

Understanding Revelation



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Highlights

- ◆ The next four slides are the highlights of this presentation.

God's
plan

Revealing (1:1)



unveiling, disclosure

Christ knows
our need

show, not
keep in the dark

to his servants (you!)

made known

The revelation of
Jesus Christ,
which God gave
him to show his
servants what
must soon take
place. He made it
known ...

How to Approach Revelation

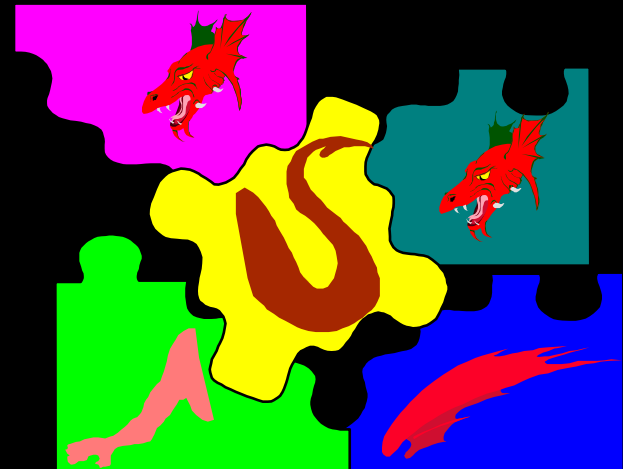
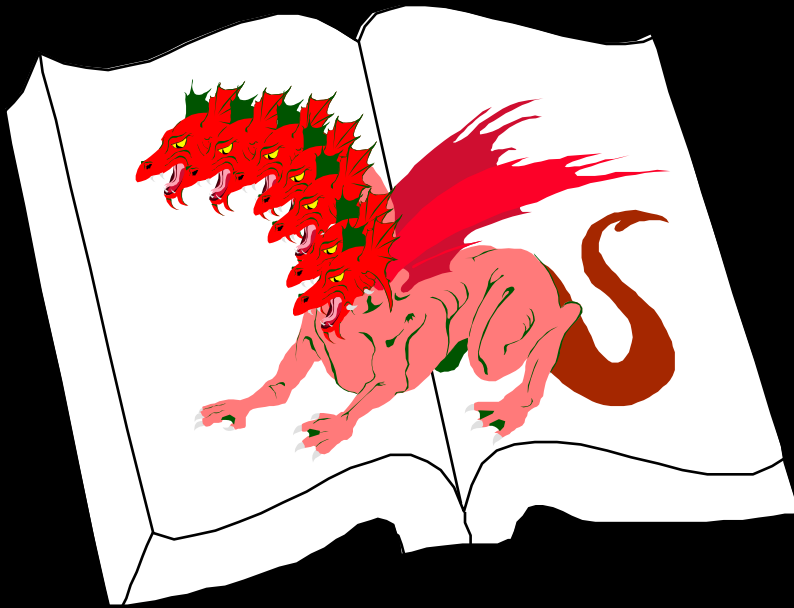
- ◆ Vision of God's victory
- ◆ Summarized by 1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 12:10.
- ◆ God rules history, and will bring it to its consummation in Christ.
- ◆ You can understand.



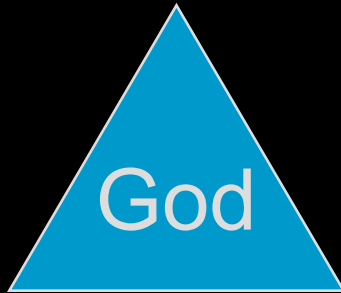
Encouraging!

It's Simple

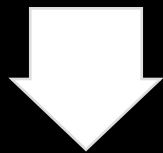
- ◆ A picture book, not a puzzle book.
- ◆ For children also.



God-Centered Symbolism



When he appears, God is
rich, multifaceted,
nonexhaustible,
Trinitarian.



Symbolism of
Revelation is
multifaceted.

A. Revelation Reveals!

Revealing (1:1)

God's
plan



unveiling, disclosure

Christ knows
our need

show, not
keep in the dark


to his servants (you!)

made known

The revelation of
Jesus Christ,
which God gave
him to show to his
servants the things
that must soon
take place. He
made it known ...

Blessing for Reading (1:3)


“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it.”



- ◆ Explicit blessing for reading. Extra encouragement.
- ◆ “Keep” means it’s practical.
 - Strengthening the heart, not tickling the fancy.

Blessing for Reading (1:3)

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it.”



- ◆ The only book of the Bible with an explicit blessing for reading. Extra encouragement.
- ◆ “Keep” means it’s practical. Strengthening the heart, not tickling the fancy.

B. Theme of Revelation

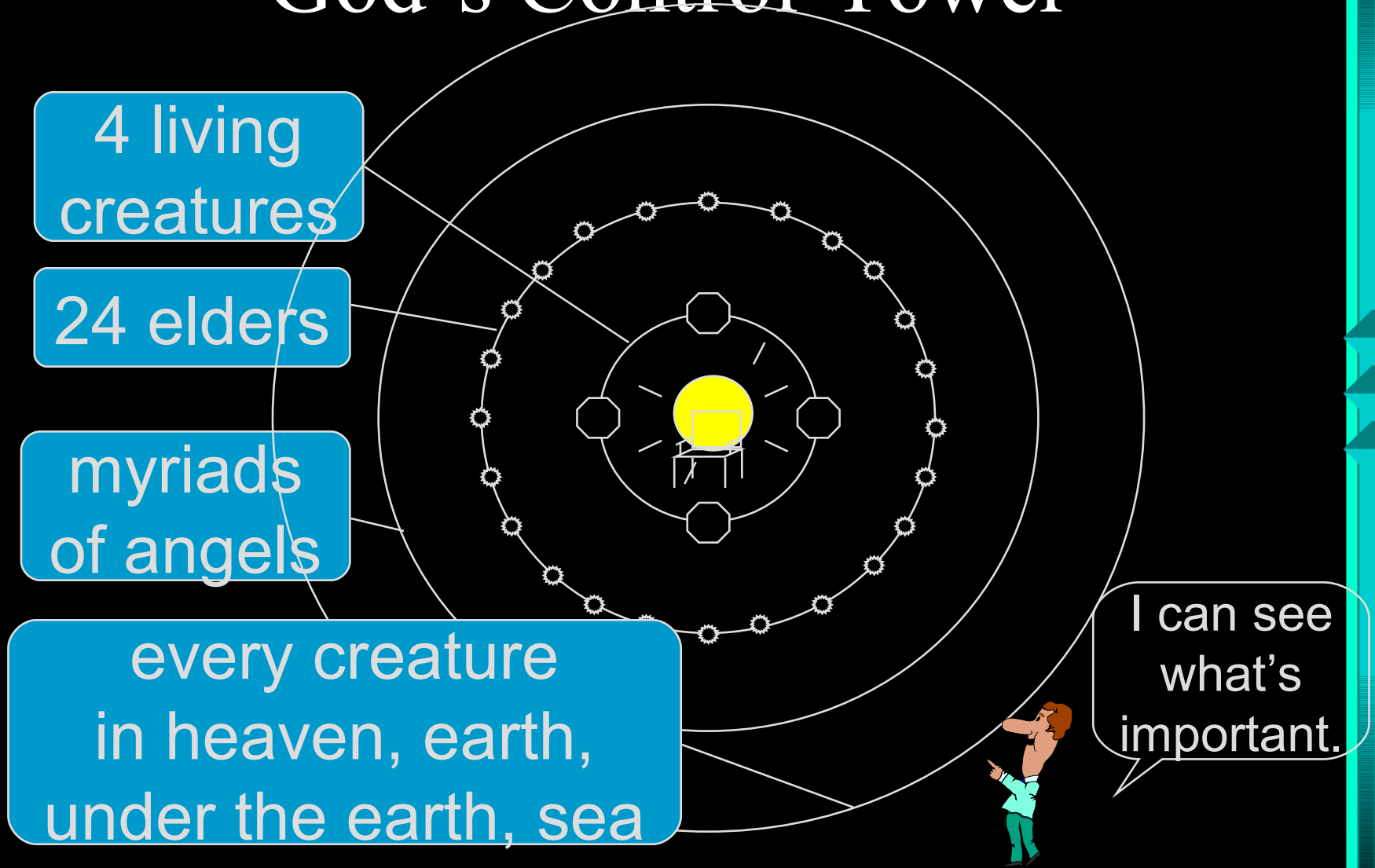
The Invitation

4:1 After this I looked, and behold, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.”

4:2 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne! 4:3 And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald. 4:4 Round the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.

4:5 From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God; 4:6 and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

God's Control-Tower



How to Approach Revelation

- ◆ Vision of God's victory
- ◆ 1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 12:10

1 John 5:4-5

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Revelation 17:14

They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.

Revelation 12:10

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

How to Approach Revelation

- ◆ Vision of God's victory
- ◆ 1 John 5:4-5; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 12:10
- ◆ God rules history, and will bring it to its consummation in Christ.
- ◆ You can understand.



Encouraging!

C. Clarity of Revelation

Are Its Symbols Difficult?

Yes

- ◆ Unfamiliar
- ◆ Apocalyptic
- ◆ Need OT background

No

- ◆ It's obvious.

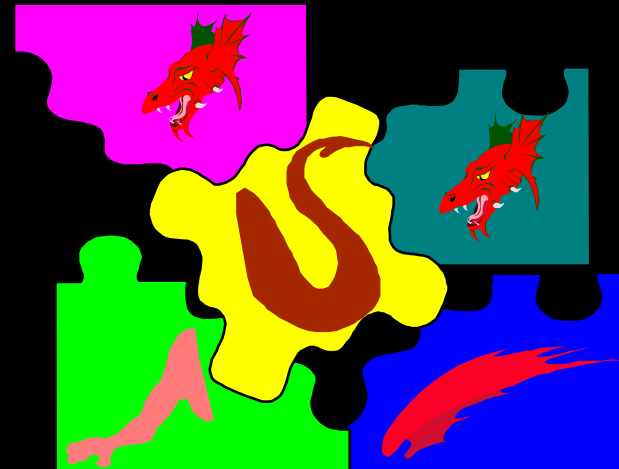
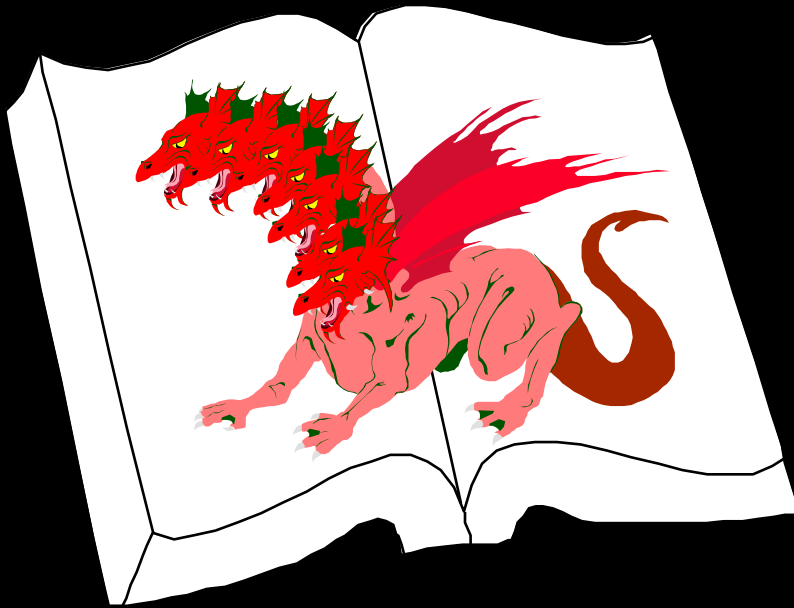


Fearsome!
Hideous!



It's Simple

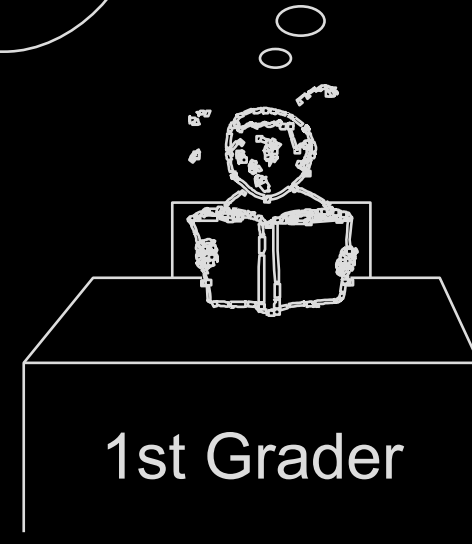
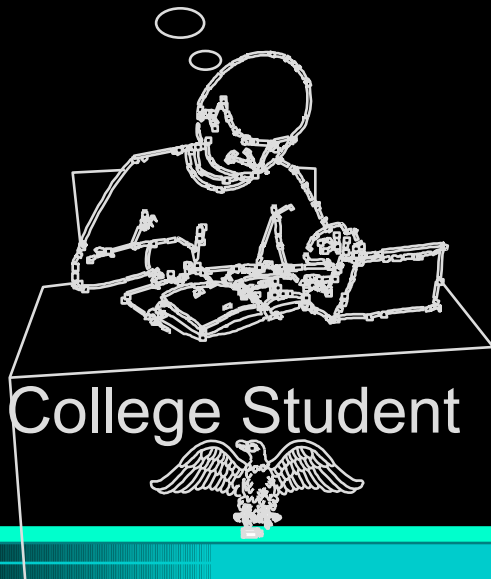
- ◆ A picture book, not a puzzle book.
- ◆ For children also.



See the Whole

Hmm.... Let's see now. What does the "locust" of Rev. 9 mean? The "horse" part must refer to one of the months of the Chinese calendar. "Crowns of gold" must refer to Babylonian kings. "Women's hair" surely suggests that it is women who will bring about the final downfall of mankind. "Scorpion tails" ... hmm... Now let me see.

Awesome!
It's a **monster!**



The Majesty of Christ

- ◆ Christ is our friend (John 15:14-15).
- ◆ He is also our majestic, awesome king!

Not a tame lion!



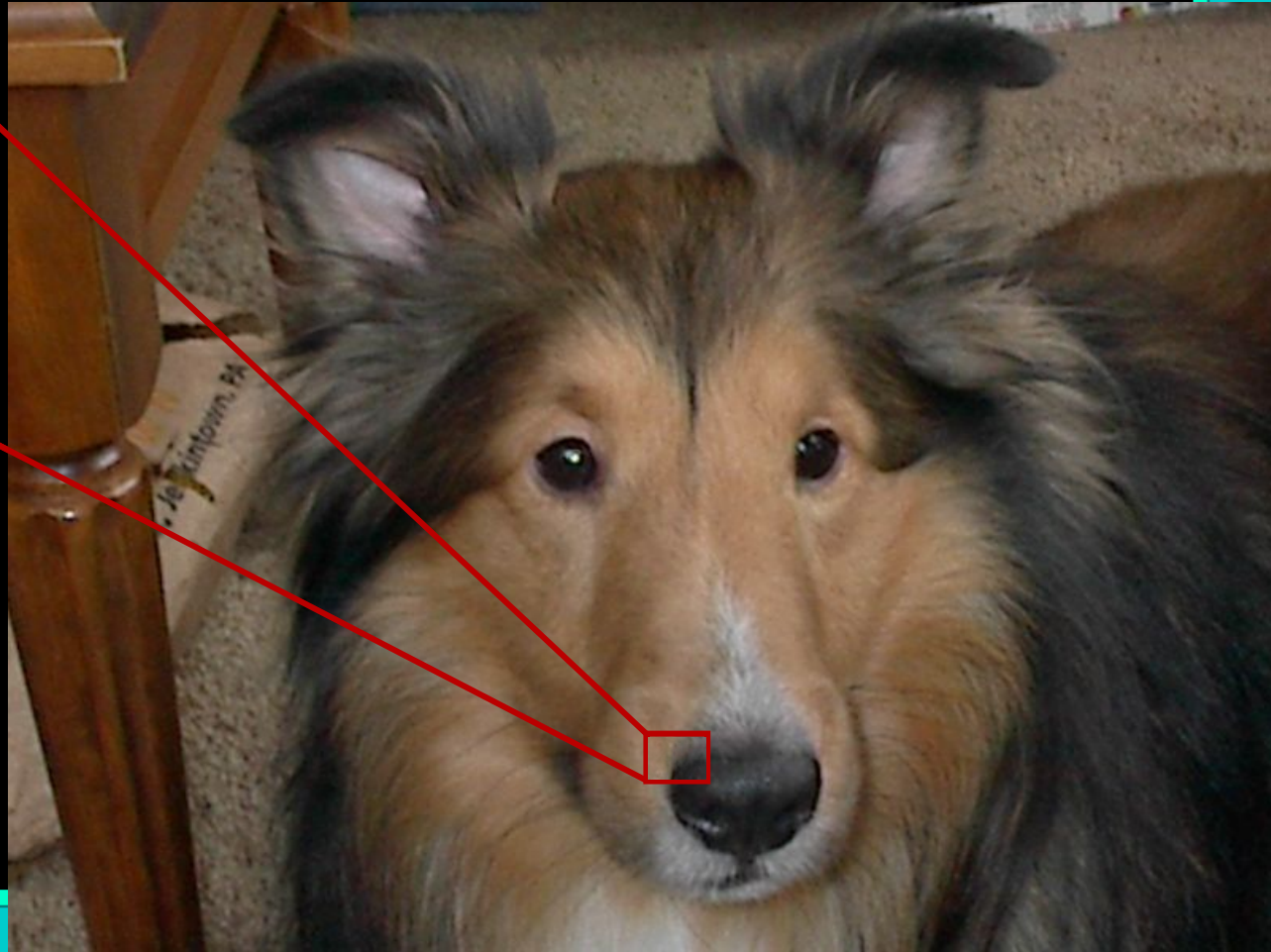
D. Symbols in Revelation

Why the Dispute over Revelation?



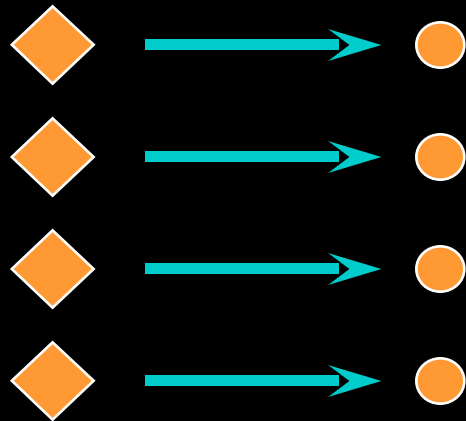
Due to:  symbolism

Meaning of a Symbol



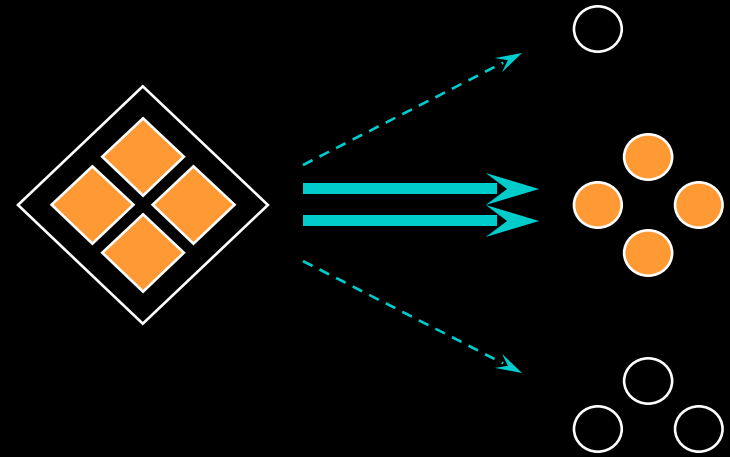
Two Approaches to Symbols

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

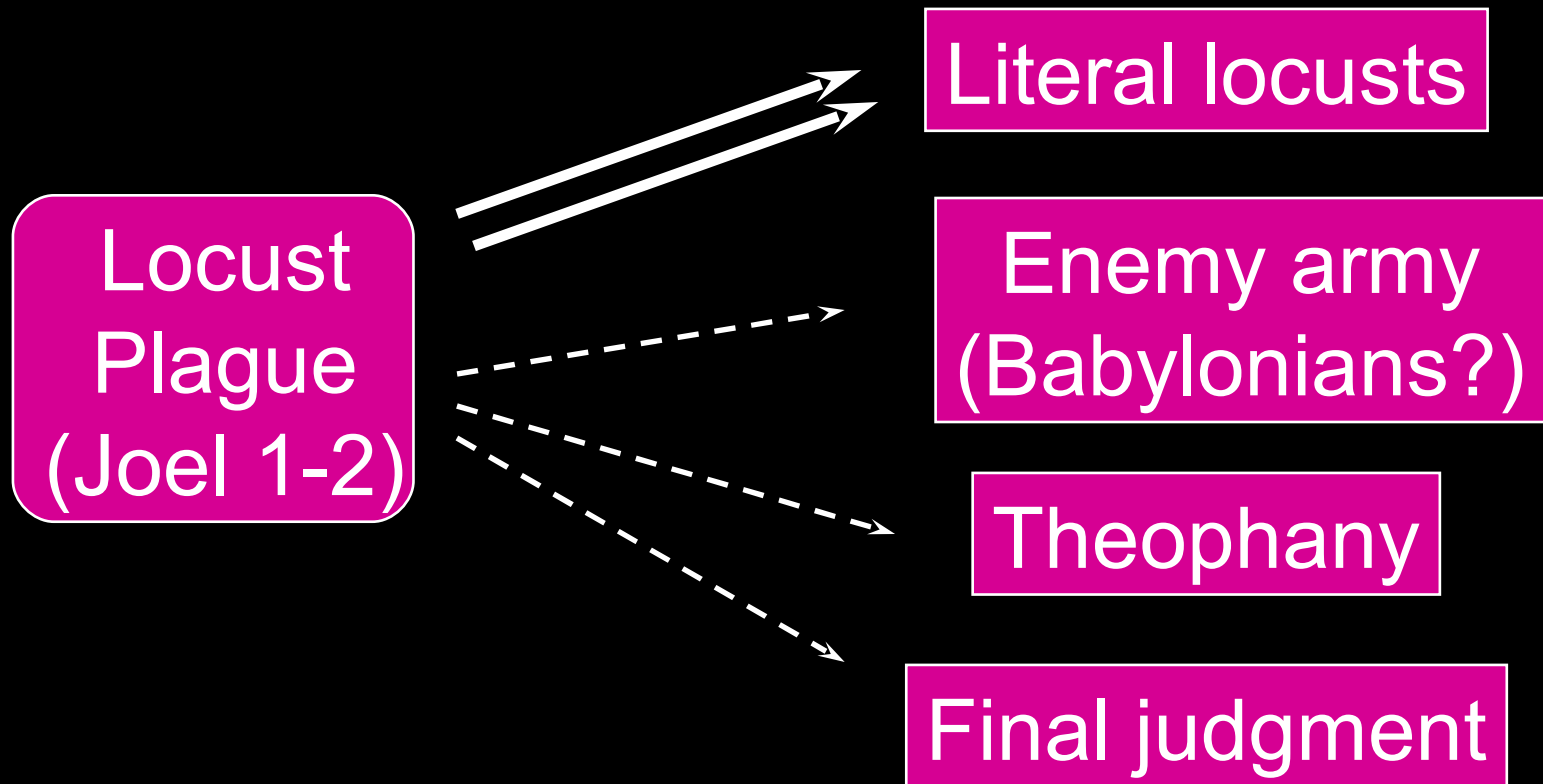
Beast



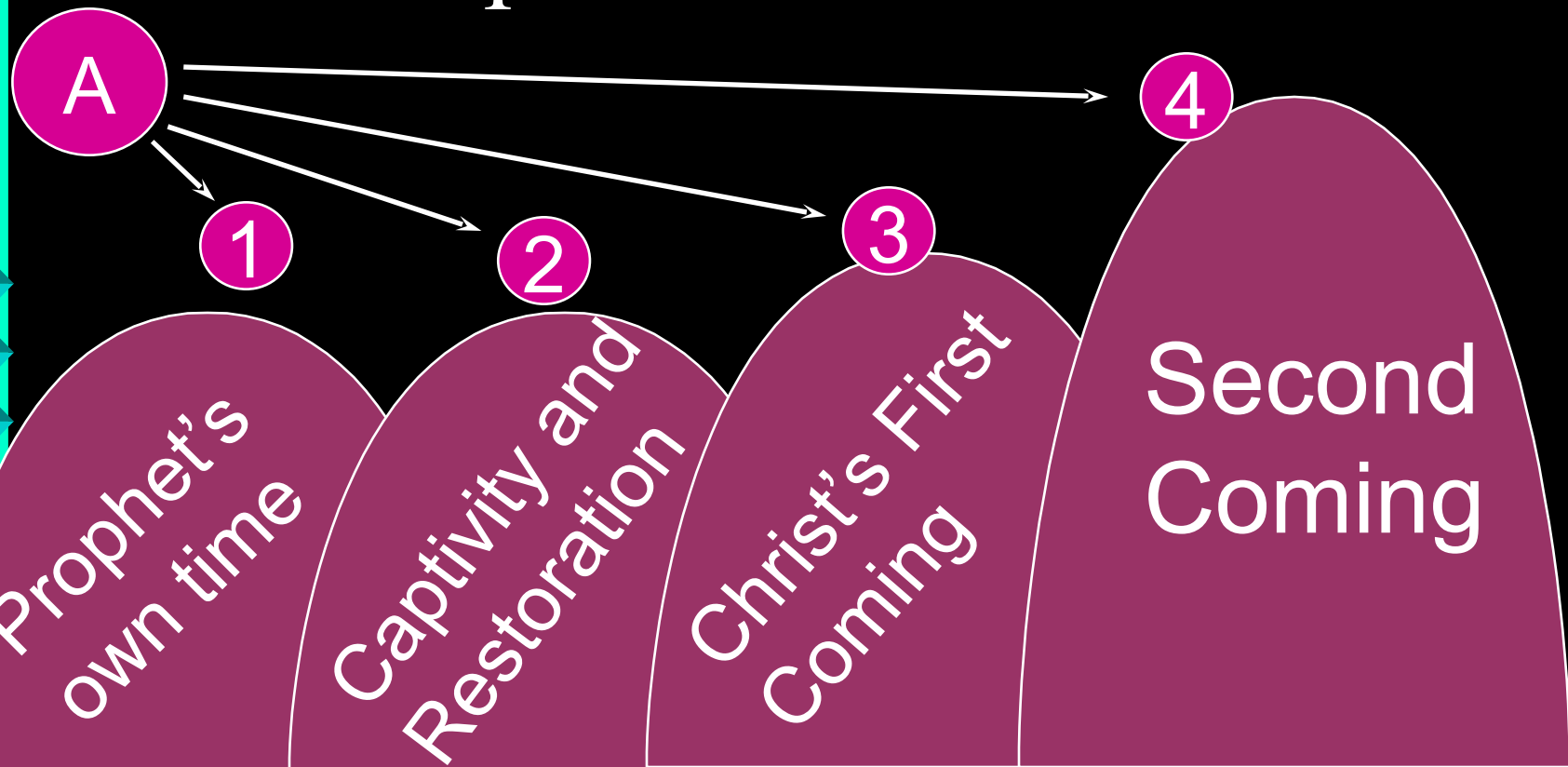
Idolatrous
Government

Prophecy is Poetic

Day of the Lord

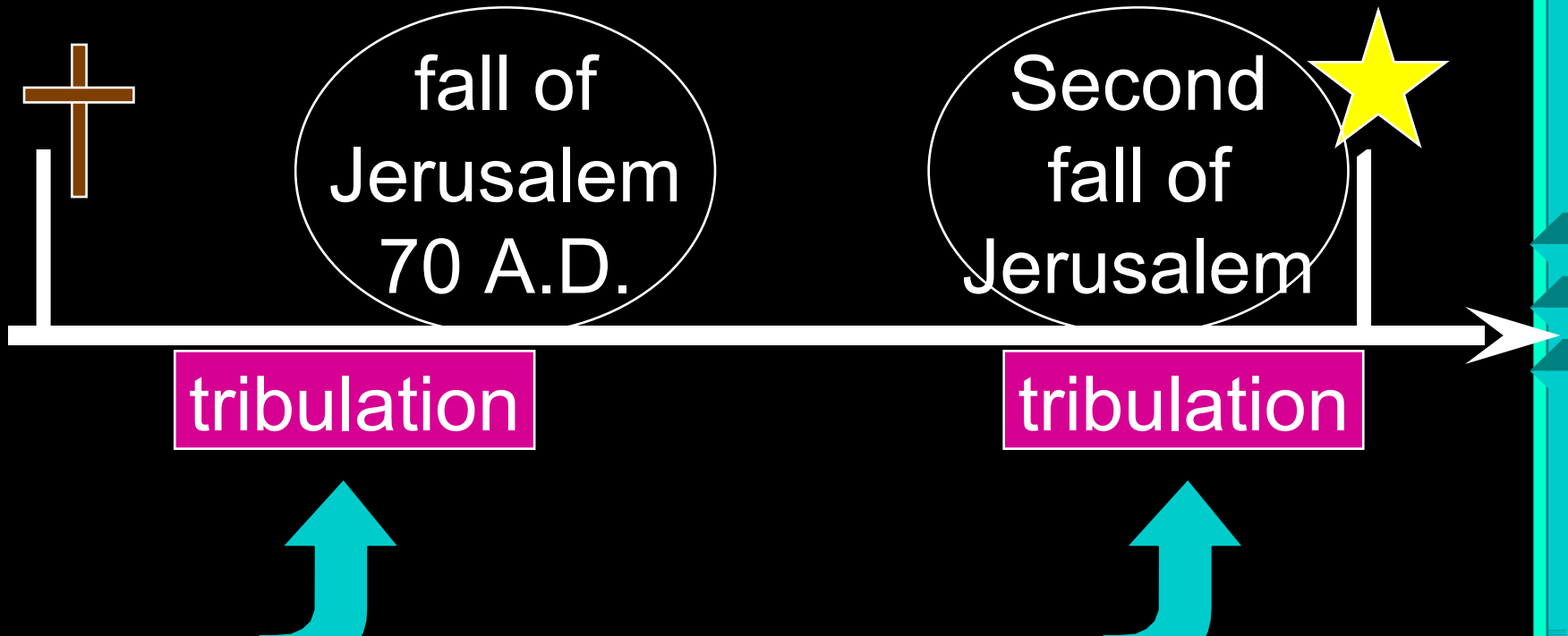


Expanded Understanding of Prophetic Fulfillment



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)

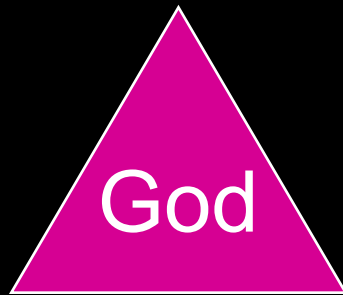
More Than Two Planes of Interacting Meaning

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

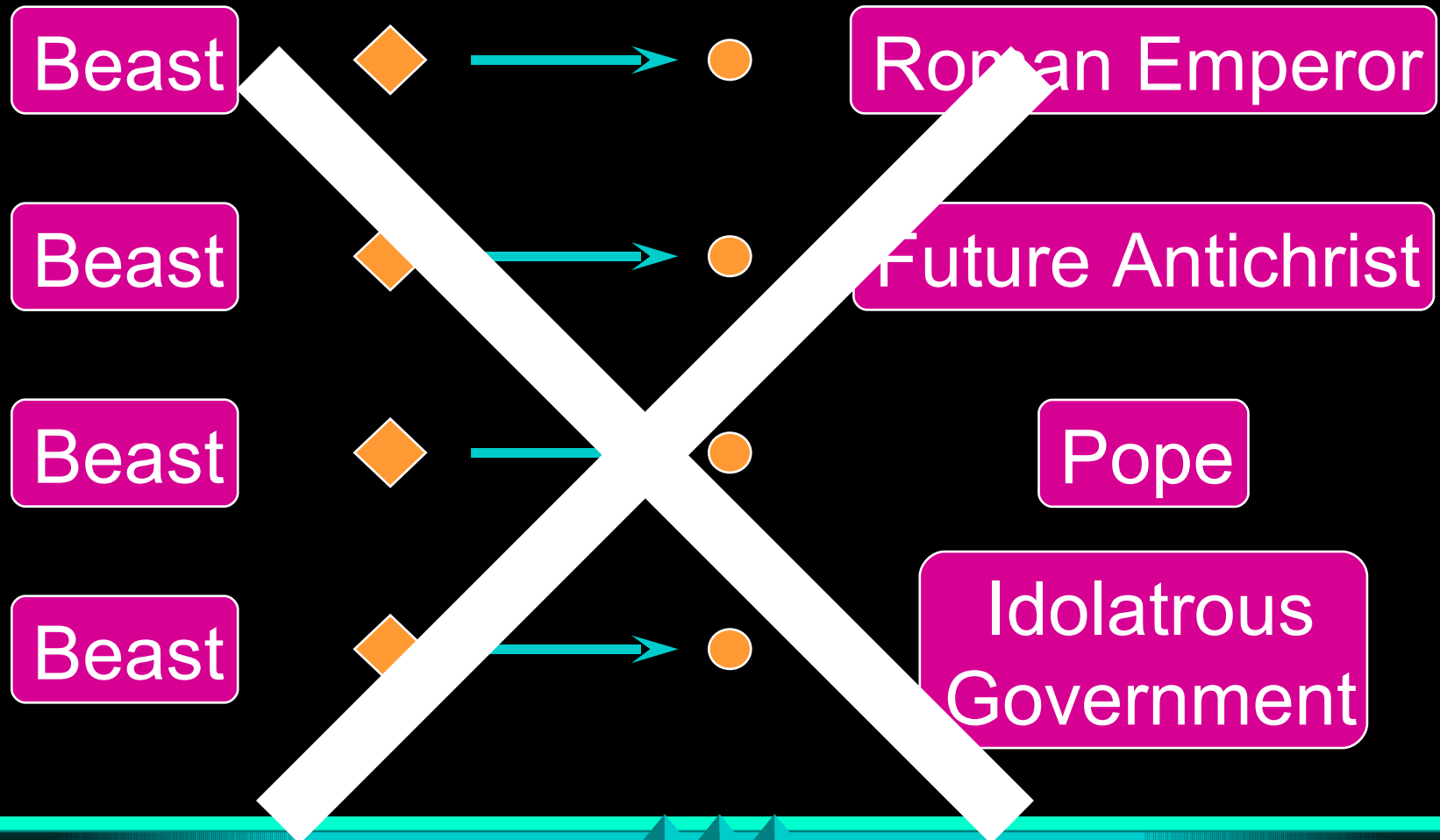


God in theophany is rich,
multifaceted,
nonexhaustible,
Trinitarian.



Symbolism of
Revelation is
multifaceted.

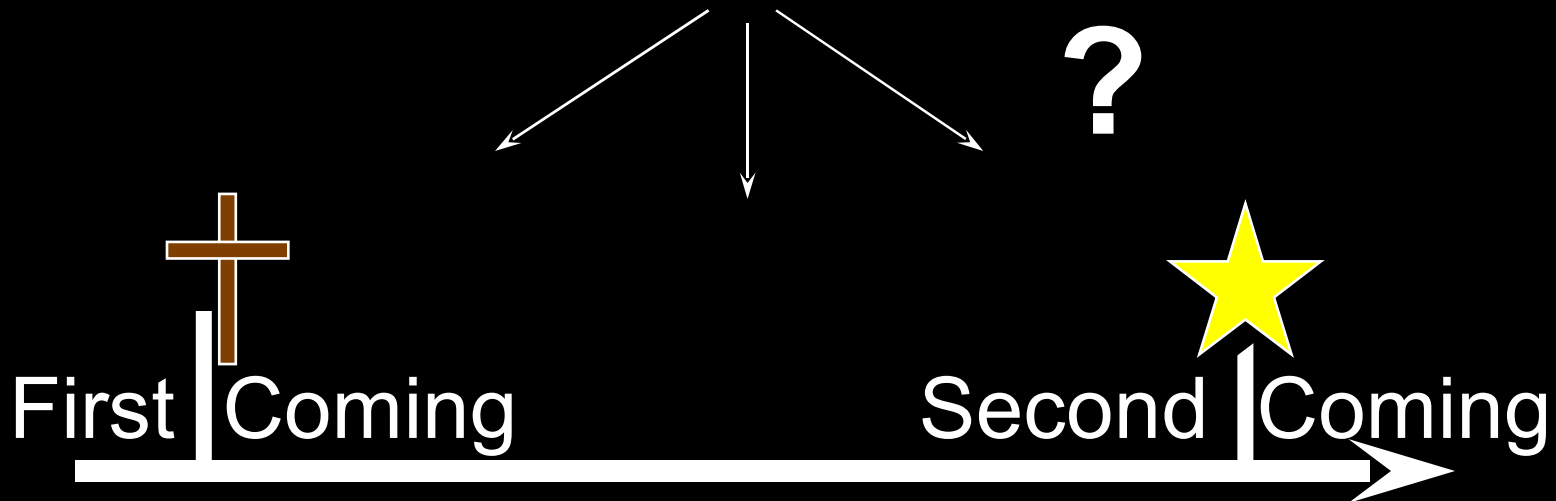
Schools' Decoding is Inadequate



E. Four Schools

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.”



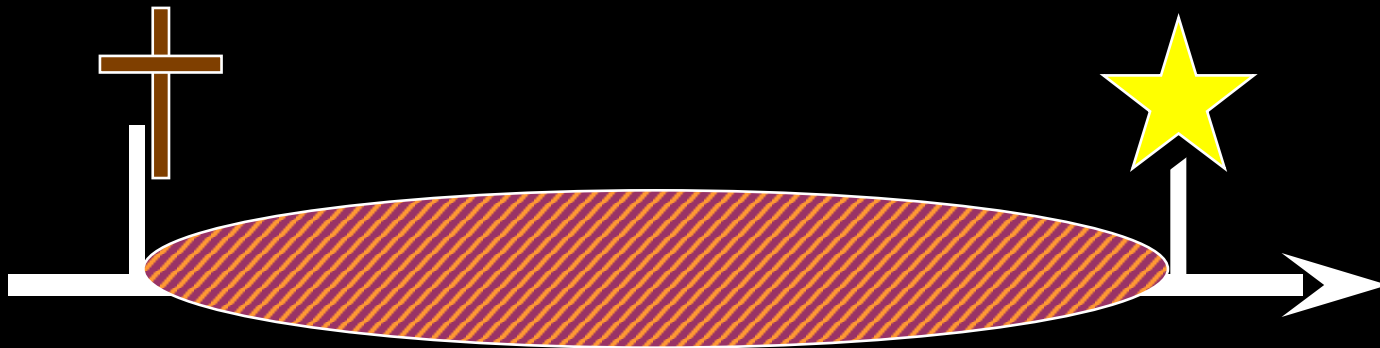
Final Crisis View (Futurist)

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



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.



Repeated Pattern View (Idealist)

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



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



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.

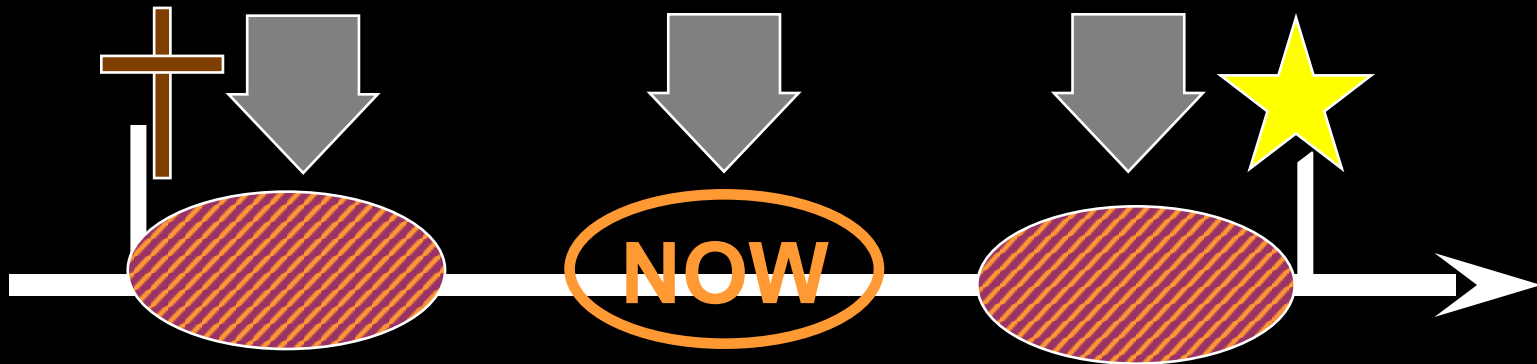
Starting with Repeated Pattern

Symbol



General
principle

Embodied in other approaches



F. Benefits of Revelation



Attack on Sins

- ◆ **Disp. Literalism**
- ◆ **Modernist unbelief**
- ◆ **Secularist atheism**
- ◆ **Hedonism**
- ◆ **False religion**
- ◆ **Symbolically deep**
- ◆ **Supernatural**
- ◆ **Theocentric**
- ◆ **Exposing sin**
- ◆ **Exposing idolatry**

Encouragements about Rev.

- ◆ Revelation is inspired Scripture.
- ◆ God knew the difficulties.
- ◆ Profitable, 2 Tim. 3:17.
- ◆ For servants of Christ, Rev. 1:1.
- ◆ With explicit blessing, Rev. 1:3.



Let's get
going.

Dealing with Disputes

- The interpretive challenge
(Swete, p. ccvii)



Spiritually
challenging.

- and patience (Prov. 14:15)

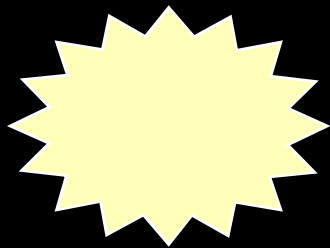


Relevance to Our Time

- ◆ It always speaks to people under persecution.
- ◆ Dispensationalism needs a positive answer.
- ◆ It attacks modern sins.

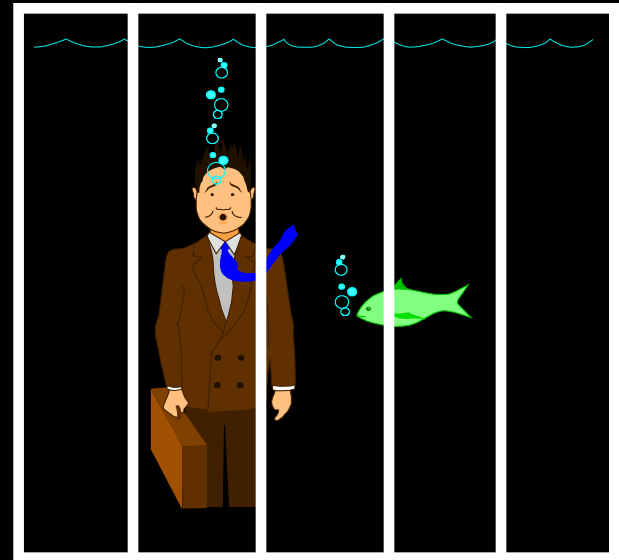
Renewing Your Mind

Glory of God in
Revelation



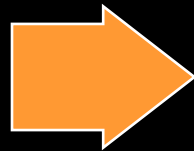
escape,
renewal

Western Culture



Envisioning the Future

View of
future



- ➔ **Dealing with bewilderment**
- ➔ **Grasping possibilities**
- ➔ **God's mind**
- ➔ **Cosmic framework**
- ➔ **New values**

Robert Scholes (Structural Fabulation, p. 19), quoting Olaf Stapledon, preface to Last and First Men:

Beauty of Revelation

- ◆ “Within this elaborate plan [of 7 7’s] is developed the action of a prophetic poem unsurpassed in sacred or profane literature in either the grandeur of its poetic imagery, or the superb sweep of its prophetic vision.” (B. B. Warfield: *Selected Short Writings* 2:86).

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

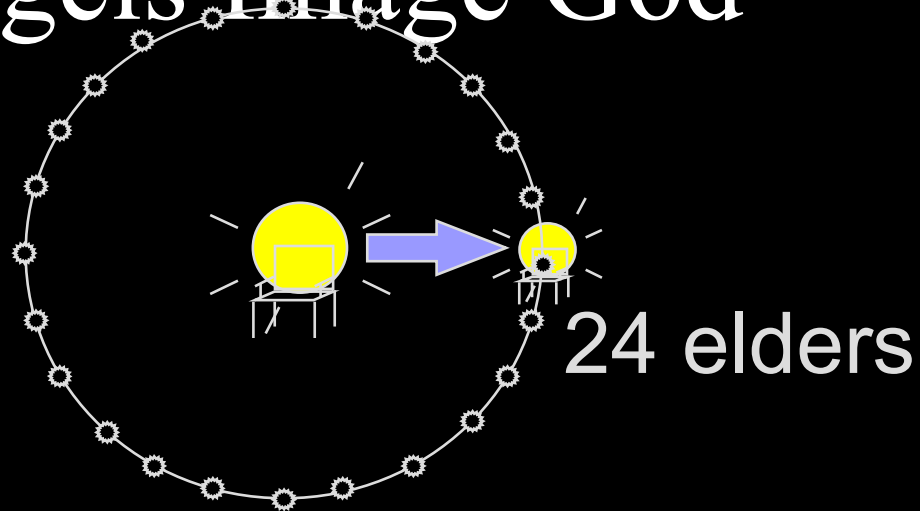


Alternate Ending

- ◆ The following ending can be used in a presentation where there is not time to develop the theme of theophany fully.

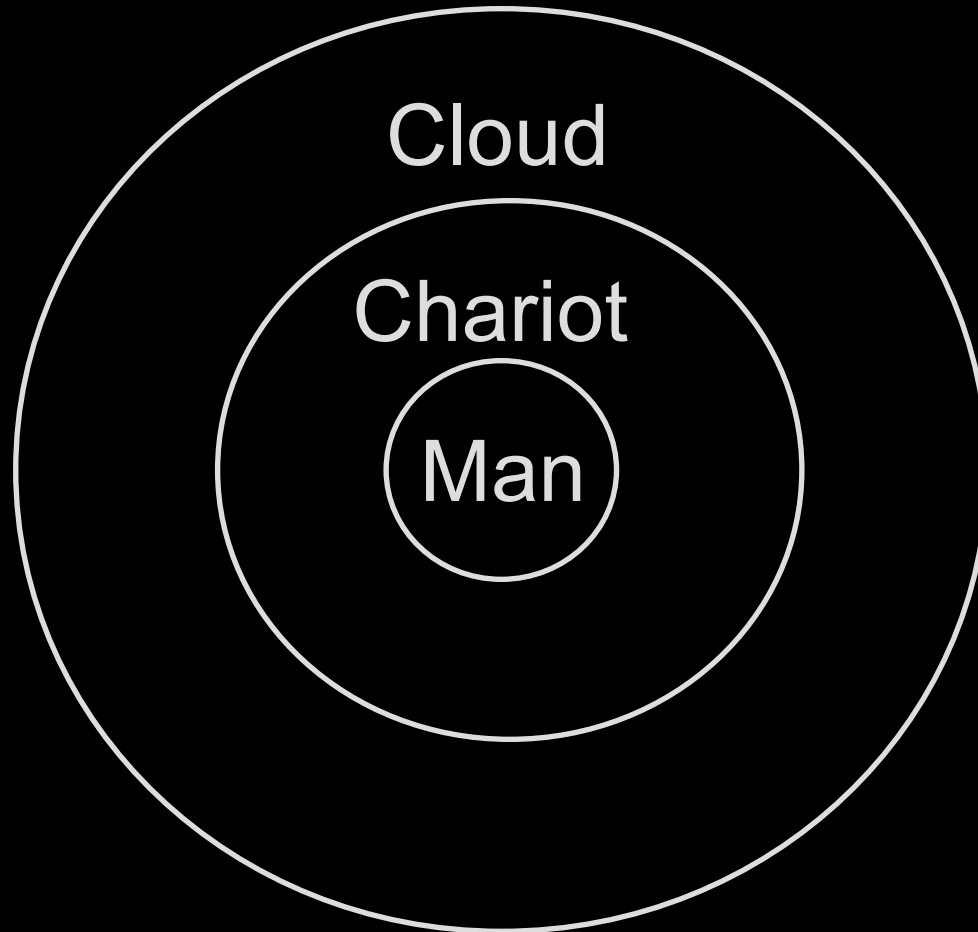
G. God's Glory

Angels Image God

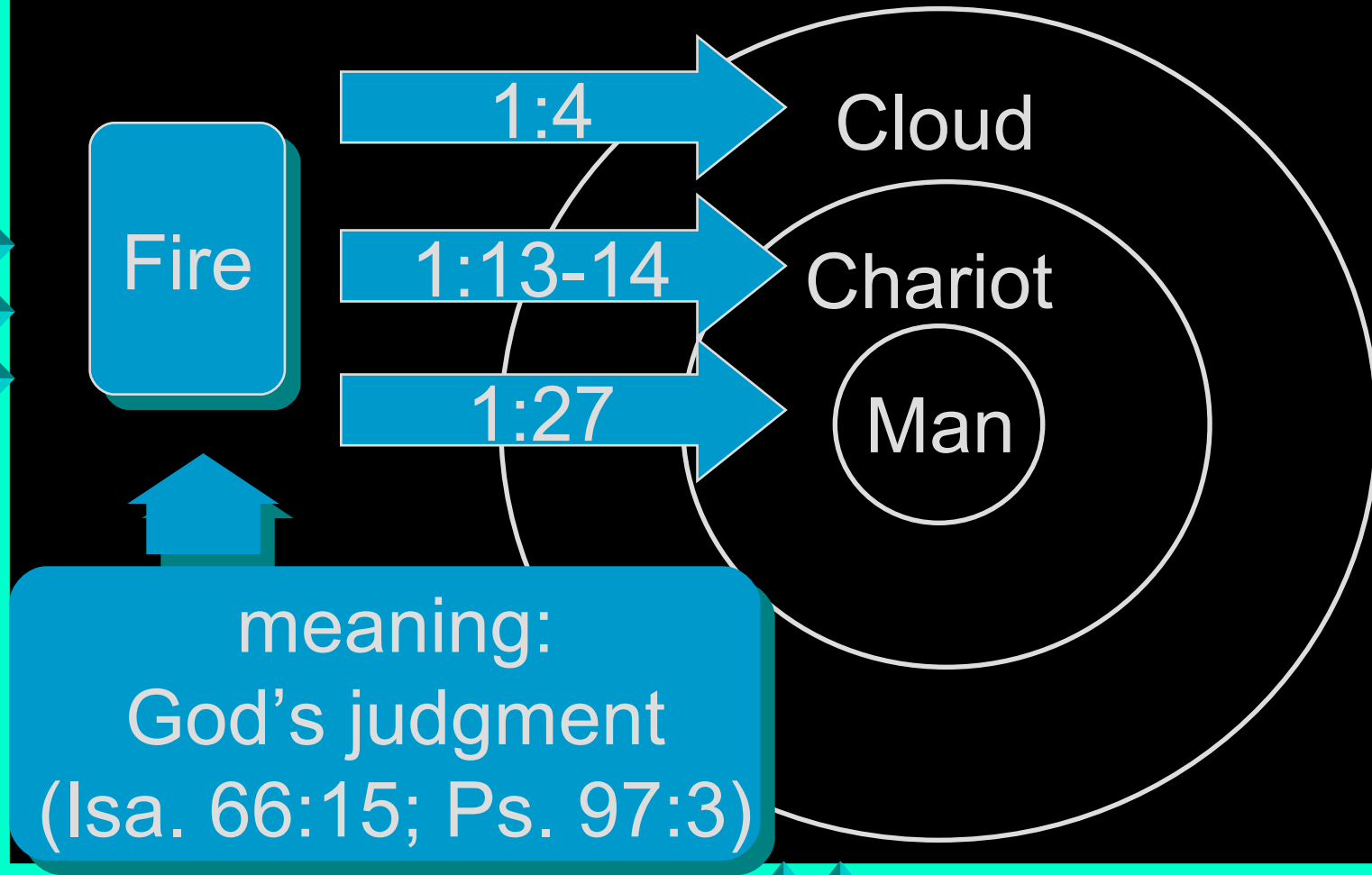


- ◆ **24 thrones image one throne (Rev. 4:4).**
- ◆ **Angels are “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1).**
- ◆ **They execute God’s decrees (Isa. 6:6-7; Ezek. 9:4; 10:2; Ps. 103:20-21).**

3 Layers in Ezekiel 1



Fire Imaging in Ezekiel 1



Imaging in Ezekiel 1

Bronze

Voice

◆ 1:4

9:3-4

◆ 1:7

1:24

◆ 1:27; 8:2?

1:25, 28

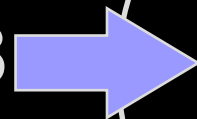
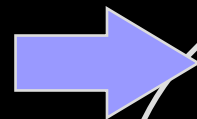
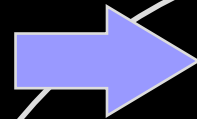
meaning: firm-
ness of judgment

pronounce
judgment

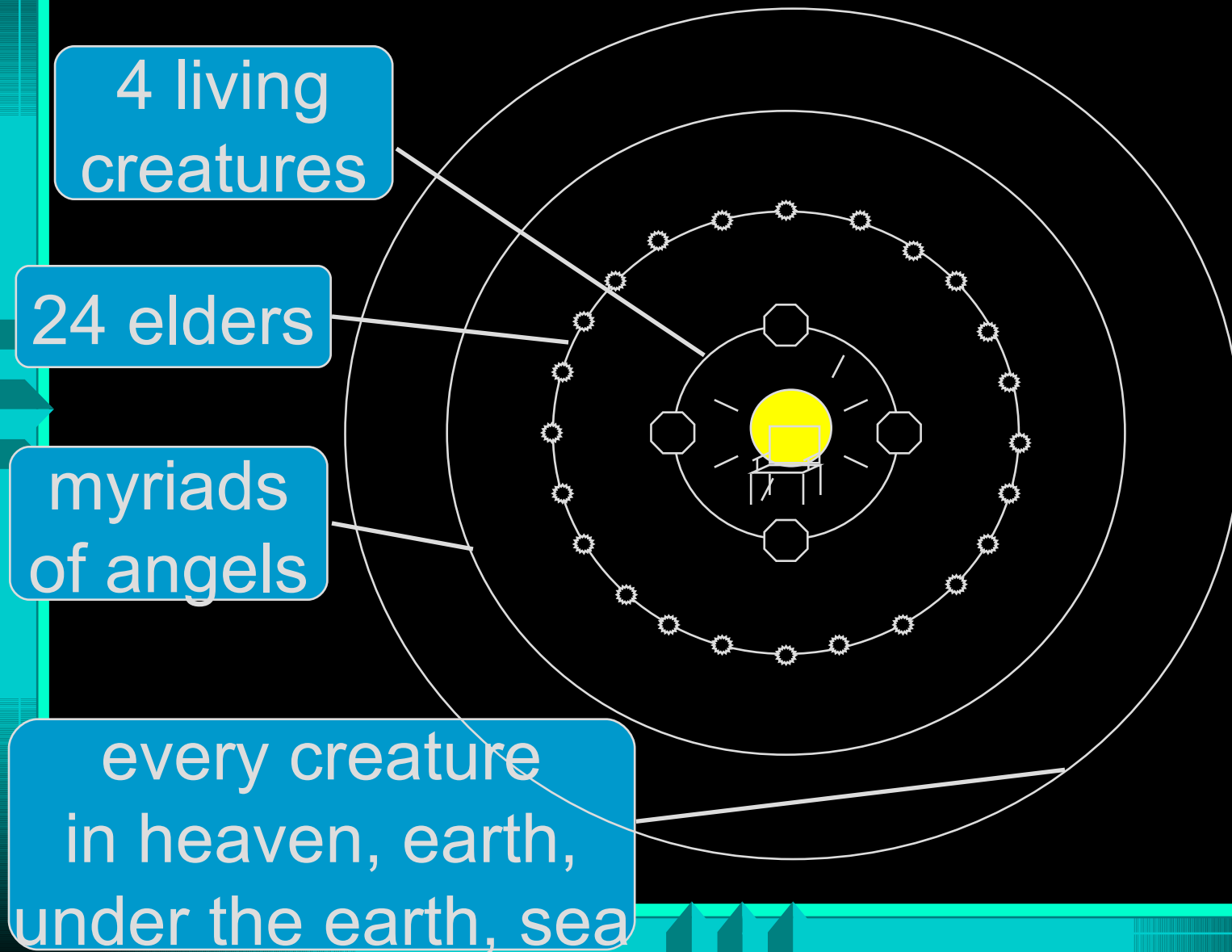
Cloud

Chariot

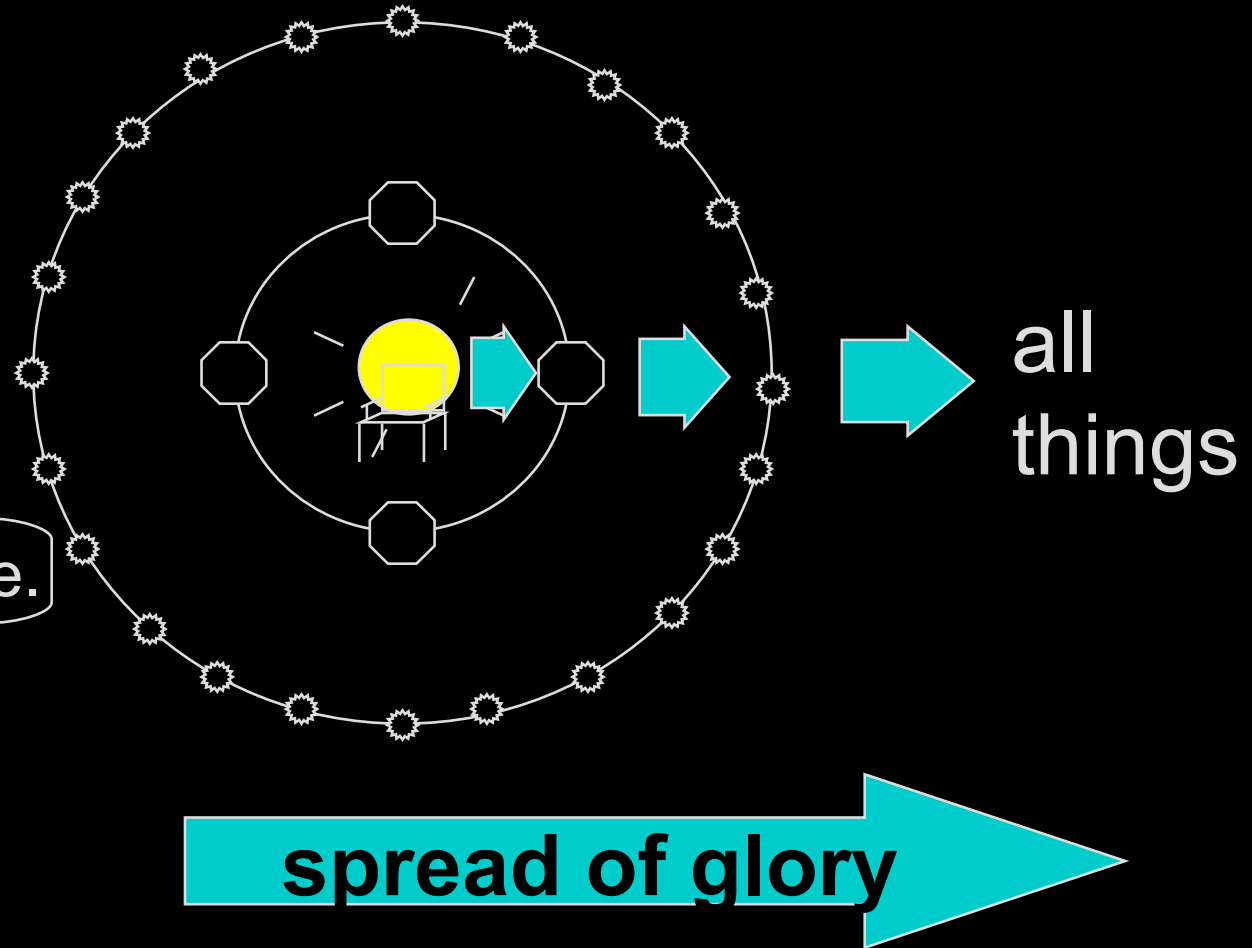
Man



God Centered Universe



God's Glory in History

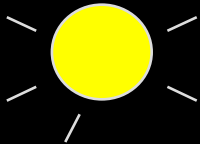


Unstoppable.

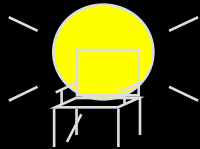


God's Glory Reflected

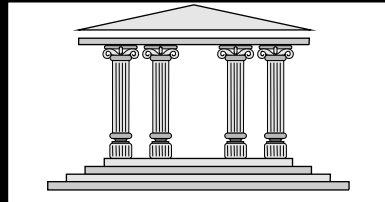
light



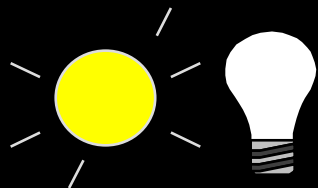
kingship



presence

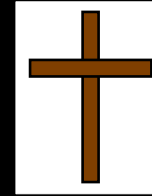


beauty



God's Glory Now

- In redemption, 5:2-6
- In creation, 4:11



- ◆ Light



- ◆ Cloud



- ◆ Thunder



- ◆ Trees (life)



- ◆ Houses

