

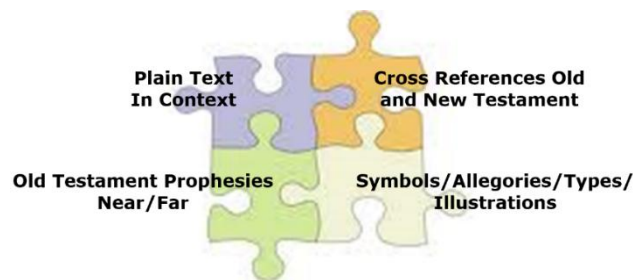
Literal Interpretation of Prophecy

God wants us to understand Prophecy
God wants us to understand the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:3 Blessed *is* he who reads and those who **hear the words** of this prophecy, and **keep those things** which are written in it; for the time *is* near.

Revelation: Putting the Pieces Together we will...

1. **Utilize:** Cross-References in the Old/New Testament
2. **Study:** The Plain Text **in Context**
3. **Unpack:** Symbols, Allegories, Types/Illustrations
4. **Compare:** Dual Prophecies; i.e. Near vs Distant Fulfillments of same prophecy



I. What Literal Interpretation of Prophecy is:

1. Literal
2. Normal
3. Historical
4. Grammatical
5. Contextual
6. Authorial
7. Exegetical
8. Singular/Objective: Has a Fixed Interpretation

Literal Interpretation is...

Literal: As opposed to non-literal or spiritualized

The understanding which any person of normal intelligence would get, without special gifts and without any 'code' or 'key' [La Sor, 1912-1991]

If a person does not interpret the plain statements of prophecy literally, there is no rule by which any consensus of meaning can be established; the existence of a wide variety of interpretations shows the failure of this approach [ET, 10]

Normal: Everyday common understanding of words.

I.e. The correct meaning of interpretation is "the ... normal, or plain interpretation" [Charles Ryrie]

Historical: Not to be taken out of the time and space which the words were uttered:

[The reader must] ... transfer himself mentally into the first century [when interpreting the New Testament]...He must place himself on the standpoint of the author and seek to enter into his very soul, until he, as it were, lives his life and thinks his thoughts...[in order to] guard carefully against the rather

common mistake of transferring the author into present day and making him speak the language of the twentieth century [Pentecost, 1915]

Grammatical: True meaning of a sentence is rooted in its grammar; i.e. parts of speech. This is giving each word...

...the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether employed in writing, speaking or thinking

Contextual: Every sentence should be understood in the context of the paragraph and every paragraph in the context of the book, and every book in view of the entire bible...

"No prophesy of the Word is to be interpreted solely with reference to itself...but all other portions of prophetic revelation are to be taken into account and considered"

2 Peter 1:20b...no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. [66 Books/40 Authors/3 Continents /Thousands of years]

Literal Interpretation is also...

Authorial: The readers obligation is to discover the meaning that the **author determined**; i.e. what the author meant and not what the reader wants the text to mean. The true meaning is not "what it means to me" but what the author intended [as directed by God]

Exegetical: Exegesis; i.e. to explain a meaning by reading **"out of"** the text, rather than reading meaning "into" the text to discover the meaning already in the text. [again not "what *I think* it means"] Bullseye before the arrow!

Singular: *One meaning* as understood by the human author *and God Himself*; the same meaning. One meaning may have many applications.

Objective: The Literal Interpretation insists that the meaning of the text is the same for everyone; i.e. The one meaning is fixed.

II. What Literal Interpretation of Prophecy is not:

...the literal method of interpretation does not mean that everything in the Bible is "true literally", rather it means that **everything in the Bible is "literally true"**. IOW's It does not mean that the Bible does not contain figures of speech such as metaphors and anthropomorphisms: Human terms used for Deity. E.g. feathers, etc.

The literalist **is not one** who denies figurative language, that symbols are used in prophesy, **nor does he deny** that great spiritual truths are set forth therein. Rather, his position is simply that prophecies are to be normally interpreted [i.e. according to the received laws of language] as any other utterances are interpreted- that which is manifestly figurative being so regarded [*as obviously figurative*. mine]. [Poythress, UD, 91]

1. Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Spiritual Application*

Determining a text as allegory does not mean there are no spiritual applications; IOWs One Scripture can have both a literal interpretation combines with deeper spiritual applications. [NJC]

E.g. "Don't muzzle the ox when it is working" in Deut. 25 **is speaks of an ox**. Paul uses the verse in 1 Cor. 9 to apply to compensating Pastors for their work.

E.g. To use a common illustration, a chair is made to sit on, but to use it otherwise does not destroy either its original purpose or its structure; for example, a chair can be used to stand on or used to prop

open a door. On the other hand, taking a chair outside of its feasible usages would turn it into something other than a chair. **For instance**, it cannot be used as kindling wood without destroying its form, that is, its "chairness." There is a difference between the **interpretation of a text [which is one]** and the **application of a text** [which are many]

Also, while there is only **one interpretation** of a text- the one literally meant by the author-there are **many implications**. This is why the New Testament use of the Old Testament sometimes seems removed from a proper interpretation; the New Testament is often not giving the interpretation, but an implication or application of the text. *A text's correct interpretation is the historical-grammatical interpretation* [Systematic Theology Vol.4, Norman Geisler, p. 418] Literal Interpretation does not eliminate Spiritual Application

- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Spiritual Application*

2. Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Figures of Speech*

We understand that God does not have feathers or wings in light of John 4:24 stating that God is Spirit. When Jesus says that He is the vine in John 15 is not physically actual.

"That He is a vine is literally true, but it is not true literally (i.e. physically) ... the literal truth behind this metaphor, viz., that we are the branches on the vine, our source of spiritual life literally (actually and in reality) comes from Christ." [Geisler]

- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Spiritual Application*
- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Figures of Speech*

3. Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Types*

The fulfillment [of] a type i.e., the anti-type ...is in "no sense spiritualization or allegorization of any literal thing or event; it is the **literal fulfillment** of the **literal type** by the **literal anti-type**." [Geisler]

Colossians 2:16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths 17 which are a shadow [Type], of things to come, but the substance is of Christ [Anti-type/Literal fulfillment]

- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Spiritual Application*
- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Figures of Speech*
- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Types*

4. Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate the use of Symbols*

IOWs Each Symbol is *Emblematic* of Something *Literal*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Seven Lamp stands | Seven Churches |
| ▪ Seven Stars | Angels/Ministers |
| ▪ Dragon | Satan |
| ▪ Serpent | Satan |
| ▪ Incense | Prayers |
| ▪ Rainbow | God's faithfulness |
| ▪ Lion | Jesus |
| ▪ John's eating of the Scroll | John receiving the message God gave him |

Caution re. Symbols in Revelation... We do not assume that because *some symbols* are contained in a specific prophesy that everything else in that prophesy must also symbolic

- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Spiritual Application*
- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Figures of Speech*
- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate Types*

- Literal Interpretation *does not eliminate the Use of Symbols*

5. Literal Interpretation does not eliminate the use of *Parables/Allegories*

Parables are not to be taken literally, but do **convey a literal point**. Taking into view the context of a Biblical text gives us keys as to whether it is an allegory or an actual event. When studying what we may believe to be a parable or allegory *we ask...*

- **Is it a real Historical Event? Check Context...**

1. **Q. Was Jonah's Fish real?** Jonah's name is found in both Jonah/2 Kings 14, real city names are mentioned and Jesus speaks of Jonah as a historical figure in Mat. 12 [The fish is Real]
2. **Q. Were Adam/Eve Real?** They are mentioned by name with actual rivers named and obvious physical results for their disobedience. [Adam/Eve are Real]
3. **Q. Was the story of Rich man/Lazarus true? A. Yes.** It is not a parable because it uses names. Parables do not. [The rich man/Lazarus story is true/real]

- **Is it an Allegory?**

1. **Check** Historical/Grammatical context before making deciding whether it is allegorical.
2. **Exhaust** all logical rationale for it speaking of an actual literal historical person/event before interpreting the text as allegorical

Rationale for a Literal Approach to Interpretation: Dwight Pentecost

1. Literal interpretation is the normal [standard] approach in all languages
2. All secondary meanings depend on the literal meaning
3. The greater part of the Bible makes sense when taken literally
4. Literal interpretation will take the secondary meaning when demanded
5. Literal interpretation is the only "sane and safe check on the imagination of man"
6. Literal interpretation is the only one in line with the nature of inspiration

Any other approach is self-defeating, for it claims that the literal truth is not the proper way to interpret, even though it expects its reader [listener] to take its words literally [Geisler]

Also Cite *Basic Bible Interpretation*; Zuck, Roy B.

III. Four Theories Interpreting Revelation

1. Preterist Theory: All Revelation has been fulfilled in the past. References were local to John's day during either Nero or Domitian. IOW's Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD

2. Historical Theory: Fulfillment of Revelation is still going on in history and Revelation is the prophetic history of the church according to this theory.

3. Historical-Spiritual Theory: This theory states that the two beasts are Imperial/ Provincial Rome [Not AC and FP]. The point of the book is to encourage Christians. Revelation has been largely fulfilled [but] there are spiritual lessons for the church today.

4. Futurist Theory: This theory holds that the Book of Revelation is **primarily prophetic** and **yet future**, especially from Revelation 4 on to the end of the book.

This is the view we will utilize to interpret the Book Revelation. It is the correct view as we will see the pieces fall into place using the Futurist Theory of Interpretation [NJC]

Correct Eschatology is by no means a Peripheral or Minor issue

Paul rebuked those teaching heresy regarding End Times

2 Timothy 2:16 ... But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have **strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.**

False teaching of Amillennialism: The teaching that **we are already in God's millennial kingdom**, or that there is no resurrection to come – it had already occurred. [Guzik]

Many today accept and honor teachers who are way off in one area or another; and they justify it by saying, "I eat the meat and spit out the bones." This kind of thinking will certainly overthrow the faith of some, because **some will certainly choke to spiritual death on the bones you say you spit out.** [Guzik] e.g., Hank Hanegraaff, **Preterist...**

Futurist Refutation of the Preterist View

These things did not happen in 70ad

1. The Second Coming
2. Global Economic Control
3. Cosmic Signs

NOTE: See outline below for numerous other events that never happened in 70ad when Jerusalem fell to Titus the Roman. John wrote Revelation around 90-95AD after the Jews were expelled/Temple destroyed. Why would John prophesy what everyone knew already happened? 70ad was absolutely a precursor [Near fulfillment] of future events that will take place.

OTHER FEATURES of the BOOK of REVELATION:

- It is the only prophetic book in the NT vs 17 prophetic books in the Old Testament
- John, the writer, reaches farther back into **eternity past** than any other writer in Scripture [John 1:1-3]. He reaches farther on into **eternity future** in the Book of Revelation.
- Special blessing is promised the readers of this book [Revelation 1:3]. Likewise, a warning is issued to those who tamper with its contents [Revelation 22:18, 19].
- Revelation is not a sealed book [Revelation 22:10]. Contrast Daniel 12:9. It is a revelation [apocalypse], which means unveiling, here of Jesus Himself
- It is a series of visions, expressed in symbols. [JVM]

This book is like a *great Union Station* where the great trunk lines of prophecy come in from other portions of Scripture. Revelation does not originate but consummates. It is imperative to a right understanding of the book to be able to trace each great subject of prophecy from the first reference to the terminal. At least **10 great subjects of prophecy which find their consummation here:** [JVM]

Subject of Prophecy in Revelation

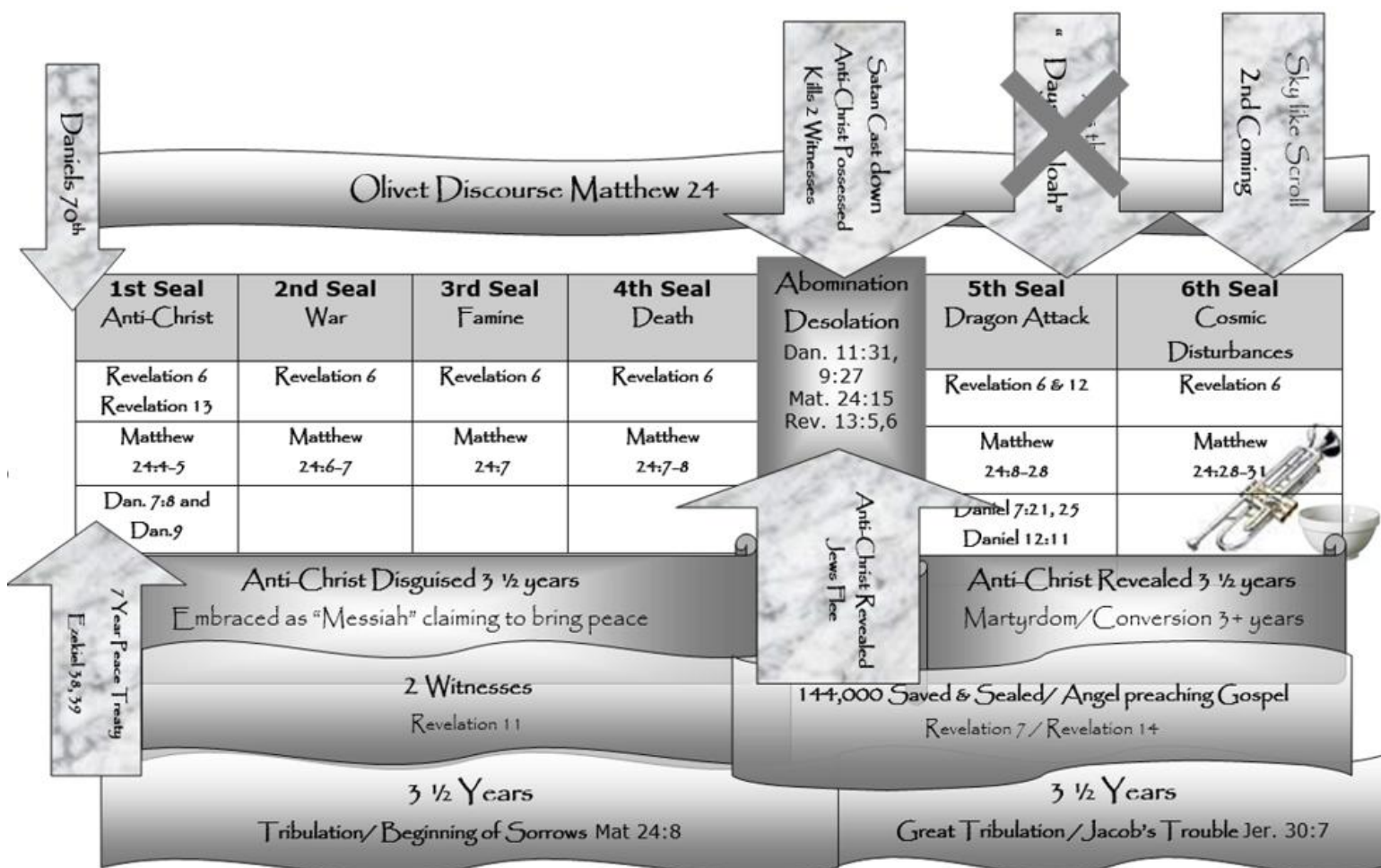
1. The Lord Jesus Christ
2. The Church
3. The Resurrection/Translation of Saints
4. The Great Tribulation
5. Satan and Evil
6. The "man of sin"
7. The Course and End of apostate Christendom
8. The beginning, course, end of the "times of the Gentiles"
9. The second coming of Christ
10. Israel's covenants; i.e. five things promised Israel

Prophetic Address

Gen 3:15
Mat 16:18
1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51, 52
Deut 4:30, 31
Ez 28:11-18
Ez 28:1-10
Dan 2:31-45; Mat 13
Dan 2:37; Luke 21:24
Jude 14, 15
Gen 12:1-3

IV. Genesis/Revelation Correlation

- In Genesis the earth was created; in Revelation the earth passes away
- In Genesis was Satan's first rebellion; in Revelation is Satan's last rebellion
- In Genesis the sun, moon, and stars were for earth's government; in Revelation these same heavenly bodies are for earth's judgment
- In Genesis the sun was to govern the day; in Revelation there is no need of the sun
- In Genesis darkness was called night; In Revelation there is "no night there" [see Rev. 21:25; 22:5]
- In Genesis the waters were called seas; in Revelation there is no more sea
- In Genesis was the entrance of sin; in Revelation is the exodus of sin
- In Genesis the curse was pronounced; in Revelation the curse is removed
- In Genesis death entered; in Revelation there is no more death
- In Genesis was the beginning of sorrow and suffering; in Revelation there will be no more sorrow and no more tears
- In Genesis was the marriage of first Adam; in Revelation is the marriage of Last Adam
- In Genesis we saw man's city, Babylon, being built; in Revelation we see man's city, Babylon, destroyed and God's city, the New Jerusalem, brought into view
- In Genesis Satan's doom was pronounced; in Revelation Satan's doom is executed



Revelation Outline

Lift Up the Lord Jesus Christ

- **Revelation:** Natural Outline

Revelation 1:19 Write the things which you **have seen**, and the **things which are**, and the **things which will take place after this**.

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Apocalypse | Things you <i>have seen</i> |
| 2. Letters to the Churches | Things that <i>are now</i> |
| 3. Plan of God | Things which <i>will take place</i> |

I. Apocalypse/Unveiling *Things you have seen* Chapter 1

- | | |
|---|--------|
| A. Title | 1:1 |
| B. Method of Transmission | 1:2 |
| C. Blessing for Reading, Hearing and Keeping | 1:3 |
| D. Greetings from John on earth and God in heaven | 1:4-8 |
| E. Glorified Christ walking among/judging His church | 1:9-18 |
| F. Outline of the Apocalypse; i.e. unveiling | 1:19 |
| G. Interpretation of the Seven Stars/Seven Lampstands | 1:20 |

II. Letters to Churches *Things that are now* Chapters 2-3

Ch's 2 and 3: God's Focus on the Churches

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|---|---------------------|---------|--------------|
| 1. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Ephesus | 2:1-7 | Loveless |
| 2. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Smyrna | 2:8-11 | Persecuted |
| 3. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Pergamum | 2:12-17 | Compromising |
| 4. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Thyatira | 2:18-29 | Corrupt |
| 5. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Sardis | 3:1-6 | Dead |
| 6. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Philadelphia | 3:7-13 | Faithful |
| 7. Letter from Christ to the Church in: | Laodicea | 3:14-22 | Lukewarm |

III. Plan of God *Things which will take place* Chapters 4–22

A. Church in Heaven with Christ: Post-Rapture **Chapters 4-5**

John 14:3 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**

Revelation 4:1 After these things [M_____: After Jesus judges churches] I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "**Come up here**, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

- **Apostle John:** Picture of Church "caught up" to God

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|------------------|-------|
| 1. Throne of God | 4:1-3 |
|------------------|-------|

2. Twenty-Four Elders	4:4-5
3. Four Living Creatures	4:6-11
4. Book with Seven Seals	5:1-4
5. Lion of the Tribe of Judah/Lamb which has been slain	5:5-10
6. Angels of heaven joins in praise of our redemption	5:11-12
7. Universal worship of the Savior/Sovereign of the universe	5:13-14

Ch's 4-21 God's Focus back on Israel

Romans 11:25 ...blindness in part has happened to **Israel** until the **fullness of the Gentiles has come in.**

Romans 11:1 ...to provoke [Israel] to **jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.**

B. [Great] Tribulation in/on the World

Chapters 6—18

▪ Two-Fold Purpose of the Tribulation

1. **God's wrath** poured out on an unrepentant sinful world
2. **Israel's Salvation:** Finally embracing Jesus Christ as Messiah

1. Seven Seal Judgments

Chapters 6—8:1

First 3.5 years: Beginnings of Sorrows; i.e. **God's Passive Wrath**

1st Four Seals begin God's worldwide judgement on sinful defiant mankind
 Restraint; Holy Spirit is no longer restraining man's lust for sin.

a. Opening of the First Seal	6:1-2	White Horse	AC
b. Opening of the Second Seal	6:3-4	Red Horse	War
c. Opening of the Third Seal	6:5-6	Black Horse	Famine
d. Opening of the Fourth Seal	6:7-8	Pale Horse	Death
e. Opening of the Fifth Seal	6:9-11		Martyrs
f. Opening of the Sixth Seal	6:12-17		Cosmic

g. **Interlude** between Sixth and Seventh Seal

(1) Reason Interlude between 6th and 7 th Seals	7:1-3
(2) Remnant of Israel sealed	7:4-8
(3) Redeemed Multitude of Gentiles	7:9-17

Second 3.5 years: Time of Jacob's Trouble, i.e. **God's Active Wrath**

a. **Opening of the Seventh Seal:** Intro 7 Trumpets 8:1

2. Seven Trumpet Judgements

Chapters 8:2—11:19

a. Angel at the Altar	Prelude to Judgment	8:2-6
b. First Trumpet	Trees incinerated	8:7
c. Second Trumpet	Saltwater to Blood	8:8-9
d. Third Trumpet	Freshwater made bitter	8:10-11
e. Fourth Trumpet	Sun, moon, stars dark	8:12-13
f. Fifth Trumpet	Demonic Locusts	9:1-12

g. Sixth Trumpet	Demons unbound	9:13-21
h. Interlude	between the sixth and seventh trumpets	10:1—11:14
	(1) The Strong Angel with the Little Book	10:1-7
	(2) John eats the Little Book	10:8-11
	(3) Dating "Times of the Gentiles" [not fullness]	11:1-2
	(4) Two Witnesses finish well	11:3-12
	(5) Great Earthquake	11:13-14
i. Seventh Trumpet	Temple in Heaven	11:15-19

3. **Seven Characters** during the Great Tribulation **Chapters 12-13**

a. The Woman	Israel	12:1-2
b. The Red Dragon	Satan	12:3-4
c. The Child of the Woman	Jesus Christ	12:5-6
d. Michael the archangel	Waring	12:7-12 [Mid-Trib.]
e. Dragon	Persecutes Woman	12:13-16
f. Remnant	Saved Israel	12:17
g. Beast from the Sea	Anti-Christ	13:1-10
	(1) Anti-Christ Described	13:1-2
	(2) Anti-Christ False-Resurrection	13:3
	(3) Anti-Christ defiles Temple	13:4-5
	(4) Anti-Christ blasphemes God	13:6-8
	(5) Anti-Christ Zero-Tolerance policy	13:9-10
h. Beast from the Earth	False-Prophet	13:11-18
	(1) False-Prophet Described	13:11
	(2) False-Prophet Given Authority	13:12-14
	(3) False-Prophet Deceives World	13:15-17
	(4) False-Prophet Mandates Mark	13:18

4. **During the Great Tribulation** **Chapter 14**

a. Lamb with the 144,000	14:1-5
b. Everlasting Gospel	14:6-7
c. Pronounced Judgment on Babylon	14:8
d. Judgment for those with mark of the beast	14:9-12
e. Praise for those who die in the Lord	14:13
f. Judgement of Earth	14:14-20

SUMMARY: The Seventh Seal Judgment leads into the Seven Trumpets Judgements. The Seventh Trumpet leads to the Seven Bowl Judgements. In between sixth and seventh of each is an interlude. Judgments move from one to another; Seals to Trumpets, Trumpets to Bowls Each group adding more and more intensity

5. **Seven Bowl Judgments** **God's Wrath** **Chapters 15-16**

a. Final Judgments of the Great Tribulation	15:1—16:1
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(1) Tribulation saints in heaven	15:1-4
(2) Temple in Heaven opened	15:5
(3) 7 Angels/ 7 Bowls of God's Wrath	15:6—16:1

b. First Bowl	Loathsome Sores	16:2
c. Second Bowl	Saltwater to Blood	16:3
d. Third Bowl	Freshwater to Blood	16:4-7
e. Fourth Bowl	Men Scorched	16:8-9
f. Fifth Bowl	Darkness and Pain	16:10-11
g. Sixth Bowl	Euphrates Dried up	16:12

h. Interlude: Kings of earth called to Armageddon	16:13-16
i. Pouring out of the Seventh Bowl	16:17-21

6. Two Babylons Judged

Chapters 17-18

a. Religious Babylon: The Apostate Church	Ch. 17
(1) Great Harlot riding the Beast	17:1-7
(2) Beast then destroys the Great Harlot	17:8-18

b. Political/Commercial Babylon	Chapter 18
(1) Fall of Commercial/Political Babylon	18:1-8
(2) World's sorrow for Babylon's Judgment	18:9-19
(3) Heaven's joy for Babylon's doom	18:20-24

C. Return of Christ in Judgment

Chapter 19

1. Four Hallelujahs in Heaven for God's Judgment	19:1-6
2. Bride and the Lamb	19:7-10
3. Return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords	19:11-16
4. War of Armageddon	19:17-18
5. Hell opened First Residents: AC and FP	19:19-21

D. Millennium: Meek inherit the Earth

Chapter 20

1. Jesus Reigns/Satan bound 1000 years	20:1-3
2. Saints of the Great Tribulation reign w/Christ 1000 years	20:4-6
3. Satan loosed after 1000 years	20:7-9
4. Satan cast into Hell w/ 2 Friends A/C and F/P	20:10
5. Great White Throne	20:11-15

E. Eternity All things Made New

Ch's. 21-22

1. New Heaven/New Earth/New Jerusalem	21:1-2
2. New System/Era: No death, sorrow crying	21:3-8
3. New Jerusalem	21:9-21
4. New Relationship	21:22-23
5. New Creation	21:24-27
6. River of the Water of Life/ Tree of Life	22:1-5
7. Promise of Return of Christ	22:6-16
8. Final Invitation/Dire Warning	22:17-19
9. Final Promise and Prayer	22:20- 21