The function of progressive revelation,” which is the idea that God revealed Truth not all at once, at one point in time, but across 1500 years and to many different authors
- The influence of theological beliefs that we bring to our reading of the Bible<sup>2</sup>

Klassen believes the answer one gives to these questions will reliably predict his eschatological stance. This paper seeks to highlight some of his stronger arguments and question some of his weaker assertions.

### **The Grammatical-Historical Method**

Klassen starts with the interpretive approach he calls “literalism.” He then suggests that we could replace this term with “grammatical-historical,” since “literal” can be misleading. If “literalism” means reading the Bible with absolutely no attention to metaphor or other symbolism, then nobody reads the Bible in a totally literal fashion.

The grammatical-historical method strives to discover the Biblical author’s original intended meaning by paying attention to what the author’s words would have meant in the author’s own social, historical context. Klassen claims that dispensational premillennialism is “committed to the consistent practice of literal interpretation in all parts of scripture, including its prophetic portions”.<sup>3</sup> He bolsters his argument with quotations from critics of dispensationalism who acknowledge the abundance of “literal” interpretations among Dispensationalist’s reading of Old Testament texts. He

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Klassen, “Premillennialism and Hermeneutics,” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 127–55. Available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Klassen, 129.

<sup>3</sup> Klassen, 4.

does not claim that the other interpretative methods (classic premillennialism, amillennialism, or postmillennialism) ignore the grammatical-historical method (which would be a false claim), but only that they are not as consistent in using this approach as dispensational premillennialists.

Klassen makes a convincing case until one considers what authors using other approaches say about this issue. [Douglas M. Beaumont](#) quotes Gary DeMar, David Chilton, and James S. Russell criticizing the Dispensationalist position for abandoning the grammatical-historical method by ignoring the plain meaning of the “time texts” in the Bible that indicate that an eschatological event under discussion was going to happen very soon, presumably in the first century. Beaumont argues that preterists, at least as much as dispensationalists, are concerned with the Biblical author’s original intent. When considering Jesus’s words in Matthew 24, for instance, they focus on the question that gives occasion to His discourse for establishing a context (“when shall these things be?”). Furthermore, a consideration of the pronouns throughout the Olivet Discourse may lead a “literalist” to understand the entire passage as pertaining to the lifetime of the twelve apostles.<sup>4</sup> Of course, dispensationalists respond with arguments of their own that they believe make good sense of the time texts.

Klassen acknowledges where Dispensationalists have conceded that the grammatical-historical method is not the sole possession of Dispensationalism. He quotes dispensationalist Craig Blasing saying, “for scholars to say the difference (between a dispensationalist and a non-dispensationalist) is simply between literal and spiritual exegesis [Bible interpretation] is not accurate and is in fact misleading.”<sup>5</sup>

One conclusion from all of this is that the grammatical-historical method is respected by all conservative scholars, but it becomes impossible to accept all “literal” interpretations and avoid self-contradictory positions. Once someone has taken all their “important” texts literally he eventually must find non-literal interpretations of “pesky” texts to keep a cohesive eschatology. The decision concerning which texts must receive literal interpretation ultimately gets determined by the presuppositions—the beliefs one holds when approaching the text—the interpreter holds, a subject most writers want to pretend does not exist with respect to their interpretation.

## **Progressive Revelation**

This topic is complex, so we will only make a few comments. Progressive revelation refers to the gradual nature of God’s revelation to man as he inspired the writing of Scripture over centuries, under numerous social settings and, most importantly, across

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas M. Beaumont, “The Hermeneutics of Eschatology: Preterism and Dispensationalism Compared,” *Christian Apologetics Journal* 08, no. 2 (Fall 2009). Available [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> Klassen, “Premillennialism and Hermeneutics,” 133.

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two Testaments. Most everyone agrees that the revelation moves from the rather vague and underdeveloped in the early Old Testament to the complete and thorough writings of the New Testament.

The problem comes when considering Old Testament passages with New Testament teachings in mind. How much should we allow our New Testament understanding to affect our Old Testament interpretation? Klassen articulates an interpretive principle that insists that the original meaning cannot be changed by further revelation. It can only be expanded upon. He decries “covenantalists” (typically associated with amillennialism) for changing the meaning by infusing Old Testament texts with New Testament meaning.<sup>6</sup> He cites Isaiah 53 as an example of how an Old Testament text has a set meaning that can be made more understandable by New Testament revelation but cannot be altered by it. He suggests that believing that an Old Testament meaning can be changed or expunged calls into question what we mean by the inspiration of Scripture. Was the Old Testament wrong?

This is a compelling argument. We know the Old Testament revelation was sufficient light for saving faith for Old Testament saints. To allow that substantial meanings of Old Testament passages are altered by New Testament texts puts the faith of Old Testament saints at risk of being spurious. However, Klassen, like most debaters, employ the obvious texts to make his point. His argument cannot work universally.

For example, God’s promise to Eve is stated as a curse on the serpent: “it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). No one from a New Testament perspective could think of this in any way other than a figurative and spiritual sense. But did Eve understand it that way? It is impossible to know, but if one remembers that Eve just had a conversation with a snake that caused a fall, can anyone be dogmatic that she understood this figuratively? If she did see it more literally, does that make her faith spurious? Perhaps Klassen is claiming more than he has grounds to.

Another example is how New Testament authors make more of an Old Testament passage than a plain reading of the text might allow. The “young woman” versus “virgin” of Isaiah 7:14 debate is one example: it seems clear that Isaiah was predicting the virgin birth of Jesus, but did Isaiah and King Ahaz understand it that way?

All of this is vitally important when considering Old Testament prophecies concerning the nation of Israel. Dispensationalism largely depends on seeing these prophecies as pertaining to the ethnic nation of Israel even today, which denies any substantive change in one’s understanding of “Israel” from the Old Testament perspective to the New. If the unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament are read as spiritual promises to

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<sup>6</sup> Klassen, 6.

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the Church, or if one believes that true Israelites are now in the Church, the remaining three views of the end times become more attractive.

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## *The Souls of the Slaughtered*

### **Introduction**

Four seals have been opened. Four living creatures have called. Four horsemen have gone to earth. It is now time for the fifth seal. There are no more creatures to call out and no more horsemen to be sent. The throne room anxiously watches the slaughtered Lamb loosen the fifth seal, unsure of what to expect next. As the seal is opened, the eyes of the throne room turn not to the earth where the horsemen have gone, but instead to the altar below it. Here are congregated the souls of martyrs, slaughtered as the Lamb was, who have a bold petition for God. This paper will seek to understand events that occur with the opening of the fifth seal by first providing historical and literary context for the passage. Then, various significant elements of the Revelation 6:9-11 will be noted. Special attention will be drawn to the lament, and then the theological implications of Rev 6:9-11 will be examined. This passage informs theologies of martyrdom and suffering in the eschaton (end times) by exploring the memory of suffering in the throne room of God, being connected to the Lamb through suffering, and contrasting martyrdom and vengeance. It is necessary to limit the scope of suffering addressed in this paper to the sort of suffering these souls went through—suffering that comes as a result of the Word of God and the testimony they had been given.

### *Historical Context*

Who is the author of Revelation? The author identifies himself as John but does not specify that he is the same John who wrote the fourth Gospel.<sup>7</sup> Examining the grammatical habits of the author may lead the reader to conclude that the two books have different authors. For example, the author of Revelation, “places nominatives in opposition to their cases, irregularly uses participles, constructs broken sentences...”<sup>8</sup> and has even more inconsistencies with the fourth Gospel. However, these differences could be easily explained by the use of an amanuensis.<sup>9</sup> Since the arguments from internal evidence can be explained and external evidence supports it, it is wise to consider the apostle John to be the author of Revelation.<sup>10</sup> Assuming Johannian

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<sup>7</sup> Rev 1:1, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Gurthie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990) 939.

<sup>9</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 4.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 15.

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authorship implies that there may be continuity between John's Gospel, letters, and Revelation.

Revelation was likely written shortly after the reign of Nero or in the middle of the reign of Domitian. Unlike Nero, it appears that under the reign of Domitian only, "some very few Jews or Christians of high rank may have had to face prosecution, and, as well, that many Jews just may have feared expulsion."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the persecution under Nero seems to fit the persecution spoken of in Revelation so an earlier date is preferred.<sup>12</sup> Understanding this date reveals that John, "showed his readers, in the face of a Jerusalem about to fall, the vision of a *new* Jerusalem."<sup>13</sup>

### *Literary Context*

The purpose of the book of Revelation is found in its first verse which proclaims, "the Revelation of Christ, which is given to him by God to be shown to his servants about what must quickly come."<sup>14</sup> It warns the church of impending suffering and death and encourages them that, despite this horrible tribulation, God is in control.<sup>15</sup> The first chapter introduces how the Revelation came to be with John hearing the voice of God in the Spirit and coming face to face with the fierce and glorious Christ.<sup>16</sup> Christ commands John to record everything he sees, beginning with letters to the seven churches which are contained in chapters two and three. In chapter four, John enters the throne room of God where four creatures and 24 elders are singing the praise of God. In chapter five, he sees a scroll with seven seals, of which he is told none can open but the lion of Judah.<sup>17</sup> This lion of Judah is the same mighty man of Christ in chapter one, yet he now appears as a slaughtered lamb. The one who is strong, mighty, and worthy is a small, meek, slaughtered lamb. All sing praises to the lamb, and the 24 elders fall down in worship.<sup>18</sup> As the lamb opens the first four seals, each living creature takes their turn crying, "Come!" and one of the four fearsome horsemen is sent out.<sup>19</sup>

The lamb opens the fifth seal. There are no more living creatures. There are no more horsemen. The might and strength brought by the living creatures and horsemen is gone. Now, John's eyes turn instead to the altar. From under the altar, these

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<sup>11</sup> Brian Jones, *The Emperor Domitian* (London: Routledge, 1993) 119.

<sup>12</sup> Mark W. Wilson, *Revelation*. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2016) Ebook.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John's Revelation and John's Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012) 69.

<sup>14</sup> Rev 1:1 SBL

<sup>15</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) xviii.

<sup>16</sup> Rev 1:1-16.

<sup>17</sup> Rev 5:5.

<sup>18</sup> Rev 5:14.

<sup>19</sup> Rev 6:1-8.

slaughtered souls boldly petition for help from the Lord.<sup>20</sup> These martyrs beneath the altar, requesting vengeance, are the people we will come to know in this paper.

### The Text

Now that historical and literary context has been provided, the passage must be examined. Let us first read the Scripture and then focus on particular points of interest identified in the Scripture by superscript letters.

*Revelation 6:9-10:* And when he [the slaughtered lamb] opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar<sup>A</sup> souls of the ones who had been slaughtered<sup>B</sup> for the Word of God and for the testimony they had. They cried with a loud voice saying<sup>C</sup>, “How long, holy and true Lord,<sup>D</sup> will you neither judge nor avenge our blood on the ones dwelling in the earth?” So, each of them was given a long, white robe,<sup>E</sup> and they were told to rest a little longer until their number would be completed, and their fellow servants, namely their brothers, who were about to be killed as they had been.

### Points of Interest

A: Why are these souls under the altar? This imagery likely comes from Leviticus 4:7, where the blood of bulls is poured out at the base of the altar.<sup>21</sup> As the blood of the bulls runs around the base of the altar as a sacrifice to God, so also the saints who sacrifice their lives for God are gathered around the base of the altar. Thus, through their position under the altar, “...the martyred saints are clearly pictured as those sacrificed for Christ.<sup>22</sup>

B: The language of “slay” parallels the description of those under the altar with the Lamb, causing the reader to look backward to the slaughtered Lamb.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that these two are not closely connected, but rather these souls were among the slaughtered in the civil war caused by the second seal.<sup>24</sup> More likely, however, is that these slaughtered souls were martyrs.<sup>25</sup> This is revealed in verse nine which states, “the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held.” In his discussion on “slay”, Johns states that, “... it is violent imagery born of conflict. Jesus’ death is consistently tied to the language of witness and of victory in the

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<sup>20</sup> Rev 6:9-10.

<sup>21</sup> Mitchell G. Reddish, *Revelation* (Macon, GA, Smyth and Helwys: 2001) 130.

<sup>22</sup> Osborne, 285.

<sup>23</sup> J. Massyngberde Ford. *Revelation*. The Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975) 110.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul Heil, *The Book of Revelation: Worship for life in the Spirit of Prophecy* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books: 2014. Ebook.

<sup>25</sup> Mounce, 147.

Apocalypse.”<sup>26</sup> The slaughtered lamb depicted worthiness and strength in a seemingly vulnerable and defeated form. Perhaps here the slaughtered souls, like the Lamb, are the ones who are strong and worthy to petition God for His vengeance.

C: How did these slaughtered souls speak to God? The text reads, “they cried with loud voice.”<sup>27</sup> Was their cry loud because of their anger, fear, or impatience? Was this cry mixed with sobs or was it strong and clear? Schmutzer depicts these souls as, “begging for vindication as they hide under the altar for protection.”<sup>28</sup> This image of desperation may most naturally come to mind when reading about slaughtered souls petitioning God for vengeance, but perhaps there is another way to view them. John uses the phrase, “cried with a loud voice”<sup>29</sup> three times in the book of Revelation. The first time occurs in this passage. In the second, a great multitude from every nation proudly proclaims praise to the lamb (Revelation 7:10). In the third, an angel commands birds to feast on the evil rulers of earth (Revelation 19:17). Neither of these other instances of this phrase imply nervousness, timidity, or begging. Perhaps the saints were not hiding or begging, but, having sacrificed themselves for God, are confidently supplicating for vengeance to be wrought on earth.

D: The saints address God as δεσποτης instead of κυριος. Being used only ten times in the New Testament, δεσποτης is a far less common word than κυριος.<sup>30</sup> Because it seems to imply a much greater authority than κυριος, the martyrs are using, “... the title to acknowledge that God is the authentic sovereign.”<sup>31</sup> This is significant when considering the historical context of the passage. These souls, slaughtered by the authority of earthly rulers, recognize God to be their ultimate sovereign and the one to whom vengeance belongs.

E: What is the significance of the white robes being given to the slaughtered souls? First, it stands in sharp contrast with the gifts given to three of the four horsemen. The first horseman receives a crown as a conqueror, the second is given a sword to take peace, and the fourth is given authority to kill a quarter of the earth.<sup>32</sup> These violent gifts are drastically different than the white robes given to the slaughtered souls in Heaven.<sup>33</sup> Rather than gifts which bring destruction to earth, the slaughtered

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<sup>26</sup> Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 169.

<sup>27</sup> Rev 6:10.

<sup>28</sup> G.W. Peterman, A.J. Schmutzer, *Between Pain and Grace: A Biblical Theology of Suffering* (Chicago: Moody, 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Rev 6:10.

<sup>30</sup> Uses of δεσποτης: Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24; 1 Tim 6:1, 2; 2 Tim 2:21; Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18; 2 Pet 2:1; Jude 1:4; Rev 6:10.

<sup>31</sup> Ford, 99.

<sup>32</sup> Rev 6:1-8.

<sup>33</sup> Heil, Ebook.

souls are given robes of honor— symbols of blessedness and purity.<sup>34</sup> These souls have already suffered the violence of earth, and now are given a reward and rest.

### **The Lament of the Martyrs**

Revelation 6:10 contains the only prayer of supplication in Revelation.<sup>35</sup> This prayer takes on the form of a lament. This short verse contains a cry for deliverance, a question of why, and a yet statement, which are the three components of a “full-fledged lament.”<sup>36</sup>

#### *The Petition*

First, the souls boldly call for deliverance by requesting God to judge those on earth and avenge their blood. At first, this cry may be startling. These are martyrs, people who were willing to give up their lives for the sake of the Gospel, which is full of love and forgiveness! How could they cry out for vengeance? In their request, the intersection between justice and martyrdom is found. Yes, martyring is an unjust action, but justice does not belong to the victims. These slaughtered souls recognize the importance of both justice and martyrdom. They don’t “...take justice or vengeance into their own hands— retribution remains with God alone.”<sup>37</sup> In lament, the martyr can cry out for justice to the one to whom justice belongs.<sup>38</sup>

Second, the slaughtered souls ask God why in their question, “how long?” By placing this question at the beginning of their prayer, it is clear that they do not hesitate from asking God hard questions. This question of, “how long,” mirrors the petitions of the psalmist, the Jews speaking to Christ, and Christ Himself.<sup>39</sup>

Third, these suffering souls include a yet statement—a statement that recognizes the greatness of God in the midst of their lament. In this lament, it is presented by “O Lord, holy and true.” While they cry out for vengeance, these souls recognize the holy and true nature of God.

#### *The Response*

God’s response to the slaughtered souls comes in three parts. First, he clothes them in white robes that symbolize blessedness and purity. Second, he invites them to

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<sup>34</sup> Mounce, 149.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, “If God Is Good and Sovereign, Why Lament?” *Calvin Theological Journal* 36 (2001) 44.

<sup>37</sup> Peterman and Schmutzer, 115.

<sup>38</sup> Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19.

<sup>39</sup> Psalm 6:4; John 10:24; Matthew 17:17.

rest until their number is completed. Third, he promises them that they will only have to wait for a little while longer.

In addition to providing a contrast to the gifts of the horsemen, the white robes cause the reader to look back to the white clothes that signify purity in the letter to the church in Sardis in 2:4 and forward to the multitude in white robes in 7:9.<sup>40</sup> This gift reveals the identity of one who is wearing a white robe as blessed and pure.

God also invites the slaughtered souls to rest. Inaugurated eschatology (the concept that the end times has already been inaugurated, or initiated, but not yet ultimately fulfilled) is present in this invitation. The present experience of these slaughtered saints is the experience of rest.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the fullness of their number has not come in, so they continue to wait for vengeance. These martyrs continue to wait as the Lord waits.<sup>42</sup> These slaughtered souls already rest, yet still continue to wait.

Finally, God promises that they will only be waiting for a little while longer. It is imminent that the fullness of their number will come in; God has promised them this much in response to their lament.<sup>43</sup> They will only have to rest a little while longer.

## **Theological Implications**

### *Suffering and Heaven*

This passage carries interesting theological implications for the suffering of a believer after death. Quoting Revelation 21:20, today's Christians often consider dwelling with God to be the end of all suffering. Volf takes this theological perspective farther by arguing that, "memories of suffered wrongs will not come to the minds of the citizens of the world to come, for in it they will perfectly enjoy God and one another in God."<sup>44</sup> In this theological framework, the suffering of these slaughtered souls can be explained by stating that these souls are in an abnormal period of waiting, and they will forget the injustice once their fullness comes in and justice is brought to earth.

Unfortunately, this perspective diminishes the value of this particular group of people receiving white robes, considers the rest they are given to be inadequate, and declares the sacrifice they have given to God to be unworthy of remembrance. This

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<sup>40</sup> Fee, 98.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander E. Stewart, *Soteriology as Motivation for the Apocalypse of John* (Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press: 2015) 190.

<sup>42</sup> D. A. Carson, *How Long O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006) 46.

<sup>43</sup> Stewart, 151.

<sup>44</sup> Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent Word* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 2006) 177.

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group is worthy of their robes. As those gathered in the throne room declare that the slaughtered Lamb is, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12), so also are these slaughtered souls worthy of the white robe given to them; perhaps these are given by the Lamb himself! As the Lamb’s marks of being slaughtered make him worthy, so also the marks of the souls being slaughtered declare their magnificent sacrifice. Furthermore, there is nothing that implies that this rest, though temporary in nature, is in any way lesser than the rest that they will receive when vengeance has been wrought. Finally, the suffering of these slaughtered souls is worthy of redemptive remembrance. This is not to say that they ought to take the title of victim, but rather, as people who have laid down their lives as the Savior has done for them. Because Christ still bears the scars of his affliction, because he takes the form of the slaughtered Lamb, it is clear the suffering can be remembered redemptively in the eschaton. These slaughtered souls remember and cry out for justice. These slaughtered souls remember and receive honorable robes. These slaughtered souls remember and rest.

### *Knowing the Slaughtered Lamb*

This passage informs the theology of knowing God. Being slaughtered enables these souls to know Christ in his crucifixion, a point made by suffering Christians throughout Church history, including Anabaptists during the Reformation. When speaking of martyrdom, a scholar suggests, “Perhaps—pace impassibility theorists—the inner life of God itself includes deep agony as well as ecstatic joy... Perhaps our experiences of deepest pain as much as those of boundless joy are themselves direct (if still imperfect) views into the inner life of God.”<sup>45</sup> In this quotation, Adams draws the connection between experiencing pain and knowing God. This is not to say that pain should be sought out so that one can know Christ more, but that through the suffering that occurs in one’s life as a result of living a holy life in a fallen world, one can know God more.

If this is the case, martyrdom takes on a whole new meaning. Not only is it a sacrifice given to God, but it is also coming to know God deeply and intimately by literally laying down one’s life in the very image of Christ on the cross. From this theological framework of martyrdom, it is easier to understand Peter’s contention that, “if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:20). As Christ suffered in this world, so also must the redeemed suffer to do this work. In some cases, this suffering will lead to the ultimate sacrifice of martyrdom.

### *Martyrdom and Justice*

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<sup>45</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams, “Redemptive Suffering: A Christian Solution to the Problem of Evil,” in *Rationality, Religious Belief and Moral Commitment*. ed. Robert Audi and William J. Wainwright. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986) 264.

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Martyrdom and justice intersect in the fifth seal. This cry sharply contrasts the prayers of Jesus and Peter while they are being martyred.<sup>46</sup> Ladd explains these two cries of martyrs that are so different in nature by contending that it is the blood, not the martyrs, that is calling for vindication.<sup>47</sup> But it is important to recognize that this petition for justice to be done has rich biblical precedent. It echoes the covenant curse of Deuteronomy 32:35, the Psalmist in Psalm 79:10, and Paul in Romans 12:19. Osborne notes that, “this is not a low point for ethics but a high point for the divine justice and for the centrality of the sovereignty of God in the life (and death) of the saints.”<sup>48</sup> Vengeance belongs to God, and the slaughtered souls rightly cry to him for justice to be done. The self-sacrifice of martyrdom and justice are not at odds. Rather, these two concepts hold each other in tension in the image of these slaughtered souls petitioning for justice from under the altar.

## Conclusion

This text informs our theology of martyrdom and suffering in the eschaton by giving us a glimpse into the throne room of God. This carries several implications for understanding the world as it exists now. First, what is commonly considered to be defeated and vulnerable can be redeemed through Christ to be strong and worthy. The slaughtered lamb is worthy to open the scroll, and the slaughtered souls are worthy to petition God for justice and receive white robes. Second, through suffering, we can come to better know our suffering God. Though it is heartbreaking to see the pain of the persecuted Church, knowing this pain can lead us to better understand God. Finally, it can be affirmed that justice belongs to the Lord and will take place on the earth. The Holy and True God of the Gospel holds the attributes of mercy and forgiveness in tension with justice and vengeance. Wrongs will be righted because the Lord declares, “vengeance belongs to me; I will repay.”<sup>49</sup> We do well to remember these slaughtered souls, be strong in Christ, sacrifice ourselves for the Gospel, and trust that God will one day right all the wrongs that have been done. Live after the pattern of the slaughtered lamb.

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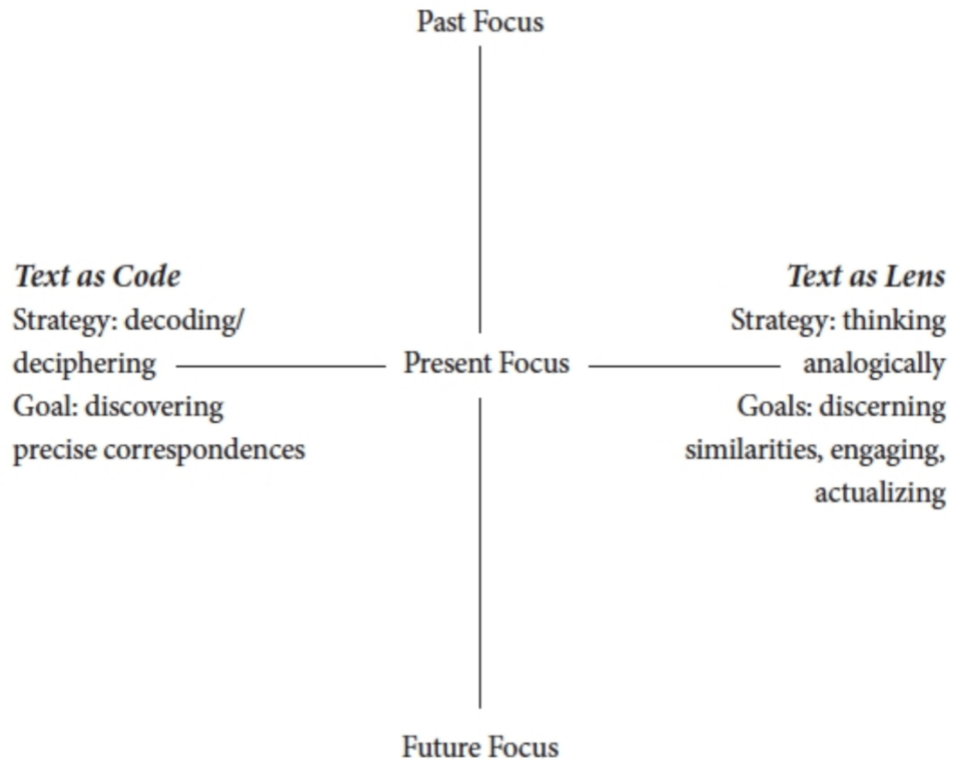
<sup>46</sup> Luke 22:34; Acts 7:60.

<sup>47</sup> George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans: 1972).

<sup>48</sup> Osborne, 286.

<sup>49</sup> Deut 32:35.

## Axis of Interpretation



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## Allegory versus Literalism (Originalism)

### Allegory versus Literalism (Originalism)

So much of the debate around the meaning of the Revelation is waged on the Allegorical vs. Literal debate. To focus closely on this tension reveals nuance that is seldom dwelt on by authors intent on distinguishing their interpretation from others. Humility is a frame of mind useful to resolving this tension.

The practice of allegorical interpretation of scripture reaches back to the church fathers and even to the NT authors reading of the OT (see Gal. 4:24). The most ardent proponents of allegorical interpretation were medieval expositors who believed in a four-fold interpretation scripture, Literal, Typological(allegorical), Tropological, Anagogical. For the topic at hand we will focus only on the Literal and allegorical. St. Augustine's commentary on the story of the Good Samaritan is possibly the most famous example of an allegorical interpretation. Here is an English translation of Augustine's "Quaestiones Evangeliorum, 2.19" by C. H. Dodd.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho: Adam himself is meant; Jerusalem is the heavenly city of peace, from whose blessedness Adam fell; Jericho means "the moon," and signifies our mortality, because it is born, waxes, wanes, and dies. Thieves are the devil and his angels. Who stripped him, namely, of his immortality; and beat him, by persuading him to sin; and left him half dead, because in so far as man can understand and know God, he lives, but in so far as he is wasted and oppressed by sin, he is dead—he is therefore called half dead. The Priest and Levite who saw him and passed by signify the priesthood and ministry of the Old Testament, which could profit nothing for salvation. Samaritan means "guardian," and therefore the Lord Himself is signified by this name. The binding of the wounds is the restraint of sin. Oil is the comfort of good hope; wine the exhortation to work with fervent spirit. The beast is the flesh in which he deigned to come to us. The being set upon the beast is belief in the incarnation of Christ. The inn is the Church, where travellers are refreshed on their return from pilgrimage to their heavenly country. The morrow is after the resurrection of the Lord. The two pence are either the two precepts of love, or the promise of this life and of that which is to come. The innkeeper is the Apostle. The supererogatory payment is either his counsel of celibacy, or the fact that he worked with his own hands lest he should be a burden to any of the weaker brethren when the Gospel was new, though it was lawful for him "to live by the Gospel."<sup>50</sup>

Though this may be the most famous it is not the most imaginative. One may be struck by Augustine's tight connection to certain OT teachings. But as time went on (and expositors were motivated by the belief that the Church held full authority in

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<sup>50</sup> From C. H. Dodd's *The Parables of the Kingdom* 1961 pg. 11ff  
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interpretation of the Bible) the use of allegory became more fanciful and less constrained by the Scripture itself. By the time of the Reformation the practice of allegorizing scripture had become so fanciful and unrestrained that Calvin resisted in numerous ways as the following example shows.

I am aware of the plausible nature of allegories, but when we reverently weigh the teachings of the Holy Spirit, those speculations which at first sight pleased us exceedingly, vanish from our view. I am not captivated by these enticements myself, and I wish all my hearers to be persuaded of this, — nothing can be better than a sober treatment of Scripture. We ought never to fetch from a distance subtle explanations, for the true sense will, as I have previously expressed it, flow naturally from a passage when it is weighed with more mature deliberation. 51

From the Reformation on the “plain” interpretation of Scripture has been made the highest interpretive principle by Protestants. This plain reading is most often called “Literal” but is also frequently labeled Grammatical/historical. In the Shared Terminology section, we suggest the substitution of the term “Originalism” for literalism for reasons discussed there.

In pointing out the varying historical emphasis on allegorical interpretation verses Literal (Original) interpretation one can lose sight of the reality that both forms of interpretation have always been employed to some extent. The medieval expositors believed it was necessary to understand the literal meaning so as to work out the allegorical and the Protestant expositors felt that passages such as 1 Corinthians 10:6-11 not only allowed for some constrained allegorical interpretation but in some sense required it. For if “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” then some meaning derived from beyond the literal may be in order.

This may be illustrated by citing our own tradition of interpretation (Apostolic Christian) where a literal interpretation has been predominant. Nevertheless, who has not heard from our pulpits how “Jesus can calm the storms in our lives” or how we should “face the giants in our lives”. If our sermons are to have direct application to life it seems almost necessary to allegorize certain passages – most notably the narrative ones.

If acceptance of allegory in interpretation has some degree of validity, what are the boundaries? When is it appropriate and, perhaps more importantly, when is it not? Let’s look back at the example from Augustine. If we consider the context from which that passage is taken what idea did Jesus intend to convey by the story? He told it in response to the question “who is my neighbor?” and concludes it by asking the lawyer “Which now of these three...was neighbor unto him?” Does Augustine’s allegory add to

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51 Calvin’s commentary on Daniel 10:5–6 in John Calvin and Thomas Myers, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 242.

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or distract from the point of Jesus' story? However good the allegory may seem, if it draws the hearer away from Scripture's clear intention it should be abandoned.

Up to this point it would seem best to look for the literal/original interpretation of all texts. But there are some texts for which the text itself suggests that allegory (or some form of figurative reading) is intended by the author. One such text is Matthew 5:17,18

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

For the most part this passage is straight-forward and would commend itself to a literal interpretation except that many other scriptures seem to say something quite opposite. Consider:

Romans 6:14b ...for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Galatians 2:16-19 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Hebrews 8:13 In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

In consideration of the whole council of God we are compelled to look for clues in the text that would create fidelity across the sum of these passages. Whole books could be written (indeed have been) on this passage but let it suffice to make a couple of observations.

The word "fulfil" in Matthew 5:17,18 should stand out to us. That is an unusual word to describe one's relation to the law. In a "not this but that" type of description of the law we would expect some other word to stand against "destroy". Perhaps "not come to destroy but to obey" or "not come to destroy but to enforce" or "not come to destroy but to endorse" would seem natural. Fulfil is typically used to describe prophesy. So is it possible to consider all that God spoke through the "Law" as a form of prophesy of His Son? If so, we have adopted in some sense an allegorical interpretation of a passage that at first look appears to call for a literal interpretation. This approach seems to be consistent with Paul's statement in Galatians 4:24 and the passage from Hebrews in chapter 4:3-9. If we look specifically at "fulfillment" claims in the NT we see this approach used numerous places such as Matthew 2:15. There we find "out of Egypt have I called my son" as a fulfillment of a prophesy about Jesus taken from Hosea where

in context the OT prophet is speaking of national Israel being delivered from slavery in Egypt.

The apparent “out of context” quotations that NT writers bring out of the OT appears to occur most frequently in regards to the Messiah (i.e. Matthew 1:23, Matthew 2:17-18, Acts 2:30,31). Many commentators believe that the unique application of seemingly “out of context” quotations to the Messiah is based on the apostle’s conviction that the entire OT looks forward to, testifies of, and anticipates the Messiah. Once again, we have at least some scriptural bases for seeing an allegorical interpretation of scripture.

Now then, does any of the above examples drawn from scripture provide justification for an allegorical reading of the Revelation? There is no consensus on the answer to that question. We can list some arguments for each interpretive approach.

### **Arguments for a literal reading of Revelation**

1. Literal/originalist interpretation is the foundational way of reading the text of any language. A text should be read allegorically/figuratively only when the grammatical construction indicates that the author intended the words to be read that way.
2. Literal/originalist interpretation tethers the interpretation to the text and prevents fanciful speculation about a meaning that is not present in the text.
3. A literal/originalist interpretation produces descriptions of events that have no correlating historical events to attribute them to. This creates a large panorama of future events that provide ample structure into which many unfulfilled OT prophecies can come to fruition.

### **Arguments for an allegorical/figurative reading of Revelation**

1. Revelation opens in verse 1 with the statement that the book is an unveiling of Jesus Christ. It has already been suggested that NT authors saw a Messiah fulfillment in the entire OT that was drawn from an allegorical/figurative reading of scripture when Jesus Christ was in view.
2. Also present in the first verse of Revelation is the statement that God “signified” (Greek word – *semaino*) this unveiling to an angel. Some translations use “communicate” to express this word. However, this word is used just 6 times in the NT (Gospel of John -3 times, Acts -2 times, Revelation – once). Of the 3 times we see it in the Gospel of John it is used to describe something symbolically.
3. Much of the Revelation is written in the literary genre called Apocalyptic. This genre is characterized by a strong reliance on symbolism. Apocalyptic often mixes multiple layers of symbols onto symbols.

4. The Revelation does not quote other scriptures verbatim. However, many allusions to others scriptures are recognized. Because allusions are not as clear as quotations there is a large variation in the estimates of the number of them in this book. Most scholars claim around 400. (For reference, there are 404 verses in Revelation.) Most of these allusions are pulling in some thought or sense from the passages they allude to without explicitly stating it. If you heard someone say “let’s not be a tinkling cymbal” you would, no doubt, think of Paul’s call to love as the highest duty, even though the phrase does not include the word love.

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