

Four Views of Revelation

	Idealist	Preterist	Historicist	Futurist
Interpretation*	Records events which are symbolic of the spiritual warfare between good and evil	Records events which happened in the past from our vantage point	Records events which span from the apostolic period to end of the age	Records events which have yet to be fulfilled
Timing of Events	May represent various historical periods rather than one specific event	Fulfilled during the age of the Roman Empire, shortly after John wrote Revelation	In process and are fulfilled over the course of history	Will take place at the end of the age
Seven churches (Rev 2–3)	Any church which shares the same characteristics of the seven churches	Seven churches located in Roman province of Asia during the first century AD	Seven periods of church history	(Possibly any one of the other views)
Twenty-four elders (Rev 4:4, 10; 5:8)	Angelic representatives of the old covenant (12 tribes) and the new covenant (12 apostles)	God’s heavenly court, but not any specific group	The church—those redeemed by Christ and triumphant	Angelic beings or saints from the New Testament era
Sealed Scroll (Rev 5:1–9)	God’s redemptive plan for the world	God’s sentence or judgment upon those who persecuted the saints	God’s purpose and design for the world and the Church	The title deed to the earth
Unsealing of the scroll (Rev 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1)	The outworkings of God’s redemptive plan throughout history, including wars, persecutions, and judgments	The execution of God’s judgment upon Jerusalem	The demise of the Roman Empire, from the death of Domitian (AD 96) to the invasion of the Vandals (fifth century AD)	The rapture and the beginning of the great tribulation
144,000 (Rev 7:4–8)	A symbolic number of old covenant Israel and new covenant Israel (i.e., spiritual Israel)	Symbolic number of Jewish Christians to escape the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD	The church	The remnant of Jewish people or the last generation of Christians alive when the Tribulation takes place
Seven Trumpets (Rev 8:7, 8, 10–11, 12–13; 9:1–21; 11:14–19)	A series of disasters which echo the plagues against Egypt (Rev 7:14–11:10). They express God’s judgment upon the unrepentant.	A series of Roman military actions against the Jews during the Jewish War	A series of invasions of the Roman Empire by various groups (e.g., Vandals and Turks)	A series of disasters which will come upon the unrepentant during the seven-year Tribulation

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Two witnesses (Rev 11:3–6)	The church throughout the church era	Prophets who prophesied about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Jewish religious and political authority	People who rejected the authority of the Papacy prior to the Reformation (e.g., Waldenses and Albigenses)	Two prophets (possibly Elijah and Enoch or Moses)
The woman (Rev 12:1–2, 5–6)	The church through the church era	Faithful Israel in the first century AD	The church which endured persecution by Rome in the fourth century AD	Israel or the church which will be persecuted by the antichrist
Red dragon (Rev 12:3)	Satan	A combination of the beasts in Daniel 7 which represent world empires	Imperial Rome as a representative of Satan	Satan
Male child (Rev 12:4–5)	Christ who ascended to heaven	The church of the first century AD	The church or the Roman emperor Constantine	Christ
Woman's escape into the wilderness (Rev 12:6)	The church which witnesses about Christ	Judaeans Christians who escaped Edomite and Roman attacks during the Jewish War	The church which escaped the persecution of Rome or the Papacy	Escape of Israel or the church from the coming persecution
1,260 days (Rev 12:6)	Symbolizes the era of the church	The period of the Jewish War (AD 66–70) or emperor Nero's persecution of the church	1,260 years of the authority of the Papacy in Rome	The final 1,260 days (3 1/2 years) before the return of Christ
Beast out of the sea (Rev 13:1–4)	Government or political system which opposes God	Rome, specifically emperor Nero	The Papacy	Symbolic of Gentile nations, namely, a revived Roman Empire
Beast out of the earth (Rev 13:11–15)	False religion associated with the political system	The Roman emperor cult or a false prophet	The Papacy	The religious version of the first beast
666 (Rev 13:16–18)	Represents the name of the anti-Christian government system	Roman emperor Nero	The Papacy	Represents a form of currency in an economic system
Babylon (Rev 17:5)	A system (possibly economic) which entices believers to turn away from God	Rome or Jerusalem	The religious system and authority of the Papacy	A false religion. Possibly the reestablishment of Babylon or Rome.
Rider on the white horse (Rev 19:11–21)	Christ's ongoing conquest of the anti-Christian system through the gospel	Christ's victory over the pagan nations by His Word	Christ's conquests and judgments upon His enemies	Christ's visible return to earth

*See Steve Gregg's Revelation, Four Views: A Parallel Commentary. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997. Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.