

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Powellhurst Men's Bible Study

Episode 1, 4:1—7:17

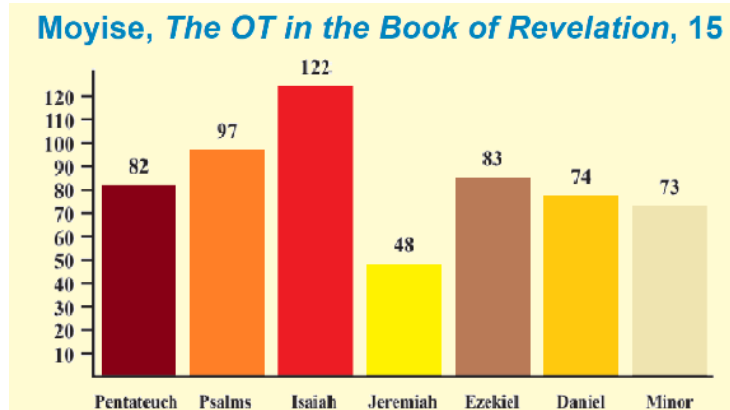
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	Present Time	Time	Times	No. Time	1000 Years	Forever
Exodus	22:8-21	22:8-21				
Episode 2		18:11-22:1				
Episode 4		18:10	12:2-18:10			
Episode 3		11:18-12:4				
Episode 5		11:18		8:1-11:18		
Episode 7		7:1-17:17				
Parados	1:8-3:22					
Prologue	1:1-8					

Literary Structure of the Book of Revelation

Learning objectives

- Distinguish seven prophetic visions.
- Locate their fulfillment before the time of wrath.
- Understand the meaning of 'great tribulation'.



Context of the New Testament

Presupposition: The Gospels, the Epistles and the Apocalypse are best interpreted in their own context, namely, 'second temple' Jewish texts.

Not from: later contexts such as:

- Church fathers who read neither Hebrew nor Aramaic, or who worked only in Latin.
- Roman Catholic or Orthodox church traditions.
- Calvinist, Arminian, Lutheran, Pentecostalist or dispensationalist theologies.
- Religions: Islam, Mormonism, Jehovahism, etc.
- Destructive or re-constructivist scholarship.

Apocalypse, Episode 1, Rev. 4:1—7:17

“Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this” (4:1).

- Episodes begin with a vision of heaven, move to events on earth, and lead to praise towards God.
- From the 2nd century CE until the wrath (6:17).
- Seven visions: ‘then I saw...’

Throne room in heaven

Beings: God, Lamb, four guardians, seven spirits, 24 elders, myriads of angels.

Furniture:

- a sea of glass (4:6; 15:2)
- the tabernacle of testimony (15:5)
- an altar of incense (5:8)
- an altar of sacrifice (6:9)
- the ark (chest) of covenant (11:19)
- harps for worship (14:2; 15:2)

Winged chariot and a deity

A coin from Gaza (southern Philistia) depicting a winged chariot and a deity, reminiscent of Ezekiel’s vision of Yahweh’s throne flying all the ways of the zodiac, i.e., over all nations. The inscription reads either YHW (Yahu) or YHD (Judea), 4th century B.C.



Vision 1 of 7: Everything starts in heaven.

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?

- First and the Last. Isa. 41:4.
- The Living One. ὁ ζῶν, *ho Zōn*, John 6:51.
- I was dead, and see, I am alive forever.
- I have the keys of Death and of Hades.

Revelation 4:1-6a

- Recall Moses at Mt. Horeb

Revelation 4:6b-8

- Four creatures = throne guardians
- Sing three threes. Praise + warning.

Revelation 4:9-11

- 24 Elders, theories: (1) 24 books of the Tanach. (2) 12 tribes + 12 apostles. (3) 24 orders of priests. (4) the non-fallen gods over the 70 nations.
- They sing to the Creator.

Vision 2 of 7: Everything revolves around Jesus

Revelation 5:1-5

- Jesus is worthy to break seven seals.

Revelation 5:6-10

- Jesus has redeemed all ethnic communities.

Revelation 5:11-14

- Jesus, crucified & risen, receives worship.

Vision 3 of 7: Tribulation on earth

Revelation 6:1-8

- The four horsemen prevent a godless Utopia.

Vision 4 of 7: Safety in heaven

Revelation 6:9-11

- Martyrs in heaven await divine vengeance.

Vision 5 of 7: Natural disasters

Revelation 6:12-17

- Signs in the sky
- Earthlings fear the coming Day of divine wrath.

Vision 6 of 7: Faithful Israelites

Revelation 7:1-8

- Signs in the sky
- One missing tribe.

Vision 7 of 7: Faithful Gentiles

Revelation 7:9-17

- Every ethnicity sings (9-10)
- Heavenly beings respond (11-12). When we sing in worship, do angels in heaven join with us?
- Out of the 'great tribulation' (13-14)
- The Lamb shepherds them (15-17)

Theories of a 'great tribulation'

- Jewish: From the captivity of Judah till Messiah.
- Second temple: Greek and Roman domination.
- Jesus: The Roman invasion from circa 64 CE till after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE.
- Church: Persecution of Christians under Rome.
- Protestant: Under Roman Catholicism.
- Missionary: Under pagan chiefs and governments.
- Evangelical: A short persecution under Antichrist, before or following Jesus 2nd coming.

The Great Tribulation in the 2nd temple era

²⁶ They made inquiry and searched for the friends of Judas and brought them to Bacchides, who took vengeance on them and made sport of them. ²⁷ So there was great distress* in Israel such as had not been since the time a prophet had last appeared among them. 1 Maccabees 9:26-27

*θλιψις μεγάλη, *thlipsis megalé*, 'great tribulation'. Thus, second-temple Jews believed that the 'tribulation' had started in the 2nd century BCE. The same expression occurs in Rev. 7:14 but with definite articles, perhaps harking back to the second-temple belief.

