

Four Schools of Interpretation for Revelation



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A. Four Major Views about Interpretation

Why Look at Others' Views?

- **Learn from others.**
- **Don't blindly adopt an approach.**
- **One's choice affects all of Revelation.**
- **No one view fits all the Scripture.**

Time of Fulfillment

When is the primary fulfillment?



- The four views differ about the primary time of fulfillment of Revelation.

Roman Empire View (Preterist)

- Beckwith (pp. 334-35): “fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the fall of the Roman Empire.”



Two Strands of Roman Empire View

- **Modernist extreme: wholly in first century.**



- **Moderate: first century is chief focus.**



Final Crisis View (Futurist)

- Fulfillment occurs in the events of the final crisis immediately preceding the Second Coming.

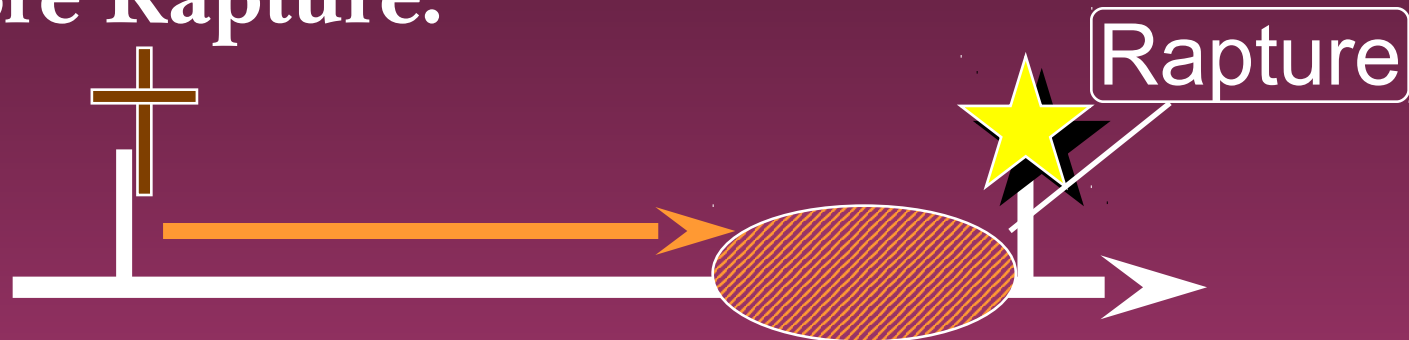


Two Strands of Final Crisis

- Pretribulationist places 4:1-19:21 after the Rapture.



- Posttribulationist, usually more moderate, sees the bulk as relating to final crisis before Rapture.



Church History View (Historicist)

- Morris (p. 17): “setting out ... the history of western Europe ... until the second coming of Christ.”
- Rev 6-19 is in chronological order.



Two Strands of Church History

- Straight-line historicist treats Rev 6-19 as in chronological order.



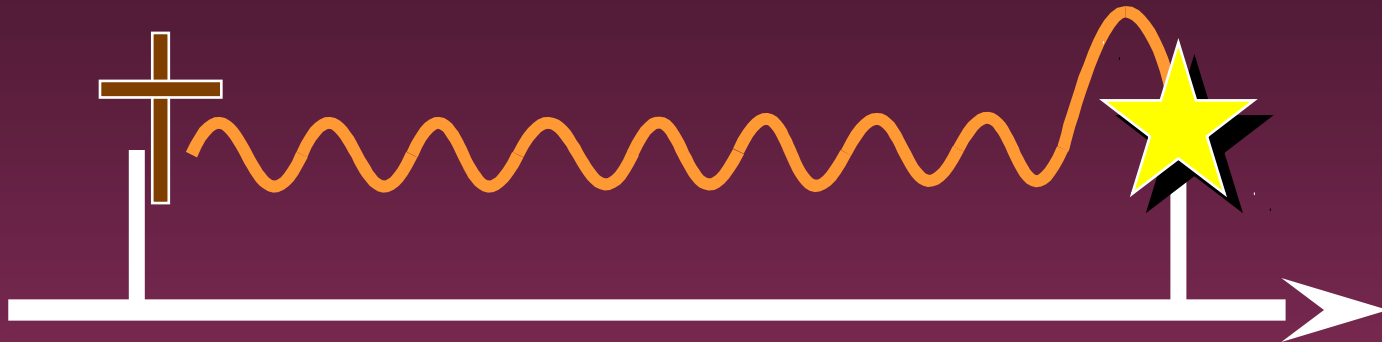
- Recapitulationist finds a number of recapitulations and nonchronological order in Rev 6-19.



- But recapitulationist is really a fifth view.

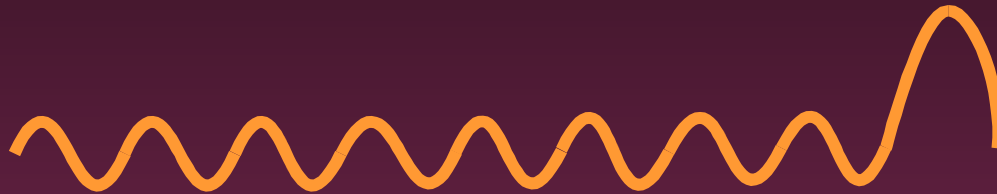
Repeated Pattern View (Idealist)

- Tenney (p. 143): “... represents the eternal conflict of good and evil which persists in every age.”



Two Types of Repeated Pattern

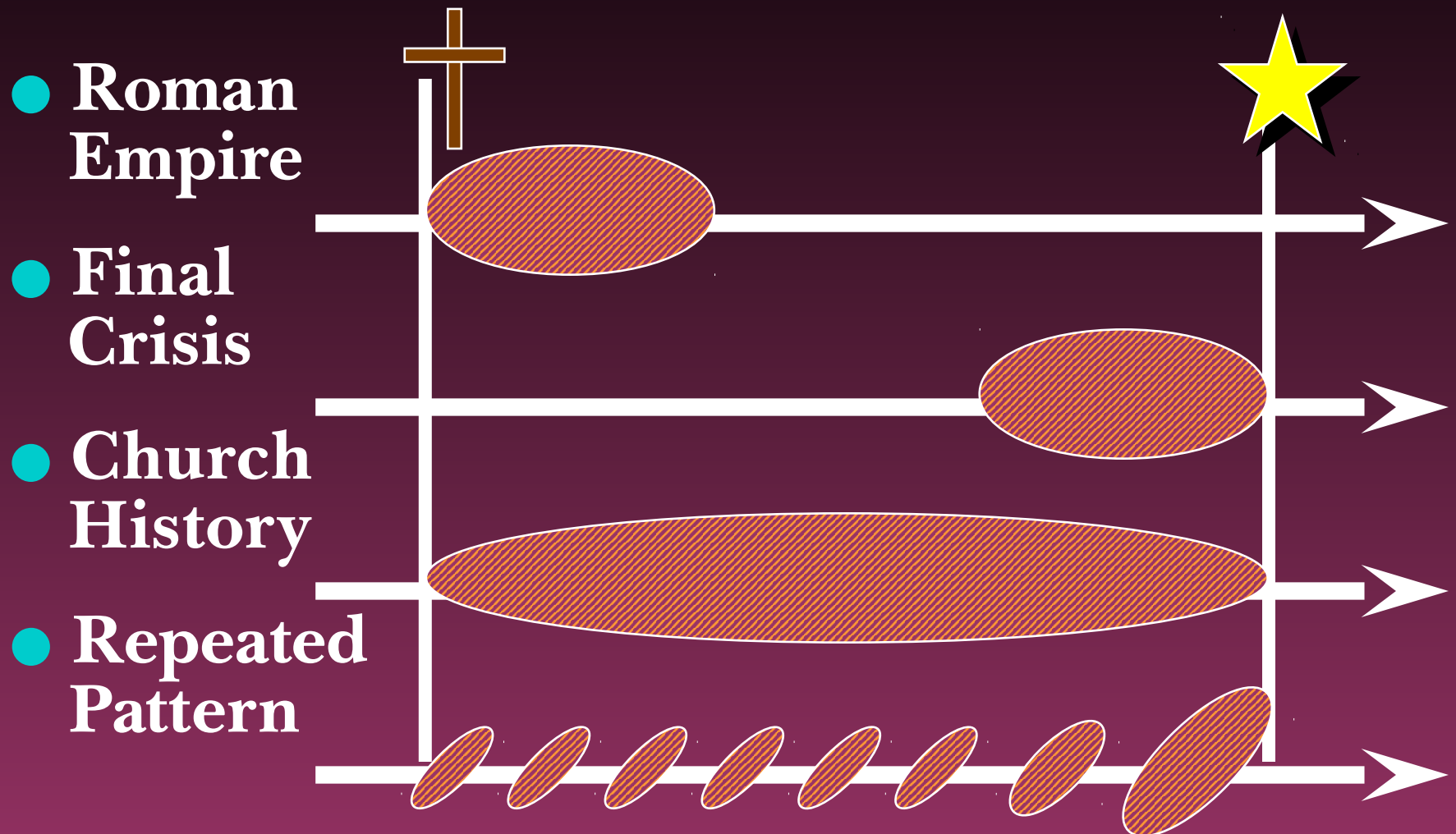
- **Consistent idealist: Eternal conflict, with no reference to specific events.**



- **Moderate idealist: repeated fulfillment**



Summary of Views



B. How the Four Major Views Work in Practice

Interpreting Rev 13:1-8 (Beast)

- Roman Empire
- Final Crisis
- Church History
- Repeated Pattern
- Roman Emperor/Empire
- Final Antichrist
- The Pope
- Persecuting dominion wherever it appears

Locusts of Rev. 9:1-11

- Roman Empire
- Final Crisis
- Church History
- Repeated Pattern
- Roman decadence
- Future locusts; or evil powers
- Islamic invasion

Interpreting Rev 9:1-11 (cont.)

● Church History

● Islamic invasion

■ crowns

■ women's hair

■ five months

Mohammed opens
his mission

612

← 150 years →

762

Caliphate to
Baghdad

Interpreting Rev. 9:1-11 (cont.)

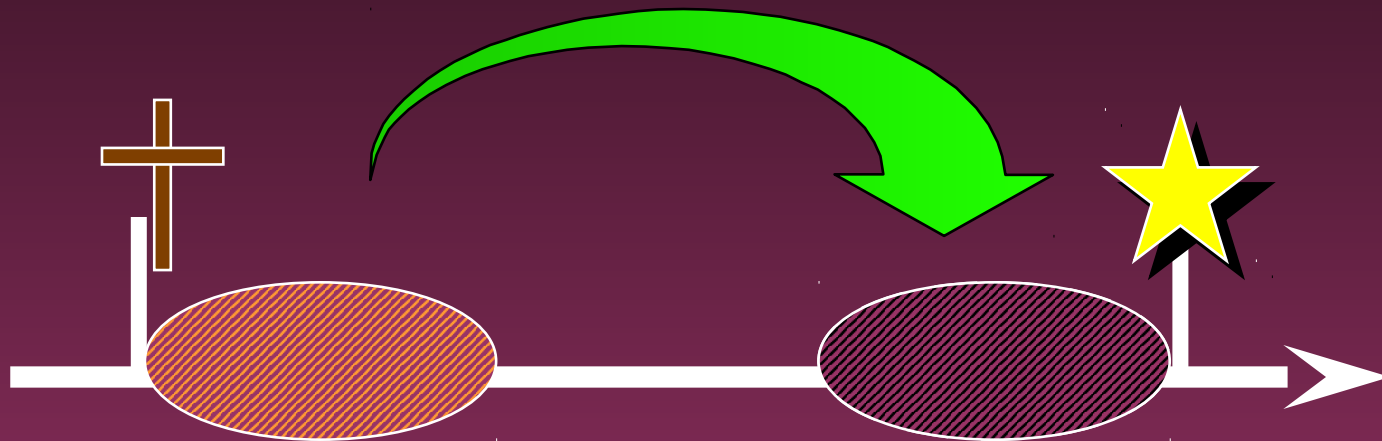
- Roman Empire
- Final Crisis
- Church History
- Repeated Pattern
- Roman decadence
- Future locusts; or evil powers
- Islamic invasion
- Powers of evil in the wicked at all times

Strengths of Different Views

- Roman Empire
- Final Crisis
- Church History
- Repeated Pattern
- Relevance to 7 churches.
- Climax at Second Coming (22:20; 19:11-21).
- Draw a line between the two dates.
- Seize common principle; Satan as unoriginal.

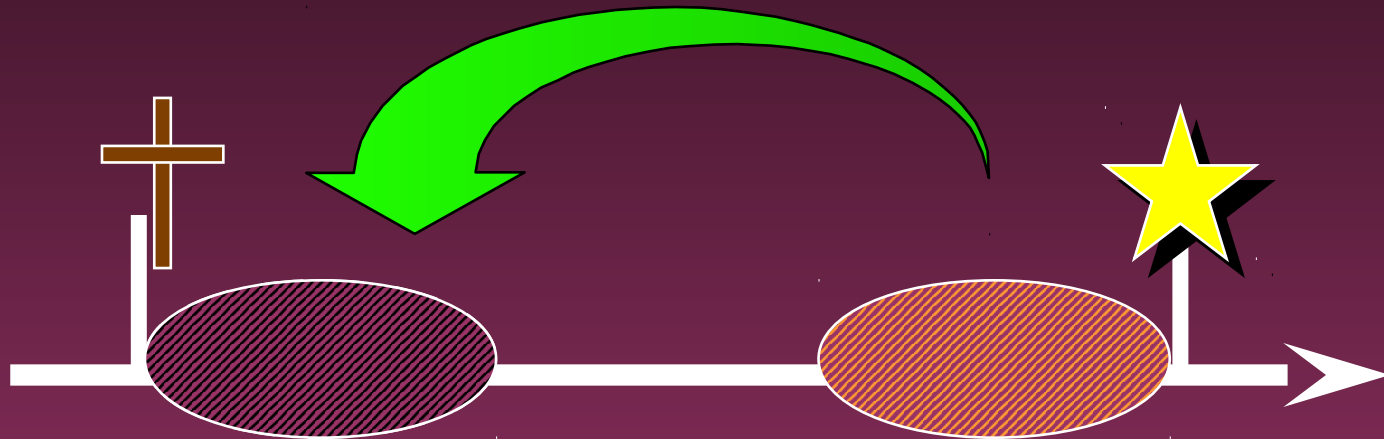
Transition from Roman Empire to Final Crisis View

- Add a second fulfillment



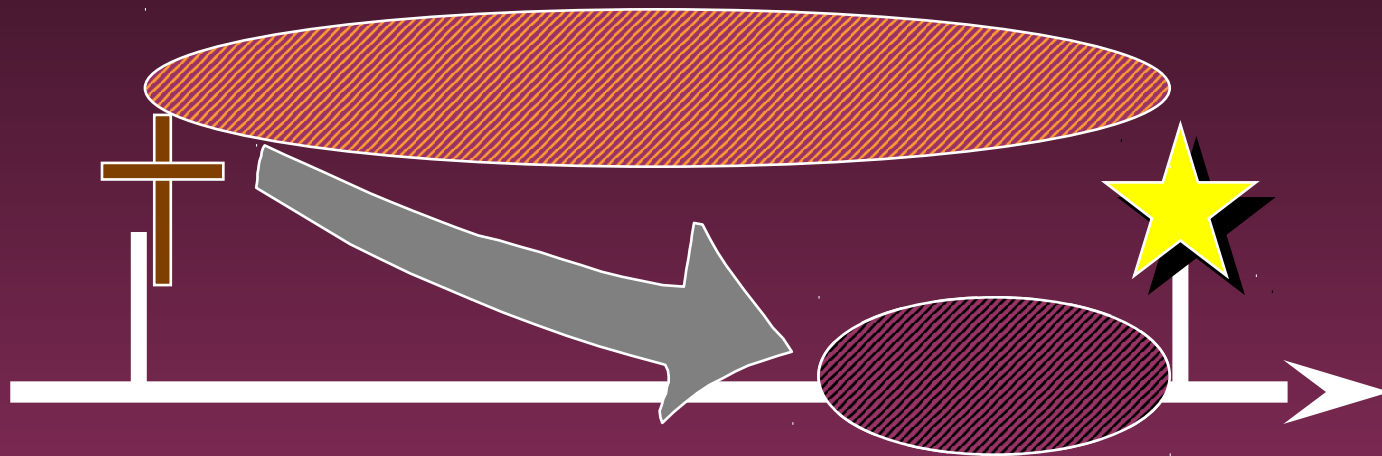
Transition from Final Crisis to Roman Empire View

- Add a foreshadowing



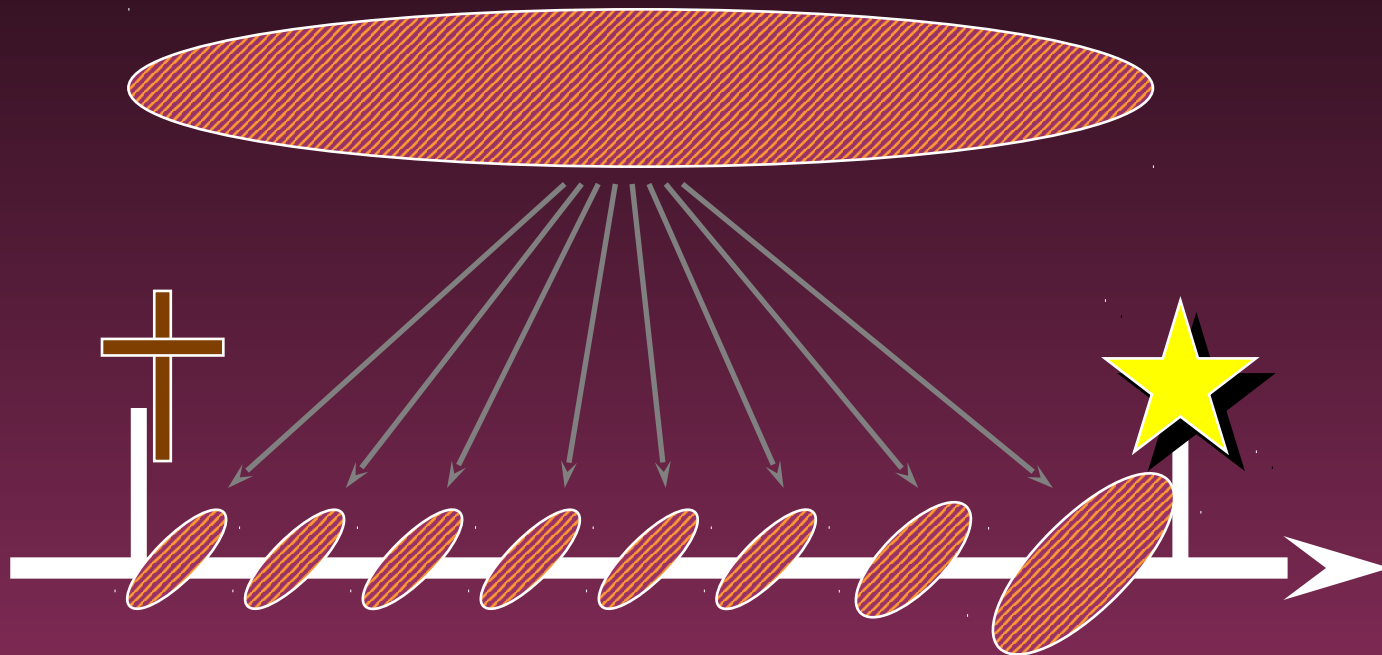
Transition from Church History to Final Crisis View

- **Compress the time line**



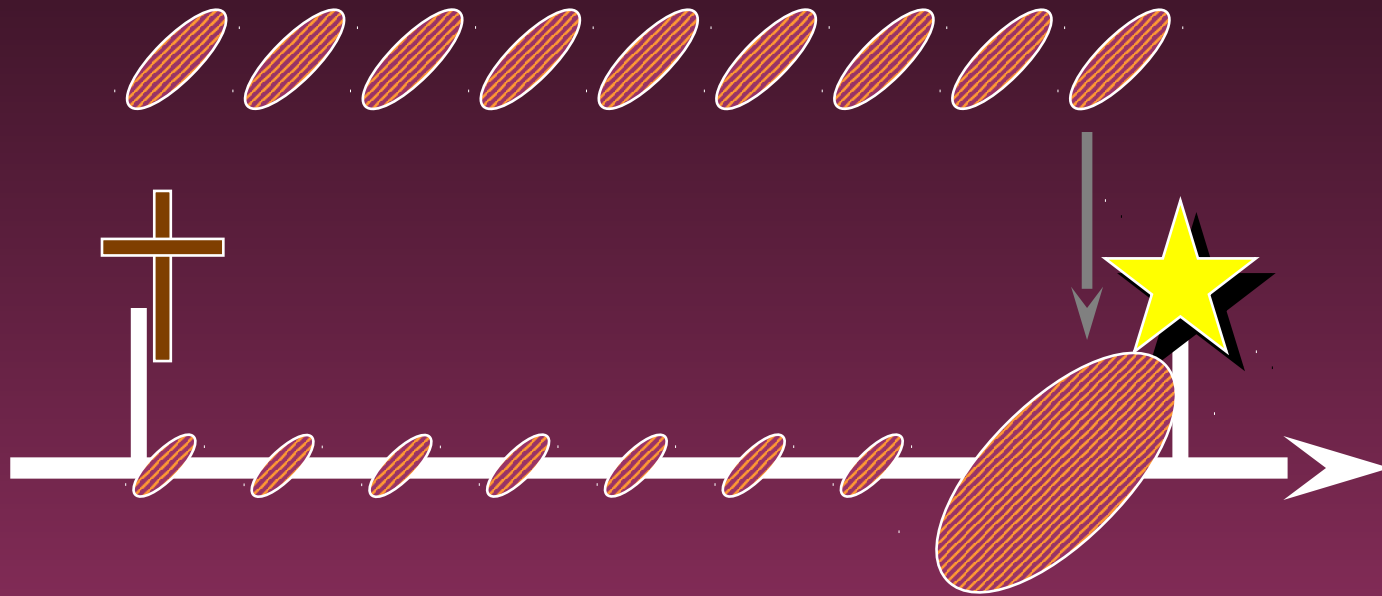
Transition from Church History to Repeated Pattern View

- **Recapitulate**



Transition from Repeated Pattern to Another View

- Find a primary fulfillment of the pattern



Variant Views

- **Early Roman Empire: Fulfillment in the fall of Jerusalem**
- **Recapitulationist.**
Revelation portrays the entire course of history from Roman times to the Second Coming, with the symbols possibly having more than one embodiment and with several “recapitulatory” accounts of this period.

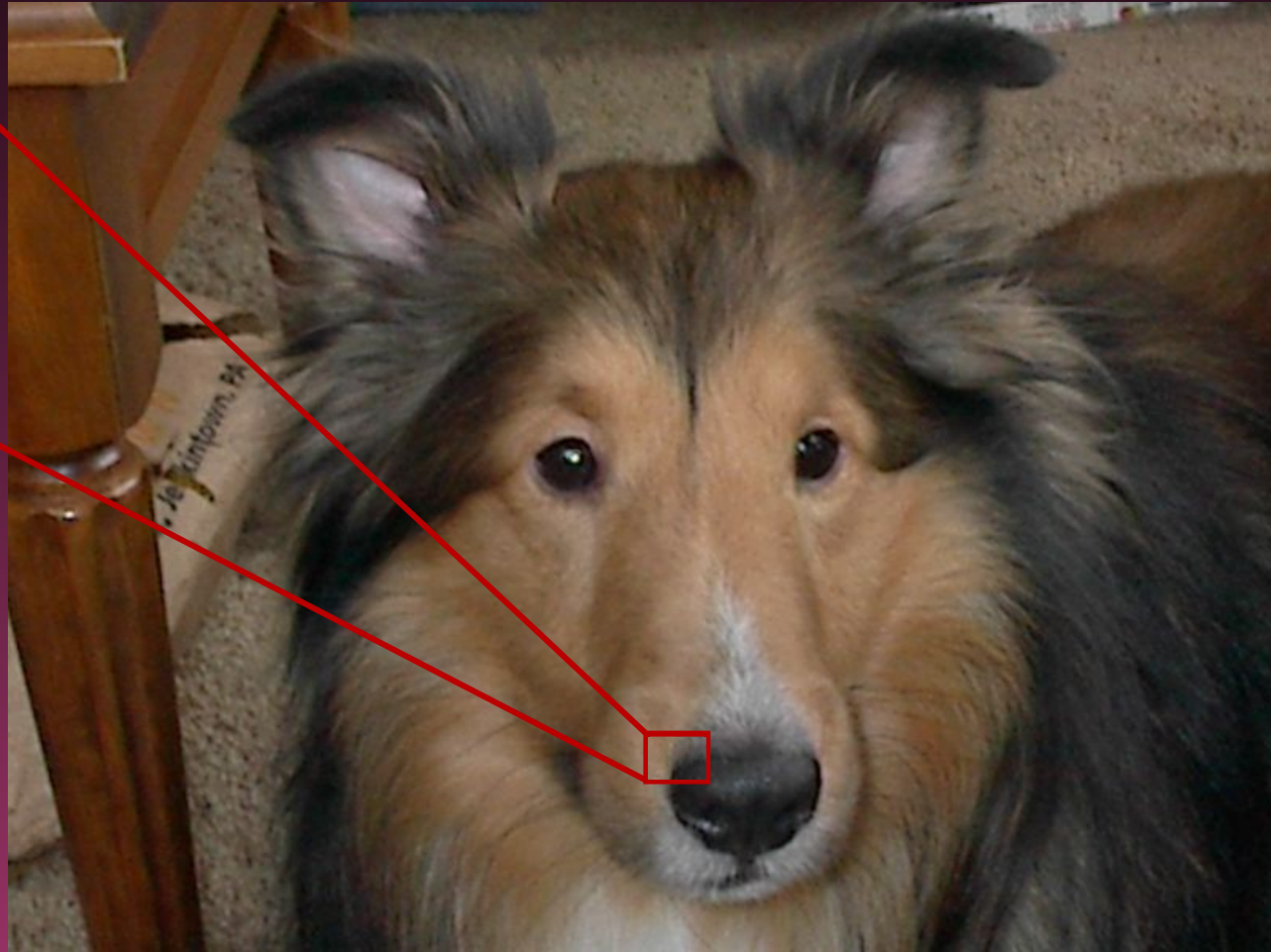
C. Symbolism

Why the Dispute over Revelation?



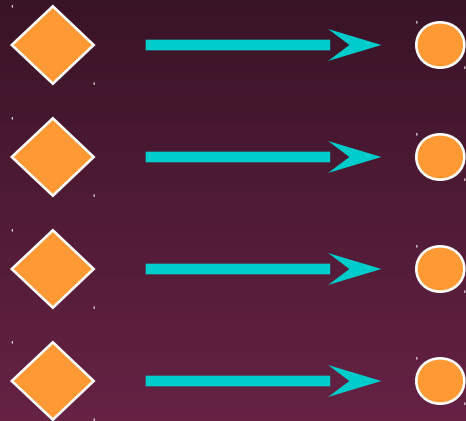
Due to:  symbolism

Meaning of a Symbol



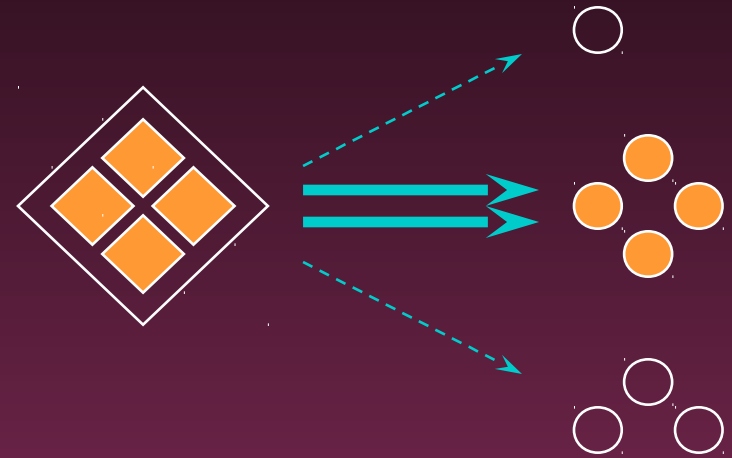
Two Approaches to Symbols

1. Code



- One referent
- Meaning = referent
- Isolated

2. Multifaceted



- Multiple allusions
- Multifaceted impact
- Holistic

Decoding by the Schools

Beast



Roman Emperor

Beast



Future Antichrist

Beast



Pope

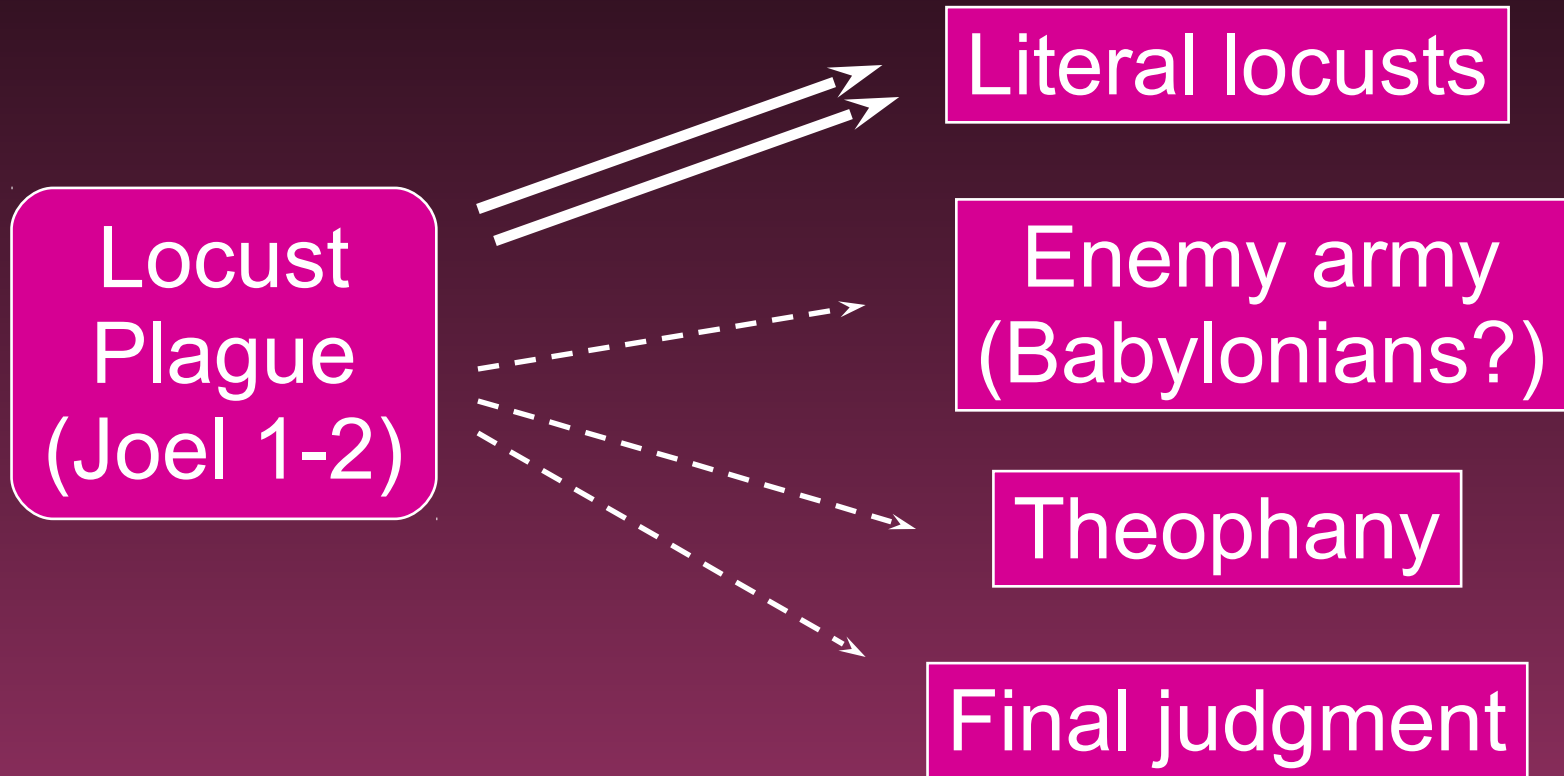
Beast



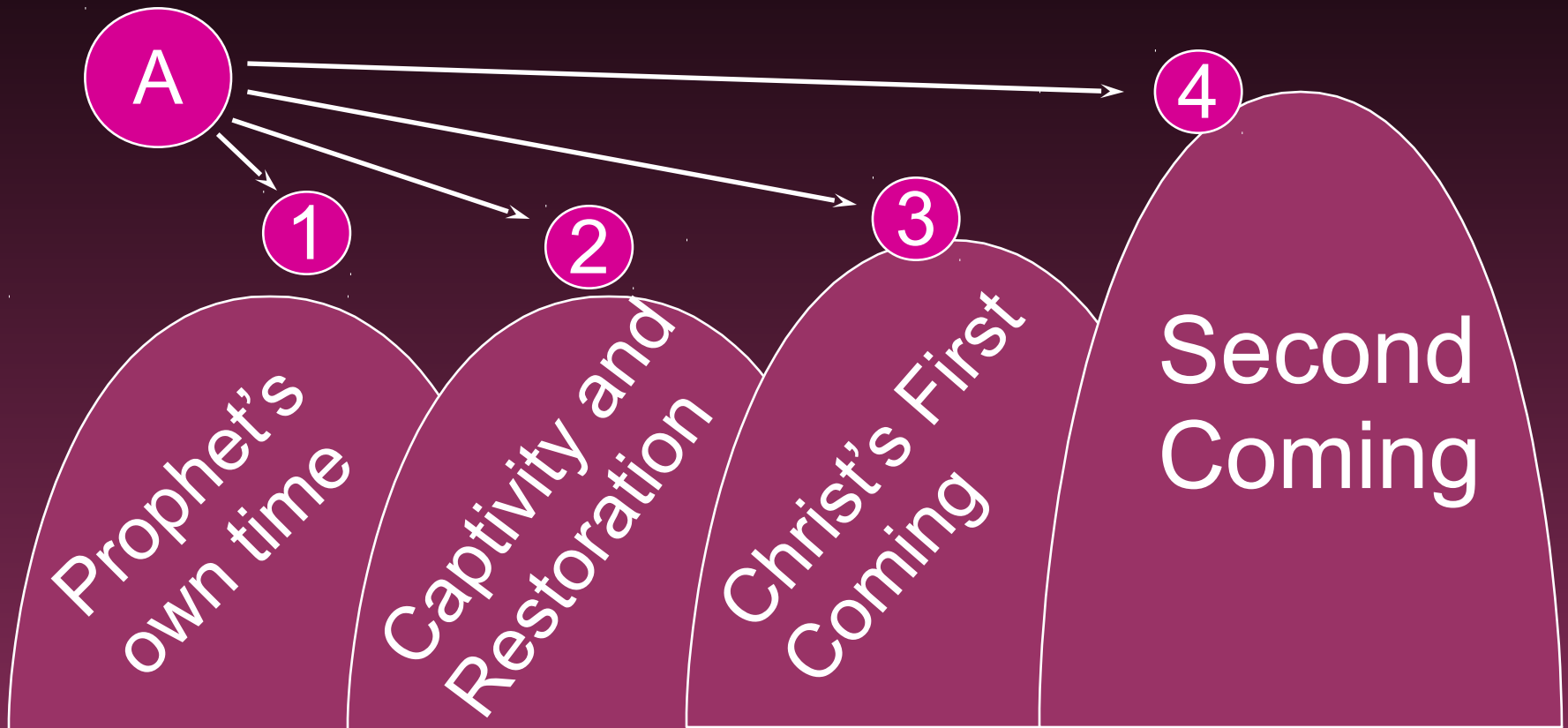
Idolatrous
Government

Prophecy is Poetic

Day of the Lord

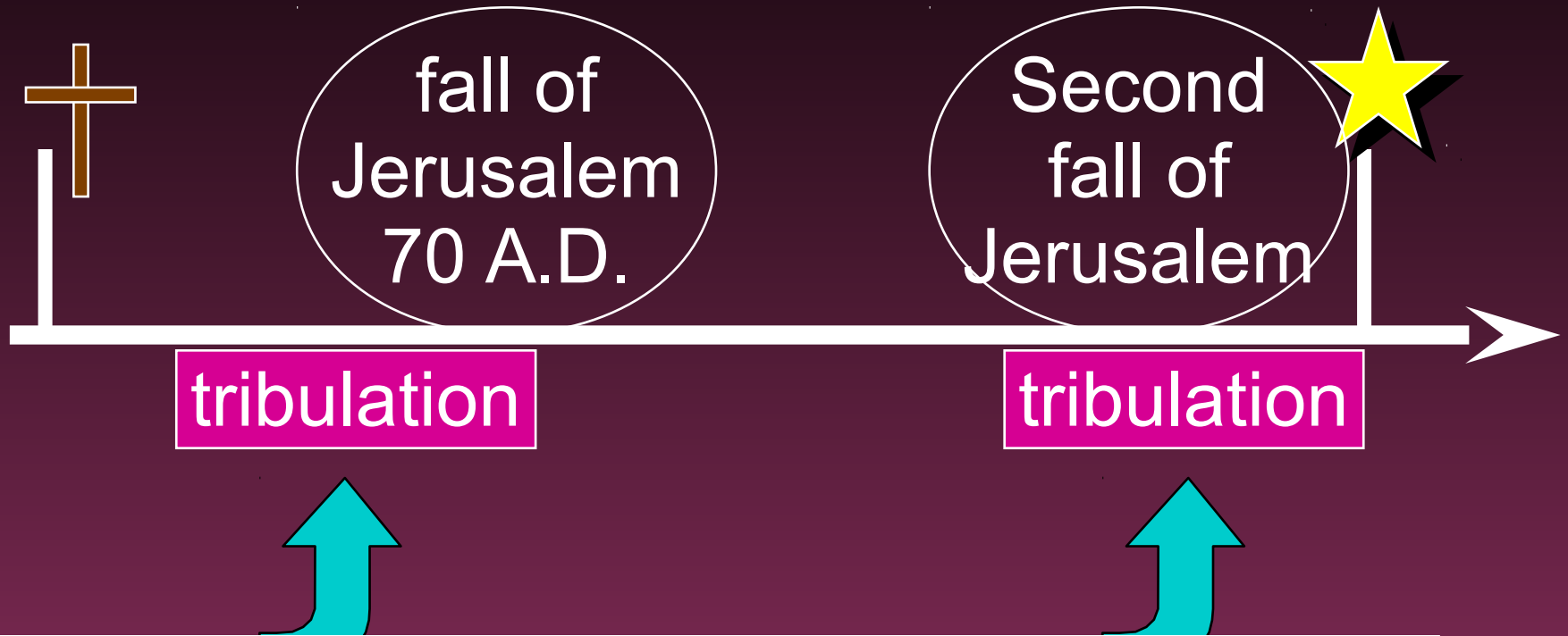


Expanded Understanding of Prophetic Fulfillment



Adapted from Irving Jensen, *Bible Study Charts*

Olivet Discourse (Luke 21)



Double Perspective of Olivet Discourse

Adapted from Irving Jensen, *Bible Study Charts*

Rev. 17:9 Has Two Referents

7 heads of the Beast



7 hills
on which
the woman sits.

(17:9)



7 kings,
5 of whom
have fallen.

(17:10)

More Than Two Planes of Interacting Meaning

For

Beast

- Referent (Roman Emperor?).
- Hideous monstrosity (repulsiveness).
- Combination of beasts from Daniel 7.
- With background of Genesis 1-3, where beasts are subordinate to man.

God-Centered Symbolism

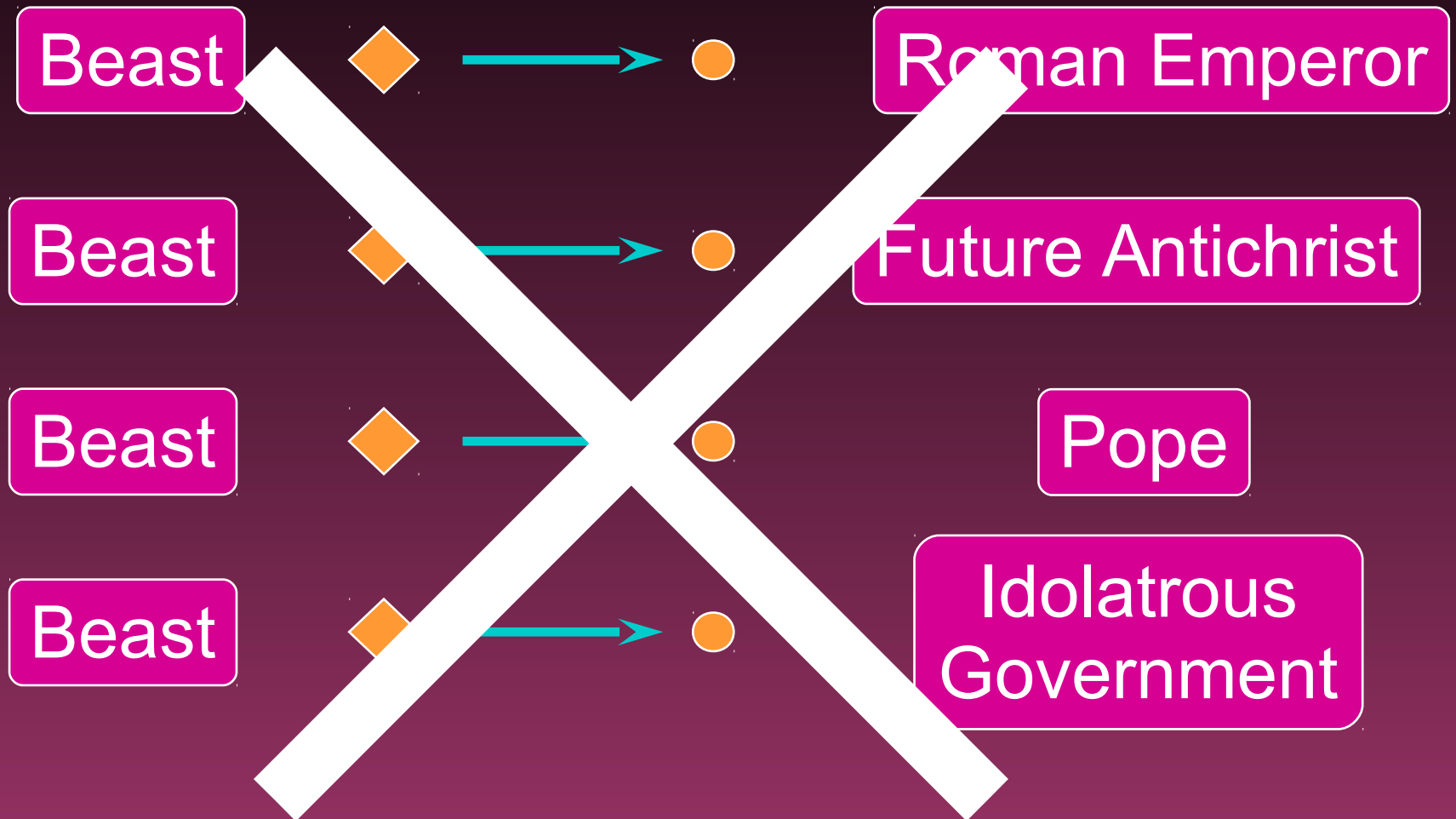


God in theophany is rich,
multifaceted,
nonexhaustible,
Trinitarian.



Symbolism of
Revelation is
multifaceted.

Schools' Decoding Is Inadequate



D. A Positive Approach

Attractions of the Schools

RE

FC

CH

RP



I'm not sure.
They all look good.



Insightful!

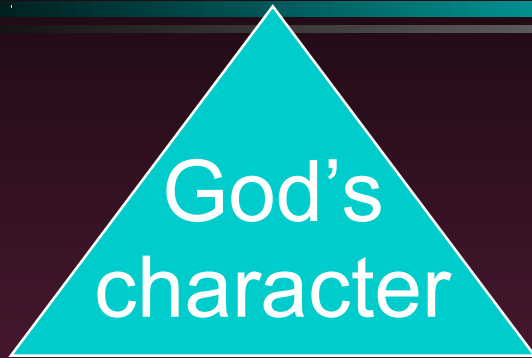
God Is Involved with Us

- Roman Empire
- Final Crisis
- Application NOW
- Repeated
- God loves 7 churches.
- God will come.
- God loves us NOW.
- God is the same at all times.

God is
central



Satan's Repeated Pattern



Satan's
Pattern



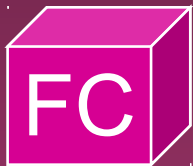
Nothing
new here.



- Satan as a creature must imitate God; he cannot create anything new.
- Since God is the same, Satanic counterfeiting is the same for all times.
- Spiritual war shows a constant pattern.
- Satan suffers repeated defeats.

Some Truth in All Four

- God is always the same.
- God rules all history.
- Spiritual warfare is always the same.



All apply the
same spiritual
principles.

Evidence for Multiple Fulfillment

- **Flexible imagery.**
- **Speaks to people in all times.**
- **Evidence for all.**
- **Necessity of repeating counterfeiting.**

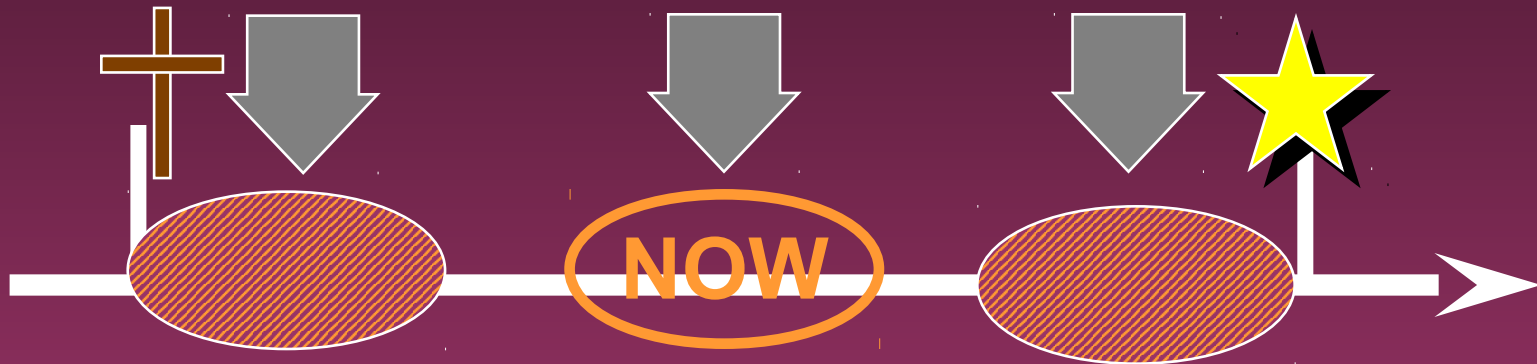
Starting with Repeated Pattern

Symbol

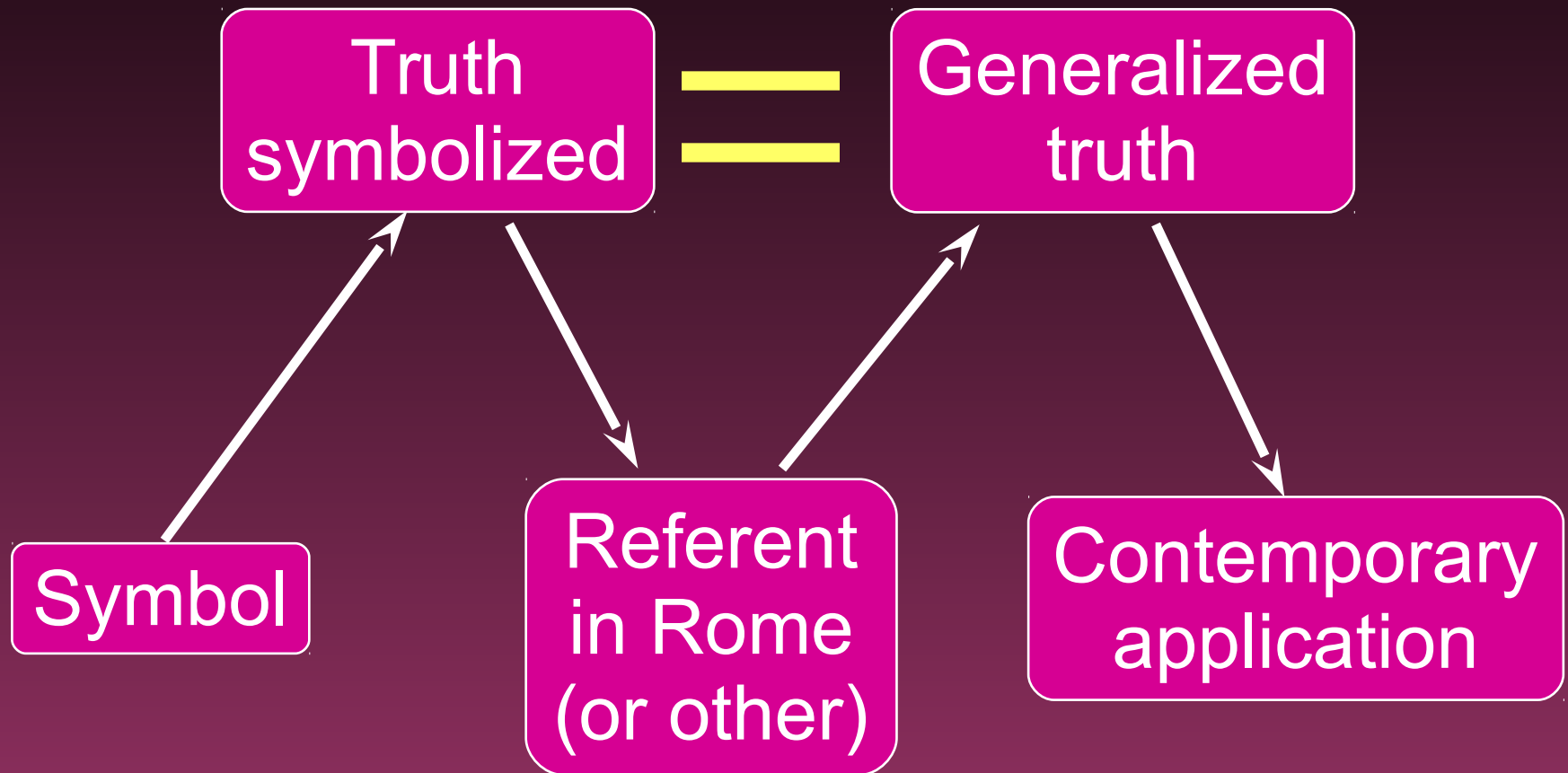


General
principle

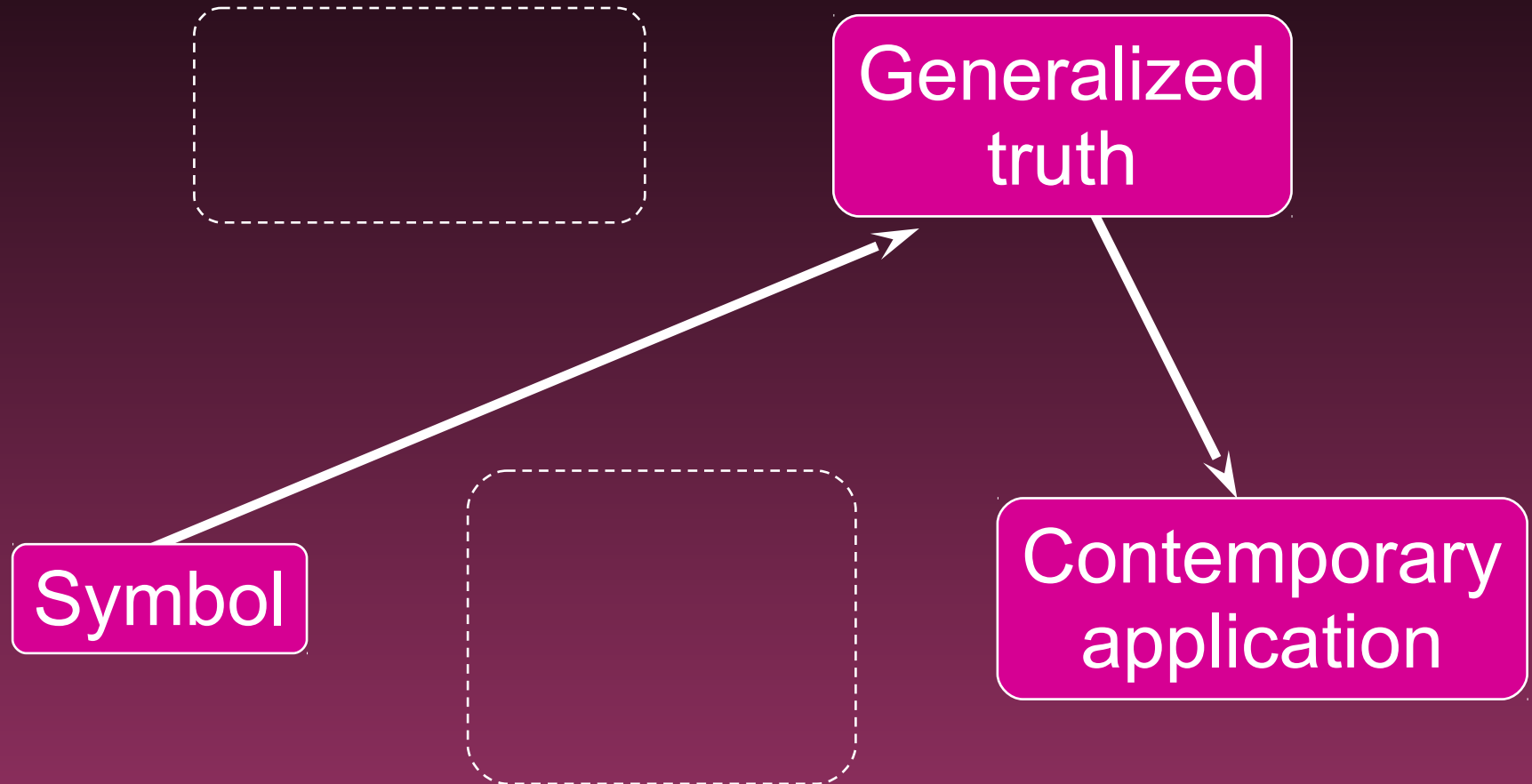
Embodied in other approaches



From Symbol to Application



From Symbol to Application in Repeated Pattern View



Fourfold Interpretation

A Symbol



represents

- Roman
- Final
- Church
- Repeated
- First century embodiment
- Final embodiment
- Embodiment NOW
- A general principle

E. Insight of Roman Empire View

Evidence for Roman View

- **Rev. 2-3.**
- **General principle of relevance to original audience.**
- **Nearness of the “time,” 1:1, 3; 22:10.**
- **Christ threatens to “come” in 2:5, 16; 3:11.**

F. Insight of Final Crisis View

The Endpoint of Fulfillment

- Endpoint when Christ comes, 22:12, 20.
- For NT church, the Second Coming is next on the “calendar,” 2 Thess. 1-2.
- 22:20 is prayer associated with Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22).

Does Revelation Focus on an Earlier “Coming”?

- Rev. 2:5; 2:16; 3:11 speak of Christ “coming”
- He judges the churches, short of final judgment
- This context qualifies 2:5, etc., but not 1:7; 2:12-17; 11:18; 22:7, 20; etc.
- Rev. as a whole offers a cosmic context.

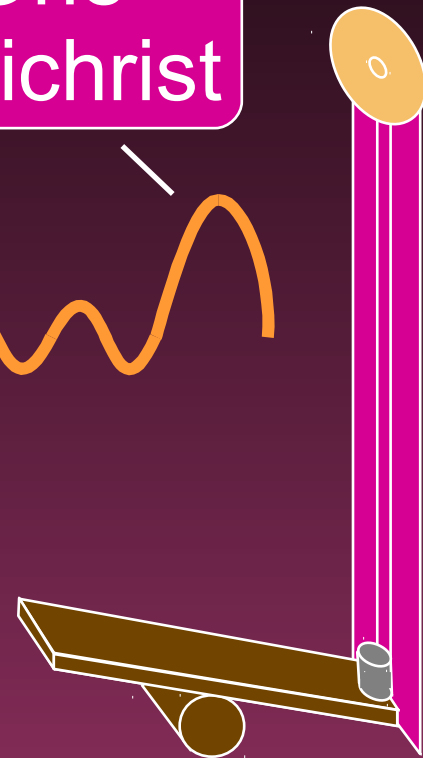
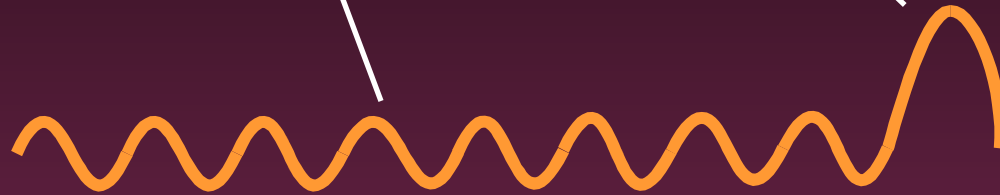
Nearness of Second Coming

- Preliminary judgments foreshadow the climactic judgment.
- Nearness is “structural”: 1 John 2:18.

Nearness

Many
antichrists

One
Antichrist



G. Insight of Repeated Pattern View

Universal Revelance

- Revelation is canon, relevant to now (2 Tim. 3:17).
- Addresses servants of God, 1:1; 22:6, 18.
- “he who has an ear,” 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.
- Pattern of spiritual war is constant.
- Flexible symbolism.
- Rev. 1:1 references Dan. 2:45.

Dan. 2:45 and Rev. 1:1; 4:1

ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ
ταῦτα (Dan. 2:45
Theodotion)

- What? The eschatological kingdom of God.

“what must take
place” ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι
μετὰ ταῦτα (Rev. 4:1)

- OT eschatological prophecy, in the process of realization (inaugurated eschatology)

Daniel and John

