

VIEWS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Historical, Preterist, and Futurist

-A. Ralph Johnson

The Book of Revelation has always sparked a sense of fantasy. The lure of the mysterious is exhilarating. Much time has been spent trying to decode its symbols. Much confusion has been the norm.

Revelation 1:3 pronounces a blessing on those who read, hear and obey it. However, it is obvious that it was never intended to be understood by everyone. In view of that, it is equally obvious that differences over which view is correct must not be made tests of acceptance between Christians. The book is there for us to mine its benefits, not to bash each other over differences as to its meaning. While we must be cautious, we do have the liberty to seek to understand and to urge others to consider what we discover.

The primary message is clear. Christ will triumph. He will come again. He will reward his people for faithfulness to him. He will punish Satan and those who follow him. There will be a new heaven and a new earth with no crying, pain or death. If we are faithful unto death we will receive a crown of life.

Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

VIEWS OF THE BOOK

There are many views of Revelation. Endless numbers of books have been written from different perspectives. We are going to consider three major conservative views which themselves have many sub-categories.

Preterist –According to this view, most or all of Revelation was fulfilled in the first century of the church, commonly limited to events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem.

Futurist --Most of the fulfillment of the book is still future. This is the popular view among the denominational world today. It is highly literalistic and predominantly pre-millennial.

Historicist --That the book is a panorama of the great events spread throughout history, relative to God's people. This view is mostly a-millennial or post-millennial but is also held by some historical pre-millennialists.

The object of this presentation is to compare these three views and the basis of their claims and the Scriptures.

DATE OF THE BOOK

EARLY DATE

Those contending for the early date place it before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., in the reign of the emperor Nero who died in 68 A.D.

Clement, Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, wrote that John went from the island of Patmos back to Ephesus “*after the tyrant’s death.*”¹

Clement does not name the “*tyrant.*” Those who accept the early date believe he was Nero. Because Clement’s description of the events of John’s ministry after leaving Patmos seem unlikely for a man who would then be over 90 years old, Preterists consider the late date unlikely. The time factor especially centers on a young man who John entrusts to a bishop’s care who afterwards renounced his faith and joined a band of outlaws. After some time, John returned on business and sought out the man and brought him back to Christ. It is claimed that there would not have been time for all of this to take place if John wrote around 95 AD.

A footnote in the Nicene & Ante-Nicene Fathers by the translator, Dr. Arthur McGiffert, suggests this may not be authentic. Such stories commonly grow up around important people. In any case, we do not know the strength of John at this time.

Some outstanding commentators holding the early view: Robert Young (who wrote Young’s Concordance), Wescott and Hort, J.B.Lightfoot, Sir Isaac Newton and Moses Stuart.

LATE DATE

Those who favor the late date maintain that John wrote about 95 A.D..

IRENÆUS, Bishop of Lyons, France [120-202 A.D.] who was a disciple of Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John.

“We will not however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, toward the end of Domitian’s reign.”²

This is also recorded by Eusebius around 325 A.D., in his Church History, Book 3, Chap. 18, “The Apostle John and the Apocalypse.”³

EUSEBIUS [260-340 A.D.] : Book 3, Chapter 23

¹ Eusebius, Church History, Book III, Chap. 23 “Narrative Concerning John the Apostle, 6, --Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1, p.150

Also, Clemens Alexandrinus, “Who Is The Rich Man” #42 – Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2.

² --Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” Book 5, Chap. 30, 3, in his discussion of the number and name of the Antichrist. Anti-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p.559-560. (Ages Digital Library, p.1122)

³ Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, (Ages Digital Library 233).

NARRATIVE CONCERNING JOHN THE APOSTLE.

*AT that time the apostle and evangelist John, the one whom Jesus loved, was still living in Asia, and governing the churches of that region, having **returned after the death of Domitian from his exile on the island.** And that he was still alive at that time may be established by the testimony of two witnesses. They should be trustworthy who have maintained the orthodoxy of the Church; and such indeed were **Irenaeus and Clement** of Alexandria. The former in the second book of his work *Against Heresies*, writes as follows: “And all the elders that associated with John the disciple of the Lord in Asia bear witness that John delivered it to them. For he remained among them until the time of Trajan.” And in the third book of the same work he attests the same thing in the following words: “But the church in Ephesus also, which was founded by Paul, and where John remained until the time of Trajan, is a faithful witness of the apostolic tradition.” **Clement** likewise in his book entitled *What Rich Man can be saved?* indicates the time, and subjoins a narrative which is most attractive to those that enjoy hearing what is beautiful and profitable. Take and read the account which runs as follows: “Listen to a tale, which is not a mere tale, but a narrative concerning John the apostle, which has been handed down and treasured up in memory. For when, after the tyrant’s death, he returned from the isle of Patmos to Ephesus, he went away upon their invitation to the neighboring territories of the Gentiles, to appoint bishops in some places, in other places to set in order whole churches...”⁴*

VICTORINUS, [300 A.D.] bishop of Petau, Commentary on Revelation chapter 17:10. “And there are seven kings: five have fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he is come, he will be for a short time.” The time must be understood in which the written Apocalypse was published, since then reigned **Caesar Domitian**; but before him had been Titus his brother, and Vespasian, Otho, Vitellius, and Galba. These are the five who have fallen. One remains, under whom the Apocalypse was written — **Domitian**, to wit. “The other has not yet come,” speaks of Nerva; “and when he is come, he will be for a short time,” for he did not complete the period of two years.⁵

JEROME, [400 A.D.]

*John...saw in the island of Patmos, to which he had been banished by the Emperor **Domitian** as a martyr for the Lord, an Apocalypse containing the boundless mysteries of the future.*⁶

Outstanding commentators holding the late view: Albert Barnes, W. Hendricksen, and R. C. H. Lenski.

⁴ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, p. 603, “Salvation of the Rich Man,” #42 (also Ages Digital Library, p.1221)

⁵ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p.341

⁶ Jerome, “Treatises”, “Against Jovinianus” Book 1, #26 (Nicene and Ante-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 6)

APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING

Why are there so many views? The reasons vary but much of it is due to the approaches taken. Often the interpreter seeks to make it fit some pre-conceived concept or theological perspective. For example, some commentators interpret the book as the early belief that Jesus would come in their generation.

Another popular method is to look for similarities and hastily conclude identity. Accordingly, an “*eagle*” (Dan. 7:4; Rev. 12:14) may be viewed as the United States, a “*lion*” (Dan. 7:4; Rev. 13:2) as England, a “*bear*” (Dan. 7:5; Rev. 13:2) as Russia, and a “*dragon*” (Rev. 12:9; 20:2) as China. To the superficial observer, since in our day it is popular to use these symbols for those nations. This may sound satisfactory but it is totally misleading. Similarity is not necessarily identity. We must discover what **God** intended.

Our approach rests on an old principle for traveling in the wilderness. Taking careful stock of known points of reference and use them to keep your bearings while exploring the unknown. Discover what God intended through what He has already revealed. Watch carefully and listen cautiously to the clues God has provided and use those points of reference to provide perspective to keep from straying too far from the true meaning.

In opening the book of Revelation it would be best to first prayerfully survey the book of Daniel, upon which much of the imagery is based. This should be first studied for content before trying to decide on the meaning. Things that have been interpreted either in these books or elsewhere in the Bible should be noted.

Study should begin by familiarizing one’s self with the Book of Revelation, noting the points that God reveals without fixing too quickly on any interpretation. Following this, all of the views should be compared to see how they fit what the scriptures reveal. Unfortunately, in the limited space here it is impossible to adequately lay such a foundation. We can only present a general summary and focus on some outstanding points. We ask that the reader consider what is here present with fairness and caution.

I. THE HISTORICIST VIEW

A. INTRODUCTION (Chapter 1)

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Note: it was going to come to pass “*shortly*.” It is obvious that the statements in chapters 19-22 about the resurrection, judgment, and new heaven and earth, must be still future. Since some things clearly are not yet fulfilled, “*shortly*” must be as God views time (as in 2Pet. 3:8-9), or that it would soon **begin** (Luke 21:28) to be fulfilled.

Jesus is then identified as the source and John as the writer, followed by a symbolic vision of Jesus, (compare Dan. 10:4-8) concluding with the commission of John to...

1:19 Write therefore the things which you saw, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter.

Note these words carefully. They indicate what John was to write--past, present, and future.

“THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN”

The things he had seen may refer to his experiences with Christ. John wrote the gospel of the life of Jesus and three smaller epistles.

1 John, Chapter 1

1 That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life 2 (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal (life), which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); 3 that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ: 4 and these things we write, that our joy may be made full.

If these books were written before Revelation then it may have reference to the vision of Jesus among the candlesticks (1:12).

B. MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA (chap. 2-3)

“THE THINGS WHICH ARE”

Chapters 2 and 3 are included in “the things which are.” These were actual churches in Asia that existed in the time of John. The content deals with existing situations. People are named by name. Local situations are identified. All are told to listen and urged to be overcomers. All except Smyrna and Philadelphia are warned to repent.

In these seven churches, futurists see seven periods of the church. However, nothing in the chapters indicates this.

In reply to the problem that chapters two and three obviously contain things that existed at the time John wrote, it is claimed that this is an instance of “double fulfillment.” While they must admit it speaks to existing churches, they contend that there is a secondary “hidden” message concerning seven church ages.

However appealing the theory may sound, the first few verses of chapter four indicate otherwise. The “things which must be hereafter” are not shown until after John ascends to heaven and the one worthy to open the books is determined. Rev 4:1 (cf. 1:19) clearly distinguished this as the future from “the things which are” about which John wrote in chapter 3.

C. PANORAMA OF THE FUTURE FROM THE TIME OF JOHN TO THE JUDGMENT (4:1—chapter 11)

“THE THINGS WHICH SHALL COME TO PASS HEREAFTER”

INTRODUCTION: Choosing the one who is worthy to open the future

Revelation 4:1 *After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, (a voice) as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.*

Instead of recognizing God’s beginning point for revealing the future, many futurist commentators try to place us in “the Laodicean period of the church,” and make the words, “*come up hither,*” to be the rapture of the church. Although not one word is said about it in the passage, they see the “Grand Fly-by” taking place at this point. According to this view, Jesus catches up the faithful Christians to spend the next seven years in heaven at the marriage supper of the lamb, while those who have not been faithful learn to mend their ways by suffering through the Great Tribulation. It is a marvel that so many can see so much in so little.

The Greek in the two passages compared:

Rev. 1:19

Greek	ha	mellei	genesthai	meta	tauta
English	things which	shall	come to pass	after	this
Strong's #	3739	3195	1096	3326	5023

Rev. 4:1

Greek	ha	dei	genesthai	meta	tauta
English	things which	must	come to pass	after	this
Strong's #	3739	1163	1096	3326	5023

The Bible in Basic English translates Rev 4:1, “*After these things I saw a door open in heaven, and the first voice came to my ears, like the sound of a horn, saying, Come up here, and I will make clear to you the things which are to come.*”

Chapters 4 & 5. Who shall open seals of the future?

Chapter 4 is a throne scene with four living creatures (4:6-9 cf. Ezek 1:4-11) and twenty-four elders worshipping God . Chapter 5 is a continuation of the events of chapter 4 and introduces a book sealed with seven seals. The question is raised, “Who is worthy to open the book?” Only the Lamb of God is found worthy. It is obvious that the book is the future, which Jesus will open one sealed period at a time.

1. FALL OF PAGAN ROME. (chapter 6-7) (From the time of John to Constantine)

Chapter 6 speaks of four horses, souls under the altar and the fall of heavenly bodies. These fit the events within the Roman Empire from the time of John to Constantine.

First Seal, A white horse

1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer. (cf. Zec 1:8; 6:3, 6)

A white horse suggests victory and triumph. This was the way Roman victories were celebrated. When John wrote, Rome was at its greatest expanse. This triumphant period is appropriately symbolized by a man riding a white horse.

The rider carries a bow--the sign of Crete, the Emperor Nerva's (96-98) home country.

Gibbons the historian, in his great work, *The Rise And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, says of that time:

“If a man were called to fix the period of the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he

would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian [96 A.D.] to the accession of Commodus.” (Vol. I, p. 47.)

Some have suggested that, because “*The Word Of God*” in chapter 19 rides a white horse, this must be Jesus. However, Jesus did not come immediately following the time of John, and other than both having a white horse, there are no similarities. Every mention of a white horse is not necessarily speaking of Jesus. The picture better fits the triumphant period of Rome followed by the progressive decline and fall of pagan rule down to the time of Constantine.

Second Seal: A red horse

Rev. 6:3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. 4 And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. (cf. Zec 1:8; 6:2)

Beginning with Commodus (180 A.D.) was a period of terrible civil upheaval and bloodshed which continued for a hundred years, in which over thirty out of thirty-four emperors died violently.

Third Seal: A black horse

Rev. 6:5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not. (cf. Zec 6:2, 6)

Caracalla (211-218) and **Geta** shared the throne after the death of their father, Septimus. Caracalla treacherously murdered his brother in his mother's arms and then went mad. He killed over 20,000 people who knew his brother or knew of what he had done. He drained the national treasury with his outlandish living and then extended and doubled the taxes. He brutally extracted assessments against the producers until the effect was to depress the output of grain, oil, and wine. Prices soared and scarcity prevailed.

Fourth Seal: A pale horse

Rev 6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Decius (249-251). His second year was jolted by a disastrous plague which ravaged the world for almost twenty years. Famine swept the empire and the barbarians on the borders pressed in from all sides. There is even an account of the Christians being accused of responsibility for the great increase of attacks upon

the population by animals. Over 5,000 people a day were reputed to have died in the city of Rome for a while. It is estimated that over one-fourth of the population of the empire was swept away in these years.

Fifth Seal: Souls under the altar

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled their course.

Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) radically changed the rule of the empire, dividing it between four rulers. During his reign he launched the tenth and bitterest persecution against Christians.

Sixth Seal: Stars falling from heaven.

Rev. 6:12 And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; 13 and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. 14 And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

This appropriately pictures the collapse of pagan imperial domination, accomplished through the victory of Constantine. The Pagans saw it as the end of the world.

Chapter 7. Sealing the servants of God in their foreheads. (cf. Ezek. 9:4)

The four destroying winds are held back while two groups are sealed: 144,000 out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and an uncountable multitude out of all nations.

This fits the period of expansion of Christianity following the triumph of **Constantine** and the legalization of Christianity.

2. FALL OF THE WESTERN CHRISTIANIZED ROMAN EMPIRE

Chapter 8 opens the seventh seal, in which seven trumpets are blown. The first four trumpets announce the fall of the old Western Roman Empire. These correspond to the four great invasions of Rome by the barbarians.

The first angel sounds:

The **Visgoths** under Alaric sacked Rome by land from the north (408-410 AD).

The second angel sounds:

The **Vandals**, led by Geneseric sacked Rome from across the Mediterranean Sea in North Africa, the area of Carthage (428-468 AD).

The third angel sounds:

The **Huns**, led by Attila, “the scourge of God” crossed the Danube River and sacked Rome (433-453 AD).

The fourth angel sounds:

Odoacer, king of the Western Goths, conquered Rome in 476 AD and brought the 1200 year reign of the Western Empire to an end.

Rev. 8:13 the angel cries “**Woe, Woe, Woe**,” signifying the nature of the three trumpets yet to sound. The Western Empire has fallen. Attention turns to the East. Indeed, the events that follow are terrible woes bringing the end to the mighty Roman Empire.

3. FALL OF THE CHRISTIANIZED EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

Chapter 9

The fifth angel sounds:

A star falls from heaven opening the abyss from which a locust plague swarms across the Earth. They sting like scorpions and torment men. Nothing could better describe the advent of Mohammed, around 622 AD and the Arabian Saracen hordes that within a hundred years swarmed over Arabia, Persia to India, and Asia, North Africa and Spain, darkening the ruling powers of the world. They were only turned back after crossing the Pyrenees Mountains into France, by the victory of Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours, and held from crossing the Hellespont into Greece by the Byzantine Emperors at Constantinople.

SYMBOLS:	INTERPRETATION:
9:1. Star fallen to earth uses key to open bottomless pit.	Mohammad, opens false prophecy upon the world
9:2. Smoke from pit darkens sun and air	Muslim influence darkens the ruling powers over the world
9:3. Locusts with power of Scorpions	Muslim Arabian hoards swarm over Asia, North Africa and Spain.
9:4. Not hurt earth or green thing but only those who do not have the seal of God	Muslims were told not to harm the land or growing things. Their main focus was against idolatry – image veneration
9:5, 10. Torment them five months	Arab domination about 150 years (5 x 30 = 150 days = 150 prophetic years)
9:6. Men should seek death	Plunder, slavery, fear, suffering produced desperation of wishing for death
9:7. Locusts like horses going to battle Crowns of gold on heads Faces like men	Arabs fought on horseback They wore gold turbans While they came like a plague of locusts, they were men
9:8. Hair like women Teeth like lions	Arab men wore their hair long They were fierce like lions
9:9. Breastplates of iron Sound of many chariots	They wore chain armor in battle They came in great numbers
9:11. Angel of the bottomless pit	They were being directed by the messenger of Satan

The sixth angel sounds:

The second “*woe*,” answers to the Turks who descended through Persia from the steppes above the Caspian Sea, crossed the Euphrates, and overran all of Asia and North Africa. They were the first to introduce the use of gunpowder (made with sulfur “*brimstone*”) into the West. Their use of cannon against Constantinople, finally brought the Eastern Empire to an end. Firing as they charged was like fire coming out of the mouths of their horses.

SYMBOLS:

SYMBOLS:	INTERPRETATION:
9:14. Angels loosed at the Euphrates	Turks invade Asia across the Euphrates
9:15. Prepared for an hour, day, month and year. (391 “days”)	About 391 years from time the Turkish power embarked on conquest (1053) to the fall of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire in 1453
9:16. Vast numbers of horsemen	The Arabians were well known for their powerful use of horsemanship in battle
9:17-18. Horses with faces like lions breathing fire and brimstone	They were fierce fighters. They introduced gunfire in their charges

9:19. Tails of horses have power to hurt	Rank was shown in tails of horses?
9:20-21. Idolaters, murders, sorceries, fornication, thefts not repented of.	Terrible conditions of the world and the church in this period.

4. THE REFORMATION

Chapter 10.

An angel produces a little book that was sweet to eat but made John's stomach bitter. This fits the spread of the word of God, resulting in the bitter conflict of the Reformation. (cf. Ezek 3:1-3)

Gutenberg's invention of the movable type press and printing of the Bible was a key factor in the Reformation. Luther began the Reformation in 1517 with his 95 Theses. The result was a bitter struggle over the teachings of the Bible.

Chapter 11.

Measuring the temple

This fits the Reformation in which the church was being measured by God's word.

The "Holy City" (the Church) is trod down 42 months (1260 prophetic years).

"Two witnesses" who are able to prophesy and bring fire down from heaven, prophesy for 1260 days (prophetic years) in sackcloth. (cf. Zec. 4:3, 11-14. The "two olive trees" supplied oil to the lamps which provide light from God)

This may represent the Old and New Testaments, which reveal prophecies against nations and were greatly suppressed by the Holy Roman Emperors and the Papacy. During the French Revolution they were especially attacked by atheistic forces that came to power and declared the only god was reason. However, God preserved them and after three and a half days (prophetic years) they were elevated and the God of the Bible was again recognized. During this period of rejecting the existence of God, conditions became so bad that Voltaire wrote, *"If there were no God, it would be well to invent one."*

Rev. 11:16-18 brings us to the judgment. This seems to be suggested in 10:7 which said that when the seventh angel sounds, time would be no more.

D: TRIUMPH OF CHRIST OVER HIS ENEMIES

At this point the book changes to describe the struggle between Christ and Satan (pictured as a ten-horned dragon), with his two confederates, the ten-horned beast and the two-horned beast (also called the "false-prophet" –Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

1. IDENTIFYING THE ENEMIES (chapters 12 & 13)

Chapter 12

There is a great struggle between God and Satan. Satan is pictured as a ten-horned *dragon* who is cast down to earth. The "*woman*" that brings forth a "*man-child*" may represent the church that was carried away and protected in the wilderness for 1,260

“days” –probably representing years, as in Daniel 7 and 9. The “*man-child*” caught up to heaven may refer to the great offspring of the church which was elevated to the heavenly realms.

Others would view the *woman* as Old Testament Israel and the “*man-child*” as Jesus. Problems with this are: 1. Fleshly Israel had already been cut off when John wrote (Rom 11). 2. Neither a literal nor a prophetic interpretation of the 1,260 “*days*” suggests anything meaningful relative to Israel. 3. Jesus was not caught up to heaven at his birth.

A third view is that the “*woman*” is Mary, and the “*man-child*” is Jesus. Problems with this are that such a literalistic interpretation flies in the face of the scriptural record. Jesus was not caught up to heaven at his birth and Mary was not taken away into a wilderness.

Chapter 13 The beast with seven-heads and ten horns

13:1-10. A “beast” with seven heads and ten-horns comes out of the sea. This is a composite of those four “*beasts*” (kingdoms) identified in Daniel 7.

Revelation 13:	Daniel 7
<i>1 And I stood upon the sand of the <u>sea</u>, and saw a <u>beast</u> rise up out of the <u>sea</u>,</i>	<i>2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great <u>sea</u>. 3 And four great <u>beasts</u> came up from the <u>sea</u>, diverse one from another.</i>
<i>having seven heads and <u>ten horns</u>, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.</i>	<i>7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth <u>beast</u>, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it;</i>
<i>2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a <u>leopard</u></i>	<i>and it had <u>ten horns</u>. 20 And of the <u>ten horns</u> that were in his head,</i>
<i>, and his feet were as the feet of a <u>bear</u></i>	<i>6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a <u>leopard</u>, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.</i>
<i>, and his mouth as the mouth of a <u>lion</u>: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and</i>	<i>5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a <u>bear</u>, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.</i>
	<i>4 The first was like a <u>lion</u>, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were</i>

great authority.	plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.
5 And there was given unto <u>him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies</u>	20 ...even of that horn that had eyes, and <u>a mouth that spake very great things,</u> whose look was more stout than his fellows.
; and power was given unto him to continue <u>forty and two months.</u>	25...and they shall be given into his hand until <u>a time and times and the dividing of time.</u>
6 And he opened his mouth in <u>blasphemy against God,</u> to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.	25 And he shall <u>speak great words against the most High,</u> and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws:
7 And it was given unto him <u>to make war with the saints, and to overcome them:</u> and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.	21 I beheld, and the same horn <u>made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;</u>

Note: At this point, it is important to compare the ten-horned “beast” with the interpretation given in chapter 17.

The explanation given to John was that the harlot “**woman**” that was drunken with the blood of the saints was “*that great city*” which sits upon seven hills and “**reigns over the kings of the earth.**” Unquestionably, this is speaking of Rome.

The “**beast**” that was yet to come appears to be the revived Western Roman Empire, known as the “Holy Roman Empire.”

After the downfall of the Western Roman Empire by conquest of the Barbarians [A.D. 476], Clovis, King of the Franks, was given a titular position of Roman Counsel by the Eastern Roman Emperor, Anastasius.⁷ This begins the revival of the Roman Empire, which had been “*wounded to death and was healed.*” (13:3)

The two-horned beast

Since there was no real authority by the Eastern Emperor over the West, the Papacy played off the Barbarians against each other. Clovis, king of the Franks, accepted Christianity and through the Pope throwing his support behind him and later leaders, the Pope received land grants which became the beginning of his temporal kingdom.

Finally, on Christmas day, 800 AD, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne “Emperor of the Romans.” Later, under Otto The Great, this became known as the “Holy Roman Empire,” which continued until the time of Napoleon.

Thus, we have the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy working together as represented in the Beast and the False-prophet (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

⁷ Gibbons, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. 38, “The Reign of Clovis” part 2, paragraph 7

Rev. 13:11-18 pictures a beast with two horns like a lamb that speaks like a dragon which comes out of the earth. In 19:20 he is called the “*false prophet that did signs in the sight of the beast*” (cf. 13:13-14) and gives its power to the first beast. This appears to be the same as the “*little horn*” of Daniel 7, and the “*man of sin*” of 2Thes. 2. This fits Roman Papal imperialism.

The Papacy represents itself as being Christ’s Vice-Regent, sitting on his throne, speaking as the voice of God. He professes to represent the “*Lamb of God*” (John 1:29). “*Horns*” represent powers. The Papacy claimed power over both church and State. The Papacy made an **image of the “beast,”** which fits the Catholic Church, made in the political and religious image of the Roman Empire, which the Papacy caused the world to follow.

The “**mark of the beast**” is the number of a man’s name. In Greek, the letters of their alphabet were also used for numbers. The name that best fits the number, “666” is *Lateinos*, the reputed founder of the Latin kingdom.

Irenaeus [A.D. 120-202], says:

“Then also Lateinos (LATEINOS) has the number six hundred and sixty-six; and it is a very probable [solution], this being the name of the last kingdom [of the four seen by Daniel]. For the Latins are they who at present bear rule”

--Irenaeus, Book 5, Chapter 30, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p.559

Hippolytus (200 AD). *“The wound of the first beast was healed and he (the second beast) was to make the image speak, that is to say to become powerful; and it is manifest to all, that those who at present still hold power are Latins. If then we take the name as the name of a single man it becomes Latinus. Wherefore we ought neither to give it out as if this were certainly his name, nor again ignore the fact that he may not be otherwise designated.”* --Hippolytus, Extant Works, Part 2, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, Paragraph 50, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5, p. 215.

The Papacy brought the revival of Rome and fashioned the Catholic Church in its image. The Government is similarly constructed. It claimed similar universal power. It introduced similar veneration of images. It has established holidays on the same occasions.

Lateinos (Greek form of Latinos), was the father of the Latin People and, in Greek, the letters (used as numbers) add up to 666.

“Right hand” = primary obedience.

“Forehead” = submission of the mind.

“Count the number of the name”

L	A	T	E	I	N	O	S	
30	1	300	5	10	50	70	200	= 666

Other names have been claimed to fit the number, however they fall short in many respects. Nero has been cited but in order to make it fit it must be in the Hebrew and his title must be added. The name in the Pope’s Crown has been cited but it is a title representing Christ, not the name of a man, and it is in Latin, not Greek.

Chapters 14 through 19 deal with the fall of “*Babylon*,” which is identified as the City of Rome and the powers it extended over the world.

2. THE STRUGGLE SUMMARIZED

Chapter 14

14:1-5. In contrast to those having the mark of the beast, here we see the 144,000 (cf. Chapter 7) having the name of Christ and His father written on their foreheads singing before the throne. (cf. Ezek 9:4)

14:6-7. **First angel** announces the eternal good tidings to all the earth. This sounds like the spread of the Gospel message beginning the Reformation.

14:8. **Second angel** announces the fall of Babylon—the coming end of Rome’s domination of the nations.

14:9-12. **Third angel** warns of consequences of worshipping the beast and his image—warning to those who further the objectives of Romanism.

14:13. Blessing pronounced on those who die in the Lord henceforth.

14:14-16. **Forth Angel** calls for one like the son of man to reap the earth--great numbers accept Christ.

14:17. **Fifth Angel** comes out of the temple with a sharp sickle.

14:18-20. **Sixth Angel** calls for the Fifth angel to reap. It reaps and the grapes are cast into the winepress of the wrath of God--perhaps the terrible pain and suffering that followed the Reformation.

Chapters 15-16. Seven angels with seven last plagues

These appear to cover the historic struggle bringing about the end of power of the Holy Roman Empire as a result of the Reformation. “Seven” suggests its complete destruction and the areas mentioned indicate that.

15:2-4. Those who are victorious over the beast and his image sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb.

15:5-8. Preparation of the temple for pouring out of the wrath of God. Smoke fills the temple, not allowing anyone to enter to offer a peace offering until the wrath of God is poured out by the angels.

16:2. **First bowl** poured into the earth on those who have the mark of the beast.

There were great struggles across Europe.

16:3. **Second bowl** poured out into the sea and it became blood.

There were great struggles on the sea between England, France and Spain.

16:4-7. **Third bowl** poured into the rivers and fountains of waters and it became blood.

There were great struggles on and across the rivers of Europe.

16:8-9. **Forth bowl** poured out on the sun and it scorched men.

The “*sun*” may refer to the scorching power of dictatorial governments on Rome.

Some have suggested it may have reference to unleashing the power of the atom.

16:10-11. **Fifth bowl** poured out on the throne of the beast.

This suggests a direct attack upon the powers in Rome--perhaps, the forces in Italy under King Victor Immanuel who took away the Pope’s temporal rule over the Papal States in Italy in the mid-eighteen hundreds.

16:12-16. **Sixth bowl** poured out on the river Euphrates and it is dried up for the kings to come from the sunrising. Unclean spirits come out of the dragon, beast and false prophet to gather them together unto the war of Armageddon.

The Euphrates is the ancient border between eastern Persia and the west. This may relate to the struggle between Muslims and Christians. Islamic countries are the last bastion against the spread of the word of God.

16:17-21. **Seventh bowl** poured out on the air. Lightnings, voices, thunders, earthquake. “*It is done.*” The great city is divided into three parts. A great hail.

This seems to bring us to the complete overthrow of the powers of Rome.

3. KEY CHAPTER—INTERPRETATION OF THE SIGNS

Chapter 17 provides some vital clues to the symbolical nature of the book and its historical application. At this point there is a pause to explain some of the symbols.

A woman is seen riding the ten-horned beast. In both Old and New Testaments God’s people are pictured as a woman or a city. When faithful they are pictured as pure and good (Eph. 5:22-33). When evil they are pictured as immoral (Ezek. 16). This woman is immoral and drunken with the blood of the saints.

Revelation (ASV) Chapter 17

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. 7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. 9 Here is the mind

that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth: 10 and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition. 12 And the ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour.

18 And the woman whom thou sawest is the great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Reference to the woman as the *city* (17:18) that sits on seven mountains (or hills) (17:9) and reigns over the kings of the earth (17:18) is so clear that even Roman Catholic scholars identify Rome as “*Babylon*.” There can be no reasonable doubt about the meaning.

However, it obviously speaks of more than a place. It includes those forces that ruled from Rome. The powers in Rome, first the emperors and then the Papacy, were responsible for killing the saints.

Notice that John speaks in the present tense. He calls it “*Babylon*” and says it “***reigns*** [17:18] *over the kings of the earth*.” When John wrote, Rome reigned over the kings of the earth. “*Babylon*” was a code word used to avoid a direct insult to the government. The name is appropriate because Babylon held God’s people in captivity, and because it was so spiritually corrupt, much like in the time of Daniel. For centuries Christians were in a type of spiritual captivity under Rome. (cf. Dan. 7:21)

Furthermore, it specified that the ten-horned “*beast*” that treads down the saints was **future from the time of John** (Rev. 17:10-11). Besides representing hills, the “*heads*” also represented “*kings*.” Five had fallen. One was in power at the time of John. Another would come after John’s time. The ten-horned beast who “*was and is not and shall come*” was an eighth and would go into destruction.

These “*heads*” probably represent the various forms of the Roman Empire.

- (1) Kings;
- (2) Consuls;
- (3) Dictators;
- (4) Decemvirs;
- (5) Military tribunes;
- (6) Emperors
- (7) The seventh is variously identified by Historicist commentators:
 - (a) Exarchate of Ravenma? (566-568 A.D.)
 - (b) Change in government form by Diocletion.
 - (c) Christianized imperial form from Constantine to Augustulus.

Others see the first five “*heads*” as Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia and Greece, with Rome as the one then in power. This seems unlikely since Assyria, and Egypt never really took empire status over the Biblical world, as did the others. Also, these

are heads of the “beast,” which clearly is the Roman Empire, ruled over by the city of Rome.

The revived Holy Roman Empire fits as the 8th. Albert Barnes, Commentary on Revelation 13, provides an excellent discussion of all these possibilities.

The seven headed “*beast*” is Roman imperialism revived in the Holy Roman Empire of the middle ages, at least to the Reformation, and likely to the time of Napoleon, around 1800 A.D.. At that time it was declared defunct by the Austrian princes to keep Napoleon from making himself emperor.

Philip Schaff, in his “History of the Christian Church,” wrote: “*The last of the emperors, Francis II., in August 6th, 1806, abdicated the elective crown of Germany and substituted for it the hereditary crown of Austria as Francis I.*” (A.D. 1835).⁸

The ten horns are defined as ten kings who had received no kingdom at the time of John who would receive power with the beast “*one hour.*” This is the one place where historicists and futurists come close to finding common ground. It seems likely that this refers to the nations that made up the Holy Roman Empire. These are variously defined, depending on the nations during any one period.

Futurists see the rise of the “beast” as still future and are presently looking to the European Commonwealth of Nations as a “United States of Europe” filling the role.

Historicists commonly look to the European nations that existed prior to the end of the Holy Roman Empire. Rev. 17:16-17 speaks of the ten horns hating the harlot and making her desolate and burning her with fire. Historicists see this fulfilled in the struggles of those nations against Rome and the destruction of her power.

4. CONCLUSION OF THE STRUGGLE (chapters 18--22)

CHAPTER 18. The fall of Babylon (Rome) symbolically described.

CHAPTER 19.

Rev. 19:1-5. Exultation at the fall of Babylon (Rome)

Rev. 19:6-10. Exultation that God reigns and that the marriage supper of the Lamb has come.

--Exultation concerning Christ’s union with his church (cf. Matt. 22:2-14; 25:1-13; Rev 21:9-10; 22:17; Eph. 5:23-32).

Rev. 19:11-21. Victory of the “Word of God” over the Beast and False Prophet.

The symbolism here is probably of spiritual warfare rather than physical (2Cor 10:3-5). It pictures the triumph of Christ through his word (Matt 24:14; Isa 11:9; Heb 4:12; Eph 6:17).

The Word of God is pictured as making war with the beast and with the false prophet that did “*signs in the sight of the beast*” (19:20). This is obviously the

⁸ History of the Christian Church, by Philip Schaff, Vol. 4, Chap. 4, Section 58, “Survey of the History of the Roman Empire,” under “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”

same as the two-horned beast (13:11-18) with horns like a lamb that spoke as a dragon and did signs ***in the sight of the beast*** (13:12, 14). This fits the Papacy, which claimed authority over both church and state, and gave power to the Holy Roman Empire. With its demise, the Papacy lost control even over its own temporal dominion in Italy, taken away in the mid-eighteen hundreds by King Victor Emmanuel and his general, Garibaldi.

CHAPTER 20

Chapter 20 says that the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan was bound for a thousand years “***that he might not deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished.***” It says nothing about a thousand years of sinless Edenic perfection.

This is obviously symbolic. Chapter 12 speaks of the *dragon* as having *seven heads and ten horns*. Chapter 17 explained that these represented kings and nations. Being “*bound*” indicates Satan was no longer free to “*deceive the nations*” --to overcome and suppress the saints, which he did during the 1,260 “*days*” (Rev 12:1-6, 13-14; 13:5-7; 11:2, 3; Dan 7:21, 25; 12:7). This pictures a time when the nations can no longer be deceived into preventing the spread of God’s word.

This would appear to fit the breakup of the Papal and imperial power of the Holy Roman Empire. Perhaps the collapse of nations hostile to the Gospel even includes atheistic Communism or the outcome of the present great struggle with Islam as may be inferred by the statement that the Euphrates (the historic dividing line between East and West) was to be “*dried up*” to make way for the kings coming from the sun rising resulting in the “*war of the great day of God*” (Rev. 16:12-16).

It is obvious the features of the passage are symbolic. What kind of literal “*chain*” could be used to bind the devil?

The “*thousand years*” could indicate a long period when the Gospel is open to freely spread throughout the earth. According to this view, the “*dragon*” represented in Rome’s power of “*seven heads and ten horns,*” may have become “*bound*” by God through events following the end of the Holy Roman Empire. It may be in the process of being bound as the national powers (such as Russia, China and the Muslim nations) are forced to open up to the spread of the Gospel. Thus, we may already have entered the “*millennium,*” or may be just entering it.

The “*first resurrection*” could indicate people being “*raised with Christ*” in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12-13). An interesting historical note by Victorinus, [300 AD] bishop of Petau, in his commentary on Revelation, (20:4-5) gave a similar explanation:

There are two resurrections. But the first resurrection is now of the souls that are by the faith, which does not pass over to the second death. Of this resurrection the apostle says: “If ye have risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”⁹

⁹ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 7, p.359

Nothing is said in Revelation 20 about Jesus sitting upon a literal throne on the earth. In fact, it says nothing about the souls that reigned with Christ, sitting on earthly thrones. Even if they were on earth, it does not require literal thrones nor that Christ be on earth for them to reign with him.

It is at this point that Historicists separate into Post-millennial and A-millennial views.

Post-millennialists see the Millennium as a period following the defeat of the “beast” and “false prophet,” after which Christ comes, the dead are raised and the final judgment takes place.

A-millennial means, “no Millennium” and in their view, they believe the “millennium” (thousand years) simply represents all the time from the beginning of the church to the return of Christ and the final judgment.

AFTER THE THOUSAND YEARS

20:7-10. Final triumph.

Satan is loosed and the nations are again deceived into compassing the camp of the saints about. Fire comes down from heaven and devours them. Satan is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet already are.

20:11-15. The Judgment

The great white throne (cf. Mat. 25:31-46)

Heaven and earth flee away

The dead are raised

People are judged

The wicked are cast into the lake of fire

21: There is a new heaven and earth without crying or pain in which dwells righteousness.

The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband (cf. Heb 12:22). This appears to represent God’s people.

The church is pictured as a bride. 2Cor 11:2; John 3:29; Rom 7:4; Eph 5:22-33; Mat 22:2-13; 25:1-13.

2Cor 11:2. *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*

John 3:29. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

Rom 7: 4. *Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*

Eph 5: 22. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. 24 Therefore as the **church is subject unto Christ**, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 25 Husbands, love your wives, even **as Christ also loved the church**, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might **present it to himself a glorious church**, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery: but **I speak concerning Christ and the church**. 33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband*

22: Conclusion of all things and final invitation.

SYMBOLIC NUMBERS PERIOD OF SUPPRESSION OF GOD'S PEOPLE		
Little Horn on ten-horned Beast (Dan. 7:3, 7, 8, 11, 17-25)	Made war with saints and overcame them (Dan. 7:21, 22, 25)	Time, times and a half time 1 yr. + 2 yrs. + ½ yr. X 360=1, 260 (Dan. 7:25)
power of the holy people How long to the end of these wonders? (Dan. 12:6-9)	Wear out the saints. Think to change the law. Given into his hand. Breaking in pieces the (Dan. 12:7)	Time, times and a half time 1 yr. + 2 yrs. + ½ yr. X 360=1, 260 (Dan. 12:7)
Red Dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns. (Rev. 12:1-6, 14)	Woman fled into wilderness where she was nourished.	One thousand, two hundred and three-score days 1,200 + 3-Score days. = 1, 260 days (Rev. 12:6)
Red Dragon cast down to earth (Rev. 12:13)	Woman persecuted, flew into wilderness Nourished..	Time, times and a half time 1 yr. + 2 yrs. + ½ yr. X 360=1, 260 (Rev. 12:14)
Scarlet Beast, 7 heads and 10 horns. (Rev. 13:1)	Authority to continue blasphemies Makes war with saints Overcomes them Authority over nations.	Forty and two months 42 X 30 days = 1, 260 days (Rev. 13:5)
Holy City (Rev. 11:2)	Trod under foot of the Gentiles (Rev. 11:2)	Forty and two months 42 X 30 days = 1, 260 days (Rev. 11:2)
Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3)	Prophecy in sackcloth (Rev. 11:3, 7)	1,200 + 3-Score days = 1, 260 days (Rev. 11:3)

A “DAY” IN PROPHECY MAY BE A SYMBOL FOR A YEAR

1. NUM. 14:33-34. The Children of Israel were in the wilderness, a year for each day spying out the land.
2. Ezek. 4:5-6. Each day Ezekiel lay on his side signified one year. Note: Ezekiel knew Daniel. Both prophesied in Babylon, and Revelation drew on the symbolism of both.
3. Dan. 9:24-27. The “70 weeks” (490 “days” = 490 years) until the anointed (“Messiah” or “Christ”). Seven weeks (49 prophetic “days” = 49 years) from command to restore Jerusalem until completion of the moat, plus 62 weeks (62 x 7 = 434 years) to the beginning of the ministry of Christ. Total years: 62+434=496. He would be cut off in the middle of the 70th week (7 years). This brings us to the time of his crucifixion.
4. John himself seems to use “days” in a non-literal sense (Rev 2:10). “Ye shall have tribulation ten days.”

This period of 1260 prophetic “days” (years) may refer to the period of the revival of the Western Roman imperial power from around 532 A.D. when the Eastern Emperor, Anastasius, gave Clovis, King of the Franks, titular position of Roman Counsel,¹⁰ until the end of the Holy Roman Empire around 1800.

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¹⁰ Gibbons, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. 38, “The Reign of Clovis” part 2, paragraph 7

II. PRETERIST VIEW

A. Basic arguments for the Preterist View

1. The Preterist view has the fall of Jerusalem as the primary focus of Revelation.

The main argument for a date before the destruction of Jerusalem is that Jesus is represented as saying that he will come “soon.” (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20). Those who hold it maintain that 2,000 years in the future cannot be “soon.” The following scriptures are pressed as indicating an early fulfillment.

Rev. 1:1 *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, even the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John;*

Rev. 1:3 *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

Rev. 22:6 *And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.*

Rev. 22:10 *And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.*

ANSWER:

- a. This may mean these things were soon to BEGIN to be fulfilled, not that they would be completed.

Luke 21:28 *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

- b. With God, “soon,” is not necessarily as short a time as in men’s terms.

2Peter 3:8. *But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a **thousand years**, and a **thousand years** as one day.*

Ps. 90:4. *For a **thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday** when it is past, and as a watch in the night.*

The book much better fits as a sweeping overview of the great events of history relating to the church, down to the end of the earth and the rewards of the final judgment.

A second argument for an early date is that it says nothing of the destruction of Jerusalem. However, this argument depends on the need for the writer to refer to the event. He is writing to churches in Asia, not Palestine, about world events of the future, not a history of what took place in Palestine in the past.

B. Problems with the Preterist view.

1. The date of the Book of Revelation stands against the preterist view.

A few later writers (6th century and later) suggested that John was in Patmos during the reign of Nero. However, the overwhelming mass of scholarship, both ancient and modern, dates the book of Revelation around A.D. 95.¹¹

As we have seen in our discussion of the date at the beginning, four very early authorities indicated that John wrote in the reign of Domitian.

Irenaeus, disciple of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the apostle John¹², said:

*“For if it were necessary that his name should be declared clearly at the present time, it would have been announced by him who saw the revelation. For it was seen, not long ago, but almost in our generation, **toward the end of the reign of Domitian.**’ He states these things concerning the Apocalypse in the work referred to.”¹³*

The objection that after 96 AD John would not have had enough time, or would have been too old to have done the things attributed to him by Clement of Alexandria¹⁴ after leaving Patmos, is highly speculative. We don’t know how old or how vigorous he was.

Jerome says John was the “*youngest of the Apostles*”¹⁵

*We may be sure that John was then a boy because ecclesiastical history most clearly proves that he lived to the reign of Trajan, that is, he fell asleep in the sixty-eighth year after our Lord’s passion, as I have briefly noted in my treatise on Illustrious Men. ... for he saw in the island of Patmos, to which he had been banished by the Emperor **Domitian** as a martyr for the Lord, an Apocalypse containing the boundless mysteries of the future¹⁶*

Some people are very active even at a hundred years old. In any case, Clement speaks of John as an “*old man.*” During the reign of Nero he would have been no more than 65, and perhaps as young as 50. This casts some doubt that his age would have been so described at the early date.

¹¹ Conceded by Arthur M. Ogden
The Avenging Of The Apostles And Prophets, p.9 (Bottom)

¹² Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol.1, p.239 (Eusebius Church History, Book V, Chap. XX, 6.)

¹³ Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p.222 (Ages Digital Library, Vol. 1, p.306)
(Eusebius Church History, book 5, chap. 8, 6.)

¹⁴ Clemens of Alexandria “Who is the Rich Man” #42 (Anti Niceene Fathers, Vol 2.)

¹⁵ Jerome, Principle Works, Treatises, Against Jovinianus, Book 1, #26 (Nicene and Ante-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. 8)

¹⁶ Ibid

Albert Barnes sums it up thus:

“Those things seem to me to make it proper to acquiesce in the general opinion so long entertained in regard to the date of the Apocalypse, for there is, perhaps, no book of the New Testament whose date is better determined on historical grounds than this.” --Introduction, p. xlix

2. The symbols in the opening of the seals in chapter 6 of Revelation much better fit the events in the Roman world from around 95 AD.

It was at this time that Rome was at its greatest point of power, with the subsequent bloodshed and decline that followed to the time of Constantine. (See historicist view in Rev. 6)

3. The claim of some preterists that Jerusalem is “*Babylon the mother of harlots*” makes no sense.

Since Rome certainly did not fall for hundreds of years after the time of John, and even after that again rose to power, the fall of “*Babylon*” is very difficult to fit into preterist model in the time of Nero. So, some preterists, suggest that the fall of “*Babylon*” is speaking of Jerusalem.

However, “*Babylon*” is clearly speaking of Rome. It is identified as sitting on “*seven mountains*” (17:9) and it “*reigns over the kings of the earth*” (7:18). Jerusalem was not on seven mountains and never reigned over the kings of the earth. Rome did both. Jerusalem was pictured as a harlot (Isa. 1:21) but so were other nations (Isa. 23:16-17).

Rome is called “*Babylon*” because of the many similarities between the two. Babylon had held God’s people in captivity during the time of Daniel, from whom many of the Symbols in Revelation 13 & 17 were taken. Likewise, Rome held God’s people in captivity. The parallels are unmistakable. Even Roman Catholic leaders cite this as referring to Rome.

Preterists struggle mightily to get around this. They say that if the “*beast*” is Rome then the “*harlot*” cannot be. One is distinct from the other. In this, they confuse the fact that “*Rome,*” the Empire, is not identical with Rome, the city. The city reigned over the Empire.

On the other hand, from the historicist perspective there is a clear distinction. Many recognize the “*beast*” to be the revived Roman Empire. The Pope crowned Charlemagne “*Emperor of the West*” on Christmas day, 800 A.D..

4. Attempts to make the coming of the son of man to be coming to destroy Jerusalem are clearly contradicted by the order of events in both Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

Matt. 24:29 places his coming “*after the tribulation*” of Jerusalem’s destruction.

Luke 21:20-28 likewise places Christ’s coming after the destruction of Jerusalem and even beyond fulfillment of the period of its being “*trodden down of the Gentiles*” (21:24). Since Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles from the time of its

destruction in 70 AD until the 1967 “Six Day War,” that indicates his coming to be future beyond Jerusalem’s return to Jewish control.

5. The claim that the “man of sin” (2Thes. chapter 2) is Nero does not fit.

- a. The “*falling away*” of 2Thes. 2 does not fit setting Nero up in the *temple of God*. Nero never sat in power in the temple at Jerusalem, or in the spiritual temple, the church (Eph 2:21). It is questionable that some pagan temple at Rome would be called the “*temple of God*.”
- b. Nero was never noted for claims to have done miracles (2Thes. 2:9).
- c. Nero was not destroyed by the brightness of the *coming* of Christ. As we have shown above, the “*coming*” of Jesus is clearly placed AFTER the tribulation of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:29-30).
- d. The “*man of sin*” much better fits the Bishop of Rome who sits in the temple of God, claiming to be the “Most Holy Father,” and “Vicar of Christ” as head of the church on earth, professing to speak with the infallible voice of God.

6. The claim that the “beast” that followed the seventh head (17:10-11) was either Nero or Titus does not fit.

The “*beast*” cannot be Nero because Nero was the fifth emperor from Augustus Caesar. John says that the one then in power was the sixth, and after him would come a seventh. The “*beast*” was the eighth.

Likewise, the claim that “Neron Caesar” was the “mark of the beast” does not fit. If Titus was the “8th” (identified as the “*beast*”), how could the name of Nero, who was two *heads* before him, be the mark of the beast? In the time of Titus people were not required to think and obey the commands of Nero. He had committed suicide and his name was totally discredited.

Furthermore, chapter 17 says that after the 6th “head” there would be a 7th for a short time, followed by the “beast” which is the “8th”. Titus could not be the “eighth” because Nero was the 5th and there were four emperors between Nero and Titus (Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian).

The words of Rev. 17, (“*five are fallen and ONE IS...*”) cannot place John in the reign of Nero because Nero was the fifth emperor, not the sixth. However, some maintain that it is counting from Julius Caesar (#1) followed by Augustus, (#2), then Tiberius, (#3), Caius (Caligula) (#4), Claudius, (#5) and Nero, (#6)

In any case no matter how the count is made the list of emperors must be arbitrarily shuffled to get their conclusion, as we have seen.

7. Some view Revelation 17:8, 11 as speaking of Nero who “was” and “is not” (was dead at the time John wrote), and “shall come” in persecution of Christians by future emperors, such as Diocletian.

There was an ancient superstition that Nero would come back from the dead again. Some suppose that the idea might have been based on that. However, Nero did not come back.

8. The claim that the name of Nero is the “*mark of the beast*” does not reasonably fit the facts.

In ancient times letters of the alphabet were also used as numbers. To make the name of Nero add up to 666 one must add his title (Caesar) to his name, and calculate the spelling in Hebrew letters (“*Neron Caesar*”).

This is extremely forced. In a letter written in Greek to the Greek-speaking churches in Asia, it would be meaningless to expect it to be calculated in Hebrew. It makes much more sense that the true name and number would be calculated in a man’s name in Greek, the language of the New Testament.

Early Bible writers such as Irenaeus¹⁷ (120-202 A.D.), who was a disciple of Polycarp, who knew John, and his disciple, Hippolytus¹⁸ (170-236 A.D.), considered the name “*LATEINOS*,” reputed founder of the Roman Empire, as the most likely explanation. *LATEINOS* perfectly fits the case. The use and prominence of his name for the nation, the church, and the language through the ages, makes the meaning readily available to all, especially to readers of the Greek Bible.

(For further information see Barnes Notes on Revelation p. xlvi.)

9. The disproportionate focus on such a short period as the destruction of Jerusalem seems highly unlikely.

Like the futurists, the Preterists have the problem of the events all crammed into a period of about seven years while ignoring or disregarding the momentous events of thousands of years.

10. Viewing the Book of Revelation as speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem leaves the Bible incomplete with no map of events between 70 A.D. and the end of the world.

It does not seem reasonable that God would stop the clock with the destruction of Jerusalem and omit the great events that relate to the church since. Is it not much more reasonable that it presents the future of the church? The rest of the Bible had covered history from the beginning. Revelation is a panorama of events to the end.

One of the great confirmations of our faith is that the Bible is the only book that surveys history from beginning to end. As prophecies are fulfilled one after another we are encouraged by the milestones of historical verification of the scriptures pointing to the coming and triumph of our Lord.

11. There are many prophecies that simply cannot be limited to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem

¹⁷ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.1, p.559 (Ages Digital Library, Vol. 1,: p.1121-1122)
(Irenaeus Against Heresies, book 5., chap. 30:3.)

¹⁸ Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.5, p.215 (Ages Digital Library, Vol 5, p.445)
(Hippolytus, disciple of Irenaeus, A.D. 170-236, Part 2, Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, par. 50.)

Luke 21 clearly indicates the city was to be trodden down by the Gentiles **until the times of the gentiles were fulfilled**. The time covered by the Gentiles trodding down Jerusalem has been over 1900 years.

Are not the many scriptures concerning the destruction of the earth and creation of a new one still future? (Rev. 20:11; 21:1; 2Pe. 3:7-13; Heb. 1:10-12; Heb. 12:25-27)

What about the coming of Christ, the resurrection and the judgment? Are these all past?

Some preterists try to divide prophecies concerning the coming of Christ into two groups. One group is claimed to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. The other is applied to his second coming at the end of the earth. This poses some serious problems.

The first problem is that this makes two returns of Jesus rather than one. The Bible does not speak of two returns.

A second problem is that it omits passes over the thousands of intervening years of the church in silence. It makes no sense to write a history of the future of the church and leave out thousands of years in the middle.

A third problem is that it simply nullifies the scriptural evidence of the Second Coming. If the passages about his coming in Matthew 24 and chapter one of Revelation, can be made to be the destruction of Jerusalem then so can the rest. Arbitrarily placing them into two groups in the face of the difficulties involved wracks havoc on any sound basis for interpretation.

Consider the following passages. Which ones are speaking of coming upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? Which are of the Second Coming, still future? What distinguishes them?

Matt. Chap 16 ----

27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds.

Matt. Chap 24 ----

3 And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what (shall be) the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (or age)?

Matt. Chap 24 -----

27 For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. 28 Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. 29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth

his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Matt. Chap 25 ----

31 But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: 32 and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; 33 and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; 36 naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? 38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, (even) these least, ye did it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire (Mk. 9:43-49; Rev. 14:10, 11; 20:10-15) which is prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. 46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

Matt. Chap 26 ----

64 Jesus said unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.

Acts Chapter 1 ---

And as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10 And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11 who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

1Thes. Chap 4 ----

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are

*fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the **trump of God**: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Rev. Chap 1 -----

7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

An even greater problem for the theory is the conflicts raised concerning the purpose of his coming. Preterists commonly claim the coming mentioned is to destroy the city. However, the key passages they base their claim on place the coming following the destruction of the city. If his coming was after the destruction, then it is clear that his coming was not to accomplish the destruction.

Consider the following comparison between Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

<p>Matt. 24:15-28 <i>Tribulation desolation Holy place</i></p>	<p>Matt. 24:29-30 <i>“<u>After</u> the tribulation” Sign of the son of man sun darkened moon not give light stars fall powers of heavens shaken</i></p>	<p>Matt. 24:31 <i>Tribes of earth mourn see son of man coming on clouds angels gather elect.</i></p>
<p>Mark 13 14-23 <i>desolation tribulation</i></p>	<p>5-26 <i><u>after</u> that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, moon shall not give her light stars falling from heaven powers in the heavens shaken.</i></p>	<p>26-27 <i><u>then</u> shall they see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory</i></p>
<p>Luke 21:20-24 <i>Jerusalem desolation vengeance wrath fall by sword led captive trodden down</i></p>	<p>5-26 <i>and there shall be signs in sun, moon and stars upon earth distress of nations men fainting for fear powers of heavens shaken</i></p>	<p>27 <i><u>then</u> shall they see son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory</i></p>

They draw a parallel between Matt. 24 and Revelation 1 and then insist that all the prophecies must have been fulfilled within that generation. Matthew 24:34 says, “*This*

generation shall not pass away before all these things are fulfilled.” Revelations 1:1 says those things were to come to pass “*shortly.*”

However, upon close examination the contention that everything must be accomplished in that generation (Mt. 24:34), does not hold up. It conflicts with both the context and other scriptures.

Matthew 24:34 says, “*This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished.*” This does not require every prophecy in the Bible to be completed by the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. Only what Jesus intended to include, is included in “*these things.*”

Furthermore, it does not mean that it would all be **completed** in that generation. It meant that the things would **begin** to be fulfilled. Luke 21:28 says “*when you see these things **begin** to come to pass...*”

Obviously, everything in Matthew 24 is not included in “*These things.*” Luke 21:24, which is also a part of what Jesus said, says that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.* That was not completed in their generation. Jerusalem has been trodden down for over 1900 years. Likewise, Matt. 25:31-36, which is a part of the same discourse, speaks of Jesus coming to *sit on the throne of his glory* and send some to eternal life and others to eternal punishment.

Confusion between the things that would come to pass and the coming of Jesus (Matthew 24:32) is resolved by a careful reading of the text. It says that when they saw the fig tree putting forth leaves they would know that summer is “*near.*” Notice that what is “*here*” is distinguished from what is “*near.*” The events that happened to the Jews were the means of knowing his coming is “*near.*”

The, “*things*” to be accomplished were the vengeance upon Jerusalem (23:32-39) and destruction of the temple (24:2). The Second Coming of Christ (24:29-31) is not included. That is still future.

They contend that the passage teaches that in 70 A.D. Christ was figuratively coming to take vengeance upon Jerusalem. However, the terminology used is the same as found elsewhere when speaking of Christ’s coming, as may be seen in the above scriptures.

Furthermore, the passage places the coming as AFTER the destruction (Matt. 24:21), not to bring it about. Matthew 24:29 says, “***after** the tribulation of those days*” (24:29). This is especially appropriate if the “*great tribulation*” has reference to the whole period of 1900 years in which the Jews have been destroyed and driven from place to place.

A comparison with the chronology of Luke 21 clearly shows the destruction was before the signs of his coming (Lk. 21:19-24). “*These things*” could not include things that are spoken of as being “*nigh, even at the doors.*” The two questions he was answering were, “*When shall these things be?*” and “*What shall be the sign of thy coming and the end of the world? (or, age)*” (24:3) “*These things,*” the destruction of the temple (24:2) and vengeance on the people (Matt.. 23:35-39; Luke 21:22-25), were not the same as the sign of his coming. When “*These Things*” were here his coming would be “*near.*”

“*Shortly come to pass*” (Rev. 1:1; 22:6) does not require that everything in the book be accomplished in one generation. That is demonstrated by the fact that even

those who profess the view are compelled to admit that everything in the Book of Revelation was not fulfilled in that generation. It cannot be had both ways. Either the statement requires the whole book to be fulfilled at that time or it must mean that it would soon **begin** to come to pass.

III. THE FUTURIST VIEW (see separate chart)

The futurist view interprets Revelation in a highly literalistic manner. It maintains that the seven churches (chapters 2 and 3) are ages and we are in the last period, that of the Laodicean Church. Thus two thousand years are covered in three chapters with the rest of the book still to be fulfilled, pushing everything after that into the future. Even more strangely, the next 16 chapters take only 7 years!!!

Chapter 5. Jesus comes in a sort of grand fly-by and the faithful of all ages are raised from the dead and, along with the faithful living, are caught up to heaven in the “rapture” to be with Christ in the marriage supper of the lamb.

Chapters 5-18. The “The Great Tribulation” takes place – seven years of terrible suffering on the earth worse than anything that has ever happened.

Chapter 19. At the end of the seven years, Jesus returns, defeats his enemies and casts some of them into the lake of fire.

In chapter 20 Jesus binds the devil and casts him into a pit for a thousand years. The “first resurrection” of those who have been martyred takes place and they sit on thrones to reign with Christ. Jesus sets up his kingdom on earth, reigning on his throne in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem ruling with a rod of iron for a thousand years.

After that the devil is again released to deceive the nations who then seek to destroy God’s people. Fire falls from heaven and destroys them and the devil is cast into the lake of fire. The heavens and earth pass away and the second resurrection takes place. The dead are judged and the wicked are cast into the lake of fire.

The momentous events of history over the last 1900 years such as the fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of Mohammedanism the fall of the Eastern Empire, and the rise and fall of the Papal temporal dominion and the Holy Roman Empire are passed over in total silence. They speak of those chapters in Revelation as being “the great tribulation.” Might it not be that the great events of the Dark Ages and suppression of true Christianity were themselves the Great Tribulation?

A. The futurist system of interpretation fails to be justified by a natural unfolding of the context of Revelations.

The futurist explanation is purely speculative, arbitrarily contrived, super-literalistic, and rests upon an inadequate evidential base. When laid beside the events of history, the Book of Revelation fits so well that the historicist view cannot be reasonably disregarded. It is unreasonable to ignore the obvious in favor of a highly speculative and unfounded explanation still to take place in the future.

B. The “Big Bang” futurist picture of Revelations is highly improbable.

It makes no sense that God would have totally ignored the momentous events of two thousand years of history and then focused on just seven short years sometime in the future. It flies in the face of reason that it takes two thousand years to fulfill chapters 2 & 3, and only seven years for the next 16 chapters of Revelation.

Where is the fall of the Roman Empire as predicted by Daniel? Where are the terrible events and destructive plagues that brought on the centuries of dark ages and tribulation? Why would God have ignored the hordes of Islam that swept across the face of the earth, first under the Arabians and later under the Turks, that threatened to wipe out Christianity, and today controls the minds of one-fifth of the population of the world? Where is the rise and fall of the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire? Where is the great Reformation, if the book is not viewed historically?

C. The futurist system conflicts with several points within the book.

One of the most glaring is trying to make the “*first resurrection*” take place in chapter 4 when God plainly placed it in chapter 20. How can there be a resurrection before the “*first*” (20:4)? Chapter 4 has nothing about Christ coming and rapturing away the saints to a marriage supper.

It also conflicts with several time-points in the book which will not permit these events to be confined to the future. As noted above, not until 4:1 do the things of the “hereafter” begin. In fact, 4 and 5 are preparatory to opening the seals of the future in chapter 6. Therefore, the opening of the future could not have begun in chapter 2.

Chapter 17 indicates the seven heads represent 7 kings. When John wrote, five had fallen, “*one is*” and another was to follow afterwards for a short time. After that would come the “*beast*” which was the “*eighth*”. If, when John wrote, “*one is*” then it is clear that they were not in the “Church Age” of chapters 2 & 3 with the period of “The Great Tribulation” 2000 years in the future. Any system that shoves these off to the end of the world is in conflict with the context.

D. Other difficulties introduced by the futurist system

1. It confuses the symbols of Revelations with the interpretation

Thus, it disregards the fact that the book is mostly written in figurative language. This super-literalism obscures the greater value of the spiritual. For example, which was greater, the earthly or heavenly tabernacle? (Heb 8:5) --Mount Zion in Jerusalem, or mount Zion in heaven? (Gal 4:25-26; Heb 12:19) Which was more important, physical or spiritual circumcision (Col 2:11; Rom 2:28-29)?

The “mark of the beast” is made to be literally writing the number 666 on the forehead and hand rather than it being thinking and obeying the authority of Rome, as would be properly conveyed by the name, “*LATEINOS*,” the reputed founder of the Latin Empire.

Irenaeus (120-202 A.D.) wrote,

“It seems to me very probable; for this is a name of the last of Daniel’s four kingdoms; they being Latins that now reign.” -see Barnes Notes on Revelation 13:18.

--Irenaeus, "Against Heresies" Chap. 30:3 (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, p.559).

2. It offers a materialistic hope of the kingdom.

Jesus offered a spiritual one. They claim Jesus is coming to establish an earthly throne and preside over a visible earthly kingdom. However, Jesus said: "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (John 18:36).

Luke 17:20 *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.*

When Jesus would not set up an earthly kingdom the Jews turned against him. Instead of recognizing that Christ rules in our hearts, many have fallen into the same error of expecting an earthly kingdom rather than a spiritual one.

Daniel said the kingdom was to begin like a **little stone** that would strike the image (Rome) on the feet, crush it, and then fill the whole earth (Dan. 2:44-45). Jesus was to receive the kingdom upon his ascension (Dan. 7:13-14;) When Jesus came the kingdom was "*at hand*" (Matt. 3:2). Peter was given the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19). The parables about the kingdom in Matthew 13 indicate its existence before Christ returns, rather than after. These things show that the kingdom was established when its laws began to be propagated on Pentecost from Jerusalem (Luke 24:47; Ac. 1:4; Isa. 2:3) around A.D. 30.

At the time of the apostles they had already been "*translated into the kingdom of the son of his love*" (Col. 1:13). At the time John wrote He had already "*made us to be a kingdom*" (Rev. 1:6). They were "*fellow citizens*" in the kingdom (Eph. 1:19). They were "*ambassadors*" of the kingdom which already existed (2Cor. 5:20).

Still future, is the "*eternal*" or "*heavenly*" state to which we will be translated at the return of our Lord, but he is already "*King of Kings*" (1Tim. 6:15). He is a *priest upon his throne* (Zech. 6:13; Heb. 6:20--7:2). He will remain upon that throne until the last enemy, death, is destroyed (Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33-36; Heb. 10:12, 13; 1Cor. 15:23-26).

When Jesus came the first time, the Jews missed it in seeking an earthly kingdom. Futurists have embraced the same error.

3. The New Testament teaching that the "last days" began in the first century with John the Baptist is disregarded. (Dan. 2:28; Heb. 1:2; Ac. 2:16, 17; 1Pe. 1:19, 20; Isa. 2:2, 3 with Luke 24:47; 1John 2:18). Instead, it is pushed far off into the future.

A typical example is placing the "*antichrist*" off into the future. John defines the "antichrist" as a "*spirit*" (1Jn. 4:3) and says that we know *it is the last hour* because many antichrists have arisen (1Jn. 2:18; 4:3). He plainly says, "*This is the antichrist*" (1Jn. 2:22; 4:3; 2Jn. 7). John is speaking of the Gnostic heresy that invaded the church in his own time.

The same is done with things Jesus said in Matthew 24. Instead of hearing Christ's words that we are not to be anxious about rumors of wars and rumors of wars" for "*the end is NOT yet*" (24:6) people insist on pushing these off to the end of the world and using them as signs that Jesus is ready to come. They ignore the plain statement of

Jesus that, “*in an hour that you think not the son of man comes*” (Matt. 24:36-44) and seek signs that indicate he when he is coming.

Likewise, they deny the obvious, that the “*great tribulation*” of Matthew 24 began with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Matt. 23:32-36; 24:2, 15-22; Luke 21:20-24) or claim that in the future there will be a “second fulfillment.” They claim that the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent sorrows of the Jews could not have been the greatest tribulation that ever has been in spite of the fact that extended many centuries of them being driven from place to place (read Deut 28) finally brought to an end in 1967 after the holocaust under Hitler in Germany.

SUMMARY OF KEY PREMILLENNIAL PROBLEMS

1. It makes the word of God ineffective in accomplishing its objective of triumphing over evil (Eph. 6:17 with 2Cor. 10:4 & Rev. 19:13).
2. It makes the first coming of Jesus a failure in its purpose.
Jesus set up His kingdom on Pentecost which was to grow to fill the whole earth . (Mk. 9:1; Lk. 24:47, 49; Ac. 1:3-8; 2:1-4; Mk. 1:15; Mt. 12:28; Lk. 11:20; 17:20, 21; Mk. 4:30, 31; Mt. 13:33; Col. 1:13-19; Eph. 2:19; 1Pe. 2:9, 10; Rev. 1:6, 9; Dan. 2:34, 38-44, 45; Dan. 7)
3. It nullifies the Lordship of Christ as king received when he ascended.
(Dan. 7; 9:24-27; Isa. 9:6, 7; Ac. 2:30, 33-36; Eph. 1:20-22; 1Cor. 15:26; Heb. 2:8, 9; Rom. 10:10; Heb. 1:5-9; Zech. 6:12, 13; Psa. 110:1-4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1-3, 11-28; 8:1-13)
4. Like the Jews who rejected him, it clings to the materialistic concept that his kingdom must be of this world, whereas Jesus said his kingdom would not come with observation (Jn. 6:15; 18:36; Dan. 7: Lk. 17:20, 21)
5. It conflicts with the scriptures that teach that the enemies of Christ will be raised and see him when he comes. (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 26:64; Jn. 5:28, 29; Mtt. 12:41, 42; 1Jn. 2:28; Mtt. 25:1-12) Rev. 20:5 indicates they are raised after the 1,000 years.
6. It conflicts with scriptures that indicate the earth passes away at his coming. (Rev. 20:13; 2Pe. 3:3-13; Mtt. 24:35-44; Lk. 17:23-37)
7. It conflicts with scriptures that indicate the judgment takes place at his coming. (Rev. 20:12-15; 2Thes. 1:6-10; Mtt. 16:27; Rom. 2:5-9)

CONCLUSION

All three views have difficulties. When trying to decipher symbols, uncertainties are inevitable. However, after careful consideration, the historicist view seems to fit the best.

In any case, whether or not we can un-code everything, the most important thing that all can understand is that God is in control. Christ will triumph in the end.

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely... 20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.