Observe the 8 Scenes in the Book of Revelation. Each scene is from a different *perspective.*

1. Rev. 1-3 (Scene #1-the church in the world) "Then I turned to see the voice…" 1:12
2. Rev. 4:1-8:1 (Scene #2-Suffering for the church) "After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven!" 4:1
3. Rev. 8:2-11:18 (Scene #3 - Warning for the world) "Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them." 8:2
4. Rev. 11:19-15:4 (Scene #4-drama of history) "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail." 11:19
5. Rev. 15:5-16:21 (Scene #5-Punishment for the world) "After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened," 15:5
6. Rev. 17:1-19:10 (Scene #6-Babylon the harlot) "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who is seated on many waters.'" 17:1
7. Rev. 19:11-21:8 (Scene #7-The drama behind history) "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse!" 19:11
8. Rev. 21:9-22:19 (Scene #8-Jerusalem the bride) "Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.'" 21:9

15 "As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me.—Daniel 7:15

Rev. 8:2-11:18 (Scene #3-Warning for the world) "Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them." 8:2

- The perspective of this scene is turned from the church in the world to the world itself. If scene #2 was the church looking at itself through the course of history and into heaven's throne room, scene #3 is the church looking at the world.
- A key interpretive point here is that the trumpets don't necessarily follow the seals chronologically.To view the scenes in Revelation this

way is unnecessarily challenging. The trumpets and the seals are concordant or happening alongside one another.

- Keys in this scene:
  - To reveal the judgments and warnings to unbelievers and sinners.
  - To disclose the disastrous realities of idolatry and rebellion against God. (Plagues resemble the plagues on Egypt).
  - Key verse to close this scene "The Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (11:15).
- Scripture:
  - 8:1-5 – Conclusion of the seals; introduction to the trumpets.
  - 8:5 "…and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lighting, and an earthquake." Compare to 4:5; 11:19; 16:18. Four instances (completion). 4:5 foreshadows. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 repeats announcing the conclusion of God's judgments.
  - 8:6-13 – The first four trumpets are blown.
    - The trumpet judgments are much like the plagues on Egypt and are aimed at the world (five of the plagues on Egypt 1-hail and fire; 2-3 - poisoning of sea/waters; 4 – darkness; 5 – locusts).
    - Mountains are kingdoms. (See Jer. 52:25; 63:4). Fractional judgment (1/3) reflects partial judgments on commercial and economic interests.
    - Great burning star could be an angelic being (1:20; 2:1). See Is. 14:12-15 and Babylon's star—that could representing a person or kingdom. "Wormwood" (Jer. 9:15; 23:15) judgment through bitter water.
    - Allusion is to plague of darkness in Ex. 10:21-29. Beale: Symbolic interpretation with "spiritual, cultural, or mental darkness"? OT imagery is metaphorical (Amos 8:9; Joel 2:1-10; Eccl. 12:6-7; Job 3:3-10; Zeph. 1:15-16).
    - Vs. 13 – the eagle announces the three coming woes. The three woes are direct judgments on people due to their refusal to repent. Eagle is an OT symbol of God's protection and judgment (Ex. 19:14; Deut. 28:49; Jer. 4:13; 48:40; Ez. 17:3).
  - 9:1-12 Fifth Trumpet/First Woe. Background is Is. 14:12-15 and Lk. 10:18.

- 1-2. Star is an angel. Key comes from Christ which means that even Satan and his minions are unable to inflict torment without permission from Christ.
- 3-6. The locust-like beings are demonic. That this image is symbolic is suggested by the fact they were not to harm what is green but only people. The object of torment is not creation but rebellious mankind—specifically those who have not been marked by God with the seal on their foreheads.
    - Torment being five months signifies the judgment is temporary. "Part of the harm inflicted has to do with keeping unsealed believers in spiritual darkness."[1]
    - Torment is spiritual and psychological suffering. six—they long to die, but death won't arrive. Like the Egyptians, the plagues caused "confusion and despair" because they were judgments.
- 7-10. The detailed description is figurative. The locusts were "like" (8x in vv. 7-10). The repeated 5 months signifies the torment is not permanent or universal, but temporary and measured.
- 11. Apollyon means "destroyer" and is suggestive of either Satan or one of his chief lieutenants.
- 12. Note verse 12 is suggestive of the chronology of the next "vision," not necessarily the chronology of the woes themselves.

o 9:13-21 Sixth Trumpet/Second Woe

- 13. Note the voice is from the golden altar around the throne. What we see and hear in John's visions is that authority *always* comes from the throne room.
- 14. Sixth angel releases the four angels (demons) bound under the Euphrates (mentioned in the OT as the place where armies of destruction come from; also anticipates the sixth bowl where Euphrates is mentioned.
- 15. The four angels were prepared for this day and hour. The timetable is under God's sovereign direction. He is governing the events of history.

[1] Beale, *Revelation*, 184.

        - 16. Size is symbolic as the myriads and myriads is 200 million. (See Jeremiah 42 as background).
        - 17. Descriptions are intended to reveal power (lion's heads) and destruction (fire and brimstone) with fatal judgments.
        - 18. Image emphasizes destruction due to the repetition of v. 18 with the hordes of demonic horses. <u>fire</u> <u>and</u> <u>brimstone</u> (3x in vv. 17-18) refer to final judgement on the ungodly, including the false prophet, beast, and devil elsewhere (14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:18).
        - 19. Torment could be psychological and spiritual, but worse leading to death. **Power of horses is in their mouths** is akin to the demonic deception of previous plagues. Connected with <u>false</u> <u>teachers</u> (2:6, 14-15, 20-21) so that "part of the effect of demon's mouths in 9:17-19 is to intensify the deception of unbelievers."[2]
        - 20-21. The rest of those who suffered these plagues did <u>not repent</u>. They worshiped the idols and worshiped the demons, some of whom were responsible for the terror and suffering of the judgment. **Murders, sorceries, immorality, thefts, and idolatry** are associated with idol worship in the OT and NT. Idolatry is THE sin of the Bible.
    - Revelation 10:1-11
        - 1-3. Note the angel's appearance and image is much like Jesus. Likely, this is Christ. Chapter 10 is John's recommissioning as a prophet. The chapter serves as an interlude (parentheses) between the 6th and 7th trumpets.
        - 4. The thunders are associated with judgment in the OT (Ex. 9:23-34; Is. 29:6) and also in Rev. (8:5; 11:19; 16:18). Psalm 29 might be the source (explanation of the thunders). Thunder judgments are not revealed, and we are not told why. Like Daniel in chapter 12, John is told not to write something down. The <u>implication</u> is that God tells us enough but not everything.
        - 5-7. Angel (Christ) stands on the sea and land. Jesus walked on water. He is Lord of earth and sea. The beasts coming from land and sea in chapter 13 are <u>under</u> Christ's <u>authority</u>.

[2] Beale, *Revelation,* 193.

- The Angel (Christ) raised his right hand and swore by the Father, **who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it,** is indicative of the Father's supreme <u>sovereignty</u>. The oath is that sound of the seventh trumpet is the completion of all God's judgments.
- The "<u>mystery</u>" of God in the NT (Rom. 16:25-26) refers to the victory of God through Jesus' death on the cross. The imagery that follows (vv. 8-10) with the scroll intersects with the Lamb (Lion) who conquered and received the scroll. "The mysterious nature of the saints' victory is to be understood through the ironic way in which Christ obtained victory through His apparent defeat by the same evil kingdom."[3] The saints conquer by spreading the gospel of Jesus' cross (victory) and by suffering and dying (persevering) even through persecution. This is also the point of the death of the witnesses in 11:1-13.

▪ 8-11. John took the book "scroll" much like Christ in ch. 5. John is identifying with Christ's commission. See also Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 and Jer. 15:15-18).

- John's <u>commission</u> (the book of Revelation) was for many peoples, nations, languages, and kings. The warnings, judgments, and gospel is to be for the repentance of the nations and judgment on those who do not repent. The mystery is finished at the seventh trumpet echoing the repetitive nature of Revelation.

o Revelation 11:1-13

▪ Church "is sealed for bearing an enduring and loyal witness to the gospel, which begins to lay a basis for the final judgment."[4]

▪ Five broad interpretations:

- Dispensationalist <u>Futurist</u>: this chapter refers to the time of tribulation and see a literal restored temple of Ezekiel 40-48 with two literal witnesses. Worshipers

[3] Beale, *Revelation,* 207.
[4] Beale, *Revelation,* 213.

are ethnic believing Jews where unbelieving Jews are outside the temple. Literal 42 month period.
    - Preterist view: Literal interpretation also but events occurred at/around 70 AD.
    - Modified Futurist: Descriptions are figurative where "ethnic believing Israel" are referred to as the "measuring."
    - Another view: those outside the court are professing but apostate church. (But no example of apostacy is depicted in chapter 11).
    - Idealist: this chapter is figurative in all senses with "true, spiritual Israel" (believing Jews and Gentiles) are those who worship in the temple. "Casting out" (v. 2) refers to the church harmed and persecuted but sealed and protected through salvation.
- 1-2. "Measuring" reflects from Ezekiel 40-48. Virtually identical words for "measure" are used as here. Remember also, Revelation is best interpreted "figuratively" first. "Measure" and "temple [Christ] of God" suggest God's presence and thus, God's people.
    - The literal views distinguish between believing Jews (sanctuary) and unbelieving Jews (outer court).
    - "Temple" refers in Revelation not to an earthly temple but to the heavenly one (present) or God's presence in the future (7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-6, 8; 3:12; 21:22).
    - "Altar" way of worship in the community which could be the "place of sacrifice" where Christians are the spiritual temple worshiping God.
    - "Forty-two months" is also symbolic. See reference to Daniel 7:25; 12:7, 11-12 with his "time, times, half a time" or 3 ½ years. Recall Elijah's ministry of drought, Israel's 42 encampments, or 42 years (two out and forty in the wilderness). The time in chapter 12 of the people of God's protection is the same 3 and ½ period of time. This time was inaugurated at Christ's ascension and is also the "approximate duration of

Christ's ministry."[5] Also, looking ahead this is the time 1260 days and time, times, half a time for the symbolic references to the church in 12:6, 14.

- 3. If the above imagery is figurative, "Two lampstands" are also figurative which are identified as churches (1:12-2:5).
- 5-6. The powers of the witnesses correspond to the seal and especially trumpet judgments.
- 7-10. "When they have finished their testimony" suggests the end of history if figurative. See also the connection to 6:9-11 and the beast (system of the world/antichrist) who makes war. Their defeat/death foreshadows their ultimate victory.
- 8. According to Beale probably indicates that the true church will seem defeated and insignificant though it is not. **Great city** is the ungodly world and in Revelation associated with **Babylon** (16:19; 17:18; 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21), not Jerusalem. Compared to **Sodom** (wickedness), **Egypt** (persecution), **where also their Lord was crucified** (spiritual description). "Where" introduces symbolic, not literal geography (12:6, 14 "wilderness;" 17:19 "heads and mountains;" 20:10 "lake of fire and brimstone"). First readers would have associated **Great City** with Rome.
- 8-9. "**Bodies"** is actually singular **body.** This indicates the corporal nature of the imagery and highlights the symbolic, not literal interpretation of the two witnesses standing for the church's witness. "They are one 'body' of Christ who witness, but they are also many witnesses scattered throughout the earth, as is evident elsewhere in the book."[6] 3 & ½ days dead reflects their connection to Christ's death with Jesus' 3 & ½ year ministry of Christ. Antichrist's victory is brief.
- 10. **Those who dwell on earth** are for idolaters/unbelievers.
- 11. **A breath of life from God entered them** is language directly quoted from Ez. 37: 5, 10 where God gave breath and life to the dry bones. This resurrection vindicates the

[5] Beale, *Revelation,* 219.
[6] Beale, *Revelation,* 228.

work of Christ and identity of the church with Christ and the witnesses' message.

- 12. Verse here is based (along with 4:1) Ezekiel's "repeated 'raptures' in the Spirit (Ez. 1:28-2:2; 3:12-14, 23-24; 11:1-5; 43:5) where the Spirit lifted the prophet up and carried him away in a spiritual, not physical sense."[7] Note the repeated prophetic commissioning in ch. 10 applied to the witnesses in ch. 11. The **loud voice from the cloud** is the cloud of 10:1 which refers to the presence of God/Christ with his people. See OT examples as well as Christ's ascension and return.
- 13. **Great earthquake** foreshadows the coming, final judgment in 11:19 and "virtually identical" to 6:12 and 16:18. "The ministry of the witnesses (church) is patterned after Christ's own ministry. At Christ's resurrection, there was an earthquake, an angel descended from heaven and the guards shook like dead men. Here, at the vindication of the righteous, there is also an earthquake, an angelic voice speaks from heaven, and those who observe are terrified."[8]
- 15-19. Announces the consummation of history and the victory of God and vindication of his people.

Takeaways:

- Idealist symbolic interpretations offer the most consistent meaning for Christian readers throughout church history.
- Because the focus is a warning for the world, the church gets to see her future and the future of her enemies.
- The repetition reinforces our confidence in God's victory.
- Worship God and anticipate victory.

[7] Beale, *Revelation,* 230.
[8] Beale, *Revelation,* 232.