如何讀啟示錄課程大綱

何若珍

1. 為什麼要查考啟示錄?

我們恐怕需要先問一個問題：為什麼很多人不願查考啟示錄?

* 在確定聖經正典的過程中，對於是否把啟示錄納入聖經正典中，曾經有很大的爭論，以至於啟示錄是最後一卷被歸入聖經正典的書卷(在第四世紀時才被納入)。改革宗的主要領袖/馬丁路德，加爾文，慈運理…都排斥啟示錄(然而馬丁路德認定啟示錄中的『大淫婦』就是指羅馬教皇/羅馬天主教會；這個觀點一直深深影響早期中國教會)，認為啟示錄不應該被歸為正典；一直到現在，東正教在公共敬拜中還是不提啟示錄。
* 有人不讀是因為放棄，太難理解了；那麼多種解釋，眾說紛紜，孰是孰非?
* 我個人的原因：過去還沒有預備好。

來1:1神既在古時藉著眾先知，多次多方的曉諭列祖，2就在這末世，藉著他兒子曉諭我們…

* 這是主耶穌要寫給眾教會的信。
* 誦讀啟示錄的人有福了。
* 啟示錄是寫給一般人，甚至基層群眾看的。
* 啟示錄是一卷非常實際，關乎未來的書卷 – 對當時處於苦難逼迫中的聖徒，主會對他們說一些很遙遠，甚至他們沒有任何概念的事嗎?
1. 啟示錄寫作年代及背景

時代背景是啟示錄釋經的關鍵。絕大多數現代學者認為是寫於豆米先(Domitian)做羅馬皇帝的時候(寫作年日約公元90-95年)。還是有少數學者認為是尼祿(Nero)做羅馬皇帝的時候寫的(寫作年日約公元65-70年，猶太戰爭年間)。

比較可能是晚期作品(豆米先掌權)的考量 (主張早期作品的也有一些不錯的論點，只是較弱)：

* 從把羅馬皇帝當作神敬拜來看

在豆米先之前，就有羅馬皇帝要老百姓拜他如同拜神祗一樣，尼祿可能也如此命令過。從史料上來看(*Pliny the Young’s letter to Emperor Trojan and Trojan’s response*, 113 A.D.)，羅馬對基督徒的迫害大多是告訴乃論的原則 – 被害人提出告訴，並經檢察官開啟偵查後，法院才能進行審判的犯罪。當時的迫害往往是出於皇帝一時的情緒或是地方巡撫或官員的狂熱；而不是普遍，大規模的迫害。

當時的基督徒也有可能捲入羅馬皇帝和貴族之間的政治鬥爭，而遭受逼迫 – 尤其是信主的貴族。Pliny寫給皇帝的信，當時的基督徒包括最底層的老百姓和住在城市與農村的老百姓。而豆米先的迫害有可能是針對信主的貴族。猶太人和基督徒受迫害則是因為他們的單一神論信仰 – 拒絕承認羅馬皇帝是神。總的來說，啟示錄寫作之時，對基督徒的迫害尚未是普世性的；不過顯然約翰在警告基督徒與教會關於即將來臨的全面迫害(第二世紀開始，對不承認該撒是神的基督徒以“不忠”的罪名起訴的逐漸增加)。

* 從對基督徒的迫害來看

無論是尼祿時期還是豆米先時期的背景，啟示錄清楚一致的焦點是迫害即將臨到小亞細亞的教會和聖徒。小亞細亞一些城市為了取悅羅馬皇帝，會很巴結的為皇帝建廟(在我們的傳統只能為死人建廟；在羅馬帝國卻不是這樣)。這一類的迫害也有可能是當地的權貴為了整合自己的勢力，為迎合當地拜偶像之居民百姓的喜好而採用的手段。

* 從小亞細亞教會的處境光景來看 (外在與內在的狀況)

當時教會的處境比較接近第一世紀晚期的光景：以弗所，撒狄，和老底嘉教會的無精打采屬靈光景導致教會的特殊性逐漸模糊。這也是需要一段較長時間才會發生的情況，不像是在第一世紀60年代中期，尼祿作皇帝的時候就會發生的現象。以弗所失去起初的愛，老底嘉的富足，都不像是保羅與彼得剛殉道是就立刻發生的事。

* 從『巴比倫』的暗喻來看

在猶太戰爭(65-70 A.D.)之前，猶太人口裡的『巴比倫』是指離經叛道的『耶路撒冷』；公元70年耶路撒冷被毀之後，『巴比倫』才成為『羅馬』的代稱。(耶路撒冷城第一次被毀乃是在公元前586年，毀於巴比倫王尼布甲尼撒的手中。)

* 早期教會傳統(著作/書信)

早期教會領袖之間的書信通訊及著作提到啟示錄的寫作年代是在豆米先掌權時期或第一世紀晚期：愛任紐(*Irenaeus*)，*Victorinus of Pettau*, 該撒利亞的尤西比烏斯(*Eusebius*), *and possibly* 亞歷山大的革利勉(*Clement of Alexandria*)。

1. 教會處境光景，寫作目的與主題
* 教會處境光景

當時教會的處境一方面相信神掌權，並且祂的國度已經臨到；主耶穌很快就會再來進行最後的審判，建立基督的國度到永遠在此同時又必須面對地上邪惡的勢力仍然猖狂，而且越來越囂張；上帝的百姓受逼迫的事實。(參考經文：帖撒羅尼迦前書4:15-17，『我們現在照主的話告訴你們一件事，我們這活著還存留到主降臨的人，斷不能在那已經睡了的人之先。16因為主必親自從天降臨，有呼叫的聲音，和天使長的聲音，又有神的號吹響，那在基督裡死了的人必先復活。17以後我們這活著還存留的人，必和他們一同被提到雲裡，在空中與主相遇，這樣，我們就要和主永遠同在。』；馬太福音10:18-23，『並且你們要為我的緣故，被送到諸候君王面前，對他們和外邦人作見證。19你們被交的時侯，不要思慮怎樣說話，或說甚麼話，到那時候，必賜給你們當說的話。20因為不是你們自己說的，乃是你們父的靈在你們裡頭說的。21弟兄要把弟兄，父親要把兒子，送到死地，兒女要與父母為敵，害死他們。22並且你們要為我的名，被眾人恨惡，惟有忍耐到底的，必然得救。23有人在這城裡逼迫你們，就逃到那城裡去，我實在告訴你們，以色列的城邑，你們還沒有走遍，人子就到了。』)

當時約翰(作者)被放逐到拔摩海島，安提帕殉道，士每拿教會因信仰受到經濟方面的試煉。換句話說，從士每拿教會的遭遇可以推論當時小亞細亞的教會正面臨節節上升的逼迫。

* 寫作目的 – 堅固受患難中的基督教會，忍耐盼望等候得勝的基督，祂必然再來完成基督國度最後的爭戰，徹底摧毀撒旦極其權勢，彰顯上帝全然的榮耀。
1. 啟示錄的文體 – 啟示文體，預言問題，書信文體
* 啟示文體

『啟示』(revelation)的意思是將上帝的奧秘揭示/顯明出來。猶太人根據聖經的結構，把上帝的啟示分成三大類：律法書(*Torah*)，先知書(*Naviim*)，與聖書(*Ketuviim*)。

然而在被擄歸回之後，仍長時間受外族統治，因此一方面為了保存猶太文化與信仰，一方面又要解釋神權與苦難的矛盾，就有許多猶太文士根據先知書中所述的『主的日子』經文，寫了一些關於上帝的啟示和末世論的書，這些書後來就被稱為是啟示文學。

啟示文學主要的文體包括

1. 異象
2. 比喻 – 例如馬太福音25章的三個比喻
3. 表徵/符號 – 數字，圖像…等等
4. 對話/辯論 – 例如約伯記
* 預言文體
* 先知宣告末後必成的預言 – 爭戰，審判，救贖與基督掌權，來警告背約，離棄真道的以色列人，規勸他們悔改歸回他們的救贖主。
* 先知宣告末後必成的預言 – 爭戰，審判，救贖與基督掌權，來警告拜偶像，充滿兇惡殘暴，不公不義的外邦人，呼召他們悔改歸向獨一真神。

『眾先知和律法說豫言，到約翰為止。』(太11:13)

* 書信文體

啟示錄是主耶穌基督，透過作者約翰，寫信給小亞細亞七個城市的教會，並藉此向眾教會說話。

『啟示錄 1:1耶穌基督的啟示，就是神賜給他，叫他將必要快成的事指示他的眾僕人，他就差遣使者，曉諭他的僕人約翰。2約翰便將神的道，和耶穌基督的見證，凡自己所看見的，都證明出來…4約翰寫信給亞西亞的七個教會…』

* ***Revelation and numbers.***

*Certain numbers are particularly important in the book of Revelation. The number seven (and its multiples) is a prime example: there are seven lamp stands, seven stars, seven spirits of God, seven seals on the scroll and so on. Other significant numbers include twelve (and its multiples), and three, four and ten.*

* ***Revelation and the Old Testament.*** 要能明白這些異象，必須(1)要有人解釋，(2)要有背景處境(典故)。

典故錯了，解讀不會正確；典故對了，誤解也能澄清：俗諺『人不自私，天誅地滅』⇨ 新解：『人不為(修為；修煉)己，天誅地滅』；原來典故：貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己《禮記·禮運》』

1. ***The Structure of Apocalyptic***

*Revelation's structure is not linear; it does not tell us a simple story in a straight line. At times the vision circles back and tells us the same thing it has already told us but in a different way. Also, many of the sequences of events do not simply follow one after another, but actually overlap.*

***Interpreting the Book of Revelation***

希望大家在查經，尤其是啟示錄的時候有大大的收穫。儘管在解經上面會對不同的解經派別有些批判，我們不能忘記：沒有前人走出來的道路，就沒有我們今天查經的享受。我相信教會歷史中對啟示錄不同的的解讀在不久的未來會逐漸趨向一致，而成為單一主流。我需要花比較多的時間來準備 – 如果只是把我讀的內容搬上來給大家，恐怕對大家幫助不大。我需要時間消化。所以有時候進度會慢一點。

1. **Preterist** 已過學派**:**  *Revelation speaks of things that are already history. The book isn’t prophecy about the end of time; it’s directed at Christians trying to live their faith in the Roman Empire. This is the prevailing view among modern scholars who aren’t aligned with orthodox Christianity.*

***Strength:****The observation that the book was intended for a first-century audience.*

***Weakness:*** *Fails to take seriously the idea that the Holy Spirit can reveal what’s going to happen, as the book purports to do.*

啟1:1耶穌基督的啟示，就是神賜給他，叫他將『必要快成的事』指示他的眾僕人，他就差遣使者，曉諭他的僕人約翰。

啟22:6天使又對我說：這些話是真實可信的，主就是眾先知被感之靈的神，差遣他的使者，將那『必要快成的事』指示他僕人。

1. **Historicist** 歷史學派**:**  *Revelation gives a bird’s eye view of the entire sweep of Christian church history, from the post-Pentecost church (Acts 2) until Jesus returns. This view has few adherents today.*

***Strength:****The conviction that God controls the course of history.*

***Weakness:*** *Revelation then has little relevance for its original audience; also, historicists have wildly divergent views concerning the particulars.*

1. **Idealist** 理想學派**:**  *There’s no correlation between the visions and any historical reality; they’re simply symbols of the ongoing struggle between good and evil.*

***Strength:****The recognition that the book clearly communicates enduring ideals.*

***Weakness:****Divorces ideas from history, thereby calling into question Jesus’s historic歷史al death, resurrection, and ascension.*

1. **Futurist** 未來學派**:**  *By the sixth seal (6:12–17), the book describes events leading up to Jesus’s return. Glances at earlier stages of redemptive history (as in Rev. 12) illuminate End Time events. The focus is on a historical struggle that unfolds at the end of the age and climaxes with Jesus’s Second Coming.*

***Strength:****Incorporates the insights of the other views without sacrificing the essential point of their position: namely, that the book prophesies a literal return of Jesus and a new creation.*

***Weakness:****The weakness of the futuristic view is that it interprets 1:9 – 3:22 just like preterists and historicists, that is, as referring to the first century. Then it declares that at 4:1, or at least by 6:12, the sixth seal, everything else is about the final period of earth history before Christ returns. Critics find this arbitrary and therefore unconvincing.*

1. **Eclectic** 綜合學派 The English word *eclectic* first appeared in the seventeenth century to describe philosophers who did not belong to a particular school of thought, but instead assembled their doctrines by picking and choosing from a variety of philosophical systems. The final system of interpretation we discuss briefly is that of an eclectic interpretation. This system picks and chooses elements from each of the other interpretive systems and applies them at different places in the text.

It is the ultimate “interpretive smorgasbord” whose proponents proclaim combines the best from each system. “The solution is to allow the preterist, idealist, and futurist methods to interact in such a way that the strengths are maximized, and the weaknesses minimized.”

**《The merging of Preterist and Eclectic views – the multiple fulfilments of the prophecies. (Ex. The prophecies regarding the birth, ministry, death, resurrection…of the Messiah.)》**

1. **Preterists View** 已過學派
* **Types of Preterism**

*Mild or partial preterism holds that most of the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled in either the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) or the fall of the Roman Empire (AD 476), but the Second Coming of Christ is yet future. This form of preterism is orthodox and is the most frequent view encountered in our day.*

*Moderate preterism has become, in our day, mainstream preterism. Today it appears to be the most widely held version of preterism. Simply put, moderates see almost all prophecy as fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, but they also believe that a few passages still teach a yet future second coming (Acts 1:9-11; 1Cor. 15:51-53; 1Th. 4:16-17) and the resurrection of believers at Christ’s bodily return... In addition to R.C. Sproul, some well-known moderate preterists include Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., Gary DeMar, and the late David Chilton (who converted to full preterism after all his books were published).**[1](https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/types-of-preterism.html%22%20%5Cl%20%228603E%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)*

*Extreme or full preterists view themselves as “consistent” preterists. . . Extreme preterists believe that “the second coming MUST HAVE already occurred, since it was one of the things predicted in the O.T. which had to be fulfilled by the time Jerusalem was destroyed”... This means there will never be a future second coming, for it already occurred in AD 70. Further, there will be no bodily resurrection of believers, which is said to have occurred in AD 70 in conjunction with the second coming. Full preterists believe that we now have been spiritually resurrected and will live forever with spiritual bodies when we die... Full preterists say... we are now living in what we would call the eternal state or the new heavens and new earth of Revelation Rev. 21:1+-Rev. 22:1+. Champions of this view include the originator of full preterism, ... J. Stuart Russell... Max R. King and his son, Tim... David Chilton... Ed Stevens, Don K. Preston, John Noe, and John L. Bray.*

*Since full (extreme, consistent) preterism is heretical and less frequently encountered, we will focus primarily upon mild (moderate, partial) preterism which seems to be increasingly popular in our day.*

*In its approach to the book of Revelation, partial preterism divides into two primary views concerning what events are foretold by the book: “Preterists hold that the major prophecies of the book were fulfilled either in the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70) or the fall of Rome (AD 476).” “The second form of preterist interpretation holds that Revelation is a prophecy of the fall of the Roman Empire, ‘Babylon the Great,’ the persecutor of the saints, in the fifth century A.D. The purpose of the book is to encourage Christians to endure because their persecutors assuredly will be judged.”*

* ***The Motivations of Preterism***

*Although all preterists insist that their view of Scripture is the best way to understand and explain the text, it is useful to understand that some preterists are influenced in their tendency to interpret future passages as having been already fulfilled by a variety of motives. One motive is to respond to the criticism of skeptics who have pointed out that Jesus’ promises to come soon have not yet materialized. Preterists believe that their view that Jesus has come in a “spiritual way” prior to A.D. 70 vindicates the Bible in the eyes of such skeptics (e.g., Bertrand Russell). But tailoring interpretation to favor non-believers is unlikely to win them to Christ.*

*Do preterists think that Bertrand Russell, or anyone else who is antagonistic to the Christian faith, is going to be convinced that the Bible is God’s Word by arguing that Jesus came in A.D. 70? A preterist coming [of Christ] is a pathetic coming. It does no honor... to the integrity of Scripture. The substitutionary atonement of Christ, the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead, and many other [doctrines], are all truths that come from Scripture, but also truths that invite the attack of agnostics, atheists, humanists, and secularists. Why is it, when we come to prophecy, that suddenly we must tailor our interpretation to suit non-believers?*

*[Gentry] associates cultural defeatism and retreatist pietism with assigning a late date to Revelation and wants to date the book before A.D. 70 so as to have biblical support for the implementation of long-term Christian cultural progress and dominion. This probably reflects his basic motivation for the early dating of Revelation: a desire for an undiluted rationale to support Christian social and political involvement.*

*But how could what appears to be a global time of unparalleled trouble (Dan. 12:1; Jer. 30:7; Mat. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Rev. Rev. 3:10+; Rev. 7:14+) be moved from the future to the past? The way preterism accomplishes this shift is to explain that the book’s description of a coming time of tribulation involving Babylon and the earth dwellers is actually a veiled description of God’s wrath being poured out on Jerusalem and the Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70.*

*The Preterist will be glad to remind the futurist that the opening verses of Revelation chapter one indicate a first-century fulfillment: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass. . . for the time is at hand ” (Rev. 1:1+, Rev. 1:3+). For the preterist, the book of Revelation was written around A.D. 68 and it has the same focus as the Olivet Discourse: some impending disaster in the immediate future that will affect the ancient Roman world. What might that be? Preterists unanimously point to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.*

*Although many preterists are devout, conservative, and orthodox in their views, the preterist system of interpretation has also attracted liberal and neo-orthodox interpreters who tend to view the Scriptures as a textbook for sociological progress and minimize its supernatural and judgmental elements.*

*In summary, preterism is often fueled by several underlying motivations: First, a desire to move the time of tribulation described by the book of Revelation from the future into the past. This removes a major stumbling block to the view of Dominion Theology as embraced by Christian reconstructionists that all the world’s institutions will eventually come under the sway of Christianity through the world-wide dissemination and progression of the gospel. Second, a desire to reinterpret the many passages in both OT and NT which speak of a future time of restoration and blessing involving the nation Israel as applying to the Church. Israel’s rejection of Messiah Jesus is seen as an irrecoverable error necessitating the replacement of Israel by the Church as the spiritual inheritor of previous promises to Israel. Third, an attempt to interpret Scripture in a way which minimizes the objections of skeptics. Fourth, a desire on the part of more liberal preterists to avoid taking predictive prophesy as supernatural and descriptive of events to come.*

* **Hermeneutics of Preterism**

*Although a full discussion of the hermeneutics of preterism is beyond the scope of our purpose here, it is helpful to understand some key aspects concerning how preterists approach the interpretation of Scripture in general, and the book of Revelation in particular.*

*The hermeneutics of preterism places great emphasis on all passages which convey the notion of “soon” or could be understood as teaching that certain events should have occurred near to the time of the New Testament.*

*The preterist system of interpretation involves a “slippery slope” where some so-called “time texts” are said to have already been fulfilled (Rev. Rev. 1:3+; Rev. 2:16+; Rev. 3:11+), whereas other equivalent time texts are left as possibly future (e.g., Rev. Rev. 22:20+). The “slippery slope” begins with mild preterism, and leads toward full (extreme) preterism which denies the Second Coming of Christ (heresy). The basic tension preterism has is if some of the passages which state that Jesus’ coming is “near” must indicate His return within the generation that heard these statements, then why not all such passages? Yet if this view is applied to all such passages consistently (the view of consistent preterism), then passages such as Revelation Rev. 22:20+, “Surely, I am coming quickly,” which an overwhelming number of commentators hold to refer to His physical, bodily return, must also have been fulfilled and so all of Jesus’ promises about His Second Coming must have already occurred. The problem here is that the preterist approach denies the doctrine of imminency. (See our discussion of Imminency.)*

*Preterists believe in the doctrine of imminency, but deny that passages which teach the any-moment return of Christ have in view His literal Second Coming. “Our study of the New Testament is drastically off-course if we fail to take into account the apostolic expectation of an imminent Coming of Christ (not the Second Coming) which would destroy ‘this generation’ of Israel and fully establish the New Covenant Church.”**[1](https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/hermeneutics-of-preterism.html%22%20%5Cl%20%229180E%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) But Scripture teaches that the any-moment coming of Jesus is not just a symbolic “cloud coming” of preterism which is neither discernible by the skeptical world nor by His Church, rather, He may come at any moment to gather the Church to Himself (John 14:1-3; 1Th. 4:13-18; 1Cor. 15:51-53).*

*So one thing to notice concerning the hermeneutics of mild preterism is its inconsistent treatment of passages concerning the coming of Christ. It tends to place as many Second Coming passages in the past as possible, taking care not to post-date passages which are especially germane to Christ’s bodily Second Coming and risk falling into the heresy of full preterism. This is what happened with the late David Chilton. His commentary on the book of Revelation, written while a mild preterist, takes Revelation Rev. 22:6-7+ as having been fulfilled in the first century. Eventually he came to believe that all Second Coming passages found their fulfillment in the first century and became a full preterist, denying a future bodily return of Christ.*

*It seems that more and more preterists are becoming hyperpreterists... [mild preterism’s view] opens the door for people to move into the heretical position of hyper-preterism... we have already seen the late David Chilton take this route. Walt Hibbard, the former owner of Great Christian Books (previously known as Puritan and Reformed Book Company), once a reconstructionist, moved from partial to full preterism... Once a person accepts the basic tenets of preterism, it is hard to stop and resist the appeal to preterize all Bible prophecy.*

*Most preterists stop short of allegorizing away the bodily return of Christ (the error of hyper-preterism). But it is frankly hard to see how any preterist could ever give a credible refutation of hyper-preterism from Scripture, given the fact that the hermeneutical approach underlying both views is identical. Hyper-preterists simply apply the preterist method more consistently to all New Testament prophecy.*

*While the initial dilemma is restricted mostly to Second Coming passages, it soon extends outward to a myriad of prophetic predictions because in order to find a first-century fulfillment to the many details which Scripture has revealed as yet future, the preterist is forced into searching historic documents in a sort of “newspaper exegesis after-the-fact” to find some event or persona who has a similarity to the Scriptural text.*

*Preterists search first century “newspapers” to see what events fit in with their scheme of first-century fulfillment. Though futurists are often charged with practicing “newspaper exegesis,” preterists are the real masters of the art. Interestingly, for the preterist, the closer we move to the time of the Lord’s physical return, the farther we get from the events they believe are indicated in the book of Revelation.*

*The biggest problem with the preterist position is the lack of consistent hermeneutics. They work hard to find historical evidence of [literal] prophetic fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Any time an event described in a prophecy cannot be linked to an actual historical event, preterists immediately resort to a symbolic interpretation of the text... What are the criteria for taking something literally? When does something become symbolic?*

*Preterists are inconsistent when they interpret Revelation’s numbers. On the one hand, they interpret the numbers 42 (Revelation Rev. 13:5+), 666 (Revelation Rev. 13:8+), and Rev. 1:1+, Rev. 5:1+, and Rev. 7:1+ (Revelation Rev. 17:10+) in a straightforward, literal fashion. On the other hand, preterists contend that the numbers 1,000, 12,000, and 144,000 are purely symbolic.*

*Since preterism sees almost all of the book of Revelation as having already been fulfilled in the past, it holds that nearly the entire book is focused solely on the readership of John’s day. One wonders how many first-time readers of the book of Revelation who arrive without any special bias would reach the following conclusion of preterism?*

***The Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ****. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ’s victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple. In fact, as we shall see, the word coming as used in the book of Revelation never refers to the Second Coming. Revelation prophesies the judgment of God on apostate Israel.*

**2. Historicist Interpretation**歷史學派

*The historicist system of interpretation understands the book of Revelation as setting forth the major events of Christian history spanning the time of John until the present. “Historicist interpreters* ***generally see Revelation as predicting the major movements of Christian history****, most of which have been fulfilled up to the time of the commentator.” Rev. 2:1+-Rev. 19:1+, including the seals, trumpets, and bowls as well as the interludes, as prophetic of salvation history, that is,* ***the development of church history within world history****.” This view has also been called the continuist view.*

*The beginning of historicism has been attributed to Joachim of Fiore (12th century) or Nicolas of Lyra (died 1340). This approach began with Joachim of Fiore in the twelfth century. He claimed that a vision had told him the 1,260 days of the Apocalypse prophesied the events of Western history from the time of the apostles until the present. The Franciscans followed Joachim and like him interpreted the book relating to pagan Rome and the papacy (due to corruption in the church). Later the Reformers...also favored this method, with the pope as the Antichrist.*

*Nicolas of Lyra (teacher of theology at Paris, died 1340)...Abandoning the theory of recapitulation, he finds in the course of the book prediction of a continuous series of events from the apostolic age to the final consummation. The seals refer to the period extending into the reign of Domitian; in the later parts are predicted the Arian and other heresies, the spread of Mohammedism, Charlemagne, the Crusades, and other historical details.*

***One of the problems the historicist view encounters is that the events of the book of Revelation appear to be clustered within a relatively short time period*** *(Rev. Rev. 11:2-3+; Rev. 12:6+, Rev. 12:14+; Rev. 13:5+). In order to apply this period to history from the time of John to that of the interpreter, the 1260 days of the time period are understood as “prophetic days” and interpreted as years*

*The principal difficulty in the way was to dispose of the predictions which limited the final stage of Antichrist’s career to forty-two months, or twelve hundred sixty days. This was accomplished by what is known as the “year-day” theory, which regards each of the 1260 days as “prophetic days,” that is, as 1260 years, and thus sufficient room was afforded to allow for the protracted history of Roman Catholicism.*

***One of the primary motives behind the full development of historicism was a desire to interpret the book of Revelation as an anti-Roman Catholic polemic where the Beast was seen as denoting the pope and the papacy.*** *This suited the needs of the enemies of the “Babylonish” papacy, especially during the Reformation. Rev. 13:1+. Thiessen lists Wycliffe, Luther, Joseph Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, William Whiston, Elliott, Vitringa, Bengel, and Barnes as adherents of this approach.” Pink sees historicism and its anti-pope focus as being a key contributor to the rise of postmillennialism*

*The dominant view which has been held by Protestants since the time of the Reformation is that the many predictions relating to the Antichrist describe, instead, the rise, progress, and doom of the papacy. This mistake has led to others, and given rise to the scheme of prophetic interpretation which has prevailed throughout Christendom. When the predictions concerning the Man of Sin were allegorized, consistency required that all associated and collateral predictions should also be allegorized, and especially those which relate to his doom, and the kingdom which is to be established on the overthrow of his power. When the period of his predicted course was made to measure the whole duration of the papal system, it naturally followed that the predictions of the associated events should be applied to the history of Europe from the time that the Bishop of Rome became recognized as the head of the Western Churches. It was, really, this mistake of Luther and his contemporaries in applying to Rome the prophecies concerning the Antichrist, which is responsible, we believe, for the whole modern system of post-millennialism.*

*Elliott, in his Horae Apocalypticae , holds that the trumpets (Rev. Rev. 8:6+-Rev. 9:21+) cover the period from A.D. 395 to A.D. 1453, beginning with the attacks on the Western Roman empire by the Goths and concluding with the fall of the Eastern empire to the Turks. The first trumpet was the invasion of the Goths under Alaric, who sacked Rome; the second was the invasion under Genseric, who conquered North Africa; the third was the raid of the Huns under Attila, who devastated central Europe. The fourth was the collapse of the empire under the conquest of Odoacer. The locusts of the fifth trumpet were the Moslem hordes that poured into the west between the sixth and eighth centuries, and the sixth judgment of the four angels bound at the Euphrates (Rev. 9:14+) was the growth and spread of the Turkish power.*

***This has led to endless speculation that is totally without biblical support.*** *Identifications have included monks and friars as “locusts,” Muhammad as the “fallen star,” Alaric the Goth as the first trumpet, Elizabeth I as the first bowl, Martin Luther as the angel of Sardis, Adolf Hitler as the red horse.*

*Historicism is not very popular today. This is partly because of its consistent failure to account for the actual events of history to our own time. The variation in results obtained by proponents has also been so great that it tends to invalidate the approach. Osborne lists a number of weaknesses of the system, including: (1) an identification only with Western Church history; (2) the inherent speculation involved in the parallels with world history; (3) the fact that it must be reworked with each new period of world history.*

*The historicist position... suffers from the inability of interpreters of this school to establish a specific verifiable criterion of judgment whereby positive identification for the fulfillment of specific prophecies can be proved to be historically fulfilled by specific events in world history, in historical instances of fulfillment to which most of the interpreters of this school could agree. The method requires the student of Revelation to go outside the Bible and seek for the fulfillment of predictions in the past events of world history, and to one not well taught in history the method is impossible to carry out, leaving the book of Revelation largely closed to the ordinary reader.*

*The historical interpreters differ so much among themselves that we may well ask, Which one of them are we to believe? It is this very diversity which has caused so many earnest students to put the Apocalypse aside in despair.*

***3. Idealist Interpretation***理想學派

*Mounce and Osborne provide a good summary of the idealist approach to interpreting the book of Revelation*

*Its proponents hold that Revelation is not to be taken in reference to any specific events at all but as an expression of those basic principles on which God acts throughout history... The idealist approach continues the allegorical interpretation which dominated exegesis throughout the medieval period and still finds favor with those inclined to minimize the historical character of the coming consummation... Its weakness lies in the fact that it denies to the book any specific historical fulfillment.*

*This popular approach argues that the symbols do not relate to historical events but rather to timeless spiritual truths... As such, it relates primarily to the church between the advents, that is, between Christ’s first and second comings. Thus it concerns the battle between God and evil and between the church and the world at all times in church history... The millennium in this approach is not a future event but the final cycle of the book...describing the church age.*

*Idealists have much in common with preterists in that they avoid an understanding of the book of Revelation which would seem to be describing future events. Here again, there is an overemphasis on the readers of John’s day, as if the book were only written to describe historic events of their time and hold devotional value for those that follow:*

*Its flaw is not so much in what it affirms as in what it denies. Many idealists could be classed as preterists, since they hold that the imagery of the Apocalypse is taken from its immediate world, and that the prevailing conditions of Domitian’s reign are reflected in the symbolic episodes that fill its pages. They refuse to assign to them any literal historical significance for the future, and they deny all predictive prophecy except in the most general sense of the ultimate triumph of righteousness. “The problem with this alternative is that it holds that Revelation does not depict any final consummation to history, whether in God’s final victory or in a last judgment of the realm of evil.”*

*1) It is an irresistible summons to heroic living. 2) The book contains matchless appeals to endurance. 3) It tells us that evil is marked for overthrow in the end. 4) It gives us a new and wonderful picture of Christ. 5) The Apocalypse reveals to us the fact that history is in the mind of God and in the hand of Christ as the author and reviewer of the moral destinies of men.*

*Idealism also suffers from an inconsistency of interpretation where small sections are interpreted literally, but then the interpreter reverts back to symbolism and allegory. There is no clear or consistent means for determining when this shift should occur. A fundamental mistake is made when the fact that John is receiving revelation through a series of visions is seen as license to hold that John’s communication is something less than logically coherent.*

*They have John in a sort of “dream world” until their personally contrived formula has him revert to a literal mode of predicting the future in more precise terms. To be sure, the bulk of the Apocalypse resulted from John’s prophetic trance(s) . . . (Rev. Rev. 1:10+; Rev. 4:2+; Rev. 17:3+; Rev. 21:10+). There is, however, no justification for equating such a trance with a dream where logical coherence is nonexistent. Though in some sort of ecstatic state, John’s spirit was wide awake and its powers were exercised with unusual alertness and clarity.*

*The bankruptcy of this approach is best illustrated by the huge variation in the interpretive results of its practitioners. If the idealist interpretation is the correct one, then the true meaning of the book of Revelation cannot be reliably determined. But then perhaps it would not matter if the book were given only to inspire the saints!*

***4. Futurist Interpretation***未來學派

*The approach to interpreting the book of Revelation which has gained perhaps the widest exposure of all systems of interpretation in recent times is the futurist interpretation. This is a result of a number of seminaries in the recent past which have championed a literal interpretative approach to all of Scripture within a framework which understands related Old Testament passages and promises involving Israel, and which distinguishes between Israel and the Church. The futurist interpretation is the basic interpretive framework behind the hugely popular Left Behind series of novels by authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins.*

*Futurism derives from the consistent application of literal hermeneutics, the Golden Rule of Interpretation, across the entire body of Scripture, including the book of Revelation. Contrary to the claims of many of its critics, it is not an a priori view which is imposed on the text. As evidenced by the testimony of the early Church, futurism is the most natural result of a plain reading of the text and the way that most unbiased readers would understand the book on their first reading.*

*Futurism gets its label from its refusal to see unfulfilled passages as having been fulfilled by approximately similar events in the past. Hence, it holds that many of the events in the book of Revelation await future fulfillment:*

*The futurist generally believes that all of the visions from Revelation Rev. 4:1ff. to the end of the book are yet to be fulfilled in the period immediately preceding and following the second advent of Christ. The reason for the view is found in the comparison of Revelation Rev. 1:1ff., Rev. 1:19ff. and Rev. 4:1ff.*

*Futurists see eschatological passages being fulfilled during a future time, primarily during the seventieth week of Daniel, at the second coming of Christ, and during the millennium. While all dispensationalists are futurists, not all futurists are dispensationalists. Futurists are also the most literal in their interpretation of prophecy passages. Dr. Tenney says: “The more literal an interpretation that one adopts, the more strongly will he be construed to be a futurist.”*

*There are two forms of this approach, dispensationalism and what has been called “classic pre-millennialism.” Dispensationalists believe that God has brought about his plan of salvation in a series of dispensations or stages* ***centering on his election of Israel to be his covenant people.*** *Therefore, the church age is a parenthesis in this plan, as God turned to the Gentiles until the Jewish people find national revival (Rom. Rom. 11:1;25-32). At the end of that period, the church will be raptured, inaugurating a seven-year tribulation period in the middle of which the Antichrist will make himself known (Rev. Rev. 13:1+) and instigate the “great tribulation”… At the end of that period... Christ returns in judgment, followed by a literal millennium (Rev. Rev. 20:1-10+), great white throne judgment (Rev. Rev. 20:11-15+), and the beginning of eternity…Classical premillennialism is similar but does not hold to dispensations. Thus there is only one return of Christ, after the tribulation period (Mat. 24:29-31; cf. Rev. Rev. 19:11-21+) and it is the whole church, not just the nation of Israel, that passes through the tribulation period.*

*When Knowles deals with the next major contributors — Irenaeus (130-200) and his disciple Hippolytus (170-236) — he describes their views as “undoubtedly the forerunners of the modern dispensational interpreters of the Seventy Weeks.” Knowles draws the following conclusion about Irenaeus and Hippolytus: “...we may say that Irenaeus presented the seed of an idea that found its full growth in the writings of Hippolytus. In the works of these fathers, we can find most of the basic concepts of the modern futuristic view of the seventieth week of Daniel ix. That they were dependent to some extent upon earlier material is no doubt true. Certainly we can see the influence of pre-Christian Jewish exegesis at times, but, by and large, we must regard them as the founders of the school of interpretation, and in this lies their significance for the history of exegesis.”*

*[Justin Martyr] asserts that it teaches a literal Millennial Kingdom of the saints to be established in Jerusalem, and after the thousand years the general resurrection and judgment... Irenaeus... finds in the book the doctrine of chiliasm (*千禧年論*), that is, of an earthly Millennial Kingdom...Hippolytus is a chiliast... identified... Antichrist, who was represented by Antiochus Epiphanes and who will come out of the tribe of Dan, will reign 3 1/2 years, persecuting the Church and putting to death the two Witnesses, the forerunners of the parousia (held to be Elijah and Enoch)... Victorinus... understands the Revelation in a literal, chiliastic, sense... The two witnesses are Elijah and Jeremiah; the 144,000 are Jews who in the last days will be converted by the preaching of Elijah... the false prophet, will cause the image of Antichrist to be set up in the temple at Jerusalem.*

*Unfortunately, with the rise of allegorical interpretation and the opposition of the heresy of Montanism (which utilized an extravagant form of millennial teaching drawn from the book of Revelation), the futurist view fell into disfavor, not to be seen in a favorable light again for over a thousand years.*

*During the Reformation, literal interpretation flourished in response to the allegorical methods employed throughout the Middle Ages by the Roman Church. However, the Reformers never fully extended literalism to prophetic passages and key Reformers did not fully appreciate the book of Revelation.*

*The primary fork in the road between futurism and all other systems of interpretation concerning the book of Revelation comes in the refusal of the futurist to be imprecise with the details of God’s revelation. For example, when a passage states that a man Rev. 13:13+), the futurist expects fulfillment to involve: (1) a man; (2) performing great signs in a similar way that great signs were performed in the OT and by Christ in the gospels; (3) who calls down literal fire from literal heaven as was done in the OT; (4) viewed by other men. He then asks the simple question: Is there any reliable historic record of such an event since the time of John’s writing? The obvious answer is, “No!” Hence this event awaits future fulfillment. It really is that simple!*

*There is a strong connection between literal interpretation and futurism: “The more literal an interpretation that one adopts, the more strongly will he be construed to be a futurist.” Literal interpretation allows the text to speak for itself:*

*Critics frequently misrepresent futurism as if it places its entire emphasis on understanding the book of Revelation as applying to the future: “The futurist position especially encounters the difficulty that the book would have had****no significant relevance for a first-century readership****.”*

*This is a major misunderstanding of the futurist position which holds that the early chapters of the book are specifically addressed to the then-existing churches in Asia Minor and fully appreciates the historical setting and contents of these passages. Moreover, futurism concurs with Swete that the events of the book of Revelation are relevant in every age as a great source of blessing and security for persecuted believers:*

*In the Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons, written in 177 to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia, which bears many signs of the use of the Apocalypse by the Christian societies of South Gaul during the troubles in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. . . . It is impossible to doubt that the roll which contained St John’s great letter to the parent Churches in Asia was often in the hands of the daughter Churches in Gaul, and perhaps accompanied the confessors to the prisons where they awaited the martyr’s crown.*

*The mistake being made is constraining the book of Revelation as if it had only a single purpose. No matter which view is taken, if one fails to understand the many purposes of the book, the interpretive result will be the lacking. Preterist Chilton remarks: “No Biblical writer ever revealed the future merely for the sake of satisfying curiosity: The goal was always to direct God’s people toward right action in the present... The prophets told of the future****only****in order to stimulate godly living.” [emphasis added] If Chilton were correct, then there would be little reason for prophecy to be predictive. The fact is, the prophets gave prophecy for more reasons than merely the stimulation of godly living. This was indeed an important reason, but not the only reason. The many fulfilled prophecies testifying to the identity of Jesus at His First Coming provide an abundant counter example to Chilton’s claim.*

*It is a misrepresentation of the futurist interpretation to assert that it denies the relevance of the text to the first-century readership. This is tantamount to saying that appreciating the prophetic predictions throughout Scripture essentially denies the relevance of the same passages to those who originally received them. The pattern of prophetic passages throughout Scripture is clearly one of both immediate local application and future prediction. Even in cases where there is no immediate local application by way of historical events (e.g., Isa. 53:1), the passages still contain inestimable worth to the original recipients in setting forth the will of God as well as inspirational value in the sure hope of what God will do in the future (Rom. 8:24-25). In the Apocalypse, this dual application of prophetic Scripture (both immediate/local and future/remote) is made explicit in the organizational framework set forth by Christ (Rev. 1:19+) and in the setting off of the seven epistles from the remaining material.*

*Other criticisms of futurism are manifestly silly. Gregg denies futurists the right to use the analogy of Scripture (Scripture interprets Scripture):*

*A major feature of the Tribulation expected by futurists is its seven-year duration, divided in the middle by the Antichrist’s violating a treaty he had made with Israel and setting up an image of himself in the rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Yet none of these elements can be discovered from a literal interpretation of any passage in Revelation... The futurist believes that Revelation (Rev. 20:1+) describes a period of world peace and justice with Christ reigning on earth from Jerusalem, though no part of this description can be found in the chapter itself, taken literally. This observation does not mean that this futurist scenario cannot be true. But it must be derived by reading into the passages in Revelation features that are not plainly stated.*

*Obviously, care needs to be exercised when connecting passages which seem to have related aspects, but if a good case can be made for a correlation, then the interpreter who fails in this synthesis is failing in his task before God. Chiding futurists who correlate the little horn of Daniel (Dan. 7:8), the man of sin of Paul (2Th. 2:3), and the Beast of Revelation (Rev. 13:1+) because of obvious and intentional similarities given in Scripture, but providing no sensible or profitable synthesis in its place is a pattern frequently demonstrated by critics. This is the primary reason why futurists can offer a systematic and detailed outline of eschatological events while the other systems fail to provide anything even remotely similar. It almost seems that the critics of futurism dislike the certainty and coherence it offers in its interpretation of prophecy. But if God supernaturally gave the inspired Scriptures through a single author (the Holy Spirit), why shouldn’t such coherence and correlation be expected?*

*To the futurist, the book of Revelation has relevancy to John, to the seven churches of Asia, to the Church throughout history, and to the saints all the way through the Second Coming of Christ and into the eternal state. Now that’s relevancy!*

*The book of Revelation is important to us because it portrays the world as a global village. Entering the twenty-first century, no better expression describes our earth and its people. Besides a mushrooming population, other factors are pushing all humanity together, such as an interlinking economy, jet age transportation, and satellite communications.*

**5. Eclectic Interpretation**綜合學派

*The final system of interpretation we discuss briefly is that of an eclectic interpretation. This system picks and chooses elements from each of the other interpretive systems and applies them at different places in the text.*

*It is the ultimate “interpretive smorgasbord” whose proponents proclaim combines the best from each system. “The solution is to allow the preterist, idealist, and futurist methods to interact in such a way that the strengths are maximized, and the weaknesses minimized.” This sounds appealing and is in keeping with the trend towards diversity so prevalent in our day. Rather than struggle within the restrictive framework of any one system, why not “have them all?”*

*The answer, once again, is hermeneutics, hermeneutics, hermeneutics! Thomas identifies the Achilles Heel of the eclectic approach: “It leaves to human judgment the determination of where the details of a text end and its general picture begins. Allowing this liberty for subjective opinion cannot qualify as objective interpretation.”* ***One can’t simply combine the elements from disparate systems of interpretation, for they are often at odds with one another.*** *Therefore, the subjectivity (a word to be avoided in interpretation) of the interpreter now rules over the choice of when to use which system. Obviously, different interpreters will make this decision differently across the text and the results will be as eclectic as the system itself. This, too, is a bad thing if you believe that God’s Word has one primary meaning which He desires all His saints to understand.*

*Taking one example from Beale:*

*Accordingly, no specific prophesied historical events are discerned in the book, except for the final coming of Christ to deliver and judge and to establish the final form of the kingdom in a consummated new creation — though there are a few exceptions to this rule... ([e].g., Rev. 2:10+, Rev. 2:22+ and Rev. 3:9-10+, which are unconditional prophecies to be fulfilled imminently in the specific local churches of Smyrna, Thyatira, and Philadelphia).*

*A growth in popularity of the eclectic interpretation is to be expected given our postmodern age, for the eclectic system of interpretation has much in common with it: First, the tendency to embrace all paths as being approximately equivalent; Second, the desire to avoid treating other views negatively; Third, the willingness to allow for a variety of interpretations of what truth is (your truth is your truth, my truth is my truth). The Word of God’s objective claim that there is a single path to truth undermines the claims of an eclectic approach much as it does the claims of postmodernism.*

重述性釋經原則

重述同一件事的啟示錄內文例證：

一般我們不太注意的 – 因為是在啟示錄的最後，我們自動地會認為這件事就是最後的一件。20:12我又看見死了的人，無論大小，都站在寶座前。……13 於是海交出其中的死人；死亡和陰間也交出其中的死人；他們都照各人所行的受審判。14 死亡和陰間也被扔在火湖裏；這火湖就是第二次的死。15 若有人名字沒記在生命冊上，他就被扔在火湖裏。

然而在啟示錄第11章中就已經有見到最後審判的異象。11:18外邦發怒，你的忿怒也臨到了；審判死人的時候也到了。你的僕人眾先知和眾聖徒，凡敬畏你名的人，連大帶小得賞賜的時候也到了。你敗壞那些敗壞世界之人的時候也就到了。19當時，上帝天上的殿開了，在他殿中現出他的約櫃。隨後有閃電、聲音、雷轟、地震、大雹。

重述同一件事的舊約例證：

* 第一次，以賽亞書13:1-14:23

以賽亞書 14:23 我必使巴比倫為箭豬所得，又變為水池；我要用滅亡的掃帚掃淨它。這是萬軍之耶和華說的。

* 第二次，以賽亞書21:6-9

以賽亞書21:9b 巴比倫傾倒了！傾倒了！他一切雕刻的神像都打碎於地。

* 第三次，以賽亞書47:1-11

以賽亞書47:11 因此，禍患要臨到你身；你不知何時發現，災害落在你身上，你也不能除掉；所不知道的毀滅也必忽然臨到你身。

***Structure of Revelation***

*At the most basic level (see table 1.1), Revelation can be divided into three sections: introduction (1:1-3:22); main vision (4:1-22:7); and conclusion (22:8-21).*

***The Introduction***序言 ***The introduction is made up of four parts.***

* *The first part (1:1-3)* 緣起 *consists of the title of the book and a blessing on all who hear and keep the words of the prophecy.*
* *The second part (1:4-8)* 開場白 *contains a fairly standard, though somewhat expanded, letter opening in which John introduces himself and greets his readers. It also includes a hymn of praise to Christ.*
* *The third part (1:9-20)* 基督顯現的異象 *tells how the risen Christ appeared to John in a vision and instructed him to write a letter to each of seven churches in western Asia Minor.*
* *The fourth part (2:1-3:23)* 給七個教會的信 *is the seven letters themselves. The seven letters of part four sum up the experiences, successes, and failings of real-life Christian communities. Yet their struggles and triumphs represent those of all Christian communities everywhere - what is said to them is said to all who identify themselves with the person of Christ and claim loyalty to his cause.*

啟示錄 1:1耶穌基督的啟示，就是神賜給他，叫他將必要快成的事指示他的眾僕人，他就差遣使者，曉諭他的僕人約翰。2約翰便將神的道，和耶穌基督的見證，凡自己所看見的，都證明出來。3念這書上豫言的，和那這聽見又遵守其中所記載的，都是有福的，因為日期近了。4約翰寫信給亞西亞的七個教會，但願從那昔在今在以後永在的神，和他寶座前的七靈。5並那誠實作見證的，從死裡首先復活，為世上君王元首的耶穌基督，有恩惠平安歸與你們。他愛我們，用自己的血使我們脫離罪惡，〔脫離有古卷作洗去〕6又使我們成為國民，作他父神的祭司，但願榮耀權能歸給他，直到永永遠遠。阿們。

***At its most basic level Revelation calls us to worship God. When all the terrible sights have passed us by and the sulfurous smoke has settled, one image must remain with us: there is One who sits on the throne.***

*The book of Revelation also calls us to follow Jesus Christ, portrayed as a slaughtered lamb. His way is the way of suffering, the way of sacrifice.*

*In the book of Revelation those who follow the Lamb "follow him wherever he goes," and they "wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb." These terms speak of our joining with Christ in a life marked by his character and his experience.*

*Revelation also tells us that those who follow the Lamb follow low him into an unequal battle. On the one side is the Lamb and his followers dressed in white robes and carrying palm branches-hardly the garb of war.*

*Shockingly, the book of Revelation chronicles the defeat of the Lamb and his followers, slain at the hands of the evil trio. Yet their defeat is the essence of their ultimate victory, because God's rule is energized not by brute force but by what Paul in a different context referred to as "power made perfect in weakness." Although they are slain, ultimately, they overcome evil.*

*Th understand Revelation, to gain access to the inner secrets of its vision, we must ask the right questions. In the case of Revelation, the first and most fundamental question is: What kind of book is this? Is Revelation an outline of history, tory, as some have thought? Is it a parable or an allegory? Is it a literal description of the future, like a history book written ten in advance of the events? Is it a sermon written in some kind of secret code? Or is it simply something beyond us, something we will never fully understand? These questions, which are actually questions about the literary genre of Revelation, help us come to grips with what makes Revelation tick. Asking what kind of literature it is gets us right into the heart of the book, so we will need to give this question a careful answer.*

***The Main Vision***

*At the beginning of chapter 4 John is summoned through an open door in the sky. This initial scene is the hub of the whole book. Everything that happens after it is like spokes, radiating outward from this vision of God on his throne, the seven spirits who are before the throne, and the Lamb that was slaughtered. Chapter 4 sets up the primary truth that Revelation impresses on us: God is seated on his throne and is surrounded by the perpetual worship ship of the hosts of heaven. Chapter 5 then sets in motion the drama that will take us through the rest of the vision: the One on the throne holds a sealed scroll that only the Lamb is able to open. The opening of the scroll in chapter 6 is the beginning of the rest of the vision.*

*The throne scene is on level one. What follows is on level two because it flows from what happens on level one.*

***Level one – it is the very basic level. It serves as the beginning to all other visions***

* *The Throne Scene (4-5)*
* *The New Cosmos (21-22:7)*

*It opens with a picture of God’s rule in heaven and ends with a picture of God’s rule spanning the universe – God’s kingdom has come to earth.*

***Level Two – includes events associated with three series of judgments: the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls. These prepare for the coming of God’s kingdom by purging the earth of sin and godlessness.***

* *The Seal Openings (6:1-8:5), including 2nd pause (10:1-11:4) – All of the seals must be broken before the scroll can be read, so the breaking of the seals continually heightens our anticipation and expectation for what is in the scroll itself. As if this delay were not enough, John’s vision takes a number of detours. The detours or pauses are not just teasers. They have an important message. Both of them tell sus crucial things about what it means to be followers of the Lamb, and what our own role is in the working out of God’s amazing purposes.*
* *The Trumpet Blasts (8:6-11:19), including 2nd pause (10:1-11:4)*
* *The Plague Bowls (15-16)*

***Level Three – consists of scenes that tell us more about the events on level two, taking us deeper and revealing new mysteries.***

* *The woman and the dragon (12)*
* *The two beasts (13)*
* *The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)*
* *The three angels (14:6-13)*
* *The two harvests (14:14-20)*
* *The great prostitute (17)*
* *The Fall of Babylon (18)*
* *Rejoicing in Heaven (19:1-10)*
* *The rider on the white horse (19:11-21)*
* *The Millennium (20:1-10)*
* *Final Judgment (20:11-15)*

***Images in the Revelation***

***The Throne – the central image of Revelation***

*The first image John saw when he passes through the heavenly door.*

*John is so overwhelmed by all he has seen that twice he falls down to worship his angelic guide. Both time he is roundly rebuked and tole in no uncertain terms* ***to worship God (19:10; 22:11)***

***The One on the Throne***

***God is sovereign. He is the ultimate authority over the whole universe.***

*Cf. 1 Kings 22:19. Isaiah 6:1-3; Ezek. 1:4-28; Daniel 7:9-10.*

列王記上22:18以色列王對約沙法說：我豈沒有告訴你，這人指著我所說的豫言，不說吉語，單說凶言麼。19米該雅說：你要聽耶和華的話，我看見耶和華坐在寶座上，天上的萬軍侍立在他左右。

以賽亞書 6:1當烏西雅王崩的那年，我見主坐在高高的寶座上，他的衣裳垂下，遮滿聖殿。2其上有撒拉弗侍立，各有六個翅膀，用兩個翅膀遮臉，兩個翅膀遮腳，兩個翅膀飛翔。3彼此呼喊說：聖哉，聖哉，聖哉，萬軍之耶和華，他的榮光充滿全地。

以西結書 1:4我觀看，見狂風從北方颳來，隨著有一朵包括閃爍火的大雲，周圍有光輝，從其中的火內發出好像光耀的精金。5又從其中，顯出四個活物的形像來，他們的形狀是這樣，有人的形像…24活物行走的時候，我聽見翅膀的響聲，像大水的聲音，像全能者的聲音，也像軍隊鬨嚷的聲音，活物站住的時候，便將翅膀垂下。25在他們頭以上的穹蒼之上有聲音，他們站住的時候，便將翅膀垂下。26在他們頭以上的穹蒼之上，有寶座的形像，彷彿藍寶石，在寶座形像以上，有彷彿人的形狀。27我見從他腰以上，有彷彿光耀的精金，周圍都有火的形狀，又見從他腰以下，有彷彿火的形狀，周圍也有光輝。28下雨的日子，雲中虹的形狀怎樣，周圍光輝的形狀也是怎樣，這就是耶和華榮耀的形像，我一看見就俯伏在地，又聽見一位說話的聲音。

但以理書 7:9我觀看，見有寶座設立，上頭坐著亙古常在者，他的衣服潔白如雪，頭髮如純淨的羊毛，寶座乃火燄，其輪乃烈火。10從他面前有火像河發出，事奉他的有千千，在他面前侍立的有萬萬，他坐著要行審判，案卷都展開了。

*Around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald (4:3). The rainbow is a reminder of God’s covenant with Noah, and thus a reminder of God’s faithfulness and mercy.*

***Thunder and Lightning***

*These details are reminders or echoes of that very important OT scene at Mount Sinai. (Ex. 19:16-19, 20:18) Communicating a sense of awe in the presence of God.*

***The Crystal Sea***

*The sea is a rich and complex symbol in Revelation. The heavenly one echoes the creatin account – on the second day God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” (Gen. 1:6)*

*It is compared to the negative image of the earthly sea (Ps. 74:13-14; Isa. 27:1; Job 38:8-11; Ps. 104:5-9)*

*Sea is no more in the new heaven and new earth (21:1)*

***The Twenty-Four Elders***

*Keeping in mind that Revelation considers all God's people to be priests,* ***the twenty-four four elders may be the heavenly representatives of God's priestly people****. That each of them has a golden incense bowl full of the prayers of the saints (5:8) clearly indicates their priestly role. They are also rulers because they wear crowns and sit on thrones. This fits in with the way Revelation speaks of Christians as a kingdom of priests (20:6; compare Ex 19:6).*

*Like others in the scene, the twenty-four elders worship God. Abandoning their thrones and laying down their crowns at his feet, they prostrate themselves in humility before the great and glorious One. By their reverential homage they signify their place under God's ultimate rule.*

***The Living Creatures***

*The four living creatures seem similar to the "seraphs" of Isaiah's vision (Is 6:2) and Ezekiel's "living creatures" (Ezek 1:4-21). These two prophetic visions parallel the angelic beings that were part of the ark of the covenant (called "cherubim," plural for "cherub," but quite unlike the flying babies of popular imagination-see 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 80:1; 99:10). The ark itself represented God's throne and the cherubim were understood to be standing in attendance upon him. Interestingly, descriptions of these angelic beings are never quite the same from one passage to the next. For example, Revelation's four living creatures each have one face, while the four creatures in Ezekiel each have four faces. Revelation's creatures each have six wings as in Isaiah, not four as in Ezekiel. In Revelation they are full of eyes; in Ezekiel the eyes are on the rims of the wheels of God's throne. What these discrepancies (if that is what we should call them) underscore is the difficulty the prophets had in describing what they experienced. More to the point, they show us that these prophets, divinely inspired as they were, crafted what they saw so it would communicate something specific to us. As I emphasized earlier, Revelation is not John's vision, it is the literary distillation of John's vision. Thus it uses literary techniques that must to be taken into account if we are to understand John's message.*

*Having said that, it is likely the four living creatures of Revelation represent the whole created cosmos of heaven and earth. Their role is to spend their whole lives worshiping God. They are a kind of object lesson of the core message sage of Revelation. Together with the twenty-four elders they demonstrate all creation's appropriate response to God. "Day and night without ceasing they sing, 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty who was and is and is to come'" (4:8; compare Is 6:2-3). More than that, they drive home the key point that Revelation is trying to make: at the very heart of reality is the worship of the One who sits on the throne. Our ultimate destiny as creatures will be determined by the extent to which we either resonate with or rebel against this reality.*

***Words about God***

*This verse includes three of Revelation's main ways of talking about God:* ***the Alpha and the Omega; the One who is and was and is to come; the Lord God, the Almighty****.*

***The Alpha and the Omega –*** 我是首先的，也是末後的 – 我是不受時間限制的；我是超越時間的，又是在時空中掌權的。

Alpha means the beginning. It can also mean “source”, as a spring might be the beginning of a river. In this sense the word points toward God the creator, the one from whom all things originate and by whom they continue to exist.

The description of God as the “end” speaks to us of the goal or purpose of the world. A river’s end is the sea – that is its destination; that is where it finishes. But “end” also means “outcome” or “purpose,” the reason why we do something. God is both the destination of creation and its purpose. At the end oof all human activity, there stands the throne of God. Life comes from God, and it returns to God.

Isaiah 44:6耶和華以色列的君，以色列的救贖主萬軍之耶和華如此說：我是首先的，我是末後的，除我以外，再沒有真神。7自從我設立古時的民，誰能像我宣告，並且指明，又為自己陳說呢，讓他將未來的事，和必成的事說明。8你們不要恐懼，也不要害怕，我豈不是從上古就說明指示你們麼，並且你們是我的見證，除我以外，豈有真神麼，誠然沒有磐石，我不知道一個。

***The One who is and was and who is to come (1:4, 8; 4:8)***

Note the difference in Chinese Union Version. The discrepancy is not appreciated. It is apparently an explanation of the name of God given to Moses in Ex. 3:14, “神對摩西說：我是自有永有的，又說：你要對以色列人這樣說：那自有的打發我到你們這裡來。”

***The Lord God, the Almighty***

***The title appears seven times*** *(1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22) which reminds us of the special care that John took in composing his account of the vision.*

***OT background:***

撒母耳記下5:10大衛日見強盛，因為耶和華萬軍之神與他同在。

耶利米書 5:14所以耶和華萬軍之神如此說：因為百姓說這話，我必使我的話，在你口中為火，使他們為柴，這火便將他們燒滅。

*The three titles together form a coherent and powerful picture of the central character of the book of Revelation.*

*4:9-11 culminates in a crescendo of praise and worship:*

9每逢四活物將榮耀，尊貴，感謝，歸給那坐在寶座上，活到永永遠遠者的時候，10那二十四位長老，就俯伏在坐寶座的面前，敬拜那活到永永遠遠的，又把他們的冠冕放在寶座前，說：11我們的主，我們的神，你是配得榮耀尊貴權柄的，因為你創造了萬物，並且萬物因你的旨意被創造而有的。

*Worship is the appropriate response to God; wholehearted, awe-inspired, loving worship. In fact, Revelation implies it is the only authentic response. For in worship, we rightly acknowledge the awesomeness of God and our total dependence of Him. But worship is expressed in more than just songs or prayers; it is expressed in loyalty. It challenges us to count the cost of being associated with God and his ways of working in the world – and the consequences of not being associated with God’s great purposes for the history.*

***The Worship of God’***

保羅的敬拜觀是全人的獻上如同澆奠

對上帝的敬拜與對羔羊的敬拜是同等的 –

啟示錄 22:1天使又指示我在城內街道當中一道生命水的河，明亮如水晶，從神和羔羊的寶座流出來…3以後再沒有咒詛，在城裡有神和羔羊的寶座，他的僕人都要事奉他。4也要見他的面，他的名字必寫在他們的額上。(『神和羔羊』都變成單數)

20:6在頭一次復活有分的，有福了，聖潔了，第二次的死在他們身上沒有權柄，他們必作神和基督的祭司，並要與基督(原文：祂)一同作王一千年 (*…but they will be priests of God and of Christ and* ***will reign with Him*** *for a thousand years*)。

羅馬書 12:1所以弟兄們，我以神的慈悲勸你們，將身體獻上，當作活祭，是聖潔的，是神所喜悅的，你們如此事奉(敬拜；**latrei,a**, *service, worship*)，乃是理所當然的。

腓立比書 2:17我以你們的信心為供獻的祭物，我若被澆奠在其上，也是喜樂，並且與你們眾人一同喜樂。

提摩太后書 4:6我現在被澆奠，我離世的時候到了。

***The Lamb*** 羔羊

***The Scroll and the Lamb (Chapter 4)***

* ***The Scroll that is sealed***
* ***John’s emotional response to the news that no one is worthy to open it.***

啟示錄 5:2我又看見一位大力的天使，大聲宣傳說：有誰配展開那書卷，揭開那七印呢。3在天上，地上，地底下，沒有能展開能觀看那書卷的。

比較

羅馬書 3:23因為世人都犯了罪，虧缺了神的榮耀。

以賽亞書 59:15誠實少見，離惡的人反成掠物。那時，耶和華看見沒有公平，甚不喜悅。16他見無人拯救，無人代求，甚為詫異，就用自己的膀臂施行拯救，以公義扶持自己…63:4因為報仇之日在我心中，救贖我民之年已經來到。5我仰望，見無人幫助，我詫異，沒有人扶持，所以我自己的膀臂為我施行拯救，我的烈怒將我扶持。

*Notice the ways in which Christ is described in this verse: first as the* ***Lion of the tribe of Judah****, then as the* ***Root of David****. Both these titles evoke longstanding standing messianic hopes. Both get at the essence of what the people of God expected in a savior.*

約翰所看見的異象：

* 被殺過的羔羊

『我又看見寶座與四活物並長老之中，有羔羊站立，像是被殺過的，有七角七眼，就是神的七靈，奉差遣往普天下去的。』(5:6)

The reason He is worthy – He is the redeemer of God’s people: 『9他們唱新歌，說：你配拿書卷，配揭開七印，因為你曾被殺，用自己的血從各族各方，各民各國中買了人來，叫他們歸於神，10又叫他們成為國民，作祭司，歸於神，在地上執掌王權。』(5:9-10)

上帝當年對祂百姓的應許：出埃及記 19:5如今你們若實在聽從我的話，遵守我的約，就要在萬民中作屬我的子民(*my treasured possession*)，因為全地都是我的。6你們要歸我作祭司的國度，為聖潔的國民，這些話你要告訴以色列人。

似乎先知以賽亞預言將來還有一次的出埃及，還有一次的救贖：

35:10並且耶和華救贖的民必歸回，歌唱來到錫安，永樂必歸到他們的頭上，他們必得著歡喜快樂，憂愁歎息盡都逃避。

51:11耶和華救贖的民必歸回，歌唱來到錫安，永樂必歸到他們的頭上，他們必得著歡喜快樂，憂愁歎息盡都逃避。

並且在以賽亞書53章中，先知詳細敘述了一位受苦的彌賽亞，被殺的羔羊：

53:7他被欺壓，在受苦的時候卻不開口，〔或作他受欺壓卻自卑不開口〕他像羊羔被牽到宰殺之地，又像羊在剪毛的人手下無聲，他也是這樣不開口。

再比較

* 啟示錄 12:14於是有大鷹的兩個翅膀賜給婦人，叫他能飛到曠野，到自己的地方，躲避那蛇，他在那裡被養活一載二載半載。*12:14 And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*
* 出埃及記 19:4我向埃及人所行的事，你們都看見了，且看見我如鷹將你們背在翅膀上，帶來歸我。

從啟示錄描述耶穌基督是被殺的羔羊來看，啟示錄要我們看到耶穌基督就是那領上帝的百姓出最後的埃及，就是罪與死的權勢；進入最後之安息，在新耶路撒冷歡喜快樂的救贖主。啟示錄描述各種的災難明顯是在將讀者帶回出埃及的場景，看到終極的救贖。事實上，從啟示錄的觀點來看，似乎聖徒在地上等候基督再臨的日子就好像當年以色列人在曠野受試煉的人子。

這『被殺的羔羊』正顯明上帝得勝的方式乃是用人看來最軟弱，最失敗的方式來成就無人可做成的事工，祂的救贖大功。使徒保羅明白這個真理，並且有很深的體會，以至於他很樂意接受主拒絕他祈求的回答：『 8為這事，我三次求過主，叫這剌離開我。9他對我說：我的恩典夠你用的，因為我的能力，是在人的軟弱上顯得完全，所以我更喜歡誇自己的軟弱，好叫基督的能力覆庇我。10我為基督的緣故，就以軟弱，凌辱，急難，逼迫，困苦，為可喜樂的，因我甚麼時候軟弱，甚麼時候就剛強了。』(哥林多後書 12:8-10)

*Following hero is pretty easy, following a slaughtered Lamb is really hard. I understand that many Christians would like to carry the victory banner of the LORD, they believe that following the Lamb means reaching prosperity at the end; but that is not God’s plan for His people while we are on this earth. Would you be willing to carry the mark of a slaughtered Lamb in your life?*

***The Followers of the Lamb (Chapter 5)***

*After the seal-openings come the seven trumpet blasts, bringing with them more judgments. Then the seven bowls of judgment are poured out on the earth. However, built into the first two series of judgments are two passages that substantially break the sequence, introducing a pause in the outpouring of the judgment.*

The first of them comes in chapter 7.

* ***The 144000***

*Chapter 7* starts with four angels “holding back the winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree” (7:1). It becomes clear in the opening paragraph that these are destructive winds. More than that, they are equivalent to the four horsemen of the first four seal-openings.

*This interpretation is suggested by the book of Zechariah, which also has four horses, or chariots, that are simultaneously identified with the four winds of the earth (Zech 6:2-5). Thus this passage takes us back to a point when the four horsemen of chapter 6 were still being restrained. The reason for this restraint is so that the servants of God can be marked on their foreheads with a seal (7:3-4).*

***This mark or seal is a sign of ownership.***

*When we encounter them again, we are told that the mark on their foreheads is nothing less than the name of the Lamb and of His Father (14:1).*

*The same point is made again in 22::4. It is also a protection at times (9:4). The apostle Paul seems to be making the same point when he wrote of the people being marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit – but he mentioned that as being happened to the saints while they are on earth. (Eph. 1:13-14)*

*The number 144,000 does not represent a literal group of this exact number but stands for the entire people of God. In 5:5-6, we noticed a contrast between what John heard and what he saw. Here again, John heard the number 144,000, but when he looked what he actually saw was “****a great multitude that no one can count****,* ***from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages****” (7:9)*

比較 創世記 13:16; 15:5; 32:12. 這正是啟示錄第七章所描述的。

他們是誰? 啟7:13長老中有一位問我說：這些穿白衣的是誰，是從那裡來的。14我對他說：我主，你知道，他向我說：這些人是從大患難中出來的，曾用羔羊的血，把衣裳洗白淨了。15所以他們在神寶座前，晝夜在他殿中事奉他，坐寶座的要用帳幕覆庇他們。16他們不再飢，不再渴，日頭和炎熱，也必不傷害他們。17因為寶座中的羔羊必牧養他們，領他們到生命水的泉源，神也必擦去他們一切的眼淚。

* 這些人是從大患難中出來的 – 這些人是生活在苦難中的人。回想主耶穌的話：『我將這些事告訴你們，是要叫你們在我裡面有平安。在世上你們有苦難，但你們可以放心，我已經勝了世界。』(約翰福音16:33) *The mark does not protect us from suffering; it does protect us from the grip of the evil one; and prevents us from apostasy.*
* 他們自己用羔羊的血把衣服洗淨 – 他們的主動以此表明他們與羔羊的認同關係；他們是羔羊的見證人，也是殉道者。

『被提』的觀念不是啟示錄的觀念或是信息。啟示錄明明的告訴我們聖徒經歷大災難。*The text of Revelation 7:14-15 proves this. In essence, Revelation describes us, the followers of Christ, as witnesses (martyrs), as well as “overcomers/victors”.*

帖撒羅尼迦前書中的描述 *(4:13-18),* 並非指基督徒在大災難之前或之後被提，而是說明在主耶穌再來進行最後的審判時，在地上的聖徒要一同被提到天上。認為災前或災後被提的人都認為基督要與聖徒在地上作王一千年 (啟示錄20:4-5, 『4我又看見幾個寶座，也有坐在上面的，並有審判的權柄賜給他們，我又看見那些因為給耶穌作見證，並為神之道被斬者的靈魂，和那沒有拜過獸與獸像，也沒有在額上和手上受過他印記之人的靈魂，他們都復活了，與基督一同作王一千年。5這是頭一次的復活。其餘的死人還沒有復活，直等那一千年完了。』做字義上的解釋literal interpretation)；之後撒旦還要被放出來，耶穌基督還要再回天上；等一段時間的爭戰之後再回來拯救聖徒，進行最後的審判。這和主耶穌所說的又有衝突。

保羅描述主再來，只有一次，沒有兩次：『51我如今把一件奧秘的事告訴你們，我們不是都要睡覺，乃是都要改變，52就在一霎時，眨眼之間，號筒末次吹響的時候，因號筒要響，死人要復活成為不朽壞的，我們也要改變。53這必朽壞的，總要變成不朽壞的，〔變成原文作穿下同〕這必死的，總要變成不死的。54這必朽壞既變成不朽壞的，這必死的，既變成不死的，那時經上所記，死被得勝吞滅的話就應驗了。』(林前15:51-54)

*It is clear to us that the Revelation does not provide supports to the idea of “rapture”, nor does the church history proves the rapture of saints before the severe prosecution. On the contrary, we have records of saints suffering through intense prosecution for their faith throughout the church history.*

* ***The Two Witnesses***

啟示錄 11:3我要使我那兩個見證人，穿著毛衣，傳道一千二百六十天。4他們就是那兩棵橄欖樹，兩個燈臺，立在世界之主面前的…7他們作完見證的時候，那從無底坑裡上來的獸，必與他們交戰，並且得勝，把他們殺了。8他們的屍首就倒在大城裡的街上，這城按著靈意叫所多瑪，又叫埃及，就是他們的主釘十字架之處…11過了這三天半，有生氣從神那裡進入他們裡面，他們就站起來，看見他們的人甚是害怕。12兩位先知聽見有大聲音從天上來，對他們說：上到這裡來。他們就駕著雲上了天，他們的仇敵也看見了。

*John uses the special terms of* “四十二個月；一千二百六十天” *to describe a horrendous event to come – not how long it will last, but* ***how bad it will be.*** 比較：但以理書 『7:25他必向至高者說誇大的話，必折磨至高者的聖民，必想改變節期，和律法，聖民必交付他手一載，二載，半載。26然而審判者必坐著行審判，他的權柄必被奪去，毀壞，滅絕，一直到底。27國度，權柄，和天下諸國的大權，必賜給至高者的聖民，他的國是永遠的，一切掌權的都必事奉他，順從他。』

解讀的關鍵在於釋義『四十二個月的踐踏』；『傳道1,260天』；『屍首倒在大城裡三天半』。這些時間段都是在描述一段災難的時期。他們不是在敘述大災難的時間長度，而是在敘述大災難的實際情況。回顧但以理書所敘述的背景 (7:25)，這段時間內，褻瀆與狂傲的超級大國要『他必向至高者說誇大的話，必折磨至高者的聖民，必想改變節期，和律法。』

約翰看到在這段時間，一隻獸與上帝的百姓爭戰，並且戰勝他們有四十二個月之久。(13:5) 他又看到有一個婦女(象徵上帝的百姓)飽受龍的威脅，卻在曠野蒙上帝的保守與餵養 1,260天 (12:6)

這些都明顯刻劃出：(1) 現階段就是災難與爭戰的時代；(2) 上帝會保護，維持，餵養祂的百姓/屬祂的人，即便表面上看起來不是如此。

所以我們這些跟隨羔羊的人確實會經歷苦難與爭戰，並在其中領受基督的餵養與引導。跟隨羔羊，就是效法希伯來書所列信心的偉人 – 那些如同雲彩般圍繞著我們的見證人。他們如同亞伯，『雖然死了，卻因這信仍然說話。』

* 從他們的穿著來看，這兩個見證人是傳悔改之道的人 (11:3)
* 從他們的服事來看，他們是為神倡言的先知 (11:3, 10)；他們如同摩西，以利亞。
* 他們靠主的靈行事 (11:4) 參考撒迦利亞書的背景
* 如同基督，他們死於主釘十架之處 (11:8)
* 他們復活了(11:11)
* 他們升天了 (11:12) 『他們就駕著雲上了天，他們的仇敵也看見了。』

所以兩個見證人似乎就是描述所有忠心跟隨羔羊的人。

啟示錄並非在肯定教會等於羔羊的跟隨者。而是在於指出：教會的成員應該是一群跟隨羔羊的人。

* 啟示錄在呼喚，要教會從巴比倫中分別出來：『 2他大聲喊著說：巴比倫大城傾倒了，傾倒了，成了鬼魔的住處，和各樣污穢之靈的巢穴，〔或作牢獄下同〕並各樣污穢可憎之雀鳥的巢穴。3因為列國都被他邪淫大怒的酒傾倒了，地上的君王與他行淫，地上的客商，因他奢華太過就發了財。4我又聽見從天上有聲音說：我的民哪，你們要從那城出來，免得與他一同有罪，受他所受的災殃。』(18:2-4)

***The Dragon***龍

* 約12:31現在這世界受審判，這世界的王要被趕出去。
* 弗2:2那時，你們在其中行事為人隨從今世的風俗，順服『空中掌權者的首領』，就是『現今在悖逆之子心中運行的邪靈。』
* 弗6:12因我們並不是與屬血氣的爭戰，乃是與那些執政的，掌權的，管轄這幽暗世界的，以及天空屬靈氣的惡魔爭戰。〔兩爭戰原文都作摔跤〕
* 啟示錄第11章充分地描述了羔羊的跟隨者，上帝的子民與獸之間的爭戰。『死亡』成為跟隨的終極代價。

龍的挫敗結局

啟示錄 12:9大龍就是那古蛇，名叫魔鬼，又叫撒但，是迷惑普天下的，他被摔在地上，他的使者也一同被摔下去。10我聽見在天上有大聲音說：我神的救恩，能力，國度，並他基督的權柄，現在都來到了，因為那在我們神面前晝夜控告我們弟兄的，已經被摔下去了。11弟兄勝過他，是因羔羊的血，和自己所見證的道，他們雖至於死，也不愛惜性命。

儘管如此，魔鬼仍然要做最後的掙扎，繼續逼迫羔羊的跟隨者與見證人：『 12所以諸天和住在其中的，你們都快樂罷，只是地與海有禍了，因為魔鬼知道自己的時候不多，就氣忿忿的下到你們那裡去了。13龍見自己被摔在地上，就逼迫那生男孩子的婦人…17龍向婦人發怒，去與他其餘的兒女爭戰，這兒女就是那守神誡命，為耶穌作見證的。那時龍就站在海邊的沙上。』(12:12-13, 17)

『啟示錄12:16地卻幫助婦人，開口吞了從龍口吐出來的水。〔原文作河〕』比較以色列人在曠野的時候，那些挑戰摩西的可拉黨人被地開口吞沒。『31摩西剛說完了這一切話，他們腳下的地就開了口，32把他們和他們的家眷，並一切屬可拉的人丁，財物，都吞下去。33這樣，他們和一切屬他們的，都活活地墜落陰間，地口在他們上頭照舊合閉，他們就從會中滅亡。』(民數記16:31-33)

這段敘述似乎把我們帶回伊甸園：夏娃失敗之後，上帝預言亞當的後裔與蛇的後裔要彼此為敵，女人的後裔要摧毀蛇後裔的頭。蛇的後裔要傷女人後裔的腳跟。這是基督福音中的一個嚴肅的信息。如同彼得所說的， 『8務要謹守，儆醒，因為你們的仇敵魔鬼，如同吼叫的獅子，遍地游行，尋找可吞吃的人。9你們要用堅固的信心抵擋他，因為知道你們在世上的眾弟兄，也是經歷這樣的苦難。10那賜諸般恩典的神，曾在基督裡召你們，得享他永遠的榮耀，等你們暫受苦難之後，必要親自成全你們，堅固你們，賜力量給你們。』(彼前5:8-10)

從海中來的獸與從陸上來的獸 ***Monsters from the Sea and the Land***

但以理就曾經提到從海中來的四個獸：『 2但以理說：我夜裡見異象，看見天的四風陡起，颳在大海之上。3有四個大獸從海中上來，形狀各有不同…』但7:2-3

這四獸代表當時歷史中地上最有權柄的四個政權：巴比倫，波斯瑪代，希臘，與羅馬；因此象徵著地上邪惡的政治，軍事，社會，經濟，和宗教系統。

羅馬又彷彿是巴比倫/波斯瑪代/希臘從死裡復活，集先前邪惡作為之大成：狂傲又褻瀆神(強迫老百姓稱該撒為神)。

* 羅馬在新約聖經中，總是邪惡勢力的代表；不知道今天的意大利人心裡的滋味如何！

*To be cowed and overawed awed by the beast is to succumb to the blasphemous claims of that which is not God. Alternatively, to refuse to worship the beast is to experience its anger and fierce hostility, for "it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them" (13:7).*

*This is not a message about what might happen in the future. It is a message about what is happening, has always happened, and will continue to happen.* ***Revelation depicts as a time of conflict the age in which we live, the age all of Christ's disciples have always lived in****. It is the time of the dragon's fury and the era of the beast's rule.*

*As Revelation puts it, "Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints" (13:9-10).*

從約翰的描述來看這獸似乎也具備死裡復活的能力或經歷；然而這就是這獸可怕的地方 – 牠能欺騙地上的人，誤導他們相信牠能從死裡復活，如同基督一樣 – 這獸很可能是指那些不斷敗部復活的邪惡政府，意識形態，政治/經濟/社會理念與制度；似乎已經被消滅，否定，排斥；卻又奪得政權，再次復興。