Amillennial Interpretation of Revelation
by Jake Gurley III

**General View of Revelation**: It is a symbolic presentation of God’s compassion for his people leading to ultimate victory over their oppressors, beginning with the Roman Empire and concluding with the future return of Christ and judgment. There are no complete, generally accepted interpretations of this view (i.e. Dispensationalism), nor is it unique or distinct from other views (there is a great deal of overlap with Preterist and Spiritualist/Allegorical views).

1. **Prologue (1:1-20)**
   A. The vision was a literary style in a genre call “apocalyptic” literature communicating truths of hard times that will exist until the “end of days”.
   B. The terms “shortly” and “near” refers to the events in the vision beginning soon, and continuing until Christ’s return.
   C. The powerful vision of the strong, authoritative, majestic, living Christ standing in the midst of the lamp stands conveys the centrality of Christ, and the leadership he continues to give the churches in good times as well as bad.

2. **Letters to 7 Churches (2:1-3:22)**
   A. It applies to the specific churches addressed, but also applies to all churches.
   B. They are typical of problems churches have had to deal with throughout history.
   C. “What he said to one, he said to all.” (Victorinus)

   A. The throne room symbolizes the sovereignty of God over all events on earth (including Rome’s persecution of the early believers).
      1. Whether it is Nero or Domition’s Rome, Napoleon’s France, Hitler’s Germany, God allows evil to exist for His will, purpose, and time.
      2. Whatever form evil takes, it is unable to successfully challenge God’s authority, power, or patience.
      3. The forces of anti-God will not escape punishment in the end, nor will believers lose their rewards even if they lose their lives.
   B. The sealed scroll represents salvation history, or the history of creation.
   C. The lamb symbolizes the resurrected Christ.
   D. The imagery of the lamb taking the scroll reflects the death and resurrection of Christ, which gives him the authority to be the Lord of salvation history, or the history of creation.
   E. The 4 living creatures represent attributes of God’s sovereignty, or 4 types of animal life that worship God (wild, domestic, birds, mankind).
   F. The 7 lamps represent the Holy Spirit.
   G. The 24 elders represent the 12 tribes of Israel (old covenant) and the 12 apostles (New covenant), symbolizing the total number of the redeemed.

4. **Opening the 7 Seals (6:1-8:1)**
   A. The white horse is usually ridden by a king or priest.
1. To conquer – the goal of kings.
2. The rider with a bow – a military weapon.
3. He has a crown – usually worn by kings or victors.
4. This horse and rider symbolizes armies used as judgment against God’s enemies.

B. The red horse symbolizes sin and war.
   1. He removes peace – the “pax Romana” was peace enforced by Rome.
   2. He carries a sword – a military weapon.
   3. This horse and rider symbolizes Rome’s inability to continue to enforce peace within its Empire.

C. The black horse is associated with death and judgment.
   1. With it comes famine – a natural outcome of war.
   2. The scales represent the high cost of wheat and barley, indicating a short-term famine on seasonal crops rather than annual producing oil and wine.
   3. Recorded famines occurred a minimum of 23 times in the Roman Empire by natural causes as well as man-made (i.e. war).

D. The pale horse is associated with death and judgment.
   1. ¼ of the population is killed – a natural outcome of war.
   2. Death by the sword, famine, and plague of wild animals – a natural outcome of war.
   3. Death and Hades follows the horse – the fear or location of non-believers.
   4. These four horses are all associated with the devastating after-effects of war that God brings upon the earthly powers persecuting his followers (although limiting their effect).

E. Martyred saints under the altar cry out for vengeance.
   1. Since the altar was the place animals were sacrificed to God, and the blood of the sacrifice ran under the altar, the picture here represents believers whose lives were taken as a sacrifice to God (martyred).
   2. Go knows the sacrifices made by the persecuted Church, hears their cries, and is working everything out according to his plan and timing.

F. Universal upheaval causes all to run in fear and hide.
   1. Following Joel 2:31, Isa 13:10, and Isa 34:4, it describes divine judgment on the created order.
   2. This is a word of encouragement to the Church letting them know that no one can escape the effects of God’s judgment on the universe, regardless of how rich or powerful they are.

G. Interlude.
   1. Sealing 144,000 is divine protection during times of persecution and judgment.
      a. The 4 angels represent coming destructive events.
      b. Believers are marked (i.e. Exod 12:21-27, Ezek 9:4) to preserve them for safekeeping.
      c. The number represents the totality of the redeemed people of God - 12 (OT) \( \times 12 \) (NT) \( \times 1000 \) (complete adequacy).
      d. Believers can know that even though many will die for their faith (under the altar noted above), God will protect many from this fate.
2. The heavenly multitude standing before the throne and the Lamb.
   a. These are believers who have died and are enjoying purity and victory.
   b. The fate of believers is not in the hands of the oppressors, but in the hands of God, who has made provision for those martyred and for those who are to continue.
   c. Whether the tribulation was necessary suffering by all believers, those who suffered during the Roman persecutions, or all of those persecuted before the end of history, the end result is eternal celebration with Christ.

H. A half-hour of silence.
   1. Silence placed where a crescendo is expected heightens and intensifies the expectation of the resumption of judgment.
   2. It enhances the difference between the holiness and righteousness of God and the deplorable, base, sinfulness of mankind.
   3. It emphasizes God’s sovereignty, timing, control, seriousness, intentionality, and finality of the coming judgment.

5. Blowing 7 Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
   A. Hail, fire, and blood are thrown down to earth.
      1. Burning up 1/3 of the earth, trees, and grass indicated limited natural disasters on land.
      2. Similar volcanic eruptions occur throughout the Roman Empire.
   B. A burning mountain is cast into the sea.
      1. 1/3 of the sea turns to blood, 1/3 creatures die, and 1/3 of ships are destroyed indicates a large but limited disaster on the seas.
      2. Similar effects were recorded when Mt. Vesuvias erupted in AD. 79, although on a much smaller scale.
   C. A huge star burning like a torch, falls from heaven to earth.
      1. Poisoning 1/3 or rivers and springs indicate a large but limited disaster effects the drinking water supply.
      2. It may be the effect of a meteor strike, or a volcanic eruption.
   D. Darkness strikes 1/3 of the sun, moon, and stars.
      1. 1/3 part of the day was dark.
      2. Sandstorms, volcanic eruptions, atmospheric abnormalities, or other things could be envisioned here.
      3. The first four trumpets reflect natural disasters that contributed to the weakening and eventual fall of the Roman Empire (1/3 symbolizes partial but not total destruction).
   E. A fallen star (Appolyon) opens the abyss and lets out the demon locusts for 5 months.
      1. The have a painful sting but is not fatal.
      2. This trumpet reflects internal decay that affected the fall of the Roman Empire through spiritual, ethical, and moral decadence and corruption by its leaders (Christians are no involved or effected because of their discipline in holiness indicated by their sealing by God).
   F. The four angels bound at the Euphrates are let loose.
1. They are released for a predetermined amount of time to do their work.
2. They release an army of 200 million demon-cavalry (similar to Chimera).
3. The kill 1/3 or humanity symbolizes a large but limited impact on the Roman Empire.
4. The demon hordes portray the third judgment by God upon Rome, namely, *wars and invasion* by neighboring countries.
   a. According to Gibbons’ *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, natural disasters, internal decay, the effect of wars and invasion from outside forces (i.e. Parthians, Gauls...) were major factors in the destruction of the Roman Empire.
   b. They also may be patterned after the judgments upon Egypt in Exod 7-12.

G. Interlude.
1. The mighty angel and the little scroll.
   a. The huge angel (i.e. the Colossus of Rhodes) descends from heaven possessing a small scroll with a hidden message (the gospel message, message of woe, Ch. 11...).
   b. Similar to Ezek 2:8, John must take and eat the scroll, that is both sweet and bitter.
   c. The sweetness is the word of God, and the bitterness is the implication of the words on the scroll that he must preach.
2. Measuring the temple delineates between the faithful and all others.
   a. Based on Ezek 40-48, the distinction is made between those who are true worshippers of God, and those who are not.
   b. Since the Church has been identified as the symbolic temple, this action indicates the preservation of the persecuted Church during the reign of the Gentiles (Rome).
3. The two witnesses do the work and proclaim the message of Moses and Elijah.
   a. They represent the voice of God preaching redemption and judgment to the world through the Church and the gospel, the Law and the prophets, the OT and NT...
   b. The enemies of the Church (the beast represents the Roman Emperor and subsequent oppressors) are limited in their ability to suppress the message.
   c. The apparent death of the witnesses is unable to stop the preaching and the effect of God’s word in the world.
   d. 3 ½ years is a symbolic number for an indefinite time of turmoil.
   e. Sodom and Egypt symbolize Rome, the capital of moral decadence and persecution of God’s people.

G. The introduction of the reign of God and Christ.
1. The heavenly hosts’ hallelujah chorus are a prelude to the grand entrance of the Temple.
2. This reminds believers that God is victorious, is powerful enough to impose his will upon all creation, and who will take the battle to the enemy (Chs. 12-14).
3. The response of the forces of evil is not to sit quietly and allow God to assert himself, but to wage all-out war to prevent that from happening.
4. This is a good representation of what happened when Jesus came the first time, taking the battle to the enemy, resulting in opening salvation to all (symbolized by the curtain tearing and exposing the ark in the Holy of Holies).
   a. This act intensified the physical and spiritual warfare between the forces of evil against the people of God.
   b. Exposing the ark in the Temple illustrates the accessibility all people have to God now that Christ has become the complete and perfect High Priest (cf. Heb 8).

   A. The pregnant woman in the sky.
      1. The woman represents spiritual Israel embodied in Mary.
         a. The time period this event is the birth, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.
         b. It provides a visual representation of the reason the followers of Christ are being persecuted.
         c. The devil failed in his attempt to kill Jesus at birth, failed to keep him dead after his crucifixion, and is now focused on extinguishing the growth of his followers.
         d. The vision refers to the people of God (bride – Isa 54:5, Hosea 2:19-20...) who has dominion over the created order (under foot), brings forth the Messiah ordained since the creation of the universe (heavens imagery).
   2. The dragon represents Satan, borrowed from Greek constellation “draco”, and is the great adversary of the Lamb.
      a. The 7 heads (i.e. Leviathan, Hydra, Methusa...) symbolizes perfect authority.
      b. The 10 horns represent complete power over kings of the earth.
      c. The 7 crowns symbolize perfect victory, or rule over kingdoms.
   3. Sweeping 1/3 stars from heaven (like a meteor shower) represents his supporting army of evil.
   4. The woman’s flight to the desert represents divine protection.
      a. The desert was a place of refuge and special presence of God (i.e. Hagar, Moses, Elijah...).
      b. The dragon’s inability to kill the woman or her offspring shows the limits to his ability to harm the people of God.
      c. The 1,260 days (3 ½ years) symbolizes the persecution is a limited time of distress.
   B. The war in heaven.
      1. The dragon and his army go to war against Michael and his angels in heaven.
      2. This is not placed in a historical context (Gen 2, Gen 6...), the forces are not identified (evil, fallen, rebellious, good, original...), nor their purposes revealed (defeat Michael, defeat God, defeat believers...).
      3. Since the imagery is common to most ANE cultures (i.e. Summerian, Babylonian, Egyptian...) it provides the heavenly background to earthly reality (good vs. evil).
         a. Specifically, answering the question, “why the Church is being persecuted by the forces of evil?”
b. It provides confirmation that evil is not capable of ultimate victory, but is doomed for defeat.

c. The dragon does not battle God (they are not equal-opposites), but the angel Michael (thought to be the protector of Israel).

d. The song of victory acknowledges the victory Christ gained at the crucifixion/resurrection, providing salvation for all mankind, while persecution of his followers continues a while longer.

C. Calling-up the two beasts.

1. The dragon calls up two mythological figures (i.e. Behemoth and Leviathan) to help in controlling the earth.
   a. Together they form an unholy counterfeit trinity - dragon as god, sea beast as Jesus, and land beast as the Holy Spirit.
   b. The dragon functions as the power and mastermind behind the scenes, the sea beast is the focus as “Antichrist”, and the land beast is the enforcer of worshipping the sea beast.

2. The beast from the sea refers to the Roman Empire or the Emperor (Nero or Domitian), who comes to the region by sea.
   a. This beast is the focus of world events as ultimate authority (7 heads), complete power (10 horns), and complete sovereignty (10 crowns).
   b. The 7 heads represent Roman Emperors (Rome was known as the city on 7 hills cf. 17:9-10), the 10 horns represent power over 10 vassal kings, and the 10 crowns represent control over their 10 kingdoms (cf. 17:7,12).
   c. One of the heads receiving a mortal wound is a reference to the Nero redivivas legend that Nero would return from death to rule again (applied to Domitian), counterfeiting the death and resurrection of Christ.
   d. Both Nero and Domitian assumed god-status, and Domitian insisted on being addressed as “Lord God”.

3. The beast from the land refers to the local Asiarchs (concilia) who enforced worship of the Emperor and the patron goddess of the Empire, “Roma”.
   a. This beast is usually identified as “false prophet”, indicating the religious nature of his role.
   b. Possessing only 2 horns represents the subservient power to the beast and dragon.
   c. The identification from the land may indicate he represents local religious authorities who enforce Emperor worship with the full backing of Rome (sounds like a dragon).
   d. The ability to perform miracles counterfeits Christ’s ministry, but is limited because the source is the dragon, not God.

4. The mark of the beast is 666.
   a. The mark is taken by all that are not marked by the Lamb, indicating their loyalty is with the Roman Empire rather than Christ (they are unbelievers).
   b. The numbers 2 (mankind) x 3 (God), 3 times refers to man trying to be God (7) but falling short 3 times (ultimate failure).
   c. It warns John’s original audience to remain faithful to Christ rather than the Roman government, and not be succumb to Emperor worship.
d. The contemporary application is to realize that any controlling power attempting to coerce worship and obedience while demeaning and reducing Christ, is to be avoided and rejected by the believer.

7. **Good vs. Evil** (14:1-20)
   A. The Lamb is Christ, the 144,000 in Jerusalem represent the total number of redeemed believers, or the total number of martyrs during Roman persecutions.
   B. The 3 angels flying overhead pronouncing the gospel and impending judgment are warnings to the oppressors that they will be responsible to God for their behavior and beliefs.
      1. It provides encouragement to believers that God will hold their persecutors responsible and will punish them accordingly.
      2. It lets them know that even the Romans need to hear the message of the gospel and allowed to repent and follow Christ.
      3. It warns believers not to worship the Emperor but be faithful to Christ.
      4. Babylon is a metaphor for Rome because both were world empires, known for their capture of Jerusalem, and had a reputation for idolatry, moral corruption, and economic prosperity.
   C. The reaper is an unknown heavenly being, but not Christ
   D. The grape harvest and winepress symbolize the death and judgment of the wicked.
      1. Wine’s color makes it a popular image for bloody death and slaughter.
      2. Many apocalyptic texts heighten the extreme nature of the punishment of God by exaggerating the blood loss in battle.

8. **The Bowls of Wrath** (15:1-16:21)
   A. The vision of heaven is to show that God is about to execute judgment to answer the martyrs call for vengeance.
   B. The bowls of wrath are the final judgments of God, portrayed as the Almighty King and Judge of all nations.
      1. The plagues are supernatural judgments upon Rome which originating from God, and cause the fall of the Empire.
      2. They intentionally remind believers of the plagues in Egypt leading to the release of Israel from captivity.
      3. The ultimate showdown between good and evil at Armageddon pits the forces of Rome against Christians, with God intervening.

   A. The whore of Babylon.
      1. The vision of the whore of Babylon is a picture of the Roman Empire.
         b. The imagery of the whore is the counterfeit of the bride in chapter 19.
         c. The description is static, like describing a picture that resembles the *Dea Roma* coin minted in AD. 71 (on which the goddess Roma reclines on the 7 hills of Rome)
         d. Riding the beast is a powerful counterfeit of Christ on the donkey.
e. Johns marveling at the sight is similar to one’s amazement at New York City, Las Vegas, or any great city that incites awe.
f. Being drunk with the blood of martyrs refers to her guilt in killing Christians who were faithful to Christ and refused to worship Rome.
2. The beast is the same as the sea beast of chapter 13, depicting the Emperor or Empire (and described in more detail above)
   a. He makes war with followers of Christ, making him at war with God.
   b. The 7 kings are to be understood as successive kings continuing the Empire until the perfect time is completed.
   c. The 10 kingdoms refer to the vassal kingdoms allied with Rome.
B. Description of the fall of Babylon.
   1. The fall of the Empire effects all others around it.
   2. The world economic system falls because trade partners are overly dependent on her wealth.
   3. Christians are warned to avoid dependence on Rome because she is doomed, and soon to face judgment.
   4. The reason for the fall of Rome is of the persecution of Christians bringing judgment upon her.

   A. The marriage feast.
      1. The bride is all of the believers throughout history.
      2. The feast is the celebration of the culmination of salvation history.
   B. The rider on the white horse.
      1. The rider on the white horse symbolizes Christ’s victory over the enemy forces on the earth (i.e. here comes the cavalry to the rescue).
      2. The sword from his mouth conveys the image of judgment and vengeance in light of the truths of the gospel.
   C. The end to the evil of Rome.
      1. The battle of Armageddon is over before it starts.
      2. It is merely a symbol of the forces of evil’s attempt to rebel against God, but are unable to even engage in battle against the Creator.
      3. When he determines time is up, nothing else can be done.
      4. The leaders of the evil forces are seized helplessly and removed from the scene.
      5. The lake of fire represents the most horrific place one could imagine for eternal punishment, evoking images of Sodom and Gomorrah, Valley of Hinnom, volcanic rivers, Hades, Tarturus, the River Styx, the Egyptian Book of the Dead...
   D. The removal and binding of the dragon signifies the restriction he has on effecting human events on earth.
      1. Although the fall of the Roman Empire is anticipated, the absolute removal of evil is not promised.
      2. The devil will not be allowed to deceive nations as he was able to do with Rome.
3. The millennium signifies a long indefinite period of time that Satan is allowed to be around, but not without restrictions of time and effect.
4. It provides encouragement to Christians under persecution that it will be limited in intensity and duration.

E. Christ returns at some period of time and brings the era of creation to an end.
1. The second coming of Christ comes and an unknown time in human history, like a thief to non-believers but anticipated by believers (consistent with other 2\textsuperscript{nd} coming texts in the NT).
2. He brings to an end the created order allowing the judgment of mankind to begin.
3. There is one general resurrection of all mankind (good and evil) to stand before God/Christ in judgment.
4. Humanity will be sorted based on their faith in Christ with followers of Christ spending eternity with God (in the book of life), and all others spending eternity apart from God (2\textsuperscript{nd} death) with appropriate rewards and punishment (in the book of works).

A. Just as the lake of fire is the most horrific place imaginable, the new creation is the most idealic place imaginable.
1. The tree of life and living water is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.
2. It is the promised reward for the faithful followers of Christ, and encourages them to not be afraid of what lies beyond physical suffering and death.
B. At the center is the throne of God signifying eternal unimpeded access and fellowship with God.
C. The throne is within the city of God.
1. The city is a perfect cube symbolic of perfect and complete existence (12 x 1000).
2. The building materials are the most beautiful, precious, and costly imaginable to create a spacious, idealic environment.
3. The imagery of a city conveys the provision, protection, and fellowship of the entire body of the redeemed (12 tribes represent OT faithful and 12 apostles represent NT faithful).

12. The Epilogue (22:6-21)
A. The original audience is assured of its authenticity and truth.
B. The events of the book which soon must begin are the periods of persecution by the Roman Empire.
C. They are encouraged to endure faithfully even at the cost of their lives because they now know what they have to lose or gain.
D. They are also warned to faithfully convey the truths of this book and not change the message in any way.