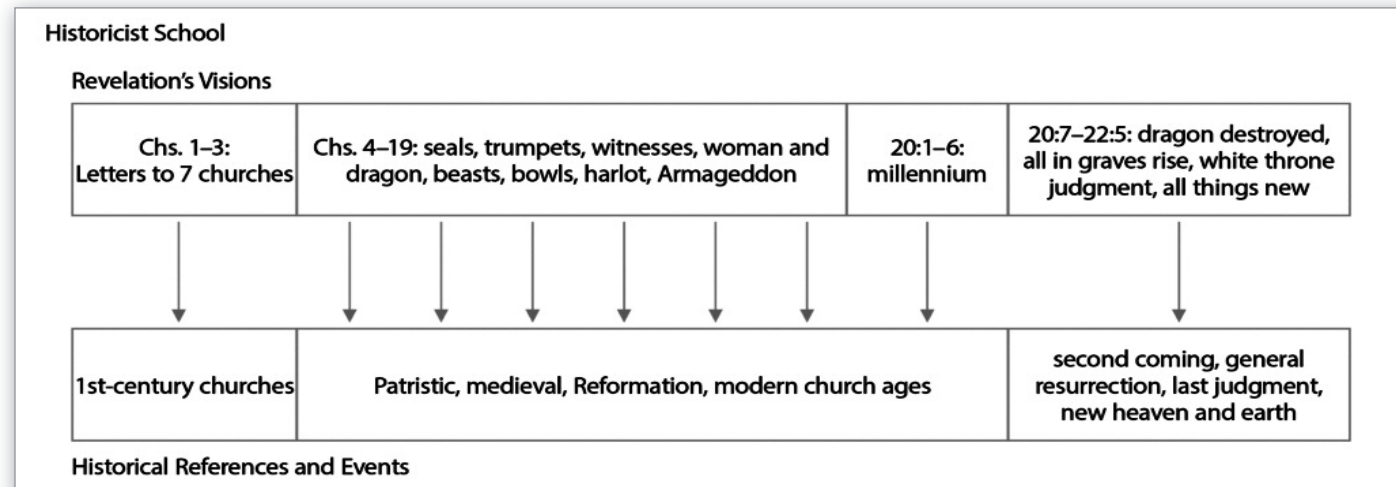
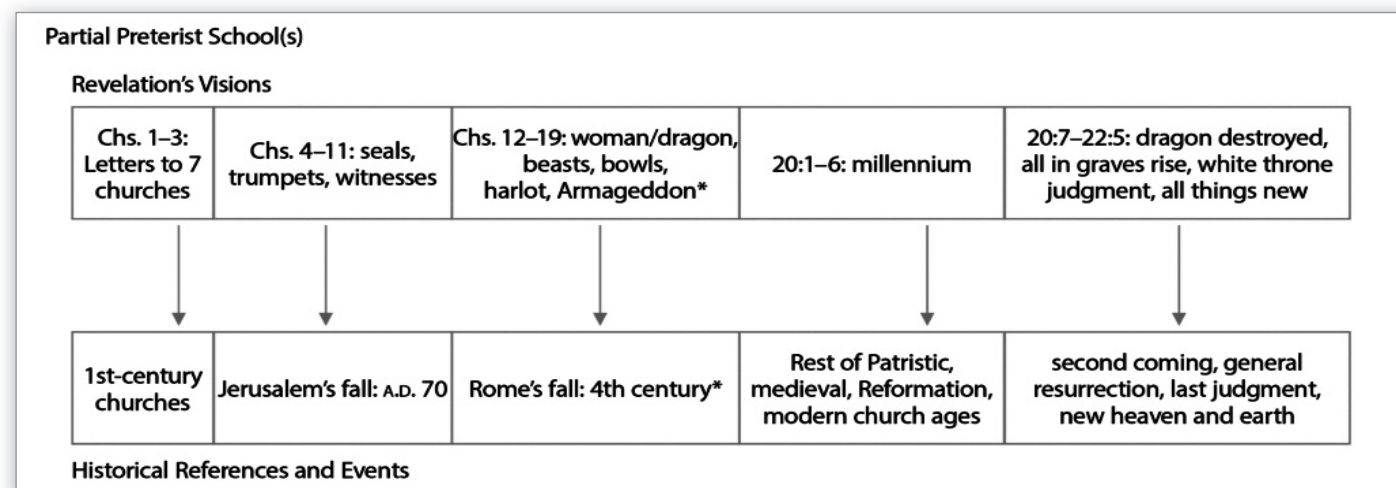


Historicist Perspective



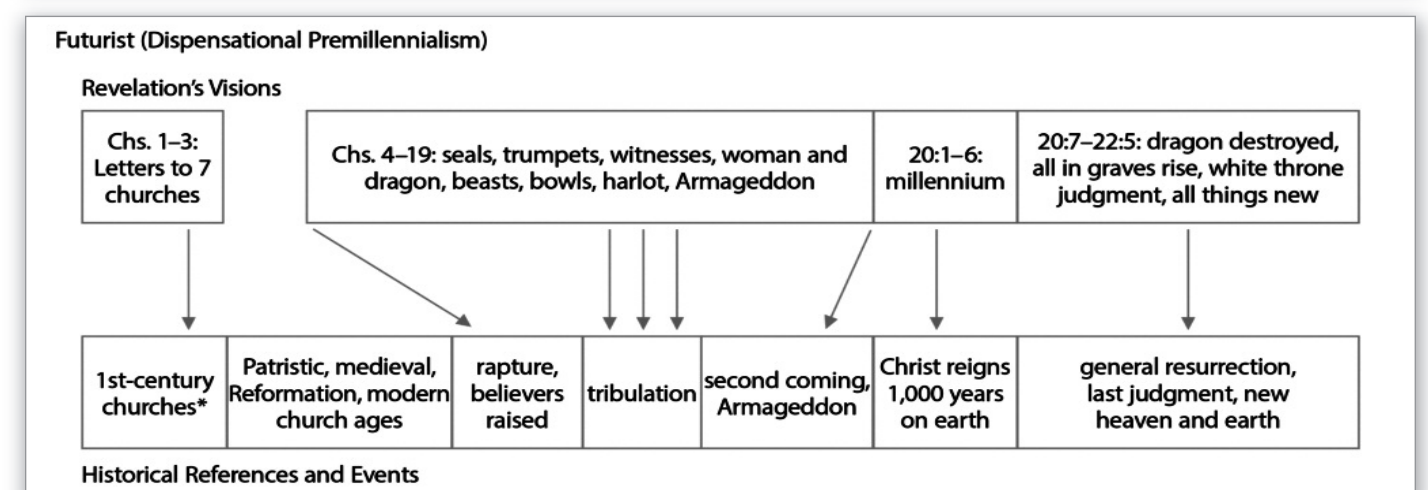
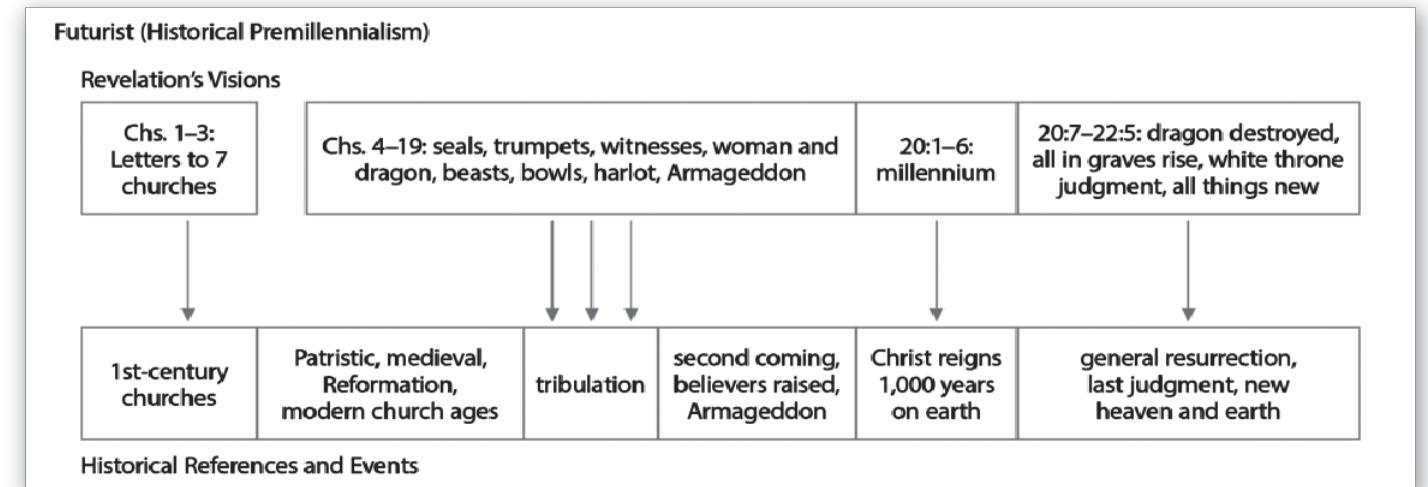
HISTORICISM understands the literary order of the visions, especially in Revelation 4:1–20:6, to symbolize the chronological order of successive historical events that span the entire era from the apostolic church to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.

Preterist Perspective

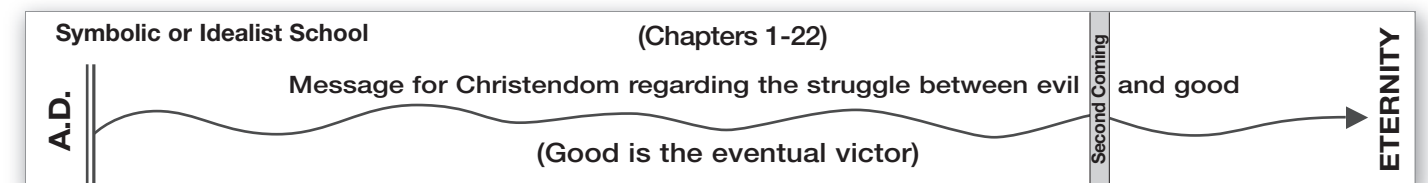


PRETERISM (from Latin *praeteritum*, “the thing that is past”) thinks that the fulfillment of most of Revelation’s visions already occurred in the distant past, during the early years of the Christian church. Preterists think these events—either the destruction of Jerusalem or the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, or both—would “soon take place” only from the standpoint of John and the churches of Asia. Some preterists interpret the order of the visions as reflecting the chronological succession of the events they signify, but others recognize the presence of recapitulation (that is, that distinct, successive visions sometimes symbolize the same historical events or forces from complementary perspectives; see Structure and Outline). Full preterism—which insists that every prophecy and promise in the NT was fulfilled by A.D. 70—is not a legitimate evangelical option, for it denies Jesus’ future bodily return, denies the physical resurrection of believers at the end of history, and denies the physical renewal/re-creation of the present heavens and earth (or their replacement by a “new heaven and earth”). However, preterists who (rightly) insist that these events are still future are called “partial preterists.”

Futurist Perspective



FUTURISM likewise treats the order of the visions as reflecting the order of particular historical events (with some exceptions). Futurists, however, typically view the visions of chapters 4–22 as representing events still future to twenty-first-century readers, thus in a distant future from the standpoint of John and the churches of Asia. For many futurists, these coming events include a discrete seven-year period of intense tribulation (chs. 6–19), followed by a millennium (Rev. 20:1–6) in which Christ will rule on earth before the general resurrection and the inauguration of the new heaven and earth (20:7–22:5).



Symbolic or Idealist Perspective

IDEALISM agrees with historicism that Revelation’s visions symbolize the conflict between Christ and his church on the one hand, and Satan and his evil conspirators on the other, from the apostolic age to Christ’s second coming. Yet idealist interpreters believe that the presence of recapitulation means that the visions’ literary order need not reflect the temporal order of particular historical events. The forces and conflicts symbolized in Revelation’s vision cycles manifest themselves in events that were to occur “soon” from the perspective of the first-century churches (as preterists maintain),

but they also find expression in the church’s ongoing struggle of persevering faith in the present and foretell a still-future escalation of persecution and divine wrath leading to the return of Christ and the new heaven and earth.

MIXED VIEW Finally, some interpreters hold a mixed view, combining features of these various positions, such as saying that many events have both present and future fulfillments, or saying that many events have past fulfillments but that there may still be a future personal Antichrist.