

Four Views on the Book of Revelation

Adapted from: Pate & Gundry (eds) 1998. *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*. Michigan: Zondervan.

	Preterist	Idealist	Classical Dispensationalist	Progressive Dispensationalist
Ideology	Historic. 'Preterist', which means 'gone by', is derived from the Latin word 'praeteritus'. Preterist views Revelation's prophecies as reflecting actual historical events in apostle John's near future, which have been fulfilled in first century AD (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:22, 37).	Symbolic / Spiritualist. Text in Revelation is seen as dramatization of predominantly apocalyptic literature, the meaning of which is not in the past or future, but as an ongoing struggle between good and evil (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:25, 129).	Prophetic / Futurist. 'Dispensation', which means the administration of God's earthly household, is seen as dividing salvation history into historical eras or epochs, where fulfillment is perceived as still future (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:28-30).	Already / Not yet. A rethinking by dispensationalists in the '80s through the lens of eschatological tension, which views the first coming of Christ as the inauguration of the kingdom of God, and the second yet to be realized in the future (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:31-34).
Methodology	Historical interpretation relative to original writings and audiences (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:19, 91).	Hermeneutical foundation presenting spiritual precepts through symbols, rather than predictive prophecy, identifying the genre before interpreting literature through chiasmic structure (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:127-131).	Literal interpretation of prophetic Scripture based on grammatical-historical method of exegesis (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:29-30, 180, 224, 227).	Interpretation in adherence to the 'already / not yet' hermeneutic, which essential framework of the self-understanding of Christianity is an eschatological one (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:31-34).
Audience	First century Church (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:19, 22, 49).	For believers like you and the apostle John, who find that following the Lord is a way of contradiction piercing inmost thoughts. Revelation offers a message of assurance, hope, and victory (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:98).	The Church and Israel, where distinction is made between the two. The church does not replace Israel in the plan of God, but is a parenthesis in the outworking of God's plan (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:29).	Israel and Gentiles, with the church forming a part of the one people of God, and not as a parenthesis in the plan of God (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:32-33).
Purpose	To steel the first century Church against the gathering storm of persecution, and to brace the Church for a major and fundamental re-orientation in the course of redemptive history - the destruction of Jerusalem, which is fulfilled in AD 70 (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:19, 22).	A call for heroic living in times of suffering to endure to the end, and to warn Christians of the enemy within - 'the false Christian'. Christ is presented as achieving ultimate victory over Satan and his hosts, with evil eventually overthrown (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:23, 25, 97).	To develop in greater details the 'things that must happen', the series of events leading to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth which Daniel prophesied, and to remind of the book's continuity with Old Testament Davidic covenant (Daniel 9:24-27; Revelation 1:1; 22:6; 20:1-10; Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:182-184).	To rethink over dispensationalism and develop a 'modified' or 'progressive' school of thought to help Christians live through the tension between this evil age and the age to come, with the belief that the kingdom of God has already dawned spiritually, and will be fully realized at the Parousia, the second coming of Christ (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:31-34).
Structure	Spiral, Historical. Involves the recasting of earlier prophecies with occasional glances backward, and the reconsidering of events from different angles, rather than relentless chronological progression (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:38-39).	Non-Chronological, Chiasmic. Key to be found in Revelation 10:1-15:4, which describes the struggle and liberation of the oppressed communities of the world (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:27).	Linear, Futuristic. Based on Revelation 1:19, 'the things which you have seen', 'the things which are', and 'the things which will take place' as referring to Revelation 1; 2-3; and 4-22 respectively, with 'the things which will take place' yet to occur in history, hence future (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:30, 185-187).	Linear. Similar to classical dispensationalism, focuses on Revelation 1:19, but instead of viewing the verse as delineating three time frames, perceives it as only two periods at work. Apostle John writes what he has seen of two realities: the things that are - the present age; and the things that will be - the age to come (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:33).

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Time of Fulfillment	Past. Fulfilled in first century AD.	Not restricted to a particular historical period. Ongoing and applicable for all time.	Future. May commence at any moment upon termination of the period of 'the things which are' (Revelation 1:19).	Present/Future. Partial actualization of Jesus' statements surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and final fulfillment at end of history.
Theology	Post-Millennium - Christ will return after the Millennium. The Millennium begins in the first century, but its length extends beyond the near or soon time frame, hence number 1000 is seen as symbolic (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:82).	Amillennium - Non-literal 'thousand years', referring to the entire period of history between Christ's first and second comings, including the time now, with Christ reigning at the right hand of the Father (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:27).	Pre-Millennium - Christ returning in two stages, the first for His church to spare them from the Great Tribulation, that is the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, and the second in power and glory to conquer His enemies (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:29-30, 189-191, 231).	Pre-Millennium - Although believers are spiritually raised with Christ at conversion and currently reign with Him from heaven, not until Christ's second advent will that reign descend to earth (Pate <i>et al</i> 1998:170-171).
Seven Seals	Parallel with Jesus' Olivet Discourse, contexts of prophecies of which relate to first century events, such as Roman-Jewish war of AD 67, Jewish revolt against Rome, civil war in Jerusalem, famine and death, and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.	Each seal does not belong to a particular time, nor follow in chronological succession. This deals with the whole history of the church and of the world throughout the Christian age, representing the calamities that fall upon the children of God, even while the provident God sits on His throne.	Following the pattern of Jesus' Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21), and revealed in symbolic mode to John, the discourse divides the period just before Christ's return into two parts: the beginning of birth pangs, and the Great Tribulation.	Pertains to the events leading up to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 with historical allusions to the first-century conflict between Caesar and Christ as partial fulfillment leading to the judgments delineated in the Apocalypse, where the seal judgments are prototype of the trumpet and bowl judgments.
Seven Trumpets	New series of judgments spiraling forward from different angles and intensifying the crises.	Punishment awaiting the wicked persecutors of the church. The trumpets indicate a series of happenings or calamities that will occur again and again throughout the earthly existence of the church.	Following the telescopic or 'dovetailing' relationship theory, the seven trumpets comprise the seventh seal, and the seven bowls comprise the seventh trumpet, explaining the mounting intensity of God's wrath.	With Intensification of language used in describing the judgments, it is difficult to root the trumpet and bowl in history. Part of earth and humanity are affected in the seal and trumpet judgments, with beginning of birth pains leading to great distress in the Great Tribulation.
Seven Bowls	Further judgments on Israel and Jerusalem.	Similar to the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7-10), the bowls runs parallel in time to the trumpets, the difference of which is the intensity, affirming that Revelation is not chronological. It is therefore unnecessary to dwell on particulars of the plagues, for the significance is God uses every department of creation to punish the unrepentant.	The seven bowls comprise the seventh trumpet. The vision progresses with the last bowl containing the last seven plagues poured out in a future period just before Christ returns, representing an ongoing chronological framework in the telescoping of the seals, trumpets, and bowls.	The bowl judgments are labeled the 'last plagues'. Whereas only a part of earth and humanity are affected in the seal and trumpet judgments, the entire earth and humanity are affected in the bowl judgments, which seems to indicate the period as immediately after the distress of those days, before Christ's return.

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144,000 Saints	Number 144,000 as symbolic, referring to racial Jews who accept the Lamb of God for salvation.	The triumphant church in heaven with congregation of a complete number, without one missing soul. These 144,000 have not accepted Satan's lie, hence, enjoy the blessedness of their redemption.	Literal interpretation sees the 144,000 servants of God as ethnic Israel, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These 144,000 are not the entirety of the faithful remnant of Israel, but are a group of them charged with the special task of witnessing for Christ during the world's darkest hour, with eventual martyrdom.	Chosen out of the twelve tribes of Israel, it indicates that racial Jews, physical descendants of the patriarches, are in John's mind, specifically, the Jewish Christians converted during the Great Tribulation. With the numbering of 144,000 and the innumerable multitude, the latter refers to every nation, while the former a select group of Jews.
Beast of the Sea	Roman Empire / Roman Emperor / Nero / Subsequent Ungodly Roman Empires.	Agents used by the dragon to attack the church, representing the spirit of the world (1 Corinthians 2:12) that opposes and persecutes the church, operating in and through the spirit of this world and its government.	A future false-Christ type of figure, who will rise to world rulership just before Christ returns, possibly an aggregate of world empires.	Roman emperor Nero, the precursor of the Antichrist. Nero's persecution of Christians from November AD64 to June AD68 could account, in part, for the three and one-half years of oppression mentioned in Revelation 13:5.
Beast of the Earth	False Prophet. One who receives his authority from the political power.	False religion and false philosophy in whatever form it may appear.	One of the slain heads of the first beast, this is one who is a travesty of the slain Lamb, a malevolent person who will embody satanic forces in controlling the final world empire.	Local priests of the imperial cult in Asia Minor, whose task was to compel the people to offer a sacrifice to Caesar and proclaim him as lord.
Harlot of Babylon	Jerusalem, the great city. Some suppose it can also represent Rome because she sits on the seven hills, but Prof Iain Provon of Uni Edinburgh feels the case of Babylon being Jerusalem is indisputable because the first mention of 'the great city' in Revelatiion (11:8) points to Jerusalem.	1) The worldly city or center of wickedness that allures, tempts, and draws people away from God (Ezekiel 27-28). 2) The world in the church, the unspiritual or earthly element that has infiltrated the body of Christ, or even a false church like Jerusalem.	The city on the Euphrates River (Revelation 9:14; 16:12). The imposing influence of that city and its dominance in world affairs are major considerations during the period just before Christ returns to judge her. It is the empire of the beast yet future.	Unfaithful Israel, especially Jerusalem. Description of the harlot's killing of the martyrs is distinctly reminiscent of Jesus' accusations against Jerusalem (Matthew 23:29-39).

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The New Creation	First century setting, the Christian's new condition in Christ - 'Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; Galatians 6:15).	Paradise restored with the redeemed enjoying intimate fellowship of marriage to the Lamb. 2 Peter 3:12-13 suggests the new heaven and earth may be a rejuvenated and transformed version of the old, perhaps this planet in the final and eternal home of God's people, or an eternal dwelling place that is beautiful, safe, and secure. The new Jerusalem refers to a people rather than a place, or may be the holy city descending from heaven to fulfill the continuation between the old and new covenants.	After the future temporal kingdom of a thousand years on earth and the consignment of Satan and the beasts to the lake of fire, the next scene is the new creation of Christ's eternal kingdom on the present earth. Proper hermeneutics allow the material existence of a new Jerusalem, new heaven and new earth with ethical perfection that exceed human comprehension because no human has yet experienced it.	Future restoration of paradise lost (the not yet aspect), which is to be actualized on the second coming of Christ. The new creation of the eternal state starts with people who place their faith in Christ becoming participants in that new creation, with full recovery of the presence and fellowship with God, witnessing the defeat of death and the gift of eternal life. Symbolically, abiding contentment is now available in Christ, where the tree of life with its promised fulfillment and eternal life is offered in Christ, making believers God's children.