



Recapitulation

“Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this” (1:19).

Recapitulation: an act or instance of [summarizing](#) and [restating](#) the main points of something.

It is important for us to understand the structure of the book of Revelation. 1:19 gives us an idea of the structure. He will receive visions of the way things are and what is going to take place soon.

Of course, seeing the things that are involve seeing them at a spiritual level to understand what is happening behind the scenes.

Chronological?

“Then I saw” used 15 times in Revelation (1:12; 5:1; 7:2; 8:2; 10:1; 13:11; 14:6; 15:1; 19:11; 19:17; 20:1; 20:4; 21:1).

The visions, while sequentially given (“then I saw”), do not necessitate that what is seen is in a chronological sequence.

Revelation 1:18 portrays Christ as *having died and raised again*.

Revelation 12:1-5 portrays the *birth* of Christ.

Therefore, the content of the visions is not *de facto* chronological.

There is a general assumption, sometimes explicit, that the visions of Revelation are chronological. Describing history unfolding from beginning to end (or near the end to the end).

Storytellers use flashback or replay to either give prior context or describe the same events from a different perspective.

E.g., You are going to watch a movie chronologically, but that doesn't mean that each scene you see is chronological (e.g., Dunkirk).

Other examples:

The “beast” is seen at war with the saints in chapter 11 but “emerges” in chapter 13.

“Babylon” is described in her glory in ch. 17 but is earlier declared to have already fallen (14:8; 16:19).

Repeated or Recapitulated Judgment?

Revelation 6:12-14 describes uses decreation language beginning with a great earthquake and final judgment.

Revelation 11:15-19 describes a final judgment with lightning, earthquake, and heavy hail.

Revelation 16:17-21 describes a final judgment with lightning, earthquake, and hail.

Are the climatic judgments chronological (one following after the other) or cyclical (describing the same events from another point of view)?

Rev 6 describes the opening of the last seals.

Rev 11 describes the blowing of the last trumpet.

Rev 16 describes the pouring of the last bowls.

How many final judgments are there? The descriptions are so close? Is this to be read chronologically or cyclically?

How Many *Last Battles* Are There?

Revelation 16:14-16 describes the battle of Armageddon where the kings of the whole world assemble for battle but are destroyed.

Revelation 19:17-21 describes a conflict where the kings of the earth assemble for battle but are destroyed.

Revelation 20:7-10 describes a situation where the kings from the four corners of the earth assemble for battle but are destroyed.

How many last battles are there? How many battles of Armageddon with language nearly identical? How many times are all the kings of the earth judged by God?

This is not even including God's judgment and destruction of Babylon.

Trumpet and Bowl Parallels?

1. The first of each affects the earth (8:7; 16:2).
2. The second of each affects the sea (8:8; 16:3).
3. The third of each affects the rivers (8:10; 16:4).
4. The fourth of each affects heavenly bodies (8:12; 16:8).
5. The fifth of each affects men (9:1; 16:10).
6. The sixth of each affects the Euphrates (9:13; 16:12).
7. The seventh of each is the end (11:15; 16:17).

This does not mean that the trumpets and bowls are the same as there are differences between them. The bowls are called the seven last plagues (15:1) which sounds like they have come after the other plagues. But this observation must be taken into consideration for any interpreter of Revelation.

The Millenium

Revelation 19 ends with the beast and false prophet being thrown into the sea (v. 20) and armies of the earth were slain (v. 21).

Revelation 20:1 begins by saying, “Then I saw...”

Is this new vision recapitulating past events or describing a chronological sequence?

Why does the cyclical structure matter? It can challenge assumptions about the chronological order and it is important for areas of interpretive challenges... like the millennium.

Futurists believe that Revelation 19 describes the Second Coming. Then the millennium is AFTER the second coming.

The Millenium

Reasons why Revelation 20 may not *follow* the Second Coming:

1. Satan is restrained from deceiving the nations (v. 3) *who were all destroyed* in 19:21.
2. John sees “the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God” (v. 4) who are with Christ in Revelation 6:9-11.
3. Satan is thrown down in Revelation 12:9 as the kingdom of God and the reign of Christ began (12:10).

Futurists assume that Revelation 20 is chronologically after Revelation 19.

#2. In other words, these souls are not future (after the Second Coming) but were past in Revelation 6 (during the Tribulation).

#3. The millennium is the time where Christ reigns, which Revelation 12 puts at his first coming. In other words, we are in the millennium now. It is not literally 1000 years, but 10x10x10, thrice great, (along with all the other symbols of this text).

The binding of Satan here is very particular. That he would not deceive the nations any longer (as he did previously in the Old Covenant).

We'll discuss the millennium later, but it is important to see that chronological reading can lead to assumptions that are not necessarily true.

Outline

1. Christ's messages to the *seven churches* (ch. 1-3).
2. Revelation of heavenly realities in which the Lamb is found worthy to open the *seven seals* (4:1-8:1).
3. From God's holy presence emerge seven angels to blow the *seven trumpets* (8:2-11:19).
4. Visions portraying the *great conflict* between Christ and Satan (ch. 12-14).
5. Seven angels come from God's heavenly temple with the *seven bowls* that contain God's wrath (ch. 15-16).

Here is a basic outline of the book. There are disagreements here as the cycles are not perfectly parallel.

#2 The seals bring us to the end, final judgment and victory of the saints. These seals are God's covenant curses upon Israel.

#3 The trumpets bring us to the end, final judgment and victory of the saints. The same judgment as the seals but a heightening of their destruction.

#4 Chapter 14 ends with a final judgment and victory of the saints.

#5 Chapter 16 ends with a final judgment and victory of the saints. The seven bowls describe the same judgment as the seals and trumpets but heightened again.

Outline

6. The next cycle depicts the *destruction of Babylon* (ch. 17-18). Two cities are depicted: “Babylon” and the “New Jerusalem.” In a similar way there are two women: the “whore” and the “bride.”
7. The *destruction of the beast and false prophet* (ch. 19).
8. The *destruction of Satan* and final judgment (ch. 20).
9. Revelation concludes with a vision depicting the *glorification of the New Jerusalem*, the church (ch. 21-22).

#6 chapter 18 (into 19) ends with the final judgment and vindication of the saints (marriage supper of the lamb)

#7 chapter 19 ends with final judgment and vindication of the saints.

#8 chapter 20 ends with the final judgment and vindication of the saints.

“And then I saw...”

Focus of God’s wrath upon the city against God, the beast (Rome/Nero) and false prophet (Judaism), and finally the dragon (Satan) himself. A cyclical view of the downfall of God’s enemies one by one but all happening at the same time.

Same structure (recapitulation) is seen in the book of Daniel.



The Date of Revelation

Was it written in AD 64-68 or AD 90-96?

Two Major Opinions

The book of Revelation is set in the midst of tribulation (1:9) as Christians are suffering persecution.

There were ten emperors who are believed to have persecuted Christians. Only two of them did so within the lifetime of John.

Nero, who reigned from AD 54 to 68.

Domitian, who reigned from AD 81 to 96.

The late date is currently the most popular among scholars.

Evidence for the Early Date

1. The temple is still standing (11:1-2) and there is tension between the church and the Jews (2:9; 3:9).
2. The number of the beast (13:18) using gematria is Nero.
3. The sixth king or emperor in Revelation 17:10 is Nero.
4. The Muratorian Canon (a list of New Testament books) dated to 170 says, "Apostle Paul himself, following the example of his predecessor John, writes by name to only seven churches."

#1 inclines toward a pre 70AD date although the temple is visionary and the Jews still did persecute Christians after the destruction of the temple.

#4 If Paul is following John's example, then Revelation is written before Paul's death in 67 AD.

Evidence for the Early Date

5. Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) describes the later years of John's life when he returned from Patmos to Ephesus after the death of "the tyrant." He describes John's very active physical life which does not fit with a 100 year old man.
6. Other New Testament books possibly cite Revelation (Jas 1:12; 2 Peter 3:13).

#5. Clement describes John riding on horseback in hot pursuit of a young bandit who was a lapsed Christian.

If Nero is "the tyrant" then John was on Patmos during Nero's reign and that is when he wrote Revelation.

#6. James speaks of "the crown of life which the Lord has promised" to those who endure testing. The closest match to the Lord saying this is Revelation 2:10.

Also, 2 Peter 3:13 speaks of "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" could be from Isaiah 65 however, Isaiah doesn't mention righteousness but Revelation 21 does.

#7. It was the most popular opinion in the 19th century.

Evidence for the Late Date

1. The “return of Nero” in 13:3 and the mortal wound now healed is said to refer to the *Nero Redivivus* myth. As such, Domitian is seen as the “second Nero.”
2. The extent of persecution. Nero’s persecution was mostly contained to Rome. Domitian’s persecution was said to extend much further.
3. Decline in the churches indicates that much time has passed.
4. The existence of the church in Smyrna.
5. The prosperity of Laodicea.

#1 This assumes that John believed this myth. Alternatively, the “beast” in 13:3 could be referring to Rome corporately since after Nero’s death it appeared that the empire was in complete chaos and disarray. The war with the Jews was called off and generals called home to deal with the unrest. It seemed as if the empire was collapsing but it did revive and come back to its vigor and strength.

#2. In response, the letters to the churches tell varying degrees of persecution. Some are not facing it at all but are lukewarm. A wide persecution may be assumed here rather than known.

In addition, we lack evidence in either cases of how widespread the persecution was. If Christians are being persecuted in Rome this could spread, not by imperial decree, but by imitation to other regions.

#3. Churches can decline quite rapidly. Just look at Corinth and the letter to that church between Paul’s visits.

#4. Some believe the church in Smyrna did not exist in Paul’s lifetime due to a letter from Polycarp to the Philippians where he said, “Among you the blessed Paul labored, who are praised in the beginning of his epistle. For concerning you he boasts in all the churches who then alone had known the Lord, for we had not yet known him” (Letter the Philippians, 11:3). Paul lived until AD 67 but wrote Philippians before AD 63 allowing time for the church in Smyrna to come into existence before AD 68.

#5. This city was destroyed in an earthquake in AD 60 or 61 and required many

years to rebuild. But the church is said to be “wealthy, and have need of nothing” (3:17). However, their arrogance could be related to how quickly the city was rebuilt.

Evidence for the Late Date

6. The testimony of Irenaeus:

“Now since this is so, and since this number [666] is found in all the good and ancient copies, and since those who have seen John face to face testify, and reason teaches us that the number of the name of the beast appears according to the numeration of the Greeks by the letters in it... We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign.”

This is the one piece of evidence that tips most modern scholars to favor the later date.

The question is: what was seen? Was it the visions (late date), or was it John?

Reasons for the early date:

1. Irenaeus refers to “ancient copies” but refers to Domitian’s reign as “almost in our day”!
2. The phrase “that was seen” may be a corruption due to the poor condition of the manuscript. It could have read, “He was seen”