Four Schools of Interpretation

Four approaches for interpreting Revelation have been distinguished by their understanding of the relationship of the visions to one another and the relationship of the visions to the events of history (other interpretations hold a mixed view combining features of these various positions/schools):

**Historicist School**

**Revelation's Visions**

|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------|

**1st-century churches**  
**Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages**  
**Historical References and Events**

**Futurist (Historical Premillennialism)**

**Revelation's Visions**

|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------|

**1st-century churches**  
**Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages**  
**Tribulation**  
**Second coming, believers raised, Armageddon**  
**Christ reigns, 1,000 years on earth**  
**General resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth**  
**Historical References and Events**

**Futurist (Dispensational Premillennialism)**

**Revelation's Visions**

|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------|

**1st-century churches**  
**Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages**  
**Rapture, believers raised**  
**Tribulation**  
**Second coming, Armageddon**  
**Christ reigns, 1,000 years on earth**  
**General resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth**  
**Historical References and Events**

*Some dispensational interpreters think the churches addressed in chs. 2–3 predict different periods in church history.*
Partial Preterist School(s)

Revelation's Visions

|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1st-century churches

- Jerusalem's fall: A.D. 70
- Rome's fall: 4th century*
- Rest of Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages
- Second coming, general resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth

Historical References and Events

*Partial preterists differ on what would (from the original recipients' viewpoint) precipitate the millennium. This chart represents the view that sees ancient Rome as the church's main enemy. Others would understand Second Temple Judaism as the church's main enemy.

Idealist School

Revelation's Visions

|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

1st-century churches

- Patristic, medieval, Reformation, modern church ages
- Second coming, general resurrection, last judgment, new heaven and earth

Historical References and Events

Three Millennial Views

Classical Premillennialism

(Christ comes before the millennium but after the tribulation; the chair, in this and following illustrations, represents the judgment seat of Christ)

- *Catching up* of believers to be with Christ
- Immediate
- Believers
- Believers
- Church Age / Tribulation
- Resurrection of believers (Renewed earth)
- Resurrection of unbelievers; Judgment (Renewed earth)*
- Eternal State
- Millennium
- Christ

*Classical Premillennialists differ over whether the renewed earth will begin in the millennium or the eternal state.
Pretribulational Premillennialism
(Christ comes before the millennium and before the tribulation)

Postmillennialism
(Christ comes after the millennium)

Amillennialism
(No future millennium)
The Setting of Revelation (seven churches in Asia)