

Four Major Schemes of Interpreting Revelation:

1. Preterist: Things that have gone by, all being in the past at the time when John wrote it: Thus that it is not a "prophecy"
2. Historicist: Covering the whole sweep of history from the 1st Century to the 2nd coming of Christ.
3. Futurist: Concentrates particularly on "the time of the end" from chapter four onward (taken from book of Daniel chapter 12) on events surrounding the 2nd coming of Christ and the "great tribulation," a time of colossal persecution.
4. Idealist: FOCUSES ON THE FUNDAMENTALS. Presents some of all three IDEALS. Idealist interpretation agrees with historicism that Revelation's visions symbolize the conflict between Christ and His Church on the one hand, and Satan and his evil conspirators on the other, from the apostolic age to Christ's second coming. With the preterist view that the forces and conflicts symbolized in Revelation's vision cycles manifest themselves in events that were to occur "soon" from the perspective of the first-century churches, but the idealist view also finds expression in the Church's ongoing struggle of persevering faith in the present and foretell a still-future escalation of persecution and divine wrath leading to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth. **This schematic of interpreting John's revelation means that the visions' literary order need not reflect the temporal order of particular historical events.**

Suggested Principles for Unpacking John's Revelation
The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

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1. John uses groups of sevens in series as if to indicate the fullness and completeness of those things it communicates and the ultimate completeness of the message itself.
2. John gives us a strong impression that the entire revelation is meant not so much to inform or communicate information as it is meant to transform—that is to create transformation in the hearer as a result of his message.
3. The revelation was primarily meant to be read aloud to a hearing community during communal worship through a “multimedia” experience “seeing” and “hearing” the message. In this audible format, the images evoked were meant to have persuaded or at least done something to them via its absorbing sights, sounds, and announcements.
4. The character of John's revelation is repetitive and progressively intensifies leading to an explicit climax: the descent of New Jerusalem and the Lamb at its center. Thus it moves in a full circle from Jesus in the midst of the Church in the earth (Rev. 1-3) to Jesus in the midst of His bride at the center of a new heaven and earth, having set everything right (Rev. 21-22).
5. Many of the images presented in the Revelation are introduced originally in the prophets of the Old Testament:
 - a. Daniel 7: Son of Man, Ancient of Days, the throne, the river from the throne, four “wild beasts,” war against God's “holy people,” divisions of “time.”
 - b. Ezekiel 1: Four living creatures with four faces, “the man” in their midst who speaks with Ezekiel, the glory, thunders, and lightnings, a scroll to be eaten by the prophet (Ezekiel 3).
 - c. Zechariah 1-6: Horses of various color and their riders, “horns” and contradicting “craftsmen,” a Man with a measuring line who measures Jerusalem, a golden lampstand, two “anointed ones” receiving oil from the lampstand, a flying scroll, a wicked woman set down in Babylon, four winds, white robe and crown given to the Lord's priest. In Zech. 10: the Coming King. Zech. 14: the Day of the Lord.
 - d. Isaiah 6: 4: Living creatures encircling the throne, burning coals from the altar. Isaiah 11& 61: The seven spirits or seven-fold Spirit of God.
 - e. Genesis: Plagues of Egypt
 - f. 1 Kings: Elijah shutting up rain from heaven and calling fire down in confrontation with prophets of Baal.

John's Revelation and Psalm 23

Revelation chapters 1-4

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Revelation 5-19:8

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Revelation 19:9-22

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
forever.