

# READING REVELATION

## A READING GUIDE

**1:1-11**      **Opening address to the audience**  
1:4-7      with a literary address to the  
seven churches

### The Letter Scroll

**1:12-3:22**      **The vision: “in the spirit of the Lord’s Day”**  
Jesus and his seven letters

### The Sealed Scroll

**4-11**      **The heavenly scroll — a closed book**  
4      The heavenly liturgy of creation  
5      and redemption  
6-7      Unsealing the scroll  
8-11      Silence . . . Trumpets  
Announcement: the kingdom of the world has become  
the kingdom of our Lord  
Redemption of the heavenly liturgy

### The Open Scroll

**12-22**      **The scroll of the heavens — an open book**  
*(Scroll was introduced in 10:1-11 — an intercalation)*  
12-14      The first sign in heaven: a woman pursued  
12      Eve/Israel/Messiah/Christ  
13      Satan/Rome  
14      Lamb/Judgment  
15-16      The second sign in heaven: 7 final plagues  
17-18      The vision of the prostitute  
19:1-22:5      with scenes of judgment  
21:9-22:5      The vision of the bride  
21:22-22:5      with scenes of restoration

**22:6-20**      **Closing address to the audience**  
22:21      with a literary farewell to the churches

# READING REVELATION

## NUMBERS

- 3** stands for the spiritual world  
**4** stands for the created order  
**6** stands for imperfection, false divinity (*lack of fullness = 7*)  
**7** stands for perfection (*also sum of 3 & 4*)  
**10** stands for totality (*including multiples: 1000 days, 144,000 people, etc.*)  
**12** stands for Ancient Israel, as the people of God (*also a product of 3 & 4*)  
*fractions:*  
 $\frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{2}$  stands for limited scope of time  
 $3\frac{1}{2}$  stands for limited time (*half of fullness = 7*)

## SYMBOLS

## COLORS

- WHITE** the color of victory (*not simply purity*)  
**RED** the color of blood, violent power, war and strife  
**PURPLE** the color of decadence/corruption, empire, imperial evil  
**BLACK** the color of famine, suffering, and disaster  
**PALE** the color of death (*grey-yellow, the color of rotting meat*)  
**GOLD** the color of incorruptible wealth, royalty, actual or false divinity

## ANIMALS

- BEASTS** stands for the spiritual world  
**LAMB** stands for the created order  
**LION** stands for perfection (*also sum of 3 & 4*)  
**EAGLE/**  
**OXEN** stands for the superior animals of their kind  
**horns** points to power and thus to rulers  
**heads** points to multiple rulers

## JOHN'S OWN INTPRETED SYMBOLS

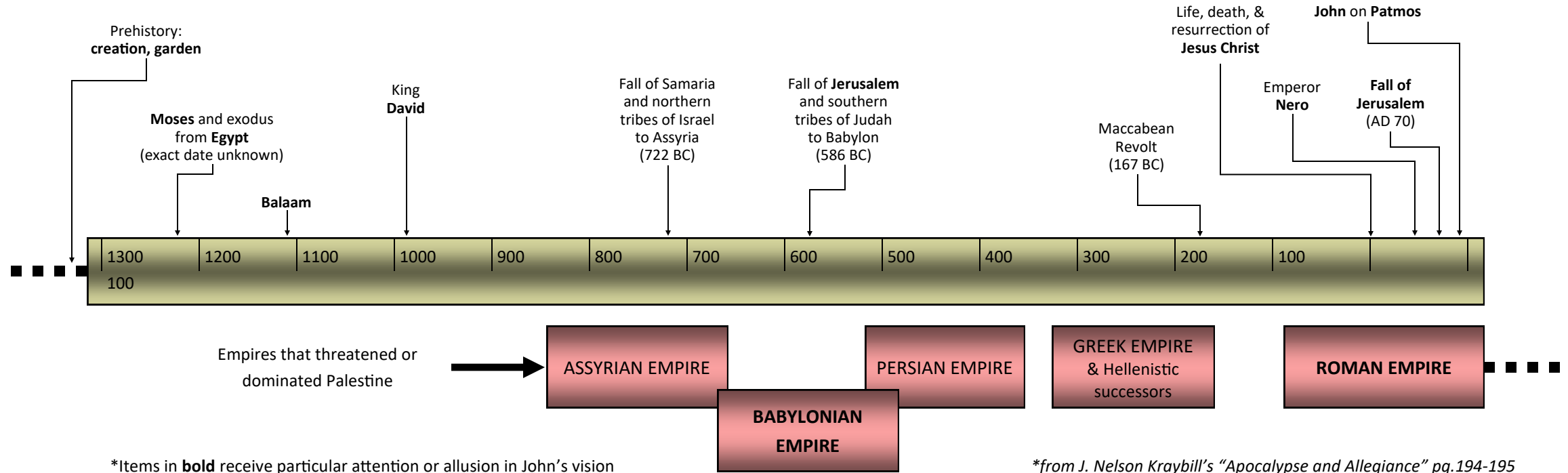
Reference	Symbol	Interpretation Given
1:8	Alpha/Omega	Who is/was/is to come
1:13	7 Stars/Lamps	Angels/Churches
8:3	Angel with censer	Prayers of the saints
10:1-11	Little open book	Must prophesy again
11:7	Great city/Sodom	Where Lord was crucified
13:6	God's Tabernacle	Those dwelling on earth
13:18	666	Number of (a) man
14:14-20	Winepress	Wrath of God
17:9-15	7 Heads, 10 Horns	7 Mountains/kings, 10 kings
18:21	Angel with millstone	Babylon cast down
19:11-16	One on a white horse	Word of God

SEVEN LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

*\*from Michael J. Gorman’s “Reading Revelation Responsibly” pg.88-90*

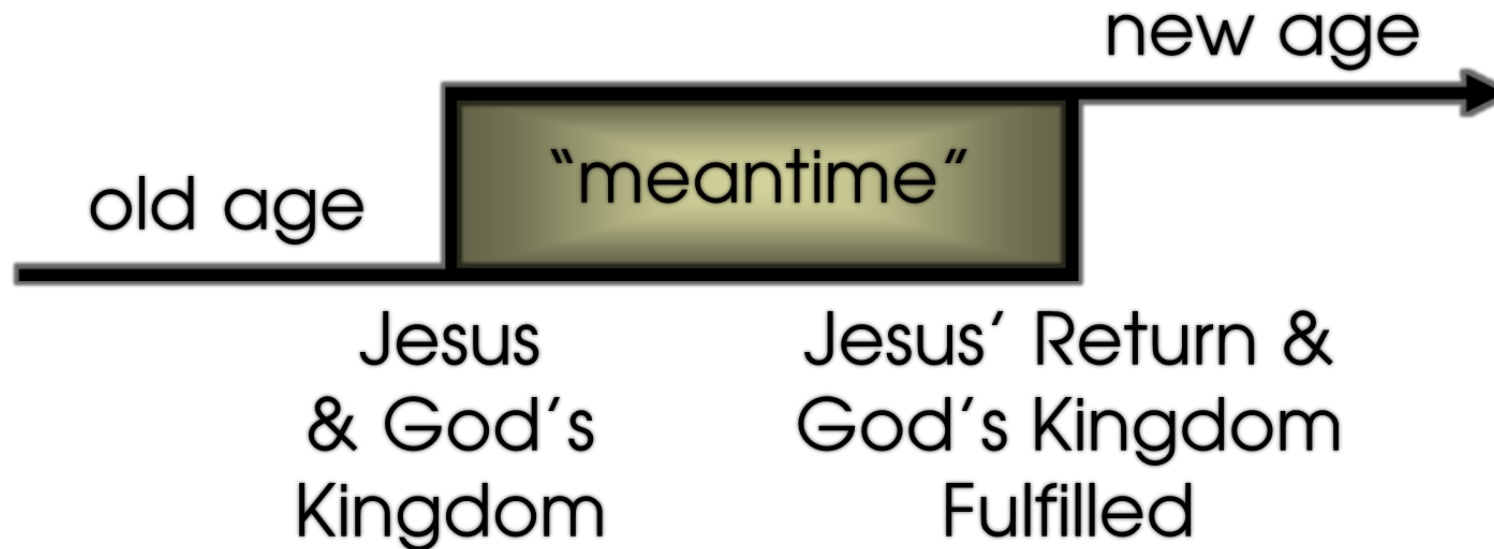
Church (Text)	Christ	Commendation	Condemnation	Challenge: Exhortation/Warning	Eschatological Promise to Faithful
Ephesus (2:1-7)	Holds 7 stars, walks among 7 lamp stands (see 1:13, 16)	Works, toil, endurance, intolerance of evildoers, testing false apostles, suffering without growing weary; hatred of Nicolaitans’ work	Abandoned initial love	Remember from where fallen; repent; do works as previously. Otherwise: removal of lampstand	Eat from tree of life (see 22:2, 14, 19; Gen. 2:9; 3:22)
Smyrna (2:8-11)	First and last; was dead and came to life (see 1:8, 17)	Affliction, poverty, slander from those who claim to be Jews	NONE	Don’t fear impending suffering; some to be jailed; 10 days of affliction. Be faithful unto death.	Crown of life, escape from second death (see 20:6, 14; 21:8)
Pergamum (2:12-17)	Has shape two-edged sword (see 1:16)	Holding fast to Name in city of Satan’s throne, even with martyrdom of Antipas	Some fellow Balaam in the way of idolatry/sexual immorality (=Nicolaitans)	Repent. Otherwise: Christ will come to make war against followers of Balaam/Nicolaitans	Hidden manna, white stone with a new name (see 22:4)
Thyatira (2:18-29)	Son of God (see 1:6) with eyes like flame & feet like bronze (see 1:14-15); searches mind & hearts, rewards according to works	Works: love, faith, service, endurance; recent works greater than earlier ones	Tolerance of Jezebel, false prophet of idolatry/sexual immorality (teaching= “deep things of Satan”); refusal to repent	Distress to adulterers, unless they repent; death to children of Jezebel; others: hold fast	Authority over nations to rule them (see Ps. 2:8-9), morning star (see 22:16)
Sardis (3:1-6)	Has 7 spirits of God and 7 stars (see 1:4, 16)	[Follows censure:] a few have not soiled clothes but walk with Jesus in white and are worthy	Name/reputation of being alive, but really dead; works imperfect or incomplete	Wake up, strengthen what remains at point of death; remember, obey, repent; otherwise: Christ to come like thief	Clothed like faithful in white robes; Christ will not blot out name from book of life (21:27) but will confess it before Father and angels (cf. 21:7)
Philadelphia (3:7-13)	Holy one, true one, who has keys of David, who opens & shuts, & whose action cannot be reversed	Works; kept Christ’s word about endurance and have not denied his name despite having little power	NONE	Synagogue of Satan (= false Jews) will bow before them and learn Christ loves them; protection from coming universal trial; hold fast	Christ will make them permanent pillar in temple of God (cf. 21:22), will write God’s name on them, the name of the new Jerusalem (see 21:2, 10) and Christ’s own new name
Laodicea (3:14-22)	The “Amen,” the faithful & true witness (see 1:5); origin/ beginning of God’s creation	NONE	Neither cold nor hot in works, but lukewarm; not rich but wretched, poor, blind, naked, pitied	Wishes them to be cold or hot; since they are not: about to be spit from mouth; buy from Christ gold, white robes, eye salve; reproof and discipline of beloved; be earnest, repent; Christ knocks at the door, will enter and eat with anyone who opens	A place with Christ on his throne

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS, PEOPLE, & EMPIRES



*\*from J. Nelson Kraybill's "Apocalypse and Allegiance" pg.194-195*

## THE OVERLAP OF AGES



*\*It is important to note that the New Testament writers present the "new age" (or "eternal life") as beginning with the life/ministry of Jesus. This "breaking in" of God's kingdom into the world is also referred to as the "final age," "last days," or in more modern language, the "end times."*

*To put it clearly: we are currently living in the "end times;" that is, at least, the "end times" as the New Testament writers understood it and believed they were living in as well when they wrote about it 1900 years ago.*