

I, John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience *which are in Jesus*, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Rev. 1:9)

AUTHOR: The apostle John

DATE:
64-68 AD **OR** 91-96 AD
(we'll deal with this in detail later)

RECIPIENTS:
The 7 churches of Asia
(Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)



IMPORTANT!!!!



When trying to understand the book of Revelation, we need to remember a few things:

1. The book was **obviously** understood by the people it was written to.
2. It was written in language they could understand.
3. It was written using symbols they could understand.
4. It was written to be useful to them (that doesn't mean it isn't useful for us, but it was definitely useful to them).

THE IDEALIST VIEWPOINT

(The Philosophy Of History view)

- ▶ Initially presented by Origen (185 -254 AD)
- ▶ No ties to specific historical events
- ▶ “Revelation is a theological poem presenting the ageless struggle between the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness. It is a philosophy of history wherein Christian forces are continuously meeting and conquering the demonic forces of evil.” – Robert Mounce

PROS:

- No need to harmonize with specific historical events
- Applicable for all ages and relevant for all periods of church history

CONS:

- John says the events are “shortly to come to pass” (Rev 1:1)
- Absolutely no way for first-century Christians to understand the book.
- It leaves interpretations at the whim of culture and social views of whatever time period the readers are in.

The Futurist View (The Pre-Millennial View)

- ▶ The book reveals the events that will happen just before Jesus' return
- ▶ Teaches that Jesus will establish a "Millennial Kingdom" followed by a short-lived attack by Satan and his followers.
- ▶ The Futurist view takes a literal or semi-literal approach to Revelation.
- ▶ Most popularly seen through the Tim LaHaye **Left Behind** series.

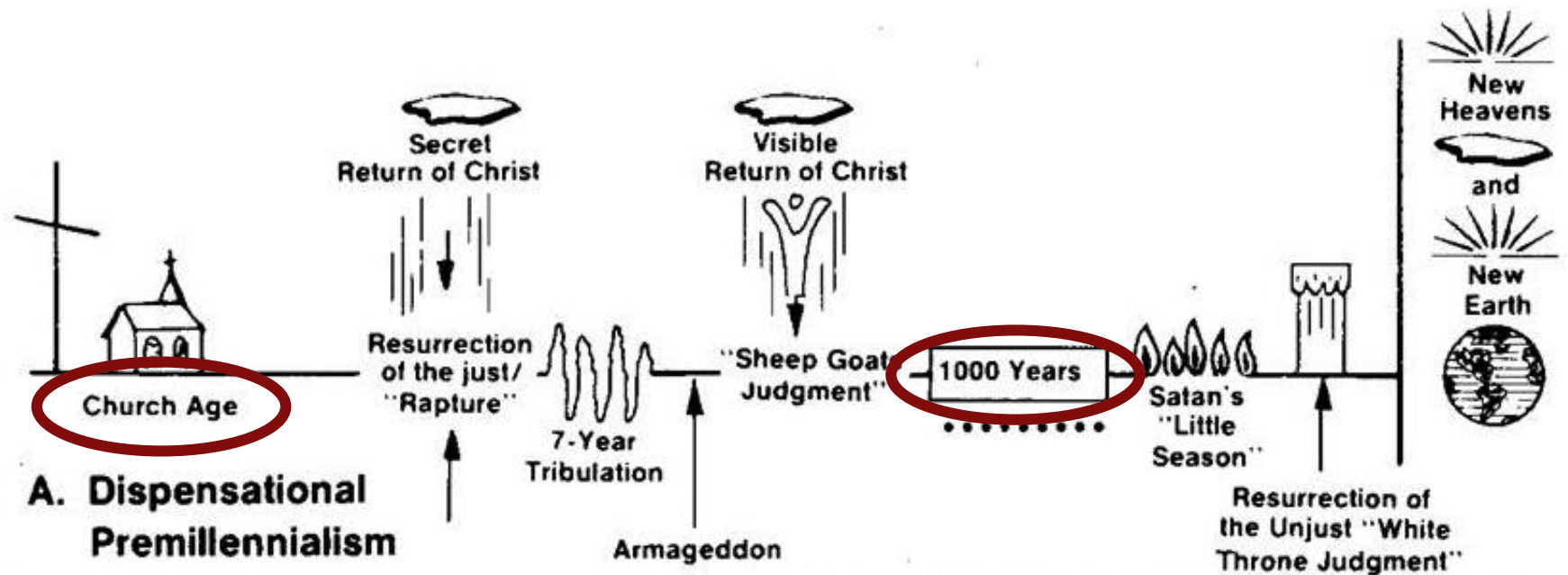
PROS:

- Brings great encouragement to those expecting the end soon
- Viewed by some to be easier to understand because most of the language can be viewed literally using the futurist view.

CONS:

- John says the events are "shortly to come to pass" (Rev 1:1)
- Where is the "blessing" for the first-century readers (Rev 1:3)?
- How could you know when you are in the period just before Christ's return?
- John specifically says the writing isn't literal (Rev 1:1).

Dispensational Pre-Millennialism



The dispensationalist divides the history of mankind into **seven distinct periods** or dispensations, and teaches that God deals with the human race during each period according to a different principle: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, kingdom. Also, this view insists that the Church will be removed from the earth before the great tribulation. This latter view, espoused by John N. Darby in England about 1830, and disseminated widely in this country by the Scofield Reference Bible, is really the unique phenomenon called American Premillennialism. It is not taught in the Bible but in the Scofield Reference Bible.

The Continuous History View

- ▶ The book reveals the events that will happen from John's day until the end of time.
- ▶ This view was made popular during the Reformation movement in the 1500's
- ▶ Continuous History sees within Revelation all the events of Western history – Catholic church, Reformation, formation of America, Hitler, etc.

PROS:

- A sense of excitement of seeing modern history within the ancient pages.
- Would work as a great predictor for future events and cataclysms.

CONS:

- John says the events are “shortly to come to pass” (Rev 1:1)
- How could you possibly understand the book in the first-century?
- Creates a very speculative and uncertain system for interpreting the book.
- Culture dictates the interpretation.

The Full-Preterist View

(Often referred to as “early date” view)

- ▶ The full-preterist position holds that the book was written for the people of John's day and was **completely** fulfilled in that general period.
- ▶ Book centers around the destruction of Jerusalem and is fulfilled in that event in 70 AD.
- ▶ There are multiple preterist viewpoints, but they all center around complete fulfillment of the book of Revelation.

PROS:

- Book would certainly “shortly come to pass” and be a blessing to first-century readers
- Fits nicely with prophecy found in Matt. 24

CONS:

- Entire argument rest on book being written before 70 AD when earliest historians say it wasn't.
- Why is it written to churches in Asia, primarily Gentile congregations in Gentile controlled cities, when it deals with a persecution centering around Jerusalem?
- Internal evidence points to later dating and a world-wide struggle with Roman emperor worship.

The Historical Background View

(Sometimes referred to as “late date” view)

- ▶ The historical background view advocates seeing Revelation as written for the people of that day and set in a definite historical background.
- ▶ Book deals with persecutions of second and third century church, specifically Roman persecution
- ▶ This view leaves room for some events to not yet be fulfilled, but the context of the book must make it clear that those events are still far off.

PROS:

- Book would certainly “shortly come to pass” and be a blessing to first-century readers
- It allows a concrete interpretation of the book without locking in to some pre-determined philosophy.
- Follows the same pattern as other apocalyptic books.

CONS:

- Not as popular as the futurist view
- Doesn't answer specifics of the imagery, which frustrates some students.



NERO
Oct.
13, 54
AD –
Jun. 9,
68 AD

**NERO LAID
BLAME FOR
ROMAN FIRE
ON
CHRISTIANS**



VESPASIAN
Jul. 1, 69
AD – Jun.
24, 79 AD



GALBA
Jun. 8,
68 AD –
Jan. 15,
69 AD



TITUS
Jun. 24,
79 AD –
Sept. 13,
81 AD



OTHO
Jan. 15,
69 AD –
Apr. 16,
69 AD

**CIVIL
WAR**



DOMITIAN
Sept. 14,
81 AD –
Sept. 18,
96 AD

**DOMITIAN
RENEWED
NERO'S
EFFORTS TO
PERSECUTE
CHRISTIANS**



VITELLIUS
Apr. 17,
69 AD –
Dec. 20,
69 AD

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. Nero's persecution is historically considered **localized** to Rome and the surrounding provinces.
2. Nero's persecution was **short-lived** (roughly two years) followed by a return to previous relations.
3. Domitian is known for beginning the **religious attack** on Christians over the Roman cultus.
4. **Early writers** wrote of John being imprisoned during Domitian's reign.
 1. Irenaeus (120-202AD)
 2. Clement (193AD) quoted by Eusebius
 3. Victorinus (303AD)

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

1. The letter is written to Gentile Christians in Asia that were "**companions**" in the tribulation.
2. All biblical evidence points toward **the Jews holding no sway** on Roman powers outside of Judea (Acts 18:12-17)
3. The Ephesian church seemed to have **changed considerably** by the time of Revelation's writing
4. Laodicea has **not a single commendation** in Revelation compared to Col 4:13's status.
5. The Beast of Romans 13 is decidedly the Roman empire and the false prophet supports **that beastly empire.**



DANIEL 2 VISION

BABYLON
(Head of Gold)
606-538 BC

Medo-Persia
(Chest & Arms Of Silver)
538-331 BC

Greece
(Belly & Thighs Of Brass)
331-168 BC

Rome
(Legs of Iron
Feet Mixed With Clay)
168 BC – 476 AD

DANIEL 7



A lion with eagle's wings



A bear with three ribs in it's mouth



A leopard with four wings and four heads



A ten-horned beast unlike the others. Iron teeth, a boasting horn, and dreadfully terrifying.

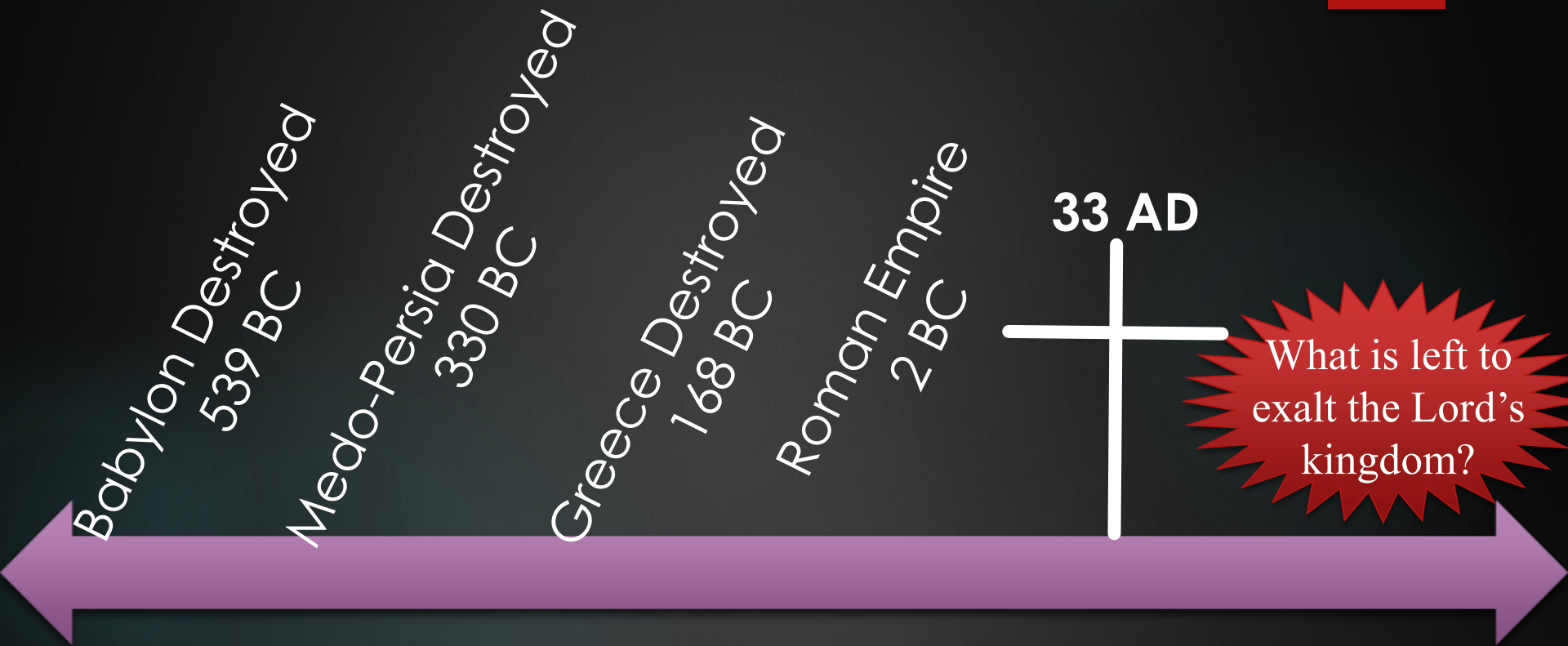
Compare this beast to Rev. 13!

And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Dan. 2:44)

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, that shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. (Dan. 7:17-18)

**THIS IS WHAT THE BOOK OF REVELATION
IS ABOUT!!!**

but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. (Dan. 2:44)



But in the latter days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of Jehovah's house **shall be established on the top of the mountains**, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow unto it. (Micah 4:1)

THE THEME & PURPOSE OF REVELATION

The grand theme of Revelation is that of war and **conflict between good and evil** resulting in victory for the righteous and defeat for the wicked. The conflict is spiritual, not physical or military. The message of the book is **assurance of victory and triumph**.

Never in the history of the world had the church been more widely and systematically persecuted than it was under Roman rule. If the church can survive that persecution, it must be from God.

But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. (Acts 5:34-39)

God's Kingdom cannot be overthrown, no matter how bleak it might seem! And **no matter how it looks**, Christ's church will be victorious.

What areas does the church seem victorious in?

- Education?
- Science?
- Entertainment?
- Culture?