

Structure of the Book of Revelation

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This analysis groups the parts of the Book of Revelation by their contents. The **“Contemporary”** components are material that relates to the actual time that John lived and recorded the book. The **“Apocalyptic Flow”** is the sequence of events outlined from the time John lived until the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. The **“Inset Chapters”** comprise explanatory information related to the apocalyptic flow but not specifically part of it. The **“Eschatology”** material is the “last things” – events that happen right at the very end of the apocalyptic flow as the Kingdom is being established and continuing through the White Throne Judgement. The material on **“Eternity”** comprises brief glimpses into the realm of God.

Contemporary:

1:1-3 Prologue

- Source of the revelation – Jesus from God the Father
- Purpose of the revelation – to show the things that must soon take place
- Method of delivery – by sending his angel
- Recipient of the revelation – to his servants, to his servant John
- Blessing for correct use – to read aloud the words, to hear and keep what is written
- Urgency – the time is near

1:4-8 Greeting to the Seven Churches

- From God the Father, the “seven spirits”, Jesus Christ, and John
- Glory and dominion to Jesus Christ whose sacrifice makes salvation possible

1:9-20 Vision of the Son of Man (Dn7:13-14)

- Circumstances of the revelation – John is exiled on the island of Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus
- A loud voice (Jesus Christ): write what you see in a book for the seven churches
- The Son of Man among seven golden lampstands, seven stars in his right hand, and sharp two-edged sword in his mouth
- He is the first and the last, the living one, died and alive for evermore

2:1-28, 3:1-29 The messages for the Seven Churches

- An individual message for Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea
- Each Church receives a unique description of Jesus, an exhortation to overcome, and a unique benefit for those who conquer
- Most Churches receive a commendation, a rebuke, and warning
- The message to each Church is generalized to apply to “he who has ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches” – the complete message is for all Christians everywhere in all times

12:1-6 The Woman and the Dragon

- Israel is seen in a vision as a woman giving birth to a male child who will rule all nations (Jesus Christ)
- Satan the Devil is seen as a great red dragon who attempts to kill the child at birth
- The child ascends to the throne of God
- The woman, now representing the Church, flees to a prepared place in the “wilderness” where she is nourished by God (the wilderness represents the True Church going “underground” to avoid persecution)

22:6-11 Jesus’ final message through the angel

- The angel affirms the words are trustworthy and true to show God’s servants what must soon take place
- The message is delivered: Jesus is coming soon; blessing accrues to those who “keep the words of the prophecy of this book”
- John affirms his reception of the revelation and is adjured NOT to seal up “the words of the prophecy of this book” (Dn12:4)

22:12-20a Jesus’ final message to John

- Jesus adjures those who “wash their robes” to avoid the corruptions of the world
- Jesus reiterates for “the Churches” to seek the water of life
- A warning is posted NOT to add-to or subtract-from “the words of the prophecy of this book”

22:20b-21 Final Doxology

Apocalyptic Flow:

The scroll with seven seals (Rv5:5, 7, 9)

- The Book of Daniel ends with a sealed book, a scroll (Dn12:9), as the flow of Revelation begins
- In Roman times, it was customary to seal a last will and testament with seven seals
- All the seals must be removed before the scroll can be read
- The correspondence of the opening of seals with the Olivet Prophecy is well documented¹
- The conditions described by the opening of the seals, (religious persecution, war, famine, economic disruption, natural disasters, pestilence) have been the human condition through the ages, but an intensification of them is probable as the events of Revelation unfold – the Great Tribulation (Dn12:1, Mk13:19, Mt24:21)

The First Seal (Rv6:1-2)

- A white horse depicting religious deception (Mk13:5-6, Mt24:4-5, Lk21:8)
- This began in earnest in the second century with the corruption of the teachings of Apostolic Church and the emergence of the false church

The Second Seal (Rv6:3-4)

- A red horse depicting war, rumors, tumults (Mk13:7a, Mt24:6a, Lk21:9a)

The Third Seal (Rv6:5-6)

- A black horse depicting shortages and economic disruption (Mk13:8a, Mt24:7a, Lk21:10)

The Fourth Seal (Rv6:7-8)

- A pale horse depicting war, earthquake, famine, and pestilence (Mk13:8b, Mt24:7b, Lk21:11a)

The Fifth Seal (Rv6:9-11)

- Persecution and death of Christians (Mk13:9-13, Mt24:9-14, Lk21:12b-19)
- Verse 11 is the indication that the Great Tribulation is starting (Mk13:14a, Mt24:15)

The Sixth Seal (Rv6:12-17)

- The heavenly signs (Mk13:24-25, Mt24:29, Lk21:25-26)
- This signals the beginning of the Day of the Lord (Mk13:26, Mt24:30, Lk21:27)

The Seventh Seal (Rv8:1-5)

- Seven angels each with a trumpet to blow (Rv8:2, 6)
- This is the ultimate Day of YHWH as prophesized throughout the Old Testament (Obadiah 15, Joel 1:15, 2:1, Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:7, 14, etc.)
- Another angel with incense, depicting the prayers of the saints, throws fire on the earth resulting in lightening, thunder, and an earthquake (Rv8:3-5)

The First Trumpet (Rv8:7)

- Hail and fire, mixed with blood are thrown on the earth
- A third of the earth burned, a third of trees burned, all green grass burned

The Second Trumpet (Rv8:8-9)

- A great mountain, burning with fire, is thrown into the sea
- A third of the sea becomes blood, a third of sea creatures die, a third of ships destroyed

The Third Trumpet (Rv8:10-11)

- A great star blazing like a torch falls on rivers and springs
- A third of the waters become bitter (Wormwood) and many people die

The Fourth Trumpet (Rv8:12-13)

- A third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck darkening a third of their light
- For a third of the day and a third of the night they are kept from shining
- A 'eagle' cries out 'woe, woe, woe' to the inhabitants of the earth on account of the final three trumpets

The Fifth Trumpet (Rv9:1-12)

- A 'star' falls from heaven and 'he' is given the key to the abyss
- From the abyss smoke emerges and from the smoke 'locusts' which torment people without killing them to the point they wish for death
- People with the 'seal of God' on their foreheads are protected
- The king of the locusts is the 'angel of the abyss' named 'Destruction' or 'Destroyer'
- This is the first woe (Rv9:12)

¹ See "The Olivet Prophecy" on www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca

The Sixth Trumpet (Rv9:13-21, 11:13-14)

- The four angels bound at the Euphrates are freed to prepare the way for an army of “200,000,000” by which a third of mankind is killed; those who survive refuse to repent
- Finally, there is an earthquake which kills “7,000” people in Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:4?)
- This is the second woe (Rv11:14)

The Seventh Trumpet (Rv11:15-19)

- With the seventh trumpet the mystery of God announced through the prophets is fulfilled (Rv10:6-7)
- “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” (Rv11:15b)
- The final application of retributive justice occurs (Rv11:18)
- The heavenly temple becomes visible amid lightening, thunder, earthquake, and hail – the ‘ark of covenant’ is visible (is this a rainbow or a box?) (Rv11:19)

The Seven last Plagues (Rv15:1-8, 16:1-21)

- Seven angels appear out of a heavenly sanctuary and are each given a bowl containing the final wrath of God (Rv15:1, 5-8, 16:1)
- The resurrected saints sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rv15:2-4)
- Each of the plagues is related to the ‘trumpet’ of the same number:
 1. Earth
 2. Sea
 3. Water
 4. Sun
 5. Throne of Beast ≡ the angel of the abyss
 6. The battle of Armageddon
 7. Retributive justice

First Plague (Rv16:2)

- Bowl poured on earth
- Harmful and painful sores afflict those who worshipped the Beast and took the mark

Second Plague (Rv16:3)

- Bowl poured on the sea
- Sea becomes like blood and all living things die

Third Plague (Rv16:4-7)

- Bowl poured into rivers and springs, they become blood
- An angel extolls the justness of the punishment of those who ‘shed the blood of the saints and prophets’

Fourth Plague (Rv16:8-9)

- Bowl poured on the sun
- People are scorched – they curse God and refuse to repent

Fifth Plague (Rv16:10-11)

- Bowl poured on throne of the Beast and his kingdom is plunged into darkness
- People gnaw their tongues in anguish – they curse God and refuse to repent

Sixth Plague (Rv16:12-16)

- Bowl poured on the river Euphrates
- The river dries up to open the way for the armies to proceed to the battle of Armageddon
- Demonic spirits emerge from the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet to assemble the armies

Seventh Plague (Rv16:17-21)

- Bowl poured into the air
- A loud voice proclaims, “It is done!”
- Amid lightening, thunder, and earthquake, the ‘great city’ is split into three and cities of nations fall
- Final wrath is poured on ‘Babylon the Great’: hail stones of 100 pounds fall on people as they continue to curse God

Inset Chapters:

Chapter 7 is positioned just after the Heavenly Signs – the sixth seal. At this point the Beast Power has enjoyed its stint of worldwide hegemony – the Great Tribulation has been raging. The Heavenly Signs are the indication that God is about to act.

Sealing the “144,000” (Rv7:1-8)

- One angel calms the elements while another emerges with the “seal of the living God”
- There is no elaboration on what the seal comprises, but the function appears to be identification and protection
- Then using the “thirteen tribe” paradigm for “Israel”, 12,000 are numbered from twelve tribes
- Much debate has centered around why is “Dan” missing?
- The numbers (“12,000” and “144,000”) appear to be symbolic
- Those selected would appear to be the ones to comprise the New Israel

A Great Multitude from Every Nation (Rv7:9-17)

- A great multitude from every nation appears before the throne “clothed in white robes” – which indicates repentance: these people must have had exposure to the truth prior to the tribulation
- The throne room in heaven displays great joy at the appearance of the great multitude
- One of the elders confirms their repentance: “They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”
- They appear to be prepared for the first resurrection: “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore...”
- Hopefully, we will see in this multitude many former friends and family members who have been part of the Church in the past

The Seven Thunders (Rv10:)

- Chapter 10 records that John hears the Seven Thunders, but is not allowed to record what they say – the only clue to the meaning is that John eats the scroll, as Ezekiel did (Ez3:1-3), and is told he must ‘again prophesy’: this would seem to imply that there is still work to be done

The Two Witnesses (Rv11:1-12)

- Chapter 11:1-10 then records the work of the ‘Two Witnesses’ culminating in their deaths
- Rv11:11-12 indicates they are resurrected after three and a half days: is this the ‘first resurrection’ or a special resurrection?

Chapters 12, 13, and 14 are positioned right after the Seventh Trumpet – this is the famous occasion of the First Resurrection (Mk13:27, Mt24:31, 1Cr15:52, 1Th4:16). **These chapters open up the meaning of the “sealed” prophecies of Daniel** (Dn12:4). Revelation chapter 12 reveals the working of Satan the Devil behind the world powers. Revelation chapter 13 reveals the Beast Power – the final incarnation of the fourth Beast of Daniel. Chapter 14 starts with the representation of First Fruits, then records the activity of three angels, and finally records the two harvests of the earth.

Satan thrown down to earth (Rv12:7-12)

- There is war in heaven, Satan and his demons are defeated and cast to earth having “no longer any place for them in heaven”
- This is a signal that “salvation and the power and the Kingdom of our God” can proceed – Satan can no longer accuse Christians
- Many have already been martyred, but now Satan comes with wrath

Satan pursues the Woman (Rv12:13-17a)

- Satan attempts to destroy the Woman, the Church, but once again God takes the Woman to safety in the “wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished”
- But not all Christians are protected as Satan is able to “make war on the rest of her offspring”

The Beast from the Sea (Rv13:1-10)

- The first partner of the Beast Power (Antichrist 1Jh2:18, 2Th2:3) is given authority from Satan the Devil – it requires worship from the whole earth, none can oppose it
- The Beast blasphemes God and makes war on the Saints – who refuse to worship it, accepting martyrdom instead
- “If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ... here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints” (compare Mk13:13, Mt24:13, Lk21:18-19)

The Beast from the Earth (Rv13:11-18)

- The second partner of the Beast Power (Antichrist 1Jh2:18, 2Th2:3) exercises the authority of the first Beast, performs great signs, and deceives all who dwell on earth to worship the Beast
- It gives life to the image of the first Beast, an idol of some kind, and imposes death on those who will not worship the idol
- It imposes the Mark of the Beast to control economic activity

The Lamb and a “144, 000” (Rv14:1-5)

- On Mount Zion (Jerusalem, the New Testament Church) are the Lamb and “144,000” singing a new song
- The “144,000” represent those prepared for the first resurrection – they are “virgins”, “firstfruits”, and “blameless”

The Messages of the Three Angels (Rv14:6-13)

- The first proclaims the gospel
- The second announces the final fall of ‘Babylon’
- The third pronounces the fate of those who worship the Beast and take the mark of the Beast in contrast with those who remain faithful

The Harvest of the Earth (Rv14:14-20)

- The saints are ‘harvested’ from the earth – first resurrection (Rv20:5, Mt24:31, 1Cr15:52, 1Th4:16)
- Sinners are harvested into the winepress of wrath – retributive justice

After the seventh of the last plagues is revealed (Rv16:17-21), then in Revelation chapter 17 God explains the zeitgeist of Western Civilization for the last two and half millennia – the corrupt religion from Satan in its many forms – collectively called “Babylon the Great” by God. Revelation chapter 18 describes the final eradication of “Babylon the Great”.

The Great Whore and the Beast (Rv17:1-18)

- An angel announces the judgement of the Great Whore, the Beast from the Earth, “Babylon the Great, mother of whores and of the earth’s abominations”, “drunk with the blood of the saints, the martyrs”
- The woman rides a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names, the Beast from the Sea, which has seven heads and ten horns – the heads represent kings and mountains, the seven hills of Rome, “the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth”
- The final incarnation of the Beast (see Dn7:19-27), with ten other kings, will make war with the Lamb, who will destroy them
- The Great Whore rules over “peoples and multitudes and nations and languages”, but will ultimately be hated by the Beast and the ten kings, who will destroy her

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great (Rv18:1-24, see Is21:9)

- An angel announces the final destruction of “Babylon” with whom “the kings of the earth have committed immorality ... and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living.”
- The people of God are implored to “come out of her”
- Despite Babylon’s arrogance, “I sit as a queen”, “her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire”
- “the merchants of the earth weep”, “all the shipmasters and seafaring men ... stood far off and cried” at the destruction of “Babylon the Great”
- A mighty angel throws a “millstone” into the sea symbolically demonstrating the end of all the trappings of the society of Babylon for the sake of “the blood of prophets and of saints and all who have been slain on earth”

Eschatology:

Finally, all is accomplished, the kingdom of the world is about to become the Kingdom of God. It remains only to consummate the final victory and establish the Kingdom.

Rejoicing in Heaven (Rv19:1-5)

- A great multitude in heaven sings rejoicing over the destruction of the great whore and the salvation and glory of God
- The twenty-four elders and four living creatures in the heavenly throne room praise God
- A voice calls on all servants of God to praise him

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rv19:6-10)

- Prior to the return to earth, a great multitude cries “Hallelujah ... for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and the Bride has made herself ready ...”
- And angel bids John record: “Blessed are those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb”

The King of kings and the White Cavalry (Rv19:11-21)

- Heaven opens and the King of kings appears on a white horse, he is called the Word of God, he also has a new name – yet to be revealed
- With him are “the armies of heaven” on white horses – presumably coming from the marriage supper
- An angel announces the final destruction of the armies of the earth gathered to battle the King of kings – the Battle of Armageddon

- The leaders of the earth's armies, the Beast and the False Prophet, are captured and thrown live into the lake of fire where they perish

The Millennium (Rv20:1-10)

- Satan the Devil is bound with "a great chain" and thrown into "the bottomless pit" so that he can no longer deceive people during the millennium
- The resurrected Saints are given "thrones" and "authority to judge", and they reign "with Christ for a thousand years" as "priests of God and of Christ"
- At the end of the millennium, Satan is released, gathers a massive army and attempts to attack the Saints in "the beloved city"
- The army is consumed by fire and Satan is thrown into the lake of fire for eternal torment

The Great White Throne Judgement (Rv20:11-15)

- The "dead, great and small" are resurrected and stand before the Great White Throne
- The "books" are opened and the "book of life" is opened: all who have ever lived and died are given understanding of God's way from the Bible; they are given the opportunity for repentance and eternal life
- Those who have their names written into the "book of life" pass into the family of God; those who do not, go to the lake of fire – the "second death"

Eternity:

The Throne in Heaven (Rv4:1-11)

- This vision sets the stage for all that is to come
- Jesus speaking to John bids him "come up here", then "in the Spirit" John sees a vision of the throne of God the Father, and the whole scene of the throne room
- There are twenty-four "elders" before the throne and four "living creatures" resembling both cherubim and seraphim who extoll and worship God the Father

The New Heaven and the New Earth (Rv21:1-8)

- With these final visions we truly "look through a glass darkly" (1Cr13:12), eagerly awaiting more revelation (see Is60:17, 65:17, 66:22, 2Pt3:13)
- The New Heaven and New Earth contain New Jerusalem, where God dwells – there will be no more tears, no pain, no death
- All things will be new; the "one who conquers will have this heritage"; sinners will have been put to the second death

The New Jerusalem (Rv21:9-27)

- The New Jerusalem is identified as "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb"
- The city is inscribed with "the names of the twelve sons of Israel" and "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"
- The measurements of the city are huge; the construction is of gold and jewels
- There is no temple in the city, nor need of sun or moon – God the Father and the Lamb are both temple and light
- The only inhabitants are those "written in the Lamb's book of life"

The River of Life (Rv22:1-5)

- The river flows from the thrones of God the Father and the Lamb through the city
- The Tree of Life grows along the river "for the healing of the nations"
- Only the servants of God will be there to worship him – and "they will reign for ever and ever"

Apocalyptic Sweep of Revelation

