

# Introduction to the Book of Revelation

# The Value of Studying Revelation

1. While the Bible promises a blessing to anyone who reads the scriptures, a special blessing is promised to those who read this book (1:3). This is the only book in all the Bible that promises a special blessing for those who read and hear its words. Keep in mind too that the book closes with a restatement of this blessing for those who, in addition to reading and hearing the Word, also “keep it” (22:7)

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2. The book of revelation reveals God's amazing plan for the future. The knowledge of future events has been a fascination of people from all throughout history and from all over the world. The faithful Christian who will study this book will not be caught by surprise as the events unfold.

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3. The book of Revelation gives a fuller and clearer picture of prophecy than any other Biblical book. It is in Revelation that we get the full glimpse of such events as the glorious appearing of Jesus Christ (Rev. 19); the governmental operation of the man of sin, the terrible events of the Tribulation Period, the ultimate end of Satan, the future glorification of the Church, the future position of the saints, and the city Christ is preparing for His Church. Without the book of Revelation we would have only scant information regarding these future events.

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4. This book finishes the story of the Bible that began in the book of Genesis:

Genesis shows humanity's beginning in a beautiful paradise. Revelation shows the wonderful paradise to come.

Genesis shows how human beings lost a chance to eat of the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24). Revelation shows that humankind will yet eat of that tree (Rev. 22:2).

# The Value of Studying Revelation

Genesis tells of humanity's first rebellion against God (Gen. 3-4). Revelation promises an end to humanity's rebellion against God.

Genesis records the first murderer, drunkard, and rebel. Revelation promises a city where "nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

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Genesis reveals the tragic sorrow that resulted from sin (Gen. 3-4). Revelation promises, “[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 21:4).

Genesis records the first death (Gen. 4:8). Revelation promises that “there will be no more death” (Rev. 21:4)

Genesis shows the beginning of the curse (Gen. 3:15-18). Revelation shows the curse lifted (Rev. 22:3).

# The Value of Studying Revelation

Genesis introduces the devil for the first time as the tempter of the human race (Gen. 3:1-18). Revelation shows the final doom of Satan (Rev. 20:10).

Genesis promises that Satan's head will be bruised (Gen. 3:15). Revelation shows Satan bruised and defeated (Rev. 19:20).



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Genesis shows Satan's first attempt at discrediting the Word of God when he asked Eve, "Did God really say?" and his first attempt at denying the Word of God, "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:1-5). Sad to say, the thousands of years since then finds human beings still believing Satan and not God. Today the Bible is not believed by the majority of people but rather is subjected to the criticism of skeptics in education, the entertainment industry, science, and even the liberal ministry. This skepticism has tragically resulted in the doom of many unsuspecting souls.

Revelation promises a curse on all such infidels who detract from God's holy Word, "And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rev. 22:19).

## Revelation 1:1 (ESV)

1The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

# Introduction to Revelation

Revelation 1:1 announces both the book's title (it is a "revelation") and its divine author ("Jesus Christ"). The book is an "unveiling" of unseen spiritual forces operating behind the scenes in history and controlling its events and outcome. This disclosure is conveyed in a series of symbolic visions that exhibit the influence of OT prophecies, especially those received by Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. The book is also "prophecy" (Rev. 1:3; 22:7), not only as divine prediction of future events but also as divine diagnosis of the present state of affairs.

The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2453.

# Who is the author?

The Early Church Fathers identify John the disciple as the author of Revelation. John also wrote the Gospel of John, and the letters of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John.

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[The Early Church Father] Irenaeus reports, on the basis of earlier sources, that “John received the Revelation almost in our own time, toward the end of the reign of Domitian” (Against Heresies 5.30.3). Since Domitian’s reign ended in a.d. 96, most scholars date Revelation in the mid-90s.

The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2453.

# What type of literature is Revelation?

The book of Revelation identifies itself both as “apocalypse” (or “revelation,” 1:1) and as prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18, 19; see also 10:11; 22:9).

The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2453.

# What type of literature is Revelation?

Revelation is a combination of three literary types:

1. Apocalyptic—a message expressed in an apocalyptic mode involves the use of cryptic, richly symbolic language portraying the dramatic end time vindication and triumph of God and His people.
2. Prophecy—God’s word of proclamation is directed to His people in the face of intense persecution from without and spiritual decline from within.
3. Epistle—a letter is addressed to the needs of specific churches (cf. 1:4-7; chs. 2-3; 22:21).

# Theme of Revelation

Revelation unveils the unseen spiritual war in which the church is engaged: the cosmic conflict between God and his Christ on the one hand, and Satan and his evil allies (both demonic and human) on the other. In this conflict, Jesus the Lamb has already won the decisive victory through his sacrificial death, but his church continues to be assaulted by the dragon, in its death-throes, through persecution, false teaching, and the allure of material affluence and cultural approval.



# Theme of Revelation

By revealing the spiritual realities lying behind the church's trials and temptations during the time between Christ's first and second comings, and by dramatically affirming the certainty of Christ's triumph in the new heaven and earth, the visions granted to John both warn the church and fortify it to endure suffering and to stay pure from the defiling enticements of the present world order.

The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2454.

# Audience of Revelation

Revelation is addressed to first-century churches in seven cities of the Roman province of Asia (now western Turkey, see map) (1:4, 11) as representative of all Christ's churches (cf. "all the churches," 2:23; and "to the churches," 2:7, etc.). These churches were threatened by false teaching (such as that of the Nicolaitans, 2:6, 15), by persecution (2:10, 13), by compromise with surrounding paganism through idolatry and immorality (2:14, 20–21), and by spiritual complacency (3:1–3, 15–17). Jesus sent his revelation to John to fortify his churches to resist the wiles of the devil, whether in the form of intimidating violence (the beast), deceptive heresy (the false prophet), or beguiling affluence (the prostitute).

# Setting of Revelation

John addressed the book of Revelation “to the seven churches that are in Asia,” namely Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, although there were undoubtedly other churches elsewhere in the province of Asia (e.g., Miletus and Colossae, see Acts 20:17; Col. 1:2). John had apparently been exiled from Ephesus to the island of Patmos, southwest of Ephesus, and it was there that he recorded his visions.

The ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2454.





PATMOS

0

100 km

100 mi

RHODES

BITHYNIA

MYSIA

ASIA

Aegean Sea

SAMOS

COS

LYCIA

Abydos

Troas

Assos

Mitylene

Pergamum

Thyatira

Sardis

Smyrna

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Hierapolis

Laodicea

Colossae

Priene

Miletus

Halicarnassus

Rhodes

Patara

0



# 7 Churches of Revelation



# Setting of Revelation

John records that he wrote his book at the direct command of the Lord who appeared to him (1:10-11, 19). This is the only instance in the NT in which a writer states this as his reason for writing.

# Setting of Revelation

The historical situation facing the churches/Church was also an important factor—persecution from without and compromise from within.

# The Purpose of the Book of Revelation

The book is a prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ in terms of His future final triumph as Lord of lords and the ethical implications of this for the present.

1. It would help the original readers understand their own times in light of the victorious and triumphant future.
2. It would help all future generations of Christians as a message of hope to counteract spiritual deterioration, to encourage perseverance and to fortify them with the assurance of Christ's ultimate victory.

From Dr. Danny Akin.



# Unique Characteristics of the Book of Revelation

1. Rich, representative symbolism—some of it familiar, some strange and bizarre—drawn from all areas of creation and life. Some of the symbols are explained in other passages of the Bible, especially the OT, and some are left unexplained presumably because (1) the author expected his readers to understand them (cf. 13:18; 17:9), and (2) the mystery of the events described was intentional.

# Unique Characteristics of the Book of Revelation

2. Though Revelation is full of OT images, language and allusions, there is not a single direct citation from the OT. John made free use of OT material. He draws heavily from Daniel and Zechariah.

3. The book has a “one-world” outlook—a world united in rebellion against God over which He will triumph and establish His sovereign rule on earth.

# The Key Verse of Revelation

Revelation 1:19 (ESV)

Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.

# The Key Verse of Revelation

Revelation 1:19 is the key verse that unlocks the door to the entire outline of the book. It is further evidence of the threefold division of this great Revelation. John was told expressly by Christ to write-

1. “what you have seen
2. what is now ...
3. what will take place later”

From this, it seems evident that the book is made up primarily of future events. It includes some things that existed in John’s day (chs. 2-3), all based on the things he saw. From this, we see that the futurist interpretation of the book of Revelation is the valid one.

# REVELATION

	<b>“The things which you have seen . . .”</b>	<b>“The things which are . . .”</b>	<b>“The things which will take place.” (Revelation 1:19)</b>
	Personal and biographical	Christ’s letters to the seven churches	Christ as Judge (chapters 4–5) The tribulation (chapters 6–18) The coming of Christ (chapter 19) The millennium (chapter 20) The eternal state (chapters 21–22)
	<i>CHAPTER</i> 1	<i>CHAPTERS</i> 2–3	<i>CHAPTERS</i> 4–22
<b>Scope</b>	History: looking back		Prophecy: looking ahead
<b>Style</b>	Dialogue		Observations and questions
<b>Scene</b>	On earth		Shifts between earth and heaven
<b>Theme</b>	Christ’s future triumph over the forces of evil and His re-creation of the world for the redeemed		
<b>Key Verses</b>	1:7, 19; 22:12–13		
<b>Christ in Revelation</b>	Jesus is the coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who will return as Judge and King to usher in the kingdom of God on earth (19:11–20:6).		

“I am the Alpha . . .” (1:8)

“. . . and the Omega” (22:13)

**"Alpha — Omega"**

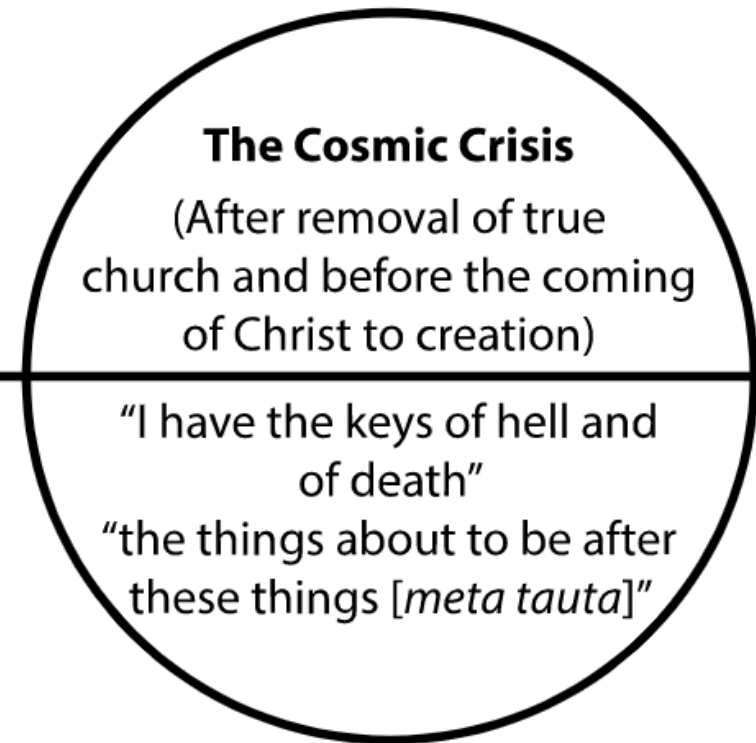
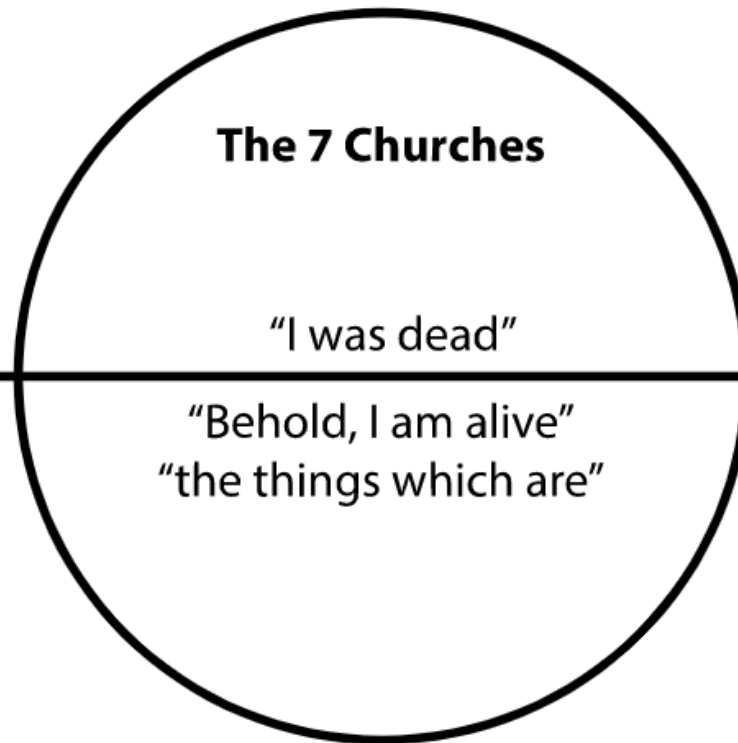
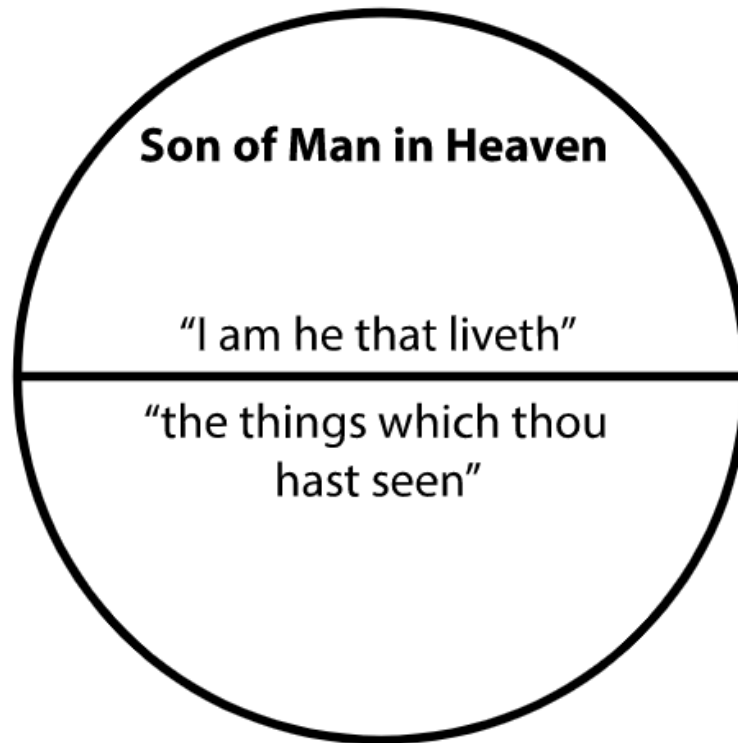
**"Things...seen"**

**"Beginning — End"**

**PAST**

**PRESENT**

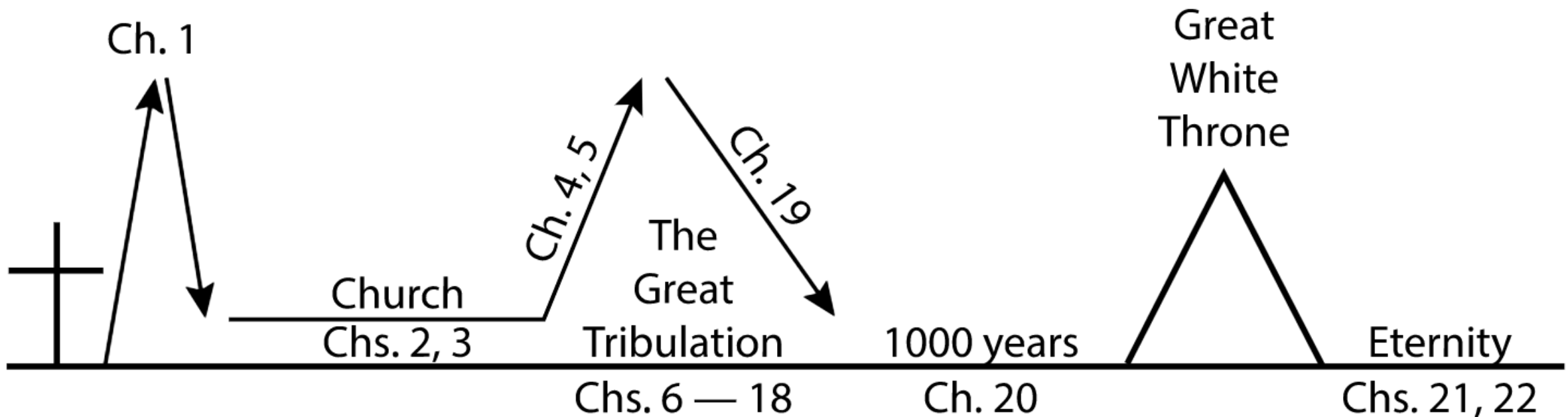
**FUTURE**



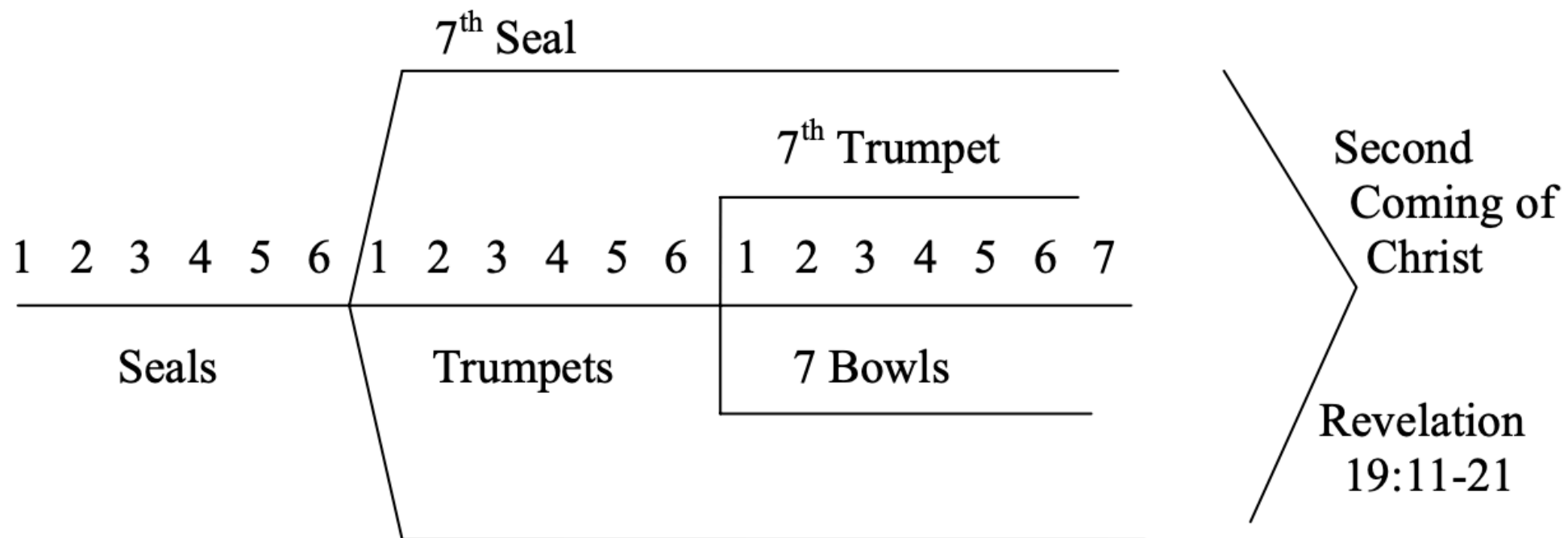
**Revelation 1  
Christ in Glory**

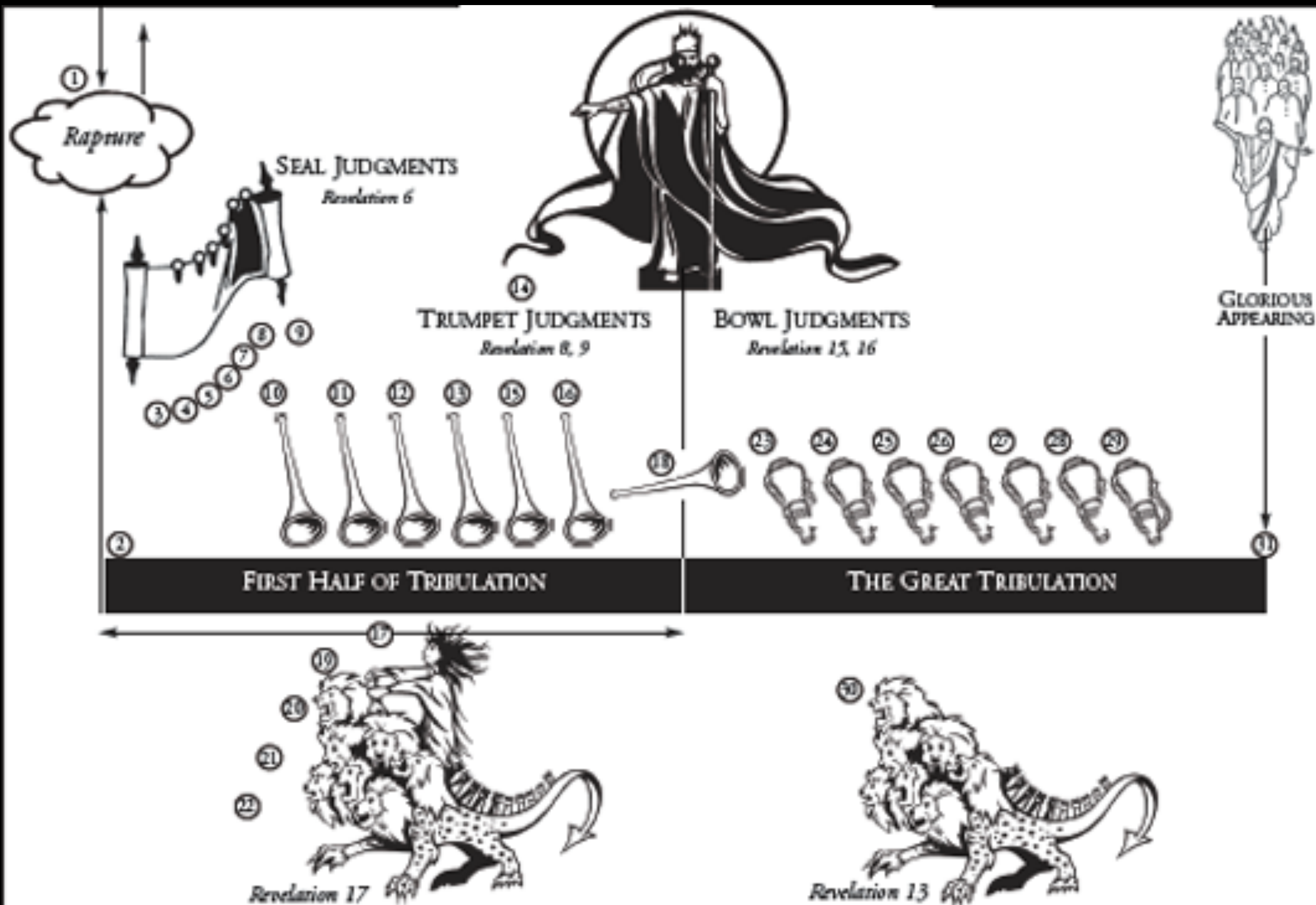
**Revelation 2, 3  
Church in the World**

**Revelation 4 — 22  
Crisis in the Future**



# Order of the Book Revelation





THE EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD AS DESCRIBED IN REVELATION



# Key Doctrines in Revelation

**Revelation**—Jesus Christ’s true identity and saving work is unveiled (1:1–22:21; Is. 11:5; 53:1–11; Zech. 9:9; Luke 1:35; John 1:1–14; 7:18; Acts 4:27; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:8; 1Thess. 5:24; Heb. 1:9; 1 John 5:20)

**Holiness**—the church is warned about sin and exhorted to holiness (22:11; Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7; Ps. 24:3, 4; Rom. 8:29; 12:1; Eph. 5:1, 8; Col. 3:12; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; 1 John 2:6)

**Worship**—God is worthy of man’s worship and praise (4:10, 11; 5:12; 2 Sam. 22:44; Pss. 22:23; 50:23; 96:2; 145:3; Ezek. 3:12; Dan. 2:20; Matt. 2:1, 2, 11; 28:16, 17; John 4:20–24; 9:30–38; Luke 1:68, 69; Heb. 1:6; Jude 1:25)

**Eschatology**—“the doctrine of the last things” (4:1–22:21)

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