The Outline/Structure of the Book of Revelation

Knowing how a book is “put together” will help you know where it’s going and how it gets there

- If you’d never seen a car before, you wouldn’t know what was what

1. Concise Outline, following 1:19

1) The things John saw, chapter 1
2) The things which are, chapters 2–3
3) The things which shall occur after these things, chapters 4–22

2. Theological/Interpretive Outline

Considering the Book of Revelation from the standpoint of the rest of prophecy in Scripture—particularly the OT—we will note that in the end times there will come:

1) A period when God will pour out his judgments upon the world
2) Following these judgments a Messianic Kingdom of God will be established on the earth
3) This Kingdom will become universal in scope and be prolonged without end.

These three ideas are the general ideas of the Book of Revelation and they are stated in the same order. Passing over the introductory material (1:1–3:22), the book presents three general subjects:

1) A period of judgment on the world, 4–18
2) The coming of Christ to establish his kingdom on earth, 19–20
3) An extension of this reign of Christ into the eternal kingdom of God in the new heavens and earth, 21–22 (especially 22:3–5)

3. General Content Outline

1) Christ’s Word to the Churches, 1–3
2) Christ’s Judgment on the World, 4–18
3) Christ’s Coming to Rule, 19–22

4. Exegetical Outline

1) Prologue, 1:1–8
2) The Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning the Things Which Are, 1:9–3:22
   - The vision of Christ, 1:9–20
   - The Letters to the Seven Churches, 2:1–3:22
3) The Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning the Things Which Shall Take Place after These Things, 4:1–22:5
   • The Tribulation Judgments, 4:1–18:24
     (1) The Background for the Tribulation Judgments, 4:1–5:14
     (2) The Seven Seal Judgments, 6:1–8:5
     (3) The Seven Trumpet Judgments, 8:6–14:20
     (4) The Seven Bowl Judgments, 15:1–18:24
   • The Return of Christ, 19:1–20:15
     (1) The Events Surrounding the Return of Christ, 19:1–10
     (2) The Battle of Armageddon, 19:11–21
     (3) The Millennial Kingdom, 20:1–10
     (4) The Great White Throne Judgment, 20:11–15
   • The Eternal State, 21:1–22:5
     (1) The New Heaven and Earth, 21:1–8
4) The Epilogue, 22:6–21

Quick Survey

1. Prologue, 1:1–9
2. The Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning the things which are, 1:10–3:22
3. The Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning the things which shall take place after these things, 4–22

Prologue, 4:1–5:14
A. The Tribulation, 6–19
   1. Seal Judgments, 6
   Interlude, 7
   2. Trumpet Judgments, 8–9
   Interlude, 10–15
   3. Bowl Judgments, 16
   Interlude, 17–19
B. The Millennium, 20
C. The Eternal State, 21–22

Interludes are common literary devices used in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean world. John strategically places these interludes in Revelation to provide background information and to add clarification to the events described in the surrounding judgments.

Determining when the events of these interludes takes place must be determined in each case by their respective contexts. In other words, the time frame for each interlude may not correspond to the precise point in the sequence of judgments in which they occur.